ROCKING THE BOAT: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 1948-1991

by

Janet Estridge Crawford

submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington

in fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Victoria University of Wellington

1995

CORRECTIONS and ALTERATIONS

- Page 35, footnote 64, delete last sentence.
- Page 55, footnote 46, line six, "Carey Hall" not "College".
- Page 63, second line from bottom, close quotation mark after "come".
- Page 72, line thirteen, "Ecumenical", not "Economical".
- Page 85, footnote 6, the last sentence should be attached at the end of footnote 7.
- Page 87, footnote 10, line eight, "was" before "a consultant".
- Page 119, line eleven, Muelder, not Meulder.
- Page 121, footnote 11, line three *Dogmatik*.
- Page 123, footnote 15, line two, "image", line ten, "Barth's".
- Page 124, line one, "insights".
- Page 126, third line from the bottom, "one woman". Delete italics in title.
- Page 130, footnote 34, line three, "the" for "those".
- Page 136, line seventeen, "one woman".
- Page 144, footnote 69, add: The word "confess" replaced "accept".
- Page 162, line two of quotation 13, "difficult" not "difficulty".
- Page 165, footnote 19 cont., line two. Dr. Gibson Winter should be listed once only.
- Page 169, footnote 32, comma after "May".
- Page 172, quotation 41, line two, "places" not "placed".
- Page 179, line eleven, omit "at the" at the end of the line.
- Page 181, five lines from bottom, omit [sic].
- Page 182, line five from the bottom, "theirs" not "their's".
- Page 192, line four, omit "the" before "theological".
- Page 201, line eleven, "the" instead of "to".
- Page 202, footnote 132, line two, "Florentin-Smyth", line three, "European".
- Page 212, line eight, omit "was" at beginning.
- Page 223, line four, "harmonizations".
- Page 224, line four from the bottom, "practical".
- Page 226, line four from the bottom, omit "the" before "World War II".
- Page 227, line ten, omit "normally".
- Page 238, line six, "concern", line sixteen, delete [sic] and insert missing bracket at the end.
- Page 240, footnote 95, "Fairfax".
- Page 241, line eight, "Chester House".
- Page 246, line fourteen, "woman", not "women".

Page 263, line eight, insert quotation mark at end.

Page 266, footnote 191, insert quotation mark before "vice-chairman".

Page 275, line twelve, "questions", last line, "be" not "by", footnote 216, "WCC" not "Wcc".

Page 284, line eighteen, "Ortega" not "Orfega".

Page 291, line four, insert "many" before "personal".

Page 322, line five from the bottom, "most" not "moist".

Page 343, footnote 100, line one, "predominance of women" not "men".

Page 361, line 10, "equality" not "quality".

Page 366, footnote 168, line six, "fifty-fifty" not "fifty-fifth".

Page 371, footnote 180, line two, "of" not "or".

Page 384, line four, insert "of" after "community".

Page 389, line seven, "Berlin" not "Berlini".

Page 392, line three from the bottom, "their" for "the" at the end.

Page 409, line thirteen, "woman" not "women".

Page 434, line three, "woman" not "women".

Page 451, line three, "1985" not "1958".

Page 455, line twelve, "patriarchal" not "partriarchal".

Page 476, last line, comma after "Redeemer", full stop after "Sanctifier".

Page 481, line thirteen, insert colon after "emphases", semi-colon after "participation".

Page 485, line twelve, "priests" not "priets".

Page 487, line five, "past", not "part".

Page 496, footnote 149, line three, "volumes" not "columes".

Page 505, line three from the bottom, separate "one" from "commissioner".

Page 514, line fifteen, omit "often".

Page 531, line thirteen, insert "was" after "which".

Page 548, footnote 306, "Kässmann".

Page 549, line twelve, insert "which" and omit "for" before and after "had".

Page 550, line twelve, "Reaction"; line four from the bottom, replace comma after "assemblies" with full stop, begin new sentence "Of .."

Page 551, line fourteen "Hyun" not "Hung".

Page 552, footnote 315, "Kässmann".

Page 553, quotation 319, last line "Hyun" not "Hung".

Page 559, line eight, "relate" not "related"; last line, "divisions" not "diversions".

Page 560, line eight, insert "work" after "section".

Page 561, footnote 348, "Kässmann".

Page 563, line fourteen, "the report" not "this report".

Page 575, line three, omit "are".

Page 577, line nine, capital letter for "Women".

Page 611, under BAROT add "d. December 1995"

Page 612, under BARROW add "d. December 1995".

ABSTRACT

When the inaugurating assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) met in 1948 questions about women's participation in the life and work of the churches, including the ordained ministry, were already on the agenda, placed there by women even though few women participated in any official capacity in the assembly. Since 1948 women's participation has become an increasingly important issue within the life and work of the WCC itself. This thesis, which is based on extensive primary research, documents and discusses women's participation in the WCC from that first assembly in 1948 to the seventh in 1991. By women's participation I understand both the inclusion of women among the representatives of the member churches who participate with some authority in the various policy and decision making bodies within the Council and the contribution of women's experiences, insights and perspectives to its policies and programmes. I argue that although women's participation in the WCC has increased significantly in the period 1948-1991 this increase has occurred only as a result of considerable struggle by women themselves, and that the ongoing pressure from women for their full and equal participation with men gives rise to serious tensions and problems within the WCC today.

The basic approach is chronological, with documentation and discussion organised around the seven WCC assemblies held in the period 1948-1991. The slow processes of bureaucratic change through which women's participation has increased are documented in some detail, with particular attention given to their participation in assemblies and on the central committee, these being the two most powerful bodies in the governance of the WCC. Significant changes in the policies and programmes of the WCC resulting from women's participation are discussed, with particular attention paid to the "women's department" which, although its title and mandate have changed more than once, has consistently been the locus of advocacy for women's participation, and the commission on Faith and Order which has addressed theological questions raised by and about women's participation.

The conclusion drawn from this study is that women's participation offers a number of significant challenges to the WCC and its member churches in their quest for unity.

In Memory of Frances Nancy Crawford

The ecumenical movement began with Adam and Eve

Author unknown, *Risk* 10:2 (1974)

oifoumone

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
AFT	Apostolic Faith Today
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCC	British Council of Churches
<i>BEM</i>	<i>Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry</i>
CICARWS	Commission of the Churches on Inter-church Aid, Refugee and World Service
CIMADE	Comité Inter-Mouvements Auprès Des Evacués
CMC	Christian Medical Commission
COPECIAL	Permanent Commission for International Congresses of the Lay Apostolate
CWU	Church Women United
CWMC	Community of Women and Men in the Church
CWME	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
DEA	Division on Ecumenical Action
<i>DEM</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement</i>
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
<i>EPS</i>	<i>EPS: Ecumenical Press Service</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>The Ecumenical Review</i>
IMC	International Missionary Council
JPIC	Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
JWG	Joint Working Group
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NCC	National Council of Churches
NCCCUSA	National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PAWM	Pre-Assembly Women's Meeting
PCR	Programme to Combat Racism
PTE	Programme on Theological Education
RC	Roman Catholic
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SACC	South Africa Council of Churches
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SEG	Staff Executive Group
SODEPAX	Joint Committee on Society, Development and Peace
SPCU	Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity
TD	Typewritten document
TL	Typewritten letter
TLS	Typewritten letter signed
UCA	Uniting Church of Australia
UN	United Nations
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCCE	World Council of Christian Education
WCW	<i>Women in a Changing World</i>
WELG	Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group
WSCF	World Student Christian Federation
WUCWO	World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Associations
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Associations

PREFACE

The subject of this thesis is women's participation in the World Council of Churches (WCC) 1948-1991. Although I have written this as a work of academic research my interest in the subject is not wholly academic for I am myself a woman who has participated in the work of the WCC.

My first contact with this institution occurred in 1979 when as a newly-ordained Anglican clergywoman in a provincial New Zealand town I organised and led a group which responded to the WCC study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church (CWMC) and subsequently sent a brief report to the WCC office in Geneva. An unforeseen consequence of this was that in August 1980 I went to Geneva where I worked for a year as consultant to the CWMC study programme. Originally employed to analyse and edit the reports sent in by groups around the world, I later became responsible for organising the conference held at Sheffield in July 1981 which was the culmination of the four year CWMC study process. After this I left the WCC and the editorial work was completed later, with a colleague, and published as *In God's Image: Reflections on Identity, Human Wholeness and the Authority of Scripture*.¹

In 1983 I returned to Geneva where I spent ten months working as a consultant to the WCC Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society, involved in

¹ Janet Crawford and Michael Kinnamon, eds., *In God's Image: Reflections on Identity, Human Wholeness and the Authority of Scripture* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983).

preparations for a pre-assembly women's meeting and for the sixth assembly of the WCC. I attended both these meetings in Vancouver in July 1983. Following my return to New Zealand, in 1984 I was one of the researchers/writers for a WCC-sponsored interfaith project on religious teachings about female sexuality, to which I contributed a paper on the Anglican church in New Zealand. The findings of this project, prepared for the NGO Forum held in Nairobi in 1985 to mark the end of the UN Decade on Women, were later published as *Women, Religion and Sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*.²

My appointment to the WCC Faith and Order Standing Commission in 1984 has meant a continuing involvement with the WCC. As a member of the commission I have been particularly involved in the study on the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community, which continued the study of some of the issues raised in the CWMC study. Working within Faith and Order I have developed a greater understanding of theological questions surrounding issues of women's participation, and as an ordained woman have been involved again and again in difficult discussions on the ordination of women which is now one of the most sensitive of all ecumenical questions.

Since 1980 I have attended, sometimes as a staff member and sometimes as a participant, many WCC consultations and meetings including a number referred to in this work. As well as participating in the sixth assembly I was present at the seventh assembly of the WCC in Canberra in 1991 as a member of the co-opted staff. Through these activities I have met a number of the women who appear in these pages and have worked with some of them. It is through this

² Jeanne Becher, ed., *Women, Religion and Sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990).

personal involvement of over a decade that I have become aware that women's participation in the WCC is not something to be taken for granted and that issues of women's participation tend to arouse strong emotions and heated debate.

As part of my professional work as a teacher in a theological college I have been involved, since 1986, in developing and teaching courses on women in the Christian tradition and this has stimulated my interest in the history of women's participation in the churches and in the World Council of Churches. It is quite common today for leaders of the ecumenical movement to bemoan a "loss of ecumenical memory" which is occurring as an older generation departs the ecumenical scene and is replaced by new participants with little or no knowledge of the ecumenical tradition and of previous events and earlier decisions. Where women are concerned the loss has been profound because women were never really included in the "ecumenical memory" in the first place. Their presence is scarcely visible in most official records and in the histories which have been written so far. There is little if any women's tradition within the WCC, no sense of building on foundations which have already been established, little knowledge of the efforts and achievements of women in the past, little memory of previous women leaders, and yet, as this work documents, women have participated in the WCC from its beginning. I hope that this thesis will contribute to the restoration of women to the "ecumenical memory" and to the understanding that the history of the WCC is a history of women and men working together for the unity and renewal of the church and the human community.

Much of the research for this thesis has been conducted in the archives and library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. I am grateful to the staff there and to a number of members of the WCC staff for their assistance, and also to the Board of

Governors of the College of St John the Evangelist, Auckland, for the sabbatical leave which enabled me to spend time in Geneva in 1993.

Judith Bright, Helen Greenwood, and other staff of the Kinder Library, College of St John the Evangelist, have been consistently helpful. I am grateful to them, and to Jill Bartlett, Lois Anderson and Denise Wellm for their invaluable work on the word-processor.

I wish to thank Bishop Peter Atkins, dean of the joint faculty of St John's/Trinity colleges, Jill van de Geer, and other members of the St John's/Trinity community for support and encouragement. My supervisor Dr George Armstrong has both stimulated and encouraged me and I am grateful to him and his wife Jocelyn for their generous hospitality, over several years.

I also wish to express my thanks to Pauline Webb and others who have assisted by sharing me with their memories of the WCC, either in conversation or in writing.

Above all I want to thank my Faith and Order colleague and friend, Dr. Thomas Best, for much practical help in finding documents and answering queries and for his unfailing support and encouragement by telephone, fax and letter.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to all those whose commitment to the ecumenical movement has enlarged my own understanding of the unity and mission of the church. I hope this work may make a small contribution to that movement from which I have gained so much.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	iii
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1 THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT: "UT UNUM SINT"	12
2 "THE LIFE AND WORK OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH": BAARN AND AMSTERDAM, 1948	41
3 FROM AMSTERDAM TO EVANSTON: 1948-1954	82
4 FROM EVANSTON TO NEW DELHI: 1954-1961	116
5 FROM NEW DELHI TO UPPSALA: 1961-1968	156
6 FROM UPPSALA TO NAIROBI: 1968-1975	210
7 FROM NAIROBI TO VANCOUVER: 1975-1983	307
8 FROM VANCOUVER TO CANBERRA: 1985-1991	449
9 CONCLUSION: ROCKING THE BOAT	582

APPENDIX		Page
I	REPORT OF COMMITTEE IV: CONCERNS OF THE CHURCHES	
	1. The Life and Work of Women in the Church	587
II	THE DAVOS STATEMENT	589
III	A LETTER FROM SHEFFIELD	591
IV	AN ORTHODOX RESPONSE TO THE WCC CONFERENCE ON MISSION AND EVANGELISM	593
V	INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE	594
VI	INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE	596
VII	A SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN WCC ASSEMBLIES, 1948-1991	597
VIII	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN DELEGATES AT WCC ASSEMBLIES	602
IX	TIME-LINE	603
X	BIOGRAPHIES	610
XI	CARTOONS BY CLAUDIUS	629
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	631

INTRODUCTION

Scope of Work

The subject of this thesis is women's participation in the World Council of Churches (WCC) from 1948, the year of its inaugural assembly in Amsterdam, till 1991, the year of its seventh (and at the time of writing most recent) general assembly in Canberra. This period of almost fifty years may be defined as beginning in the aftermath of the Second World War, which deeply influenced the formation of the WCC and the Amsterdam assembly, and concluding with the Gulf War which overshadowed the Canberra assembly. The tumultuous events of the second half of the twentieth century form the context in which the WCC has grown and developed and it has been deeply influenced by the political and social movements of this era. Among these movements is the women's movement which, although diverse and amorphous, has from the turn of the century raised questions about women's "place" in all areas of culture and society, including in the Christian churches, and which has been successful to the extent that it has raised the hopes and aspirations of women all over the world even where it has not improved their material conditions. Questions about women's place in the whole life of the church were on the agenda of the first assembly of the WCC and women in the churches were eager to participate in this new ecumenical organisation. At the seventh assembly, where women participated in greater numbers and more actively than at any previous assembly, issues to do with their participation gave rise to considerable tensions which remained unresolved. In

this thesis I document the history of women's participation in the WCC and discuss the changes which took place from 1948 to 1991.

To participate means to take a part or share in and participation may be used both in the rather general sense of having, being or forming part of and more specifically to refer to "the active involvement of members of a community or organisation in decisions which affect them".¹ According to the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* participation "implies belonging to and involvement in an organisation, being an active member of a decision-making body, involved in policy making or participating in the procedures, programmes, staffing or financing of the organisation".² At the sixth WCC assembly in 1983 participation was defined as implying "involvement and encounter with others, sharing with others, working together, making decisions and living together as people of God".³

The WCC is a fellowship (*koinonia*) of churches which participate or share in the work of the WCC in many ways. In terms of the various decision and policy making bodies, committees, working groups, conferences and consultations through which the work of the WCC is carried out, the churches participate through their representatives. These representatives may be their official delegates, as at assemblies and world conferences; they may be elected to membership of the central or executive committees; they may be appointed to commissions, committees or working groups; they may be employed as staff; they may be invited to consultations or meetings. Thus participation in the WCC is closely linked to representation of the churches. By women's participation in

¹ *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, 1993 ed., s.v. "participant", "participation".

² Dorothy Harvey, "Participation", in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 775.

³ David M. Gill, ed., *Gathered for Life: Official Report VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July - 10 August 1983* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 54.

the WCC I mean in the first place the inclusion of women among the recognised representatives of the member churches who participate with some authority in the various decision and policy making bodies within the Council.

Within the ecumenical movement women's participation also implies "the presence of women's experiences, insights and perspectives to impact and influence the direction and journey of the ecumenical movement".⁴ Women's participation thus refers to women's distinctive contribution, a contribution which can be made fully only if women are fully included in policy and decision making bodies and in leadership roles. In my discussion of women's participation in the WCC I pay attention to women's inclusion in the various structures of the WCC and also to the contributions made by women and the changes which result from their participation.

Although women have been actively involved in the WCC since its inauguration almost fifty years ago there has been no major study of their participation. The first book to address the topic of women in the WCC was Susannah Herzel's *A Voice for Women* published in 1981, which as the sub-title indicates had as its focus "the women's department of the World Council of Churches".⁵ Herzel's uncritical narrative unfolds the story of how the work of this department (the title of which has varied over the years) helped and encouraged ecumenically-engaged women to find and develop "their own hidden voice", a voice she describes as "a mixture of accents and cadences, anger and music".⁶ The metaphor used by Herzel of women finding and developing a *voice*, emerging from

⁴ Anna Karin Hammar, "After Forty Years - Churches in Solidarity with Women?", *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988), 533.

⁵ Susannah Herzel, *A Voice for Women: The Women's Department of the World Council of Churches*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984).

silence and making themselves heard, has been widely used in women's writing, particularly in reference to women and the church(es) in which they have been traditionally not only *silent* but also *silenced*.⁷ Like Herzel, I am interested in discovering women's hidden voice (or voices) in the WCC but from my perspective her work is limited by its focus on the work on *one* department in the WCC, even though that department has been, particularly since the 1970s, a powerful advocate or "voice" for women in the WCC.

A recent work by Melanie May, originally a dissertation "occasioned by" the WCC study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, uses the same metaphor as May discloses "voices heretofore silent", the voices of women present in the WCC since its inauguration.⁸ Like Herzel's earlier work, May's *Bonds of Unity* has a specific focus, namely women's role in the theological discourse on unity carried out by the WCC Commission on Faith and Order. May's work is informed by Foucault's notion of "subjugated knowledge" and she presents the Community Study as an "insurrection of subjugated knowledge",⁹ a welling-up of the variegated voices of women against the dominant theological discourse formulated by Faith and Order. In her first chapter she gives a helpful account of women's participation in the WCC from 1948 to 1975, focussing on their

⁶ *ibid.*, [ix].

⁷ "In the past, women have been almost like a deaf and dumb person, enclosed in a world of their own, separate from that of most others, with no public voice to express their feelings or communicate their thought. But now women have learnt to speak for themselves". Ursula King, *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Education, 1989), 2. The silencing of Christian women has been in accordance with biblical injunctions such as I Cor. 14:34 ("Women should be silent in the churches") and I Tim. 2:11 ("Let a woman learn in silence with full submission"). "But now that silence is being broken...It is being broken in love of the faith - and with the force of centuries of accumulated anger and oppression. It is being broken so that women may discover whether they can in fact express their full humanity within the context of the Christian faith...[T]he determination to say *No more silence!* is now strong and firm and growing..." Alice L. Hageman, ed., *Sexist Religion and Women in the Church: No More Silence!* (New York: Association Press, 1974), 19-20.

⁸ Melanie A. May, *Bonds of Unity: Women, Theology and the Worldwide Church*. American Academy of Religion Academy Series, 65. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

involvement in theological reflection. This is based on the retrieval of that type of "subjugated knowledge" which is, according to Foucault, "historical contents present but passed over in official documents and records".¹⁰

My work has a broader scope than that of both Herzel and May. It is the first work to document and discuss women's participation in the WCC as a whole, and focusses both on the inclusion of women as participants in the policy and decision making structures of that body and on the significance of the contribution which they have made by their presence in these structures. Although I pay attention to both the women's department and the Commission on Faith and Order my discussion is not limited to these two bodies within the WCC. Although I am interested in women's contribution to the theological discourse on unity, I am also interested in the slow processes of institutional change as the WCC tries to reflect its understanding of unity in its own structures.

In this thesis I document the history of the movement towards the greater participation of women in the WCC and the bureaucratic procedures through which changes leading to their increased participation have taken place. I discuss the changes which have occurred within the WCC as a result of that movement. I reflect upon the ways in which women's participation continues to challenge the WCC and its member churches in their search for unity. I conclude that the history of women's participation in the WCC is a history of struggle, that women's continuing efforts to gain increased participation have caused tension and conflict within the WCC, and that the future of women's participation remains problematic.

⁹ *ibid.*, 5-6.

Sources of work

This thesis is based on extensive research, primary sources for which have been WCC records and documents, both published and unpublished. Published materials include reports of assemblies, world conferences and consultations; central committee minutes; Faith and Order papers, including reports, minutes and study documents; newsletters and journals.

Unpublished documents in the WCC archives (held in the library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, Switzerland) have provided much of the most interesting and significant material. Archival material which I have used includes unpublished reports and minutes (including executive committee minutes); correspondence and background papers relating to conferences and consultations; documentation from staff meetings; memoranda and circular letters; personal correspondence.

The files of material from the "women's department" proved to be particularly helpful. Among them I found extensive documentation relating to the women's ecumenical conference held at Baarn in 1948, none of which has been published, as well as unpublished material relating to the Sexism in the 1970s consultation and to the Community of Women and Men in the Church study, minutes of the working group of the department on cooperation between women and men and unpublished reports of a number of consultations and meetings. Unfortunately the material in these files has not been catalogued or indexed and some of it is in considerable disorder. A few documents could not be traced. Material on the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group was particularly elusive but

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 7.

eventually I was able to supplement the documents in the WCC archives with others from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, in Rome.

In terms of secondary sources, a number of WCC publications have been helpful. The *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement (DEM)*,¹¹ published in 1991, has been invaluable as a general reference work, particularly as so far the two volume *History of the Ecumenical Movement* does not extend beyond 1968 and in the relevant volume covering the period 1948-1968 there are very few references to women and no women contributors.¹² The *Dictionary* on the other hand had a number of women contributors and contains helpful articles on a number of relevant topics, as well as biographical entries on a small number of individual women.¹³

Two works by Ans J. van der Bent, former librarian at the Ecumenical Centre, have been useful for reference purposes, although unfortunately both now need updating. They are *Six Hundred Ecumenical Consultations 1948-1982* and *Vital Ecumenical Concerns: Sixteen Documentary Surveys*, published in 1983 and 1986 respectively.¹⁴ The former contains brief descriptions of and bibliographic information on ecumenical consultations organised by the various divisions, departments, secretariats and sub-units of the WCC, excluding assemblies and world conferences. The latter includes "The Role of Women in the Ecumenical Movement" among its sixteen "vital concerns". Also useful was *Major Studies*

¹¹ See Nicholas Lossky et al., eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991).

¹² See Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*. 3rd edn. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986) and Harold E. Fey, ed., *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, volume 2 1948-1968*. 2nd edn. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986). In addition to editing the first volume Rouse also contributed two chapters.

¹³ Of 108 biographical entries only 11 are for women.

¹⁴ See Ans J van der Bent, *Six Hundred Ecumenical Consultations 1948-1982* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983); *Vital Ecumenical Concerns: Sixteen Documentary Surveys* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984).

*and Themes in the Ecumenical Movement*¹⁵ which includes brief descriptions of major studies undertaken by the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church and the themes of numerous ecumenical assemblies and world conferences held or sponsored by the WCC, the Roman Catholic Church and regional conferences of churches. Unfortunately the most recent work by van der Bent, the *Historical Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, was not available to me until shortly before the completion of my work.¹⁶

I have found much significant material in *The Ecumenical Review (ER)*, a quarterly journal published by the WCC since 1948. *Women in a Changing World (WCW)*, a newsletter published irregularly from 1975 to 1991 by the WCC sub-unit on Women in Church and Society, has been an invaluable source of material by and about women. *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal*, a quarterly publication of the Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US, has frequently contained papers from WCC meetings which have not been published elsewhere as well as more general articles on ecumenical themes.

Reference has been made already to *A Voice for Women* by Susannah Herzel. In it I have found particularly helpful the often lengthy quotations from interviews which Herzel conducted with a number of women who played leading roles in the WCC prior to the 1980s. Their reminiscences and reflections are an invaluable resource and in most cases have not been published elsewhere. Unfortunately Herzel does not give any information about how, when or where these interviews were conducted. Neither does she give precise references for her

¹⁵ See Ans J van der Bent, comp., *Major Studies and Themes in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1987).

many quotations, a large number of which are in fact from unpublished documents in the WCC archives. May's *Bonds of Unity* proved particularly helpful for its very comprehensive bibliography.

Shape of work

The first chapter is intended as a brief introduction to the WCC and to those aspects of its structures and relationships which are particularly relevant to the discussion of women's participation.

In chapters 2 to 8 I document and discuss the history of women's participation in the WCC from 1948 to 1991. These chapters are arranged chronologically, with the material in each being organised around one of the seven WCC general assemblies. Each chapter has two main sections: the first deals with the period leading up to the assembly, the second with the assembly itself. Within each of these sections the text is organised around certain focal events and themes, not all of which necessarily appear in each chapter. In the first section these foci include world conferences and significant consultations, Faith and Order studies and meetings, aspects of the work of the 'women's department', central committee debates and resolutions, and assembly planning and preparations. In the second sections of each chapter particular attention is given to statistical analyses of the churches' delegations, to women's participation in assembly leadership, to plenary addresses, to section and committee reports, and to the process and results of nominations and elections. That these seven chapters are of unequal length, with the last two being considerably longer than the

¹⁶ See Ans J van der Bent, *Historical Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, 3. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994).

preceding five, reflects the increased volume of material to be discussed as women's participation in the WCC during the period between the fifth and seventh assemblies (1975-1991).

In the ninth and final chapter I survey the history which has been disclosed, concluding that although for women the history of their participation in the WCC has been a history of struggle, pain and protest, they have continued this struggle because of their faith that Christian unity means *community* of women and men in the church. For the WCC and its member churches women's participation is either a problem or a possibility: a problem if it is seen as one more threat to the unity of the churches, a possibility if it is seen as bearing the promise of a new vision of unity and resources without which unity cannot be achieved.

Following the nine chapters there are nine appendices containing some of the significant primary documents referred to in the text, a summary of each of the seven assemblies and a time-line. The tenth appendix consists of short biographical articles on a number of the women who feature in the main text.

While the lives of a few of these women have been documented in biographical or autobiographical form, most have not. Information in many cases has been hard to find and may be still incomplete. It has been gathered from many sources, including the 'bio-files' in the library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. These bio-files are a valuable resource but unfortunately have not been kept up to date. I was motivated to do this extra research when I realised how few women were included in the biographical entries in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* and how little is known and remembered today about many women who have made significant contributions to the WCC and to the wider ecumenical movement. I hope by providing these biographies both to add to the scope of this

present work and to provide a basis for further work by myself or others. I have placed this material in an appendix in order not to impede the flow of the main text and notes with material which, although interesting and significant, may not be directly pertinent.

Editorial Method

The word *church* is capitalised when referring to the universal Church, the "Body of Christ" or "community of the Holy Spirit", or when it is part of the name of a specific Christian community such as the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of England.

Generally I have followed current WCC practice in minimising capitalisation for terms such as assembly, central committee, moderator, general secretary, sub-unit and department but many quotations are in an older style which used much more capitalisation.

Any text on the ecumenical movement sometimes seems like a kind of "alphabet soup" because it contains so many acronyms. This work is no exception. The full name of each organisation, programme or study is given the first time it appears, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Thereafter the acronym is generally used. A complete list of all acronyms and abbreviations is given on pages iii and iv.

Inclusive language for people has been a policy in all WCC publications for some time and the constitution and rules were amended in 1975 to make all the terminology fully inclusive. Earlier texts are however full of androcentric language with "man" and "men" used as generic nouns. Thus "lay men" is used to refer to lay men and women, and women are "chairmen". Although I am committed to the use of inclusive language I have kept the language of original

texts in quotations, however androcentric they may be, without repeatedly inserting "sic".

CHAPTER 1

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT: "UT UNUM SINT"

The word ecumenical is derived from the Greek word *oikoumene* which from about the time of Alexander the Great has meant the whole inhabited earth (Greek *oikein*, to inhabit; *oikos*, house). In Roman times the *oikoumene* was equated with the empire and the word is generally used in this sense in the Bible. By the fourth century "ecumenical" had entered the ecclesiastical vocabulary and was used to refer both to that which pertained to or represented the whole of the Church and to that which had universal authority or validation.¹

In the twentieth century as the movement towards Christian unity developed, so too did the meaning and use of the word ecumenical though it did not become widespread till about the time of the Second World War (and still today is not part of the common English vocabulary). The influential Oxford Conference on Life and Work in 1937 stated that: "The thought and action of the Church are ecumenical, in so far as they attempt to realize the *Una Sancta*, the fellowship of Christians, who acknowledge the one Lord."² Since then the term has been used in the traditional sense of "concerning the Church as a whole" and also in the senses of "concerning the relationship of different Churches" and "expressing the consciousness of the wholeness of the Church."³

¹ See W.A. Visser 't Hooft, "The Word 'Ecumenical': Its History and Use", in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, ed. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill. 3rd edn. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 735-740, for a more detailed explanation of the changing use of this word.

² *ibid.*, 740.

³ *ibid.*

Definitions of the ecumenical movement have generally emphasised its connection with the search for Christian unity. Thus it is described as "the movement in the Church towards the recovery of the unity of all believers in Christ,"⁴ and as "the modern movement for co-operation and unity which seeks to manifest the fundamental unity and universality of the Church of Christ."⁵

The World Council of Churches (WCC), founded in 1948 as an organisation of Protestant and Orthodox churches, is an instrument of the ecumenical movement, a movement which has many other expressions, organized and spontaneous, formal and informal. In an early meeting the WCC defined its own understanding of ecumenical as describing "everything that relates to the whole task of the Church to bring the gospel to the whole world. It therefore covers...both unity and mission in the context of the whole world."⁶ (The WCC itself has not been notably successful in maintaining or linking the two elements of unity and mission with equal force).

The Roman Catholic Church, which is not a member of the WCC, may be said to have officially entered the ecumenical movement with the publication of the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) in 1964. In this document the Second Vatican Council described the ecumenical movement as "the initiatives and activities encouraged and organized, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity."⁷

In recent years the ecumenical movement has tended to broaden its focus and the meaning of *oikoumene* and ecumenical has expanded.

Starting from the concern for the whole church, ecumenism has expanded to embrace the whole of humankind; today it is faced with developing an awareness of the wholeness of creation. The concerns for the unity of the church, for the renewal of human community and for the well-being of creation

⁴ *ibid.*, 735.

⁵ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Ecumenical Movement".

⁶ Quoted in Konrad Raiser, "Oikoumene", in *DEM*, 742. According to former WCC general secretary Philip Potter, the ecumenical movement is "the means by which the churches which form the house, the *oikos* of God, are seeking so to live and witness before all peoples that the whole *oikoumene* may become the *oikos* of God". David Gill, ed., *Gathered for Life: Official Report Sixth Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July-10 August 1983* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 197.

⁷ Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. New revised edn. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 456-7.

constitute inter-related perspectives on that ecumenical horizon which we begin to perceive as a whole.⁸

In this understanding the ecumenical movement combines "an absolute commitment to the unity and renewal of the Church and an absolute commitment to the reconciliation of God's world."⁹

Today the ecumenical movement means different things to different people, this being one reason for some of the tensions within the movement. For some it still means the traditional focus on the unity of churches while for others the unity of the human community is a priority. Others emphasize the aim of the ecumenical movement as the bringing of all creation into a harmonious whole. *Oikoumene* is a dynamic concept and the ecumenical movement is a movement greater than any of its organized, institutional expressions. This work is however concerned with the World Council of Churches, which is certainly one of the major institutional expressions of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century.

The rest of this chapter is intended as a brief introduction to the WCC and to certain aspects of its structures and relationships which are particularly relevant to the discussion of women's participation. It begins with a description of what the WCC is and how it works. This is followed by a section on the Orthodox churches in the WCC, because these churches have a strong sense of their unique identity and tradition and after centuries of division and separation relationships between them and the Protestant member churches have not always been easy. As later chapters demonstrate, questions and issues to do with women's participation in the WCC have often increased the tensions between Orthodox and Protestants, with the Orthodox frequently being in a minority position.

The WCC is composed of Orthodox and Protestant churches. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC), which represents a third major Christian tradition, is not a member, nor likely to become one. However, since the Second Vatican Council

⁸ Konrad Raiser, "The Ecumenical Movement", in *Faith and Faithfulness: Essays on Contemporary Ecumenical Themes: A Tribute to Philip A. Potter*, ed. Pauline Webb (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 90.

⁹ Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 238.

(1965-8) the RCC has been fully committed to the ecumenical movement and has been in a developing relationship with the WCC. Issues around women's participation in the WCC have both affected and been affected by this relationship, which is described in the next section.

Within the WCC there are a number of smaller constituent bodies, known variously as commissions, departments, and sub-units. I have chosen to focus on two of these because in my opinion they have been of particular significance in relation to women's participation in the WCC. The Commission on Faith and Order is the body within the WCC which deals most directly with theological questions of unity and ecclesiology. Consequently it has been the body which has been obliged to address the theological and ecclesiological questions raised by women's participation, including the ecumenically sensitive issue of women's ordination. Thus there is a section describing the structure and functions of this commission. This is followed by a section on the "women's department" because it is the body within the WCC which has most consistently advocated women's participation in the total life of the WCC, while at the same time it has constantly been regarded as the location for all issues to do with women.

The World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches was formally constituted at its first general assembly, held in Amsterdam in August 1948. Since then it has continued to develop as an organised international expression of several streams of the twentieth century ecumenical movement. Two of those streams - the Life and Work movement and the Faith and Order movement - merged at the first assembly. A third stream, that of the missionary movement, merged at the third assembly in 1961 when the International Missionary Council (IMC) became officially integrated with the WCC. Ten years later the Christian education stream merged with the others when in 1971 the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) also integrated with the WCC.¹⁰

¹⁰ For a comprehensive survey of the ecumenical movement see Barry Till, *The Churches Search for Unity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972). See also Robert S. Bilheimer, *Breakthrough: The Emergence of the Ecumenical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 1-46, and W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982). For a detailed

The first assembly of the WCC has been described as "an event without precedent in the history of the Church".¹¹ With the exception of the Roman Catholic Church all the major Christian traditions were represented by the three hundred and fifty-one delegates who came from one hundred and forty-seven churches in forty-four countries. Despite the long-standing Orthodox commitment to the ecumenical movement, only three Eastern Orthodox churches were represented and the majority of delegates came from Western Europe or North America. Only six percent of them were women.

Since 1948 there has been a considerable numerical increase and geographical spread in WCC membership. The third assembly, held in New Delhi in 1961, was the first assembly to take place outside the North Atlantic world (the second having been in Evanston, USA in 1954) and saw the entry into membership of four Eastern Orthodox churches - and also of no less than eighteen churches from the so-called "Third-World", - while only five were admitted from Europe and North America.¹² By 1965 all the autocephalous and autonomous Eastern Orthodox churches had become members of the WCC. At the seventh assembly in Canberra, 1991, 852 voting delegates were present, representing 311 member churches from about 100 countries. Slightly over half of the delegates were from North America and Europe and 35% were women. During the assembly a further six churches were welcomed into membership with the China Christian Council becoming the three hundred and seventeenth member. A number of smaller churches (with membership between 10,000 and 25,000) are associate members, eligible to participate in all WCC activities but not to vote at assemblies. Although the Orthodox and Third-World churches have a growing role in the greatly expanded WCC it continues to be "predominantly Western, more

history of the ecumenical movement to 1948 see Rouse and Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*.

¹¹ W.A. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches Held at Amsterdam, August 22nd to September 4th, 1948*. Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series, vol. 5 (London: SCM Press, 1949), 28.

¹² I am aware that the term "Third World" is problematic, particularly given the political and economic changes of recent years. I have chosen to retain it because it is currently still widely used and is part of the self-description of a number of groups such as the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT).

specifically European, in its structure, style and spirituality and Protestant in its theology".¹³

Churches calculate membership on different bases and so it is not possible to say precisely how many people are members of WCC churches, estimates ranging from 350 million to 450 million.¹⁴ In spite of its continued growth the WCC brings together only about one third of the world's Christians. Lacking from its membership are most conservative evangelical and Pentecostal churches, many "independent" Christian groups and churches, and the Roman Catholic Church with its estimated 880 million members. Some project that by the beginning of the 21st century fewer than half of the non-Roman Catholic and non-Orthodox Christians in the world will be members of WCC churches.¹⁵ In spite of the limitations to its membership the World Council of Churches remains probably the most widely-representative Christian body in the world because of the way in which it brings together Christians from different countries, cultures and confessions.

The WCC projects different images and is experienced in diverse ways by both its member churches and those which are not members.¹⁶ There are ongoing attempts to discuss and clarify the nature and self-understanding of this unique organisation but a pre-condition for membership is agreement with the Basis upon which the Council is founded. The original Basis adopted in 1948 stated that: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour".¹⁷ This was replaced at the third assembly in 1961 by the present Basis:

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore

¹³ Aram Keshishian, "Towards a Self-Understanding of the WCC", *ER* 43 (1991), 20.

¹⁴ For a discussion of membership figures see Anton Houtepen, "Towards Conciliar Collaboration: The WCC and the Roman Catholic Communion of Churches", *ER* 40 (1988), 473. He concludes that "more than two-thirds of Christianity does still not really participate in the WCC 'community'".

¹⁵ Marlin Van Elderen, "WCC, Membership of", in *DEM*, 1100.

¹⁶ See John S. Conway, "Images of the WCC", *ER* 36 (1984): 391-403 and Marlin Van Elderen, *Introducing the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 142-143.

¹⁷ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly, 197*

seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹⁸

This Basis, "less than a confession of Christian faith and more than a formula", continues to serve as "a source or ground of coherence".¹⁹ A further aid to understanding the nature of the WCC is a document titled "The Church, the Churches, and the World Council of Churches. The Ecclesiological Significance of the World Council of Churches".²⁰ Commonly known as the Toronto Statement, because it was received by the 1950 meeting of the WCC central committee at Toronto, this statement makes it clear that as a "fellowship of churches" the WCC is not and must never become a "super-church" and clearly defines the limits of its functions and authority.

According to the Constitution of the WCC the first of its stated functions and purposes is "to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe."²¹ The WCC also acts "to facilitate the common witness of the churches," "to support the churches" in mission and evangelism, "to express the common concerns of the churches in the service of human need" and in work for human rights, justice and peace, and "to foster the renewal of the churches" in unity, worship, mission and service.²² This threefold emphasis on unity, mission and service reflects the beginnings of the modern ecumenical movement and the Constitution requires the WCC "to carry on the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work and of the International Missionary Council and the World Council on Christian Education."²³ The continuation of these different elements and the relationships among them have frequently caused tensions within the WCC.

¹⁸ T.K. Thomas, "WCC, Basis of", in *DEM*, 1097. The complete text of the current Constitution and Rules is found in Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 358-388.

¹⁹ Tom Stransky, "World Council of Churches" in *DEM*, 1084.

²⁰ For the text of this see Visser 't Hooft, *Genesis and Formation*, 112-120. See also Morris West, "The Toronto Statement", in *DEM*, 1008-1009.

²¹ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 358.

²² *ibid.*, 358-359.

²³ *ibid.*, 359.

Constitutionally, the supreme legislative body governing the WCC is the assembly which determines WCC policies and reviews their implementation. Meeting every seven or eight years the assembly is composed of voting delegates appointed by the member churches according to a formula based on numerical size, confessional representation and geographical distribution. To date there have been seven assemblies, each one involving more participants as the following table indicates.

Assembly	Delegates	Churches
1. Amsterdam 1948	351	147
2. Evanston 1954	502	161
3. New Delhi 1961	577	197
4. Uppsala 1968	704	235
5. Nairobi 1975	676	285
6. Vancouver 1983	847	301
7. Canberra 1991	842	317

Although delegates form the core of the assemblies and are the only people with the power to vote, many others participate and help to create and influence what happens: consultants and observers; representatives of associate churches, councils, and other ecumenical organisations; press and visitors. At the most recent assembly (Canberra, 1991) there were 852 delegates but including accredited visitors a total of over 4,000 persons a day participated in one way or another.²⁴ The participation of women at assemblies is discussed in some detail in this work.

The assembly delegates elect the WCC presidents (six in Amsterdam in 1948, eight in Canberra in 1991) and the members of the central committee, the main continuation body between assemblies. The central committee (ninety members in 1948, one hundred and fifty in 1991) meets annually and implements assembly policies by approving and reviewing programmes and determining priorities among them. It also adopts the budget, elects the members of a small executive committee and appoints the general secretary. As membership of the WCC has become more diverse the election of central committee members has

²⁴ *ibid.*, 8-10.

become more contentious. There have been continuing efforts to include more women on the central committee and in other leadership positions.

The general secretary is the chief WCC executive and heads the staff who conduct the continuing work and programmes of the WCC. In the almost 50 years since the foundation of the WCC there have been five general secretaries, each appointed by and accountable to the central committee: Willem A. Visser 't Hooft (1948-1966), Eugene Carson Blake (1966-72), Philip A. Potter (1972-84), Emilio Castro (1985-92) and Konrad Raiser (1992-).

WCC programmes are designed to implement the general policy guidelines decided by the assembly, and are offered as a service to all churches, whether members or not. The programmatic structures have varied over the years. The Amsterdam assembly set up twelve departments and authorised an executive/programme staff of thirty-six. The second assembly (Evanston, 1954) established a structure of four divisions (Studies, Ecumenical Action, Interchurch Aid/Refugees and International Affairs, and Information), each with several departments. A lengthy examination of structures resulted in a change in 1972, and the creation of three units (Faith and Witness, Justice and Service, Education and Renewal), each with several sub-units. Prior to the Canberra assembly in 1991 the WCC began another process of re-evaluation and restructuring, resulting in significant changes which came into effect in January 1992 and therefore lie outside the parameters of this work. The numerical and geographical expansion of the WCC membership, the integration of the IMC in 1961 and the WCCE in 1971, a shift following the fourth assembly in 1968 from an emphasis on study to an action orientation, have all led to a greater breadth of concerns and interests and to considerable expansion of its programmes and activities. The number of staff has also increased, reaching a peak of over 300 in the 1980's. There have been continuing efforts to include more women in executive staff positions.

The authority of the WCC consists only in the weight it carries with the churches by its own wisdom and each church retains the constitutional right to ratify or to reject utterances or actions of the Council. The WCC cannot exercise any constitutional authority over its member churches, it cannot legislate for them, and the churches are entirely free to accept or reject the Council's statements and recommendations.

[It] may not make rules for the churches, speak for them, act for them (except when they specifically ask it to) or indeed give the impression that it exercises any kind of authority over them. It is a council of churches, but not in the strong, authoritative sense of those gatherings of the early church when bishops took binding decisions on doctrinal issues.²⁵

On the other hand the WCC is mandated through its Rules to "offer counsel" to the churches and there is an expectation (or hope) that in reflecting the considered judgement or concern of a widely-representative Christian body WCC statements will have "great significance and influence" and will carry authority by virtue of their own truth and wisdom".²⁶ These however have no juridical authority although they may have considerable influence. What the WCC says and does receives its validation by a process of reception in the member churches.²⁷

The Orthodox Churches and the World Council of Churches

The Orthodox Church was involved in the modern ecumenical movement from the earliest stage and in fact the first proposal to establish a "koinonia of churches" was made by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in a famous encyclical letter of 1920.²⁸ Orthodox churches (with the major exception of the Russian Orthodox Church which was living in a difficult political situation) participated actively in both the Faith and Order and the Life and Work movements prior to the founding of the World Council of Churches. In spite of this early commitment and involvement there was little Orthodox participation in the inaugural assembly of the WCC in 1948. Only three Eastern Orthodox churches - the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Church of Greece and the Church of Cyprus - together with the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of the USA were represented. The Orthodox churches in eastern Europe, where the main Orthodox population is found,

²⁵ Van Elderen, *Introducing the WCC*, 91.

²⁶ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 377.

²⁷ Here I am not using the word "reception" in its technical theological sense which is the subject of significant current discussion. See for example John D. Zizioulas, "The Theological Problem of 'Reception'", *One in Christ* 21 (1985): 187-193.

²⁸ "Encyclical Letter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate", in Visser 't Hooft, *Genesis and Formation*, 94-97.

rejected the invitation to Amsterdam as a result of a conference held in Moscow one month before the assembly.²⁹ The recommendation of that conference, deciding against Orthodox participation was, however, "more due to the tensions of the cold war and East-West relationships at that time than to any theological or ecclesiological reasons."³⁰ The Oriental (or pre-Chalcedonian) Orthodox churches present at Amsterdam were the Ethiopian Coptic and (Indian) Syrian Orthodox. Thus at its beginning membership of the WCC was dominantly Protestant and Western (ie. western European and North American), with a small minority of Orthodox, mostly from the Constantinople-oriented Greek-speaking churches. Even in Greece there was "very strong opposition, suspicion and fear lest Orthodoxy and the Orthodox ecclesiology lose its integrity through membership of the WCC".³¹

This situation changed, helped by the Toronto Declaration which became for the Orthodox "the great charter of the WCC, and the main guarantee of the immunity and integrity of their ecclesiology within the membership of the WCC".³² Between 1961 and 1965 all the autocephalous and autonomous Eastern Orthodox churches became members of the WCC, while of the Oriental Orthodox, the Syrian church joined in 1961 and the Armenian in 1962. Although the Orthodox presence at the third assembly (New Delhi, 1961) was significant it was not until the fourth assembly (Uppsala, 1968) that there was "anything like adequate representation from this major part of the Christian family."³³ At the fifth assembly (Nairobi, 1975) Eastern Orthodox formed 13% of the participants, Oriental Orthodox 5%. At the sixth assembly (Vancouver, 1983) a fifth of the membership was Orthodox and the same proportion was maintained at the seventh assembly (Canberra, 1991) where of 852 delegates there were 130 Eastern Orthodox and 47 Oriental Orthodox. At Canberra two Orthodox, one Greek and

²⁹ See "The Moscow Patriarchate and the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches", *ER* 1 (1949): 188-197; "The Official Report of the Moscow Conference in 1948", *ER* 2 (1950): 403-407.

³⁰ Georges Tsentsis, "The Meaning of the Orthodox Presence", *ER* 40 (1988), 441.

³¹ Vitaly Borovoy, "The Ecclesiastical Significance of the WCC: The Legacy and Promise of Toronto", *ER* 40 (1988), 505. The Greek Orthodox Archbishop in London, Metropolitan Germanos, representative in western Europe of the Ecumenical Patriarch, did agree to be one of the six presidents of the WCC but unfortunately died in 1950.

³² *ibid.*, 506

one Coptic, were elected to the WCC presidium while an Armenian Orthodox became moderator of the central committee.³⁴ The election of the presidium was however extremely difficult and it was not possible to fulfil the guidelines that two of the seven presidents should be Orthodox and at least three be women while still keeping regional and confessional balances. In the end the presidium was expanded to eight. The question of Orthodox representation within the WCC remains a sensitive one.

WCC regulations and Orthodox Canon Law make it likely that new member churches will be Protestant, thus reducing the proportion of the Orthodox voice in the WCC and (some have argued) in effect rewarding the Protestant tradition for the schismatic and divisive tendencies which the WCC is intended to overcome. To help counter this, the WCC ensures a certain percentage of seats to Orthodox representatives.³⁵

Since 1948 Orthodox representation in the WCC has increased significantly and, at the same time, the Orthodox voice has become stronger and more influential. That relationships between Orthodox and other churches within the WCC have not always been easy or comfortable is hardly surprising.

A thousand years of virtual non-communication between the traditions of the East and West cannot be rectified easily or quickly ... Even with an increased visible presence, the Orthodox in the World Council often felt like visitors in someone else's home. The WCC's ethos, gender, theological preoccupations, liturgical habits and work styles were predominantly those of the ecclesiastical West. Eastern churches received official deference from their occidental counterparts but frequently met with little real comprehension or spiritual empathy. Finding Orthodox staff and committee members able to operate effectively in such a strange environment proved difficult, and their paucity served to compound the problem.³⁶

³³ David M. Gill, "Participation: Beyond the Numbers Game", *ER* 40 (1988), 489.

³⁴ These were, respectively, His Beatitude Parthenios of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and Archbishop Aram Keshishian.

³⁵ Van Elderen, "WCC, Membership of", 1089.

On the other hand:

The specificity of Orthodox ecclesiology and theology, the Orthodox vision of the world, some historical misgivings the Orthodox have vis-a-vis Western Christendom were, and to some extent still are, the main factors giving the impression that Orthodoxy remains on the fringe of the Council's work and does not fully participate in its activities which appear to be "western" in emphasis.³⁷

Considering the centuries-old gulf between East and West, between Orthodox and Protestant, much progress has been made within the WCC and yet a gulf remains:

Many Orthodox wonder about ... the active participation of the Orthodox churches in the World Council of Churches, while not a few Protestants ... are tempted to consider the Orthodox as a body belonging to a different "world" and culture, alien to the concerns of the ecumenical movement and often constituting a stumbling block in the march towards Christian unity.³⁸

Notwithstanding these somewhat negative comments, the Orthodox Church has made a real and significant contribution to the ecumenical movement and to the WCC while being enriched itself, "both in the field of ecclesiastical and theological experiences and in the area of Christian love and solidarity ... [and in] unique opportunities for a broader encounter and deeper dialogue" with Protestant churches.³⁹

At the seventh assembly (Canberra, 1991) the reference committee report noted that:

Since the Vancouver assembly the participation of both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches in the life of the Council has grown. The involvement of representatives of Orthodox churches in WCC programmes, conferences and consultations has become more dynamic, ecumenically committed and creative. This was clearly illustrated and acknowledge by primates and representatives of

³⁶ Gill, "Participation", 489.

³⁷ Tssetsis, "Meaning of the Orthodox Presence", 442.

³⁸ *ibid.* 440.

³⁹ *ibid.* 441-2.

Orthodox churches ... [and] in the decisions of the third preconciliar pan-Orthodox conference (Geneva, 1986) and in other documents and publications. Those events prepare a new perspective on sharing the common responsibilities with WCC member churches for the future of the ecumenical movement.⁴⁰

It was however at Canberra that a number of Orthodox concerns about the WCC and the future of the ecumenical movement were heightened. These concerns were expressed in a statement to the assembly which concluded with the question: "Has the time come for the Orthodox churches and other member churches to review their relations with the World Council of Churches?"⁴¹

Among the stated concerns were a fear that the WCC was in danger of losing its focus on the restoration of the unity of the church, that there was an increasing departure from the Basis of the WCC, that the changing process of decision making was weakening "the possibility of an Orthodox witness in an otherwise Protestant international organisation".⁴² While one of the immediate causes for concern was undoubtedly a presentation by a young Korean woman theologian, Dr Chung Hyun Kyung, there were other Orthodox concerns which had been present before the assembly at which they were publicly expressed.⁴³ Far from implying the imminent withdrawal of the Orthodox Churches from the WCC:

Voicing these concerns is to be understood as an expression of attachment to the World Council on the part of the Orthodox member churches, an expression of the fact that the World Council is taken very seriously by them, that the World Council is truly their own.⁴⁴

The increased presence and involvement of the Orthodox churches in the WCC has developed over the same period that women's presence and participation has increased. Discussions on the role of women in the church, pressure for the equal representation of women in all the structures and work of the WCC, the

⁴⁰ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 171.

⁴¹ "Reflections of Orthodox Participants", *ibid.*, 279-282.

⁴² *ibid.*, 281.

⁴³ Dr Chung's presentation and reactions to it are described in Chapter 8 of this work.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Lossky, "The Promise and the Outcome", *ER* 43 (1991), 212.

ordination of women as an item on the ecumenical agenda, have all been initiated by Protestant members of the WCC, and on these and other issues related to women's participation the Orthodox have frequently found themselves in a minority position. The development of feminist theology and its articulation within the WCC has posed new challenges to Orthodox tradition. Thus issues of women's participation have contributed to tensions between the Orthodox and other member churches, tensions which are documented and discussed in this work.

The Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches

During the period in the early twentieth century when the modern ecumenical movement was developing and when the events leading to the formation of the World Council of Churches took place the Roman Catholic Church expressed little interest in ecumenism.⁴⁵ The 1917 Code of Canon Law forbade Catholics "from holding disputations or meetings, especially public ones, with non-Catholics, except with permission of the apostolic see or in urgent cases, with the local ordinary".⁴⁶

The encyclical *Mortalium Animos* (6 January 1928) on the promotion of "true religious unity", made it clear that for the RCC Christian unity meant the return of other Christians to the Mother church, "the one true Church of Christ" from which "they have in the past fallen away." The encyclical stated that as "the one true Church" the Roman Catholic Church could not participate in assemblies where it would be treated merely as one church among others and declared that it was not "in any way lawful for Catholics to give to such enterprises their encouragement or support".⁴⁷ In spite of this uncompromising official stance there were unofficial contacts between individual Roman Catholics and the fledgling ecumenical movement and much pioneering work was done by Abbé Couturier, Yves Congar, and others.

A year after the inauguration of the WCC, a shift in RCC evaluation and policy began with a Holy Office letter entitled *Ecclesia Sancta* (20 December

⁴⁵ See Oliver S. Tomkins, "The Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Movement, 1910-1948", in *History of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Rouse and Neill, 677-693.

⁴⁶ Tom Stransky, "Roman Catholic Church and Pre-Vatican II Ecumenism", in *DEM*, 882.

⁴⁷ Tomkins, "The RCC and the Ecumenical Movement", 682-3.

1949) which evaluated the ecumenical movement more positively and stated that under strict conditions RC experts approved by the hierarchy, could participate with other Christians in discussions on "faith and morals". The policy of "reunion" by "return" still stood firmly but the idea of dialogue-in-fellowship was now accepted.⁴⁸ Unofficial contacts between the RCC and the WCC were facilitated by the formulation in 1950 of the WC Toronto Statement with its recognition that membership in the WCC "does not imply a specific doctrine concerning the nature of church unity" and does not mean "that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the full or true sense of the word."⁴⁹

The Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions, a European organisation of RC scholars established with Rome's approval, was formed in 1952 and continued to meet until 1969. Under the leadership of Johannes Willebrands it devoted serious attention to Protestant and Orthodox ecumenical efforts, especially WCC Faith and Order issues, and even prepared documents on the themes of the WCC assemblies at Evanston (1954) and New Delhi (1961). Many of this group were later key drafters of Vatican II documents.⁵⁰

John XXII, pope from 1958 till his death in 1963, was completely committed to the ecumenical apostolate. In 1960 he approved the sending of five official RC observers to the third assembly of the WCC (New Delhi, 1961) and also set up the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) with Cardinal Bea as its president and Willebrands as its secretary. Originally created as a preparatory organ of the Second Vatican Council the SPCU was confirmed as a permanent office of the holy see by Pope Paul VI in 1966 and in 1989 was superseded by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65), convoked by John XXIII and continued by his successor, Paul VI, was an event of major significance in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵¹ Intended as an *aggiornamento* (updating) of the church in modern times it covered every major dimension of the

⁴⁸ Stransky, "RCC and Pre-Vatican II Ecumenism", 883.

⁴⁹ Visser 't Hooft, *Genesis and Formation*, 115, 117.

⁵⁰ Among them were Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Emmanuel Lanne and Pierre Duprey. Congar and some other members of this group were also involved in preparatory work on the Toronto Statement.

church's life, with two key documents on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*).⁵² The Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), drafted by the SPCU and approved in November 1964 (on the same day as *Lumen Gentium*), began a new ecumenical tradition in the RCC and a new era in terms of its relationships with other Christians.⁵³

While insisting that it is in the Catholic Church alone that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained, the Decree recognised that other Christians *are* Christians by virtue of their baptism and incorporation into Christ, and that "separated churches and communities", though suffering certain defects, have been used by the Spirit of Christ as a means of salvation. The Decree made it clear that ecumenism was to be a priority of the whole church and committed the RCC to ecumenical dialogue and action. As a result the RCC has since Vatican II been increasingly involved in ecumenical relations and organisations. In particular the relationship between the RCC and the WCC has developed since 1965 when the Joint Working Group (JWG) was formed to explore future relationships.

The JWG has met annually since 1965 and to date has submitted six official reports to its two parent bodies.⁵⁴ At first the JWG limited itself to identifying and encouraging possibilities for cooperation between the RCC and the WCC at various levels but before long the question of RC membership in the WCC was raised, first by individuals, then in public at the fourth assembly of the WCC (Uppsala, 1968) by Dr Roberto Tucci, one of fifteen Roman

⁵¹ See Tom Stransky, "Vatican Councils I & II", in *DEM*, 1053-55.

⁵² See Flannery, *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*.

⁵³ See "Unitatis Redintegratio", *ibid.*, 452-470. That this was a new ecumenical era was symbolised by the presence at the Council of invited observers from other churches and from the WCC. For a reflection on Vatican II by one of the two permanent WCC observers see Nikos Nissiotis, "Towards a New Ecumenical Era", *ER* 37 (1985): 326-335.

⁵⁴ See "Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. First Official Report", *ER* 18 (1966): 243-255; "Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Second Official Report", *ER* 19 (1967): 461-467; "Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Third Official Report", *ER* 23 (1971): 44-69; "The Fourth Official Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches", in *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975*, ed. David M. Paton. (London: SPCK, 1976), 271-282; "Fifth Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches," *ER* 35 (1983): 198-218; *Joint Working Group between the*

Catholics who were present as delegated observers.⁵⁵ Cardinal Willebrands, president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, was also present as a guest. In his visit to the WCC in Geneva a year later, Pope Paul VI publicly mentioned the question, adding that there were many theological and pastoral aspects to be studied and resolved. The JWG report on "Patterns of Relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches", published in 1972, mentioned three possibilities for the future relationship of the two bodies but concentrated on the third, namely membership of the RCC in the WCC, as "the most realistic approach".⁵⁶ The SPCU however had strong reservations and the question of RC membership in the WCC was allowed to lapse after 1972 as it "had been made clear that such an application would not be made in the near future".⁵⁷

Since the lapsing of the question of RCC membership in the WCC, a mutual policy of collaboration and cooperation has developed under the auspices of the Joint Working Group. The Sixth Report (1990) gives a helpful survey of the "close and intensive network of cooperation that has developed between the parent bodies of the JWG", and shows "the extent to which productive relations between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church have multiplied and developed" while not ignoring the fact that there are also "certain difficulties" and that the difference in nature between the two bodies represents "a continuing obstacle to the full development of their relations".⁵⁸ There are various forms of contact and working relationships, formal and informal, which have developed between WCC sub-units and Vatican offices and Catholics have participated in various ways in most WCC

Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Sixth Report. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990).

⁵⁵ See Roberto Tucci, "The Ecumenical Movement, the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church", in *The Uppsala Report: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, July 4-20, 1968*, ed. Norman Goodall. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1968), 323-333. Dr Tucci acknowledged that "this is a very delicate question". *ibid.*, 329.

⁵⁶ "Patterns of Relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches", *ER* 24 (1972), 287.

⁵⁷ "Fourth Official Report of the JWG", 90. See also the statement by WCC general secretary Emilio Castro at the seventh assembly in 1991: "The question of the Roman Catholic Church's inclusion in a world ecumenical structure - whether the present WCC or whatever new body would be created to facilitate this integration - is no longer a pressing issue". Quoted in Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 165.

conferences, meetings, and consultations held in recent years.

Since 1968 the RCC has been officially represented by twelve members on the commission on Faith and Order. This means that RC theological perspectives and contributions have been included in the work of the commission and RC theologians have participated in all the meetings, consultations and drafting groups of Faith and Order in recent years. They were thus fully involved in the preparation of the text titled *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), a major convergence document published in 1982.⁵⁹ In the broad discussion process on BEM from 1982 to 1990, the RCC was actively involved at international, national and local levels and, most importantly, the RCC accepted the invitation to send a response to BEM at the highest appropriate level. It was the first time the RCC had given an official response to an ecumenical document.

A joint committee on Society, Development and People (SODEPAX) flourished from 1968 to 1980 and was, with the RC participation in Faith and Order, an effective, visible symbol of RCC/WCC collaboration.⁶⁰ Problems were experienced however as SODEPAX came up against the limits of the whole relationship between the RCC and the WCC, a relationship between "a world-organised church with central authority, and a council of churches which is one step removed from the decision-making structures of the member churches."⁶¹ Another short-lived collaborative venture was the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG) which brought together women from the RCC and the WCC from 1968 to 1972 and which is discussed in this work.

The relationship between the RCC and the WCC is today characterised "by a mutual acceptance of differences in nature and structures and a mutual appreciation of the constraints on each".⁶² Within these constraints there is a considerable degree of cooperation and collaboration although there is no longer any likelihood that the RCC will become a member of the WCC.

The Faith and Order Commission

⁵⁸ "JWG ...Sixth Report", vii, viii.

⁵⁹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

⁶⁰ See Tom Stransky, "SODEPAX", in *DEM*, 937-938.

⁶¹ *ibid.* 938.

The Faith and Order movement with the movement for Life and Work and the International Missionary Council shaped the first phase of the modern ecumenical movement between 1910 and 1948. At the great World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 discussion of matters related to doctrine (faith) and church structure or organization (order) was prohibited in order to ensure as great an attendance as possible. Soon after the Edinburgh conference, at the instigation of one of the missionary bishops who had been there, the general convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA resolved to appoint a commission to bring about a world conference to consider those questions of faith and order which had been excluded at Edinburgh. This decision was supported by a number of churches and the first world conference on Faith and Order finally took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1927, attended by over 400 participants representing 127 churches from the Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed and Protestant traditions. A second world conference took place in Edinburgh in 1937, at which the decision was taken to unite Faith and Order with the movement for Life and Work and to form a "World Council of Churches".⁶³

Since the formation of the WCC in 1948 the tasks of the Faith and Order movement have been carried out by the commission on Faith and Order within the WCC. The aim of the commission according to its by-laws is "to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe."⁶⁴ The functions of the commission include the following:

To study such questions of faith, order, and worship as bear on this task and to examine such social, cultural, political, racial, and other factors as affect the unity of the Church....to study matters in the present relationship of the

⁶² Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 165.

⁶³ For a detailed history of the Faith and Order movement to 1948 see Tissington Tatlow, "The World Conference on Faith and Order" in *History of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Rouse and Neill, 405-441. The name of the proposed new body was contributed in 1937 by S. McCrea Cavert. See Visser 't Hooft, *Genesis and Formation*, 40.

⁶⁴ Thomas F. Best, ed., *Faith and Order 1985-1989: The Commission Meeting at Budapest 1989* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 301.

churches to one another which cause difficulties or which particularly require theological clarification.⁶⁵

The commission seeks to draw the churches into conversation and study without asking them to compromise their convictions. The earlier comparative methodology has been replaced by a form of theological dialogue which seeks to approach controversial issues from a common biblical and christological basis. The commission works mainly through study projects carried out through small international consultations and a lengthy process of drafting, testing and revision before the results are shared with the churches. The most widely-known Faith and Order publication, the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document (1982) was the result of such a process. From time to time the commission convenes a world conference on Faith and Order. The third world conference took place in Lund, Sweden, in 1952, the fourth in Montreal, Canada, in 1963, and the fifth in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in 1993.

The Faith and Order commission is currently limited to 120 members and meets approximately every four years. The ongoing work is supervised by a smaller group, known in the past as a working committee or group, now a standing commission of thirty members which meets annually. A small secretariat, including the director of Faith and Order and two or three executive staff, is based in the WCC offices in Geneva. The commission on Faith and Order has been called "the most representative theological forum in the world".⁶⁶ Since 1948 its composition has changed considerably with Orthodox representation increasing from a small percentage to over 20% and representatives of churches in the "Two-Thirds World", almost entirely absent at the first world conference, now forming 40% of the membership. Since 1968 the Roman Catholic Church has been represented officially by twelve members and participates fully in all Faith and Order studies. Appointment to the commission is made by the WCC central committee and takes place after each WCC assembly. Appointment is on the basis of personal capacity

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 301-302.

⁶⁶ Günther Gassmann, "Faith and Order", in *DEM*, 412.

to serve the purposes of the commission but the central committee is concerned to ensure a reasonable geographical and confessional balance, together with "a sufficient number of women, young and lay persons".⁶⁷

Women were in fact virtually absent from the Faith and Order movement in its early days. There were only seven women delegates at the first world conference in 1927. They drew attention to this fact in a statement in which they declared:

We believe that the right place of women in the Church and in the Councils of the Church is of grave moment and should be in the hearts and minds of all We....ask the prayers of all, that the gifts of women as well as of men may be offered and used to the full in the great task that lies ahead of us.⁶⁸

In spite of this plea little change occurred and at the fourth world conference in 1963 there was only one woman among the 250 or so delegates.

Since the 1960s there have been some significant changes and women, who now represent nearly 30% of the commission's membership, have become increasingly active in its work. As a result of this, and of changes in the churches themselves, the commission has in recent years begun to address some of the theological issues relevant to women's participation in the church. Prominent among these is the question of the ordination of women, one of the most ecumenically sensitive issues of the present day, but many other important issues were raised during the four year study on *The Community of Women and Men in the Church* (CWMC) 1978-1982.

The "women's department" of the WCC

Since the inauguration of the WCC in 1948 it has had a "women's department" though this has had several different names and mandates. Though this work is not a history of the women's department⁶⁹ much of the history of that department is relevant, for two reasons. First, because it is that department which

⁶⁷ Best, *Faith and Order 1985-1989*, 303.

⁶⁸ H.N. Bate (ed.), *Faith and Order; Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1927), 372-3.

⁶⁹ See Susannah Herzel, *A Voice for Women: The Women's Department of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981) and Mieke

throughout the history of the WCC has been largely, though not exclusively, the advocate for women's participation in the WCC and which has sought in various ways to promote that participation. Second, because the changes in the name and mandate given to this department reveal significant changes in understanding about the nature and place of "women's work" within the WCC. While these changes will be discussed in some detail, together with those aspects of the department's work relevant to women's participation, the following brief overview may serve as an introduction.

Following the first assembly of the WCC in 1948 the central committee set up a Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. This commission made up of about twenty church representatives, including several men, was served by a secretary who was a member of the WCC staff. At the second WCC assembly in 1954 all the work of the WCC was organised into three divisions, within each of which there were several departments. The new Department of Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society replaced the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church and was located in the Division on Ecumenical Action, together with the departments on youth and the laity. After the third assembly in 1961, at which the merger of the International Missionary Council with the WCC took place, the topic of "family ministries" was added to the mandate of what was now known as the Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society.

In 1971 there was a major restructuring of the WCC and the old divisions were replaced with three units: Faith and Witness, Justice and Service, and Education and Renewal. Within each unit there were a number of sub-units. The work of the former Department on Cooperation was now split into two "desks": questions of family were placed in the sub-unit on education, while questions

Scharffenorth-Korenhof and Bettina Breustedt, "Von der Frage nach Partnerschaft zur Gemeinschaft von Männern und Frauen-Entwicklungen im Weltrat der Kirchen" in *'Eva, wo bist du ?' Frauen in internationalen Organisationen der Ökumene: Eine Dokumentation*, Gudrun Kaper et al. (Gelnhausen: Burckhardt-Lietz Verlag, 1981), 89-126 for a history of the department to 1980. See van der Bent, *Six Hundred Ecumenical Consultations 1948-1982*, 113-123 for brief descriptions of and bibliographical information on all the consultations sponsored by the department wholly or in collaboration with other bodies from 1948 to 1982. See Pauline Webb, "Women in Church and Society", in *DEM* 1069-1072 for a summary account to 1988.

related to "women's emancipation" were dealt with by the "women's desk" in the sub-unit on renewal. This particular arrangement lasted only until the fifth assembly in 1975 when the structure of the unit on Education and Renewal was changed. A new sub-unit on Women in Church and Society was formed which together with the sub-units on youth, education, and renewal and congregational life composed the third unit. This structure lasted until further organisational changes in 1992 set up four programme units. (Under this new structure, which lies outside the parameters of this work, the "women's department" is now the stream on Churches in Solidarity with Women in the unit on Justice, Peace and Creation).

Throughout these changes the work "women's department" has been guided and overseen by a working committee or group of approximately fifteen members, women and men representing the WCC member churches and appointed by the central committee following each assembly. The department or sub-unit has always had an executive secretary or director and for a short period (1962-1966) had an associate executive secretary as well. From 1975 to 1991 there was also a programme secretary responsible for specific work related to women and rural development.

CHAPTER 2

THE LIFE AND WORK OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH: BAARN AND AMSTERDAM, 1948

In May 1938 the provisional committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Utrecht, provisionally fixed August 1941 as the date for the first general assembly of the new body. The second world war intervened and it was not until August 1948 that the World Council of Churches which had been technically "in process of formation" for ten years came formally into existence at the inaugurating assembly held in Amsterdam. The assembly met "against a background of spiritual disintegration and physical suffering"¹ which was the result of that war and which was reflected in the assembly theme: "Man's Disorder and God's Design".

Prior to the assembly and at the assembly itself this theme was considered under four headings which were thought to represent the "burning concerns of all the churches in this crisis of civilisation" .² The four headings or topics were: The Universal Church in God's Design; The Church's Witness to God's Design; The

¹ John C. Bennett, ed., *Man's Disorder and God's Design: Outline of Preparation for the First General Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. Foreword by Henry P Van Nusen (London: SCM Press, 1947), 11.

² *The Church and the Disorder of Society: An Ecumenical Study Prepared under the Auspices of the World Council of Churches*. *Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series*, vol. 3 (London: SCM Press 1948), 5.

Church and the Disorder of Society; The Church and the International Disorder.³

Each of these was developed during an ecumenical study process carried out under the auspices of the WCC Study Department for two years prior to the assembly and was then discussed by one of the four sections in which the assembly worked for half its time. The study process was conducted by four commissions, each made up of fifteen to twenty church leaders and theologians. It resulted in the publication of four volumes, intended in the first place for delegates at the assembly and later offered to the general public.⁴ At the time of their publication these volumes together represented "one of the most intensive pieces of ecumenical study ever undertaken".⁵

This ecumenical study involved few women. There were only six women on the four study commissions and of the forty or so writers who contributed to the four volumes only two were women.⁶ This is perhaps not surprising, given that in the 1940s very few women were recognised as either church leaders or theologians, and given the lack of involvement of women in the study process it is hardly surprising that only one chapter raised any issues specifically related to women. In a brief chapter on "Personal Relations in a Technical Society"

Kathleen

³ These sectional themes corresponded to the concerns of, respectively, Faith and Order, the International Missionary Council, Life and Work, and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches in the new form of the Churches' Commission on International Affairs (CCIA). See Rouse and Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, 718-719.

⁴ See *Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series*, vols. 1-4 (London: SCM Press, 1948).

⁵ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches held at Amsterdam August 22nd to September 4th, 1948*. *Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series*, vol. 5 (London: SCM Press, 1949), 48.

⁶ The six were: Suzanne de Diétrich, Cornelia M. Van Asch Van Wijk, Georgia Harkness, Mrs A A Perez, Mrs L E Swain, and Kathleen Bliss. The two writers were Olive Wyon and Kathleen Bliss.

Bliss argued that the development of technology and "technical society" had affected relations between the sexes, between the generations, and between neighbours". Relations between the sexes had been effected at work, as women increasingly entered the labour force, and in marriage, as "biological function and social necessity are no longer the powerful forces of family cohesion which they used to be".⁷

As women were virtually invisible in the preparatory process, so they and their concerns might well have been invisible at the assembly itself. In fact, although women's participation at the assembly was indeed limited, as this chapter documents, the question of the life and work of women in the church and in the WCC itself was firmly on the agenda as one of the "concerns of the churches".

In addition to working in sections, the assembly also met in four committees which formed the "business side" of its work. Three of these committees dealt with matters concerning the organisation of the WCC while the fourth dealt with "concerns of the churches". These concerns were registered by churches with the general secretary before January 1948 and four were then selected as being "of general import and worthy of consideration by the Assembly".⁸ One of the four so chosen was "The Life and Work of Women in the Church".⁹ This "concern" was the direct result of an "enquiry" into "The Life and Work of Women in the Church"

through which it became clear that "this question of the place of women in the life of the Church has become one of the most crucial questions in the whole Christian

⁷ Kathleen Bliss, "Personal Relations in a Technical Society", in *The Church and the Disorder of Society*, 87-88.

⁸ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 107.

situation."¹⁰ While "it was hoped by many that this matter would be one of the subjects for discussion" at the assembly, it was the French Reformed Church which made the definite proposal that it should be included among the "concerns of the churches".¹¹

Although the enquiry into the Life and Work of Women in the Church was conducted under the auspices of the WCC Study Department during the same period that it was conducting the four studies related to the assembly theme, there seems to have been no relationship between the two processes and although the enquiry revealed the crucial importance of the question of women's place in the church this was not reflected at all in the discussions of the Church in the four study volumes. In fact two different processes were at work. The thematic study was initiated by the provisional committee of the WCC, a body composed of male church leaders who were the official representatives of their churches, was conducted with the full support of this committee and the Study Department, and was intended from the beginning to be central to the whole work of the assembly. The enquiry on the other hand was conceived, initiated and carried out by women with little institutional assistance and was not understood as central to either the preparatory process or the actual assembly. That "The Life and Work of Women in the Church" appeared on the assembly agenda at all was due to the vision, commitment, and sheer hard work of women themselves.

⁹ The other three were: The Christian Approach to the Jews; The Significance of the Laity in the Church; Christian Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid.

¹⁰ *Revised Interim Report of a Study on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, Including Reports of the Ecumenical Conference of Church Women, Baarn, Holland, and of the Committee on "The Life and Work of Women in the Church" of the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1948), 6.

¹¹ *ibid.*

The Life and Work of Women in the Church

The first official mention of the "Life and Work of Women in the Church" occurs in the minutes of the provisional committee of the WCC meeting held in Geneva in February 1946, which record that in his report on the work of the Study Department the director, Dr Nils Ehrenstrom, drew attention to "the projected volume in the series *Ecclesia Militans* on the 'Life and Work of Women in the Church.'" ¹² The *Ecclesia Militans* series, he explained, was begun by the Study Department during World War II to serve "the practical purpose of providing documentary information on significant trends of reorientation and renewal in different areas of church life. The inquiries are carried out by ad hoc collaborators, under the general editorial responsibility of the department."¹³

In the case of the "Life and Work of Women in the Church" the "ad hoc collaborator" with the Study Department was Twila Lytton Cavert under whose direction the inquiry was carried out, first from Geneva and then from New York. Cavert was in fact much more than a "collaborator" for "with the help and encouragement of the Study Department [she]... both initiated and sustained the Inquiry". ¹⁴

Cavert, an American Methodist, was on the executive committee of the United Council of Church Women, an ecumenical organization representing approximately ten million Protestant church women, and on the national board of

¹² *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation. Minutes and Reports of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches held at Geneva from February 21st to 23rd, 1946; the constitutional documents of the World Council of Churches and an introduction* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.), 36.

¹³ *ibid.*, 147.

the YWCA. She was married to Dr Samuel McCrea Cavert who was general secretary of the Federal Council of Churches in the United States and deeply involved in the formation of the WCC. He attended a number of meetings in Geneva while the WCC was "in process of formation" and for some months at the end of the war and again in 1947-1948 was "lent" by the Federal Council to the WCC. From 1946 he chaired the committee on assembly arrangements. Twila accompanied him on at least some of his visits to Geneva, and there met other women in a similar situation.

American women often accompanied their husbands when they came to attend meetings in Geneva. These wives carried major responsibilities in women's organisations in their country, managed large budgets, and had even, like the Methodists, initiated global mission work. These women of action were shocked and annoyed when on these journeys they were placed in the role of spectators, reduced to going shopping in town while their husbands took important decisions! In 1946 they were a small pressure group and contacted European women with some status in the church.¹⁵

Madeleine Barot, one of the European women who was so contacted, described these women as "less interested in protesting than in achieving participation".¹⁶ Cavert, who took the lead in this group, was certainly not content to spend her time shopping.

On one of her visits to Geneva Cavert paid a visit to the office of World YWCA where she found they had begun to gather material about the place of women in the church. Later she recalled:

It came to me down at the Y that there was really something ridiculous about this: why *should* the YWCA, with all the programmes it has already deal with *this*? Why shouldn't the *church* get busy ? I had observed so much in both America and Asia of women working with such vigour and dedication and

¹⁴ Olive Wyon, "Memorandum on the Enquiry into the Life and Work of Women in the Church, January 1948". TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

¹⁵ André Jacques, *Madeleine Barot: Une Indomptable Énergie* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 148. My translation.

¹⁶ *ibid.* My translation.

nobody paying any attention to them . . . So I said to one of the Y officers; "Frankly, I don't think the World YWCA is the place where this business about women in the Church should be dealt with. I think the World Council ought to get busy on it".¹⁷

With the encouragement of WCC general secretary, Willem Visser 't Hooft,¹⁸ Cavert then organised a tea-party to which she invited YWCA officers, together with leaders of the Council-in-formation, among them Dr Nils Ehrenstrom, director of the Study Department.¹⁹ This tea-party "led to the promised support of WCC leaders for any work Cavert might undertake on behalf of women in the church",²⁰ and led to the decision of the Study Department to include the "Life and Work of Women in the Church" in its *Ecclesia Militans* series. In April 1946 a comprehensive questionnaire on this topic was sent out by Twila Cavert, "under the auspices of the WCC" and at the request of the Study Department.

The questionnaire on the "Life and Work of Women in the Church" was prepared in English, French and German, by Cavert with the help of an ad hoc committee. It offered space for respondents to express their beliefs and

¹⁷ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 6-7.

¹⁸ Visser 't Hooft had his formative ecumenical experience in the SCM and WSCF, being general secretary of the latter body 1932-1938. There he had worked with women youth leaders, several of whom he later invited to join the WCC staff (Suzanne de Diétrich, Madeleine Barot, Jean Fraser). His support of women was influenced by his wife, Henriette ("Jetty" Boddaert), whom he married in 1924. He wrote of her: "Her one overwhelming concern became that women did not get the chance of making their full contribution. In our civilization the norm of humanity was a male norm. It was not simply a question of giving women jobs or votes. The issue was whether we could learn again that when God created man in his own image he created them male and female. She wrote some eight or nine essays on the subject, each of which cost her much time and energy...She convinced me that this was indeed one of the deepest unsolved problems of humanity." W A Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1973), 362-3. According to Herzel when Mrs Cavert approached Visser 't Hooft he himself was proposing to collect material on the contribution made by women in the churches during the war. Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 6.

¹⁹ Ehrenstrom, a Swede, was "already in touch with Swedish leaders who were impatient of the churches' attitudes towards women in Sweden, where they had already demonstrated outstanding leadership in parliament, law, and medicine." *ibid*, 7.

aspirations for the future and Cavert encouraged descriptive rather than historical material. In her letter accompanying the questionnaire she wrote:

Naturally the success of this project depends on receiving the fullest information and the liveliest interpretation possible. This questionnaire aims to provide you with a *path into the forest* but it cannot suggest all or perhaps even the most interesting things to be seen there. Will you please keep this question in mind? "Am I giving the description of the work of the women in my church in a manner which renders full justice to it?"²¹

The questionnaire was sent to key women throughout the world who were encouraged to work with representatives of the member churches of the provisional WCC. Help was received from the International Missionary Council and its affiliated National Councils of Churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and also from YWCA groups. Around the world small groups were formed to translate and distribute the questionnaires and to collate the responses. Conferences were held and study commissions formed. The questionnaire was without precedent. Never in the history of the Church had there been such systematic attention "to gaining a picture of the life and work of women in the church as a *whole*, - both professional and voluntary, - toward an evaluation of it as it is and the hopes for its future."²²

If in the beginning there was doubt as to whether women in the churches, experiencing all the difficulties of life in the post-war period, would be interested in responding to a long, complicated questionnaire, the response exceeded all expectations and dispelled all doubts. It was reported that:

The Committees of fifty-eight countries have sent in memoranda often from fifty to a hundred papers or more in length, with supporting documents -

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Letter accompanying questionnaire on the "Life and Work of Women in the Church", n.d., signed Mrs Samuel McCrea Cavert, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

²² *Revised Interim Report*, 9.

indicative of great ability, concern, initiative and devotion... Altogether a good many thousands of women ... have in this study revealed their zeal, their activities...their concern for the Church and its Witness, and an intention to listen for the voice of the Spirit of God to hear His Word for the next steps of Christian womanhood in this new, dangerous and - potentially, under God's guidance -glorious age.²³

The questionnaire, the associated correspondence and the responses involved Mrs Cavert in a great deal of work which she carried out with the assistance of "helpers" in New York and some secretarial assistance from the Study Department in Geneva. Thus the greater part of the enquiry was carried out by volunteers, including Cavert herself. In April 1947 the provisional committee of the WCC appointed Miss Olive Wyon, a British theologian, as secretary to the WCC Study Department and at the same meeting requested the Study Department "to submit to the Assembly an interim report on its inquiry into "Life and Work of Women in the Church".²⁴

It was to be an interim report because there was not time to prepare a full report before the assembly. Mrs Cavert and Miss Wyon were asked to draw up this report which was to be used as background material for the assembly. In a letter to Miss Wyon written from New York, welcoming her cooperation and establishing a working relationship with her, Cavert quoted Dr Henry Van Dusen, chairman of the Study Department Commission, as saying that "You and Miss Wyon will need to work together intimately. The pressure in Geneva is such that

²³ *Interim Report of the Study on the Life and Work of Women in the Church.* Concerns of the Churches No. 3. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1948), 9-10.

²⁴ *Minutes and Reports of the Meeting of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches, Buck Hill Falls, Penn., April 1947* (Geneva: WCC, 1947), 102. There is no further mention of the report being published as part of the *Ecclesia Militans* series.

the ladies may not receive much attention."²⁵ She also noted that "Dr Van Dusen...said that a meeting for women had been planned by the Study Department Commission as one of the Pre-Assembly series and that we (you and I) were supposed to work on that."²⁶

This seems to be the first Mrs Cavert heard of the "Baarn Conference" (see below). Cavert and Wyon did in fact work in close collaboration, although this was mainly by correspondence for it appears that they met only once, in June 1948, when on her way from New York to Geneva Twila Cavert visited Olive Wyon who was on holiday in England.²⁷ Wyon was expecting to return to Geneva in the middle of July and wrote to her secretary that until then:

She [Mrs Cavert] will act for me in everything connected with the Women's Inquiry and 'Baarn'...She and I have talked everything over very fully. She knows my mind on the main principles and points; we are jointly responsible for the work this summer.²⁸

In July however Olive Wyon was recovering from an operation and was not expected to be present at either Baarn or Amsterdam. Although there was a steady stream of letters between Cavert and Wyon, the responsibility for finalising the Interim Report and for organising the Baarn conference fell directly on Cavert - still a "voluntary worker" but working "an 8.30 am to 6 pm schedule".²⁹ In a letter written about five weeks after her arrival in Geneva, Twila Cavert recounted her experience:

²⁵ Twila Cavert to Olive Wyon 25 July 1947, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. (This letter was written from Whitby, Canada, where Cavert was a delegate at a conference of the IMC.)

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Twila Cavert to Olive Wyon, 19 June 1948, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

²⁸ Olive Wyon to Miss E M Evans, 9 June 1948, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

I have not only written the report for the women's conference and the Assembly, and I am planning the programme for the Baarn Conference, but I also find myself in the unhappy position of having to serve as Chairman [sic] of the Baarn Conference and the Secretary for the concern for the "Place of Women in the Church" in the Assembly itself. It really is rather absurd but there is nothing at the moment I can do about it.³⁰

It seems that in fact Cavert revised rather than wrote the interim report as an international group in Geneva, chaired by Olive Wyon, had been formed to prepare the report which presumably was written either by the group as a whole or by Wyon with the group's assistance.³¹ Soon after her arrival in Geneva in June 1948 Cavert received instructions from Visser 't Hooft to make this report "more in line with those prepared for the other concerns". She wrote that "I may say that I had rather a bad night after this request was made, but have acceded to the request that I will do whatever I can",³² and the report was hastily revised.

The *Interim Report*, which summarised the results of the enquiry into "The Life and Work of Women in the Church" in less than fifty pages, represented "no more than a first attempt to call attention to some of the main situations and problems which are fully described in the national reports."³³ It was clear that a much more thorough and elaborate report, "far more substantial than anything that had originally been planned", would have to be prepared at a later date.³⁴

²⁹ Twila Cavert to Eleanor Kent Browne, 23 June 1948, TLS, WCC Archives., Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, (Eleanor Kent Browne was associate secretary and treasurer to the American Committee for the World Council of Churches).

³⁰ Twila Cavert to Eleanor Kent Browne, 22 July 1948, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

³¹ The group included Dr Ehrenstrom (Study Department), Mrs Visser 't Hooft, Reverend H. Newell (assistant general secretary, WCC) and Mrs Newell. See "Meeting of Women's Inquiry Sub Committee (in process of formation). 17 rue de Malagnou November 4th, 1947", TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

³² Twila Cavert to Olive Wyon, 19 June 1948, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

³³ *Revised Interim Report*, 6.

³⁴ *ibid.*

The five sections of the *Interim Report* dealt with some basic considerations of the churches in regard to the topic: the professional work of women in the church, including the controversial subject of the full ordination of women in the ministry where it noted the great need for full, ecumenical study; women's voluntary activities in the churches; women's participation in the governing boards and policy-making bodies of the churches; women and the ecumenical movement. The report was basically descriptive of the wide variety of women's experiences in different churches around the world but it also made it clear that many women wanted fuller recognition of their gifts, and opportunities for greater participation in the mission and ministry of the church.

These reports maintain the belief that in Christ's New Covenant women were made full citizens of the Kingdom - with the responsibilities and privileges attendant thereto. The issue has not been posed stridently in terms of "women's rights" but in terms of a desire to discover and accept the will of God for women in these days of crisis when the Church is weak and needs all its resources in helping the Kingdom to come on earth. Strategy and practical considerations may demand the "taking of steps" toward the full deployment of women in the Church, but the women of the Churches are indubitably asking that the goal of their full citizenship in the Kingdom of God shall be explicitly recognised in all quarters, together with whatever implications are to be drawn therefrom.³⁵

It was also clear that through the enquiry women had "expressed the deepest desires fully to participate in the Ecumenical Movement" and saw its importance not only for the unity of the Church but also for women themselves, for "their mutual encouragement, reinforcement and contribution to the Church".³⁶

The Ecumenical Women's Conference, Baarn

³⁵ *ibid.*, 26.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 53, 13.

If the enquiry into "The Life and Work of Women in the Church" was without precedent so too was the women's conference held at Baarn, in the Netherlands near Amsterdam, 13 - 17 August, 1948. It was the first women's meeting held by the WCC³⁷ and it was clearly understood to be a preparatory meeting for the assembly which began a few days later (22 August). The letter of invitation stated:

The purpose of this Women's pre-Assembly Conference is to consider some of the implications of the interim report of the study on the "Life and work of Women in the Church"..[It] gives a group of about fifty outstanding Church women from different parts of the world an opportunity to look carefully into some of the questions to be considered and to present some Findings to the Committee which will prepare a report on the "Place of Women in the Church" for a plenary session of the Assembly itself.³⁸

In a personal letter to one of the participants Cavert emphasised the ecumenical significance of the meeting:

Our concern at Baarn will be with the Church - its unfortunate divisions and its need for unity and renewal. We shall be grateful for the impulse which has come and the sense of urgency behind it, which brings us together for the first time really, at least as representatives of our various communions, to consider what as women we may be led to do in helping in these tasks of renewal and unity.³⁹

As the enquiry had revealed, women were eager to participate in the ecumenical movement and they believed that the ecumenical movement needed

³⁷ Although the enquiry into the "Life and Work of Women in the Church" had been undertaken under the auspices of the Study Department of the WCC the Baarn conference was held "as a conference related to the general administration of the World Council". When Dr Ehrenstrom of the Study Department (the only man to attend the meeting) gave an address at the beginning he did so as a representative of the World Council as a whole. Twila Cavert to Lady Stansgate 3 August 1948, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. This gave a higher status to the conference, although the WCC did not contribute to its funding!

³⁸ Letter of invitation to Baarn conference, n.d., WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. The letter was signed by "Mrs Samuel McCrea Cavert" who wrote that "Miss Olive Wyon of the Study Department joins me in hoping that you can accept this invitation".

³⁹ Twila Cavert to Helen Roberts, 25 June 1948, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. Roberts was General Secretary of the World YWCA and took responsibility for arranging the worship at Baarn.

the contribution of women. The Baarn conference was a way of involving women in the work of the WCC assembly at which few of them would be official participants. Using the *Interim Report* as background material the women at Baarn were to do "most useful work in paving the way for the discussions at the Assembly itself".⁴⁰ This preparatory work was limited however to the discussion on women in the church and did not cover the whole range of topics covered at the assembly.

The Baarn conference brought together women who were attending the assembly in some official capacity and a number of others who were specially invited. Those in the latter group, which included some women who were accompanying their delegate husbands, were encouraged to apply for accredited visitor status.⁴¹ Some women who were going to the assembly were disappointed that they were unable to attend because by the time the Baarn invitations were received they had already made travel arrangements which could not be changed.⁴²

Of the fifty-four women who gathered at Baarn eleven were delegates, official representatives of their churches at the assembly; eight were consultants, individually invited by the WCC because of particular expertise; four were alternates who attended a conference parallel to the assembly;⁴³ one was a fraternal [sic] delegate representing the World YWCA. Fifteen others were accredited visitors. The remaining fifteen did not attend the assembly. These

⁴⁰ *Revised Interim Report*, 7.

⁴¹ Accredited visitors participated in some assembly events but not in the sections or committees where the main work took place.

⁴² Invitations to the meeting in August were still being sent out in June.

⁴³ Alternates attended worship services, plenary meetings and receptions of the assembly and met separately for special section and committee meetings which discussed the same topics as the sections and committees of the assembly. There were special liaison arrangements to enable the alternates in their sections and committees to contribute to the cont'd....

fifty-four women included leaders in church women's organisations, women engaged in voluntary and professional church work,⁴⁴ women educators,⁴⁵ and no fewer than six clergy.⁴⁶ Some were already active in ecumenical church work both nationally and internationally⁴⁷ and a number were involved in the YWCA.⁴⁸ A few had been involved in the enquiry on "The Life and Work of Women in the Church".⁴⁹

assembly sections and committees. This type of parallel conference did not continue after the Amsterdam assembly.

44 For example, Mrs Gertrude Williamson White Irvine, president of the National Council of Women's Organisations of the Presbyterian Church in the USA; Mrs Georgina F. Sibley, president of the United Council of Church Women, USA; Mrs Henrietta Bell, wife of an Anglican bishop, chaired a diocesan board of women's work; the Hon. Eleanor Plumer chaired the executive committee of the Church of England Council for Women's Church Work; Schwester Martha Körper, a Reformed Church deaconess from Germany; Frau Doktor Nopitsch, a German Lutheran who had founded the Bayerische Mutterdienst (Bavarian Service to Mothers); Dr Margit Sahlin of the Church of Sweden, assistant director of the Svenska Kyrkans Diakistyrrelse.

45 For example, Miss Sarah Chakko, principal of Isabella Thoburn College, a Christian women's college in India; Suzanne de Diétrich, a biblical teacher on the staff of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute; Mrs Mildred Horton, president of Wellesley College, a women's college in the US; the Rev. Dr Mary Ely Lyman, a professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

46 They were: the Rev. Dr Mary Ely Lyman, (Congregational, USA); the Rev. Elsie Chamberlain, a Congregational minister from England (who was married to a Church of England clergyman); the Rev. Elsie Culver, a Congregational minister from the USA, who had been ordained to an ecumenical ministry; the Rev. Dr Mossie Allman Wyker (Disciples of Christ, USA); the Rev. Gwyneth Hubble, a Baptist from Great Britain who was head of Carey Hall, a United Missionary College for Women; Pastor Marie Speiser from the Reformed Church in Switzerland who was pastor of several rural parishes near Berne.

47 For example, Miss B P Gibson (Church of Scotland) was a member of the IMC; Mrs Anna Canada Swain (National Baptist Convention, USA) was a delegate to the 1938 IMC Conference; Miss Sue Weddell (Reformed, USA) worked for the Foreign Missions Conference of North America where she was responsible for the World Day of Prayer; Lady Margaret Stansgate (Church of England) was a member of the WCC Study Department Commission; Mrs E. Aitken represented the Christian Council of South Africa Women's Committee; Dr Mossie Allman Wyker was president of the Ohio Council of Christian Women. Mrs Georgia Sibley and Miss Cornelia Van Asch Van Wijk had both attended the Life and Work world conference in Oxford in 1937.

48 For example, Miss Cornelia Van Asch Van Wijk, a past president of the Netherlands YWCA and of the World's YWCA; Miss Winifred Galbraith and Miss Sarah Chakko, from the World's Council of the YWCA; Mrs Marjorie Martin, executive committee of the World's YWCA; Miss Helen Roberts, general secretary World's YWCA. Madeleine Barot, Twila Cavert and Suzanne de Diétrich were all YWCA members. The YWCA, an all-women ecumenical organisation founded in 1894, and the WSCF, founded in 1895, provided an invaluable training-ground for women leaders in the ecumenical movement.

49 They included: Miss Cornelia Van Asch Van Wijk (Holland), Mme Jeanne Lebrun (France), Dr Elizabeth Schwarzhaupt (Germany) and Mrs Valentine Zander (Russian cont'd....

Women were present from seventeen countries but half the participants were from the USA and Britain and there were very few representatives of what were then known as the "younger churches".⁵⁰ Cavert was well aware of this lack which was also the case in the membership of the assembly itself. She was hampered by lack of funds for any potential delegates, as most of the women paid their own way or raised the necessary funds for themselves. (Expenses were kept very low by the Dutch host-group). She made a number of efforts - all unsuccessful - to find women who might be able to attend and wrote to a correspondent:

You, I know, share with me a hope that not only the whole Assembly, but for very special reasons this women's meeting should not be primarily an Anglo-Saxon plus a few European women's affair. Frankly, I am afraid it stands in that position to a considerable extent at this moment.⁵¹

Cavert was more successful in gaining the attendance of a number of women from Germany and other European countries although the aftermath of World War II made travel difficult. Some money which had been donated was used to cover the expenses of the German women and to give some help to some of the other European women. Almost all the participants were from Protestant churches, the two exceptions being Mrs Valentine Zander, a Russian Orthodox living in exile in Paris who had acted as a study correspondent and Miss Sarah Chakko of India, a member of the Syrian Orthodox Church, who was to play a very prominent role at the assembly. Mrs Cavert made many efforts to gain the attendance of Mrs Thalie

Orthodox). Mrs D Barton, Mrs H. Newell and Mrs Henriette Visser 't Hooft had all "helped" with the enquiry in Geneva.

⁵⁰ They were Sarah Chakko and Joy Solomon from India, Dr Wu Yi-fang from China, and Mrs Vera Stockwell, an American resident in Buenos Aires who represented Latin America.

⁵¹ Twila Cavert to Sue Weddell, 19 June 1948, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. Cavert asked Sue Weddell, who worked for the Foreign cont'd....

Woyla, a Greek Orthodox woman in Athens who had also acted as a study correspondent, but in the end her travel could not be arranged. Sister Geneviève, a Roman Catholic Sister from Lille with an "ecumenical vocation" wanted to attend as a visitor but the Roman Catholic hierarchy forbade all involvement with the WCC.⁵²

Representatives of some of the big women's organisations thought the meeting was too short, badly organised and poorly led.⁵³ Such criticism may have been valid but it must be remembered that while the WCC sponsored the meeting it contributed little in way of resources. When Olive Wyon became ill, Twila Cavert became responsible for the organisation of the Baarn conference, the revision of the *Interim Report*, and preparations for the committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church at the assembly. In all this she acted as an unpaid voluntary worker. It is clear that without her vision, energy, and sheer hard work the Study Department, with its very limited resources, could not have paid sufficient attention to the concerns of women, and that the question of women in the church would probably not have appeared on the assembly agenda.⁵⁴ An "immense debt" is indeed owed to Mrs Cavert.⁵⁵

Missions Conference in North America, if she knew of any women who might already be in Europe or who might be encouraged to come.

⁵² Twila Cavert to Olive Wyon, 19 June 1948, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

⁵³ Madeleine Barot, "Die Frauen und die Ökumenische Bewegung", *Ökumenische Rundschau* 14 (1965), 212.

⁵⁴ Here I disagree with Robert Bilheimer who argues that: "A swelling movement of social change made the issues of men/women relationships unavoidable in the ecumenical movement.... By the time the Amsterdam Assembly met, the movement for the equality of women in the church and society could not be denied". Robert S Bilheimer, *Breakthrough: The Emergence of the Ecumenical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1989), 184, 192. This thesis in fact documents the slow response of the WCC to the undoubted movement for change.

⁵⁵ Wyon, "Memorandum on the Enquiry into the Life and Work of Women in the Church, January 1948".

In spite of all the difficulties the Baarn conference did take place and the women did succeed in making a significant contribution to the assembly, preparing a brief report and some recommendations for the use of the assembly committee on "The Life and Work of Women in the Church".⁵⁶ In the report the women called the Church to consider the revolution taking place "in the entire structure of society" and to ask itself "what consequences these drastic changes will have in its own life".⁵⁷ They expressed their conviction that "the Church will not have the fullest life nor be able to fulfil her task completely unless men and women each take their full share of responsibility and in mutuality contribute their varying gifts and capabilities."⁵⁸

They called the Church to set "an example of what the right relations between men and women should be", pointing out that "secular society today is ahead of the Church in the use it makes of the contribution of women". While recognising the value of the work done by churchwomen's organisations (which many of them represented), they called the Church to see "women's work" as "an essential part of its own responsibility".⁵⁹

A series of recommendations to the WCC assembly began with the statement that "We believe that problems relating to women in the Church are problems of the Church as a whole, and as such need the continuing attention of

⁵⁶ "Report of A Conference of Church Women from 17 Countries called by the World Council of Churches, to consider the Life and Work of Women in the Church, Baarn, Holland, August 13th - 17th, 1948", in *Revised Interim Report*, 67-72.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

the World Council of Churches, and we further believe that the handling of these problems should not be delegated exclusively to women."⁶⁰

The main recommendations together with the chief points made in the report from the Baarn conference were all reflected in the report and recommendations from the assembly committee on "The Life and Work of Women in the Church", proof that the women at Baarn had indeed paved the way for the discussions at the assembly itself.

The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam 1948

The first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, 22 August to September 4 1948, was an historic event. Those present were conscious that they were embarking on a new venture and the pervasive mood was "at once sober and celebrative".⁶¹ Sober, because of the devastating effects of World War II and the continuing human disorder and suffering in newly independent India and in the armed struggle for independence in Indonesia; sober because of developing tensions between East and West, witnessed to in the absence of representatives from most of the Orthodox churches; sober, because "the atomic bomb gave an apocalyptic cast to all".⁶² Celebrative, because there were signs of hope: reconstruction was beginning in war-torn Europe and Japan; the founding of the United Nations just three years earlier pointed to a new sense of world-wide interdependence; the long process of the World Council's formation had at last come to fruition. Representatives from one hundred and forty-seven

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 71.

⁶¹ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 15.

⁶² Bilheimer, *Breakthrough*, 1.

churches in forty-four countries, overcoming their war-reinforced isolation and historic divisions, had gathered to constitute formally the new body in a city which, in spite of dreadful hardship during the war, was itself now in a celebrative mood. As the assembly met the canals and public buildings in Amsterdam were illuminated for the first time since the war, in honour of Queen Wilhelmina's jubilee and in anticipation of the installation of Princess Juliana as the new Queen of the Netherlands.⁶³

The first assembly was constituted and the formation of the World Council of Churches completed with the adoption of a motion on the morning of 23 August but the assembly opened the day before, a Sunday, with an act of worship in the Nieuwe Kerk.

The service began with a procession of delegates in national costume and official garb. Sober black was on the whole predominant, but there were academic hoods of many colours and brilliant splashes of red, purple, orange and gleaming white, especially among the Eastern churchmen. There were bare heads, turbaned heads, velvet caps and birettas; the faces of all the races of mankind; ruffled collars on Scandinavian ecclesiastics, making them look like Rembrandt portraits; full beards and high black headdresses distinguishing the Eastern Orthodox; round collars, Geneva bands, pectoral crosses, and many other insignia of office from different lands and different churches.⁶⁴

It seems that in this great procession of "churchmen" women were invisible.

Where were the women at the assembly?

⁶³ Queen Wilhelmina abdicated on 31 August 1948 and was thereafter known as Princess Wilhelmina. She was described by her compatriot Willem Visser 't Hooft as "passionately interested" in the World Council and an "active and vocal participant" in the life of the ecumenical movement. See Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, 353-355. Princess Juliana also took an interest in the ecumenical movement and invited church leaders at the assembly to meet her, on which occasion she "expressed strong convictions about the place of women in the church, and Archbishop Eidem of Sweden had a rather hard time explaining why (at that time) his church would not ordain women". *ibid.*, 209.

⁶⁴ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 21-22.

Women members of the assembly

The number of women participants at the first assembly of the World Council of Churches was small. Of the three hundred and fifty delegates from one hundred and forty-seven churches and forty-four countries, a mere twenty were women.⁶⁵ There were sixteen women consultants out of a total of one hundred and forty-five, two women among the fourteen *fraternal* delegates, and one woman among the twenty-one official observers.⁶⁶ Of the two hundred and thirty-one alternates, thirty-one were women, of whom six were the wives of delegates. Thus women formed only 6% of the assembly membership. This small representation of women was not new in the ecumenical movement. The Life and Work and Faith and Order movements had been predominantly movements of male church leaders and theologians, and only a handful of women had been present at their world conferences.⁶⁷ At a time when practically all women were lay women, because

⁶⁵ There is some discrepancy in the figures quoted by different sources. The assembly report states that there were 351 delegates, see Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 267. and idem, *Memoirs*, 208. Charles Johnson states that there were 351 delegates of whom 18 were women. See Charles S. Johnson, "Laymen at Amsterdam", *Christendom* 23 (1948), 507. Twila Cavert counted 16 women delegates. See Twila Lytton Cavert, "Women at Amsterdam," *Christendom* 23 (1948), 498. The total of 351 delegates is also given in *DEM*, 1086. My total of 20 women out of 350 delegates is based on the membership lists published in *The First Assembly* and corresponds with a statistical summary prepared by the WCC, March 1960. Unpublished document, no title, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

⁶⁶ Observers, who are not entitled to vote, are representatives of churches which are not members of the WCC while fraternal delegates, who may speak if invited but may not vote, are representatives of organisations which have a relationship with the WCC. Participants in both categories are invited to attend. At Amsterdam the one woman observer, Miss Marjorie Bradford, represented the International Refugee Organisation. The two fraternal women delegates were Dr C Reimer from the Federation of Deaconesses and Miss Helen Roberts of the World's YWCA.

⁶⁷ At the first Life and Work world conference, Stockholm 1925, there were about 40 women among over 500 representatives of the churches while at the second, Oxford, 1937, there were 23 women out of a total of over 300 participants. At the first Faith and Order world conference, Lausanne 1927, of nearly 400 delegates only 7 were women
cont'd....

very few churches admitted women to ordained ministry, it was the ecumenical youth movements, the WSCF and YWCA, which encouraged women's participation. These, like the YWCA were lay movements.

The original intention of those planning the organisation and structure of the WCC had been that lay people should have a significant role and that it should be more than "a trade union of professional church leaders".⁶⁸ This was a particular concern of J.H. Oldham, one of the great ecumenical pioneers, who was himself a layman.⁶⁹ He believed that the Council must include "lay people holding posts of responsibility and influence in the secular world" if the Church was to give a relevant witness to the world.⁷⁰ The constitution of the WCC, which was adopted by the assembly 30 August, 1948, reflected this concern:

The members of the Assembly shall be both clerical and lay persons - men and women. In order to secure that approximately one-third of the Assembly shall consist of lay persons, the Central Committee, in allocating to the member churches their places in the Assembly, shall strongly urge each church, if possible, to observe this provision.⁷¹

Prior to the assembly the general secretary had written to the churches, emphasising the importance of seeing that this proportion of lay representation be reached, and urging that in order to secure this end "delegations of two or more persons should consist of one half lay men or women since those churches which are entitled to only one delegate may not feel they can appoint a lay person."⁷² In spite of this, only sixty-two laypersons were appointed as delegates, a percentage

while at the second world conference, Edinburgh 1937, there were 10 women among approximately 450 participants.

⁶⁸ Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, 353

⁶⁹ See Kathleen Bliss, "Oldham, Joseph Houldsworth", in *DEM*, 746-747.

⁷⁰ Visser 't Hooft, *Genesis and Formation*, 40.

⁷¹ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 199.

⁷² *Minutes and Reports of the Meeting of the Provisional Committee, April 1947*, 74.

of almost 18% and so far short of the one-third sought by the WCC. All twenty women delegates were in the lay category.

It was only some of the churches with larger delegations which appointed women at all, with the single exception of the Society of Friends of Canada which appointed a laywoman as their sole representative. The Church of England had a delegation of twenty, of whom five were women. The Methodist Church (United Kingdom) had two women in a delegation of eight. The Church of Scotland sent eight men. The largest American delegation was from the Methodist Church which included one woman among its twelve members. The Church of Sweden sent seven men and one woman while the Evangelical Church of Germany in its twenty member delegation had only one woman.

Three of the women delegates were Anglican, five belonged to Lutheran churches, one to the Society of Friends, one to the Syrian Orthodox Church,⁷³ and the rest belonged to a number of Protestant churches - Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Disciples of Christ and United churches. In terms of geographical distribution all except two came from Europe or North America. (Overall there were only twenty-two delegates from the "younger churches", mainly from Asia). The assembly was thus dominated by European and North American male clergy, who altogether made up more than two-thirds of its membership.⁷⁴

⁷³ Sarah Chakko, although a member of the Syrian Orthodox Church, was not officially a delegate of that church (which was represented by a bishop). She was present by invitation as a representative of the "younger churches". As the Syrian Orthodox Church is an Oriental rather than an Eastern Orthodox Church there were no Eastern Orthodox women present, and no Orthodox Church sent a woman delegate.

⁷⁴ Including Australia and New Zealand with Europe, there were 240 (male) clergy delegates - over 68% - from North America and Europe.

The one hundred delegates at the youth conference which was held alongside the assembly achieved a somewhat better balance with about 25% women and in their statement noted that: "There is a fair balance of sexes and callings among us which indicates more nearly the actual situation in the churches from which we come".⁷⁵ Whether 25% could be called a fair proportion of women is of course another question, but it was certainly an improvement on the 6% at the assembly.

Women in leadership roles

Few women were involved in leadership roles at the assembly. There were no women among the presiding officers or on the influential business and nominations committees. There were however two women with the nineteen men on the message committee, charged with communicating the assembly to the churches, and it was one of them who was asked to draft the message. According to Visser 't Hooft:

We needed a message from the Assembly. We were trying to sum up what the Assembly really had wanted to say and to do. And we came to the conclusion that the best person to write that was Kathleen Bliss. That is the way we made use of women in the Council generally from the very beginning of its work.⁷⁶

Thus Kathleen Bliss was the author of the phrase "We intend to stay together",⁷⁷ a phrase which has become a kind of leit motif of the WCC. Bliss, who was present at the assembly as an alternate, was also one of four speakers at a plenary session

⁷⁵ "Statement Presented to the Assembly on Behalf of the Youth Delegation by Philip Potter (West Indies)," in Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 183.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 23. Visser 't Hooft goes on to describe how when this was reported by a Roman Catholic priest at a lecture in Rome there was prolonged laughter. "That was the funniest thing in the world to the Italians - that a great church conference should have its message written by a woman".

⁷⁷ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 9.

which was "the culminating session of the three opening days", sharing the platform with Prof. Jacques Ellul, Prof. Hrodmake, and John Foster Dulles.⁷⁸

The four assembly sections each had six officers: a chairman and two vice-chairmen, a secretary and two liaison officers. Miss Winifred Galbraith, a consultant and a member of the World's Council of the YWCA, acted as liaison officer to section III on "The Church and the Disorder of Society", while Mrs Anna Swain, a delegate and president of the Women's American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, acted as vice-chairman [sic] of Section IV on "The Church and the International Disorder". She also addressed the very large visitors' section of the Conference and "made a good impression".⁷⁹

Mrs Mildred McAfee Horton, a consultant from the U.S. and Miss Sarah Chakko, a delegate from India, each spoke at one of the three very well-attended public meetings which brought the issues of the assembly to a wider audience. One commentator noted that among the speeches which most impressed the assembly were those by Kathleen Bliss, Sarah Chakko, and "Mrs Douglas Horton" and that the worship service led by "Mrs John Karefa-Smart" was one of the two most moving periods of worship.⁸⁰ Another commented that women's participation in the plenary sessions was "restricted very largely to the discussion of the life and work of women in the Church."⁸¹ In the smaller section meetings however, women were "not without effectiveness" and several made "notable

⁷⁸ ibid., 36-37. Bliss spoke on the relationship between the church and modern scientific-technical society.

⁷⁹ Johnson, "Laymen at Amsterdam", 507.

⁸⁰ H.G.G. Herklots, *Amsterdam 1948: An Account of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1948), 42, 16. Rena Karefa-Smart of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church who was present as a consultant led one of the morning worship services.

⁸¹ Johnson, "Laymen at Amsterdam", 507.

contributions" to Section II and III,⁸² although it is not clear from the assembly report what these contributions were.

The committees dealing with the organisation of the WCC and the concerns of the churches had a total of twenty-three officers but it was only on the committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church that these included women - and all three of its officers were female. In the alternates' conference too women were the officers for that committee, while Bliss chaired the committee on the laity. There were no women among the section officers at the alternates' conference. Women were slightly better represented in leadership at the youth conference, where of course they formed more of the membership. Madeleine Barot and D T Niles, who co-chaired the WCC Youth Department, also co-chaired the conference; of two secretaries one was a woman and two of the four sections had a woman as secretary.

Probably the most prominent women at the assembly were Kathleen Bliss and Sarah Chakko. Chakko chaired the committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church and then presented and successfully defended the report of the committee to the plenary session. She also spoke at a press conference on the work of the committee, and addressed one of the public meetings on "The Christian Witness in the World" where she emphasised the need for "a United Church which will bear a common witness to the redemptive power of the Gospel in the life of society and of the individual."⁸³

Overall, women's participation in the leadership and in the programme of the assembly was limited, although it seems that those who did participate made a

⁸² *ibid.*

good impression. It was however through the committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, that women made their major contribution to the assembly and for some this was clearly sufficient. According to Twila Cavert:

The hope expressed in many quarters both before and during the Assembly, that the life and work of women in the Church should be given recognition and should be further explored as a source of power for the renewal of the Church, was realised to a very considerable extent."⁸⁴

Others were less satisfied with the effective limitation of women's participation to this one issue (which was a very small part of the whole Assembly agenda). According to one male commentator: "It was the feeling of many women attending as delegates or accredited visitors that both the actual participation of women and the formal opportunity for such participation were below the normal expectation at such a conference, and in such a time as the present."⁸⁵

The Committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church

This committee of about fifty members was chaired by Sarah Chakko, with Twila Cavert acting as secretary. (Mrs Birgit Rohde of the Church of Sweden acted as liaison officer with the alternates' committee, which discussed the same topic but did not contribute anything significant to the final report). Of the twenty women delegates, sixteen chose this committee, as did ten of the sixteen women consultants. They were joined by fifteen male delegates and four consultants, prominent among whom was Professor Karl Barth, one of the most eminent Protestant theologians of the time.⁸⁶

⁸³ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 177.

⁸⁴ Cavert, "Women at Amsterdam", 498.

⁸⁵ Johnson, "Laymen at Amsterdam", 507.

⁸⁶ Visser 't Hooft, "Karl Barth and the Ecumenical Movement", *ER* 33(1980), 145. Visser 't Hooft states that the women had asked Barth to help them "find the right theological cont'd....

As background materials the committee had the *Interim Report* which summarised about 5,000 pages of data sent by respondents to the inquiry conducted by Twila Cavert, and the statement from the women's conference at Baarn. Eleven of the women on the committee had been at Baarn (including both Sarah Chakko and Twila Cavert), and were well-prepared for the discussion. This was evidently lively, with Karl Barth playing an active role.

Sarah Chakko told a press conference that:

We spent the first day discussing the biblical and theological basis for the status of women in the Church...We had two points of view, one from Professor Karl Barth and the other from women members of the Committee.⁸⁷

According to Visser 't Hooft:

Barth sat in this largely female group all of whose members were profoundly dissatisfied with the patriarchalist attitude of the churches and hoping that Barth would help them to secure full scope and precedence for women in the Church. There was great disappointment and opposition, however, when Barth explained his position and asserted that while the Bible did indeed maintain the equal dignity of men and women, it also spoke of women's subordination to man.⁸⁸

Chakko was among those who challenged Barth's views:

And she really challenged him. She contended with the others that, having affirmed the woman and given such a beautiful exegesis of her place in the Genesis account of creation, he somehow "pulled the rug out from underneath" when he turned to the Pauline teachings on the place of women. He then undid whatever good might have been done by his Genesis commentary.⁸⁹

approach" while Dr Henry Van Dusen told a press conference that Barth "had chosen this committee as it was a question he was interested in". "Press release no. 24, Amsterdam, 1948", WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

⁸⁷ "Press release no. 24".

⁸⁸ Visser 't Hooft, "Karl Barth and the Ecumenical Movement", 145. Basically Barth was an advocate of the principle that women are subordinate in function but not in dignity or honour. Woman is subordinate not because of her nature but because it is her God-given vocation.

⁸⁹ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 23.

Georgia Harkness, professor of Applied Theology at Garrett Biblical Institute, was another who challenged Barth and later gave a vivid account of the clash in which he "convinced nobody" that man is the head of woman.⁹⁰

Twila Cavert noted that those from the "younger churches", both women and men, were among those who challenged Barth most strongly and who, both in the Committee and in plenary session witnessed that:

The man-woman relationship had indeed been restudied in the light of Biblical teaching, Christ's example and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with the result that fewer handicaps of tradition and prejudice are being placed in the way of women's full service in the Church.⁹¹

This was not the first time that Barth's views had been challenged by women as witnessed to in an earlier correspondence between him and Henriette Visser 't Hooft.⁹² It was not to be the last time.⁹³

As Barth was a systematic theologian with a world wide reputation, this confrontation with women at Amsterdam drew a good deal of attention. Again according to Visser 't Hooft:

This confrontation with the women left a very deep impression on Barth. To hear him speaking of it, one felt that the women had really brow-beaten him.

⁹⁰ Rosemary Skinner Keller, *Georgia Harkness: For Such a Time as This* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 28. Harkness also thought that Barth chose to be on the committee.

⁹¹ Cavert, "Women at Amsterdam", 501.

⁹² Henriette Visser 't Hooft wrote to Barth in 1934, questioning his interpretation of I Cor. 11: 3-11. For this letter, his reply, and three letters she wrote to him in 1941, 1944 and 1948, see Gudrun Kaper u.a., *Eva, wo bist du? Frauen in internationalen organisationen der ökumene: Eine Dokumentation* (Gelnhausen: Burckhardthaus - Laetare Verlag, 1981), 14-19, 32-34. For an English translation of the 1934 correspondence see Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 160-166. See also W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Fatherhood of God in an Age of Emancipation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), 45-46.

⁹³ See for example Joan Arnold Romero, "The Protestant Principle: A Woman's Eye View of Barth and Tillich", in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 319-340. For a more sympathetic but critical treatment see Paul S. Fiddes, "The Status of Women in the Thought of Karl Barth", in *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 138-155.

But then he himself over-reacted. In a press review he joked about this "revolt of the women" and this also saddened the women.⁹⁴

What is significant about this "clash" is not just that it shows that the women were prepared to debate theology with an important male theologian and were not willing to accept him as their authority, although the significance of their reaction should not be denied. Even more significant is that this debate reveals that from the beginning the committee wished to base its discussions on a biblical and theological understanding of status of women. The first time it was raised publicly in the WCC the question of the "life and work" of women in the church was identified as a *theological* issue.

The committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church was attended by a number of highly competent and very experienced church women; it had before it the summarised results of the world-wide inquiry; it had been preceded by a preparatory conference which gave women a chance to plan their strategy; it was the focus of many hopes and expectations. It is hardly surprising that when the report "was issued upon two sheets of foolscap paper there were those who felt disappointed by its brevity".⁹⁵ (See Appendix I for the text).

Length is of course not the only criterion and many were probably more disappointed in the content of what was "a very cautious document".⁹⁶ The reasons for this caution are not documented and are not apparent. Did it reflect divisions within the committee? Was it the influence of Barth? Did the committee feel that anything less cautious would have been rejected by the

⁹⁴ Visser 't Hooft, "Karl Barth and the Ecumenical Movement", 145. Henriette Visser 't Hooft's letter written to Barth in 1948 was one response. See n. 94 above.

⁹⁵ Herklots, *Amsterdam 1948*, 76. The reports of the three other committees on the concerns of the churches were all significantly longer.

⁹⁶ Visser 't Hooft, "Karl Barth and the Ecumenical Movement", 145.

assembly? Possibly therein lies the explanation, for there was "a spirited discussion within the assembly"⁹⁷ before the report was received by the assembly and "commended to the Churches for their serious consideration and appropriate action".⁹⁸

The report began with a brief theological statement: "The Church as the Body of Christ consists of men and women, created, as responsible persons, together to glorify God and to do His will."⁹⁹ It then related this statement to the experience of women, succinctly summarising the overall results of the two year enquiry:

This truth, accepted in theory, is too often ignored in practice. In many countries and churches it is evident that the full co-operation of men and women in the service of Christ through the Church has not been achieved. Yet the Church as a whole, particularly at the present time of change and tension, needs the contribution of all its members in order to fulfil its task.¹⁰⁰

The report then identified four specific areas relating to the life and work of women in the Church, which called for special attention. In summary: *Voluntary Organisations* of women, while important and doing valuable work, must be integrated into the total structure of the Church lest they become independent movements or substitutes for a wider participation in the Church; women should be included on *Church Committees and Boards* where policy and decisions are

⁹⁷ Cavert, "Women at Amsterdam", 502. Cf Elsie Culver's statement that women at Baarn had prepared "a women's religious bill of rights" which "an ecumenical statesman" warned them against presenting as it "would not be wise and might lead to the elimination of the proposed 'Commission on the Place of Women in the Church', which it was hoped the assembly would authorise". Elsie Culver, *Women in the World of Religion* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967), 210. Culver was not at Amsterdam herself and gives no source for this statement.

⁹⁸ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 146. The same formula was used for the reports of the other committees on the concerns of the churches and of the four sections.

⁹⁹ *ibid.* (This rather avoids the question of whether woman is man's equal or his subordinate).

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

made; attention should be given to improving the training, remuneration, status and security of women *professional church workers*; the whole subject of the *ordination of women*, on which the churches are not agreed, requires further careful and objective study.¹⁰¹ The report concluded that "Information and guidance in connection with these and other problems might usefully be provided by the World Council of Churches, and it is therefore urged that the *Life and Work of Women in the Church* remain one of its particular concerns."¹⁰² With the report were five recommendations, similar to those which had been formulated at the Baarn conference:

1. That the Interim Report on the Life and Work of Women in the Church be republished with necessary corrections and additions.
2. That a longer Report on the Life and Work of Women in the Church be prepared.
3. That an adequate supply of information about women's activities be provided through the Ecumenical Press Service and other channels.
4. That a greater number of women be chosen to serve on the Commissions, the major Committees and the Secretariat of the World Council of Churches.
5. That a Commission composed of men and women be appointed with adequate budget and executive leadership, to give further consideration to the Life and Work of Women in the Church and to give guidance on important issues.¹⁰³

In presenting the report to the assembly Sarah Chakko began by explaining that the committee had been made up of women and men and that the report was being presented on the assumption that "this subject was the concern of the Church as a whole and not the problem of women alone."¹⁰⁴ That this point needed to be made is evidence that it was not clearly understood and that some of the church leaders present saw "women's work" as the concern of women. This would in fact prove to be an ongoing problem.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 146-147. Original emphasis.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, 147.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 147-148.

The report was received and the recommendations were all agreed, though not without discussion and some diplomatic replies from Sarah Chakko.¹⁰⁵ There was some opposition to the publication of the report, and particularly to its analysis of a subject "which always caused controversy".¹⁰⁶ The reference to the ordination of women drew some opposition, although it was an objective description of the actual situation which concluded that "this whole subject needs further careful and objective study".¹⁰⁷ A Church of England representative expressed his anxiety that "it would give a wrong impression to people and lead them to think that there would be more general consent to the ordination of women than was actually possible."¹⁰⁸ He believed "it was fully known that there was no hope whatever of anything like agreement".¹⁰⁹ This was the first time that the ordination of women was discussed at a WCC meeting and this anxious response to a carefully-worded statement was but the first of many such responses in the years ahead.

In her reply Sarah Chakko pointed out that the question of the ordination of women was only one aspect of the problem, and a minor one at that: "There were many other matters relating to the service of women which it would be good to discuss, and it really could not be so very dangerous to discuss the ordination of women."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ ibid., 148.

¹⁰⁵ Years later Philip Potter recalled a "heated debate" and "thinking...how odd it was that women should have to fight with churchmen on the subject of the role of women in the Church". *Sexism in the 1970s: Discrimination Against Women. A Report of a World Council of Churches Consultation, West Berlin, 1974* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974), 28. Potter was a youth delegate.

¹⁰⁶ ibid., 149.

¹⁰⁷ ibid., 147.

¹⁰⁸ ibid., 151.

¹⁰⁹ ibid., 149.

¹¹⁰ ibid., 150.

Of the five recommendations two were more significant than the others with regard to women's future participation in the WCC. The fourth, which recommended that more women be chosen to serve in the decision-making structures of the WCC, was already too late as far as the most influential committee, the central committee, was concerned. Elections for that had already taken place and only two women had been appointed. (See below.) Chakko noted this fact and added that "it was hoped, however, that by the time of the next assembly, this recommendation would be considered."¹¹¹

The most important recommendation was the fifth, which when passed committed the WCC to setting up a commission on the "Life and Work of Women in the Church". The recommendation included the request for an "adequate" budget and staff, without which the commission would be unable to function, and, in fact, the sum of US\$6,000 - enough for an executive secretary - was provided in the budget prepared by the committee on programme and administration.¹¹²

That this commission was to be part of the future structure of the WCC was the most significant result of the committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church and of all the preliminary work in the enquiry and at the Baarn meeting. The report may have been cautious and the recommendations few and limited in their scope, but the approval of the recommendation to set up the commission meant that the "Life and Work of Women in the Church" had gained a place within the male-dominated ecclesiastically-oriented organisation of the WCC. From now on the concerns of women would be included in the agenda of the WCC, not just by "happenstance" or because of the devoted work of a few

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, 151.

volunteers but because of the decisions of the delegates of the member churches made at the assembly.

Nominations and Elections

Those who wished to see women play a more active role in the WCC can hardly have been encouraged by the results of the elections to the central committee, the powerful body charged with guiding the policies and work of the WCC between assemblies. Of the ninety members only two were women: Mrs Lillian Harrington, Presbyterian Church in the US and Mrs Anna Canada Swain, Northern Baptist Convention, USA. Mrs Swain was subsequently elected to the executive committee. (As this was the executive of the central committee, members were elected by the central committee, not the assembly).

The assembly nominations committee, consisting of seven men and chaired by Bishop Brilioth of Sweden, had for the first time to apply the newly-approved constitution of the WCC according to which membership of the central committee was to be chosen "from among persons whom the churches have appointed as members of the Assembly with due regard being given to such factors as numerical size, adequate confessional representation and adequate geographical distribution."¹¹³ This clause in the constitution represented a compromise between those who wanted representation to be based on the confessional principle and those who preferred a regional principle by which a number of places would be

¹¹² *ibid.*, 138, 143.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 199.

assigned to each region and then filled by the member churches in the region according to their own decisions.¹¹⁴ Advocates of the regional principle, originally the dominant group, had also proposed that, in allocating seats on the central committee to the different regions, it should also be specified how many of those should be filled by lay people. For example, for Europe there should be five lay persons in a total delegation of twenty-two. While in the final version of the constitution the regional principle was retained to some extent by the reference to "adequate geographical distribution" the principle of lay representation on the central committee was lost, even though it was retained for the assembly. Even so, the nominations committee had in mind "the strongly felt desire for a fair proportion of lay men and women".¹¹⁵

The committee was faced with a difficult task in seeking ninety members to represent almost one hundred and fifty churches¹¹⁶ and in his report Bishop Brilioth referred openly to the problem:

Some may not be satisfied in every respect with the list which is before them, but I do not think it humanly possible to produce a list that would be equally acceptable to all...[The committee] has been restricted in its choice of delegates only, and has had to be responsive to the wishes expressed by the representatives of the churches.¹¹⁷

The bishop referred specifically to the difficulty in nominating women:

We have received from the sub-committees on Women and on the Laity a request that there should be adequate representation of laity, including women, in the Central Committee. I need hardly say that we have tried hard to act in accordance with this request - also before we received it - but the limitations imposed on us through the composition of the delegations and the express

¹¹⁴ See Visser 't Hooft, *Genesis and Formation*, 50-51.

¹¹⁵ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 217.

