MISSIO No 20
Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement

A report from a research conference
in Uppsala, May 6–8, 2002

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Swedish Institute of Mission Research
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Conference on Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement

Uppsala, Sweden, May 6–8, 2002
Organised by The Swedish Institute of mission Research in collaboration with scholars from The Faculties of Theology, Law and Medicine of Uppsala University

Opening of Conference

Karin Sarja, Managing Director, SIM
Hilda Lind, Chairperson, Swedish Mission Council
Bo Sundqvist, Vice-Chancellor, Uppsala University
Jan Lundius, SIDA Representative

Keynote address

Mehari Gebre-Medhin: Gender, Starvation and Famines.

Thematic approach 1: Theological reflections on Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement

Mercy A. Oduyoye: Theological Reflections on Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement from a West-African Perspective.
Agnes Aboum: A Critical Assessment of the International Monetary Institutions in Relation to Gender and Poverty.

Research presentations

Thematic approach 2: The health and welfare of Women

Kajsa Ahlstrand: The Development of Ideas on Women, Health and Poverty and the Role of Churches.

Research presentations

Thematic approach 3: Issues of Human Rights in a Historic Perspective

Alf Tergel: Poverty, Human Rights and church Involvement in Latin America.
Research presentations

**Thematic approach 4: Economics, organisations and Authorities**

Kjell Havnevik: *Sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank and Poverty.*

Research presentations

**Presentation of papers and special sessions**

**Monday, May 6, 15.15**

**Alfvénsalen**, Main Hall, Strandgatan 7 B, Chair: Gunilla Gunner and Aasulv Lande

Helene Egnell: Feminist Approaches to Interfaith Dialogue.
Olle Kristenson: Doing Theology from the Point of View of the Poor.

**Fjellstedtska skolan**, Conference room, Linnégatan 1, Chair: Gunnel Cederlöf and Sigbert Axelson


**Tuesday, May 7, 11.00**

**Alfvénsalen**, Main Hall, Strandgatan 7 B, Chair: Gunnel Cederlöf and Sigbert Axelson

Lisbeth Mikaelsson: The Figure of Woman in the Norwegian missionary Writing.
Anna Apell: Church-related women groups in southern Malawi as challengers of identities and as contexts where new identities are built.
Seija Jalagin: Education or Christian Education? Missionary Girls’ Schools in Japan in the Transition Years of the 1930s.

**Fjellstedtska skolan**, Conference room, Linnégatan 1, Chair: Gunilla Gunner and Aasulv Lande

Veronica Kyle: An overview of African-American and Afro-Caribbean churchwomen on survival and resistance.
Tuesday, May 7, 16.00

**Alfvénsalen**, Main Hall, Strandgatan 7 B, Chair: Sue Davén
*Special session*, Swedish Mission Council and networking on gender strategy

**Fjellstedtska skolan**, Conference room, Linnégatan 1, Chair: Karin Sarja
*Special session*, Deborah Gaitskell and the Network for Nordic Mission History and Gender

Tuesday, May 7, 17.00

Free time

Wednesday, May 8, 11.00

**Alfvénsalen**, Main Hall, Strandgatan 7 B, Chair: Jan Lundius
*Eskil Jonsson*: Power and Globalisation, an Institutional Ethical perspective.

Wednesday, May 8, 13.30

**Alfvénsalen**, Main Hall, Strandgatan 7 B, Chair: Agnes Aboum – Panel session
Participants: Mercy Oduyoye, Agnes Aboum, Deborah Gaitskell, Mehari Gebre-Medhin and Kjell Havnevik
Introduction

The issue of poverty and its alleviation in the world today has received a new impetus through some epoch-making research on the subject that has emerged during the last two decades.

The aim of the conference that was held in Uppsala in May 2002 was to address the issue of poverty from two perspectives: the situation of women and the role of development assistance, in particular that of church involvement.

The conference brought together established authorities as well as young researchers from a range of disciplines who in keynote and plenary sessions, scientific presentations and group and panel discussions presented the state of the art and addressed future trends and challenges in the alleviation of poverty, with special emphasis on gender issues.

Topics covered included an overview of gender and poverty, political, economic and theological reflections on gender poverty and church involvement, and the development of ideas on women and their offspring, health and poverty.

Some selected topics on these themes have been put together in this book. We trust that this publication will serve a useful purpose for researchers, educators and informers and development workers focusing on poverty and gender issues.
Good morning to everyone and “varmt välkomna” to Uppsala and to the International Conference on Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement. We are delighted to see you and look forward to an interesting and stimulating conference.

Poverty in the world has taken on new dimensions during the last two decades and not least due to a series of epoch-making researches. Nobel Prize winner in economics, Amartya Sen should be especially noted. His contribution has strongly affected our understanding of fundamental problems related to welfare economies and questions of the nature of poverty. To economists and philosophers, among others, he has become a powerful advocate for the world’s poor. The struggle against poverty has also taken on new dimensions in its criticism of affluence.

In this Conference on Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement, poverty will be examined primarily from two perspectives:

(1) The situation of women in the world and in international development work will be studied, and (2) Questions will be asked about the role of Christian churches. The conference will be focused upon these perspectives for two reasons. Firstly, throughout history women have been those principally affected by poverty. The majority of the world’s poor today are women. And neither should we forget children’s situations; women’s situations always affect children! Secondly, Christian missionaries and Christian churches historically as well as now have worked to fight against poverty.

The area of poverty research, its causes and control, is a demanding area. Well considered foundations must be examined as well as planning efforts made within the framework of development work. A higher and higher proportion of development contributions come from wealthy countries and are channelled through volunteer organizations and missions. The globalization of poverty as well as of riches must also be noted. The class society is an immense global problem.

For poor, vulnerable people in southern countries, for a woman in a tin shed outside Durban, the questions raised in this conference are literally questions of life and death. As said in the 1 September 2000 headline of an
article by Amartya Sen in a Swedish newspaper: “Give her power, save the world.” The article ended with the words “the voices of women are of decisive importance for the future of the world and not only for the future of women”. Women have the strength but lack the power. Poverty’s basis in the unjust distribution between rich and poor countries, between women and men, is a fact; an often almost incomprehensible injustice, which is cynical, well-planned and systematic.

Questions of gender, poverty and church involvement encompass innumerable aspects which need to be discussed. At a conference, questions are always put forward about what will be taken up. We have chosen several areas: Theological reflections on gender, poverty and church involvement; The health and welfare of women; An historical perspective on questions of human rights, gender, poverty and the work of churches and missionaries; Global economy, gender, poverty and churches. Through these themes and through a cross-disciplinary approach, we will examine questions of gender, power and church involvement. Under each theme, we have tried to bring together scientists from different disciplines so that through the co-operation of one and all, they may find new knowledge. We have also tried to look at both the past and the present. What can history teach us? Where do we stand now and how should we proceed?

The conference is arranged by the Swedish Institute of Mission Research (SIM) together with researchers from the theological, medical and law faculties of Uppsala University. It has been both challenging and stimulating to plan a conference with such a strong orientation toward cross-disciplinary work. But it is most appropriate that we all co-operate across boundaries and disciplines in just such questions and research on gender, poverty and church involvement. Problems of gender and questions of poverty cannot be screened apart or placed within boundaries.

This year, the Swedish Institute of Mission Research is celebrating its fifty year jubilee. The Institute would like to function as a link and meeting place among researchers and those from churches, associations and organizations which are engaged with missions. The three responsible authorities for the Swedish Institute of Mission Research are Uppsala University, the Lund Mission Society and the Swedish Mission Council. These three illustrate the needed co-operation by being a forum between the world of research and those who actively and concretely work with or for countries of the south. The Swedish Institute of Mission Research works with research information and mission research in different ways: It publishes the journal, Swedish Missiological Themes, and arranges conferences, seminars and courses. It welcomes students, doctoral candidates and researchers to its journal library. Through the years, SIM has arranged cross-disciplinary conferences on, for example, Religion and Politics in Southern Africa, and Churches in the Crisis in Central Africa.
A fifty year anniversary may be celebrated in various ways. SIM, by means of this conference, would like to promote the focusing on important research questions and on the work of churches in countries in the south. We would like to look ahead: How can we build a network for future research, commitment, and work on questions of gender, poverty and church involvement? During this conference, a new network will be built for the exchange of knowledge and experience. Perhaps we can hope for a new gathering in future years where we can ponder further about what has happened, how far we have come, and what we can do in the years ahead.

During this conference, we look forward to taking part in the research in various ways; through the Keynote address, lectures, and the concluding Panel session. We will also hear about ongoing and completed research through research presentations. Doctoral candidates, students and researchers will introduce their work, each of which is related, in different ways, to questions of gender, poverty and church involvement. In this way we hope the conference will be a forum for network building between researchers from the south and north, among younger and older people, and among representatives from different disciplines and contexts.

We would like to present our warm thanks for the financial assistance we received for arranging this conference. We received contributions from The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)/Department for Research Cooperation (SAREC), The Swedish Mission Council, The Lund Mission Society, The Church of Sweden Mission, and the Faculty of Medicine at Uppsala University.

I am now happy to introduce Bo Sundqvist, Vice Chancellor of Uppsala University and Professor of ionphysics, Hilda Lind, Chairperson of the Swedish Mission Council and, Jan Lundius, doctor in history of religions and senior research officer from the Swedish SIDA/SAREC. Once again, a “varmt välkomna” to this old city of Uppsala, green and beautiful.
Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement

Hilda Lind

“Look at me”, she said. “Yes, look at me. Look at my face, my body.” Her name is Mpho. She is in her thirties, has a child and she lives in South Africa. She talked very distinctly to the audience in front of her. And the place was the City Hall in Johannesburg.

