

E-QUALITY



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A REVIEW OF *TERMS OF EMPOWERMENT*

By Marion Larson

The Salvation Army has a long history of promoting social justice and showing Christ's love through word and deed. As with many such efforts, women have been on the front lines of the Army's efforts to bring solace to the suffering, along with the good news of the Gospel. But unlike many Christian organizations, the Salvation Army has viewed women as full and equal partners with men. From its founding, the Army has taught that each man and each woman should serve God according to his or her own particular gifts and calling—and that these gifts and calls aren't distributed according to gender.



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Terms of Empowerment: Salvation Army Women in Ministry includes three essays on women's contributions to ministry, each previously published and distributed by the Salvation Army. "Female Ministry," published in 1859, provides the Army's foundational teaching on this subject. Written by Army co-founder Catherine Booth, this piece refutes common arguments against women's public ministry, asserting instead that "If she have the necessary gifts, and feels herself called by the Spirit to preach, there is not a single word in the whole book of God to restrain her, but many, very many, to urge and encourage her." To support this assertion, Booth draws on biblical scholarship and on writings of early church fathers to demonstrate that women did preach and teach and prophesy in the earliest years of the church. And she mentions several of her female contemporaries who, like Booth herself, saw great results in their service to God.

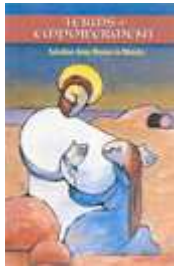
Booth's daughter Evangeline served as the Army's fourth general and wrote "Woman," the second piece in this book. Published in 1930, "Woman" enlarges upon the great promise in the broadening opportunities for women in the early decades of the 20th century. Booth motivates and challenges her audience to use these new opportunities to serve others and pursue Christ's work in the world, following in the footsteps of biblical leaders and "keepers of the faith" such as Sarah, Deborah, Ruth, Hannah, Mary, Lydia, Priscilla, and Phoebe. Evangeline also explores the gospel ministry of her contemporaries who demonstrated their strength and abilities, such as Florence Nightingale, Madame Curie, and Catherine Booth.

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Kay Rader, Salvation Army Commissioner and former World President of Women's Organizations for The Salvation Army, wrote the final essay, "Keeping the Dream Alive," in 2001. Evidence of the horrible plight of many women—particularly in developing nations—leads Rader to temper the optimism of Evangeline Booth's piece significantly. Gender discrimination continues to be a problem in our world, argues Rader, not just for poor women in other parts of the world, but also for Christian women in Western churches. The Salvation Army must never lose sight of its egalitarian roots. In a needy world like ours, we can't afford to relegate women to silence through prejudice or ill-advised interpretation of Scripture.

This book is not only valuable for those interested in Salvation Army history. It also can be a useful tool in helping to realize the vision put forth by these three authors and expressed so eloquently by Rader: "A church that leads the world on issues of social justice, a church that accepts women and men as equals and helps them live integrated lives, a church that helps women fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to all aspects of mission and ministry."



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