¹¹⁶ In fact only 82 places were filled, eight being left vacant for representatives of Orthodox Churches which it was hoped would join the WCC before the next Assembly. *ibid.*, 216.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 216-217.

wishes of the churches have not made it possible in such a degree as we would have wished.¹¹⁸

One is left to wonder which churches may have expressly wished that their representatives on the central committee not be a woman or lay man. The result was a serious limitation in women's participation in decision-making during a very significant period in the life of the WCC.

The nominations committee also had the task of making a proposal about the presidium of the WCC and agreed that it would be preferable to have a group of presidents rather than a single person. It was quickly agreed that John R Mott should be nominated as honorary president and the committee also agreed on five other names, all of those with long experience in the ecumenical movement: Pastor Marc Boegner of France; the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Geoffrey Fisher; the Archbishop of Uppsala, Dr Erling Eidem; Archbishop Germanos of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and Bishop G Bromley Oxnam of the Methodist Church, USA. According to Visser 't Hooft, the question then arose as to whether the younger churches should not also be represented on the presidium in order to demonstrate the desire of the council to become truly universal in outlook and structure. It was decided to propose a sixth president from Asia:

Attention was called to the name of a Chinese lady who had a prominent place in academic life. But how would our Chinese friends feel about this choice? Bishop Brilioth, Bishop Henry Sherry and I went on a night expedition to find a Chinese bishop who would be able to answer this question. We did find him, but.....it took some time to get him to understand the issue. The answer was negative. We had to start again.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 216.

¹¹⁹ W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, 212. The "Chinese lady" must have been Dr Wu Yi-Feng of the Presbyterian Church who was a consultant to the assembly. She was president of Gin Ling College in Nanking, one of two women's colleges in China, a recognised leader of women's higher education in that country and a former president of the national Christian Council of China. She was described by Sarah Chakko as "one of the two or cont'd....

In the end the committee proposed Professor T C Chao, also from China. The committee's proposals were accepted by the assembly and so six male presidents were added to the central committee, to which they belonged *ex officio*.

Conclusions

Women's participation at the first assembly of the WCC was limited in terms both of the number of women present and of their actual contribution to the debates and decisions. The result of the nominations and elections was hardly encouraging to women. Yet at Amsterdam the foundation was laid for the greater participation of women in the future and a movement began which continued through successive assemblies and within the ongoing life of the WCC, a movement towards the full equality of women with men. The decisive step was the assembly's recommendation that a commission be appointed to continue work on 'The Life and Work of Women in the Church' and 'to give guidance on important issues.'¹²⁰ This ensured that the issues raised by women would remain on the agenda of the WCC. In the words of Twila Cavert, who had contributed so much to achieving this result: 'The hope expressed in many quarters both before and during the Assembly, that the life and work of women in the church should be given recognition and should be further explored as a source of power for the renewal of the Church, was realised to a very considerable extent.'¹²¹

Almost fifty years after the Amsterdam assembly it is possible to detect

three most influential women in China today". "Press release no. 38, Amsterdam, 1948", TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

¹²⁰ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 148

¹²¹ Cavert, "Women at Amsterdam", 498.

within the whole process of the enquiry into the "Life and Work of Women in the Church", the Baarn conference, and the Amsterdam assembly a number of significant issues or themes which continued to be important in women's struggle for increased participation in the WCC, and which will recur in the successive chapters of this work.

1. It was through the *initiative and efforts of women* that the enquiry was carried out, that the Baarn conference was held, and that the assembly included the committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. These efforts could not have succeeded without support from influential men within the WCC and clearly this support was given. It is equally clear that women and their concerns were *not a priority* in the planning and organisation of the WCC and of its first assembly.
2. Women insisted that the question of women's place in the church was a *theological and ecclesiological issue*, that it had to do with the very nature of the Church and with their membership in the Body of Christ. Twenty years later they were still insisting this, with the result that the study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church (1978-1982) was an ecclesiological study, undertaken by the Faith and Order Commission in collaboration with the Sub-unit on Women.
3. The belief that "problems relating to women in the Church are problems of the Church as a whole"¹²² meant the insistence that these problems should be considered by the churches meeting together in the World Council of Churches, and that such considerations should involve men as well as women. The themes

¹²² *Revised Interim Report*, 71.

of co-operation between women and men, and of the integration of women's concerns

into the whole church have continued to be important and were highlighted by the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study and the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998). A continuing problem was to be the *reluctance* of institutional churches and their male members to commit themselves to "women's concerns".

4. At the Amsterdam assembly the "concerns of the churches" resulted in both a committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church and a committee on the Significance of Laity in the Church.¹²³ In fact the recognition of the importance of the laity was deemed "one of the most outstanding features" of the assembly,¹²⁴ although statistically their participation was far below the goal of approximately one-third of the delegates. That at least half the laypeople in the churches were women tended to be obscured in the discussions and reports, as in the assembly statistics.¹²⁵ At the same time it was generally assumed that all women were lay women, although already in 1948 in some churches women were ordained as clergy. Questions about the participation of women continued for some time to be seen "through the larger and somewhat refracting prism"¹²⁶ of the *participation of the laity*, and the relationship between the category of "women" and other categories such as "laity" and "youth" has continued to be problematic within the

¹²³ See Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 153-159.

¹²⁴ H. Krüger, "The Life and Activities of the World Council of Churches", in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, Vol. 2, *The Ecumenical Advance 1948-1968*, ed. Harold E. Fey (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), 38.

¹²⁵ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 167 states 81 delegates were lay men or women. Of these in fact only 20 were female.

¹²⁶ Eileen W. Lindner, "Still In But Out", in *Women and Church: The Challenge of Ecumenical Solidarity in an Age of Alienation*, ed. Melanie A. May (Grand Rapids: cont'd....

WCC.

5. Already at Amsterdam it was evident that *the ordination of women* was a sensitive ecumenical issue. It was significant that this issue was raised in the context of the enquiry and the committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, even though it was seen as "only a minor part of the whole problem".¹²⁷

The ecumenical tensions over this issue have become greater in the years since 1948 and for many it has been linked increasingly with the issue of women's full participation in the Church.

6. The pressure to have more *women appointed as delegates* to WCC assemblies, and as members of the central committee, other committees, and staff has increased over the years. A continuing problem, apparent already at Amsterdam, has been the unwillingness of many churches to appoint women as their delegates.¹²⁸

7. The method of "*enquiry*" into the actual experience of women and the strategy of *pre-assembly women's meetings* have continued to be used to good effect by women seeking fuller participation within the WCC, even though they have not always been aware of earlier efforts.

William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 103. Linder argues that the "focus on the distinction between clergy and laity obscured the question of gender inclusiveness behind a concern to avoid clericalism".

¹²⁷ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 150.

¹²⁸ At Amsterdam there was no recommendation to the churches encouraging them to appoint women as delegates, although veteran ecumenist Dr. John Mott pointed out that it was their responsibility. "He said that the lack of women among the voting delegates was symptomatic of what is usual in the churches and communions". *ibid.*, 151-152.

CHAPTER 3

FROM AMSTERDAM TO EVANSTON: 1948-1954

During the six years between the first and second assemblies of the WCC the new ecumenical ship sailed on somewhat troubled waters. It was a period of political tensions and conflict, with an ever-growing gulf between the communist East and non-communist West which resulted in tensions between churches and within the WCC. In 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea there were direct repercussions for the WCC as Dr T C Chao, a Chinese Christian who had been elected to the presidium at Amsterdam, felt obliged to resign because of the stance taken by the Council.¹

Within the WCC itself it was a period of consolidation and development. Considerable attention was paid to defining the nature and purpose of the Council more clearly, resulting in the adoption by the central committee meeting in Toronto in 1950 of a statement on "The Church, the Churches, and the World Council of Churches: The Ecclesiological Significance of the World Council of Churches".²

¹ Chao, a member of the Anglican Church of China, had been elected to represent the "younger churches". He resigned because "he did not feel that he could bear responsibility for the statement which the Central Committee had made concerning Korea.... It was learned later that Dr. Chao had been forced to give up his teaching and that one of the reasons....had been his refusal to deny his faith in the ecumenical nature of the Church." *The First Six Years 1948-1956: A Report of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches on the Activities and Departments of the Council of the Secretariats* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1954), 6.

² For the text of this see Visser 't Hooft, *Genesis and Formation*, 112-120. According to this statement, membership in the Council does not imply the acceptance of a particular concept of the Church, or of a specific doctrine of the unity of the church. It is clear that the WCC is not a super-church, and that it cannot make decisions for its members. For a

Under the supervision of the central committee led by chairman Bishop Bell and vice-chairman Dr Franklin Clark Fry the various departments, commissions and the secretariat of the WCC developed their programmes and studies. The Faith and Order commission, now an integral part of the WCC, held the third world conference on Faith and Order in Lund, Sweden, in 1952.

At the first assembly in Amsterdam women had gained a place, a foothold or perhaps a toehold, within the structures of the WCC. Through the inquiry into the Life and Work of Women in the Church, the churchwomen's conference at Baarn and the committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church at Amsterdam, women had made clear their desire that "the goal of their full citizenship in the Kingdom of God should be explicitly recognised in all quarters, together with whatever implications are to be drawn therefrom."³ In 1948 it was not clear how this goal would be recognised, and what the implications might be, within the WCC itself.

At Amsterdam two women had been elected to the ninety-member central committee. Mrs Lilian Harrington unfortunately died in 1952 before the end of her term of office but Mrs Anna Swain was elected to the twelve-member executive committee.⁴ In view of the small number of women on these committees it is perhaps not surprising that there were few women on the various committees and boards appointed by the central committee, with the exception of

helpful discussion of the background to and significance of the statement see Bilheimer, *Breakthrough*, 47-57.

³ *Revised Interim Report*, 26.

⁴ Although the central committee had the right to change the membership of the executive committee at each session in fact very few changes were made, and none that affected the participation of women. Although over the years there have been many suggestions that there should be some sort of rotation of membership of this committee this has not yet happened and any changes are usually due to resignations or death.

the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church in which women greatly

outnumbered men. For example, there were no women on the Faith and Order commission and only three women among the forty-two members of the commission of the Churches on International Affairs. The youth department did somewhat better, with seven women on a committee of twenty-eight (and with Madeleine Barot as vice-chairman). On the study department committee were two women, one of whom was Professor Georgia Harkness. Kathleen Bliss was on the board of *The Ecumenical Review* and she, Barot, Harkness, Helen Roberts (of the YWCA) and Margit Sahlin were all on the board of the Ecumenical Institute, founded in 1946 as an ecumenical training centre with an emphasis on laity and youth.

The first assembly had authorised an executive staff of thirty-six members (usually called secretaries) but for various reasons that number was not reached at any one time before the second assembly.⁵ However a total of sixty-one staff served in the first six years, representing nineteen churches and thirteen countries. Of these only six were women, and three of these worked for the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. Jean Fraser worked with the youth department and Suzanne de Diétrich remained at the Ecumenical Institute where she had been since 1946. A sixth was with the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees, the largest department in this period. Mention should also be made of Ruth Rouse who although around seventy years old and not a staff member was deeply involved in preparing the first volume of *A History*

*of the Ecumenical Movement.*⁶

Given the very low participation of women in the structures of the WCC, the appointment of Sarah Chakko to the presidium was a notable event. She was elected by the central committee in 1951 to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of T.C. Chao. Her appointment was a recognition of the high esteem in which she was held but unfortunately she was not to be in office for long, for she died suddenly in January 1954. The Evanston assembly was thus deprived of her leadership and the WCC lost one of its most outstanding women participants.

Early in 1953 Chakko, who was also chair of the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, hosted the central committee meeting at Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, a Christian college for women, where she was principal. Many tributes were paid to Chakko on the occasion of this meeting⁷ and she in her turn replied, "When I heard that you were definitely coming to Isabella Thoburn College, I said to myself, 'They will see in flesh and blood, as well as in brick and mortar, the life and work of women in the church'."⁸

⁵ See *The First Six Years*, 6-7.

⁶ See Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*. 3rd edn. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986). The first edition was published in 1954 by SPCK and The Westminster Press. From 1948 Rouse was editorial secretary to the committee responsible for preparing this work (under the sponsorship of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey) and was responsible for the direction and detailed planning as well as for the writing of two chapters.

⁷ See *Minutes and Reports of the Fifth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Lucknow (India), December 31, 1952-January 8, 1953* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1953]), 58-60. Bishop Oxnam praised Chakko for her "rare spiritual qualities, personal charm and executive ability." The first Christian college for women in Asia this was named after its founder who in 1869 was the first missionary to be appointed by the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the building of the school had been supported by women's missionary societies.

⁸ *ibid.*, 60.

"The Service and Status of Women in the Churches"

In accordance with the recommendations of the Amsterdam assembly, in 1948 the WCC study department published the *Revised Interim Report on the Life and Work of Women in the Church* together with the reports from the Baarn conference and the assembly committee on "The Life and Work of Women in the Church" in one small volume, thus making these available to a wider audience.⁹ In 1949 the executive committee of the WCC invited Dr Kathleen Bliss to write the "Larger Report" also recommended by the assembly although there is material in the WCC archives which suggests that originally this book was to be written by Twila Cavert. Although Bliss had emerged as an outstanding woman at the assembly she had not been at Baarn and had not belonged to the assembly committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. According to Bliss herself it was Mrs Geoffrey Fisher, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was influential in her selection as the author, for Mrs Fisher believed that she would not use the book to push for the ordination of women - a topic which Mrs Fisher thought should never be discussed by the commission. "But Visser 't Hooft and others wanted me to write the book simply because I could write. So, although I hadn't really had anything to do with the commission's meeting as such, I was

⁹ See *Revised Interim Report of a Study on the Life and Work of Women in the Church including Reports of an Ecumenical conference of Church Women, Baarn, Holland and of the Committee on "The Life and Work of Women in the church" of the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948* (Geneva: WCC, 1948)

interested."¹⁰ The resultant work was published in 1952 under the title of *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches*.¹¹

To the factual material gathered from the original enquiry into the Life and Work of Women in the Church, Bliss added two chapters in which she sketched the history of the interaction between Church and society as it affected the role of women in both, giving "not [as] a mere tabulation of the various national documents, but rather [as] a personal interpretation of the situation as it was revealed in the material."¹² The result was described by Visser 't Hooft as "a highly illuminating survey of the place and work of women in the Churches which may claim to represent the first world-wide study on this subject which has ever been made."¹³

While paying tribute to women's service throughout the history of the Church, Bliss also pointed to the limitations imposed upon women as "the guiding hands have always been masculine".¹⁴ She argued that as a result of social conditions and Church restrictions the Church had not made use of "even a tithe of the vast reserve of talent and devotion"¹⁵ in its women members and that

¹⁰ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 18. Bliss, who had recently borne a child, had resigned from the *Christian Newsletter* and was able to write the book at home. It is not clear why Mrs Fisher's opinion may have been so influential but she had met Mrs Cavert in 1946 and was invited to the Baarn conference, sending a substitute as she was unable to attend, and was a delegate to the Amsterdam assembly. (While Mrs Fisher evidently supported the official Church of England policy on women's ordination Lady Stansgate, also a member of that church, who worked quite closely with Cavert and who attended the Baarn conference and was a consultant to the assembly was an ardent advocate of the ordination of women. Dr Fisher wrote to the WCC stating that she did not have the official support of the Church of England in this role because of her views on women's ordination. Stansgate subsequently became a member of the Congregational Church). Bliss herself was unsure on the issue at the time she wrote the book.

¹¹ Kathleen Bliss, *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1952).

¹² *ibid.*, 9.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 14.

even in the present "for countless women work for and with women is the *only* way open to them to make their contribution to the life of the Church".¹⁶

Bliss was convinced that this restriction of women's work was divisive to the church as women's groups or organisations, particularly if successful, tended to *become* 'the Church' for women:

Thus there can arise in practice, although the theory of it is denied, a church within a church, or a church alongside a church. Women constantly feel that in spite of what is said in preaching the men are really 'the Church' and their own participation is derivative from and dependent on, that of men.¹⁷

According to Bliss, "The question for the future is how the immense achievement of the work of women for women and with women can be made fruitful in the life of the whole church." She concluded that this "is not a women's question, it is a Church question."¹⁸

Bliss wrote "to stimulate the thinking of the churches" but it was not clear how the churches would react. According to Visser 't Hooft:

It is difficult to say whether this re-examination of the situation of women in the Church will procure for them wider openings in the service of the churches, or whether, on the contrary, it will result in a renewed and stricter subordination of woman's ministry to that of man.¹⁹

In his opinion the real question posed by Bliss's book, based as it was on the 1946 inquiry, and on the report of committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church at Amsterdam, was:

Whether the Churches have really faced up to the basic tenets of their own faith concerning the relationships of men and women in the fellowship of the Church of Christ. The purpose of this book...is...to show where the Churches stand

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *The First Six Years*, 55.

today, at what points they may be able to learn from each other, and what questions need to be faced.²⁰

The new WCC commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, recommended by the Amsterdam assembly, was to lead the way in studying the issues and in encouraging the churches to face the questions and to learn from one another.

The Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church

The members of the commission were appointed by the WCC central committee meeting in Chichester in July 1949, with a couple of additions being made at the Toronto meeting in 1950. Including consultants, there were thirty members of the commission. About one third of these had been present at Baarn and Amsterdam and so ensured some continuity with the process which had brought the commission in being.²¹ Twila Cavert, who had played such an important role, was appointed as a consultant but resigned before she had attended a meeting.²² The membership was predominantly European and North American, with only two Orthodox representatives.²³ Six men were appointed, in accordance

²⁰ Bliss, *Service and Status of Women*, 10.

²¹ Members included Sarah Chakko, Gwyneth Hubble, Margit Sahlin, Elizabeth Schwarzhaupt, Mary Ely Lyman, and Rena Karefa-Smart, while Helen Roberts and Valentine Zander were consultants. Neither of the two women members of the central committee were appointed to the commission, although Leslie Swain convened a consultative group which formulated proposals on the commission for the central committee.

²² It seems strange that Cavert withdrew so completely from the Commission. Herzel, who interviewed Cavert, explained it thus: "Once the Commission was underway and the study of women's work had been handed over to Kathleen Bliss, Twila Lytton Cavert moved over from the centre. She continued to act as an American link and to accompany her husband to various assemblies and consultations. But it is evident that her real involvement was more geared to the American church". Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 114.

²³ Mrs Thalie Woyla did not however attend the meetings. Mrs Valentine Zander was originally appointed as a consultant but the commission subsequently asked the central committee to appoint her as a member. Mrs Zander was a Russian exile living in Paris with her husband Leo who taught at the St Sergius Theological Institute. Both were committed to the ecumenical movement and belonged to a small ecumenical group which

with the Amsterdam recommendation that the commission be composed of women and men.²⁴

In the period before the second assembly the full commission met only twice, at Bossey in March 1950 and at Oxford in September 1952. Two smaller meetings or working groups of selected members were held in August 1951 and September 1953.

At the first meeting, which was convened by WCC general secretary Visser 't Hooft, Kathleen Bliss was elected to chair the commission which she did until mid-1951.²⁵ Sarah Chakko, who had taken leave of absence from her position as principal of Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow, served as executive secretary until her return to India in August 1951. She continued however to work on behalf of the commission, replacing Kathleen Bliss as its chairperson and continuing in that role until her sudden death in January 1954. Bliss acted as secretary to the commission on a temporary and part time basis from August 1951 to January 1953 when Madeleine Barot accepted the position of executive secretary, a position she was to hold for the next thirteen years. Thus in its formative period the commission was led by three outstanding women, each of whom had an established reputation in the ecumenical movement.

Chakko in particular played an important role first in chairing the committee

Twila Cavert visited, to her great excitement, in 1948. See Twila Lytton Cavert to Olive Wyon, 19 June 1948, WCC Archives, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. Mrs Zander was a study correspondent for the enquiry into "The Life and Work of Women in the Church" and attended the Baarn conference.

²⁴ They were: Bishop Arne Fjellbu, Dr Hugh Kerr, Dr Pieter Roscam Abbing, Bishop Y. Y. Tsu, Dr Reinhold von Thadden and Professor Charles Westphal.

²⁵ Bliss was not in fact a member of the commission at this stage but was at the meeting because she had already accepted the invitation of the executive committee to write the

on the Life and Work of Women in the Church at the Amsterdam assembly and then in her leadership of the commission. At a time when very few women were involved in leadership roles in the WCC she was a living witness to the potential of women in such roles. In the words of Madeleine Barot, her successor:

Sarah never lost her genuinely feminine character, and was thus able to prove in a particularly brilliant way, by her own personal manner, what a woman can achieve - this despite the fact that she belonged to one of the most tradition-bound of the Christian Churches, in one of the countries where woman is most sheltered. To the churches of the WCC she opened a new door.²⁶

For many people Sarah Chakko probably represented Asian Christianity rather than Orthodoxy. She was undoubtedly and unashamedly an Orthodox, but her Syrian Orthodox church was Oriental rather than Eastern, the church of a minority, poor and offering little theological education. As an Asian woman she challenged European women to reconsider their position in the church:

One is very much intrigued by the concept of "women" underlying Church and public life in Europe...Even in countries where women have political rights they are not found in any significant numbers in places of trust and responsibility. In some Churches where women were ordained to the ministry during the war and did serve their congregations effectively, a reaction seems to have set in and women ministers are asked to confine their service to women and children. Socially, while they are cherished and protected, they are often not treated as intelligent responsible persons. All this is very puzzling to one who has come from a land where the Christian concept of womanhood has served as a dynamic in social and public life. The church in many so-called "mission lands" pioneered women's education, gave them their rightful place in society, and offered them opportunities of service. Many of the European missionary women workers find in these lands greater opportunities for creative service than in their own home countries. Is the European attitude on women truly Christian? If not, when and why did it stop moving in the right direction?²⁷

book. The central committee subsequently appointed her to the commission and ratified her appointment as its chair.

²⁶ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 120.

²⁷ Sarah Chakko, "Reflections on Recent Travels in Europe and North America", *ER* 3 (1951) 148-9.

Although Sarah Chakko worked for the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church for such a short period it was at a very important time as the new commission tried to clarify its role and to find its way, in "a field in which little thinking had been done by the churches and in which no ecumenical thinking had been done at all".²⁸ Chakko's contribution was significant for two main reasons. Firstly, according to Visser 't Hooft:

Her personality, her interest, and her ability to interpret between East and West, traditional and new, gave the commission, strength, stability, and confidence...She served as the finest possible public relations person for the commission.²⁹

Secondly, Sarah Chakko's leadership influenced the commission in its decision to focus on the man-woman relationship, on reconciliation and cooperation between women and men, rather than on women's work as separate from the work of men in the church. Sarah affirmed in her person and in her work, both as an educationist and as a leader in the WCC, the need to work for inclusiveness and wholeness. She believed that women had a contribution to make to both church and society, and that while women's work was complementary to that of men it was in no way inferior or less important.

The choice of Barot as Chakko's successor was an interesting one and was undoubtedly based on the respect which Visser 't Hooft had for her on account of her work in the world youth movement and in CIMADE. She had in fact already declined an offer from him to join the staff of the WCC immediately after the war. Although a leader in the YWCA Barot had not had any great interest in "the woman question" and her first reaction to Visser 't Hooft's offer of the position of

²⁸ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 15.

executive secretary was hesitant, "because the place of women had never been much of a problem for her personally".³⁰ In CIMADE she had been the head of an organisation with men working under her. But the situation was changing, and her ideas with it:

Women who, during the war, had dealt with enormous responsibilities, and about whom there had been no question whatever of their being quite capable of carrying out work as dangerous as any man's, suddenly found themselves pushed back into a definitely subordinate position in relation to men. I was greatly concerned about this. Some were starting to say, "Oh, but we now need a man to direct CIMADE." But I remained at the head of CIMADE because I thought it was wrong after the war automatically to put men back in all key positions. Many women in similar positions now began to think about the status of women. This was true in political and business life throughout Europe. Women had gained a lot during the war, certainly, but this gain was not final nor assured. For this reason I was prepared to accept the post and the reflection and study which it implied.³¹

The central committee in 1949 assigned three specific tasks to the commission. These were:

1. To publish a book based on the responses to the 1946 inquiry, and to stimulate the thinking of the churches on the place of women in the Church;
2. To initiate a special study on man-woman relationships in the light of biblical teaching and of the traditions of the Church;
3. To give help to women by encouraging the exchange of information and experience between various groups, and by inviting more women to participate directly in ecumenical work.³²

In fulfilment of the first of these tasks the commission encouraged the publication of Bliss's book on *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches*.

In fulfilment of the second it prepared a little booklet on the man-woman relationship in the light of biblical teaching and Church tradition, with special

²⁹ ibid.

³⁰ ibid., 131.

³¹ ibid. See also Jacques, *Madeleine Barot, 147-148*.

³² *The First Six Years*, 54.

reference to the place and work of women in the church.³³ The booklet, which was designed to facilitate and encourage ecumenical study of the issue by groups of men and women, was translated into German, French and Spanish at the initiative of national groups and by the second meeting of the commission in 1952 some 3,000 copies had been distributed. According to the introduction by Chakko and Bliss responses from groups which used the study would be used in preparing a report for the 1954 WCC assembly. There is no further mention of this proposal and no reports appear to be extant, whether or not any were ever received. The perspective of the writer (the text was drafted by Cornelia Van Asch Van Wijk) was clear:

"There is an assumption, open or hidden, in the minds of many church people that one sex alone is meant to lead, initiate and govern and the other to follow and be subordinate...the Churches still preserve patterns of thought about the sexes which come not from the gospel but from the patriarchal form of society now largely passed away."³⁴

Through its secretariat in Geneva the commission also acted as a liaison between women's groups, a channel for the sharing of information, news and ideas, and a source of information on ecumenical questions. Both Chakko and Barot travelled widely, making links with women's groups in Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Africa. Thus the work of the commission had two main lines of concern: the study of questions related to the man-woman relationship and work with already-established women's groups (in spite of concerns about the role of these groups expressed by Bliss and others).

³³ *A Study of Man-Woman Relationships: A Study Outline Published for the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church of the World Council of Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1952).

³⁴ *ibid.*, 16.

The commission understood its purpose to be to work for the wholeness and renewal of the Church. The man-woman relationship was an important aspect of both wholeness and renewal, for only when this relationship was properly understood would women be able to make their full contribution to the total life of the Church. At its second meeting the commission stated:

The problem must be faced in its fundamental aspect: the full recognition of the equal value and joint responsibility of the twofold human being: man-woman as members of the Church of Christ. The urgency of facing this fundamental problem cannot be overstated, because only then can the questions arising around it, such as the place of women's organisations, women's participation in church government and at other policy-making levels, or even the complex questions of ordination of women be solved.³⁵

Although there was much study still to be done on the man-woman relationship, the commission was already convinced of the importance of women's sharing fully in responsibility for the life of the Church:

The bearing of responsibility being of the very essence of true human existence the Church should not withhold this from women in any realm, but open up opportunities for women to grow in responsible living and encourage them to enter into their heritage as fully grown partners with men in being children of God, equal in his sight and jointly called in His service in the Church and in the world.³⁶

Three basic principles governed the work of the commission in this initial period:

1. Woman's place in Church and society is not just a woman's problem. It is also the responsibility of men to devote their time and energy to discover what the rôle of woman is, as the solution to the problem is a matter of common concern to the whole Church. It is just as wrong to leave it to women, as is so often done today, as it was to have men make all the decisions on this point, as was too often the case in the past.
2. The Church needs the full employment of all its resources in the fulfilment of its mission, therefore the spiritual gifts of all its members are needed. The Church cannot afford to miss the opportunity which would follow from a harmonious collaboration of the two sexes.

³⁵ "Ecumenical Chronicle: The Life and Work of Women in the Church", *ER* 5 (1952), 159.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 160.

3. The churches must reconsider the place of women, not only for the sake of their own inner life but also to give an answer and a witness before a world which is very much aware of this issue. It is not enough for the churches just to let things drift along, either clinging to their old traditions on the one hand, or merely following the present-day trends in the secular world on the other.³⁷

In keeping with the first principle, the long-term aim of the commission was to make itself redundant. Members agreed that "this point would have been reached when women were freely and naturally associated with men in Church life and were not, as they are at present, a majority with minority status."³⁸

The commission was composed mostly of women, it was deeply concerned with women's place in the Church, and much of its work was done with women. In spite of its insistence on the need for co-operation and partnership between men and women, churchmen in general showed little interest in, or understanding of, its work. Of the six men appointed to the commission, only two attended its first meeting.³⁹ The commission expressed its concern and stated: "We shall be defeating our purpose if we have only the thinking of women and women's organisations".⁴⁰ It was agreed that, with the permission of the central committee, Mr Philippe Maury of the WSCF be invited to serve as a consultant. When in 1950 a letter was sent to all member churches asking them to nominate an

³⁷ "World Council Diary: The Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church." *ER* 6 (1954), 189.

³⁸ "Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, Oxford, September 1952", 6. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

³⁹ "Minutes of the First Meeting of the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, Chateau de Bossey, 6-10 March, 1950". TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. Visser 't Hooft, Dr Kramer and Dr Ehrenstrom of the WCC staff were also at the meeting, bringing the number of men present to five out of a total of sixteen.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

individual or committee to act as a contact with the commission, in most cases it was a woman or a committee of women that was nominated.⁴¹

Churchwomen, on the other hand, were keenly interested in the work of the commission. "Millions of women look to the commission in the hope that one day through its work they may find a response to their thirst for service and their aspiration towards a renewal of the Church."⁴² Many wanted to use the commission as a clearing house for women's concerns, to see it as the ecumenical, international counterpart of the churchwomen's organisations which played an important and established role in some churches, particularly in North America. Some thought the commission should be made up of representatives of women's organisations. The commission, however, kept insisting that it was *not* a "Women's Commission", and that it was "important to maintain the proportion of men and women in the membership of the Commission in order to have the proper interplay of the thinking of men and women."⁴³

European women were generally rather critical of the American churches' women's organisations, which Sarah Chakko called "shadow churches".⁴⁴ Dr Cynthia Wedel, a representative of the United Council of Churchwomen who was appointed as a consultant to the commission, recalled her surprise when, at the Bossey meeting, she was told:

"Now *don't* tell us about your women's organisations because we know all about them; and the one thing we do *not* want is to become second-class citizens as you have become in the church, when you are pushed into your own groups and don't even try to get into the operational running of things." Well of

⁴¹ *The First Six Years*, 56.

⁴² *ibid.*, 53.

⁴³ *Minutes and Reports of the Third Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Toronto (Canada), July 9 - 15, 1950*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1950]), 119.

⁴⁴ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 14.

course, this took *all* the wind out of our sails! But it was a very wholesome experience.⁴⁵

Kathleen Bliss, too, had personal misgivings about the American church women's groups which were often both large and powerful:

I guess I had a reputation for spurning those women's groups. But the reason for it was my own commitment to lay groups and realization that these had to be based on a real partnership between men and women.⁴⁶

When Madeleine Barot became executive secretary of the commission she demonstrated strong resistance to pressures from women's groups and emphasised the need for co-operation between women and men. "This was the condition I made for my entry into the WCC - that the department would never become a platform for the big women's organisations, but one of research on the question of co-operation between men and women."⁴⁷

Under the leadership of Chakko, Bliss and Barot therefore, and in accordance with its principles, the commission emphasised the importance of the participation of women in the *whole* life of the *whole* Church, rather than their segregation as a separate group within the Church.

The working group which met in September 1953 decided that the aims and functions of the commission needed redefinition and clarification and to this end prepared a number of recommendations for the Evanston assembly. Among them was a recommendation to change the name of the commission "so as to remove the impression that it is the 'Women's Department' of the World Council of Churches."⁴⁸ The title of "Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 13-14.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁸ *The First Six Years*, 57.

Church" sounded "feminist and segregative"⁴⁹ and it was felt that there should be greater stress on the co-operation of women and men. The proposed new title was therefore the "Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society".⁵⁰ There can be no doubt that the guiding spirit behind the proposal was that of Madeleine Barot, executive secretary to the commission since January 1953, for her acceptance of the position had been on condition that the title would be changed.⁵¹ For Barot "co-operation of men and women" implied that:

Alone, considered in isolation or separated from each other, both the man and the woman are incomplete. They are truly themselves only when in a dialogue, constantly renewed, in a reciprocal relationship founded on grace, which is the same for each of them and which implies equal responsibilities for each.⁵²

The working group also recommended that a man be appointed as second executive secretary if the budget permitted (which in fact it did not), and decided to hold a consultation immediately before the Evanston assembly:

An educational meeting [which] would bring in consultants and delegates to the Assembly as well as members of the Commission. It would be specially meant for those coming from without the US.⁵³

About fifty participants including "theologians and scientists" attended the meeting on "The Christian Message on the Cooperation between Men and Women", held at Lake Forest College, 11-13 August 1954.⁵⁴ Unlike the Baarn meeting, but in keeping with the commission's self-understanding, this was a meeting of men and women, at which the major addresses were given by men - a sign that the new department was intended to be important for men as well as for

⁴⁹ "Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, 1 - 3 September, 1953, Bossey", TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

⁵⁰ *The First Six Years*, 57.

⁵¹ Jacques, *Madeleine Barot*, 150.

⁵² *ibid.* My translation.

⁵³ *ibid.*

women. Among the speakers was Dr Walter Muelder, a sociologist from the Boston University School of Theology, who was to play an important role in the new department and at the assembly. Muelder made it clear that it was right to add "society" to "church" in the department's name and work:

The cooperation of men and women in the church is one aspect of the larger question of their cooperation in society as a whole. Any study which isolates the church as an institution from the tendencies in all historical institutions does so at grave peril.⁵⁵

To sum up, in the first six years after the Amsterdam assembly the commission was largely concerned with establishing principles and foundations for its work. Some of its difficulties were described in a report prepared for the Evanston assembly:

During these first years of work, the Committee has become conscious of the paucity of means at its disposal to enable it to respond to the great hopes that were raised when it was founded. The meetings of the Commission's members have been too few and far apart; there has been a great lack of continuity in the Secretariat; and there has been an insufficient number of publications...However, the number and range of the problems and questions have so rarely been studied by the churches that the Commission faces a virtual jungle through which it must cut a path.⁵⁶

The work initiated by the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church was indeed something new in the churches and in the ecumenical movement. It came at a time when many perceived that there was a crisis in the relationships of women and men and that the "women's question" was a matter of vital concern. At the first meeting of the commission Visser 't Hooft asked, "Have Christians anything specific to say to this situation?" He went on to point out that:

⁵⁴ No report of this consultation was published. There is a draft report titled "Consultation on the Christian Message on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society, Lake Forest, Illinois," in the WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

⁵⁵ Herzl, 25, *A Voice for Women*, 25.

⁵⁶ *The First Six Years*, 57.

"The churches have not yet said anything helpful on the subject, either separately or together. The time has come to say something extremely clear."⁵⁷

Some things were clear. There was work ahead "for at least ten years in stimulating both study and action".⁵⁸ The emphasis was to be on the cooperation of men and women, with the aim of achieving the complete integration of women into the total life of the whole church. The church was to be studied as part of society, not in isolation from it. The proposed new name attempted to articulate this understanding and to break the associations with the traditional concept of "women's work" which seemed to be implied in the original name.

Conclusions

While the concern of the commission was to establish the right relationship between men and women in the churches and to encourage women's full contribution to the total life of the Church, it did not appear to show any concern for the situation within the WCC itself. There, women's contribution was almost totally limited to the work of the commission. The commission believed that women should be given positions of responsibility in all areas of Church life and should be included in decision-making roles but it seemed to overlook the fact that women were almost totally excluded from positions of responsibility and decision-making within the WCC.

In accordance with its understanding that the question of women's place in the Church was not a "women's question" but a question for the whole Church the commission sought to establish a model in which men and women worked

⁵⁷ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 12.

⁵⁸ *The First Six Years*, 54.

together. It seemed however to overlook the fact that in other areas of the WCC there was little or no attempt on the part of men to work in collaboration with women or to respond to women's concerns. The lack of response to women's desire to be involved in the whole work of the whole Church was evident in the major conference held by the WCC in the period between the first two assemblies 1952.⁵⁹

The question of women's participation in the Faith and Order movement had been raised at the first world conference in 1927 but to little effect. Twenty-five years later at Lund there were only two women among the two hundred and twenty-five delegates and a mere two women among the twenty-two consultants.⁶⁰ There were no women among the one hundred members of the Faith and Order commission. Neither was there any concern expressed about this lack of women's participation. It was therefore probably only to be expected that there would be no mention of women in the various reports and discussions. One of the major themes of the conference was the doctrine of the Church but there was no reference to the Amsterdam statement that "the Church consists of men and women."⁶¹ Although there was significant attention paid to the influence of social, cultural, political, racial and other so-called "non-theological factors" on the problems of Christian unity, gender was not mentioned as one of these factors. There was not even a passing reference to the ordination of women, identified at Amsterdam as a difficult ecumenical issue and one which, according to the

⁵⁹ See Oliver S. Tomkins, ed., *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lund, August 15th to 28th, 1952* (London: SCM Press, 1953). See May, *Bonds of Unity*, 100-104, for a helpful discussion of Lund from a woman's perspective.

⁶⁰ The delegates were the Reverend Mother Margaret, an Anglican prioress, and Mrs Sylvia Green, from the Irish Society of Friends. Dr Winifred Garrison (Disciples, USA) and Dr Olive Wyon (Church of Scotland) were consultants. (Twila Cavert, accompanying her delegate husband, was an accredited visitor).

committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, required careful study.

While Lund was undoubtedly a major ecumenical event, with many positive contributions to Faith and Order and to the whole ecumenical movement, at Lund and in this whole era of Faith and Order work, "silence surrounds women."⁶²

The primary interest of the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church in the years preceding the Evanston assembly was in encouraging the study of the relationship between men and women and in encouraging their cooperation. The assembly would reveal to what extent the commission's work had been successful. The working group was not too optimistic:

The Commission is looking forward eagerly to the kind of response that the member Churches will make in choosing their delegations to the Evanston Assembly. The official invitation to the Assembly asked the member Churches to consider including women among the delegates. It is still too soon to tell just how many women will actually be present at Evanston, but first indications are that much work still remains to be done before the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church has achieved its aims!⁶³

The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, 1954

The second assembly of the WCC met in Evanston, Illinois, in the summer of 1954, bringing together 502 delegates from 132 member churches in 42 countries.⁶⁴ In the six years since the first assembly political differences had deteriorated into sharp divisions, the Chinese churches had suspended membership in the WCC in the wake of the Korean war, and the "cold war" was so bitter that delegates from Eastern Europe countries could enter the US only

⁶¹ *The First Assembly*, 146.

⁶² May, *Bonds of Unity*, 103.

⁶³ "World Council Diary: The Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church", *ER* 6 (1954) 190.

⁶⁴ Membership of the WCC had increased from 147 to 161 churches but only 132 of these were represented at the assembly.

after the intervention of Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.⁶⁵ There were sharp theological differences too, particularly over the assembly theme, "Jesus Christ the Hope of the World". The "younger churches" from Africa and Asia (excepting China) were better represented than at Amsterdam, but there was no increase in Orthodox participation and Roman Catholic attendance, even as observers, was forbidden by the Vatican. Yet if at Amsterdam the motto was "staying together", at Evanston it was "growing together" and in spite of political and theological tensions the assembly was able to affirm, "Here at Evanston we are united in Christ".⁶⁶ But how inclusive of women was this unity?

Women members of the assembly

According to the statistics in the official assembly report of the 502 delegates at the assembly 383 were clergy, forty-four were women and seventy-five were laymen.⁶⁷ Women thus appear to have some sort of unique status, being neither clergy nor lay. The 383 clergy were in fact all male, while at least three of the women were ordained, but this is not readily apparent.⁶⁸ Thus the representation by laypersons was, at 23.5%, far below the "approximate one third" recommended

⁶⁵ Dulles, a Presbyterian layman, was active in the ecumenical movement and had been a consultant at Amsterdam.

⁶⁶ W.A. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954* (London: SCM Press, 1955), 2.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 336. All statistics in this section are based on *The Evanston Report* and Jonathon F. Bennett, *Evanston, 1954, being a Report on the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, August 15 - August 31, 1954* (Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom [1954]), 12. (Bennett, a NZ Presbyterian, attended the assembly as a fraternal delegate representing the National Council of Churches and accompanying his wife, Mrs F O Bennett, one of the three Presbyterian delegates from New Zealand).

⁶⁸ They were: The Rev'd Gwyneth Hubble (Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland); the Rev'd Elsie Chamberlain (Congregational Union of England and Wales); the Rev'd Dr Mossie A Wyker (Disciples of Christ, USA), who is listed as "Mrs James D Wyker". It is impossible to know now if this rendering invisible of ordained women was deliberate.

in the constitution, although some improvement on the 18% at Amsterdam, while the percentage of women delegates, at 8.5%, was slightly higher than the 5.7% at Amsterdam. While the delegates were appointed by the churches, the one hundred and forty-five consultants were invited by the WCC. Only sixteen of them were women. There were also one hundred and forty-five youth consultants, who took full part in the assembly and also had a separate preliminary conference. Of these thirty-two were women. Among the thirty-one fraternal delegates were only three women⁶⁹ while among the twenty-five observers there were no women. Counting all the above categories therefore women's participation was 11.8%, while if the four hundred and ninety-nine accredited visitors are included the percentage rises to 15.7%. As at Amsterdam, women's numerical participation at the Evanston assembly did not accurately reflect their presence in the churches.

As had been predicted in early discussions on representation, churches with very small delegations generally sent male clergy. Two exceptions were the Methodist Church in Ceylon which appointed a laywoman as its sole delegate and the Batak Church Sumatra which sent a layman and two deaconesses. The largest delegations were all weak in women: one woman out of eighteen Lutheran delegates from the Evangelical Church in Germany; three out of eighteen from the Church of England; three out of thirty-six from the Methodist Church, USA. On a confessional basis there were eight Anglican women, seven Lutherans, seven from the Reformed or Presbyterian tradition, and twenty-two from other Protestant churches, while geographically all except three came from North America, Europe

⁶⁹ Helen Roberts (World's YWCA); Miss A L Frasz (Council of Churches in Indonesia); Miss Jogelina Lozoda (Confederation de Iglesias Evangelicas del Rio de la Plata). It is interesting that two of these represented ecumenical bodies in the "Third World".

or Australasia. It did not appear that the churches had paid much heed to the WCC invitation asking them to include women among their delegates.

Excluding the accredited visitors, about fifteen of the women participants at Evanston had participated in some way at the Amsterdam assembly, while of these about a dozen had been also at the Baarn conference. While only two of the women delegates had been delegates at Amsterdam several had been alternates or accredited visitors there.⁷⁰ Among the women consultants five had been at Amsterdam⁷¹ while Madeleine Barot, now executive secretary of the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, had been at Baarn and Amsterdam as had WCC staff member, Suzanne de Diétrich. About half the members of the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church were at Evanston as either delegates or consultants.⁷² Such continuity of experience is important in terms of understanding of the processes and the work of the WCC, and both in knowing and being known by those with power and influence. Usually greater experience leads to more active participation.

Women in leadership roles

Given that a number of experienced and competent women were at the assembly, it seems surprising that so few were involved in leadership roles.

⁷⁰ Mrs Fisher (Church of England) and Mrs Swain (American Baptist Convention) had both been delegates at Amsterdam, while Mrs Mowll (Church of England, Australia), Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt (Reformed Church, Germany), Doreen Warren (Anglican Church, NZ), Elsie Chamberlain (Congregational Church, UK), Mary Ely Lyman (Congregational, USA), and Mossie Wyker (Disciples, USA) had attended in other categories.

⁷¹ Leila Anderson, Cornelia Van Asch Van Wijk, Rena Karefa-Smart, Georgia Harkness and Mrs J D Bragg.

⁷² Mary Ely Lyman (delegate), Jorgelina Lozada (fraternal delegate), Rena Karefa-Smart (consultant), Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt (delegate), Cornelia Van Asch Van Wijk (consultant), Gwyneth Hubble (delegate), Claire Jullien (consultant), Reinhold von Thadden (delegate), Helen Roberts (consultant), Cynthia Wedel (consultant), and Philippe Maury (fraternal delegate).

There were no women among the presiding officers. Anna Canada Swain, one of two

women elected to the central committee in Amsterdam, was on both the steering committee and the nominations committee, while Kathleen Bliss was on the message drafting group. The fifteen theme groups were all led by male chairmen and secretaries. Of the six sections, the one on the laity was chaired by Kathleen Bliss who also presented its report to the assembly. All the other section officers (a chairman, two vice-chairmen, a secretary and a liaison officer for each section) were men. The seven assembly committees on WCC business were all staffed by men with the exception of the committee on the Division of Ecumenical Action which had Madeleine Barot as its secretary.

The Reverend Elsie Chamberlain (Congregational Union of England and Wales) was the leader and preacher at one of the morning worship services.

Towards the end of the assembly Rena Karefa-Smart, a consultant, was one of three speakers who introduced the theme of "The Tensions of the World and Our Unity in Christ" and was reported as speaking "with simplicity and vigour".⁷³

Madeleine Barot presented the report on the Life and Work of Women in the Church to a plenary session. Overall however there were actually fewer women in leadership roles than at Amsterdam.

The Life and Work of Women in the Church

North American church women, those great advocates of church women's organisations, were interested in women participants at the assembly. On a free

⁷³ Visser 't Hooft, *The Evanston Report*, 59.

afternoon, a Sunday, the women of Evanston and Chicago welcomed the women of the assembly.

Nearly 5,000 women came to a long-planned and well organised series of teas held in the various churches of the city, where they were received by the women members of the Assembly. Later they listened to an informative and thought-provoking address by Dr Kathleen Bliss.⁷⁴

The American women's groups also organised large numbers of women to attend the assembly on the day when Madeleine Barot was to present the report on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. Many women took advantage of this opportunity, some of them travelling great distances. The evening of the plenary session was one of sweltering heat and Barot was scheduled as the last speaker. Not realizing that two thousand women had come especially to hear her, Barot agreed to defer her report so that the assembly should "no longer be exposed to the excessive heat".⁷⁵ According to the assembly report, "the large audience breathed a sigh of gratitude",⁷⁶ while Barot herself commented that there were protests as the women were angry and frustrated at not being able to hear her speak "on a subject which concerned them all and about which they felt so strongly".⁷⁷ It was only four days later that Barot gave her report, and it was of course not possible for these women to return. To Barot, this occurrence seemed to typify an attitude: "Oh, it's only the women. They can wait....until after the more interesting and important issues are dealt with."⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 47.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Jacques, *Madeleine Barot*, 154. My translation. There is a discrepancy between Visser 't Hooft's account in *The Evanston Report* which states that Barot proposed the deferment of her report while according to Barot she agreed to it, not knowing that there would be such an audience.

⁷⁸ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 133. Herzl's account agrees with that in Jacques, stating that Visser 't Hooft "pleaded with Madeleine to put off her report."

When the time finally came for the delayed report Barot, speaking calmly and in a firm voice to an assembly dominated by men, began by quoting the opening words of Sarah Chakko at the Amsterdam assembly:

The place of women in the Church is a question which affects the whole church - the men as well as the women. Its consideration cannot be left to women only, as there is too often a tendency to do.⁷⁹

After briefly recalling the reasons for the creation of the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, Barot stated that:

Most people are convinced that, besides the masculine influence, a truly feminine influence should be felt in all spheres of life, in the Church as well as in society. Many believe that therein lies the hope of renewal in the expression of the Christian message and the way to discover new forms of service.⁸⁰

Acknowledging that "much is still obscure, and there are strongly divergent opinions on the practical manner in which the feminine contribution can be made", Barot challenged the churches to rethink the question of the place of women, and to distinguish clearly between sociological and theological factors, particularly with regard to the ordination of women.⁸¹ The WCC had a particular contribution to make:

The World Council of Churches is working towards the wholeness of the Church. Therefore, it is trying to enable Christians of different traditions, nations, age and sex, to meet and work together in full participation in all phases of the Church's life. The Church is truly one, only when all of its members work wholeheartedly together, recognising their responsibility one for another. Thus it follows that the World Council should seek to work toward a more complete integration of both sexes into the life of the Church, ensuring that all people may freely put their gifts at its disposal.⁸²

⁷⁹ Madeleine Barot, "Report to the Assembly on the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church", 1. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. The report was actually given on the evening of August 28.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 2.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*, 3.

Suggesting that the Church's witness was weakened "by the preponderance of women in the activities of the Church" with men's influence "too exclusively at the leadership level," Barot insisted that "Christian men and women must work together to find a pattern of cooperation that may set an example for the world, and give a sign of unity by this example."⁸³ This was the rationale behind the new name of the Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society: "As questions related to the place of women, of women's work, of women's organisations, must be considered in the light of co-operation between men and women, this title has been chosen as the best possible one."⁸⁴ The assembly seems to have made little response to this report as no debate is recorded.

The Department on the Co-operation between Men and Women

The assembly received a major report from the central committee on the structure and functioning of the Council, proposing that it be organized into three divisions, each of which would bring together a number of departments sharing common functions. There was to be a Division of Studies, including Faith and Order, a Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees, and a Division of Ecumenical Action (DEA) which would bring together departments concerned with "helping the churches to make their membership of the World Council a practical, living reality...[and with] building up ecumenical consciousness and understanding...promoting activities within the churches which are ecumenical in

⁸³ *ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

character."⁸⁵ In this Division were placed the Youth Department, the Department on Work for the Laity, (replacing the Secretariat for Laymen's Work), the Ecumenical Institute, and the new Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society.

Subject to the general policy of the division, each department was to have freedom to initiate projects, prepare programmes and take action. The aim and functions of the Department on Co-operation as proposed by the former commission were accepted by the assembly. The *aim* was "To help the churches to work towards such co-operation between men and women as may enable them both to make their full contribution to church and society."⁸⁶

The *functions* included promoting the study of questions affecting the relationship, co-operation and common service of men and women; helping women to make their contribution to the total life of the churches and encouraging the churches to accept this contribution; fostering an ecumenical outlook in, and ecumenical co-operation among, women's organisations; co-operation with the other departments in the DEA and, where relevant, with other divisions and departments of the WCC.⁸⁷ The assembly committee charged with discussing and reporting on the work of the new DEA commented that the Department on Co-operation "is concerned with certain quite special problems of dislocation and unbalance in the life of the Church, now seen as urgent in many areas, but which we dare hope may prove to be transitional."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Visser 't Hooft, *The Evanston Report*, 190.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 204.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 204 - 205.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 227.

A recommendation to the member churches repeated the plea for men and women to work together:

The Member Churches should be asked to recognise *the seriousness of the problem of the Cooperation of men and women* in various areas of church life, and to seek ways in which this problem can be solved...It should be recognized that these are not questions for women only, but for men and women to consider together.⁸⁹

The committee also drew attention to the Department on Co-operation's "strongly expressed opinions" that its work "should be *kept distinct* from that of the Department on Work for the Laity" while at the same time noting that the latter "is not concerned with lay *men* only, but with the laity, i.e. *lay men* and *lay women* generally".⁹⁰ The tension between the two overlapping departments hinted at here was to develop and reach a climax before the next assembly.

At Amsterdam the topic of the Life and Work of Women in the Church was put on the assembly agenda as one of the four 'concerns of the churches'. The Evanston assembly was structured somewhat differently but two of the six sections dealt with issues which had attracted increasing attention in the period between the assemblies and which seemed to warrant full-scale ecumenical discussion, namely race relations and the laity. These became the subjects of sections V and VI respectively. As at Amsterdam the importance of the laity was affirmed but in the section report, which focussed on Christian vocation in the sphere of daily work, women were largely ignored and there was no recognition of women as a group within the laity.⁹¹ It is clear throughout the report that lay men's experience of work was assumed to be normative.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 229. Original emphasis.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 231, 229. Original emphasis.

⁹¹ In the plenary discussions of the report Cornelia van Asch vanWijk pointed out that the "tentative definition" of a layman "omitted housewives and those not gainfully employed". *ibid.*, 172. There was little reaction to this comment.

Nominations and elections

The report on the structure of the Council had recommended some additions to the rules regarding the composition of the WCC presidium, the most significant being that the maximum number should be six, that the term of office should end at the assembly following election, and that a president should not be eligible for immediate re-election.⁹² After some protracted debate these rules were adopted, together with the principles that the nominations committee should have regard to the personal qualifications of the individual, and to fair and adequate confessional and geographical representation.

When the nominations committee made its first report to the assembly its proposal for the presidium "was followed with marked interest".⁹³ It had in fact proposed a presidium of six male clerics, five of whom were bishops. During the next few days there was much discussion about "the advisability of appointing a layman to the presidium" and "a courteous request, signed by more than sixty people" suggested that a layman might be nominated.⁹⁴ The committee carefully considered the possibility "especially bearing in mind the contribution of 'the incomparable Sarah Chakko'".⁹⁵ One lay man was approached but declined to serve and in the end the six men originally nominated were appointed.⁹⁶ The (lay)

⁹² *ibid.*, 178.

⁹³ *ibid.*, 49.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 49-50.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 262.

⁹⁶ They were:

The Very Rev. Principal John Baillie, British Isles

Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri, South America

Bishop Otto Dibelius, Europe

The Most Rev. Metropolitan Juhanon, Asia

The Most Rev. Archbishop Michael, Eastern Orthodox

The Right Rev. Henry Knox Sherrill, North America

man who had led the move towards a lay member of the presidium expressed his confidence in the result, although reminding the assembly of the need to be aware "of the vital importance of participation by laymen and women in the Council's leadership."⁹⁷

It does not seem that this advice was taken very seriously, for the ninety-member central committee which was then elected was also dominated by male clergy, with a total of seventeen lay people of whom only six were women.⁹⁸ This was a slight increase over the two elected at Amsterdam, but hardly evidence of a great desire on the part of men for co-operation and partnership with women. And while at Amsterdam there was some comment on how few women were elected, at Evanston no comment is recorded.

Conclusions

Women at the Evanston assembly played a very minor role and the assembly itself showed no signs that the WCC was moving significantly towards greater co-operation of men and women. Rather, it was as if, having set up the new Department on Co-operation, the assembly thought the rest of the business could continue as usual. It would hardly be surprising if those women who had looked to the work of the Commission on Life and Work to further their participation in the church and in the ecumenical movement felt that nothing had changed, that women in the churches and in the WCC were still a majority with minority status.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 263.

⁹⁸ They were: Mrs F O Bennett (Presbyterian Church of New Zealand)
 Mrs K Bliss (Church of England)
 Mrs F Brooks (Methodist Church, USA)
 Mrs E Jarvis (Church of Scotland)
 Mrs M Lindstrom (Church of Sweden)
 Mrs L Swain (American Baptist Convention)

The establishment of the Department on Cooperation between Men and Women was, however, a positive step. The change in name might not quickly change the attitudes of men towards the department, but it did clearly indicate the focus of the department's work. The new divisional and departmental structure meant that the Department on Cooperation was integrated more firmly into the total structure of the WCC and given a more stable basis than the former commission had enjoyed, with greater freedom to initiate programmes and to take action in its field.

The assembly message challenged Christians to seek justice for others and asked if the churches were willing to join the assembly in declaring that "segregation and discrimination on the grounds of race . . . is contrary to the will of God and to act on that declaration". It asked them, "Do you pray regularly for those who suffer unjust discrimination on grounds of race, religion, or political conviction?"⁹⁹ Gender discrimination was not yet recognised as a form of injustice, and the "women's question" at Evanston did not arouse the same interest as it had at Amsterdam but the establishment of the Department on Cooperation did ensure that issues of women's participation would not be lost from the agenda of the WCC in the years before the third assembly.

⁹⁹ Visser 't Hooft, *The Evanston Assembly*, 3.

CHAPTER 4

FROM EVANSTON TO NEW DELHI: 1954-1961

The period following the second assembly of the WCC was, like the preceding period, a time of considerable international tension with crisis and emergencies in a number of countries including Egypt (the Suez crisis), Hungary and Cyprus. There were struggles for independence and revolutionary changes in newly-emerging states in Africa and Asia. Over all hung the threat of nuclear warfare and the menace of nuclear testing and the arms race.

For the WCC these were crucial years during which it became much more truly a *world* council with a much more widespread membership. Nineteen new churches became members, including eight from Africa and five from Asia. There were also significant regional ecumenical developments in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Although no Orthodox churches joined the WCC during this period there were, after 1957, new contacts with the Russian Orthodox and relationships with the Roman Catholic Church began to develop, especially following the establishment in 1960 of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.¹

The International Missionary Council (IMC) had not joined with the Life and Work and Faith and Order movements in founding the WCC but now, after long and complicated negotiations, it was agreed that the two bodies would officially

¹ The SPCU was founded by John XXIII as a 'preparatory organ' of Vatican II.

integrate at the 1961 WCC assembly. This developing relationship between the WCC and the IMC had serious implications for the Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in the Church and Society.

As the WCC grew in size and as the concept of its role became enlarged during this period, so its tasks and responsibilities increased. The original focus on study was broadened to include a greater emphasis on education and action. Prior to the New Delhi assembly the building of new and larger offices in Geneva was begun - a step which was questioned by some who thought that the WCC was becoming too much of an institution.²

All these changes meant that there were considerable demands on the leadership of the WCC just at a time when many of the first generation of ecumenical leaders, the men whose vision and work had shaped the WCC, were disappearing from the scene.³ New leaders were emerging - but few women were among them.

At Evanston the assembly had elected two honorary presidents and six presidents, all of whom were men, and a ninety-member central committee which included six women. At its first meeting this new central committee elected Dr Franklin Clark Fry as chairman and Dr Ernest Payne as vice-chairman, and also elected a twelve-member executive committee. The only woman elected to this

² See Fey, *The Ecumenical Advance*, 58.

³ "None of those who took part in the Westfield meeting of 1937 in which the first plans for the creation of a World Council of Churches were drawn up, are today members of the Central Committee. In the short time since the World Council was conceived there has been almost a complete change in its leadership." *Evanston to New Delhi, 1954-1961: Report of the Central Committee to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1961), 7. Among those who had died were John R. Mott and George K. Bell, the two honorary presidents elected at Evanston, both of whom died shortly after the assembly, and Eivind Bergrav, a president of the WCC between Amsterdam and Evanston.

was Kathleen Bliss. The executive committee, composed of the twelve elected members, the presidents, honorary presidents, and chairman and vice-chairman of the central committee, was developing a more powerful role partly because it met twice a year while the central committee met only once. Thus the executive committee not only executed policy decided by the central committee but more and more initiated and prepared proposals concerning policy and programme for submission to the central committee and, through a sub-committee on staffing, dealt with appointments of executive staff. Between meetings the chairman and vice-chairman represented both the central and the executive committees and were "constantly consulted by the General Secretariat on important points of policy".⁴ With only six women on the central committee and one woman on the executive committee women's participation in policy and decision-making within the WCC was seriously limited.

Women were poorly represented on the working committees of the departments and divisions, which were also appointed by the central committee. The working committee of the Department on Cooperation of Men and Women was the only one with a majority of women, no other committee having more than three women members (out of a usual total of fifteen). Although at Evanston there had been a clear statement that the Department on the Laity was concerned with both laymen and laywomen only one woman was appointed to the working committee of this department⁵ and when the executive secretary was appointed by the executive committee in 1955 he, too, was a man.

⁴ *Evanston to New Delhi*, 25.

⁵ She was Mildred Horton, later replaced by Jorgelina Lozada from the working committee of the Department of Cooperation.

The proportion of women on the WCC staff actually decreased during this period as new appointments were filled by men. Suzanne de Diétrich, associate director of the Ecumenical Institute since 1946, left shortly after the Evanston assembly, her position being filled by a layman, while Jean Fraser, director of the Youth Department since 1947 who left at the same time, was also replaced by a man, leaving Madeleine Barot as the only woman head of a department.

The Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society was thus unique within the WCC both because it had a woman as its executive secretary and because its working committee contained a majority of women. It was also the only working committee to be co-chaired by a woman and a man;⁶ the Rev. Gwenyth Hubble, a Baptist minister from the UK, and Dean Walter Muelder, an American sociologist who had participated at the Lake Forest meeting held by the department just prior to the assembly. Of the eight women and six men on the working committee⁷ only Hubble, Rena Karefa-Smart, and Jorgelina Lozada had been members of the former commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. Of the consultants to that commission, Cynthia Wedel now became a

⁶ This was at the suggestion of Mrs Swain. Although there was some discussion by the central committee of the nominations for these committees this was mostly to do with geographical representation and there was no suggestion that there were too few women, or that other departments might also have co-chairs. See *Minutes and Reports of the Seventh Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, (Ill.), USA, August 27th, 31st, September 1st, 2nd, 1954*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1954]), 25.

⁷ They were:

Miss Gwenyth Hubble (Baptist) U.K.	Miss Marion Royce (Anglican) Canada
Dean W G Muelder (Methodist) USA	Dr H Thimme (EKiD) Germany
Prof H Berkhof (Reformed) Netherlands	Prof S Verkovsky (Orthodox) USA
Mr A Dumas (Reformed) France	Mrs Cynthia Wedel (Prot. Episc.) USA
Canon S.L. Greenslade (Anglican) UK	Mrs A C Whitelaw (Reformed) New Zealand
Mrs R Karefa-Smart (Methodist) W.Africa	Mrs J D Wykeer (Disciples) USA
Miss J Lozada (Disciples) Argentina	Mrs M Lindström (Lutheran) Sweden

There were a few changes during the seven years vacancy was filled in 1955 by Miss Renuka Mukerji from India.

member of the working committee, while Philippe Maury of the WSCF and Helen Roberts of the World's YWCA continued as consultants to the new committee. In 1958 Hubble resigned and Roberts replaced her as co-chair of the working committee and also as a member of the committee of the Division of Ecumenical Action, while Hubble became the only woman on the working committee of the Department of Missionary Studies. Kathleen Bliss, who had chaired the former commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church was now chair of the committee on the Ecumenical Institute (the only working committee chaired by a woman) and Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, also a former member of the commission, was on the committee of the Department on the Laity.

The Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society

The period between the second and third assemblies was one of great activity for the newly-named Department of Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society. The work of the department was enlarged, in terms both of the activities it undertook and also in terms of the geographical expansion of its work, especially into Africa.⁸ This increased activity was due in part to the foundations which had been laid in the earlier period and to the decisions taken at Evanston which helped to clarify the aim and functions of the department. It was also due in large part to the commitment, energy and vision of Madeleine Barot, who was

⁸ See Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 28-36, for a summary of the Department's work during this period. May, *Bonds of Unity*, 53, lists all the consultations 1956-1961.

executive secretary to the department during the whole of this period. In the words of one of her colleagues, "She *was* the department."⁹

Barot's vision was of a department which could be as important to men as it was to women and she was unwavering in her commitment to the principles of cooperation and complementarity, even though these were often not understood or appreciated by those with whom she worked. While women, particularly those in church women's organisations, wanted the department to work for women, without men, most men thought it was concerned with "women's issues" which should be left to women.¹⁰ Barot however insisted that the position of women could not be considered in isolation, but was related to that of men, just as men's position was related to women. The difference between men and women was not to be denied or belittled, because it was the will of God who had made "mankind...bi-sexual so that they might exercise love and communion in the image of God".¹¹ On their own, in isolation from each other, neither man nor woman was complete: "They each reach their full nature only with the help of the other, they are only truly themselves in dialogue...in a reciprocal relationship, founded on grace, which is the same for each of them."¹²

For Barot marriage was an important paradigm of the relationship between man and woman, but "the idea of one sex complementing the other must be

⁹ Herzel, 133. The colleague was the Rev. William Clark who was associate executive secretary in the Department 1962-1965. Prior to his appointment Barot was assisted part of the time by an associate secretary; from 1956 to 1959 by Helen Turnbull and from 1959 to 1962 by Helen Morton. Turnbull was funded by a generous gift from the United Church Women (USA) and Morton may have been funded from the same source.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 132.

¹¹ Madeleine Barot, "Considerations on the Need for a Theology of the place of Women in the Church," *ER* 7 (1955), 156. Barot gives a reference to Karl Barth, *Kirkliche Dogmatik*, III/1,2,3,4 and to Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*.

¹² Jacques, *Madeleine Barot*, 150. My translation.

extended to every sphere of life...to social life and to the relationship between men and women at work, not merely to marriage".¹³ Cooperation or partnership should be the basis of relationships between the sexes in a Christian community and for Barot this meant men and women working *together* on questions to do with women's place in the Church. While it is true that, as Melanie May has pointed out; "her respect for the differences between women and men, as well as her accent on cooperation, distinguished Barot from feminists of her day", she was not alone in her thinking. Lutheran women at the second assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1952 had struggled against being segregated in a "women's section" and had developed concepts of partnership and cooperation, between men and women, based on Barth's theology of creation. Following the assembly the results of this work were published in a small book by Elisabeth Hahn, titled *Partnership*. Barot acknowledged that this work by the Lutherans had great influence on the work of her department, which in 1954 published an English translation of Hahn's book.¹⁴ Barot, too was influenced by aspects of Barth's theology, but where she and other women disagreed with him (as at Amsterdam) was over his interpretation of Pauline (and other) texts as requiring a hierarchical

¹³ Barot, "Considerations", 157

¹⁴ Elisabeth Hahn, *Partnership: A Contribution to the Problem of Equal Rights based on the work of Section VI ("Women in the Church") of the Lutheran World Federation Assembly at Hanover, Germany (1952)* (Geneva: Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, World Council of Churches, 1954). Barot acknowledged the influence of Hahn and the LWF women in her account of the history and *raison d'être* of the Department on Cooperation at a consultation in 1958. See *Report of the Consultation on Obstacles to the Cooperation of Men and Women in Working Life and in Public Service: Implications for the Work of the Department, held at Odense, Denmark, August 8-12, 1958*. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1958), 2. Otherwise this link seems to have been largely unrecognised.

ordering of the "partnership" between man and woman.¹⁵

In July 1955 the working committee of the Department on Cooperation met for the first time at Davos, Switzerland. A major achievement of this meeting was the drawing up of a statement on "Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society", which expressed the philosophy of the Department.¹⁶ (See Appendix II for the text). This statement, often referred to as the Davos Statement, represented the working committee's attempt at "sorting out the many different ideas existing on this subject, clarifying the issues and giving them objective expression", and clearly reflected Barot's thinking. The central committee, which met in Davos immediately after the working committee, received the statement and agreed to commend it to the member churches for their study and comment, recognising it as "the latest fruit of a long process of thought and consultation which had begun before the Amsterdam assembly."¹⁷

The statement affirms the basic concern of the department as the wholeness of the Church, a wholeness which can be achieved only when every part of the membership of the Church is enabled to participate fully in its life. It points to the biblical basis for cooperation between men and women which it sees not as an

¹⁵ Aspects of Barth's theology which influenced Barot, Hahn, and other women were his understanding that creation in the "image of God" consists in the human relationships between man and woman, that man and woman are equal before God in their creaturely existence, that they can only truly be male and female through their orientation to each other, and that what it means to be male or female in response to God's call in any age or place is an open issue. Barth affirmed gender difference but was opposed to cultural stereotyping based on gender. His arguments for woman's subordination to man were based not on woman's inferiority to man (as in traditional Christian anthropology) but on obedience to God's word (as he interpreted it). See Fiddes, "The Status of Woman..." for a helpful summary of Barth's thought.

¹⁶ *Minutes and Reports of the Eighth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Davos (Grisons), Switzerland, August 2-8, 1955* (Geneva: World Council of Churches [1955]), 47-49. The text was also published in *ER* 8 (1955): 72-73.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 47.

emphasis on the interest or insights of a single group in the Church but as an issue touching virtually all the doctrinal and practical matters with which the Church is concerned. It challenges the churches to demonstrate in their own life right relationships between men and women so that the world may be inspired and challenged to follow their example. It states that the department uses both theology and sociology to stimulate the churches to rediscover the full meaning of cooperation and is also concerned with measures and procedures for achieving that cooperation. It points out that:

If the implications of the cooperation of men and women in all doctrinal and practical issues of the Church were generally recognised by the member churches and the departments of the World Council of Churches, there would be no further need for this Department. For the good of the Church and the effectiveness of its witness in the world, it is necessary, for the present, to continue to emphasise this special concern.¹⁸

To achieve its purpose, the department held a number of consultations at which theological and sociological questions to do with cooperation between women and men were studied; at Herrenalb, Germany in 1956, at New Haven, USA in 1957, and at Odense, Denmark in 1958.¹⁹ "Odense marked the end of a solid ten years of work by a small group of people dedicated to the idea that although cooperation between men and women lies at the heart of the gospel of reconciliation, it is far from realised in the life of the church."²⁰

The department could have no direct effect on the churches. It could only encourage, stimulate and challenge them, and the churches were slow to change. Theological study did not necessarily result in practical changes and in late years

¹⁸ ibid., 48.

¹⁹ See Ans J. van der Bent, *Six Hundred Ecumenical Consultations 1948-1952* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 113-115 for details of these. See also Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 28-33.

²⁰ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 33.

Barot herself commented on the limitations of this approach, based as it was on dialogue "from above", saying that it was very dependent on "male church leaders' understanding of the dialogue".²¹

The report of the department on Cooperation to the central committee meeting in 1956 expressed an increased commitment to action:

The Department now seeks to translate the principle of cooperation of men and women into practical reality in the life of the churches, which have often been much slower than society to adapt to social changes...In the richness of ecumenical exchange, we hope to learn of many different ways in which such cooperation is contributing to the wholeness of the Body of Christ.²²

For the first time the department now began to pay more attention to the position of women within the WCC itself and to emphasise the need for cooperation of men and women there as well as in the Churches. A continuing question was:

How do we help the member Churches, on their parishes, regional and national boards, as well as the WCC on a world level, *where the decisions are being made*, to include a fair representation of women (and laymen also), so that creative cooperation and integration are possible instead of fragmentation as now?²³

One practical step towards the greater participation of women in the WCC structures was the drawing up of a list of women competent to serve on WCC committees and a proposal to do this, on the basis of names submitted by the churches, was made by the working committee at Davos in 1955. This was probably stimulated by a meeting with the executive secretary of the Department on Faith and Order, Dr J Robert Nelson, at which he said that Faith and Order would welcome more women members - and asked for the names of women

²¹ Jacques, *Madeleine Barot*, 156. My translation.

²² *Minutes and Reports of the Ninth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Galyatëto, Hungary, July 28-August 5, 1956* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1956]), 90.

²³ Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society "Minutes of the Working Committee, Herrenalb, July 19-22, 1956", 4. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. Original emphasis.

theologians.²⁴ (At the third world conference on Faith and Order, held in Lund in 1952, there were only two women among the 225 delegates, and in 1955 there were still no women members of the Faith and Order commission).

It was however at the working committee meeting held at New Haven in July, 1957, that questions to do with the representation of women on WCC committees and on the staff really became the focus of attention. Research had revealed that less than one-tenth of the WCC committee members were women, with six committees having only one woman, while there were no women serving on the important working committees of the Division of Studies, the commission on Faith and Order and the department of Missionary Studies, or on the finance committee of the central committee, the board of governors of the Ecumenical Institute, and the committee on Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty. The working committee of the department on Cooperation, the only committee with a majority of women, agreed that its chairman, Dean Muelder,²⁵ should write to the chairman of the nominations committee asking:

That women be included on all committees and that he express the serious concern that a greater proportion of women be included. Also it was noted with concern that there are very few women on the Senior Staff of the WCC, that no woman is in the upper échelon and that only one woman is head of a department, that department being the Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women.²⁶

²⁴ Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society. "Minutes of the Working Committee, Davos, July 1955", 6. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

²⁵ The Rev'd Gwyneth Hubble who had been co-chair with Dean Muelder resigned from the working committee at the Herrenalb meeting in 1956. In 1958 Miss Helen Roberts became co-chair. She had been associated with the department's work since the Baarn conference in 1948.

²⁶ Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society. "Minutes of the Working Committee, New Haven, Conn., July 21-25, 1957." TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

Dean Muelder duly wrote to Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, chairman of the nominations committee, expressing the departments' concerns and pointing out that "If cooperation is to be taken seriously it must be reflected in the committee structure and staffing of the World Council itself."²⁷

In reply the department was asked for a list of names of competent women who might be appointed to committees.

At the next meeting of the working committee (Nyborg Strand, 1958) thoughts turned to the third assembly which it had been decided would take place in 1961. It was decided to ask Visser 't Hooft about the possibility of having more women delegates at the assembly, and of having some women on the planning committee in preparation for the assembly (a committee which consisted of six men). The general secretary replied that the official letters of invitation suggested that women be included among the official delegates and suggested that the department might use its own constituency, perhaps by pointing out to churches the names of women who had had ecumenical experience.²⁸ (It seems that the department did not take this step, a possible reason being lack of staff resources). Here we see a pattern emerging, a pattern that was to continue. The department would press for the inclusion of more women, and would then be asked to supply the names of women who might be included. This might be seen as a rather one-sided form of cooperation in which the onus was on the department to do all the work - and the department was "a small one, with little budget, staff or resources".

A new factor affecting women's participation was noted by Madeleine Barot as the

²⁷ W Muelder to Dr F C Fry, 27 July, 1957. WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

²⁸ Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society. " Minutes of the Working Committee, Nyborg Strand, August 12-16, 1958." TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

assembly drew closer: "As the number of member churches of the WCC increases, so the number of official delegates to the official meetings from each Church decreases, and women are less likely to be appointed."²⁹

The results of the department's emphasis on increased participation of women in the WCC, as well as in the member churches, would be seen at the third assembly. Before then, there were other topics which engaged the attention of the department, including a struggle for its own continued existence. It also began to pay attention to the question of the ordination of women.

The Ordination of Women

The *Interim Report* of the enquiry into the Life and Work of Women in the Church, while noting that the subject of "women clergy" represented only one aspect of women's contribution to the Church and should not be allowed to overshadow the whole, and while acknowledging the controversial nature of the subject, also stressed its importance:

The full ordination of women to the Ministry is indeed a controversial subject. Perhaps no subject related to women in the church stands in such great need of full, ecumenical study as this one, not because of the great number of women who at this moment are seeking ordination, but because in certain groups throughout the world there is great interest and concern with the principles involved, and because it has important implications for church unity.³⁰

The ordination of women was discussed at Amsterdam by the Committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, resulting in a rather cautious statement:

²⁹ Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society. "Minutes of the Working Committee, St. Andrew's, Scotland, August 3-18, 1960," 4. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

³⁰ *Interim Report*, 35-36.

The Churches are not agreed on the important question of admission of women to the full ministry. Some churches for theological reasons are not prepared to consider the question of such ordination; some find no objection in principle but see administrative or social difficulties, some permit partial but not full participation in the work of the ministry; in others women are eligible for all offices of the Church. Those who desire the admission of women to the full ministry believe that until this is achieved the Church will not come to full health and power. We are agreed that this whole subject requires further careful and objective study.³¹

As described in the previous chapter even this was too much for some delegates but the *Revised Interim Report*, published soon after the assembly, repeated the material in the *Interim Report* and in addition suggested that a report on the subject might be prepared for the next assembly; based on "a full, ecumenical inquiry into the spiritual, biblical, theological and practical questions involved".³²

At the first meeting of the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church the question was raised as to its policy on the opening of the ordained ministry to women. Many churches apparently felt that their decisions should wait for the commission to report on the matter.

It was explained that the Commission was working on the subject through the Survey and through the study of man - woman relationships, but there was nothing binding on the churches to prevent them taking whatever action they wished to take; on the other hand every church in the World Council stands in an ecumenical context and is therefore responsible for the effects of its actions on the other churches.³³

The question of the ordination of women was thus taking shape as one with two aspects, aspects which were often to be in tension. On the one hand, the ordination of women was to do with the man-woman relationship, with women's

³¹ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 147. See Bliss, *Status and Service*, 136-161, for a helpful discussion of the situation regarding ordination of women in the churches c. 1950.

³² *Revised Interim Report*, 58.

³³ Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. "Minutes of the First Meeting, Bossey, 6-10 March, 1950", 14. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

participation, and therefore with the wholeness of the Church; on the other hand, it was to do with the nature of ministry in the church and therefore an issue which might cause division rather than unity within the ecumenical movement.³⁴

Related

to these two aspects was a question about which department of the WCC should deal with the issue (if, indeed, it was to be dealt with at all). Was it a matter for the department on Cooperation, which concerned itself with cooperation between men and women and with women's participation in the Church, or was it a matter for the department on Faith and Order, being a question which had to do both with belief (faith) and with ministry (order)? Faith and Order had however shown no interest in addressing the question in spite of, or perhaps because of, its implications for the unity of the Church.

Questions about the ordination of women did not go away and however much the department on Cooperation may have tried to keep a neutral stance, its very existence and its work tended to stimulate the discussion. If it was true, as Bliss wrote, that "without exception all Churches which have seriously discussed the question of women in the ministry have also had to look to the broader aspect of the place of *all* women in the Church,"³⁵ then it was also true that those who looked at the place of women in the Church were also likely to ask questions about the place of women in the ministry of the Church, including in the ordained ministry. Bliss had also noted that "the nearer a service of women approaches to the ministerial function, the more on edge the Churches are about it", arguing that

³⁴ Georgia Harkness has described how at the Madras International Missionary Conference of 1938 an attempt to have a statement giving encouragement to women in ministry was blocked by a bishop who said such a move would cause barriers to the ecumenical movement. This motion was defeated. See Georgia Harkness *Women in Church and Society: A Historical and Theological Enquiry*, (Nashville, Abingdon, 1977), 132.

the reason was that "the question of women in the ministry at once raises every other question on which there are divided counsels in most Churches".³⁶

The question of women's ordination was not raised at the Evanston assembly except in Barot's report on the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, where she related it, with other questions to do with women's participation in the churches, to "the conception held...on the nature of the ministry, service and priesthood, and on the nature of priesthood, and on the nature of consecration - the laying-on of hands or ordination". Barot pointed out that for this "technical study" the help of Faith and Order was needed but there was no response to her comments.³⁷

At the working committee meeting in Davos in 1955 Barot noted that the department had received many requests for documents on the participation of women in the full ministry of the Church, both for theological discussion and for information about what other churches were doing on the matter.

The problem of knowing in what measure the Department should adopt a definite position with regard to the question of the full ministry of women in the Church is constantly posed. Arguments brought forward against it by most of the Churches are mainly non-theological....³⁸

At the same meeting Barot did suggest to the executive secretary of the department on Faith and Order Dr Nelson, that Faith and Order might undertake a study on "the ministry of women in the context of the nature of the Church and in the light of the different traditions".³⁹ There was no response to this suggestion although Dr Hans Thimme, a member of the department on Cooperation working

³⁵ Bliss, *Status and Service*, 161.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 79.

³⁷ Barot, "Report to the Assembly", 2, 5.

³⁸ "Minutes of the Working Committee, Davos, 1955", 2.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 7.

group, "insisted on the fact that every study of Faith and Order is in fact connected with the problems faced by this department, that the question of the nature of the Church is also the question of the membership of the Church".⁴⁰

The Davos statement did not explicitly comment on the ordination of women but it did challenge the churches to consider questions of ministry:

To what extent have our Churches taken account of the new psychological, social, economic and political situations in the world and developed forms of ministry and service appropriate to the needs of these new situations? To what extent must the understanding of vocation, of mission, of service, and of various forms of the Christian ministry be re-examined, so that our Churches may demonstrate in their own life right relationships between men and women and inspire and challenge the world to work towards such relationships?⁴¹

Although the Davos statement was accepted by the central committee and commended to the churches, it evidently aroused some nervousness. Barot later wrote that some delegates feared the very existence of her department might raise unduly the question of the ordination of women to the full ministry of the church. According to her:

The discussion on this point was abruptly ended by Dr Visser 't Hooft's remarks that it was too late to cast doubts on the legitimate existence of a department which had been devised and approved by two successive Assemblies of the WCC. But it appears evident that our very existence is a cause of fear to some people.⁴²

The question of the ordination of women assumed new importance when in December 1957 the council of bishops of the Church of Sweden asked the general secretary of the WCC for a report on the facts about the ordination of women in the member churches and on the theological and biblical bases on which the decisions about ordination had been taken. Visser 't Hooft referred this request to

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *Minutes and Reports of the Eighth Meeting of the Central Committee*, 48.

⁴² *Herzel, A Voice for Women*, 28.

the department on cooperation and Madeleine Barot and Helen Turnbull met with representatives of the department on Faith and Order to discuss the possibility of a co-operative report. The response from Faith and Order was that "[It] could not consider the possibility of studying this subject until 1963 because of previous commitments, nor could it promise priority after 1963".⁴³ As there were almost six years to go before the fourth world conference on Faith and Order in 1963, this seems another expression of Faith and Order's reluctance to address the question.

A report compiled by Helen Turnbull on the basis of a questionnaire sent by the department on Cooperation to the WCC member churches was ready by May 1958. According to this survey, of the one hundred and sixty-eight member churches, forty-eight churches ordained women to the full ministry, while a further nine ordained them to a partial or irregular ministry. Ninety churches did not ordain women. Twenty-one supplied no definite information. Thus of the churches which replied approximately 38% ordained women to some form of ministry, while approximately 68% did not. This "Report on Women in the Ministry" was evidently regarded as a sensitive matter as the working committee agreed to keep it updated but not to publish it, supplying mimeographed copies only to those who requested it.⁴⁴ On September 27, 1958, the assembly of the

⁴³ "Minutes of the Working Committee, Nyborg Strand, 1958", 4.

⁴⁴ "The Ministry of Women. A working paper compiled at the request of the Church of Sweden by Helen B. Turnbull in two parts: (1) the facts about the ordination of women in the member churches of the World Council of Churches, (2) a brief summary of some of the theological and biblical bases, May 1958", TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. At the central committee meeting in 1958 a member asked "whether he was right in understanding the report as stating that the staff of the Department of Cooperation had been *advocating* the ordination of women to the ministry. It was answered that on the contrary the World Council secretariat had only responded through the Department of Cooperation to a request from the bishops of the Swedish Church for a summary of the facts concerning the present attitudes and practices of the member churches with regard to this question. No editorial position had been taken but the available material supplied by the member churches both for and against the ordination of women had been summarized as impartially as possible". *Minutes and*

Church of Sweden voted in favour of the full ordination of women, and the first three women were ordained in April 1960. Among them was Dr Margit Sahlin, who had participated at Baarn and Amsterdam, and who had been a member of the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church prior to the second assembly.

In July 1958 Barot attended a session of the Faith and Order working committee in Geneva, in order to speak on the department on Cooperation's work on the ordination of women. After explaining the documents which had been prepared in response to the Church of Sweden's request she stated the department's position:

It was clear to the Department that the question of the ordination of women was only a small item among very many fields where the attempt was being made to discover room for co-operation. Nevertheless, it was a question which ought to be taken seriously by the churches because there were some women who felt a definite call to the full ministry of their own church. Moreover, a great number of the laity considered that the Church should genuinely recognize and make use of all the gifts given by the Holy Spirit, including those given to the laity; thus the question of the place of women in the Church was very closely connected with the thinking about the place of the laity in the Church. People had very great difficulty in understanding the difficulties seen by theologians with regard to the problem of women. It raised again and again the question "What is the Church"?⁴⁵

Barot stressed that "in the main the question of ordination represented only a relatively minor aspect of a much wider problem",⁴⁶ that it was too large a question for the department on Cooperation with its limited resources to consider on its own, and that it should be discussed by Faith and Order. (The resources were

Reports of the Eleventh Meeting of the Central Committee, 1958, 34-35. In fact members of the department on Cooperation working committee were divided on this issue.

⁴⁵ Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Working Committee Meeting, 15-20 July, 1958, Geneva.* Faith and Order Paper No. 26. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1958]), 18.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

limited not only in terms of finance and personnel but also in terms of theological experience). In the discussion which followed it was stressed that Faith and Order too had limited resources, and there were some questions as to whether the ordination of women was really relevant to Christian unity, and therefore a legitimate topic for Faith and Order to study. The consensus was that it showed signs of becoming a "live issue for unity"⁴⁷ and might therefore be included in a possible future study of ministry. It was finally decided that the question should be deferred until 1963 when it would be considered by the full Faith and Order commission.

The next developments concerning the ordination of women occurred after the New Delhi assembly, although in 1960 Barot wrote an article on "Women and the Ministry" in which she described it as "a burning question...which no church can go on refusing to discuss now that it has been asked".⁴⁸

The Future of the Department on Cooperation at Risk

Prior to the third assembly in 1961 the WCC went through a process of re-examining its structure and programme in preparation for the incorporation of the International Missionary Council which was to take effect at the assembly. Consolidating or eliminating departments was a real possibility, and the department on Cooperation was one of those which came under threat. It became evident that "the vigour of the Department testified to the irrepressible energy and

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁸ Madeleine Barot, "Women and the Ministry", *Laity*, 9 (July 1960), 22.

ingenuity of Madeleine Barot, rather than to the institutional support of the World Council of Churches."⁴⁹

The department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society was in fact vulnerable. Its title reflected the diverse activities in which it was engaged, activities which appeared to overlap with those of other departments, especially the department on the Laity. The difficulty it found in engaging men in its work meant that in spite of its title it often looked like the very thing it did not want to be, that is, an international counterpart to the national church women's organisations. At the same time, it did not have the full support of some of these women's organisations because they disagreed with its decision to work with men. Its resources were limited, and not all the WCC authorities were convinced of the importance of its work. The title and purpose of the department were frequently questioned, for, as Barot pointed out to the central committee, the WCC was the only organisation which stressed cooperation between men and women:

All other organisations have either a department concerned with women's questions or group women in such a way as to segregate them, or have totally integrated them by trying to have at least one woman on the executive staff whose duties could just as well be entrusted to a man... We are often asked if the cooperation that we are trying to substitute for the present situation of co-existence is not a mere utopia...and more harmful than co-existence (i.e. the support of women's departments and women's organisations).⁵⁰

The working group meeting held at Spittal, Austria, in August, 1959, was enlarged by the presence of a number of "special consultants," members of the third assembly preparatory commission which was meeting at the same time.

⁴⁹ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 30.

⁵⁰ *Minutes and Reports of the Twelfth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rhodes, Greece, August 19-27, 1959* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1959], 166.

There was considerable discussion of the future of the department and the members of the working group expressed their opposition to the suggestion that the department on Cooperation might be merged with the department on the Laity and to any cut in staffing. They were however ready to consider a revision of the aims of the department to include family questions, something which they had in the past resisted on the grounds that these questions would tend to take priority and overshadow its other concerns.⁵¹ The department was now ready for a change of policy, dependent on the result of the merger of the IMC with the WCC. One of the reasons for this change was a growing awareness of the concerns of Christians in Asia and Africa, developed through Barot's travels and through the addition of an Asian woman to the working committee.⁵²

Faced with questions about its future, the department continued to challenge the WCC and its member churches.

The Department has a concern for the *wholeness* of the Church. Wholeness and unity belong together. The idea of wholeness and unity of the Church reflects a close connection between ecclesiology and anthropology...What are the implications for the future of the WCC of the readiness of Christians in Eastern Asia to face their problems together as men and women? Are the conservative tendencies of the European churches holding back the proportional representations of men and women in the full life of the Church?⁵³

At the next meeting of the working committee, held at St Andrew's, Scotland in August 1960, concurrently with the meeting of the WCC central committee,

⁵¹ Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society, "Minutes of Enlarged Working Committee, Spittal, Austria, August 4 - 13, 1959", TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

⁵² See Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 33-36, for a description of Barot's travels in Africa and Asia during this period. Miss Renuka Mukerji, principal of Madras Women's Christian College, had joined the working group in 1955.

⁵³ "Minutes of Enlarged Working Committee, Spittal, 1959".

matters came to a head. Eugene Carson Blake, general secretary of the WCC, acting on behalf of the WCC committee on Programme and Finance, presented to the working committee a plan according to which the department on Cooperation would be merged with the department on the Laity, forming a joint men's and women's department within which there would be a "secretariat" (of one staff person) to continue the special interests of the department on Cooperation. One reason for this proposal was financial, while another was:

The fact that, despite its name, this Department is regarded as the "Women's Department" of the WCC, and the fear that its very existence might delay the full integration of women in the churches and countries which are ready for it - and in the work of the WCC itself.⁵⁴

The working committee was not surprised by this proposal, and neither was it prepared to accept it. Rather, it agreed that the department should have a limited life and quoted the Davos statement of 1955 in which it had looked to a time when there would be no further need for its work. It did not think that this time had arrived, arguing that in "although considerable progress has been made in the past five years, we believe that the time has not yet come to discontinue the department", and that:

It would be a serious discouragement to many now at work in this field, and a disservice to the Churches, if a change were to be made before the objectives of the department have been more nearly achieved. Such a change might well be interpreted as indicating that the World Council of Churches had lost interest in the question of the service and status of women. It is still a fact that the member churches and the World Council itself have not an adequate number of women in their delegations, their committees and their staff.⁵⁵

It noted that it had had little success in persuading other WCC departments to invite women to cooperate in their work and that "official representatives of the

⁵⁴ Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society. "Minutes of the Working Committee, St. Andrews, Scotland, August 3 - 18, 1960".

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 9.

churches and men in general" showed little interest in more cooperation with women. The goal of cooperation between women and men had hardly been achieved when:

on the different committees of the WCC less than ten per cent of their members are women, and in the General Secretariat and among heads of Department of the WCC the proportion is even smaller (although, nonetheless, it is higher than the proportion of women in the governing bodies of the member churches).⁵⁶

The proposed merger would have serious consequences for women's participation:

Even if the women obtained a fair proportion of seats in the new Committee on the Laity, the general proportion of women serving on the Committees of the WCC would be reduced...Unless the Department on the Laity decided to have a woman as its Director, it is more than likely that there will no longer be a woman among the Heads of Department.⁵⁷

It would also have serious consequences for the way in which the WCC was perceived by women.

The majority...would certainly consider such a decision as a step backwards, as if the WCC had gone back on its determination to raise the question of the position of women in the Church. This change...would be in danger of being attributed to pressure from reactionary elements in the churches and from the most conservative churches.⁵⁸

Members of the department on Cooperation argued that far from being merged with the department on the Laity it should maintain its separate identity and be strengthened. They therefore made a counter-proposal to the central committee, that the department would add to its programme the work on "Home and Family Life" previously undertaken by the IMC, expressing their willingness

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 7-8.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 8.

"to accept this added responsibility, since the cooperation of men and women in the home and family life is already one of our basic concerns".⁵⁹

The central committee finally voted to retain the department but to change its name to the department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, and to add a new clause to its functions:

To assist churches and Christian councils to discover and express the significance of the Christian faith in the realms of marriage and family life particularly in the context of other religions and secularism.⁶⁰

In order to cope with its increased responsibilities the department staff was to be enlarged to two.

Conclusions

In 1960 the future of the department on Cooperation was assured, at least for a time, and in a report prepared for the third assembly stated that:

The scope of the work has been extended from the consideration of the role of women in the Church to include the whole complex of man-woman relationships in every aspect of society... The work to be done is far greater than as yet has been accomplished.⁶¹

As the department had begun to extend its contacts into Africa and Asia the geographical scope of its work was also widened, although it was to be some time before it would lose its rather eurocentric focus.

Contacts with Orthodox churches had been slight during this period although two Orthodox men, first Professor Verkovsky and then Professor Istavidris, had been members of the working group. The latter made a

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 11.

contribution at a 1960 consultation⁶² while three Orthodox attended a 1957 consultation on "The Renewal of the Church",⁶³ but Orthodox participation in the department's work

had been limited to these occasions. It was therefore a significant step forward when in 1959, just prior to the central committee meeting in Rhodes, Greece, the department held a consultation in Athens, attended by twenty Greek Orthodox women and ten representatives of the departments on Cooperation and the Laity. Barot reported that the three day meeting was too short but:

This experiment showed that women's work encounters very similar difficulties and joys in churches of Protestant and Orthodox traditions alike - and that there was a rich reward from the exchange of information and the casting away of prejudices based on misinformation...This first meeting was marked by the joy of mutual discovery. Plans have been made to follow it up.⁶⁴

It was to be some time before these plans reached fruition but at least a first small step had been made towards the inclusion of more Orthodox participants in the work of the department.

The consultation held by the department on Cooperation prior to the third assembly bore witness to the extension of the department's range and functions. It was also an example of a "Barot strategy" by which Barot would arrange a consultation immediately before another, larger conference, timed so that women could be present at the larger meeting by staying on, while some men who were delegates to the conference could arrive a bit earlier in order to attend the

⁶⁰ *Minutes and Reports of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, St. Andrews, Scotland, August 16-24, 1960.* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1960]), 142.

⁶¹ *Evanston to New Delhi*, 90.

⁶² *See Report of the Consultation on Towards Responsible Cooperation between Men and Women, our Christian Responsibility* (Geneva: Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society, 1960).

⁶³ *See Report of the Consultation on the Renewal of the Church, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., July 15-20, 1957* (Geneva: WCC, 1957).

consultation.⁶⁵ Held in Madras in November, 1961, its focus was on questions of marriage and Christian family life within an Asian context.⁶⁶ Forty participants, twenty-two women and twelve men, from thirty countries attended this consultation, the first initiated by the department in Asia. As well as focussing on marriage and family life, they also addressed the question of women's participation in the renewal of the Church:

It was agreed that the primary question is not one of prestige, office-seeking or proportional representation, but of finding ways in which women as well as men can make their best contribution to the upbuilding of the Body of Christ...The urgent task is to seek constantly the renewal of the Church, one manifestation of which will be the co-operation of men and women toward common ends. It must be recognised, however, that certain traditional patterns and assumptions regarding the place of women in church and society still prevail in almost all countries, which prevent the free and natural emergence of women to places of responsibility. It is the special obligation of *men* to work for the reconstruction of these patterns, many of which are man-imposed.⁶⁷

Within the WCC itself and in its member churches it seemed as though traditional patterns and assumptions still prevailed to a large degree and that men on the whole were not yet convinced of their obligation to work for the reconstruction of these patterns. After ten years of hard work, numerous consultations, meetings, studies, reports and publications, first by the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church and then by the department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society, women's participation in the WCC was only marginally greater than it had been in 1948.

⁶⁴ *Minutes and Reports of the Twelfth Meeting of the Central Committee*, 165-166.

⁶⁵ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 34, describes this strategy which Barot first used in 1958 for a consultation held in Ibadan, Nigeria, just before the first assembly of the AACC. The Madras consultation ended two days before the third assembly of the WCC began in New Delhi.

⁶⁶ See *Report of the Consultation held at Women's Christian College, Madras, on Changing Patterns of Men-Women Relationships in Asia*, (Geneva: Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, 1962).

The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, 1961

The third assembly of the WCC, which took place in New Delhi, India, 19 November - 5 December 1961, was the first assembly to meet in Asia. As the more than one thousand participants gathered for the opening worship they found themselves in an atmosphere that was distinctively Indian. The service was held in a vast Shamiana (tent), decorated with Indian hangings and as a prelude the choir sang Indian Christian lyrics to an Indian musical accompaniment. "No one could fail", wrote one participant, "to realize that something new was happening to the life of the World Council". If the setting was obviously Asian, the occasion was obviously ecumenical.

The procession included men and women from every race and every continent. Their colourful national ecclesiastical costumes, variegated beyond description, bore visual testimony to the fact that never before had there been a Christian gathering representative of so wide a diversity both of historical background and of geographical extent. Among the nearly 200 churches represented were some bodies that were the most ancient in Christian history and others that were fruits of missionary work of the last century.⁶⁸

Twenty churches had joined the WCC during the period 1955-1960 and a further twenty-three were about to be admitted at New Delhi, thus making it more truly a *world* council, with an increased participation of "younger" churches and of Orthodox churches from Eastern Europe. Of the twenty-three new member churches eleven were from the African continent, two from the Pacific Islands, two were Pentecostal churches (the first to join the WCC) from South America and four were Orthodox, namely the Russian, Bulgarian, Rumanian and Polish

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 32. Original emphasis.

Orthodox churches. These newcomers brought the total number of member churches to one hundred and ninety-eight. Also present for the first time were five official observers from the Roman Catholic Church, authorised by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

The New Delhi assembly is significant in the history of the WCC because it was the first assembly held in Asia and because it brought together a more widely representative body of Christians from a greater number of churches than the two previous assemblies. It was also the assembly at which the International Missionary Council finally became integrated with the WCC, a commission and a division on World Mission and Evangelism being created to continue the work of the IMC within the structures of the WCC.

The assembly theme, which served more as a guiding principle than as a topic of study and debate, was "Jesus Christ - the Light of the World". Although this theme was, like that at Evanston, decidedly christocentric, it was at New Delhi that the WCC Basis which, as agreed at Amsterdam was christocentric, was amplified and made more trinitarian.⁶⁹

In his report to the assembly, central committee chairman Dr Franklin Clark Fry referred to the tremendous pace of life in the world in the past seven years and to the role of the WCC:

The winds of history....have blown increasingly and with gale force, here and there twisting into actual cyclones. The acceleration of events, without and within the Council, has been relentless, often frightening...Actually, our council, acting in the churches behalf, sees itself called not only into the tide of

⁶⁸ *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 1. The comment was made by Samuel McCrea Cavert, who had been present at both the previous assemblies.

⁶⁹ To the original first clause of the constitution, "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which accept the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour" was added, "according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together with common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, son, and Holy Spirit". See *ibid.* 152-159.

events but to be ahead of them - and that is where it has earnestly striven to be.⁷⁰

Among the issues on which the chairman thought the WCC had been "commendably in the van" was "the emerging status of women" in which it had "interested itself constructively".⁷¹ How were the results of this "constructive interest" manifested in the assembly itself?

Women as members of the assembly

Present at the assembly were 577 delegates representing 197 member churches in about seventy different countries. (Five delegates from East Germany were absent as they could not get permission to leave their country). To these were added 108 advisers (previously called consultants), 100 youth participants, 59 fraternal delegates, 45 observers, and 120 guests, making a total of 1,006 participants. Also present were 297 staff, over half of whom were co-opted, and a press corps of 350 accredited media representatives.

About one third of the delegates came from North America, one-third from Europe, and one third from the rest of the world. Of these 20% came from Asia and 7.5% from Africa. Representation from Latin America remained small at 2.7% while Australia and New Zealand together accounted for 5.8% of the delegates.

At the request of the central committee the member churches had been asked by the general secretary to choose their delegations with a view to including "clergy and laity, men and women, different racial and ethnic groups, and those

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 335.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 336.

with a competence in the major interests of the WCC."⁷² In spite of this request only 18% (102) of the delegates were lay people, far below the goal of one-third. According to one commentator this imbalance between clergy and laity was natural, for obviously "the smaller churches would tend to seek an ordained leader if they had only one place to fill".⁷³ In fact it was not just churches with small delegations which chose to send only ordained males as their representatives. If the proportion of laity was small, the proportion of women was even smaller with only forty-two female delegates, of whom one was ordained (the Rev. Isabelle Merry, who with a male cleric represented the Congregational Union of Australia). Thus women delegates were 7.2%, a slight gain from the first assembly where they were only 5.7%, but a decrease from the 8.7% at the second assembly. They were considerably outnumbered by the Orthodox delegates (all male) who together accounted for almost 12% of the delegates.

The largest delegation was that from the Methodist Church, USA. In a total of forty-three members (which included sixteen from overseas churches), only five were women. The Orthodox churches sent no women though both the Church of Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate had quite large delegations of seventeen men. The Church of England sent three women and twenty-one men. Some of the smaller churches had a better proportion of women to men. The National Baptist Convention, the Evangelical United Brethren, and the Presbyterian Church, American churches with delegations respectively of five, six and four members, each included one woman, as did the Church of Norway, the Church of

⁷² *Minutes and Reports of the Twelfth Meeting of the Central Committee*, 63.

⁷³ Kenneth Slack, *Despatch from New Delhi: The Story of the World Council of Churches Third Assembly, New Delhi, 18 November - 5 December 1961* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 19.

Denmark, and the Swiss Protestant Federation, each of which sent five representatives. The Korean Methodist Church had a delegation consisting of one woman and one man, while the Presbyterian Church of Wales sent a laywoman as its only delegate. The Church of South India and the Burma Baptist Church each included a woman in their delegations while three of the five Methodist Church (USA) women delegates came from Asia, two from India and one from Sarawak. The great majority of women delegates came however from Western churches, thus continuing the trend at the two previous assemblies.

Of the one hundred and eight advisers thirteen were women as were three of the forty-five observers and three of the fifty-nine fraternal delegates, while twenty of the one hundred youth delegates were women. The participation of women in the "non-delegate" categories was thus 16%, an increase over the 11.8% in these categories at Evanston, although the percentage of women delegates had declined.

Among those women who were present the majority were at their first assembly. While some of these newcomers were to become significant leaders in the WCC⁷⁴ this meant that there was a certain lack of experienced women at New Delhi. Kathleen Bliss (delegate), Mildred Horton and Anna Swain (advisers), and Madeleine Barot (staff) were the only women who had been at Amsterdam. Only six members of the working group of the department on Cooperation were present, plus of course Barot and her associate secretary, Helen Morton. These six were Renuka Mukerji, Helen Roberts, Cynthia Wedel, Professor Berkhof, Dean Muelder, and Dr Thimme. This meant that few advocates for the department were present.

⁷⁴ For example, Marga Bührig (delegate), Kiyoko Takeda Cho (adviser) and Cynthia Wedel (adviser) were all to become WCC presidents.

Women in leadership roles

With so few women present at the assembly it is perhaps not surprising that they played little part in its leadership. Mildred Horton was co-chair of the section on Witness, the eleven other officers of the three sections all being men. Kathleen Bliss chaired the message committee but both the chairman and the secretary of the assembly committee on the department on Cooperation of Men and Women were men. The only other woman officer of a committee (out of a total of forty) was Miss Mollie Batten, like Kathleen Bliss a member of the Church of England, who acted as secretary to the committee on the Ecumenical Institute. Miss Batten was also the only woman to give a plenary presentation, speaking with two men in a general session on "The Laity: The Church in the World". Two other women, Miss A Frasz (an adviser from the Protestant Church in Indonesia) and Dr Mary Moore (a medical missionary from Scotland) spoke in panel discussions. Women took no part in leading worship or preaching. In terms of leadership women certainly participated less than at the two previous assemblies, being in fact virtually invisible.

The Report of the Committee on the Department on Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society

The assembly accepted the proposal that the department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society be renamed the department on Cooperation between Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, and that included in its functions should be the new clause:

To assist churches and Christian Councils to discover and express the significance of the Christian faith in the realms of marriage and family life particularly in the context of other religions and secularism.⁷⁵

This extension of the department's mandate was reflected in the report of the assembly committee on the department which was chaired by Bishop John W Sadiq (Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon). Although the report was divided into three sections, dealing with cooperation in the church, the family and society, the section on the family was considerably longer and contained many more recommendations than the other two sections.

The report noted that real progress among the member churches of the WCC and in the ecumenical movement had been made in the cooperation of men and women and that "the *principle* is now widely accepted that women cooperate freely with men as fellow-members of the Body of Christ." At the same time, it emphasised that "the *acceptance of the principles of cooperation is not enough* and that attention must now be focussed on their practical application"⁷⁶

The report pointed out that a number of member churches permitted the ordination of women to the ministry of Word and Sacraments and that other professionally trained women were being used by many churches but that at the same time women were often given neither the status commensurate with their talents and education, nor the encouragement to develop their full potential, and that as a result "the contribution which they can bring as women is thus obscured". With regard to church policy-making bodies, boards, assemblies, courts and so on, the committee had to acknowledge that "in many places effective co-operation is neither recognised nor practised".

⁷⁵ *The New Delhi Report*, 354.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 208, 209. Original emphasis.

The report went on to state that:

In this respect, it was unanimously agreed by the Committee to draw to the attention of the Assembly the *very small place given to women in the nominations to the new Central Committee and the Commission on Faith and Order*.⁷⁷

As at the Amsterdam assembly this comment came *after* the nominations and elections process and therefore too late to have any influence on the results - and no action was taken to recommend that the process would be any different at the next assembly.

The committee did however recommend that:

Churches which employ ordained women and professional women church workers examine the ways in which they are being used and consider how best they may be enabled to make a distinctive and significant contribution, and also give consideration to the contribution of other women including the opening of lay offices and policy-making boards at present open only to men.⁷⁸

This recommendation was accepted by the assembly, but an amendment proposed by a Salvation Army delegate, that "the assembly encourage a wider opportunity for the use of women as ordained ministers", was opposed by both Anglican and Orthodox representatives, on the grounds that as a question of principle it lay outside the mandate of the WCC and should not be debated by the assembly.⁷⁹

The amendment was withdrawn, but support was expressed for the suggestion in the report that there ought to be a thorough study of the effectiveness of women in the ministry in those churches where they were ordained.

The question of the ordination of women was taken up also in the report of the assembly committee on Faith and Order which requested the working committee of the Commission on Faith and Order "to establish a study of the

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 209-210. Original emphasis.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 217.

theological, biblical and ecclesiological issues involved in the ordination of women".⁸⁰ In the debate which followed, Dr George Johnston (United Church, Canada), secretary to the committee on the department on Cooperation, asked that study of these issues be not limited to Europe and that the study should be carried out in close conjunction with the department on Cooperation, but there was no other attempt to integrate the work of the two groups on the ordination of women.

In the discussion at New Delhi of the ordination of women we can see several tendencies which were to develop in future years as this subject became more prominent within the WCC. First, the ordination of women was raised in relation to two different departments of the WCC: the department on Cooperation and the commission on Faith and Order. While the former had as its primary concern *women* in the church, the latter had as its priority the *unity* of the church. Thus each approached the topic from a rather different angle. While the report of the committee on the Department of Cooperation accepted ordination of women as a reality in some churches and thought it desirable to collect information about women ministers and their experiences, the committee on Faith and Order recommended a theological study of the issues involved in the ordination of women (the kind of study first suggested at Amsterdam). There was little interest in integrating these two approaches, each of which seemed to address a different constituency within the assembly. The plenary discussion revealed once again the extreme sensitivity of some churches for whom this was not even a matter which could be debated. This was a position which the Orthodox in particular were to continue to hold.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 171. This was listed last among a number of areas of study proposed for churches in Europe as they grappled "with the problems caused by 'the rapid drift toward the various

Nominations and elections

During the assembly one honorary president, six presidents, and a central committee of 100 members (increased from 90 in order to "provide for representation of the missionary interests of the churches") were elected by the delegates, on the recommendation of the nominations committee. This committee consisted of ten men and one woman (the Rev. Isabelle Merry). The first nomination, that of Dr J H Oldham, who had been the secretary of the Edinburgh Conference in 1910, as honorary president, was greeted with prolonged applause. The election of the presidium proceeded without debate and resulted in six male presidents. For the first time, two laymen were among those elected to the presidium, along with an Anglican archbishop, an Orthodox archbishop, a German church president, and a recently ordained Indian educator.⁸¹

In proposing the nominees for the central committee the chairman of the nominations committee pointed out that the committee had taken into account the principles in the WCC rules, according to which there was to be a fair and adequate confessional and geographical representation of the member churches, and adequate representation of lay persons - both men and women - "so far as the composition of the Assembly makes this possible". As central committee members (unlike the presidents) had to be elected from the delegates, and as the

forms of materialistic secularism and sophisticated nihilism'." The ordination of women seems a rather strange addition to this paragraph.

⁸¹ They were: Sir Francis Ibiam, a layman (Presbyterian Church of Nigeria), chairman of the AACC and governor of Eastern Nigeria; Mr Charles Parlin (Methodist Church, USA), lawyer; the Most Rev. Arthur Michael Ramsey (Church of England), Archbishop of Canterbury; the Most Rev. Iakovos, Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Americas (who had been elected to the presidium by the central committee in 1959 as a replacement for Archbishop Michael who had died); the Rev. Dr Martin Niemöller (Evangelical Church in Germany), a member of the WCC executive committee since

number of women was not only small but also restricted to a small number of churches it was in fact obviously unlikely that many would make it on to the central committee and this proved to be the case. The proposals of the nominations committee were received with little discussion, and no discussion at all of the fact that there were only five women nominees. The election proceeded and resulted in the election of the original hundred nominees. The new central committee thus elected consisted of eighty-four male clergy and sixteen laypeople, of whom nine were men and five were women.⁸² Including the six presidents, who were ex officio members of the central committee, lay representation was 16%, while women were a mere 4.7% of the membership of the body which would govern the WCC in the period until the fourth assembly.

The assembly also elected 120 members of the commission on Faith and Order, on the nomination of the committee on the department of Faith and Order. Those nominations were not restricted to delegates, and several questions were raised by those who wished other churches or geographical areas to be represented. The balloting sustained the nominations presented by the committee, with the result that for the first time a woman was elected to the Faith and Order commission; Miss Christian Howard of the Church of England.

The fact that so few women were nominated in the election process seems to have been unquestioned until the report of the committee on the Department on Cooperation of Men and Women which did draw attention to *"the very small*

Amsterdam; the Rev. Dr David Moses (United Church of Northern India and Pakistan), vice-chairman of the former IMC and chairman of the NCC of India.

⁸² They were: Dr Kathleen Bliss, Church of England; Miss Frances Kapitzky, United Church of Christ, USA; Mrs Sadie Tillman, Methodist Church, USA; Mrs M G Wyllie, Methodist Church, Australasia; Dr Ivy Chou, Methodist Church of the USA, Sarawak.

place given to women in the nominations to the new Central Committee and the Commission on Faith and Order"⁸³ but without suggesting any action to rectify the situation. Obviously for most delegates at the assembly (who were of course mostly men) this was not a matter of concern.

Conclusions

The New Delhi assembly was significant for a number of reasons, among them the expansion of the WCC through new membership into a more truly world body, including more churches from the "Third World" and much greater Orthodox participation. The IMC was integrated into the WCC, the WCC Basis was extended, and an important definition of the unity of the church was worked out.⁸⁴ Once again an important place was given to the "lay question" especially in the section on Witness which emphasised the role of lay people in carrying the message of the gospel to the secular world.

The assembly spoke strongly against racial discrimination in the churches and in society and particularly in church leadership:

Denominations in their own structures must give a lead to ensure that there is no race discrimination in the church. The churches are further called to utilise people of different races in positions of leadership, on the basis of merit only...Churches should give equal opportunity for training to all potential leaders and take special pains to foster the gifts of those less privileged...⁸⁵

There was however still no recognition of discrimination based on gender.

With regard to participation of women, the New Delhi assembly was little different from the Amsterdam assembly and thirteen years of work, first by the commission on the Life and Work of Women in the church and then by the

⁸³ *The New Delhi Report*, 210. Original emphasis.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 116.

department on Cooperation between Men and Women seemed to have resulted in little change. Women were poorly represented in church delegations and in leadership roles, they were largely ignored in the important elections which took place, the question of the ordination of women continued to be seen as divisive. If indeed the *principle* of cooperation had been widely accepted, the New Delhi assembly showed that this principle was still to be put into practice within the WCC itself, as well as in its member churches. Although both the name and the functions of the department on Cooperation had been expanded, its functions still did not include radical questioning of the structures of discrimination against women.

Referring to the growth of the WCC at New Delhi an experienced ecumenist commented that "such growth does not always make for comfort, but it makes for reality".⁸⁵ At New Delhi the reality which was still ignored, perhaps because it was just too uncomfortable, was that women make up at least half the membership of the Church.

⁸⁵ ibid., 104. See also 187-8, 102-105.

⁸⁶ Slack, *Despatch from New Delhi*, 50.

CHAPTER 5

FROM NEW DELHI TO UPPSALA: 1961-1968

The six and a half years between the third and fourth assemblies of the WCC were eventful for the world, for the churches, and for the whole ecumenical movement, including the WCC. The world of the 1960s was one in which new technology resulted in world-wide instant communication and a growing sense that the world was a "global village." It was also a world characterised by increasing urbanisation, a growing gulf between rich and poor nations, and a population explosion. Politically it was a tumultuous period, from the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 to the assassination of US civil rights leader Martin Luther King shortly before the Uppsala assembly at which he was to have preached the opening sermon. There were continuing tensions in the Middle East, conflict in Nigeria, racism in South Africa, the US, Britain and other countries, and the prolonged agony of the Vietnam War. Rebellious youth and student revolts bore witness to a growing generation gap. All these events and movements in the world affected the churches in some way, while at the same time they were also experiencing internal tensions. Theological storms were raised in the US by the "death of God" movement and in Britain by the "Honest to God" debate and in many churches there were increasing theological divisions and confusion and controversy where there had once been certainty. The development of the charismatic movement was another factor which affected many churches around the world.

Ecumenically the most important event during this period was the Second Vatican Council, held in four sessions from 1962 to 1965, one result of which was the new involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement and a developing relationship between the RCC and the WCC. For the WCC it was a time of growth during which thirty-six churches were admitted as members and nine as associate members (a new category created for churches with fewer than ten thousand members). By 1965 all the autocephalous and autonomous Eastern Orthodox churches had become members, thus greatly strengthening the Orthodox presence. Two major world conferences were held under the auspices of the WCC during this period: the fourth world conference on Faith and Order, held in Montreal in 1963, and the world conference on Church and Society held in Geneva in 1966, both of which are discussed in this chapter.

An event of great significance within the WCC was the retirement at the end of 1966 of Dr Willem Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the WCC since its foundation. He was replaced by an American, Dr Eugene Carson Blake (United Presbyterian Church in the USA), who had been actively involved in the WCC since the Evanston assembly.¹

Immediately after the New Delhi assembly the new central committee had elected as its officers Dr Franklin Clark Fry, an American Lutheran, and Dr Ernest Payne, a British Baptist. When Blake was appointed as general secretary Fry, who was chairman of the central committee, offered his resignation so as not to have two of the chief positions in the WCC filled by men of the same nationality.

¹ See Ans J van der Bent, "Blake, Eugene Carson," in *DEM*, 107-108 for a brief description of his career.

His resignation was not received but a second vice-chairman, Dr J Russell Chandran of India, was appointed to create somewhat of a balance. This practice of two vice-chairmen, which was allowed in the WCC rules, continued after the fourth assembly although there was no longer the same need for it and provided an opening for women's leadership. Franklin Clark Fry died only weeks before the assembly which was thus deprived of his ecumenical experience, dating back to the first assembly, and his skilful leadership in the chair.

All the office-holders in the WCC during this period were men and on the executive committee, now increased from twelve to fourteen members, there were only two women, namely Kathleen Bliss and Dr Ivy Chou.² These two were certainly not nonentities, being described by Charles Parlin, one of the presidents, as "Dr Kathleen Bliss, who is perhaps the most articulate of the [central committee] membership...[and] Dr Ivy Chou, a striking personality who speaks effectively for the people of the East and the newer churches of the Orient."³

However with only five women on the central committee and none among the officers it was clear that the principle of cooperation between men and women still received little real recognition or support when it came to the Council's decision-making structures. In 1961, immediately following the third assembly, the nominations committee in its report to the central committee heard that in the process of appointing new divisional and departmental committees "approximately

² Chou, a member of the Methodist Church, came from Sarawak. She was an accredited visitor at the Evanston assembly in 1954, invited by the WCC, and was appointed as a delegate to the New Delhi assembly by the Methodist Church, USA, as one of its overseas representatives. In the list of participants at the Uppsala assembly in 1968 she is referred to as the Rev. Dr Ivy Chou. From 1961 to 1968 she was a member of the executive committee and also served on the board of the Ecumenical Institute and on the DEA committee.

200 of the 250 or so places have been filled, and notes that only 25 women have been included - and that six committees as yet include no women, six committees include one woman, and six more only two women each in a normal membership of 15."⁴

The problem had been noted but further appointments did not increase the number of women significantly. Only the Division of Ecumenical Action, which included among its concerns women, laity and youth, had a woman (Kathleen Bliss) as chair of its working committee. There were five women among the eighteen members of the working committee of the department on the Laity, the largest number on any committee except that of the department on Cooperation of Men and Women. That committee was chaired by a man, Dr Hans Thimme (Evangelical Church in Germany) who, with Miss Renuka Mukerji, was the only member of the previous committee, although Prof André Dumas rejoined the committee in 1962. Miss Freda Gwilliam, an educational adviser with the Ministry of Overseas Development in England, acted as co-chair of the committee which in 1961 included six men and six women.⁵ The model of shared responsibility through male and female co-chairs was not followed by any other department or division.

The influential Faith and Order commission had only one woman member (Miss Christian Howard, Church of England), who was also the only woman

³ Charles C Parlin, "Are Laymen Being Muzzled?" *ER* 14 (1962), 474.

⁴ *Minutes and Reports of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, India, December 6-7, 1961* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.), 8.

⁵ Among the new members were Mrs Marie Assaad (Coptic Orthodox), who was to have a long involvement with women in the WCC, and Dr Liselotte Nold, a German Lutheran, who was to play a prominent role in contacts with Roman Catholic women.

among 232 delegates at the fourth world conference on Faith and Order, held in Montreal in 1963. The Church and Society world conference held in 1966 was, unlike the Faith and Order world conference, very much a lay conference, and yet still had only 23 women members out of 420 participants. The responsibility lay with the churches which for the most part did not choose women as their delegates but the WCC did little to encourage the churches to increase women's participation and in areas over which the WCC could exercise some control the situation was little different. There were still few women in executive staff positions, the DEA with a staff of four women and twelve men having a larger proportion of women than the other divisions.

The World Conference on Church and Society

The world conference on Church and Society held in Geneva, 12-26 July, 1966, was the third world conference to deal primarily with the questions of Church and Society, following on the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm in 1925, and the world conference on Church, Community and State held by the Life and Work movement in Oxford in 1937. It was prepared by the WCC department on Church and Society following the WCC assembly in New Delhi where it became apparent that progress in ecumenical social thought required a world-wide conference on Church and Society. The mandate for the conference was "to look at the problems of society in the modern world from the perspective of God's call to Man, and thus help to develop a body of theological

and ethical insights which will assist the churches in their witness in contemporary history."⁶

Meeting to discuss the theme, "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of our Time," the conference brought together 420 participants, including 338 officially nominated church representatives. These were appointed according to a new process by which the WCC selected participants from panels of names proposed by the churches, thus making it possible to achieve a better balance. It was in fact the first world ecumenical conference in which lay people were in the majority (180 to 158 theologians and clergy) and in which there was an equal number of participants from the non-western and the western worlds.⁷ When it came to women however there was not the same concern to achieve a proper balance⁸ and even though lay people were, for a change, a majority they were mostly lay *men*. Only twenty-seven of the participants (6.4%) were women. Women were involved to some extent in leadership of the conference. Dr Margaret Mead, the well-known American anthropologist, who had been a member of the Church and Society working committee since the New Delhi assembly, had played a major role in planning the conference and co-chaired one of the four sections. Miss Janet Lacey, director of Christian Aid for the BCC, was the "token female" among the eight presidents of the conference and chaired the

⁶ *Minutes and Reports of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Paris, France, August 7-16, 1962* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.), 141.

⁷ *Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time: World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, July 12-26, 1966. The Official Report* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967), 9-10.

⁸ *The Official Report* breaks participants down into categories such as political leaders and civil servants, businessmen and industrialists, workers or trade union leaders, pastors, professors of social ethics and so on and gives the figures of regional participation but nowhere classifies participants according to gender.

worship committee.⁹ Barbara Ward, a well-known English economist present as a Roman Catholic guest, was one of a panel of four speakers at one of the major plenaries. Madeleine Barot was present as one of the staff.

Although women's participation in the conference was somewhat limited numerically, the department on Cooperation had published as one of the background documents for the conference a small book titled *Man and Woman: Similarity and Difference*.¹⁰ Written by Francine Dumas, a French woman described by Barot as "a mother of a family, a pastor's wife deeply involved both in the life of her church and in the social and political questions of France today,"¹¹ this study developed a "biblical sexual anthropology" which took into account "both the similarities between men and women, which stabilize family and society, and the differences between them, which create the tensions necessary for the daily creation of whole individuals."¹² According to Dumas, whose work was based on psychological, sociological, cultural and theological insights, women must not be merely "represented" on church bodies.

They must be there in sufficient numbers to be effective and to ensure that this difficult partnership with its confrontations rich in promise...may become real...in the church, without reservation on the part of men and without feminine conformity to masculine domination, which would bar the way to a real evolution in the sharing of responsibilities in liberty and in 'mutual obedience'. This is the only witness valid for all times, though the form may vary with different cultures.¹³

Dumas, who like Barot was a member of the Reformed Church of France, argued in favour of the ordination of women, both on the basis of New Testament exegesis and on the grounds that by not opening the full ministry

⁹ Lacey referred to herself in this way. See Betty Thompson, "Lacey, Janet", in *DEM* 580.

¹⁰ Francine Dumas, *Man and Woman: Similarity and Difference* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1966). This was published in several languages.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 6.

to women the Church scandalized unbelievers by conduct "which is unrealistic in its attitude to facts, unjust towards persons, and stultifying for that very Church which seeks to be the light of the world."¹⁴

Dr Margaret Mead and Professor André Dumas (a member of the working group of the department on Cooperation and husband of Francine) co-chaired the fourth section of the conference on the theme "Man and Community in Changing Societies," within which there was a sub-section on "Men and Women in Changing Communities." It seems that Francine Dumas' book was used as a resource by this sub-section which noted in its report that "two of its members were women and that the proportion of women to men in the Conference as a whole was even lower, in spite of the fact that the membership and activity of women in the church is far greater than that of men."¹⁵ The sub-section discussed personal relationships between women and men, family relationships, responsible parenthood, and cooperation of men and women in church and society. It stated that "equality and cooperation are a necessary basis for responsible living, yet the churches in many parts of the world have helped perpetuate unjust types of subordination of women,"¹⁶ and that "the churches have more influence on modern society when women play a full part in their common life, and when men

¹² *ibid.*, 5.

¹³ *ibid.*, 87-88.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 87. It was the Reformed Church of France which had asked the WCC to put the question of the place of women in the Church on the agenda for the first assembly. After twelve years of sustained debate the church had in 1965 voted by a small majority for the admission of women to the full pastoral ministry.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 162. As noted above however there was no official statement of how many women were at the conference.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 168.

and women have an equal place in their legislative, policy making structures and ministry."¹⁷

With regard to cooperation between men and women in the churches, the theology of ordination was seen as a "decisive question," while the sociology of ordination raised the question as to whether practical objections to the ordination of women were of a general kind or "contextually particular," While recognising that some were convinced women ought to be ordained and others equally convinced that they ought not, the report challenged those in the latter group by its statement that: "It is a serious issue affecting cooperation of men and women in the churches when women hear a call to the ordained ministry and their vocation is denied on sexual grounds."¹⁸

This seems to have been the first time that the question of the ordination of women was raised in a WCC context quite independently of both the department on Cooperation and Faith and Order. The relationship between women's ordination and their full participation in the church on terms of equality with men was to be made more clearly and strongly within the WCC in future years by other groups which saw it as an *ethical* issue.

The Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society

Following the New Delhi assembly the mandate of the department on Cooperation included questions to do with cooperation in the family, a change reflected in its new title. The working committee of the department, with a largely

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 165

¹⁸ *ibid.*

new membership, was chaired by Dr Hans Thimme and Miss Freda Gwilliam as a way of expressing the principle of cooperation between men and women.¹⁹

The committee began work immediately on a statement of the basic concerns of the department, to replace the 1955 Davos statement and to reflect its new mandate and title. Madeleine Barot reported to the 1962 meeting of the central committee that further work needed to be done on this statement but quoted a few sentences to indicate the approach which was being taken. Reflecting the department's understanding that it was "not blindly feminist, nor strivingly egalitarian," the draft text emphasised the interdependence and co-responsibility of men and women, "a co-responsibility to be realised in mutual love." Freed from conflict, *for* co-humanity and co-responsibility, the Church, the community of the New Creation, is freed "for her servanthood as a community of men and women in the world."²⁰

The following year the finished statement was presented to the central committee which apparently received it without discussion. The statement pointed

¹⁹ Other members of the committee were: Professor Basil Anagnostopoulos, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Mrs Marie Assaad, Coptic Evangelical Church, Egypt, The Most Rev'd L J Beecher, Archbishop of East Africa, church of the Province of East Africa, The Rev'd H G Cox, American Baptist Convention, USA, The Rev'd A Dumas, Reformed Church of France, Miss F H Gwilliam, Church of England, Sister Madeleine-Marie Handy, Presbyterian Church, Cameroons, Miss Renuka Mukerji, Church of South India, Frau Liselotte Nold, EKID (Evangelical Church in Germany), Mrs Valentina Shishkina, Orthodox Church of Russia, Mrs T F Wallace, United Church of Christ, USA, Dr Gibson Winter, Protestant Episcopal Church, USA, Mrs M G Wyllie, Methodist Church of Australasia.

²⁰ *Minutes and Reports of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Paris, France, August 7-16, 1962* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1923], 128-9. This seems to be one of the earliest references to the Church as a "community of men and women."

to the changing social context in a world "seeking a new declaration and demonstration of the interdependence of men and women through which life can be sustained, enriched and fulfilled." While "traditional relationships based on paternalism" were being undermined new relationships based on equality had not yet found adequate expression. The department's witness to joint responsibility and cooperation emerged as a result of social transformation but was rooted in the doctrine of creation found in *Genesis*: "From the first, men and women are called to partnership and mutual love and shared dominion over all creatures."²¹

According to the statement:

This shared responsibility of man and woman has been broken again and again by domination and exploitation; moreover these estrangements come from the human heart and mind and are then crystallized in social structures. We seek, therefore, social patterns and legislation which express more adequately the equality of men and women, while summoning them to the change of heart which makes a reality of this equality. We do not call men and women to a shared responsibility which is alien to their natures and culture; we summon them to a partnership in which they will find their richest fulfilment. The Christian community recognizes this shared responsibility as an expression of the true humanity bestowed on all mankind by Jesus Christ.²²

The Christian community was not always realised in the churches.