Ten days ago South Africa celebrated its Freedom Day. The 27th of April 1994 was the first Election Day in the new South Africa after apartheid. Since then the 27th of April is a public holiday known as Freedom Day.

This year the national Christian ecumenical organisation, South African Council of Churches, contributed to Freedom Day by launching a two-year campaign – Transcending Racism. Among all the different addresses given, was that of Mpho. “Look at me!” she said. “I am HIV-positive.” And so she went on telling her story. Her message was clear: Break the silence! Lift the stigma! Include us in the society and in the church. Work theologically and scientifically with all the issues connected with HIV/aids.

I represent the Swedish Mission Council. This council is one of the three bodies behind the Swedish Institute of Mission Research. I am very happy that this international conference is to start today. Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement are even main topics for Swedish Mission Council. The council comprises more than twenty churches and church-based organisations co-operating with churches and ecumenical organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

When working together, we as organizations and individuals are often deeply rooted in the daily life of people like Mpho. Churches are found in almost every corner of the world and are involved in all kinds of experiences. We know that churches play an important role in the civil society, often a positive role but not always. It is important to analyse all different components, conditions, methods and strategies used by the churches in their work aimed at eradicating poverty and changing gender inequality.

Swedish Mission Council understands that the Swedish Institute of Mission Research is a platform where praxis and theory can meet in enriching and challenging dialogue. This conference is truly part of this. I hope that these three days will offer many different opportunities for all kinds of encounter. For the sake of Mpho, and other sisters and brothers around the world, I wish you all would make use of your clear and sharp brains and equally important of your warm and loving hearts.

Thank you!
Opening Remarks
Conference on Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement, Uppsala University

Vice-Chancellor Bo Sundqvist

Dear Participants,

As Vice-Chancellor, it is with great pleasure I welcome you to Uppsala and Uppsala University.

Clark Kerr, the famous Berkeley President and an Honorary Doctor of our own university has pointed out that there are 75 institutions in the world, founded before 1520, that are still doing much the same things, in much the same places, in much the same ways and under the same names. Among these institutions are the Catholic Church, the Bank of Sienna, and the Parliament of Iceland, and then some sixty universities. Uppsala University is one of these.

The university, first founded in 1477, proudly fills its place in the circle of medieval European seats of learning. Today, however, the university is a modern centre for research and education with some 37,000 students and about 5,500 faculty and staff. In a few years, a six-year period will end in which two thirds of the teachers and students at this university are moving to new or refurbished buildings. In a sense, this makes the university not only the oldest, but also the most modern Swedish university. Its heart nevertheless remains in the area next to the Cathedral, where it was born and where the present University Main Building lies, a beautiful and well-preserved example of late 19th century architecture.

I understand that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Swedish Institute of Mission Research, and that this conference is part of the celebrations of that event. The university co-operates closely with the Institute, and is represented on the governing board. The university further wishes to congratulate the Institute and is proud to be co-organizing this conference.

The theme of the conference is well chosen. My own concerns and my engagements are focused on the role of higher education in developing countries. The question of the rapidly growing knowledge gap between industrialised and developing countries is of great concern and must be dealt with. The access to higher education is of course closely related to poverty and gender.

It is therefore I most sincerely wish you all the best for the deliberations in the coming days. Enjoy your stay in Uppsala. Once more, welcome.
About Listening

Jan Lundius

Dear Friends and Colleagues!

When I consider the expertise of this assembly, I think it would be appropriate if I address you not as an expert. Instead I would like to strike personal note. While doing so I intend to reflect upon the three themes of the conference: Gender, Poverty and Church involvement. What do these words tell me? If I examine them in a “self-centred way”, a certain dichotomy, inherent in the concepts, is revealed.

First, gender – a word that as a matter of course denotes both men and women. Nevertheless I am a man, not a woman, and am thus positioned in a certain way.

Secondly, poverty – compared to the majority of the world’s population I am rich, not poor.

Thirdly, Church involvement – by upbringing and cultural lookout I might be considered as a Christian, not (as an example) a Muslim. However, this last theme of the conference includes as an additional concept – involvement. I am not sure of the meaning of this word, but assume it has to do with “interaction”, with “communication”.

How do I communicate with a woman, a poor person, or a Muslim? First, I assume we have to share a common language. Let me suggest such a language – compassion, in the meaning of feeling for, or with, someone. Being able to share certain feelings.

I would like to be considered as an individual, not as an entity, a representative for something, a generalisation. I also like to communicate with other individuals, regardless if they are women, poor, or of another faith or conviction.

How can I be able to do that? As a child, as most other children I suppose, I was fascinated by differences between people. How did other people think? Why did they talk and behave in a way that sometimes was entirely different from my own way talking and acting? This fascination led me first to imitating others, to role-playing. Then I started to draw and paint, creating worlds of my own. Interpretations of the reality. Finally, I found and entered into the marvellous world of books.

Accordingly, I followed a similar path when I entered the University. I began by studying something called “Drama, Theatre and Film”, then I continued with Art History, Literature and Philosophy. All fields where I, in a
certain way, could creep in under the skins of others. Finally, I ended up with History of Religions and there I was caught.

Why? Probably because my quest in a certain way was fulfilled. History of Religions made it possible for me to meet with people who, compared with myself often had a totally different way of perceiving the world. I learned from them. I became fascinated by the endless varieties of interpreting human existence and how these interpretations were acted out, alone or in groups. Hopefully, I also changed a bit from these confrontations. I would like to say that I became more humble. I do not know for sure, but I hope it is true. Why do I believe I became more respectful and humble? Because in the field of religious studies you cannot be an expert. Your informants know more about their own personal faith than you can ever do.

While studying other faiths, you have to learn to listen and by listening, you learn. To gain respect and trust you have to give. A simple way of doing that is to share your own beliefs and experiences with your informants. Social research implies giving and receiving – communication.

I cannot be a woman but I can learn to listen to women while they try to explain how they view their own female existence.

I am not a poor person, but I can learn something about how it is to be one by listening to persons who live in such a wretched condition. Thus I will maybe be able to help them to find some way out of their poverty.

I am not a Muslim. However, by listening to one I may learn to respect her/his faith and thus learn to be tolerant, or maybe I may even come to appreciate the allure of that particular faith.

By listening, we become wiser. My professor in History of Religions used to tell us a story. I do not know if it is true or just a legend. If it turns out to be a legend, I still would like to believe in it. He said that in Masai language there is no word for “wisdom”. – “Wisdom” is called “to listen”. A wise man is “a listener” and a very wise man is “someone who has listened a lot”.

This is exactly what I would like to do on a conference like this one – listen. Since I opened with a subjective and somewhat egocentric touch I continue by, somewhat shamelessly, stating that I also would like to be listened to. Thus – by communicating in the deepest sense of the word – I hope we all will be able to partake in a dialogue that finally will leave as persons who all are a little bit wiser than we were when we came.
Gender, Poverty and Famines

Mehari Gebre-Medhin

Abstract
There is rich documentation about poverty and much of it would seem easy enough to comprehend. Nevertheless, identification of the poor and the diagnosis of poverty may be far from obvious, especially when we move into the area of moderate poverty. Even more challenging is the analysis of the causation of poverty. The definition of poverty is thus of particular relevance in the context of recent discussions on globalization, international relations and the role of the so called civil society in general and the causation of starvation and famines in particular.

The presentation will discuss a biologically oriented model for the understanding of poverty building on the core of absolute deprivation as manifested by hunger, starvation and famines. It is maintained that starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat and not necessarily a reflection of there not being enough food to eat. Starvation is thus a commentary on ownership of food by persons. In order to understand starvation, it is necessary to look into the structure of ownership.

The revolting famines of the 1970’s, generally ascribed by politicians of the time and other persons in positions of authority to drought, took place with limited abnormal reduction in food output, and consumption of food per head at the height of the famines was fairly normal for the affected areas as a whole. Food prices in general rose relatively little and people, particularly women and children, were dying of widespread famine in vast numbers even when food was selling at prices not very different from pre-drought levels. These issues will be discussed in relation to the concepts of ownership, exchange entitlement and non-entitlement transfers.

Introduction
As was evident from the initial programme for this conference, the planning group had very much hoped to have Nobel Laureat Professor Amartya Sen of Cambridge University, UK, to come to Uppsala and hold a plenary session on a related topic. However, due to other pressing commitments he was unable to attend this conference. We hope, however, that we will get another opportunity when he can come and give us state-of-the-art lecture on the
topic of human poverty and its alleviation – an area that lies close to his heart and for which he has acquired worldwide renown.

Revisiting the topic of gender, poverty and famines inevitably was a very painful experience for me. I have once again been deeply touched, indeed disturbed and saddened, by the tragic drama of the Ethiopian famines of the 1970’s in which close to 200 000 people, mainly women and children, starved to death. When figures pass a certain level, they tend to become abstract. Yet for those of us who have met the sad and despairing eyes of emaciated migrants in the relief shelters, these figures have a chilling reality.

I recall our frustration over the fact that although reports of widespread famine repeatedly hit the headlines of the newspapers, there was extreme scarcity of scientific documentation in this field. In Current Content Life Sciences, the main data base that was available at the time, for the whole of 1975, with some 1 000 000 key words annotated, corresponding to several hundred thousands of articles, there were less than 10 that gave a hint in their title of the ravages of contemporary famines. I hope that I will not be accused of being cynical if I assert that this was so because the victims of these famines were merely impoverished women and children.

