

William Booth

'My feelings and opinions with respect to woman generally are known throughout the world. My standard on this subject is ever before you, and I want the entire Army to embrace it. First and foremost I insist on woman's equality. Every officer and soldier should hold to it that woman is as important, as valuable, as capable, and as necessary to the progress and happiness of the world as man. Unfortunately a large number of people of every class think otherwise. They still cling to the notion of bygone ages – that as a being woman is inferior to man.

To many she is little more than a plaything for their leisure hours. To others she is like a piece of property, a slave in everything but name. Ofttimes she is treated with less consideration as to health and comfort than the horses that run in omnibuses or beasts that are fattening for slaughter. Now The Salvation Army has done and is doing something to combat these hideous and heathen notions.

To begin with, the Army has maintained that the sexes are equal alike in birth; alike equal in the value of the soul and the capacity for joy and sorrow; alike equal before God and in the love of the Heavenly Father; alike equal in their share in the redemption of Jesus Christ; alike equal in responsibility for spreading salvation and extending the Kingdom of God; alike equal in accountability at the Judgement-Day; alike equal as citizens of the Celestial City; and alike equal in capacity for the employments and enjoyments of the eternity to come.

I do not say that every individual faculty in woman is equal to the corresponding faculty in man, any more than I would say each particular capacity possessed by man is equal to the same in woman. They differ both in character and degree. But where one is weaker the other is stronger. For example, in the power of will and in the possession of physical force the man will often be found to excel the woman. On the other hand, in quickness of perception, in powers of endurance, and in strength of love (the quality in us which is most God-like), woman is generally the superior of man. Taken as a whole, therefore, I say that woman is equal to man in the value of her gifts and the extent of her influence; and I maintain that if she be given a fair chance she will prove it to be so.

Now I want you to think over and accept this truth. Nay, more, I would have all of us stand to it, and show it forth to the world, by our own treatment of our women comrades. Above all, let us teach it both in theory and in practice to the young people around us. Let the boy be taught from his earliest infancy that his sister is as good as he is, in all that is important to life, except, perhaps, in the physical force which he possesses in common with the brute beasts. Let the girl be made to feel that her value to God and man is as high as it would have been had she been a boy. Let the grown-up people set before the children and the voting people a constant and living example of that gentleness and kindness to woman which was ever manifested by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whether married or single, let every man treat the woman with whom he is acquainted with respect, with patience, and with care. Every man to whom has been entrusted a wife must – and will, if he has any proper sense of manliness in him – champion her interests, fight her battles, watch over her soul, and even die, if need be, as Christ died on her behalf. Let us then determine to pay woman more regard in the position assigned to her by the providence of God, as a wife, as a mother, as a daughter, and as a comrade in the Salvation War.

– Your affectionate General,
(Signed) William Booth.'