Churches have failed at times to recall men and women to their oneness in Christ, and have even increased their bondage by providing justification for long-established discriminations....

The churches, even as other embodiments of man's responsibility before God, are hedged around with inequities which obscure the witness to oneness in Christ. We are beset by the conflicting ideologies of masculine paternalism and aggressive feminism.²³

Notwithstanding failure on the part of the churches, the Church, God's people, is called to break down the walls of separation and to show in its life "the true

²¹ *Minutes and Reports of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rochester, New York, U.S.A., August 26 - September 2, 1963* [Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1963], 103.

humanity and equality to which all men and women are called," thus reminding humanity of its oneness in Christ, a oneness which might be expressed "through a wide variety of cultural expressions."²⁴

The principle of cooperation between men and women was extended to the staffing of the department when, in order to cope with the increased work caused by the extended mandate, a second staff member was appointed in mid-1962. "It was decided that the Department should have a specialist on family questions, and that on the staff there should be both a man and a woman, the two of them working jointly on the possible implications of the principle of cooperation."²⁵

A proposal was made that these two staff members should be co-executive secretaries, of equal status, but according to WCC staff procedures this was not possible and the second position had to be for an associate secretary. There was also some discussion as to whether the executive secretary who headed the department should be a man or a woman. Those arguing for a woman held that it was the only department likely to have a woman as its head, while others argued that a man would better symbolise cooperation and would avoid the department being regarded as a "Women's Department." In fact as long as Madeleine Barot was on the staff, there was no question but that she should be the executive secretary.²⁶

In mid-1962 the Rev. William Clark was appointed as associate secretary and continued in that position until 1965. Madeleine Barot wrote of his

²² ibid., 104.

²³ ibid.

²⁴ ibid., 104-5.

²⁵ *New Delhi to Uppsala 1961-1968: Report of the Central Committee to the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), 92.

appointment that:

The presence of a man on the staff has made it at last possible to put into real practice the principle adopted by the WCC when it created a Department on Cooperation of Men and Women...The change in our title at Evanston did not bring many tangible changes in practice; but eventually it led to the creation of [this] additional staff post.²⁷

The Rev. Matti Joensuu (Church of Finland) replaced William Clark as associate secretary in 1965-1966 and then, following the resignation of Madeleine Barot at the end of 1966, became executive secretary, the first man to fill this post in the history of the department on Cooperation.²⁸

Madeleine Barot was herself in favour of the appointment of a man as executive secretary. Although the working committee had earlier expressed its concern lest the concern for family questions "absorb all the time and energy of the Department" and had agreed on the importance of keeping "a sound balance between the new programme and the more general responsibility for Men and Women relationships in Church and Society,"²⁹ by 1965 Madeleine was convinced that the department should give priority to family questions. She believed that the work on women's questions was well established and that family issues were now of utmost importance to churches in many parts of the world and also in the developing relationship between the WCC and the RCC. She was convinced that

²⁶ Department on Cooperation, "Minutes of the Working Committee, Enguru, Nigeria Jan 4-6, 1965". 1. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

²⁷ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 42.

²⁸ Joensuu belonged to the Lutheran Church of Finland, one of the last Protestant churches to ordain women, beginning only in March, 1987. See May, *Bonds of Unity*, 55. His appointment is clear evidence that the department on Cooperation did not officially support the ordination of women, although Barot herself appeared to be personally in favour of it.

²⁹ Department on Cooperation, "Minutes of the Working Committee, Paris, Aug 1-4, 1962", 16. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

"a man is absolutely needed for this new emphasis on family questions as well as to demonstrate forcefully the idea of cooperation."³⁰

These considerations lay behind Barot's decision not to renew her contract but to resign in December 1966, and to her replacement by Matti Joensuu. He however resigned at the end of 1967 and was replaced by the Rev. Leslie Clements, a Methodist minister from New Zealand, with experience in family counselling and family education. In September 1967 Miss Brigalia Bam, a South African, joined the staff as associate secretary. Both Clements and Bam were present as staff of the department on Cooperation at the fourth WCC assembly at Uppsala in 1968.

Madeleine Barot's commitment to the principle of cooperation between men and women was wholehearted. Before leaving the department she wrote in her annual Christmas letter that she wanted to practice that principle in a position which "need not necessarily be filled by a woman, but in which a woman could make a special contribution and to which she could perhaps add a new dimension."³¹ She found this position as secretary for development education in the WCC's Division on Inter-Church Aid. For the department on Cooperation, however, this commitment to the principle of cooperation meant that for a time its executive secretary was a man, with the result that in the whole WCC there was no department with a woman as its head for the principle of cooperation had not yet extended to the point where other departments would appoint women to positions of leadership. "Cooperation" therefore resulted in less participation by women at

³⁰ "Minutes, Enguru, 1965", 1.

³¹ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 48.

the level of responsibility and at the same time the increased focus on questions to do with the family and marriage meant that the work of the department in this era was largely taken over "by issues that had been peripheral."³²

By 1968, twenty years after the establishment of the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church by the first assembly much had changed and yet:

Despite the name of the Department, the stress put on cooperation, and the presence of men on the Committee and on the staff, women are the Department's best correspondents. The Department is still the main point of reference for women's organisations and those individual women who are interested in ecumenical questions...The largest number of requests for information and study made by the member churches of the World Council to the Department are on...questions relating to the opportunities offered to women in the service of the churches.³³

The emphasis given by the department to cooperation instead of to the advancement of women was still questioned, particularly by secular organisations such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

No other body has yet dared to give up the traditional segregated pattern of women's departments or strictly women's groups staffed and administered by women only. These organisations question the effectiveness of men in the area of women's concerns and sometimes wonder if cooperation is not, even for our time, still an unrealisable dream.³⁴

In spite of such questioning, the department continued to insist "on the need to include men in the study of so-called women's questions and on the need to consider the wellbeing of women always as part of the questions of the wellbeing of the family and of the community in general rather than as an end in itself."³⁵

³² May, *Bonds of Unity*, 32. See *New Delhi to Uppsala*, 93-99 for an account of the activities of the Department during this period. See also Herzog, *A Voice for Women*, 42-48.

³³ *New Delhi to Uppsala*, 92, 93.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 97.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 98.

The principle of cooperation was not well understood outside the WCC. It seemed that it was not well understood within the WCC either and received little institutional recognition or support. Not only did other departments not pursue the principle of cooperation; the financial arrangements for the department on Cooperation were described as "a denial of the most basic requirements of any true co-operation," leading to a situation which was "in serious contradiction to the principle which the department is charged to promote."³⁶ The problem was that the general budget of the WCC provided for only one secretary in the department, although clearly there was work for two. Although the Department's mandate was increased at New Delhi, its budget was not, and from 1962 to 1965 the second staff position was funded by the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service and the Divisions of World Mission and Evangelism. In 1965 this support came to an end and in order to maintain two staff members until 1968 (when the general budget might be revised at the assembly) an appeal for funding was made to women's organisations. Enough money was raised to pay for the second staff member and thus to enable the work on family questions to be carried out. But neither the women's organisations - which contributed through their churches to the general budget of the WCC - nor the department was happy about this situation. Questions were asked: "Is it right to expect women to continue to pay for a department concerned with the principle of cooperation and family questions? Should these concerns not interest the men of the churches as well?"³⁷

An insight into the status of the department on Cooperation within the WCC

³⁶ *ibid.*, 93, 92.

³⁷ *ibid.*, 93.

prior to the Uppsala assembly is given by Rena Karefa-Smart, whose involvement with its work dated back to the Amsterdam assembly in 1948. She had been a member of the working committee in the 1950s although her participation was limited because she lived in Sierra Leone. In 1967 she spent a year in Geneva and worked for the department in a voluntary capacity, helping to fill the gap in staff while Brigalia Bam was struggling for permission to leave South Africa.

According to Karefa-Smart:

At Headquarters it was quite disconcerting to discover that most of the staff found our work amusing. Madeleine was looked upon as terribly brilliant, eccentric and tolerated; and although we had some very good people on the working committee - men as well as women - we were always regarded as a sort of step child...[The Department] was very much a token appendage to the World Council. I don't mean structurally...but in terms of attitude on the part of many of the people working in other departments. Did we really *need* to be there? There was an underlying current of unease because of the realisation that if we really did our work well and got through to the policy making people, there would be some radical changes made.³⁸

Since 1948 much good work had undoubtedly been done by the department and yet the most radical change seems to have been that by 1968 the Department on Cooperation had a man as its executive secretary!

The Department recognised two important and interdependent principles:

- (i) women's groups and interests need to be represented in all fields of church life for the sake of unity and efficiency of service and witness.
- (ii) women should be appointed not only because they are women, but as individuals having the necessary requirements and able to bring a useful contribution.³⁹

The churches however seemed unwilling to recognise the first principle and either unwilling or unable to find suitable women to appoint, with the result that "the

³⁸ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 49.

³⁹ *New Delhi to Uppsala*, 94.

majority of women attending ecumenical conferences are nominees of the World Council of Churches itself who come as advisers or experts - they are not sent by the churches."⁴⁰ The proposed ways of remedying this situation were not acceptable to the department as Barot explained:

Should we try to break this vicious circle by asking that a certain number of places be allocated to women, ... or would it be better to add to the various assemblies a few extra places which would be compulsorily reserved for women..? Both methods are detrimental to the principle of cooperation based upon the personal gifts of the individual.⁴¹

Barot, who believed that she had never been discriminated against because she was a woman, was perhaps insufficiently unaware of the difficulties experienced by women whose personal gifts were neither sought nor recognised by their churches.

On some occasions Barot organised women's consultations just prior to an important church or ecumenical meeting and at the same place "in the hope that some women, having their expenses already paid by the budget of the consultation, will be invited to stay on for the assembly as observers or full participants."⁴² This "Barot strategy" did help some women to gain experience but Barot thought that in the long-term "providing a special budget to ensure the participation of women will not strengthen the principle of sound cooperation."⁴³ There was a risk that it might come to be seen as "an easy way out which the churches may be tempted to perpetuate."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ ibid.

⁴¹ Madeleine Barot, *Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1964), 41-42.

⁴² *New Delhi to Uppsala*, 94. This strategy was followed before the assembly of the AACC, Kampala, Uganda, in 1963.

⁴³ ibid., 95.

⁴⁴ Barot, *Cooperation of Men and Women*, 42.

Presumably it was for these reasons the department did not plan any women's meeting prior to the Uppsala assembly, and in keeping with its own principles it did not lobby for a special allocation of places for women delegates, or for any other special measures to ensure women's participation at the assembly.

Faith and Order and the Ordination of Women

During the 1960's within the ecumenical movement there was much discussion of ministry. On the one hand there was renewed interest in the ministry of the laity from both Protestants and Roman Catholics. Within the WCC considerable attention had been paid to the laity at each of the first three assemblies (though without great lay participation) and in 1968 the department on the Laity reported that:

There is increasing evidence within and among the churches throughout the world that an enlightened and committed laity hold the key to the renewal of the Church. It is through the engagement of the laity as the Church in the world that the mission of Christ in today's world is most effectively carried out.⁴⁵

At the same time, against the background of a number of negotiations for re-union of separated churches, there was a focus on questions of ordained ministry which in many cases proved to be "the most difficult hurdle."⁴⁶ In a number of Protestant churches the ordination of women was accepted while in others there was increasing pressure for it to be accepted.

Whether or not women should be ordained was a question which was to

⁴⁵ *New Delhi to Uppsala*, 91.

⁴⁶ Patrick C Rodger and L Vischer, eds. *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal, 1963*. Faith and Order Paper No. 42. (London: SCM Press, 1964), 24.

become increasingly divisive within and among the churches, within the ecumenical movement generally and within the WCC. In fact, the closer relationship of churches created by the ecumenical movement contributed to the divisiveness of this issue, as foreseen in a 1966 report for the Church of England:

In the present century all Christian communions have become far more conscious of the nature of the Church and its ministry as a theological question and therefore, because of the sharper consciousness of doctrinal issues, the introduction *de novo* of women ministers into most churches now might be more difficult and divisive than it was a generation or more ago.⁴⁷

This report pointed out that resistance to the ordination of women was generally found in those churches (and individuals) with "what theologians term a high doctrine of the Church, the ministry and the sacrament, and the issue is more divisive where these high doctrines prevail."⁴⁸

Theological consideration of the question of the ordination of women generally came from two different sources, the first of which was reflection on the nature of the Church's ministry, while the second was "the theological consideration of the relationships between men and women in general, and their complimentary rôles in life and in the Church."⁴⁹ Within the WCC these two sources were identified with two different departments, namely Faith and Order and Cooperation of Men and Women.

It was clear, as Madeleine Barot and others pointed out, that the WCC itself could not give an answer on this question, and that "each church must make its own decision."⁵⁰ It was also clear from the New Delhi assembly that the churches wanted some ecumenical study on the question, and that this study should be

⁴⁷ *Women and Holy Orders, Being the Report of a Commission appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.* (London: Church Information Office, 1966), 24.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 20.

done by the commission on Faith and Order in cooperation with the department on Cooperation. Thus in the period after 1961 "those concerned for cooperation among men and for women and for unity in faith and order were collaborating in a focus on the division in the churches concerning the ordination of women."⁵¹

In 1962 the Faith and Order working committee decided to place the question of the ordination of women on the agenda for the fourth world conference on Faith and Order, to be held in 1963. In preparation for this, the department on Faith and Order and the department on Cooperation jointly organised a small consultation on "The Ordination of Women: An Ecumenical Problem."⁵² This consultation resulted in a publication titled *Concerning the Ordination of Women* which included an introduction summing up the issues involved, a statement drawn up by the consultation, two papers on scriptural evidence, and three personal comments, two by Orthodox representatives who had not been at the consultation.⁵³ The Orthodox contributions were by the Rev. Archimandrite Georges Khodre (Patriarchate of Antioch) and Professor Nicolai Chitescu (Orthodox Church of Romania). Both agreed that "women cannot receive the sacrament of ordination in the Orthodox Church."⁵⁴

In his introduction Dr Lukas Vischer, executive secretary of Faith and Order, stated that the ordination of women was on the agenda for the forthcoming world conference because:

⁵⁰ Barot, "Women and the Ministry", 29.

⁵¹ Bilheimer, *Breakthrough*, 192.

⁵² The participants at this consultation, held in Geneva in May 1963, were Dr Hans Thimme, Dr Marga Bührig, Dr André Dumas, the Rev.H Brandreth, and staff of the two departments: M Barot, W Clark, P Minear, P Verghese and L Vischer.

⁵³ *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1964).

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 57.

The problem is of concern to an increasing number of churches...It would be wrong...to view this issue as a result of feminist demands or agitation by a few enthusiasts. It concerns the total understanding of the Ministry of the Church and therefore has deep theological significance.⁵⁵

There was one fundamental question to be answered:

Does the life of the Church adequately reflect the great truth that *in Christ there is neither male nor female*? Does the Order of the Church adequately reflect this truth? There is growing insistence that women should assume more responsible functions in the life of the Church; this demand has grown particularly strong within the ecumenical movement, within which so many women have played a leading role.⁵⁶

These words echoed those spoken fifteen years earlier, at the Amsterdam assembly, and now at last the study then asked for was beginning.

This first WCC consultation on the ordination of women revealed what was to become increasingly evident as discussion of this issue continued: "not only the formidable difficulties of relationship between the Churches which the variety of practice among them may raise, but - even more clearly - the difficulties attending the very study and discussion of the question."⁵⁷ For some, the very raising of the question was seen as transgressing the boundaries of what was appropriate within the WCC and although the official position of the WCC was - and remains - neutral, Barot noted that it was often considered to be in favour of women's ordination "due to the very existence of the department [on Cooperation]."⁵⁸

Papers from the consultation on the ordination of women were distributed at the Montreal world conference on Faith and Order as study material for Section III on "The Redemptive Work of Christ and the Ministry of His Church."⁵⁹ Also

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁷ *Women and Holy Orders*, 20.

⁵⁸ Madeleine Barot, "Report of Activities - January 1965 to July 1966". TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

presented was a summary of a questionnaire carried out by the department of Cooperation to update the questionnaire of 1958 on the ordination of women. On the whole, the answers to this:

Only betrayed the divergence of opinion which the Department on Cooperation of Men and Women had failed to help resolve. There were several indications that the question of the ordination of women might result in serious ecumenical barriers in the months and in the years to come.⁶⁰

In spite of this preparatory work the ordination of women was barely mentioned in the report of Section III, where the major issue was the nature of the "special," i.e. ordained, ministry, and the language throughout assumed that "the minister" was male. In fact discussion of the ordination of women was restricted to "a sub-section of a sub-section of Section III [which] was able only to give part of one day to the subject. In this short time, no real grappling with the problem took place."⁶¹ One brief footnote in the report proposed that "the question of the diaconate and that of the ordination of women receive further attention in Faith and Order".⁶² An appendix to the Report of Section III, titled "*Women in the Ministry and the Ministries*," took this proposal a step further, recommending a study which should include Biblical, doctrinal, ecclesiological, sociological and psychological factors, as well as church law and practice, and stating that "it is of great importance to ensure that there should be a real ecumenical dialogue on this

⁵⁹ See *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, 61-68. The section had seventy-eight members of whom four were women: Christian Howard (the only woman delegate), two guests and one staff member. Barot herself was not at the conference.

⁶⁰ Madeleine Barot, "The Feminine Bid for the Pulpit", *Christianity Today*, 7 (August 1963), 39. The results of the questionnaire are published in Elsie Thomas Culver, *Women in the World of Religion* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967), 289-291: 22 churches ordained women to pastoral office; 3 reported partial or occasional ordination; 4 held ordination of women to be permissible but did not practise it; 38 churches (mostly Anglican, Lutheran, and Orthodox) denied ordination to women; 25 ordained women to service as deaconesses or nuns; 16 did not ordain women to any form of ministry.

⁶¹ Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society. "Minutes of the Working Committee, Rochester, N.Y., August 17-22, 1963", 3. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

question."⁶³ It did not however stress the importance of more women being engaged in the dialogue, which at Montreal was conducted by men.

The results of the Montreal conference were disappointing to those who had hoped for real progress on the issue of the ordination of women. At the same time, it was significant that for the first occasion the issue had appeared on the agenda of a major ecumenical meeting. At Montreal "many Orthodox found themselves confronted with this question for the first time in their lives. In this context the decision to make a study on the theme of 'Women in Ministry' was of great significance."⁶⁴

The publication in 1964 of *Concerning the Ordination of Women* made more widely available the papers presented as study material to the world conference, and the proposal from Section II resulted in a two-stage study, with a consultation on the diaconate followed by a consultation on "The Office of Deaconess in the Church", held in 1965. These consultations were held jointly by the departments on Cooperation, on the Laity, and on Faith and Order. The consultation on the deaconess resulted in a publication, *The Deaconess: A Service of Women in the World Today*.⁶⁵

⁶² *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, 65.

⁶³ "Women in the Ministry and the Ministries", in *Minutes of the Faith and Order Commission and Working Committee. The Mandate from the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*. Faith and Order Paper No. 41. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1963), 23. This text, here published as an appendix, was not included in the report, *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*.

⁶⁴ Georg H Vischer, *Apostolischer Dienst: Fünfzig Jahre Diskussion über das kirchliche Amt in Glauben und Kirchen Verfassung* (Frankfurt: Lembeck, 1982), 104.

⁶⁵ *The Deaconess: A Service of Women in the World Today*. World Council of Churches Studies No. 4. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1966). Included in this collection of short papers was one by Evangelos Theodorou on "The Ministry of Deaconesses in the Greek Orthodox Church" (pp. 25-30) in which he expressed the hope that "in future the Church of Greece will be able to have ordained deaconesses not only in convents but in parishes also", 30.

Work on the ordination of women was not seen as a priority by Faith and Order and took place within the wider study on the ordained ministry. This study was initiated at the Faith and Order commission meeting in 1964⁶⁶ and then in 1967 it was decided to add the study on ordination to the already existing studies on baptism and eucharist.⁶⁷ A consultation held in Geneva in 1968 produced a working paper titled "The Meaning of Ordination" which was sent to the churches for their consideration. In this paper there was a brief section in which the members of the consultation expressed their opinion that "there is no conclusive theological basis" for refusing to ordain women but that "there are fundamental reasons which would justify the Church in such ordination." They concluded:

Are we not obliged then, to ask whether this exclusion, justifiable perhaps in the first centuries, must not be reassessed in the altered sociological environment today, in order that women will no longer be forced to work and serve in relative isolation, so that the Church may be free to live in accordance with the implications of her own theology?... Perhaps then the Kairos is upon us - at least the new understandings and exercise of ministry call for a serious questioning of the traditional restrictive practices regarding the sexes in the ministry of the Church.⁶⁸

Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas commented that although Orthodox theologians "could find no reasons against such ordination...the entire matter is so deeply tied up with their tradition that they would find it difficult...to endorse without reservations the rather enthusiastic statements" of this working paper.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Faith and Order Commission and Working Committee held at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, 15-27 August, 1964.* Faith and Order paper No. 44. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1965), 52. "The ordination of women" was listed as one of six "particular questions" which should be given special attention in the light of the more general discussion.

⁶⁷ *New Directions in Faith and Order, Bristol, 1967: Reports - Minutes - Documents.* Faith and Order Paper No. 50. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), 148.

⁶⁸ "The Meaning of Ordination," *Study Encounter* 4 (1968), 175.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 193.

From 1968 the topic of the ordination of women was to recur in the discussions of Faith and Order. For the department on Cooperation, the new attention to women's ordination marked a turning-point. According to Madeleine Barot,

Up to then, many churches had not really understood what we were talking about, nor seen possible avenues of new cooperation between men and women. There was opposition, but also enthusiasm.⁷⁰

One result was that the work of the Department was taken more seriously, but at the same time it "began to arouse fear in some churches, the Orthodox in particular."⁷¹

Madeleine Barot, the Department on Cooperation, and the principle of cooperation between men and women

When Madeleine Barot left the department on Cooperation at the end of 1966 she had been its executive secretary for thirteen years. Her dynamic leadership and pioneering vision had shaped the department's attitudes and work throughout most of its history. In the words of her successor, Marti Joensuu, "the Department has been what she had made it; her pioneering spirit gave the work its force and direction."⁷²

Although a determined advocate for the full participation of women in both church and society, Barot was also determined that the department *not* be a "women's Department" or a department *on* women, but a department on *cooperation* between men and women. As we have seen, this principle of cooperation was not easily understood, accepted, or practised within the churches

⁷⁰ Jacques, *Madeleine Barot*, 162. My translation.

⁷¹ *ibid.* My translation.

⁷² *ibid.*, 168. My translation. See also the comment by her colleague William Clark: "Certainly...she *was* the department". Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 133.

or within the WCC. A booklet written by Barot in 1964 explains clearly how she - and the department - understood this principle.⁷³

The starting point for Barot was the distinctive and complementary nature of women and men, but this did not mean that either sex was seen as restricted in its characteristics or capabilities, its roles or activities.

The nature and qualities peculiar to men and women cannot be specifically defined. Differentiation between the sexes is an inescapable fact of nature; any attempt to minimise it is doomed to failure. But any definition which would limit the range of masculine and feminine possibilities is also fraught with danger. Man and woman are set opposite each other and not merely alongside each other. It is in meeting each other and recognising their differences that each discovers his destiny...The richness of the complementary relationship of man and woman and their incompleteness when either is alone extend to all fields of life...This complementary nature must be respected in social, political and professional life. It must be fully used for the Church's witness and service.⁷⁴

This view of the complementary relationship between women and men was rooted in Scripture, beginning with the Genesis account of male and female created in the image of God. A second important biblical theme was that of new life in Christ, a life which:

...remains mysterious and hidden - it is constantly given anew, it escapes all definition, but it seems, however, that interdependence, mutual submission, complementary equality between the sexes, correspond better with what we can perceive of it than do hierarchy, authority and subordination.⁷⁵

In a changing social context, change in the roles of women has an impact on men.

There is not only a 'women's question' posed by the present evolution, but also a 'men's question'. It was therefore wrong to centre attention upon women. It was wrong that men should leave to women the responsibility for finding

⁷³ Madeleine Barot, *Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1964).

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 9-10.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 5.

answers and new forms of service, and that the segregation of a bygone age should be perpetuated. One must now speak of cooperation.⁷⁶

In Barot's vision, men and women were to work together, bringing their complementary gifts into all areas of church and society, sharing responsibilities and leadership. Men were to work with women on questions related to the family; women to share with men in the ministry of the Church. There were to be no separate spheres, no segregation. If the department had concentrated more on women, that was because theirs was the more urgent need, but it needed also to study what should be done "by and for the men."⁷⁷

As we have seen, the department on Cooperation did its best to model cooperation between men and women as well as to affirm the biblical and theological principles on which cooperation was based. Barot, "like many women at that time...thought that these principles would be implemented, as it were automatically, as a result of growing understanding,"⁷⁸ but progress was slow.

Reading the documents, reports and recommendations published by the Department during the 13 years Madeleine worked there, one sometimes gets an impression of repetition. That is because raising awareness, finding appropriate responses and putting them into effect is a long process that faces much resistance in a world of tradition and power struggles.⁷⁹

Barot herself remained hopeful, and expressed the hope that sustained and motivated her in the preface which she wrote for the French version of Dumas' book, *L'autre semblable*:

We are at the dawn of a new era in which old obstacles become possibilities, in which we must advance without fear towards a new society which men and

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 48.

⁷⁸ Marga Bührig, "Uppsala 1968-Berlin 1974 - JPIC Convocation 1990?", *ER* 40 (1988), 397. Bührig, a contemporary of Barot's and like her European, shared this assumption at the time.

⁷⁹ Jacques, *Madeleine Barot*, 167. My translation.

women will build together, and where they will be able together to exercise the fullness of their gifts.⁸⁰

Relationships with the Orthodox

Prior to the 1960s the relatively few Orthodox churches which were members of the WCC had shown little interest in questions concerning women and their involvement in the work of the department on Cooperation had been limited. This situation did not change significantly when following the New Delhi assembly nearly all the Eastern Orthodox churches joined the WCC. The participation of Orthodox women and the presentation of Orthodox perspectives on issues concerning women continued to be limited. There seemed to be little official encouragement from their churches of participation by Orthodox women in ecumenical activities. During her period of leadership Madeleine Barot:

...had not found any real signs of interest from officials of the Orthodox Church. Many of her communiqués to various representative patriarchs went unanswered, and few attended committee meetings or consultations even if they were officially designated by their hierarchy to do so.⁸¹

A woman who was close to the situation during the sixties later commented that:

I think that the Orthodox, from the first, considered the department to be somewhat dangerous...and they didn't want the women in the Orthodox churches to come into contact with it because they were afraid of the results. Even though Madeleine had a number of contacts with the Orthodox, she couldn't convince the church leaders that there was any necessity for the women in their churches to be concerned about the work of the department.⁸²

⁸⁰ Francine Dumas, *L'Autre Semblable: Hommes et Femmes*. Préface de Madeleine Barot. (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1967), 6. My translation. (This preface differs from that in the English version, *Man and Woman: Similarity and Difference*.)

⁸¹ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 84.

⁸² *ibid.* The woman is not named.

There were, of course, a number of reasons for this hesitancy on the part of the Orthodox. It was not until the 1960s that all the autocephalous Orthodox churches became members of the WCC and relationships between them and the Protestant churches were not always easy. There were cultural as well as theological differences and also a difficult political situation in that most of the Eastern Orthodox Christians in the countries of the Middle East were, for much of this period, experiencing considerable turmoil, while most of the European Orthodox churches were in the socialist block. In these circumstances Orthodox priorities were often somewhat different from those of Western, Protestant churches.

The situation was a little different where the Oriental Orthodox were concerned. Mrs Marie Assaad, a member of the Coptic Orthodox Church, joined the working committee of the department on Cooperation in 1964, thus beginning a long association with the WCC which was to culminate in her becoming in 1980 the first woman to hold the position of deputy general secretary. Father Paul Verghese, a member of the Orthodox Syrian Church of India, who was for part of this time director of the Division of the Ecumenical Action, was generally supportive of the department's work and attended a number of its consultations.

In general however the only issue concerning women on which there was a real response from the Orthodox was the question of the ordination of women. Although as yet there had been little real discussion of this it was clear already that the Orthodox were reluctant to allow it as a topic for ecumenical debate and that they were somewhat fearful of the department on Cooperation which was a focus for this issue within the WCC. While for the department itself questions of

women's ordination were a minor aspect of its concerns, it seemed to be the only one recognised by most of the Orthodox.

Conclusions

During the period between the third and fourth assemblies women's participation in the WCC did not increase to any significant extent. After years of study and many consultations and publications by the department on Cooperation the fact was that in 1968 there was little more cooperation between men and women in the WCC and in its member churches than in 1948. These remained male-dominated institutions in which women struggled to participate fully. Within the WCC itself women were almost totally excluded from positions in which policy and decisions were made. The resources of the department on Cooperation had during these years been increasingly taken up by the "family questions" which had been added to its mandate at the New Delhi assembly. On the other hand, the question of the ordination of women was beginning to be taken more seriously and had appeared for the first time on the agenda of Faith and Order and also of the Church and Society world conference. In spite of the increased participation of Orthodox churches in the WCC the Orthodox showed little interest in questions of women's participation, and few Orthodox women participated in the WCC.

In its report to the central committee in 1967 the department on Cooperation, looking ahead to the post-Uppsala period, presented a statement on the nature and significance of its work. Written in the months following Barot's

departure at the end of 1966, the report emphasised the rapid pace of change in society and signalled changes in the department's approach:

Earlier statements and declarations on man-woman relationships were dealt with mostly in terms of theology as for example the Davos-Statement, which was accepted by the Central Committee in 1955. Now, we are emphasising the urgency of the main concerns of the Department on Cooperation in light of the social revolution of our times.⁸³

The Department continued to base its thinking on "the fundamental elements" of biblical anthropology and ecclesiology.

The distinctiveness and the "togetherness" of men and women as described in the message of Creation and sanctified by Christ's redemption is still and always will be the corner stone of the Department's biblical foundation. Ecclesiology teaches us the fundamental lesson, the wholeness of the Church implies the full and living contribution of all the members of the Body of Christ, not for the sake of one group or for private interests but for the complexity of the Church as a whole. So all members wherever and whoever they are, are called to bring their full and complementary contribution to the benefit of the whole Church thus fulfilling Christ's work in the world.⁸⁴

Now however the department wanted "greater freedom and flexibility"⁸⁵ to pursue its functions, which still combined a number of different concerns, all of which were seen as "vital to the ongoing witness of the Church in the world,"⁸⁶ namely:

- i) to examine concepts and patterns of the roles of men and women in the light of the Christian doctrine of Man and of the nature and mission of the Church, taking into account the insights offered by contemporary social sciences;
- ii) to help men and women make their contribution to the life of the Church and to further their active participation in ecumenical encounter;
- iii) to urge the churches to make it possible for women to share fully in the opportunities and responsibilities of church life, work and membership;

⁸³ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twentieth Meeting, Heraklion, Crete (Greece), August 15-26, 1967* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967), 221.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 226.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 223.

- iv) to encourage men and women to understand their full and complementary responsibilities of church life and work of society;
- v) to work for a fuller understanding and development of the Christian concept of cooperation between men and women in personal relationships and partnership in the family and home;
- vi) to assist the churches and Christian Councils to discover and express the relevance of the Christian faith in the realms of marriage and family life, in the varying situations of contemporary society;
- vii) to act as an initiator and supporter of study and action and to be a centre of information about developments in the cooperation of men and women in Church, Family and Society;
- viii) to keep actively in touch with other bodies, national and international, Christian and secular, concerned with these matters.⁸⁷

In this report for the first time the department stated clearly that each of its concerns was relevant to the study and work of "more than one of the administrative units in the general structure of the WCC"⁸⁸ and argued that, even if the department on Cooperation itself did not survive any structural reorganisation of the World Council:

The responsibility for acting as initiator, catalyst, consultant and coordinator, should be entrusted to one such administrative unit. This unit whatever form it takes, should demonstrate the partnership of men and women in the membership of its Working Committee, in its joint chairmanship by a man and a woman, and above all in its staff, where men and women hold the posts of Executive and Associate Secretaries interchangeably. For the next few years, at least, the words "COOPERATION OF MEN AND WOMEN" should appear in the title of whatever part of the structure of the WCC to which these concerns are committed.⁸⁹

It did not however take the further step of recommending that these forms of cooperation should be practised by other units or committees although it did recommend that:

Whatever the structure and reorganisation of the WCC, the presence on all Committees of a far greater number of women than there are at present is essential to secure their complementary contribution to the work of the WCC as a whole.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ ibid.

⁸⁸ ibid.

⁸⁹ ibid.

⁹⁰ ibid., 226.

As well, it asked for a "far higher percentage of women" on the executive staff of the WCC.⁹¹

"Cooperation of men and women" continued to be the keyword in describing the department's aim and functions but it now seemed to be calling for a more active response to this principle from the WCC and its member churches as it affirmed that it "is essential for the relationships between men and women to be recognised and accepted as the total concern of the WCC, its member churches, and of other manifestations of the ecumenical movement."⁹²

The forthcoming assembly would show how the WCC and its member churches responded to this plea.

The Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches

The fourth assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Uppsala, Sweden, 4 - 20 July, 1968. Larger than the three previous assemblies, it brought together 704 delegates from 235 member churches, along with some 2,000 other participants. The theme, "Behold, I make all things new," seemed peculiarly appropriate as "the sense of crisis in world affairs and its shattering impact upon Christian institutions" kept breaking in on the assembly "with the effect of a thunder-clap and lightning flash."⁹³

A feature of this assembly was its focus on the context of the time, a context which was dramatically described in the opening lines of the assembly message:

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *ibid.*, 223.

⁹³ Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, July 4 - 20, 1968* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), xvii.

The excitement of new scientific discoveries, the protest of student revolts, the shock of assassinations, the clash of wars; these mark the year 1968. In this climate the Uppsala Assembly met first of all to listen. We heard the cry of those who long for peace; of the hungry and exploited who demand bread and justice; of the victims of discrimination who claim human dignity; and of the increasing millions who seek for the meaning of life.⁹⁴

As the assembly struggled to respond to these voices and situations it was recognised that "the world was writing the agenda for the meeting"⁹⁵ in a way which was itself new and which resulted in a less theological orientation in the discussions and debates than at the previous assemblies.

While the New Delhi assembly had marked the entrance of Eastern Orthodoxy into the World Council and also the first involvement of the Roman Catholic Church at an assembly, at Uppsala both these relationships reached a further stage of development. At Uppsala there was "the strongest and most free participation yet of Eastern Orthodoxy"⁹⁶ while fourteen Roman Catholics were present as "delegated observers" - a new category which gave the right to speak

(by invitation of the chair), though not to vote.⁹⁷ An even more outstanding feature of this assembly was the role of the youth participants, 127 of whom had been invited on the nomination of the WCC Youth Department. In an era of student protest, when Che Guevara, Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Tariq Ali were the heroes of youth, the traditional attitude of "respectful gratitude" from those young people who had "the real privilege of sharing in considerable measure in a great

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, xvii.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, xv.

⁹⁷ The RC observers at New Delhi were present from the SPCU. Their presence at Uppsala was more official and one of the group, Fr Roberto Tucci, gave an important address on "The Ecumenical Movement, the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church". *ibid.*, 323-333.

ecumenical event"⁹⁸ was changed into something new and more challenging. A pre-assembly youth meeting, intended as a briefing session, became more like a council of war. Throughout the assembly the youth participants kept questioning authority and protesting their right to be included in decision-making. They were vocal in their criticism of the average age of the delegates (which was 51.7 years) and convinced that "imperialism and paternalism are perpetuated by the structure and theology of the WCC"⁹⁹ Women participants, also a minority at the assembly, were quieter and less confrontational, but Uppsala did mark a turning-point in women's participation in the WCC.

Membership of the assembly

According to the report of the credentials committee to the assembly there were 704 delegates present at Uppsala (almost exactly twice as many as at Amsterdam). The total of approximately 2,700 participants included 675 staff and a press contingent of about 750 (some of whom were "ecumenical clerical sheep in wolves' clothing").¹⁰⁰ Excluding both staff and press the break-down of participants was: 704 delegates, 6 presidents, 8 retiring members of the central committee, 72 fraternal delegates, 157 advisers, 127 youth participants, 65 delegated observers of whom 14 were Roman Catholics, 32 observers, and 159 guests of whom 58 were Swedish.¹⁰¹

In terms of geographical distribution 15% of the participants came from Asia, 8% from Africa south of the Sahara, 4% from the Middle East and North

⁹⁸ Kenneth Slack, *Uppsala Report: The Story of the World Council of Churches Fourth Assembly, Uppsala, Sweden, 4-19 July 1968* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1968), 14.

⁹⁹ Goodall, *The Uppsala Report*, xv.

¹⁰⁰ Slack, *Uppsala Report*, 6.

Africa, and 4% from Latin America where membership of the WCC was still weak. North America supplied 26% of the participants and Europe 43%. Thus the majority of participants (69%) were from the "developed" or "First World" while only 31% were from the developing regions of the "Third World."

In terms of confessional representation there was "a consolidation of the great Orthodox advance in the life of the Council"¹⁰² which had begun at New Delhi. There were some 140 participants from Eastern Orthodox churches and with almost 20% of the delegates they were one of the largest confessional groups even though the delegation from the Church of Greece withdrew at the last minute.¹⁰³ Presbyterians and Lutherans formed respectively 20% and 19% of the total, while Anglicans and Methodists were each 11%. Other confessional groups each comprised less than 10% of the total.

The assembly has been described as "a collection of ecclesiastical 'top brass'".¹⁰⁴ Denominational church officials formed 23% of the total, added to which were bishops and their equivalents numbering 15%, and another 6% of ecumenical administrators, making 44% in all. Another 12%, mostly ordained, were involved in theological education and 14% in the pastoral care of parishes and congregations. Only 33% of the participants were lay but this percentage shrank to 25% of the voting delegates.

Women members of the assembly

¹⁰¹ Goodall, *The Uppsala Report*, 147.

¹⁰² Slack, *Uppsala Report*, 6.

¹⁰³ This was because the host country could not guarantee that there would be no demonstrations against the Greek régime. Demonstrations did in fact occur. *ibid.*, 7.

Although there were more women present at Uppsala than at previous assemblies they still formed only 11% of the total membership and a mere 9% of the voting delegates. Some of the smaller churches were more inclusive of women delegates than were the larger churches. Three small churches entitled to only one delegate sent a woman¹⁰⁵ while several churches with six or seven delegates managed to include one or two women.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, the Evangelical Church of Germany had only two women among its twenty-eight member delegation, the Church of England one woman out of twenty, and the Methodist Church (U.S.A.) two women out of twenty-six delegates. The Orthodox Church of Russia sent thirty-four men and one woman - the only Orthodox woman delegate. The majority of women delegates were from churches in Europe and North America which was hardly surprising as those churches had significantly more delegates than those in the rest of the world, but it was noteworthy that in spite of this some churches in Asia and Africa had a higher proportion of women in their delegations than did many churches in Europe and North America.

Among the seventy-two fraternal delegates were four women (5%), two of whom represented women's organisations. Only eighteen of the one hundred and fifty-seven advisers (11%) were women, even though the general secretary explained that one reason for such a large number of advisers was because it enabled the assembly "to benefit by the presence of lay men and women who

¹⁰⁴ ibid.

¹⁰⁵ They were the Old Catholic Church of Austria, the Belgian Église chrétienne missionnaire, and the Methodist Church of Malaysia.

¹⁰⁶ Among these were the Church of England in Australia, the United Church of Canada, the Church of Denmark, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Church of South India, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the National Baptist Convention, USA.

could not be included in the official delegations from their churches."¹⁰⁷ There were four women (6%) among the sixty-three delegated observers, two of them belonging to the Roman Catholic contingent of fourteen. There were no women among the thirty-two observers and only ten (9.9%) among the one hundred and one guests. Among the youth participants 31 (24%) were women.

Pauline Webb, a Methodist laywoman from the U.K., described herself at Uppsala as "one of those rare women then, a delegate in my own right sent by my own church."¹⁰⁸ Just how rare, she did not realise until an incident which took place during one of the plenary sessions:

At Uppsala, I was very conscious that there were few women as representatives. But I hadn't realized how few until a little woman from the Philippines interrupted one of the sessions and asked that the women who were there representing their churches as fully appointed delegates should stand up. I remember Archbishop Wood from Australia, a great tall man, who looked at this little lady and said, "I don't think that's necessary. There are plenty of women here when you look around". And there were quite a lot of advisers, people like Margaret Mead, very distinguished women. So I, too, had been impressed by the women there. Then the actual representatives did stand; and you suddenly realized as you looked around the hall how very few we were.¹⁰⁹

Among those women who were present there were, as Webb noted, a number who were distinguished in various fields and also some with considerable ecumenical experience. Kathleen Bliss was present at her last assembly, as a retiring member of the central committee, as were Frances Kapitzky and Mabel Wyllie. Among the advisers were Roman Catholic economist, Dr Barbara Ward (Lady Jackson),¹¹⁰ American anthropologist Dr Margaret Mead and Mrs Justice

¹⁰⁷ Goodall, *The Uppsala Report*, 148.

¹⁰⁸ Pauline Webb, *She Flies Beyond: Memories and Hopes of Women in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 19

¹⁰⁹ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 52.

¹¹⁰ Barbara Ward had made a significant contribution to the 1966 world conference on church and society. Her participation at the assembly prompted the comment that "the greatest immediate gain of having the Roman Catholics join the World Council by the next assembly would be that Barbara Ward would become one of the presidents, or

Annie Jiagge, a high court judge from Ghana. Other advisers were Dr Kiyoko Takeda Cho, a professor at the International Christian University in Japan, Dr Marga Bührig, director of a lay academy in Switzerland, Miss Janet Lacey, recently retired director of Christian Aid for the BCC, Frau Liselotte Nold, director of the Bavarian Service to Mothers, and Dr Cynthia Wedel, an associate general secretary of the NCCC-USA. Mrs Athena Athenassiou of the Greek Orthodox Church was a fraternal delegate representing the World Alliance of World YWCA's. Miss Rosemary Goldie of COPECIAL was one of the Roman Catholic delegated observers. The staff included Brigalia Bam, now associate secretary in the department on Cooperation and Rena Karefa-Smart, working as research assistant in the department, Madeleine Barot, now working for the Division on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service and Mrs Charlotte Browne-Mayer, recently appointed director of that division and the only woman director in the WCC.¹¹¹

Among the delegates were Miss Elisabeth Adler, of Germany who like Bührig was director of a lay academy, Dr Ivy Chou, former principal of the Methodist Theological School in Sarawak, Mrs Elaine Homrighouse, a member of the national executive committee of United Presbyterian Women (USA), Miss Christian Howard, secretary of the board of women's work for the (Anglican) diocese of York, Mrs Birgit Rodhe, deputy director of education for the Swedish

possibly chairman of the Central Committee". Robert McAfee Brown, "Uppsala: An Informal Report", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5 (1968), 648-9.

¹¹¹ Charlotte Browne-Mayer, a member of the United Church of Christ (USA), who had been active in the NCCC-USA, began her appointment as assistant general secretary and director of DICARWS in April, 1968, the first woman to direct a division (at that time the largest administrative unit in the WCC), and the first woman assistant general secretary. She resigned and left the WCC in December 1969 for reasons which are not clear.

city of Malmö, and Pauline Webb, recently vice-president of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain, the highest position open to a laywoman.

Although the number of women present at the assembly was not in keeping with "their major contribution to the spiritual, intellectual and financial life of most churches"¹¹² they were for the most part competent and experienced, well-qualified to act in leadership roles. Barot, Bliss and Rodhe had all been active in the WCC since the Amsterdam assembly twenty years earlier.

Women in leadership roles

Women in fact played little part in leadership at the assembly. Elisabeth Adler was the only woman to lead daily worship, and was also one of three respondents to an address by former general secretary Dr Willem Visser 't Hooft on "The Mandate of the Ecumenical Movement." At both the opening and closing worship services women's participation was minimal, with Liselotte Nold acting as one of five prayer leaders at the opening service and Dr Ellen Flesseman - van Leer reading a Scripture lesson at the closing service. Bible studies were held in plenary or in the six sections, with Francoise Florentin-Smyth the only woman to act as a leader. A major address was given by Barbara Ward who, with President Kenneth Kaunda, spoke to the Assembly on "The Rich and the Poor Nations." Among the advisers, Margaret Mead and Janet Lacey made significant contributions.

The assembly worked in six sections each of which had a chair, two vice-chairs, and a secretary - a total of 24 officers. There was one woman officer,

¹¹² Richard N. Dickinson, "Human Profile of an Assembly", *ER* 21 (January 1969), 59.

Birgit Rodhe who chaired Section VI, "Towards New Styles of Living." There were eight assembly committees, none of which was chaired by a woman. There were no women on the worship committee or the credentials committee (each of which had eleven men). Two women (Anna Marie Aagaard from Denmark and Mrs Theodore Wallace from the USA) were on the twelve member message committee. The influential nominations committee had twenty-three members of whom two were women, one of whom (Miss Carmencita Karagdag, Philippine Independent Church) was added in response to a motion asking for an additional layperson.¹¹³

Section and Committee Reports

The reports of the six sections contain few specific references to women and the summarised record of the plenary discussions on the reports shows that the debates were dominated by men. Buried within the reports there are however some significant references to women, or references which could have become significant if they had been developed.

Section I dealt with "The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church" but the report only hinted at the idea that catholicity was denied by Christian communities which did not "exhibit in all the variety of their life together the essential oneness in Christ of men and women."¹¹⁴ Although "discrimination based on race, wealth, social class or education" was given as an example of how Christians might confuse "the unity and catholicity of the Church with other

See also Slack, who refers to women's participation at the assembly as "a curious reversal of the proportions often found at worship in the local church". *Uppsala Report*, 8.

¹¹³ Goodall, *The Uppsala Report*, 108.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, 14.

solidarities and communities" there was no mention of discrimination against women as both a denial of unity and catholicity and, like racism, a "tragic distortion of humanity." For the sake of the renewal of both the Christian and the human community the Church was called to reject "all exclusiveness of class and race" and to fight "all economic, political and social degradation and exploitation of men,"¹¹⁵ but women were rendered invisible, by the exclusive (androcentric) language and there was no recognition that women might experience "degradation and exploitation" *because* they were women.

In Section II, on "Renewal in Mission," there was a statement that:

We need to explore how, in the diverse roles in which we find ourselves, we can creatively and with integrity express our full humanity - whether it be as young people, or women, or members of minority groups, or people in positions of authority, and so on.¹¹⁶

There was no suggestion however as to what realisation of their full humanity might mean for women and although in another place the report referred to the "new life" in Christ enabling "men...to break through racial, national, religious and other barriers that divide the unity of mankind"¹¹⁷ once again gender was not acknowledged as a barrier to unity.

The report of Section III, on "World Economic and Social Development," in a section on discrimination focussed on "white racism" but noted also that:

Discrimination against women is another pervasive impediment to personal and community development. The Church must actively promote the redistribution of power, without discrimination of any kind, so that all men, women and young people may participate in the benefits of development.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 14, 18.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 33.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 28.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 50.

The redistribution of power within the church, itself was not addressed. It was the report of Section IV, on "Towards Justice and Peace in International Affairs," which provoked the strongest reaction from a woman, a reaction which directly linked human rights with the rights of women in the churches. Describing the same incident as that recalled by Pauline Webb a delegate from New Zealand wrote that:

A sudden infusion of passion came into the plenary Session when Mrs Josefina Ambrosio, fraternal delegate representing the NCC in the Philippines, was called ...[and] spoke under the heading "Human Rights". With a voice that rang to the rafters, she said, "We expect the churches to be the first to observe in practice the principles set out in the Declaration of Human Rights, including the rights of women". She called on all women delegates to stand in their places. "Only nine per cent of delegates are women", she cried. Then she called on all women in the huge hall to stand, and of course there were hundreds of them in the galleries. "I hope", she said, "that at the next Assembly, not only will fifty per cent of delegates be women, but women will also be represented on the Presidium."¹¹⁹

This incident, which made such an impression on Webb and presumably on other women also, appeared thus in the official assembly report: "Mrs A J P Ambrosio....underlined that part of the report which dealt with the status of women."¹²⁰ (The section report did not in fact deal specifically with the status of women at all although it devoted a section to race relations).

The fifth section, on "Worship," said nothing about women but Section VI, titled "Towards New Styles of Living," in a section on creative partnership suggested that there was "the possibility for creative partnership between the sexes" beyond the family relationship.¹²¹ Notwithstanding this comment, the report of this section, chaired by a woman (Birgit Rohde) and with more women

¹¹⁹ David M Taylor, *Uppsala 1968: A Report on the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, July 4-19, 1968*, (Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1968).

¹²⁰ Goodall, *The Uppsala Report*, 59.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, 92.

members than any other section, focussed on marriage and the family and was, according to one male commentator, "poorest, perhaps, in the passages dealing with the relations between the sexes."¹²² There was one sentence which stated boldly that "established patterns in church, family and society which deny the full human rights of women stand condemned."¹²³ Referring to this sentence Liselotte Nold, herself a member of the section, later wrote that in accepting the report of Section VI the assembly "basically condemned its own composition,"¹²⁴ but this was not mentioned in the plenary discussion.

In general therefore the section reports at Uppsala emphasised the importance of human rights and called the churches to support these rights but, like the person who calls attention to a speck of dust in someone else's eye while ignoring the bug in his or her own, the assembly participants generally failed to recognise their own failure to treat women with justice. Mrs Justice Annie Jagge, an adviser to Section IV, found the assembly both inspiring and disappointing; inspiring because Christians took the world situation so seriously, and disappointing because "a question which was constantly in the room, was hardly spoken about openly; the question of an appropriate representation of women in the 'policy making bodies' of the WCC."¹²⁵

Throughout the assembly there was pressure at many points for greater youth participation, and for youth to be involved in decision-making. There was less concern about the small representation of women, apart from Mrs Ambrosio's passionate speech, but two of the assembly committees did raise this as an issue.

¹²² Slack, *Uppsala Report*, 59.

¹²³ Goodall, *The Uppsala Report*, 92.

¹²⁴ Liselotte Nold, "Uppsala aus der Sicht der Frau", *Ökumenische Rundschau* 18 (1968), 167. My translation.

The committee on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society stated that:

The Assembly has been made aware of how small has been the representation of women in its own counsels. If equal partnership is to be experienced at all levels of church life, women must be given a much greater opportunity than at present of sharing in decision-making and in administration.¹²⁶

It followed this with a request that the Division of Ecumenical Action "give urgent attention to the problems that still prevent the full participation of men and women in all the councils of the churches." It did not however suggest that there was any need for more direct action, maintaining the department's policy that both men and women should be chosen for positions "because their gifts and abilities are needed irrespective of their sex."¹²⁷ That women had repeatedly *not* been so chosen, in spite of their gifts and abilities, remained unrecognised.

The committee on the Division of Ecumenical Action recommended "that the DEA consider ways in which future assemblies of the World Council of Churches can be improved, particularly to ensure greater participation of youth, lay men and women."¹²⁸ This point was taken up in discussion on the fifth assembly and resulted in a resolution in which the assembly expressed:

Its great dissatisfaction that the proportion of women, lay persons of either sex, and delegates under 35 is so low among official delegates, and specifically authorise(s) the Central Committee, in allocating places for the Fifth Assembly, to put into force (after consultation with the member-churches if necessary) any measures which it may decide to be advisable to achieve an improvement in the proportion of such delegates.¹²⁹

This resolution, which clearly distinguished women as a separate group, was the strongest resolution yet on the subject of assembly delegates and was significant

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ Goodall, *The Uppsala Report*, 250.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 247.

because in it the assembly authorised the central committee to take action. This resolution was to have significant results.

The report of the committee on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society hoped that "concern about the cooperation between men and women might become an integral part of all departments," and in the only reference at the assembly to the ordination of women urged that the study of this question be continued "especially taking into account the experience of the increasing number of churches which now ordain women, so that in the light of this experience there may be further theological reflection on the ecumenical implications of this development."¹³⁰

The concerns expressed by the department on Cooperation about staffing and finance were met, with the general budget providing for a staff of two executives in the department, to handle "both the traditional concerns and also the newly developed concerns for family life and marriage counselling."¹³¹

Nominations and Elections

The first election to take place was that of members of the Faith and Order commission, increased from a total of 120 to 150 members, although 15 places were left vacant at this time. It was agreed that for the first time some places would be allocated to Roman Catholics, selected in consultation with the Roman Catholic authorities. The elections resulted in a slight increase in the number of women which rose from one to four with no questions or discussions about this

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, 191. See also 377-378.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ *ibid.*, 207, 387.

poor representation.¹³² Faith and Order remained the preserve of male theologians, nearly all of whom were ordained.

The procedure established for the elections of the central committee and the presidium was the same. The nominations committee made its proposals, based on the WCC rules requiring "adequate" confessional and regional representation. Any six members of the assembly could then propose a substitution, which had to be made in writing and which had to name the person for whom their nominee was a substitution.

The report of the nominations committee and the assembly action on it created "a good deal of debate and excitement."¹³³ There was complete agreement on the election of retired general secretary Dr Visser 't Hooft as honorary president, but as soon as the committee presented its nominations for the six presidents "battle was joined."¹³⁴ The session was chaired by a lay woman (Dr Kathleen Bliss having been invited to assume the chair by central committee chairman Dr Ernest Payne who was himself a nominee), but there was no lay person on the list. Moreover, for the third time in succession no woman was nominated, even though "days before the election the women were making every effort to have the nominating committee place a woman on the ballot, replacing one of the men."¹³⁵ Those nominated were the Serbian Patriarch, His Holiness German; Dr Hanns Lilje, Lutheran Bishop of Hanover; Dr D T Niles of the Methodist Church of Ceylon; Dr Ernest Payne, Baptist Union of Great Britain and

¹³² Christian Howard was re-elected and was joined by Ellen Flesseman-van Leer, Françoise Florentin-Smyth, and Sister Marie-Madeleine Handy. Three of the women were European, one (Handy) African.

¹³³ M M Thomas, *My Ecumenical Journey* (Trivandrum, India: Ecumenical Publishing Centre, 1990), 314.

¹³⁴ Slack, *Uppsala Report*, 83.

Ireland; Dr John Coventry Smith, moderator of the general assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.; the Rt Rev. A H Zulu, Anglican Bishop of Zululand (South Africa).

Strong feeling was expressed by some delegates at the absence of a woman...It was pointed out that the desirability of this had not been overlooked...but the Committee had not found it possible, taking all other factors into account, to include a woman in its list.¹³⁶

The ensuing debate was described by Pauline Webb as "acrimonious"¹³⁷ and two attempts were made to substitute women for men. The proposal that Rena Karefa-Smart be substituted for John Coventry Smith was ruled out of order, because both she and Niles were Methodists and two Methodists would have upset the confessional balance.¹³⁸ A strong attempt was made to elect Mrs Birgit Rodhe in place of Bishop Lilje. If successful this would have substituted a Lutheran laywoman for a Lutheran bishop. In the voting Mrs Rodhe, who had gained a high profile as the chair of section VI and who had a long ecumenical experience going back to the Amsterdam assembly, received 284 votes but Dr Lilje received 339 and was elected, as were the other five original nominees.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Elizabeth K Fiers, "As the World Turned - Uppsala 1968", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 8 (1968-69), 42.

¹³⁶ Goodall, *The Uppsala Report*, 141.

¹³⁷ Personal communication, Pauline Webb to Janet Crawford.

¹³⁸ See the comment by Robert McAfee Brown: "Two Methodists would have upset the balance. Incredible! Who in this day and age would feel that two Methodists were going to do gross injustice to the insights of the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, the Reformed or the Baptists? Surely this is an area where a minimum of ecumenical trust can be exercised; otherwise, we have wasted the past 20 years." Robert McAfee Brown, "The Lessons of the Assembly," *Christianity and Crisis*, 28 (September 16, 1968), 205-6. For a similar comment, see also Brown, "Uppsala: An Informal Report", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5 (1968), 648-9. If Karefa-Smart had been elected she would in fact have represented three minority groups: women, laity, and Africans. All three of these were lacking on the presidium but the confessional balance was seen as the over-riding factor.

¹³⁹ One woman delegate noted that there were "Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran objections to women in high offices of the church" in view of which Mrs Rodhe received significant support to achieve as many votes as she did. Fiers, "As the World Turned", 42-3.

When the nominations committee produced its list for the central committee (increased from 100 to 120 members) there was criticism that there were still too few lay names, and certainly too few women and young people. To this criticism the nominations committee had the same response as in the past: "The central committee can only rightly be chosen from those in whom the churches have placed their confidence by sending them as delegates to the Assembly, and this in real measure determines the form of the central committee."¹⁴⁰

One laywoman (Mrs M Box, Presbyterian Church of Australia) asked for her name to be withdrawn (for reasons which were not recorded) and was replaced by a man while the Rev. Dr David Colwell (United Church of Christ, USA), asked to withdraw his name in favour of Miss Jean Fairfax, of the same church, thus substituting a lay woman for an ordained man. In the event only seven women were elected on to the central committee, a mere 5.8% of the total.¹⁴¹ In spite of all the agitation by youth during the assembly there were only two members under thirty-five on the new central committee. Thus neither women nor youth had gained much in terms of representation.

Pauline Webb attributed her own election to the pressure from women for greater inclusion and was surprised to be elected, particularly as "I displaced my church's senior official who had since the earliest days been our representative on the central committee, but he graciously gave place to me."¹⁴² Webb, who was attending her first assembly, was even more surprised when the newly-elected

¹⁴⁰ Slack, *Uppsala Report*, 84.

¹⁴¹ They were Miss Jean Fairfax (UCC, USA); Miss Carmencita Karagdag (Philippine Independent Church); the Rev. (Miss) Ching-Chee Lee, (Church of Christ in China, Hong Kong Christian Council); Miss Lois Miller (Evangelical United Brethren Church, USA); Dr Eva Shipstone (Methodist Church, India); Miss Pauline Webb (Methodist Church, UK); Mrs Janet Wesonga (Church of Uganda).

¹⁴² Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 20.

central committee, meeting the day after the assembly adjourned, elected her as one of its two vice-chairs. M.M Thomas, a layman from the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, was elected as chairman and Metropolitan Meliton of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was the other vice-chair. Thus of the three officers, the most powerful persons in the WCC after the general secretary, two were laypersons and one of these was a woman. It was the first time a woman had been elected to a position of such responsibility and influence.¹⁴³ Webb, who had no idea that she was to be nominated, believed that this was "engineered by Eugene Blake and Philip Potter,"¹⁴⁴ and that she was elected because she was a woman, rather than for her ability.

I realized very much that I had been made Vice-Chairman because I was a woman and found this humiliating at first. Everything in me rebelled against being a token woman. I would have liked to think that I was made Vice-Chairman because I was *me*. But I knew that wasn't so and I had to accept that. And, anyway, I felt absolutely overwhelmed, and would have refused it if it had not been for the fact that I knew the women had pressed for this.¹⁴⁵

Conclusions

The Uppsala assembly in 1968 was the most widely representative gathering of Christian churches which had yet been held. Paradoxically, it was not widely representative of the membership of those churches, with laymen, women and youth all not having "even minimally adequate representation."¹⁴⁶ It was the WCC's most activist and politically oriented assembly, marked throughout by the vigorous presence of youth participants. The presence and participation of Roman

¹⁴³ Sarah Chakko had been a president of the WCC but was appointed, not elected.

¹⁴⁴ Personal communication, Pauline Webb to Janet Crawford. Potter was in 1968 director of the Division on World Mission and Evangelism.

¹⁴⁵ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 52.

¹⁴⁶ Brown, "The Lessons of the Assembly", 206.

Catholic delegated observers bore witness to the rapid development of the relationship between the WCC and the RCC, to the point where RCC membership of the WCC was recognised as a possibility at some future date.

The assembly directed the new central committee to restructure the World Council in the light of the functions now required of the ecumenical movement, bearing in mind its growth away from the North Atlantic region which gave it birth towards the "Third World," the larger role played by Orthodox Churches in its life, and the growing partnership with the RCC. What was asked for was not a more tinkering with organisational procedures but a thorough review and restructuring to be carried out over the next three years.

The growth of the WCC, the commitment to restructuring, and the emergence of new leadership, all contributed to the beginning at Uppsala of a new era of the ecumenical movement. By 1968 the founding veterans of 1948 had mostly been replaced by a younger generation of leaders. At Uppsala the assembly hastened this process by electing a central committee which in its turn elected officers and an executive committee many of whom had had little experience of the

WCC. The new executive committee of sixteen members, plus the presidents, was more representative of Asia and Africa than formerly, though Mrs Janet Wesonga of Uganda was the only woman member apart from Pauline Webb. Only two members had served on the executive committee before; two of the new presidents had not served on the central committee and neither had one of its new vice-chairmen, Pauline Webb. In the words of general secretary Eugene Carson Blake, "after the Fourth Assembly, it [was] clear that, however influential the experienced members may be, the new leadership elected at Uppsala [would] be

responsible for a new and exciting and more ecumenical era in the life of the Council."¹⁴⁷

Women's participation in the new leadership was however still limited, as was their participation in the assembly as a whole. Dr Marga Bührig, a member of the Swiss Protestant Church Federation, was present at the assembly as an adviser. In reflecting on the assembly she noted that the composition of the delegations allowed:

...certain a *posteriori* conclusions concerning the power structures of the member churches...As far as women are concerned, what is absolutely certain is that the number bears no relation to the preponderance of women who attend church services and other religious functions.¹⁴⁸

For Bührig, this was linked with the failure of the department on Cooperation's policy with its emphasis on partnership and cooperation between women and men.

The Department did not see itself as set up to represent a group "being discriminated against" and did not see its task to be that of helping to change existing power structures. On the contrary, it saw the way open to the mutual study of basic problems...[It] had pledged itself to deal thoroughly with essential topics in loyal co-operation with both men and women...Yet now, twenty years later, it would seem that the real balance of power within the churches has changed scarcely at all...[T]he good, thorough and comprehensive work of the Department has as yet failed to bring about a change in the existing set-up, and has not produced a genuine balance or a real partnership between men and women in the church.¹⁴⁹

The problem at Uppsala was still essentially the same as at the Amsterdam assembly:

The problem of how to reconcile theory and practice or, to put it another way, the translation of theoretical insights into responsible action...asking what exactly are the forces which are preventing this translation from taking place

¹⁴⁷ Eugene Carson Blake, "Uppsala and Afterwards", in Fey, *The Ecumenical Advance*, 418.

¹⁴⁸ Marga Bührig, "Discrimination against Women", in *Technology and Social Justice: An International Symposium on the Social and Economic Teaching of the World Council of Churches from Geneva 1966 to Uppsala 1968*, ed. Roland H. Preston, (London: SCM Press, 1971), 295. Cf Brown, "Lessons of the Assembly", 206, where he suggests the imposition of a quota system to ensure more balanced representation among the delegates.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 297, 299.

and which are thereby perpetuating discrimination against women instead of removing it?¹⁵⁰

At Uppsala there was still "an enormous discrepancy" between theological statements on the co-operation of women and men and "the various power structures to be encountered in the majority of churches belonging to the World Council of Churches."¹⁵¹ It was not so much that the Department on Cooperation had failed, as that the churches had failed to respond to the work of the department. The theory of co-operation conflicted with male-dominated power structures in the churches, power structures which were largely replicated in the WCC which was itself a body made up of those self-same churches and within which it was just as difficult to reconcile theory and practice. Within these structures the participation of "minority" groups such as women was often a matter of tokenism rather than cooperation. Rosemary Goldie, one of the RCC delegated observers at the assembly, commented afterwards "I did often have the old familiar sensation that our consciences were quietened by the presence of 'a layman', 'a woman', 'an under-25', and so the responsible people could get down to business!"¹⁵²

Webb believed that she had been elected as vice-chair of the central committee as a "token woman" but also realised that such tokenism might give women like herself the experience which enabled them "to push open doors of opportunity for other women."¹⁵³ Token or not, Webb was elected and this was a sign that times were changing and that the central committee, "the most powerful group within the WCC" could "begin to discern the signs of the times" and to

¹⁵⁰ ibid., 296.

¹⁵¹ ibid., 299-300.

¹⁵² "Uppsala 68: Letters of Criticism and Advice", *Study Encounter* 4 (1968), 217.

respond to them.¹⁵⁴ Another sign was that in the various discussions and decisions at Uppsala:

Talk of cooperation between women and men, based on the theological affirmation of sexual difference, receded. The emphasis was on equalising the participation of women and men, 'irrespective of their sex'.¹⁵⁵

"Equalising of participation" was to become increasingly the focus in the years ahead. Although women's participation at the fourth assembly was limited, Uppsala did in fact mark a significant turning point for women in the WCC.

¹⁵³ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 20.

¹⁵⁴ Brown "Lessons of the Assembly", 207.

¹⁵⁵ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 35.

CHAPTER 6

FROM UPPSALA TO NAIROBI: 1968-1975

The seven year period between the fourth and fifth assemblies was a time of "dreadful pain and turmoil"¹ with many threats to peace and human survival. The world monetary crisis, growing pollution of the environment, the population explosion, widespread violations of human rights, wars and confrontations, the increasing impatience and unrest of peoples seeking political and racial liberation, all created a situation in which "the very future of international society" was threatened.² Signs of hope included the resolution of civil war in the Sudan and the end of direct super-power involvement in Indochina.

During these years 31 new churches joined the WCC, making a total of 271 member churches in more than 90 countries. More than half of the total membership was now in the Southern hemisphere and the increased cultural and theological diversity resulting from this expanded membership led to many tensions. The question of RCC membership in the WCC had faded but there was increasing collaboration between the two bodies on a number of issues and the formal link established in 1965 through the Joint Working Group continued, as did a joint committee on Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX), established in 1968 following the Uppsala assembly.

¹ David E. Johnson, ed., *Uppsala to Nairobi 1968-1975: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (New York: Friendship Press, 1975), 10

² *ibid.*, 16.

As instructed by the assembly, the central committee had made decisions about a new structure for the administration of the WCC and about the role and composition of future assemblies. (See below). These decisions were to be implemented in planning for the fifth assembly. Also in accordance with decisions made by the assembly, the Program to Combat Racism (PCR) was set up in 1969 and, although highly controversial, renewed in 1974, while a new commission, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), was set up in 1970. In 1971, after years of co-operative work and prolonged negotiations, the World Council of Christian Education integrated with the WCC, general responsibility for continuing its work being lodged in the newly established WCC Office of Education. Early in 1973 the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) held a world conference on the theme "Salvation Today" in Bangkok, Thailand. This was the first world conference on mission held since the integration of the IMC with the WCC at New Delhi in 1961, and was the major WCC conference during the years 1968-1975.

Throughout this period the WCC experienced financial problems which were increased by the world monetary crisis and inflation. Stringent limits were placed on staff numbers and, in spite of the greatly increased membership of the Council, the staff grew only from 314 in 1969 to 329 in 1974. Staff members came from 49 churches in 45 countries, with a great increase in the numbers from Asia, Africa and Latin America. The number of women is not recorded but following the departure of Charlotte Browne-Mayes in 1969 there was no woman head of a division and the report of the central committee to the fifth assembly

noted that "further improvement is necessary in the recruitment of Orthodox staff members and the *appointment of women to leading positions*".³

One significant change occurred in the presidium when, following the death of D T Niles in July 1970, the central committee in 1971 elected Dr Kiyoko Takeda Cho to replace him. Thus for the second time there was a woman president of the WCC, the first having been Sarah Chakko. Both these women presidents were Asian, and neither was elected by an assembly, being in each case elected by the WCC central committee to fill a vacancy. Neither woman was elected as a member of the WCC central committee as neither was an official delegate at an assembly (though Sarah Chakko would have been a delegate at Evanston had she not died). It was possible for each of them to be elected to the presidium as membership of that body was and is not restricted to assembly delegates. Dr Cho, a Japanese, had a distinguished career in education and had been active in the ecumenical youth movement and the YWCA. She was an adviser to the Evanston, New Delhi, and Uppsala assemblies. It was Pauline Webb who suggested to Eugene Carson Blake that Dr Cho fill the vacancy created by D T Niles' death and Blake then gave her the task of phoning the Kyodan (United Church of Christ in Japan) authorities to gain their consent to her nomination. Webb recalled that they were "not very keen" but, their assent gained, Cho's election proceeded without any opposition.⁴

Another significant change in the WCC which took place at the same meeting of the central committee in 1971 was the election of Philip Potter to

³ *ibid.*, 47. My emphasis.

⁴ Personal communication, Pauline Webb to Janet Crawford.

succeed Eugene Carson Blake as general secretary of the WCC. Potter, a Methodist from the West Indies, had long been involved in the ecumenical movement and was currently director of CWME. After his election Potter was questioned about the role of women in the WCC. His response showed an awareness of the situation:

I agree entirely that we've got to give attention to this and I hope to do so. Of course, in our committee structures we are very much influenced by what happens in the churches themselves, and if the churches do not have women in the centre of their life, it is very difficult to get them into the structures of the World Council.⁵

Following the Uppsala assembly there was a considerable expansion of the programmes, studies and activities of the WCC, all reflecting in some way the "enlargement of the ecumenical vision to embrace the needs of the world and of humankind in its striving for unity and community".⁶ Increasingly, the word "ecumenical" was understood in its biblical sense, referring to the whole inhabited earth and the universal human community and not only to fellowship among Christian churches.⁷ The emphasis on the unity of humankind as inseparable from the quest for the unity of the church, a predominant theme in many of the Uppsala reports, continued as a characteristic of the work of the WCC and as time went on many questions to do with women's participation became focussed around this theme.

⁵ "In Potter's Hands", *Risk* 8 (3) (1972), 14.

⁶ Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 33.

⁷ See Konrad Raiser, "Oikumene" in *DEM*, 741-742, for the development of the meaning of this word in the ecumenical movement.

The Women's Liberation Movement

During the period between the fourth and fifth assemblies the struggle for women's participation within the WCC took new directions and new emphases. This was within the context of the growing influence of the modern feminist movement, or the women's liberation movement as it was often called. This movement was born in the USA in the 1960s, set off by events in American society, but spread to other First World countries and eventually became a world-wide movement.⁸ The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sex as well as race, came soon after a presidential commission which found that women were second-class citizens in almost every sphere of American life. The word sexism was coined, probably by analogy with racism, to refer to institutionalised oppression on the ground of gender.⁹ Books such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (first published in 1963) voiced "the frustration and rage of women who were tired of being assigned spheres and roles and images in a society that was supposed to offer dignity and humanity to all".¹⁰

The modern feminist movement was launched and the wider secular movement was paralleled by a movement in the churches as women evaluated their

⁸ I am aware that the feminist movement is sometimes accused of being a Western movement and therefore irrelevant to non-Western women. On this I agree with Ursula King that "the growth of feminism around the world does not mean that the movement for the emancipation of women and their full participation in society has been imposed from the outside. On the contrary, women from the Third World stress the importance of their own struggle and efforts to achieve their own liberation while participating in movements for the political and economic liberation of their own countries". Ursula King, ed., *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader* (London: SPCK, 1994), 3.

⁹ See Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, *A Feminist Dictionary* (London: Pandora Press, 1984), 411-412, for the history and definition of sexism.

¹⁰ Barbara J. MacHaffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 135. MacHaffie gives a helpful brief account of the women's movement in the churches.

status and sought "expanded roles in ministry, seminary education and decision making, participation and power".¹¹ In some denominations women struggled for ordination while in others they struggled for greater acceptance of women who were ordained. A vast body of literature on sexism in the churches emerged, beginning with Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968). Women began formulating feminist theology using liberation theology as a model or guide.¹² These developments influenced women's struggle for participation in the World Council of Churches.

Women in Leadership in the WCC

At Uppsala the assembly had elected a central committee of one hundred and twenty members, of whom only seven (5.8%) were women. This committee then elected a sixteen member executive committee on which there was one woman (Mrs Janet Wesonga of Uganda). There was no woman among the six presidents but Pauline Webb was one of the two vice-chairs of the central committee. Following the assembly the divisional and departmental committees were reappointed by the new central committee but women's participation on these was also limited. For example, the thirty-three member committee of the Division on World Mission and Evangelism had only three women, while there were two women on the twenty-four member committee of the Division on Inter-Church

¹¹ Anne E Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 12. Carr offers a helpful overview of "The Women's Movement and the Churches", *ibid.*, 5-18.

¹² See for example Letty M Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective: A Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974) and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975). Russell (pp.52-3) defines theology as "feminist" when it consciously expresses the world and experience of women seeking human equality and reflects upon God from the perspective of their world and experience.

Aid, Refugee and World Service. The committee of the Division on Ecumenical Action, which included the departments on youth, laity, and cooperation of women and men, included eight women among its thirty-six members. In spite of the poor representation of women on committees, two women did give significant leadership within the WCC during this period. These two were Pauline Webb and Brigalia Bam.

When Pauline Webb was elected, first to the central committee and then to the position of its vice-chair, she was relatively unknown in the ecumenical movement and Uppsala was the first assembly which she had attended. She was better known in the United Kingdom, where she had recently finished a term as vice-president of the Methodist Conference and was, in her professional capacity, director of religious broadcasting in the external services of the BBC. Webb was not identified with the feminist movement and this may have been a factor in her election - "I was seen as a church woman, not a movement woman".¹³ She did, however, feel the need to work on behalf of other women and decided that, having been elected as a token woman, she would use the opportunities which the role gave her. Like Kathleen Bliss before her,¹⁴ Pauline preferred to work through the larger body of the WCC and not to confine her concerns to the department on Cooperation, although she was certainly supportive of its work and worked with Brigalia Bam on a number of issues. In her own words:

I remember being described in one article as a "figurehead of the ecumenical movement" which I thought a flattering description until I discovered the definition of a figurehead as a female figure with no functional role and only of decorative value! But at least from that position I hoped to be able to share in some way in steering the ecumenical ship into some yet uncharted waters. So I

¹³ Personal communication, Pauline Webb to Janet Crawford.

¹⁴ Webb thought that Bliss "had handed on the baton" to her. Personal communication, Pauline Webb to Janet Crawford.

joined enthusiastically with Brigalia Bam, Madeleine Barot's successor at the women's desk, in planning a conference at Berlin in 1974 on sexism in the 1970s.¹⁵

(This conference, a landmark in the history of women's participation in the WCC, is discussed below).

According to Webb, central committee chairman M M Thomas was, like WCC general secretary Eugene Carson Blake, very supportive of women.¹⁶ He treated Pauline as a partner and gave her high visibility.

His expectations of women were entirely free from a patronising attitude. If there was an important or particularly difficult subject for debate on the agenda, he did not suggest that under the circumstances perhaps he should resume the chair. As a result, Pauline chaired some complex and controversial debates.¹⁷

Among these were debates concerned with the controversial Programme to Combat Racism. During the central committee meeting in 1971 Pauline chaired a four and a half hour debate on PCR and though she found it exhausting, her capable handling of this and other debates contributed to the acceptance of women in leadership in the WCC. Throughout this period "the model of her increasing leadership role...would provide hope and inspiration in the continuing struggle to correct the imbalance of male leadership in the Council".¹⁸

Webb also took practical steps to encourage women's increased participation, using the influence given her by her role as one of the officers of the WCC. An early example was her suggestion of Dr Cho as president to replace D T Niles. Although she believed she had been elected as a "token woman" in response

¹⁵ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 20.

¹⁶ Personal communication, Pauline Webb to Janet Crawford.

¹⁷ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 53.

to pressure from women at Uppsala, Webb recognised that her position both gave her valuable experience and enabled her "to push open doors of opportunity for other women".¹⁹

Although Brigalia Bam is frequently referred to as Madeleine Barot's successor she did not replace her as executive secretary to the Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society but from September 1967 acted as associate secretary, first to the Rev. Mattie Joensuu and then to the Rev. Leslie Clements, a Methodist from New Zealand, who replaced Joensuu as executive secretary in August 1968. It was only after the restructuring which took place in 1971 that Bam became responsible for the new "women's desk", while Clements was in charge of the "family desk". Bam remained at the WCC until 1980 and during her thirteen years gave a new style and new emphasis to the "women's department", these changes being reinforced by the structural changes which took place early in the seventies.

Brigalia Bam's first contact with the Department on Cooperation came at the women's conference organised by Barot in conjunction with the first All-Africa Conference of Churches assembly at Kampala in 1963, although she had already had contact with the WCC through its youth work.²⁰ For Bam, Kampala was "a very exciting meeting. Here were women from all parts of Africa, very able, impressive women. I was awed by their competence".²¹

In 1967 Bam joined the staff of the department on Cooperation, her name

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 51.

¹⁹ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 20.

²⁰ See Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 135-139, for an account of Bam's career prior to her going to the WCC.

²¹ *ibid.*, 138.

being proposed by Fr Paul Verghese, DEA director who had met her at the All African Youth Conference held in Nairobi in 1962. Bam brought to the department a perspective which was formed by her South African experiences, including the experience of having her passport withdrawn for human rights advocacy,²² and later "informed by her contacts among Blacks and feminists in North America and the poor in Latin America".²³

On the basis of her personal experience and conscious of the rising tides of liberation movements in society and in the churches, Bam developed an approach which was more "militant" than that of Barot²⁴ and which introduced a new vocabulary into the "women's department". "Oppression" and "liberation" replaced "partnership" and "cooperation" as key-words and Bam, linking racism and sexism, called women to be in solidarity with those still suffering oppression.

As a black woman, I believe that this is where the women's movement, and church women even more particularly, have an important contribution to make. It takes them beyond personal liberation to the liberation of humanity. Women have achieved a solidarity they should now *use*. They understand that whoever is oppressing another person needs, himself, to be liberated. From their experience of oppression, women can enter into the experience of blacks more immediately and work for *their* liberation . . . I am not saying that the issues which affect us as middle-class women are unimportant. But I am saying that, if we have the platforms, we must also speak on behalf of others who have no platform. I do not know where or how we can enjoy our liberation while we live in the midst of their oppression. We simply have no place for our freedom if there are still black women working like slaves under the impossible conditions of racial injustice. Our solidarity must express itself in the fields and on the frontiers.²⁵

Restructuring of the WCC

²² Bam's passport was withdrawn in 1963 after her return from the AACC assembly and her arrival in Geneva was delayed for more than a year until it was restored. Bam's brother, a law student, who was arrested in 1963, spent eleven years in prison.

²³ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 36.

²⁴ Jacques, *Madeleine Barot*, 156.

The styles of work and decision-making formulated by the second assembly in 1954 proved inadequate as the WCC grew in size and complexity. Before the Uppsala assembly the central committee initiated a re-examination of the WCC's structure and organisation in order to respond to the many changes which had taken place in the world scene, in the WCC, and in the relation of the churches to the WCC. For various reasons this re-examination was not finished by the time of the assembly and responsibility for concluding it and for implementing its conclusions was given to the incoming central committee which, when it met at Addis Ababa in 1971, adopted a number of proposals concerning the fifth assembly and concerning the administration of the WCC.²⁶

Prompted by events at Uppsala, the assembly asked that the review of the WCC structure should include consideration of "how the influence of official leaders of the churches (who are mostly clerical) can best be balanced with men and women, especially younger men and women, whose primary field of Christian service is in the world".²⁷ It also asked that a committee on structure should consider the nature and composition of an assembly, with special reference to the allocation of delegate seats and "to the inclusion of a greater proportion of lay men and women, and of persons under 35 . . .".²⁸ The various committees of the WCC were also to be reviewed and consideration given to "the relations between church representation and legislative authority and responsibility and between ecclesiastical control and lay professional expertise and insight".²⁹

²⁵ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 64.

²⁶ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 10th-21st, 1971* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971), 136-202, 25-28.

²⁷ *The Uppsala Report 1968*, 376.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 377-378.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 378.

The report of the structure committee, which was presented to the central committee at its meeting in Addis Ababa in January 1971, suggested that an assembly was a complex event which must be "the occasion for a celebration which will include the conducting of the business of the World Council of Churches; worship and study; and an occasion for common Christian commitment". In its composition the assembly was to be "both a representative body and an occasion for participation of a wider circle among the people of God". The participation of "the people of God" should be encouraged through a "visitors' programme" separate from the business meeting. The delegates, to whom was entrusted legislative responsibility, were still to be duly elected by the member churches and to be "broadly representative" of those churches.³⁰

These guidelines or principles were accepted by the central committee which took a major step towards increasing the representation of women (and other "minority" groups) at future assemblies when it also accepted a proposal on the composition of an assembly. According to this, the member churches would nominate and elect directly a given percentage of their delegates, this percentage to be fixed by the central committee but not below 85%. The balance of the delegates, not above 15%, would be elected by member churches upon the nomination of the central committee. Such nomination would be based on a number of factors, including "proportions of lay persons, of women and of young people".³¹ This proposal was included in the revised rules of the WCC, giving the central committee for the first time some power to negotiate with the churches over the composition of their delegations. There was a mixed response to the

³⁰ *Central Committee, Addis Ababa, 1971*, 146.

³¹ *ibid.*, 152.

proposal, which had originally been for 25% rather than 15%. While some would have preferred 25% one (male) member of the central committee thought 5% would be sufficient!³² The implementation of what became known as "the 15% rule" was to have a significant effect on planning for the fifth and subsequent WCC assemblies.

The former divisional structure was replaced by three more flexible programme units, each grouping a number of sub-units which were themselves more flexible versions of the former departments. The three new programme units, named Faith and Witness, Justice and Service, and Education and Renewal, were designed to reflect the major functions of the WCC according to its constitution. The former Division on Ecumenical Action became the programme unit on Education and Renewal, made up of two sub-units, one on education and one on renewal.³³ The department on Cooperation between Men and Women in Church, Family and Society disappeared and was replaced by two separate "desks". Questions to do with the family, included in the department's mandate since the New Delhi assembly, were now placed in the sub-unit on education and "the issue of women's emancipation" was placed in the sub-unit on renewal.³⁴ The new structure reflected a significant change in perspective, a change foreshadowed in the department's report to the central committee in 1969, in which it stated that: "There isconflict between women and men in a man-made world. Premature

³² Thomas, *My Ecumenical Journey*, 371.

³³ See Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 178-182, for a more detailed account of the formation of the programme unit on Education and Renewal which was completed only in 1973. The new emphasis on education was in response to the decision by the WCCE at its world assembly in 1971 to integrate with the WCC - an integration which was negotiated on the WCC side by Kathleen Bliss.

³⁴ "The emancipation of women" is used as a sub-heading for the section on the "women's desk" in *Uppsala to Nairobi* and also in the text. See *ibid.*, 194-195.

harmonizations in concepts like 'complementarity' have not solved the conflict; they have dimmed it."³⁵

The aim of the new programme unit on Education and Renewal emphasised participation. It was:

To assist churches, Councils of Churches and renewal movements through processes of education and communication to enable persons, communities and institutions to participate as fully as possible in the changes that faith in God and Christ calls for in them, in the renewal of the churches, and in the transformation of society.³⁶

The basic orientation of the unit, as of the former DEA, was still towards people. But now the focus was increasingly on those described as "the powerless", "the silent", and "the unrepresented", and "liberation became a more and more significant theme of work, whether it was with women, renewal movements, children, schools, lay people, church administrators or those seeking to stimulate awareness about development".³⁷

The "women's desk"

Given the context of the growing feminist movement, the emphasis on liberation and participation in the new programme unit, the change from a department on Cooperation between Men and Women to a "women's desk", and given the leadership of Brigalia Bam with her commitment to human rights, it is hardly surprising that "the language, tactics, pressures and concerns of politics ran right through the women's desk's work in the 1970s".³⁸ The real question during

³⁵ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Third Meeting, University of Kent at Canterbury, Canterbury (GB) August 12th - 22nd, 1969* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1969), 167.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 182.

³⁷ *ibid.*, 184.

³⁸ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 64.

the 1970s was understood to be "whether the Church will ever allow women to become human," and under Bam's leadership "activities arising out of belief in the emancipation of women [were] undertaken in response to the mandate which was given at the Uppsala Assembly".³⁹

There was a move away from studies based on theological, sociological and psychological aspects of the relationship between the sexes, which after twenty years seemed to have led to little change as delegates at the fourth assembly, the programme staff and the committees of the World Council all remained predominantly male. In the words of Dr Marga Bührig:

Making allowance for a measure of exaggeration, one might almost say that these meticulous theological and psychological inquiries into the 'true nature of woman', her intrinsic gifts, the mission entrusted to her by God, and the correct appraisal of the unalterable contrast between men and women which is part of creation, have perhaps led to an inability or reluctance even to appreciate that discrimination against women ever exists, even though its existence is born out by the facts. It may be that lucid theological insights make people blind to the practical conditions which require change.⁴⁰

Bam realised that women needed training and encouragement if they were to take positions of responsibility in church or society, and so organised a series of leadership training consultations, beginning in her own continent of Africa where some pioneering work in this area had earlier been organised by Madeleine Barot.⁴¹ At these consultations women were encouraged to develop confidence in their own abilities, to support other women, and to articulate and affirm their own

³⁹ Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 195.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 197. A similar point was made by Letty Russell in one of the background papers for the 1974 consultation on Sexism in the 1970s: "The WCC has sponsored many studies of women in church, family and society in the period from 1948 to 1968 but these studies do not seem to have led to much practical change in the status and function of women." Letty M Russell, "An Open Letter to My Sisters on Six Continents," TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

⁴¹ Prior to the fifth assembly in 1975, women's leadership training seminars had been held in Lomé, Togo; Monrovia, Liberia; and Kampala, Uganda. Further seminars were held in Europe and the Middle East after the Fifth Assembly.

insights and experiences rather than depending on male "experts". Bam purposely restricted many of these consultations to women, thus making a real break with the tradition which had emphasised cooperation between men and women and had sought to involve men in working with women. Madeleine Barot, reflecting on this development which was contrary to so much of her own work, acknowledged that:

When the WCC's work ceased to be dominated by the western world, it became apparent that, to give effective support to women in their quest for liberation, there was still a need for a place where women could be together, where they could, without being subjected to pressure or coopted for other purposes, discover their own identity, work out their own contribution, show what they could do and express their hopes for justice, peace and unity in the world in their own way.⁴²

The leadership training programme was successful in that out of the local seminars came women "who became future leaders in the WCC, members of its Central Committee, and executives of national councils" as well as women who could "articulate their positions, experiences, and insights with force and clarity" at consultations and conferences.⁴³

Another focus for the women's desk during this period was the ordination of women.

Ordination of Women

At Uppsala the report of the committee on Cooperation of Men and Women had urged continued study of the question of the admission of women to holy orders, "especially taking into account the experience of the increasing number of

⁴² Madeleine Barot, "What Do These Woman Want" in *Faith and Faithfulness: Essays on Contemporary Ecumenical Themes, a Tribute to Philip A. Potter*, ed. Pauline Webb. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 80.

churches which now ordain women".⁴⁴ In response to this recommendation Bam organised a consultation on the ordination of women which was held at Cartigny, Switzerland, in September 1970.⁴⁵ This consultation, "unique in the history of ecumenical encounters",⁴⁶ brought together twenty-five participants, male and female, from six continents, representing eight Christian traditions, including Roman Catholic and Orthodox.⁴⁷ Of the eighteen women participants, seven were ordained. In accordance with the Uppsala mandate, the purpose of the consultation was to explore positive reasons for ordaining women and to reflect on the experience of those churches which did ordain women. In preparation for the consultation a survey or 'spot-check' was made, based on responses to a questionnaire sent to 100 women. The survey showed a marked increase in the number of ordained women since World War II. Of 239 member churches of the WCC, about 72 now ordained women although the large group of Anglican and Orthodox churches had not changed their opposition.

The consultation report began with the statement that:

No church which has proceeded to the ordination of women has ever had cause to reconsider its decision. Rather the experience has been one of enrichment and greater adequacy in developing flexible forms of ministry. The actual experience of such churches is of great importance, since so many forebodings are grounded merely in theoretical possibilities, untested by actual experience of ordained women.⁴⁸

⁴³ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 63.

⁴⁴ *The Uppsala Report 1968*, 250.

⁴⁵ See *What is Ordination Coming To? Report of a Consultation on the Ordination of Women held in Cartigny, Switzerland 21st - 26th September 1970*, ed. Brigalia Bam. (Geneva: WCC, Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, 1971). This volume contains four of the 16 background papers, two case studies, and reflections by a woman minister, as well as reports and summaries.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁷ There were two Roman Catholic participants, one of whom, Dr Tine Govaart-Halkes of the Netherlands, gave a paper which was "pro" the ordination of women. There was only one Orthodox participant.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 1.

It equated any form of discrimination against women with "dehumanisation". It requested that the WCC examine its own structures for discrimination, particularly in its staff and commissions, and called on the member churches to experiment boldly beyond the normal ecclesiastical and sociological limits present, in order that the contributions of women might have maximum effect.⁴⁹ It also affirmed that although "some traditions found great difficulty in looking at this question" the right ecumenical attitude was "*not* for one church to refrain from change" because another had not moved but "to declare that discrimination cannot be permitted in any part, and attempt to persuade towards the truth those parts which still practice and indeed institutionalise discrimination".⁵⁰

Ordination was not seen as the answer to problems of women's participation in the churches because "it became evident in our discussions that in all the churches the old barriers remain untouched because even after ordination women still had no opportunities for leadership and very few were involved in decision-making".⁵¹ The report did however argue that many of the theological arguments used in the past against the ordination of women no longer carried much weight, and that there were many positive arguments in favour of this change. Ordination of women would be a sign of renewal. "The Church which seeks to be the people of God, a sacrament or sign of His work in the world must be a body where there is full cooperation between men and women. Today this is only possible if ordination of women is permitted".⁵²

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 72.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 2.

⁵² *ibid.*, 64.

At Cartigny the discussion of the ordination of women was seen as taking place within an ecumenical context where there were major changes in thinking about ordination and ministry, and where social changes had led to changes in the practice of ministry. Thus it was argued that:

The ordination of women, if accepted today, would be within the church whose understanding and practice of its ministry is developing...To ask whether women should be ordained is not simply to ask whether there should be an *extension* of existing forms of ordination. It is to raise the whole question of the value of ministry and ordination as these have been known down the centuries.⁵³

The Cartigny consultation marked a new stage in ecumenical discussion of the ordination of women. The number of churches which ordained women had increased considerably in the past decade and traditions which in 1960 had not even considered the issue were now discussing it seriously.⁵⁴ Where previously theological arguments from scripture and tradition had been mainly negative it now seemed that the weight of such arguments had shifted in favour of the ordination of women and "the burden of proof" lay with those opposed to ordination rather than with those "who affirm its appropriateness and necessity".⁵⁵ The argument that the ordination of women would threaten the growing unity of the churches, though still claimed by Roman Catholics and Orthodox, was increasingly rejected by others who argued that ordination of women would contribute to the renewal of the churches. Above all at Cartigny the experience of

⁵³ *ibid.*, 59. Original emphasis.

⁵⁴ For example, the (Anglican) Lambeth Conference in 1968 had stated that the theological arguments for and against ordination of women to the priesthood were inconclusive and had asked all Anglican churches to study the question. In the RCC there were during the 1960s a number of studies on the subject and three petitions were presented to the Second Vatican Council, one by Gertrude Heinzelmänn and two by the St. Joan's Alliance. See Gertrud Heinzelmänn, *Die getrennten Schwestern: Frauen nach dem Konzil* (Zürich: Interfeminas Verlag, 1967) for discussion of women's participation at the council and those petitions.

⁵⁵ *What is Ordination Coming To?*, 59.

ordained women was taken seriously, experience which was for the most part positive, and which was seen as strengthening the ministry of the whole people of God.

It was within the commission on Faith and Order that much of the ecumenical discussion of *ministry* was taking place but despite the mandate from the Uppsala assembly, the question of the ordination of women received only limited attention between 1968 and 1975. At Louvain in 1971 the commission received a text on "The Ordained Ministry" which was the result of a process of study and consultation initiated by the 1963 world conference on Faith and Order.⁵⁶ In this text there was a section titled "Who is to be Ordained?" within which there was a brief sub-section of two paragraphs on "The Ordination of Women". This was basically descriptive. It began by acknowledging that "strong emotions are aroused when this subject is discussed" and concluded that "the force of nineteen centuries of tradition against the ordination of women cannot be lightly ignored. But traditions have been changed in the Church. The question must be faced, and the time to face it is now".⁵⁷

Faith and Order study on ministry continued at an international consultation in Marseilles in 1972. The text produced at this meeting, titled "The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective," did not greatly develop the discussion on the ordination of women although it did state that:

For most communions, the role of women in the ministry is a matter of discipline and not of doctrine, although there are doctrinal positions relevant to the question. If agreement could be reached that the disciplinary status of the

⁵⁶ "The Ordained Ministry", in *Faith and Order Louvain 1971: Study Reports and Documents*. Faith and Order Paper No. 59. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971), 78-101.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 93.

question predominates, the issue could be decided by a future ecumenical council.⁵⁸

Following a process of discussion and revision, the central committee agreed in 1974 to the publication of the report on ministry, together with reports on baptism and eucharist. The resulting text, titled *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry* was communicated to the member churches in 1975.⁵⁹

In the 1975 text the subsection on "The Ordination of Women" was an expanded version of the 1971 Louvain text. It pointed out that:

The implications for the ordained ministry both of the relatedness of men and women as created in the image of God, and of the transcending of the distinction between them in the perspective of redemption in Christ, need to be more fully explored. The different traditions read the same facts in different ways...[C]hurches which ordain men only tend to see sexual differentiation as requiring a clearly defined separation of social roles. Churches which ordain both men and women, on the other hand, may risk the danger of underestimating the anthropological and social significance of difference between the sexes.⁶⁰

Acknowledging the presence of social and psychological factors, the text affirmed that the Church must take the side of "freedom, justice and truth where those can be discerned".⁶¹

Where the consultation at Cartigny had rather strongly linked the refusal to ordain women to discrimination against women, the Faith and Order text took another position:

But the question of who may be ordained, related as it is to this issue, is not the same question. The patterns of ministry are shaped by the Church in obedience to its understanding of the Gospel, as interpreted by the Spirit in the ever-

⁵⁸ "The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective", *Study Encounter* 8 (4) (1972), 13.

⁵⁹ *One Baptism, One Eucharist, and a Mutually Recognised Ministry: Three Agreed Statements*. Faith and Order Paper No. 73. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975).

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 48.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

changing contemporary situation. It is on these grounds that the question of ordination should be judged.⁶²

The report concluded that differences on this issue should not be regarded as insuperable obstacles to the mutual recognition of ministries and that:

Since the opinion appears to be growing that doctrinal considerations either favour the ordination of women or are neutral, the possibility is open that a future ecumenical council might deal with the question. Ecumenical considerations, therefore, should encourage, not restrain, the full, frank facing of this question.⁶³

Shortly before the Faith and Order commission meeting at Accra in 1974, a WCC consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s" took place in West Berlin. (See below). At this consultation, organised by the women's desk and limited to women participants, the discussion of women's ordination took place in the context of the struggle against discrimination and sexism. Existing forms of theology were challenged as "often oppressive to laypeople and especially to women".⁶⁴ In a critique which might have had the Faith and Order commission in mind (although it was not in fact directed to any specific group), participants stated that "even on subjects which directly concern women, it is usually men who formulate the theory and carry out the practice." Among their recommendations was one supporting women in their quest for ordination and urging WCC member churches "to open all service opportunities to women".⁶⁵

Thus we see that ordination of women was being addressed within the WCC by two different constituencies, with rather different results. The Faith and Order commission, dominated by male theologians and with a significant Orthodox

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.*, 49.

⁶⁴ *Sexism in the 1970s: Discrimination Against Women. A Report of a World Council of Churches Consultation, West Berlin, 1974* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974), 97.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 97, 100.

involvement, acknowledged it to be an issue which required ecumenical attention, although the commission itself seemed rather reluctant to engage in debate on the issue. It was however clear in its texts that for Faith and Order the refusal by some churches to ordain women was not a matter of discrimination but a question of doctrine. Within the constituency of the women's desk, which was made up largely (though not exclusively) of women, and in which there was little Orthodox participation, the ordination of women was increasingly seen as an issue of justice. In the understanding of this group, the refusal to ordain women was a denial of their full humanity and of their full participation in the body of Christ. For those at Cartigny, the composition of the Faith and Order commission itself was seen as evidence of discrimination.⁶⁶ Both these positions were to be represented in the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study (see below) which addressed the issue of women's ordination in the period after the fifth assembly.

By the fifth assembly in 1975 the question of the ordination of women was firmly on the agenda of the WCC and although the official position was still neutral some of the WCC publications were decidedly in favour. In 1971 the youth department magazine *Risk* devoted an issue to "women's liberation" in which it treated the issue as virtually settled:

The ordination of women is a question we have deliberately avoided taking up. Few, if any, churches can master knock down theological arguments against it. Even in those churches where women are ordained, women are mostly confined to certain types of ministry. Experience shows that even gaining ordination is only a paper victory. What is now needed is frankness and honesty about the reasons which exclude women from ordination or the total range of ministries.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ What is Ordination Coming To?, 73.

⁶⁷ Gladly We Rebel! *Risk* 7 (1) (1971), 11.

An issue of the WCC quarterly review published just before the fifth assembly was devoted entirely to women and their role in the churches. Several of the articles dealt by various ways with the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood, all being basically positive. The contribution by Emilianos Timiadis, representative at the WCC of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was particularly significant for he argued that attitudes and practices concerning women in the Orthodox Church had been determined by sociological rather than theological factors.⁶⁸ An article by Phyllis Guthardt, an ordained Methodist from New Zealand, concluded with strong theological arguments for the full acceptance of women in ordained ministry.⁶⁹ It seemed that the tide was turning.

Increasing Pressure for Women's Participation

Almost as soon as the Uppsala assembly was over, pressure for the increased representation and participation of women in the structures of the WCC, and particularly at the fifth assembly, began to mount. A first sign of this came at the 1969 meeting of the central committee, where the DEA report expressed concern regarding the implementation of the Uppsala proposals on the increased participation of women in all WCC meetings and conferences and recommended that "serious attention be given to appointing more women to senior posts on the WCC staff".⁷⁰ In the ensuing discussion more attention was paid to the question of youth representation in the Council, but a resolution was passed "that in the selection of personnel for senior WCC posts due regard be paid to the actions of

⁶⁸ Emilianos Timiadis, "From the Margin to the Forefront", *ER* 27 (1975): 366-373.

⁶⁹ Phyllis Guthardt, "The Ministries of the Peculiar People", *ibid.* 345-351.

⁷⁰ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Third Meeting, University of Kent at Canterbury, Canterbury, Great Britain, August 12th - 22nd, 1969* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1969), 179.

the Uppsala Assembly on the role of women in WCC affairs".⁷¹ During the discussion the Rev. Miss Ching-Ching Lee pointed out two problems which often made the participation of both women and youth at ecumenical meetings difficult. Firstly, many churches either could not, or would not, pay for their participation, since they were usually "not high enough in the local structure". Secondly, there was the problem of people in secular employment being given time off work. These two problems needed attention because "it was no use extending a right which for practical reasons could not be exercised".⁷²

At the next meeting of the central committee, held in Addis Ababa in 1971, a major step towards increasing the representation of women (and other "minority" groups) at future assemblies was taken with the acceptance of the proposals from the structure committee on the composition of an assembly, including the 15% rule. (See above).

In August 1972 the central committee met at Utrecht in the Netherlands. Considerable attention was paid at this meeting to the theme, "Committed in Fellowship", which was addressed by a number of speakers and discussed in groups.⁷³ After this meeting vice-moderator Pauline Webb published an article in which she challenged the limited concept of fellowship in this discussion.⁷⁴ She began by noting that although women throughout the world were seeking a community in which to make the fullest possible contribution, in the discussions

⁷¹ ibid., 34.

⁷² ibid., 31.

⁷³ See *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Fifth Meeting, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 13-23 August, 1972* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1972), 20-22, 141-144.

⁷⁴ Pauline M Webb, "Committed to Fellowship; - But of What Sort?" *ER* 25 (1973): 256-265.

at Utrecht, "discussion about sex discrimination was omitted altogether".⁷⁵ In Webb's opinion the debate at Utrecht was dominated by the particular concerns of members of the central committee:

Since that Committee has to be representative of the leadership of the member churches it inevitably is predominantly clerical, senior and male...[T]his is how the churches are, and this is the reality which the ecumenical movement at this point in history must reflect. Frantic attempts to enlist a few more lay people, some young participants and a dozen or so women are only of superficial value. What we must explore more deeply is how the whole nature of our fellowship would need to change if we seriously accepted the necessity of partnership with and participation by these absent constituencies.⁷⁶

In a trenchant critique, she declared that "with all the lip service that is paid to the need for greater representation of women on committees, there seem to be few people aware of how painfully lopsided the whole ecumenical movement is as it limps along, relying mainly on male strength". Drawing on her own experience, she stated that "as long as the prevailing style is so masculine and the representation of women so minuscule, we women will go on feeling like the addenda able to express ourselves freely only when we are apart from the whole, finding our identity only in separation from the total community".⁷⁷

Not only were women largely excluded from the ecumenical fellowship, their absence from the discussions resulted in glaring omissions:

We speak of Eucharistic fellowship, but ignore the implications of the fact that in most of the member churches women are still excluded from celebrating the Eucharist, we speak of partnership, but fail to translate this into terms of equal opportunity for women to share in the ministries of the Church. These questions, like the much larger questions of abortion and birth-control, of relationships between the sexes and the liberation of women, would all place enormous strains upon the ecumenical fellowship if we were to explore them at any depth...yet they are all questions of paramount importance to the human community at this time in history and we ignore them at our peril. If they are to

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 256-257.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 257-258.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 263.

come on to our agenda, then obviously women need to be present in large enough numbers to share fully and effectively in the debate.⁷⁸

Webb had had considerable experience of the WCC's work against racism. Now she stated that "the issue of sexism is quite as explosive as the issue of racism".⁷⁹

In her article Webb referred to a tension at the Utrecht meeting caused by "the increasing determination on the part of the women of our company to ensure greater participation and partnership in the life of the Council as a whole and at the Assembly in particular".⁸⁰ In fact, during the central committee meeting a number of the women present met as a separate group. This appears to have been the first time that such a separate women's meeting took place, and it evoked various responses, "ranging from amazement to amusement". Seventeen women, delegates and staff, including Pauline Webb and Dr Takeda Cho, attended this meeting in order to "assert our identity and plan our strategy".⁸¹

One of the results of this meeting was a request to the executive committee "to take steps to remedy the imbalance between the percentage of women in the total composition of the Assembly and the percentage actively participating in the

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 263-264.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 264.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 263.

⁸¹ *ibid.* Webb does not give the number of women and the central committee minutes do not refer to the incident at all. The number of seventeen was given by Brigalia Bam in a letter in which she referred to "Miss Pauline Webb, Dr K Takeda Cho, and fifteen other women delegates and staff members present at the WCC Central Committee meeting in Utrecht", Brigalia Bam, "Circular letter to our contacts, sent out in October 1972". TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. Among those present were Margaret Mead, Birgit Rodhe and Clair Collins Harvey (CWU president) who were advisers and Madeleine Barot and Nita Barrow (staff). According to Webb a photo of this group of women was titled "Women on the Warpath". Personal communication to Janet Crawford.

life of the churches".⁸² The executive committee received this request at its meeting in January 1973 and agreed to "recommend to the Central Committee that 60% of the places at the Fifth Assembly to be filled by the Central Committee should go to women".⁸³ It may have been on this occasion that Pauline Webb was challenged "in all earnestness" by one of the men on the executive "to say where we could find women of sufficient calibre to participate in an international and ecumenical gathering!"⁸⁴ Webb's response was that the best people to represent women were women.⁸⁵

This decision of the executive committee, endorsed by the central committee at its next meeting in Geneva in 1973, meant that at the fifth assembly there would be for the first time a specific allocation of places for women. In addition to those women directly appointed as delegates by the member churches, 60% of the 15% filled by the central committee were to be women. As at this stage the number of delegates planned for the fifth assembly was 800, the effect of the recommendation was that there would be an additional 72 women in the 15% category nominated by the central committee. For the first time at an assembly the number of women delegates would not be entirely dependent on the member churches.⁸⁶ Through this recommendation the WCC staff, who had to work on the procedures for implementing it, were given specific goals rather than the general

⁸² *Central Committee, Minutes and Reports, Utrecht, 1972, 52*

⁸³ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 14-28 January, 1973, Bangalore, India, 11.*

⁸⁴ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 21.

⁸⁵ Pauline Webb, personal communication to Janet Crawford. Webb identified the man as Ernest Payne, one of the WCC presidents.

⁸⁶ Technically the WCC, through its central committee, nominated the additional 15% for election by the churches. Thus a member church retained the right to refuse any particular nomination.

and vague suggestions for increasing women's participation which had been made so often and so unsuccessfully in the past.⁸⁷

Brigalia Bam was determined to take further action to ensure increased participation of women at the next assembly. Immediately after the Utrecht meeting she wrote a circular letter addressed to "friends", in which she expressed the concerns raised by the women at Utrecht and their proposed strategy, stating that:

Our concern as women is that in this Fifth Assembly the percentage of women delegates be higher than in previous assemblies. So we are writing to ask you to see to it that your Churches do include women in it [sic] delegations. May we suggest that you start planning right away on your best strategy for this, with a view to making the necessary approaches to your church leaders and to submitting a list of your candidates to them.⁸⁸

As Bam explained, such action was important not only to increase the number of women delegates at the assembly but also to gain more women members of the central committee. "It is only by getting a greater number of women as *delegates*, that we can be assured...having more women as members of Central Committee. (Advisers, Consultants, etc. not being eligible to such membership)".⁸⁹

In this letter Bam also informed her contacts that the WCC was planning "an international consultation on the whole issue of women, to be held in June 1974", and that she would keep them informed of developments on this. At this stage,

the proposed theme is "SEXISM IN THE SEVENTIES", and our goal is stated in terms of fulfilment, that is helping women make a more diversified contribution to the Church and to society. It is hoped that the consultation would bring an important contribution and new directions on the issue of women to the WCC Fifth Assembly in 1975.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ At Utrecht the assembly preparation committee had expressed its hope "that special emphasis be given to places for women and young people" in the allocation of the 15%. *Central Committee, Minutes and Reports, Utrecht, 1972*, 183. The actions taken by the women at Utrecht gave some real force to this "hope".

⁸⁸ Brigalia Bam, "Circular letter addressed to our contacts".

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

Bangkok, 1973

At the beginning of 1973 the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism held a world mission conference in Bangkok, on the theme "Salvation Today". Of a total of 143 delegates only 18 were women, but at 12.5% this was a decided improvement on women's participation at the Uppsala assembly.

Although Brigalia Bam was not present, six of the women who had been at the Utrecht meeting of the central committee in 1972 were present. Included among them were Pauline Webb, Dr Takeda Cho, and central committee member Carmencita Karagdag.⁹¹ It was presumably due to the influence of the women participants that one of the section reports included a strong statement "on women". According to this:

Men and women are both made in the image of God, and it is in their complementary nature and in their cooperation together that God's purposes for the salvation of mankind can be fulfilled. This cooperation is not possible where women's destiny is determined exclusively by their biology where they are thus denied the possibility of full personhood. The roles that are assigned to women are all in terms of sex...They gain acceptance only if they accommodate to the styles and expectations of the male world...God's "feminine voice" will only be heard as women are enabled to make their own particular contribution to theological thinking and to the whole life of the Church.⁹²

⁹¹ Clair Collins Harvey, Peggy Ashby and WCC staff member Nita Barrow had also been at Utrecht. Also present was Elisabeth Adler, who had played a prominent role at Uppsala, and Dr Anna-Marie Aagard and Mrs Mercy Oduyoye, both of whom were to be leading women in the WCC in future years.

⁹² *Bangkok Assembly 1973: Minutes and Reports of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, December 31, 1972 and January 9 - 12, 1973* ([Geneva]: World Council of Churches, [1973]), 75.

While the theology in this report was similar to that expressed in many documents from the department on Cooperation in the 50s and 60s, it went further by concluding that, in practical terms, "a deliberate attempt has to be made to bring women into positions of responsibility and decision making". Furthermore, it called for "radical change" in the structures, the style of working and the form of conferences and meetings to ensure "that women may make their full contribution and that all may be liberated from the evil of power, domination and manipulation".⁹³

Within the WCC central committee the struggle to bring more women into positions of responsibility and decision-making in the World Council itself continued. In 1973 women members protested against proposals made by the nominations committee to fill vacancies on a number of committees, proposals which "did nothing to correct the imbalance of women in the membership...in spite of the repeated representations that had been made".⁹⁴ Two women asked that the proposals be not accepted, with the result that there was "a considerable discussion during which strong protests were voiced regarding the continued failure to provide for adequate representation of women in all areas of the Council's work".⁹⁵

The result was a compromise with the central committee agreeing to the original proposals and at the same time instructing the nominations

⁹³ ibid.

⁹⁴ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 22-9 August, 1973* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1973), 94.

⁹⁵ ibid. This protest was led by Jean Fairfax, a member of the Legal Defence Fund for the Civil Rights of Blacks in the USA, and Clair Collins Harvey, president of CWU, who was present as a substitute.

committee that "between now and the Fifth Assembly all vacancies shall be filled by women nominees".⁹⁶

Consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s: Discrimination against Women", (West) Berlin, 1974

The impulse for this consultation came from Bam, who "insisted on having a meeting before the 1975 Nairobi Assembly, recognising that each Assembly had been preceded by a women's meeting"⁹⁷ and was "joined enthusiastically" by Pauline Webb.⁹⁸ The planning process had already begun before the Utrecht meeting of the central committee, for in July 1972 a "Consultative Ad Hoc Meeting on the Women's Issue" was held at Chester House, London, where Webb worked.⁹⁹ The meeting was chaired by Webb and attended by Bam and seven other women, among whom were Frances Smith from the WCC communications department and Janet Lacey from the British Council of Churches.¹⁰⁰ At this meeting the decision was made:

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 95. M M Thomas describes this resolution as "an over-reaction of the committee against the first impact of feminist radicalism which was rising in view of the coming Berlin consultation on Sexism" and states that "as the women interpreted it so, they were quite frustrated...I saw Pauline...quite depressed". Thomas, *My Ecumenical Journey*, 413.

⁹⁷ Tom Best to Janet Crawford, telefax, 27 January 1994, based on a conversation between Best and Brigalia Bam. Personal files of the author. In fact the Uppsala assembly had not been preceded by a woman's meeting and the meetings held by the department on Cooperation prior to the Evanston and New Delhi assemblies had involved both women and men.

⁹⁸ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 20.

⁹⁹ "Minutes of a Meeting of an Ad Hoc Consultative Group on "The Women Issue", Chester House, London 19-20 July, 1972". TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

¹⁰⁰ The other participants were Ellen Bogle (administrative assistant to Bam), Gudrun Diestel (Oberkirchenratin, EKD), Dominique Perrot (research assistant, Institute of Studies in Development, who lived in Geneva) Grace Igwe (a Nigerian) and G Carver.

To hold an international consultation on "Sexism in the Seventies". Purpose: to expose sexism so forcefully that it affects the WCC Fifth Assembly. Secondary purpose: to prepare women to speak up at the Assembly.¹⁰¹

Planning for the consultation was continued by a task force based in Geneva and chaired by Bam, while Webb and several others not resident in Geneva were kept informed.¹⁰² There was prolonged discussion over the question of men's participation at the consultation, with Webb arguing for their presence and Bam strongly opposed. At the third meeting of the task force in March 1973 it was finally decided *not* to include men and Webb later defended this break with the earlier emphasis on *cooperation* between women and men, telling a meeting of the WCC executive committee that "this consultation would be limited to women because many felt that they would be severely inhibited if men were present, but it should be seen as only one part of a process and it was hoped that the whole subject would be fully debated at the Assembly".¹⁰³

The "Sexism in the Seventies" consultation took place from 15 to 21 June, 1974, in West Berlin, and was attended by some 140 women.¹⁰⁴ While some women were the official representatives of their churches others had been specifically invited, "chosen for their professional reputation, their personal

¹⁰¹ "Minutes, Ad Hoc Consultative Group".

¹⁰² Members of the task force included WCC staff members Nita Barrow, Florence Addison and Frances Smith; the Rev. Eva Zabolai Csekme, and Audrey Abrecht from the LWF; Margaret Dunn and Katherine Strong from the World YWCA. During 1973 it was chaired by Rose Gurupatham who acted as Bam's replacement while she was on leave.

¹⁰³ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, Bad Saarow, German Democratic Republic, 18-12 February, 1974*, 1.

¹⁰⁴ The consultation report, *Sexism in the 1970s* names 140 women participants (pp.135-50). Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 72, refers to 160 women. The task force minutes show that the first proposal was for 80 participants but already in January 1973 it was proposed to raise the number to 100, because of the great interest shown in different parts of the world. Speaking to the WCC executive committee a year before the consultation Bam reported that it had been originally planned to have 120 participants "but in view of the great interest aroused this had now been increased to 150". *Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 18 August, 1973, Geneva*, 11.

standing in society, often against the wishes of their church".¹⁰⁵ Among them were twelve Roman Catholic participants and five from Orthodox churches.

Constance Parvey, a Lutheran pastor from the US, commented that:

Many of us had been at world gatherings before, but had never been at a meeting of all women who were our peers from many continents, churches and professions - education, law, medicine, theology, politics, the social sciences, etc. For many, the Berlin experience was a turning point. We had numerous occasions to be with men of similar education and work, but none to meet with women of our generation and to share with them our faith, professions and hopes.¹⁰⁶

This remarkably talented group of women from all over the world challenged the conviction held by many men in the ecumenical movement, that there were simply not women of sufficient calibre to participate at international, ecumenical gatherings.¹⁰⁷ As Pauline Webb noted:

The answer was right there before our eyes in Berlin - 170 of them from over fifty different countries, women whose experience as pastors and theologians, lawyers and politicians, doctors and economists, teachers and administrators, counsellors and home makers provided a reservoir of talent and an abundance of gifts that the official ecumenical bodies had scarcely used until then.¹⁰⁸

The only male speaker related to the consultation was Philip Potter who, in his official capacity as general secretary of the WCC, addressed a public meeting and thus spoke "in connection with" rather than "at" the consultation. In his opening remarks he expressed his embarrassment at being the only male speaker and apologised that the general secretary of the WCC "is a male and not a

¹⁰⁵ Barot, "What Do These Women Want?", 80. Bam told the executive committee that most participants "would be women from our own constituencies". *Minutes of the Executive Committee, 1973*, 11. Nominations were sought from members of the task force, church-women's groups, Church Women United (USA), the World YWCA, the Roman Catholic Council on the Laity, and secular women's organisations.

¹⁰⁶ Constance F Parvey, "The Journey of an Idea" in *The Community of Women and Men in the Church; Report of the Asian Consultation held at the United Theological College, Bangalore on 11-15 August, 1978*, (Bangalore: Printers India, 1978), 7-8.

¹⁰⁷ See Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 20-21, for an illustration of this conviction held by a WCC president.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 21.

female".¹⁰⁹ The invitation to Potter was seen by the task force as a compromise with its "women only" policy but his presence and public identification with the issue was seen as an asset, particularly as the public meeting was attended by a number of male church leaders.¹¹⁰ In explaining the reasons for WCC sponsorship of this consultation with its "provocative title...which caused many raised eyebrows, to put it mildly, in the churches,"¹¹¹ Potter drew analogies between sexism and racism, declaring that "sexism, like racism, is sin". Potter stated that "this concern must be seen in the light of the whole tradition in ecumenical thinking and action since the formation of the WCC."¹¹²

The consultation was part of the total concerns of the WCC for "liberation and community in Christ" and an important preparation for the forthcoming fifth assembly of the WCC, with its theme "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites".¹¹³ Potter acknowledged that in spite of much valuable work done in the past, the cooperation of men and women in Church and society was still far from a reality, and that "while our theological thinking has been clarified, we have done very little to act on it" confessing that:

Women have not had the chance to speak clearly, fully, and radically to the whole Christian community. It is part of the very nature of "sexism" that we men have dominated the discussion; even about women.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 27. The full text of Potter's address is given pp.27-33.

¹¹⁰ See "Task Force on 'Sexism in the 1970s, Minutes, 13 February, 1974", 2. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

¹¹¹ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 28; see also Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 20. The title had been the subject of a good deal of discussion by the task force which had received many critical comments on it. At its sixth meeting in October 1973 the decision was made to keep the original wording but to add to it "a colon and the words Discrimination Against Women - all in one line". "Task Force on 'Sexism in the 1970s', Minutes, 5 October, 1973", 2. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

¹¹² *Sexism in the 1970s*, 33, 31.

¹¹³ *ibid.* In fact although the consultation was an official WCC meeting funding for it was raised by the task force from various sources and not provided by the WCC budget. In this it was similar to the Baarn meeting in 1948.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, 33.

He defended the women-only participation at the consultation as "absolutely necessary at this stage in history", arguing that women must "under God, take their destiny in their own hands" and that "this consultation is a significant ecumenical contribution to this process", a process "which will enable us to know and do what is right in achieving a fuller humanity as women and men".¹¹⁵ Potter's address emphasised that:

It was not the growth of the secular women's movement that prompted the church's concerns about sexism, but the gospel itself. The basis of the World Council's determination to address this issue was both theological and biblical.¹¹⁶

Pauline Webb stressed the same point in a brief opening address which she gave in her official role as vice-moderator of the WCC central committee. She defined sexism as "any kind of subordination or devaluing of a person or group solely on the ground of sex". Within the church sexism meant that:

There have been different histories, different expectations, a different sense of identity, and an association with the structures of power that have created a male-dominated order in almost all human society and certainly within the Church, making it impossible for the Church to foreshadow the truly human community. So it is for the sake of that community that we Christian women come now to examine the heresy of sexism and to explore ways of overcoming it that will liberate both men and women for a new partnership in the gospel.¹¹⁷

Like Potter, Webb stressed the importance of the consultation in terms of preparation for the fifth assembly of the WCC and also for the United Nations International Women's Year in 1975, pointing out that the choice of "this year 1974 is deliberate".¹¹⁸ But for Webb, as for Potter, the primary importance of the consultation was related to the proclamation of the wholeness of the gospel which

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 31.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

was distorted by the "heresy" of sexism and which women (and men) had therefore to expose and eradicate.¹¹⁹

Nelle Morton, a distinguished feminist theologian and human rights activist from the US, took up the theme of wholeness in a major conference address, entitled "Towards a Whole Theology".¹²⁰ Morton claimed that "sexism is one message of the Church the world has not failed to hear", and argued that sexism was a theological issue:

Any theology developed by one sex, out of the experience of one sex, and taught predominantly by one sex, cannot possibly be lived out as if it were whole theology. For whole theology is possible only when the whole people become a part of its process, and that includes women.¹²¹

She declared that:

Theologising as women becomes top agenda for a consultation such as this...Theologising involves reaching back into our tradition, and re-examining it, claiming the wholeness of it, laying hold on those seeds of liberation within it, reclaiming them and bringing them to the life of the Church and the world.¹²²

For Morton, every woman was a minister by virtue of her baptism, and as a minister every woman was involved in the theological task. "We may not be academic theologians, or systematic theologians, but in entering the theological process, we have much to do and much to say, and a new way of saying it".¹²³ Morton concluded that the shape of a "whole theology" remained a matter for speculation.

But of one thing we may be sure. It cannot come out of one group or one sex or one nation or one culture speaking for the whole, any more than men have

¹¹⁹ ibid., 9.

¹²⁰ Nelle Morton, "Towards a Whole Theology", in *Sexism in the 1970s*, 56-65. This is the transcript of Morton's address, which was based on a longer paper prepared in advance of the consultation. The full text was published for the first time in Nelle Morton, *The Journey is Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 62-85.

¹²¹ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 59, 57.

¹²² ibid., 63.

¹²³ ibid., 64.

been able to speak for the whole. A whole theology would envision all the people speaking out of their own experiences into the process and towards full humanness.¹²⁴

In the light of Morton's address, with its insistence on the importance of women's involvement in "theologising", it is somewhat surprising to learn that among the various consultation working groups which had been planned prior to the event there was not one on women and theology. Constance Parvey has recounted the story of how a working group on women and theology came to be formed in addition to the groups discussing women in political and economic structures, in education, in the family, and in the church:

When I arrived as a delegate from my church, I was asked to co-chair a meeting on women in politics. I had never studied political science on an advanced level and had never worked as a practical politician. But I had studied theology and I had served for years as a pastor on the local congregational level. I therefore went to the leadership and asked if it would be all right to organise a group on "women and theology". The reply I got was "theology is not relevant to the lives of women, but if you want to organise one, go ahead and see what happens". Twenty-three women came to the group; all had studied theology. Of the twenty-three, only three were employed by the church. One was a seminary professor from North America, fully employed. The second, a seminary lecturer in Latin America - but without pay, and myself, a local pastor. All of us talked of the difficulties we had encountered in the church, no matter what church, area of the world, or economic system. All, except three, had ended up in other professions. They were teaching languages, philosophy, history, active as journalists and writers. Some were "doing their theology over the kitchen sink", taking care of husbands and children.¹²⁵

Members of this diverse group found in liberation theology "a basis for discussion coming out of our own experience and background".¹²⁶ In affirming "lived experiences as the context for reflecting theologically" they broke with

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ Constance F Parvey, "The Journey of a Dream: Beginning Again" in *Report of the All Africa Regional Consultation on Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, Ibadan, Nigeria, 15-19 September, 1980* (Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches Publication, 1980), 6. Parvey gave a similar account of the Berlin consultation at the Asian consultation on the Community of Women and Men in the Church held at Bangalore in 1978. See "The Journey of an Idea" (n. 104 above), 8.

¹²⁶ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 98.

tradition in which theology began with reflection on traditional text and doctrines.¹²⁷ It was this traditional methodology which both Bliss and Barot had followed in their work with the WCC and it is clear that what happened at Berlin was understood by the women themselves as being different. In the words of Liselotte Nold, "The theologians among us had the courage to take life and its problems as a valid starting point for theological reflection".¹²⁸ A major concern of this group was "sexist language and imagery" and as well as recommending that the WCC provide guidelines for "elimination of sexist language, concepts and imagery" it also recommended that "this conference request the Fifth Assembly of the WCC to instruct the Unit on Faith and Witness to initiate a study in relation to God language."¹²⁹ It was the work of this small group which, according to Madeleine Barot, "was really the beginning of the Faith and Order Study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church!"¹³⁰ Certainly it was this group which introduced the issue of "sexist language" into the WCC, where it was to become another focus of controversy in the years ahead.

Many of the recommendations from the consultation were specifically directed at strengthening the participation of women at all levels of the work, reflection and decision-making of the WCC,¹³¹ which was urged "to examine its own internal structure and set an example by ensuring an adequate representation of women from member churches on all its boards and committee structure to ensure that it is sufficient for handling the wide variety of programs and concerns

¹²⁷ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 46.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 132.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, 102, 100.

¹³⁰ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 76.

¹³¹ See comment by Letty M Russell, "Women in the WCC: Participation in a Symphony of Groaning", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 14 (1975), 117.

of women".¹³² The women also recommended that a major ecumenical programme entitled "Women: Education for Participation" should be launched after the assembly. This would be a regionally based adult education programme to combat sexism, designed by women to fit their own needs in particular situations, including

"political participation, national liberation struggles, economic development, health and family care, literacy and greater participation in church structures and theological education".¹³³

While recognising that "the planning of a specific strategy for an entire group...from such diverse church and national backgrounds...would be at best highly impractical"¹³⁴ a working paper presented to the participants did make a number of suggestions regarding greater participation of women at the assembly and as members of the central committee and WCC commissions. This was produced by a group set up by Brigalia Bam to prepare strategy and recommendations, another example of Bam's foresight and political awareness.

As she wrote to Letty Russell before the consultation,:

I know that some of the groups will come up with some concrete recommendations but I feel that those participants who do know something about our structure and how the WCC operates will have a different and a more realistic approach. This group will have to meet during our free time and evenings because the members will be participating in other working groups.¹³⁵

The paper pointed out that:

At first glance, it would certainly seem that the inclusion of more women at the Nairobi Assembly is not a question of suitable participants. We are aware that

¹³² *Sexism in the 1970s*, 122.

¹³³ *ibid.*, 126.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, 123.

¹³⁵ Brigalia Bam to the Rev. Dr Letty M Russell, 22 May 1974, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

there is a list of over 200 suitable candidates whose credentials have been screened.¹³⁶

The problem was that the churches had to be persuaded to appoint women as delegates, and "the overall attitude appears to be that if only one delegate is to go, then it must be a man. If places are available but funds are limited, the attitude is that the church cannot afford to send a woman".¹³⁷

As even those persons proposed by the WCC central committee under the 15% rule had to be officially appointed by their churches a strategy was suggested:

For instance, the members of the Caribbean group propose to go back from this meeting to the respective boards or hierarchies of their individual churches to check on the names and number of women proposed. Where these may be inadequate, they will work to ensure that there is good representation. They will notify Geneva immediately of suitable names. If financing is a problem, the women are proposing their own fund-raising activities, and when subscribing the money to the churches will " earmark " it for women's representation.¹³⁸

The same two points were emphasised throughout the paper: women should work to ensure women's representation on the local as well as the global level and they should use their financial power to provide the financial support needed to make women's participation possible. Women should no longer be dependent on financial support given or withheld by men.