It was against this background that our research group at the Ethiopia Nutrition Institute in Addis Abeba as well as other investigators in the early 1970’s embarked on an ambitious endeavour to document the tragic story of the Ethiopian Famines of the time. The eye-witness reports and the prospective, longitudinal epidemiological investigations resulted in a series of comprehensive publications based on first hand material from the famine afflicted provinces of Wello and the Ogaden of Ethiopia at the height of the devastation that caused death, disruption and the fall of an ancient regime.

Figure 1. Map of Ethiopia
We were interested in the systematic documentation of the famines in Ethiopia because we could barely conceive that a tragedy of such a dimension could ever occur right under our gaze and that of the world community. This exercise required a closer examination of a range of concepts including climatic conditions, land ownership, food production and food prices, purchasing power, food consumption, nutritional status, poverty, starvation and famines, morbidity and finally death. The information could be disaggregated on the basis of geography, ethnicity, socioeconomic condition, occupation, religious belonging and gender. These data contributed to the development of a biologically oriented model for the understanding of starvation and famines and the place of starvation and famines in the conception of poverty.

In the following we will briefly look at the interaction between the three closely interrelated entities of gender, poverty and famines. Regarding the issue of gender, I have chosen to focus on the situation of women in their biological, social and economic vulnerability and their entrenchment in the relentless grip of reproduction and production. This is eloquently depicted by the all too common scene of the simultaneously weary and heavy laden mother with a burden on her head or back, suckling a baby, and carrying a new one in her womb.

Figure 2. Figure of expectant and working mother.
The general conception of poverty

There is rich documentation about poverty and much of it would seem too easy to comprehend. But not everything about poverty is quite so simple. Even the identification of the poor and the diagnosis of poverty may be far from obvious when we move away from extreme and raw poverty. Even more difficult is the question of the causation of poverty.

By way of introduction, I grew up in Ethiopia under comparatively privileged circumstances but in a society in which a significant proportion of the population was living in abject poverty. When I was a young child in the early 1940’s beggars used to come to our house rather often and chant songs about hunger, starvation, displacement and dispossession with heart-rending credibility. Their melancholic but expressive and melodic songs, perfected over the years, still ring in my ears and I can until this day rather easily recall although those visits often left me scared with difficulty to sleep and recurrent nightmares. Only mother’s caressing fingers on my head and the sedative recital of the Lord’s prayer with her could restore my calm.

The beggars used to get a piece of traditional home-baked, unleavened bread with a little relish, or only salt and strongly spiced pepper along with water taken in a rusty tin from a nearby well. I remember vividly asking my parents about where beggars came from and why they had no food and looked so rugged. With a pensive sadness mother would answer “Because nobody cares about them and God wants us to take care of them”, whereas father, with a strain of indignation in his voice, would say “Because they have been dispossessed and deprived of their rights”. So I grew up with the concept of poverty as being an expression of deprivation and neglect. This was my first confrontation with poverty, its conceptualization and its measurement. These delineations were deeply engraved in my mind and no subsequent insight, knowledge or experience have so far been able to erase or replace them.

Development of models for the understanding of poverty based on the study of famines

In his monumental work “Poverty and Famines” published in 1981 (1), Sen carried out an epoch-making and most thorough review and analysis of four great famines that occurred between 1943 and 1975. This analysis relates to The Great Bengal Famine of 1943 (2), The Ethiopian Famines of 1973–75, The Famines in the Sahel during the 1979’s and the Bangladesh Famine of 1974. The Ethiopian Famines, which form the basis of the present discussion, constitute four major publications using a) data describing the fate of shelter population in the Wollo Region (3), b) a new model of a consolidated food and nutrition information system (Early Warning System) (4), c) appli-
cation of this model in the Ogaden Region (5) and finally d) A Special Report summarizing the period 1973–75 (6). Based on this material as well as other tales of famine, Sen could convincingly argue for “a biologically oriented model for the understanding of poverty building on the irreducible core of absolute deprivation with issues of starvation and hunger at the centre of the concept of poverty” (1).

Food availability, food distribution and famines in Ethiopia

Table 1 shows crop production data in Ethiopia for 1972–73 produced by the Ministry of Agriculture at the height of the famine (7). It is evident from this information that 65 per cent of the districts had normal output, 21 per cent had below-normal production and 14 per cent had above normal. Only 7 per cent had substantially below-normal output. A decline of this proportion is not enough to explain the devastating famine that occurred in this part of country. There was thus little evidence of a dramatic decline in food availability in Ethiopia coinciding with the famine.
Table 1. Crop Production in Ethiopia: Provincial Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of districts reporting</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Abovenormal</th>
<th>Belownormal</th>
<th>Net belownormal</th>
<th>Substantially below normal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)=(4)–(3)</td>
<td>(6), included in (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Wello</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Arussi</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Harerge</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Eritrea</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shewa</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tigrai</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Wellega</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Germu Gofa</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Illubabor</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>–8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Gojjam</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Kefa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>–11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Begemdir and Simien</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sidamo</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>–22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Bale</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>–73</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A similar picture emerges when energy consumption in the area is considered, see Table 2 (8). The available data indicated that there was no picture of sharp fall in food consumption per head in the famine year 1973 compared to the years 1961 to 1971 (9, 10).

Table 2. Food Availability in Ethiopia: Calories per head, 1961–74

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>1973</th>
<th>1974</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961–5</td>
<td>2,092</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964–6</td>
<td>1,910</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967–9</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,980</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>2,152</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>2,081</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>1,912</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews with relief camp inhabitants along the north-south highway in the north of the country readily revealed that the dominating group among the deprived were women and children drawn from the surrounding agricultural land, large numbers of men who had migrated from their farms abandoning their families in search of work and people from roadside towns who no longer could support their families, women in service occupation who had been released from their jobs, beer sellers, and prostitutes (11). In addition to these, other victims of the famine included pastoralists from the lowlands, evicted farmers and dependents of farmers, rural labourers, tenant cultivators who had left their hamlets due to economic problems and the homeless who normally survived as beggars.

A closer look at the situation in Wollo revealed that whereas there was no noticeable food availability decline for Ethiopia as whole during 1973, there was clearly shortage of food in the province of Wollo. The result of this was a direct entitlement failure on the part of the Wollo farmer and trade entitlement failure for other classes such as labourers providers of service. There was thus both a decline in the food access for the Wollo area as well as a collapse of the income and purchasing power and of the ability of the Wollo population to acquire food from elsewhere in Ethiopia. To this can be added transport difficulties in moving food to the province from elsewhere in Ethiopia.

All the experiences and data from great famines, particularly the ones that occurred in Ethiopia, gave a consistent picture as described in detail by Sen (1). Famine implies starvation, but not vice versa. Starvation implies poverty, but not vice versa. Poverty can reflect relative deprivation as opposed to absolute dispossession. Poverty can exist even when no serious starvation
occurs. Starvation on the other hand does imply poverty, since the absolute dispossession that characterizes starvation is more than sufficient to be diagnosed as poverty.

Starvation is thus the characteristic of some people not having enough to eat. However, starvation is not the characteristic of there being not enough food to eat. Inadequate food supply can be a cause for starvation, but one of many possible causes.

Starvation statements are thus about the relationship of persons to food. Starvation readily reflects on ownership of food by persons. That is why it is necessary to look into the structure of ownership in order to understand starvation.

A person will be exposed to starvation if, for the ownership that she actually has, the exchange entitlement set does not contain any feasible bundle including enough food. Starvation will occur in the absence of non-entitlement transfers, for example through charity or the welfare system.

Going back to the issues of gender, poverty and starvation, a woman’s ability to avoid starvation will depend on her ownership and on the exchange entitlement mapping that she faces. Starvation is therefore a powerful indicator of poverty and an indispensable factor in the conception of poverty. Poverty is a matter of deprivation.

Epidemiologically speaking starvation implies people going without adequate food, while famine is the particularly virulent manifestation of its causing widespread death. What was grave about the Ethiopian famines was that they took place with no abnormal reduction in food output, and consumption of food per head at the height of the famine in 1973 was fairly normal for Ethiopia as whole. When food output was reduced in parts of the Wollo Region, inability to command food from outside was the result of low purchasing power in the affected areas. Food prices in general rose very little and people, particularly women and children, were dying of starvation even when food was selling at prices not very different from pre-drought levels. This was a telling example of entitlement failures of the population. In the case of the pastoralists in the south-eastern Ogaden Region, they were hit by the drought, but were decimated by the market mechanism.

The end of starvation presupposes a shift in the entitlement system, both in the form of social security and – more importantly – through systems of guaranteed employment at wages that provide exchange entitlement adequate to avoid starvation. What is needed is not only ensuring food availability, but above all guaranteeing food entitlement.
References

Theological Reflections on Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement, from a West African Perspective

Mercy Amba Oduyoye

I am a woman from Ghana in West Africa, born into a nuclear family that is Methodist within an extended family that has all varieties of Christianity in Africa, Muslims and people practicing African Religion at various stages in their lives. I am a woman with formal education in the Study of Religion and in Christian theology. My involvement in the church has been from birth, as a child of a Methodist Minister, a Sunday School teacher, a lay preacher, a participant in the ecumenical movement for over forty years and a keen observer of how the church impacts Africa, and how Africa impacts the church. I do not count myself poor, but I know poverty, the poverty that produces children with matted hair who walk the streets begging for bread, sheltering under the sky, clothed in rags and afraid only of rain.

I know the operations of gender among the Akan, Ghanaians, West Africans, indeed among Africans. I know the operations of gender in Christianity, its teachings, its liturgical language, theological formulations and institutional arrangement. I have stood in awe of the power of poverty and gender in West Africa and at the church’s lukewarm efforts when facing both. I have been involved with women who in the midst of poverty have dared to raise the issues of gender insensitivity, inequities and injustice. It is from this standpoint that I offer these reflections.