On the local level, women should ensure that a proportionate amount of the money which they raise for the financial support of their churches is designated for women's work. On the world basis, women should exert every effort to see that there is a commitment to apportion some part of the church's budget for the support of women to go to meetings, just as there is for men...Where women have control over larger amounts of money, they should be prepared to give substantial amounts *to ensure that the lack of finance may not be used as the excuse for preventing progress in the greater involvement of women in the life of the World Council of Churches at the decision-making level.*¹³⁹

¹³⁶ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 123. There is no other information about this list.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 124.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, 124-125. My emphasis.

The Berlin consultation was not without its difficulties. The women came from different backgrounds, traditions and cultures, with different experiences, perspectives and priorities, spoke different languages and were engaged in different struggles. There were "disappointments, misunderstandings, frustrations, hurts and tensions" which remained unresolved.¹⁴⁰ In spite of difference and difficulty, the consultation was experienced as a significant event which brought new self awareness and a new sense of solidarity to those who participated. In Bam's words:

We learned that we all need to be liberated, only our liberation will take different forms in different contexts. Together we found a new kind of community and we renewed our commitment to work for change to end all those things which deny our humanity, and above all the creative purposes of God... We hope that this new wave of self-awareness among women which permeated our meeting in Berlin, will continue to grow, and that sisterhood will be an expression of solidarity, as we work for an end not only to sex discrimination but to all forms of oppression.¹⁴¹

Bam summarised the results of the consultation in a phrase first written by ecumenical veteran Liselotte Nold: "None of us returns home the woman she was when she came".¹⁴²

Reflecting on the consultation after almost twenty years, Pauline Webb commented:

It was there that for the first time many women came to realise that the question of women's participation was not simply a matter of social justice, but of theological integrity. And it was there that many of us discovered the strength of sisterhood. We caught the mood of a banner on the wall which announced "Sisters awake! Our time has come! Sisterhood is blooming. Spring time will never be the same again".¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ ibid., 131. See also Morton's comment that "the combined pressures building up over the years exploded into anger, frustration, and confusion in the Berlin consultation". Morton, *The Journey is Home*, 675.

¹⁴¹ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 5-6.

¹⁴² ibid., 131.

¹⁴³ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 21.

Sexism and *sisterhood* both entered the ecumenical vocabulary at Berlin in 1974 and were to remain key words throughout the next decade.

The Berlin consultation on "Sexism in the 1970's: Discrimination against Women" was a landmark in the history of women's participation in the WCC. It marked the beginning of a new phase, a phase in which "a shift of emphasis from 'man-woman cooperation in church and society' to 'the liberation of women' is found".¹⁴⁴ This shift in emphasis was reflected in the all-women composition of the consultation as well as in its title. It was affirmed by Madeleine Barot, who had for many years worked for cooperation between men and women. She wrote that:

The conference in Berlin in 1974 was dazzling proof of the effectiveness of a women's department...[It] was an eye-opener to many people. It was clear that what gave force to the demands of these women, accused of feminism and consequently suspect, was their faith, their understanding of the gospel, their deep spiritual life. They were a force to be reckoned with but also one to be relied on. They too were the church.¹⁴⁵

Women at the Berlin conference developed a new awareness of women's universal struggle for liberation from all forms of discrimination and oppression. Out of this awareness came commitment to change, change in the churches and change in the WCC, and the conviction that "church women of the various countries of the world will not rest until full mutuality and equality can become a reality in the institution that proclaims freedom so eloquently for all".¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Stephen Thottahil, "Identity and Relationship of Women and Men in the Church and Society: Thinking within the World Council of Churches", (DTM diss., Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, 1990), 77.

¹⁴⁵ Barot, "What *Do* These Women Want?", 80. Barot herself was responsible for excluding the male correspondent from *Le Monde*, who had come specially from Paris, explaining to him that men were not admitted. This of course immediately drew media attention. See Jacques, *Madeleine Barot*, 162.

¹⁴⁶ Morton, *The Journey is Home*, 65.

For many participants, the Berlin experience led to a new understanding of the ecumenical movement and of the need for women's participation in it. They realised that together they provided "a reservoir of talent and an abundance of gifts that the official ecumenical bodies had scarcely used until then".¹⁴⁷ After Berlin, many of these women played significant roles in local, national, and international ecumenical bodies so that "reading the list of participants now is like reading a roll-call of women from all parts of the world whose enormous talent has been committed to the ecumenical movement ever since".¹⁴⁸ Among them were two future presidents of the WCC (Anna Marie Aagaard and Annie Jiagge), the first woman deputy general secretary (Marie Assaad), two future vice-moderators of the central committee (Jean Skuse and Sylvia Talbot) and several future members of the central committee (Dorinda Sampath, Jean Woolfolk, Hildegard Zumach).¹⁴⁹

The Berlin consultation also marked the beginning of a new way of doing theology within the ecumenical movement as women recognised that "it was for them to create a theology which would stand alongside the masculine-oriented theology of the present day church".¹⁵⁰ As one of the participants later wrote:

When women do theology they do not simply add to the current streams of theological thinking but they contribute to theology, challenging rediscovering,

¹⁴⁷ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 21.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Sun Ai Lee Park founded the Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology and *In God's Image*, an Asian journal of feminist theology; Jan Cormack of New Zealand became national co-ordinator for the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa-New Zealand; Constance Parvey became director of the WCC study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church; Bam became general secretary of the South Africa Council of Churches.

¹⁵⁰ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 76.

renaming and recreating its content, its implications and the language used for its expression".¹⁵¹

In their questioning of male, white, western theology the women at Berlin became involved in the creation of a distinctively feminist theology, a process which continued within the WCC "women's desk".

Thus the overall results of the Berlin consultation included a new self-awareness among women, a new mood of assertiveness as women resolved to struggle for liberation in all aspects of life, a new commitment to women's participation in the ecumenical movement, a new way of doing theology, a new discovery of the strength of sisterhood as well as of the often painful divisions between women. The Berlin consultation was to have a considerable influence on the future work of the WCC. Not only did it mark a shift in emphasis from man-woman cooperation to women's liberation and the beginning of a distinctly feminist theology within the WCC. It also gave rise to a number of specific recommendations and careful strategies which had direct impact on the fifth assembly of the WCC and on decisions made there. Plans which had been laid in Berlin came to their fulfilment in Nairobi.

Follow-up to "Sexism in the 1970s"

At the Berlin consultation women had committed themselves to work in nominating and recruiting women in their own home churches and raising money to send them as official delegates to Nairobi. In the eighteen months between the consultation in June 1974 and the fifth assembly in December 1975 there was a

¹⁵¹ Eve Zabolai, Csekme, "A Woman Looks at Theology", *ER* 27 (1975), 324.

great deal of activity by a number of women to ensure that the expectations and hopes aroused at Berlin would reach some fulfillment at Nairobi.

Significant sums of money were given by the West German World Day of Prayer Committee and by a number of North American groups, including the US Working Group on the Participation of Women in the World Council of Churches (POW), a group formed by women's organisations in WCC member churches and related ecumenical bodies as an independent project of one year's duration, designed to continue the process from Berlin to Nairobi. Letty Russell, one of the Berlin participants and co-ordinator of POW, described the problems related to women's greater participation in the WCC as reflecting the situation in the member churches, for by the very nature of conciliar ecumenism "the vision and the tactics of the world body are dependent on those at the local and denominational levels for implementation".¹⁵² According to Russell sexism and clericalism were linked, with the result that "the male dominated and clerically dominated structures of church life have been perpetuated by an under-representation of women and laity in the WCC".¹⁵³

Russell noted the lack of women on the WCC staff and in key committee positions and pointed to the need to search out and promote qualified women for leadership roles. The percentage of women on the staff was in fact only marginally higher than at the Uppsala assembly, even though the WCC had greater

¹⁵² Russell, "Women in the WCC", 122. According to M M Thomas he and others in WCC leadership were concerned in the post-Uppsala period with ensuring better regional and confessional representation among the executive staff. See Thomas, *My Ecumenical Journey*, 325, 358, 428. Part of the problem was that prior to 1974 suggestions for new staff came from existing staff. Thomas expresses no concern about the small number of women executives.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 121.

control over who was appointed to the staff. A 1975 survey revealed that while women dominated the lower grades (administrative staff) men far outnumbered women in the higher grades (executive staff). Of 176 staff in Grades 1-V 90% were women, 10% men. Of 119 staff in Grades VI-X 74% were men and 26% women.¹⁵⁴ The general secretary, two deputy general secretaries, and three unit directors were all men.

In June 1975 Brigalia Bam wrote to all the women who had been appointed as delegates or advisers to the assembly, pointing out the current situation regarding women in leadership. Of the six WCC presidents only one was a woman. On the central committee, the main decision-making body between assemblies, there were only 7 women among the 120 members. Pauline Webb, vice-moderator of the central committee was the only woman officer. Bam urged her correspondents to take positive steps towards the election of women to leadership positions:

It is hoped that at Nairobi a larger number of women will be elected to the Presidency, to the Central Committee, and to other committees of the Council than has occurred in the past. This should be possible, since there will be a higher percentage of women delegates at Nairobi than has been true at other Assemblies. However, this will not happen automatically. If women are to be elected to leadership, their names and credentials must be submitted to the Nominations Committee. Women should feel a responsibility for recommending capable women for these posts, since often the women delegates are not well-known to the Nominations Committee.¹⁵⁵

Bam worked on a number of strategies to encourage women's active and informed participation at the assembly. She organised a European women's consultation, held at Cartigny, Geneva, 7-12 April 1975 and attended by almost

¹⁵⁴ David M Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November - 10 December, 1975* (London: SPCK, 1976), 244.

¹⁵⁵ "Brigalia Bam to Women Delegates and Advisers, June 1975". TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

forty women from a number of churches and countries in Europe. The meeting was designed to familiarise women with the main issues that would be dealt with at the assembly and to give them a chance to meet with WCC staff members. Several of the women, including Bam and the convenor, Liselotte Nold, had been at the Berlin consultation and this meeting enabled them to bring the results from Berlin to a wider group.¹⁵⁶

The women at Berlin had urged the WCC to publicly support the United Nations International Women's Year 1975 and had suggested an examination of its internal structure to ensure an adequate representation of women as an appropriate response to IWY.¹⁵⁷ Originally the WCC did not intend to make an official statement on the year, the reasons given by Philip Potter being that major attention would be given at the assembly to the issue of women's role in church and society and that "we already came out strongly at the Sexism Consultation." He considered it more important "to involve our member churches and groups with which we are in touch through our various programmes in participating in a practical way in the International Women's Year".¹⁵⁸ In April 1975 however the executive committee agreed to send a letter of greeting to the IWY conference in Mexico. This letter, based on a proposal from the indefatigable Brigalia Bam, stated that:

As Christians we affirm that the equality of women and men is clearly enunciated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ...yet we confess that in their institutional life the churches, in common with most structured communities,

¹⁵⁶ There appears to be no official record of this meeting but a few documents relating to it are held in the WCC Archives.

¹⁵⁷ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 122.

¹⁵⁸ Philip Potter to Dr Richard M Fagley, 10 January, 1975. TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. Fagley worked for the CCIA in the New York office of the WCC.

have not so far enabled women to render their fullest contribution to the total life of their councils and assemblies.¹⁵⁹

The letter noted that "the cause of women will be very much on the agenda of the Fifth Assembly" and concluded by stating that "in common cause with you we look forward eagerly towards the day when men and women in equal partnership can work for a world community in which all are free to utilize their God-given talents in the service of a new humanity".¹⁶⁰

Faith and Order, Accra, 1974

In addition to working for increased participation of women at Nairobi, Bam and others also worked to ensure that the concerns raised by the women at Berlin would be reflected in the assembly programme, and that their recommendations would have an impact on the WCC and its member churches. An important step in this process took place at the meeting of the Faith and Order commission held in Accra, Ghana, just a few weeks after the Berlin consultation.¹⁶¹

In 1974 there were still only four women among the 120 official members of the Faith and Order commission. This fact had not gone unnoticed¹⁶² but the membership continued to consist largely of "middle-aged men from the North Atlantic countries, veterans who have worked for years in the ecumenical

¹⁵⁹ "Letter of Greeting to International Women's Year Conference in Mexico" in *Minutes of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 14-18 April, 1975, Geneva, Switzerland*, 31.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ See *Accra 1974: Meeting of the Commission on Faith and Order. Minutes and Documents*. Faith and Order Paper No. 71. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974).

¹⁶² For example, "Where are the women in Faith and Order? That needling question has been heard for years, often to the embarrassment rather than the chagrin of the men who constitute 97 percent of the Commission's membership". J Robert Nelson, "Men, Women

movement".¹⁶³ In order to give a more balanced representation at the Accra meeting a number of consultants were invited, including women, younger men, Third World theologians, and Roman Catholics (in addition to the eleven who were members of the commission). These brought the total number in attendance to 170, representing more than twenty churches in over fifty countries. Only two of the four women members of the commission (Howard and Flesseman van Leer) were able to attend but they were supplemented by a number of consultants, bringing the total number of women to twelve (an increase from just over 3% to 7%).¹⁶⁴ Although only Bam and Parvey had been present at Berlin it was part of Bam's strategy to ensure that the results from Berlin would be considered at Accra and that "there would be a group of women theologians from around the world who would strengthen, support, and bring clarity to this new dream".¹⁶⁵ As Bam had hoped, the small group of women made their presence felt. As one man reported, "Their convictions were firmly expressed, and they were heard as never before...The men responded, it seemed, with genuine seriousness and concern".¹⁶⁶

Prominent on the agenda of the Accra meeting was the revision of the three short consensus statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry on which Faith and

and Church Unity: Faith and Order in Ghana", *The Christian Century* (18 September 1974), 854.

¹⁶³ Gerald O'Collins, "Faith and Order in Ghana," *Theological Studies* 36 (1975), 138. O'Collins however contrasted favourably the membership of Faith and Order, "which certainly needs more women, lay Christians and younger persons to reach a balanced membership" with the "lopsided nature of an equivalent body", namely the Vatican's International Theological Commission (1974-79) which had in its membership of thirty no layman - "let alone any laywomen" - and 22 of whose members came from Europe.

¹⁶⁴ The consultants were: Brigalia Bam, Dorothy Donnelly, Mrs Comfort Engman, Dr Aurelia Fule, the Rev. Susan Morrison, Mrs Mercy Oduyoye, the Rev. Constance Parvey, the Rev. Jeanne Audrey Powers and Annelot Weisbach. Mrs Mary Tanner, who in 1991 became the first woman moderator of the Commission, attended as substitute for Professor G W H Lampe (on the recommendation of Christian Howard), and brought the total number of women to twelve.

¹⁶⁵ Parvey, "The Journey of a Dream", 7.

Order had been working since 1967.¹⁶⁷ The statement on "The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective" presented for discussion at Accra was a revision of the Marseilles text of 1972. In its discussion of this text, the commission could not avoid the issue of the ordination of women. As the Marseilles text itself had pointed out, about one-third of the member churches of the WCC ordained women in the full sacramental ministry and the movement to do so was gathering momentum. As one Roman Catholic observer commented:

To a large extent Protestants have reached a consensus that there are no conclusive scriptural, doctrinal, or theological arguments prohibiting the ordination of women...For most churches the role of women in ministry is seen to be not a matter of doctrine but of discipline which can be adjusted to meet changing circumstances".¹⁶⁸

Within the Roman Catholic Church, now officially represented on the Faith and Order commission, the question had been debated increasingly since the Second Vatican Council and two major works on the subject had been published in 1973.¹⁶⁹ For Orthodox churches it was not a matter of debate except in ecumenical circles while the churches of the Anglican Communion were divided. Within the Church of England it was a matter of lively debate and the general synod meeting in May 1973 had passed a motion stating that it saw no

¹⁶⁶ Nelson, "Men, Women and Church Unity", 854. Nelson also remarks that "two African women with the first names of Comfort and Mercy gave the men small comfort and showed little mercy on male dominance".

¹⁶⁷ See Max Thurian *"Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (the 'Lima text')"* in *DEM*, for a brief history of this process.

¹⁶⁸ John E Lynch, "The Ordination of Women: Protestant Experience in Ecumenical Perspective", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 12 (1975), 194.

¹⁶⁹ See Haye van der Meer, *Women Priests in the Catholic Church: A Theological - Historical Investigation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973). This doctoral thesis, supervised by Karl Rahner, was published in German as *Priestertum der Frau?* in 1969. See also Ida Raming, *Der Ausschluss der Frau vom priesterlichen Amt: Gottgewollte Tradition oder Diskriminierung?* published in German in 1973; English translation, *The Exclusion of Women from the Priesthood: Divine Law or Sex Discrimination?* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976).

fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood.¹⁷⁰ Within the Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA it was a burning issue. At the general convention in October 1973 a motion approving the admission of women to the priesthood was narrowly lost (though approved by the majority of the clergy and the laity). There were rumours that individual bishops had expressed their intention of ordaining women anyway, and in fact this happened before the end of the Faith and Order meeting in Accra when on 29 July 1974, in Philadelphia, eleven women were ordained by four Episcopal bishops.¹⁷¹ The women at the Berlin consultation, just a few weeks before the Faith and Order meeting, had expressed strong support for the ordination of women, passing a recommendation "that this consultation goes on record in support of sisters in churches where ordination and employment of women as pastors and priests is a problem. In addition, we *urge* member churches of the WCC to open all service opportunities to women".¹⁷²

Although in the circumstances Faith and Order could hardly avoid the issue, neither could it reach a decision for or against, and "the debate showed that only some Catholics agreed with their Orthodox brothers in refusing ordination to women, but no satisfactory results were reached".¹⁷³ The result was that the agreed statement on "The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective" which the commission produced at Accra contained a brief section on "The Ordination of

¹⁷⁰ See Jacqueline Field-Bibb, *Women Towards Priesthood: Ministerial Politics and Feminist Praxis*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 105-127 for a history of this debate.

¹⁷¹ See Jacqueline Field-Bibb, "From Deaconess to Bishop: The Vicissitudes of Women's Ministry in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.", *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992), 61-78, for a detailed account.

¹⁷² *Sexism in the 1970s*, 100. Original emphasis.

¹⁷³ O'Collins, "Faith and Order in Ghana", 132.

Women" which did not differ greatly from the Marseilles text of 1972.¹⁷⁴ It pointed to differences in theological reasoning and church practice without coming down on one side or the other, although it did state that "the opinion seems to be growing that doctrinal considerations either favour the ordination of women or are neutral".¹⁷⁵

Underlying the cautious, carefully-balanced statements there is clearly a concern lest the ordination of women raise obstacles to the mutual recognition of ministries but the conclusion, in words identical to those in the Marseilles text, was that: "Ecumenical considerations...should encourage, not restrain, the full, frank facing of this question".¹⁷⁶ This statement on ministry, together with agreed statements on baptism and eucharist, was published and sent to member churches for information and reaction.

A second major focus at the Accra meeting was on the theme "Giving Account of the Hope that is within us". The origins of this lay in the Uppsala assembly which had emphasised the importance of church unity for human community. Faith and Order was concerned at this stage not only with the relation of the two but with the Christian hope shared by both.¹⁷⁷

At Accra the participants divided into groups each of which dealt with one aspect of the theme in terms of different cultural and political contexts. One group dealt with the theme from the perspective of "The Community of Women and

¹⁷⁴ See *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry: Three Agreed Statements*. Faith and Order Paper No. 73. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975). "The Ordination of Women" is dealt with in paragraphs 64-69, pp. 45-49. A fuller description of the development of this text and of Faith and Order work on ordination of women is given earlier in this chapter.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 49.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

Men". The group was led by Christian Howard and Jeanne Audrey Powers and had as its members all except two of the twelve women at the meeting, with eight men. The assignment given to the group stated that

The Christian community should be the community of men *and* women giving account of hope together. But does the church spiritually and structurally make it possible for women in full partnership with men in all dimensions of its ministry? Has the theological language not contributed to prejudice against the place of women in the Church and in society?"¹⁷⁸

One of the texts used as a basis for their discussion was a paper by Letty Russell, titled "Women and Freedom", which was part of the preparatory paper she had written for the Berlin consultation. The spirit of that meeting seems to echo through the statement drafted by the group at Accra. Titled "Giving Account of

the Community of Men and Women", the statement began by affirming that:

Our Christian faith leads us to hope for a renewed and transformed man - woman relationship. In the creation, God made us male and female persons, called to discover who we are and to find fullness of life through the community of men and women...But we recognise that sin has distorted and thwarted the full development of our man - woman relationship.¹⁷⁹

The statement continued with an affirmation of hope reminiscent of words at the Amsterdam assembly: "Called as men and women together to become signs of the promised kingdom, we hope for a true and complete community in Christ".¹⁸⁰

The concerns expressed at Berlin about sexist language and imagery were reflected in more detail in the Accra statement:

The problem of language and imagery about God has emerged in fresh ways in the contemporary world . . . Theology entails watching our language in the presence of God. Both generic language, and the conventional use of male and

¹⁷⁷ See Thomas Wieser, "Giving Account of the Hope - From Bangkok to Nairobi", *International Review of Mission* 67 (1978): 127-136, for an account of study on this theme.

¹⁷⁸ *Accra 1974*, 14.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 107.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

female language in speaking about God and the Church stand in the way of a Christian community in which all can participate fully. Both present theological problems which urgently need Faith and Order's attention.¹⁸¹

The "Conspectus of Studies and Programme" which summarised the results of the Accra meeting noted that the issue of the "Community of Women and Men in the Church" had "achieved prominence in the agenda" although some doubted if the questions being raised by women were integrally related to the theological discussions of church unity.¹⁸² (The insistence for more than twenty years by the "women's department" that the co-operation of men and women was essential for the wholeness of the church had evidently passed by these male theologians!) In the end the commission agreed that the "Community of Women and Men in the Church" should be one of three priority areas for study under the theme "Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind", to which the "Hope Study" was closely related and which had also been a focus for Faith and Order since the Uppsala assembly. It also recommended that this new study be pursued in close co-operation with WCC Unit III (in which the women's desk was located). The ordination of women was one topic in this proposed new study, but by no means the only one. Also noted in the study proposal were:

The deeper theological issues of symbols of gender in the concept of God, the authority of Scripture (especially St Paul!), celibacy and marriage, the Virgin Mary, and the traditional domination of masculine categories in Christian faith".¹⁸³

Constance Parvey was one of the women who attended both the Berlin consultation and the Accra meeting of Faith and Order. She remembered that:

At Accra the specific profile and recommendation for the Community Study were shaped. Aware of disunity, yet taking careful steps toward mutual

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, 108.

¹⁸² *ibid.*, 88.

¹⁸³ Nelson, "Men, Women and Church Unity", 854.

recognition in baptism, eucharist, and ministry, aware of gaping human division and injustices, yet taking steps toward reconciliation - it was in this setting that the community study found its first theological expression".¹⁸⁴

Recommendations from Berlin began to take programmatic shape at Accra. That this happened was not due to chance but to the determined effort of a small group of women, women who "were enacting their conviction that their concerns belong to the whole church".¹⁸⁵

Central Committee, 1974

Within weeks of the Faith and Order Commission meeting at Accra the WCC central committee met in West Berlin (August 11-18, 1974). The agenda of this

meeting too was affected by the Berlin consultation two months earlier, although only a few of the women at the central committee meeting had been at the earlier meeting. Bam was the only woman to attend all three meetings and obviously played a key role as a link between them.

In reporting on the consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s", Pauline Webb paid tribute to the quality of the participants and noted the strong sense of community which they had experienced in spite of differences. The central committee did not question her statement that "there was unanimous agreement that at the next Assembly there should be a plenary session given to the place of

¹⁸⁴ Constance F Parvey, ed., *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference, Sheffield, England, 1981* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 12.

¹⁸⁵ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 47.

women in a changing world",¹⁸⁶ and in response to another Berlin

recommendation the central committee agreed:

To reaffirm its wish that there should be adequate representation of women from member churches on all boards and committees of the Council, and to instruct the Executive to continue to examine the staff and committee structures with a view to ensuring that it is sufficient for handling the wide variety of programmes and concerns of women.¹⁸⁷

Also originating from the Berlin consultation was a motion on the elimination of "sexist language concepts and imagery from all speeches and documents" of the WCC, and "from the study booklet, litanies, and the special hymn in the preparatory materials" for the fifth assembly.¹⁸⁸ The original motion was replaced, on the grounds that "most people related to the WCC did not understand the problem of sexism in language".¹⁸⁹ Instead, the central committee agreed that the WCC should appoint a task force on sexism and language to provide a background

¹⁸⁶ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Meeting, Berlin (West), 11-18 August, 1974* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974), 45. There is in fact no reference to this agreement in *Sexism in the 1970s*.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 46. See also *Sexism in the 1970s*, 122.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.* See also *Sexism in the 1970s*, 102, 104. The "special hymn" appears to have been "Freedom for Service", the author of which was the Rev. Fred Kaan, a well-known hymn writer. This hymn appeared in the first North American edition of the preparatory booklet *Jesus Christ Frees and Unites* (New York: Friendship Press, n.d.) but was removed from a later edition. Kaan responded to the Berlin recommendation in an article titled "That Famous Recommendation 5" (*Monday Morning*, Dec. 2, 1974). In this Kaan pointed out that the hymn was not written for the assembly but had been taken from his hymnal *Pilgrim Praise*, published in 1968. He sent a copy of this letter to Faith and Order secretary Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, with a letter stating that he "would welcome a discussion on this issue if you feel so inclined". Already prior to the Berlin consultation Kaan's hymn had been criticised for its "sexist language". A letter from Louise Wallace, a former president of Church Women United and leader of the United Church of Christ, written in April 1974 to the WCC, expressed her "disappointment in the choice of the hymn" which she criticised as "very sexist". Wallace pointed out that the UCC had voted in June 1973 for the elimination of all non-inclusive language from church materials. Her letter was evidently passed on to Kaan who indicated his unwillingness to change the language and his belief that the hymn should be retained. This correspondence is in the WCC Archives. Later hymns by Kaan are in inclusive language, indicating a change in his thinking.

paper for the executive committee in April 1975, expressing the reasons for concern about the issue, defining the problem and identifying specific issues to be addressed, and recommending guidelines "to help in the elimination of sexist language, concepts and imagery in speeches and publications of the WCC".¹⁹⁰ The central committee also instructed the executive, in collaboration with the newly created task force on sexism and language, to examine the WCC constitution and rules in order to remove words "which some people considered to be sexist in their assumptions" while at the same time affirming that "from the formation of the WCC, no distinction has been intended between men and women in the provisions of the Constitution and Rules".¹⁹¹ This appears to have been the first time that "sexist language" became a topic of debate within the WCC but it was certainly not to be the last.

In response to a report on the Faith and Order commission meeting at Accra, the central committee affirmed the proposal for a study on the Community of Men and Women in the Church:

[It]welcomed the decision of the Commission on Faith and Order to give full attention to the relationship of men and women in the Church. It *recommended* that a study on the theological and practical aspects of the community of men and women in the Church be undertaken in cooperation with other parts of the WCC which are involved in these problems, especially Unit III [Education and Renewal].¹⁹²

This motion was to have far-reaching consequences.

The Next Step, February 1975

¹⁸⁹ ibid. The comment was made by a woman, Miss Jean Fairfax, whose amendment replaced the original motion.

¹⁹⁰ ibid., 47.

¹⁹¹ ibid., 49. The offending words were "chairman", "vice-chairman", and so on and the third person pronoun "he".

¹⁹² ibid., 28.

The vision of the women at Berlin was beginning to take shape as a WCC programme and the next step in this rather tedious journey through the WCC bureaucratic process was a consultation held under the joint auspices of Faith and Order and the women's desk - the first collaborative action undertaken towards the recommended study. A small group representing the participants at the Berlin and Accra meetings came together for a few days in Geneva, in February 1975.¹⁹³ Their task was to prepare the background paper on sexist language as requested by the central committee, to prepare the assembly plenary on women in a changing world, and to prepare a "working paper" on the study on the community of men and women, based on the proposal drafted at the Faith and Order meeting at Accra.

The paper on "Sexist Language in Theology and Church" prepared at the consultation was presented by Bam to the executive committee meeting in April 1975. It began by stating that "language is a powerful tool either for oppression and liberation" and described the growing awareness of an increasing number of women that "the kind of language used in our worship-services and in theological and church-related papers still ignores the presence of women in the Christian community".¹⁹⁴ It argued that as "an international organisation committed to building up a world community of freedom and equality" the WCC had to take

¹⁹³ See "Consultation on Sexist Language in Theology and Church, the Role of Women in the Church, Feb. 19-22, 1975. Le Cénacle, Geneva". TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. The participants were: Letty Russell, Sylvia Talbot, Eva Zabolai-Czekme, Liliane Mottu, and Brigalia Bam, all of whom had been at the Berlin consultation, with the Rev. Ruth Epting (Switzerland) and Tomoko Evdokimov (Russian Orthodox). Faith and Order was represented by staff members Lukas Vischer and Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, with Pastor Henri Mottu, who had been a consultant at the Accra meeting. It is not clear why the Faith and Order representatives were so few.

¹⁹⁴ "Statement from the Consultation on Sexist Language in Theology and Church", 1, 2. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

language seriously, "so that all people are included in its words and actions".¹⁹⁵

Commitment to inclusive language implied also commitment "to changing the structures of the churches",¹⁹⁶ and, by implication, of the WCC itself.

The consultation made a number of detailed suggestions for changes in the language of the constitution and rules of the WCC, on the grounds that "the words *chairman, men* and *brotherhood* were sexist because they implied that women were not included".¹⁹⁷ After exhaustive discussion the executive committee agreed to a number of recommendations based on these suggestions and when these were accepted by the assembly later in the year the revised constitution and rules were fully inclusive in all language referring to people. *Chairman* was replaced by *moderator, brotherhood* by *community, laymen* by *lay persons*, and so on. Although according to one staff member (male) these were "tiresome verbal amendments"¹⁹⁸ they were a sign that inclusive language was now accepted on the agenda of the WCC.

Of much more significance in the long-run and inherently much more controversial was the statement by the consultation that "many of the concerns about language raised here are directly related to symbols, images and language of Deity."¹⁹⁹ This point was expressed in more detail in the working paper on the community of men and women study which the participants also produced and

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 4. These changes were in response to a document on "Changes in the Constitution and Rules of the WCC" which had been presented to the central committee meeting in West Berlin and then circulated to the member churches in preparation for their voting on it at the fifth assembly. The purpose of the proposed changes was to revise the constitution and rules in accordance with the structural changes proposed by the central committee following the fourth assembly but the task force took the opportunity to revise the language also.

¹⁹⁸ David E Jenkins, "Nairobi and the Truly Ecumenical: Contribution to a Discussion about the Subsequent Tasks of the WCC", *ER* 28 (1976), 280.

¹⁹⁹ "Sexist Language in Theology and Church", 3.

which was published, after some revision, in *The Ecumenical Review* of October 1975, with the comment that it would be "presented to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches for discussion and further attention".²⁰⁰ The paper began by stating that "the community of women and men in the Church is an old ecumenical theme" and linked this explicitly with the theme of unity: "Obviously we cannot approach the question of unity in the Church and among humankind without dealing specifically with what this means for women, and the ways in which both women and men can enter into a fully committed community".²⁰¹

The working paper suggested a number of questions to engage study groups around the world in a process of action and reflection, according to their specific local and regional situations. A section on "emerging theological concerns" began with several questions on language, symbols and imagery used to speak of God because, according to the text, "as women's consciousness changes the call for new language in speaking about God becomes urgent".²⁰² Study questions on the ordination of women were in a section on emerging issues of Church renewal and unity.

This working paper, which was given to all the delegates at Nairobi, was there taken up specifically by two sections: the section which dealt with questions of church unity (Section II) and the section which dealt with questions of justice and human liberation (Section V), with the result that a firm mandate for the

²⁰⁰ "The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Study by the World Council of Churches. A working paper to be presented to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches for discussion and further directions", *ER* 27 (1975), 386. The same issue contained one of the papers prepared for the consultation on sexist language. See Paul D Hanson, "Masculine Metaphors for God and Sex-Discrimination in the Old Testament", in which he argues that "the dominance of the male metaphor in designations of the deity" was the product of a society driven to choose male metaphors "by virtue of patriarchal structures predicated upon sexual inequality", *ibid.*, 317. (Hanson was Professor of Old Testament at Harvard Divinity School).

Community of Women and Men in the Church Study emerged from the assembly. (See below).

Relationships with the Roman Catholic Church

Immediately after the Uppsala assembly twelve Roman Catholics were appointed to the WCC commission on Faith and Order and since then the RCC has participated fully in all Faith and Order studies. Another relationship between the WCC and the RCC also began in 1968, with the formation of the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG), its twelve members appointed jointly by the WCC central committee and the RCC Secretariat on Promoting Christian Unity in consultation with the Pontifical Council on the Laity. This latter group was however to be quite short-lived, lasting only from 1968 to 1972.²⁰³

The origins of the WELG went back to 1965 when, at the invitation of Cardinal Willebrands of the SPCU, Madeleine Barot met with women auditors (or "auditrices") who had been invited to the Second Vatican Council.²⁰⁴ This first step was followed by two small meetings between Protestant and Orthodox women representing the WCC and RCC women (Vicarelli/Rome, October 1965 and Crt-Brard, June 1966) followed by a somewhat larger women's ecumenical international conference of about 100 women held at Taiz, France, in June 1967. This conference, on the theme "The Christian Woman, Co-artisan in a Changing

²⁰¹ ibid.

²⁰² ibid., 389.

²⁰³ See Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 54-60, for a brief account of the history of the WELG. While Herzel deals in some detail with events leading up to the formation of the WELG and with its activities her account of its termination is brief and does not indicate the complexity and confusion surrounding this event. The whole history has yet to be published.

²⁰⁴ Seventeen women, nine of whom were religious sisters, were admitted to the third session of the council as auditrices. Thirteen lay men were present as auditores at the second session.

Society", was organised by the Conference of International Catholic Organisations and the WCC department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in collaboration with the World YWCA. Both the theological presentations at the conference, by French Protestant André Dumas and Dutch Roman Catholic Lydia Simons, focussed on the theological bases for cooperation between women and men and maintained that without this cooperation neither men nor women could make their full contribution to the life of the Church. The report of the consultation however made it clear that such cooperation was not always experienced by women:

We are forced to admit that the churches have been surpassed by the secular world when it comes to making it possible for men and women to work together in order to make their complementary contribution to the needs of the rapidly changing world...Women are not always finding freedom to express themselves, to take on greater responsibilities, to make their contribution where their specific attributes, knowledge and experience are needed for the benefit of society as a whole through the medium of the church. They are sometimes having to seek their fulfillment outside it. We note with disappointment and concern, that women have been neglected for posts in church organisations and institutions on account of their sex even when it has been admitted that they are better qualified and more experienced than the men selected.²⁰⁵

At Taizé women from the three major christian traditions - Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic - agreed unanimously "that the whole programme of ecumenism must involve cooperation between women and men".²⁰⁶

Cooperation between men and women was also one of the themes at a major RCC event, namely the Third World Congress for the Lay Apostolate held in Rome in October 1967, and organised by the Permanent Committee for International Congresses of

²⁰⁵ "Report of the Women's International Ecumenical Conference - The Christian Woman Co-artisan in a Changing Society, 19-24 June, 1967, Taizé, France," 90, 91. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 101.

the Lay Apostolate (COPECIAL). In preparation for this congress an "Experts' Meeting" of women was organised by Rosemary Goldie (COPECIAL) and Madeleine Barot (WCC department on Cooperation) at which the twenty participants prepared a workshop for the congress on the theme of cooperation between men and women. At the congress itself there were among the nearly 3,000 participants 100 Orthodox and Protestant observer-consultants who were encouraged to participate fully. Liselotte Nold chaired one of the five workshop groups on the cooperation of men and women and Madeleine Barot, Kathleen Bliss, and Annie Jiaage were also among the observer-consultants.

With the formation of the WELG in October 1968 those contacts between women became more formalised and were given some recognition and status. The WELG however met only four times (December 1968 in Rome; October 1969 in Cartigny; October 1970 in Rome; October 1971 in Cartigny) and struggled with difficulties caused by the fact that it had no secure funding and no staff of its own. It was involved in a rather complicated structural relationship with its parent bodies and with the Joint Working Group, the official WCC/RCC liaison group formed in 1965, which increasingly seemed to assume that it had authority over the WELG, while the WELG women saw themselves as working in some kind of cooperative relationship with the JWG. The JWG itself had only two women members, Liselotte Nold from the WCC and Maria del Pilar Bellosillo of the RCC, both of whom were members of the WELG appointed to the JWG as the result of a formal recommendation from the WELG after its first meeting.

When the JWG met in Rome at the end of May 1972 several representatives of the WELG were present and gave a detailed report of its activities over the past

four years.²⁰⁷ These included initiating two conferences on issues of concern to women. The first of these, on "The Image of Women in the Mass Media", held in Vienna in June 1971, brought together women from European churches and media specialists.²⁰⁸ The second was a world conference of forty delegates from twenty countries who met in Nicosia, Cyprus, in May 1972 to discuss "Women's Role in Peace Education".²⁰⁹

The WELG report recognised the dual parentage of the group:

WELG undoubtedly owes much to the vision, the thinking and the activity of the WCC Department on Cooperation of Men and Women. It has found a stimulus also in the new awareness growing within the Roman Catholic Church - stemming from Vatican II and clearly expressed in the recent Synod of Bishops - that women are called to full participation in the mission of the church".²¹⁰

It argued that:

the *raison d'être* for such a group may be summed up by saying that the wholesome development of women's participation in the life of the Church and society is an ecumenical concern; further, that it is a matter, not only for women's organisations, but for the Churches as such - and that in the present state of affairs, a group such as WELG is needed to bring it constantly to the attention of the Christian community and of Church leaders".²¹¹

Members of WELG acknowledged the danger that the existence of the group might "become an alibi for ignoring the real issue, for excluding women from policy-making bodies of the Churches", and even for limiting their participation in

²⁰⁷ "Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG) Review of activity (1968-1972); Recommendations for the future. Submitted to the RCC/WCC Joint Working Group, 1972." TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

²⁰⁸ A brief report of this meeting was published in *EPS* 17, (1 July 1971), 7-8. A booklet based on the conference proceedings was published under the title *As Others See Us: A World YWCA Programme Bulletin on the Image of Women in the Mass Media*, (Geneva: World YWCA, 1972).

²⁰⁹ See Herzog, *A Voice for Women*, 58-59, for a brief account of this conference and the difficulties which surrounded it, especially on the RCC side.

²¹⁰ "Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG) Review of Activity (1968-1972)", 3.

²¹¹ *ibid.*

the JWG, and also acknowledged that to address only issues which affected women was contrary to the underlying principles of WELG and yet they were convinced that there "remains a need and a role for a women's ecumenical liaison group".²¹² Discussion at the meeting revolved around "the participation of women in the ecumenical movement and the life of the Church as a whole" and resulted in a recommendation from the JWG that "the WCC Programme Unit III (Education and Renewal) and the RCC Council of the Laity seek out the ways by which the activities of the WELG may best be carried further and their recommendations be furthered".²¹³

What happened from that point on is not so clear. On the WCC side it was understood by Bam, Bührig and others that the WELG was to continue, reconstituted as a more international body, and that the WCC and the RCC would collaborate on a study, recommended by the previous WELG, on "Women in the Church of Today and Tomorrow".²¹⁴ Names were proposed by Bam both for membership of the new WELG and for consultants to the proposed study, and money for the study was set aside in the 1973 budget.²¹⁵ On the RCC side there

²¹² ibid.

²¹³ "Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Minutes of the Meeting held at Rome, Italy, Via Cassia, May 29-June 2, 1972", 48. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. This quote is from the "Communiqué" issued at the end of the meeting. The minutes themselves are quite unclear on this point and this lack of clarity enabled the differing interpretations which developed over the next months.

²¹⁴ See "Proposed Survey: Women in the Churches", Annex D, in "Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG) Review of Activity (1968-1972)." In this the purpose of the proposed survey was described as being: "to reach a *status quaestionis* on the responsible participation of women in the Christian Churches...[and] ultimately, to improve the participation of women in the life and mission of the Churches; and by so doing contribute to the renewal of the Churches and furthering of Christian unity".

²¹⁵ Brigalia Bam to Rosemary Goldie, 5 September 1972. TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. See also Brigalia Bam to Dr Marga Bührig, 12 September 1972 and Brigalia Bam to Dr Lukas Vischer, 15 September 1972.

was however a different interpretation of the discussion at the JWG meeting, resulting in the opinion that the JWG had decided to discontinue the WELG entirely. Reporting in April 1973 on an unofficial meeting with some RCC representatives Faith and Order director Lukas Vischer wrote:

I do not think that their interpretation ...is correct. I think that they read into the discussion what they wanted; they always felt that the WELG was an uncomfortable structure which does not fit the organisational structure of the curia. They always raised the question of the authority of WELG. To whom does it report? Who finances its operations? Because there was no full clarity about these questions, they were not enthusiastic about its continuing existence.²¹⁶

The SPCU had in fact determined that the WELG should not continue, although it was not until the meeting described by Vischer that this became quite clear to the WCC. At that meeting he also learned that there were problems over the proposed study on women in the church which, in the absence of WELG, would have to be carried out by the Council of the Laity (RCC) and Unit III (WCC). It was clear however that there was little support for this in Rome.

According to Vischer:

The reason is rather simple: there is a considerable reluctance on the part of the Vatican to get involved in discussions on the role of women in the Church. Especially the place of women in the ministry of the Church. The Synod of Bishops in 1971 has passed a resolution that the question of the ordination of women should be studied by a theological commission...The Pope has not done anything to implement it. Apparently, he is afraid to open a debate on this issue. If now the Laity Council was to undertake an ecumenical study on the role of women in the Church this would almost inevitably be understood by the Secretariat of State as an attempt to take up in an indirect way the recommendation of the Synod.²¹⁷

There was a suggestion that the Laity Council and the WCC might each do an independent study, keeping to terms agreed at the beginning and with those

²¹⁶ "Memorandum from Lukas Vischer to Rose Gurupatham, 3 April 1973", TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. (Gurupatham was acting as Bam's substitute while the latter was on study leave).

responsible maintaining contact with each other. For the Laity Council this would have meant that the study could proceed without the authorisation needed for an ecumenical study. What in fact happened was that the Laity Council and WCC Unit III collaborated on a consultation on new trends in laity formation, held in September 1974, and there were some ongoing staff consultations on laity issues.

On women's issues there were separate developments. In May 1973 Pope Paul VI responded to the recommendation from the 1971 Synod of Bishops by setting up a temporary study commission on women in society and the church, a commission with twenty-four members of whom fifteen were women. The question of the ordination of women was specifically excluded from its brief although the participation of women in pastoral responsibilities and non-ordained ministries was included. The commission's final report was produced in January 1976.²¹⁸ In 1974 the WCC went ahead with its consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s" at which there was significant Roman Catholic participation, including that of Maria del Pilar Bellosillo, a former member of the WELG and president of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO).

Following the Berlin consultation and the Accra Faith and Order meeting Bam and others in the WCC worked towards getting the proposed study on "The Community of Women and Men in the Church" on to the WCC agenda. It had been obvious for some time that the RCC Laity Council was not interested in collaborating with the WCC on this, but this did not mean that there was no RC interest in the theme of partnership between women and men. In August 1975 as a contribution to IWY an ecumenical colloquium on "Women and Men as Partners

²¹⁷ *ibid.*

in Christian Communities" was organised by Pro Mundi Vita (an international information and research centre under RC auspices but not part of the official institutional structure of the RCC) in cooperation with the WCC, WUCWO, the LWF, the RC organisation "Femmes et Homes dans l'Église" and some smaller groups.²¹⁹ Seventeen men and fifty-six women attended this colloquium at Louvain (Belgium), the gender imbalance being deliberate because the organisers "estimated that a good rapport of dialogue would come from the women being in a majority of two-thirds".²²⁰ Among the participants were some who had attended the "Sexism in the 1970s" consultation and some who had been at the Faith and Order meeting in Accra. Although Bam was not present Barot was, as were former WELG members Maria del Pilar Bellosillo and Maria Vendrik. Other RC women participants included Kari Børresen, Tine Govaart-Halkes and Denise Peeters, all of whom were to participate in the Community of Women and Men in the Church study. The major theological presentation at the colloquium on "Theological Aspects of the Partnership of Women and Men in Christian Communities" was given by Letty Russell, who was also to be active in the CWMC study. Also present was Constance Parvey, like Russell a participant at the Berlin consultation where she had been co-moderator of the women in theology group. Parvey, who had also been a consultant at Accra, was to become director of the CWMC study.

²¹⁸ See *The Church and the International Women's Year 1975* (Vatican City: Pontifical Council for the Laity, n.d.), for a brief account of this study and its recommendations.

²¹⁹ Documentation of this colloquium is found in *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin* 59 (March 1976).

²²⁰ *ibid.*, 27.

The Louvain colloquium seems to be little-known and there are few references to it in either WCC or RCC sources. It shows however that in spite of lack of official support from the RCC and the discontinuation of the WELG the links between women in the RCC and the WCC which had begun in 1965 were, after a decade, not easily broken. They were to continue however mainly on an informal and personal basis. At the institutional level collaboration on the role of women was to be "at the level of the mutual exchange of information and staff contact".²²¹

Conclusions

Throughout the period following the Uppsala assembly there was growing pressure for increased participation of women in the WCC. Women members of the central committee, women at the CWME world conference, women at the "Sexism in the 1970s" consultation, women at the Accra meeting of the Faith and Order commission, women in the WELG - all contributed to this growing pressure. Strong leadership was provided by Pauline Webb and Brigalia Bam in particular, and strategies were developed. In spite of this pressure, prior to the fifth assembly women remained a minority in the decision-making bodies of the WCC and all the consultations, debate, reports and recommendations concerning women's place and participation resulted in little change. In the official report of the central committee to the fifth assembly a four-page section on "The Emancipation of Women" concluded that, as in the past, theological study about and by women had

²²¹ "The Fourth Official Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches", in Paton *Breaking Barriers*, 280.

not led to practical changes. "So while the WCC has taken a definite decision to improve the representation of women at the Fifth Assembly...the programme staff and the committees of the Council remain predominantly male".²²²

The editor of *Uppsala to Nairobi*, David Johnson, an Episcopal layman who was a member of both the central and executive committees, gave his own interpretation to the official record in an article titled "Finding the Way to Nairobi" in which he commented that discrimination against women was more of a reality than their emancipation:

The Council - belatedly and in a limited way - has tried to do a few things to begin righting this wrong...The few skimpy improvements in the attitudes of us males, and the ever-so slightly increased participation of women in the work of the WCC, over the past few years, have come about only after much grudgingness, much pusillanimity, much ill-will on our part.²²³

(He could well have added that change had come about because of the hard work of a small number of committed women!)

Signs of hope could be seen: in the introduction of the 15% rule; in the well-formulated proposals for the study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church; above all in the plans which Bam and others had made to ensure women's increased - and active - participation at the assembly. Given that "the concern about discrimination against women [had] been on the agenda of the WCC since its inception twenty-five years ago"²²⁴ and that in the seven years since Uppsala it "had come to the boil,"²²⁵ the question surely was, what difference would the fifth assembly make?

²²² Johnson, Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 197.

²²³ David E Johnson, "Finding the Way to Nairobi", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 14 (1975), 29.

²²⁴ Johnson, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 194.

The Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi 1975

The fifth assembly of the World Council of Churches took place in Nairobi, Kenya, 23 November - 10 December, 1975. This assembly, the first to be held in Africa, had as its main theme the christological affirmation "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites". It has been described as "an assembly of consolidation" with "nothing specially new in the way of ideas,"²²⁶ but while dealing with many of the same issues as the Uppsala assembly Nairobi was "in many ways a far quieter assembly...a balanced and listening assembly".²²⁷ It was "a cautious, self-critical assembly,"²²⁸ one which seemed "to lack focus" and did not "generate a spirit or a character".²²⁹ No overwhelming important issue emerged to preoccupy or polarise the assembly and consequently "those who looked for excitement did not find it; those who longed for an enemy to fight looked in vain".²³⁰

Membership of the Assembly

This was the largest assembly yet, with 676 voting delegates representing 285 member churches. These delegates represented a greater geographical,

²²⁵ Kenneth Slack, *Nairobi Narrative: The Story of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches 23 November - 10 December 1975* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 43.

²²⁶ David M Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November - 10 December, 1975* (London: SPCK, 1976), 35.

²²⁷ Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, 87.

²²⁸ Angus MacLeod, *Nairobi Encounter: A Personal Account of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya* (Christchurch: n.p., 1976). MacLeod was general secretary of the National Council of Churches in New Zealand.

²²⁹ E G Homrighausen, "The Church in the World: World Council at Nairobi", *Theology Today* 33 (1976).

cultural and confessional diversity than at the four previous assemblies and "both membership and agenda were more genuinely world-wide, and more representative of the human race".²³¹ Of the delegates 107 were Africans, 92 Asians, 147 West Europeans, 97 East Europeans, 137 North Americans, 21 Latin Americans, with 9 from the Caribbean, 42 from Australia and the Pacific, and 20 from the Middle East.²³² The largest confessional group was the Reformed/Presbyterian (18%), followed by the Lutheran (15%) and the Eastern Orthodox (13%). The United Churches contributed 12%, closely followed by Methodists (11%) and Anglicans (10%). The Oriental Orthodox were 5%, while 15% of the total was formed by smaller churches which each had less than 5% of the delegates. Among this latter group were two churches which joined the WCC in 1969, the Evangelical Pentecostal Church "Brazil for Christ" and the African Church of Christ on Earth by the Prophet Simon Kimbangu. These two churches, representing recent Christian traditions, contributed significantly to the growing inclusiveness of the WCC. The Roman Catholic Church, though still not a member of the WCC, was represented by 16 delegated observers.

One feature of this assembly, pointed out by central committee moderator M M Thomas in his report to the assembly, was "the larger proportion in its voting membership of pastors of local congregations, lay men and women and youth".²³³ In fact 152 of the delegates were women (22%; cf Uppsala 9%), 62 were under 30 years (9%; cf Uppsala 4% under 35) while 287 were lay (42%; cf Uppsala 25%). These changes in representation were not due to chance, nor for the most part to

²³⁰ Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 30.

²³¹ *ibid.*, 4.

²³² All statistics in this section are based on information in *Breaking Barriers*.

²³³ *ibid.*, 227.

changes in the churches, but to a determined effort on the part of the WCC, particularly through the implementation of the "15% rule" by which the central committee could exercise some control over nominations from the churches.

Another distinctive feature, not totally unrelated to the push for greater representation of women, youth and laypeople, was that 80% of the delegates had "never been to such a gathering" and were moreover, "little acquainted with the activities and procedural style of the World Council of Churches".²³⁴ This may in fact have contributed to the comparative calmness of the assembly, with a large number of the newcomers being "bewildered" by the structure and style of a body with which they were unfamiliar.²³⁵ While the pressure of the youth delegates at Uppsala had resulted in the inclusion of youth in many of the official delegations at Nairobi, the end result was "that youth was submerged in the Assembly machine" and lacked the collective spirit and impact they had had at Uppsala.²³⁶ For women the situation was rather different.

In his report to the assembly general secretary Philip Potter affirmed the task of the ecumenical movement and of the World Council to further the participation "of all who are made in God's image and are empowered by his Spirit to play their part in the life of the congregations and of the community". He informed his audience "that is why such a great effort was made to ensure that a larger number of women and youth should be present as delegates at this Assembly as a sign to the churches of what should be normal in their life and decision-making

²³⁴ Philip Potter, "Together Seeking God's Face", *ER* 28 (1976), 204.

²³⁵ Albert H. van den Heuvel, "Ecumenical Diary: The Fifth Assembly at Nairobi", *ER* 28 (1976), 97.

²³⁶ *ibid.*, 103.

processes".²³⁷ Certainly at 22% the proportion of women delegates had increased significantly over the 9% at Uppsala seven years earlier, although this proportion still failed to reflect women's participation in the world-wide church.

Accountability for this lay with the churches rather than with the WCC, which constitutionally could not compel churches to appoint women delegates but which certainly had tried actively to encourage them to do so. In the words of one fraternal delegate, "certainly those who bore responsibility for the nomination of delegates...would know how firm was the advice that a proper proportion of women should be included".²³⁸ It was however, as this work has documented, largely the efforts of women in the decision-making bodies of the WCC and in the churches, efforts which were stimulated and encouraged by the Berlin conference on "Sexism in the 1970s", which led to the result that at Nairobi, "for the first time, women made up a conspicuous part of the assembly".²³⁹

One significant change was that for the first time there were several women delegates from Orthodox churches. The Russian Orthodox Church sent three women, while the Bulgarian, Rumanian, Serbian and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches each sent one woman, as did the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Church of Greece, the Orthodox Church of America and the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Orthodox Syrian Church had two women delegates.

As usual however the delegates themselves, although in a key position as the only voting members of the assembly, were outnumbered by those in other

²³⁷ Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 252.

²³⁸ Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, 43.

²³⁹ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 79. Cf Parvey's comment that many of the women "felt overwhelmed by the privilege of being there and could 'listen and learn' in a receptive way - as they did at home - a good thing but less than was called for at a world policy-making meeting". Constance Parvey, "The Patriarchal Captivity of the Churches Comes Loose", *Lutheran World* 3 (1976), 227.

categories. One delegate recorded his surprise on discovering that "voting delegates were outnumbered two to one...The non-voting observers sometimes were the most vocal and dominated the discussion".²⁴⁰ Amongst these other categories of participation the proportion of women was much lower than among the delegates; 6 out of 95 fraternal delegates, 25 out of 110 advisers, 7 out of 60 guests, 4 out of 37 delegated observers. Women were better represented among the stewards (74 out of 180) but men far outnumbered women among both the WCC staff and the co-opted staff. Overall therefore the participation of women at the assembly was much less than 22%.

Many of the women delegates were among the 80% attending their first assembly but among the total number of women participants were some with significant ecumenical experience and others who were to become influential leaders. Elisabeth Adler, Marie Assaad, Madeleine Barot, Christian Howard, Ofelia Ortega, and former central committee member Carmencita Karagdag were among the advisers while Margaret Mead was present as a guest and Marga Bührig as a fraternal delegate. Brigalia Bam was of course present as WCC staff, as were Florence Addison and Nita Barrow. Among the delegates were Annie Jiagge, Mercy Oduyoye, Jean Skuse, Letty Russell, Constance Parvey and the seven women members of the retiring central committee, including Pauline Webb. Sixteen of the delegates, seven of the advisers and four of the staff had attended the consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s".

Brigalia Bam had taken steps to prepare women for active participation and to enable them to keep in touch and to caucus during the assembly. Several briefing sessions were held during the assembly to help women understand the

²⁴⁰ MacLeod, *Nairobi Narrative*, 43.

programme and how they might participate in it.²⁴¹ Bam had also devised a system whereby women's meetings could be called at short notice and had reserved a meeting room to be permanently available for use by women delegates. This was the first assembly at which such steps had been taken to ensure that, in spite of limited numbers, women's participation would be active, informed and organised. In spite of these steps, many women tended to remain "silent observers", pleased to be present but lacking knowledge of "how to work the machinery, or how to get their concerns before their sections, drafting committees, and the plenary sessions".²⁴²

Women in Leadership Roles

As usual much of the substantive work of the assembly was done in the six sections. There were also four hearings, one on each of the three programme units of the WCC and one on the general secretariat. These replaced the committees which at former assemblies had examined and reported on the work of each department. There were still however a number of committees to deal with programme guidelines, finance, nominations, credentials, the message and other aspects of policy and business. A recommendation from the Berlin consultation had urged the WCC "to give high priority to women in the selection of chairpersons for the various sections, committees, and hearings" at the assembly.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Parvey, who attended most of these meetings, "found most of our time consumed by frustration" because of technical difficulties (to do with translation facilities) and "wide divergences of opinion" about which issues were the priority ones. See Parvey, "Patriarchal Captivity", 226.

²⁴² *ibid.*

²⁴³ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 125-6.

Each of the sections had four officers - a moderator, two vice-moderators, and a secretary - as did each of the hearings, giving a total of forty people in leadership positions. All six sections had one woman vice-moderator while Section VI, on "Human Development: Ambiguities of Power, Technology, and Quality of Life," which had been referred to specifically in the Berlin recommendation also had a woman moderator (Ms Birgitta Hambræus, a delegate from the Church of Sweden). Section V, on "Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation", had a woman secretary (Ms Dorothy McMahon, a delegate from the Methodist Church of Australia). The hearing on the general secretariat was moderated by a woman (Ms Marion Kelleran, USA, Anglican) as was that on Unit II - Justice and Service (Ms Annie Jiagge, Ghana, Reformed). Three of the four hearings had a woman secretary and one had a woman vice-moderator, the result being that each hearing had at least one woman in a leadership role. Each of the ten committees had at least two officers while five had three. In the committees on nominations, worship, press and finance there were no women officers. One of three policy reference committees, was moderated by a woman (Ms Theresa Hoover, Methodist, USA) while women acted as secretaries to the programme guidelines committee, the message committee, and all three policy reference committees. Altogether of sixty-six leadership positions twenty-one were held by women. Women were thus better represented in leadership (31.8%) than they were in the delegates (22%), a result which could have been achieved only by deliberate effort on the part of the WCC. It is notable however that on all the influential committees, with the exception of policy one reference committee, leadership was firmly in the hands of men. Also, the small proportion of women at the assembly was reflected in the membership of

these committees. For example, on the nominations committee of twenty-seven only six were women (22%), on the programme guidelines committee of fifty only fourteen were women (28%), and on the finance committee of thirty-one there were just four women (12.9%).

Women played little part in leading assembly worship, which is somewhat surprising considering that David Johnson, who as noted above had been critical of the Council's efforts to increase women's participation, was moderator of this committee, that Pauline Webb was one of its members, and that much of the worship was of a more informal character than at previous assemblies. There was one incident during the worship which symbolised how the WCC was changing. At the opening service a little procession of worship leaders was led by a young Masai girl, wearing full traditional ceremonial dress and carrying a large Bible in Swahili. She spoke the first words of the service, as she placed the Bible on the lectern in the midst of the assembly hall: "This is the word of God, which bears witness to him who frees and unites". Thus the opening act was performed by a young black woman from a developing nation.²⁴⁴ Some of the plenaries were set in a context of worship and the presentation on the theme "That all may be one" was described as "an outstanding example" of this.²⁴⁵ Mercy Oduyoye of Nigeria led the short service which placed brief statements on the theme within a context of intercession, confession and praise.

During the assembly there were three eucharistic services, one of which was arranged by the Oriental Orthodox churches while a second was celebrated by the

²⁴⁴ Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, 12.

²⁴⁵ Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 7.

Eastern Orthodox. The third was a liturgy from East Africa prepared in the course of church union negotiations, and celebrated by "a large company of African clergy led by Archbishop Festo Olang".²⁴⁶ Although the official report does not mention it, many women at the service reacted strongly to the lack of women's leadership. M M Thomas remembered that:

There was...a great deal of open criticism about not having any female celebrant, distributor of the eucharist or even any female reader of lessons....Women participants in the service took this very badly. The women in my work-group said it spoiled the spiritual significance of communion for them. The question came up also in the Assembly business committee and the host-churches promised to issue an explanation.²⁴⁷

If this explanation was issued, it was not recorded.

Plenary Presentations

Women played little part in most of the eight plenary presentations based on the main theme. As noted above, Mercy Oduyoye led the worship which formed the context of the fourth plenary, "That all may be one". In the fifth plenary, "That the world may believe", Ms R Andriamanjato (Reformed, Madagascar) was one of three respondents to a major address by Bishop Mortimer Arias from Bolivia. In a rather critical response she expressed her regret that "Dr Arias had not included in his list of WCC missionary activity its labours for the improvement of the status of women in church and society or dwelt on the failure of the Church to live up to the words of St Paul in Galatians that in Christ there is neither male nor female".²⁴⁸

Although women played such a small part in most plenary presentations, one plenary was entirely led by women and devoted to their concerns. The sixth

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 9.

²⁴⁷ Thomas, *My Ecumenical Journey*, 447.

plenary, held on the morning of Friday 28 November, addressed the assembly theme from the perspective of "Women in a Changing World". Scheduled to last ninety minutes, it in fact "exceeded its allotted time by an hour or so", with the not-surprising result that "the Assembly became somewhat inattentive at one point".²⁴⁹

It was however a historic occasion, as WCC president Dr Takeda Cho pointed out in her introductory remarks, saying that "in the life of the WCC, this is the first time that a plenary has been held in which women can speak clearly, fully, and radically out of our concrete situations to the whole Assembly".²⁵⁰

In the circumstances it was perhaps understandable that the women's concerns "filled up and spilled over" the allotted time.²⁵¹ As one woman commented, "we have been silent in the Council for thirty years, surely we can be allowed an extra thirty minutes now!"²⁵² According to a sympathetic male commentator:

It was as though having waited twenty-seven years in the World Council's life for such a session their eyes were on the calendar rather than the clock. This said, let it also be said that the assembly remained in place in very large numbers and appreciated a great deal of the force of what was said and done.²⁵³

The plenary was introduced by Dr Takeda Cho, who traced the history of the WCC's concern for women and recalled some of the women who had contributed to its work. Dr Sylvia Talbot briefly described the June 1974 consultation in Berlin on "Sexism in the 1970s", following which three women gave personal

²⁴⁸ Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 18.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 19.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*

²⁵¹ *ibid.* The comment was made by Dr Sylvia Talbot, who moderated the plenary.

²⁵² Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 22.

²⁵³ Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, 44.

accounts of what it meant to be a woman in their own circumstances.²⁵⁴ There followed a panel in which three women spoke less personally and more analytically about "the role of the church in a male-dominated society, the disabilities under which women labour in many societies, and social and psychological factors in relationships between women and men".²⁵⁵ The panel was followed by a ten-minute film, made in the US for the WCC, and the presentation concluded with an act of worship based on the Magnificat and titled "Mary's Story and Ours".²⁵⁶

There were varied reactions to the plenary. A New Zealand man reported that "unfortunately it was ruined by long, tedious speeches",²⁵⁷ while Philip Potter referred to it as "a formidable presentation".²⁵⁸ A male delegate from the Netherlands thought that:

The contributions at that session were all noteworthy and constructive but we, the delegates, reacted rather coolly. Were we overfed? Or was it simply because the female part of the Assembly participants was so evidently accepted in their own right that the issue lacked the dramatic edge in the Assembly which it certainly has when one looks at one's own church!²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ These were Ms Dorothy McMahon (Methodist Church of Australasia), teacher; Terry Simonian (Armenian Apostolic Church), a social scientist on the staff of the Near East Council of Churches; Dr Julie Ojiambo (Church of the Province of Kenya), a member of the Kenyan parliament.

²⁵⁵ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 80. The speakers were Prakai Nontawassee (Church of Christ in Thailand), principal of the Thailand Theological Seminary; Dr Justice Annie R Jiagge (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana), a member of the Supreme Court of Appeal in Ghana and a leading member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women; Dr Una Kroll (Church of England), a medical doctor and Anglican deaconess. Their speeches are published in *The Ecumenical Review* 28 (1976), 35-48.

²⁵⁶ It is not clear whether this focus on Mary was chosen for its ecumenical significance but Roman Catholics found it interesting. "While some of the exegesis is open to question, there is no doubt that many women see in the Blessed Virgin Mary an indication of their own possibilities. This is particularly interesting from the Protestant point of view". "Reflections on the Fifth WC Assembly based on Reports of some of the Catholic Observers", *Information Service* 30 (1976/1), 8.

²⁵⁷ MacLeod, *Nairobi Encounter*, 11.

²⁵⁸ Philip Potter, "Editorial", *ER* 28 (1976), 1.

²⁵⁹ van den Heuvel, "Ecumenical Diary", 101.

Catharina Halkes, also from the Netherlands, thought there were too many personal testimonies and that the presentation had too little theological reflection.²⁶⁰

In her sermon at the opening of the sixth WCC assembly in 1983 Pauline Webb recalled the "women's session" at Nairobi:

For some of us a new dimension was given to the theme "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites"...[in] a session in which women from many parts of the world opened their hearts and gave expression to the pain they had felt in being excluded from a full partnership with men in the life and membership of the Church. It was as though we were at last free to be heard and recognised for our own worth and for our own gifts.²⁶¹

For Webb the real significance lay not in the words spoken or the resolutions later passed but in the event itself, an event which "led to the whole study process on 'The Community of Women and Men in the Church' which for some of us has been life-changing."²⁶²

An experienced (male) ecumenist commented of this plenary that:

It was a sign only. The session itself was neither particularly satisfactory or satisfying and there was little follow-up in the business or the reports of the Assembly...[but] this item is at least now fully registered on the ecumenical agenda. But it is not really an additional item. It is an all-pervading question, opportunity and disturbance.²⁶³

In spite of the luke-warm nature of some of reported comments, the whole assembly broke out in applause at the end of a statement by Dorothy McMahon, a statement which seemed to sum up the new, assertive spirit of women.

I am.
I am woman

²⁶⁰ Catharina J M Halkes, "Frauen in der ökumenischen Bewegung", in *Feministische Theologie*, ed. Maria Kassell (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1988), 258.

²⁶¹ Pauline Webb, "The Word of Life", *ER* 35 (1983), 345.

²⁶² *ibid.*

²⁶³ Jenkins, "Nairobi and the Truly Ecumenical", 280.

I am freed by Christ and I am claiming that freedom that space to live, now.
 I stretch out my hands to you, my sisters and my brothers.
 You may dance with me in celebration.
 You may walk beside me in unity
 I will no longer walk behind you.²⁶⁴

In other plenary presentations two male speakers in particular made references to discrimination against women, linking sexism with racism and other forms of oppression. In his major theological presentation on "Who is this Jesus Christ who Frees and Unites", American theologian Robert McAfee Brown named "racism, sexism, classism, imperialism" as forms of oppression enslaving both those on whom they are imposed and those who do the enslaving.²⁶⁵ In a dramatic introduction to his address a woman's voice was heard saying:

Jesus, how can I accept you as Messiah when the church that calls you Messiah denies the worth of my womanhood? I feel excluded when your children proclaim "the *brotherhood of man*". My sisters and I are only granted subordinate roles in the Church of your followers. The assurance that I too am made in God's image is denied when God is described as a masculine God only. It seems to me a blasphemy that your followers should deny full personhood to the more than half of your children who are women.²⁶⁶

A strong challenge to male chauvinism within Christianity was made by the Hon. Michael Manley, prime minister of Jamaica, in his address to the assembly on the theme "From the Shackles of Domination and Oppression" in which he named women as "the largest category of victims in all human experience" and linked this with "the misuse of the concept of woman as created from Adam's rib". In this context Manley referred specifically to the ordination of women, recording his

²⁶⁴ Quoted in Homrighausen, "The Church in the World", 280.

²⁶⁵ Robert McAfee Brown, "Who is this Jesus Christ who Frees and Unites?" *ER* 28 (1976), 54.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 7. Original emphasis.

bewilderment "at the continuing exclusion of women from God's ministry in so many churches of the Christian world".²⁶⁷

In other presentations at the assembly a number of male speakers made references to discrimination against women, frequently linking sexism and racism. The moderator of the central committee, M M Thomas, in a reference to "Sexism in the 1970s" affirmed that:

We require a theology of human wholeness which incorporates the experience and insights, the understanding of what it means to be human, which comes from women and from other sections of humanity who have thus far been wholly or partially excluded from effective participation in the decision-making processes of church and society. The wholeness of both church and society is at stake here.²⁶⁸

The desire of people for participation in decision-making, their refusal to accept passive roles or to be treated as objects instead of subjects, was mentioned by WCC general secretary Philip Potter in his report to the assembly as one of the major trends within the WCC in recent years and he noted specifically, "the determination of women to challenge the age old discrimination against them in Church and society and to contribute to fullness of life for all".²⁶⁹

Reports and Recommendations

The concerns raised by women were reflected in a number of the assembly reports and recommendations although some women reported that their attempts to make specific recommendations regarding women and their participation

²⁶⁷ Michael Manley, "From the Shackles of domination and oppression", *ER* 28 (1976), 54.

²⁶⁸ Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 238.

²⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 252.

"seemed to get lost in the section drafting committees".²⁷⁰ According to

Constance Parvey:

It was mainly those women whose awareness of women's status in the Church had been raised before the Assembly - women not only from the West but from all continental areas - who were surprised at how difficult it was to get their sections to recognise the relevance and theological importance of women's concerns.²⁷¹

The report from Section I, "Confessing Christ Today", in a sub-section on "structures that obscure the confession of Christ" acknowledged that "it is difficult for a woman to confess a Christ who frees and unites when she has been taught subordination to men - in church and society - in the name of this same Christ. The structures of sexism also obscure the image of Christ".²⁷² In spite of this acknowledgment, in the twenty-one recommendations from this section there was no specific reference to women or to sexism.

Section II, on "What Unity Requires", had a minority of women participants and the few who were there tended to remain silent. Parvey was told by several that "they didn't see how what was being said about Christian unity related to their experience" and many "could not locate a point of entry into what was for them a highly academic and abstract intellectual exchange".²⁷³ In spite of this, the section report contained a paragraph on "The Community of Women and Men and the Wholeness of the Body of Christ" which firmly linked women's participation in the Church with the unity of the Church:

The Church's unity includes women and men in a true mutuality. As a result of rapid cultural, economic, and social change, women (and many men) reject the passive or restrictive roles formerly assigned to women, and search for fuller participation in the life of the Church and in society at large. The relations of

²⁷⁰ Parvey, "Patriarchal Captivity", 227.

²⁷¹ *ibid.*

²⁷² Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 47.

²⁷³ Parvey, "Patriarchal Captivity", 227.

women and men must be shaped by reciprocity and not by subordination. *The unity of the Church requires that women be free to live out the gifts which God has given to them and to respond to their calling to share fully in the life and witness of the Church.* This raises fundamental dogmatic issues on which we are not agreed, but which are further pursued in the study, "The Community of Women and Men in the Church", which will include the significance of the Virgin Mary in the Church and the question of the ordination of women. It will be important for the churches to discuss the implications of this study for their teaching on family life and on religious vocation.²⁷⁴

This statement was supported by a recommendation on "Women and Church Unity" which affirmed the Community of Women and Men in the Church study, though Parvey noted that in spite of the preparatory work at the Accra meeting of Faith and Order, "it was only after considerable effort that the proposal got on the agenda" of the section and into the programme recommendation.²⁷⁵

Recognising that the catholicity of the Church requires the community of men and women in its life, we recommend that the churches participate fully in the study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, with consideration of issues of theology, Scripture, tradition, and ministry. We ask the churches to engage in serious theological reflection on these issues, especially in relation to the issue of the nature of the unity we seek.²⁷⁶

It was in Section V, on "Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation", that the concerns of women were raised most forcefully. The report dealt with three principal topics - Human Rights, Sexism, and Racism - and aroused such interest when it was presented to the assembly that forty-three persons were still waiting to speak at the end of the session. As a result a further session was arranged and was attended by several hundred people. At this session each part of the report was debated separately.

The sub-section on "Sexism" began by stating that:

For the sake of the unity of the Church and humankind, the concerns of women must be consciously included in every aspect of the deliberations of the WCC.

²⁷⁴ Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 62. My emphasis.

²⁷⁵ Parvey, "Patriarchal Captivity", 228.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 69.

The liberation of women from structures of injustice must be taken seriously as seen in the light of the liberation of all oppressed people and all forms of discrimination.²⁷⁷

While acknowledging past efforts of the WCC such as the "Sexism in the 1970s" conference, the report alleged that:

The position of women has not changed significantly. As long as women are largely excluded from decision-making processes, they will be unable to realise a full partnership with men and the Church will be unable to realise its full unity.²⁷⁸

It then quoted the Amsterdam statement from 1948: "The Church as the Body of Christ, consists of men and women created as responsible persons to glorify God and to do God's will".²⁷⁹ There was however one significant change made in the Amsterdam text by the drafters of the Nairobi report: the masculine pronoun for God was eliminated (by writing "God's will" instead of "His will"). This change reflected the concern for language expressed in the report:

Language in many instances and the connotations of language in other instances fail to reflect the depth of the mystery of God who transcends all human metaphors and images. It is important that our language about God also be inclusive.²⁸⁰

As Melanie May has pointed out, this concern for language reflects a significant change between the 1940s and 1970s:

In the 1940s, women were asking for recognition of their service and for fuller participation in the life of the churches. In the 1970s, women were aware that, until the theological language and imagery that forms the life of the churches, are recast, they would not be partners with men.²⁸¹

The report identified three areas in which change was seen as necessary,

²⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 107.

²⁷⁸ *ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *ibid.*

²⁸¹ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 48.

namely the areas of theology, participation and relationship. Beginning with the statement that "a thorough examination needs to be made of the biblical and theological assumptions concerning the community of women and men in church and society" it concluded:

Recognizing that small advances in the position of women in church and society have been made, we are nevertheless convinced that it is vital for the WCC and the member churches to open all service opportunities to women and to encourage the study, by both men and women, of a deeper and more thorough participation of women in church life with special attention to the question of ordination and the employment of women in the Church. The freedom and unity of Jesus Christ includes both halves of the human community; therefore it is imperative to the unity of church and society that the full participation of women be given urgent consideration and immediate implementation.²⁸²

The first of a number of recommendations "on sexism" was a specific commendation of the proposed Community of Women and Men in the Church study:

Whereas a thorough examination needs to be made of the biblical and theological assumptions concerning the community of women and men in the Church, *it is recommended that* the WCC shall commend the study document "The Community of Women and Men in the Church" (1975) to its member churches and invite their active participation in three year study in which:

1. priority be given to a theological study of sexuality, taking into account the culture of the member churches;
2. women theologians and scholars be invited to participate fully in the study;
3. care be taken in translations of the word of God, which always comes in human language, so that they reflect the gender used in the original language, and to consider developing principles for the elimination of sexist terminology, if any, in our languages.²⁸³

This was followed by several recommendations directed to the WCC member churches, which had as their common concern women's participation in the

²⁸² Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 109.

²⁸³ *ibid.*, 113.

churches. Three of these five recommendations had to do with the ordination of women. When the section report was discussed (at the extra session mentioned above) there was extended discussion of these recommendations as a result of which the text was revised by a small group comprising Jeanne Powers, an ordained Methodist who was one of the vice-moderators of the section, Archbishop Sarkissian of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and Professor Nikos Nissiotis, a Greek Orthodox member of the Faith and Order Commission. The recommendations which were finally approved by a large majority read as follows, with the fourth being the result of the redrafting process:

Whereas there is ample evidence that the expertise and gifts of women are not being fully used by any Church, *it is recommended that* the WCC shall urge:

1. member churches to consider making available funds for theological education of women (especially advanced study);
2. member churches to ensure full participation of women in all decision-making bodies;
3. those churches that ordain women to give them the same opportunities and pay as men, according to the measure of their gifts (1 Cor. 12);
4. those member churches which have agreed in principle to the ordination of women to the priesthood/ministry to take immediate action to admit women to all their ordained ministries, taking into serious consideration that there are other churches of our WCC fellowship that are not in agreement with this practice;
5. those member churches which do ordain women and those which do not continue dialogue with each other and with non-member churches about the full participation of women in the full life of the Church including ordained ministries, according to the measure of their gifts.²⁸⁴

The report of the hearing on Unit III: Education and Renewal assumed a new structure in which the unit would have four sub-units, on education, women in church and society, youth, and renewal movements. A number of recommendations were addressed to the Sub-unit on Women in Church and

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 113-114.

Society (formerly the "women's desk"). It was asked "to collaborate with the Commission on Faith and Order to ensure active continuation of the study 'The Community of Women and Men in the Church' over a period of three years (1976-78) in preparation for an ecumenical consultation under the auspices of the WCC in 1979-80".²⁸⁵ The hearing also recommended that, in co-operation with Faith and Order, the Sub-unit should urge:

- (a) all member churches to encourage fuller participation of women in decision-making bodies.
- (b) those member churches which do not have theological objections to the ordination of women should not be deterred from action by "ecumenical considerations"
- (c) those member churches which do ordain women and those which do not should continue dialogue on the full participation of women in the ordained ministries of the churches according to the measure of their gifts.²⁸⁶

The hearing on Unit 1: Faith and Witness made several recommendations regarding programme directions for Faith and Order but made no reference to the Community of Women and Men in the Church study, even though this had been specifically recommended in the report of Section II. The rather odd result was that the Sub-unit on Women was urged by one hearing to collaborate with Faith and Order on a study which was not mentioned in the directions given to Faith and Order by another hearing.

Overall the presentations, reports and recommendations at the fifth assembly made reference to many concerns of women, ranging from language about God and women's ordination to the securing of safe water supplies and education of women about their legal rights. It was perhaps because of this wide range of concerns, and the consequent lack of clear focus, together with the fact that

²⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 309.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*

women participants were still a small minority, that some thought "the issue of women's liberation ranked higher in preparation for the Assembly than at the event itself".²⁸⁷

Broadly speaking, women's participation at the assembly made a significant impact on two main themes: the search for unity in the church and humankind, and the struggle for human rights, justice and liberation. The proposed study on "The Community of Women and Men in the Church" encompassed both these themes and was recommended by both Section II, on "What Unity Requires", and Section V, on "Struggles of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation". The outcome of these recommendations would rest with the new central committee.

Constitutional Changes

The proposed revised constitution of the World Council of Churches which had been sent to the member churches six months before the assembly, was carried by an overwhelming majority and adopted as were a number of amendments to the rules.²⁸⁸

One of the significant changes concerned selection of delegates to an assembly as the central committee was now empowered to "recommend the distributions within delegations among church officials, parish ministers, and lay persons; and among men, women, and young people".²⁸⁹ There was in fact considerable debate as to whether the central committee should "determine" or "recommend", with some arguing that the final decision should lie with the

²⁸⁷ van den Heuvel, "Ecumenical Diary", 104.

²⁸⁸ The full text of the revised "Constitution and Rules" is in Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 317-340.

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 324; see also p. 320.

churches and others that "in a period of transition" churches needed more than "mere recommendations".²⁹⁰ In the end "recommend" won the day and the following interpretation of the change was given:

The Central Committee can determine the number of delegates to the Assembly and their allocation among the member churches, giving due regard to geographical and cultural balance. This does not limit the right of the churches to determine who their delegates shall be. In reference to the distribution among church officials, parish ministers, lay persons, men, women, and young people, the Central Committee can only give recommendations. The definition of the terms: church officials, parish ministers, and lay persons is left to the churches.²⁹¹

The rules enabling the central committee to nominate no more than 15% of the delegates according to the categories necessary to achieve the desired balances at an assembly were also approved by the assembly.²⁹²

The effect of those changes was to empower the WCC to ensure the greater participation of women (and representatives of other minority groups) as delegates at an assembly. There was however no attempt in either the constitution or the rules to ensure equivalent balances on the central or executive committees or on the presidium. The rules stated that the nominations committee to be elected early in each assembly should include "appropriate confessional, cultural, and geographical representation of the membership of the Assembly and representation of the major interests of the World Council".²⁹³ The same criteria were to be used by the committee in making its nominations, with "the personal qualifications of the individual for the task" as an additional principle.²⁹⁴

Appearing almost as an

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 191.

²⁹¹ *ibid.*, 189.

²⁹² *ibid.*, 324. (These provisions had been adopted already by the central committee).

²⁹³ *ibid.*, 326.

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*

afterthought at the end was the statement, unchanged from the previous rules, that "the Nominations Committee shall secure adequate representation of laypersons men, women and young people - so far as the composition of the Assembly makes this possible".²⁹⁵

Thus women's participation in the central committee was still linked to their participation as delegates at the assembly - and selection of delegates was still ultimately the responsibility of the churches, with even delegates nominated in the 15% category having to be elected by the churches concerned.

Nominations and Elections

During the assembly many references had been made to the need for women's participation in decision-making bodies. How were women to be represented in the decision-making bodies of the WCC? Would the assembly act to put its own house in order, by increasing the number of women on the central committee? The nominations committee, moderated by Dr Robert Marshall (Lutheran, USA), was responsible for proposing names for the six presidents and the 130 members of the central committee.²⁹⁶ It is hardly surprising that this committee "found itself under particular pressure to listen to the voice of the assembly and increase the number of women".²⁹⁷

It seemed that the committee had indeed listened to this voice as, for the first time, not just one but two women were included in the six nominees for the

²⁹⁵ ibid.

²⁹⁶ Although the revised constitution and rules allowed for up to 145 members on the central committee the smaller number was accepted because of the financial difficulties which the Council was experiencing.

²⁹⁷ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 81.

presidium. (Neither Sarah Chakko nor Dr Takeda Cho, the two previous women presidents, had been elected by an assembly). Furthermore, while at Uppsala the elections to the presidium had been hotly contested and the attempt to nominate a woman unsuccessful, at Nairobi the nominations were accepted without controversy.²⁹⁸ The result was the election of Mrs Justice Annie Jiagge (Reformed, Ghana) and Dr Cynthia Wedel (Episcopal, USA), together with Dr J Miguez-Bonino (Methodist, Argentina), His Eminence Nikodim (Russian Orthodox), Dr T Simatupang (Indonesian Christian Church), and Archbishop Olof Sundby (Church of Sweden). Jiagge had played a significant role at the assembly as a contributor to the women's plenary and as moderator of the hearing on Unit II: Justice and Service. Wedel, who was not a delegate, was present as a member of the press but she was "a very distinguished and well-known ecumenical figure"²⁹⁹ whose involvement with the WCC went back to 1952 when she became a member of the working group of the newly-formed WCC Department on the Cooperation between Men and Women. Both women brought to the role of president "a wealth of experience, not only in their ecumenical background, but also in the efforts they had put forth on behalf of women in church and society".³⁰⁰ Neither saw herself as a "token women", as Wedel pointed out in her account of a press conference after their election.

One of the newspaper men said to us, "Do you two think you're tokens?" We started laughing and said that if they wanted tokens they wouldn't have picked us, because we've both been very outspoken; and they know where we stand on the role of women.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ The attempt to find someone to stand against the Russian Orthodox Nikodim "fizzled out". See Thomas, *My Ecumenical Journey*, 449, for a brief account of this.

²⁹⁹ Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, 78. The rules do not require a president be a delegate, or even a member of the assembly.

³⁰⁰ Herzl, *A Voice for Women*, 181.

³⁰¹ *ibid.*, 182.

Nominations and elections for the central committee proceeded without controversy although a number of changes were made to the original list following written proposals from the delegates. Unfortunately the official report does not record what these changes were and the only substitutions made from the floor involved one man replacing another. According to central committee moderator M M Thomas there was a crisis in the nominations committee itself when moderator Robert Marshall found that "the committee was voting against all church leaders in favour of youth and women".³⁰² The actual results hardly seem to bear this out but, again according to Thomas, Marshall was so irritated that he refused to allow his own nomination until Philip Potter intervened. (In the event Marshall was both nominated and elected).

Twenty-six women were elected to the central committee, forming 20% of its membership.³⁰³ This was a significant improvement as on the previous central committee women had been slightly under 6% of the membership. Of these twenty-six Pauline Webb and Jean Woolfolk were the only women members of the previous central committee to be re-elected. They, together with new

³⁰² Thomas, *My Ecumenical Journey*, 448.

³⁰³ They were: Mrs Joan Anderson (Presbyterian Church of New Zealand), Mrs Fernanda Comba (Waldensian Church, Italy), Miss Ana Ferrari (Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina), Mrs Daisy Gopal Ratnam (Church of South India), Mrs Heather Johnston (Presbyterian Church in Canada), Miss Cynthia Latuihamallo (Protestant Church in Indonesia), Ms Janice Love (United Methodist Church, USA), Rev. Augustina Lumentut (Christian Church in Mid-Sulawesi), Miss Evelyn Mahlatsi (Church of the Province of South Africa), Miss Teli Matthew (Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India), Mrs Jean Mayland (Church of England), Mrs Marie Momo Kingue (Evangelical Church of Cameroon), Ms Mercy Oduyoye (Methodist Church, Nigeria), Mrs Michiko Okuda (United Church of Christ in Japan), Rev. Margaret Barnes Perry (Presbyterian Church in the US), Miss Waltraut Peper (Evangelical Church, GDR), Mrs Julia Roduner Laedrach (Swiss Protestant Church Federation), Mrs Dorinda Sampath (Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Grenada), Ms Jean Skuse (Methodist Church in Australia), Ms Barbara Thompson (United Methodist Church, USA), Mrs Marja van der Veen-Schenkeveld (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands), Miss Pauline Webb (Methodist Church, UK), Ms Jean Woolfolk (Disciples of Christ, USA), Ms Margaret Youngquist (American Lutheran Church), Mrs Jean Zaru (Friends United Meeting), Mrs Hildegard Zumach (Evangelical Church in Germany).

members Joan Anderson, Dorinda Sampath, Jean Skuse, Barbara Thompson and Hildegard Zumach, had been present at the "Sexism in the 1970s" consultation eighteen months before the assembly. There they and others had made plans towards the greater participation of women in the WCC. Now it seemed that these plans were beginning to bear fruit, with two women presidents and a significant increase in the number of women on the central committee.

Conclusions

At the Nairobi assembly women's participation was both quantitatively and qualitatively stronger than at the Uppsala assembly seven years earlier. There were more women delegates than at any previous assembly; more women in leadership roles, more women elected to the decision-making bodies. Women were however still a minority and, in spite of pressure from the WCC and much hard work on the part of women themselves, only 22% of the delegates were women and many of them were, for various reasons, passive rather than active participants.

For the first time at an assembly there was a plenary devoted wholly to women and the issues which they presented. Although reactions to this plenary were mixed and "the sparks from it did not kindle a fire in the rest of the assembly",³⁰⁴ it was recognised as a significant event. Women's concerns were reflected in some of the section reports and recommendations, even though women had often had to struggle to get them there. Women's reactions generally were mixed and a number expressed disappointment that women had not made

³⁰⁴ Halkes, "Frauen in der ökumenischen Bewegung", 258.

more impact on the assembly.³⁰⁵ "What we experienced at Nairobi", wrote Constance Parvey, "was not an expression of the new partnership between women and men in the Church, but rather a gentlemen's meeting where the dignity of women was given recognition".³⁰⁶

The great accomplishment of women at Nairobi was to get the proposal for study on "The Community of Women and Men in the Church" on to the future agenda of the WCC and its member churches. This study, conceived in embryonic form at the Berlin consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s", carefully carried through the Faith and Order Commission meeting and the WCC central committee in 1974, and affirmed by the Nairobi assembly, was about to be born as an official programme of the WCC. Therein lay the lasting result of women's participation at the fifth assembly, a result which was greatly to influence women's future participation in the WCC.

³⁰⁵ See "Women's Views of Nairobi Assembly", *WCW* 3 (March 1976): 14-17 for an expression of views both positive and negative.

³⁰⁶ Parvey, "Patriarchal Captivity", 228.

CHAPTER 7

FROM NAIROBI TO VANCOUVER: 1975 - 1983

The period between the fifth and sixth assemblies brought new challenges and demands for the WCC in a situation of growing global crisis. Particularly from the beginning of the 1980s the world political and economic situation deteriorated. The arms race and the nuclear threat continued; there was rising unemployment in the developed as well as the developing world; religious fundamentalism linked to politics led to new tensions within and between nations. At the same time there was a growing consciousness on the part of people everywhere of their rights as human beings and a growing determination of the poor and oppressed to struggle for justice. The ecological movement and popular peace movements gained ground as did the movement to women's full and equal participation in society.

For most of this period the WCC was in a financial crisis, caused mainly by the world economic situation. It was also a time when it underwent the most vicious attacks in its history, largely on account of its continued commitment to the controversial Programme to Combat Racism. The Salvation Army withdrew from full membership but twenty new churches joined, all but two of them from the "Third World", and five small churches became associate members. Orthodox participation in the life of the Council increased greatly.

Three world conferences were held: in 1979 in Cambridge, USA, a Church and Society conference on "Faith, Science and the Future"; in 1980 in Melbourne, a world mission conference on the theme "Your Kingdom Come"; in 1981 in Sheffield, England, a conference on "The Community of Women and Men in the Church." There was also an important meeting of the Faith and Order Commission held in Lima, Peru, in 1982. Each of these will be discussed in this chapter, together with the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, relevant Faith and Order studies, the work of the Sub-unit on Women and significant actions of the central committee.

Women in Leadership

The Nairobi assembly had elected two women (Jiagge and Wedel) to the presidium and twenty-six women to the central committee. Immediately after the conclusion of the Nairobi assembly the newly-elected central committee met and elected its officers and the twelve members of the executive committee.

Archbishop Edward Scott (Anglican, Canada) was elected as moderator, with Jean Skuse, a Methodist laywoman from Australia, and Archbishop Karekin Sarkissian of the Armenian Apostolic Church as vice-moderators. Skuse, who had been secretary of the New South Wales Council of the Australian Council of Churches since 1970, had chaired the influential programme guidelines committee at Nairobi. Dorinda Sampath and Pauline Webb were elected to the executive committee and, as presidents and moderators were *ex officio* members, this gave a total of five women (Jiagge, Wedel, Skuse, Sampath and Webb). This accorded

with a decision made by the central committee prior to the election that there should be at least five women (20%) on the executive committee.¹ With women now forming 20% of the membership of both central and executive committees there had been a significant gain since the Uppsala assembly, after which they were only 5.8% of the central committee and 8% of the executive committee. The representation of women on these two committees was however still somewhat less than their participation at the assembly, where they had formed 22% of the delegates.

Following the assembly it was necessary to appoint the membership of fifteen commissions and working groups to oversee the work of the different sub-units of the WCC. This process began at the first meeting of the new central committee in Nairobi, December 1975, and was finally completed by the executive committee, February 1977. During this long process attempts were made to include more women and young people but concern was expressed about the whole process and the lack of balance and in 1976 the central committee agreed to a proposal by Janice Love, a young lay woman, that "all future commissions, committees and working groups appointed by the Central Committee reflect at least the percentage of women, laity and youth at the Fifth Assembly."² The final result of the appointment process was that women formed

¹ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Twenty-eighth Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, December 7 and 11, 1975* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1976), 6.

² *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Twenty-ninth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 10-18 August, 1976* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1976), 3-4.

20-25% of the membership of most of the commissions and working groups, with the exception of the working group for the Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society where the fifteen members included two men.

The Faith and Order commission was one on which there had been very few women. Now there was some improvement, with six women among the thirty members of the standing commission (formerly the working group), one of whom, Florence Mahoney, became one of the two vice-moderators. On the full commission of 120 (which included the standing commission) there were now nineteen women (approximately 16%).

There were some important changes in and additions to women staff of the WCC during this period. In 1975 Nita Barrow associate director of the Christian Medical Commission 1971-75 was appointed as its director, the only woman director apart from Brigalia Bam. Bam herself "expressed concern" to the executive committee in 1977 about "the small number of women" among WCC senior staff. In response the committee "indicated a realistic recognition of the difficulties of finding women who were available for such posts".³ Early in 1978 the Rev. Dr Constance Parvey joined the staff of Faith and Order as secretary for the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, while at the same time Ms Priscilla Padolina, a rural sociologist from the Philippines, joined the Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society as secretary for a new programme on women

³ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 14-18 February, 1977, Geneva, Switzerland, 9.*

and rural development. Early in 1980 Brigalia Bam, who over a period of twelve years had made an enormous contribution to women's participation in the WCC, left the Council.

A tribute was paid to Bam in "An Open Letter" published in the Sub-unit newsletter. According to this:

The first word must be one of deep appreciation for your complete commitment to some extremely complex tasks. It takes great skill to serve as an advocate *for* and an enabler of women amidst the pluralistic mix of the member churches of the WCC, to say nothing of the cultural diversity of our world's family. Not only have you demonstrated such skill but you have approached it all with a beautiful kind of self-abandonment and willingness to risk.⁴

After referring to Bam's commitment to the "women's desk" through years of structural changes and scarce resources, and to the main aspects of the work carried out under her leadership, the anonymous writer concluded:

As you leave the WCC for new areas of ministry we pledge that we will continue the struggle begun at Amsterdam - the struggle to bring to reality the words expressed at that Assembly (and long accepted in theory) that "the Church as the Body of Christ consists of men *and* women, created as responsible persons to glorify God and to do his will".⁵

Bam was replaced in October 1980 by the Rev. Bärbel von Wartenberg, a theologian, teacher and writer from the Federal Republic of Germany, who had been teaching at the Centre for Development Education in Stuttgart and actively involved in consciousness raising on questions of development, mission, racism and ecumenism in parishes and schools. An ordained pastor of the Lutheran church (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) von Wartenberg was the first

⁴ "An Open Letter to Brigalia Bam on behalf of her sisters across the world", *WCW* 8 (May 1980), 3-4.

⁵ *ibid.*, 3.

ordained woman to serve as director of the sub-unit. She was also a trained theologian and an acknowledged feminist.

In 1977 the central committee reorganised the general secretariat of the WCC, creating positions for three deputy general secretaries, each of whom was also moderator of one of the three programme units.⁶ In 1980 Mrs Marie Assaad, a member of the Coptic Orthodox Church from Egypt, was appointed as deputy general secretary and staff moderator of Unit III on Education and Renewal. In this position, the highest yet achieved by a woman staff member, she worked closely with von Wartenberg and the Sub-unit on Women and did much to advocate for women's increased participation in the WCC. Assaad, a professional sociologist without theological training who had never worked in a church position although she had considerable ecumenical experience, did not find her new role easy. She later wrote of frequently finding herself excluded and overlooked by male church leaders, of their unwillingness to enter into serious conversation with her, of the difficulty she experienced when she refused to imitate the accepted male model of leadership. In her experience women colleagues were usually too few or too shy to support each other but "We need each other's support and solidarity. For in the midst of this desert of gender biases we may easily lose confidence and give up the struggle."⁷

Two World Conferences

⁶ Previously there had been two deputy general secretaries, one responsible for programme and one for general administration, and the unit moderators had been staff within the unit, usually heads of sub-units. Thus Bam had been staff moderator of Unit III. The new arrangement gave greater overall responsibilities to the three deputy general secretaries.

⁷ Marie B Assaad, "When I Was Called", WCW 22 (October 1986), 9.

The WCC conference on "Faith, Science and the Future", held in Cambridge, USA, in July 1979 was prepared by the Sub-unit on Church and Society and related the issues of science and technology to the WCC's concern for a just, participatory and sustainable society.⁸ Of the 405 participants, including almost 100 students, most were nominated by the churches while some were invited by the WCC. About half were physical scientists and technologists, the other half being church leaders, theologians, social scientists, and people from government and industry. The conference report noted that "the planning committee did not succeed in its aim that at least a third should be women; some member churches met that goal, but the total was almost a fifth".⁹ While few women were involved in conference leadership, several women gave plenary presentations, among them Rosemary Radford Ruether who spoke on "A Feminist Perspective on Religion and Science", and Karen Lebacqz, whose topic was "Bio-Ethics: Some Challenges from a Liberation Perspective". Although the conference said nothing specific about women's participation in "a just, participatory and sustainable society" it is significant that the planning committee had aimed at having women as one third of the participants, even if this aim was not achieved. At the 1966 Church and Society world conference there had been no such concern for women's participation.

⁸ For an account of the history of this theme, which was a major focus for reflection and study within the WCC 1975-1983 see C.I. Itty, "Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society", in *DEM*, 550-552.

⁹ Roger L Shinn and Paul Abrecht (eds.), *Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference on Faith, Science and the Future*,

The world mission conference organised by CWME and held in Melbourne in May 1980 was about the same size as the Church and Society conference, with just over 400 participants. Again women were about 20% of the participants, mostly delegates but a few advisors. While "quite a high number of women" were moderators and drafters within the sections and sub-sections only one woman gave a plenary presentation while eight men delivered addresses in plenary.¹⁰ Given the strong statement on women's participation made at the CWME world conference in Bangkok, 1972 (see above) it is somewhat surprising that more effort was not made to involve women.

Among the women who were present were central committee members Daisy Gopal Ratnam, Dorinda Sampath and Jean Skuse. Whether or not they took the initiative is not known, but the women members of the conference met separately (as they had done at Bangkok) and drafted a text which was presented to the conference under the title, "The Vision of the Kingdom According to Women".¹¹ In this they stated that:

As women in the church...we are still struggling to find our voice and to be heard...Today we women are more aware of the importance of our participation in the church...Women have been told by those in power how to serve the Lord and men. The "church fathers" have told the "church mothers" what to do and why.¹²

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA, 12-24 July, 1979. Vol. I. Plenary Presentations. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 1-2.

¹⁰ *Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives. Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, Australia, 12-25 May, 1980* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, c 1980), 252. The woman was Julia Esquivel who spoke on "The Crucified Lord: A Latin American Perspective".

¹¹ *ibid.*, 247-253.

¹² *ibid.*, 248-249.

The statement called attention to the lack of women in church leadership, pointing out that this was reflected at the conference itself, and emphasized the need for the full participation of women in every aspect of the church's life, not only for their contribution to mission and evangelism but for the renewal of the church itself. The statement cited examples of Jesus encountering, welcoming, affirming, accepting, and responding to women and of the commitment of women, in New Testament times and in the present, to proclaiming the Good News. It concluded:

The testimony of this message witnesses to the fact that visions of the Kingdom according to women are not new. We women continue to struggle and hope in full confidence that a new incorporation of women and men in the church will be manifested. For us, a mark of the lifestyle of the Kingdom is to claim our own voice, and with this basic mark of identity, to be in dialogue: "Your Kingdom Come!"¹³

Appended to this statement were a number of recommendations which were accepted by the whole conference. These included an affirmation of the WCC CWMC study; a request that the WCC, its member churches, and mission agencies make theological education and leadership training for women a priority for the decade; a call for "pre-conferences" to prepare women and others to participate more fully; and a recommendation that "the issues of the equal partnership of women and men should be included in all units of the WCC".¹⁴

While there was no recommendation about the numbers or percentage of women conference participants there was an interesting recommendation which was based on the belief, already expressed in the women's statement, that women's

¹³ *ibid.*, 253.

experience was different from that of men and that they had a different contribution to offer. Future conferences, therefore, should be conducted in such a way "that women are included in the modes of expression, in worship, in giving major theological presentations in plenary, in the use of language, images, and forms of communication."¹⁵

The Community of Women and Men in the Church (CWMC) Study

The Nairobi assembly had affirmed the concept of the CWMC study and had recommended that it be an official WCC programme for the three years 1976-78, but the path ahead was still not clear. As we have seen, the proposal for the study came from two sections of the assembly; section two on unity, and section six on liberation and human rights. A major question which had to be resolved before the study could proceed concerned its location, or "lodgement" within the structures of the WCC. Should it be lodged in the secretariat on Faith and Order, or in the Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society? Debate over this question was really debate over the nature of the CWMC study itself.

Where should this new study be located? Was it primarily a women's issue, one of justice for women, or was it primarily an issue of unity, having to do with one baptism into the body of Christ and a common confession of Jesus Christ as Lord?¹⁶

The newly elected central committee at its first meeting immediately following the assembly set up a review committee to make specific

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

recommendations on programmes, based on the proposals from the assembly. Following its first meeting early in 1976, it became known that the review committee thought the Community Study should be lodged in Unit III, for the pragmatic reason that there were too many programmes in Unit I and too few in Unit III.¹⁷ This provoked an immediate and strong reaction. Constance Parvey, who had been involved in developing the concept of study from Berlin through Accra to Nairobi, wrote to Faith and Order secretary Lukas Vischer to express her concern:

Pragmatically speaking, given the important role of Faith and Order in the formation of the theological life of the Churches, the CWMC will not get the rigorous theological attention it needs from the churches if Faith and Order is not firmly committed and ultimately charged with responsibility for this study...This confusion of the issue at Nairobi, seeing it primarily as 'women's liberation', led to breakdowns in communication and stifled dialogue. Until it can be made very clear beyond doubt that the CWMC addresses itself to the very nature of the Church, and to our very humanity in God, we will not be able to muster the creative, vigorous and serious dialogue required to guide us through these fundamental questions of the relationship between women and men in the Body of Christ.¹⁸

Dr Jorge Lara-Braud, executive director of the NCCC, USA, wrote in similar vein:

The very people who complain about the so-called narrowness of the women's agenda are precisely those who fail to take seriously the women's insistence that the issue of the relationship between men and women should be the business of the whole Church, and should be a central theological concern of the whole family of God.¹⁹

¹⁶ Constance F Parvey, ed., *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference, Sheffield, England, 1981* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 13.

¹⁷ Lukas Vischer to Constance Parvey, 28 June 1976, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

¹⁸ Constance Parvey to Lukas Vischer, 9 July 1976, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

¹⁹ Jorge Lara-Braud to Lukas Vischer, 9 July 1976. WCC Archives. A similar response was from Jeanne Audrey Powers, a member of the standing commission of Faith and Order:

In August 1976 the question was debated by the central committee, the review committee having recommended that the CWMC study be a "joint venture" between Faith and Order and the Sub-unit on Women.²⁰ Opinions were still divided:

Some...were reluctant to identify the Study with church unity and thus did not want to lodge it in the Secretariat on Faith and Order. These people, women and men alike, considered the study to be a women's study. For many men, this meant that the issues being raised were not relevant to the work of Faith and Order. For some women, this meant that the issues would be disregarded in Faith and Order discussions. Two underlying assumptions were present in this debate: church unity is made manifest by the resolution of the classical controversies, particularly those over baptism, eucharist, ministry and a common confession of faith; and the issue of women's participation requires singular attention.²¹

The central committee made the decision to lodge the CWMC study in the secretariat on Faith and Order in Unit I, where it would be a "project" related to the continuing study on "The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Humankind". It was to be undertaken in collaboration with the Sub-unit on Women in Unit III. A woman study secretary was to be appointed, and funding for her appointment was to be found in "designated funding", i.e. the money would not come out of the WCC budget but had to be raised specially.²²

With this decision to lodge the CWMC study in Faith and Order, the nature of the study was clarified. It was to be an ecclesiological study, focussed on the

Jeanne Audrey Powers to Lukas Vischer, 24 June 1976, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

²⁰ *Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1976*, 98, 104-105.

²¹ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 61-62.

²² *Central Committee, Minutes 1976*, 28, 52, 53, 68, 75.

recognition that "women's issues" are issues concerning the *wholeness* of the *whole* church.

Its central focus was on issues of "community", based on the belief that the church's unity must include both women and men in true mutual partnership. This focus on inclusive community widened the theological debate on church unity.²³

It was to be "a study of church unity with particular regard to the experience of women",²⁴ not a "women's study" as had been first proposed but a "community study".

The decision to make the CWMC study a joint project of Faith and Order and the Sub-unit on Women, lodged in Faith and Order, was unusual and did not solve all the problems. As Margaret Sonnenday, a member of the advisory committee set up to oversee the study,²⁵ recalled after its conclusion:

Immense difficulties [were] encountered in the very beginning of the Study - for example, the difficulty in just defining the responsibilities between the two Units and Sub-Units (Faith and Order, and Women in Church and Society). We had hardly any experience in inter-Unit co-operation. Therefore, initiating the Community study was *pioneer work* within the WCC...So, the Community Study for the Advisory Committee and the WCC staff involved a real *learning process*.²⁶

²³ Janet Crawford, "The Community of Women and Men in the Church: Where Are We Now?", *ER* 40 (1988), 39. See also Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 13. "Its fundamental character was to be that of an ecclesiological study, a study of inclusive community, more than of a 'justice' or a 'women's issue' per se".

²⁴ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 62.

²⁵ The advisory committee (originally called project committee), as agreed by the central committee in 1976, consisted of the director of Faith and Order, the director of the Sub-unit on Women, the CWMC study secretary, and two persons from both the Faith and Order Commission and the working group for the Sub-unit on Women. Mrs Mary Tanner served as moderator of this committee, membership of which changed from time to time. The advisory committee was responsible for developing and directing the whole project. There was also a staff task force which related the CWMC study to other units and sub-units of the WCC.

²⁶ "Minutes of the Community of Women and Men in the Church Advisory Committee Meeting, John Knox Centre, Geneva, September 21-23, 1982", TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. Original emphasis.

There were continuing difficulties over the funding of the study. The central committee had decided that the study was not to be supported by, or draw on, existing WCC funds, that it was outside the ongoing budget, and that although the WCC remained responsible for the actual fund-raising, "one hundred percent of the funding had to come from sources outside normal giving to the WCC".²⁷ The reason for this was that the WCC was itself experiencing a period of significant financial difficulty, but the difficulties in finding funding for the CWMC study also reflected the tensions that had been present in the debate over the location of the study. According to Midge Béguin-Meinertz, who worked for the WCC office of income coordination and development and who personally raised much of the funding for the study:

When we approached the church organisations for financial support they said: "This is a women's study. Why don't you approach women's organisations?" And when we sought assistance from the latter they said: 'This is not a *women's study*, but a community study'. Most of these, especially women, who understood the importance of the study, *did not have the power* to help effectively.²⁸

Funding problems were not unusual for World Council studies but "this one found fewer advocates at the level of the top ecclesiastical types than usual" because, as noted by Béguin-Meinertz, Constance Parvey and others, women's organisations

²⁷ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 16.

²⁸ "Minutes, CWMC Advisory Committee, 1982", 3. Original emphasis.

withheld funds "because they wished it to be undertaken as a primary responsibility by the churches themselves, not just the women's groups".²⁹

The tension between a *women's study* and a *community study* was present from the very beginning. Without a doubt, the first impulse for what became the community study occurred at the 1974 Berlin consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s".³⁰ There is however some confusion about the *specific* origins of the study. According to some commentators, its genesis lay in a recommendation of the Berlin meeting for a "Major WCC Project on Women to be launched after Nairobi: Education for Participation". This was an ambitious proposal, directed to the Fifth Assembly, for a women-centred project, run by women and for women, to increase women's participation according to their own perceived needs. It was envisaged as "an *action-education programme to combat sexism*", "*regionally-based*", "*adequately-funded and staffed by women*", with a separate staff desk in Geneva and part-time women staff to co-ordinate the regional groups, with "*world consultations of women*", and with "*findings of all the action-education groups to be shared*" in a number of ways, including at the sixth assembly of the WCC.³¹ Mary Tanner argues that it was the direction of this proposal which "was changed significantly at the Accra meeting of the Faith and Order Commission by a call for a community study".³²

²⁹ Betty Thompson, *A Chance to Change: Women and Men in the Church*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), 24.

³⁰ See Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 11. "The impulse for the study...was the June 1974 Berlin consultation, "Sexism in the 1970s", organised by the WCC Sub-Unit on Women in Church and Society".

³¹ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 126-127. Original emphasis.

³² Mary Tanner, "The Community Study and the Unity of the Church and Renewal of Human Community", in *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order*, Lima

On the other hand, both Constance Parvey and Madeleine Barot locate the origins of the community study in the Berlin working group on theology in which they each participated.³³ In fact the actual recommendation which was taken from the theology sub-group at Berlin to the Faith and Order meeting in Accra requested a study on "God-language in indigenous theology and worship" linking this with communication of the gospel and the need "to relate the ongoing studies and interpretation coming out of liberation theology and indigenous theology to the problems of speaking about the action of God in ways that communicate the gospel to all races, sexes and cultures."³⁴

It seems then that the impulse for the Community Study lay less in specific recommendations at the Berlin consultation and more in its overall questioning of discrimination against women in church as well as in society, and in its vision for a future in which women would be partners with men in new community. In the words of a statement from the theology sub-group:

Women today are questioning what authority and community mean in the Church when it is male authority and male communities which dominate. We

1982. Vol. 2. *Study Papers and Reports*, ed. Michael Kinnamon. Faith and Order Paper No. 113. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 155. This was also published as "The Community Study and the Renewal of Human Community", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 21 (1982). See also Thomas F Best, "The Community Study: Where Do We Go From Here?", *ER* 40 (1988), 56, in which he states that the original proposal was for a programme on women's issues, "a major WCC Project on Women...Education for Participation" which became "a community study".

³³ See Herzog, *A Voice for Women*, 76, where she quotes Barot as saying this group "was really the beginning of the Faith and Order study on 'The Community of Women and Men in the Church'". See also Parvey's comment that the origins of the study came "out of the theology sub-section of the Berlin Conference in 1974 which Letty Russell and I co-ordinated". Constance Parvey to Lukas Vischer, 9 July 1976, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. See also Constance F Parvey, "The Journey of an Idea" in *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: Report of the Asian Consultation held at the United Theological College, Bangalore, on 11-15 August 1978* (Bangalore: Printers India, 1978), 8.

³⁴ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 100.

are questioning what it means to be "a new humanity in Christ" (Gal.3:28) when most theology has been male, white, and Western. Women and men must begin to discover what it means to long to be different and to be together in our struggles. We long to catch a new vision of what it means to be fully human in Christ.³⁵

Whatever the exact origins of the CWMC study, it is clear that the first initiatives came from the women at Berlin, that there was a significant change and development at Accra, and that what emerged in 1976, following the Nairobi assembly, was a *community* study, lodged not in the Sub-unit on Women but in Faith and Order. (The original proposal for a project on "Education for Participation" seems to have survived in the form of a programme on women and rural development, in which the Sub-unit on Women worked to conscientize and train rural women in third world countries for leadership).³⁶

The focus on *community*, on women and men together in the Church, echoed the earlier emphasis in the WCC on *cooperation* between men and women. In both cases this was based on the belief that women as well as men are integrally part of the church and that women's concerns should be concerns for the whole church. Just as in the 1950s the emphasis on *co-operation* rather than on women had not been welcomed by all, so in the 1970s the shift of emphasis from *women's* issues to *community* issues was not entirely popular, as Tanner acknowledged:

Some would say that too swift a change was made between a women's study, called for by Berlin, and a community study, implemented by Nairobi, to redress the imbalance of 4,000 years of male-dominated history and theology.³⁷

³⁵ *ibid.*, 99.

³⁶ See *Nairobi to Vancouver, 1975-1983: Report of the Central Committee to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 206.

³⁷ Tanner, "The Community Study and the Unity of the Church and Renewal of Human Community", 155.

The same point was made by Parvey:

In the community study process some women have said that it arrived too soon at an emphasis on community - that not enough time was given for women to clarify their own experiences and, out of them, to establish their own priorities before beginning a dialogue with men.³⁸

It was clear however to Parvey that "the questions put forth for reflection and response" in the study were "questions that women are asking".³⁹

In spite of difficulties and doubts the CWMC study did proceed, though not as quickly as first planned. It was only during 1977 that sufficient money was raised for the appointment of a study secretary. Dr Constance F Parvey, an American Lutheran pastor who had already been deeply involved in the formation of the study at Berlin and Accra, accepted appointment for a three year term and began work in Geneva on 1 January, 1978. Funding continued to be a problem and the international consultation planned as the culmination of the study programme, originally planned for 1978, was postponed to 1979, then to 1980, and finally took place in 1981. Parvey's contract was extended to March 1982 so that she could conclude the study process by reporting to the Faith and Order commission at its Lima meeting in January 1982. Thus the CWMC study lasted for four years, from January 1978 to March 1982.

During these four years, under Parvey's leadership the CWMC study was pursued under four different, though inter-related, aspects.⁴⁰ Local study groups around the world discussed and responded to questions in a study guide booklet

³⁸ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 55.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 158.

⁴⁰ See May, *Bonds of Unity*, 62-73 for a helpful description of each of the different aspects of the study process. A useful bibliography of WCC publications related to the CWMC study 1974-1982 is in Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 190-194.

and many sent reports of their discussions to Geneva.⁴¹ Regional consultations were held in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Latin America and North America.⁴² Four specialised consultations were held to discuss specific theological issues: a consultation on "Ministry, Mariology, and Biblical Hermeneutics",⁴³ a consultation on the ordination of women;⁴⁴ a consultation on theological anthropology;⁴⁵ a consultation on women's experience and the authority of

⁴¹ Excerpts from local group reports were published in WCW, 10 (June 1981). May, *Bonds of Unity*, 129-163, is based on material from the group and regional reports and includes an account of the process. An analysis of responses on the theme of identity in the reports is found in Janet Crawford and Michael Kinnamon, eds., *In God's Image: Reflections on Identity, Human Wholeness and the Authority of Scripture*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 1-46.

⁴² See *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: Report of the Asian Consultation held at the United Theological College, Bangalore on 11-15 August 1978* (Bangalore: Printers India, 1978); *Report of the Middle East Council of Churches Consultation on The Community of Women and Men in the Church, Beirut, Lebanon, January, 1980* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981); "A Space to Grow In.." *Report of the European Regional Consultation of The Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, Bad Segeberg, Federal Republic of Germany, 20th-24th June, 1980* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981); *Report of the All Africa Regional Consultation on Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, Ibadan, Nigeria, 15-19 September 1980* (Nairobi: All-Africa Conference of Churches Publication, 1981); *Comunidad de Mujeres y Hombres en la Iglesia: Encuentro latinoamericano de mujeres, 15-18 marzo de 1981* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Sebila, 1981); *A Gathering to Share Our Hope: Report on the National Consultation U.S. Section of the World Council of Churches Study of the Community of Women and Men in the Churches, Stony Point, New York, March 25-26, 1981* (New York: National Council of Churches, 1981). A brief description of the contents of each consultation report is found in Ans J. van der Bent, *Six Hundred Ecumenical Consultations 1948-1982* (Geneva: WCC, 1983).

⁴³ This consultation is in fact not mentioned in most accounts of the Community Study (with the exception of May, *Bonds of Unity*, and van der Bent, n. 42 above) and the only report is an unpublished document, "Notes on Ministry, Mariology and Biblical Hermeneutics Consultation sponsored by The Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, June 26-29, 1978, Foyer John Knox (Geneva)," TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

⁴⁴ See Constance F Parvey, ed., *Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective: Workbook for the Church's Future*. Faith and Order Paper No. 105 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980). The consultation was held at Klingenthal (France) in August 1979.

⁴⁵ The report of the consultation on "Towards a Theology of Human Wholeness", held at Niederaltaich (West Germany) in September, 1980, is published as "Human Wholeness" in Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 48-78. Several of the papers given at the consultation are published in *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 21 (1982).

Scripture.⁴⁶ Input from these different strands of the Community Study provided the background and documentation for the final event, the international conference held in Sheffield, England, July 1981.⁴⁷ Out of the great wealth of material produced by the Community Study I shall, in what follows, discuss certain aspects or issues which are relevant to the theme of women's participation in the WCC. These include participation in the Community Study, referring to both the actual participants and what they said about participation, issues emerging from the specialised theological consultations, with a separate section on the ordination of women; the results of the Sheffield conference and the response of the central committee to its recommendations.

Participation in the CWMC Study.

According to Mary Tanner, moderator of the advisory committee for the CWMC Study, "participation was always more important than the productions of reports and recommendations".⁴⁸ The study certainly attracted participation, so much so that it was reported to the sixth assembly that it "touched more people and encouraged more grassroots participations during its four years...than any previous Faith and Order related programme".⁴⁹ Although originally only 3,000 copies of the study guide were printed, by 1981 there were an estimated 65,000

⁴⁶ See Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 80-108, for the report of the consultation on "The Authority of Scripture in Light of the New Experiences of Women" held at Amsterdam in December, 1980.

⁴⁷ See Parvey, *The Sheffield Report* for the official conference report and Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, for a brief, popular account.

⁴⁸ Mary Tanner to Dr Philip Potter, 24 September 1982, TLS, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

copies in print. There were several reprintings of the English and German versions and the guide was also "translated at local initiative in 13 languages mimeographed and adapted to community situations in every continental area", these copies and adaptations being made mainly by denominational and ecumenical women's organisations.⁵⁰

It was the local study groups which attracted the most interest and participation, probably because the methodology used was a distinct change from the traditional methods used by Faith and Order:

Instead of starting from "above" with the deliberations of theological "experts", [the CWMC study] deliberately started from "below" by inviting women and men in congregations and ecumenical groups, "non-experts", to talk about and reflect upon their actual experiences of community in their churches, and to articulate their visions of renewed community.⁵¹

Groups all over the world used the study guide and 150 of these groups sent reports to the Geneva office. It is estimated that over 2,000 people were represented by these responses and in addition there were many others in groups which for some reason did not submit reports.⁵² Although group reports did come from all over the world, the greatest number came from the North Atlantic or

⁴⁹ *Nairobi to Vancouver, 1975-1983: Report of the Central Committee to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 85.

⁵⁰ Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission held at the Centre Jean XXIII, Annecy, France, January 3-10, 1981*. Faith and Order Paper No. 106. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981), 54.

⁵¹ Crawford, "The Community of Women and Men in the Church: Where Are We Now?", 39.

⁵² Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 1. May gives the example of Finland where the Women's Committee of the Ecumenical Council of Finland sent out approximately 800 copies of the study guide and knew of twenty discussion groups, eight of which sent in reports to the Committee which then transmitted them to the Study Desk in Geneva, with the comment that: "The comparatively small amount of reports signifies that they do not give the whole picture of how largely and significantly this study has influenced the discussions of different groups in our country", May, *Bonds of Unity*, 136. The originals of all the group reports are in the WCC Archives.

"developed" world, and "third-world" countries were generally under-represented.⁵³ Although there was significant participation from both Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians, the greatest participation came from members of the major Protestant denominations. Group members were pre-dominantly middle-aged and middle-class, overwhelmingly "the educated laity of the WCC member churches".⁵⁴

Although there were no men-only groups, a number of groups had only women members and in many mixed groups women predominated. The study was designed for the whole church community - women and men - but it has been estimated that women participants outnumbered men by about two to one.⁵⁵ A number of groups commented on the difficulty of getting men to participate in what was still often perceived to be a women's study. In the words of one group, "Unfortunately no men participated. The whole debate on women's role in society and the church is unfortunately considered to be of interest for women only".⁵⁶

⁵³ See May, *Bonds of Unity*, 63, where she agrees with Parvey that "this distribution is, in part, a reflection of the disparity between communication technologies in the so-called "developed" and "developing worlds" and also acknowledges that "the distribution may also be an indication that some of the questions posed by the Community Study were not accessible or relevant to some regions of the world". The question of relevance was posed sharply at Sheffield in a plenary statement from Third World participants who challenged the focus on community within the church, calling for greater awareness of the global context of desperate struggle against many forms of exploitation and oppression. See *The Sheffield Report*, 96-101, and below.

⁵⁴ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 160. For a more detailed analysis of the membership of these groups see Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 2-3.

⁵⁵ Janet Crawford, "The Continuing Significance of the Community Study: Sheffield and Beyond", in *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*, ed. Thomas F. Best. Faith and Order Paper No. 138 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985), 47.

⁵⁶ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 135. The comment was made by an ecumenical group in Copenhagen.

According to the reporter who read and summarised all the United States group reports:

Women were the majority of participants and provided the most support. Perhaps this is as it should be (or at least as it should be expected to be) for the Study questions hold out the possibility of a new place for women in the church which threatens many men.⁵⁷

There is, as Bärbel von Wartenberg has suggested, "food for thought in the absence of male voices, or rather in the relatively small number of men participating", and with her we might ask, "Whatever happened to the men in the quest for the new community?"⁵⁸ Indeed it seemed that on the whole men were no more interested in *community* with women than they had been earlier in *co-operation* with women.

Whatever the reasons for the relative paucity of male participation by men, there is no doubt that the local group process of the Community Study attracted many women, women who found in the study a unique opportunity to participate in a WCC study which was not a "women's study" yet which took women's experiences, perspectives and understandings seriously. Experience was the major

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 135-136. See also Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 159, where she argues that "It is not surprising that more women than men have been motivated to begin this work and provide the leadership [and that] as the process developed, its major constituency has been women."

⁵⁸ Bärbel von Wartenberg, "Adam and Eve, Where Are You? Introduction", *ER* 34 (1982), 161. One answer to this question has been given by Best, who argues that "while there is a women's movement, with all its creative diversity of approaches and styles, to help women understand and cope with the changing patterns and expectations which confront them today, there is no corresponding men's movement to help men deal with the demands placed upon them, most critically the demand that they relinquish power in favour of women, or at least join in the search for new and more equal forms of community, including sharing of power". Best, "The Community Study: Where Do We Go From Here?", 20. On the question of men's participation, see also Parvey's comments, *The Sheffield Report*, 158-159. Parvey concludes that, "Ecumenically, the responses of men are just beginning. Men are starting to take seriously for themselves the meaning of the new contributions of women. A fuller picture might be part of future work".

starting-point of the Community Study and through participation in the study

women were encouraged to articulate their distinctive experience as women.⁵⁹

The articulation of this experience in the group and regional reports became the

material on which the Sheffield consultation was based. Speaking at Sheffield

Philip Potter, who had read the reports, told conference participants:

I felt here through this enormous study which has gone on in so many parts of the world, the incredible pain and agony of it all - and with it the extraordinary love and patient endurance and perseverance which lie behind it. I perceived also the tremendous insights and wisdom - which have been lying there wasted for so many years and which are still emerging, thank God, for our enrichment - I have been aware, reading these reports, of the impotence of our male-dominated churches to see, hear, feel, decide and act...For me, the study is a veritable test of our faith and of the ecumenical movement which is concerned about the unity of the whole people of God, as a sign and sacrament of the unity of all the peoples of the world.⁶⁰

Among the questions in the CWMC study guide there was a section devoted to participation in church and society. The answers of course varied and yet, in spite of differences in church doctrine and practice, a remarkably consistent picture emerges from the reports:

Most of the study groups concentrated more on the actual experience of women and men within the churches than on official teaching and pronouncements...They report that women frequently far outnumber men in church membership and attendance at worship but their participation is often limited to certain activities closely related to women's traditional social roles...Women and men do different things and fulfill different roles, based not simply on individual gifts and interests but on gender..This means that, in general, women have little part in decision-making or positions of responsibility in the churches.⁶¹

⁵⁹ On the role of experience, particularly the experience of women, in the theological method of the Community Study, see Tanner, "The Community Study and the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community", especially pp. 152-156.

⁶⁰ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 25.

⁶¹ Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 28, 36. A more detailed analysis is given pp. 27-38.

In some churches the principle of equality was affirmed and in theory women had the opportunity to participate on equal terms with men, although in practice women were still often under-represented in positions of authority and responsibility. In other churches women's restricted participation was based on theological teaching about the inferiority and subordination of women. Although some women expressed satisfaction with the level of their participation, while others saw hopeful signs of change, many expressed a growing degree of frustration through lack of acceptance, and a degree of anger or disillusion with the church.

In general the churches were accused of perpetuating or endorsing social attitudes towards women which limited women's participation, particularly in areas of decision-making and responsibility. Many groups commented that the churches tended to follow social customs and attitudes rather than to challenge them and that as a result women's position changed more quickly in society than in the church.⁶²

Overall the reports from the local groups (and the regional consultations) revealed that, in spite of some significant regional and denominational differences, women's experience in the churches generally was one of *limited participation*. This was the same conclusion which Kathleen Bliss had reached in 1952, in *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches*. In this respect, the responses to the Community Study were remarkably similar to the responses to the inquiry into "The Life and Work of Women in the Church" carried out thirty years earlier by

⁶²

Crawford, "The Community of Women and Men in the Church: Where Are We Now?" 42.

Twila Cavert and others.⁶³ This was recognised by Betty Thompson, journalist and former WCC staff member, when she wrote:

What became apparent from the reports and the meetings was the same thing that emerged from the 1951 World Council study - that no matter what the church or where it was located there were men dominating at the top and many women serving at the bottom. And, as in the study three decades earlier, the opportunities for capable women in the society exceeded those in the church. This was true in Protestant, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches.⁶⁴

As in the past, so too in the CWMC study where "the preoccupation was with greater empowerment for all the laity and a search for new methods of cooperation that would avoid the old male, competitive, authoritarian model".⁶⁵

Specialised Consultations

The specialised consultations within the CWMC Study were held in order to respond to specific concerns of Faith and Order, "drawing on the theological and interdisciplinary expertise of women and men from WCC member churches and the

⁶³ Few of the participants in the Community Study seem to have been aware of the earlier inquiry into the Life and Work of Women in the Church, in spite of the obvious links between the two. Parvey comments that: "One might call the Chakko/Bliss study of 1952 "phase I" of the present Community Study, although I did not see a copy of the 1952 study until near the end of the Community Study process when I ran across a copy in the sale of second-hand books". Constance F Parvey, "The Continuing Significance of the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study: Its Mixed Meaning for the Churches", in *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal, and the Community of Women and Men*, ed. Thomas F. Best, 37. (Parvey is wrong in her assumption that Chakko co-authored the book which was done by Bliss alone). An obvious difference between the two "phases" was that the Community Study involved men as well as women. It also covered a broader range of questions. But in both cases there was an emphasis on finding out the experiences of women in the church and these findings were significantly similar.

⁶⁴ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 26. Thompson was of course mistaken in thinking that the earlier study took place in 1951.

Roman Catholic Church, but still using an experience-based methodology".⁶⁶

The first brief consultation, held in Geneva in June 1978, brought together twelve participants from Europe and North America, to discuss "Ministry, Mariology and Biblical Hermeneutics" in light of the questions being raised by women. The task of this consultation was to begin to explore these three issues, which had long been on the Faith and Order agenda, and to outline ways in which they could be addressed during the course of the CWMC study. The discussion of Mariology was the most difficult, with "the divergence between Mary as portrayed by feminist theologians and as portrayed by Orthodox and Roman Catholic icons and doctrines" seeming "irreconcilable".⁶⁷ In fact the issue of Mariology was never developed to any extent in the Community Study. According to a statement at the Faith and Order standing commission in 1981:

It was noted that there had been large disagreement on this issue. Generally, the study results saw Christ as the model of a new inclusive anthropology and spoke of Mary (particularly as exemplified in the *Magnificat*) as a prophet of human liberation.⁶⁸

At Sheffield Mary was described as no longer "the model of submission and subordination but rather as a woman who has fully lived her partnership with God in the Christ Event".⁶⁹ But the question of Mary as a model for women's participation in the Church remains on the ecumenical agenda.

⁶⁵ ibid.

⁶⁶ Constance F Parvey, "Community of Women and Men in the Church", in *DEM*, 211.

⁶⁷ May, *Bonds of Unity*, 65.

⁶⁸ *Minutes, Faith and Order Standing Commission, Annecy, 1981*, 60.

⁶⁹ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 141. See *ibid.*, 178-181 for a fuller discussion of Mary in the CWMC Study.

Although the report of the first specialised consultation was not published, and although it is not mentioned in many publications on the Community Study,⁷⁰ it began to explore other significant theological issues which were developed in the later consultations. "Ministry" was the topic of a 1979 consultation on the ordination of women and was also discussed in a number of other consultations. (See below). The question of "biblical hermeneutics" was taken up at a consultation on "The Authority of Scripture in Light of the New Experience of Women", held in Amsterdam in 1980. The participants at this consultation, Protestants and Catholics (there was unfortunately no Orthodox participation) were unable to agree on questions of biblical authority, but they did agree that:

The Bible has been used to justify and maintain a view that women are, and should be, subordinate to men. Traditional, male-oriented interpretations of scripture have marginalised women, subordinating them to men in order of creation and stereotyping their roles and images in church and society, often relegating women, in the name of biblical authority, to a second class of humanity. Throughout the world a new awareness is growing, an awareness of the fundamental equality of persons and of the need for a new community of women and men that rejects patterns of hierarchical authority and power.⁷¹

The third specialised consultation, held at Niederaltaich (West Germany), also in 1980, seems to have originated in the discussion of "ministry" at the earlier consultation on "Ministry, Mariology and Biblical Hermeneutics" where it was stated that:

Concepts and relationships which were once acceptable are now not acceptable, or at least being questioned. At the centre of this change is a growing awareness of the difference between present day anthropology and anthropologies of early periods in church history. With new insights into the nature of personhood, old attitudes need to be confronted and changed...If the

⁷⁰ See n. 42 above. Parvey herself refers to "specialised consultations on three topics", and omits this first one. See *The Sheffield Report*, 15.

⁷¹ Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 83.

church is to witness and minister to this age, it must not work with a false and redundant anthropology.⁷²

The theme, "Towards a Theology of Human Wholeness", echoed the statement at the Berlin consultation, that "the Church has made it difficult for women to become whole persons".⁷³ But, as Parvey noted in the consultation report, the issues raised at Niederaltaich had been first raised much earlier than 1974.

[They] were already raised at the first meeting of the WCC in Amsterdam, 1948, in a debate initiated by women in response to comments made by Karl Barth on Genesis 2. This consultation follows in the tradition of that earlier initiative.⁷⁴

Now at Niederaltaich in 1980 participants again took up questions of "theological anthropology", of what it means to be human, to be created as male and female "in the image of God". The starting point for the discussion was "the disparity between what women have been taught about 'being woman' and what women experience their lives to be".⁷⁵ Discussion was based on a recognition of the androcentric nature of Christian tradition, and in particular its failure to attribute to women the fullness of "the image of God", seeing in them only the "derivative, or reflected image".⁷⁶

The consultations on anthropology and the authority of scripture reached no conclusive results but they did pose important questions and articulate some of the theological traditions and teachings which were seen to hinder women's full

⁷² "Ministry, Mariology and Biblical Hermeneutics", 3, 4.

⁷³ *Sexism in the 1970s*, 101. The consultation also asked the WCC "to set up a study group" for "a new study of theological anthropology". *ibid.*, 119.

⁷⁴ Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 54.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 51.

participation in the church and in society. In these two consultations tradition was challenged by the experiences of women, while at the same time resources within the tradition which offered hopes of transformation and inclusive community were found and affirmed. The findings of both consultations pointed to the importance of "widening the community of interpretation and theological reflection to include those who have previously been excluded or marginalised."⁷⁷

As a step towards this "widening" of the community, these specialised consultations were based on the principle that two-thirds of the participants should be women (the same principle as at the Louvain Colloquium in 1975).

The CWMC Study and the Ordination of Women

As women's participation in the WCC increased, so too did questions about the ordination of women. The link between participation and ordination had been made explicitly in the report from Section V at the Nairobi assembly:

We are...convinced that it is vital for the WCC and the member churches to open all service opportunities to women and to encourage the study, by both men and women, of a deeper and more thorough participation of women in church life with special attention to the question of ordination.⁷⁸

While it was recognised that the question of the ordination of women "raised fundamental dogmatic issues on which we are not agreed" the report of Section II also called for study of this question to be pursued in the CWMC study.⁷⁹ From the first mention of the ordination of women at the Amsterdam assembly in 1948 it

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 53.

⁷⁸ Paton, *Breaking Barriers*, 109.

had proved to be a sensitive ecumenical issue, and of all the issues dealt with in the Community Study it was this which proved to be "the most difficult and intractable".⁸⁰

Following the Nairobi assembly the decision was made to lodge the CWMC Study in Faith and Order which, as discussed earlier, had already paid some attention to the ordination of women in the context of its study on ministry. In 1979 the Faith and Order commission published a report which evaluated and responded to the replies received from the churches in response to the three statements published in 1975 in *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Agreed Ministry*.⁸¹ This report stated that "the replies of the churches and the wider ecumenical discussion indicate widespread recognition of the need for further biblical and theological study of women and ministry", with a particular question about the possibility of "a mutually recognised ministry where there is diversity of practice on this issue".⁸² A "Working Paper on the Ordination of Women", which was included as an appendix, summarised the responses from the churches and referred to recent developments such as the ordination of women to the priesthood in some Anglican churches and the 1976 Roman Catholic

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 62.

⁸⁰ Best, "The Community Study: Where Do We Go From Here?", 54. As Best notes in a footnote, "Why *this one* should be the most difficult is an interesting point in itself", *ibid.* Original emphasis.

⁸¹ *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry: Three Agreed Statements*. Faith and Order Paper No. 73, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975).

⁸² *Towards an Ecumenical Consensus on Baptism, the Eucharist and the Ministry: A Response to the Churches*. Faith and Order Paper No. 84. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977), 12.

declaration against the admission of women to the priesthood.⁸³ The paper concluded that:

It is evident...that in many churches there have been developments which affect the discussion both within and among them in many ways. Theologians and church leaders of any church cannot simply remain silent therefore on this issue. This situation imposes a new ecumenical responsibility on all churches to avoid division over this matter and to pay serious attention to the problems which need discussion in the immediate future.⁸⁴

The CWMC study was seen as providing "an excellent opportunity" for "further investigation and open discussion", taking into account "the crucial points in the debate on the agreed statements as well as the new elements in recent ecumenical discussion".⁸⁵

Thus within the commission on Faith and Order the ordination of women was seen as relevant to ecumenical discussions on ministry which were taking place in the context of an ongoing study on baptism, eucharist, and the ministry. At its meeting in 1978 in Bangalore, India, the commission affirmed that the ordination of women was, for many, "a matter of inescapable importance and that discussion must go on".⁸⁶ Recommendations from the Bangalore meeting formed a basis for

⁸³ *ibid.*, 17-19. The *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*, prepared by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was given in Rome with the approval of Pope Paul VI on 15 October 1976 (the feast of Teresa of Avila).

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁶ *Sharing in One Hope. Reports and Documents from the Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission, Bangalore 1978*. Faith and Order Paper No. 92. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1978), 255.

the CWMC consultation on the ordination of women, held at Klingenthal the following year.⁸⁷

While the Faith and Order discussions and recommendations were largely the work of men, women in the constituency of the Sub-unit on Women were also pressing for further study on the ordination of women. In January 1977 the Sub-unit sponsored a consultation of church women executives, held in Glion, near Montreux, Switzerland. The eighty participants came from forty countries and from Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches. Coming from churches with widely differing positions on women's ordination, they agreed that:

The largest proportion of the Church's membership, especially women, have not taken part in the discussions, and the engagement and commitment of the entire Christian community are lacking in whatever decisions are taken. There seems to be very little movement into new perspectives. Constructive debate is often hampered by continued reference to the same positions, both pro and con. The Churches are in need of generating new thinking which can enrich future conversations. It should be normal for women to be included in the discussions so that their insights may spur the Church on to new visions.⁸⁸

A year later, in February 1978, at a consultation of European Christian women also sponsored by the Sub-unit on Women, "questions surrounding the ordination of women" were seen as revealing "fundamental attitudes towards women in general, on the part of men and women alike" and it was recommended that "a strong appeal be made to our churches' authorities, to actively promote the study of women's ministries at all levels of the church."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 255, 269.

⁸⁸ *Half the World's People. A Report of the Consultation of Church Women Executives. Glion, Switzerland, January 1977.* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 1978), 15.

⁸⁹ *Consultation of European Christian Women, Brussels, 29 January - 4 February, 1978.* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1978), 10.

When the CWMC consultation on "Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective" took place in August-September, 1979, at Château Klingenthal, near Strasbourg in France, its purpose was "to seek a common approach to the controversial issue of women's ordination in an ecumenical context, this within the overall search for a true partnership of women and men in the Church".⁹⁰ The consultation brought together thirty participants, theologians, pastors, biblical scholars, church leaders, administrators and teachers, representing Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Old Catholic and Roman Catholic churches. Women outnumbered men (eighteen to twelve) and only three members of the Faith and Order commission were present. The participants represented churches with widely divergent traditions and practices concerning the ordination of women and as the report stated:

It was clear from the beginning of the consultation that the questions surrounding the ordination of women are painful when seen from the perspective of the ecumenical movement. The issue touches a nerve in the churches and in some it is highly charged. A number of churches fear internal division over this question; others fear setbacks in unity discussions.⁹¹

Acknowledging this reality, those at the Klingenthal meeting did not seek to reach a consensus, but rather to explore the topic in an ecumenical context and to make suggestions for further exploration and dialogue within and among the churches. To this end they designed a "Workbook for the Church's Future", an "agenda of questions designed to facilitate the process towards mutual

⁹⁰ Constance F Parvey, *Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective: Workbook for the Church's Future*. Faith and Order Paper No. 105. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 3.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, 8-9.

understanding within the ecumenical context".⁹² Dr Letty Russell, a member of the Faith and Order commission, an ordained Presbyterian and a veteran of many ecumenical meetings, wrote of the Klingenthal consultation that it was:

*A new ecumenical meeting. It wasn't "just" a women's meeting. Nor was it "just" a Faith and Order (men's) meeting...For the first time in my experience with such meetings women ceased to be "the problem", to be referred to and studied in relation to ordination. Instead, as women and men joined together, theology became the problem!... Women did not have to prove themselves but theologians did! They had to rethink together the nature of ministry... They had to rethink the meaning of unity at the expense of justice. Here was one very small hint that women could stop being a problem and become an opportunity for a new level of shared dialogue.*⁹³

Russell labeled this shift in perspective, brought about by the inclusion of women as participants in a common journey to discover unity in Christ rather than as a problem to be studied, the "Strasbourg Shift" and argued that beneath the surface of the meeting there was "a tentative reaching toward expression of a changed paradigm in ecumenical conversations".⁹⁴ It was a shift from theology based on a paradigm of domination, a paradigm which excludes the ideas and persons who do not fit into the established hierarchical view of reality, to a paradigm of cooperation in which people value the possibility of diversity and inclusiveness. In Russell's view, a paradigm of cooperation, or a rainbow paradigm of theological discussion, would welcome the new questions asked by women and other "outsiders" for in this paradigm "the unity of the Church is to be

⁹² *ibid.*, 60.

⁹³ Letty M Russell, "Women and Unity: Problem or Possibility", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 21 (1982), 299. Original emphasis.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 303.

sought in trying to reach out to the outsiders in order to discover a more inclusive consensus".⁹⁵

It was understood by those at the Klingenthal consultation that their work would contribute "to the background materials on ministry for the ongoing Faith and Order work on One Baptism, one Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry and to the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study".⁹⁶

Perhaps it was because of the "Strasbourg Shift" in methodology, or perhaps because of the shift in participation by which women outnumbered man and only one male Faith and Order representative was present, that the Klingenthal consultation had little, if any, influence on the ongoing Faith and Order work on ministry and seems to be not reflected at all in the 1981 convergence document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. (See below for further discussion on this). The report from the consultation was, however, included in the background materials for the international consultation on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, held at Sheffield, England, in July 1981, although the ordination of women to the priesthood was not one of the priority items on the agenda for that meeting. According to Constance Parvey:

The focus of the preparatory work for Sheffield was built on common concerns. This meant that "women in ministry" was the common subject, and ordination of women was one aspect of it.⁹⁷

The Community of Women and Men in the Church Conference, Sheffield, 1981

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 302.

⁹⁶ Parvey, *Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective*, 1.

The international consultation planned as the culmination of the CWMC study process was held in Sheffield, England, 10-19 July, 1981. There were one hundred and forty delegates, representing ninety churches and fifty-five countries. They included twelve Roman Catholics,⁹⁸ but only eight Orthodox.⁹⁹ "First" and "Third" World participation was about equally balanced, but as at the earlier CWMC consultations women outnumbered men by almost two to one.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the voting delegates, another hundred participants were present as observers, consultants, stewards, press and staff. In all these categories women outnumbered men.

With a total of two hundred and forty participants the Sheffield consultation was not a large meeting, but it had a unique character as a meeting of women and men, in which women were the majority.¹⁰¹

Betty Thompson, a veteran of three World Council assemblies and a former WCC staff member, was in the press corps at Sheffield. She described the participants and her own reactions thus:

We were the usual ecclesiastical hodgepodge: a mixture of enthusiasts for the subject augmented by persons trusted by our church to be official delegates,

⁹⁷ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 177.

⁹⁸ A number of Roman Catholics participated in ecumenical local study groups, and in the regional and specialised consultations. There were also several local groups which were entirely Roman Catholic in membership.

⁹⁹ Orthodox participation in the CWMC study is discussed in a separate section. See below, p. 40ff.

¹⁰⁰ While the predominance of women in the local study groups was basically because men chose not to participate, the predominance of women at the consultations was the result of a guideline which was established because "the central thrust of the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study is to bring into ecumenical/theological dialogue the new contributions of women". Parvey, *Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective*, 7. As already noted, this principle may have originated at the Louvain colloquium in 1975.

¹⁰¹ This reversal of the usual ecumenical or church situation was also, according to Parvey, a reversal of the usual social situation. "For men this has meant sometimes finding themselves not only a minority in numbers but also a minority in power". Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 158.

young men and women working as volunteers or stewards, "experts", translators, secretaries, and the usual motley crew of press to which I belonged...One of the heartening things I observed at the registration desk and in the dining hall was the dearth of familiar faces. This was not the old gang but a group of persons with many first-time participants in a World Council of Churches conference. Another striking thing was that women outnumbered men about three to one...I was accustomed to being in the definite gender minority. Here the situation was reversed. I wondered if the men present felt as I had sometimes felt, outnumbered and a bit out of place. Another change was the large number of delegates from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the islands of the Pacific and the Caribbean.¹⁰²

Among the women participants at Sheffield were five who had been present as the first steps towards the Community Study had been taken at Berlin in 1974.¹⁰³ Others had joined in the journey at the Accra meeting of Faith and Order, while several had been present at the Nairobi assembly.¹⁰⁴ Parvey alone had participated at all three of those previous meetings and for her, as for many others, Sheffield now became "another landmark...in their ecumenical journey".¹⁰⁵

Among the delegates, chosen by their churches and not by the WCC, were many who had no previous knowledge of the CWMC study and who were introduced to the issues for the first time at Sheffield; others had participated in local groups and/or regional and specialised consultations.

Although the whole Community Study process had stressed the experience and contributions of women, and though women participants at Sheffield

¹⁰² Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 16.

¹⁰³ They were Madeleine Barot (who formed a living link with the Baarn women's conference in 1948), Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, Letty Russell, Pauline Webb, Hildegard Zumach and Constance Parvey.

¹⁰⁴ Mercy Oduyoye, Jeanne Audrey Powers, Christian Howard and Parvey were at Accra. Russell, Webb, Zumach, Oduyoye, Powers and Parvey were all at the Nairobi assembly.

¹⁰⁵ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 23.

outnumbered the men, the conference process did not offer as much change from traditional methods as some would have liked. As a result:

Sheffield itself had problems with participation. There was much criticism of its structures, for example a high platform to look up to, long opening plenaries with little time for response, not enough input from the regions at the beginning or participation from the range of Orthodox traditions, too much hard work and consequent neglect of the body, and so forth. Some expected more structural flexibility.¹⁰⁶

To some the conference seemed to be based on a "male" model, a model with "heavy concentration on plenary presentations delivered from 'above', orientation toward a product (recommendations and reports), and reliance on expertise and experience".¹⁰⁷ One young man reacted to the plenary presentations with a comment which might have been made at any number of previous WCC meetings: "Apparently lay people, women, youth, the Orthodox, and Third World people still need to continue to plead for proper recognition".¹⁰⁸ In fact the balance of male and female presenters was a considerable improvement on the usual WCC practice, but European and North Americans predominated.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 175.

¹⁰⁷ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 84.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 94.

¹⁰⁹ The plenary presentations were given by: Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking in his capacity as president of the BCC; Philip Potter, general secretary of the WCC; German theologians, Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jürgen Moltmann; Tissa Balasuriya, a Roman Catholic priest and theologian from Sri Lanka; American psychologist Jean Baker Miller; Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, a Russian Orthodox lay theologian from Paris; Rose Zoé-Obianga, an African liberation theologian. Four Bible studies were given by Professor Phyllis Tribble, professor of Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Pauline Webb preached at the conference service in Sheffield Cathedral. The texts of all the presentations except the Bible studies are in *The Sheffield Report*. Addresses by Potter, the Moltmanns, Zoé-Obianga, Balasuriya and Baker Miller are published in *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 21 (1982).

To delegates from the Third World, the plenary presentations concentrated too much on what they thought were Western concerns and perspectives and ignored the global context of desperate struggles against exploitation and poverty. "Restlessness" on the part of many delegates from the Third World "erupted" at an evening meeting held after four days of plenary presentations and resulted in a "brief but powerful statement" which was presented in plenary the next day.¹¹⁰ This challenged the focus of the conference and of the whole Community Study as too narrow, with too much emphasis on the church:

We are here, representing two-thirds of the world's women; they are the most exploited people on earth. We are from nations in Africa and Asia where the Church is a minority among other faiths and ideologies. Most of us have come here with no prior opportunity to share our concerns. When we did so here, we realized that they are not confined to women and men in community in the Church only, and that our perceptions about the global context are affirmed as urgent. While we seek to remedy conscious or unconscious sexual discrimination within the fellowship of the churches, let us also look to ways of ending the equally sinful exploitation of the powerless by the powerful, whenever that is found.¹¹¹

Responses from First World participants varied, but European participants in particular took the challenge seriously and made a statement in response.¹¹² It was from this confrontation that "the web of oppression" emerged as a dominant image for the linkage of sexism, racism, classism, and world economic disorder. Overall, the Third World intervention introduced a note of global awareness which was reflected in a number of section reports, and ensured that the values and priorities of Western participants did not dominate.

¹¹⁰ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 71.

¹¹¹ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 96-97.

¹¹² *ibid.*, 99-101.

As usual at WCC meetings, much of the work of the Sheffield conference was done in the sections, working groups in which the issues were hammered out as each section prepared a report on its topic. The topics of the seven sections and the resultant reports reflected the wide scope of the Community Study and of the conference.¹¹³ Taken as a whole:

The section work reveals a deep commitment to the church, its tradition and its divine calling to 'the people of God'...The work challenges major issues that hinder making manifest the church as a true community of women and men and, finally, it proposes new directions.¹¹⁴

Based on the work in the sections were a number (seven pages) of recommendations which, together with "A Letter from Sheffield" which the participants wished to be sent to the churches, were presented to the WCC central committee meeting at Dresden in August 1981.¹¹⁵ The discussion of what occurred at Dresden will be continued below. Here it is sufficient to note that the only two recommendations which were not approved by the central committee related to *participation* of women in the WCC, and *ordination* of women.

"Participation" was not a section topic at Sheffield but it was very much an underlying theme of the consultation, as it had been in the local study groups. At Sheffield,

¹¹³ The topics were: Identity and Relationships in New Community
Marriage, Family, and Life Style in New Community
Scripture in New Community
Ministry and Worship in New Community
Authority and Church Structures in New Community
Tradition and Traditions - A Chance for Renewal?
Justice and Freedom in New Community.

¹¹⁴ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 10.

The reality of women's experience of restricted participation was set alongside the vision of a renewed, inclusive community encouraging the full participation of all its members and the development of the gifts of each individual. Restricted participation was seen as a denial of full humanity and of the liberating grace of God.¹¹⁶

The frequently-quoted statement by Rose Zoé-Obianga, "I am because I participate" encapsulated much of the mood and the emphasis of Sheffield.¹¹⁷

Although "participation" was a key-word at Sheffield, it was participation "within the framework of the search for new community...not participation in structures of power and authority as usual...but participation at the full price of long-term responsibility and accountability for change."¹¹⁸ What was remarkable was that in spite of difficulties and disappointments and undoubted tensions, many of those at Sheffield actually experienced a new kind of participation. As they said

in "A Letter from Sheffield": "We received a foretaste of global community of women and men vulnerable to the pain of all forms of oppression and united in struggle against them".¹¹⁹ Participation in renewed community was thus not just something *discussed* at Sheffield; the consultation itself gave to many participants a foretaste of new community, an *experience*, even if brief and partial, of living together as women and men in new relationships. "Over and over again came

¹¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 83-93, for the text of these. For "A Letter from Sheffield" see Appendix III this work.

¹¹⁶ Crawford, "The Community of Women and Men in the Church; Where Are We Now?", 43.

¹¹⁷ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 72. Although often attributed to Zoé-Obianga, this quotation is, as she notes, from John V Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence and African Religion* (Napierville, Ill: Alec R Allenson, 1963), 85. The originator of the phrase was African theologian John Mbiti.

¹¹⁸ Constance F Parvey, "The Community of Women and Men", *ER* 33 (1981), 346.

¹¹⁹ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 92.

delight from both sexes that they experienced a new community in which women and men were equal and valued participants".¹²⁰

This was the experience not only of those who participated at Sheffield, but also of many who took part in other aspects of the Community Study, especially in local groups. In the words of Mary Tanner:

Through their experience they have not only begun to put into words a renewed vision of an ecclesial community, but have, through that participation, experienced a renewed community...They have experienced living with others who no longer base their lives on the assumption of the inequality of the sexes and who are committed to struggling against all forms of oppression and who, in so doing, have a foretaste of living in a united and not divided way.¹²¹

Although a new kind of participation in a new kind of community was experienced by many participants as one of the positive (though still partial and limited) results of the CWMC Study, it was one of their recommendations on participation which was to cause the greatest controversy at the central committee meeting in Dresden. This was the recommendation that at the sixth assembly of the WCC, "50% of all membership elected to sub-units and committees of the WCC be women".¹²²

Parvey, herself an ordained Lutheran pastor, was well aware that the ordination of women was a sensitive issue within the ecumenical context of the WCC. She wrote of Sheffield that:

Ordination of women was not one of the priority items prepared for the common agenda. A special consultation had been prepared on the subject and its report was included in the background materials...The focus of the preparatory work for Sheffield was built on common concerns. This meant that

¹²⁰ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 93.

¹²¹ Tanner, "The Community Study and the Unity of the Church and Renewal of Human Community", 165.

¹²² Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 90.

"women in ministry" was the common subject, and ordination of women was one aspect of it.¹²³

The group at Sheffield which drafted a text on "The Ordained Ministry" (as part of the report of the section on "Ministry and Worship in New Community") was also aware of ecumenical sensitivities and produced a cautious text stating that:

It was aware of the complexity and diversity of the existing situations both within and between the different churches. The state of the discussion is also at different stages in different cultures. Amongst the churches there is a plurality of practice embracing those who do ordain women, those who do not, and those who are hesitant for ecumenical reasons.¹²⁴

The group noted that "the issues involved in this matter touch us at our deepest level, embedded as they are in liturgy, symbolism, and spirituality", and that social and cultural contexts were also significant.¹²⁵

After listening to reasons for the ordination of women advanced by women who wished to be ordained in churches where this was not possible, and to arguments against the ordination of women from representatives of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions, the group concluded its report with the statement:

It was clear that the process of listening to and questioning each other among these various groups must continue without prejudice to the actions of those who ordain women and those who do not.¹²⁶

This carefully drafted statement, produced by a group which included Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutherans, and Reformed participants, attempted to find some sort of middle ground and to speak to the ecumenical situation.

¹²³ *ibid.*, 177.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, 129.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, 130.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

About fifteen of the women present at Sheffield were ordained. Other participants, male and female, came from WCC member churches committed to the ordination of women. Some felt that the issue of women's ordination was being sidestepped and that "the bludgeon of unity" was stifling open discussions.¹²⁷ Already at the beginning of the conference many advocates of women's ordination had reacted negatively to the opening speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Robert Runcie, in which he affirmed women's *ministries* without affirming women's *ordination*, arguing that "an over concentration on the issues involved in the ordination of women may reinforce a clericalist view of the church".¹²⁸

When the report from the section of ministry came to the plenary it provoked a lively debate. Some wanted a more explicit statement in favour of the ordination of women while others, particularly some of the Orthodox, felt quite differently.¹²⁹ The result was that: "If the report was too weak for some, it was too strong for others...The difficulty of forging an ecumenical consensus on an

¹²⁷ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 73.

¹²⁸ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 21. For a description of the variety of responses to Runcie's speech see Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 43. Runcie was invited to speak because he was at the time president of the BCC. It was his own decision to focus his remarks on ministry. According to his biographer, Runcie, a skilled speaker, completely misjudged the occasion, resulting in "probably the greatest debacle of Runcie's archiepiscopate...The wavelength was just wrong and a snide Oxbridge note almost had him booed off the platform". Adrian Hastings, *Robert Runcie* (London: Mowbray, 1991), 78.

¹²⁹ As Parvey points out, the debate was essentially settled in most Protestant churches but was still "almost new in the international ecumenical movement, and there [was] considerable resistance by some to even consider the ordination of women to the priesthood as an item for discussion". *The Sheffield Report*, 178. At Sheffield the Protestant voices were the majority.

issue which has divided the church for centuries became acutely apparent here."¹³⁰

A young North American woman spoke from the floor:

Knowing that ordination is not the issue of this consultation...I feel we would default in our responsibility to those not here if we did not express our solidarity with those women who long for ordination and with those now ordained who face problems of assignments and placements.¹³¹

As Parvey recounts: "This intervention received a standing ovation. As a result it was requested that something expressing this sentiment, whether all agreed with it or not, be included in the Sheffield letter and in the section reports."¹³²

It was in fact the report of the section on "Tradition and Traditions - a Chance for Renewal?" which was revised in the light of this request to read as follows:

It is important to stress that though the ordination of women is not *the* issue for this consultation, it is *an* issue of real importance. Many Sheffield participants represented communities that ordain women, and they felt a responsibility to express their solidarity with those women who long for ordination and with those now ordained who face problems of acceptance and placement. This is not a contradiction of the section report on the ministry which embraces the viewpoints of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed participants. That report gives suggestions for how we can speak together in an international ecumenical context. Both statements, one that affirms the ordained ministry for women and the other that attempts to find a middle ground on this sensitive issue, need to be heard in discussions on unity.¹³³

The request from the plenary was also taken up by the small committee which drafted the "Letter from Sheffield" as the message from the consultation to the churches. As explained by Jean Mayland when she presented the letter to the WCC central committee, the Sheffield participants rejected a "typical ecumenical

¹³⁰ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 46.

¹³¹ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 177-178. See also Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 46-47. The speaker, Kathryn Johnson Lieurance, was a Lutheran laywoman.

¹³² *ibid.*, 178.

statement" from the committee and demanded instead a text which "would enable not only the issues, but also the feelings of pain and joy involved, to be briefly and effectively communicated".¹³⁴ The relevant passage stated that:

For many women and men there is a real pain in the frustration of a church life controlled by male leadership, where, for instance, women feel called to the ministry of word and sacraments and ordination is not open to them or where the Church has not responded to creative developments in society.¹³⁵

The letter thus described "an existential situation in some of the WCC member and nonmember churches, a situation with which many at Sheffield wanted to join in sympathy".¹³⁶

The Sheffield statements on the ordination of women lost the cool neutrality which characterised earlier Faith and Order texts on the subject. While recognising that some churches did not ordain women, the Sheffield conference took a pastoral and supportive position to all women struggling in their churches, whether struggling for ordination in churches which did not admit the possibility, or struggling to be placed in positions of ministry, lay or ordained, in churches where that was theoretically possible. If in typical ecumenical discussions on ministry women often appeared to be the problem, at Sheffield for the majority of participants it seemed that the churches were the problem. As a result, the Sheffield conference "refused not to recognise the women within those churches

¹³³ *ibid.*, 139-140.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, 90-91.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, 92.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, 178.

for whom ordination is a call and a part of their Christian hope, whether ecclesiastically recognised or not".¹³⁷

At Sheffield, as at the earlier Klingenthal consultation, the greater participation of women and the focus on *their* experience, led to a shift in perspective, but that this shift was not welcomed by all ecclesiastical authorities was demonstrated at the Dresden meeting of the WCC central committee, just a few weeks after the Sheffield consultation, when the "Letter" provoked a stormy debate. (See Appendix III for the text of "A Letter from Sheffield".)

The Orthodox Churches and the CWMC Study

As noted earlier, the Orthodox churches in the WCC took little interest in the work of the Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women during Madeleine Barot's period of leadership, one of the reasons being their suspicion that the department was advocating the ordination of women. The advent of Brigalia Bam and subsequent changes in the "women's department" did little or nothing to change this situation but, as a result of pressure from the WCC, at the Nairobi assembly in 1975 many Orthodox delegations for the first time included one or more women.

The Orthodox position was explained in the report from a consultation held prior to the assembly and in preparation for it.¹³⁸ A brief section on "Women in the Church" stated that:

¹³⁷ Parvey, "The Continuing Significance of the Community of Women and Men in the

So far as women is concerned, there is certainly a theological problem, or at least traditional practices which restrict her full participation in ecclesial life. While the Orthodox Churches are making fairly intense efforts to make it possible for women to share more fully in ecclesial life, they tend to yield to specific requests rather than to take any steps to re-examine the problem as a whole...Why does the Orthodox Church not ordain women to the ministerial priesthood? Because at present the problem does not present itself in an acute form within the Orthodox Church, the latter does not feel ready to pronounce officially on this question without first giving it mature reflection.¹³⁹

The following year, 1976, in Agapia, Romania, the first-ever consultation of Orthodox women was held.¹⁴⁰ This consultation, on the theme of "Orthodox Women: Their Role and Participation in the Orthodox Church", was held on the initiative of the WCC Unit on Education and Renewal, but Brigalia Bam was the only non-Orthodox participant. Around forty women from Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches and from nearly all the countries of Europe as well as Africa, Asia and America attended the consultation. A number of them were theologically educated and many of them worked for the church, in education (including theological education) and in community and social work. Some of the three hundred nuns at the Agapia monastery and four abbesses of women's convents in Romania were present, together with three bishops, and three male theologians from the faculty of theology in Bucharest. Several of the women had represented their churches at the fifth assembly.

Church" , 38.

¹³⁸ The consultation of Orthodox churches on "The Church's Struggle for Justice and Unity" (Crete, 7-14 March 1975) was organised by the WCC Faith and Order Commission. The report from the consultation formed the basis of the Orthodox contribution to sections II and V at Nairobi. See Constantin G Patelos, ed., *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 116-124.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, 124.

¹⁴⁰ See *Orthodox Women, Their Role and Participation in the Orthodox Church: Report on the consultation of Orthodox Women, Agapia, Roumania, 1976*, (Geneva: WCC, 1977).

Among the presentations at the consultation was a paper by Dr. Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, a French woman, on "The Meaning of the Participation of Women in the Life of the Church". In this she attempted to relate the Orthodox tradition to the changing cultural context and to contemporary women's aspirations, stating that:

These questions concerning the cooperation of men and women in the Church and the better utilisations of women's energies and gift to serve the growth of the Kingdom of God are very much in the minds of many Orthodox women...Though it is latent in the Church's consciousness, the clear recognition that men and women are equal before God is only just beginning to pierce the thick layer of prejudice and cultural conditioning.¹⁴¹

Behr-Sigel acknowledged the importance of cultural differences in changing attitudes towards women, hinting that Orthodox women themselves did not always agree:

Although sometimes prevented, this process seems to be progressing more quickly in the advanced industrialised societies of the West, and more slowly in the Third World and the recently industrialised countries where traditional Orthodox churches are situated. We Orthodox women in Western cultures must not claim to speak on behalf of all Orthodox women nor seek to *impose* changes in customs which would perhaps scandalise the least of our sisters, even if we feel such changes are desirable.¹⁴²

Recognising the tension in the Orthodox tradition between the affirmation of the equal dignity of men and women in Christ and the recognition of sexual distinctiveness as God-given and valuable, Behr-Sigel was prepared to keep an open mind on the possibility of women's ordination to the sacramental priesthood, suggesting that continuity of tradition need not be understood as fixing the Church in the past.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

In a paper on "The Concern for Women in the Orthodox Tradition; New Challenges", Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis, representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the WCC, argued that "the place assigned to women is, all too often, marginal, dictated by men, too narrow and with limited possibilities for action".¹⁴³ He called for partnership between women and men, complementarity in home, society, and the Church, and claimed that "a serious reappraisal of womanhood is needed, showing that she is an equal co-believer, fully sharing the common tasks of building the new Creation". For the Metropolitan "debate on the sophisticated and contentious subject of women's ordination" was of secondary importance, it being more important to consider the place of women in the wider ministry of the Church.¹⁴⁴

The women at the consultation affirmed the need for more education and training for Orthodox women and urged that women be encouraged to take active roles in decision-making in the church.¹⁴⁵ They noted that in the ecumenical movement "the participation of Orthodox women was growing very slowly"¹⁴⁶ and asked that more women be appointed as delegates to ecumenical meetings. They recommended that in increasing the Orthodox staff of the WCC a woman should be appointed. On the subject of women's ordination they stated:

In the light of the increasing debate on the ordination of women to the priesthood in churches of the Western tradition, it would be helpful to women if special studies could be conducted on this subject in order to clarify and interpret the Orthodox position to other churches. This is an immediate need,

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, 30. Cf. his article "From the Margin to the Forefront" *ER* 27 (1975), 366-373, in which he argues that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is based on sociological factors rather than theological objections and that the tradition can change.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 34

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 50.

especially for Orthodox women living in Western societies who are continually being engaged in dialogue on this question.¹⁴⁷

The Agapia meeting was a milestone in the history of Orthodox women's participation in the WCC. It was an inter-Orthodox meeting at which Orthodox women addressed questions concerning their participation in their own churches and in the ecumenical movement. While affirming the Orthodox tradition, the women showed a willingness to be critical of aspects of the tradition and an openness to the possibility of some changes. They affirmed their involvement in the ecumenical movement and the WCC, and the contribution which Orthodox women could make to that movement. It was clear at Agapia that the question of the ordination of women was not an Orthodox priority but also that the Orthodox position on this issue was less fixed and intransigent than it was to become later. The Agapia consultation seemed to mark the beginning of a new stage in Orthodox women's participation in their own churches and in the WCC.

Unfortunately it was not until 1990 that a second inter-Orthodox women's meeting was held and in the interval tensions between Orthodox and Protestants over women's participation in the WCC had increased. The CWMC study contributed significantly to the development of these tensions. Although the Orthodox churches generally had taken little interest in the work of the "women's desk" they were and are deeply committed to, and involved in, the work of Faith and Order. Because the Community Study was perceived as an ecclesiological study and lodged in Faith and Order, through it the Orthodox were brought into

¹⁴⁷

ibid.

contact with questions concerning women in the church because these were now also Faith and Order questions.

There was some Orthodox participation in all aspects of the Community Study: the local study groups, the regional consultations, the "specialised" consultations, and the final conference at Sheffield. Although the majority of the local study groups were related to the various Protestant member churches of the WCC, some Orthodox did participate:

Individuals from a number of Orthodox churches took part in ecumenical groups, and a distinctive Orthodox contribution came from several Orthodox congregations as well as from a separate but parallel study programme organised by the Orthodox Church in America.¹⁴⁸

This Orthodox Church in America study was significant in that it showed the church's willingness to be involved in the study, *all* parishes being asked to participate, while at the same time the WCC study guide was rejected in favour of its own version. The main difference between the two was that whereas the WCC study emphasised the role of experience as a starting point for theological reflection and discussion, the OCA study began each of its ten sections with a statement which was intended "to raise the central problems of each subject and to present what seems to be the accepted Orthodox position on the theme".¹⁴⁹ Thus although the *subject* was the same, the *methodology* of the two studies was very different. Other Orthodox reports made it clear that they shared the belief that the tradition of the Church, which includes the Scriptures, supplies the answers to

¹⁴⁸ Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Women and Men in the Church: A Study of the Community of Women and Men in the Church* (Syosset, N.Y.: Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America, 1980), 5.

questions about women and men: "The basic, essential and final revelation of the truth of God about women and men in the church".¹⁵⁰

Protestant and Roman Catholic participants generally took a more questioning, even critical, attitude to the interpretation and use of Scripture, an attitude that was clearly expressed at the consultation on "The Authority of Scripture in Light of the New Experiences of Women" (Amsterdam 1980). The consultation report stated that:

The Bible has been used to justify and maintain a view that women are, and should be, subordinate to men. Traditional, male-oriented interpretations of scripture have marginalised women, subordinating them to men in order of creation and stereotyping their roles and images in church and society, often relegating women, in the name of biblical authority, to a second class of humanity.¹⁵¹

At this consultation there was no Orthodox participation or contribution, and it is hard to imagine that any Orthodox would have agreed with the report. Moreover, although the report noted that the Orthodox contribution was "an essential input for any future work on this theme",¹⁵² the theme was hardly one which was likely to attract Orthodox participation.

At the consultation "Towards a Theology of Human Wholeness" (Niederaltaich 1980) there were three Orthodox among the eighteen participants, but of the four major presentations on the theme none was given by an Orthodox. The consultation report however concluded with an "Orthodox Affirmation" which emphasised the significance of Mary as the feminine symbol of the church in ecclesial typology, the representative of humanity - male and female - saved in

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵¹ Crawford and Kinnamon, *In God's Image*, 83.

hope.¹⁵³ The important role of Mary in Orthodox theology was emphasised in a number of other Orthodox reports but as we have seen the topic Mary and Mariology was not developed in the CWMC study as a whole.

Overall, the Orthodox contribution to the Community Study was distinctive. Orthodox in local groups and in the Middle East regional consultation (the only regional meeting at which Orthodox participants were a majority) emphasised the importance of patristic tradition, a tradition which they understood as affirming the differences and complementarity of male and female. While most (but not all) other participants emphasised similarity and equality, the Orthodox expressed the understanding that "there are profound and permanent differences between women and men...The basis for this distinction was understood to be principally theological and spiritual".¹⁵⁴

On the question of the ordination of women the Orthodox response, both in the group reports and at the consultation on "Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective" (Klingenthal 1979) was to affirm the equality of all the baptised, and women's call to participate in all the key ministries of the Church, while maintaining that for them the ordination of women was not even a question. As Parvey noted in the Klingenthal report, the question *was* however being raised in bilateral dialogues and other ecumenical relations, with the result that:

In terms of leadership of women, need is being expressed within these [Orthodox] churches to reflect anew theologically and practically on

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 81.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 76-77.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 25.

men/women relationships and their implications regarding equality of persons and the renewal of the Church.¹⁵⁵

At the Sheffield conference in 1981, Orthodox theologian Elisabeth Behr-Sigel gave a plenary presentation on "Orthodox Tradition as a Resource for the Renewal of Women and Men in Community".¹⁵⁶ Behr-Sigel affirmed the Orthodox belief that "tradition is the very life of the church and its continuity is an ever-renewed inspiration" but argued that:

Faithfulness to the tradition does not mean sacralisation of the past, of the history of the church. Tradition is not a kind of immutable monster, a prison in which we would be confined forever. It is a stream of life, driven and impregnated by the energies of the Holy Spirit, a stream which unavoidably carried historical, and therefore transitory, elements and even ashes and cinders.¹⁵⁷

Quoting from Scripture and the Fathers and referring to Orthodox iconography, Behr-Sigel claimed that, although the structures and the language of the church seem patriarchal, through them the church has brought forth a radically new message and offers a "celestial vision" of community, the fulfillment of humanity in God. She suggested that:

The Western temptation is to neglect or to ignore the vision; while the temptation of the Orthodox is to dodge the effort necessary to translate it into the present situation. One finds pleasure in it and it is sometimes an alibi for laziness, a justification for a sclerosed conservatism, pretending not to examine the questions raised by modern peoples both inside and outside of the church.¹⁵⁸

Although Orthodox did participate in the Community Study their participation was somewhat limited and never in proportion to their membership

¹⁵⁵ Parvey, *Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective*, 13.

¹⁵⁶ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 61-68.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 62.

of the WCC. In the group reports and at the various consultations the Orthodox voice was always a minority, and often maintained a minority position different from that of the majority. There were only eight Orthodox delegates at Sheffield, and none of them was from the influential Greek Orthodox Church. Elisabeth Behr-Sigel later commented that "only two women theologians (one American and one French) have followed the totality of the study and were really engaged in it".¹⁵⁹ (She herself was the French theologian, while Deborah Belonick was the American. Both made significant contributions at Sheffield).

There is no single reason for this limited Orthodox participation (limited "both numerically and in terms of competence")¹⁶⁰ but it does seem clear that for most Orthodox churches the Community Study and the issues it raised were not a priority. There may also have been a certain hesitation on the part of some of the Orthodox leadership, at least partly because they feared an attempt to impose on their churches a Western, Protestant agenda, including the ordination of women. On the other hand, the WCC may be criticised for the failure to involve more Orthodox in the planning and oversight of the study, which might well have allayed some Orthodox fears or suspicions by allowing them a more influential role.

No Orthodox was on the advisory group appointed by the central committee to oversee the study; no Orthodox was on the staff of the sub-units jointly responsible for the study; no Orthodox was among the various volunteers and

¹⁵⁸ ibid., 67-68.

¹⁵⁹ Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, *Le Ministère de la Femme Dans l'Eglise* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987), 170. My translation.

consultants who worked at different times on the study. In only one consultation - the Middle East regional consultation - were the Orthodox given a dominant role in planning and participation. Of those Orthodox who did participate, the majority were from Western Europe and North America and those areas in which Orthodoxy is most dominant were under-represented. It is also true that efforts on the part of the WCC to involve Orthodox participants were often unsuccessful. Behr-Sigel thought that the responsibility for the poor Orthodox participation in the study was to be shared:

The Orthodox felt they could not make themselves heard...They underestimated the importance of the problem of women's ordination for their Protestant partners who, in their turn, thought they could treat Orthodox reticence with disdain.¹⁶¹

Orthodox concerns about their participation in the WCC were expressed at a meeting between delegates representing Orthodox churches and a delegation of WCC staff, held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in May 1981. At this consultation, only the second of its type since the formation of the WCC, the Orthodox delegates expressed their desire that, as "one of the two great Christian traditions represented within the WCC", their theological viewpoint and way of thinking be taken more into account and that they be afforded greater representation at all levels of decision-making within the WCC. They also stated that:

At the programmatic level...the WCC does not take sufficiently into account those questions which are priorities for the Orthodox. On the contrary, issues alien to the Orthodox tradition and ethos are adopted on the Council's agenda

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

as priority issues, such as the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood.¹⁶²

These underlying tensions together with the tensions generated by the Community Study culminated in a stormy debate at the central committee meeting held in Dresden in August 1981, just weeks after the Sheffield conference.

Central Committee Meeting, Dresden, 1981

In his opening address the general secretary, Dr Philip Potter, took as his theme the role of the ecumenical movement and the WCC as agents of God's healing power in the world, emphasising the importance of the process of "healing through participation". Reminding the committee that it would receive a full report on the CWMC study, Potter went on to say:

The main thrust of this world-wide study, which has involved hundreds of groups of women and men, is first of all an exposé of our broken relationships through institutionalised male domination not only in societies but in the Church. We shall be asked to look afresh at received attitudes and interpretations of scripture as well as our entrenched practices in the light of God's design for humanity as a community of women and men. But it is important to recognise that it has been mainly the sufferers, women, who have become acutely aware of the diseased structures of distortion and of domination in which both women and men are caught, but of which women have been the main victims. It is also they who are pointing to at least some of the courses we should adopt if we are all to be healed. The question for us and our churches is how much are we all really promoting this process of healing through participation.¹⁶³

¹⁶² "Orthodox Churches Express Desire for More Participation in WCC", *EPS: Ecumenical Press Service*, 4 June 1981: 3-4. A shortened version of this was published in *ER* 33 (1981), 398.

¹⁶³ Philip Potter, "Healing and Salvation", *ER* 33 (1981), 335.

The debate which followed the CWMC presentation demonstrated that the answer to Potter's question was not easily answered.

The plenary presentation on the CWMC study took place in the context of worship "with voices of the broken community articulating findings from all parts of the world".¹⁶⁴ An overview of the study process was given by Mary Tanner, moderator of the CWMC advisory group and a member of the Faith and Order commission. Mercy Oduyoye, another member of the commission, presented the recommendations from Sheffield, while Jean Mayland, a member of the central committee who had been actively involved in the study presented the "Letter from Sheffield to the Churches".¹⁶⁵ Although in general the study was affirmed in the ensuing debate, the reaction to two of the recommendations and to the letter served to illustrate that "Whenever issues of women and men have been addressed at anything more than a superficial level, or in more than purely abstract and theoretical terms, they have given rise to intense, sometimes difficult debate."¹⁶⁶

Controversy first broke out over the two-part recommendation that at the sixth assembly "50% of all membership elected to sub-units and committees of the WCC be women" and that "three of the six Presidents of the WCC

¹⁶⁴ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 52.

¹⁶⁵ For Oduyoye's comments see Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 81-83. For Mayland's introduction to the Letter see *ibid.*, 90-91.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas F. Best, "Beyond Unity-in-Tension. Prague: The Issues and the Experience in Ecumenical Perspective", in *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*, ed. Thomas F. Best. Faith and Order Paper No. 138. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988), 24.

elected at the Assembly be women".¹⁶⁷ As Mary Tanner later explained, "the intention behind the recommendation was to show that if we are to be united as a community of women and men in the Church, then there should be equal participation of women and men in all areas of church life." At Dresden, however, "so incredible did this appear to some that it was thought to be absurd".¹⁶⁸

The recommendation was immediately rejected and the ensuing debate, which raged over several days, centred around the "Love" amendment (proposed by American Janice Love), which stated that:

The Committee appreciates:

1. that women make up over half the constituents of the member churches and half the human family:
2. that the principle of men and women in partnership means equal participation.

Therefore, it affirms that this principle of equal participation between men and women be a goal towards which we move, starting with the composition of the WCC decision-making and consultative bodies during and after the Sixth Assembly.¹⁶⁹

The debate was dominated by Orthodox members of the central committee, all of whom were men and none of whom had been present at Sheffield. They argued that the WCC was not a church, but a fellowship of churches which had no right to legislate for its members, and that if the recommendation were passed the

¹⁶⁷ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Third Meeting, Dresden, German Democratic Republic, 16-26 August, 1981* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981), 25.

¹⁶⁸ Tanner, "The Community Study and Renewal of Human Community", 163. See also Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 177. "This was not Sheffield in a militant mood...Much debated at Sheffield itself, the recommendation finally passed with the argumentation that full dignity of partnership means fifty-fifty. This was seen as a principle of partnership...coming from Sheffield, a community of women and men, it was felt that nothing less than fifty-fifty could be recommended as a goal. Women and men in the church are not servants, one of the other, but share together in authority and participation the church's servant role". See also Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 24. "The request that the Council should work towards a fifty percent representation of women...was treated as though it was extravagant and extreme".

World Council would be exceeding its authority. They also made it clear that "for them the problem of women's participation could not be solved in terms of equal rights, which was a legalistic concept. A theological and ecclesiological problem was involved, requiring further detailed study."¹⁷⁰

Commenting on the long and heated debate, Parvey analysed the difference between what was intended at Sheffield and what was understood - by some - at Dresden. The original recommendation was not an attempt to set quotas - the legal mind at work - but to be just and fair, the goal of the ethical/moral spirit.

However:

"When this recommendation was presented before the Dresden Central Committee, it became completely distorted. A moral/ethical appeal exploded into a legal and theological battle over the term "equality". What was learned in that exchange is that there is no theological tradition for the word "equality", and certainly no consensus about its meaning and use."¹⁷¹

The amendment actually implied recognition of a principle, rather than legal obligation, but this principle was itself "explosive", as a WCC staff member observed:

In Dresden our Orthodox brothers feared, rightly, that a World Council strongly influenced by women would also in the end ask the Orthodox churches the questions which are not supposed to be asked "for the sake of unity"; the ordination of women, for instance.¹⁷²

For the Orthodox, however, more was at stake than a difference about the participation of women, or the meaning of "equality".

The issue touched sensitive nerves in the Orthodox world which already had major questions about the nature of their participation in the World Council in

¹⁶⁹ *Central Committee, Minutes, Dresden, 1981*, 29.

¹⁷⁰ Reinhold Traitler, "An Oikoumene of Women?", *ER 44* (1988), 180.

¹⁷¹ Parvey, "The Continuing Significance", 38

¹⁷² Traitler, "An Oikoumene of Women?", 180.

the eighties...There were underlying questions of authority, biblical understanding, and doctrine.¹⁷³

When the amendment was finally put to the vote the Orthodox members of the central committee abstained. The amendment was carried.

The intensity of feeling over the recommendation on equal representation extended to the discussion of the "Letter from Sheffield". There were several points in the letter which some Orthodox were unhappy about, but opposition focused on the statement that:

We gained perspectives...that for many women and men there is real pain in the frustration of a church life controlled by male leadership, where, for instance, women feel called to the ministry of word and sacraments and ordination is not open to them.¹⁷⁴

In introducing the letter, Jean Mayland explained that this reference was designed:

To reflect the problem actually expressed by some churches without attempting to give a normative theological judgement or a comprehensive view of the situation in all churches, or requiring any church to accept a description of its own situation made from outside that context.¹⁷⁵

It was not however understood in this way by the Orthodox. The view expressed by Bishop Antonie (of Romania) was typical. He said that:

The Orthodox supported the equality of men and women and were against any social and human oppression. They respected the Protestant practice of ordaining women, but could not accept the Sheffield method of dealing with the issue. It was a doctrinal question and should be the subject of dialogue and of research into Tradition, Scripture and church history; it was not a matter for declarations such as the Sheffield Letter. This Letter was an attempt to win a battle without dialogue and without presenting the clear opposition to the ordination of women by the Orthodox, based on tradition which could only be changed by a long process undertaken by the whole Church.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 82.

¹⁷⁴ *Central Committee, Minutes, Dresden, 1981*, 30.

¹⁷⁵ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 91.

¹⁷⁶ *Central Committee, Minutes, Dresden, 1981*, 27.

Realising that the letter would provoke negative reactions from Orthodox member churches the central committee set up a drafting group to consider the whole matter. This group however decided "that a letter from consultation had its own integrity and could not be altered".¹⁷⁷ In the end the central committee agreed to "take note of the Letter" (rather than to "receive" it) and to "send the full report of the Sheffield consultation, including the Letter, to the member churches of the WCC" (rather than to "commend the Letter for serious and prayerful study in the churches"), and to "authorise the General Secretary to write an accompanying letter which clearly presents the controversies raised within the Central Committee meeting at Dresden, especially the objections presented by Orthodox members."¹⁷⁸

The ferment of debate provoked by the Sheffield recommendations at the Dresden meeting was unusual, although not unique. To some extent it reflected the different composition and nature of the two meetings. The participants at Sheffield included about two-thirds women and one-third men, many of whom had been involved already in the CWMC study process. Among them, Orthodox participants were a small minority. At Dresden male participants outnumbered women by about nine to one and were generally of higher ecclesiastical "rank", or carried greater authority, than did the majority of Sheffield participants. None of the Orthodox members of the central committee had been present at Sheffield and few had participated in any stage of the CWMC study. As Parvey noted, "Given

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* This letter was in fact never sent. In 1994 Philip Potter told Dr Tom Best that he and the officers had agreed not to send it but to apply a policy of "benign neglect", having agreed to the letter at the time "in order to placate some intransigent forces in Dresden and to calm the discussion". Tom Best to Janet Crawford, 3 August, 1994, TLS, personal files

the different people participating in these two gatherings, what seemed perfectly normal at Sheffield sounded radical at Dresden. It occasioned, as reported in the press, a clash of contexts, a meeting of "two ecclesial realities".¹⁷⁹

In the heated response to two recommendations, many other thoughtful recommendations were ignored and important insights from the Community Study were not discussed, with the result that:

The very tentative questions raised about the ordination of women in some parts of the church across the world came to dominate the debate, whilst the much larger question about the subordination of women in almost all parts of the world was never seriously heard.¹⁸⁰

To some, the debate was neither surprising nor discouraging. As veterans of the ecumenical movement they saw that "it was healthy for the Council to confront head-on issues which had been present in the Council since its inception but never openly debated at length in its policy-making group".¹⁸¹ But for others, whether present at Dresden or not, the debate left scars and unhappy memories of a seeming polarisation over questions concerning the participation of women in the churches and in the WCC itself, a polarisation which became focused on the

¹⁷⁹ of the author. In view of the heated debate at Dresden it is surprising that no questions were ever asked about this letter at the next meeting of the central committee. Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 176. See also her comment that "the Dresden debate on equality of participation was part of a larger issue. The Orthodox are fearful that their engagement in the ecumenical movement puts too much pressure on them to change in what gets termed "a Protestant direction" and that there is not enough movement the other way. They are anxious to increase their participation and their influence in the WCC. Because they are often in a minority situation, they sometimes act like minorities, fighting to defend themselves." Friedrich König, "Feature Interview: Connie Parvey: What's Next For the Community of Women and Men in the Church?", *Lutheran World Information*, 42/81, 14.

¹⁸⁰ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 24. Webb also comments that, "Once again, women were accused of rocking the ecumenical boat by daring to question both the direction in which it was heading and the crew which, literally speaking, were *manning* it!"

¹⁸¹ Thompson, *A Chance to Change*, 84.

ordination of women.¹⁸² Pain and protest were expressed on both sides of this debate.

The questions posed by participants at Sheffield in 1981 echoed those posed by women at Lausanne in 1927 and Amsterdam in 1948 concerning the rightful place of women in the "councils of the church", although at no prior time in the history of the WCC had the discussion of these issues resulted in such a confrontation between those committed to "equality" and those committed to "tradition". But, as pointed out at Dresden by Paul Crow, a member of both the central committee and the Faith and Order commission, "tradition" was not the possession of one party in the debate:

It was important to realise that all churches in the WCC claimed the Tradition. In his own church it was a dynamic Tradition and faithfulness to it led to the dogmatic affirmation of equal participation of women and men in the life of the Church. But it must be recognized that the churches, while standing under the same Tradition, have different interpretations of it and therefore there are theological differences between them. But that was why the WCC existed and it was here that they brought their differences, but in loyalty to that one Tradition.¹⁸³

"Different interpretations" of Christian tradition were to continue to cause controversy over questions surrounding women's participation in the WCC, but, as

¹⁸² In fact, as noted by Parvey, the controversy originated in the recommendation on "women's equal participation in the ministries of decision-making within the Council's structures". See Constance F Parvey, "Stir in the Ecumenical Movement: The Ordination of Women", in Brita Stendahl, *The Force of Tradition: A Case Study of Women Priests in Sweden, with an Appendix by Constance F Parvey* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 169. Cf Mary Tanner, "Unity and Renewal: The Church and the Human Community", *ER* 36 (1984), 256: "The discussion of shared power and leadership could not escape questions about the church's set apart ministry, which is itself a sign and upholder of unity. And so the question was raised afresh, that most painful and divisive of questions, the ordination of women to the priesthood".

¹⁸³ *Central Committee, Minutes, Dresden, 1981*, 29. Crow was a member of the Disciples of Christ.

Philip Potter told members of the central committee in 1982, the CWMC study had succeeded in uncovering "how timid and afraid" the member churches of the WCC were when it came to facing "the issue of the full participation of women in the real life of the church and of society".¹⁸⁴

Faith and Order, Lima, 1982

The Faith and Order commission met in Lima, Peru, in January 1982. This meeting, the first in Latin America, is considered a landmark in ecumenical history because at it the commission gave final form to the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* text (*BEM*),¹⁸⁵ which since then has attracted "an attention unprecedented in the history of the modern ecumenical movement".¹⁸⁶ It was also the meeting at which the final official reporting on the CWMC study took place and at which decisions about the follow-up to the study were made.¹⁸⁷

A significant number of the commission members did not attend this historic meeting and of the total of 94 participants only 16 (17%) were women. Five of the women and three of the men had been present at Sheffield. Also present was

¹⁸⁴ Philip A Potter, "A Call to Costly Ecumenism", *ER* 34 (1982), 340. This is the text of his address to the central committee, in July 1982.

¹⁸⁵ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper No. 111. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

¹⁸⁶ Max Thurian, "*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (the Lima text)", in *DEM*, 80.

¹⁸⁷ Specific responsibility "for the follow-up of the concerns of the study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church and the reflections of the study in the Sixth Assembly" had been given to Faith and Order by the central committee in 1980. *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Second Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland 14-22 August, 1980* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981), 42.

Constance Parvey, whose contract had been extended in order that she could attend. Tributes were paid to Parvey as she concluded her work with Faith and Order, the director, Dr William Lazareth, stating that "Through her contagious enthusiasm and seriousness of purpose, she managed to involve directly tens of thousands of Christians throughout the world in an ecumenical study programme unequalled in its grass-roots participation".¹⁸⁸ A special minute of appreciation included the affirmation that:

She more than any single person is responsible for the fact that the community of women and men in the church is now a deeply grounded inescapable aspect in virtually every part of our world. She helped us understand that the issue is not simply the liberation of women, but the relationship, the community, of women and men in church and society.¹⁸⁹

A plenary presentation on the CWMC study was both a report on the four years of the programme and a review of the 1981 Sheffield consultation.

Addresses were given by Parvey, director of the study, Dr Mary Tanner, moderator of the advisory group, Dr Letty Russell, and Professor Nicholas Lossky.

In Parvey's "impression" of the Community Study she argued that, although the cross-cultural approach showed no universal pattern, in most places "women's identity is subordinated in order to serve, support and foster male identity and priorities".¹⁹⁰ The structures of the Church and passages of Scripture had been used to reinforce this subordinate identity for women. Tanner claimed that

¹⁸⁸ Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order, Lima, 1982* Vol. 1. *Minutes and Addresses*. Faith and Order Paper No. 112. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 21.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 139.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 126.

Scripture had emerged as the most important issue of the Community Study and that:

Perhaps the most challenging question posed to Faith and Order...is the issue of right scriptural interpretation...The task of interpretation belongs to the whole people of God and not to professional (male) experts alone...[T]his understanding will lead to a plurality of interpretations and will raise the issue of the norm by which interpretations are judged.¹⁹¹

Russell argued that in the Community Study the traditional hierarchical "paradigm of domination" was challenged by an inclusive "paradigm of doxology" in which unity of the Church is sought "in trying to reach out to the outsiders in order to discover a more inclusive consensus".¹⁹² Lossky, a member of the Orthodox Church of France, presented a reflection on ministry from an Orthodox perspective in which he contended that while women can and do fulfill many ministries in the Church they cannot be ordained to the presidency of the eucharistic community "for reasons that have to do with the maleness of Christ and the absence of female presidents in the tradition".¹⁹³ Time was needed for serious theological reflection and study.

In the plenary discussion following those presentations "broad and deep appreciation" for the Community Study was expressed with affirmations that, in spite of fears that it would be a "women's study", it had developed as a genuine "community study", one which provided "new models for reconciliation and the renewal of human community".¹⁹⁴ The minutes recorded that:

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, 127.

¹⁹² *ibid.*

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 128.

In light of the opposite impression some received at the 1981 Central Committee meeting in Dresden, the Orthodox members of the Commission were especially concerned to give assurance that the Community Study was greatly appreciated by the Orthodox churches.¹⁹⁵

Discussion centred around two major themes: the ordination of women and the future of the Community Study and the issues it had raised. The ordination of women had not been a major issue in the Community Study itself, though it had emerged with some force at Sheffield, but it was an issue in which Faith and Order had traditionally taken some interest through its work on ministry. The discussion at Lima was less heated than at Dresden and revealed a diversity of Orthodox approaches to the question. Other Orthodox agreed with Lossky that they still needed "serious theological reflection...on this issue".¹⁹⁶ Clearly the issue was not yet resolved.

The CWMC study had technically come to an end as a separate programme and while from the discussion at Lima it was clear that the commission thought it "critically important that insights arising from the Community Study be presented in Faith and Order and that the study of its central issues be continued", the question was how to do this within the limitations of staff and financing.¹⁹⁷ Two possibilities were considered: continuation of the study of certain specific issues, or infusion of "the whole agenda of the Commission of Faith and Order with the perspective of the Community Study".¹⁹⁸ The decision was made for "infusion" of the agenda which consisted of three studies: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry;

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 129.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

Towards a Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today; The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community. Relevant aspects of each of these studies will be discussed briefly.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

At Lima it was unanimously agreed that:

The Commission considers the revised text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry to have been brought to such a stage of maturity that it is now ready for transmission to the churches in accordance with the mandate given at the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 1975 and re-affirmed by the Central Committee, Dresden, 1981.¹⁹⁹

The *BEM* text was the culmination of over fifty years of work by Faith and Order the last stage of which, following the fifth assembly, had coincided with the CWMC study. How far had the "insights" and "perspective" of the Community Study already informed the convergence text on the "classical" ecumenical theological issues of baptism, eucharist and ministry? How much had women participated in and contributed to this major work of Faith and Order?

According to Roman Catholic theologian Dr Francine Cardman, the *BEM* text which the commission approved at the same meeting at which it heard the final report on the Community Study reflected "a curious lack of engagement" with that study.²⁰⁰ In a paper contributed to a BEM forum held in Chicago in October 1983, she commented that:

The full impact of the hope for new community has yet to make itself felt on the classical agenda of Faith and Order. One of the most significant things to

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 83.

²⁰⁰ Francine Cardman, "BEM and the Community of Women and Men", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 21 (Winter 1984), 86.

notice about both BEM and the beginnings of the reception process is the remarkable lack of attention to either the Community study or women's concerns.²⁰¹

In an article written about a year later, Faith and Order member Mary Tanner, while expressing general agreement with Cardman, argued that:

It was only at Lima that the challenges of the Community Study to the classical agenda began to be articulated clearly for the first time. Only at Lima did the justifiable cries of brokenness give way to recognizably ecclesiological challenges...The different methodologies, the different time scales, made it hard for the full impact of the challenges of the Community Study to baptism, eucharist, and ministry to be felt, let alone to be reflected in a text which had been maturing for so many years.²⁰²

The *BEM* text was not entirely uninfluenced by the Community Study. Both Cardman and Tanner noted "positive signs" in the text, hints which might be developed in the future. In both the baptism and eucharist sections of the text there are "theological insights about unity, equality and the imaging of Christ in us all"²⁰³ which at least implicitly make connections to the Community Study. There is also, as they both note, a careful use of inclusive language in references to people, so that "As women read the Lima text and respond to it the language

²⁰¹ ibid., 85. Commenting on the fact that *BEM* was sent to the churches with a request for their official response while the final report from the "wonderful and inspiring process" of the CWMC study was not sent to the churches at all, Catherina Halkes saw "a concrete sign of what it means to be women in the church. One so-called official report, high church, clerico-theological; the other, women playing theology but not being accepted seriously or patriarchally played down". See Thomas Wieser, ed, *Wither Ecumenism? A Dialogue in the Transit Lounge of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 45.

²⁰² Mary Tanner, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry and the Community of Women and Men Study", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 23 (1984), 245.

²⁰³ ibid., 248. For example, baptism is incorporation into the new community, liberation into a new humanity "in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal.3:27-28; I Cor. 12:18)", "a sign and seal of our common discipleship...a basic bond of unity". *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 2,3. Cardman argues that if the sign value of both the life of the baptised community in the world, and of life within the baptised community were more fully developed "the connections to the community of women and men would become clearer". Cardman, "BEM", 87.

signals to them that they are partners in the search for the visible unity of the Church".²⁰⁴ At the same time, however, the text does not take seriously the challenge of the Community Study to the use of male language about God:

This has profound consequences for what we believe about the imagery of God in women and men and for some it provides a very definite challenge to the baptismal formula. And this was never recognised in the Lima text.²⁰⁵

Neither does the eucharist section take up from the Community Study the crucial question of the representation of Christ in the eucharistic president. "Who may represent Christ and how this representation is made possible are not addressed directly in the text", a lack which Cardman sees as "regrettable" while at the same time it may be leaving matters open "for future determination".²⁰⁶

It is in the section on ministry that the lack of connection between *BEM* and the Community Study becomes most obvious. Although *BEM* intends to ground the ordained ministry in the ministry of the whole church, after the first six paragraphs the text focuses on the ordained ministry. Within the forty-eight remaining paragraphs of the text the treatment of the ordination of women is notable for its brevity. The whole controversial issue is dealt with in two carefully formulated and balanced paragraphs:

Where Christ is present, human barriers are being broken. The Church is called to convey to the world the image of a new humanity. There is in Christ no male or female (Gal.3:28). Both women and men must discover together their contributions to the service of Christ in the Church. The Church must discover the ministry which can be provided by women as well as that which can be provided by men. A deeper understanding of the comprehensiveness of

²⁰⁴ Tanner, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry", 246. See also Cardman, "BEM", 85 (though she adds that "The language of the ministry section is so studiously genderless in regard to the person of the minister that I take this to be not so much an exercise in inclusive language as an exercise in avoidance").

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, 249.

²⁰⁶ Cardman, "BEM", 88.

ministry which reflects the interdependence of men and women needs to be more widely manifested in the life of the Church.

Though they agree on this need, the churches draw different conclusions as to the admission of women to the ordained ministry. An increasing number of churches have decided that there is no biblical or theological reason against ordaining women, and many of them have subsequently proceeded to do so. Yet many churches hold that the tradition of the Church in this regard must not be changed.²⁰⁷

An equally balanced section in the commentary alongside the text describes the position of those churches that do, and those that do not, ordain women, concluding with the statement that "The discussion of these practical and theological questions within the various churches and Christian traditions should be complemented by joint study and reflection within the ecumenical fellowship of all churches."²⁰⁸

As Tanner comments,

It is at this point that many women must feel the sudden inconsistency with all that has gone before and an obvious point where the challenge of the Community Study has not even been recognised, let alone met. At one moment we are 'included in' and then relegated to a commentary. From this point on the text proceeds to talk of the all male ordained ministry of tradition....For many this will appear not only a way of evading the challenge of the Community Study, but also of not recognising the challenge which comes from within the sections on baptism and eucharist.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 23-24. Marga Bührig comments that this quotation "belong[s] to the category of well-intentioned words that serve no purpose" and argues that: "This passage reads as though everything can start again from the beginning, as though ministries for men as well as for women can be created anew, as though not all important church offices are *de facto* purely for men, as though there is no inequality between men and women in the structures of all churches, including those in which women can be ordained". Bührig, *Women Invisible*, 109.

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 25.

²⁰⁹ Tanner, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry", 247.

The cautious statement of the *BEM* text in fact marks an evident retreat from the earlier and bolder Accra text of 1974.²¹⁰ As Cardman documents, in comparison with earlier WCC studies and statements on ministry including the Accra text, *BEM* "considerably reduced its estimate of the significance of the question for the recognition and reconciliation of ministries"²¹¹ although the whole question was actually gaining *more* significance within the ecumenical movement as the Community Study itself demonstrated, not least in the developments at the Sheffield consultation.²¹² In the ministry section more than anywhere else *BEM* in both the text and the commentary seems to be either out of touch with the Community Study or, more likely, unwilling to grapple seriously with the issues it raised about the ordination of women.

At Lima the general lack of connection between *BEM* and the Community Study was addressed to some extent by a series of recommendations from a CWMC working group. These recommendations related mainly to a number of publications which were planned to supplement *BEM* itself. There was also a

²¹⁰ Compare this extract from the Accra text with the quotation from *BEM* above.
 "Both men and women need to discover the full meaning of their specific contribution to the ministry of Christ. The Church is entitled to the style of ministry which can be provided by women as well as that which can be provided by men. Indeed, understanding of our mutual interdependence needs to be more widely reflected in all branches of ministry...Since those who advocate the ordination of women do so out of their understanding of the meaning of the Gospel and ordination and since the experience of the churches in which women are ordained has on the whole been positive and none has found reason to reconsider its decision, the question must be asked as to whether it is not time for all the churches to confront this matter forthrightly." *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry*, 45.

²¹¹ Cardman, "BEM", 89.

²¹² According to Faith and Order staff member Michael Kinnamon, who was present at the meetings at Sheffield, Dresden, and Lima, "It is hard to think of an issue that is currently more divisive in ecumenical discussions". See Michael Kinnamon, *Why It Matters: A Popular Introduction to the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry Text*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985), 35.

recommendation that the preface to *BEM* contain a note "on the necessity of including women at all levels of reflection on these texts" and that "the response of women to the text is taken account of somewhere in the process of reception".²¹³ In the event few of these recommendations were implemented. In a volume of theological essays, *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, published in 1983, there is no essay which treats the Community Study and its implications for *BEM*.²¹⁴ Of the two essays on ministry, one simply mentions that *BEM* did not "tackle" the question of women's ordination while the other did not mention it at all. (It is perhaps not surprising that none of the fourteen essays was written by a woman). The volume of liturgical texts shows no particular sensitivity to inclusive language and the editorial commentaries make no mention of this issue.²¹⁵ The preface to *BEM* makes no specific mention of the need to involve women in reflection on the document, merely stating that:

As concrete evidence of their ecumenical commitment, the churches are being asked to enable the widest possible involvement of the whole people of God at all levels of church life in the spiritual process of receiving this text.²¹⁶

²¹³ Kinnamon, *Towards Visible Unity*, Vol. I, 86. For the complete recommendations see *ibid.*, 86-87. The Preface had a different authority from the tripartite text and was not voted on. It was sent over the signatures of the Moderator and the Director and did not need or carry "the weight of acceptance by the Commission". *ibid.*, 83.

²¹⁴ See Max Thurian, ed., *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper No. 116. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983).

²¹⁵ See Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright, eds., *Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration*. Faith and Order Paper No. 117. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983).

²¹⁶ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, x.

Official responses were however to be "at the highest appropriate level of authority". The question of women's participation in the responses to *BEM* will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Apostolic Faith Study

While the *BEM* study reached its culmination at Lima after years of work by Faith and Order, the study on the theme "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today" was after some years of preparatory work officially launched at the Lima meeting.²¹⁷ Clearly this new study offered an opportunity for the insights and perspective of the Community Study to "infuse" the work of Faith and Order in a way which had not been possible with the *BEM* study. The beginning did not seem very hopeful. At the first plenary discussion on the Apostolic Faith Study "the participation of women in the discussion of this topic was very weak" and the minutes noted "that should be a forewarning about the study".²¹⁸

At a second plenary the commission received a draft outline which stressed the importance of the Nicene Creed as a basis for the study programme. A recommendation proposing that the issues of the Community Study "should be

²¹⁷ See Anton Houtepen, "Common Confession", in *DEM*, 195-197, for a brief history of this study.

²¹⁸ Kinnamon, *Towards Visible Unity*, Vol. 1, 95.

integrated into the interpretation and explication of the Nicene Creed" was recorded as causing "some concern" as it was argued that "only some of those issues would be relevant".²¹⁹ Furthermore, it was said to be "unfortunate" that a memorandum from the working group on the Community of Women and Men in the Church "did not get a hearing".²²⁰ This was rectified to some extent the next day when vice-moderator John Deschner moved that the memorandum entitled "Community of Women and Men in the Church and Apostolic Faith" be submitted to the steering group for the new study. This memorandum stated that:

The study on apostolic faith should consider the picture of a renewed community of women and men which has been articulated by the Community of Women and Men in the Church study as a contribution to understanding the context in which their investigations need to be carried out.²²¹

Affirming that "the Community Study has direct implications for every item of the Nicene Creed", the memorandum asked that particular attention be paid to a number of issues, including the trinitarian language of the Creed, the relation between the man Jesus and the risen Christ and the implications of a male saviour for women, the place and role of Mary in the life of the community today, and the creation of woman and man as set forth in the two Genesis accounts and interpreted in the preaching and teaching of the Church.²²² It asked "Are the language, thought and imagery of the Nicene Creed sufficiently inclusive to keep

²¹⁹ *ibid.*, 99.

²²⁰ *ibid.*

²²¹ Kinnamon, *Towards Visible Unity*, Vol. 2, 47.

²²² *ibid.*, 47-50.

together the community of women and men, a community whose members are created and redeemed in the image of God?"²²³

It was clear from this memorandum that members of the working group on the Community of Women and Men in the Church thought that the theological issues which the CWMC study had identified as relevant to women's participation (or lack of participation) in the Church should be included in and addressed by the Apostolic Faith Study. They recommended that women "play a full part in the study process and make their contribution".²²⁴ The development of the study and its "infusion" by the CWMC study will be discussed in the next chapter.

Unity and Renewal

A second new project on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" was accepted at Lima as one of the major Faith and Order studies for the coming period. Intended as a continuation of earlier studies, including the extensive effort titled "Unity of the Church-Unity of Humankind", the aim of the study as presented at Lima by vice-moderator Deschner was "quite simply to ask us to pay more attention to the broader location of our church unity work: not simply to our location among divided churches, but to the location of our churches in a divided world".²²⁵

In a paper given as an introduction to the theme Deschner pointed to two major developments in the Church unity debate during the 1970s. On the one

²²³ *ibid.*, 47.

²²⁴ Kinnamon, *Towards Visible Unity*, Vol. 1, 100.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, 112.

hand, Faith and Order had moved from seeing unity "basically as inter-Protestant...to a vision of conciliar fellowship which takes the relations with Rome and Orthodoxy with deep seriousness". On the other hand, Deschner saw "the growing urgency of two liberation motifs", namely "the Church of the poor" and of "the community of women and men", both calling for "a preferential option" for the victims of oppression, this option "to be expressed in commitment not simply to compassion but to basic structured change". Deschner described three claims made about that option: without that option, no Church unity; that option must inevitably generate tension and even conflict within the churches; Church unity "profoundly understood" must embrace such tension and make it fruitful.²²⁶

There was considerable debate over the title, aim, methodology and possible content of the study and although it was approved as a major Faith and Order study, it was left to a steering committee (which was not appointed until 1983) to "initiate reflection on the theme and methodology of the study in order to prepare a full prospectus to be submitted to the Commission at the earliest possible opportunity".²²⁷ It was clear from the discussions however that many commissioners saw this new study as the place for a follow-up of the Community Study. The relationship between the two was specifically addressed by Mary Tanner in her paper on "The Community Study and the Unity of the Church and

²²⁶ John Deschner, "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community", *Towards Visible Unity*, Vol.2, ed. Kinnamon, 195.

²²⁷ *ibid.*, 124.

the Renewal of Human Community".²²⁸ In this she stressed the implications of the Community Study "for a renewed vision of the unity of the Church", arguing that:

The unity of the Church has to do profoundly with the quality of our lives together as Christians. Unity must involve breaking down the barriers erected by sexism, classism and racism, realities which are within the Church as well as in the torn and divided world.²²⁹

In Tanner's view the Community Study offered many clues towards a more inclusive ecclesial community and suggested many changes "which must be made in church life if sexism is to be broken".²³⁰ Such a renewed community in the church would become "a sign of and an agent for the renewal of human community".²³¹

The Lima meeting in January 1982 was the last meeting of the Faith and Order commission prior to the sixth assembly of the WCC in August 1983. After Lima little could be done to advance the work of Faith and Order as all the financial and staff resources of the WCC were directed to preparing for the assembly. After the assembly a new commission was appointed (although with considerable continuity of membership) and there were significant changes in the staff. The Lima meeting thus marked the end of an era, an era which culminated in the publication of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. The Lima meeting also marked the official conclusion of the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study. The commission began to plan for two new studies which some, at

²²⁸ See n. 31 above. This paper was first given to a consultation held in Geneva in June 1981, preparatory to the Lima meeting.

²²⁹ *ibid.*, 158.

²³⁰ *ibid.*

least, hoped would continue and develop issues raised by the CWMC study. The results would be seen in the post-Vancouver period.

The Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society, 1975-1983

During the period between the fifth and sixth assemblies the purpose of the Sub-unit was clearly defined as being "to encourage *the full participation of women* in the total life of the WCC and of the member churches".²³² The mandate of the Sub-unit stated that in pursuit of this purpose:

It fulfills an *advocacy* role, and in *collaboration* with other Units and Sub-units, WCC member churches and international ecumenical organisations, it *promotes* the concerns of women in church and society, and enables women to make their special contributions. It serves as a resource for and link among traditional and emerging groups to foster the full participation of women, toward the goal of the unity of the church and the unity of humankind.²³³

In fulfillment of this mandate the Sub-unit working group, made up of ten women and two men, decided to concentrate its work in the four interrelated areas of advocacy, enablement, theology, and communication, establishing the following priorities:

- 1) to *advocate* for a more just participation of women within WCC and the member churches and draw attention to their concerns;
- 2) to *enable* women, who often are not adequately prepared emotionally, educationally or politically, to participate fully;
- 3) to *examine the theological assumptions* which underlie the attitudes of churches and individuals and limit the participation of women;
- 4) to *communicate* with churches, women's groups, individuals, and within the WCC, the concerns of women, thus strengthening the advocacy role.²³⁴

²³¹ *ibid.*, 165.

²³² *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 203. My emphasis.

²³³ *ibid.*, 203-204. Original emphasis.

²³⁴ *ibid.*, 204. Original emphasis. See also WCW 14 (April 1983), 4, where there is a slightly different wording. This also contains a fuller report of the Sub-unit's work during this period than does the official report, *Nairobi to Vancouver*.

Within this overall framework priority was given to the CWMC study programme, carried out in collaboration with Faith and Order, and to a programme on women and rural development.²³⁵

Before leaving the Sub-unit in 1980 Brigalia Bam began implementing work in the four main areas, particularly through a number of consultations. The first of these was the consultation on "Orthodox Women: Their Role and Participation in the Orthodox Church", held at Agapia, Roumania, in September 1976. The experience of the Agapia consultation helped to shape a consultation on "Women in Church and Society" held in Cairo, Egypt, in March, 1978, under the joint sponsorship of the Sub-unit and the Middle East Council of Churches. Thirty-five women - Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant - from six countries attended this consultation hosted by the Coptic Orthodox Church. Prominent on their agenda was the discussion of the role of women in the church from the perspectives of the Bible, history, and canon law.²³⁶

²³⁵ The programme on Women and Rural Development, specifically directed to development for and by women in rural areas, was the result of a growing concern about the needs of rural women, especially in developing countries. These needs were highlighted at the Berlin consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s" and during IWY in 1975. A number of recommendations at Nairobi related to these concerns and the review committee recommended to the central committee meeting in 1976 that "the proposed programme on secondment be sought as a matter of urgency". (*Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1976*, 105). In 1978 Priscilla Padolina, a rural sociologist from the Philippines, joined the Sub-unit as secretary for this programme which was carried out largely through regional workshops. (See *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 206, for a report on the programme and Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, 97-100, for a fuller account).

²³⁶ No report of this meeting was published. It is listed with a brief description in van der Bent, *Six Hundred Ecumenical Consultations 1948-1982*, 122, and mentioned briefly in WCW 14 (April 1983), 10.

In January 1977 the Sub-unit convened a meeting of church women executives at Glion in Switzerland. Eighty participants - Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestant - from forty different countries and from all continents attended. The majority carried leadership responsibility for work with women either in their own denominations or in councils of churches. Sylvia Talbot of Guyana, who had been present at both Berlin and Nairobi, gave the opening address in which she articulated the challenges facing these women:

How do we learn to identify and respond to the issues of the moment? How do we encourage women in a ministry which is almost sure to be disruptive? How do we help women to speak clearly, fully, and radically to the whole Christian community, as we were challenged to do in Berlin by Philip Potter? ...How do we move women *from the periphery of the church's life to its centre*?²³⁷

Although they represented churches which had differing positions on women's ordination, participants discussed the variety of ministries which women were beginning to realise in different situations, and noted the lack of involvement of women in discussions on women's ordination, together with the lack of constructive debate and new ideas.²³⁸

Also in 1977 the Sub-unit sponsored the meeting of a working group of leading European church women to share experiences and their hopes and ideas for promoting partnership and equality between men and women in church and society. The participants reported that:

We women have discovered that ecumenical discussion and exchange release us from narrow and restrictive ideas and thought patterns and that we are neither willing nor able to go back on them. However, we have also realised

²³⁷ See *Half the World's People - A Report of the Consultation of Church Women Executives* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1978), 4-5. My emphasis.

²³⁸ *ibid.*, 15.

how our process towards agreement is hindered by the male-clerical structures of our churches.²³⁹

This group decided that the time had come to call Christian women of Europe together to share experiences and to work out a common course of action. As a result the Sub-unit sponsored a consultation of European Christian women which took place in Brussels early in 1978.²⁴⁰ Seventy women met for what was designed to be a forum for discussion grounded in Bible study. Of the seventy, only two were Orthodox but there were eleven Roman Catholics, among whom was Dr Catharina Halkes who gave a paper on "Feminist Theology as a Model of Liberation Theology". Another paper, titled "New Trends in Feminist Theology", was given by German theologian Dr Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel. These two papers by leading European feminist theologians showed clearly that interest in feminist theology was growing, as did the fact that two of the six working groups explored the significance of theology expressed by women. For these women, as for many others in the 1970s, feminist theology was based on:

The struggle of women to achieve and express their own experiences of religion and faith...women's recovery of confidence in their own bodies, the experience of being close to nature, to the earth and cosmos...consciousness of women's new power...opposing limitations which religion has imposed on women.²⁴¹

The importance of women doing theology together, conscious of their unique experiences and perspectives, was highlighted at a consultation for women theology students sponsored by the Sub-unit and held in Cartigny, Switzerland, in

²³⁹ There is no published report of this meeting. See *WCW 14* (April 1983), 5, for a brief reference.

²⁴⁰ See *Consultation of European Christian Women, Brussels 29 January - 4 February 1978* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1978).

July 1978. This was a historic occasion as fifty-three women students of theology from twenty-five countries gathered together in "a living expression of the fact that throughout the world women are studying theology in greater numbers than ever before".²⁴² They recognised that the theology which they were studying had been formulated by men and that there was a great need for a theology based on the experience of women "a theology by women, addressed to all people ... a theology from women who are critically aware of what it means to be a woman in the world today."²⁴³

Through these consultations and through the Community Study the Sub-unit took up biblical and theological issues identified at Berlin and Nairobi and began to develop the new insights of a feminist theology - a theology which tried "to be faithful to the gospel and address the special situation of women".²⁴⁴ At the same time much work was directed to increasing women's opportunities for ecumenical experiences and facilitating their contribution at local and global levels through seminars and regional meetings. Leadership development, promoted in regional programmes and workshops, was designed to empower women for greater participation.

The Sub-unit developed its communication with a growing network of women through staff travel, reports of its meetings and consultations, the newsletter *Women in a Changing World* (begun in 1975 and published irregularly)

²⁴¹ *ibid.*, 37-38.

²⁴² WCW 14 (April 1983), 11.

²⁴³ *We Listened Long Before We Spoke: A Report of the Consultation of Women Theological Students, Cartigny, Switzerland, July 1978* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1979), 30.

²⁴⁴ *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 207.

and personal contacts. By these means it contributed to the formation of "a global sisterhood",²⁴⁵ helping to link women around the world with others who shared similar goals. In 1981 the Sub-unit published *A Voice for Women* by Susannah Herzel, the first attempt to document women's participation in the WCC. As Bärbel von Wartenberg, director of the Sub-unit from October 1980, commented in the preface, "At a time when most history is still being written about the deeds and decisions of men, the appearance of such a book is something rare and exciting".²⁴⁶ As the author explained, the title of the book referred to women finding and developing "their own hidden voice", a voice which had now emerged in the WCC "as something strong, as something rooted in its own historical development, and as something to be reckoned with".²⁴⁷

In its task of advocacy on behalf of women the Sub-unit devoted much attention to human rights for women. It also gave high priority to working for their better representation and fuller participation in the WCC. Such advocacy contributed to the appointment in 1980 of Marie Assaad as one of the three deputy

general secretaries.²⁴⁸ Assaad took over the position of staff moderator of Unit III

²⁴⁵ ibid., 209. This phrase was frequently used by von Wartenberg.

²⁴⁶ Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, vii.

²⁴⁷ ibid., [ix]

²⁴⁸ In 1979 the central committee appointed one male deputy general secretary and agreed, in response to lobbying from women, that "Consideration of a second nomination be postponed until the name of a woman candidate could be presented...It was noted that the candidate should preferably be a woman from the developing world". *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-First Meeting, Kingston, Jamaica, 1-11 January 1979* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1979), 102. The

(which had previously been held by Brigalia Bam) and over the next five years worked closely with von Wartenberg and the Sub-unit on Women. Another cause for some satisfaction was the appointment by the central committee in 1980 of Pauline Webb as moderator of the assembly preparation committee.

Both Bam and von Wartenberg agreed that achieving better representation and fuller participation of women in the WCC and in the member churches was a difficult task.

In the first place, men are not accustomed to having women in leadership roles. Consciously or unconsciously they often view women as a threat to their own power. In the second place, women are often reluctant to assume positions of leadership. Either they lack the necessary confidence and feel they will be unable to live up to the expectations, or they are not interested in participating in what they see as male-dominated, hierarchical structures.²⁴⁹

The Sub-unit worked to educate women for participation and to empower them in leadership roles, "seeking ways to break the psychological barriers that prevent women themselves striving for fuller participation".²⁵⁰ As a practical step toward the better representation of women on WCC committees, commissions, working groups and other bodies the Sub-unit also began to develop a databank, a list of names and biographical data of qualified women around the world. (A similar effort initiated by Barot in the 1960s seems to have disappeared without trace).

At the same time as it was working for increased participation of women, the Sub-unit was also advocating changes in the style and working of the WCC.

appointment of Marie Assaad, who fulfilled these two criteria, was made by postal ballot of the central committee in February 1980.

²⁴⁹ WCW 14 (April 1983), 7.

²⁵⁰ *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 203.

These qualitative changes which it was seeking involved methods of working which might hold more appeal for women. The Sub-unit tried to model in its own work and also to advocate changes which would "incorporate the so-called 'female' values into the bureaucratic structures, to contribute to a more holistic approach and to more co-operative, non-hierarchical and creative working styles".²⁵¹

The need for such changes was also expressed by Jean Skuse, vice-moderator of the central committee since 1975, in an article written on the eve of the sixth assembly:

Women are admitted to hierarchical structures on the basis of adopting existing conditions. They are expected to accommodate themselves to the prevailing male norms, to imitate the traditional processes, to learn to operate within the accepted procedures, to adopt an image expected of them by male colleagues...There is something inherent in the style of the dominant male hierarchical power structures that inhibits the participation of women...These questions are questions of culture as much as of equal rights.²⁵²

As her title indicated, Skuse was writing from a "feminist perspective", a perspective which saw "women's culture" as different from "men's culture".

Under the leadership of Bärbel von Wartenberg, herself a feminist theologian, the Sub-unit on Women, too, was developing an overtly feminist perspective and thus enlarging its understanding of "women's participation" in ways which offered new challenges to the WCC.

In reporting on its work in the period between the fifth and sixth assemblies, the Sub-unit commented that:

²⁵¹ WCW, 14 (April 1983), 7.

²⁵² Jean Skuse, "The Ecumenical Movement from a Feminist Perspective", *CTC Bulletin* 4 (3) (December 1983), 19.

While some progress has been made in raising levels of consciousness, the numerical participation of women still remains low. In fact, the number of women in executive positions in the WCC has gone down.²⁵³

It also noted that:

Much more work has to be done to integrate women's concerns more fully in the work of other Sub-units...The traditional concept of a "women's corner" in the churches and within the WCC had to be broken, although this does not mean that women's concerns do not still need special emphasis. The philosophy of women's participation has to be further elaborated in terms of contact and outreach.²⁵⁴

The process of developing a philosophy of women's participation would involve three related tasks: developing "the female voice of the church" by enabling women to speak out on questions of theology and doctrine and to bring their experiences of spirituality and action into the life of the churches; strengthening "the global sisterhood" by developing links and mutual support among women in different parts of the world; continuing to pursue the concerns of the Community of Women and Men in the Church study, securing a greater participation by men, and helping the churches to appropriate the insights of the study. It remained to be seen whether the Vancouver Assembly would shape the mandate of the Sub-unit in accordance with these priorities.

Preparing for the Sixth Assembly

It having been agreed that the sixth assembly would be held in Vancouver,

²⁵³ *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 205. The central committee in 1981 had drawn the attention of the general secretary to the fact that the number of women staff members in grades 6-10 had decreased from 31 out of 119 staff in 1975 to 24 out of 113 staff in February 1981 and had requested that this be taken into account in future appointments. *Central Committee, Minutes, Dresden, 1981*, 105. See also *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 20: "The council is acutely aware of the need to appoint more women to senior positions."

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*

Canada in August 1983, substantive planning began at the central committee meeting held in Geneva in August 1980. The central committee had already resolved in 1979 that staff of the Sub-unit on Women "would be much involved in preparing the sixth assembly, with a special emphasis on women's involvement in the delegations, in leadership, and in the selection of programme issues".²⁵⁵

At its 1980 meeting the central committee accepted a number of proposals which were designed to achieve "a more equitable representation at the Sixth Assembly, especially of women and youth".²⁵⁶ Although the WCC rules did not permit the central committee to legislate for the churches which retained the right of appointment to their delegations, it was agreed that "the policy proposed should be strongly urged upon the churches and their cooperation earnestly requested".²⁵⁷ According to this policy, while churches with only one delegate were not subject to any restrictions those with more than one delegate were requested to conform to a table which laid down the minimum number of lay people, women and youth in proportion to the size of the delegation. Thus a delegation of two was to include one layperson, and one woman or one youth (defined as a person under thirty). A delegation of thirty-five should include eighteen lay people, nine women and eight youth. While the women might be either clergy or lay, if they were under thirty they were to be counted as *either* women *or* youth and not in both categories. The central committee also agreed that:

To ensure participation of women and youth in roles other than as delegates, those planning for the Assembly should ensure that advisers, consultants,

²⁵⁵ Central Committee, *Minutes, Kingston, 1979*, 82.

²⁵⁶ Central Committee, *Minutes, Geneva, 1980*, 34.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 35.

presenters and any other designated leadership for the Assembly include women and youth at a rate comparable to the rate of delegates.²⁵⁸

The Sub-unit on Women was asked to prepare lists of potential women participants in all categories, to contact member churches to discuss their process for selecting delegates and to urge them that women form at least 31% of their representation. The Sub-unit was also authorised to organise a pre-assembly meeting for women. In order to cope with the extra workload required by the assembly planning process a consultant was appointed to work with the Sub-unit for ten months from 1 January 1982.²⁵⁹ This seems to have been the only way in which the central committee acknowledged the fact that women's participation in the assembly was, in practical terms, the responsibility of the Sub-unit on Women. This was surely a striking illustration of the Sub-unit's own statement that "much more work has to be done to integrate women's concerns more fully in the work of other Sub-units."²⁶⁰

The central committee appointed a fifteen-member committee on assembly preparation, with Pauline Webb as moderator. There were four other women members of the committee (Ms Ana B. Ferrari, Ms Evelyn Mahlatsi, Ms Waltraut Peper and Ms Barbara Thompson). Also included was Dr Robert Wallace, a member of the Sub-unit on Women working group. As moderator Webb worked to ensure that women would participate "visibly and in leadership as much as possible".²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 80.

²⁵⁹ The Rev'd Janet Crawford (Anglican, New Zealand). (The author).

²⁶⁰ *Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1980*, 80.

²⁶¹ Pauline Webb to Janet Crawford, personal communication.

The following year the central committee met in Dresden and the debate on the recommendations from the Sheffield CWMC conference took place, with the result that the central committee affirmed the "principle of equal participation" as a goal towards which the WCC would move, "starting with the composition of the decision-making and consultative bodies during and after the Sixth Assembly".²⁶² When Webb presented the report of her committee there was some discussion of the 15% category (the 15% of the delegates which, according to the WCC Rules, was to be elected by certain member churches upon nomination of the central committee). The central committee agreed that, in order to improve the balance among the delegates, priority in nominating those in the 15% category should be given to "women, youth, lay persons and local pastors".²⁶³

At the next meeting of the central committee, in July 1982, vice-moderator Jean Skuse reported on behalf of the executive committee which had been working on the question of participation. Although not all churches had yet named their delegations (87 seats remaining vacant out of 780) the majority had done so and most had complied with the criteria established in 1980. Those which had not complied had been asked to reconsider and as a result a number had submitted revised delegations. According to Ms Skuse:

It was encouraging to note that the proportion of women and youth named by the churches in the 85% was already higher than at Nairobi, though not yet as high as had been hoped. The Nairobi totals were 149 women (22%) and 61

²⁶² *Central Committee, Minutes, Dresden, 1981*, 29

²⁶³ *ibid.*, 57.

youth (9%) whereas the present total in the 85% for Vancouver were 175 women (25.3%) and 70 youth (10.1%).²⁶⁴

In recommending to the central committee persons for inclusion in the 15%, the executive committee had given priority to women and youth in order to improve the overall balance (preference having also been given to persons from regions which would improve the overall geographic balance). The central committee approved the proposed list of names subject to the approval of the respective churches, thus raising the likely total of women delegates to 233 (29%). At this point decisions about speakers and people in leadership roles had not yet been made, but the planning committee had recognised "the need for adequate balance between men and women, confession and geographical regions".²⁶⁵ It was also able to report that planning for the pre-assembly women's meeting, a "women's space" throughout the assembly, and a Canadian women's forum was taking place, with groups of women in Vancouver working in collaboration with a "staff task force on women's participation".²⁶⁶

The central committee also received a report from the assembly worship committee. On the six-member committee there were two women (Dr Marianne Micks, USA, and Ms Aruna Gnanandason, India). This committee "hoped that inclusive language would be used" in assembly worship.²⁶⁷

Conclusions

²⁶⁴ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 19-28 July 1982* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 44.

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 43.

During the period between the fifth and sixth assemblies of the WCC there was a significant increase in women's participation in the WCC although women remained a small minority on the central committee and at most WCC conferences, as well as on the WCC programme staff. The exception was the Community of Women and Men in the Church study where women outnumbered men in study groups and at consultations as well as at the final conference at Sheffield. Participation was a consistent theme throughout the Community Study though the linking of participation and ordination proved highly controversial, as did a recommendation from Sheffield that, beginning at the sixth assembly, women and men should participate in equal numbers in all WCC decision-making bodies. A more important result of the Community Study was that through it "the language, culture, images and consciousness of women" were brought inescapably into the ecumenical movement, a result which would ultimately "affect the style and power structures of its institutional forms".²⁶⁸

Under the leadership of Bärbel von Wartenberg the Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society acted as an advocate for women's participation and worked in various ways to enable this participation and to develop a "women's voice". There was a growing interest in feminist theology and in women "doing theology" together. At the same time the development of some of the theological issues raised in the CWMC study was accepted as belonging to the future work of the commission on Faith and Order.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 27.

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 41.

New ground was broken when the first inter-Orthodox women's consultation was held in 1976 but Orthodox participation in the CWMC study was always rather problematic and the greatest opposition to the Sheffield principle of equal participation came from Orthodox members of the central committee. The Orthodox churches were also increasingly sensitive over the question of the ordination of women, which was now accepted by a growing number of Protestant member churches of the World Council.

Shortly before the sixth assembly Bärbel von Wartenberg wrote that "the role and participation of women in the churches is one of the most controversial issues in the present ecumenical debate...This will certainly surface at the Assembly". As she pointed out:

This question does not touch only on deep theological ground and historical developments, it also involves the question of power and decision-making in the church and the church's recognition of women's contribution. Are church men prepared to accept the participation of women in the spiritual leadership and decision-making power of the church?...Can there be unity among male church leaders without seriously tackling the question of women's role? Can unity be achieved without agreement with the women in the churches? What sort of unity would it be? This question has to be kept alive in all the deliberations at the Assembly.²⁶⁹

There was a suggestion that "the growing claims by women on a role as partners in the life of the churches" might become "explosive", as had the WCC's stand on racism.²⁷⁰ How the WCC would deal with these tensions and with the

²⁶⁸ Jean Skuse, "From Words to Deeds: Participation by all God's People", *ER* 40 (1988), 423.

²⁶⁹ Bärbel von Wartenberg, "Women Hold Up Half the Sky", in *Vision '83: WCC, Education and Renewal Unit: Focus on Vancouver Assembly* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 20-21.

²⁷⁰ Leon Howell, *Acting in Faith: The World Council of Churches since 1975* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 74.

growing demand by women that they should be partners in the life of the WCC itself remained to be seen.

The Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver, 1983

The sixth assembly took place 24 July - 10 August, 1983, at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. Once again the theme was christological: "Jesus Christ - the Life of the World". More than 4,500 people a day, on average, participated in one way or another in this assembly which had a public programme in addition to an extensive programme for accredited visitors. Worship services, plenary debates, and some other events were broadcast across North America by cable television and satellite. "Never before had any church meeting, let alone a WCC Assembly, been made so accessible to so many".²⁷¹

Throughout the assembly Canadian cultures made a strong impact, not least when a 15-metre high totem pole carved by native Canadians was raised with appropriate ceremony on the campus. From its venue on the edge of the Pacific basin the assembly also paid special attention to the concerns of the island churches of the Pacific in their struggles for political and economic independence and for a nuclear-free Pacific. Threats of peace were in fact manifold in the world of 1983, as reflected in statements by the assembly on the Middle East, Southern Africa, Central America, Afghanistan, Cyprus and the Pacific. Violence in Sri Lanka erupted in death and homelessness for many during the first week of the assembly. In this context the assembly message spoke of a renewed commitment

²⁷¹ Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 8.

to justice and peace, together with a renewed commitment to the visible unity of the church and to mission and evangelism.²⁷² The sixth assembly was thus "an Assembly of reintegration. At Vancouver, Amsterdam and Uppsala appeared to have come to terms with each other".²⁷³

Among the thousands of participants at the assembly the core group consisted of the 847 voting delegates from the WCC member churches.²⁷⁴ Of these delegates approximately 30% were women (Nairobi 22%), almost 14% were under 30 years of age (Nairobi 9%), and 46% were lay people (Nairobi 42%). As at Nairobi, only about 20% had already attended an assembly. This "glorious patchwork" of participants represented 301 member churches in more than 100 countries with slightly more than half the total coming from North America and Europe.²⁷⁵ Denominationally, the largest group was from the churches of the Reformed tradition (176), followed by the Eastern Orthodox (125) and Lutherans (122). There were 95 delegates from Methodist churches, 89 Anglicans, and 82 from United churches. Oriental Orthodox numbered 44 and Baptists 38. Also present were Moravians (11), Disciples (13), Old Catholics (8), Independents (6), Pentecostals (11), Kimbanguists (6), Mar Thoma (3), Mennonites (2), Brethren (2) and 14 representatives of other (small) churches. There were 32 delegated

²⁷² See *ibid.*, 1-4, for the Message which is titled "Life Together".

²⁷³ *ibid.*, 19.

²⁷⁴ As usual there is some discrepancy in different sources. The official report gives the total of 847 delegates (with 63 places not taken up), of whom 30.46% were women. See Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 7. The same total number of delegates is given in *DEM*, 1095. The nominations committee at the assembly worked on the basis of 839 delegates, of whom 29.49% were women. See Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 126.

²⁷⁵ David M Gill, ed., *Gathered for Life: Official Report VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July - 10 August 1983* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 8.

observers from non-member churches, 21 of whom were Roman Catholics.

Fifteen guests of other faiths were also active participants.

Vancouver was planned as a participatory assembly, with the result that "not only the diversity of member churches, but also the diversity of the human family within and beyond the churches" was striking.²⁷⁶ A small children's programme was run concurrently with the assembly and the children participated in some of the worship services; a small but significant group of disabled persons was present and sign language was used as well as simultaneous interpretation into six languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Russian and, for the first time, Greek). The assembly message noted that "among us women, young people and persons with disabilities are participating in larger numbers than before".²⁷⁷ As we have seen, pressure had been put on the churches to include members of the two "minority" categories of women and youth in their delegations and the 15% rule had been used to achieve more balanced representation. The active participation of both women and youth was also encouraged through two pre-assembly meetings, held immediately before the assembly.

The Pre-Assembly Women's Meeting (PAWM)

The PAWM took place at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 21-23 July, 1983. It was planned by the Sub-unit on Women in cooperation with a WCC staff task force and a planning group in Geneva. It seems that none of those responsible for the meeting realised that it was in the tradition of the women's

²⁷⁶ ibid.

meeting held at Baarn, prior to the first Assembly in 1948, for no mention was ever made of this, or of other "pre-assembly" women's meetings.²⁷⁸ Of the approximately 300 participants, the majority were delegates and advisers to the assembly, while others were observers, accredited visitors, staff and guests. About 10% were specially invited male delegates, symbolic of the belief that "only sisterhood and brotherhood together make a wholistic expression of our Christian faith".²⁷⁹ In her opening address Bärbel von Wartenberg, director of the Sub-unit on Women, stressed the need for women to move out of the "women's corner" and into full and equal participation in all aspects of church life, not giving up special programmes and organisations for women, but working towards the goal of inclusive community. She also affirmed that the purpose of the meeting was "to prepare ourselves for full and informed participation in the Assembly".²⁸⁰

Among those who addressed the PAWM were the Rt Reverend Lois Wilson, former moderator of the United Church of Canada, WCC deputy general secretary Mrs Marie Assaad, and WCC general secretary Dr Philip Potter. Potter, who was present at the meeting as an honoured guest, paid tribute to women pioneers in the ecumenical movement and also took part in a panel discussion on "Women in the Ecumenical Movement", in which Pauline Webb, Jean Skuse and Justice Annie

²⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 1.

²⁷⁸ There had been some sort of preliminary women's meeting before each of the previous assemblies except the fourth at Uppsala although the 1974 "Sexism in the 1970s" conference was not held immediately before the Nairobi assembly and the meetings prior to the Evanston and New Delhi assemblies included men. Unlike these earlier meetings the Vancouver PAWM was planned from the beginning as an event to help women participate fully in the assembly.

²⁷⁹ WCW 16 (December 1983), 6. This issue of the Sub-unit on Women newsletter, titled "Building Global Sisterhood", contains the only published reports of the PAWM.

²⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 5.

Jiagge spoke of their own experiences of ecumenical leadership. While agreeing that women were divided over a number of issues, including language and images of God, the women panelists suggested that all women experienced some form of discrimination on account of their gender, that women did not want to be imitation men, and that, in the words of Jean Skuse, "We all know deep down inside that we have all got something to contribute to the church and something we want to offer".²⁸¹

The question of the ordination of women and its implications for questions of unity was raised by interviewer Dr Janice Love. Potter answered that in his opinion the question of unity could no longer be discussed without looking at the place of women in the total ministry of the church. Potter also charged that too many churches which did ordain women left them "to do the dirty jobs", limiting possibilities for their whole ministry in the church. "So", he concluded, "I don't think any of us can crow about the fact that we have ordination [of women] in our churches".²⁸²

Much of the work of the PAWM focused on discussion of the eight assembly "issues" from women's perspectives.²⁸³ While this discussion took place in small groups, several plenary sessions were held around the theme "How to Survive an Assembly". In these participants were given practical information about the

²⁸¹ *ibid.*, 10.

²⁸² *ibid.*, 9.

²⁸³ WCW 15 (July 1983) was designed to be used as preparatory material at the PAWM. It contained material on each of the eight issues "As Women See Them".

assembly programme, about WCC structures and about various business and meeting procedures.

At the PAWM women were a majority. From that experience they moved into the assembly itself, where they were once again a minority - but a minority prepared for participation. In the words of one participant at the PAWM:

The pattern was much the same as that followed later at the Assembly itself: Bible studies, worship, plenary sessions, work groups on the different issues. Yet those three and a half days were quite different from the three weeks which followed. There was a more open, more intimate, more informal atmosphere than in the Assembly, and this was certainly not just because we were fewer in number. Despite the differences...a considerable measure of tacit agreement was observable at this conference, probably due to the fact that women have similar and sometimes identical experiences in church and society, whether in Europe or in India...A fellowship [sic] emerged during the common study, the singing and praying, and was able to accompany us still into the Assembly itself. It was a blessing to be able to carry this fellowship with us into the Assembly, for there we were once more the usual minority and the rules of the game were much stricter.²⁸⁴

The PAWM did not however produce a statement, report or message for the assembly.

Membership of the Assembly

There was definitely a greater representation of women at this than at any previous assembly, although the exact number is not easily determined. One report quotes the credentials committee as having given the following statistical breakdown:

²⁸⁴

Johanna Linz, "Learning in Community", *ER* 36 (1984), 191.

Total number of delegates actually present:	835
Percentage of males (excluding youth)	63.71
Percentage of females (excluding youth)	22.75
Percentage of youths (male and female)	13.53
Percentage of males, including youth	70.42
Percentage of females, including youth	29.58 ²⁸⁵

The nominations committee however worked on the basis of 839 delegates of whom 29.49% were women. This corresponds with their figure of 248 women, but does not distinguish how many of these women were also counted in the category of youth. The editor of the official assembly report gave the total number of delegates as 847 (the same total as that given in the *DEM*), of whom 30.46% were women.²⁸⁶ Whichever figures are used, women were approximately 30% of the delegates, a significant gain over the 22% present at Nairobi in 1975 but still somewhat less than the one-third set as a goal by the central committee, and far below the 50% envisaged at Sheffield and affirmed as a goal by the central committee in 1981.

The increased percentage of women among the delegates was no accident but the result of much hard work over many years by many people. In particular, the recommendation from the central committee that churches include one third women in their delegations had had an effect and many churches had taken it seriously. The second channel to better representation was the 15% clause, which entitled the WCC to propose to member churches additional names of delegates from those categories which were under-represented (women, youth, disabled people). In fact 55 of the women delegates were in the 15% category without

²⁸⁵

This report is quoted in Janet Crawford, "From Nairobi to Vancouver: How Have Things Changed?", *WCW* 17 (February 1984), 29. No copy of the original report has been found.

which the percentage of women would have been much smaller.²⁸⁷ The credentials committee expressed its concern about this fact, and also about the fact that a number of churches tried to include young women in two minority categories - women and youth - instead of nominating young women and women separately.²⁸⁸

The reality was, however, that:

Small churches with very few delegates often find it extremely difficult to appoint a woman (or young person), since in many churches women do not hold leadership positions. Other churches did not want to respond to the proposed criteria for other reasons.²⁸⁹

The result was that right up to assembly, "a long and often tiresome battle for better representation of women"²⁹⁰ was fought and that without this battle the percentage of women delegates would definitely have been much smaller. As Bärbel von Wartenberg acknowledged, advocacy for the full participation of women had a long history in the WCC. The results achieved at Vancouver were due not to chance but to "the corporate effort of many women and men in the past and present, their support, experience and advice in committees and ... the Women's Task Force of the WCC."²⁹¹

In all other categories of participation except one men far outnumbered women. The exception was the stewards, where there were eighty-two women out of a total of one hundred and fifty-nine. Of the thirty-eight invited guests eight were women, among them Madeleine Barot, Nita Barrow and Marga Bührig.

²⁸⁶ See n. 269 above.

²⁸⁷ At least one of the women appointed in the 15% category had to find her own funding while her church paid for two male delegates. See Aiko Y Carter, "Finding My Way...", *ER* 36 (1984), 166.

²⁸⁸ Crawford, "From Nairobi to Vancouver", 29.

²⁸⁹ Bärbel von Wartenberg, "Vancouver: A Model", *ER* 36 (1984) 157-158.

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 158.

Twenty-six of the eighty-four advisers were women, among them a number who made presentations during the assembly. Thus among the categories controlled by the WCC there was an attempt to reach the recommended one-third participation by women. In those categories outside the control of the WCC the figures tell a different story. Only seven of the eighty-nine observers were women (though Eunice Kim of the Asian Church Women's Institute, Thelma Adair from Church Women United and Marianne Maus from the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women must together have represented many thousands of Christian women). There were two women among the thirteen delegated representatives of Christian World Communions, four among the sixty-four delegated representatives of WCC associate member churches. There were five women among the fourteen delegated representatives of ecumenical organisations, three of them representing all-female organisations (Fellowship of the Least Coin, YWCA, World Day of Prayer). There were thirty-two delegated observers, of whom twenty-one were from the Roman Catholic Church. Of the twenty-one, four were women. Also present were the six retiring WCC presidents, among whom were two women (Annie Jiagge and Cynthia Wedel) and twenty-three retiring members of the central committee of whom nine were women (including Pauline Webb). These statistics reveal that leadership in churches and ecumenical bodies was still almost exclusively male with the result that overall at the assembly men far outnumbered women in spite of all the efforts of the WCC (just as older people outnumbered youth, and clergy outnumbered lay people).

These imbalances were brought forcefully to the assembly's attention during the plenary presentation of the report of the issue group on "Moving Towards Participation." Nicole Fischer, the moderator, asked different groups - laity, women, youth, the disabled, children - to stand and this provided a vivid illustration to the comment in the report that "Women constitute the largest part of congregations around the world, but structures of power within and outside the church inhibit their growth and full participation."²⁹²

Certainly there were more women participants at Vancouver than at any previous assembly, and certainly participation involves more than numbers alone. At the same time, the number of women participants was disappointing to those who had struggled hard to achieve the one-third total. The principle of equal participation, affirmed as a goal by the central committee in 1981, seemed far from realisation. As Jean Skuse later wrote:

Whether an increase from 6% of delegates being women at Amsterdam to 30% at Vancouver is great progress over a period of 35 years - less than one per cent per year - is questionable, particularly as any improvement has come about only as a result of affirmative action on the part of the WCC Central Committee.²⁹³

Women in leadership

According to the official report at the sixth assembly "leadership by women, prominent as never before, was welcomed for the competence of those providing it".²⁹⁴ Marga Bührig, who had been present at every assembly since Evanston in 1954, commented that:

The presence of women at every level was taken much more for granted, so that they had no need to draw special attention to it. The people responsible for

²⁹² Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 55.

²⁹³ Skuse, "The Ecumenical Movement from a Feminist Perspective", 19.

²⁹⁴ Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 18.

arranging the programme, the services, the leadership of plenary sessions and group meetings, had obviously taken great care to ensure the fullest possible participation of women.²⁹⁵

As Bührig acknowledged, the highly visible role of women in the assembly leadership was due not to chance, but to deliberate and careful planning on the part of the assembly preparations committee moderated by Pauline Webb. In fact:

The selection of women, speakers, moderators, contributors, issue and group leaders derived from the one third representation, using the argument that the leadership in the Assembly should reflect the representation of women.²⁹⁶

In the end, although each proposed name had to be "discussed, promoted and defended"²⁹⁷ and although there were many balances to be considered (such as youth, denominational representation, and so on), the proportional participation of women in leadership roles exceeded their representation among the delegates.

Much of the work of the assembly was done in eight issue groups (which replaced the sections at previous assemblies). Each of these groups had a moderator, two vice-moderators, and two rapporteurs, making a total of forty people involved in group leadership. Fifteen of these leadership positions were held by women. Four of the groups had women moderators. Ms Nicole Fischer (Switzerland, Reformed) moderated the group on "Moving Towards Participation"; Ms Theressa Hoover (USA, Methodist) moderated the group on "Struggling for Justice and Human Dignity"; Ms Mercy Oduyoye (Nigeria, Methodist) and Ms Margareta Ingelstam (Sweden, Congregational) moderated the groups on "Learning in Community" and "Communicating Credibly" respectively.

²⁹⁵ Marga Bührig, "Moving on the Right Track", *ER* 36 (1984), 163.

²⁹⁶ von Wartenberg, "Vancouver, A Model", 158.

²⁹⁷ *ibid.*

Each group had both a male and a female vice-moderator, while three had women rapporteurs.

Most of the ten assembly committees had a moderator, two vice-moderators, and a secretary. Of these thirty-one leadership positions eight were held by women. Three of these committees were moderated by women: the credentials committee by Ms Jean Mayland (Anglican, UK), the message committee by the Rt Rev. Dr Lois Wilson (United, Canada), and the finance committee by the Rev. Patricia McClurg (Reformed, USA). Ms Jean Skuse (United, Australia) was vice-moderator of the influential business committee but the equally important nominations committee had three male moderators as did one of the two policy reference committees and the programme guidelines committee. Overall 32.39% of the leadership roles in issue groups and committees were held by women, a very slight gain on the 31.8% in such roles at Nairobi. Women were however better represented in committee membership than at Nairobi, which of course reflects the fact that at Vancouver there were more women to choose from. It is worth noting however that as at Nairobi leadership of the more influential committees, with the exception of message and finance, was still firmly in male hands.

Women contributed significantly to a number of the plenary presentations. During the first week there were five sessions used for presentations on the main theme and the sub-themes. A further plenary was led by representatives of the Pacific region, to remind participants that they were meeting on the rim of the vast Pacific basin. The two presentations on the main theme, "Jesus Christ - the Life

of the World" were both given by men while the presentations on the four sub-themes consisted of "an extraordinarily diverse set of testimonies, short addresses and responses".²⁹⁸ Out of a total of twenty-two people involved in these presentations no fewer than ten were women. Among them were women from the third world (Domitila Barrios de Chungara, Sithembiso Nyoni, Maria Teresa Porcile Santiso), from the northern hemisphere (Helen Caldicott, Anezka Ebertova) and Orthodox women (Frieda Haddad, Mother Euphrasia). Another memorable presentation by a woman was that by Darlene Keju in the Pacific plenary.²⁹⁹ It was notable however that most of the women's presentations were in the nature of "testimonies", powerful statements about their concrete struggles and concerns as women and human beings. The only explicitly theological presentation by a woman was the major presentation on the sub-theme "Life in its Fullness" by German theologian Dorothee Sölle.³⁰⁰ She, according to Bührig, became "the most quoted and most criticised speaker at the Assembly."³⁰¹

Pauline Webb who, as moderator of the assembly planning committee, had done much to ensure women's participation in leadership at the assembly, herself broke new ground when she preached the sermon at the opening worship. Webb's sermon on "The Word of Life" made a great impression, so much that "those who

²⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 18. Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 18.

²⁹⁹ The "testimonies" given by Haddad, Barrios de Chungara, Mother Euphrasia and Porcile Santiso are published in *The Ecumenical Review* 35 (1983). *Women in a Changing World* 17 (February 1984) contains excerpts from all the sub-theme presentations given by women, and the full texts of "Pacific Witness" by Darlene Keju-Johnson.

³⁰⁰ The text of Sölle's presentation, "Life in its fullness" is in *ER* 35 (1983), 377-384.

³⁰¹ Bührig, "Moving on the Right Track", 184. Sölle's presence at the assembly had been somewhat controversial from the start and, according to Pauline Webb, it was a struggle to get her there. Pauline Webb, personal communication to Janet Crawford.

heard it were still discussing it many days later."³⁰² Particularly memorable to many was the section "Written in blood" in which she linked the word of life with the word written in blood, the blood of Jesus and the blood of martyrs. This led her to the conclusion in which she highlighted the physical experience of women:

The shedding of blood can be a symbol of creation and life rather than of destruction and death. For a woman the shedding of blood which is sometimes thought of as a curse is in fact a blessing. It is a sign that her body is being prepared to give birth if and when life is conceived within her. And even if she personally never knows the privilege of motherhood, the instincts and energies released within her can be used by God in the partnership of sustaining and nourishing his children, especially those who are neglected, deprived or robbed of their full human dignity. She is called to magnify life wherever it is diminished, as, like Mary, the mother of Jesus, she magnifies the Lord.³⁰³

As Bührig commented:

Some may have found it offensive ... to hear such a close connecting of Christ's blood and women's blood, [but] for many women it was infinitely liberating. For so long - even down to the present day - our physical being has been tabooed and ostracized in the church.³⁰⁴

For Aiko Carter, a Japanese woman, a first-time assembly participant, the impact of this image of women's blood as a symbol of new life was "shockingly interesting" and changed her entire perception.³⁰⁵ This "pastoral and yet bold sermon",³⁰⁶ together with the symbolic presence of women and children, made the opening worship an experience of great affirmation for many women and also demonstrated that women had a different experience and perspective to contribute.

Vancouver has been widely affirmed as a praying and worshipping assembly. One of the features of the worship was its inclusive and participatory

³⁰² Dieter Trautwein, "Assembling for Worship at Vancouver", *ER* 36 (1984), 143.

³⁰³ Pauline Webb, "The Word of Life", *ER* 35 (1983), 348-349.

³⁰⁴ Bührig, "Moving on the Right Track", 165.

³⁰⁵ Carter, "Finding My Way...", 167

character. Women and men, children and young people, people with disabilities, clergy and lay people, diverse in colour, language, and garb, participated in reading scripture, leading prayers and hymn singing, playing instruments, singing in choir or congregation and preaching. From the opening act of worship, women participated actively in the worship life of the Assembly.

It was there that many stereotypical attitudes against women's spiritual leadership were broken down. Preaching, praying, singing, symbolic actions, eucharist, all this was done by women as well as men.³⁰⁷

The liturgist at the public celebration attended by 15,000 people, was Lois Wilson, past moderator of the United Church of Canada. At the celebration of the Lima Liturgy, shown nationwide on television, two of the six celebrants who assisted the Archbishop of Canterbury were women, who stood on either side of him at the altar.³⁰⁸ The servers who served the bread and wine at many stations in the worship tent were couples, a man and a woman, one from the First World and one from the Third World.

For many, the celebration of the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom on the (Orthodox) Festival of the Transfiguration (August 6th) made a poignant contrast to the celebration of the Lima Liturgy, for "visually this service was characterised by the multitude of officiating and communicating patriarchs, archbishops, bishops and priests."³⁰⁹ With this one exception however, in all the services arranged by the worship committee women and men shared in leadership

³⁰⁶ von Wartenberg, "Vancouver: A Model", 159.

³⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 160.

³⁰⁸ They were the Rev. Carolina Pattiasinah-Toreh (Protestant Church in the Moluccas, Indonesia) and the Rev. Elizabeth Liddell (Church of Denmark).

³⁰⁹ Trautwein, "Assembling for Worship", 145.

so that "even as worship was seen to be central to the life of the Assembly, so women's participation was seen to be central to the worship of the Assembly".³¹⁰

The participation of women in the assembly worship was, like their participation in the assembly generally, no accident:

It happened because the women on the Worship Committee, among them women staff of the WCC and Aruna Gnanadason of India, ensured that this happened by monitoring all the preparations.³¹¹

"The Well / La Source"

A significant feature of the assembly was the contribution made by women through the women's centre called "The Well/La Source" and through the "Voices of Women" stream in the special programme for accredited visitors. "The Well", provided a meeting place for women participants and visitors from Canada and elsewhere. Run by a dedicated team of Canadian women volunteers, it was "a place of refreshment" for women at the assembly, "our own haven to repair to when the going got rough in the assembly itself."³¹² It also brought together women from all parts of the world to share thoughts and experiences on issues such as women and health, women and ordained ministry, women as church leaders, women in the Orthodox Church, violence against women, women and racism, feminist theology, and many others. Films on women, women's music, and liturgical celebrations for women, including a eucharist with a woman president, were all part of the programme offered at "The Well". For some women at the assembly the environment and events at "The Well" were more attractive

³¹⁰ Barbara Stephens, "Worship", *In God's Image* (November 1983), 14.

³¹¹ *ibid.*, 15. The committee had increased to twelve, five of whom were laywomen.

than those at the assembly itself, for it was at "The Well" (and also in the "Voices of Women" stream) that the search for an authentic and relevant interpretation of the Bible by women, the search for new styles of leadership, for inclusive language, and other concerns were discussed freely and openly.

The difference between the environment of "The Well" and that of the assembly itself was the subject of an interesting through "undoubtedly subjective observation" by veteran ecumenist Marga Bührig, who noted a striking difference between Dorothee Sölles' plenary address and her speech at a women's peace dinner at "The Well" later the same day:

In the plenary, I almost failed to recognise her; it was to me as if she were a stranger, at the beginning completely so At the evening meeting, on the contrary, in a free, relaxed and expectant sisterly atmosphere, she was fully herself - vivid, scintillating, persuasive, challenging and herself challenged.³¹³

The activities at "The Well" were intensively reported in the daily assembly newspaper *Canvas* and in this way many issues were presented to the delegates and spilled over into the assembly. The activity at "The Well" and the attendant publicity undoubtedly raised awareness of women's presence at the assembly, contributed to strengthening connections between women, and enabled women to give voice to their concerns. Although "The Well" was not part of the official assembly programme, and although many of those who participated in its activities were not themselves assembly participants, it made a significant contribution to women's participation at the assembly.

³¹² Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 25.

³¹³ Bührig, "Moving on the Right Track", 164.

Plenary Presentations

At the first WCC assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, where women were only 6% of the delegates, the whole assembly heard and discussed the report of the Committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. At the fifth assembly in Nairobi in 1975, where 22% of the delegates were women, there was for the first time a plenary devoted entirely to women and their concerns. At Vancouver in 1983, where women were still only 30% of the delegates, there was in the official programme no explicit place for deliberations on the situation of women. The guiding assumption was that "women were to be fully incorporated into the whole working of the Assembly, bringing the perspectives of women to whatever issue was at hand".³¹⁴

At Nairobi many of the women's concerns had been focused on the proposed study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church. The 1981 Sheffield consultation which was the culmination of this study had recommended to the WCC that at the sixth assembly "the CWMC study be selected as one of the issues of the Assembly and that a plenary be devoted to it."³¹⁵ In the initial list of "issues" prepared by the assembly planning committee in 1981 the Community of Women and Men in the Church was number eleven out of a total of fifteen. By the 1982 central committee meeting the list of issues had been reduced to ten and the CWMC study was included only indirectly under the issue "Moving Towards

³¹⁴ Elizabeth Bettenhausen, "Women and Youth at Vancouver", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 23 (1984), 96.

³¹⁵ Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 89.

Participation".³¹⁶ By the time of the assembly the issues had been reduced to eight, one of which was still "Moving Towards Participation".³¹⁷ There is no indication that a plenary on the Community Study or on the issues it had raised was ever seriously proposed or considered during the planning process.

According to Bärbel von Wartenberg the planning process was guided by other recommendations from Sheffield, and took as a principle the inclusion of women's concerns in all issues of the assembly. This was understood as reflecting "an overall goal of the Community Study: that women and men together should shape our life in church and society".³¹⁸ Von Wartenberg thought that the planned lack of focus on women or "women's issues" also reflected a development in which "women in increasing numbers are moving out of their traditional corner in the church and seeking to participate fully in the whole of the church and society".³¹⁹ The open question was, as von Wartenberg herself recognised, how women would make use of the various possibilities given them during the assembly. Another question was, of course, how many possibilities were given to women. With regard to the plenary presentations on theme and sub-themes the answer has to be, "Not many".

³¹⁶ *Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1982*, 138.

³¹⁷ The other seven were: Witnessing in a Divided World, Taking Steps Towards Unity, Healing and Sharing Life in Community, Confronting Threats to Peace and Survival, Struggling for Justice and Human Dignity, Learning in Community, Communicating Credibly.

³¹⁸ von Wartenberg, "Vancouver: A Model", 158. This appears to be a reference to the Sheffield recommendation that "the substance of the Assembly demonstrate more evidence of women's perspectives so that the Assembly as a whole reflects more adequately the community perspectives". Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 89. This was

As already noted, fewer than half the thematic plenary presentations were given by women and Dorothee Sölle was the only woman to give a *theological* presentation, rather than a "testimony". Moreover, the four presentations on the sub-theme "Life in Unity", planned as the culmination of the thematic part of the programme, were all given by men. The conclusion, a commentary illustrated by slides on the Rublev icon of the Trinity, conveyed more than one message.

According to one woman:

The image of this presentation was not lost on some of us. The heavy repetition of masculine terminology in describing this representation of Trinity and the absence of women speaking to the issue of unity made the following assertion into a very powerful question instead: "This image of the divine Trinity rules out all egoism - whether individual or collective - all life-destroying separation, any subordination or leveling of persons."³²⁰

In plenary discussions it was clearly men who dominated and, according to Aruna Gnanadason, many women were frustrated that they did not get an opportunity to speak. "Men claim the microphone, make long speeches no one is interested in and women get little opportunity to participate".³²¹ Other women did not want or dare to participate in plenary and it was noted that few Third World women did so.³²² No doubt many women did feel nervous about speaking in plenary and preferred to speak in smaller groups. Some however suspected that when faced with a long list of prospective speakers plenary moderators might at times have chosen men at women's expense.³²³

additional to the recommendation that the CWMC be selected as an issue and have a plenary devoted to it.