The church in West Africa was created dependent on the church in western Europe: dependent for its theology, liturgy and structures. But most significantly dependent for its financing and its attitudes towards women. I have stood in awe at church-women’s solidarity with the church, in the face of the church’s exploitation of women’s spirituality.

Poverty
We are faced with statistics that identify women as bearing more than half the burden of Africa’s materials poverty. The situation may be described as similar to the biblical story of people expected to make bricks without straw. Women are expected to birth healthy children when they themselves subsist on leftovers during the period of gestation. They are expected to nurse sick
children, husband and all relations back to health, with little assistance from medical practitioners. They are expected to stem the tide of HIV/AIDS while forced by culture to comply with the spouse’s demands for sex even when HIV positive or suffering from AIDS. In all of this, the church stands by and urges the woman on, not as a living sacrifice but with the argument that it is a privilege to serve men who constitute the church.

Church

The church defies crisp and clear definition but from the fore-going you can sense that, from where I stand, and faced with the challenges of poverty as it relates to women, the church is made up of those who have authority to define who a woman is and to make her conform to that definition on the pain of marginalization and stigmatization. In Africa the label feminist is a stigma that the church attaches to women who dare to claim humanity, that is, to take responsible decisions and to make choices that safeguard their own well-being while they take their share in ensuring the well-being of the community to which they belong.

The church as an institution has been an agent of modernization in Africa, especially in transforming education from apprenticeship to schooling. In this venture, the underlying gender assumption was that men should be empowered to change what they will and women to be moulded to fit into the men’s world as helpers, doing only what men do not want to do and what men want women to do. The woman should be a creature without a will, whose agency is only accepted as valid if it fits the world as envisaged by men. The church promoted women’s education only to the extent that by so doing, they would become fitting spouses and mothers. In this view, a woman was not permitted to stay outside the institution of marriage. A woman is not permitted to carry her own head; her head must be a man. And this, the church can vouch for from its scriptures. The church’s attitude towards women is that of total submission and compliance with what constitute the well-being of men.

Gender

Gender is interactive and comparative. When one observes the interactions between men and women that are promoted or prohibited by the church in West Africa, one cannot but charge the church with insensitivity to the needs of women as human beings. To view the scene from a gender perspective, one ought to compare how the church stands in situations that demand the recognition of human beings as sexual beings. From the very early days of theologizing in Christianity, the human sexual act has been demonized as the source of evil and Eve and all her daughters, the Devil’s own gateway into the world.
Marriage, from Genesis to preaching today, at least from pulpits in Ghana, is construed as a way to curb women’s initiatives in shaping human relations and the way for men to be installed lords over women. We hear more often of unmarried women than unmarried men. The former is dangerous but the latter state is ignored. Education, training and economic arrangements ensure that single womanhood is made unviable, hence, the poverty syndrome daubed by feminist as the feminization of poverty. But we know the church in West Africa can do better than this. There are resources in both the African culture and in Christianity to uphold the humanity of women and to empower women to overcome their status as the poorest of the poor. Women are kept poor in order to maintain the status quo of dependency on men; women are not born to be poor.

Poverty and justice

Let us visit the widow in the temple to ask how she became so poor. Let us visit the persistent widow to ask why was the judge so reluctant to take up her case and what was the case? Let us return to all the biblical women who used their femaleness to get what they wanted and we ask: Could Naomi and Ruth have escaped poverty without recourse to a culture that makes Ruth throw herself at the feet of a sleeping man? In West Africa the women’s challenge is in the fact that to whom less is given, much is expected. Women are expected to play lady bounty but are expected to remain economically dependent. The contradiction is glaring. It may not seem logical, but for the church to become a positive factor in women’s economic wellbeing, it must seek the theology that rids it of that which generates and foists anthropological poverty on women. Excluding being female from the definition of human is the source of all injustice towards women.

Reflections

Such is the situation in the world I know. Historically, the church in Ghana and for that matter, most parts of Africa collaborated with governments and merchants to transform the economies that sustained the continent before Europeans arrived here. I shall not talk about the trans-Atlantic trade in human beings though its effects are still with us. I shall not talk of colonial exploitation though it has shaped the attitudes of Africans towards working for government and towards what is deemed to be “government property”. I shall not talk of racism and its close links with the economic exploitation of Black Africans. I shall only talk of education and its role in the transformation of the meaning of employment.

The churches helped to westernize education and to introduce the concept of working for another for cash payment. Being employed meant working for the church, government or mercantile institutions. Trading and farming,
fishing and animal husbandry were for those who had not entered the newly
introduced system. Church was vigorous in promoting education but less so
or indeed hardly ever created employment beyond preaching, teaching and
nursing. The contemporary situation of poverty has its roots here. Many
young people said to be unemployed in Ghana are indeed street traders. Petty
trading as it is labelled here needs no formal training. Several young people
said to be unemployed are self-employed transporting, shopping baskets or
moving produce from one part of the market to the other. They are hiring
themselves out as domestic workers, a form of employment introduced by
Europeans who needed personal cooks, stewards, gardeners, “washer men”
and messengers. These too are minimally qualified for what they do, but
they are employed. The question I am raising is “what is work?” Expulsion
from Eden meant surviving on one’s sweat. Paul said those who will not
work let them not eat and the Didache decreed hospitality only for three days
for those who come to visit us. Women, who indeed are described as unem-
ployed, fill their days with work. By what yardstick do we judge their return
from all this labour?

The ecumenical movement has joined the critique of the global economic
system at least since the United Nations promulgated the development dec-
ade. Today in the age of globalization, Christians still ask questions about
justice in trade, and churches and Christian groups undertake poverty allevi-
ation programmes. The church on the paradigm of Jesus’ healing ministry
has actively promoted health and healing. But today the link between pov-
erty and absence of health stares us in the face. How does someone live with
AIDS in the USA while another dies of the same in Africa and we continue
to preach “God shines the sun and sends down rain on the good and the bad
equally”. Globalization has meaning, because the earth is the Lord’s, its re-
sources everywhere may be exploited by anybody from anywhere. In 1927 a
Belgian Jesuit said, “the riches of God’s creation are intended for the benefit
of all humanity and should not be left in the hands of ‘retarded people’ or
‘indigenous despots’ in Africa”.

As it happened, the wealth of the Congo was left in the hands of a Belgian despot, King Leopold I. This means Af-
rica’s resources continue to be at the disposal of all comers, while Africans
are effectively excluded from going “everywhere” to do the same. Our the-
ology of the unity of human kind is still deficient; it does not seem to com-
municate.

The same economic malaise with its accompanying endemic poverty is
behind the political instability that Africa experiences. Wars and massacres
are the order of the day and the reason is petroleum, diamonds and other

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minerals. The church carries out a ministry of reconciliation in the midst of this disaster: repentance, forgiveness and restitution. The church’s role has been one of disaster management. One begins to wonder, what theology will respond to poverty. Is the Christian anthropology not making any headway in establishing the sanctity of life, the divinity that is part of our humanity and the fact that our response to “the other” is our response to God?

The imputed depravity of human nature and the Augustinian original sin have become excuses for doing evil with impunity. Should we not stimulate some pride in our heritage as children of God, created to be Holy as God is Holy; and then exegete holiness to stimulate a different response to this admittedly difficult situation? A cup full of sweet water should never spill bitter drops however much it is shaken. The challenge of poverty and gender equity to the church is to seek a way to counter the violence this frustration generates.

It is generally admitted in contemporary analyses of the human condition that one of the most noticeable aspects of the gender ideology is the feminization of poverty. Economic arrangements and the norms of marriage manage to portray women as economically dependent on men and keep it so. Churches have contributed to this by encouraging the subjugation of women. “Sarah called Abraham Lord”; widows remain poor without married daughters-in-law (Naomi-Ruth-Boaz). Women’s hard work goes to enrich men (p. 31). The source of the wealth of the wealthy women of the Greek Bible is not highlighted except that of Lydia. Their generosity, however, is hailed. The human community needs to highlight women who have contributed to the creation of wealth and the church should craft a theology to undergird this.

In Africa, the church focuses on home making and motherhood to the neglect of the self-development of women beyond what will directly benefit men, children and home making. A theology that disparages women’s humanity, portrays women as devoid of initiative or dangerous to the community when they take initiative, ought to be countered. The Christian anthropology has to say what Genesis 1 says, that both male and female are created in the image of God and with equal responsibility to manage the earth. God’s economy (home-management) is the responsibility of both women and men. Training in skills should be available to all as the nature of God is in all. What each does according to his or her ability is equivalent in value to what the other does. Remember the parable of the vineyard in which those who worked eight hours were paid the same as those who worked an hour. Sexism should not be allowed to guide economic arrangements.

The subjection of women in the Bible (1 Peter 3:1–7), the glorification of motherhood (without state compensation) and the veiling of other biblical models of being a woman need to be countered by the church. The consequences of this Christian culture are to keep women economically poor and the church poor as a consequence. Using the same syndrome, while not eco-
nomically empowered, the church encourages women to throw in their all for the financing of the church. Women struggle for other forms of participation but church hierarchy regularly manages to co-opt women’s initiatives.

Finally, for both women and men, the globalization of poverty said to be the biblical norm, needs to be revised. I do not hear Jesus saying blessed are the poor so therefore we should ensure that the poor are always with us. Poverty alleviation was central to the ministry of Jesus. The church is the vehicle of the good news of Jesus the Christ. The church is therefore accountable to God for its attitudes towards those who are poor and there are none so poor as those who do not feel any need. Poverty takes various forms and the church in West Africa cannot neglect any for even here there are relatively affluent people living in the midst of persons struggling with abject poverty who are embarrassed to talk about economic poverty.

We have become communities whose safety nets no longer work and whose poor are too busy facing the challenges of the immediate situation, and therefore they do not theorize about the condition and do not analyze the poverty-making machinery they experience. The church does not work along such lines either so we are not going through the painful process of accounting honestly for our status of being poor or of being non-poor.

Let me end as I often end on the subject of poverty in Africa. Africa is not poor. Poverty is not a state that descends without cause. Africa is not poor. Those deemed poor in Africa are not poor because they are lazy. Some are poor because of the greed of a few but that happens elsewhere beyond the shores of Africa. Some are poor because to date, people only get what they can negotiate for, and Africans do not seem to get close to negotiating tables that are loaded with the already rich. Africa is not poor, and as our politicians begin to work together as a continent, as women claim their humanity and the right to economic initiatives, as the church learns to be a church for all, African women will cease to be the icon of poverty for the whole world.
A Critical Assessment of the
International Monetary Institutions
in Relation to Gender and Poverty

Agnes Aboum

Executive Summary
Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, expressing itself in many different forms: a lack of opportunities, a lack of power, a lack of security. Different people experience poverty in different ways. Consequently efforts are needed in many different areas, such as efforts aimed at achieving economic growth and enhanced participation in the global market, greater economic and social quality, a democratic development, sustainable development, equality between women and men, stronger conflict management, the promotion of human rights as well as humanitarian aid. These measures must be designed so as to tackle the specific causes of poverty for different people on the basis of local conditions. They must enhance the capacity of individual people to influence and change their situation. (Glob Kom, 2002)

Today around the world, 3 billion people live on less than $1 a day; 3 billion live on under $2 a day; 1.3 billion have no access to clean water; 3 billion have no access to sanitation. The human pain of poverty is all around us. The poor cannot wait on our deliberations. The poor cannot wait until we wake up – too late – to the fact that the human crisis affects us all. (Wolfensohn, 1998)

Donor policies – trade, investment and development assistance – cannot be divorced from donor interests. The unjust structure of relationships in the international economic order in favor of the North and the resultant artificial insufficiencies in the developing world have spawned desperation in the latter, whose consequences know no limits and have led to extreme suffering. There is no interest – free intervention. All too often, unfortunately some parties do not declare their interests. The EU for instance, has provided substantial assistance to countries contiguous to the Union such as the Balkan interest in the development in Africa due to the number of refugees generated by conflicts that end up in Europe and the negative global effects of the conflicts. With or without the conflicts, poverty continues to ravage Africa and especially so the most vulnerable members of society i.e. women and children.
What is poverty?

Poverty is much more than a matter of income alone. The poor seek a sense of well-being which is peace of mind, it is good health, community and safety. It is choice and freedom as well as a steady source of income.

Well-being is having the chance to grasp new economic opportunities; something the poor feel much less able to do than a decade ago.

Well-being is personal security. More women are working outside the household now, trying to make ends meet. But gender inequity at home persists, and domestic violence is on the rise.

Countries may come up with sound fiscal and monetary policy, but if they do not have good governance, if they do not confront the issue of corruption, if they do not have a complete legal system which protects human rights, property rights, and contracts, which gives a framework for bankruptcy laws and predictable tax system, if they do not have an open and regulated financial system and appropriate regulation and behaviour that is transparent, then their development is fundamentally flawed and will not last.

“What use constitutional protection if women face discrimination in the market place and violence at home?” (Wolfensohn, 1999)

Neo liberal policies and their effects on women

Women’s equity and equality and the full realization of their human rights cannot be achieved in the context of current neo-liberal policies that exacerbate inequality.

Ethiopian women lawyers association (EWLA), the equivalent of the federation of women lawyers in Kenya (FIDA), was suspended at the beginning of September 2001 and its bank account frozen.

EWLA got into trouble after making a presentation on a women’s program on T.V. in which they decried police ineptitude apparent lack of feeling for a case in which one women had been the subject of repeated brutality by a known psychopath during a staggering five years of horrendous trauma occasioning the death of the father of that victim of brutality.

Revision of gender insensitive articles in the law, introduction of family law, an entirely new law in Ethiopia are key examples of successful efforts at the advocacy level done by EWLA.

Rampant and unqualified slurs against women by top leaders and rulers of any country must swiftly and articulately be challenged through protest letters, demonstrations and demands for apology to all women without descending to the base level of the leader.

We seek to ensure that women are at the heart of policy and decision making. The experience, perspectives and technical expertise of individual women and organizations working with women are key components in en-

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suring the gender agenda in poverty alleviation. The multiplicity and com-
plicity of female roles include the following:

- Productive activities in the formal economy
- In subsistence economy
- In the informal sector
- Their reproductive activities and responsibilities regarding the household
  and the family
- Their intensive involvement in the society/community commonly seen as
  an extension of their reproductive activities.

The disadvantaged position of women exemplified in the various forms as
follows:

- In family and society
- Their limited access to opportunities
- Their limited access to power, infrastructure and resources.

If these issues are not tackled with a view to creating meaningful and far
reaching changes, sustainable development and poverty alleviation will re-
main illusory.

It must be pointed out that 70% of the absolutely poor are women and that
the fight against the feminization of poverty and the establishment of a
framework for the political, economic and social empowerment of women
and the narrowing of the power gap between the two genders must have
unconditional priority.

If women were to have access to and control of supplementary financial
resources and opportunities for advancement, they would also profit from
possible boosts in the economy.

The participation of women in political and economic decision making
should be unconditionally promoted. In order that the fundamental condition
of women in the formal and subsistence economy of the informal sector,
household, family and community be realized, the following must be
achieved: solid democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people,
and improved infrastructure. In addition, freedom, peace, security, domestic
stability, respect for human rights including rights of development, rule of
law, gender equity, market oriented policies and an overall commitment to
just and democratic societies is essential.

The inclusion of women in positions of decision making in the economy,
raising of their business competence through promotion of research, univer-
sity and non-university education and training, career development and
counselling, awareness-raising and adult education represent basic prerequi-
sites for eliminating the economic discrimination against women and for
combating the feminization of poverty.
National budgets should not merely be analyzed after the fact in their effect on women, but must already take into account in planning the economic and social needs of women, above all with regard to employment opportunities and access to health care, to education, training and consultation services, to income and social security.

Poverty and Christianity

The task of the church is not to supersede the non-Christian religions, nor with Karl Barth on the one hand or Karl Marx on the other to be against religion as intrinsically ungodly or inhuman or both; but to ally itself with religion and draw on the potential of religion for achieving emancipation or liberation. At one level this refers to the freedom from oppression or enforced poverty which is the goal of African Political theology and South American liberation theology. It means being involved with the God who has deeper resources of religion, Christian and non-Christian, to free us from attachment and dependence and from servitude to human oppressors and to Mammon and material possessions, preparing us for that true poverty which is chosen and life enhancing. Although religious movements are too easily institutionalized and filtered and become means of investment, at heart they are characteristically driven by a revolutionary impetus.

Christian theology has paid too much attention to sin and to the sinners who cause the suffering, fashioning doctrines of atonement which offer them forgiveness. It has paid too little attention to the suffering of the victims. Any satisfactory way forward will have to deal with both. Justification by faith must coincide with justice for the victims of history. Sin has to be forgiven, both the sin of the oppressor and the vengeful sin of the victim, but the suffering it causes has to be addressed as urgently, if not more so, and the victims have to be involved in the process of mutual transformation. Suffering of the victims has to be involved in the process of mutual transformation. Suffering of the poor cannot be accounted for within the narrow confines of any theory of retributive justice. It is a framework of merits and demerits, worthiness and unworthiness, which God explicitly rejects as a basis for his dealings with us.

What is behind this behavior and gives it meaning is not a justice system of rewards and punishments but God’s free and unmerited love, often described by Gutie’rrrez as gratuitous love. In contrast to a confining logic of retribution and reward, the free love of God is unfettered by any logic at all.
World Trade and Structural Adjustment

World trade policies and gender

The statutes, policies and the institutional structure of the WTO are until today completely “gender blind”. This condition is exacerbated by the disproportionate dominance of the WTO and their policy of adding ever more points to their agenda, thereby applying their stamp of liberalization and the increase of competition on, for example, the developments in agriculture and questions regarding intellectual property rights, leading in the end to the profit gains of rich countries and transnational corporations at the expense of poor countries and disadvantaged groups like indigenous women and female small holders.

The continued orientation towards export and trade liberalization cannot act as positive driving forces, but has the potential effect of undermining the formation of a “sustainable, gender-sensitive and people oriented development”.

It is an indisputable fact that women and girls are especially affected by all economic transactions. Information and awareness campaigns must therefore emphasize the fact that workable perspectives for the improvement of their situation be alluded to.

It is true that in highly indebted poor countries also referred to as HIPC by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, women suffer more than any other group for the consequences of the “debt crisis” and the structural adjustment programmes established to overcome it. It is imperative that, while promoting the HIPC initiative, a consistent gender analysis of the consequences of the debt problem on women, and of all the necessary strategies to combat it, be expeditiously undertaken.