³¹⁹

ibid.

³²⁰

Bettenhausen, "Women and Youth", 97.

³²¹

Aruna Gnanadason, "Women at the VI Assembly of the World Council of Churches", *In God's Image* (November 1983), 7.

³²²

Priscilla Padolina, "Third World Women in the Assembly", *WCW* 17 (February 1984), 28.

³²³

von Wartenberg, "Vancouver: A Model", 160.

Issue Groups

Much of the work of the assembly was carried out in the eight issue groups which were charged with reflecting on current ecumenical "issues" (which had been pre-determined). Each group consisted of approximately 120 members who met a total of eight times, in plenary sessions and in smaller groups, before submitting a report and recommendations to the whole assembly.³²⁴ In reading these reports it is possible to discern some points which seem to reflect women's concerns, or at least the concerns of some women (and possibly some men) without distinguishing any over-riding concern or focus. For example, the report of the issue group on "Healing and Sharing Life in Community" contained a section titled "Community of women and men in the Church" which emphasised the need for harmonious relations between men and women in order to promote health.³²⁵ A related recommendation asked that:

The churches continue to explore appropriate models of response to the changing roles of women and men within society, work, church and family life, bearing in mind the effects of economic and political stress as well as regional and cultural differences.³²⁶

The issue group on "Struggling for Justice and Human Dignity", moderated by Theresa Hoover, took up the theme of "the web of oppression and injustice" which had been developed at the Sheffield consultation and discussed sexism,

³²⁴ For these reports see Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 30-110. Although these reports represented much of the substantive work of the assembly and were commended to the churches for their study and action, "the quality of work done by most of the Issue Groups left a lot to be desired", *ibid.*, 18.

with particular reference to the CWMC study which had "contributed to identifying the root causes of the oppression of women, and furthered the understanding of power as empowerment."³²⁷ It specifically named "violence against women" as a "reprehensible form of sexism".³²⁸

The issue group on "Moving Towards Participation" was moderated by Nicole Fischer, president of the National Protestant Church of Geneva, and staffed by Bärbel von Wartenberg. As we have seen, the original proposal that the Community of Women and Men in the Church should be one of the issues was not accepted, and instead it became a sub-theme of this group. However in the report and recommendations the Community Study disappeared entirely. The report focused on factors affecting several "special groups in their search for full participation".³²⁹ These groups were laity, women, young people, the aging, and children, persons with disabilities. The brief section on women stated that:

Women constitute the largest part of congregations around the world, but the structures of power with and outside the churches inhibit their growth and full participation.

Their own lack of confidence and their general aversion to manipulative power tactics sometimes mean that women miss opportunities to participate.

Tradition, cultural patterns, the domination of imported theologies, and traditional male interpretations of the Bible make the situation even more difficult for women.

Jesus Christ gave important roles to women, and they were the first witnesses of his resurrection. But the Church he founded through the centuries marginalized women. Networks of women's organizations inside and outside the Church are however a hopeful sign in our day.³³⁰

³²⁵ *ibid.*, 68.

³²⁶ *ibid.*, 70.

³²⁷ *ibid.*, 88.

³²⁸ *ibid.*, 87.

³²⁹ *ibid.*

³³⁰ *ibid.*, 55.

The report included several recommendations addressed to the churches and asking them to provide structures and training to enable women's participation.

Special reference was made to relationships with the Orthodox:

The Orthodox churches should take the initiative to provide simple study material and information on the Orthodox Church and the role of women, for the benefit of non-Orthodox women and men. This information would greatly strengthen the understanding and sisterhood between women of different confessions. The WCC should assist in this exercise. While the position of Orthodox women needs to be respected, the ordination of women must still be kept actively on the ecumenical agenda.³³¹

The issue group reports generally were not notable "for the quality of their theological or social analyses" and showed signs of the time pressure under which the groups worked.³³² Certainly in comparison with the work done at the "Sexism in the 1970s" consultation almost ten years earlier and at the much more recent Sheffield CWMC conference the report on "Moving Towards Participation" seems like a step backwards. It offers little if any advance on the report from the Committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church at Amsterdam in 1948. In addition to the general problem of lack of time, two factors contributed to the comparative weakness of this report regarding women's participation. Firstly, many delegates had little ecumenical experience and little if any knowledge of, or involvement in, previous programmes, studies, or consultations. This made it difficult for the group to build on earlier work done by the WCC on this, or any other issue. Secondly, in discussion of this issue women became one of a number of "minority" groups, even though it was recognised that they constituted the majority in congregations around the world. There was no recognition of the fact

³³¹

ibid., 58.

that women were not a separate group alongside youth, laity, the aging, and people with disabilities but that those groups were each made up of both women and men.

The issue group on "Taking Steps to Unity" had as its focus the work of Faith and Order, in particular the text on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the process of its reception by the churches. Although the CWMC study had been lodged in Faith and Order, and although there had been much discussion of this study and its possible continuation at the Lima meeting of the Faith and Order commission in 1982, there was only a brief mention of the study in the report of this group:

Through the study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, many have discovered that life in unity must carry with it the overcoming of division between the sexes, and have begun to envision what profound changes must take place in the life of the Church and the world. The participants at the Sheffield conference on the Community of Women and Men in the Church emphasized that one form of oppression is interwoven with others. The inter-relatedness of racism, classism and sexism calls for a combined struggle since no one form of renewal will, by itself, accomplish a renewal of ecclesial community.³³³

There was however reference to the continuation of the concerns of the CWMC study within the programmatic work of Faith and Order:

Such insights should be deepened and built upon with the study on the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community. Further, the specific challenges contained in the Sheffield recommendations should be taken up in the process of response to "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry", the work on confessing the apostolic faith, and the quest for common ways of decision-making and teaching authoritatively.³³⁴

³³² *ibid.*, 14.

³³³ *ibid.*, 49-50.

³³⁴ *ibid.*, 50.

The original text was in fact somewhat weaker and the explicit reference linking the follow-up of the CWMC study with the new study on the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community was the result of a plenary intervention by Dr Margaret Sonnenday.³³⁵ (Sonnenday was former moderator of the Sub-unit on Women working group).

It seems surprising that there was no mention of the ordination of women in the report of this group, given the history of this issue in Faith and Order and in the Community Study.

Ordination of Women

There were of course many discussions and debates at the assembly other than those recorded in the written reports and published texts and most of these are not accessible. It is clear however that there was discussion of women's ordination and that some strong feelings were expressed. During a press backgrounder on women at the sixth assembly and the work of the Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society, Jean Skuse "erupted" in response to a question on whether the WCC favoured "coercive" or "persuasive" strategies to achieve ordination. Skuse replied:

We are talking about justice and human dignity, not just the political struggle. For too long the Church has told women to be patient. It has told them what techniques to use. Some women are ready to leave the church. They come here expressing anger and pain. We have to hear them.³³⁶

³³⁵ *ibid.*, 43.

³³⁶ Frances Smith, "Women's Ordination Won't Wait", *WCW* 16 (December 1983), 35.

In her response Bärbel von Wartenberg noted that WCC churches were not agreed on this issue, that the Orthodox were struggling with it, and that "we can't postpone ordination of women until all member churches reach agreement".³³⁷

Michael Kinnamon, Faith and Order staff member, admitted that the *BEM* text did not reach agreement on women's ordination and "that issue is still before us".³³⁸

During the same press conference:

A Canadian journalist, quoting bulletin board graffiti, said the Archbishop of Canterbury would not have been allowed to celebrate the eucharist during the Assembly if he had made the same statement about blacks that he made about women - that they could be ordained but not now. Kinnamon said in reply: "We have come further together on the racism struggle than on sexism, where we are at an earlier stage".³³⁹

One of the liveliest exchanges on this topic came during the report of one of the cluster groups.³⁴⁰ An Orthodox delegate (male) questioned whether the ordination of women was not an obstacle to church unity.

This provoked a Swiss Reformed delegate to make a heated retort, "One should not lay the burden of the question of unity on women", and she went on to ask: "Gentlemen, what were you doing for the unity of the Church before this, when there was as yet no discussion of the question of the ordination of women?"³⁴¹

³³⁷ *ibid.*

³³⁸ *ibid.*

³³⁹ *ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Assembly participants met at various times in small groups which acted as a "home base". These fed into the larger groupings known as clusters which in turn reported to the plenary and "provided grist for the mill of the Message Committee". Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 13. These reports have not been published.

³⁴¹ Marga Bührig, *Woman Invisible: A Personal Odyssey in Christian Feminism* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1993), 108. Bührig does not name the two participants but according to an *EPS* report they were George Dragas (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople/UK), and Nicole Fischer. See "Delegates Reflect on Council, Ecumenism in Feedback Session", *EPS* 7 August 1983 (83van.42).

The only official reference to the ordination of women was in the report of the issue group on "Moving towards Participation" which stated merely that it must "be kept actively on the ecumenical agenda".³⁴²

The Programme Guidelines Committee

The programme guidelines committee had the task of receiving and evaluating *Nairobi to Vancouver*, the official report of the central committee to the assembly, and of formulating guidelines for future WCC programmes, "taking careful note of proposals that emerge at various points in the Assembly."³⁴³ In response to the report, the committee noted that in implementing the programme guidelines established at Nairobi:

[S]ome progress has been made in increasing the opportunities for disabled persons', youth, and women's participation in the total life and work of the Council. Some programmes, however do not yet reflect an understanding of the importance of such participation.³⁴⁴

The committee in its turn established five guidelines to "inspire all WCC activities in the coming years"³⁴⁵ and eight priority areas for WCC programmes. These included unity, fostering ecumenical relationships, creative theological work, evangelism, ecumenical learning, and a priority "to engage member

³⁴² Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 58.

³⁴³ *ibid.*, 247.

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 250.

³⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 251. The guidelines were: growing towards unity; growing towards justice and peace; growing towards vital and coherent theology; growing towards new dimensions of the churches' self-understanding; growing towards a community of confession and learning.

churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of all creation."³⁴⁶

The sixth priority was:

The development of a community of healing and sharing within the WCC and the member churches where women, men, young people and children, able and disabled, clergy and laity, *participate fully* and minister to one another.³⁴⁷

"Participation" was defined as implying "encounter and sharing with others, working and making decisions together in styles that enhance inclusiveness, and living together as people of God". Within this priority there was a specific reference to women's participation in the WCC:

Future working groups, commissions and committees appointed by the WCC Central Committee should, as far as possible, have a composition of at least the proportion of women and young people present at the Assembly.³⁴⁸

There was however no mention of the principle, originating at Sheffield and affirmed at Dresden, of moving toward the goal of equal participation. The question of more women staff was also raised in the section on this priority, with the recommendation that "steps should ... be taken to ensure an increase in the number of women appointed to WCC executive staff positions (Grades 6-10)".³⁴⁹

The seventh priority stated that "the concerns and perspectives of women should become integral to the work of all WCC Units and Sub-units".³⁵⁰ The committee had a number of suggestions as to how this should be done, drawn

³⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 255.

³⁴⁷ *ibid.* Original emphasis.

³⁴⁸ *ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 255-256.

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 256.

particularly from the issue groups on "Moving towards Participation" and "Healing and Sharing Life in Community". In keeping with this priority:

Programmes and policies of the Council should appropriate and translate the insights gained from the study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church. Monitoring the churches' participation in and reaction to this study should be emphasized; and the WCC should continue open discussions on the issues of women's involvement in the total life of the churches. Using methodology similar to that developed by the CWMC study and drawing on expertise and resources from across the Council, a systematic and contextual study of the social, religious, cultural, economic and political causes and consequences of sexism should be undertaken. The study should include an examination of women and work, women in poverty, violence against women, sex tourism, and women as initiators and participants in social change.³⁵¹

The naming of "the concerns and perspectives of women" as a programme priority was certainly a significant result of the Vancouver assembly. Its implementation, particularly given the rather poor representation of women on the central committee and in higher WCC staff positions, would be another question. As Bärbel von Wartenberg commented:

So far, all the programmes in which the word "women" appears have been designated automatically to the Sub-Unit on Women. ... The challenge for the WCC and the churches is to see that development programmes, racism, dialogue, mission, human rights, health programmes, etc. all affect women in a special way and that these aspects need to be integrated in the respective programme activities.³⁵²

If this integration were achieved then women would indeed have moved out of the "women's corner" into a new kind of participation.

Nominations and elections

³⁵¹

ibid.

³⁵²

von Wartenberg, "Vancouver: A Model", 161-162.

During the assembly the concepts of participation, partnership and inclusive community were highlighted in many of the discussions and documents. In his report to the assembly general secretary Philip Potter described the churches as "a fellowship of participation." Great applause greeted his statement that:

More insistently we have painfully tried to come to terms with the fact that the house of living stones is a community of women and men fulfilling a common ministry of witness and service to the world.³⁵³

His remarks on "hierarchical and institutional exclusiveness," "concentration of power in bureaucratic ways" and "disparity and concentration of power in the life of the churches", and his plea that "we exorcise the heresy of magisterial authority and power in the Church and become a true priesthood of all believers among whom the gifts and functions are not imposed but mutually accepted"³⁵⁴ while welcomed by many, drew a negative response from others. There were some pointed questions in the plenary discussion which followed his address.³⁵⁵ Thus already at the beginning of the assembly there was an evident tension between the ideal of the Church as a fellowship of participation and the reality of a hierarchically ordered institution and "between commitment to the representation of the whole people of God and the established power structures in the churches".³⁵⁶ This tension became most evident and acute during the process of nominations and elections.

³⁵³ Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 201, 202.

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 201-202.

³⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 113.

³⁵⁶ Robert J Marshall, "Power and Politics in the WCC Nominations Process", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 23 (1984), 110.

The nominations committee moderated by Harry Ashmall, a layman from the United Kingdom, had only nine women among its thirty-three members. It began its complicated task by securing the assembly's assent to three principles, each of which was based on previous decisions by the central committee.³⁵⁷ One of these raised the number of central committee members to one hundred and forty-five. Another safeguarded adequate representation for the Orthodox churches by allocating them approximately 23% of the central committee seats. Of particular significance to women was the third principle which stated that:

The new Central Committee should reflect the composition of the Assembly - not only in the representation of confessions and regions, but also in the representation of women, youth and lay persons, remembering that the Dresden Central Committee affirmed that "the principle of equal representation between men and women be a goal towards which we move, starting with the composition of the WCC decision-making and consultative bodies during and after the Sixth Assembly" (Central Committee Minutes, Dresden, August 1981, p.29).³⁵⁸

An amendment to the rules to allow the election of seven presidents (instead of six) was also approved. When the assembly accepted the recommendations without debate, "confidence reigned" that the new central committee would indeed represent the composition of the assembly.³⁵⁹ In the event the process of nominations and elections dragged on over several sessions of difficult and contentious debate during the course of which there were complaints, protests, legal rulings and many negotiations.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ See Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 123-124.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 124.

³⁵⁹ Marshall, "Power and Politics", 106.

³⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 103-113, and Bettenhausen, "Women and Youth", for detailed accounts of what is reported only briefly in Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 123-127.

The disappointment of those who advocated greater representation of women began when it was learned that women (according to the credentials committee) held only 29.49% of the delegates' seats, instead of the roughly one-third which had been widely understood to be the percentage. Greater dissatisfaction surfaced when the nominations committee presented its list in which women made up only 26.21% of the proposed membership of the central committee. Moreover, as the analysis was given only in the three categories of "male, female and youth", it was not easy to determine how many women had been counted as both female and youth. The presentation of the list provoked some strong reactions to what were seen as serious imbalances, with particular attention being paid to women and youth. There was no easy or quick resolution but a challenge on the grounds that the nominations committee had not kept to the agreed guidelines was denied by the moderator who ruled that it had tried, to the best of its ability, to be faithful to the three principles. Proposals for changes were considered; each had to be directed to the replacement of one name on the list by another and each had to be supported by six delegates. Women, youth, and the Orthodox delegates all claimed that they were under-represented and the process of counter-nomination seemed to pit one group against the other.³⁶¹ In two cases young women ("youth") replaced older women. An Orthodox woman was

³⁶¹ As Marshall points out, the reason for what could be seen as a conflict in which women and youth competed against each other for seats, and together competed against the Orthodox, "lies in the nature of the power structure within the WCC and not in the animosity of these different minority groups for each other". "Power and Politics", 106. It is likely however that the process did little to improve relationships among these groups.

replaced by a young woman from a non-Orthodox church. A counter-nomination that would have resulted in a further erosion of Orthodox representation evoked such strong concern that debate was adjourned so that advice could be sought from the officers. At a later session the assembly was informed that the woman concerned had withdrawn her name. The amended list was finally adopted, but "a not insignificant number abstained from voting to register their frustration at the Assembly's inability to achieve the goal for representation that it had set itself".³⁶²

The final result was a central committee of one hundred and forty-five members, thirty-eight of whom were women (26.21%). This total included seven women who were also included in the youth category. Four of the women (10%) were ordained while eighty-two of the one hundred and seven male members (76.6%) were clergy. Over half the women were from just three confessions: Reformed, Methodist and Anglican.³⁶³ Thirty nine of the one hundred and forty-five members (26.89%) had served on the central committee in the period from Nairobi to Vancouver. Just five of the women (Janice Love, Jean Mayland, Jean Skuse, Marja van der Veen-Schenkeveld and Hildegard Zumach) were in this category.

At previous assemblies nominations and elections had not always been easily decided and this is hardly surprising for the central committee is the chief administrative and decision-making body of the WCC, with responsibilities for

³⁶² Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 125. According to an *EPS* report the vote was taken by a show of hands with three opposed and approximately 30 abstentions. See "WCC Okays Central Committee", *EPS* 9 August 1983 (83van.48).

³⁶³ See *ibid.*, 126 for a complete denominational breakdown.

policy, programmes, budget and staff. At Vancouver not only was the public debate often heated but there was also much going on behind the scenes. At one point the moderator spoke of complaints from some delegates about the great pressure put on them although "he did not explain whether it was pressure upon women and youth by their peers to stand as challengers or whether it was by Church officials for the women and youth to cease and desist".³⁶⁴ It may well have been both, but pressure from church officials was probably more difficult to withstand.

The nominations committee identified a number of problems for the incoming central committee to consider. It highlighted the representation of the Orthodox churches, regions, smaller churches and united churches, and youth as matters for review but rather surprisingly did not mention representation of women.

In the final result women had received 26.21% of the seats in the central committee which was a small advance over the 22.56% they had had in the previous central committee but still significantly lower than their 29.49% representation at the assembly - and this was significantly less than the 33% representation which had been aimed at in the WCC planning for the assembly. It was also far below the goal of equal participation (50%) called for at Sheffield, accepted at Dresden and seemingly affirmed by the nominations committee and

³⁶⁴ Marshall, "Power and Politics", 112. See also p.109: "At least in private conversation some delegates...expressed the fear that life would not be so good for them in their church after the Assembly if they did not accept decisions of the head of their delegation".

the assembly at the beginning of the nominations process. No doubt many agreed with

Jean Skuse who thought it "a tragedy that women have advanced so little in terms of Central Committee membership", and wondered how many decades or generations it might take to realize the goal of equal participation.³⁶⁵

The election of the seven member presidium was less difficult than the election of the central committee although there was an unsuccessful counter-nomination seeking to replace one woman with another.

Youth delegates, without consultation with the New Zealand delegation, nominated Anya Hook, a young Maori woman from Auckland ... in place of Dr Marga Bührig. This caused some embarrassment. The unknown Anya not surprisingly received few votes.³⁶⁶

Hook, an Anglican, was present at the assembly in the 15% category. The nomination of this inexperienced and virtually unknown young woman against the widely-respected Bührig seemed to illustrate the comment by Aruna Gnanadason that the pitting of woman against woman, or youth against woman, underlines "the fact that men's positions cannot easily be challenged...a sad reminder of just how male-dominated our churches are".³⁶⁷

Three women and four men presidents were elected, the women being Dame Nita Barrow, (Methodist, Barbados), Dr Marga Bührig (Swiss Reformed Church, Switzerland), and the Very Rev. Lois Wilson (United Church of Canada). Barrow

³⁶⁵ Crawford, "From Nairobi to Vancouver", 29.

³⁶⁶ Angus MacLeod, *Vancouver Diary: A Report on the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches: 24 July - 10 August, 1983* (Christchurch: n.p., 1983), 19. MacLeod was general secretary of the National Council of Churches in New Zealand.

³⁶⁷ Gnanandason, "Woman at the VI Assembly", 7.

and Bührig were present at Vancouver as guests while Wilson was a delegate of her church. All three had had distinguished careers and significant ecumenical involvement.

The process of nominations and elections at Vancouver certainly "did not show forth the WCC at its sparkling best".³⁶⁸ Juggling and balancing the categories - confessional, regional, national, lay/clerical, age, and gender - set the nominations committee an impossible task. Mrs Justice Annie Jiagge, one of the six outgoing WCC presidents, said that the real problem is "with the churches. When they send delegates, they think first of the moderator or the bishop."³⁶⁹ WCC deputy general secretary Konrad Raiser thought the only long term solution was to take more women into church leadership positions. He also noted that young and female participants in the assembly were not equally distributed by region, making the task of achieving balance in nominations even more difficult.³⁷⁰

Underlying the heated debates were fundamental though largely unacknowledged questions about the nature of the Church, about unity, participation and inclusiveness, and about the relationship between unity and inclusive participation. Elizabeth Bettenhausen, herself a delegate (Lutheran Church in America), was right in arguing that "the issue is really ecclesiology; the

³⁶⁸ Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 18.

³⁶⁹ Quoted in *EPS* 7 August 1983 (83 van.48).

³⁷⁰ *ibid.*

question of proportionality is derivative".³⁷¹ In her view the fundamental questions were:

Is the unity of the Church best represented by the diversity of persons baptized into the body of Christ and one in this baptism? Or is the unity of the Church best represented by the ordained ministers, especially the bishops?³⁷²

These questions were neither clearly articulately nor openly debated at the Vancouver assembly although the pervasive emphasis on participation, signaled in Potter's opening speech, together with the fact that there was a greater diversity of participants than at any previous assembly, seemed to indicate a shift towards the understanding that the unity of the Church is best represented by diversity. In the words of one WCC staff member:

The degree and quality of participation determine more and more the quality of the ecumenical fellowship. Unity, the fundamental purpose of the ecumenical movement and of the WCC, is increasingly being understood as inclusiveness.³⁷³

As he also noted, the progress towards greater inclusiveness had not been without "growing pains" as "each new stage...places a challenge before the existing fellowship".³⁷⁴ At Vancouver the question of greater inclusiveness of women in the major decision-making body of the WCC was clearly one such challenge.

Central Committee 1983

³⁷¹ Bettenhausen, "Women and Youth", 101.

³⁷² *ibid.*, 93.

³⁷³ Thomas Wieser, "Editorial", *ER* 36 (1984), 137.

³⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 138.

A meeting of the newly-elected central committee was held in Vancouver immediately following the conclusion of the assembly. Its chief business was to elect its officers and the sixteen members of the executive committee. The Rev. Dr Heinz Joachim Held (Evangelical Church of Germany) was elected as moderator with Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myra (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and Dr Sylvia Talbot (African Methodist Episcopal Church) as vice-moderators. Talbot, a laywoman and health education specialist, had been a member of the WCC Christian Medical Commission since 1973, its moderator since 1976.

Of the sixteen members elected to the executive committee only four were women: Joyce Kaddu (Anglican, Uganda), Annathaie Abayasekera (Anglican, Sri Lanka), Jean Skuse (Uniting Church of Australia), Janice Love (Methodist, USA). When the seven presidents and three officers were added to the executive committee there were eight women out of 26 members (30.76%). (This number would possibly have been larger if two women had not withdrawn their names, for reasons which are not recorded).³⁷⁵

A further five members were co-opted onto the central committee to represent the associate member churches. Of these all were male, and four were ordained. In response to a protest from Jan Love the general secretary pointed out that "associate member churches had been allowed one representative [each] at the Assembly and these had all been men."³⁷⁶ The result was, of course, to lower the

³⁷⁵ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Fifth Meeting, Vancouver, Canada, 8 and 11-12 August 1983* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 5. Ms Muchena and Ms Palma withdrew their names and proposed substitutes. It is not recorded whether these substitutes were male or female.

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 6-7.

proportion of women on the central committee still further, from 26.21% to 25.33%, a fact which received little publicity.

The central committee received the final report of the assembly nominations committee. In presenting this report the moderator, Mr Ashmall, spoke of the difficulties encountered by the committee, stating that: "Churches paid lip service in public to the need for adequate representation of laity, women and young people, but in private refused to accept such nomination to the Central Committee." The central committee received the report "for further consideration and action in due time."³⁷⁷

The central committee also ratified a number of staff appointments and reappointments which had been made previously by the executive committee. These included the appointment of new directors for nine of fourteen WCC Sub-units. Only one of these was a woman, Miss Gwen Cashmore, who was appointed as director of the Sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life, thus joining the only other women director, Bärbel von Wartenberg of the Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society.

The central committee also approved a list of nominees for membership in the Faith and Order standing commission. Of the 29 members (one vacancy was left) five were women.³⁷⁸ Other commissions and working groups were to be appointed by the central committee in 1984.

³⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 11.

³⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 115. The women were: Ms Haydee Bouzada (Roman Catholic Church, Argentina), Pastor Aracely E De Rochietti (Evangelical Methodist Church in Uruguay), Rev'd Janet Crawford (Anglican Church, New Zealand), Ms Mary Oduyoye (Methodist Church, Nigeria), Dr Mary Tanner (Church of England).

These decisions of the central committee did not seem to indicate any radical shift in women's participation in the WCC as a result of the sixth assembly at Vancouver.

Evaluating women's participation at the assembly

There is no doubt that there were more women participants at Vancouver than at any previous assembly, and that the percentage of women delegates was higher. Women were also better represented in leadership roles at the assembly. But what difference did women's participation make? What did women contribute to the discussion and decision-making? These questions are not as easy to answer as are questions about numbers and percentages, although some answers have been indicated in the preceding sections. Writing soon after the assembly Bärbel von Wartenberg commented that "A long and not always pleasant debate on how the participation of women influenced and changed the style of the Assembly has been going on since then".³⁷⁹

For some there was no doubt about the answer. Madeleine Barot, an ecumenical veteran who had attended every WCC assembly, thought that "Vancouver provided spectacular proof of the headway the Sheffield recommendations had made "and that, thanks to the media coverage, the whole world has heard about and commented on the role of women at the Assembly, something never seen before at a church gathering of this kind".³⁸⁰ She was

³⁷⁹ von Wartenberg, "Vancouver: A Model", 158. This comment refers to debate among the WCC staff.

³⁸⁰ Barot, "What *Do* These Women Want", 81.

convinced that "Vancouver was indeed a major breakthrough for women", and thought this was the general opinion.³⁸¹ According to Aruna Gnanadason:

Never before in any ecumenical international gathering have women been more present, more active, more heard and more listened to. The "feminine" element was obvious in every aspect of the Assembly life. From worship, to discussions on issues, to theological reflections, to administrative responsibilities, to policy decision making - the women's perspective was evident".³⁸²

This "feminine" presence was, according to many comments, first experienced at the opening worship service, on the theme "A Celebration of Life". Women and men representing churches around the world shared in the leadership of this service; a memorable sermon was preached by a woman; as symbols of life from various cultures were presented at the altar, Sithembiso Nyoni, a young woman from Zimbabwe, handed her seven-month old baby daughter to Philip Potter, an unplanned act which produced a spontaneous applause and became a widely-used visual image of the assembly.

Pauline Webb used metaphors based on women's experience to great effect in her sermon:

Jesus compared his disciples to a pregnant woman. While the world waits hopefully she must agonize and labour to bring to birth the life hidden within her. We live in a world pregnant with his coming kingdom. We share the travail and the labour and the sweat of bringing to birth that new age of the son of God, to whom, as the writer of the epistle puts it, the spirit, the water and the blood bear witness.³⁸³

Almost as though she had established a precedent, other women speakers also brought their experiences of childbirth and motherhood into their reflections

³⁸¹ *ibid.*, 76.

³⁸² Gnanadason, "Women at the VI Assembly", 6.

³⁸³ Webb, "The Word of Life", 348-9.

on life and faith, with the result that "something of the typical female experience was reflected in their words and this experience was brought right into the Church".³⁸⁴ This uplifting of distinctively female experience was something new at an assembly, as indeed was the presence of young children.

Marga Bührig, who had been present at every assembly since the second commented that at Vancouver women made a difference to the style of the assembly which was "more colourful, warmer, more lively, more down-to-earth, more original." For Bührig, this "corresponded to the image of a participatory church"³⁸⁵ more than the previous assemblies had. Jean Skuse, who had been a delegate at Nairobi, thought the big difference at Vancouver was "the *total* participation of women - in the Pre-Assembly meeting, in the presentation of themes, in issue group leadership, in worship. Women have been more visible than at Nairobi."³⁸⁶ Two Dutch commentators had different reactions, one holding that women's contributions were often made on the periphery of the assembly and that the results of the central committee elections were disappointing, while the other was more positive, although she questioned whether women's participation would lead to any practical results.³⁸⁷

The newly-elected women presidents gave a summary highlighting aspects of women's participation at the Assembly:

We have been able to provide significant leadership at the Assembly. We have also been able to participate effectively in its total life:

³⁸⁴ Bührig, "Moving on the Right Track", 165.

³⁸⁵ Bührig, *Woman Invisible*, 113-4. See also Bührig, "Frauen in der Ökumene", 103-6.

³⁸⁶ Quoted in Crawford, "From Nairobi to Vancouver", 29.

³⁸⁷ Halkes, "Frauen in der ökumenischen Bewegung", 271-2.

as for example, through the witness given by Darlene Keju-Johnson of Marshall Islands; she is afraid to have children because of the effects, on the living and the unborn, of the nuclear testing and dumping of nuclear waste in the Pacific;

or the testimony of Sithembiso Nyoni, from Zimbabwe, when she presented her seven-month old baby daughter as a symbol of life;

-or as when the native Canadian women brought home to all the legitimate concerns for the rights of indigenous peoples;

or through the presentations made by Dorothee Sölle, of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Helen Caldicott, from Australia, urging the Assembly participants to join the struggle for world peace;

or through the ideal of a prayerful life mediated by Mother Euphrasia, of Roumania;

or, at a different level, through the thoughtful generosity of the Canadian women who hosted the Assembly participants at *The Well*, a meeting place for women; or through the sensitive participation of women in the worship life the Assembly. Pauline Webb, of the United Kingdom, preached a powerful sermon at the opening service. There were many others who preached, prayed, sang, read the lessons and helped with the celebration of the eucharist. Among us was the first woman bishop, Marjorie Matthews from the USA. We have worked towards a renewed community of women and men in the church. We are encouraged by the greater readiness of both women and men to work in that direction and towards that end.³⁸⁸

Clearly women *were* more visible at Vancouver and had a higher level of participation than at any previous assembly. This greater participation was not affirmed by all and von Wartenberg wrote of some who "felt that the participation of women was too powerful and therefore threatening".³⁸⁹ Although women were less than one-third of the delegates and formed only about one-third of the assembly leadership there were "many men and women who felt that even this was too much".³⁹⁰

It is not easy to understand why some thought women "dominated" the assembly when they were in fact outnumbered by men in every category of

³⁸⁸ "A Letter to Assembly Participants Signed by the Three Women Presidents", WCW 16 (December 1983), 2.

³⁸⁹ WCW 17 (February 1984), 31.

participation. Women speakers may have spoken "with such clarity and careful passion that no one could wonder what points they were making", giving "vivid examples of the particularity of women's perspectives",³⁹¹ but they were still a minority of the speakers. Given the lack of information about those who thought women "dominated" one may imagine that they came from ecclesial and cultural contexts in which women's participation was seriously limited. There is also some research which suggests that in even more "liberal" contexts women are seen to be "dominating" if they get more than one-third of the available resources of time, money, attention, or anything else.³⁹² In any case, underlying the mixed reactions to women's participation at the assembly there were clearly different understandings of what women's participation *ought* to be.

Conclusions

At the sixth assembly women participated actively in a variety of ways, including in leadership. In spite of all efforts on the part of the WCC the proportion of women delegates was still less than one-third, and their representation on the new central committee was even less. In the discussion and debate on participation the category of "women" was usually linked with other under-represented groups (youth, the disabled and laity) in a way which seemed to ignore that these other categories themselves consisted of both women and men.

³⁹⁰ von Wartenberg, "Vancouver: A Model", 163.

³⁹¹ Bettenhausen, "Women and Youth", 97.

³⁹² See Sally Cline and Dale Spender, *Reflecting Men at Twice Their Natural Size* ([London]: Fontana/Collins, 1988). "The rule of no more than one third" is described p. 26.

While some thought that the question of women's participation would be solved once more women were in positions of church leadership, others wished to see the churches represented by others than the official leaders, male or female.

The overall impression given in the documents from the assembly is that, although women may have participated more at Vancouver than at Nairobi, issues of specific concern to women received less attention. In spite of the PAWM and two organised meetings of women during the assembly (plus other spontaneous meetings), in spite of the plenary presentations given by women and women's leadership at many points, no clear "women's voice" emerged at Vancouver. "Women's perspectives" were either no different from men's perspectives, or else did not emerge very clearly in most of the reports, while there were no opportunities within the assembly itself to focus on specific women's concerns. This in fact happened at "The Well" and it may be that the perception that women dominated the assembly was due in part to the publicity given to "The Well" and to other "unofficial" contributions by women in the daily newspaper, *Canvas*.

Given the diversity of women at the assembly it would be unrealistic to expect them to share any one perspective or to agree on every issue. Yet through the PAWM a solidarity and sense of "global sisterhood" had developed even though at the assembly itself other priorities - regional, confessional and political - often dominated. The weakness of the PAWM was that it did not result in any message, position paper or recommendations for the assembly. This was never intended for the meeting was from the beginning oriented towards people and process and "the short three-day meeting did not reach a stage where mature

common statements could have been made easily, and it would have been a forced effort to do so".³⁹³ But the lack of a common statement, aim or agenda meant that within the assembly women's contribution was diffuse rather than focused, individual rather than collective.

A major result of women's participation at the Nairobi assembly had been the affirmation of the Community of Women and Men in the Church study as an official WCC programme. In spite of the great interest in this study in the period between the two assemblies and its significant impact within the WCC it made little impact on the sixth assembly. Although it was affirmed in general terms on a number of occasions its specific findings and recommendations were not discussed. The obvious place for this to have happened would have been at the PAWM where the women's constituency was present, and in the issue group on "Taking Steps Towards Unity" where the Faith and Order constituency was represented. For Faith and Order the focus was on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, which was even affirmed specifically in the assembly message.³⁹⁴ The insights and findings of the CWMC study were not pursued in this group, and even the controversial question of ordination of women, with all its implications for the unity of the churches, was not discussed.

The Sheffield principle of equal participation of women and men which had finally been accepted by the central committee as a goal to which the WCC should move dropped almost completely out of sight at Vancouver, while the integration

³⁹³ von Wartenberg, "Vancouver: A Model", 159.

³⁹⁴ Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 2.

of "concerns and perspectives of women" in all the work of the WCC was established as one of the priorities for the post-Vancouver years. This priority clearly recognised that women's concerns and perspectives might be different from those of men and that women's participation should not be restricted to a "women's corner" or to specific "women's issues". Rather, all issues were to be issues for women and men. Although women had been advocating this in various ways since the first assembly in 1948, this was the first time that such integration had been articulated as a *policy* of the WCC. If this policy were successfully implemented it would result in major changes in women's participation in the WCC.

CHAPTER 8

FROM VANCOUVER TO CANBERRA: 1983 - 1991

The period between the sixth and seventh assemblies of the WCC saw winds of change sweeping over the world, particularly in Eastern Europe and South Africa. The end of the "Cold War" did not however usher in a new era of peace for the Gulf War broke out in January 1991 just three weeks before the seventh assembly convened. In addressing the assembly WCC secretary Emilio Castro commented that in spite of far-reaching changes in the world situation "hunger and poverty continue to be the lot of great majorities of the world's population. People live in despair, or resort to revolt and protest. Religious and ethnic conflicts, intolerance and violence are as much in evidence as ever before".¹

Castro noted that "the vitality of the Christian community has shifted towards the southern continents"² and "that in a context of increasing religious pluralism interfaith coexistence is a reality of our life everywhere."³ Among the signs of hope which he discerned were "the dynamism of young people" and "the unheard of progress of modern science and technology."⁴ Another sign of hope was "the revolution - we can use no lesser word - that calls for the recognition of the gifts that God has given equally to women and men and demands that these

¹ *Signs of the Spirit: Official report Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991*, ed. Michael Kinnamon (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 150.

² *ibid.*, 151.

³ *ibid.*, 141.

⁴ *ibid.*, 150, 151.

gifts should have full opportunity to be used in the life of society and in the church".⁵

In July 1985 the UN Decade for Women came to an end with a world conference and a Forum for NGOs held in Nairobi, at both of which assessments were made of the progress made and the obstacles met by women during the Decade. This was to have consequences for the WCC.

In 1988 the WCC celebrated the fortieth anniversary of its founding with special events at the central committee meeting in Hanover, ceremonies in Amsterdam and Geneva, and the publication of a special edition of *The Ecumenical Review*.⁶ Prior to this, at the end of 1984, Dr Philip Potter retired after serving the WCC for twenty-three years, the last twelve as its general secretary. His successor, Dr Emilio Castro, a Methodist from Uruguay with a long and varied involvement in church and ecumenical affairs, served as general secretary until after the seventh assembly. In thanking the central committee immediately after his election Castro paid tribute to Potter, noting in particular that under his direction, "the WCC had expanded through participation by women, youth and people who had felt themselves marginalised".⁷

A number of former ecumenical leaders died during this period, among them the first two general secretaries, William Visser 't Hooft and Eugene Carson Blake. Among the women leaders who died were Cynthia Wedel, WCC president 1975-83, and Kathleen Bliss. Within the world-wide church significant events

⁵ *ibid.*, 150.

⁶ *Commemorating Amsterdam 1948 : 40 Years of the World Council of Churches. The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988).

⁷ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 9-18 July 1984, (Geneva: WCC, 1984), 71.*

included the Extraordinary Synod of the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in 1985, twenty years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council; the publication in 1985 of the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* in which Pope John Paul II meditated on the dignity and vocation of women; the consecration in 1989 of Barbara Harris as the first woman bishop in the Anglican Communion.

Sixteen churches joined the WCC during this period, making a total of 317 member churches. According to Castro there was increased cooperation between the churches but "the processes of unity [were] slowing down", with divisions more and more accepted as inevitable.⁸ In 1989 the WCC began a process of programmatic reorganisation and a process of consultation on the common understanding of the WCC and its relation to its member churches (and non-member churches). These processes continued beyond the seventh assembly.

The sixth assembly at Vancouver had adopted five interdependent guidelines for the programmatic work of the WCC, placing them in the context of a vision of growth, of "growing more and more into Jesus Christ, the Life of the World".⁹ The Assembly also identified a number of priority areas.¹⁰ Of these guidelines and priorities two were particularly relevant to women. One priority was identified as:

The development of a community of healing and sharing within the WCC and the member churches where women, men, young people and children, able and disabled, clergy and laity, *participate fully* and minister to one another. Participation implies encounter and sharing with others, working and making decisions together in styles that enhance inclusiveness... [F]uture working groups, commissions, and committees appointed by the WCC Central Committee should, as far as possible, have a composition of at least the proportion of women and young people present at the Assembly. Steps should

⁸ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 165.

⁹ Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 250. For the guidelines see *ibid.*, 251-2.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 252-6.

also be taken to ensure an increase in the number of women appointed to WCC executive staff positions.¹¹

A second priority was that "the *concerns and perspectives of women* should become integral to the work of all WCC Units and Sub-units. Programmes and policies of the Council should appropriate and translate the insights gained from the study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church".¹²

Guided by the Vancouver guidelines and priority areas the WCC carried out a vast range of programmatic work, studies, conferences, consultations, and publications before the next assembly in Canberra.¹³ Many of these activities reflected the above two priorities and will be discussed in this chapter, together with the major Faith and Order studies, the work of the Sub-unit on Women, and relevant discussions and decisions of the central and executive committees. The three women presidents (Barrow, Bührig and Wilson), members of the executive committee (Abayasekera, Koddu, Love and Skuse), together with central committee vice-moderator Sylvia Talbot and the thirty or so other women members of the central committee and with the leadership of women's desk director Bärbel von Wartenberg, developed strategies to achieve more influence. Gathering a day or two before a meeting they would identify issues which they wished to place on the agenda. Then,

We planned who would make the motions to place the missing items on the agenda, who would second the motion, and who would get to the microphone to sustain the debate. The effect of this solidarity has been to give some women the courage to say what they think, even at the expense of contradicting or disagreeing with the male superiors of their churches, and to make some

¹¹ *ibid.*, 255. Original emphasis.

¹² *ibid.*, 256. Original emphasis.

¹³ See Thomas F Best, ed., *Vancouver to Canberra 1983-1990 : Report of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches to the Seventh Assembly*, (Geneva: WCC, 1990) for a full account.

changes in the agenda so that matters affecting church women world-wide can be creatively dealt with by the World Council of Churches.¹⁴

Unit II: Justice and Service

Unit II was created to respond to the needs of the world by assisting the churches in their struggles against poverty, injustice and oppression and in their ministry of service and aid to those in need. By 1983 the unit was moderated by a woman, central committee member Dr Janice Love, and included five sub-units: the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA); the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service (CICARWS); the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR); the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD); and the Christian Medical Commission (CMC). The work of these five sub-units was supplemented by several unit-wide programmes including, after Vancouver, the new programme on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) mandated by the assembly (see below), which provided a framework for co-ordination and co-operation between the sub-units. Unit II and its sub-units responded seriously to the call from the assembly to make the "concerns and perspectives of women" integral to their work, a call which was reinforced at two major WCC consultations which were of particular concern to Unit II: a world consultation on interchurch aid, refugee and world service in 1986, and a world consultation on ecumenical sharing of resources in 1987.

In November 1986 about 300 people gathered in Larnaca, Cyprus, to discuss the future of interchurch aid, refugee and world service under the consultation

¹⁴ Lois Wilson, *Turning the World Upside Down: A Memoir*, (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1989), 142.

theme "Diakonia 2000: Called to be Neighbours".¹⁵ The invited participants included church leaders, community organizers, agency representatives and WCC staff. Although only about 25% of the participants were women, women played an active role, meeting at times as a separate group. One of the themes which emerged was that women (and youth) "must be given more responsibility in directing the churches' diaconal ministry".¹⁶ In response to this challenge and to the Vancouver priority, the sub-units in Unit III increasingly worked together to address issues of concern to women. Thus for example work was done on economic justice for women, women's health, women under racism, and refugee women. Women's needs and resources were no longer assumed to be the same as those of men.

A second important consultation took place in El Escorial, Spain, in October 1987, on the theme "Koinonia - Sharing Life in a World Community". There were 229 participants at El Escorial, the majority of whom were delegates appointed by churches, ecumenical councils and agencies, networks and related organisations. Women were only 30% of the participants but according to the consultation report "the role the women participants played in the consultation went far beyond their numerical strength. They assumed 50% of the tasks of group leaders, recorders, drafters, celebrants etc."¹⁷ One of the two keynote speeches was given by Sithembiso Nyoni (Zimbabwe) who had been prominent at the Vancouver assembly and Brigalia Bam was present as a resource person.

¹⁵ See Klaus Poser, ed., *Diakonia 2000 : Called to be Neighbours. Official Report WCC World Consultation, Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service Larnaca, 1986*, (Geneva: WCC, 1987).

¹⁶ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 146.

The focus of the consultation was the ecumenical sharing of resources and from the beginning the women participants insisted that "the equal sharing of women and men in the community is the basis for all other forms of sharing".¹⁸ They met frequently as a group and "their determined action as individuals and as a group had a decisive impact".¹⁹ Among the "Guidelines for Sharing" approved by the consultation was one which stated that at all levels - local, national/regional and international - those bodies responsible for the ecumenical sharing of resources "should recognise and work towards the goal of an equitable representation of 50 percent women...in all decision-making structures over the next five years".²⁰ The women participants also drafted their own set of comprehensive recommendations, introduced by a statement linking "the plight of women and the patriarchal interpretation of the Bible" and a "men's theology [which] perpetuates a system where women are considered 'less than'".²¹ Their recommendations called for women's full participation by 50% representation "in all decision making and consultative structures set up or changed as a result of this consultation" and also for 50% of ecumenical resources for the next five years to be used for "programmes and activities empowering women and their communities".²² The affirmation by the whole consultation of the

¹⁷ Huibert van Beek, ed., *Sharing Life. Official Report of the World Consultation on Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community. El Escorial, Spain, October 1987* (Geneva: WCC, 1989), 112.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, viii.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*, 30.

²¹ *ibid.*, 32.

²² *ibid.*, 32-33.

recommendations from the women's group was a result which had not been foreseen or planned, and which surpassed the expectations of many participants.²³

In 1988 the WCC central committee received the report of the El Escorial consultation and considered the "Guidelines for Sharing" with a view to recommending their implementation by the WCC and its member churches. There was some debate as to whether the women's recommendations should be included with the "Guidelines", as some thought they had a different (and lesser) status. Carol Abel, one of the central committee members who had been at El Escorial, argued that the consultation had considered these recommendations "of paramount importance" and in the end both the "Guidelines" and the separate recommendations on women were received and affirmed by the central committee.²⁴ The various WCC commissions and working groups were instructed to work out the implications for their respective sub-units.²⁵

Although as formulated at El Escorial the goal of 50% representation of women in decision-making structures was directed towards those bodies with responsibility for ecumenical sharing of resources it was soon applied in other ecumenical contexts, often in conjunction with the goal of 50% participation affirmed by the central committee at Dresden in 1981. Within the WCC this recommendation from El Escorial was used to support claims for the increased participation of women on *all* decision-making bodies.

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

²³ ibid., viii.

²⁴ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Ninth Meeting, Hanover, Federal Republic of Germany, 10-20 August 1988* (Geneva: WCC, 1989), 52. See *ibid.*, 196-202 for the "Guidelines on Sharing" and "Recommendations on Women and Youth".

Both the above title and its initials derive from one of the WCC programme priorities initiated at the Vancouver assembly, namely, "to engage member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation".²⁶ Following the assembly JPIC developed both as a specific programme within the WCC Unit II and as a process which expanded to include non-member churches (including the RCC), regional and national ecumenical organisations, and issue-oriented movements. During the 1980s a number of regional, national, ecumenical and confessional meetings were held with JPIC as their focus and substantial theological contributions were made from a number of perspectives. A major event was the WCC-sponsored world convocation on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, 5-12 March 1990, and attended by almost one thousand people. The convocation issued a set of ten faith-affirmations stating commonly held basic beliefs together with "an act of covenanting" on justice, peace and the integrity of creation interwoven with "concretizations" detailing a number of specific steps to be undertaken by those committing themselves to covenant relationships.²⁷

The JPIC process was not without difficulties and reactions to the Seoul convocation were mixed. Interpretations of the ecumenical significance of the convocation varied "from the chaos that was Seoul to the ecumenical

²⁵ ibid., 53.

²⁶ Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 255.

²⁷ See D Preman Niles, comp., *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (Geneva: WCC, 1992). This contains the final document from the convocation and a number of essays written by persons who were involved in the process. It is not a full report of the convocation, such a report having not been published because of the lack of both personnel and funds. An overview of the JPIC process is given in D. Preman Niles, "Justice, Peace and the

breakthrough at Seoul".²⁸ In reporting to the WCC central committee, meeting in 1990 just ten days after the convocation, Unit II moderator Dr Janice Love referred to JPIC as "at the heart of an ecumenical vision for the next millennium".²⁹ The central committee commended the convocation final document to the churches for their study and action and re-affirmed the long-term commitment of the WCC to the JPIC process up to and beyond the seventh assembly.³⁰ In 1991 the seventh assembly reflected the concerns of JPIC in all its section reports and the continuation of JPIC, together with the unity of the church and the wholeness of mission, was affirmed by the programme policy committee as one of the three major goals of the WCC.³¹ Thus between the Vancouver and Canberra assemblies JPIC became established as a primary emphasis in the work of the World Council of Churches.

Women and the JPIC Process

Many women in many parts of the world were deeply involved in the JPIC process and committed to its goals. Within the WCC three women played important roles and were powerful advocates for JPIC. Dr Marga Bührig, one of the WCC presidents, was appointed by the executive committee in March 1988 as moderator of the group which was given responsibility for planning the JPIC process and for organising the world convocation. Executive committee member Dr Margot Kässmann was also a member of this preparatory group. Central

Integrity of Creation" in *DEM*, 557-9. See also Janice Love, "JPIC and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement," *ER* 43 (1991), 107-119.

²⁸ Niles, *Between the Flood and the Rainbow*, 6.

²⁹ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Minutes of the Forty-First Meeting. Geneva, Switzerland, 25-30 March 1990* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 98.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 97-99.

³¹ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 186-187.

committee member Dr Janice Love was moderator of WCC Unit II the oversight body for JPIC within the WCC, and was also one of the four moderators of the Seoul convocation.³²

JPIC was supposed to be an overall concern of the WCC, one to which all units and sub-units would relate their work. While some sub-units did in fact endeavour to do so, "others for the most part went about their business because they had enough on their own agenda".³³ The Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society was one which took the JPIC process seriously and made specific efforts to reflect on and contribute to the theme of JPIC from women's perspectives. At a meeting in January 1984 the working group of the Sub-unit designated justice, peace and the integrity of creation as one of three programme emphases (the other two being participation and women doing theology and sharing spirituality).³⁴ During the five years (1986-1990) before the Seoul convocation over 600 women participated in regional and sub-regional JPIC meetings sponsored by the Sub-unit.³⁵ Through these meetings:

Women in the struggle for justice, women engaged in peace movements, women committed to caring for creation, and women doing theology were brought together to share their stories of pain and struggle, their hopes and aspirations to build a better world. Together they explored feasible actions for implementation at national/regional level as they discovered their power and

³² See Marga Bührig, "The World Convocation: Problems, Achievements", in Niles, *Between the Flood and the Rainbow*, 17-25, and Margot Kässmann, "The Process Leading to Seoul and Canberra: Points of Strength and Weakness", *ibid.*, 8-16, for critical assessments by these women.

³³ Kässmann, "The Process Leading to Seoul and Canberra", 13.

³⁴ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 227. The link between these three emphases was understood to be the empowerment of women and the focus on women's perspectives.

³⁵ Priscilla Padolina, "Women in the JPIC Process: Breaking the Silence", in Niles, *Between the Flood and the Rainbow*, 67. See Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 229-230 for a list of these meetings and some of the key issues which emerged. *Women in a Changing World* 24 (November 1987) is a special issue on JPIC with papers, case studies, recommendations and a letter from the Asian regional consultation held in December 1986.

strength. It has also paved the way to build a common bonding of sisterhood and solidarity around the world.³⁶

The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998)

was approved by the central committee in January 1987 as "a long-term framework for actions in solidarity with women".³⁷ The third of its five objectives, as defined by the central and executive committees (March and August 1988), was "to give visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the work and struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation".³⁸ While this objective clearly linked the Ecumenical Decade with the JPIC process the relationship between the two was not clearly spelled out and "within the structures of the WCC, the close collaboration between the JPIC advisory group and the Decade did not materialize as had been hoped".³⁹ Although women participated with enthusiasm in the JPIC process, it is questionable how far their participation was in fact made visible within the process and to what extent their perspectives were retained in the final document from Seoul.

An article published six months prior to the Seoul Convocation was highly critical of the JPIC preparatory document, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology: Affirmations on Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation". Writing from an avowedly feminist perspective, co-authors Jane Carey Peck and Jeanne Gallo criticised the document on the grounds that just as women and women's issues "continue to be marginal or invisible in ecumenical ethics or theology" so too:

Women and issues posed by women [are not] at the centre of the JPIC discussion and planning but, when included, continue to be one element among many ... In preparatory work, women's contributions are added as an element -

³⁶ Priscilla Padolina, "Women in the JPIC Process", 67.

³⁷ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 232.

³⁸ *ibid*, 233.

³⁹ Anna-Karin Hammar, "The Decade: Its Links to JPIC", *ER* 46 (1994), 170.

not sought, referred to, drawn upon, developed, as a resource for *integrating* the three aspects of JPIC ... Male perspectives ... continue to be dominant in the JPIC process.⁴⁰

Peck and Gallo argued that the WCC's orientation to solidarity with the poor and oppressed was inadequate because it did not recognise the reality that the majority of the poor and the poorest of the poor are women. In their view,

If the shift in Council's social change orientation from appealing to the powerful to empowering and heeding the oppressed were carried to its logical conclusion, the JPIC process should focus on those who are most oppressed, the poorest of the poor around the world : women. JPIC should centre on women and women's articulation of their issues, their perception of the root causes of suffering and their visions of change and hope.⁴¹

They argued for a "results test", asking "What are the results for the poor and oppressed, life for the poorest and most oppressed women before and after the process? ... Even if JPIC solves certain problems, how does it really address the question of the most poor, who are women?"⁴²

Peck and Gallo thought women should not be merely "add ons" or marginals in the ecumenical process but partners and "their participation should make a difference".⁴³ This was surely the hope of the Sub-unit on Women, of those who attended the women's regional meetings, and of the more than 200 women at the JPIC women's forum held immediately prior to the convocation in order to encourage women's full participation in its deliberations and decisions. The reality was somewhat different.

⁴⁰ Jane Carey Peck and Jeanne Gallo "JPIC: A Critique from a Feminist Perspective", *ER* 46 (1989) 575-6. Original emphasis.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 577.

⁴² *ibid.*, 581.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 580.

Although the central committee in 1987 had accepted a recommendation that

the goal of equal participation between women and men, affirmed by the central committee at Dresden in 1981, "be made visible at the JPIC convocation ... by ensuring that 50 percent of the participants be women, including young women, as the subject matter warrants it",⁴⁴ in the end, in spite of encouragement from the WCC, women were around 37% of the participants, far from the "critical mass" hoped for by Peck and Gallo. Some women were prominent in leadership, notably Marga Bührig and Janice Love, who acted as two of four co-moderators, with Bührig also preaching at the opening service. Women's voices were heard particularly in the "testimonies of suffering" given within a liturgical context on the second day.⁴⁵ The same day Bishop Barbara Harris (USA, Episcopal), the first Anglican woman bishop, preached but many Eastern and Oriental Orthodox did not attend as "a sign of protest at the inclusion of a female bishop as a main speaker".⁴⁶ Bührig herself, while affirming that "women were fairly well represented at all levels of the meeting and in all offices", acknowledged that "it did not prove possible to enable women, and also young people, to contribute their very specific experiences as penetratingly as had been intended. They were often referred to passively in the phrase "especially women and children". Moreover, "it

⁴⁴ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Minutes of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting. Geneva, Switzerland, 16-24 January 1987* (Geneva: WCC, 1987), 72.

⁴⁵ Zora Azirou, Anne Pattel-Gray and Sister Naoku Iyori spoke, respectively, on the situation of Algerian migrants in France, aborigines in Australia and prostitutes in the Philippines.

⁴⁶ "Bishop: Hypocritical Church needs to Confess Its Sins", *EPS* 16-20 March 1990 (90.03.60).

was possible only to a limited extent to include their demands as an integral part at all stages".⁴⁷

The "Final Document" from Seoul contains ten affirmations which were accepted by an overwhelming majority and which have been described as "the foundations of a social-ethical catechism".⁴⁸ In these the convocation affirmed:

- that all exercise of power is accountable to God
- God's option for the poor
- the equal value of all races and peoples
- that male and female are created in the image of God
- that truth is at the foundation of a community of free people
- the peace of Jesus Christ
- the creation as beloved of God
- that the earth is the Lord's
- the dignity and commitment of the younger generation
- that human rights are given by God.⁴⁹

The fourth affirmation dealt specifically with "male and female" although the focus was on women rather than on men. Participants affirmed "the creative power given to women to stand for life wherever there is death", pledged themselves to resist "structures of patriarchy which perpetuate violence against women", and to resist "all structures of dominance which exclude the theological and spiritual contributions of women and deny their participation in decision-making processes in church and society". Finally, they committed themselves "to seek ways of realising a new community of women and men".⁵⁰ The act of covenanting, undertaken by participants at Seoul and later recommended by the

⁴⁷ Bührig's comment makes it clear that women at Seoul, in spite of being in a minority, did have "demands" which they wanted to be integrated into the whole, though unfortunately it is not so clear what these "demands" were.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁹ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra* 150. This summarises the text. For the complete affirmations see Niles, *Between the Flood and the Rainbow*, 168-176.

⁵⁰ Niles, *Between the Flood and the Rainbow*, 71.

WCC to churches and other groups was designed "to go beyond the general renewal of commitment which is part of these affirmations [and to] lead to concrete action".⁵¹ Concrete commitments were made to work together in four selected areas:

- for a just economic order and for liberation from the bondage of foreign debt.
- for the true security of all nations and people;
- for building a culture that can live in harmony with creation's integrity;
- for the eradication of racism and discrimination on national and international levels for all people.⁵²

Throughout the "concretizations" of these commitments there were a number of specific references to women (often linked with references to children) and sexism was named as one form of domination which causes suffering. But while the fourth concretization named "the sin of racism" and called for its eradication it is striking that there was no such specific denunciation of sexism.

In fact the planning committee had foreseen three covenants related to the threefold theme - one on economic justice, one on peace and peacemaking, and one on care for the environment - but "at the convocation itself many participants worked for the inclusion of a fourth - on racism".⁵³ This may well have been because delegates from the "third world" were in the majority. Women, on the other hand (from all worlds) were a minority. One can only wonder if a fifth covenant - on sexism - would have been added if more women had been present.⁵⁴ As it was, the affirmations and commitments made at Seoul, while giving some

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 177.

⁵² *ibid.*, 177-8.

⁵³ Hammar, "The Decade: Its Links to JPIC", 167.

recognition to women and women's issues, continued the long ecumenical tradition

of treating these as marginal, rather than central. If in the JPIC process women had indeed "broken their silence",⁵⁵ at Seoul their voices were not loud enough to influence the convocation to any great extent.

World Mission and Evangelism Conference

The WCC conference on world mission and evangelism held in San Antonio, Texas, in May 1989 had as its theme "Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way". Organised by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), this conference brought together representatives of churches, mission agencies and national and regional bodies concerned with Christian mission; church leaders, representatives of local churches, and those serving on mission frontiers. CWME established the goal of 50% women participants but in the end, of the 275 official delegates, only 44% were women. When all other participant categories were included women were around 30% of the 649 total.⁵⁶ The conference report noted "the intensity of resistance by some to the attempt to establish specific quotas of women and youth"⁵⁷ but the result was still a more inclusive and broadly representative gathering than at the CWME conference held in Melbourne in 1980.

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, 167f. for the text of such a covenant which was proposed at a national ecumenical consultation on JPIC held in Sweden in August 1992.

⁵⁵ Padolina, "Women in the JPIC Process", 71.

⁵⁶ See Frederick R. Wilson, ed., *The San Antonio Report. Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 6-7.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 6.

The major work of the conference was done in four sections and, following a pattern which was becoming well-established, women participants met regularly to ensure that their concerns were expressed during this intensive work of the conference. It was in discussion of the sub-theme "Stewardship of the earth and human cultures" in Section III that the issue of discrimination against women was raised most prominently. The section report stated that "exclusion and subjugation on grounds of sexual difference are practised to at least some extent in almost every country", attributing the "general acceptance of the supposedly inferior stakes of female members of a given community" to "a whole network of cultural factors handed down through the centuries".⁵⁸ It continued:

Religious beliefs condition the minds of most people towards unquestioningly accepting and even glorifying the dormant, dependent and docile status ascribed to women, thus contributing towards cementing and perpetuating this form of exclusion and subjugation. Ordination of women was taken as an example in this regard.⁵⁹

It is hardly surprising, given the ecumenical sensitivity over the issue of ordination of women and the strong language of this statement, that it was not unanimously accepted. While the denial of ordination to women by some churches was "generally held to be discriminatory" there were "some voices [which] pleaded for a view that allows for justification of such denial on theological grounds".⁶⁰ Despite these voices the WCC was requested to include the question of the ordination of women in the agenda for the Canberra assembly

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 65.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 66.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

in 1991 and the section also affirmed "the endeavour to find an inclusive language".⁶¹

Throughout the four section reports and in the testimonies offered by women in one of the plenary sessions the emphasis was on women as suffering and oppressed, victims of male-domination and injustices of many kinds. CWME director Eugene Stockwell in his plenary address on "Mission Issues for Today and

Tomorrow" referred to this discrimination against women as an important example of the conflict between culture and gospel, stating that "a more profound understanding of the relationship of the Christian gospel and culture should lead us towards greater justice for women in both society and the church".⁶² He referred to the unwillingness of churches to include women in their delegations to the conference, saying "justifications offered for this unwillingness abound, but the fact remains. The issues of gospel and culture are not far from us; we sense their impact right here".⁶³

These issues were highlighted in a statement which Orthodox participants expressed some of their concerns.⁶⁴ (See Appendix IV for the text.) (There were 53 Orthodox delegates and 27 present in other capacities, making a total of 80 or just over 12%). Of the five concerns which they mentioned, one dealt with inclusive language and another with the ordination of women, both of which were categorically rejected:

⁶¹ *ibid.*, 66-67.

⁶² *ibid.*, 124.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ See "An Orthodox Response to the WCC Conference on Mission and Evangelism", *ibid.*, 185-6.

We cannot accept any tampering with the language of the Bible or any attempts to rewrite it, to make it conform to the beliefs or ideology of any particular culture, denomination or movement. While the issue of the fuller participation of women in the life of the church should be a subject of study in the World Council of Churches, their ordination to priesthood is not, for us, subject to debate, since it is contrary to the Christology, ecclesiology, Tradition and practice of the early church.⁶⁵

After this statement was presented in one of the final plenaries, an ordained woman from the Reformed tradition expressed her feeling of rejection and hurt, to which an Orthodox bishop replied:

We have simply tried to express our faith. Therefore, we are very upset if anyone has been hurt...I wish to clarify that any woman who is ordained in her own church has all our respect. If the church accepts this practice, we respect it.⁶⁶

According to Orthodox theologian Elisabeth Behr-Sigel this incident at San Antonio is significant because it highlights "the embarrassing situation of Orthodox officials" who, while rejecting any questioning of their position, "still do not want to break the bonds uniting them to the Churches that have instituted the ministry of women". The "ambiguous double-talk of the Coptic bishop" reflects this impasse, just as the whole incident illustrates "the inability...of representatives of the Orthodox Churches and of those Churches that practice the ordination of women to hear each other's voices".⁶⁷

The San Antonio conference developed a number of theological and missiological insights with many implications for the life and mission of the churches. It was the most representative and inclusive of the world mission

⁶⁵ ibid.

⁶⁶ ibid., 186. The comment was made by Bishop Antonius Markos, a member of the Coptic Orthodox Church (Kenya), who presented the original statement on behalf of the whole Orthodox delegation (Eastern and Oriental).

conferences held under the auspices of the WCC, with 44% of the delegates being women, 19% being Orthodox, 14% youth, and 70% from the "Two-Thirds World". Not only were women present in greater numbers than at previous CWME conferences; they also made a distinctive contribution during one plenary in which they challenged other participants to commitment to solidarity with women in specific regional contexts. This challenge would however have been unnecessary if "many issues of vital importance for the wholeness of women everywhere in the world" had not been overlooked.⁶⁸ Moreover, the increased numerical participation of women was achieved in the face of resistance from some churches, and fell short of the 50% goal established by CWME. The ordination of women and attempts to make biblical language more inclusive of women caused divisions between Orthodox participants and others.

Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women

In July 1985 some 17,000 women from all over the world gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, to mark the end of the UN Decade on Women. About 3,000 were delegates to the UN World Conference on Women but the majority were there to participate in Forum '85, a parallel meeting of NGOs. Both conferences shared the theme "Equality, Development, Peace". The WCC, in collaboration with its international network of Christian women, was heavily involved in the Forum

⁶⁷ Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, "The Ordination of Women: An Ecumenical Problem", *Theology* 97 (1994), 9.

⁶⁸ Wilson, *The San Antonio Report*, 173. For the text of their challenge, "In Solidarity with Women in Struggle", see *ibid.*, 173-177.

which was convened by Dame Nita Barrow, one of the WCC presidents. The Sub-unit on Women organised several workshops, exhibits, and panel discussions.⁶⁹

In March 1985 the general secretary wrote to all WCC member churches, drawing their attention to the forthcoming UN meetings. Castro affirmed the role of the WCC in reminding churches of "the need for greater sensitivity and awareness related to women's role in the Christian community", citing the 1974 conference on "Sexism in the 1970s", the CWMC study, and the sixth assembly, but also noted that, in spite of many achievements during the UN Decade, "the developments show that we are far from giving women equal status and opportunities and that their life conditions have deteriorated".⁷⁰ Dr Castro asked the churches "to assess self-critically the church's own progress regarding the participation of women in all aspects of the life of the church, in all forms of ministry, including the ordained ministry for those member churches who do ordain women" and called on them "to give increased support to women's organisations' efforts to increase the participation of women at all levels of church life".⁷¹

A message sent from the WCC to the UN World Conference pledged support for the UN in its efforts to promote the rights and dignity of women, affirming the Christian belief that:

Every human being is created in God's image and likeness and cannot be deprived of this divine dignity by sexism, racism and class; neither can the

⁶⁹ See *WCW 20* (November 1985) for a detailed account of WCC involvement in the Forum. This was the first time that there was an organised Christian presence at a Forum during the UN Decade on Women.

⁷⁰ "Letter from the General Secretary to the Member Churches on the UN World Conference to Mark the End of the Decade on Women", *WCW 19* (May 1985), 32-3.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

Christian gospel be used to sanctify or perpetuate existing inequalities and injustices against any human being.⁷²

The message also admitted that:

The churches have often failed to live up to this affirmation of faith and have legitimized and perpetuated women's inferior status in church and society. By doing so, they have not given leadership and prophetic witness to the world and have not acted in solidarity with women in their struggle for equality.⁷³

When the WCC central committee met in 1985, shortly after the UN meetings, a plenary session was devoted to presenting highlights from the NGO Forum and to reflecting on its implications for the member churches. Noting that the general secretary had received no reply to his letter concerning the end of the UN Decade, central committee members expressed the view that "the churches had not been sufficiently aware of the Decade and that in many churches the position of women had not improved in the last ten years" and urged member churches "to eliminate teachings and practices which discriminate against women as a Christian response to the forward looking strategies adopted by the UN Conference".⁷⁴

In response to a recommendation from the central committee the general secretary wrote again to the member churches in September 1985, inviting them send information about their achievements for women during the UN Decade. By March 1986 only two replies had been received and so the Sub-unit on Women sought to elicit responses from its network, both by direct approach to individuals and by an appeal in the Sub-unit newsletter. In this Priscilla Padolina, acting

⁷² "WCC Message to Mark End of UN Women's Decade," *EPS* 7-14 July 1985 (85.07.22).

⁷³ *ibid.*

director of the Sub-unit following the resignation of Bärbel von Wartenberg, stated the WCC's intention of bringing before the churches "the vital need for progress in the area of women's participation in the total life of the church".⁷⁵ In appealing to her readers for information about the situation of women in their churches Padolina wrote:

Women engaged in the struggle for participation in true commitment have long known that the best way to get results is to initiate and follow up actions themselves. Equal participation is a process which will continue over many years, not a state which we expect to achieve in one given moment. But unless we take some measure of the progress - or lack of it - our goals may easily continue to be pushed farther and farther into the future ... That is why we need to assess our present situation and to continue to work for inclusive community.⁷⁶

Not many responses were received, though the women's network sent more than the member churches.⁷⁷ According to those which were received, the "present situation" did not differ very greatly from that described in responses to the 1948 enquiry into the life and work of women in the church, or in the reports from CWMC local study groups in the late 1970s. As the central committee noted when it considered the findings at its meeting in 1987: "On the whole women play traditional low-status roles in the churches. There are very few women in

⁷⁴ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Meeting, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 28 July - 8 August, 1985* (Geneva: WCC, 1985), 57.

⁷⁵ "Forward to the Year 2000: An Appeal to our Readers", *WCW* 21 (April 1986), 11.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ By March 1986 two replies had been received to the general secretary's two letters. By November 1986 the Sub-unit had received 44 replies. See "Churches in Solidarity with Women", in Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society, "Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, Le Centre de Rencontre, Cartigny, Geneva, Switzerland, January 27-31, 1987", TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva.

higher positions...the findings largely pointed to the need to work for greater visibility of women in the churches".⁷⁸

Recognising that the UN Decade "in spite of all its successes did not adequately touch the concerns of church women or challenge the churches to take stock of the position of women in society", the central committee agreed to launch an Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-1998.⁷⁹ The focus of this Ecumenical Decade was to be "on the situation of women in the churches as well as the churches' participation in improving the conditions for women in society".⁸⁰ Following this decision of the central committee steps were taken by WCC staff and the Sub-unit on Women working group to design and publicise the Ecumenical Decade which was officially launched at Easter 1988.

The Ecumenical Decade of Churches on Solidarity with Women was regarded as an "intensification and development" of the CWMC study⁸¹ but was not planned as a study programme. Rather, the WCC invited member churches (and other interested bodies) to "initiate programmes and to participate actively in carrying out the objectives of the Ecumenical Decade".⁸² These objectives were defined as:

- (1) empowering women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their churches and communities; (2) affirming - through shared

⁷⁸ *Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1987, 69.*

⁷⁹ "The idea of a decade we borrowed from Bishop Uwadi of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, who had said during the WCC central committee...in 1985, just after the end of the UN Decade, that he believed the churches needed a women's decade no less than the United Nation". Hammar, "The Decade: Its Links to JPIC", 164.

⁸⁰ *Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1987, 70.*

⁸¹ *Central Committee, Minutes, Hanover, 1988, 106.* See also Mercy Oduyoye, *Who Will Roll the Stone Away? The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 57: "The Decade has the same aim: It follows up on the Community study, in that it is asking for action on a few of the issues raised during that study. The target is the same; men and women of the church together".

⁸² *Central Committee, Minutes, Hanover, 1988, 106.*

leadership and decision making, theology and spirituality - the decisive contributions of women in churches and communities; (3) giving visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the work and struggle for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; (4) enabling the churches to free themselves from racism, sexism and classism, and from teachings and practices that discriminate against women; and (5) encouraging the churches to take actions in solidarity with women.⁸³

The Ecumenical Decade did not focus on women's work in or for the churches, but on the churches' work with or for women. In the words of WCC deputy general secretary Mercy Oduyoye, the WCC called "for a decade of *churches* in solidarity with women; at the end of the day the *churches* will have to give an account of what has been done and what has been achieved and appropriated".⁸⁴

The role of the WCC was firstly to encourage member churches to participate, and secondly to monitor the progress made and to facilitate exchanges of information, tasks for which the Sub-unit on Women was given responsibility. In fact, although the Ecumenical Decade was a Council-wide project focussed on the churches, it was the Sub-unit on Women which was largely responsible for initiating the concept, developing the proposals, publicising the Decade, publishing materials and monitoring the results. Once again, work *for* women was undertaken *by* women.

Although the focus of the Ecumenical Decade was on the *churches*, the call for solidarity with women was also taken seriously within the WCC itself, frequently in response to initiatives of the Sub-unit on Women and women staff.

⁸³ Priscilla Padolina, "Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women", in *DEM*, 339.

⁸⁴ Oduyoye, *Who Will Roll the Stone Away?*, 11. For an account of some of the activities undertaken by churches in the first two years of the Decade see *ibid.*, 14-26.

A significant step was the creation of a staff task force on women (made up of women and men), to monitor the participation of women in the staff structures and to encourage the employment of more women in executive positions. (See below). This staff task force also encouraged the participation of women in commissions and working groups and actively advocated equity in participation at consultations and on the governing bodies of the WCC. Such advocacy had of course long been carried out by the Sub-unit on Women and by individuals on the WCC governing bodies but now for the first time WCC staff played a more active role and "in-house" advocacy for women was not left to the staff of the Sub-unit on Women.

The Decade objectives were also promoted in various ways by the different programme units and sub-units within the WCC, some of which were already seeking to respond to the Vancouver mandate that "the concerns and perspectives of women" should become integral to their work and to the guidelines on equal participation established at El Escorial in 1987. For example, the Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths organised a consultation which brought together fifty women from eight religious traditions in a pioneering interfaith venture, while the Programme on Theological Education committed a significant proportion of its funds to theological education for women.⁸⁵

Within the WCC however the Decade was not entirely uncontroversial. During central committee discussions in 1987 it had been agreed that in planning the Decade "a sensitivity to all the churches, particularly the Orthodox Church, be

⁸⁵ For further examples see *ibid.*, 23-38. Further accounts of sub-unit responses to the Ecumenical Decade can be found in the reports in Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*.

kept in mind".⁸⁶ The Orthodox churches having made it clear that their support for the Decade did not include discussion of the ordination of women this topic was not raised within the WCC in the context of the Decade. (It was however raised and discussed in other contexts, for which see below). In spite of this deliberate avoidance of a difficult ecumenical issue, already at the 1988 meeting of the central committee fear was expressed by an Orthodox speaker lest the Decade become "a period of disintegration for the WCC".⁸⁷ He stated his concern that:

Although the motivation behind the Decade and its general directions were acceptable...other issues that were not widely acceptable were taking too much prominence. The question of language, and in particular, certain English language - related problems were in danger of becoming a theological problem.⁸⁸

It is not clear what stimulated this concern about language but it was expressed by several other Orthodox speakers and as a result the central committee requested "the opening of a theological study on the question of theological language".⁸⁹

The following year there was further debate on the subject, stimulated this time by a reference to "inclusive language" in a report from the assembly worship committee. Archbishop Keshihian stated that:

This is a very important and sensitive issue which needs careful study. The doctrine of the Trinity is found in the constitutional Basis of the WCC, and any attempt to introduce any change in language may harm the fellowship of churches in the Council. Secondly, if the question of language is placed in the context of the churches in solidarity with women, wrong conclusions can be

⁸⁶ *Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1987*, 70. It was evident from debate at this meeting that Orthodox representation had reservations about the proposals for the Decade. See also Leonie Liveris, "The Significance of the Decade for the Orthodox Churches", *ER* 46 (1994), 178-185, for an assessment written at the mid-decade point. Liveris writes that already in 1987 "Orthodox members were clearly anxious about such a positive and critical programme focused on women and their place in the church".

⁸⁷ *Central Committee, Minutes, Hanover, 1988*, 106.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 107.

reached and further complications created. It is a cultural problem and should be dealt with in terms of how we translate our ecumenical terminology into different cultures.⁹⁰

The general secretary responded that the study requested in 1988 had not been carried out because there was not time to do the necessary work before the assembly. For the sake of assembly preparations guidelines for assembly documents and worship materials had been agreed by the executive committee and further discussions would continue after the assembly. The guidelines affirmed that the language of biblical texts, the historic creeds, the Lord's Prayer and other "traditional writings" would be unchanged and that references to the Trinity might be in both the traditional language of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and in terms such as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. Personal pronouns in reference to the persons of the Trinity were to be avoided where possible and customary language was to be supplemented "by increased use of feminine, especially biblical, imagery".⁹¹

Questions of participation lay at the heart of the Ecumenical Decade agenda: questions about women's participation in the churches, in society and in the WCC itself. Within the WCC attention was focussed on the increased participation of women in staff positions, and on their "equal participation" in all of the WCC's decision-making structures and programmes, including the seventh assembly in 1991. In its attempts to increase women's participation the Council was frequently hampered by the unwillingness of a number of its member churches to recognise the principle of equal representation which the central committee had accepted as

⁹⁰ *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Minutes of the Fortieth Meeting. Moscow, USSR. 16-27 July 1989* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 84.

a goal at Dresden in 1981 and had reaffirmed in accepting the El Escorial guidelines in 1989, and the increased focus on women's participation during the first years of the Ecumenical Decade heightened already existing tensions between the member churches, particularly at the seventh assembly.

The Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society

The period between the sixth and seventh assemblies was a time of significant change for the Sub-unit on Women. At the end of September 1985 Bärbel von Wartenberg left after serving as director for five years. Although she had served a shorter term than her two predecessors, Madeleine Barot and Brigalia Bam, von Wartenberg had made a distinctive contribution towards the realisation of the goals which they had identified. High among these goals was the increased participation of women in the WCC. Bärbel was a determined and persistent advocate for women, who in the words of her colleague Priscilla Padolina:

Collaborated with supportive women and men to increase the representation of women at the VI Assembly, in Central Committee and sub-unit commissions, and to promote them to leadership positions in workshops and consultations organised by the WCC and to promote them to leadership positions... She dismissed charges of sounding like a broken record in her persistent advocacy of women because she believe[d] that it is essential to keep this issue in the forefront of the WCC's work.⁹²

Bärbel herself wrote that women's participation was "a very hot potato" for

⁹¹ "Interim guidelines for the use of inclusive language". TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. (See Appendix VI for the text).

⁹² Priscilla Padolina, "Au Revoir, Bärbel" *WCW* 20 (November 1985), 34. See also the comment by Gnanadason that it was during the period of her leadership "that the advocacy role that the sub-unit played, reached its zenith", with careful monitoring of all the WCC did to ensure women's involvement and that "their perspectives and visions are faithfully reflected in all that is said or written as the voice of the ecumenical movement". Aruna Gnanadason, "Women in the Ecumenical Movement", *International Review of Mission* 81 (1992), 242.

many churches in the ecumenical movement but that she had learned to negotiate for increased participation by women, participation meaning "numbers of positions occupied by women", for "although this is also a game, it is a necessary one if full participation is to follow".⁹³ For von Wartenberg women's participation meant more than "the numbers game", important as that was, for "women, once they are permitted to participate in the church structures, begin to reflect on whether they should accept predetermined roles and play by the rules made by men". She found sexism to be pervasive in the churches:

Men alone decide on definitions of doctrine, grace, hope; they make the church's statements on peace, justice, creation, community, racism, etc. Male theological commissions decide on their understanding of unity and produce volumes of sophisticated theological thinking about it.⁹⁴

She admitted to being "more radical than ever" after working for five years "in male committees of the world church, with metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, presidents, churchmen in all shapes and sizes", an experience which "really opened my eyes to the extent to which sexism holds sway in the churches". At the same time, she had experienced that "the courageous and frank confrontation by women has made it possible to break through the system, to gain ground and to make visible progress" and so was able to acknowledge that "through intelligent, organised and concerted action by women, and with the support of some committed male feminists...we have had some success".⁹⁵ Herself an ordained minister and a feminist theologian von Wartenberg was convinced that "the

⁹³ Bärbel von Wartenberg, "Be Wise as Serpents...", *WCW* 20 (November 1985), 3.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter, *We Will Not Hang Our Harps on the Willows: Engagement and Spirituality*. Translated by Fred Kaan. (Geneva: WCC 1987), 42.

awakening of the women's movement in the church is a total Copernican change, both in breadth and character. It calls into question the whole dominating male way of thinking, as well as the conception of the world moulded by men over the centuries".⁹⁶

During her period as director of the Sub-unit on Women von Wartenberg emphasised the importance of women's contribution which she saw as providing the ecumenical movement and the churches with new models of leadership, theology and spirituality. She thought that in spite of their relatively small numbers, women were "the salt and leaven which will shape the ecumenical movement"⁹⁷ and that without the full participation of women the ecumenical movement itself would have no future. "The world is not seen as a whole if only seen and named by the male half of humanity. Nor is the church whole if it is defined by men alone".⁹⁸

Anna Karin Hammar, a young Swedish Lutheran pastor, succeeded von Wartenberg as director of the Sub-unit on Women for four years, from July 1986 till the end of June, 1990.⁹⁹ Like her predecessor, Hammar was avowedly a feminist. In her view,

Equality and emancipation are not enough. We are working for more than equal rights (with men), we are working for a fundamental change in the way we live together on this earth. Thus feminism is a vision of a different world, a deep transformation of our relationships. This new world is a community of equals.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁸ von Wartenberg, *"Be Wise as Serpents .."*, 4, 3.

⁹⁹ See Jean Becher "An Interview with Anna Karin Hammar" *WCW* 22 (October 1986), 28 for some information about her previous life and her hopes for her new position.

¹⁰⁰ Anna Karin Hammar, "Introduction: Come Holy Spirit Renew the Whole Creation", *WCW* 28 (December 1989), 2.

Following Hammar's departure the Sub-unit was left without a director until after the seventh assembly in 1991. Throughout this period Priscilla Padolina continued her work in the Sub-unit as secretary for the programme on women and rural development, retiring after the assembly. The work of the Sub-unit was supported by a commission (also known as the working group) of fifteen members (twelve women and three men), representing different churches and regions. Most of these had been present at one or more WCC assemblies while several were members of the central committee. Hildegard Zumach (Evangelical Church in Germany) was the only member of the previous commission.¹⁰¹

In its first report to the new WCC central committee, meeting in Geneva in 1984, the Sub-unit emphasised that participation was the key to all its work:

The purpose and programmes of Women in Church and Society are to encourage the participation of women in the total life of the member churches. Advocating women's concerns and perspectives, and promoting the contribution of women to church and society, the Sub-unit works in collaboration with other WCC programmes, member churches and other international and ecumenical organisations. For the sake of the unity of the church and of humankind, the Sub-unit fosters the full participation of women and serves as a resource for, and link between, church women's groups and newly forming women's coalitions. "Monitoring" the situation of women in various places is an important part of strengthening the overall advocacy on their behalf.¹⁰²

This overall concern for women's participation was expressed through three programme emphases: on participation; women doing theology - women sharing spirituality; and justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

The emphasis on women doing theology and sharing spirituality included

¹⁰¹ See Priscilla Padolina, "Our Partners in the Sub-Unit", *WCW* 20 (November 1985), 29-30 for information about each member of the commission.

supporting the exploration of theology and biblical study from women's perspectives. Together with PTE the Sub-unit published a collection of biblical and theological reflections by third-world women.¹⁰³ Workshops on "reading the Bible with women's eyes" and on inclusive language in worship were held. A major project on "young women doing theology" was carried out jointly with PTE, in order to "encourage mutual exchange and networking between young women doing theology ...and to highlight feminist theologies and theologies grounded in women's experiences".¹⁰⁴ A consultant, the Rev. Yon Sawa (United Church of Christ in Japan), was employed to run the project from in 1988 to 1989, during which period an international workshop was held at Bossey, followed by national workshops in several centres. A consultation on women's spirituality was held in Moscow in July 1989.¹⁰⁵

In terms of participation, the Sub-unit on several occasions "brought women together to share stories of their own experiences, examine obstacles and find ways to strategise for action".¹⁰⁶ A workshop held in India on the theme "Women's Participation from a Biblical Perspective" led to publication of a book which it was hoped would "encourage women and men to re-read our Christian tradition in the light of the new experiences of women, and to become aware of attitudes

¹⁰² Central Committee, *Minutes*, Geneva, 1984, 164.

¹⁰³ John S Pobee and Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter, eds., *New Eyes for Reading : Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, (Geneva: WCC, 1986).

¹⁰⁴ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 232.

¹⁰⁵ Some papers from this consultation are published in WCW 28 (December 1989).

¹⁰⁶ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 227.

which deeply influence our lives and beliefs, not based on the gospel but on dominant cultural values".¹⁰⁷

Another attempt to study scripture in the light of women's experience was a multi-faith study on "Female Sexuality and Bodily Functions in Different Religions", which was based on the understanding that "knowledge about religious teaching which either inspired or reinforced social values was a necessary basis for promoting the participation of women in decision-making, and for recognising their significant role and contribution to public life".¹⁰⁸ The origins of this project lay in the CWMC study which had identified the need for further investigation of male-female identity, a re-interpretation of scriptures relating to this, and a clearer understanding of human sexuality. Also, at the UN Mid-Decade Forum held in Copenhagen in 1980 many participants in a seminar on women and religion had spoken of the impact of religious teachings on women.

The study project was initiated by Marie Assaad, deputy general secretary and staff moderator of the Unit on Education and Renewal, who gathered a group of eight women to do the initial research which was presented at a workshop at the 1985 Decade Forum in Nairobi.¹⁰⁹ Subsequently the Sub-unit on Women commissioned a number of responses to the original research and eventually

¹⁰⁷ *By Our Lives : Stories of Women - Today and in the Bible* (Geneva: WCC, 1985), vii.

¹⁰⁸ Jeanne Becher, ed., *Women, Religion and Sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), ix.

¹⁰⁹ See Marie Assaad "Study on Female Sexuality and Bodily Functions in Different Religious Traditions" WCW 20 (November 1985); 24-27 for a brief description of the project, the researchers (who in May 1985 were joined by Linda Katsuno, a young disabled woman), and the response at the Nairobi Forum. The researchers were: Elizabeth Amoah (Reformed, Ghana); Janet Crawford (Anglican, New Zealand); Blu Greenberg (Judaism, U.S.A.); Laila El-Hamamsy (Muslim, Egypt); Ranjana Kumari (Hindu, India); Anca-Lucia Manolache (Orthodox, Rumania); Junko Minamoto (Shin Buddhist, Japan); Maria-Teresa Porcile-Santiso (Roman Catholic, Uruguay). Manolache and Crawford were unable to attend the Forum.

published the entire collection of papers in 1990, in the hope the publication would "throw some light on the origins of discriminatory practices based on gender, expose some of the time-honoured taboos about female sexuality, and contribute to the ongoing discussion of women's role in religion".¹¹⁰

Strengthening leadership training had long been one way in which the Sub-unit sought to promote women's participation. In June 1986 a workshop on "Women in Church Leadership" was held in conjunction with the LWF women's desk and the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey. More than fifty women from twenty-six countries attended this workshop which focussed on the issue of power. Among those who gave presentations were Marie Assaad and WCC presidents Lois Wilson and Marga Bührig.¹¹¹ Throughout the workshop a recurring question was whether there was a distinctive style of leadership for women. While there was no consensus on this, there was agreement that "we do not want female leadership to imitate the male model".¹¹² A series of recommendations on empowering women included one on the need to "work towards appointment of women executive staff in WCC sub-units ... so that women's concerns are included in their programmes".¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Becher, *Women, Religion and Sexuality*, xii. The original studies on Hinduism and Islam were not published in this by decision of the writers. Other contributors were Elisabeth Behr-Sigel (Orthodox), Riffat Hassan (Muslim), Carter Heyward (Episcopal), Prina Navè Levinson (Jewish), Nicole Maillard (Orthodox), Vasudha Narayanan (Hindu) and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Roman Catholic).

¹¹¹ These presentations were published in *WCW* 22 (October 1986), together with Bible studies, reports and recommendations from issue groups at this consultation.

¹¹² *ibid.*, 2.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 17.

Another consultation sponsored by the Sub-unit was an international Orthodox women's meeting on the theme "Church and Culture".¹¹⁴ Held in Crete in January 1990 within the context of the Ecumenical Decade, this was only the second such women's meeting, the first having been held in Agapia, Roumania, in 1976. Twenty three Orthodox women from fifteen different countries attended this consultation which was intended to provide a forum for Orthodox women to share experiences and reflections, particularly in the areas of ministry, human sexuality, participation and decision-making, and also to identify issues and formulate goals for the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. Major concerns which emerged were the urgent need for a renewal of women's ministries, particularly the diaconate; the need to clarify Orthodox teachings concerning human sexuality and relationships; the need to examine and broaden women's participation in the church, including in positions of responsibility and decision-making. The participants made a specific comment about Orthodox women's participation in the ecumenical movement:

We believe that participation in the ecumenical movement has been valuable in showing Orthodox women that they can take responsibility and be competent and articulate witnesses to their faith. At the same time, the presence of Orthodox women has made a particular contribution to increasing and deepening ecumenical and pan-Orthodox contacts. We hope and recommend that more opportunities be given to women to make their full contribution at all levels of such contacts, and to report back to their Churches.¹¹⁵

As one participant reflected, such a response "would indicate to the church universal that not only do the Orthodox profess that women are highly significant and honoured in the church, but also that in practice their person is vital for the

¹¹⁴ See "Church and Culture: 2nd International Orthodox Women's Consultation, Orthodox Academy of Crete, 16-24 January, 1990", Unpublished report. Personal files of the author.

life of the church". The women were however disappointed by "the lack of response from the bishops as well as parish priests" to their carefully-worded recommendations, and by "the negative reaction by conservative and traditional women's groups" and the work in Crete "was largely ignored".¹¹⁶

The sixth assembly had urged that "the concerns and perspectives of women should become integral to the work of *all* WCC units and sub-units."¹¹⁷ This was in keeping with one of the key insights of the UN Decade on Women, was expressed by Nita Barrow in the memorable phrase: "There are no issues that are not women's issues".¹¹⁸ Within the WCC women's participation was increasingly understood as not just a question of the numerical representation of women, though that was still important and still needed to be worked for. Neither was it just a question of including women's "concerns" or "issues". More and more women's participation meant allowing "the pressure of women's experiences, insights and perspectives to impact and influence the direction and journey of the ecumenical movement".¹¹⁹ As Anna Karin Hammar wrote:

We have begun to listen intentionally to the experiences of women with the basic attitude that these perspectives are of interest to the *whole* community as well as being an issue of justice for women. We are looking intentionally for women's distinctive contributions and perspectives that can guide our struggles and commitments.¹²⁰

This new emphasis on the integration of women's concerns and perspectives into all the programmatic work of the WCC altered the role of the Sub-unit on

115 *ibid.*, 17.

116 Liveris, "Significance of the Decade for Orthodox Churches", 181.

117 Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 256.

118 Hammar, "After Forty Years - Churches in Solidarity with Women?", 533.

119 *ibid.*

120 *ibid.* Original emphasis.

Women in Church as it sought ways to encourage and facilitate such integration and "to bridge the administrative and historical separation of this deep concern from other programmes, either in substance or methodology." ¹²¹ In practical terms this meant that a great deal of the work of the Sub-unit (which had only two executive staff) was done in collaboration with other units and sub-units, as well as with bodies outside the WCC such as the LWF's women's desk.

It was during this period that for the first time serious attention was paid to the question of women's participation in the staff of the WCC. The presence of women programme staff, as well as the involvement of women in the decision-making bodies of the WCC, was seen as essential for bringing women's perspectives into the programmatic work. Following the Vancouver assembly a staff task force on women, made up of representatives from a number of sub-units, was set up to assist the Sub-unit on Women in carrying out its task of monitoring the response to women's concerns across the WCC. This task force also monitored staff vacancies in the WCC and attempted to secure increased recruitment of women staff. (See below.)

All in all, the years between the sixth and seventh assemblies were significant for the Sub-unit on Women. When the working group met in Tokyo in December 1989 to review past progress and to look to the future a number of challenges were identified as crucial to the Sub-unit, to the WCC and to the member churches. Under the heading of participation the primary challenge was

¹²¹ *Central Committee Minutes, Geneva, 1984*, p. 166.

still "implementation of the Dresden recommendation on women's full participation at all levels of decision-making and in all aspects of work".¹²²

Women Staff

As Anna Karin Hammar pointed out in an article published in 1988, the WCC depended on women secretaries and administrative staff to do its basic work. Like other institutions, the WCC "would not function without its women; in this perspective it is the same after forty years as it was before".¹²³ After forty years there was, however, growing concern about the fact that while the majority of administrative staff (including interpreters and translators) were women, the majority of executive or programme staff were men. During the post-Vancouver period the issue of staff balances, including confessional, regional and gender balances, was prominent on the agenda of the WCC governing bodies, and in the months immediately before the seventh assembly there was an unprecedented level of tension in the WCC Geneva offices over questions to do with women (or the lack of women) in executive positions.

The assembly programme guidelines committee had stated in its report that "steps should be taken to ensure an increase in the number of women appointed to WCC executive staff positions".¹²⁴ Following the assembly the Sub-unit on Women working group urged "that the percentage of women in programme

¹²² Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 235.

¹²³ Hammar, "After Forty Years", 528.

¹²⁴ Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 255-6.

positions be increased...to at least 33%" by the next assembly.¹²⁵ Later in 1984 Dr Janice Love, a consistent advocate for women, pointed out in a central committee debate that it would be difficult to implement the assembly recommendation that the concerns and perspectives of women should become integral to all WCC programmes unless more women were appointed to executive staff positions.¹²⁶

In 1985 the general secretary reported to the central committee that he had been instructed by the executive committee to consider certain principles when vacancies arose. "These included the need to ensure the recruitment of African staff in senior positions, to increase the representation of Orthodox, women and persons with disabilities; and to ensure better geographical balances within these categories and within regions."¹²⁷

Staffing procedures were discussed by the executive committee at its meetings in March and September 1986, while an ad hoc committee on staffing issues met with the general secretary for two days in June of the same year and produced a long-range plan for balancing staff which pointed out that the imbalances within the staff resulted from the previous lack of any planned approach to appointments. The report acknowledged that it was desirable for the staff of the WCC to be representative of "the vast richness of diversity of its member churches" but that "it is not simple and easy to establish criteria for determining what constitutes a balanced staff...once many of the varied factors are

¹²⁵ "Long-Range Plan for Balancing Staff" [report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing Issues to the Executive Committee, September 1986], 4. TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. This report is summarised in *Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 15-19 September 1986, Reyjavik, Iceland*, 18-20.

¹²⁶ *Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1984*, 83.

considered".¹²⁸ Gender was of course only one of these factors and correcting the gender imbalance was not given a high priority in the long-range plan which was accepted by the central committee in 1987.

According to the long-range plan the first priority in filling future executive staff vacancies was to be given to regional balance, while the second priority was to be certain sub-regional balances on the grounds that as a world body the Council required within its staff "the diversity of as many countries and regions as possible".¹²⁹ The third priority was to be given to confessional balance, with the first need being to increase the number of Orthodox. Increasing the balance of women was named as the fourth (and final priority) and although specific guidelines and goals were given for the other priority areas these were not stated for women.

An analysis of the staff as at March 1990 gave a total of 315 (of whom 74 were employed part-time), from 89 churches and 63 countries. (In 1974 there had been 329 staff from 49 churches and 45 countries). Of the 315, 219 were women and 96 were men. However of the women over 80% (179) were employed in grades 1 - 5, as secretarial/administrative/technical staff, while almost 80% of the men (75) were in grades 6 - 10, as programme or executive staff. In the top three grades (8 - 10) there were 24 men and only six women.¹³⁰ Of eighteen sub-units only one had a woman director, and that one was the Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society. (The Sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life, which in the 1971 restructuring had absorbed the former Laity department, had a woman

¹²⁷ *Central Committee, Minutes, Buenos Aires, 1985, 71.*

¹²⁸ "Long-Range Plan for Balancing Staff", 1.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, 3.

director 1983-6). The only real gains for women in terms of staff positions had been the appointment of two women as deputy general secretaries: Ms Ruth Sovik, appointed in 1985, and Ms Mercy Oduyoye, appointed in 1987, served respectively as staff moderators of Units II and III. Ms Marie Assaad, the first woman deputy general secretary, who had been appointed in 1980, retired at the end of 1986.

Towards the end of 1990 a new stage was reached in the debate about women staff when women on the WCC staff themselves spoke out and uttered "a cry of pain and anger and frustration".¹³¹ On 21 October a deputation of about thirty women went to a meeting of the powerful Staff Executive Group (SEG) and there presented, without waiting to be invited, a statement of their pain and protest.¹³² This statement pointed to a pattern of ignoring women's contributions, particularly as staff work focussed on preparations for the 1991 assembly, to the frustrations of working in a male-dominated system, and to burdens borne by women staff because "the implementation of the WCC's commitment to women has been left to women. This has been difficult and frustrating without appropriate resources and effective bases in power structures and with a growing sense of marginalisation".¹³³

¹³⁰ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 20-21.

¹³¹ "Statement (I) from the Women's Task Force to the Staff Executive Group, 17 October 1990", TD, author's personal files.

¹³² The SEG is composed of the staff of the general secretariat, the heads of all sub-units and departments and the moderators of regional task forces. Its function is to advise the general secretary on the implementation of policy established by the central and executive committees and it also services as a forum for corporate reflection on policy matters.

¹³³ *ibid.*

The women drew attention to what they perceived as an abnegation of male responsibility, and indifference or even hostility from male colleagues. They called for a number of actions to be taken in order to involve more women staff in decision-making and for new policies and practices to ensure 50% participation of women at all levels of the WCC and at the assembly. They also called for a review "of why many women programme staff stay at the WCC for shorter periods than male counterparts".¹³⁴ A supportive male member of the SEG wrote in a WCC staff newsletter:

What the paper was saying is that despite the goodwill and intentions within the WCC, the end result is that fewer women feature in decision-making and advisory roles than men. It is a fact that, despite our commitment to full participation of women, there is only one woman director of the Programme Sub-Units out of fourteen. That is NOT a good balance. Using CICARWS, one of the larger sub-units, as an example, it IS a fact that only 29% of the programme staff are women and 98% of the administrative staff.¹³⁵

Several days after the SEG meeting the sub-unit directors held a meeting at which the issue of women's participation in the WCC was put on the agenda and at which a delegation from the women's task force highlighted a number of structural problems, particularly the concentration of power in the hands of the directors. At this meeting "the need to review the structure and to consider ways of including more women in decision-making positions were emphasised and proposals for such changes were encouraged by the General Secretary".¹³⁶

¹³⁴ ibid.

¹³⁵ Bob Scott, "Women Raise Important Issues," ECSACT 25 (26 October 1990). Author's personal files. (ECSACT is a staff newsletter.) One of the results of the women's action was in fact that CICARWS responded seriously to their challenge and quickly began monitoring the participation of women in its own staffing, committees, and regional groups.

¹³⁶ "Open Letter to Colleagues from the Women's Task Force, December 1990", 2, unpublished document. Author's personal files. The letter makes it clear that the women's presence at this all male-meeting was not entirely welcome.

Several more meetings were held and a small ad hoc group was established to follow up some of the concerns which women had expressed. The report of this group, made in December 1990, took as its starting point the commitment to women's participation made by the WCC at Dresden, at the Vancouver assembly, at Larnaca, El Escorial, and in the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women and called on the WCC to work to implement these commitments and "to model the practices inherent in the commitments".¹³⁷ This group made a number of recommendations which were passed on to the other staff-making bodies and to the appropriate decision-making bodies.

The first recommendation was "that a clear affirmative action policy be articulated and adopted throughout the WCC".¹³⁸ Other recommendations focussed on how recruitment policies might be altered to widen the pool of possible candidates. The implication of these was that the system by which the general secretary notified heads of member churches and central committee members of vacancies did not encourage the recruitment of women. The working group also expressed its concern that as the WCC was unable at the time to hire any new staff to replace those who left, both the number and percentage of women staff would decrease. (The temporary hiring freeze was due to a financial crisis described as "a growing deficit situation",¹³⁹ coupled with a restructuring process which was completed after the seventh assembly.) This fear was realised as in the months immediately before and after the assembly no fewer than eleven women in

¹³⁷ "Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Women's Concerns in the WCC, December 1990", 1. TD, author's personal files.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 3.

¹³⁹ *Central Committee, Minutes, Moscow, 1990*, 123.

executive staff positions left and were not immediately replaced.¹⁴⁰ As the working group noted, "already executive women are asked to assume a number of roles and functions to compensate for the low number of women in executive positions".¹⁴¹ Women in administrative positions were also carrying extra workloads.

In an "Open letter to Colleagues from the Women's Task Force", written in December 1990, the group reviewed the results of its initiatives. On the positive side:

We have discovered new allies among some male colleagues who have taken important initiatives in moving our concerns forward. Leadership, all leadership in the Assembly, will be close to 50% of women ... Sub-units and regional task forces have begun processes to review the impact of their programmes on women. The Personnel department is studying whether women programme staff are more likely to leave before their contracts expire than men programme staff. There is discussion in some quarters about leadership training and the need to learn more about alternative, non-authoritarian models of leadership. In general, there seems to be a heightened awareness about women's issues.¹⁴²

On the negative side, reactions from some male colleagues had been disappointing and some had attempted to divide women on the grounds that it was not an issue for Third World women, something which was "unacceptable to those of us from the South and [an] unsuccessful attempt to disempower those of us from the North". Women continued to feel frustration for "it is becoming clear to many of us that although lip service is paid to women's participation in the life of the

¹⁴⁰ These women are listed in *WCW* 30 (June 1991), 26-27.

¹⁴¹ "Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group", 2.

¹⁴² "Open Letter to Colleagues", 3.

Council, this is not seen as a justice issue. Indeed, some women feel that there has been retaliation for their having raised these issues".¹⁴³

In looking toward the future, the task force identified several challenges for future work on women's participation in the Council. There was concern about the staffing situation in the Sub-unit for Women which had been without a director since Anna Karin Hammar's departure at the end of June (and Priscilla Padolina was about to retire). Women wanted more democratic and open structures of decision-making and more attention to creating community within the WCC. They repeated their concern about the impact which the financial problems the WCC was experiencing might have on women staff and on programmes for women. The letter concluded with a recognition of the important role played by the WCC as a prophetic witness and the tensions between that and the actual reality in the churches. In order to make women's full participation in the churches a reality, it had to be a reality within the WCC "as a beacon, as a sign of where they should be moving".¹⁴⁴ The challenge for WCC staff, particularly those in positions of power and responsibility, was to translate the commitment which had been expressed on many occasions over many years into concrete action. The results of this challenge could be seen and evaluated only in the period after the Seventh assembly.

Faith and Order

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 5.

Following the Vancouver assembly there were significant changes in the Faith and Order commission and staff. On the thirty-member standing commission the number of women was still six (20%) although apart from Mary Tanner they were all new to the commission. Tanner herself became one of the four vice-moderators. The number of women on the plenary commission doubled from thirteen to twenty-six (24%). In 1987 Dr Irmgard Kindt-Siegwalt became the first woman to serve as an executive secretary in the history of Faith and Order.¹⁴⁵

Faith and Order's major programmes had received the full support of the Vancouver assembly which affirmed the ecumenical significance of the Lima document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (*BEM*), recommended that Faith and Order continue to give priority to its study "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today", and welcomed the proposed study on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community".¹⁴⁶ Between Vancouver and Canberra the work of Faith and Order was focussed on these three programmes, each of which was in some way relevant to the theme of women's participation.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

¹⁴⁵ Dr Constance Parvey had worked in Faith and Order, but for a limited term as director of the CWMC study. The position filled by Dr. Kindt-Siegwalt was a seconded position supported by the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD). There was pressure on the EKD from the WCC to second a woman and some concern from the church's representative that it should be called on to correct an imbalance which existed because of the WCC's own failure to employ women in executive staff positions. (Based on author's recollection). Dr Kindt-Siegwalt served until April 1991.

¹⁴⁶ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 94.

When the Faith and Order plenary commission met in Budapest in 1989 it issued a statement thanking the churches for the serious manner in which they had studied and responded to the *BEM* text and giving a brief report on the *BEM* process since 1982. According to this statement *BEM* had become "the most widely distributed, translated, and discussed ecumenical text in modern times."¹⁴⁷ In their responses to *BEM* many churches had affirmed the broad convergence which it expressed but at the same time:

There are areas of difficulty which remain in need of further clarification and reflection ... In rejoicing at the new situation brought about by the responses to *BEM* we do not minimise the seriousness of these ... They remain issues that keep many of our churches and people apart and they require further work.¹⁴⁸

The 'ministry of men and women' was named as one of these areas of disagreement.

A year later *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses* was published.¹⁴⁹ This volume described the major features and results of the *BEM* process and summarised significant aspects of the responses, while at the same time offering some clarifications and comments on critical points and identifying major issues for future work by Faith and Order. It was based on the official responses from the churches, which had been asked to

¹⁴⁷ "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: The Continuing Call to Unity. A Statement by the Faith and Order Commission Addressed to the Churches," in *Faith and Order 1985-1989: The Commission Meeting at Budapest 1989*, ed. Thomas F Best. Faith and Order Paper no. 148. (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 25.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴⁹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*. Faith and Order paper no. 149. (Geneva: WCC, 1990). Prior to this the official responses of 179 churches to *BEM* had been published in six volumes. See *Churches Respond to BEM*, vols. I-VI, ed. Max Thurian. Faith and Order Papers nos. 129, 132, 135, 137, 143, 144. (Geneva: WCC, 1986-88).

respond "at the highest appropriate level of authority".¹⁵⁰ The Lima recommendation that Faith and Order encourage the churches "to see that the response of women to the text is taken account of somewhere in the process of reception"¹⁵¹ had not resulted in any action and it is likely that women were in a minority, if included at all, in the synods, councils, bishop's conferences and other bodies which responded on behalf of the churches.

The responses to *BEM* revealed that "the deepest differences between the churches concerning mutual recognition of ministries relate to the issues of the ordination of women and episcopal succession".¹⁵² In fact of the 143 published responses 77 contained comment on the ordination of women, with 51 affirming it, 16 (including the RCC) being opposed, and a further 10 stating that they had not reached a decision.¹⁵³ While these responses were more or less to be expected, the criticism of the *BEM* text itself was less expected. All but a few of the 77 responses "challenged the document's counsel not to regard obstacles arising from differences on this issue as 'substantive hindrance' to mutual recognition of ministries".¹⁵⁴ *BEM* was described as "gravely deficient at this point",¹⁵⁵ as "too

¹⁵⁰ *BEM*, x. A total of 186 "official responses" had been received, of which 55 were from churches in the "two-thirds" world while about 20 were from non-member churches of the WCC, including the RCC. Of these responses 143 were published in the six volumes of *Churches Respond to BEM*, but these represented 179 churches as some had responded through a federation or council e.g. the Melanesian Council of Churches and the Inter-Orthodox Symposium, USA.

¹⁵¹ Kinnamon, *Towards Visible Unity*, vol. 1, 86.

¹⁵² *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* 1982 - 1990, 88.

¹⁵³ Based on the analysis in Ute Thräne, "Zusammen-stellung der offiziellen Antworten zu *Taufe, Eucharistie und Amt*", (Genf: 1993). Unpublished paper. Author's personal files.

¹⁵⁴ Melanie A. May, "The Ordination of Women: The Churches' Responses to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (1989), 252.

¹⁵⁵ *Churches Respond to BEM*, vol. 3, 24. (Response of the Orthodox Church in America).

brief and touch[ing] only the surface",¹⁵⁶ and as "regrettably equivocal".¹⁵⁷

Whether for or against the ordination of women a number of churches were concerned that the issue was not addressed sufficiently seriously and at least two responses commented that the text was much more cautious on the ordination of women than was the draft text developed at Accra in 1974.

Furthermore, as Faith and Order member Melanie May pointed out, the two particular issues concerning the mutual recognition of ministries which emerged as most serious in the responses, namely episcopal succession and the ordination of women, were treated differently in the *BEM* text.

Episcopal succession is addressed directly. Both episcopal and non-episcopal churches are counselled concretely; both are challenged to change their perspective for the sake of mutual recognition ... Neither churches that do nor churches that do not ordain women are counselled concretely; neither are challenged to change their perspective for the sake of mutual recognition. Divergence is described but not directly addressed.¹⁵⁸

In spite of the inconclusiveness of *BEM*, some churches criticized it for what they saw as an implicit bias towards the ordination of women while others expressed disappointment that it did not outrightly support it. More positively, the responses also showed that:

The issue of the place and role of women in the church's various ministries and functions is receiving growing attention. There appears to be increasing willingness in all churches to include women in [lay] ministries previously exercised pre-dominantly if not exclusively by men ... In churches having a diaconate, whether or not this office is considered to be "ordained", most churches are ready to include qualified women beside qualified men in this position.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *Churches Respond to BEM*, vol. 5, 174. (Response of the Church of Christ in Thailand).

¹⁵⁷ *Churches Respond to BEM*, vol. 2, 195. (Response of the United Methodist Church, USA).

¹⁵⁸ May, "The Ordination of Women", 267.

¹⁵⁹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990*, 122-3.

It was however clear that:

The theological, Christological and anthropological convictions expressed in the respective arguments concerning the place and service of women in the church ... still require deeper and fuller elaborations within the multi-lateral context provided by the Faith and Order Commission.¹⁶⁰

The three major issues identified in *BEM 1982-1990* as demanding further work were Scripture and Tradition, Sacrament and sacramentality, and the search for common ecumenical perspectives on ecclesiology.¹⁶¹ The debate on the ordination of women was seen to be related to all three of these major issues,¹⁶² issues in which "a number of specific issues needing further reflection are subsumed".¹⁶³ In the final chapter on "provisional considerations" of these "major issues demanding further study",¹⁶⁴ the ordination of women is so thoroughly subsumed that it almost disappears altogether. There is a brief reference to it in the section on Scripture and Tradition, while in the section on ecclesiological perspectives "the ministries of women" is merely listed as one of a number of areas which need further study.¹⁶⁵

When the Faith and Order standing commission met in 1990 (shortly after the publication of *BEM 1982-1990*) it agreed that a new study on "Ecumenical Perspectives On Ecclesiology", first proposed by the plenary commission at Budapest in 1989, would "take the place of the *BEM* study" in the future

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* 131-151.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, 131.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 141, 148.

programme of Faith and Order and would "provide the framework for the follow-up of *BEM*".¹⁶⁶ It was foreseen that this study would be developed by the new standing commission to be appointed following the 1991 assembly, and that an early step "could begin in late 1991 with a first consultation on 'ministries of women in the church'".¹⁶⁷ The proposal for such a consultation had in fact originated at the Budapest meeting, with a recommendation that "as part of the proposed ecclesiology study, a consultation be held on unresolved ecumenical ministry issues, especially the ordination of women".¹⁶⁸

Thus by the time of the seventh assembly in 1991 there was at least a possibility that Faith and Order would continue to work on the ordination of women under the general framework of a new ecclesiology study which was planned as the follow-up to the *BEM* process. But in the *BEM* document, the much-praised Lima text itself, little attention had been paid "to the most obvious point of present and potential disagreement, namely, the ordination of women".¹⁶⁹ Rather, on this particular point it seemed that Faith and Order had retreated from its earlier bolder statements. The result satisfied neither opponents nor proponents of women's ordination and did little to advance dialogue between the two. *BEM* gave no lead to the vital and church-dividing question of women's ordination, a question which is, as Mary Tanner argued, "crucial not only for women but for the future visible unity of the church".¹⁷⁰

Apostolic Faith Today

¹⁶⁶ Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission held at the Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane, Scotland, 16-24 August, 1990*. Faith and Order Paper no. 125. (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 69.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 71.

¹⁶⁸ *Faith and Order 1985-1989*, 237-8.

¹⁶⁹ Cardman, "BEM and the Community of Women and Men", 85.

The Faith and Order study "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today" (henceforth AFT) was initiated at the Lima meeting of the commission in 1982 and affirmed by the Vancouver assembly in 1983. In 1984 the Faith and Order standing commission decided that the AFT study would take the form of a comprehensive ecumenical explication of the apostolic faith based on the text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381.¹⁷¹ The study was carried out through a series of international consultations from which a draft text was produced. This text, known as the Crêt Bérard draft, was discussed and revised by the Faith and Order plenary commission in 1985 and after a further process of revision the standing commission in 1987 authorised its publication as a provisional study document titled *Confessing One Faith*.¹⁷² This study document, which at almost 100 pages was in the history of Faith and Order the longest text and "the one with the broadest theological scope",¹⁷³ was sent to the member churches and to the wider ecumenical community for study and comment. On the basis of the responses to this text, together with the results from a further series of consultations, the text underwent further revision until finally, in 1990, the standing commission authorised its publication under the new title of *Confessing the One Faith*.¹⁷⁴ Although it had been hoped that at least the English version

¹⁷⁰ Tanner, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry", 249.

¹⁷¹ See Gennadios Limouris, "Historical Background of the Apostolic Faith Today", in *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*. Faith and Order Paper no. 153. (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 105-111, for a brief history of this study and details of its major publications.

¹⁷² See *Confessing One Faith: Towards an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*. Faith and Order Paper no. 140. (Geneva: WCC, 1987).

¹⁷³ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, 95.

¹⁷⁴ See n. 181 above for details of *Confessing One Faith*.

would be ready before the seventh assembly the WCC publications office was so occupied with materials for the assembly itself that *Confessing the One Faith* was not published till after the assembly. With its publication a very intensive phase of Faith and Order's work was complete.

The plenary commission meeting in Lima in 1982 which saw the beginning of the AFT study as a major Faith and Order programme also saw the conclusion of the Community of Women and Men in the Church study programme. In an attempt to ensure that the theological insights of the CWMC study would continue to inform the work of Faith and Order a small working group in Lima produced a memorandum on "The Community Study and Apostolic Faith"¹⁷⁵ stating the study "should consider the picture of a renewed community of women and men which has been articulated by the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study as a contribution to understanding the context in which their investigations need to be carried out".¹⁷⁶

The memorandum asked that particular attention be paid to a number of points which had emerged from the Community Study. One of these concerned the trinitarian language of the Creed for issues of language and imagery for God had been widely addressed (though with varied responses) in the Community Study process.¹⁷⁷ The memorandum asked:

¹⁷⁵ See "The Community Study and Apostolic Faith: Memorandum from the Working Group on the Community of Women and Men in the Church," in Kinnamon, *Towards Visible Unity*, vol. 2, 47-50.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 47.

¹⁷⁷ See Melanie A May, "Conversations on Language and the Imagery of God Occasioned by the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study," *Union*

How far are the terms Father, Son and Holy Ghost/Spirit, which safeguard the distinctiveness of persons, still adequate today to describe the Trinity? How far should the contention of many women that this language excludes them from the community of the body of Christ be taken seriously and lead us towards discussing new terms for confessing our belief in the Holy Trinity?¹⁷⁸

There were Christological insights from the Community Study also:

The confession that Jesus became man (*anthropos*) needs to be investigated to explicate the relation between the Jewish man Jesus and the risen, ascended, glorified Christ. Is maleness central to our perception of Christ? Many women are suggesting that the implication that maleness has been taken into the Godhead profoundly affects their understanding of their redemption. If the incarnation is thought of, as one speaker in Lima expressed it, as "enmalemment" and not "enfleshment", then the implications of a male saviour are impossible for women to bear. An investigation also needs to be made on the way this affects our understanding of the representation of Jesus Christ by the celebrant of the eucharist.¹⁷⁹

As Mary Tanner later commented, "these paragraphs contain some of the major challenges from a feminist perspective to the Church's confession of faith".¹⁸⁰

Although it had originally been envisaged that the Community Study would deal with questions concerning the person and role of Mary, these questions had not been treated at any depth. The memorandum suggested that they too be explored in the context of the new study.¹⁸¹ It concluded by recommending to the AFT study steering group that "women play a full part in the study process and make their contribution".¹⁸²

Seminary Quarterly Review 40, (1985), 11-20, for a discussion of some of these responses.

178 "The Community Study and Apostolic Faith", 148.

179 *ibid.*

180 Mary Tanner, "Toward a Common Confession of the Apostolic Faith Today" in *Women and Church: The Challenge of Ecumenical Solidarity in an Age of Alienation*, ed. Melanie A May (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1991), 181.

181 "The Community Study and Apostolic Faith", 49.

182 *ibid.*, 49-50.

Women's participation in the AFT study was in fact limited and it seems that little effort was made by Faith and Order to encourage their participation or to relate the study to the insights and questions articulated in the CWMC study.

Membership of the steering group which had the task of overseeing and guiding the study process, and which was also responsible for much of the drafting of the text at different stages, was predominantly male, with Mary Tanner being the only woman until 1989. She was also the only member of the group to have been involved in the CWMC study. Women were not well represented (quantitatively) in the AFT consultations either. A total of 217 people participated in the ten consultations held between 1983 and 1989. Of these only 52 (24%) were women.¹⁸³ Co-incidentally women formed 24% of the membership of the plenary commission, while on the standing commission 20% (6 out of 30) of the members were women. In spite of the Lima recommendations, *Confessing the One Faith* was not the result of study by an inclusive community of women and men and although it has been described as "an ecumenically representative interpretation"¹⁸⁴ it is an interpretation which does not represent the participation of many women.

What then of the text? To what extent does it respond to the questions posed by the Community Study? These questions, clearly expressed in the Lima memorandum, were focussed on the "masculine" language of the traditional

¹⁸³ These figures are based on the participants' lists in *Confessing the One Faith*, 127-137. No account has been taken of those persons, male or female, who attended more than one consultation.

¹⁸⁴ *One God, One Lord, One Spirit: On the Explication of the Apostolic Faith Today*, ed. Hans-Georg Link. Faith and Order Paper no. 139. (Geneva: WCC, 1988), 7. Link, a Faith and Order staff member, based this description on the participation in the study process of many confessional and regional representatives and failed to notice the lack of participation by women.

trinitarian formula of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit", the "maleness" of Christ, and the phrase "born of the Virgin Mary".

Discussion of God as "Father" began at a consultation on the first article of the Nicene Creed, held in Kinshasa, Zaire, in 1985, at which, according to one participant, "women had had their say on questions raised by feminist theology about the traditional way in which God is confessed and understood".¹⁸⁵ The report from the meeting asked if "the fatherhood of God" could be understood "in a non-patriarchal and non-authoritarian way"¹⁸⁶ and affirmed the image of God the "motherly Father" as offering new possibilities for naming the God "who encompasses and transcends male and female, masculine and feminine, who liberates both men and women from the fake stereotypes...which have entrapped us all" and who judges oppressive hierarchical structures in both church and world.¹⁸⁷ When the Kinshasa text was revised by the AFT steering group at Crêt-Bérard it was significantly shortened and there was a greater emphasis on God as "Father". The revised text insisted that "it is a matter of Christian identity to continue to use the name that Jesus used in addressing God"¹⁸⁸ and failed to acknowledge the serious questions which had been raised about this "masculine" terminology.

When the Crêt Bérard draft text was discussed by the plenary commission in August 1985 there was a protest from one commissioner who, referring to the Lima memorandum, expressed his dismay that "the issues raised there concerning the imagery and concepts applied to God in the Creed and its explication had not

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 50.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 24.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 28.

been addressed in subsequent work on the apostolic faith project".¹⁸⁹ Intense discussion took place over several days and in a later plenary session the commissioner, Robert Smith (United Church in Canada), introduced a motion asking that:

The Steering Group and any other consultation called on the apostolic faith deepen and further the reflection begun at Kinshasa (Zaire) on the issues set out in the memorandum of the Community of Women and Men study in Lima ... and that, to this end, steps be taken to ensure the participation of theologians, women and men, who are already doing theological research on these issues.¹⁹⁰

After lively discussion Smith, emphasising that he did not wish to be divisive and that he had been encouraged by the response to his raising of the issue, asked and received leave to withdraw the motion. The minute writer commented that "Without any doubt, a long process of interpretation still lies before us here. It is to be hoped that women will be more fully involved in this demanding and laborious work".¹⁹¹ This hope was not realised.

After further revision the draft text was published in 1987 as the study document *Confessing One Faith*. In spite of all the discussion at Stavanger no significant changes had been made in the section on the fatherhood of God. Mary Tanner, one of the few women who had contributed to the formulation of the text, wrote of it that "while the paragraphs devoted to the fatherhood of God evidence a certain openness to the issues raised by Christian feminists, they are nevertheless

¹⁸⁸ ibid., 56.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas F. Best, ed., *Faith and Renewal: Reports and Documents of the Commission on Faith and Order, Stavanger, 1985, Norway. Faith and Order Paper no. 131*. (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 144.

¹⁹⁰ ibid.

¹⁹¹ ibid., 136.

weak - for several reasons".¹⁹² A major weakness discerned by Tanner is that the text fails to acknowledge the reasons why some Christians find the language of Father (and Son) both alienating and unusable. "There is no acknowledgement of the oppressive patriarchalism experienced in today's world, a patriarchalism that seems to be entrenched and given respectability by the male masculine language of the Christian tradition". While the text does say clearly that the language of fatherhood applied to God is not meant to imply biological sexuality or maleness it ignores the fact that "a range of almost exclusively male gender-coded words continues to be applied to God, thus perpetuating the perspective that male and masculine rather than female and feminine are more appropriate to describe the three persons of the Holy Trinity as well as their inner life and relation".¹⁹³

In the revised text, published in 1991 as *Confessing the One Faith*, there is an attempt to acknowledge the contemporary challenge to the language of fatherhood, although without any reference to the CWMC study or to the serious theological work done on this issue by a number of feminist scholars:

According to widespread popular opinion the fatherhood of God has been taken to imply that God is male and masculine and that patriarchal and authoritarian features are characteristic of God. Therefore, men have been assumed to be more in the image of God than women and patriarchy and authoritarianism are suspected as being woven into the very fabric of the churches' life.¹⁹⁴

The central argument of the text is that while "feminine" images may be used in talking *about* God, the names "Father" and "Son" may not be "surrendered".¹⁹⁵

The feminist challenge to patriarchal God-language has been rejected without

¹⁹² Tanner, "Toward a Common Confession", 185.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Confessing the One Faith*, 27.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 31.

serious consideration.

The discussion of the second article of the Creed began at a consultation held

in Kottayam (India) in November 1984. According to one of the participants.

"feminist concerns" were considered and "the question of the male identity of Jesus was also discussed".¹⁹⁶ However the question of the maleness of Jesus, which had

been a major concern of the Lima memorandum, was not referred to at all in the text. Although there is a whole section on "The humanity of Jesus of Nazareth" which emphasises Jesus' historical existence and the limitations of his human life, and in which reference is made to his being a Jew, there is no similar reference to his gender. There is no explication of the relation between the man Jesus and the risen, ascended, glorified Christ, although the text does state, rather baldly: "As a human being, Jesus Christ *is* male. But within the persons of the Trinity, there is no gender".¹⁹⁷

The text of *Confessing One Faith*, although extensively rewritten since the Kottayam draft, goes no further in addressing the challenges raised in the Lima memorandum. In fact according to the text the most important challenge to the affirmation of Jesus Christ as the "image of true human being" is the taking of worldly success as the criterion for the fulfilment of human life.¹⁹⁸ While the fact that Jesus was a Mediterranean Jew is discussed, there is no mention of the fact that he was a man, not a woman. As Tanner points out, this is a serious omission,

¹⁹⁶ *One God, One Lord, One Spirit*, 89.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 63

¹⁹⁸ *Confessing One Faith*, 37.

especially given the fact that "during internal debates within the Anglican Communion as well as during bilateral dialogue between Anglicans and their Roman Catholic and Orthodox partners, this question of the significance of the specificity of Jesus' maleness is a recurring theme in the debate on the ordination of women".¹⁹⁹

Four years later, in *Confessing the One Faith*, gender is for the first time mentioned as an aspect of Jesus' humanity, a humanity which "entails specificity of time, space, gender, race, socio-cultural context, etc".²⁰⁰ Once again however there is not even a hint of the possible significance of this gender specificity for women in the church and the questions raised by women concerning the maleness of Jesus are not addressed. Likewise, in the explication of the phrase "born of the Virgin Mary" there is no attempt to address the Mariological questions raised in the CWMC study and repeated in the Lima memorandum.

Discussion of the Holy Spirit took place at a consultation on the third clause of the Nicene Creed, held at Chantilly, France, in January 1985, and included reflections on the Spirit as "the feminine element in the Trinity".²⁰¹ At the Sheffield CWMC conference German theologian Jürgen Moltmann had referred to the "ancient but suppressed tradition of the maternal office of the Holy spirit, the divine motherhood"²⁰² and in keeping with this tradition the Chantilly text

¹⁹⁹ Tanner, "Toward a Common Expression", 189.

²⁰⁰ *Confessing the One Faith*, 54.

²⁰¹ *One God, One Lord, One Spirit*, 116.

²⁰² Parvey, *The Sheffield Report*, 36.

affirmed that "like a mother the Spirit brings to birth new children of the Father",²⁰³ adding quite a long Commentary:

While agreeing on the *motherly* actions of the Holy Spirit, Christians disagree as to how this feminine image is to be further developed. Because God's Spirit (*Ru'ah*) is feminine in Hebrew and related languages, some contend that the Holy Spirit must be considered somehow as a "feminine principle" in God, and be referred to as "she". Others, however, affirm the scriptural imagery with the symbolic analogy and the use of metaphorical language, while retaining the masculine gender "he" as traditionally used. The common usage of the languages of Commission members presently determines the gender employed when references are made to the Holy Spirit in Faith and Order documents.²⁰⁴

By 1987 in *Confessing One Faith* the Spirit is no longer "like a Mother" but gives "the new life in Christ" and in baptism "brings to birth new children of the Father, in the one Son".²⁰⁵ The Commentary has been shortened and there is no longer agreement on "the motherly actions" of the Spirit:

Because God's Spirit (*Ru'ah*) is feminine in Hebrew and related languages, some contend that the Holy Spirit must be considered somehow as a "feminine principle" in God, and referred to as "she". The churches, however, affirm the scriptural imagery with its symbolic analogy and the use of metaphorical language, while retaining the masculine or neuter gender as traditionally used.²⁰⁶

This remains unchanged in the 1991 text of *Confessing the One Faith*, a text which is "overloaded with male and masculine language, symbols, and images".²⁰⁷

The questions raised by the Community Study were not unknown to those who worked on the Apostolic Faith study. They had been clearly expressed at Lima in 1982 and brought to the forefront of discussions at Stavanger in 1985, but

²⁰³ *One God, One Lord, One Spirit*, 104. Moltmann also participated at the Chantilly meeting.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Confessing One Faith*, 68.

the text of *Confessing the One Faith* fails to deal with them adequately. It rejects, apparently without serious consideration, the arguments of those who experience the use of masculine language and imagery for God as "serving to shape up a church whose liturgy, ministry and structure perpetuate the inequality of women and men",²⁰⁸ and an examination of the successive versions of the text reveals changes which seem to indicate an increasing reluctance to respond to the concerns about language expressed in the CWMC and in subsequent discussions within the WCC.

Unity and Renewal

The second major Faith and Order study project inaugurated at Lima in 1982 and affirmed by the Vancouver assembly in 1983 was titled "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" (shortened to Unity and Renewal).²⁰⁹ This study sought to inter-relate theologically two main emphases of the ecumenical movement which had often been seen and treated in isolation from each other: the movement towards the visible unity of the churches and the call to common Christian witness and service in a broken world. The ecclesiological focus of this study was on the church as mystery and prophetic sign and it was decided to relate this to two concrete areas where human brokenness was in need of renewal. From the many possible areas two were chosen : the community of

²⁰⁶ ibid., 69.

²⁰⁷ Tanner, "Toward a Common Expression", 190.

²⁰⁸ ibid., 192.

²⁰⁹ For a helpful overview of the Unity and Renewal study see *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: A Faith and Order Study Document*, Faith and Order Paper n. 151 (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 1-9. For a bibliography of related texts and materials see ibid., 80-84. See also Gennadios Limouris, "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: A Historical Survey", in *Church, Kingdom, World: The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign*, ed. Gennadios Limouris, Faith and Order Paper no. 130 (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 176-185.

women and men in the church because it fulfilled the commitment which Faith and Order had made to continue the work of the Community Study, and the churches' involvement in the search for justice. According to Paul Crow, moderator of the

Unity and Renewal steering group:

Perhaps better than any others we could have chosen, these two issues and struggles are "prisms" ... through which we are able to view and confess the reality of division within the church, and to claim God's call to be a sign and foretaste of God's unity and renewal in the human community.²¹⁰

The process of the study included the development of a text on the church as mystery and prophetic sign, a series of consultations on the two specific issues,²¹¹ and a number of local study groups. Its progress was regularly monitored by the steering group and the standing commission. After preliminary drafting a first version of a text was prepared early in 1989 and then carefully reviewed by the plenary commission in August of that year. After further revision the text was approved for publication by the standing commission at its August 1990 meeting, and published later that year under the title *Church and World*.

As Crow had pointed out in an address to the plenary commission in 1985, any serious study of the two issues chosen as "prisms" was bound to lead into "such tense and difficult areas as ...the ministry of women in the church [and] inclusive language".²¹² It is these two issues, both of which are relevant to the

²¹⁰ Best, *Faith and Order 1985-1989*, 141-2.

²¹¹ For a complete list of consultations see *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: A Faith and Order Study Document*. Faith and Order Paper no. 151. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 87-8.

²¹² Best, *Faith and Order 1985-1989*, 142.

theme of women's participation, which will be discussed in this section with particular reference to one of the consultations and to the *Church and World* text.

The consultation on "The Community of Women and Men and the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" which took place in 1985 in Prague, Czechoslovakia, brought together 27 participants (16 women and 11 men) from fifteen countries and from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed and Protestant churches.²¹³ The focus of the consultation was broad, and as Faith and Order secretary Thomas Best wrote in his introduction to the consultation report, the themes were "at once fundamental and existential, general and deeply personal". The meeting was characterised by difference, and by difficulty caused by difference. There were "differing experiences and perceptions of the issues and *of the meeting itself*"²¹⁴ which, combined with differences in theological method and orientation made communication and mutual understanding sometimes difficult. According to Best:

Besides the usual and inevitable differences of theological position, and the sensitive nature of the subject matter, there were differences over deeply-held values, and of expectations about the role of scholarship and biblical study in ecumenical discussion. There was even discussion about what subjects were discussable: for some an academic, "objective" presentation of "positions" was the only suitable approach, while others considered this impossible, indeed a violation of the subject matter - which, they felt, inevitably includes a subjective dimension. Given the complexity, sensitivity, and fundamental character of the issues which surfaced, and the history of the ecumenical movement's efforts in this area, it is scarcely surprising that the discussion proved difficult at times, and that the meeting will be remembered rather for its

²¹³ Thomas F. Best, ed., *Beyond-Unity-in Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women*. Faith and Order Paper no. 138. (Geneva: WCC, 1988), for the report. A second consultation on the theme "The Ecclesiological Significance of the Community of Women and Men" was held in Porto Novo, Benin, in 1988 but the report and papers have not been published.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*, x. Original emphasis.

strong presentation of basic positions than for specific suggestions for ways to move forward.²¹⁵

At the heart of the discussions (and the difficulties) at the Prague consultation were three theological and ecclesiological issues. The first concerned the interpretation of scripture and Tradition, and the relationship between the two. This was by no means a new issue in Faith and Order discussions but at Prague the "critical feminist-theological hermeneutics of liberation" presupposed in the Bible studies by Professor Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza were decidedly controversial and gave new force to old questions. A second issue was that of the validity and proper role of experience in doing theology and the relationship of experience to both scripture and Tradition which again was not a new issue for Faith and Order. While the methodology of CWMC study had been based on beginning with the experience of women and men in specific, local situations, at Prague there was sharp critique of this approach to theological reflection.

Another significant division at Prague was between those who counselled patience in order to facilitate dialogue and those who argued that too much patience delayed justice. As Martin Cressey, an experienced ecumenist, pointed out in his "theological /ecclesiological reflection" on the consultation the tension between these two attitudes is common in the ecumenical movement, leading to "the strong feeling in some quarters that there are *two* movements, one reconciling (to the point of being too conciliatory?); the other striving for justice (to the point of being too destructive /aggressive?)"²¹⁶ It is over questions of women's participation that this tension has often been experienced most acutely within the

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, 25.

WCC as the search for the reconciliation and unity of divided churches has been challenged by the search for justice for women. If unity is seen as the priority then women, with their impatient cries for justice and the right to full participation, may be seen as the problem. On the other hand, as was pointed out by a group at Prague: "To be patient about the role of women ... may betray *both* the women who are denied effective participation in the search for unity *and* the search for unity itself, which will reach false solutions of problems unless there is a fuller development of the community of women and men in the church".²¹⁷ The consultation itself was unable to make any significant contribution to the resolution of this tension.

The study document *Church and World*, published in 1990, was "the important first result" of the Unity and Renewal study, which, it was acknowledged, "had to struggle with difficult theological and methodological questions".²¹⁸ This document integrated the results of the consultations on community of women and men and on justice, contributions from a small number of local study groups, continued reflection by the Unity and Renewal steering group, and review by the Faith and Order standing and plenary commissions. The text was described as "an expression of ecumenical convergence... to be studied and "tested" by the churches as a help and impetus for their own self-understanding and their common efforts towards unity and renewal".²¹⁹ The fifth and sixth chapters are the most relevant to this discussion.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, 154.

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, 155.

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, viii.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

The fifth chapter of *Church and World* begins by affirming that "the church, as prophetic sign of that which God desires for women and men, is called to embody ... a true community of women and men in its own life". At the same time, however, "the division between male and female raises profound questions of theology and anthropology: questions of what it means that we are not simply human, but human *as male or female*".²²⁰ The text merely acknowledges that Christians give very different answers to fundamental questions concerning the relationship between biological gender and identity, between gender and differences in function, status and roles.

A major section of this chapter deals with the complex set of issues concerning the ministries of women and the question of the ordination of women. The results of the Unity and Renewal study are summarised as agreement on the following:

- (a) on the necessity to see the ordained ministry and *episcopate* in the church as gifts of God, to serve pastoral upbuilding of the Christian community; and (b) on the many ministries of women and men which are recognised in all the churches as charisms exercised in the life of the church ... [and] (c) the need for biblical and historical study on these issues and (d) the fact that there is no consensus among the churches on the question of ordaining women to a full ministry of word and sacrament/priesthood.²²¹

As it is clear that "the question of the ordination of women remains divisive within

the ecumenical movement" the text can recommend only that dialogue continue and that each church, whatever its position on this issue, "needs to study seriously, praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the ministries of the church in the light

²²⁰ *ibid.*, 51. Original emphasis.

²²¹ *ibid.*, 59-60

of Scripture and Tradition".²²² This determinedly neutral text stands in striking contrast to the Sheffield statements on the ordination of women.

The sixth chapter of *Church and World* devotes a section to language and community, recognising that language can be a powerful tool for upbuilding or harming the life of a community:

In many cases the search for justice and for a fuller community of women and men has led to a quest for more inclusive language, and to a readiness to change some inherited forms of language ... When a significant portion of a Christian community no longer feels itself addressed by specific terms and phrases - or indeed feels excluded by them - then the urgent attention of the whole community is needed ... As Christians search for a fuller community a growing complex of issues has arisen around the use of language in the life of the church, in theology and worship. The language used in speaking of and addressing God, the language used in translating the Scriptures, the language of theology and worship, the language used in hymns have all come under scrutiny.²²³

The text describes some of the problems of male God-language and some of the proposed solutions, concluding with the bland statement that "Christians in each place must continue to reflect on the issues of language and its use, being sensitive to the need for language which is both faithful to Scripture and Tradition, and compelling and convincing to men and women today".²²⁴

The final chapter of *Church and World* summarizes a number of affirmations which, "rooted in Christian hope, ... call for Christian action".²²⁵ The church is called to be both a prophetic sign and an effective instrument of the kingdom of God, not for its own sake but for the sake of the renewal of human community. The divisions within and between churches diminish the church's

²²² *ibid.*, 62.

²²³ *ibid.*, 66.

²²⁴ *ibid.*, 69.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, 74-5

effectiveness as sign and instrument. In situations of injustice the church must act on behalf of that justice which is a constitutive aspect of the reign of God and it must express justice within its own life, so as to be a sign and promise of the eschatological kingdom of justice. It follows that:

The church must proclaim in word and in deed the fundamental equality of women and men, created in the image of God and now called to maturity in the image of Christ the first-born of all creation, the first-born of the dead who reconciles all in himself (cf. Col. 1:15-20, 28). The church must be a community in which power is used to serve and not arbitrarily to exclude others, which fosters relationships of mutuality and communion, which promotes the full exercise of the charisms poured out upon the people of God, and which corrects the ways in which the use of language perpetuates prejudice and inequality.²²⁶

Once again the document fails to offer any concrete proposals as to *how* these aims might be achieved.

Church and World is a convergence text, that is, it focuses on areas of agreement, on what it is possible to say together. It is carefully-written, combining passages of objective description with questions which have been formulated in deliberately neutral terms. It touches on issues which had been raised in the

CWMC study - theological anthropology, scripture and Tradition, women's ministries and the ordination of women, power and authority in the church, language - but in repeating, in a rather general way, some of its themes, it loses the cutting edge which was evident in the earlier study. The radical questioning of the Church, Tradition and Scripture which was articulated in the CWMC study and which caused such controversy at the Prague consultation has disappeared from

²²⁶ *ibid.*, 74-75.

Church and World. There is no hint of the passionate nature of the struggle for the full participation of women in the church nor of the growing tensions which the search for a renewed community of women and men was creating within and between the member churches of the WCC and in the very structures of the WCC itself.

To sum up then, although more women participated in the work of Faith and Order in this period than in the past, they were still a minority and the major Faith and Order studies were not greatly influenced by "the concerns and perspectives" of women. In particular Faith and Order had failed to deal adequately with two issues of particular concern to women in their struggles for full and equal participation in the churches and in the WCC itself. The ordination of women had been on the ecumenical agenda since first raised (by women) at the 1948 assembly. Questions about the language and symbols used for God had been introduced at the "Sexism in the 1970s" consultation in 1974. Theological understanding of both issues had been developed through the CWMC study. Prior to the Canberra assembly, both were identified by WCC general secretary Emilio Castro as major doctrinal challenges which needed to be addressed.²²⁷ Up to this point however Faith and Order had "hardly found the will or the methodology to confront these possibly church-dividing issues"²²⁸ and when it had attempted to do so, in the

Unity and Renewal study, little progress had been made towards resolving deep differences of belief and practice. On the ordination of women Faith and Order texts were in fact more circumspect and cautious than in the period before the

²²⁷ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, xiii, xvii.

publication of *BEM*, and agreement on this issue was becoming more, rather than less, difficult as both the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches articulated their opposition.²²⁹ While inclusive language was for many churches still an unfamiliar issue, for some, particularly US Protestant churches, it had been a subject of serious study for some years, leading in some cases to controversial changes in traditional language and formulae.²³⁰ Within the WCC this was clearly an issue which was potentially a new source of division and one which Faith and Order was, perhaps understandably, reluctant to address.

At the plenary commission meeting in Budapest in 1989 the Faith and Order commission began to plan a new and comprehensive study on ecumenical perspectives of the nature and mission of the church, focussed around the concept of "Koinonia" or communion.²³¹ In response to proposals for this study concerns were expressed by one of the female commissioners who asked:

Will discussing koinonia help heal the wounds of women and not cover them up?...If women and men share a common koinonia within the church, does this mean that I should expect to live in that koinonia in the New Creation now, where the promise is that in Christ there is "neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28)? Or should I accept that this will only happen in the kingdom?...That is, if we approach this problem from the standpoint of koinonia, am I going to be told that the ultimate evil is to disturb the koinonia?...Can focusing on koinonia really help women talk to those who regard us as...unwilling to set

²²⁸ Best, *Faith and Order 1985-1989*, 142.

²²⁹ The impossibility of women's ordination to the position was the official conclusion of an inter-Orthodox consultation in 1988. See Gennadios Limouris, ed., *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women: Inter-Orthodox Symposium, Rhodes, Greece, 30 October - 7 November 1988* (Katerini [Greece]: Tertios Publications, 1992). A papal encyclical in the same year repeated the teaching of the Declaration *Inter Insigniores* that priests must be male. See *Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year* (Homebush, NSW: St. Paul Publications, 1988).

²³⁰ See for example, *An Inclusive-Language Lectionary* prepared by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA and published in three volumes 1983-5, and the extensive literature commenting on this.

²³¹ See Best, *Faith and Order 1985-1989*, 220-241.

aside petty concerns for the good of the church? Can discussing koinonia help?²³²

The answers to these questions would depend on work done by Faith and Order after the Canberra assembly but in the years prior to the assembly it seemed as though on the whole the concerns of women were experienced within Faith and Order as rocking the ecumenical boat, as a threat to unity. The priority for Faith and Order was the unity of the churches - Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant - rather than the "community of women and men in the church", and it had not yet been able to lead the churches to agreement on the implications of the truth proclaimed at Amsterdam, that "the Church as the Body of Christ consists of men and women".²³³

Towards the Seventh Assembly

When the central committee of the WCC met in August 1988 its members celebrated both the fortieth anniversary of the WCC and the launching of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. They also devoted considerable attention to plans for the seventh assembly, to be held in Canberra, Australia, in February 1991. In addition they also engaged in some significant debate over questions concerning the participation of women in the WCC, particularly at the coming assembly.

The subject was introduced by general secretary Emilio Castro in his report to the central committee. While he affirmed the "increase of vitality" which the participation of women and young people had brought to the life of the Council

²³² *ibid.*, 206-7. The speaker was Roberta Bondi (United Methodist Church, USA).

Castro also expressed his reservations about the results of "the gentle but continuous pressure on the churches to include in their official delegations representatives of minorities, women, young people, lay people, parish ministers etc".²³⁴ He referred specifically and approvingly to an article by David Gill, titled "Participation: Beyond the Numbers Game."²³⁵ In this Gill, a former WCC staff member who in 1988 was general secretary of the Australian Council of Churches, argued that the patterns of participation initiated forty years earlier at Amsterdam had evolved to a point where they were creating unforeseen problems - such as the "gruesome experience" of the nominations process at Vancouver - and were leading to "questions about the WCC's identity as a council of churches."²³⁶ According to Castro, Gill spoke for many who feared "that this arithmetical game of participation may mean that while we have a sociological representation of the church we do not have a representation in terms of people recognized by the Church as their own leaders and spokesmen".²³⁷

Castro made it fairly clear that in his own opinion church leadership was not likely to become more inclusive of women and young people and so the WCC ought to change its structures to ensure the full participation of male church leaders. He told the central committee:

We must use our imagination to the full to find those structures which make it possible for us to receive the contributions of all sectors of the people of God and at the same time to acknowledge the special authority which the churches,

²³³ Visser 't Hooft, *The First Assembly*, 146.

²³⁴ Emilio Castro, "Central Committee, Hanover, 1988: Report of the General Secretary", *ER* 41 (1989), 95.

²³⁵ David Gill, "Participation: Beyond the Numbers Game", *ER* 40 (1988), 488-493. As this had not been published when the central committee met presumably Castro, as editor of *The Ecumenical Review*, had already seen the article.

²³⁶ *ibid.*, 491.

²³⁷ Castro, "Central Committee, Hanover, 1988", 95.

through their normal decision-making mechanisms, have granted to individuals within them. If we are optimists we hope for self-correction in the sense that women and young people will be increasingly recognised within the member churches and thus in the future it will be the norm for them to represent authoritative bodies in their churches. But as these processes occur at different tempos, more rapidly in the WCC than in the individual churches, it will be necessary to think of creative alternatives which preserve the riches we have gained from full participation of women and young people in the governing bodies of the WCC and which still allow us to benefit from the experience and support of the leaders appointed by the churches. Analysis of this problem involves considering possible structural changes in the WCC.²³⁸

He suggested as possible solutions a two-chamber system, or convocations of church leaders.

Castro's concern was that the WCC seemed to have lost the full participation of church leaders, and with that their support, with the result that decisions made at assemblies and by the central committee were not fully recognised or supported by the churches. In the ensuing discussion Castro's view was challenged. Jean Skuse, a laywoman and former vice-moderator of the central committee, affirmed the lead which the WCC had given to the churches in facilitating the participation of the whole people of God and suggested that "if church leaders have not taken the WCC seriously the solution was not to change our own structures but to work harder to encourage churches to recognise the leadership of women, youth and laity within their ranks".²³⁹ Another laywoman, Jean Mayland, stressed the significance to women and young people of the WCC's attempts to include them in decision-making, and the influence this often had on churches at the local level.

In a later article Mayland referred to this incident, commenting that tensions

²³⁸ *ibid.*

²³⁹ *Central Committee, Minutes, Hanover, 1988, 10.*

had increased over the questions of participation because of a perception "that the top church leadership no longer feels it worth-while to be on central committee. If it is full of women and youth then it is not to be taken seriously".²⁴⁰ According to Mayland, Castro's remarks were stimulated by his attendance earlier in 1988 at celebrations in Moscow to mark the millennium of the Russian Orthodox Church: "At the Russian millennium celebrations he had found the 'top' church leaders present. He did not find them at the WCC. He was therefore suggesting some kind of two-tier decision-making system."²⁴¹

In their formal response to the general secretary's report the members of the central committee recognised that questions of full participation posed a challenge to the WCC but did not agree that the solution was to change the WCC structures to make them more acceptable to church leaders.

The Committee recognised the challenge presented by the full participation of women and youth in the decision-making bodies of the WCC while keeping the involvement and support of church leaders. The participation of women, youth and laity in the WCC was strongly affirmed. In fact it was pointed out that the WCC has been a model for member churches. This issue of participation is a challenge to the WCC and to member churches and should be carefully studied.²⁴²

The debate about participation became more specific and more difficult when the central committee turned its attention to plans for the seventh assembly. According to the WCC rules it was the responsibility of the central committee to determine the total number of delegates and the size of each church's delegation, taking into account the size of the churches and confessional, regional and cultural balances. It also had the right to recommend "the proper distribution within

²⁴⁰ Jean Mayland, "The People of God and the Ecumenical Movement", *ER* 43, (1991), 40.

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

delegations among church officials, parish ministers and lay persons, men women and youth", and following the appointment by the member churches of no less than 85% of the delegates, the central committee had the right to choose, through a process of consultation with the churches, a further 15% of delegates.²⁴³

The executive committee had already considered the need for the Canberra assembly to be more inclusive than Vancouver and to that end made a number of proposals to the central committee. Having proposed as goals that women be 40% of the delegates, youth 15%, and lay persons 50%, it also proposed a policy regarding the composition of delegations "to realise these goals and to achieve an equitable representation at the Assembly." According to this policy churches sending only one delegate were not subject to any criteria, those sending two delegates should have one ordained and one lay person and should include one woman and/or one youth. A minimum number of clergy, laypersons, women and youth was set out for larger delegations. The churches were also urged "to give special consideration to the importance of including persons with disabilities and persons of racial and ethnic minorities represented in their membership", to bear in mind that central committee members would be elected from the delegates, and to remember that as the assembly was the supreme legislative and decision-making body for the WCC delegates should be recognised by their churches as able "to

represent the thinking of their churches to the WCC and vice-versa and able to make commitments on behalf of their churches on matters that come before the

²⁴² *Central Committee, Minutes, Hanover, 1988*, 14.

²⁴³ *ibid.*, 69, 72.

Assembly for decision."²⁴⁴ While recognising that only churches with large delegations could fulfil all the criteria, the executive committee stressed that "it is the *responsibility of all churches* to do their share in making the Assembly fully representative of the people of God".²⁴⁵

At the same time, the churches retained the full authority to appoint their delegates and the central committee could recommend only that they accept the criteria and principles proposed by the executive committee.

In the debate which followed the presentation of the executive committee proposals Jean Mayland, on behalf of Unit III, proposed an amendment stating the goal of 40% women at Canberra "be regarded as a minimum which falls short both of the goals of the Dresden Central Committee and also the recommendation of 50% made by the El Escorial Resource Sharing Consultation".²⁴⁶ This aroused considerable debate and in recognition of the fact that the central committee could not legislate for the member-churches by actually fixing a percentage, Mayland proposed as a reformulation "that the goal for women's participation be 40% but the Central Committee notes that this falls short of the recommendation made by the El Escorial Resource Sharing Consultation".²⁴⁷

This too provoked debate, with support being voiced by a number of women and reservations by a number of men, while it was noted that "such a

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 72-74.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 75. Original emphasis.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 76.

recommendation causes particular problems for the Orthodox Church."²⁴⁸ In response:

Ms Mayland described her amendment as giving the churches a percentage figure to aim at, without being compulsive. She did understand the position of the Orthodox, but wished to remind the churches that women form 50% of the human race and until women form 50% of such a gathering, we fall short of God's purpose in creation. The Unit III Committee felt strongly that the issue is vital to the Unit, to the WCC and to the witness of the churches.²⁴⁹

Voting was suspended to allow time for consultations with Orthodox members and at a later session vice-moderator Dr Sylvia Talbot presented the following compromise recommendation:

The Central Committee recommends that the member churches ensure the fullest possible participation of the whole people of God, clergy, lay persons, women, youth, persons with disabilities, victims of society, etc. in the life and work of the WCC, including its Assemblies, in an attempt to reach the agreed goals of 20% youth and 40% women, and in accordance with the traditions and practices of each member church.²⁵⁰

The central committee agreed to this recommendation, which was clearly much weaker than the amendment proposed by Mayland and which ignored the previous recommendations from Dresden and El Escorial.

Dr Constance Parvey, an advocate for women's participation who had experienced the debate over the 50% recommendation at the Dresden meeting of the central committee, was concerned that the goal of 40% women delegates raised serious questions for those churches which had not brought women into their own structures of authority that women from those churches might have

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 76-77. The executive committee proposal of 15% youth had been amended to 20%.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 77.

difficulty in participating in the assembly. In an article in *The Ecumenical Review* she asked:

How can women delegates at Canberra represent their churches if they have not been part of the process up to now? Or how can women representatives have in mind the wholeness and accrued memory of the WCC when they are brought into the ecumenical process at the last minute ...? And what new memories and understanding of the church and the movement towards unity can women bring as part of those who have been left out of the process, or have been silent, or have developed parallel structures?²⁵¹

Parvey's questions might just as well have been asked regarding male delegates also, for in the event 80% of the delegates at Canberra had not been to a previous assembly, while nearly 60% had never attended a WCC event of any sort.²⁵²

In 1990 the central committee received a report from the assembly planning committee, which included a proposal that one of the plenary sessions at the assembly be on "The churches in solidarity with women", with the aim of interpreting the issues of the Ecumenical Decade, celebrating contributions of women, and challenging the churches to take action. Two central concerns for this plenary were named as "women's struggle for justice and life" and "transforming the churches".²⁵³ The report also commented on women's participation:

The strong presence and active participation of women in every aspect of the Seventh Assembly is the responsibility of all those involved in planning the assembly. Women's participation in the assembly goes beyond discussions of percentages and particular "women's issues". Rather, women's contributions should be present in every discussion of the theme and sub-themes. in every worship service, and on every issue which emerges in the course of the fourteen days.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Constance Parvey, "Participation: A Pilgrimage of Agony and Hope", *ER* 40 (1988), 501.

²⁵² Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 24.

²⁵³ *Central Committee Minutes, Geneva, 1990*, 65.

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 69.

This policy of "infusion" was similar to that at the Vancouver assembly, but at that there had been no plenary "on women".

In a later closed session vice-moderator Dr Sylvia Talbot presented a paper describing the current situation with regard to assembly delegates. At 26 March 1990 the names of 611 delegates had been received from 202 churches, of whom 192 were women. At approximately 31% this was far below the approved goal of 40% and the percentage of youth was very low (7.53%). The central committee accepted a number of recommendations implementing the 15% rule, and agreed that "in order to improve representation according to the goals adopted in Hanover, only women and youth be nominated at this time".²⁵⁵

The central committee also received a report from the finance committee which for the first time had a sub-section on "women and finance," although the discussion of women and (WCC) finance had begun earlier as a result of the Larnaca and El Escorial consultations. A small working consultation had been planned for November 1989, to focus on how the financial structures of the WCC, its member churches and agencies impacted on women. Now the central committee was informed that this meeting had not taken place (due to understaffing) but that the study had progressed through written responses and questionnaires. These consistently showed that the primary problem was the invisibility of women's concerns and perspectives, which as they were not seen were not taken seriously. It was hoped therefore that at the assembly "both the

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 114.

programme and finance discussions ... may give attention as to how the Council can make these concerns and perspectives more visible at the practical level".²⁵⁶

The central committee also received a major report from the committee on programmatic reorganisation. This committee had been appointed following extended debate the previous year "to study the programmatic life of the WCC and to bring proposals for programmatic reorganisation to the March 1990 meeting of the Central Committee".²⁵⁷ This study had been instigated by the executive committee on the grounds that the goals of the 1971 restructuring had not been fully achieved and that after nearly two decades it was time for a re-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Basic problems included too many programme thrusts and too many sub-units, together with an increase of administrative and decision-making centres. Another area in which tension and difficulty were experienced concerned questions of *participation* in WCC decision-making structures:

Attempts have been made to make these structures, and our working style, more participatory. Sometimes this has left behind those persons in the life of the member churches who have a greater role in decision-making. And yet the structures of the WCC are still seen as being not participatory enough, reflecting the gap still existing between the WCC and its member churches in the understanding and implementation of participation.²⁵⁸

The 1990 report of the committee on programmatic reorganisation offered a pattern which it was thought could begin at Canberra. According to this there would be seven programmatic units within the WCC, replacing the three units and seventeen sub-units. One unit would be "Women and Youth" which would

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 121.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 160.

²⁵⁸ *Central Committee, Minutes, Moscow, 1989*, 188.

continue the concern of the Sub-units on Women and Youth. After lengthy discussion it was agreed that this report should be referred to the new central committee which would consider the proposals in the light of the priorities and programmatic thrusts set by the assembly.²⁵⁹ The status quo would therefore continue till after the assembly but it was clear that the ground was being laid for significant changes in structure and organisation, and that the existence of a separate sub-unit or "department" for women was once again under threat.

Orthodox Perspectives

It has already been demonstrated that during the years 1983 - 1991 Orthodox members of the WCC frequently took a minority position on issues relating to women. This was certainly not a new phenomenon but as women's participation in the WCC increased and as more attention was paid to their "concerns and perspectives" there were more occasions on which representatives of Orthodox and Protestant churches could only agree to disagree. The Orthodox were very sensitive to any attempts to impose quotas for women's participation, arguing that this was contrary to the constitutional requirement that the autonomy of each member church be respected. At the same time Orthodox churches did generally make more effort to send women representatives and delegates to ecumenical conferences and meetings. They were not so willing to accede to pressure to accept the ordination of women or inclusive language, appearing at times as the most intransigent opponents to both these changes in Christian tradition.

²⁵⁹ *Central Committee, Minutes, Geneva, 1990, 89.*

Reference has already been made to tensions experienced at the 1985 Prague Faith and Order consultation on "The Community of Women and Men and the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community". A major factor contributing to these tensions was Orthodox criticism of the original CWMC study which was expressed more frankly than ever before.²⁶⁰ The issues dealt with in the study were dismissed as "seriously imbalanced from an Orthodox point of view",²⁶¹ and as having little relevance for Orthodox women, while the way the questions were formulated was "foreign in their understanding of the church" and the term "feminism" was dismissed as "not...acceptable to the Orthodox Church".²⁶² A paper presented by Dr George Dragas (Ecumenical Patriarchate) was highly critical of the CWMC study, arguing that both its ecclesiological perspectives and its methodology were unacceptable to Orthodoxy.²⁶³ After the consultation Dragas and two other Orthodox participants wrote a statement for publication with the consultation report.²⁶⁴ In this they expressed their unhappiness with the "one-sided feminist approach"²⁶⁵ and with the methodology which they thought gave undue weight to the personal experience of participants and to case studies. Their own approach, based on the claim that Orthodox views represented "the wisdom

²⁶⁰ Best, *Beyond Unity-in-Tension*, 132. None of the Orthodox participants at the Prague consultation had been involved in the original CWMC study or present at the Sheffield conference.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, 135.

²⁶² *ibid.*, 126.

²⁶³ See George D. Dragas, "Some General Reactions and Comments from an Orthodox Point of View", in Best, *Beyond Unity-in-Tension*, 117-126.

²⁶⁴ See G[eorge] D Dragas, D Koukoura and G Limouris, "An Orthodox Statement on the Prague Consultation", in Best, *Beyond Unity-in-Tension*, 166-8. This statement was written after the consultation, the final plenary having already agreed to its inclusion in the documentation of the meeting. The unusual nature of this process reflects the tensions experienced during the consultation.

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 167.

of the Christian tradition"²⁶⁶ had proven equally unacceptable to many of the non-Orthodox participants. While the conflicts at Prague did little if anything to advance ecumenical dialogue they did reveal the depth of some of the disagreements over the nature and roles of women, disagreements which were based on differing understandings of scripture, tradition, experience, and authority in the church.

A couple of years after the Prague consultation Orthodox theologians from twelve churches (Eastern and Oriental) met in Sofia, Bulgaria, at a consultation sponsored by the WCC JPIC programme. The consultation, at which the great majority of participants were men, produced a report on "Orthodox Perspectives on Creation" in which a section was devoted to women.²⁶⁷ Working in a different context, these theologians were somewhat critical of Orthodox failures to provide women with opportunities for "active participation in the Church's life" and, while not discussing any possibility of women's ordination to the priesthood, affirmed that women, with men, are "joint heirs to the grace of life" and share in the "Royal Priesthood" of believers, and that the Orthodox had historically recognised the diaconal, witnessing and nurturing roles of women. This section concluded with the statement that:

In particular, Orthodox men must acknowledge that as full members of the Church, women share in the intercessory vocation of the Church to stand in the presence of the Lord on behalf of all creation. In concrete terms we must find means to allow the considerable talents of women in the Church to be devoted

²⁶⁶ ibid., 126.

²⁶⁷ The report of this consultation, held in Sofia, Bulgaria, 24 October - 2 November 1987, has not been published. The section on women was published by the Sub-unit on Women in its newsletter. See *WCW* 26 (June 1988), 27. "Orthodox Perspectives in Creation".

as fully as possible in the Lord's service for the building up of the Kingdom. This means more opportunities for theological education for women and the opening of career opportunities in the Church for women. Serious consideration must be given to the re-introduction of the ancient order of Deaconess by the hierarchies of the local churches.²⁶⁸

A similar approach was taken by Dr Ion Dura (Romanian Orthodox) at a second Faith and Order consultation on "The Ecclesiological Significance of the Community of Women and Men", in Porto Novo, Benin, 1988.²⁶⁹ While at Prague the emphasis had been on Orthodox theology, Dr Dura's paper at Benin was on women's actual participation in the Orthodox Church.²⁷⁰ While affirming the Orthodox tradition that women are not ordained as priests, he called for the Church to be more attentive to the issue of women's participation, commenting on the lack of women on higher decision-making bodies in Orthodox churches, on the insignificant presence of Orthodox women in the theological education, and on the limited participation of Orthodox women in ecumenical and theological consultations. On the latter point he held both the Orthodox hierarchy and the WCC to be responsible.

The ordination of women was the topic of an inter-Orthodox conference held in Greece just a few weeks after the Porto Novo consultation. This "symposium" on "The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women" was called and organised by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.²⁷¹ Although it had no official

²⁶⁸ ibid.

²⁶⁹ A report of this consultation has not been published.

²⁷⁰ Ion Dura, "The Woman in the Life of the Orthodox Church: General Considerations about her Actual Participation in it". Unpublished document. Personal files of the author.

²⁷¹ See Gennadios Limouris, ed., *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women: Inter-Orthodox Symposium*,

connection with the WCC it was clearly stimulated by events there and in the wider ecumenical movement, the proposal for such a meeting having originated in the recognition at a pan-Orthodox conference in 1986, that:

Questions about the place and the role of women in the Orthodox Churches, and whether women can be ordained to the priesthood, have been constantly raised in ecumenical discussions, whether multilateral or bilateral, and in the Orthodox context as well.²⁷²

Some seventy participants, official church delegates and consultants from all except one of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches, attended the Rhodes consultation and "for the first time in the history of the Orthodox Church women...took part in an ecclesial assembly at this level".²⁷³ The eighteen women who were present made presentations, and participated in the discussions and the voting. "The vote of a woman, it was remarked, had the same value as that of a bishop".²⁷⁴

Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myra in his opening remarks emphasised the importance of the meeting, the first of its kind in the modern history of the Orthodox Church. He also emphasised the important place given to women in the Orthodox Church through the centuries, concluding with the statement that:

We are gathered here in an historical moment for our Churches to engage in the very important task, not to review our tradition and practice of our Churches but, rather, carefully to restate the impossibility of the ordination of women from the perspective of the Church's doctrine and to re-examine possibilities for reappraising the place and enriching the role of women in the inner life of our Churches.²⁷⁵

Rhodos, Greece, 30 October - 7 November 1988, (Katerini [Greece]: Tertios Publications, 1992), for the report of this symposium.

²⁷² *ibid.*, 9.

²⁷³ Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, "The Ordination of Women: An Ecumenical Problem", *Theology* 97 (1994), 17.

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Limouris, *The Place of the Woman*, 11.

As well as clarifying the reasons for the Orthodox tradition of not ordaining women to the priesthood the Rhodes consultation discussed the Orthodox understanding of women's role in the life, work and practice of the churches, asserting that:

The Church has encouraged the Christian woman to practise; together with man and in accordance with her nature and her personal inclinations and vocations, a whole variety of ministries. These have been in the area of liturgical, pastoral, catechetical, didactic, missionary, and social work...[and] female Monasticism...has contributed to the advancement of the position of women in the Church in particularly difficult circumstances.²⁷⁶

The report also acknowledged, "in honesty and with humility", that "owing to human weakness and sinfulness" the Church had not always lived up to its true nature and there had been "practical discrimination against women".²⁷⁷ It underlined the importance of the actual work being undertaken by women in parishes, though "often without sufficient support and encouragement from the leadership of the Church".²⁷⁸ While similar comments had sometimes been made by individuals, such open criticisms of aspects of the institutional churches' treatment of women had never been made by such a high-level and representative Orthodox meeting.

The various tasks performed by Orthodox women in the churches were described as "supportive diaconia, a complementary pastoral dimension in

²⁷⁶ ibid., 28-9.

²⁷⁷ ibid., 29. For description of various kinds of discrimination experienced by Orthodox women see Anca-Lucia Manolache, "Orthodoxy and Women: A Romanian Perspective" and Elisabeth Behr-Sigel and Nicole Maillard, "Orthodoxy and Women in France", in Becher, *Women, Religion and Sexuality*, 172-183 and 184-191 respectively.

²⁷⁸ ibid., 30.

harmony with the specific sacerdotal ministry of the clergy".²⁷⁹ In keeping with this affirmation of women's role in diaconal ministry, the consultation recommended that:

The apostolic order of deaconesses should be revived...such a revival would represent a positive response to many of the needs and demands of the contemporary world in many spheres...[and] would emphasise in a special way the dignity of woman and give recognition to her contribution to the work of the Church as a whole.²⁸⁰

Again, the suggestion of reviving the order of deaconesses had been made before, but never at such a high level.

The significance of the Rhodes consultation lay in the fact that it was the first serious attempt on the part of the Orthodox to reflect together on the question of women's ordination. It was thus the outcome of a process which had begun some thirty years earlier when in the sixties this question "suddenly exploded" in the WCC and there impacted the Orthodox Churches which, according to Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, "were hardly prepared to give a response to this challenge" and within which "women's voices were scarcely heard...at the time".²⁸¹ Prior to the Rhodes

consultation the Orthodox responded to the question of women's ordination either by negative statements, "pronounced solemnly, and without any explicit theological justification",²⁸² as in the central committee debate in Dresden in 1981, or by the personal contributions of a few individual theologians.²⁸³ The

²⁷⁹

ibid.

²⁸⁰

ibid., 31-2.

²⁸¹

Behr-Sigel, "Ordination of Women", 11.

²⁸²

ibid., 16.

²⁸³

Among them Behr-Sigel herself, Paul Evdokimov, Thomas Hopko and Kallistos [Ware].

Rhodes consultation marked a new stage in the Orthodox response to this question, a question which had first been rejected "as a foreign body" but which was now becoming "internalised".²⁸⁴

In the opinion of Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, herself a participant at the consultation it is significant that although women's ordination to the priesthood was rejected, this was "on the basis of arguments that are as subtle as they are laborious"²⁸⁵ and that arguments based on woman's inferiority or natural subordination to man were explicitly rejected. Furthermore:

The Rhodes conclusions are careful not to qualify women's ordination as a "heresy" that could involve a break in the ecumenical dialogue...The opponents of women's ordination within and outside the Orthodox Church would be wrong to cry victory, as if the conclusions would provide a further reason for breaking off the dialogue with communities that ordain women.²⁸⁶

Behr-Sigel also comments that the report of the consultation; "which is meant to express a certain unanimity",²⁸⁷ passes over in silence "tensions and a diversity of attitudes within the Orthodox theological community"²⁸⁸ which were in fact revealed at the Rhodes meeting. She sees the conclusions themselves as prompting "serene and courageous rethinking of the problems, in continuity with our living Tradition",²⁸⁹ and indicates that this is being pursued by a minority of Orthodox.

The Rhodes consultation was primarily a meeting of male clergy and academics, though there was a significant representation of women. In January

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 10.

²⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 17.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 19.

²⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 18.

²⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 20.

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 19.

1990 an Orthodox women's meeting took place which expressed women's views based on their experiences within the church. This meeting, the long-awaited Second International Orthodox Women's Consultation, held in Crete fourteen years after the Agapia conference, was sponsored by the WCC Sub-unit on Women.

While the discussion of women's ministries focussed on the "creative restoration of the diaconate for women" the question of women's ordination to the priesthood was raised although, given the urgency of other matters, the women "only began reflection on this question".²⁹⁰ Although the Rhodes consultation had concluded that the Orthodox tradition did not allow the possibility of women's ordination, at the women's consultation there were differing opinions. The women called for more study and reflection, and "a more precise identification of the issues involved".²⁹¹

A careful reading of the reports from the 1988 and 1990 consultations suggests that the Orthodox position on the ordination of women was neither monolithic nor as intransigent as it often appeared within the context of the WCC.

If the Orthodox churches in the WCC found it hard to respond to the question of women's ordination when it "exploded" upon them in the sixties, they seemed equally unprepared to respond to the question of inclusive language for God when it emerged in the eighties. Their usual response was simply to reject any attempts to change the traditional trinitarian language of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" as contrary to Scripture and the patristic teaching, while some argued

²⁹⁰ "Church and Culture", 6.

²⁹¹ *ibid.*

that changes to this language had theological implications which threatened the very foundation of ecumenical fellowship.²⁹² Few Orthodox theologians were motivated to respond to the work of feminist theologians on questions of language, and there appeared to be no inter-Orthodox debate or discussion.²⁹³

By the time of the seventh assembly there was within the WCC an increasing polarisation between Orthodox and "feminists", i.e. those who supported the ordination of women and advocates for inclusive God-language. (Although there were many who were in favour of both ordination and inclusive language, this was not necessarily the case). The result was usually an uneasy compromise which did nothing to address the underlying issues or to resolve the growing tensions.

Conclusions

In the seven years between the sixth assembly at Vancouver and the seventh assembly at Canberra there was continued pressure for the increased participation of women in the WCC and all its various structures and programmes together with

²⁹² See for example Appendix IV, "An Orthodox response to the WCC Conference on mission and evangelism".

²⁹³ Two Orthodox theologians who have addressed the issue of language are Deborah Belonick (Orthodox Church of America) and Emmanuel Clapsis (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America/Ecumenical Patriarchate). See Deborah Belonick, "Revelation and Metaphors: The Significance of the Trinitarian Names, Father, Son and Holy Spirit", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 40 (1985): 31-42, and *Feminism and Christianity* (New York: Orthodox Church in America, 1983); Emmanuel Clapsis, "Naming God: An Orthodox View", *ER* 44 (1992): 100-112. At the Rhodes symposium in 1988 Kyriaki Fitzgerald presented "An Orthodox Assessment of Modern Feminist Theology" to introduce key concepts and assumptions to an audience "painfully lack [ing] a substantial response to the general issue of the participation of women in the life of the contemporary Church and the challenges of Feminist Theology in particular". Limouris, *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church*, 287.

a growing awareness of women's concerns and perspectives as different from those of men. Following the consultation on resource sharing at El Escorial and the

introduction of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women nearly all WCC sub-units paid more attention to women's issues, both by including more women as participants in their work and by addressing women's concerns more specifically in their programmes. However as preparations for the seventh assembly advanced women at the WCC confronted their male colleagues and asked them to be more committed to supporting women in their struggles, not least their struggles within the WCC itself. A particular concern was the small number of women executive staff and the consequent pressures on them as they tried to ensure women's full participation at the assembly and organise the PAWM at a time when the Sub-unit on Women was without a director.

Debate over the goal of 40% women delegates at the assembly took place in a context where there was more general questioning over categories of representation and some doubts about the continuing effectiveness of the WCC if it continued to press so vigorously for the inclusion of "minority" groups such as women, youth, and laypeople. At the same time, many women affirmed the role of the WCC in providing a model for the member churches and in encouraging them to become more inclusive.

The ordination of women continued to be a topic on which there was no ecumenical consensus although within the WCC, and particularly in Faith and Order, debate on this issue seemed somewhat muted. According to Emilio Castro:

It has become clear that it is unfair to claim that the ordination of women is *the* - or even one of the main - obstacles to the unity of the church! We had been disunited, after all, for many centuries before this topic was even raised! It is simply a consequence of the wider problem, namely our lack of reciprocal recognition of ministries. Once we have attained this goal we can then reflect together whether the denial, by some churches, of ordination to women is in fact "discrimination". Meanwhile, of course, nothing impedes a consideration of the issue of ordination of women within every Christian family, and this is taking place already.²⁹⁴

It was clear that inclusive language was joining the ordination of women as a controversial ecumenical question. Although the topic had first been introduced at the Berlin consultation on Sexism in the 1970s in 1974 the WCC had not yet undertaken serious discussion or research on what was becoming an increasingly divisive issue, proposing merely that a concentrated theological analysis be developed after the assembly.

As the assembly drew near it was clear that major changes were ahead for the WCC. A difficult financial situation plus plans for programmatic reorganisation would be addressed by the new central committee in light of decisions taken by the assembly. What role would women have in making these decisions and how would they be affected by them?

The Seventh Assembly, Canberra, 1991

The seventh assembly of the World Council of Churches took place in Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991. For the first time the theme was an

²⁹⁴ Best, *Vancouver to Canberra*, xiii. Cf. the comment by former Faith and Order staff member Gennadios Limouris that: "As Orthodox we have also seriously to show to the other churches that the ordination of women is not a *secondary* issue for Orthodoxy, but that it rather constitutes a *primary* and even *essential* obstacle for the unity of the Church". Limouris, *The Place of the Woman in the Church*, 284. Original emphasis.

invocation: "Come, Holy Spirit-Renew the Whole Creation". As general secretary Emilio Castro pointed out when he addressed the assembly:

Four years ago, when the theme was chosen, we could hardly have imagined the far-reaching changes that have since then overtaken us. Ideologies have collapsed and barriers have broken down. Winds of change have swept over Eastern Europe and Southern Africa. But the end of the Cold War has not ushered in a new era of peace. The prayer we chose as our theme continues to be as relevant today as when we chose it.²⁹⁵

In fact the Gulf War was barely three weeks old when the assembly was convened and until just a few days before there was uncertainty as to whether or not it would be held at all. On account of the war some delegates were unable to attend and it provided a constant, sobering backdrop as well as taking a great deal of time as the assembly struggled to adopt a public statement on the Gulf War, the Middle East, and the threat to world peace. As was to be expected in the Australian context Aboriginal concerns and culture also received considerable attention during the assembly and the question of the relationship of gospel to culture was raised directly and sharply, becoming the topic of much debate.

Questions of participation also came to dominate much of the assembly and were singled out afterwards by Castro together with questions about the inculturation of the gospel, as placing "enormous challenges on the agenda of the WCC and its member churches".²⁹⁶ In his assembly address Castro had referred to several signs of hope in the midst of all the problems of the world, among them "the dynamism of young people" and "the revolution ... that calls for the recognition of the gifts that God has given equally to women and men and demands that these gifts should have full opportunity to be used in the life of

²⁹⁵ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 150.

²⁹⁶ *ibid.*, xiii.

society and in the church."²⁹⁷ After the assembly however it seemed to him that "questions of 'participation' - of women, youth, laity, and the differently-abled - cry out for further attention. *So do questions raised about the limits of participation*".²⁹⁸

These questions of participation were most pronounced during the process of nominations and elections which was unusually tense and painful and which will be described in some detail below. It was perhaps partly with this experience in mind that some participants later described the Canberra assembly as unusually difficult, and "marked by a contentious spirit unparalleled in previous assemblies".²⁹⁹ Certainly for many women participation at the assembly was by no means an entirely positive experience while the question of women's participation seemed more divisive than ever before.

Assembly Participants

According to the report of the credentials committee 826 voting delegates representing 295 member churches were present at the Canberra assembly.³⁰⁰ Sixty member churches for some reason did not send full delegations and a further twenty-two were not represented at all. Thus there were slightly fewer delegates than the 847 at the Vancouver assembly. The total number was fairly equally

²⁹⁷ ibid., 150-151.

²⁹⁸ ibid., xiii-xiv. My emphasis.

²⁹⁹ Paul A Crow, "Canberra as Hope and Struggle," *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal*, 30 (1991), 182.

³⁰⁰ "Report of the Credentials Committee, Document No. CR1", 1, TD, WCC Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva. This report was not published in *Signs of the Spirit*. As there are some discrepancies between the figures published there in a summary of participation and the more detailed report given by the committee to the assembly it is the latter which has been used as the basis for this section. With the admission of the China Christian Council to membership of the WCC, which took place during the assembly, the number of member churches rose to 317 of which 22 did not send any delegates.

divided between North America and Europe and the rest of the world. Of the delegates 35% were women, 65% men; 46% lay and 54% ordained. Youth delegates, made up of 66% women and 34% men, were 11% of the total. (The age limit for official youth delegates had been lowered from 30 to 27 years. If it had remained at 30 the percentage of youth at Canberra would have been 17%). Approximately 20% of the women delegates were in the youth category and many belonged to the three "minority" categories of women, youth and laity. The credentials committee noted with regret that the goals of 40% women, 20% youth and 50% lay set by the central committee had not been reached, although the percentage of women had risen from the 31% at Vancouver. The percentages for lay (46%) and ordained (54%) remained the same as at Vancouver.

The credentials committee expressed its appreciation to those churches which had made a real effort to conform to the goals set by central committee, some of which had accepted requests to make changes in their delegations. The committee also noted that eighty-four member churches did not conform to the criteria: of these eleven did not name any woman, youth or lay person in their delegation and seventeen others did not name a youth or a woman. The majority of this latter group were churches which had four or fewer delegates. The criteria did not apply at all to the thirty churches which sent only one delegate. Of these twenty-nine sent a man and only one a woman.

The statistics show that two churches with small delegations of four - the Church of the Brethren and the Philippino Independent Church - managed to achieve equal representation of women and men, while the Society of Friends achieved 100% with three (lay) women. A number of confessional groups managed 40% or more women although the Reformed churches, which with a

total of 165 delegates had the largest number, had only 33.9% women. The Eastern Orthodox churches had 122 delegates of whom 16.4% were women while the Oriental Orthodox with the much smaller number of 47 delegates had 25.5% women. Other confessional groups which were low in women included the Community Churches and the Hussites which with only two delegates each had no women, the Moravians (25.0%), Old Catholics (16.7%) and Pentecostals (16.7%).

Delegations from larger churches varied greatly in their composition:

For example, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which had 17 representatives, sent only two lay women, four lay men and no youth. The Episcopal Church USA sent, among its ten delegates, five women, one of whom was ordained, and five men, three of whom were ordained, but only one youth. It did, however, include persons from its provinces in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama and Taiwan. The Uniting Church in Australia, with seven delegates sent only two men, both of them ordained and one of them an Aboriginal. It also sent two youth and one ordained woman. Thus the response to the guidelines ranged from minimal to overkill. The ends of the spectrum involved neglecting either lay women or lay men.³⁰¹

In terms of the regions the highest percentage of women (44.5%) came from North America, with Latin America (42.3%) close behind. The lowest percentage of women (20.6%) came from the Middle East, followed by Europe (30.4%).

According to the credentials committee there were 892 other persons participating in the assembly (not counting the approximately 1,100 accredited visitors, day visitors and local volunteers). Apart from the stewards, WCC staff, co-opted staff (and an additional 417 accredited members of the press) there were around 400 participants in a number of different categories: delegated representatives of councils of churches and of associate member churches, observers, outgoing members of central committee, guests and advisers. In all

³⁰¹ Michael Horsburgh, "Why the world Council of Churches is Not a Credible Commentator on Public Issues", unpublished paper quoted in Margaret Rodgers, "Issues of Women in Church and Society", in *Beyond Canberra: Evangelical*

these categories except the advisers (who were appointed by the WCC) men far outnumbered women who formed only about 22% of the total. For example, there were five women among the twenty-five Roman Catholic delegated observers. The most equal representation of women in of all the categories was among the 170 stewards where just over 48% were female.

Although 35% of the delegates were women this was less than the 40% goal and far less than the 50% goal established almost twenty years earlier at Sheffield and Dresden and affirmed at El Escorial in 1987, and in the assembly as a whole the percentage of women was far lower. Where the WCC had some control or influence the percentage of women often reached or approached the goal of 40% (although both the WCC staff and the co-opted staff were predominantly male) but in many categories, particularly where there was only one representative of an institution, women were conspicuously absent.

Pre-Assembly Women's Meeting (PAWM) and Women Space

The three day PAWM was attended by some 300 women and a few specially invited men. In the words of one participant, central committee member the Rev. Margot Kässmann (Evangelical Church in Germany),

We shared a magnificent community, we learned from one another, listened to and enriched one another. We experienced Bible studies led by women from three different continents, we listened to the stories of aboriginal women and we studied the mechanisms of an assembly. All of that enabled women to act and speak and decide during the assembly.³⁰²

Although the PAWM helped women, especially those attending an assembly for the first time, to understand the dynamics and processes they did not manage to

Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues, ed., Bruce J. Nicholls and Bong Rin Ro (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1993), 73.

formulate strong resolutions to the assembly and the churches and the PAWM did not prepare them to make a distinctive contribution to the section work.³⁰³ The "message" from the PAWM focussed on women's struggles for peace and justice. The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women was affirmed but the message also expressed the women's sense of frustration:

When we heard the testimonies of our sisters in the Pre-Assembly we recognised that the total church has not adequately claimed the Decade as its own or responded to the challenges the Decade poses to be in solidarity with women. We urge the churches to act resolutely so as to bring change in the remaining years of the Decade.³⁰⁴

After the closing worship at the PAWM the participants moved in a procession across the campus, carrying the banners and hangings that had been part of their gathering to the Women Space tent. There "the handing over of the decorations to WomenSpace was a symbolic act that expressed something of the continuity and solidarity of women's experience at the assembly".³⁰⁵ WomenSpace provided five one-day programmes on a number of women-related themes, a number of evening events, a weekend devoted to theology and feminism, a eucharist led by women, and various impromptu events. It was also a place for relaxation and for encounter between women from very different countries and contexts. "Female spirituality had a place in the tent and you could see a glimpse of that global sisterhood we often appeal to".³⁰⁶ Thousands of people passed

³⁰² Margot Kässmann, "How Long, O Lord?", *WCW* 31 (1991), 6.

³⁰³ See Elizabeth Raiser, "Spiritualität und Partizipation: Eindrücke aus Frauensicht", *Ökumenische Rundschau* 40 (1991), 384, for her perception of the reasons for this "loss of potential".

³⁰⁴ See "Message from the Pre-Assembly Women's Meeting: At Such a Time as This...", in Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 271.

³⁰⁵ Judy Nelson-Clegg and Jean Gledhill, "WomenSpace", *WCW* 30 (June 1991), 9.

³⁰⁶ Kässmann, "How Long, O Lord?", 17.

through the "doors" of the tent and although delegates had little free time to spend there it became especially important for some of them as the assembly progressed, offering a haven from the pressures put on some of the women nominated for positions on the central committee and a safe space in which to discuss issues of sexual harassment.

Women in Leadership

The naming of delegates remained the decision of each member church, although the WCC could and did encourage them to seek the goals established by the central committee. The WCC was responsible for planning the assembly programme and worship and for nominating membership and leadership of a number of committees as well as leadership of the sections. Staff member Thomas Best commented that in all these areas:

Enormous time and energy was involved in the search for balanced and representative groups of persons ...In particular a scheme of co-moderatorship was adopted to insure that women and men, youth and older persons from all the regions of the world and from as many confessions and churches as possible would hold positions of leadership at the Assembly.³⁰⁷

A total of 230 delegates was elected to serve on the nine committees which were responsible for much of the work of the assembly. Membership of each committee was almost equally divided between women and men, with the finance committee having the greatest imbalance (14 women and 21 men) and the nominations committee having a small majority of women (18 women and 16 men). Overall 106 women (46%) and 124 men (54%) served on the assembly committees which, considering that there was a smaller number of women

³⁰⁷ Thomas F Best, "Canberra and the Ecumenical Future," *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal*, 30, (1991), 243.

delegates from which to choose committee members, represented a fairly good balance. Of the women delegates, 36.6% were on a committee compared with 23% of the men.

The very influential business committee, which functioned as the steering committee for the work of the assembly as a whole, had as its leaders the moderator and two vice-moderators of the central committee (Dr Held, Metropolitan Chrysostomos and Dr Sylvia Talbot) while the other eight committees each had two co-moderators, one male and one female, and two vice-moderators, one male and one female except for the report committee which had two male vice-moderators, one of whom was a youth. Within the four sections leadership was evenly balanced, with each having two co-moderators, one male and one female. Although Emilio Castro referred to the attempt to balance leadership roles as "a timid change"³⁰⁸ it was significant as the first time that such a deliberate attempt had been made to ensure women's equal participation in leadership at an assembly. The result was that:

Women played an important and prominent part in the leadership of committees and in other key positions, including moderating many difficult and combative plenary sessions ... In particular the system of committee co-moderators "worked", offering in many cases a model of shared leadership within the community of women and men.³⁰⁹

Care had been taken by the worship committee to make leadership of the various worship events as inclusive as possible and this had its impact. According to one woman:

The central message I received from the prayers, the languages used, the selection of people leading the worship, and the images and symbols used in almost all of our worship is that of inclusiveness. It was with this image of the

³⁰⁸ Harriet Ziegler, "Women Want More Than 'timid change' *Assembly Line* (Friday 8 February 1991), 3.

³⁰⁹ Best, "Canberra and the Ecumenical Future", 244.

church as an inclusive society that I started each day and looked forward to the daily activities of the assembly.³¹⁰

The three major services were the opening and the closing, and a celebration of the Lima Liturgy. Women preached at two of these - the Rev. Dr Jacquelyn Grant (African Methodist Episcopal Church, USA) at the Lima Liturgy and Dr Birgitta Larsson (a laywoman from the Church of Sweden) at the closing service. Reaction to women's participation was not always favourable, as one woman described in her account of the Lima Liturgy:

A woman leading the procession held up the Byzantine cross. I was meditating on this beautiful scene when I heard a male voice: "Look, a woman is carrying a cross, a *Byzantine* cross. This is very bad ... *too much*." In the course of the service a woman pastor was preaching. Another man whispered: "Listen, she is using 'she' when talking about the Holy Spirit. *What are these women up to?*" Many women in that service served the eucharist. Some men refused to take communion simply because women were serving.³¹¹

Plenary Presentations

Care had also been taken to involve both women and men in the plenary presentations. There were fewer plenary addresses than at previous assemblies. Of the two major presentations on the assembly theme, one was given by a man, one by a woman. The four sub-themes were explored in plenary through a "round-table discussion" chaired by Pauline Webb with brief presentations by four panelists of whom one was a woman. A series of programme-orientated plenaries in the second week attempted to put a human face on WCC themes and programmes and included a plenary on "Churches in Solidarity with Women" on issues related to

³¹⁰ Elsa Tesfay-Musa, "Worship and Work Must Be One. But Were They?", *ER* 43, (1991), 235.

³¹¹ Kushnud Azariah, "Experience and Promise," *ER* 43 (1991), 251. Original emphasis.

the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. In all these plenaries attempts had been made to achieve participation representative of as many groups as possible.

It was on the second day with the two plenary presentations on the assembly theme, "Come, Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation" that the first shock ran through the assembly. The first presentation had been prepared by His Beatitude Parthenios III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, who unfortunately was not able to attend the assembly because of pastoral duties related to the Gulf War. In his absence his address was read by an Orthodox colleague, Grand Protopresbyter Georges Tsetsis. This address was followed directly by that of Dr Chung Hyun Kyung, of the Presbyterian Church of Korea and professor of theology at Ewha Women's University in Seoul, South Korea.³¹² Prof. Chung's electrifying presentation began with her entrance, following the reading of the Patriarch's address, accompanied by sixteen Korean and two Aboriginal dancers, complete with gongs, bells, drums, clapsticks and candles. After an invocation of the spirits of an eclectic collection of martyrs, Prof. Chung set fire to this list, and the photograph of her doing this became an icon of the assembly, appearing on the cover of the "Assembly Highlights" video and reproduced all around the world. As a piece of communication, Chung's presentation was memorable:

Sound, physical power, grace, gesture, lighting, garb, symbol and symbolic action so blended with and complemented the spoken word that it was a compelling and unforgettable "moment".³¹³

³¹² For the text of this address see Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 37-47. The address of Parthenios is on pp. 28-37.

³¹³ Gordon Gray, "Communicating Canberra", *ER* 43 (1991), 232.

Reactions to the address were, however, mixed. In the words of one delegate, "There was passionate applause but there was also passionate silence."³¹⁴ There was no immediate opportunity for plenary discussion of the presentations but there was plenty of discussion in informal settings over the next few days. For some, especially some women, Dr Chung's address was a highlight, an example of the creativity and new insight which women's presence could bring to the ecumenical movement. For Margot Kässmann "The way she combined drama, dance, symbolic acts and intellectual study was a symbol of feminist theology and new, fresh forms of Bible study women are doing all over the world."³¹⁵

Others objected that her presentation was syncretistic and a paganization of Christianity, a danger to the doctrine and unity of the church. It was described as raising issues of "inculturation, creation, inclusiveness, interreligious dialogue, syncretism, discernment of the limits of diversity, and pneumatology".³¹⁶ Although both speakers reflected on the Holy Spirit within the Christian tradition, their addresses had little in common, and "the young woman scholar represented, in many senses, a position quite different from that of the venerable Patriarch".³¹⁷ The two addresses, so very different both in content and in style, raised more sharply than ever before the question of the relationship between gospel and culture and the need for criteria "for determining the limits of theological diversity in this radically pluralistic age".³¹⁸

³¹⁴ Quoted in Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 15.

³¹⁵ Kässmann, "How Long, O Lord?", 17.

³¹⁶ Jeffrey Gros, "Christian Confession in a Pluralistic World", *Christian Century* 198 (1991), 645.

³¹⁷ Tissa Balasuriya, "Liberation of the Holy Spirit", *ER* 43 (1991) 201. In this article Balasuriya describes the differences between the two.

³¹⁸ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 15.

Many dynamics were present in the discussion and controversy which followed this plenary. It was seen as a clash between "classical" and "contextual" theologies, between traditional Christianity and a new form of syncretistic Christianity, between West and East, First World and Third World, Orthodox and feminist. Although in fact those who were critical of Chung's address included evangelicals and others, the debate was often seen as between the Orthodox and those espousing feminist liberation theology. In the words of one Orthodox participant, there was

A very unfortunate and largely artificial pitting of the Orthodox as representatives of so-called "Northern-hemisphere-Western", or better "rational" theology, conservative, if not plainly reactionary, "imperialistic" because bent on imposing their own ways on all, ... against an open, lively, "contextual" theology which really speaks to our own day, represented in particular by Korean theologian Prof. Chung Hyun Kyung.³¹⁹

To this experienced ecumenist, the encounter between Prof. Chung and the Orthodox was, in reality, "no more than a minor incident conveniently illustrating how easy it is to caricature Orthodox 'primitivism'"³²⁰ but others, including Archbishop Kirill (Russian Orthodox) and Stanley Harakas (Greek Orthodox), publicly stated that Chung's theology was unacceptable.

Chung was ready to debate her critics in public and a rumour went around that there would be a debate between her and Metropolitan Paulos Gregorios, a popular and articulate representative of the Orthodox Syrian Church (India).³²¹ No debate took place, but there was a special ninety-minute plenary session on the

³¹⁹ Nicholas Lossky, "The Promise and the Outcome", *ER* 43 (1991), 212.

³²⁰ *ibid.*

³²¹ According to one Orthodox commentator Chung's invitation to Orthodox participants to debate her presentation with her "indicated that she did not understand that the issue itself, in Orthodox perception, was beyond debate". Stanley S. Harakas, "Must God Remain Greek?", *ER* 43 (1991), 197. For an evangelical response (negative) see C. René Padilla, "Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation", in *Beyond Canberra*, ed. Nicholls and Ro, 32-34.

topic of the gospel and inculturation at which nearly twenty speakers took their three minutes at the microphone. The final word was given to Chung who asserted that beneath all the talk of syncretism, there lay the question of power.

She stressed that women, and persons from many parts of the world, had listened to European, aged, male patriarchal, academic and dominant interpretations of the Spirit for 2000 years. Could they now, she asked, listen to us for twenty years? ³²²

There is no doubt that the address by Chung, a young, Asian woman (though ironically one who had received much of her theological education in the West)³²³ at the Canberra assembly was the most dramatic and controversial presentation by a woman at any WCC assembly, probably indeed by anyone at any WCC meeting. To some, including some women, her theology was a danger to the doctrine and unity of the church. To others, including many women and "non-Western" participants, she was an eloquent representative of the theology emerging in the feminist movement and in the third-world. To some, she represented their fears of what women might bring to the ecumenical movement while to others she represented their hopes. Thus right at the beginning of the assembly issues of women's participation were raised for, in the words of another woman participant, "the participation of women, typified by this young, Asian female theologian, has left an indelible impression on all who saw her".³²⁴

When the assembly was being planned, it was hoped that "women would play a major part throughout the assembly, and not just be relegated to one special

³²² Balasuriya, "Liberation of the Holy Spirit", 202.

³²³ She completed her M.Div. at the School of Theology at Claremont, California, attended the one-year study/action program at the Women's Theological Center in Boston, and gained her PhD in systematic theology from Union Theological Seminary, New York.

³²⁴ Adebisi Sowunmi, "Women's Participation at the Canberra Assembly", WCW 31 (December 1991), 18.

session of their own".³²⁵ Through the work of women - and some men - in the WCC decision-making bodies on the assembly planning committee and on the staff, this hope was largely realised. At Canberra:

Women led Bible studies, gave speeches, spoke in plenary, appeared as section leaders, drafters and rapporteurs. Different from Vancouver was that you didn't look at every single woman who spoke and said: "Ah, at last a woman is speaking". Women have proven their ability to exercise leadership roles in the WCC, so it was only natural to see them in such roles at the assembly. It would have been easy to forget how far we've come, the energy it took by the staff and the Central and Executive Committees to bring women into these places.³²⁶

So wrote one woman member of the central committee.

In addition to this 'infusion' of women into the whole assembly there was also one plenary session devoted to the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. The presentation was built around the image of the greening cross, symbol in the Armenian Christian tradition of resurrection and new life following the crucifixion and death of Jesus, which also recalled women's presence at the crucifixion and their proclamation of the resurrection. There was standing-room only at the plenary which was led by Brigalia Bam and Bishop Vinton Anderson (African Methodist Episcopal Church in the US). Four women, two of whom were ordained, gave an account of hopes and visions of women in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa while four people, two men and two women, responded on behalf of the churches.³²⁷ Throughout the presentation, it was emphasised that the Decade was for churches, not for women, and that it must be seen as part of the mission of the church. Although the presentation was informative, it was scarcely inspiring. For those already familiar with the Decade,

³²⁵ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 44.

³²⁶ Käessmann, "How Long, O Lord?", 16.

it offered little or nothing that was new and its impact on the rest of the assembly seemed to be slight.

Statements and Reports

Throughout the assembly there were many affirmations of the church as an inclusive community of women and men, of the need for women's fuller participation, and of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.

Central committee moderator Dr Heinz Held reported to the assembly on the work done by the WCC since the Vancouver assembly, with particular reference to the programme guidelines established there. He reported that in response to the guideline on "the development of a community of healing and sharing within the WCC and the member churches where women, men, young people and children, able and disabled, clergy and laity, *participate fully* and minister to one another",³²⁸ the WCC had made efforts to achieve greater participation of women and of youth although, as he noted, in neither category had the proportion of delegates at the assembly reached the goals recommended by the central committee. In spite of this, he affirmed that:

In the last few years in the governing bodies of the WCC we have consciously striven with, I believe, increasing success, to achieve a better balance in our centre at Geneva between women and men, between the various confessional traditions and the individual regions of the world. The same holds good for the composition of our programme commissions and that of those who take part in our consultations and conferences. Our concern was to apply the principle of full competent participation, equal rights and eligibility for all in the work of the World Council. Some of us may be put off by the fact that specific quotas

³²⁷ See "Voices from the Decade Plenary", *WCW* 31 (December 1991), 11, for excerpts.

³²⁸ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 142, quoting Vancouver Programme Guidelines in Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 255.

were laid down, but it has kept us mindful that the aim should not be lost to view. It has also helped us to come closer to it, even if we have not yet actually hit the target hoped for.³²⁹

Dr Held also devoted a paragraph to the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with women:

It is slowly gaining an entry in the churches and calls on them to acknowledge the crucial contribution of women in church and society and to put into practice the insights gained from the study on the community of men and women in the church ... The decade is intended to draw the churches' attention also to the still existing discrimination against women in society ... But above all it is important to achieve, or at least promote decisively, the full cooperation of women, with equal rights, in the theological work, the decision-making bodies and the moulding of the life of the church.³³⁰

He concluded that "we are to a great extent still only in the initial stage of realising these objectives. For the further progress of the World Council, therefore, the tasks described here will continue to exist beyond this assembly in Canberra".³³¹

Held did not refer to the Vancouver guideline that "the concerns and perspectives of women should become integral to the work of all WCC Units and Sub-units"³³² but under his discussion of Vancouver's call for "a vital and coherent theology" he commented that "...the growing, independent theological contribution of women in our churches and in the World Council represents a challenge to our traditional theological thinking which calls for both unprejudiced attention and critical care".³³³ (It is perhaps significant that Dr Held was speaking three days after Prof. Chung's plenary presentation).

³²⁹ ibid., 142.

³³⁰ ibid.

³³¹ ibid.

³³² Gill, *Gathered for Life*, 256.

³³³ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 138.

In the general secretary's report Dr Castro discussed a number of issues which he believed were so pressing as to demand a response from the churches and from the WCC. Unlike Dr Held, Dr Castro had little to say about women. There was a passing reference to the churches' launching of "a decade of solidarity with women so that all of us together may grow into a community of women and men".³³⁴ Castro also affirmed that the Holy Spirit creates communion and fellowship and that "one of the main efforts of the WCC to articulate this theological perspective is to be found in the search for an inclusive community of women and men both in church and society".³³⁵

Given the rather low-key nature of the statements about women's participation in both the general secretary's and the moderator's reports, it was perhaps surprising when during the ensuing plenary discussion there was a dramatic intervention from Archbishop Kirill of Smolensk (Russian Orthodox, USSR) in which he linked the ordination of women (to which no reference had been made in either report) with radical theology and syncretism:

It is quite clear, he contended, that "liberal, radical and contextual theologies have a dominant place" in the WCC. As a result of such developments as the ordination of women and a "tendency to syncretism", we are witnessing new divisions in the church. The WCC is acquiescing to majorities instead of holding to the apostolic faith. He called for a "radical U-turn" before ecumenical hopes are exhausted.³³⁶

In his response the general secretary stressed that the WCC had not advocated the ordination of women, but had invited the churches to explore the place of women in church and society. Dr Castro also rejected any notion of

³³⁴ *ibid.*, 151. According to one commentator this brief mention "angered women who otherwise think the WCC is doing a reasonably good job in regard to women". Marie Fortune, "At Canberra, Profound Sexism", *Christianity and Crisis*, 11 (July 15, 1991), 220.

³³⁵ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 154.

syncretism, while affirming the right of Christian theologians "to stress the boundaries of the churches' thinking as they seek to relate the Christian message to their cultural contexts".³³⁷ Clearly underlying the Archbishop's intervention and the response was concern over the issues raised by Dr Chung's address.

The reference committee had the task of recommending action on the reports of the moderator and general secretary and also on relationships with member churches and various ecumenical partners. Most of its report was focussed on these relationships but the committee agreed with the moderator in urging "continued support for the WCC's commitment to the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches on Solidarity with Women",³³⁸ although without specifying the forms this support might take.

The reference committee also recommended that a statement titled "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling" be adopted by the assembly and transmitted to the churches. This statement, prepared beforehand by the Faith and Order commission in response to a request from the central committee, affirmed the calling of the church "to proclaim reconciliation and provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, culture, colour, and to bring all people into communion with God".³³⁹ The short statement (two pages) concluded with a section calling the churches to take a number of steps towards full, visible unity but there was no mention in these of anything to do either with women's place in the church, or with the church as an inclusive community of women and men. Indeed in the whole text there was no hint that questions of women's

³³⁶ *ibid.*, 125. Kirill was one of the outspoken critics of Prof. Chung's address.

³³⁷ *ibid.*

³³⁸ *ibid.*, 170.

³³⁹ *ibid.*, 172.

participation, including the ordination of women, had anything to do with the visible unity of the church.

Assembly participants were informed that section work lay at the heart of the assembly:

Section work is at the heart of the assembly's life. Out of it should emerge programme policies for the work of the WCC, policies and priorities it must pursue until the churches meet again in assembly ...[T]he work of the sections will also have to identify the *issues* that arise for the churches and the world when we relate our confessions and our prayers on the theme and sub-themes to the life of the churches in the world.³⁴⁰

In spite of the importance of the section's work, it has been acknowledged that the Canberra section reports are "of less than the highest quality".³⁴¹ There were a number of reasons for this, but the result was that there was often too little sustained development of ideas and argument and it seems unlikely that Canberra will be remembered for its section work.³⁴²

One of the issues which emerged in more than one section was the search for a renewed community of women and men. Section II, on the sub-theme "Spirit of Truth - Set Us Free!", had as one of its six issues "Justice for Women" which in the final report was divided into two sections, one on women in society and the other on women in the church.³⁴³ The brief statement on women in the church began with a description of many churches as male-dominated systems in which

³⁴⁰ *Resources for Sections: The Theme, Sub-themes and Issues: World Council of Churches Seventh Assembly 1991* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 3.

³⁴¹ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 24.

³⁴² Among the reasons given by Kinnamon are the lack of sustained theological input, shortage of experienced leadership, dearth of ecumenical memory, and the tyranny of time. A critical description of the whole process as "flawed" was given by RC delegated observer Donna Geernaert in "A Lack of Focus?" *ER* 43, (1991), 208.

³⁴³ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 89-91

"men take power, define what power is and who is to participate in it".³⁴⁴

Following a brief reference to language being used sometimes "as a tool of domination" there was a proposal "to recover holistic language that can be used, where appropriate, in the liturgies of the churches"³⁴⁵ but as one delegate recorded, "a proposal made to add here: 'for God', was defeated by fierce protest".³⁴⁶ There was also a very careful statement on women's ordination:

In some confessions, the equality of women is seen in terms of women's ordination. We affirm the struggle of our sisters in their search for ordination, but we recognise that ordination does not mean that in these confessions women are no longer marginalised. Churches that are not discussing the ordination of women must be respected. It must be realised that women and men within those traditions are also dealing with the women's issue on the ministries and mission of women in church and society.³⁴⁷

The cautious nature of these statements can be explained by the difficulties which the participants expressed in agreeing on a common text³⁴⁸ but several of the recommendations were much stronger than the text of the actual report. In addition to calling upon the WCC "to convene a study conference of leaders within the churches on the roles of and relationships between women and men in our communities", and "to organise a special study commission to research differences in teaching and tradition regarding women in Orthodox and Protestant churches, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, "participants affirmed that "while respecting

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 90.

³⁴⁵ *ibid.*

³⁴⁶ Jeannette M Deenik-Moolhuizen, "Canberra 1991: Solidarity of the Church with Women", *Exchange* 20 (1991), 78.

³⁴⁷ *ibid.*

³⁴⁸ Kässmann, "How Long, O Lord?", 17, refers to these difficulties.

theological perspectives that do not accept the ordination of women in some traditions ... women's participation in the ordained ministries should remain on the ecumenical agenda."³⁴⁹

In the plenary discussion two speakers emphasised that for the Orthodox ordination was not seen as a justice issue while a third (also Orthodox) spoke against the substitution of inclusive language for "the time-tested language of the Bible or the fathers". While these responses may have been predictable others were not. Picking up on the references in the section on women in society to sexual harassment and violence against women, two women insisted that these were not experienced only in society. Dr Lois Wilson (United Church of Canada), one of the WCC presidents, stated that "the report should speak of sexual harassment of women in the churches as well as in society". An ordained woman from the Presbyterian Church (USA) also claimed that violence against women was on the rise, and that "women need places of sanctuary, even at a WCC assembly".³⁵⁰ These are the only references in the official report of the assembly to what was in fact a major issue at the assembly, that is sexual harassment of women which took place even while the assembly was in process. (See below).

Section III dealt with the sub-theme "Spirit of Unity - Reconcile Your People!" A sub-section on the theme of the community of women and men in the church struggled to integrate the ideas of those who were familiar with the original CWMC study with those of others who had no knowledge of any of the history of women in the ecumenical movement.³⁵¹ In the end, a paragraph was produced for

³⁴⁹ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 91.

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 93, 95

³⁵¹ Based on my experience as a staff member working in this sub-section.

the report in which, once again, the importance of an ecumenical study of women's ordination was affirmed:

A truly renewed community will value the gifts of every group of people. This community, united by baptism, shares differently but equally in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Churches today are being enriched by many new and renewed ministries of women, both among those churches that ordain women and those that do not. Yet, serious differences continue to exist between the churches on this issue. Because these different positions appear to "raise obstacles to mutual recognition of ministries" and thus may be a hindrance to unity, it is important that an ecumenical study on this issue be undertaken as part of the work of Faith and Order.³⁵²

The sub-theme for Section IV was "Holy Spirit - Transform and Sanctify Us!" The report of this section stressed the call to the church to be an inclusive community, repenting of and overcoming sexism, together with racism, caste-ism and other forms of discrimination and oppression. It pointed out that inclusivity has to do with power and powerlessness and "needs to be defined by those who are or feel excluded". It means "equality, full participation and respect for all... who are - or feel themselves - marginalised". In an attempt to be truly inclusive the report named the marginalised as "children, young people, women, differently-abled, people of other ethnic or educational backgrounds, people of different spiritual understandings".³⁵³ These statements did not lead to any recommendations or cause any debate in plenary, and like a number of other statements stressing inclusivity, seemed to make "the women's issue...harmless...just one facet within a diversity of traditions".³⁵⁴

³⁵² *ibid.*, 98-99.

³⁵³ *ibid.*, 118.

³⁵⁴ Deenik-Moolhuizen, "Canberra 1991", 80. See also Johanna Linz, "Verweigerte Solidarität: Kirchen Kaum Bewegt", *WCW* 31 (December 1991), 26.

The four section reports served as the basis for an integrated report, prepared by a report committee, which was presented to the full assembly for adoption.³⁵⁵ This was the first time that an assembly had produced such an integrated report and the process proved to be virtually unworkable. As this report summarised the almost 70 pages of section reports in 22 pages and omitted all their recommendations (which were passed to the programme policy committee) much of the detail of the section work was lost.

The material reflecting women's concerns in the four section reports was condensed to four paragraphs. Three of these were based on the Section II report and referred to sexism in society, the Ecumenical Decade, and the ordination of women. References to the churches as male-dominated institutions and to the need to recover 'holistic language' disappeared and the statement on women's ordination was even more cautious than in the original, merely acknowledging differing approaches to the question and urging "mutual respect for the other's position in the spirit of love and understanding".³⁵⁶ From the Section III report there was a bland paragraph on "a true community of women and men", the content of which differed greatly from that in the original report and left out any mention of the ordination of women:

A true community of women and men is God's gift and promise for humanity, which is created "in God's image" - male and female (Gen. 1:27); and the church, as sign of that which God desires for women and men, is called to embody that community in its own life. Today Christians from many traditions look together for a more complete and authentic community of women and men. We affirm that the domination of women by men does not belong to human community as intended in God's creation (Gen. 1,2) but to the consequences of sin, which distort the community of women and men as well as the relationship between human beings and nature (Gen. 3:16-19). The God who created us as women and men calls us into community. The Christ who

³⁵⁵ See "Report of the Report Committee", in Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 236-258.

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 248.

identifies with our suffering calls us to become his body. The Spirit who empowers us to witness and serve sends us forth as God's agents, co-workers for a new heaven and a new earth.³⁵⁷

As discussion of the report did not begin until past the time when the assembly was to have adjourned, there was little time or energy for prolonged debate. Several brief suggestions for revision were offered and accepted by the committee, after which the report was adopted in substance. One suggestion - a proposal to insert a paragraph urging churches to adopt inclusive language with reference to both humanity and God, - was not accepted because, according to the moderator of the committee: "The ecumenical movement is still struggling with the appropriate use of such language... The proposed paragraph assumed a level of agreement that simply does not exist at this time."³⁵⁸ The result was that the report did not mention this important ecumenical issue.

The programme policy committee had the task of formulating policy for future WCC programmes in the light of the varied proposals which emerged during the assembly. Taking renewal as the underlying theme, the committee named five basic concerns to undergird and inspire all WCC programmes in the next period: renewal through reconciliation; renewal through freedom and justice; renewal through a right relationship with the creation; renewal through an ecumenical spirituality for our times; *renewal through enabling the full participation and contribution of women*. Under this last heading its report stated that:

Deepening the churches' solidarity with women in the church and in the whole society should find a central place in the continuing work of the WCC. ...The goals of the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women need to be visibly expressed in all activities and work by, through, and encouraged by the

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 250.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 235. My emphasis.

WCC. Churches are to act resolutely on this concern and to uphold the goal of visible unity in the building of a renewed community of women and men.³⁵⁹

The committee also stated its expectation that within the WCC "the participation goals for women and youth will be maintained in all events and in membership of committees", and took the bold step of linking participation with funding: "The central committee should assure funding only for those activities which reflect approved goals of inclusiveness".³⁶⁰ It would be the task of the new central committee to implement this and the other guidelines as it shaped the programmatic work of the WCC in the period after the assembly.

Overall the assembly documents said little if anything new about women's participation and some issues, such as the ordination of women, were addressed less forcefully than at Vancouver or Nairobi. References to "the community of women and men" did not rise beyond the level of a cliché and the substantive issues raised by the CWMC study were not addressed. There are few hints in the reports of the struggles before and during the assembly over women's ordination, inclusive language, and feminist theology. The sharpness of the debate roused by Dr Chung's address is not recorded. Reading the official documents does not reveal the painful contrast between the rhetoric affirming the Ecumenical Decade and the actual experiences of many women at Canberra. Central to this experience was the process of nominations and elections.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 192.

³⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 189.

Nominations and Elections

According to the official report of the Canberra assembly the process of nominating and electing the presidents of the WCC and the members of the Central Committee was "difficult" and "painful" and resulted in "deepening our divisions".³⁶¹ Similar comments were made by many of those who later reflected on the assembly among them veteran ecumenist Paul Crow who described the "usually tense" processes as on this occasion "exceptionally hurtful".³⁶² They also took a considerable amount of time, both in plenary and in meetings of delegations, and during the last few days of the assembly so much time was taken up with the elections and the equally difficult statement on the Gulf War that much other business was not dealt with.

From the beginning the nominations committee, co-moderated by the Rev. Ruth Jefferson (Anglican, Canada) and Bishop Jeremias (Eastern Orthodox, Poland) was faced with a difficult task. Since there were only 150 places on the Central Committee (five of which were reserved for representatives of the 35 associate member churches and not subject to the nominations process) it was obvious that some churches, countries and ethnic groups were bound to lack direct representation and to feel disappointed. Disappointment began to turn to anger, however, when the nominations committee's slate failed to reach the minimum goals which had been agreed for the percentage of women (40%) and youth (20%). When presented for the second time, the slate included 37% women and only 8% youth (persons under 27). Of the twelve youth nominees, ten were women who were included in both categories. Presenting the report of the

³⁶¹ *ibid.*, 19, 20, 25.

³⁶² Crow, "Canberra as Hope and Struggle", 182.

committee co-moderator Ruth Jefferson spoke of "frustration, anger and pain" experienced in trying to perform "a difficult balancing act".³⁶³ The committee was not entirely responsible for imbalances because, as she stated publicly, some delegations were simply unwilling to accept women or youth as their representatives. The situation deteriorated rapidly as advocates for youth, women, laity, regions and confessions faced one another in sharp, even bitter confrontations. To at least one observer it was "a situation where it seemed as if the only concern of the delegates was to secure positions of power for their own nominees".³⁶⁴

In this tense atmosphere there were reports of threats and intimidation being used against women. One woman was allegedly threatened with excommunication if she did not withdraw her name.³⁶⁵ Others were told that women should stay at home with their children.³⁶⁶ Five African women nominees all finally withdrew. Pressure on women nominees had happened at previous assemblies. What was different at Canberra was that it was openly discussed and that some women expressed their anger in public. Lois Wilson, one of the departing presidents, told the plenary of women delegates in tears after receiving threats from male clerics. In a voice trembling with anger she declared: "These are the politics of the World Council of Churches and they stink to high heaven and I do not think it was what Jesus had in mind".³⁶⁷ In response the assembly

³⁶³ "Delegates decide youth is older now", *Assembly Line* 8 (16 February 1991), 3.

³⁶⁴ Robin H.S. Boyd, "Outsiders - Students and Youth at the Assembly", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 30 (1991), 229-230.

³⁶⁵ Fortune, "At Canberra, Profound Sexism", 219.

³⁶⁶ Käessmann, "How Long, O Lord?", 17. Käessmann also refers to women being threatened by excommunication.

³⁶⁷ Crow, "Canberra as Hope and Struggle", 182.

resolved that if any nominee resigned the replacement should not increase the percentages of men, people over 27, or clergy already on the slate.

When the elections were finally held (Monday, 18 February) there was over an hour of complicated wrangling with ten unsuccessful attempts to propose substitutions.³⁶⁸ The final result saw fifty-one women elected to the central committee, 35% of the one hundred and forty-five elected members. As the five representatives of the associate member churches were all male clerics, on the full one hundred and fifty member committee women were 34%. While this was an increase on the 26% elected at Vancouver in 1983 it was still considerably lower than the goal of 40%. Of the fifty-one women, all except eight were laywomen, while seven were also youth. There were four Orthodox women, two of whom were from the same church (Russian Orthodox).

The election of the presidium, which followed soon after, was even more contentious than that of the central committee. An early document from the nominations committee had described the presidents as "eminent persons of solidarity and considerable experience" but a substantial majority voted for one of them to be a "youth", after voting to raise the age for this "youth president" from 27 to 30 years.³⁶⁹ There were already guidelines specifying that two of the seven should be Orthodox (Oriental and Eastern) and that at least three should be women. The task proved too much for the nominations committee which produced a slate with only six names, including two women. The list provoked heated debate, not least because it contained no name from Latin America, the

³⁶⁸ Some of the proposals were aimed at including representatives of both the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and the China Christian Council.

³⁶⁹ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 20.

Caribbean, or sub-Saharan Africa. There was an hour of complicated procedural wrangling following which the election was deferred.

The beleaguered Committee was instructed to bring back a list of seven names, including three women and one African. But the African delegates had already decided on a nominee, and he was a male.³⁷⁰

The newly-elected central committee held its first meeting on the evening of 18 February and had to do so without presidents as they had not yet been elected.

The elections finally took place on the last day (20 February) after considerable debate and a twenty-minute adjournment to resolve procedural difficulties. African delegates were dismayed that there was still no representative of sub-Saharan Africa (although there were two from Egypt). In the end, the assembly elected seven presidents (the six previously nominated plus one other woman) and asked the central committee to amend the rules to increase the number of presidents to eight. (The assembly itself could not do this as there had to be twenty-four hours notice of a proposed change in the rules). The central committee did this when it met immediately after the assembly, and then at once responded to the request of the assembly by electing an African man as the eighth president. The presidium was thus made up of three women and five men.³⁷¹ Thus the impasse was solved by enlarging the presidium, a solution which, according to one woman delegate, belittled women and youth as it was their presence on the

³⁷⁰ Mary-Gene Boteler (Presbyterian, USA), quoted in "Leadership of World Council of Churches Elected for 1990s", *EPS* 1-10 March 1991 (91.03.03).

³⁷¹ Professor Anna Marie Aagaard, a Lutheran theologian from Denmark; Bishop Vinton Anderson of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, USA; Bishop Leslie Boseto of the United Church in Papua and the Solomon Islands; Mrs Priyanka Mendis, a young Anglican woman from Sri Lanka; Parthenios of Alexandria, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa; the Rev. Eunice Santana, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Puerto Rico; Pope Shenouda of Alexandria, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church; Dr Aaron Tolen, an educator from the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon.

presidium which lay at the heart of the wrangling: "The regions and Churches clearly feel that to be represented by a woman or a youth is not to be represented adequately".³⁷²

Clearly no-one had enjoyed the election process and the assembly asked the incoming central committee to review the nominations procedures. Different commentators however offered different interpretations of what had happened. Some were inclined to criticise the WCC for insisting that churches be represented by women, youth and laypeople; some thought that categories were being emphasised at the expense of competence, thereby causing a lack of credibility in the WCC. Some women interpreted what had happened as indicative of "the profound sexism flourishing just beneath the surface of most organisations in a patriarchal culture".³⁷³ Others saw the turmoil as evidence of a backlash which Lois Wilson thought was itself an indicator of the gains women had made. Janice Love, a former member of the executive committee who was re-elected to the central committee, observed "a conflict between those who want to slow the movement of women into positions of authority in the council and those who say 'Slow down from what?'"³⁷⁴ Margot Kässmann, another woman re-elected to the central committee (and later appointed to the executive committee) asked:

How can we go on talking about community between women and men in the church when there is apparently no wish for such community on the male side? What good is it to make up percentages for women in World Council committees when there is no support for this in the member churches?³⁷⁵

A thoughtful statement by Donna Geernaert, a Roman Catholic delegated observer who was not personally involved in the elections, pointed to one of the

³⁷² Fortune, "At Canberra, Profound Sexism", 219.

³⁷³ *ibid.*

³⁷⁴ *ibid.*

underlying problems in the whole process:

Administrative decisions may be viewed as a kind of operative theology which tests the theoretical agreements achieved in dialogue. Thus, when the assembly agreed that certain groups should have specific quotas of representatives included in the central committee, this agreement could be affirmed only through the nominations which came from the churches. Although the nominations committee's failure to achieve the assembly's stated quotas was disappointing, its success in clarifying the member churches' degree of actual agreement with the theoretical decision may have been the most helpful way of identifying the starting point for a new dialogue.³⁷⁶

If the assembly is seen as an exercise in the "reception" by its member churches of the values and policies promulgated by the WCC, then clearly Canberra revealed that many member churches were not yet ready to "receive" the philosophy of representation developed by the WCC.

The final step in electing the WCC leadership took place at the brief central committee meeting immediately after the assembly.³⁷⁷ In more than three hours of closed sessions, the new committee first elected a moderator and two vice-moderators and then fifteen members of the executive committee. There was general consent that the moderator should be from an Orthodox church (as there had not yet been either an Orthodox or a woman moderator) but the proposal of the nominations committee was met with a second nomination from the floor. Both nominations were of male Orthodox clergy and after a series of ballots the second nominee, Archbishop Aram Keshishian of the Armenian Orthodox Church (Lebanon) was elected. There was considerable discussion of the committee's nominees for the vice-moderator's positions - Ephorus Dr Nababan (Batak Protestant Christian Church, Indonesia) and the Rev. Nelida Ritchie (Evangelical

³⁷⁵ Kässmann, "How Long, O Lord?", 17.

³⁷⁶ Geernaert, "A Lack of Focus?", 209.

Methodist Church of Argentina) - with alternative names being proposed from the floor. Some wanted a lay person, others a young person, but in the end the committee's two nominees were elected. The election of the remaining fifteen members of the executive committee (who, with the three officers and eight presidents, would make a total of twenty-six) proceeded without incident, possibly because it was understood that a system of rotating the memberships would be introduced in two to three years. Seven women were elected, five of whom were lay women (compared with one lay man), with four being from the "Third World". Thus the percentage of women on the executive committee (38%) was somewhat better than the percentage on the central committee (35%). One of the newly-elected executive committee, Ms Birgitta Rantakari was elected as moderator of the important finance sub-committee.

At the end of these elections, the Rev. Elizabeth Welch (United Reformed Church in the UK) expressed disappointment in the process of nomination and election, during both the central committee meeting and the assembly. No doubt she spoke for many in expressing her hope that "it would be possible to evolve a process that is less painful and more business-like".³⁷⁸ Similar hopes had been expressed in the past.

Sexual Harassment

³⁷⁷ See *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Forty-Second Meeting, Canberra, Australia, 18 & 21-22 February, 1991* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 5-7.

³⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 8.

For many women at Canberra the official affirmation of the Ecumenical Decade offered a painful contrast to their own experiences during the assembly. Nowhere was this contrast more obvious or more painful than when a young female steward was raped on the campus by a delegate who assaulted her at knifepoint in her own room.³⁷⁹ Charges were laid but were dropped because of a technicality. There was no denial of culpability and the delegate was ordered to leave the assembly, a decision which was supported by other members of his delegation because he had "committed adultery".³⁸⁰ Although this incident was not mentioned in public, news of it spread rapidly. Many women were shocked, not only by the actual assault, but also by the defence mechanisms which they saw working as attempts were made to blame the woman. In Womenspace and in small groups all over the campus women talked about what had happened and about many other experiences of sexual harassment in churches and at ecumenical meetings. As staff member the Rev. Ofelia Ortega observed: "These things are not new; they have always happened at assemblies. But now women are less willing to be silent. Victim's stories must be told".³⁸¹

That many such stories were told among women, albeit privately, lay behind some of the comments made in the plenary discussion on the report of Section II. In the words of the Rev. Mary-Gene Boteler (Presbyterian, USA): "The report addresses the issue of violence against women but makes no recommendations. Such violence is on the rise; women need places of sanctuary, even at a WCC assembly."³⁸² In the section report however the comments on sexual harassment, intimidation and violence against women were all in the sub-section on "Women

³⁷⁹ This incident is described in Fortune, "At Canberra, Profound Sexism," 219.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*

in Society" as though they were irrelevant to "Women in the Church". The rape was not mentioned in the official report of the assembly. The issue had however been raised and the traditional silence broken for the first time.

Conclusion

There were more women participants at Canberra than at any previous WCC assembly, but although women were 35% of the delegates this was below the 40% goal set by the central committee (a goal which was significantly lower than the 50% recommended at Dresden almost twenty years earlier). Some churches had responded much more positively than others to the guidelines on composition of delegations, but a significant number of the women delegates were within the 15% category nominated by the WCC. The increased proportion of women delegates showed both that WCC policies were having some effect and that these policies met with a mixed reception from the churches.

The hope that women would play a major part at Canberra and not be restricted to one special session was fulfilled. They participated in all aspects in the assembly, including leadership roles. As a result of deliberate policy, including the system of co-moderatorship, women played an important and prominent part in the leadership of committees and in other key positions. This widespread participation of women was affirmed by many, including by evangelical participants (mostly male) who named the leadership of women as among the challenges they had experienced at the assembly:

381 *ibid.*, 220.

382 Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 95.

Women were visible and active participants in the full programme of the assembly including worship (both preaching and administering the eucharist); section work, plenary sessions, business and committee actions as well as the educational offerings of the visitors' programme. The assembly was enriched by the participation of these many gifted women.³⁸³

The prominence of women in leadership positions at Canberra marked a significant advance in women's participation at WCC assemblies.

In spite of increased levels of participation, women's experience of the assembly was not entirely positive. According to one commentator, "compared to the mood of hope women had in Vancouver there was a lot of resignation and disillusionment among women at Canberra... We women have not abandoned hope, but we feel neglected, angry and impatient".³⁸⁴ A group of younger women, for whom Canberra had been their first large ecumenical gathering, spoke "in terms of pain as much as of joy, of despair as much as of hope".³⁸⁵

Among the reasons for women's negative attitudes were the following:

They had been shocked at the pressures women had been put under as they tried to gain full acceptance as representatives of their churches on the policy-making bodies of the Council. They had found many of the procedures alienating to women. Some had even experienced sexual harassment or simple disparagement.³⁸⁶

For some the mood of disillusionment was linked with the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with women which three years after its launching had not, as women at the PAWM made clear, been taken up seriously by many churches and seemed in danger of becoming a decade of women in solidarity with the churches. In the words of Margot Kässmann: "It is the women all over the world

³⁸³ "A Letter to Churches and Christians Worldwide from Participants Who Share Evangelical Perspectives", in Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 285.

³⁸⁴ Kässmann, "How Long, O Lord?", 16. See also Linz, "Verweigerte Solidarität", 26-27.

³⁸⁵ Webb, *She Flies Beyond*, 26.

who take up the idea and find creative ways of contextualizing it. The men in the churches do not seem to see it as their issue. That is a deadlock. At Canberra we did not really find a way out".³⁸⁷

Certainly the Ecumenical Decade was affirmed at a number of points during the assembly (though some women were angered that the general secretary made only one brief reference to it in his report). The report of the programme policy committee stated that:

The goals of the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women need to be visibly expressed in all activities and work by, through, and encouraged by the WCC. Churches are to *act* resolutely on this concern and to uphold the goal of visible unity in the building of a renewed community of women and men.³⁸⁸

The problem for some women was that their experiences at the assembly emphasised the large gap between the goals of the Ecumenical Decade and the reality. Also, in spite of many references in assembly documents and speeches which affirmed "inclusive" or "renewed" community there was little if any clarification of, or commitment to, specific steps leading to the achievement of this rather vague ideal.

From the assembly as a whole there emerged no clear "women's perspective", or position on "women's issues", which was perhaps not surprising as the women at the PAWM had not formulated any strong resolutions to the assembly or to the churches. In the section reports, the major attention to women and their concerns came in section II under the sub-heading "Justice for Women" which focussed mainly on women in society. Only very cautious mention was

³⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 26-7.

³⁸⁷ Käessmann, "How Long, O Lord?", 16.

³⁸⁸ Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 192.

made of the difficult and potentially divisive theological issues of concern to many women ie. the ordination of women and inclusive language. (In fact traditional Faith and Order issues and the emphasis on the quest for the unity of the churches were somewhat marginalised at Canberra where there was a very heavy emphasis on justice issues and the JPIC programme).

At the same time, the most challenging and controversial theological presentation at the assembly was undoubtedly that given by Professor Chung. Responses to her address, from both women and men, were varied and what was exciting to some was deeply disturbing to others. It was clear to all however that feminist theology had its own distinctive contribution to make and that women theologians would not necessarily conform to masculine patterns of thinking and acting. That women's contribution might be distinctive and different was encouraging for some (mainly women) and threatening to others (mainly but not exclusively men).

This sense of threat seems to underlie the concerns expressed in a statement from Orthodox participants at the assembly, although it makes no explicit reference to women or to feminist theology. There is however a clear expression of alarm about Chung's presentation, even though she is not named. Concern about "a growing departure from biblically-based Christian understandings" of the Trinitarian God and about "the changing process of decision-making in the WCC", together with "other tendencies and developments" were seen by the Orthodox as questioning "the very nature and identity of the Council" and they therefore responded with the question: "Has the time come for the Orthodox churches and other member churches to review their relations with the World Council of

Churches?"³⁸⁹ Unfortunately the events and discussions at Canberra did nothing to resolve or relieve the already existing tensions between Orthodox and non-Orthodox. While some of those tensions had nothing to do with women, some were the result of differing attitudes to questions *about* women's participation and others were raised *by* women's participation.

In a context where "Orthodox" and "women" were understood by some almost as oppositional categories, Orthodox women participants were in a difficult position. As one wrote:

Most people were friendly, and interested in knowing more about what it meant to be Orthodox - particularly Orthodox and female....But that word "Orthodox" seemed to engender a certain guardedness, a wariness, in some people, and from a few there was a tinge of actual hostility. The reason for these attitudes is always the same - the Orthodox stand alone in many ways. We are, first of all, the ones who do not ordain women to the priesthood.³⁹⁰

According to one Protestant woman who wrote sympathetically of the difficulties Orthodox women found in a feminist critique of patriarchy and male-dominated church structures, at Canberra it became clear "how little we understand one another, how distinctive our ways of speaking are, how varied the cultures, in which our tradition is embedded". She believed that a dialogue between Orthodox and Protestant women had just begun.³⁹¹

At Canberra questions of participation and representation emerged more strongly than at any of the six earlier assemblies, and the assembly may well be remembered for its long-drawn wrangling over nominations and elections more than for any of its theological arguments, reports or public statements. While the

³⁸⁹ "Reflections of Orthodox Participants", in Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 280-282.

³⁹⁰ Valerie Zahirsky, "Are the Orthodox that far Apart?", *ER* 43 (1991), 223.

³⁹¹ Raiser, "Spiritualität und Partizipation", 387. My translation. Raiser, who was an observer on behalf of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women, of which she was president, hoped that this dialogue would continue in Europe.

relatively high level of women's participation was affirmed by many, it had been achieved only as the result of deliberate policies instituted by the WCC and it was clear that these policies had not been "received" by all the member churches.

While some affirmed that "room was being created for more than the thoughtful heads of yore with their resources of decades of patient ecumenical experience and reflection"³⁹² others lamented that the move towards more inclusive participation had resulted in "a disastrous loss of credibility" for the WCC as it had been achieved at the cost of competence and expertise.³⁹³ Others suggested that the dichotomy between "competence" and "participation" was false, and that competent persons in theological and other fields could be (and were) found among women and other "minority" groups.³⁹⁴

Underlying many of the conflicts over participation were questions about representation. While willing to affirm the participation of women as members of the whole people of God, and to accept them as members of the assembly, many churches were less willing to accept that a woman might be their legitimate representative on the central committee or presidium. The most acute tension at Canberra was over the question of participation and representation in decision-making and leadership in the WCC. On the one hand were those who thought that membership of the central committee and presidium should represent as far as possible the diversity of the whole people of God, while on the other hand were

³⁹² John Deschner, "Canberra's Church Unity Statement in a 'Restless' Ecumenical Movement", *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal*, 30 (1991), 193.

³⁹³ John Habgood, "The Role of the Churches in the International Order". The Thomas Corbishley Lecture, Heythrop College, London, 9 October 1991, MS copy, 13, quoted in Margaret Rodgers, "Issues of Women in Church and Society", in *Beyond Canberra*, ed. Nicholls and Ro, 74.

³⁹⁴ See for example Best, "Canberra and the Ecumenical Future", 245 and Rodgers, "Issues of Women in Church and Society", 75.

those who thought it appropriate that churches should be represented by their leaders - leaders who in the majority of cases were ordained, middle-aged (or older), and male.

The participation of women was a difficult issue at Canberra, both at the beginning of the assembly where it was raised in relation to the churches' delegations and at the end where it was a cause of bitterness and division during the nominations and elections processes. As a result of the Canberra assembly, questions of representation, including the representation of women, which were already recognised as important ecumenical issues, became more acute. The situation was summed up by the general secretary who stated that:

That system [of quota and categories] was introduced to facilitate the participation of all in decision-making processes. Despite the evident benefits it has brought in some quarters, its effectiveness is now being called into question both in terms of the way it works and the erosion of memory and content it is said to entail.³⁹⁵

With widespread dissatisfaction all around, the only agreement was that a new approach must be found before the eighth assembly. In 1991 the nature of this approach and its implications for women were quite unclear but what was clear was that women's struggle for full participation in the WCC was by no means over.

³⁹⁵ Emilio Castro, "Editorial", *ER* 43 (1991), 169.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: ROCKING THE BOAT

The ship is an ancient and well-known symbol for the Church, the "ark of salvation" carrying the faithful on the troubled seas of life, and the ecumenical ship has become a well-known symbol of the World Council of Churches. For almost fifty years the ecumenical ship has been sailing, taking on board in the course of its voyage a growing and increasingly diverse complement of passengers (i.e. members of the member churches of the WCC) who often have little in common except the journey towards the visible unity of the Church of Christ which they hope to reach at some indeterminate time in the future.

From the beginning of this voyage at least half the passengers have been women but in the ship's official log-books their presence on board is scarcely noted and women's sea stories form little part of traditional sailing lore. This supplementary log has therefore been composed, pieced together from contents hinted at or buried within the official logs and from journals, letters, autobiographies, memoirs and other writings, especially those by women voyagers. Through studying these materials and consulting with some of the present-day sailors much has been learned about women's participation in the journey. New light has been shed on key points of the voyage; new interpretations have been given to old travellers' tales; the achievements of many women mariners have been recognised. No doubt much will be added to this rich "her story" as other women contribute to its telling.

Even before the ship left port women refused to be segregated on a separate deck, out of sight and mind of the other passengers. As a concession, for some years a saloon was set aside as a place where men and women together might discuss the journey and study ways of increasing their cooperation on board the ship. In general the results of their studies and discussions were politely ignored by the other passengers and crew. One problem was that not many men were interested in visiting what was understood to be the "women's saloon", even though it was clearly labelled as for men and women. Women on the other hand found they were not really welcome in other parts of the ship which seemed to have invisible "Men Only" notices. There were some women crew, but nearly all were below decks where they were not very visible although performing valuable work cooking, cleaning, minding children, caring for the sick - and even raising money towards the cost of the voyage! Very few women gained access to the upper-deck where they could really participate in sailing the ship. For quite a time no-one even noticed that no woman ever set foot on the bridge.

Over the years as new passengers came on board some of them brought new ideas. At first quietly and then more loudly women began to insist that as they held the same tickets as men they should be able to share with men in all aspects of life at sea. They read books on sailing and studied charts and maps, sometimes with men but frequently in women's groups. They began to develop their own ideas about the voyage and to ask questions about the direction in which the ship was sailing. They began to insist more forcefully that more women should be included amongst the officers and crew. They even went so far as to suggest that the ship should be "manned" by equal numbers of women and men, a concept which many of the (male) sailors found quite ridiculous. Women thought that by

achieving this they would be able to contribute to decisions about the voyage and influence both the direction in which the boat was heading and the way in which it was being sailed. They also had ideas about changing life on board to make it more comfortable for everyone, particularly those who were finding their accommodation very cramped. They argued that the boat-builder had intended the vessel to be sailed by women and men together and that if this were to happen both the ship itself and the voyage would be transformed.

There were some tensions and disagreements among the women themselves, as was only to be expected among such a diverse group. They were however generally agreed on the need for women's greater participation, in the navigation of the ship.

Women had to struggle to make their voices heard on board but they refused to be silenced, even when the weather was stormy. They held women's meetings and developed networks with women who were back on shore or in other boats, as well as with those all over the ship. They learned the ropes themselves, improved their navigational skills, and taught them to other women. They continued to develop their own ideas, giving increasing value to women's experiences and insights and the results of women's studies of ships and sailing, of the sea, the winds, the stars and the sky.

After some years and as a result of all the time and energy which they had expended, the initiatives they had undertaken and the strategies they had developed, women actually gained quite a presence among the crew on the upper-deck (although still well below the fifty percent which was their goal). Their presence was more visible and their influence began to be felt more widely throughout the ship.

Tensions developed among the passengers and crew. Some were happy with the changes and supported the women's claims for increased participation. Some thought they had gone far enough and should be satisfied with what they had achieved. Some affirmed the principle of women's equal participation but argued that the time was not right or that there were more important priorities, or that implementing the principle would cause too many problems; the women should wait patiently until the men were ready to deal with the issues they raised. Some were very willing to use language about cooperation, community, inclusiveness and participation but proved unwilling to accept policies aimed at making these concepts a reality on board the ship.

Some believed deeply that the boat-builder had decreed that only men should be allowed on the bridge or at the helm. They were hurt and even offended when, as sometimes happened, they were accused of discrimination against women for in their own understanding they were faithfully maintaining the traditional law of the sea which they believed to be eternal and unchanging.

Sometimes there were extreme reactions, as though some women were mutineers wanting to high-jack the ship, or pirates who would end by scuttling it. There were a few rather half-hearted threats to leave the ship if the women went too far, while some women began to talk about jumping ship and joining a women-only boat. Most however continued to be committed to men and women staying in the boat together.

The situation became more complicated as there was increasing agitation from various smaller groups on board - young people (who had always been rather noisy), indigenous peoples, ethnic groups, people with disabilities - all asserted their rights to be heard and to be represented among the crew. Some of those in

the majority (i.e. men who did not belong to any of these groups) thought that all "minority groups", including women, should be given some recognition but that control of the ship should remain in experienced male hands. Women retorted that they were not a minority, but that every minority consisted of both women and men. Women should not be forced to compete as one minority group against others for a few spare positions among the crew.

As tensions grew some of those on board accused women of rocking the boat, even implying that if they were not careful it might sink.

A chorus of women's voices insists that the boat is being rocked by winds from heaven. The rocking, they say, can be converted into smooth sailing by recognising and mobilising the skills of all the sailors. They continue to insist that if women and men can together set the course, trim the sails, and share the helm, then the voyage will be transformed, no matter how stormy the sea. The liberation and engagement of all the skills and experience of women into the sailing task will uncover new sailing capacities for all, both women and men. Then, its sails filled by the Spirit's wind, the good ship "Oikoumene" with a full complement of passengers and crew will press to its destination.

APPENDIX I
REPORT OF COMMITTEE IV
CONCERNS OF THE CHURCHES

1. THE LIFE AND WORK OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

The Report was received by the Assembly and commended to the churches for their serious consideration and appropriate action.

The Present Situation

The Church as the Body of Christ consists of men and women, created, as responsible persons, together to glorify God and to do His will. This truth, accepted in theory, is too often ignored in practice. In many countries and churches it is evident that the full co-operation of men and women in the service of Christ through the Church has not been achieved. Yet the Church as a whole, particularly at the present time of change and tension, needs the contribution of all its members in order to fulfill its task.

In many spheres the witness of the Church can be effectively made only by men and women in co-operation; for example, in the Christian home, in the duties of Christian citizenship, in secular occupations, in social and community life. Lack of space prevents discussion of these important matters. Certain problems, however, relating to the life and work of women in the Church call for special attention.

1. *Voluntary Organisations.* Organisations of women within the churches afford rich opportunities for service and self-expression, and a valuable training-ground in Christian leadership. They do a great work in teaching, in social and missionary service, and in the deepening of the spiritual life. In order that these organisations may not become independent movements or substitutes for a wider participation in the life of the Church, they must be integrated into its total structure.

2. *Governing Boards.* We urge that the experience of women should be further utilised for the central life of the Church through their inclusion in Church courts, committees, and boards, where policy is framed and decisions affecting Church life as a whole are made. We look to the World Council of Churches and the national Christian councils to give a lead in this direction, by the appointment of qualified women as members of their committees and as staff members in responsible posts.

3. *Professional Church Workers.* In order to secure the services of educated and well-qualified women, with a sense of vocation, for professional work in the Church, e.g. as deaconesses, directors of religious education, parish workers, missionaries, youth leaders, attention must be given to improvement in standards of training, remuneration, status and security of employment. The study and teaching of the Bible, theology and kindred subjects would be enriched by the co-operation of women.

4. *Ordination of Women.* The churches are not agreed on the important question of admission of women to the full ministry. Some churches for theological reasons are not prepared to consider the question of such ordination; some find no objection in principle but see administrative or social difficulties; some permit partial but not full participation in the work of the ministry; in others women are eligible for all offices of the Church. Even in the last group, social custom and public opinion still create obstacles. In some countries a shortage of clergy raises urgent practical and spiritual problems. Those who desire the admission of women to the full ministry believe that until this is achieved the Church will not come to full health and power. We are agreed that this whole subject requires further careful and objective study.

Information and guidance in connection with these and other problems might usefully be provided by the World Council of Churches, and it is therefore urged that the *Life and Work of Women in the Church* remain one of its particular concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Interim Report on *The Life and Work of Women in the Church* be republished with necessary corrections and additions.
2. That a Longer Report on the *Life and Work of Women in the Church* be prepared.
3. That an adequate supply of information about women's activities be provided through the Ecumenical Press Service and other channels.
4. That a greater number of women be chosen to serve on the Commissions, the major Committees and the Secretariat of the World Council of Churches.
5. That a Commission composed of men and women be appointed, with adequate budget and executive leadership, to give further consideration to the *Life and Work of Women in the Church* and to give guidance on important issues.

APPENDIX II

THE DAVOS STATEMENT

The "Davos Statement" on "Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society", commended to the member churches for their study and comment.

"The basic concern of this Department, as of the entire World Council of Churches, is the wholeness of the Church. This wholeness can be achieved only when every part of the membership of the Church is enabled to participate fully in its life. Effective participation includes working together with others who have different gifts. The special concern of this Department is the co-operation between men and women. It is inherent in our Faith that men and women are called and sent together to do God's will in the Church and in society. God created men and women and put them together under His blessing and His order. Christ came to save men and women and called them together to His discipleship. The Holy Spirit was given to men and women as members of the new community to witness together for the sake of Christ in the World.

This emphasis on "togetherness" implies recognition of the incompleteness of man and woman when taken separately or in isolation from each other. For this reason the cooperation of men and women is not a special doctrinal issue not yet a single feature of Church life or organisation. Still less is it an emphasis on the interests or rights of a single group in the Church. It touches nearly all doctrinal and practical issues with which the Church is concerned. For example, we cannot overlook the fact that the Bible speaks of a very close connection between the nature of the Church and the mystery of the right relationship of the sexes (Eph. 5:32). Again, looking at the membership of the Body of Christ, we have to face the fact that the new community contains men and women, both contributing their gifts to the common life. And any consideration of the nature of man must take into account the twofoldness of the sexes and their unity in diversity.

This gives the basis for putting the right emphasis on what we have to say on certain questions of modern society. If we are to avoid measuring social developments and changes all over the world merely by the pre-suppositions of Western or Eastern civilisations or of modern secular movements and doctrines, we must constantly criticise these pre-suppositions in the light of fresh and serious study of the Bible.

As we face the lack of cooperation, the deep misunderstandings, and the rivalry between men and women in some of our societies, and sometimes even in our Churches, we are convicted under Christ of our disobedience and our failure

to respond faithfully to the tasks to which we are called. We may profitably ask ourselves: To what extent some interpretations of the Scriptures are among the causes of disorders in our Churches and societies? (For example, have legalistic interpretations of the biblical conception of subordination perpetuated faulty patterns of relationship between men and women?) In face of modern demands for equality of rights and opportunities, to what extent have our Churches given teaching on the true partnership based on the insights of the Bible? To what extent have our Churches taken account of the new psychological, social, economic and political situations in the world and developed forms of ministry and service appropriate to the needs of these new situations? To what extent must the understanding of vocation, of mission, of service and of various forms of the Christian ministry be re-examined, so that our Churches may demonstrate in their own life right relationships between men and women, and inspire and challenge the world to work towards such relationships?

In concrete situations of tension between the order willed by God and the actual disorders of our Churches and societies, this Department is called to remind the churches of their needs, and of the opportunities which lie before them for a true witness to the purposes underlying God's creation of the two sexes. For example, it has already been found that when men and women cooperate in ecumenical discussion, some of the well-known dangers of abstract and impersonal thinking can be avoided, and more vital encounters achieved between practical and devotional life and theological discussion.

If the implications of the cooperation of men and women in all doctrinal and practical issues of the Church were generally recognised by the member churches and the departments of the World Council of Churches, there would be no further need for this Department. For the good of the Church and the effectiveness of its witness in the world, it is necessary, for the present, to continue to emphasise this special concern. The Department is trying to put the whole discussion on this issue on a new level and on the basis of theological thinking and sociological observations, to stimulate the Churches to rediscover the full meaning of cooperation between men and women in Church society. It serves within a functional area, concerned with measures and procedures for achieving that cooperation, rather than as an agency related to organised constituency groups of men and women in the church.

Minutes and Reports of the Eighth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Davos (Grisons), Switzerland, August 2-8, 1955, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1955]), 47-48.

APPENDIX III

A LETTER FROM SHEFFIELD

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, we long that you may hear us, for we belong together with you in the church and in a common humanity.

Brothers, can you not hear the "sighs too deep for words" of women who suffer war, violence, poverty, exploitation and disparagement in a world so largely controlled by me? Sisters, can you not see how the lives of men have been trapped by the effects of their having this power and a supposed superiority?

We speak as those who have been seeking to listen anew to scripture and to live the tradition of the Church in its many forms. Thus we have heard a word of God for today about a vision for our human life - a renewed community of women and men. We speak with urgency. In a world threatened by nuclear self-destruction women and men are made more sharply aware that they need a new partnership as equals before God; in churches and societies which men have dominated in ways deeply damaging to women and to men, we need both repentance and faith to move forward at God's call through the gospel.

What did we in Sheffield hear the Holy Spirit saying to the churches? We learned:

- how deep are the emotions involved in any reflection on our being as women and men;
- how hard it is to address and envision God in ways that respect the Christian understanding of personhood rather than suggesting male superiority;
- how great is the need for education on the issues of our consultation;
- how radical may be the changes needed in our societies.

We received:

- a foretaste of a global community of women and men vulnerable to the pain of all forms of oppression and united in struggle against them.

We gained perspectives:

- seeing that for many women and men struggles against tyranny, militarism, economic exploitation and racism are the immediate task;
- that Christians in many places need to call on governments to overcome exploitation, particularly where women and men have become victims of

wrong patterns of development, through cheap labour, migrant labour or tourist-orientated prostitution;
 and that for many women and men there is real pain in the frustration of a church life controlled by male leadership, where, for instance, women feel called to the ministry of word and sacraments and ordination is not open to them or where the Church has not responded to creative developments in society.

We recognized:

the importance of including Christians from every continent and culture and from all churches in this Community Study in order to achieve a perceptive hearing of all concerns.

We rejoiced:

to recognize that sexuality is not opposed to spirituality but that Christian spirituality is one of body, mind and spirit in their wholeness.

We sang at Sheffield:

the Magnificat of Mary that celebrates God's liberating intervention; the praise of Jesus in whom we look upon the human face of the Triune God.

We invite you to pray with us:

Eternal God, as you created humankind in your image, women and men, male and female, renew us in that image:
 God, the Holy Spirit, by your strength and love comfort us as those whom a mother comforts;
 Lord Jesus Christ, by your death and resurrection, give us the joy of those for whom pain and suffering become, in hope, the fruitful agony of travail;
 God, the Holy Trinity, grant that we may together enter into new life, your promised rest of achievement and fulfilment - world without end. Amen.

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, we long that you will join us in giving reality to the vision which we have seen.

Constance F. Parvey, ed., *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Report of the World Council of Churches Conference, Sheffield, England, 1981* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 91-93.

APPENDIX IV

AN ORTHODOX RESPONSE TO THE WCC CONFERENCE
ON MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We, the Orthodox participants in this Conference, men and women from Orthodox churches throughout the world, unanimously express to you the joy and happiness we have experienced during our participation in this gathering, which allowed us all the opportunity to deepen our understanding of evangelism and mission in Christ's way.

We wholeheartedly thank all those who have laboured to make this Conference a significant ecumenical event.

We wish, however, to draw your attention to some major concerns:

- a) We have noticed that in some conference documents and in worship services there has been a distortion of the constitutional basis of the World Council of Churches and of some fundamental tenets of our common faith.
- b) Faith in the Triune God constitutes *the basis* of the World Council of Churches. The confession of the holy name of the Father, the divinity of the son and the existence of the Holy Spirit as an hypostasis (person) and their unity in the divine essence of God is the fundamental presupposition of the participation of the Orthodox churches in the World Council of Churches.
- c) We unequivocally, affirm that Jesus Christ is our God and Saviour. "He is the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). He is the one who saves us and leads us to unity.
- d) We cannot accept any tampering with the language of the Bible or any attempts to re-write it, or make it conform to the beliefs or ideology of any particular culture, denomination or movement.
- e) While the issue of the fuller participation of women in the life of the church should be a subject of study in the World Council of Churches, their ordination to priesthood is not, for us, subject to debate, since it is contrary to the Christology, ecclesiology, Tradition and practice of the early church.

We submit this consideration in a spirit of love, for the sake of the integrity of our Christian fellowship and of our unhindered ecumenical involvement in the World Council of Churches.

San Antonio, USA. 31 May 1989

The Orthodox participants

Frederick R. Wilson, ed., *The San Antonio Report: Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: WCC, 1990).

APPENDIX V

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Language which is carefully chosen, ensuring that both vocabulary and content include all people, is known as inclusive language. Inclusive language is important for many people not only because it reflects a change in culture, in particular in the status of women, but also because it may actually effect that change. It encourages people to examine attitudes which may be exclusive and alter them.

By baptism all people become full members of the Body of Christ, yet the language of theology and liturgy often seems to deny that basic equality. Those who are not male, white, young and healthy find their existence and experience is rarely mentioned. Women have become increasingly aware of, and vocal about, their exclusion. They have observed that language reflects the culture which has formed it. A language in which a masculine noun or pronoun can be used to denote members of both sexes reflects a culture in which the male is normative. Language which includes only male metaphors for God reflects a culture for which the most sacred is male. Such language has begun to change. As women emerge from subordination, the language has begun to adapt to make them visible.

In the Christian community, especially but not exclusively in the English-speaking world, concern focused initially on language referring to the worshipping community. Many liturgical revisers in Canada, the US, New Zealand and England agree that alternatives should be found for terms such as "men", "sons", "brothers" and "mankind", and for masculine personal pronouns, on the premise that although these words once had a broad meaning, they are now not believed to be inclusive. It is also accepted that the biblical distinction (in Hebrew, Greek and Latin) between "male human" and "human" should from now on be clearly observed in translation.

Recent liturgical writing and hymnody have gone beyond the use of inclusive vocabulary. Drawing on neglected scriptural and spiritual traditions and the reflections of contemporary women, worship can increasingly benefit from the wealth of women's experience now offered in canticle and prayer, reading and blessing. The worship of the people of God can begin to include the experience of all the people of God. It has been easier to revise language about the worshipping people than language about the One they worship. The scriptures were fashioned in a patriarchal culture. Biblical images for God are predominantly masculine, and although the Christian God is stated to transcend gender and although devotion to a motherly God is well attested within the tradition, there have been strong negative reactions to feminine imagery. The creative use both of non-

personal (love, rock, light) and non-gender-specific descriptions (healer, friend, lover, disturber) is inevitably found to be less troublesome.

Close attention to biblical texts has encouraged debate about translation. Some scholars argue that if texts are to be adequately understood, translation must include a considerable amount of interpretation. An inclusive-language translation might refer to Jesus as "child of God" rather than "son of God", as "human one" rather than "son of man", on the assumption that Jesus' humanity is of greater significance than his masculinity. Exclusively masculine descriptions for God might also be modified, "lord" being replaced by "sovereign", "father" by "father and mother". Suggestions such as these test the elasticity of the Christian faith.

While the 1981 central committee mandated the use of inclusive language in all WCC publications, the question of appropriate language for God was a point of growing ecumenical controversy during the 1980s. The 1988 central committee asked for a theological study of this issue. Some Orthodox argue that the scriptural and patristic source of the Trinitarian formula "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" in the WCC basis means any change in such language has theological implications affecting the foundation of ecumenical fellowship. Interim guidelines for worship at the seventh assembly (1991) affirmed adherence to biblical texts and early creeds while recognising a need to encourage people creatively to express their faith in contemporary language.

Vivienne Faull

Nicholas Lossky et al., eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1991).

APPENDIX VI
INTERIM GUIDELINES
FOR THE USE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- a. The Trinitarian basis of the WCC and the credal/baptismal formula is reaffirmed as biblical language about God. Therefore, references to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be included when appropriate.
- b. Personal pronouns in reference to persons of the Trinity are to be avoided whenever possible.
- c. Our customary vocabulary and language should be supplemented by increased uses of feminine, especially biblical, imagery.
- d. Terms such as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier are appropriate for speaking about God, but it is recognised that some traditions do not accept them as direct substitutes for the biblical language referring to the persons of the Trinity.
- e. Biblical quotations from standard translations (e.g. RSV or TEV, TOB, etc.) should not be modified, nor should direct quotations from the Creeds, Lord's Prayer or other traditional writings. Where necessary, supplementary comments may be added to make such quotations more inclusive.
- f. Only inclusive words are to be used in relation to people.

(Officially adopted by WCC central committee for the guidance of the Canberra assembly worship committee). Unpublished document. WCC archives.

APPENDIX VII

A SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN WCC ASSEMBLIES,
1948 - 1991**First assembly**

Amsterdam, Netherlands, 22 August to 4 September 1948; 351 delegates from 147 member churches.

Context:

Aftermath of World War II; political polarisation (East and West); conflict between capitalism and Marxism; crisis of faith in Western Europe.

Theme:

"Man's Disorder and God's Design".

Sections:

- (1) the universal church in God's design,
- (2) the church's witness to God's design,
- (3) the church and the disorder of society,
- (4) the church and the international order.

Central committee moderator: George Bell; *vice-moderator:* Franklin Clark Fry; *presidium:* Marc Boegner, Geoffrey Fisher, T.C. Chao (from 1951 Sarah Chakko), G. Bromley Oxnam, Germanos of Thyateira (from 1951 Athenagoras of Thyateira), Erling Eidem (from 1950 Eivind Berggrav); *honorary president:* John R. Mott.

Significance:

Member churches covenanted "*to stay together*".
Focus on the concept of the "*responsible society*".

Second assembly

Evanston, Illinois, USA, 15 to 31 August 1954; 502 delegates, from 161 member churches.

Context:

The Cold War; the Korean War; beginning of the arms race.

Theme:

"Jesus Christ - The Hope of the World".

Sections:

- (1) our oneness in Christ and our disunity as churches,
- (2) the mission of the church to those outside her life,
- (3) the responsible society in a world perspective,
- (4) Christians in the struggle for world community,
- (5) the churches amid racial and ethnic tensions,
- (6) the laity: the Christian in his vocation.

Central committee moderator: Franklin Clark Fry; *vice-moderator:* Ernest Payne; *presidium:* John Baillie, Sante Uberto Barbieri, Otto Dibelius, Juhanon Mar Thomas, Michael (from 1959 Iakovos), Henry Knox Sherill; *honorary presidents:* John R. Mott (d. 1955) and George Bell.

Significance:

The concept of the "*responsible society*" developed.
 Greater representation of the "*Younger Churches*".
 The Orthodox issued a *Minority Report*.

Third assembly

New Delhi, India, 19 November to 5 December 1961; 577 delegates, from 197 member churches.

Context:

Asian and predominantly non-Christian environment.

Theme:

"Jesus Christ - The Light of the World".

Sections:

- (1) witness,
- (2) service,
- (3) unity.

Central committee moderator: Franklin Clark Fry; *vice-moderators:* Ernest Payne and J. Russell Chandran (1966-68); *presidium:* A. Michael Ramsey, Francis Ibiam, Iakovos, David G. Moses, Martin Niemöller, Charles C. Parlin; *honorary president:* Joseph H. Oldham.

Significance:

Historic proclamation on the nature of the unity we seek - *The New Delhi Statement*.

The IMC joined the WCC.

Four Eastern Orthodox churches became full members of the WCC.