Structural adjustment: its supposed benefits to poor countries

Structural adjustment is fundamentally a response to an economic crisis. The economic crisis many developed countries experienced in the late 1970’s and during the 1980’s was a result of a combination of both external and internal factors. External factors included oil price shocks (1973 and 1979), high real interest rates coupled with the tightening of international credit, the weakness of the U.S. dollar since 1985. Given that many developing countries’ exports are denominated in dollars, sharp swings in commodity prices, notably the cocoa/coffee boom of 1975–77, followed by secular declines in major primary commodity prices that continued into the 1990’s, have contributed to a continued deterioration in the terms of trade facing African primary commodity exporters. The general slow down in the world economy in
the later 1970’s and early 1990’s, coupled with increased protectionism, depressed demand for developing country exports.

Rationale for structural adjustment

Structural adjustment programs and policies are essentially intended to improve the incentive structure, the trade regime, allocation of resources, and efficiency in the use of resources to stimulate growth enhancing impulses in the economy. A reorientation of public expenditures and policies toward human capital and infrastructure, an expansion of exports and efficient import substitutes, efficient trade policies, and liberalization of prices and deregulation of controls to allow procedures to increase output of goods and services, are the essential characteristics of SAPs. (Husain, 1993)

SAPs generally comprise policy reforms and corrective measures in a number of areas classified as follows: stabilization, promotion of the private sector, market liberalization and price reforms and nationalization of public sector institutions. (Berg, 1989)

Adjustment is necessarily concerned with how economic change and resource allocation come about, and on whom the costs and benefits fall and why. It is about factor mobility and productivity resulting from shifts in incentives from what are seen as economically less productive activities to economically more productive activities, as well as from non-tradable to tradable goods.

Impact of structural adjustment in Africa

Empirical evidence clearly shows that growth that makes greater use of the factor of production owned by the poor, principally land and labour, can have a significant effect on poverty. But if the pattern of growth is highly capital-intensive, as was the case with African countries, higher growth will not have much impact on poverty. Therefore the choice of instruments for promoting growth and ensuring free mobility of factors, particularly labour, are important considerations in the design of adjustment programs. Ineffective capital markets inhibit growth and institutional or regulatory barriers constrain poor people’s access to the labour and product market. Attempts to reform the financial sector and remove these barriers are certainly going to help poor countries (especially where the poor in those countries are represented significantly by women).

The Interface between Gender and Growth

A distinguishing characteristic of sub-Saharan African economies is that both men and women play substantial economic roles. Data compiled by
IPPRI indicate that African women perform 90% of the work of food storage and transport from farm to village, 90% of the work of hoeing and seeding, and 60% of the work of harvesting and marketing. One way to analyse the dynamics of the varied contributions of men and women to the productive economy is by examining the “gender intensity of production” in different sectors. In Uganda, men and women are not equally distributed across the productive economy, as agriculture distributed female intensive sector of production and industry and services are male intensive. (Elision and Evers 1997)

Micro-level analyses portray a consistent picture of gender based asset inequality acting as a constraint to growth and poverty reduction. Country case studies throughout SSA point to a pattern that disadvantaged women face, compared with men, in accessing the basic assets and resources needed to participate fully in realizing SSA’s growth potential. These gender based differences affect supply response, resource allocation within the household, and, significantly, labour productivity. They have implications for the flexibility, responsiveness and dynamism of African economies, and they limit growth. The Agricultural growth that SSA does not achieve because of gender inequality is not marginal to the continent’s needs, as it affects food security and well-being, increases vulnerability, and further reinforces risk-aversion. A case in Burkina Faso shows how differences in access to key inputs, notably labour and fertilizer, lead to marked productivity differentials, and different supply responses, between plots controlled by men and those controlled by women.

The missed potential example

**Burkina Faso**
Shifting existing resources between men’s and women’s plots within the same house could increase output by 10–20%.

**Kenya**
Giving women farmers the same level of agricultural inputs and education as men could increase yields obtained by women by more than 20%.

**Tanzania**
Reducing time burdens of women could increase household cash income for small holder coffee and banana growers by 10%, labour productivity by 15%, and capital productivity by 44%.
Zambia

If women enjoyed the same overall degree of capital investment in agricultural inputs, including land, as their male counterparts, output could increase by 15%. (Udry et al. 1995: Tibaijuka 1994)

Gender inequalities in education and formal employment

Gender inequalities in education and formal employment also provide a basis for assessing the impact of gender inequality or growth. Over the 1960–92 period, SSA, together with South Asia, had the worst initial conditions for female education and employment, and the worst record for changes in the past 30 years. The average number of total years of schooling for the female adult population in 1960 was 1.1 years. Gender inequality in schooling in 1960 was also very high in SSA, with women having barely half the schooling of men.

Females in SSA have experienced the lowest average annual growth in total years of schooling between 1960 and 1992. An annual increase of 0.04 years raised the average years of schooling for the female adult population by a mere 1.2 years. Females experienced slower expansion in growth of the total years of schooling than males, and have a weak position in formal sector employment increased by only 1.6 percent between 1970 and 1990. (Blackden and Bhanu, 1998)

Based on these trends, comparison between SSA and East Asia indicates that gender inequality in education and employment is estimated to have reduced SSA’s per capita growth in the 1960–92 period by 0.8 percentage points per year, and appears to account for up to one fifth of the difference in growth performance between SSA and East Asia. While this is far from the overriding factor, it is an important constituent element in accounting for SSA’s poor economic performance.

Household diversity and poverty

Gender analysis of household survey data for a group of 19 SSA countries confirms that there exists enormous diversity in household structure and composition, and shows that poverty is related to family systems. A simple distinction between male and female heads of households does not adequately capture the diversity of family systems and how the resources are allocated. Analysis of households on the basis of leadership nonetheless provides useful information on the structure and characteristics of different households in SSA. The average size of HHH is consistently smaller than that of MHH. While the majority of female household heads are widowed or divorced, the overwhelming majority of small household heads are married.
This suggests that female leadership is likely to be the result of disruptive life changes and is indicative of the instability of household structures and composition, with implication for vulnerability to poverty.

Vulnerability reflects the dynamic nature of poverty referring as it does to defencelessness, insecurity and exposure to risk. Vulnerability is a function of assets; the more assets the people have the less vulnerable they are. An awareness of the diverse nature of assets, and of their hierarchy, is essential for meaningful policy action. Women and children are more vulnerable because tradition gives them less decision making power and less control over assets than men, while at the same time their opportunities to engage in remunerative activities and, therefore, to acquire their own assets are more limited. (World Bank 1996)

There is no consistent evidence that poverty incidence is necessarily higher among FHH. One cross-country study shows that poverty incidence is statistically higher among FHH compared with MHH in only SSA countries. The gender of the household head is therefore not a particularly useful predictor of household-level poverty status, and is not in itself effective as a criterion for targeting. Patterns of disadvantage for women and girls persist irrespective of the gender of the household head.

The situation of children and women in poor polygamous MHH might be of greater concern. Analysis on a regional level finds the highest incidence of poverty in West Africa among polygamous MHH, and in East and Southern Africa among dejure and defacto FHH. Where women have more control over the income and resources of the household, for which female headship may be seen as proxy, the pattern of consumption tends to be more child focussed and oriented to meeting basic needs of the household. When households with similar resources are compared in seven SSA countries, children in FHH have higher school enrolment and completion rates than children in MHH. In Cote D’ivore doubling women’s share of cash income has been shown to raise the budget share of food by 2% and to lower the budget shares of cigarettes and alcohol by 26% and 14% respectively.

**Capital / financial services**

Data on gender differences in access to financial services are scarce. Available estimates suggest that the poor in general have little access to finance and that women in particular have less access than men. Women’s World Banking estimates shows that 2% of low income entrepreneurs have access to financial services. In Africa women receive less than 10% of the credit to small farmers and 1% of the total credit to agriculture. In Uganda, it is estimated that 9% of all credit goes to women. In Kenya, only 3% of female farmers surveyed, compared with 14% of male farmers, had received commercial bank loans. Women face gender specific barriers in accessing finan-
cial services, including lack of collateral (usually land); low levels of literacy, numeracy, and education and they have less time and cash to undertake the journey to a credit institution.

Women in Africa are consistently under-represented in institutions at a local and national level, and have little say in decision making. Gender barriers limit women’s participation and reinforce power gaps. Almost all the 15 countries reporting to the inter-parliamentary union showed no change or negative change in the level of women’s representation between 1975 and 1997. Women in SSA comprise 6% of national legislatures, 10% at the local level and 2% in the national cabinets. Half of the national cabinets in SSA have no women at all. Few governments have made systematic efforts to institutionalize and translate their international commitments made at the Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul conferences, and in the convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAN).

The poor in general, and poor women in particular, do not have a voice in decision making, and their different needs and constraints do not therefore inform public policy choices and priorities. A key insight from gender analysis in SSA is that there are interconnections and short term trade-offs between and within economic production, child bearing and rearing, and household/community management responsibilities. This assumes particular importance given the competing claims on women’s labour time, and the need to raise women’s labour productivity in both the households and the market economies.

Consequently, a key challenge for public policy is to undertake concurrent investments in both the market and household economies, across a range of sectors, which explicitly minimize trade-offs and build on positive externalities.

Globalization

Debt relief: its implications on poverty reduction/alleviation

In July 2000, ten of the poorest developing countries, all but one of them in Africa, began to use about $17 billion for poverty reduction expenditures that had been originally intended for debt service payments. By end of year 2000, under an accelerated programme supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), 12 more developing countries, most of them also in Africa, had qualified for debt relief, which is estimated to free up a further $17 billion for poverty related expenditure. The heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative forms part of a comprehensive strategy to examine the entire poverty reduction expenditure programme of these countries.
Three African countries were visited in February 2001 to examine the reduction in total debt, debt service payments, as well as projected increase in poverty related expenditures resulting from debt relief for five African Developing countries. Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique are beneficiaries of debt relief in the initial group of countries.