WCC revised its Basis to define participation in much broader terms.

The question of Jesus Christ and other religions debated.

First attendance by official Roman Catholic observers.

Fourth assembly

Uppsala, Sweden, 4 to 20 July 1968; 704 delegates, from 235 member churches.

Context:

New scientific and technological discoveries; student revolts; assassinations; race riots; the Vietnam War; the recognition of world as "a global village".

Theme:

"Behold, I Make All Things New".

Sections:

- (1) the Holy Spirit and the catholicity of the church,
- (2) renewal in mission,
- (3) world economic and social development,
- (4) towards justice and peace in international affairs,
- (5) worship,
- (6) towards new styles of living.

Central committee moderator: M.M. Thomas; *vice-moderator:* Pauline Webb and Metropolitan Meliton; *presidium:* Patriarch German, Hanns Lilje, Daniel T. Niles, (from 1971 Kiyoko Takeda Cho), Ernest A. Payne, John Coventry Smith, Alphaeus H. Zulu; *honorary presidents:* Joseph Oldham and W.A. Visser 't Hooft.

Significance:

Vigorous presence of youth.

Socio-political focus on justice and service.

New category of "delegated observers" created for non-member churches.

A new generation of leadership elected to the central committee.

Fifth assembly

Nairobi, Kenya, 23 November to 10 December 1975; 676 delegates, from 285 member churches.

Context:

Nuclear threat; emergence of the women's liberation movement; growing awareness of the evil of apartheid in South Africa; debate about the justice of the Vietnam War.

Theme:

"Jesus Christ Frees and Unites".

Sections:

- (1) confessing Christ today,
- (2) what unity requires,

- (3) seeking community,
- (4) education for liberation and community,
- (5) structures of injustice and struggles for liberation,
- (6) human development.

Central committee moderator: Edward W. Scott; *vice-moderators:* Jean Skuse and Karekin Sarkissian; *presidium:* Annie R. Jiagge, José Míguez Bonino, Nikodim (from 1979 Ilja II of Georgia), T.B. Simatupang, Olof Sunby, Cynthia Wedel; *honorary president:* W.A. Visser 't Hooft.

Significance:

Provided a theological undergirding for the socio-political emphases of the Uppsala Assembly.

Emphasised the search for a "just, participatory and sustainable society".

Highlighted the role of women in Church and society.

Debated the relation between the search for Christian unity and Dialogue between Christianity and other religions.

Sixth assembly

Vancouver, Canada, 24 July to 10 August, 1983; 847 delegates, from 301 member churches.

Context:

The resurgence of militarisation; the world economic crisis; regional conflicts; awareness of the ecological crisis and its relation to the gap between First and Third world countries.

Theme:

"Jesus Christ - The Life of the World".

Issue groups:

- (1) witnessing in a divided world,
- (2) taking steps towards unity,
- (3) moving towards participation,
- (4) healing and sharing life in community,
- (5) confronting threats to peace and survival,
- (6) struggling for justice and human dignity,
- (7) learning in community,
- (8) communicating credibly.

Central committee moderator: Heinz Joachim Held; *vice-moderators:* Chrysostomos of Myra and Sylvia Talbot; *presidium:* Nita Barrow, Marga Bührig, Paulos Gregarios, Johannes W. Hempel, Ignatius IV, W.P. Khotso Makhulu, Lois M. Wilson; *honorary president:* W.A. Visser 't Hooft (d. 1985).

Significance:

Focus on participation - by women, youth and laity; the importance of ecumenical formation.

Commitment to "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation".

Celebration of the Lima liturgy.

Affirmation of BEM text.

Seventh assembly

Canberra, Australia, 7 to 20 February 1991; 842 delegates, from 317 member churches.

Context:

The Gulf War; the breakdown of the Berlin Wall and Soviet totalitarianism; crises in Eastern Europe; the plight of indigenous peoples; the ecological crisis; starvation in African nations.

Theme:

"Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation".

Sections/sub-themes:

- (1) Giver of life - sustain your creation!
- (2) Spirit of truth - set us free!
- (3) Spirit of unity - reconcile your people!
- (4) Holy Spirit - transform and sanctify us!

Central committee moderator: Aram Keshishian; *vice-moderators:* Soritua Nababan and Nélida Ritchie; *presidium:* Anne-Marie Aagaard, Vinton Anderson, Leslie Boseto, Priyanka Mendis, Parthenios of Alexandria, Eunice Santana, Shenouda of Alexandria, Aaron Tolen.

Significance:

Debate about the concept of a "just war".

The rights of indigenous people highlighted.

The need for greater participation of women and youth in the WCC emphasised.

The question of the future structure of WCC general assemblies raised.

APPENDIX VIII

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN DELEGATES AT WCC ASSEMBLIES

Assembly	Delegates	Women
1. Amsterdam 1948	351	5.7%
2. Evanston 1954	502	8.5%
3. New Delhi 1961	577	7.2%
4. Uppsala 1968	704	9.0%
5. Nairobi 1975	676	22%
6. Vancouver 1983	847	29.49%
7. Canberra 1991	842	35%

APPENDIX IX

TIMELINE

	WCC Major Events	Women in WCC	Roman Catholic Church	World Church	The World
1945					End of World War II Inauguration of United Nations
1946				Lutheran World Federation established	UN Commission on the Status of Women founded
1947		Inquiry on the Life and Work of Women in the Church		Second world conference of Christian youth, Oslo Formation of the (United) Church of South India	India and Pakistan become independent
1948	First assembly, Amsterdam	Ecumenical Women's Conference, Baarn			Universal Declaration of Human Rights
1949			Holy Office Letter <i>Ecclesia Sancta</i> accepts idea of dialogue-in-fellowship	Missionaries expelled from China 1949-51	Apartheid established in South Africa Simone de Beauvoir, <i>Le Deuxième Sexe</i> Indonesian Independence recognised
1950	Toronto Statement on nature of the WCC	Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church formed	Doctrine of the assumption of Mary defined		Korean War, 1950-53

1951				World Evangelical Fellowship formed End of denominational Christianity in China	
	WCC Major Events	Women in WCC	Roman Catholic Church	World Church	The World
1952	Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund	Publication of <i>The Service and Status of Women in the Churches</i>		<i>Revised Standard Version</i> (Bible) published	
1953					Death of Stalin
1954	Second Assembly, Evanston	Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society replaces commission			
1955		"Davos Statement" on principles of Department on Cooperation			
1956					Second Arab-Israeli War Suez crisis Hungarian uprising
1957				Conference of European Churches formed	Ghana becomes independent
1958			Death of Pius XII; John XXIII becomes Pope	Christian Peace Conference inaugurated	
1959				Inauguration of East Asia Christian Conference	

1960			Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity founded	3 women ordained in Church of Sweden	Sharpeville shootings, South Africa Independence for Congo, Nigeria, and many other African countries
1961	Third Assembly, New Delhi IMC merges with WCC Russian Orthodox Church joins WCC	Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society	5 observers at WCC assembly	International bilateral dialogues develop during '60s Growth of charismatic movement	First manned space flight Berlin wall built
	WCC Major Events	Women in WCC	Roman Catholic Church	World Church	The World
1962			Second Vatican Council 1962-65	Consultation on Church Union (USA) formed	Cuban crisis
1963	Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal		Death of John XXIII; Paul VI becomes pope	JAT Robinson, <i>Honest to God</i> Inauguration of All Africa Conference of Churches	Assassination of President Kennedy Betty Friedan, <i>The Feminine Mystique</i>
1964			<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> (Decree on Ecumenism)		
1965	All autocephalous Eastern Orthodox churches now members of WCC Joint Working Group established	WCC/RCC Women's meeting, Vicarello/Rome		Rome and Constantinople withdraw mutual excommunication of 1054	Communist coup thwarted in Indonesia; massacres Vietnam War expands 1965-75
1966	World Conference on "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of our Time", Geneva Eugene Carson Blake replaces W A Visser 't Hooft as general secretary	WCC/RCC women's meeting, Crêt-Bérard	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity becomes joint project of WCC/Rcc	Pacific Conference of Churches established	The cultural revolution in China 1966-1976

1967		WCC/RCC women's meeting, Taize, on "The Christian Woman Co-artisan in a Changing Society"	First synod of bishops Third world congress for the lay apostolate with WCC involvement Pontifical Council on the Laity established		Six day war between Israel and Arab states UN adopts Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Nigerian civil war 1967-70
------	--	---	---	--	--

	WCC Major Events	Women in WCC	Roman Catholic Church	World Church	The World
1968	Fourth WCC assembly, Uppsala	Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG) formed (WCC/RCC)	RC delegated observers at WCC assembly RCC/WCC SOPEPAX formed RC members join WCC Faith and Order Commission	Mary Daly, <i>The Church and the Second Sex</i>	USSR invades Czechoslovakia Martin Luther King assassinated
1969	Programme to Combat Racism founded		Paul VI visits WCC		First man on moon
1970		Consultation on "What is Ordination Coming To?"; Cartigny		American Lutheran Churches United churches formed in North India, Pakistan	Women's Liberation Movement develops during '70s Chilean revolution 1970-73
1971	Restructuring of WCC World Council	"Women's desk" in Education and Renewal unit WELG consultation on women in the mass media, Venice	Synod of bishops	Gustavo Gutierrez, <i>A Theology of Liberation</i> United Church of Bangladesh formed	

1972	Philip Potter becomes general secretary	WELG Consultation on women's role in peace education, Nicosia WELG report followed by effective dissolution		United Reformed Church formed in Great Britain	
1973	CWME world conference, Bangkok		Vatican study commission on women in the church founded	Caribbean Conference of Churches established Christian Conference of Asia replaces East Asia Christian Conference	Britain joins EEC Oil crisis Fourth Arab-Israeli war
	WCC Major Events	Women in WCC	Roman Catholic Church	World Church	The World
1974	Faith and Order Commission, Accra	Consultation on "Sexism in the 1970s: Discrimination against Women", West Berlin	RCC/WCC consultation on "New Trends in Laity Formation", Asia	Middle East Council of Churches formed International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne Publication of <i>Religion and Sexism</i> , ed. R R Ruether	President Nixon resigns over 'Watergate'
1975	Fifth Assembly, Nairobi	Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society	Studies on women in the priesthood by Pontifical Biblical and Theological Commissions Pro Mundi Vita colloquium		UN International Women's Year begins UN Decade for Women Outbreak of civil war in Lebanon
1976	1976-82 Community of Women and Men in the Church Study lodged in Faith and Order	Consultation on "The Role of Orthodox Women in the Church and in Society", Agapia, Roumania	Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith publishes <i>Inter Insigniores</i> (against ordination of women) Statement on "The Role of Women in Evangelization"	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) founded, Dar-es-Salaam Women priests ordained, Anglican Church of Canada	

1977		Consultation of church women executives, Glion, Switzerland		Uniting Church of Australia founded Women ordained priests, Episcopal Church, USA and Anglican Church, New Zealand	
1978		Consultation of European church women, Brussels Consultation of women theological students, Cartigny	Deaths of Paul VI and John Paul I; John Paul II becomes pope		Fifth Arab-Israeli war
	WCC Major Events	Women in WCC	Roman Catholic Church	World Church	The World
1979	World conference on "Faith, Science and the Future", Massachusetts, USA	CWMC consultation Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspectives", Klingenthal			Margaret Thatcher first woman prime minister of Britain Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan Iranian revolution
1980	CWME world conference on "Your Kingdom Come", Melbourne	CWMC consultation "Towards a theology of human wholeness", Niederaltaich CWMC consultation "The authority of Scriptures in light of new experiences of women", Amsterdam		Formation of China Christian Council Women-Church movement develops during 1980s	UN mid-decade meeting, Copenhagen Iran-Iraq war

1981	CWMC conference, Sheffield Central Committee, Dresden, accepts 50% participation of women as WCC goal			Seminar of European Christian women	President Sadat of Egypt assassinated
1982	Faith and Order Commission, Lima Publication of BEM			Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women established Latin American Council of Churches formed	Falklands War
1983	Sixth assembly, Vancouver		Revised Code of Canon Law published	Women's Commission of EATWOT founded	
1984	Emilio Castro becomes general secretary	Interfaith project on religious teachings on female sexuality			Assassination of Indira Gandhi, Indian Prime Minister
1985	Faith and Order consultation on the Community of Women and Men, Prague		Second Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 20 years after Vatican II		UN Conference and NGO Forum to mark end of Decade for Women Bhopal disaster, India
	WCC Major Events	Women in WCC	Roman Catholic Church	World Church	The World
1986	CICARWS world conference, "Diakonia 2000", Larnaca, Cyprus			EATWOT Women's Conference, Oaxtepec, Mexico	Overthrow of Marcos régime, Philippines
1987	Conference on resource sharing, El Esarial, Spain		Encyclical letter <i>Redemptoris Mater</i>	CCA expelled from Singapore	
1988	Inauguration of Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women		Apostolic letters <i>Mulieris Dignitatem</i> and <i>Christifideles Laici</i>	Inter-Orthodox symposium on "The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church", Rhodes, Greece	Soviet forces withdraw from Afghanistan 'Perestroika' and 'glasnost' in USSR

1989	CWME world conference on "Mission in Christ's Way", San Antonio, Texas		SPCU replaced by Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity	Lausanne II international congress on world evangelization, Manila Consecration of Barbara Harris as first Anglican woman bishop (USA)	Tiananmen Square massacre, China Berlin Wall opened Collapse of socialist states in Eastern Europe
1990	JPIC world convocation, Seoul	Orthodox women's consultation, Crete		<i>New Revised Standard Version</i> (Bible) Penny Jamieson ordained bishop, Anglican Church, New Zealand	Gulf War
1991	Seventh assembly, Canberra				

APPENDIX X

BIOGRAPHIES

AAGAARD, Anna Marie b. 1935. Danish.
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark.

Professor of Systematic Theology at Aarhus University, Aagaard has been a member of the Danish government's Research Council for the Humanities since 1986. A lay member of her church she has been active in the ecumenical movement for many years. She was a delegate to the fourth WCC assembly, Uppsala, 1968, at which she served on the message committee and subsequently, in 1970, on a special committee appointed to make recommendations on a possible new structure for the WCC. Long active in women's concerns in the LWF, Aagaard attended the 1974 Berlin consultation on Sexism in the 1970s and participated in the CWMC consultation on theological anthropology (Niederaltaich, 1980). She was one of the delegates appointed by the WCC central committee to the CWME Bangkok Assembly, 1973. At the seventh WCC assembly, Canberra, 1991, Aagaard was elected to the WCC presidium.

ADDISON, Florence b. October 1920, Ghana; d. September 1978.
Methodist Church.

A prominent Ghanaian educator Addison was educated in Ghana and Great Britain. She began her career as a school teacher and later became deputy chief education officer in the Ministry of Education. For ten years she was a member of the Ghanaian delegation, first to the UN General Assembly and then to the Commission on the Status of Women. A Methodist lay preacher, Addison was a member of the Ghana Committee on Co-operation between Catholics and Protestants and attended many international meetings concerned with women and education. In 1972 she attended the WCC Cyprus consultation on Women's Role in Peace Education and in December of that year became Scholarships Director for the WCC. She attended the 1974 Berlin consultation on Sexism in the 1970s and the 1977 Glion consultation of Church Women Executives sponsored by the Sub-Unit on Women in Church and Society.

ASSAAD, Marie Bassili b. October 1922, Cairo. Egyptian.
Coptic Orthodox Church, Egypt. Widowed 1974; mother and grandmother.

BA Social Sciences 1944; BA Education 1945; MA Sociology-Anthropology 1969. Senior Research assistant at American University, Cairo, 1972-1980, Assaad became internationally known through her original research on female circumcision in Egypt which led to active programmes to eliminate this practice. A lifelong ecumenical commitment was kindled for Assaad by attendance as YWCA delegate at the second world conference of Christian Youth, Oslo, 1947. Assaad has served the YWCA at local, national and international levels. She was a member of the working committee of the WCC Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society 1961-1968, a participant at the Berlin 1974 consultation on Sexism in the 1970s, an

advisor at the fifth WCC assembly, Nairobi, 1975, and a member of the WCC Christian Medical Commission 1976-1980. In August 1980 Assaad was appointed WCC deputy general secretary, the first woman to serve in this position. She acted also as staff moderator of Unit III (Education and Renewal) until her retirement in December 1986. The only woman executive in the general secretariat of the WCC, Assaad often experienced marginalization and the refusal of male church leaders to enter into serious discussion with her. She struggled for better collaboration between executive and support staff and initiated the two year multifaith research project on "Female Sexuality and Bodily Functions in Different Religious Traditions" in preparation for the 1985 Nairobi meeting at the end of the UN Decade on Women. She was a member of the JWGW in the 1980s.

BAM, Brigalia Hlophe b. April 1933, Tsola, South Africa.
Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican).

Baptised into the Moravian Church (where her maternal grandfather was a pastor) Bam later became an Anglican. Following a teacher training course Bam did a diploma in social work in Johannesburg where she became involved in the SCM and YWCA. She worked 1958-1967 for the South African Council of World Affiliated YWCAs, first as a youth secretary, then as a programme secretary, and then became national chair of the African Child Welfare Society. In 1959 Bam attended a WCC-sponsored inter-racial youth camp in Zambia, in 1962 was a South African delegate at the All Africa Youth Assembly in Nairobi, and in 1963 attended a meeting for African women in Kampala, Uganda, organised by Madeleine Barot prior to the inauguration of the AACC. This meeting, her first contact with the WCC Department on the Co-operation between Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, was "very exciting" and made a deep impression on Bam. Following her return from the AACC assembly Bam's passport was confiscated and although a member of the AACC general and executive committees 1963-1968 Bam was unable to travel to meetings.

Invited by Fr. Paul Verghese to succeed Madeleine Barot as executive secretary of the Department on Co-operation Bam had to wait for more than one year to receive her passport, finally taking up the position in September 1967. Bam acted also as staff moderator for Unit III (Education and Renewal) until leaving the WCC in 1980. In 1972 during leave of absence she obtained an MA in Sociology from the University of Chicago. Bam organised the Sexism in the 1970s consultation (Berlin 1974) which was a landmark in the history of women in the WCC, and worked hard to encourage women's participation in the fifth WCC assembly, Nairobi, 1975. Following her departure from the WCC in 1980 Bam served on the staff of the World YWCA in Geneva, then returning to South Africa became deputy general secretary of the SACC and then in 1994 general secretary of the SACC.

BAROT, Madeleine b. July 1909, Chateauroux, France; d. December 1995.
French Reformed Church.

A leading figure in the ecumenical youth, student and women's movements Barot had no formal theological training but studied archaeology and library science at the University of Paris after which she worked at the French Archaeological Institute in Rome 1935-1940. An active member of the SCM, Barot attended the world conferences of Christian youth at Amsterdam 1939 and Oslo 1947. From 1940 to 1949 Barot was executive

secretary of the ecumenical aid organisation CIMADE, working particularly with internees and refugees. From 1945 on she combined this with working for the World YWCA in Geneva. From 1945 to 1949 she was co-chair, with D. T. Niles, of the newly-formed youth department of the (provisional) WCC, having declined an invitation from Visser 't Hooft to join the staff. Barot was a consultant to the 1948 WCC assembly and then 1953 accepted the position of executive secretary of the WCC Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society, continuing in that position till 1967. During those years Barot travelled widely, convened numerous consultations and meetings, wrote many articles, and encouraged partnership between women and men in all areas of the WCC. She also pioneered dialogue between Roman Catholic and Protestant women, beginning during the Vatican II Council in 1965, at which she was an observer. From 1967 to 1972 Barot worked for the WCC department of development education. Returning to France after twenty years with the WCC Barot worked 1972-1979 in the Protestant Church Federation on the commission for social, economic and international questions. After leaving the WCC Barot continued to participate in a number of ecumenical women's meetings, including the 1974 Berlin consultation on Sexism in the 1970s. She attended the fifth WCC assembly, Nairobi 1975, as an adviser, and the sixth assembly, Vancouver 1983, as a guest. Barot has received honorary degrees from Wilson College, Pennsylvania and Ewha University, Seoul, Korea.

BARROW, Nita b. November 1916, Barbados; d. December 1995.
Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Barbados.

A graduate of the University of Toronto School of Nursing and Columbia University, New York, Barrow became one of the world's leading authorities on public health and health education and was among the first to study and work with alternative forms of health care for the underprivileged. Barrow was president of the World YWCA 1975-1983, president of the International Council for Adult Education 1982, permanent representative and ambassador of Barbados at the UN 1986-1990, and appointed Governor General of Barbados in 1990. The recipient of numerous honorary degrees and awards, in 1980 she was made a Dame of St Andrew by order of Queen Elizabeth II. Barrow was convenor of the 1985 Nairobi Forum which marked the end of the UN Decade on Women and a member of the commonwealth group of eminent persons on South Africa, 1986. Barrow was associate director of the WCC Christian Medical Commission 1971-1975, director 1975-1980. She was a member of the task force which prepared the 1974 Berlin consultation on Sexism in the 1970s and participated in the consultation. At the sixth WCC assembly, Vancouver 1983, which she attended as a guest, Barrow was elected to the WCC presidium and served in that role until 1991.

BEHR-SIGEL, Elisabeth b. July 1907, Strasbourg, France.
Orthodox. Married.

Daughter of a Lutheran father and Jewish mother Behr-Sigel was baptised in the Lutheran church. Active in the French SCM she learned much from ecumenists Suzanne de Diétrich and Marc Boegner. Having obtained a degree in philosophy, Behr-Sigel decided to study theology which she was able to do at the University of Strasbourg where in 1927 the Faculty of Theology opened to women students. Following the decision of the two local Protestant Churches to accept theologically-trained women for parish ministry - a response to the shortage of pastors following World War I - Behr-Sigel

served for eight months between 1931 and 1932 as "pastor-administrator" of a small Reformed community, though by her own wish she was not ordained. Instead, Behr-Sigel joined the Orthodox Church to which she had been introduced by her theological studies. Together with her husband she founded an ecumenical group in Nancy in 1943 and after the war had frequent contacts with the Anglican-Orthodox Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius. Behr-Sigel has taught in Paris at the Institut Supérieur d'études Oecumeniques, the Institut Catholique de Paris, and the Institut de Théologie Orthodoxe Saint-Serge. In 1976 she participated in the Agapia consultation on The Role and Participation of Women in the Orthodox Church, sponsored by the WCC Sub-Unit on Women in the Church and Society. Following this she became actively involved in the CWMC study, attending the consultations on ordination of women, Klingenthal 1979, and theological anthropology, Niederaltaich 1980. A participant at the 1981 Sheffield CWMC conference, Behr-Sigel at short notice gave one of the main plenary addresses. In 1988 she participated in the Rhodes consultation organised by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on The Place of Women in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women and in 1990 in the second international Orthodox women's consultation held in Crete and sponsored by the WCC Sub-Unit on Women in Church and Society. She is the author of several books and many articles.

BLISS, Kathleen b. July 1908, London; d. September 1989.
Church of England. Married, three children.

A student at Girton College, Cambridge, where at the time she was the only woman studying theology, Bliss graduated with honours in history and theology. A leader in the SCM, she married Rupert Bliss and went with him to missionary service in South India with the London Missionary Society. They returned to England when World War II broke out and Bliss became assistant to J. H. Oldham, editor of the influential *Christian Newsletter*. Oldham was her friend and mentor and it was through him that Bliss first became involved with the WCC when she deputised for him at a meeting of the Provisional Committee in Geneva. In 1945 Bliss replaced Oldham as editor of the *Christian Newsletter*, continuing till 1949 in that position which kept her in touch with many of the most significant people and ideas of the time. In 1949 she received an honorary DD from the University of Aberdeen.

Bliss attended the first WCC assembly, Amsterdam 1948, as an alternate delegate of the Church of England. She addressed a plenary on the theme of disorder in modern society (with Jacques Ellul, John Foster Dulles and Joseph Hrodmake), and served on the message committee where she wrote the preliminary draft, including the famous phrase, "We intend to stay together". From 1950-1951 Bliss chaired the new WCC Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, and then acted for almost two years as its secretary (part-time). She wrote *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches*, (1952) based on the enquiry conducted before the Amsterdam assembly but with considerable material of her own. Bliss insisted that "women's questions" were questions of relationship, involving men as well. Her primary interest was in the role of lay people in the Church.

From 1954 to 1961 Bliss was at the heart of the WCC and greatly respected. At the second assembly in Evanston, 1954, she was elected to the central committee and then to the executive committee on which she was the only woman. She served as chair of the Board of Trustees of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey and on the editorial board of *The Ecumenical Review*. Following the New Delhi assembly in 1961 she continued until

1968 as a member of both central and executive committees and chaired the committee of the new Division on Ecumenical Action. She also moderated the commission on the integration of the WCC and the WCCE. She was described as "perhaps the most articulate of all the membership" of the central committee.

Bliss served on the BCC 1942-1967 and was general secretary of the board of education of the Church of England 1957-1966, the first woman to head a general synod board. From 1966 until her retirement in 1972 she was lecturer in religious studies at the new University of Sussex. It was said of Bliss after her death in 1989 that "she might well have been Archbishop of Canterbury had ordination been open to women, for she was a pastor and administrator as well as a thinker".

BÜHRIG, Marga b. October 1915, Berlin.
Swiss Protestant Church Federation.

Born in Berlin, Bührig has lived in Switzerland since 1926 and in 1939 received a doctorate in German Literature and Modern History from the University of Zürich. Raised in a family without church affiliation Bührig experienced conversion as a result of participation in women's Bible study groups. As an unmarried woman she struggled with questions of emancipation and the meaning of partnership between women and men, becoming involved in ecumenical women's work in Germany and Switzerland. In 1959 Bührig became a study leader at Boldern Academy, Zürich, a lay study and conference centre related to the Evangelical Reformed Church. Already heavily involved in women's work Bührig, with a female colleague, was called to the all-male community of Boldern at the instigation of women. In 1971 Bührig became director of the academy, the only woman in a senior executive position of this kind in German-speaking Switzerland, and continued in that position until she retired in 1981. She served as president of the European Ecumenical Association of Academic and Retreat Centres 1976-1982.

Bührig's involvement in the international ecumenical movement began through the WCC Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society when in 1956 she attended "The Place of Women in the Ministry of the Church and in the Government of the Churches" a consultation held by the Department in Herrenalb, Germany. In 1963 she was one of a small group at a consultation on the ordination of women, organised jointly by Faith and Order and the Department on Co-operation. She participated in the conference of WCC/RCC women at Taizé in 1967 and was co-president of the WELG, 1968 - 1972.

At the fourth WCC assembly, Uppsala, 1968, Bührig "received the impulse to radicalise the feminist voice within the ecumenical movement" following which she made several visits (1977, 1980, 1981) to the Centre for Women and Religion, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. Since then Bührig has become known as one of the European 'mothers' of feminist theology. Elected to the WCC presidium at the sixth assembly, Vancouver, 1983, where she was present as a guest, Bührig served until 1991, becoming deeply involved in the JPIC process. She was moderator of the preparatory group for the JPIC World Convocation, Seoul, 1990. Bührig is the author of many books and articles on women in the church.

CAVERT, Ruth Twila, née Lytton b. February 1895, USA; d. May 1991.

Methodist. Married, one stepdaughter.

A graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University, Cavert also studied at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University, the Imperial University of Tokyo and the New York School of Social Work. In 1918 she taught for six months at Tokyo Women's Christian College, following which she travelled in China and Europe. Prior to her marriage Cavert was for two years dean of women and assistant professor of English at Lawrence College, Wisconsin. In 1927 she married Samuel McCrea Cavert, associate secretary of the Federal Council of Churches. In 1928 the Caverts attended the IMC meeting in Jerusalem, "on what amounted to a second honeymoon", he representing the Federal Council and she the YWCA. From 1928 to 1936 Cavert was on the administrative staff of Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York.

Cavert's experience as an educator, as a member on the National Board of the YWCA and on the executive committee of the United Council of Church Women, and her participation in programmes of the Federal Council of Churches related to women's welfare all prepared her for the work which she did on the WCC enquiry on the Life and Work of Women in the Church prior to the 1948 assembly. Cavert initiated this enquiry and did most of the work while acting in a volunteer capacity. She also organised the ecumenical women's meeting held at Baarn immediately before the assembly. Cavert was appointed as a consultant to the Commission on the "Life and Work of Women in the Church" in 1950 but from then on her focus moved from the international scene back to the US.

CHAKKO, Sarah b. February 1905, Trichur, South India; d. January 1954, Lucknow, North India. Syrian Orthodox Church of India.

Chakko studied history at Queen Mary's, a government women's college in Madras, taught for two years in a London Missionary Society high school, earned a master's degree at Presidency College in Madras and began teaching in 1930 at Isabella Thoburn College, a women's ecumenical college under US Methodist auspices in Lucknow. In 1936 she took an MA degree in education at Chicago University and in 1937 studied international law at Michigan University. On her return to India in 1938 she was appointed vice-principal of Isabella Thoburn College, becoming principal in 1945. Active in the SCM of India, Burma and Ceylon, Chakko attended student conferences in Java in 1933 and San Francisco in 1936. She served on the National Committee of the YWCA of India for a number of years and at the time of her death was a member of the executive committee and vice-president of the World YWCA. She also served on the board of Christian higher education and on the National Christian Council of India. Chakko attended the first WCC assembly, Amsterdam 1948, as a representative of the "younger churches" by invitation of a US Methodist bishop, and presented the report of the Committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. From March 1950 to August 1951 Chakko took leave of absence in order to work as executive secretary to the newly-appointed WCC Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. In that position she travelled widely in North America, Europe and the Middle East. When T. C. Chao resigned as one of the WCC presidents in 1951 Chakko was asked to succeed him "in recognition of her exceptional service to the whole ecumenical movement". She was the first woman to hold this position. In 1952 Chakko chaired the world conference of Christian youth held at Kottayam, South India, and in 1953 hosted a meeting of the WCC central committee at Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. Named as a Syrian Orthodox delegate to the second WCC assembly, Evanston, 1954, Chakko had begun to

take an active part in preparation for it but died suddenly of a heart attack in January 1954. Her death at the early age of 48 was a great loss to the ecumenical movement.

CHAMBERLAIN, Elsie Dorothea b. March 1910, London; d. April 1991.
Congregational Union of England and Wales. Ordained; married, one daughter (adopted).

Chamberlain studied theology at King's College, London, where she was one of only three women doing the degree course. She graduated BD in 1939 and in 1941 was ordained in the Congregational Church. In 1946 Chamberlain became the first woman chaplain in the RAF but served only a few months before being invalided out. In 1947 she married John Garrington, an Anglican priest whom she had met while they were both students at King's College. Their marriage had been delayed because of Anglican prejudice against an Anglican priest marrying a Congregational minister. Garrington died in 1978. In 1950 Chamberlain began work as the first ordained woman producer in the Religious Department of the BBC. After leaving the BBC in 1967 she continued to do some broadcasting and was active in ministry till her death. In 1956-7 Chamberlain was the first woman to chair the Congregational Union of England and Wales, in the 1970s was vice-president of the Six Point Group, a non-political body dedicated to furthering the equality of women, and in 1984-5 national president of the Free Church Women's Council. From 1972 she was active in building up the Congregational Federation, serving as its president 1973-5. The Federation consisted of about 300 Congregational churches which did not join the United Reformed Church when it formed in 1972. Although a firm advocate of church unity Chamberlain believed that in joining the URC Congregationalists would lose too much of importance. Chamberlain attended the Baarn women's conference in 1948, was an accredited visitor at the Amsterdam assembly, and a delegate to the Evanston assembly in 1954, where she was the only woman to lead a worship service.

CHO, Kiyoko Takeda b. 1917, Hyogoken, Japan.
United Church of Christ of Japan. Married, one son.

Born into a Buddhist family, Cho converted to Christianity while attending Kobe College, a mission school for girls. In the US as an exchange student Cho graduated from Olivet College, Michigan in 1941 and enrolled at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, New York, only to be interned following Pearl Harbour. Through Reinhold Niebuhr's intervention she was able to continue her studies until she was repatriated in 1942. In 1953 she became a part-time lecturer at the new International Christian University, Tokyo and having gained a PhD from the University of Tokyo in 1961 became a full Professor at ICU where she taught until 1988 as an historian specialising in intellectual history. She served as dean of the graduate school and director of the Institute of Asian Cultural Studies, translated Reinhold Niebuhr's works into Japanese, wrote a number of works on the modernisation process in Japan, and was well-known for her essays in national newspapers.

Cho's ecumenical experience began when she attended the first world conference of Christian youth, Amsterdam 1939. Attendance at the second world conference, Oslo, 1947 was prevented by the allied occupation authorities but in 1948 she was able to attend an Asian student leaders' conference at Kandy, Ceylon, and subsequent meetings of the executive committee of the WSCF to which she belonged 1953-1956. Cho

attended the WCC assemblies in Evanston 1954, New Delhi 1961, and Uppsala 1968 as a consultant or adviser, served on the WCC-WCCE Joint Commission on Ecumenical Affairs 1964-1965, and participated in the Humanum Studies 1969-1975. She attended the Church and Society Conference, Geneva 1966, and was a member of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs 1968-1975. Following the death of WCC president D.T. Niles in 1971 Cho was elected by the central committee to replace him on the presidium and served until the fifth assembly, Nairobi, 1975.

DIÉTRICH, Suzanne de b. January 1891, Niederbronn, France; d. January 1981. Reformed Church of France.

Diétrich was a lay leader in the ecumenical youth and student movements. She studied engineering at the University of Lausanne, with a view to managing the family metal foundry, gaining a diploma in electrical engineering in 1913. Contact with the SCM in Lausanne led to a decision to devote herself to student work and during World War I she worked among Bible students and groups of young people in Paris. From 1920 on she became increasingly involved in the WSCF, serving as its vice-moderator 1928-1932. In 1934 she joined W. A. Visser 't Hooft at the WSCF headquarters in Geneva where she was secretary of the Commission for Ecumenical Relationships and also worked part-time for the World YWCA. Despite a physical disability which meant she had to walk with crutches, Diétrich travelled widely, visiting student groups in Europe, India, and North and South America, taking part in numerous ecumenical meetings and conferences including the world conference of Christian youth, Amsterdam 1939, at which she led the Bible studies. The same year she was active in the creation of CIMADE which she supported throughout World War II. Her main task in the WSCF became the training of Bible study leaders and the writing of Bible study materials. In 1946 she became founding staff member and associate director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva, which the WCC (still in process of formation) had established as an ecumenical training centre for laity and youth. There until her retirement in 1954, she played an important role, particularly in leading biblical study seminars. She was a consultant at the WCC assembly, Amsterdam, 1948. After retirement Diétrich was much in demand as a Bible study leader in North and South America and Africa. In 1950 she received an honorary doctorate from the Theological Faculty of the University of Montpellier, France.

FRASER, Jean b. May 1909, England; d. August 1995. Church of Scotland. Single.

Fraser graduated with an Hons BA from Newnham College, Cambridge, and from 1936 to 1942 was employed by the Presbyterian Church of England in parish and youth work, then from 1942 to 1947 was executive secretary of the youth department of the BCC. Her work included preparations for the second world conference of Christian youth, Oslo, 1947. Invited by W.A. Visser 't Hooft, she became executive secretary of the WCC youth department, attending the first WCC assembly in 1948 as a consultant. She continued to work for the youth department till 1954 when she became principal of St Colm's College, Edinburgh, training women missionaries and deaconesses for the Church of Scotland. After retiring in 1969, having reached the statutory age for women to retire in Scotland, Fraser returned to Geneva and worked there until 1974, first as editorial assistant to the *International Review of Mission* and then as part-time archivist. Fraser

died at her retirement home in Germany after suffering for a long period from Alzheimers disease.

HALKES, Catherine J.M. b. 1920, The Netherlands.
Roman Catholic. Married; three children.

Halkes obtained a doctorate in Dutch language and literature from Leiden University and then studied pastoral theology at the universities of Utrecht and Nijmegen. From 1964 to 1970 she was assistant director of an institute training laity for pastoral work and from 1970 until her retirement was an "emeritus professor". In 1986 she was on the staff of the theological faculty of the Roman Catholic University of Nijmegen, first as lecturer and supervisor in pastoral theology and then from 1977 as lecturer in feminism and Christianity. In 1983 she became the first incumbent of Nijmegen's special chair in feminism and Christianity. During the Vatican II Council, Halkes spent time in Rome writing articles on the situation of lay people and women in the Church. During the 1960s she published and spoke a good deal about the place of women in the Church and in 1967 at the Third Congress on the Laity was one of the leaders responsible for the working group on co-operation between women and men. Halkes gave a paper at the WCC consultation on the ordination of women, Cartigny 1970, and spoke at the consultation of European Christian Women, sponsored by the WCC Sub-Unit on Women, Brussels, 1978. She participated in the CWMC consultation, Amsterdam 1980, and in 1984 was one of the participants at a symposium to honour WCC general secretary Philip Potter on his retirement. Halkes was asked by the Union of Catholic Women to address Pope John Paul II when he visited the Netherlands in 1985 but was forbidden to do so by Cardinal Simons. One of the European 'mothers' of feminist theology Halkes was one of the convenors of a meeting of women theologians in Boldern, Switzerland, in 1985 which resulted in the founding of the European Society of Women in Theological Research. Halkes lectures widely and has published extensively in feminist theology. Some of her work has been published in English.

HARKNESS, Georgia Elma b. 1891, Harkness, NY, USA; d. August 1974.
Methodist.

Acknowledged as the first woman theologian of distinction in the United States, Harkness graduated in 1920 from Boston School of Theology with Master's degrees in arts and religious education and then in 1923 gained a Ph.D. in philosophy. From 1922 to 1939 she taught at Elmira College and Mt Holyoke College, two women's colleges. From 1939 to 1950 she was professor of applied theology at Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, a major Protestant seminary. In this position Harkness was the first full-time woman professor of theological studies in a US Protestant seminary. From 1950 until her retirement in 1961 she was professor of applied theology at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California. A pacifist and Christian socialist with a strong commitment to social justice and to equality of women Harkness was publicly recognised as the person who more than anyone else brought about the granting of full clergy status to women in the Methodist Church in 1956. In 1958 she was named "Churchwoman of the Year" by the Religious Heritage of America and in 1962 received an honorary D.Litt. from Elmira College. In 1975, the Georgia Harkness chair in applied theology at Garrett - Evangelical Theological Seminary was endowed in her memory.

Having been active in the SCM and the YWCA, in 1937 Harkness began her international ecumenical work by attending the Oxford Life and Work conference where

she was one of only 23 women but played a significant role. The following year she was a delegate to the IMC conference in Madras. Her contributions to these two meetings led to her invitation to the Geneva conference of the Board of Strategy of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches in 1939. There she was the only woman alongside twenty-nine men. Harkness was a consultant to the WCC assemblies at Amsterdam 1948 and Evanston 1954.

Harkness was the author of many articles and almost forty books on topics including theology, ethics, the laity, and women in the church. She also published devotional works and poetry.

HOWARD, (Rosemary) Christian b. September 1916, England.
Church of England.

A leading lay member of the Church of England, Howard gained a Lambeth Diploma in Theology in 1943 and was awarded a Lambeth MA by Archbishop Donald Coggan in 1979. A licensed lay worker in the diocese of York from 1947, Howard was secretary to the board of women's work 1947-1972 and secretary for lay ministry 1972-1979. She was a member of the (Anglican) Church Assembly 1960-1970 and then of the General Synod 1970-1988, of the Churches' Council for Covenanting 1978-1982, and of the BCC executive 1974-1988. A leading campaigner for the ordination of women Howard wrote General Synod reports on that topic and also served as vice-moderator of the Movement for the Ordination of Women. She was a Church of England delegate to the third and fourth WCC assemblies at New Delhi 1961, and Uppsala 1968. From 1961 to 1975 she was a member of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order, serving as a member of the working committee 1968-1975. At the fourth world conference on Faith and Order, Montreal 1963, she was the only woman among 232 delegates. Keenly interested in the CWMC study, Howard acted as a volunteer at the 1981 Sheffield conference. Howard was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1986.

JIAGGE, Annie R b. October 1918, Ghana.
Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Married.

Jiagge was born into a family distinguished for Christian service, her mother having inaugurated the YWCA in Ghana in 1899. Originally a school teacher Jiagge later studied law and became the first African lawyer in Ghana. Having served as an appeals court judge, Jiagge was appointed a supreme court judge in 1969. She attended the first world conference of Christian youth, Oslo 1947, as a YWCA delegate and was one of the speakers at the 1952 world conference of Christian youth in Kottayam. She has served as president of the YWCA, Ghana, and vice-president of the World YWCA. Active in the ecumenical movement in Ghana, Jiagge attended the WCC assemblies at Evanston 1954, Uppsala 1968, Nairobi 1975, Vancouver 1983 and, as a guest, Canberra 1991. In 1961 she was appointed to the Committee on the Laity and in 1967 represented the WCC at the (Roman Catholic) Third Congress on the Laity in Rome. From 1968 to 1975 she was a member of the WCC Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service. In 1974 she participated in the Berlin consultation on Sexism in the 1970s. At the Nairobi assembly she was one of the speakers in the plenary on Women in a Changing World and was elected to the WCC presidium where she served until 1983. From 1984 to 1991 Jiagge was moderator of the commission of the Programme to Combat Racism.

KÄSSMANN, Margot b. 1958, Germany.
Evangelical Church in Germany. Ordained.

Kaessmann studied theology at the universities of Tübingen, Göttingen and Marburg/Lahn, obtaining her doctorate in 1990. From 1987 to 1989 she worked as a pastor with particular responsibility for JPIC activities and since 1990 has been the executive secretary for development education in the Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck. Kaessmann was a delegate to the sixth WCC assembly, Vancouver, 1983, in the youth category. There she was elected to the WCC central committee. At the Canberra assembly 1991, Kaessmann was re-elected to the central committee and elected also to the executive committee. She was a member of the WCC's preparatory group for the World JPIC Convocation on, Seoul 1990.

KAREFA-SMART, Rena Joyce (née Weller) b. March 1921.
Married; three children.

Originally a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Karefa-Smart has been since 1988 a member of the Episcopal Church, USA, in which she is an ordained priest. At the age of fifteen Karefa-Smart attended the 1936 IMC conference in Mexico City with her parents, thus beginning a long history of ecumenical involvement. She was an alternate delegate to the first world conference of Christian youth, Amsterdam 1939, and co-chair of the second world conference, Oslo 1947. In 1948 she married John Karefa-Smart, a Sierra Leonean politician and physician, and with him attended the inaugural WCC assembly, Amsterdam 1948, where they were both consultants, she being attached to the Committee on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. In the 1950s she was vice-chair of the WSCF and also served on the working group of the WCC Department on Co-operation between Men and Women. She was an adviser and plenary speaker at the second WCC assembly, Evanston 1954 and after living in West Africa for a number of years worked in a voluntary capacity for the Department on Cooperation in Geneva 1967-1969 while her husband worked for the World Health Organisation. Present as WCC staff at the Uppsala assembly in 1968 she was nominated but not elected to the presidium. During the 1970s Karefa-Smart served on the commission of the Programme to Combat Racism. A delegate of the AMEZ Church at the Vancouver 1983 assembly, Karefa-Smart was elected to the WCC central committee where she served until 1991. Karefa-Smart has also been active in the YWCA, in anti-racism work, many women's organisations, and a number of ecumenical bodies. She is currently ecumenical officer of the Washington, D.C. diocese of the Episcopal Church, USA.

LACEY, Janet b. October 1903, Sunderland, U.K; d. July 1988.

Brought up a Methodist, Lacey later became an Anglican. A writer, dramatist and ecumenical administrator, Lacey trained as a youth leader and worked for many years with youth clubs, then as secretary of the youth department of the BCC. From 1952 to 1968 she was director of Christian Aid, the interchurch aid and refugee service of the BCC which she built into an internationally recognised organisation raising millions of pounds annually. For the second WCC assembly, Evanston 1954, she wrote a drama about the WCC's work for refugees and for the third assembly, New Delhi 1961, produced a film. In 1966 she was what she called the "token female" president for the world conference on Church and Society, Geneva. At the fourth assembly, Uppsala,

1968, she was an adviser, having served 1961-1968 as vice-chair of the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service. A laywoman, Lacey was the first woman to preach in St Paul's Cathedral, London and St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem.

LOVE, Janice b. 1952, USA.
United Methodist Church.

Love, a lay woman, obtained a Masters degree in political science and a Ph.D. at Ohio State University and has a BA in African politics from Eckerd College, Florida. She has had a number of teaching positions and since 1991 has been associate professor in the department of government and international studies at the University of South Carolina, where she was assistant professor 1986-1991. Love has had wide ecumenical experience, which includes having been a member of the Board of Mission (1970-1972) and the Board of Global Ministries (1972-1976) of the United Methodist Church and founding co-chairperson of Young Christians for Global Justice. A UMC delegate to the fifth WCC assembly, Nairobi 1975, Love was there elected to the central committee. At the sixth assembly, Vancouver 1983, she was re-elected to the central committee and elected also to the executive committee. At the seventh assembly, Canberra 1991, she was again elected to the central committee. Love was moderator of the WCC unit on Justice and Service 1983-1991 and has been a keen advocate of women's concerns, particularly in central committee debates.

MORTON, Helen b. 1898, Boston, USA; d. March 1991.
Episcopal Church.

A graduate of Vassar College, Morton obtained a Masters degree in social work from Simmons College, 1922. Morton was very active in both the WSCF and the YWCA. In the 1930s and 1940s she served as executive secretary of the National Student Council of the YWCA and was also a member of the WSCF executive committee. With other WSCF members in 1937 she attended the Life and Work conference in Oxford and the Faith and Order conference in Edinburgh. She also attended the first world conference of Christian youth, Amsterdam 1939. During World War II Morton worked with Madeleine Barot on the staff of CIMADE and in the late 1940s with the World YWCA in Geneva. From 1959 to 1962 Morton worked with Barot in the WCC Department on the Co-operation between Men and Women, acting as head of the department when Barot was away. At this time there were only five women on the executive staff of the WCC. Morton attended meetings of the Department on Co-operation working committee at St Andrews 1960 and Paris 1962, and also attended the meeting held in Madras prior to the 1961 New Delhi assembly. Following her return to the US Morton was active in community work and urban renewal until her death.

NOLD, Dr Liselotte b. April 1912; d. July 1975. German.
Evangelical Lutheran Church.

A lay woman, Nold was active in the ecumenical movement for more than thirty years, her main interest being in the work of women in the churches. At the time of her death Nold was director of the Bayerischer Mütterdienst (Bavarian Service to Mothers) where she had begun working some twenty years earlier as assistant to its founder, Dr.

Nopitsch. Nold was a delegate to the WCC assemblies at Evanston 1954 and New Delhi 1961, and an adviser at the Uppsala 1968 assembly. From 1961 to 1968 she was a member of the working committee of the Department of Co-operation between Men and Women in Church, Family and Society and in 1968 became a member of the committee of the Division of Ecumenical Action. She was active in the WELG (1968-1972) and from 1968 until her death the only woman representative of the WCC on the JWG. Nold chaired or attended many ecumenical women's consultations and participated wholeheartedly in the Berlin 1974 consultation on Sexism in the 1970s just a year before her death. She was also active in women's concerns in the LWF. One of her major achievements was interpreting the issues facing women in church and society to the German churches. She was described as a "far-sighted, courageous and warm-hearted 'steward' of a 'human' church".

ODUYOYE, Mercy Amba b. 1934, Ghana.
Methodist. Married; no children.

The daughter of a Methodist pastor, Oduyoye herself became a Methodist lay preacher. Having originally trained and worked as a school teacher Oduyoye then studied theology, graduating with a BA in religious studies from the University of Ghana in 1963 and a Cambridge MA in 1965. After returning to Ghana to teach, Oduyoye became involved in leadership of an SCM conference at the University of Ghana, 1965, where she met Adeolu Adegbola, chair of the WCC Youth Committee and Albert van den Heuvel, director of the youth department, contacts which led to her appointment in 1967 as youth secretary in the WCC, jointly sponsored by the WCC and the WCCE. Oduyoye continued in the WCC until 1970 when she moved to Nigeria with her husband, Nigerian theologian Modupe Oduyoye, whom she married in 1968. After working as youth secretary for the AACC, Oduyoye taught in the department of religious studies at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1974 to 1986. In 1987 she assumed the position of deputy general secretary of the WCC, acting also as staff moderator of the unit on education and renewal. Following her retirement in 1991 Oduyoye has continued to teach as a visiting lecturer in various institutions. From 1973 to 1977 Oduyoye was chairperson of the WSCF, the first African and the first woman to serve in this position. She was a member of the WCC Faith and Order Commission 1976-1987 and attended the commission meeting at Accra in 1974, at which plans for the CWMC study were formulated, as a consultant. A participant at the 1981 CWMC Sheffield conference Oduyoye presented the recommendations from that conference to the 1981 meeting of the WCC central committee. Since 1977, when she became its first African woman member, Oduyoye has attended four WCC assemblies: Uppsala 1968 and Canberra 1991 as staff and Nairobi 1975 and Vancouver 1983 as a delegate. The author of several books, Oduyoye is today's foremost African woman theologian.

PARVEY, Constance Fern b. January 1931, USA.
Lutheran Church in America, now Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
Ordained.

Educated at Bryn Mawr, University of Minnesota (BA, 1952) and Harvard Divinity School (BD 1963), Parvey received an honorary doctorate from the University of Redlands, 1977. She was ordained in the New England Synod of the Lutheran Church in America in December 1972, becoming one of a small number of women in the Lutheran ministry following the 1970 decision of the two Lutheran churches in America to ordain

women. Parvey served as Lutheran chaplain at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and as associate pastor of the University Lutheran Church in Cambridge. From 1975 to 1978 she was a member of the NCCC USA Faith and Order commission. Parvey attended the Berlin 1974 consultation on Sexism in the 1970s and was a consultant at the Accra meeting of the WCC Faith and Order commission later that year, and was thus closely involved in the genesis of the CWMC study. Having attended the fourth WCC assembly, Uppsala 1968, as press representative for a student newspaper, Parvey was an LCA delegate at Nairobi in 1975, serving on the message committee. From 1978 to 1982 Parvey was director of the CWMC study in which role she travelled extensively, organised and attended many ecumenical consultations, and wrote numerous articles. She edited the official report of the 1981 Sheffield conference which concluded the CWMC study, *The Community of Women and Men in the Church* (Geneva: 1983). Following the conclusion of the CWMC study Parvey taught for several years and then returned to parish ministry in the US. Since 1987 she has been a member of the Office for Ecumenical Affairs of the ELCA.

ROUSE, Clara Ruth b. September 1872, London; d. 1956.
Church of England. Single.

Baptised in 1889 in the Evangelical Spurgeon Church to which her family belonged, in 1894 Rouse joined the Church of England. After attending Girton College, Cambridge, 1891-1894 she studied Sanskrit at the British Museum 1894-1895 in preparation for becoming a missionary. After attending a Student Volunteer Union conference at Keswick in 1894 Rouse became a leader in the SCM, *Student Volunteer magazine* 1895-1897 and being travelling secretary for the SVMU 1896-1897. From 1897-1898 she was travelling secretary of the North American Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, then secretary of the College YWCA in the USA 1898-1899. After working 1899-1901 as a member of the missionary settlement for university women at Bombay, India, which she had helped to plan, Rouse returned to England on account of her health. In 1905 she was appointed travelling secretary of the WSCF and continued in that position till 1920, doing pioneering work among university students, visiting sixty-five countries, and making valuable contacts with Orthodox Christians. Rouse worked in close collaboration with John R. Mott, often accompanying him on his travels. She was secretary of the executive committee of the WSCF, 1920-1924, giving a great deal of her time to European student relief which she had initiated. From 1925 to 1939 she was educational secretary of the Missionary Council of the National Assembly of the Church of England. She was a member of the World's YWCA 1904-1946 and its president 1938-1946. After her retirement Rouse served as secretary to the committee for the preparation of *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948* which she co-edited with Stephen Neill and for which she wrote several articles. An accredited visitor at the first assembly of the WCC, Amsterdam, 1948, Rouse was a living link between it and the Edinburgh missionary conference of 1910, which she also attended. Described as "one of the few women who can be called an ecumenical pioneer", Rouse influenced generations of students in the WSCF, many of whom became leaders in the ecumenical movement.

RUSSELL, Letty Mandeville b. ? USA.

Presbyterian Church. Ordained.

Russell graduated from Wellesley College 1951 and married a fellow leader in the SCM but the marriage did not last. From 1954 to 1958 Russell studied at Harvard Divinity School, a member of the first graduating class to include women. She graduated STB and later studied at Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1966-1969, gaining STM and ThD degrees. At Union, Russell met her second husband, Dutch missiologist and ecumenist Johannes Hoekendijk, Professor of World Christianity. He died in 1975. Russell worked in the East Harlem Protestant Parish, New York, for seventeen years, serving as pastor of the Church of the Ascension 1958-1968, following her ordination in 1958. For a number of years she has taught at Yale Divinity School where she is now professor of theology. The author of many books Russell is internationally known as a feminist theologian.

Following youthful involvement in the YWCA student movement Russell served on the National Boards of the YWCA of the USA and of India, where she taught for a time at Union Theological College, Bangalore. At the third WCC assembly, New Delhi, 1961, she was appointed to the Committee on Studies in Evangelism and subsequently participated in a number of studies. She attended the Berlin 1974 consultation on Sexism in the 1970s for which she wrote one of the background papers. Prior to the fifth WCC assembly, Nairobi 1975, Russell organised a US group on the Participation of Women in the WCC which raised money to enable women to attend the assembly. She herself was a delegate at Nairobi and thereafter a member of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order 1975-1991, with a particular interest in the study on The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Humankind. Russell attended the 1981 Sheffield CWMC conference and was a strong advocate for the CWMC study within Faith and Order. She has long been active in the Faith and Order Commission of the NCCC USA. Through her teaching, writing and travelling Russell has contributed greatly to the development of a global feminist theology and to the building of ecumenical networks of women.

SKUSE, Jean Enid b. January 1932, Australia.
Uniting Church of Australia.

A former Methodist lay preacher Skuse became a member of the UCA when it formed in 1977. Her international ecumenical experience began when she attended the Church and Society World conference in Geneva in 1966. As secretary to the New South Wales Council of the Australian Council of Churches 1970-1975 Skuse was largely responsible for a much-publicised report of the Commission on Women in the Church and reflected its findings at the 1974 Berlin consultation on Sexism in the 1970s. A delegate at the WCC Nairobi assembly in 1975 Skuse was secretary of the influential programme guidelines committee. Elected at Nairobi to the WCC central committee, Skuse was then elected as its vice-moderator 1975-1983 and following the Vancouver assembly continued as a member of both central and executive committees until 1991. She was a WCC representative on the JWG 1983-1991 and 1989-1991 national co-ordinator for the seventh WCC assembly, Canberra, 1991. From 1976 to 1989 Skuse was general secretary of the Australian Council of Churches, the first woman and the second lay person to hold the most important ecumenical position in Australia. She was a member of the UCA standing committee 1977-1985 and of the New South Wales government's women's advisory council 1981-1984. Skuse received the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1978 and an MBE in 1979.

SOVIK, Ruth (née Johnson)

American Lutheran Church; USA.

Sovik served in Taiwan with her husband Arne, a Lutheran missionary, 1952-1955 and then accompanied him to Geneva where he directed the mission department of the LWF. Sovik worked with the WSCF and then joined the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism as editorial assistant for the *International Review of Mission*. In the US 1967-1971, Sovik completed a Master's degree in English and taught at a public high school. Returning to Geneva in 1971 she resumed her previous job with CWME and then became its deputy director with Emilio Castro as director. In 1980 Sovik became associate general secretary of the World YWCA, moving on to general secretary in 1983. In August 1985 at the invitation of Castro she accepted the position of deputy general secretary of the WCC, serving also as staff moderator of the unit on justice and service, until her retirement in January 1992.

TANNER, Mary b. July 1938, Bristol, UK.

Church of England. Married; two children.

Tanner graduated in theology from the University of Birmingham 1960 and then lectured in Old Testament and Hebrew at the University of Hull, 1961-1968. In 1982 she was appointed theological secretary for the Board of Mission and Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, became deputy general secretary of the Board in 1989, and is now secretary for the Council of Christian Unity of the Church of England. She is a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and of the (Anglican) Eames Commission on Women and the Episcopate, and was a consultant to the 1988 Lambeth Conference at which she convened the women's presentation. Tanner attended the 1974 Accra meeting of the WCC Faith and Order commission as a substitute, her name being proposed by vice-moderator Christian Howard. In 1975 she was appointed as a member of both the commission and the standing commission and following reappointment in 1983 became vice-moderator. In 1991 she was appointed moderator of the Faith and Order commission, the first woman to hold this position. From 1979 to 1983 she was moderator of the advisory group on the CWMC study. Tanner was an adviser at the sixth WCC assembly, Vancouver 1983, and an observer at Canberra 1991. In 1988 the Archbishop of Canterbury conferred on her a Lambeth Doctorate in recognition of her services to ecumenism. Tanner has written and spoken widely on ecumenical topics.

WARTENBERG-POTTER, Bärbel von b. September 1943, Federal Republic of

Germany. Evangelical Church in Germany. Married (twice); two children (deceased).

Wartenberg-Potter studied theology and German at Heidelberg University 1963-1965, then completed her degree and qualified as a teacher at the University of Tübingen 1965-1969. She worked in the Aktion Mission 1969-1971, involved in education for schools and congregations, and from 1971 to 1974 in the regional service for Oekumene and Mission of the Church of Württemberg. Married in 1969 she spent the years 1974-1976 caring for her two sick sons, both of whom died of a genetic illness. Following the breakdown of her marriage and divorce in 1976, Wartenberg-Potter was ordained in the Church of Württemberg in 1977 and worked as a teacher in the Centre for Development Education, Stuttgart. From October 1980 to September 1985 she was director of the

WCC Sub-Unit on Women in Church and Society where she emphasised the need for global sisterhood among women and encouraged the development of feminist theology. In December 1984 she married retiring WCC general secretary Philip Potter and after leaving the WCC in 1985 went with him to Jamaica where she taught at the United Theological College of the West Indies, Jamaica. She is currently living in Germany.

WEBB, Pauline Mary b. June 1927, Wembley, UK.
Methodist.

Webb has a BA Hons in English from King's College, London (1948), a Teacher's Diploma from the London Institute of Education (1949) and a Master of Sacred Theology degree received while an ecumenical fellow at Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1964-1965. She began her professional career as a teacher then in 1955 began a long career in communications. She was editor for the Methodist Missionary Society 1955-1966, director of lay training for the Methodist Church 1967-1973 and area secretary for the Methodist Missionary Society 1973-1979. From 1979 to 1987 Webb was head of religious broadcasting in the World Service of the BBC. An accredited Methodist lay preacher since 1953 Webb attended the World Methodist Conferences in Oslo 1961 and London 1966. In 1965 she was elected vice-president of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain, the highest position open to a layperson. Webb's ecumenical experience began when she attended a BCC youth conference in 1951. Since then her ecumenical involvement has included membership of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission, chairing the BCC race relations unit, membership of the BCC assembly and division of international affairs, presidency of the Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church and being co-chair of the British section of the World Conference on Religions and Peace. Webb attended the fourth WCC assembly, Uppsala 1968, as a delegate. Elected to the WCC central committee she served 1968-1975 as its first woman vice-moderator and then continued as a member of both the central and executive committees 1975-1983. She was a member of the commission of the Programme to Combat Racism 1969-1975 and of the Commission on Communication 1983-1991. Webb co-chaired the Berlin 1974 consultation on Sexism in the 1970s and was moderator of the Vancouver planning committee in which role she worked hard to involve women in the sixth assembly. At the Vancouver assembly 1983 she preached at the opening service. For over twenty years Webb was at the heart of the ecumenical debate on race and gender issues. The author of a number of books and articles, Webb has received three honorary doctorates.

WEDEL, Cynthia Clark b. August 1908, Dearborn, MI, USA. d. August 1986.
Episcopal Church. Married; no children.

Wedel graduated with a Master's degree in history from Northwestern University, 1929, and more than thirty years later received a Ph.D. in psychology from George Washington University, Washington D.C. She was also the recipient of a number of honorary degrees.

Wedel married in 1938 an Episcopal clergyman, Theodore Wedel, who died in 1970. The couple had no children and Wedel spent a long career in volunteer service. She was a strong promoter of equal rights for women in church and society, an early advocate of women's ordination in the Episcopal Church and a proponent of the ministry of the laity. Wedel was also active in leadership for racial justice, economic welfare and world peace. One of the founders of the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy, Wedel

served several terms as its vice-president, was for a decade national chair of volunteers for the American Red Cross, served on President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women and later on the Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Wedel was president of Church Women United 1955-1958, associate general secretary of the NCCC-USA 1960-1969 and president 1969-1972, the first woman to serve in this position.

Wedel's international ecumenical work began in 1952 when as a member of the working committee of the new WCC Department on the Co-operation between Men and Women she attended its first meeting at Bossey. Having served on that committee 1952-1961 she then served on the committee on the Laity 1961-1968. Wedel attended the WCC assemblies at Evanston 1954, and New Delhi 1961 as a consultant and Uppsala 1968 as an adviser. Present at Nairobi 1975 as a member of the press, Wedel was chosen to read a lesson at the opening service and later elected as a WCC president, continuing in that role until 1983. Wedel also served as an observer at the II Vatican Council.

Described by Emilio Castro as "the first lady of ecumenism", Wedel was also an important role model for women, serving many times as the first woman in a particular role, a fact which she attributed to "the happenstance of being in the right place at the right time".

WILSON, Lois Miriam (née Freeman) b. April 1927, Winnipeg, Canada.
United Church of Canada. Married; four children.

The daughter of a UCC minister Wilson gained a BA at United College, Winnipeg in 1947, BD in 1969 and a Diploma in TV Production, 1974. She has received honorary DD and LLD degrees from several institutions.

In 1950 on marrying Roy Wilson, a fellow-student who was ordained to the UCC ministry, Wilson put aside thoughts of her own ordination. Mother to four children born 1952-1960 Wilson till the mid-sixties fulfilled most of the traditional expectations of a mother and a minister's wife. She was ordained in June 1965, on her fifteenth wedding anniversary, a restriction on the ordination of married women having been removed by the UCC in 1964. With her husband she served in several parishes and then became moderator of the United Church of Canada, 1980-1982. Wilson was the first woman to serve in this position and also the first woman president of the Canadian Council of Churches, 1976-1979. From 1983-1989 she served as co-director of the Canadian Ecumenical Forum. Wilson has done extensive work in the voluntary sector for Amnesty International, Project Ploughshares, the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, Urban Rural Mission and other bodies. Involvement in the SCM in her youth led to Wilson's meeting with leading ecumenical figures including Philippe Maury, John R. Mott and Madeleine Barot. In 1976 she was named honorary president of the SCM, Canada.

The focus of much of Wilson's life and work has been the official ecumenical movement of the Canadian and the world church. Her involvement with the WCC began in 1972 when she attended a consultation in Crete on "Centres of Social Concern and Related Christian Movements". A member of the WCC working committee on Renewal and Congregational Life 1977-1983 Wilson was a UCC delegate at the Vancouver assembly 1983 and was there elected to the presidium, serving until 1991. Within the WCC she was particularly interested in women's concerns, congregational renewal, and the Churches' Commission on International Affairs.

Wilson has received many awards and honours, including two Canadian Peace Awards and, in 1984, the Order of Canada. She has written two books and many articles.

WYON, Olive b. March 1881, London; d. August 1966.
Presbyterian Church of England.

Wyon attended school in Germany and later studied theology at King's College, London, before doing missionary training in Edinburgh at what later became St Colm's Missionary College of the Church of Scotland. She became well-known in British churches through her translations of a number of important works by European theologians, among whom were Emil Brunner, Ernst Troeltsh and Jacques Ellul. Wyon was one of a network of writers who contributed to preparatory studies for the world conference held by the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work in Oxford, 1937. Through this she became known to ecumenical leaders including J.H. Oldham and W. A Visser 't Hooft. From 1936 to 1946 Wyon was engaged in pastoral work with students in Cambridge but in 1947 accepted an invitation from the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches to work as Study Department Secretary in Geneva. There Wyon was involved in preparations for the WCC assembly in Amsterdam 1948. She worked with Twila Cavert on the enquiry on the "Life and Work of Women in the Church" and on preparations for the women's conference held at Baarn immediately prior to the assembly, though she was prevented by illness from attending either event.

In 1951 Wyon was appointed as principal of St Colm's, the Church of Scotland Women's Missionary College which she herself had attended forty years earlier. This, her final appointment, lasted three years and was one for which her wide church and ecumenical experience had prepared her well. After her retirement Wyon continued work for which she was already widely-known, writing several books on prayer and spirituality. She was convinced of the essential role of prayer in the search for Christian unity. Wyon received an honorary DD from the University of Aberdeen in 1948, one of the first women to be awarded this honour.

APPENDIX XI

CARTOONS BY CLAUDIUS

Cartoon by Claudius, from *One World* 134 (April 1988).

Cartoon by Claudius, from Thomas Wieser, ed., *Whither Ecumenism?*
(Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1 PUBLISHED SOURCES

Accra 1974: Meeting of the Commission on Faith and Order. Minutes and Documents. Faith and Order Paper, no 71. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974.

As Others See Us: A World YWCA Programme Bulletin on the Image of Women in the Mass Media. Geneva: World YWCA, 1972.

Assaad, Marie B. "Study on Female Sexuality and Bodily Functions in Different Religious Traditions". *Women in a Changing World* 20 (November 1985): 24-27.

_____. "When I Was Called". *Women in a Changing World* 22 (October 1986): 8-9.

"The Authority of Scripture". In *In God's Image: Reflections on Identity, Human Wholeness and the Authority of Scripture*. Edited by Janet Crawford and Michael Kinnamon. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, 81-108.

Azariah, Kushnud. "Experience and Promise". *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 250-252.

Balasuriya, Tissa. "Liberation of the Holy Spirit". *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 200-205

Bam, Brigalia (ed.). *What is Ordination Coming To? Report of a Consultation on the Ordination of Women held in Cartigny, Switzerland, 21st-26th September, 1971.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, 1971.

Bangkok Assembly 1973: Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, December 31, 1972 and January 9-12, 1973. [Geneva]: World Council of Churches, [1973].

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Faith and Order Paper, no. 111. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses. Faith and Order Paper, no. 149. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990.

Barot, Madeleine. *Concrete Ecumenical Experiences.* The Fourth Annual John Knox House Lecture. Geneva: John Knox House Association, 1958.

_____. "Considerations on the Need for a Theology of the Place of Women in the Church". *The Ecumenical Review* 7 (1955): 151-160.

- _____. "Die Frauen und die Ökumenische Bewegung". *Ökumenische Rundschau* 14 (January 1965): 211-221.
- _____. *Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1964.
- _____. "The Feminine Bid for the Pulpit". *Christianity Today* 7 (August 1963): 38-39.
- _____. "What Do These Women Want?" In *Faith and Faithfulness: Essays on Contemporary Ecumenical Themes*. Edited by Pauline Webb. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984: 76-83.
- _____. "Women and the Ministry". *Laity* no. 9 (July 1960): 22-30.
- Bate, H.N. (ed.). *Faith and Order, Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*. London: Student Christian Movement, 1927.
- Becher, Jeanne. "An Interview with Anna Karin Hammer". *Women in a Changing World* 22 (October 1986): 28-29.
- _____. (ed.). *Women, Religion and Sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.
- Beck, Huibert van (ed.). *Sharing Life: Official Report of the World Consultation on Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989.
- Behr-Sigel, Elisabeth. *Le Ministère de la Femme dans l'Eglise*. Préface du Métropolitain Antoine de Souroge, évêque du diocèse de Grande-Bretagne du Patriarcat de Moscou. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987.
- _____. "The Ordination of Women: An Ecumenical Problem". *Theology* 97 (1994): 9-26.
- _____. "Orthodox Tradition as a Resource for the Renewal of Women and Men in Community". In *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference, Sheffield, England, 1981*. Edited by Constance F. Parvey. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, 61-68.
- Behr-Sigel, Elisabeth and Nicole Maillard. "Orthodoxy and Women in France". In *Women, Religion and Sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*. Edited by Jeanne Becher. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990, 184-191.
- Belonick, Deborah. *Feminism and Christianity*. New York: Orthodox Church in America, 1983.
- _____. "Revelation and Metaphors: The Significance of the Trinitarian Names, Father, Son and Holy Spirit". *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 40 (1985): 31-42.

- "The BEM Process". In *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 149. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990, 6-16.
- Bennett, John. (ed.). *Man's Disorder and God's Design: Outline of Preparation for the First General Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. London: SCM Press, 1947.
- Bennett, Jonathan F. (ed.). *Evanston 1954, being a Report on the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, August 15-August 31, 1954*. Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, [1954].
- Best, Thomas F. "Beyond Unity-in-Tension. Prague: The Issues and the Experience in Ecumenical Perspective". In *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*. Edited by Thomas F. Best. Faith and Order Paper, no. 138. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988, 1-33.
- _____. "Canberra and the Ecumenical Future". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 30 (1991): 241-247.
- _____. "The Community Study: Where Do We Go From Here?" *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 48-56.
- _____. (ed.). *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 138. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985.
- _____. (ed.). *Faith and Order 1985-1989: The Commission Meeting at Budapest 1989*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 148. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.
- _____. (ed.). *Faith and Renewal: Reports and Documents of the Commission on Faith and Order, Stavanger 1985, Norway*. Faith and Order Paper no. 131. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.
- _____. (ed.). *Vancouver to Canberra 1983-1990: Report of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches to the Seventh Assembly*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.
- Bettenhausen, Elizabeth. "Women and Youth at Vancouver". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 23 (1984): 93-102.
- Bilheimer, R. *Breakthrough: The Emergence of the Ecumenical Tradition*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989.
- "Bishop: Hypocritical Church Needs to Confess its Sins". *EPS: Ecumenical Press Service* 16-20 March 1990 (90.03.60).
- Blake, Eugene Carson. "Uppsala and Afterwards". In *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Vol. 2, 1948-1968*. Edited by Harold E. Fey. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968, 413-445.

Bliss, Kathleen. "Oldham, Joseph Houldsworth". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 746-747.

_____. "Personal Relations in a Technical Society". In *The Church and the Disorder of Society: An Ecumenical Study Prepared Under the Auspices of the World Council of Churches*. Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series, vol. 3. London: SCM Press, 1948, 83-90.

_____. *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches*. London: SCM Press, 1952.

Borovoy, Vitaly. "The Ecclesiastical Significance of the World Council of Churches: the Legacy and Promise of Toronto". *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 504-518.

Boyd, Robin H.S. "Outsiders - Students and Youth at the Assembly". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 30 (1991): 226-240.

Brash, Alan A. *Amsterdam 1948: Being a Report on the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, August 22-September 4, 1948*. Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1948.

_____. *Delhi 1961: A Report on the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, November 19-December 6, 1961*. Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1962.

Brown, Robert McAfee. "The Lessons of the Assembly". *Christianity and Crisis* 28 (September 16, 1968): 205-207.

_____. "Uppsala: An Informal Report". *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5 (1968): 633-660.

_____. "Who is this Jesus Christ who Frees and Unites?" *The Ecumenical Review* 28 (1976): 6-21.

Bühlig, Marga. "Discrimination against Women". In *Technology and Social Justice: An International Symposium on the Social and Economic Teaching of the World Council of Churches from Geneva 1966 to Uppsala 1968*. Edited by Roland H. Preston. London: SCM Press, 1971, 295-321.

_____. "Frauen in der Ökumene". In *Geteilter Schmerz der Unterdrückung: Frauerbefreiung im Christentum?* Edited by V. Hochgrebe. Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1984, 101-112.

_____. "Moving on the Right Track". *The Ecumenical Review* 36 (1984): 163-166.

_____. "The Role of Women in the Ecumenical Dialogue". In *Women Invisible in Theology and Church*. Edited by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary Collins. Concilium 182. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985, 91-98.

- _____. "Uppsala 1968-Berlin 1974 - JPIC Convocation 1990?" *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (July-October 1988): 394-399.
- _____. *Woman Invisible: A Personal Odyssey in Christian Feminism*. Tunbridge Wells (England): Burns & Oates, 1993.
- _____. "The World Convocation: Problems, Achievements". In *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. Compiled by D. Preman Niles. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992, 17-25.
- By Our Lives: Stories of Women - Today and in the Bible*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985.
- Cardman, Francine. "BEM and the Community of Women and Men". *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 21 (1984): 83-95.
- Carr, Anne E. *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.
- Carter, Aiko Y. "Finding My Way _ _" *The Ecumenical Review* 36 (1984): 166-168.
- Castro, Emilio. "Central Committee, Hanover, 1988: Report of the General Secretary". *The Ecumenical Review* 41 (1989): 90-100.
- _____. "Editorial". *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 161-164.
- Cavert, Twila Lytton. "Women at Amsterdam". *Christendom* 23 (1948): 498-503.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Minutes and Reports of the Eighteenth Meeting, Enugu, Eastern Nigeria, Africa, January 12-21, 1965*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1965.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Nineteenth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, February 8th to 17th, 1966*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1966.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twentieth Meeting, Heraklion, Crete, Greece, August 15th-26th, 1967*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Third Meeting, University of Kent at Canterbury, Canterbury, Great Britain, August 12th-22nd, 1969*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1969.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 10th-21st, 1971*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971.

- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Fifth Meeting, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 13-23 August, 1972.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1972.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 22-29 August 1973.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1973.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Meeting, Berlin (West), 11-18 August 1974.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Twenty-Eighth Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, December 7 and 11, 1975.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1976.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Twenty-Ninth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 10-18 August 1976.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1976.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-First Meeting, Kingston, Jamaica, 1-11 January 1979.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1979.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Second Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 14-22 August 1980.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Third Meeting, Dresden, German Democratic Republic, 16-26 August 1981.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 19-28 July 1982.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Fifth Meeting, Vancouver, Canada, 8 and 11-12 August 1983.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 9-18 July 1984.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Meeting, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 28 July-8 August 1985.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985.
- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 16-14 January 1987.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1987.

Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Thirty-Ninth Meeting, Hanover, Federal Republic of Germany, 10-20 August 1988. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989.

Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Fortieth Meeting, Moscow, USSR, 16-27 July 1989. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990.

Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Forty-First Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 25-30 March 1990. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990.

Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Forty-Second Meeting, Canberra, Australia, 18 and 21-22 February 1991. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1991.

Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Minutes of the Forty-Third Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 20-27 September 1991. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1992.

Chakko, Sarah. "Reflections on Recent Travels in Europe and North America". *The Ecumenical Review* 3 (1951): 146-150.

Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time: World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, July 12-26, 1966. The Official Report with a Description of the Conference by M M Thomas and Paul Abrecht. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967.

The Church and the International Women's Year 1975. Vatican City: Pontifical Council for the Laity, n.d.

The Church and the Disorder of Society: An Ecumenical Study Prepared under the Auspices of the World Council of Churches. Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series, vol. 3. London: SCM Press, 1948.

Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: A Faith and Order Study Document. Faith and Order Paper, no. 151. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.

"The Church's Struggle for Justice and Unity". In *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1920-1975*. Edited by Constantin G. Patelos. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978, 116-124.

Clapsis, Emmanuel. "Naming God: An Orthodox View". *The Ecumenical Review* 44 (1992): 100-112.

Cline, Sally and Dale Spender. *Reflecting Men at Twice Their Natural Size.* London: Fontana/Collins, 1988.

Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission held at Kloster Loccum, Federal Republic of Germany, July 18-25, 1977*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 83. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977.

Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission held at Taizé, France, August 20-24, 1979*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 98. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980.

Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission held at the Centre Jean XXIII, Annecy, France, January 3-10, 1981*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 106. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.

Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission held at the Hoffbauer-Stiftung Potsdam, GDR, 13-20 July 1986*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 134. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.

Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission held at the Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane, Scotland, 16-24 August 1990*. Faith and Order Paper no. 152. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990.

Commission on Faith and Order. *Minutes of the Working Committee Meeting, 15-20 July, 1958, Geneva*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 26. Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1958].

Comunidad de Mujeres y Hombres en la Iglesia: Encuentro latinoamericano de mujeres, 15-18 marzo de 1981. San José, Costa Rica: Ediciones Sebila, 1981.

"The Community of Women and Men in the Church: The Sheffield Recommendations". In *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference, Sheffield, England, 1981*. Edited by Constance F. Parvey. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, 83-90.

"The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Study by the World Council of Churches. A working paper to be presented to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches for discussion and further directions". *The Ecumenical Review* 27 (1975): 386-393.

"The Community Study and Apostolic Faith: Memorandum from the Working Group on the Community of Women and Men in the Church". In *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order, Lima, 1982. Vol. 2: Study Papers and Reports*. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. Faith and Order Paper, no. 113. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982, 45-50.

Concerning the Ordination of Women. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1964.

Confessing One Faith: Towards an Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as Expressed in the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed (381). Faith and Order Paper, no. 140. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987.

Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381). Faith and Order Paper, no. 153. Geneva: WCC Publications 1991.

"Constitution and Rules". In *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991*. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 358-388.

"The Constitution of the World Council of Churches". In *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches held at Amsterdam, August 22nd to September 4th, 1948*. Edited by W.A. Visser 't Hooft. London: SCM Press, 1949, 197-201.

Consultation of European Christian Women. Brussels, 29 January - 4 February 1978. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1978.

The Continuing Journey: Women's Participation in the Lutheran World Federation. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation Dept. for Mission and Development Women in Church and Society, 1992.

Conway, John S. "Images of the WCC". *The Ecumenical Review* 36 (1984): 391-403.

"Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society (a statement drawn up by the Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society which the Central Committee of the World Council decided to transmit to the Churches for their study and comment)". *The Ecumenical Review* 8 (1955): 72-73

Crawford, Janet. "The Community of Women and Men in the Church: Where Are We Now?" *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 37-47.

_____. "The Continuing Significance of the Community Study: Sheffield and Beyond". In *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, renewal and the community of women and men*. Edited by Thomas F. Best. Faith and Order Paper, no. 138. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985, 44-57.

_____. "From Nairobi to Vancouver: How have things changed?" *Women in a Changing World* 17 (February 1984): 29.

Crawford, Janet and Michael Kinnamon (eds.). *In God's Image: Reflections on Identity, Human Wholeness and the Authority of Scripture*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983.

Crow, Paul A. "Canberra as Hope and Struggle". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 30 (1991): 181-190.

- _____. "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: A Perspective from Budapest". In *Faith and Order 1985-1989: The Commission Meeting at Budapest*. Edited by Thomas F. Best. Faith and Order Paper, no. 148. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990, 134-143.
- Csekme, Eve Zabolai. "A Woman Looks at Theology". *The Ecumenical Review* 27 (1975): 324-331.
- Culver, Elsie. *Women in the World of Religion*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967.
- The Deaconess: A Service of Women in the World of Today*. World Council of Churches Studies, no. 4. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1966.
- Deenik-Moolhuizen, Jeannette M. "Canberra 1991: Solidarity of the Church with Women". *Exchange* 20 (1991): 75-80.
- "Delegates Decide Youth is Older Now". *Assembly Line* (16 February 1991): 3.
- "Delegates Reflect on Council, Ecumenism in Feedback Session". *EPS: Ecumenical Press Service* 7 August 1983 (83 van. 42).
- Deschner, John. "Hope". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 480-482.
- _____. "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community". In *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order, Lima 1982*. Vol.2. *Study Papers and Reports*. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. Faith and Order Paper No. 113. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982, 185-197.
- Dickinson, Richard N. "Human Profile of an Assembly". *The Ecumenical Review* 21 (1969): 55-56.
- Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991.
- Dragas, George D. "Some General Reactions and Comments from an Orthodox Point of View". In *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*. Edited by Thomas F. Best. Faith and Order Paper, no. 138. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985, 117-126.
- Dumas, Francine. *L'Autre Semblable: Hommes et Femmes*. Neuchâtel (Switzerland): Delachaux et Niestlé, 1967.
- _____. *Man and Woman: Similarity and Difference*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1966.
- "Ecumenical Chronicle: The Life and Work of Women in the Church". *The Ecumenical Review* 5 (1953): 159-166.

- "Ecumenical Diary: Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches". *The Ecumenical Review* 24 (July 1972): 371-373.
- "Encyclical Letter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate". In *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches*. W.A. Visser 't Hooft. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982, 94-97.
- "Evangelical Perspectives from Canberra." In *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report of the Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991*. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 282-284.
- Evanston to New Delhi, 1954-1961: Report of the Central Committee to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1961.
- Fabella, Virginia. *Beyond Bonding: A Third World Woman's Theological Journey*. Manila: Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians and Institute of Women's Studies, 1993.
- Fahey, Michael A. (comp.). *Ecumenism: A Bibliographical Overview*. Bibliographies and indexes in religious studies, 23. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992.
- Faith and Order Louvain 1971: Study Reports and Documents*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 59. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971.
- Ferme, Dean William. *Profiles in Liberation: 36 Portraits of Third World Theologians*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1988.
- Fey, Harold E. (ed.). *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, volume 2, 1948-1968*. 2d edn. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.
- Fiddes, Paul S. "The Status of Woman in the Thought of Karl Barth". In *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition*. Edited by Janet Martin Soskice. London: Marshall Pickering, 1990, 138-155.
- Field-Bibb, Jacqueline. "From Deaconess to Bishop: The Vicissitudes of Women's Ministry in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA". *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992): 61-78.
- _____. *Women Towards Priesthood: Ministerial Politics and Feminist Praxis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Fiers, Elizabeth K "As the World Turned - Uppsala 1968". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 8 (1968-69): 38-47.
- "Fifth Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches". *The Ecumenical Review* 35 (1983): 198-218.

The First Six Years 1948-1954: A Report of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches on the Activities of the Departments and Secretariats of the Council. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1954.

FitzGerald, Kyriaki. "An Orthodox Assessment of Modern Feminist Theology". In *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women: Inter-Orthodox Symposium, Rhodes, Greece, 30 October-7 November 1988*. Edited by Gennadios Limouris. Katerini (Greece): Tertios Publications, 1992, 287-318.

Flannery, Austin (ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. New revised edn. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992.

For the Years Ahead: Programme of the Commission on Faith and Order after the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 1975. Faith and Order Paper, no. 80. [Geneva]: World Council of Churches, [1975].

Fortune, Marie. "At Canberra, Profound Sexism". *Christianity and Crisis* (15 July 1991): 219-220.

"The Fourth Official Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches". In *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975*. Edited by David M. Paton. London: SPCK, 1976, 271-282.

"Forward to the Year 2000: An Appeal to our Readers". *Women in a Changing World* 21 (April 1986): 11.

Gassmann, Günther (ed.). *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 159. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993.

_____. "Faith and Order". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 411-413.

A Gathering to Share Our Hope: Report on the National Consultation US Section of the World Council of Churches Study of the Community of Women and Men in the Churches, Stony Point, New York, March 25-26, 1981. New York: National Council of Churches, 1981.

Geernaert, Donna. "A Lack of Focus?" *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 206-210.

Gill, David M. (ed.). *Gathered for Life: Official Report VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada 24 July-10 August 1983*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983.

_____. "Participation: Beyond the Numbers Game". *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 488-493.

Gladly We Rebel! Risk 7 (1) (1971).

- Gnanadason, Aruna. "Women at the VI Assembly of the World Council of Churches". In *God's Image* (November 1983): 4-7.
- _____. "Women in the Ecumenical Movement". *International Review of Mission*. 81 (1992): 237-246.
- Goodall, Norman (ed.). *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, July 4-20, 1968*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1968.
- Gray, Gordon. "Communicating Canberra". *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (April 1991): 230-234.
- Gross, Jeffrey. "Christian Confession in a Pluralistic World". *Christian Century* 108 (1991): 644-646.
- Guthardt, Phyllis. "The Ministries of the Peculiar People". *The Ecumenical Review* 27 (1975): 343-351.
- Hageman, Alice L (ed.). *Sexist Religion and Women in the Church: No More Silence!* New York: Association Press, 1974.
- Half the World's People: A Report of the Consultation of Church Women Executives. Glion, Switzerland, January 1977*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1978.
- Halkes, Catherine J. M. "Frauen in der ökumenischen Bewegung". In *Feministische Theologie*. Edited by Maria Kassel. Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1988, 257-282.
- Hahn, Elisabeth. *Partnership: A Contribution to the Problem of Equal Rights based on the Work of Section VI ("Women in the Church") of the Lutheran World Federation Assembly at Hanover, Germany (1952)*. Geneva: Commission on the Life and Work of Women of the Churches, World Council of Churches, 1954.
- Hammar, Anna Karin. "After Forty Years - Churches in Solidarity with Women?" *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 528-538.
- _____. "The Decade: Its Links to JPIC". *The Ecumenical Review* 46 (1994): 164-171.
- _____. "Introduction: Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation". *Women in a Changing World* 28 (December 1989): 2-3.
- Handspicker, Meredith B. "Faith and Order 1948-1968". In *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2, 1948-1968*. Edited by Harold E. Fey. 2nd edn. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986, 143-170.
- Hanson, Paul D. "Masculine Metaphors for God and Sex-Discrimination in the Old Testament". *The Ecumenical Review* 27 (1975): 316-324.

- Harakas, Stanley S. "Must God Remain Greek?" *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 194-199.
- Harkness, Georgia. *Women in Church and Society: A Historical and Theological Inquiry*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972.
- Harvey, Dorothy. "Participation". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 775-779.
- Hastings, Adrian. *Robert Runcie*. London: Mowbray, 1991.
- Heinzelmann, Gertrud. *Die getrennten Schwestern: Frauen nach dem Konzil*. Zurich: Interfeminas Verlag, 1967.
- Herklots, H.G.G. *Amsterdam 1948: An Account of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. London: SCM Press, 1948.
- Herzel, Susannah. *A Voice for Women: The Women's Department of the World Council of Churches*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.
- Heuvel, Albert H. van den. "Ecumenical Diary: The Fifth Assembly at Nairobi". *The Ecumenical Review* 28 (January 1976): 97-104.
- _____. "Survey of Press Comments: Reactions to the Fourth Assembly". *The Ecumenical Review* 21 (1969): 32-54.
- Hodgson, Leonard (ed.). *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order held at Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937*. London: SCM Press, 1938.
- Homrighausen, E.G. "The Church in the World: World Council at Nairobi". *Theology Today* 33 (April 1976): 77-85.
- Houtepen, Anton. "Common Confession". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 195-197.
- _____. "Towards Conciliar Collaboration: The WCC and the Roman Catholic Communion of Churches". *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 473-487.
- "Human Wholeness". In *In God's Image: Reflections on Identity, Human Wholeness and the Authority of Scripture*. Edited by Janet Crawford and Michael Kinnamon. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, 49-78.
- "Identity". In *In God's Image: Reflections on Identity, Human Wholeness and the Authority of Scripture*. Edited by Janet Crawford and Michael Kinnamon. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, 1-46.
- "In Potter's Hands". *Risk* 8 (3) (1972): 3-15.

"In Solidarity with Women in Struggle". In *The San Antonio Report. Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way*. Edited by Frederick R. Wilson. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990, 173-177.

Interim Report of the Study on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. Concerns of the Churches, no.3. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1948.

Itty, C. I. "Just, Participating and Sustainable Society". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1991, 550-552.

Jacques, André. *Madeleine Barot: Une indomptable énergie*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf: 1989.

Jenkins, David E. "Nairobi and the Truly Ecumenical: Contribution to a Discussion about the Subsequent Tasks of the WCC". *The Ecumenical Review* 28 (1976): 276-285.

Johnson, Charles S. "Laymen at Amsterdam". *Christendom* 23 (1948): 504-508.

Johnson, David E. "Finding the Way to Nairobi". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 14 (1975): 7-36.

_____. (ed.). *Uppsala to Nairobi 1968-1975: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. New York: Friendship Press, 1975.

"Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. First Official Report". *The Ecumenical Review* 18 (1966): 243-255.

"Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Second Official Report". *The Ecumenical Review* 19 (1967): 461-467.

"Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Third Official Report". *The Ecumenical Review* 23 (1971): 44-69.

Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Sixth Report. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.

Kaper, Gudrun, et al. *Eva, wo bist du? Frauen in internationalen Organisationen der Ökumene: Eine Dokumentation*. Gelnhausen (Germany): Burckhardt - Laetare Verlag, 1981.

Kässmann, Margot. "How Long, O Lord?" *Women in a Changing World* 31 (December 1991): 16-17.

_____. "The Process Leading to Seoul and Canberra: Points of Strength and Weakness". In *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace and*

the Integrity of Creation. Compiled by D. Preman Niles. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992, 8-16.

Keller, Rosemary Skinner. *Georgia Harkness: For Such a Time as This*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Keshishian, Aram. "Central Committee, Geneva 1991: Report of the Moderator". *The Ecumenical Review* 44 (1992): 113-120.

_____. "Towards a Self-understanding of the WCC". *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 11-21.

King, Ursula. *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Education, 1989.

_____. "Women in Dialogue: A New Vision of Ecumenism". *Heythrop Journal* 26 (1985): 125-142.

King, Ursula (ed.). *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*. London: SPCK, 1994.

Kinnamon, Michael. *Why It Matters: A Popular Introduction to the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry Text*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985.

_____. (ed.). *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991.

_____. (ed.). *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order, Lima, 1982. Vol. 1: Minutes and Addresses*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 112. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.

_____. (ed.). *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order, Lima 1982. Vol 2: Study Papers and Reports*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 113. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.

Koilkpillai, J. Victor. "Editorial". *The Ecumenical Review* 27 (1975): 313-315.

König, Friedrich. "Feature Interview: Dr. Connie Parvey: What's Next for the Community of Women and Men in the Church?" *Lutheran World Information* 42/81:12-15.

Kramarae, Chris and Paula A. Treichler. *A Feminist Dictionary*. London: Pandora Press, 1984.

Krüger, Hanfried. "The Life and Activities of the World Council of Churches". In *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2, 1948-1968*. Edited by Harold E. Fey. 2nd edn. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968, 29-62.

Lazareth, William H. *Growing Together in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: A Study Guide*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 114. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982.

"Leadership of World Council of Churches Elected for 1990s". *EPS: Ecumenical Press Service* 1-10 March 1991 (91.03.03).

"Letter from Assembly Participants Signed by the Three Women Presidents". *Women in a Changing World* 17 (February 1984): 31.

"A Letter from Sheffield". In *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference, Sheffield, England, 1981*. Edited by Constance F. Parvey. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, 91-93.

"Letter from the General Secretary to the Member Churches on the UN World Conference to Mark the End of the Decade on Women". *Women in a Changing World* 19 (May 1985): 32-33.

"The Life and Work of Women in the Church". *The Ecumenical Review* 5 (1952): 159-166.

Lindner, Eileen. W. "Still In But Out". In *Women and Church: The Challenge of Ecumenical Solidarity in an Age of Alienation*. Edited by Melanie A. May. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991, 101-108.

Limouris, Gennadios. "Historical Background of the Apostolic Faith Today". In *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 153. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 105-111.

_____. "Men and Women: Equal Partners in the Christian Community: An Orthodox Point of View". In *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*. Edited by Thomas F. Best. Faith and Order Paper, no. 138. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985, 100-116.

_____. "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: A Historical Survey". In *Church, Kingdom, World: The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign*. Edited by Gennadios Limouris. Faith and Order Paper, no. 130. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986, 176-185.

_____. (ed.). *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women: Inter-Orthodox Symposium, Rhodes, Greece, 30 October-7 November 1988*. Katerini (Greece): Tertios Publications, 1992.

Lindqvist, Martti. "A Pilgrimage to a New Community". *The Ecumenical Review* 34 (1982): 162-168.

Link, Hans-Georg (ed.). *One God, One Lord, One Spirit: On the Explication of the Apostolic Faith Today*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 139. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988.

Linz, Johanna. "Learning in Community". *The Ecumenical Review* 36 (1984): 186-192.

_____. "Verweigerte Solidarität: Kirchen kaum bewegt". *Women in a Changing World* 31 (December 1991): 26-27.

Liveris, Leonie. "The Significance of the Decade for the Orthodox Churches". *The Ecumenical Review* 46 (1994): 178-185.

Lossky, Nicholas. "The Promise and the Outcome". *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 211-216.

Love, Janice. "JPIC and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement". *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 107-119.

Lynch, John E. "The Ordination of Women: Protestant Experience in Ecumenical Perspective". *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 12 (1975): 173-197.

McCoy, Jerry P. "A Promise Partially Fulfilled: The JPIC Convocation in Seoul". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 29 (1990): 407-417.

MacHaffie, Barbara J. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

MacLeod, Angus. *Nairobi Encounter: A Personal Account of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya*. Christchurch: n.p., 1976.

_____. *Vancouver Diary: A Report on the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches: 24 July - 10 August, 1983*. Christchurch: n.p., 1983.

Manley, Michael. " 'From the Shackles of domination and oppression' ". *The Ecumenical Review* 28 (January 1976): 49-65.

Marshall, Robert J. "Power and Politics in the WCC Nominations Process". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 23 (January 1984): 103-113.

May, Melanie A. *Bonds of Unity: Women, Theology and the Worldwide Church*. American Academy of Religion Academy Series, 65. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.

_____. "Conversations on Language and the Imagery of God Occasioned by the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study". *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 40 (3) (1985): 11-20.

_____. "The Ordination of Women: The Churches' Responses to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*". *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (1989): 251-269.

_____. (ed.). *Women and Church: The Challenge of Ecumenical Solidarity in an Age of Alienation*. Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1991.

Mayland, Jean. "The People of God and the Ecumenical Movement". *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 37-42.

"The Meaning of Ordination". *Study Encounter* 4 (1968): 166-189.

"Message from the Pre-Assembly Women's Meeting: At Such a Time as This..."
 In *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991*. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 270-272.

Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal 21 (1982)

Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal 21 (July 1982).

Minutes and Reports of the Second Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches held at Chichester (England), July 9-15, 1949.
 Geneva: World Council of Churches [1949].

Minutes and Reports of the Third Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Toronto (Canada), July 9-15, 1950. Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1950].

Minutes and Reports of the Fifth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Lucknow (India), December 31, 1952-January 8, 1953.
 Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.

Minutes and Reports of the Seventh Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Evanston (Ill.), USA, August 27-31, September 1-2, 1954. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1954.

Minutes and Reports of the Eighth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Davos (Grisons), Switzerland, August 2-8, 1955.
 Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.

Minutes and Reports of the Ninth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Galytetö, Hungary, July 28-August 5, 1956. Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.

Minutes and Reports of the Eleventh Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Nyborg Strand, Denmark, August 21-29, 1958.
 Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.

Minutes and Reports of the Twelfth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rhodes, Greece, August 19-27, 1959. Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.

Minutes and Reports of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, St. Andrew's, Scotland, August 16-24, 1960.
 Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.

Minutes and Reports of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, India, December 6-7, 1961. Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.

Minutes and Reports of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Paris, France, August 7-16, 1962. Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1962].

Minutes and Reports of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rochester, New York, U.S.A. August 26-September 2, 1963. [Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1963?]

Minutes and Reports of the Meeting of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches, Buck Hill Falls, Penn., April 1947. Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1947].

Minutes of the Meetings of the Faith and Order Commission and Working Committee held at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, 15-27 August, 1964. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1965.

Morton, Nelle. *The Journey is Home.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.

"The Moscow Patriarchate and the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches". *The Ecumenical Review* 1 (1949): 188-197.

Nairobi to Vancouver, 1975-1983: Report of the Central Committee to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983.

Nelson, J. Robert. "Men, Women and Church Unity: Faith and Order in Ghana". *The Christian Century* (19 September 1974): 852-854.

Nelson-Clegg, Judy and Jean Gledhill. "Women Space". *Women in a Changing World* 30 (June 1991): 9-12.

The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961. London: SCM Press, 1962.

New Delhi to Uppsala 1961-1968: Report of the Central Committee to the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968.

New Directions in Faith and Order, Bristol, 1967: Reports - Minutes - Documents. Faith and Order Paper, no. 50. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968.

Niles, D. Preman (comp.). *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.* Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992.

_____. "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement.* Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 557-559.

Nissiotis, Nikos. "Towards a New Ecumenical Era". *The Ecumenical Review* 37 (1985): 326-335.

Nold, Liselotte. "None of us Returns Home the Woman She Was When She Came". In *Sexism in the 1970s: Discrimination Against Women. A Report of a World Council of Churches Consultation, West Berlin, 1974*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974, 131-133.

_____. "Uppsala aus der Sicht der Frau" *Ökumenische Rundschau* 18 (1968): 162-168.

O'Collins, Gerald. "Faith and Order in Ghana". *Theological Studies* 36 (March 1975): 130-144.

Oduyoye, Mercy. *Who Will Roll the Stone Away? The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.

"The Official Report of the Moscow Conference in 1948". *The Ecumenical Review* 2 (1950): 403-407.

"An Open Letter to Brigalia Bam on Behalf of her Sisters across the World" *Women in a Changing World* 8 (May 1980): 3-4.

One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry: Three Agreed Statements. Faith and Order Paper, no. 73. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975.

"The Ordained Ministry". In *Faith and Order Louvain 1971: Study Reports and Documents*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 59. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971, 78-101.

"The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective". *Study Encounter* 8 (4) (1972): 1-22.

"Orthodox Churches Express Desire for More Participants in WCC". *EPS: Ecumenical Press Service* 4 June 1981: 3-4.

"An Orthodox Response to the WCC conference on mission and evangelism". In *The San Antonio Report. Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way*. Edited by Frederick R. Wilson. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990, 185-186.

Orthodox Women: Their Role and Participation in the Orthodox Church. Report on the Consultation of Orthodox Women. September 11-17, 1976, Agapia, Romania. Geneva: World Council of Churches. Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society, 1977.

Padilla, C René. "Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation". In *Beyond Canberra: Evangelical Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues*. Edited by Bruce J Nicholls and Bong Rin Ro. Oxford: Regnum Books, 1993, 22-37.

Padolina, Priscilla. "Au Revoir, Bärbel". *Women in a Changing World* 20 (November 1985): 34.

_____. "Our Partners in the Sub-Unit". *Women in a Changing World* 20 (November 1985): 29-30.

_____. "Third World Women in the Assembly". *Women in a Changing World* 17 (February 1984): 27-28.

_____. "Women in the JPIC Process: Breaking the Silence". In *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. Compiled by D. Preman Niles. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992, 66-71.

Parvey, Constance F. "Community of Women and Men in the Church". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 210-211.

_____. "The Community of Women and Men". *The Ecumenical Review* 33 (1981): 346-347.

_____. *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference, Sheffield, England, 1981*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983.

_____. "The Continuing Significance of the Community of Women and Men in the Church Study: Its Mixed Message for the Churches". In *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*. Edited by Thomas F. Best. Faith and Order Paper, no. 138. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985, 34-43.

_____. "The Journey of a Dream: Beginning Again". In *Report of the All Africa Regional Consultation on Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, Ibadan, Nigeria, 15-19 September 1980*. Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches Publication, 1980, 6-13.

_____. "The Journey of an Idea". In *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: Report of the Asian Consultation held at the United Theological College, Bangalore, on 11-15 August 1978*. Bangalore: Printers India, 1978, 7-11.

_____. "Participation: A Pilgrimage of Agony and Hope". *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 494-503.

_____. "The Patriarchal Captivity of the Churches Comes Loose". *Lutheran World* 3 (1976): 226-229.

_____. "Stir in the Ecumenical Movement: The Ordination of Women". In *The Force of Tradition: A Case Study of Women Priests in Sweden, with an Appendix by Constance F. Parvey*. Brita Stendahl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, 139-174.

- _____. (ed.). *Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective: Work book for the Church's Future*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 105. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980.
- Patelos, Constantin G. (ed.). *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978.
- Paton, David M. (ed.). *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975*. London: SPCK, 1976.
- "Patterns of Relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches". *The Ecumenical Review* 24 (1972): 247-289.
- Peck, Jane Carey and Jeanne Gallo. "JPIC: A Critique from a Feminist Perspective". *The Ecumenical Review* 41 (1989): 573-581.
- "Percentage of Women Executives Drops". *Women in a Changing World* 30 (June 1991): 26-27.
- Pobee, John S. and Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter (eds.). *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986.
- Poser, Klaus (ed.). *Diakonia 2000: Called to be Neighbours. Official Report WCC World Consultation Inter-Church, Aid, Refugee and World Service, Larnaca, 1986*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987.
- Potter, Philip A. "A Call to Costly Ecumenism". *The Ecumenical Review* 34 (1982): 332-344.
- _____. "A Chance to Change". In *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference, Sheffield, England, 1981*. Edited by Constance F. Parvey. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, 23-28.
- _____. "Editorial". *The Ecumenical Review* 28 (1976): 1-4.
- _____. "Healing and Salvation". *The Ecumenical Review* 33 (1981): 330-340.
- _____. "Together Seeking God's Face". *The Ecumenical Review* 28 (1976): 204-209.
- Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin* 59 (March 1976).
- Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin* 83 (October 1980).

Raiser, Elisabeth. "Spiritualität aus Frauensicht". *Ökumenische Rundschau* 40 (1991): 380-387.

Raiser, Konrad. "The Ecumenical Movement". In *Faith and Faithfulness: Essays on Contemporary Ecumenical Themes. A Tribute to Philip A Potter*. Edited by Pauline Webb. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984, 90-96.

_____. "Oikoumene". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1991, 741-742.

"Reflections of Orthodox Participants". In *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991*. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 279-282.

"Reflections on the Fifth World Council of Churches Assembly based on Reports of some of the Catholic Observers". *Information Service* 30 (1976/1).

Renewal of the Church: Report of a Consultation of the World Council of Churches, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, July 15-20, 1957. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1957.

Report of the All Africa Regional Consultation on Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, Ibadan, Nigeria, 15-19 September 1980. Nairobi: All-Africa Conference of Churches Publication, 1981.

Report of the Consultation Held at "Uplands", High Wycombe, Bucks, England, July 27-August 2, 1960, on "Towards Responsible Cooperation between Men and Women, Our Christian Responsibility". Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1960.

Report of the Consultation Held by the Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society, at Herrenalb, Germany, 15th-19th July, 1956. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1956.

"The Report of the Central Committee to the Assembly concerning the Structure and Functioning of the Council in the Period following the Second Assembly". In *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*. Edited by W. A. Visser 't Hooft. London: SCM Press, 1955, 174-214.

Report of the Consultation Held at Women's Christian College, Madras, India, November 13-17, 1961, on "Changing Patterns of Men-Women Relationships in Asia". Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1961.

Report of the Consultation on "Obstacles to the Cooperation of Men and Women in Working Life and Public Service: Implications for the Work of the Department", Held at Odense, Denmark, August 8-12, 1958. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1958.

Report of the Consultation on the Renewal of the Church, New Haven, Conn., USA, July 15-20, 1957. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1957.

Report of the Consultation on "Towards Responsible Cooperation Between Men and Women, Our Christian Responsibility". Geneva: Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society, 1960.

"Report of International Church Women's Conference, Baarn, Holland". In *Revised Interim Report of a Study on the Life and Work of Women in the Church including Reports of an Ecumenical Conference of Church Women, Baarn, Holland and of the Committee on "the Life and Work of Women in the Church" of the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1948, 67-72.

Report of the Middle East Council of Churches Consultation on The Community of Women and Men in the Church, Beirut, Lebanon, 22nd-26th January 1980. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.

"Report on the Re-examination of the Structure of the World Council of Churches from the Central Committee to the Fourth Assembly". In *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, July 4-20, 1968.* Edited by Norman Goodall. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1968, 355-388.

Resources for Sections: The Theme, Subthemes and Issues: World Council of Churches Seventh Assembly 1991. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.

Revised Interim Report of a Study on the Life and Work of Women in the Church including Reports of an Ecumenical Conference of Church Women, Baarn, Holland and of the Committee on "the Life and Work of Women in the Church" of the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1948.

Rodger, Patrick C. and L. Vischer (eds.). *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal, 1963.* Faith and Order Paper, no. 42. London: SCM Press, 1964.

Rodgers, Margaret "Issues of Women in Church and Society". In *Beyond Canberra: Evangelical Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues.* Edited by Bruce J Nicholls and Bong Rin Ro. Oxford: Regnum Books, 1993, 69-79.

Romero, Joan Arnold. "The Protestant Principle: A Woman's Eye View of Barth and Tillich". In *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions.* Edited by Rosemary Radford Ruether. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974, 319-340.

Rouse, Ruth and Stephen Charles Neill (eds.). *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948.* 3rd edn. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.

Royce, Marion V. *The Effect of the War on the Life of Women, a Study.* Geneva: World's YWCA, [1945?]

Russell, Letty M. *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective - A Theology.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974.

- _____. "Women and Unity: Problem or Possibility". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 21 (1982): 298-304.
- _____. "Women in the WCC: Participation in a Symphony of Groaning". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 14 (1975): 111-122.
- Sexism in the 1970s: Discrimination Against Women. A Report of a World Council of Churches Consultation, West Berlin, 1974.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974.
- Sharing in One Hope. Reports and Documents from the Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission Bangalore 1978.* Faith and Order Paper, no. 92. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1978.
- Sharing Life: Official Report of the WCC World Consultation on Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community: El Escorial, Spain, October 1987.* Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988.
- Shinn, Roger L. and Paul Abrecht (eds.). *Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference on Faith, Science, and the Future: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA, 12-24 July, 1979.* 2 vols. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980.
- Skuse, Jean. "The Ecumenical Movement from a Feminist Perspective". *CTC Bulletin* 4 (3) (December 1983): 18-20.
- _____. "From Words to Deeds: Participation by all God's People". *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 420-424.
- Slack, Kenneth. *Nairobi Narrative: The Story of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches 23 November-10 December 1975.* London: SCM Press, 1976.
- _____. *Uppsala Report: The Story of the World Council of Churches Fourth Assembly, Uppsala, Sweden. 4-19 July 1968.* London: SCM Press, 1968.
- Smith, Frances. "Women's Ordination Won't Wait". *Women in a Changing World* 16 (December 1983): 35.
- Sölle, Dorothee. "Life in its Fullness". *The Ecumenical Review* 35 (1983): 377-384.
- Sowunmi, Adebisi. "Women's Participation at the Canberra Assembly". *Women in a Changing World* 31 (December 1991): 18.
- "A Space to Grow In _ _". *Report of the European Regional Consultation of The Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, Bad Segeberg, Federal Republic of Germany, 20th-24th June, 1980.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.

"Statement on some Basic Considerations concerning the work of the Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society". In *Minutes and Reports of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rochester, New York, U.S.A., August 26-September 2, 1963*, 103-105.

Stephens, Barbara. "Worship". In *God's Image* (November 1983): 14-16.

Stransky, Thomas F. "A Basis Beyond the Basis: Roman Catholic/World Council of Churches Collaboration". *The Ecumenical Review* 37 (1985): 213-222.

_____. "Roman Catholic Church and Pre-Vatican II Ecumenism". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 882-883.

_____. "SODEPAX". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 937-938.

_____. "Vatican Councils I and II". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 1053-55.

_____. "World Council of Churches". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 1083-90.

A Study of Man-Woman Relationships: A Study Outline Published for the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church of the World Council of Churches. London: SCM Press, 1952.

Sullivan, Denise C. (ed.). *Living Ecumenism: Christian Unity for a New Millenium*. Melbourne: The Joint Board of Christian Education, 1995.

Tanner, Mary. "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry and the Community of Women and Men Study". *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 23 (1984): 243-250.

_____. "The Community Study and the Unity of the Church and renewal of human community". In *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order, Lima 1982. Vol. 2. Study Papers and Reports*. Edited by Michael Kinnamon. Faith and Order Paper, no. 113. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982, 152-165.

_____. "Ordination of Women". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 752-755.

_____. "Toward a Common Confession of the Apostolic Faith Today". In *Women and Church: The Challenge of Ecumenical Solidarity in an Age of Alienation*. Edited by Melanie A. May. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991, 179-193.

_____. "Unity and Renewal: The Church and the Human Community". *The Ecumenical Review* 36 (1984): 252-262.

Tatlow, Tissington. "The World Conference on Faith and Order". In *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*. Edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill. 3rd edn. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986, 405-441.

Tavard, George H. *Women in Christian Tradition*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973.

Taylor, David M. *Uppsala 1968: A Popular Report on the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1968.

Tesfay-Musa, Elsa. " 'Worship and Work Must Be One': But Were They?" *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 235-237.

Theodorou, Evangelos. "The Ministry of Deaconesses in the Greek Orthodox Church". In *The Deaconess: A Service of Women in the World of Today*. World Council of Churches Studies No. 4. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1966, 25-30.

Thomas, M.M. *My Ecumenical Journey 1947-1975*. Trivandrum (India): Ecumenical Publishing Centre, 1990.

Thomas, T.K. "WCC, Basis of". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publication, 1991, 1096-98.

Thompson, Betty. *A Chance to Change: Women and Men in the Church*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982.

_____. "Creative Confusion in Canberra". *Christianity and Crisis* (8 April 1991): 101-106.

_____. "Lacey, Janet". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 579-580.

Thottahil, Stephen. "Identity and Relationship of Women and Men in the Church and Society: Thinking Within the World Council of Churches". Dissertation (D.Min). Pontifica Universitas Lateranensis, 1990.

Thurian, Max. "*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (the 'Lima text')". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 80-83.

_____. (ed.). *Churches Respond to BEM*, 6 vols. Faith and Order Papers Nos. 129, 132, 135, 137, 143, 144. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986-88.

_____. (ed.). *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 116. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983.

_____. and Geoffrey Wainwright (eds.). *Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 117. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983.

- Till, Barry. *The Churches Search for Unity*. Harmondsworth (England): Penguin Books, 1972.
- Timiadis, Emilianos. "From the Margin to the Forefront". *The Ecumenical Review* 27 (1975): 366-373.
- Tomkins, Oliver S. "The Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Movement, 1910-1948". In *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*. Edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill. 3rd edn. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986, 677-693.
- _____. (ed.). *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lund, August 15th to 28th, 1952*. London: SCM Press, 1953.
- Towards an Ecumenical Consensus on Baptism, the Eucharist and the Ministry: A Response to the Churches*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 84. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977.
- Traitler, Reinhild. "An Oikoumene of Women?" *The Ecumenical Review* 44 (1988): 178-184.
- Trautwein, Dieter. "Assembling for Worship at Vancouver". *The Ecumenical Review* 36 (1984): 139-149.
- Tsetsis, George. "The Meaning of the Orthodox Presence". *The Ecumenical Review* 40 (1988): 188-197.
- Tucci, Roberto. "The Ecumenical Movement, the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church". In *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches Uppsala July 4-20, 1968*. Edited by Norman Goodall. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1968, 323-333.
- "Unitatis Redintegratio". In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. General Editor Austin Flannery. New revised edn. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992, 452-470.
- "Uppsala 68: Letters of Criticism and Advice". *Study Encounter* 4 (1968): 199-218.
- van der Bent, Ans J. "Blake, Eugene Carson". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1991, 107-108.
- _____. *Historical Dictionary of Ecumenical Christianity*. Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, 3. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994.
- _____. *Major Studies and Themes in the Ecumenical Movement*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.

- _____. *Six Hundred Ecumenical Consultations 1948-1982*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983.
- _____. *Vital Ecumenical Concerns: Sixteen Documentary Surveys*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.
- van der Meer, Haye. *Women Priests in the Catholic Church: A Theological - Historical Investigation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973.
- Van Elderen, Marlin. *Introducing the World Council of Churches*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.
- _____. "WCC, Membership of". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 1098-1100.
- Vischer, Georg H. *Apostolischer Dienst: Fünfzig Jahre Diskussion über das kirkliche Amt in Glauben und Kirchen Verfassung*. Frankfurt: Lembeck, 1982.
- Vischer, Lukas. "The Ecumenical Movement and the Roman Catholic Church". In *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, volume 2, 1948-1968*. Edited by Harold E. Fey. 2nd edn. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986, 311-352.
- _____. "A Privileged Instrument of the Ecumenical Movement?" *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 90-99.
- Visser 't Hooft, Henriette. "Aus den Briefwechsel mit Karl Barth 1934". In *Eva wo bist du? Frauen in internationalen Organisation de Okumene: Eine Dokumentation*. By Gudrun Kaper et al. Gelnhausen (Germany): Burckhardthaus-Laetare Verlag, 1981, 14-19.
- Visser 't Hooft, W.A. *The Fatherhood of God in an Age of Emancipation*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.
- _____. *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.
- _____. "Is the Ecumenical Movement Suffering from Institutional Paralysis?" *The Ecumenical Review* 25 (1973): 295-309.
- _____. "Karl Barth and the Ecumenical Movement". *The Ecumenical Review* 33 (1980): 129-151.
- _____. *Memoirs*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1973.
- _____. "The Word 'Ecumenical': Its History and Use". In *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*. Edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen A Neill. 3rd edition. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986, 735-740.

- _____. "The World Council of Churches as Koinonia and as Institution". *Midstream: An Ecumenical Journal* 23 (1984): 143-161.
- _____. (ed.). *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*. London: SCM Press, 1955.
- _____. (ed.). *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches held at Amsterdam, August 22nd to September 4th, 1949*. Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series, vol. 5. London: SCM Press, 1949.
- "Voices from the Decade Plenary". *Women in a Changing World* 31 (December 1991): 8-11.
- Wartenberg, Bärbel von. "Adam and Eve, Where Are You? Introduction". *The Ecumenical Review* 34 (1982): 159-162.
- _____. "Be Wise as Serpents _ _" *Women in a Changing World* 20 (1985): 2-4.
- _____. "Vancouver: A Model". *The Ecumenical Review* 36 (1984): 155-163.
- _____. *We Will Not Hang Our Harps on the Willows: Engagement and Spirituality*. Translated by Fred Kaan. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987.
- "We listened long before we spoke". *A Report of the Consultation of Women Theological Students. Cartigny, Switzerland, July 1978*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1979.
- "WCC Message to Mark End of UN Women's Decade". *EPS: Ecumenical Press Service* 7-14 July 1985 (85.07.22).
- "Women Hold up Half the Sky". In *Vision '83: WCC, Education and Renewal Unit: Focus on Vancouver Assembly*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983, 19-21.
- Webb, Pauline M. "Committed to Fellowship - But of What Sort?" *The Ecumenical Review* 25 (1973): 256-265.
- _____. *She Flies Beyond: Memories and Hopes of Women in the Ecumenical Movement*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993.
- _____. "The Word of Life". *The Ecumenical Review* 35 (1983): 343-349.
- _____. "Women in Church and Society". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 1069-72.
- _____. (ed.). *Faith and Faithfulness: Essays on Contemporary Ecumenical Themes. A Tribute to Philip A Potter*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984.

West, Morris. "Toronto Statement". In *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited by Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 1008-9.

Wieser, Thomas. "Editorial". *The Ecumenical Review* 36 (April 1984): 137-138.

_____. "Giving Account of the Hope - From Bangkok to Nairobi". *International Review of Mission* 67 (1978): 127-136.

_____. (ed.). *Whither Ecumenism? A Dialogue in the Transit Lounge of the Ecumenical Movement*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.

Williamson, Roger. "What God has Joined Together, Let No One Put Asunder: Reflections on JPIC at the Canberra Assembly". In *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. Compiled by D. Preman Niles. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992, 82-101.

Wilson, Frederick R. (ed.). *The San Antonio Report. Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990.

Wilson, Lois. *Turning the World Upside Down: A Memoir*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1989.

Women and Holy Orders: Being the Report of a Commission appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. London: Church Information Office, 1966.

Women and Men in the Church: A Study of the Community of Women and Men in the Church. Syosset, NY: Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America, 1980.

Women in a Changing World 10 (June 1981).

Women in a Changing World 15 (July 1983).

Women in a Changing World 16 (December 1983).

"Women in the Ministry and the Ministries". In *Minutes of the Faith and Order Commission and Working Committee. The Mandate from the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*. Faith and Order Paper, no. 41. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1963, 23-25.

"Women in the Church and in Society". *Words to the Churches: Voices of the Sisters: Risk* 10 (2) (1974): 36-41.

"Women's Views of Nairobi Assembly", *Women in Changing World* 3 (March 1976): 14-17.

"World Council Diary: The Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church". *The Ecumenical Review* 6 (1954): 189-190.

The World Council of Churches, its Process of Formation. Minutes and Reports of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches held at Geneva from February 21st to 23rd, 1946; the Constitutional Documents of the W.C.C. and an Introduction. Geneva: World Council of Churches, [1946].

Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives. Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, Australia, 12-25 May 1980. Geneva: World Council of Churches, Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, 1980.

Zahirsky, Valerie. "Are the Orthodox that far Apart?" *The Ecumenical Review* 43 (1991): 222-225.

Zernov, Nicholas. "The Eastern Churches and the Ecumenical Movement in the Twentieth Century". In *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*. Edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill. 3rd edn. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986, 645-674.

Ziegler, Harriet. "'Women Want More than 'timid change' ". *Assembly Line* (8 February 1991): 3.

Zizioulas, John D. "'The Theological Problem of 'Reception' ". *One in Christ* 21 (1985): 187-193.

2 UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

The following are housed in the World Council of Churches' Archives, Library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, Switzerland.

a) **WCC Executive Committee Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 14-28 January, 1973, Bangalore, India.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, August 18, 1973, Geneva, Switzerland.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 18-20 February, 1974, Bad Saaron, German Democratic Republic.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 6 August, 1974, West Berlin.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 14-18 April, 1975, Geneva, Switzerland.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 14-18 February, 1977, Geneva, Switzerland.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 4-8 February 1985, John Knox Centre, Geneva, Switzerland.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 9-13 March 1986, Kinshasa, Zaire.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, 15-19 September 1986, Reyjavik, Iceland.

b) **Minutes and reports**

Barot, Madeleine. "Report to the Assembly on the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church". [Evanston, 1954].

_____. "Church and Culture: Second International Orthodox Women's Consultation, Orthodox Academy of Crete, 16-24 January, 1990". [Geneva: Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society, 1990].

Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. "Minutes of the First Meeting of the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, Oxford, September, 1952'.

_____. "Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, 1952".

_____. "Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, 1-3 September 1953, Bossey".

_____. "Consultation on the Christian Message on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society, Lake Forest, Illinois". [1954]. [Draft report.]

"Consultation on Sexist Language in Theology and Church, the Role of Women in the Church, February 19-22, 1975. Le Cénacle, Geneva".

Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society. "Minutes of the Working Committee, Davos, July 1955".

_____. "Minutes of the Working Committee, Herrenalb, July 19-22, 1956".

_____. "Minutes of the Working Committee, New Haven, Conn., July 21-25, 1957".

_____. "Minutes of the Working Committee, Nyborg Strand, August 12-16, 1958".

_____. "Minutes of Enlarged Working Committee, Spittal, Austria, August 4-13, 1959".

_____. "Minutes of the Working Committee, St Andrew's, Scotland, August 3-18, 1960".

Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society. "Minutes of the Working Committee, Paris, August 1-4, 1962".

_____. "Minutes of the Working Committee, Rochester, New York, August 17-22, 1963".

_____. "Minutes of the Working Committee, Enugu, Nigeria, January 4-6, 1965".

"First Meeting of the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group, Rome, 11-13 December 1968". [Brief report by Rosemary Goldie.]

"Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Minutes of the Meeting held at Rome, Italy, via Cassia, May 29-June 2, 1972".

"Meeting of Women's Enquiry Sub-Committee (in process of formation). 17 rue de Malagnou, November 4, 1947".

"Minutes of a meeting of an Ad Hoc Consultative Group on 'The Women Issue', Chester House, London, 19-20 July, 1972."

"Minutes of the Community of Women and Men in the Church. Advisory Committee Meeting, John Knox Centre, Geneva, September 21-23, 1982".

"Notes on *Ministry, Mariology and Biblical Hermeneutics Consultation* sponsored by The Community of Women and Men in the Church Study, June 26-29, 1978, Foyer John Knox (Geneva)".

"Report of the Women's International Ecumenical Conference: The Christian Woman Co-artisan in a Changing Society. 19-24 June, 1967, Taize, France".

"Statement from the Consultation on Sexist Language in Theology and Church". [April 1975].

Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society. "Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, Le Centre de Rencontre Cartigny, Geneva, Switzerland, January 27-31, 1987".

_____. "Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, Mahabalipuram, India, January 14-18, 1988".

Task Force on Sexism in the 1970s. "Minutes, 5 October, 1973".

_____. "Minutes, 13 February, 1974".

"Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG) Review of Activity (1968-1972); Recommendations for the Future. Submitted to the RCC/WCC Joint Working Group, 1972".

c) **Letters**

Bam, Brigalia to Rosemary Goldie, 5 September 1972.

_____ to Dr Marga Bührig, 12 September 1972.

_____ to Dr Lukas Vischer, 15 September 1972.

_____ to the Rev. Dr Letty M. Russell, 22 May 1974.

Barot, Madeleine to Freda Gwilliam, 14 February 1966.

Cavert, Twila Lytton. Letter accompanying questionnaire on the "Life and Work of Women in the Church". n.d. Signed "Mrs Samuel McCrea Cavert".

_____. Letter of Invitation to Baarn Conference. n.d. Signed "Mrs Samuel McCrea Cavert".

_____. to Olive Wyon, 25 July 1947.

_____. to Sue Weddell, 19 June 1948.

_____. to Olive Wyon, 19 June 1948.

_____. to Eleanor Kent Browne, 23 June, 1948.

_____ to Eleanor Kent Browne, 22 July 1948.

_____. to Lady Stansgate, 3 August 1948.

_____. to Lady Stansgate, 18 August 1948.

Lara-Braud, Jorge to Lukas Vischer, 9 July 1976.

Muelder, Walter. to Dr F.C. Fry, 27 July 1957.

Parvey, Constance to Lukas Vischer, 9 July 1976.

Potter, Philip to Dr. Richard M. Fagley, 10 January 1975.

Powers, Jeanne Audrey to Lukas Vischer, 24 June 1976.

Tanner, Mary to Dr Philip Potter, 24 September 1982.

Vischer, Lukas to Constance Parvey, 28 June 1976.

Wyon, Olive to Miss E. M. Evans, 9 June 1948.

d) **Miscellaneous documents**

Bam, Brigalia. "Bam to Women Delegates, Advisers, Fraternal Delegates, Observers and Guests, Nairobi Assembly, 1975". [Memorandum]

_____. "Brigalia Bam to Women Delegates and Advisers, Geneva, June 1975".
[Memorandum]

_____. "Circular letter addressed to our contacts, sent out in October 1972".

Craig, Joan. "Survey of Churches on Ordination of Women". [Geneva, April 1978].

Dura, Ion. "The Woman in the Life of the Orthodox Church: General Considerations about Her Actual Participation in it". [Unpublished paper given at Faith and Order Consultation on "The Ecclesiological Significance of the Community of Women and Men", Porto Nova, Benin, September 1988.]

Howard, Christian. "Greetings for Christmas and 1974", Coneysthorpe, November 1973. [Xerox letter].

Goldie, Rosemary. "To the members of the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group, 13 August 1971". [Circular letter].

"The Ministry of Women. A working paper compiled at the request of the Church of Sweden by Helen B. Turnbull in two parts: 1) the facts about the ordination of women in the member churches of the World Council of Churches; 2) a brief summary of some of the theological and biblical bases". [Geneva, May 1958].

"Report of the Credentials Committee, Document No. CR1". [Canberra Assembly, 1991].

Russell, Letty M. "An Open Letter to my Sisters on Six Continents". [Background paper for consultation on sexism in the 1970s, West Berlin, 1974.]

"Sheffield Section Topics". [Background document for participants at CWMC consultation, Sheffield, 1981.]

Spaulding, Helen F. "Statistics and Information collected from the WCC Member Churches and other resources". [Geneva, 1975]. [On the ordination of women.]

Thräne, Ute. "Die Ordination der Frau-Schritte in der ökumenischen Bewegung". [Geneva, 1993].

_____. "Zusammenstellung der offiziellen Antworten zu *Taufe, Eucharistie und Amt* zum Thema: Ordination der Frau". [Geneva, May 1993].

Vischer, Lukas. "Memorandum from Lukas Vischer to Rose Gurupatham, 3 April 1973".

Visser 't Hooft, W.A. "From W.A. Visser 't Hooft to the Members of the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church, April 14, 1951". [Memorandum.]

_____. "Memo from W.A. Visser 't Hooft to Miss Frances Smith, February 19, 1971".

Wyon, Olive. "Memorandum on the Enquiry into the Life and Work of Women in the Church, January 1948".

e) **Miscellaneous documents**

The following are held in the personal files of the author.

Best, Thomas to Janet Crawford, 27 January 1994. [Telefax].

Best, Thomas to Janet Crawford, 3 August 1994. [Letter].

Fitzpatrick, Brenda. "Developing a CICARWS Policy on Women's Empowerment and Access to Resources, August 1990".

"Interim Guidelines for the Use of Inclusive Language". [Adapted by the WCC executive committee, 1989, for the guidance of the Canberra assembly worship committee.]

"Long-Range Plans for Balancing Staff". [Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing Issues to the Executive Committee, September 1986.]

Poser, Klaus. "CICARWS Policy on Women's Empowerment and Access to Resources. November 1990".

"Report of Ad Hoc Working Group on Women's Concerns in the WCC. December 1990".

Women's Task Force, World Council of Churches. "Statement (1) from the Women's Task Force to the Staff Executive Group. 17 October 1990".

The Women's Task Force. "Open Letter to Colleagues from the Women's Task Force, December 1990".