According to the report, the first country, Uganda is well advanced in the implementation of its own poverty eradication programme under the growing watch of civil society, among them the Uganda debt network, the council of churches, and others. The second country, Tanzania has only recently made a commitment to a poverty programme and civil society has yet to exert an influential voice following a generation of single party rule. The third, Mozambique, is by far the poorest, regionally polarized and institutionally very weak. All three countries must deal with the scourge of corruption.

The disadvantaged position of developing countries in WTO governance

Recent events have increasingly led to the questioning of the governance structure of WTO. In particular, issues have been raised regarding the organizations decision and rule making processes, the level and nature of participation by various categories of members, as well as transparency and accountability in the entire institution. The existing practice of informal consultation or “Green Room Meetings” has attracted special attention because of the lack of a clear mechanism for selection of those member countries that participate in such meetings.

These meetings tend to be dominated by a small group of key actors. Efforts have been made to make the process more transparent. However, the continuing existence in Geneva of such groups as “like-minded groups” and “Sub-marine groups” in the preparations for the Doha WTO. Ministerial conference is a vivid example of the need for greater transparency in the WTO decision-making structure.

African countries feel particularly disenfranchised by the governance structure of WTO. Because they are resource constrained, effective participation in the WTO process places an enormous burden on them. Some of them are not represented in many of the crucial meetings and when they are represented, their staffing is often inadequate for the tasks at hand. In the end, many African countries are not effective “rule makers” within the WTO framework. Instead, they are “rule takers”. Looking at the overall system of the WTO governance, what would better serve the interest of the African Members of WTO is an efficient system of representative decision-making, which takes adequate account of the large size of the organizations as well as its complex mandate. Compared to similar international organizations such
as the World Bank and IMF, WTO does not have an Executive Board, which could facilitate decision-making by concentrating discussions among a small but representative group of members. Currently, the absence of such a body effectively locks out many African countries from the consensus-building consultations that take place inside and outside the formal meetings.

The state of poverty in Africa

The result of the measure of poverty in Africa indicates that the poverty line, i.e. the minimum amount of expenditure required to satisfy the basic needs of each person in a society, varies from country to country and between sub-regions, depending on, among other things, the level of development.

According to these results, about 44% of Africa’s population were living below a poverty line of $39 per person per month in the early 1990’s. North Africa had a much lower incidence of poverty, with only 22% of the population living below a poverty line of $54 per person per month, while SSA had a much higher incidence of poverty, with 51% of the population living below a poverty line of $34 per person per month.

The highest incidence of poverty in the sample is recorded for Guinea-Bissau, where 78% of the population lived below a poverty line of $26 per person per month, while the lowest incidence of poverty is recorded for Algeria, with 15% of the population living below a poverty line of $74 per person per month. Twelve countries recorded a head count ratio greater than the average for the continent: Guinea-Bissau (70%), Niger (68%), Tanzania (67%), Zambia (60%), Guinea (56%), Zimbabwe (55%), Uganda (52%), Senegal (51%), Madagascar (50%), Kenya (50%), Lesotho (48%) and South Africa (44%).

This means that more than 25% of the population of the sample hired in countries with high incidence of poverty in the early 1990’s. For North Africa, the highest incidence of poverty is recorded for Mauritania, with a head-count of about 32%.

The effect of globalization in SSA with special reference to women

Globalization has had very specific impacts on African women. Counteracting the negative effects of globalization, however, may also depend on the actions and activities of those women. According to Majorie Mbilinyi, Professor at the Institute of Development Studies in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania and a member of GERA’s steering committee, globalization has entailed a long series of economic and cultural crises (including the debt crisis and structural adjustment) that have contributed to the growing power of global regulatory institutions.
The power wielded by these institutions, including the IMF and WTO, has had a profound impact on Africa said GERA steering committee member P. Kassey Garba of the university of Ibadan in Nigeria. Although the effects of globalization are not new, she noted that the liberalization imperatives of multi-lateral institutions have accentuated these effects in recent years. She said that more regional alliances among Africa Women to address global economic policies might contribute to the strengthening of African’s position and participation within these institutions.

Other leading women have argued that while some Africans including merchants, senior technocrats, and even GERA members have benefited financially from globalization, it has been devastating for many women. It has contributed to reducing their access to land, to lowering wages and increasing poor working conditions, and has thus posed serious threats to physical safety.

“Poverty is humiliation, the sense of being dependent on them and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when we seek help.” (I am quoting an unnamed peasant from Eastern Europe.)

“At first I was afraid of everyone and everything. My husband, the village, the police. Today, I fear no one. I have my own bank account. I am the leader of my villages savings group. I tell my sisters about our movement.”

(Birshirambibi, a woman from South Africa.)

African women do not approve the shift in areas of responsibility between UNDP and the World Bank. These two institutions have agreed among themselves that UNDP, an important grant agency, will focus on poverty reduction and alleviation. The women claim that, although the World Bank has the mandate to reduce poverty, it has not done so completely for Africa and consistently misunderstood African realities. Some feel that the World Bank largely neglects the well being of African women and girls, with forced structural adjustment conditions that make life harder for women instead of better. The economic growth it supports, and the limited debt relief on offer, do not seem to be reducing poverty in Africa. Some women leaders were of the opinion that the World Bank and the IMF are rich male dominated institutions that cater to rich male dominated perceptions. Their policies and programmes seem to view women as passive sufferers and beneficiaries, tacked on as an after thought, rather than propelling women as the producers and indispensable agents for change and development that they are in Africa.

Another leading woman, Kathrin Ichoya of COMESA, argues that although economic globalization has failed in Africa, “all is not lost on the African Continent”. Rather, sub-regional economic groupings are becoming vehicles for African government to develop an alternative to globalization. The groupings provide a powerful new economic infrastructure of which women can be part, she said.
COMESA, for example, has worked towards women’s economic empowerment by supporting women in the private sector through initiatives such as the Women in Business programme which promotes the establishment of women owned enterprises and offers women entrepreneur technical training and other services. But as regional grouping increases in economic significance, said Ichoya, there is a parallel need for more initiatives as in GERA where women researchers from across the region can meet and regional alliances can be formed.

Mbilinyi advocates “anti-globalism” over an approach that “tinkers” with globalization. Calling on popular social movements, she outlined some conditions necessary for globalization to be resisted in Africa including broad-based social movements to generate political will for an alternative model because the will for transformation is absent among those in power; progressive movements that adopt gender perspectives in their analysis and the principles of participatory development to guide the process of developing an alternative model to include the voice of all segments of African society, particularly women.

On globalization and liberalization, it is noteworthy how incapable governments are to act under the current conditions of globalization to guarantee social security, the distribution of growth and income, and “human development” as a whole.

The apparent retreat of the state from the management and responsibility for safeguarding fundamental social rights due to a background of market liberalization and the struggle of “regional advantages”, as well as the privatization of originally state owned responsibilities, lead to the sudden deterioration in the distribution of income, negatively affecting women in particular. In this context, structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of international financial institutions such as World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, play a strategic and detrimental role. It must be possible for the state, also in terms of globalization, to act “socially and undertake social responsibilities” without being pressured by macro-economic institutions and transnational corporations.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<tr>
<td>CEDAN</td>
<td>Convention for the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>Poverty Reduction and Social Development Unit</td>
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<td>HIPC</td>
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Women, Health and the Development of Medical Missions:
Some South African Reflections

Deborah Gaitskell

This paper has two main concerns. First, it seeks to explore, from the vantage point of my special interest in South Africa, a comparison between African and Asian models of female medical missions in their origins, development and impact on both women and health. Secondly, it evaluates, for the South African case, the extent to which mission medicine was sufficiently cognizant of the impact of poverty on the health of the indigenous population. How well did Christian doctors and nurses analyse the social disease patterns which might have led them into wider activism to improve African living conditions?

Comparing Female Medical Missions in Africa and Asia or The Zulu Have No Zenanas

Long before I took a special interest in medical missions, when I was researching the more overtly ‘spiritual’ topic of church expansion among African women in South Africa,¹ it soon became abundantly clear to me how much of a ‘poor relation’ most female mission work in Africa was by comparison with what was being done in India by the Anglicans and British Methodists on whom I was focusing. The special Methodist mission periodical, Women’s Work, for instance, was full of news from the East, but I generally looked in vain for reports from twentieth-century South Africa. Significantly, one author has suggested that an alphabet of women and missionary work would begin with ‘A’ for Aylward and end with ‘Z’ for Zenana,² making China and India the be-all and end-all of the story as usual! Gladys Aylward, of course, was the small but determined British domestic servant

who set off solo to cross Russia by train in order to evangelise China (fa-
mously portrayed by Swedish actress Ingrid Bergman in the movie, *Inn of the Sixth Happiness*) The zenana was the secluded women’s area of elite homes in north India which powerfully caught the imagination of British and American churchwomen in the nineteenth century, sparking off and legiti-
mizing the startling employment of single women missionaries to teach and evan-
gelise and later offer health care to those living in enclosed domestic spaces off-limits to men.

In 1914, a good hinge moment between the dying influences of the Victo-
rian era and the developments of the new century, British Methodist Women’s Auxiliary work reflected a characteristic weighting eastwards, even though, and perhaps actually causing, Christianity to make better pro-
gress in Africa than Asia. Of 108 British women missionaries supported in the
mission field when the First World War broke out, a huge number, 64, were based in India, 22 in Ceylon, 17 in China and two in Burma. The only non-oriental postings were one woman in Spain and two in South Africa. The WA argued optimistically that it was

impossible to exaggerate the greatness of the missionary opportunity to-day
in the sphere of woman’s work, for there is a Women’s Movement spreading
rapidly in Eastern lands that needs above all things Christian leadership,
while the new value set on women’s education constitutes a missionary call
of peculiar urgency.³

Its 22 medical centres were likewise all in the East; two hospitals in China, 4
medical stations in Ceylon and 16 in India, ranging from small dispensaries
to well-equipped hospitals. In-patients numbered 3,662, and 221,835 patients
attended dispensaries.⁴

The extraordinary allure of the East for the Christian women of the West
has to be acknowledged, as well as the class element which overlay it. The
Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East (SFPEE) – which
in fact, despite its title, also helped South African missions – sent fifty single
women teachers abroad from its foundation in 1834 to 1847. Their Indian
pupils were largely low caste and poor, but when the novelty of female visi-
tation by high-ranking, secluded women in zenanas offered the chance to
covert the elite (especially after the 1857 Mutiny), a rash of separate
women’s denominational mission societies arose, which ultimately rendered
the SFPEE redundant.⁵ But female seclusion also troubled the churches be-

³ Report of the Women’s Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for the year
⁴ The One Hundredth Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, London, 1914,
pp. 231, 233.
⁵ Jane Haggis, “White Women and Colonialism: Towards a Non-recuperative History”, in:
52–55.
cause it ‘was most strictly maintained in those social categories and geographic regions [i.e. north India] that had remained most resistant to the proclamation of Christianity.’ The opening of the zenana was, as astonished male contemporaries observed, like ‘the discovery of a new continent’, resulting in an amazing new orthodoxy, that it was the ‘plain and manifest duty’ of thousands of unmarried Western women to evangelise the women of the East. ‘You might as well try to turn the stars in their courses’ was the challenge of this suggestion. Most missionaries believed, Andrew Walls contends, that India’s ancient civilisations ‘demanded the best educated and most obviously able candidates’, while ‘Africa received the leftovers’, or, as Fitzgerald put it, India ‘was widely believed to be not only the noblest but also the most difficult missionary field.’

The fascination and elite female inaccessibility of the East gave it overriding weight in ideology and propaganda, as well as in female recruitment. However, though the Zulu had no zenanas, gender norms did still work to encourage the employment of women in Africa to reach women and children. Recruits were generally wives who required no extra pay since they were married to male missionaries, but there were also single women if affordable. South Africa’s High Church Anglicans often had priests from celibate male orders working among Africans, which necessitated larger staffs of single women than Protestant missions could afford, while the Catholic Church, whose work expanded greatly from the 1930s, made great use of nuns, whose contribution is still very under-researched. The deep irony remained that, while the hope of converting elite oriental women stirred American and European mission activists, in the end, it was the outcasts, low castes and tribal people who came in mass movements into the new faith, as well as women in the Caribbean and Africa, where far more use was made of the ministry of married couples and the unpaid help of mission wives.

But demands arising out of the East’s gender separation combined powerfully in the late nineteenth century with three additional factors ‘supplied’ from the West: gender discrimination found in mission societies: (1) women could raise funds but not be full members, and offers from unmarried candidates were generally spurned, (2) the ideology supported separate spheres of

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6 Rosemary Fitzgerald, “A ‘Peculiar and Exceptional Measure’: The Call for Women Medical Missionaries for India in the Later Nineteenth Century”, in: Robert Bickers and Rosemary Seton (eds), Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues, Curzon Press, Richmond, 1996, p. 180; p. 182, quoting Dr Watson in 1868 in: E.G.K. Hewat, Vision and Achievement 1796–1956: A History of the Foreign Missions of the Churches United in the Church of Scotland, London, 1960; and p. 175, quoting Editorial Notes, Medical Missions at Home and Abroad (July 1897), p. 323. She comments, p. 180, note 32, of the “extravagant publicity” given to female seclusion, that “the Western imagination constructed an image of zenana women evoking such an intense mixture of fascination and repugnance that less ‘exotic’ versions of Indian women’s lives were effectively erased from Western view”.


public and private life appropriate for men and women, and (3) advances were arising in women’s education and employment. The new British female missionary associations of the 1850s and 60s, some argue, saw ‘dramatic’ growth precisely because of the potency of their enforced separation.9 The movement grew because it had to be a women-only movement and its overriding conviction and rationale was that this was work for women which only women could do. In turn, female mission recruitment was promoted and authorised. Dana Robert argues that this notion of ‘women’s work for women’ was ‘one of the major mission theories of the late nineteenth century’ and a dominant force in Protestant missiology until the First World War, legitimizing and extending women’s special mission work through educational and other social services10 such as medicine, which is our special concern here. For British missions by the 1890s, having had only a couple of decades earlier had a negligible percentage of paid women missionaries, the growth was striking. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) intake (not counting wives) was 51% female, the London Missionary Society (LMS) 37%, the Wesleyan Methodists (WMMS) 28% and probably over 60% for the China Inland Mission.11 By 1929, two-thirds of the mission personnel of six United States societies were female.12

The debate is still in progress regarding the exact link between the women’s missionary movement and the expansion of female education and employment as a result of the first wave of feminist activism. Sarah Potter stressed women’s recruitment for the new teaching, philanthropic and health professions and their channelling into mission schools, hospitals and orphanages abroad. For example, teachers and nurses provided 42% of WMMS female mission candidates in the 1890s.13 Over half the 172 LMS recruits on whom Rosemary Seton had occupational data were teachers, governesses and nurses. Nevertheless, Seton underlines the pull of the zenana in their

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motivation. Missions undoubtedly did offer invaluable overseas work opportunities in the period 1880–1900, legitimized by the widespread publicity for zenanas. This was especially true for women doctors, still struggling for acceptance at home. Hence, a quarter of Britain’s women medical graduates were working in India at the turn of the twentieth century. From the London School alone, 112 women doctors went out to the mission field between 1874 and 1918 (74 to India, 19 to China and 19 to other destinations). They provided the first medically qualified British woman missionary, Fanny Butler, who set sail for India in 1880 under the auspices of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society. Of 258 women on the British Medical Register in 1900, 75 were serving as medical missionaries, 45 of those in India. By 1927, there were reported to be 183 hospitals in India staffed by women, of which 93 were run by missions. In 1932, women’s mission hospitals numbered 134 (compared with 112 for men), with annual returns reporting more than 138,000 in-patients, over one and a quarter million out-patients, and over 35,000 surgical operations performed. Admittedly, there were already perhaps 140 million Indian women in British India and the Princely States by 1900, but the scale of operations, by contrast with Africa, is still staggering.

Female missionaries used Indian women’s supposed plight, argues Haggis, to advance themselves professionally in an era of developing capitalism and secular individualism. This is not unlike Antoinette Burton’s portrayal of Victorian feminists asserting their entitlement to imperial citizenship and the vote on the back of an assumed moral guardianship of Indian women as victims of gender oppression. The degree to which religious motivation under-girded and sustained female medical missions is an issue to which we will need to return, but it is worth emphasising that by bringing together women’s work and medical work as our joint focus here, we are tapping into what, by the opening years of the twentieth century, many in the Protestant foreign mission movement had come, against all expectation, to view ‘as the most distinguished forms of missionary endeavour’. Back in 1873, had not

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Dr William Elmslie, medical mission pioneer in Kashmir, described ‘the practice of medicine by a lady, for the purpose, not merely of curing, but of Christianising her patients’ as a key ‘to fit every lock’ on the ‘door to the inner social life of India’? Or, as a CMS male doctor noted, ‘I can never forget what a Hindoo gentleman said to me when we discussed Indian missionary work. He said the two things that tell are women’s work because it wins the home, and medical work because it wins the heart.’ Winning homes and hearts was a goal and possible achievement that was replicated in medical missions among African women too.

The early start and eventual impressive scale and high-powered outcome of female medical mission work in the East must be sketched, however impressionistically, from selected examples from the north, centre and south of India. Rosemary Fitzgerald shows the modest start to the Delhi Medical Mission in the 1860s. Priscilla Winter, missionary wife, with her medicine box and no real training, sought to cure ailments at the female bathing places on the banks of the holy river, to which even women normally veiled by purdah would come to make their religious vows. Yet by 1900, the female medical agency had become the Delhi mission’s distinctive feature. By 1870 they had a hospital-trained midwife with an Indian assistant and could begin visiting secluded women and open a dispensary. A former zenana teacher headed the mission from 1875–91 and began nursing-training for eighteen local women on municipal scholarships. To assuage anxieties about purdah violation, the mission dispensary had a private courtyard off a quiet side lane where women could alight from their curtained conveyances without fear of attracting male attention.

By 1885 a small hospital, St Stephen’s, had been built, the first in Delhi for women and children, while the first woman doctor was appointed in 1891: Jenny Muller, of Indian / German origin, trained in Calcutta and the London School of Medicine for Women, who later reopened the hospital at the mission’s Karnal offshoot too. Thirteen other women doctors joined over the years up to 1914, including one Indian woman who worked for decades as house surgeon and hospital assistant, while a dozen European nurses were on the staff over those years. In contrast, such developments, were quite unexpected in South Africa for many decades. As an example, I can think of Dr Mamphela Ramphele working as a banished person, on account of her political beliefs, in a clinic in the northern Transvaal, but this was the late

By comparison, female entry into medicine in India at much the same time as in Britain is still astonishing. The first African \textit{male} doctor trained in South Africa itself only qualified in 1946 and the first African woman the following year.\footnote{Mamphela Ramphele, \textit{Mamphela Ramphele: A Life}, David Philip, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1995, ch. 6, ‘Surviving in a Wilderness’.} Instead of prayers and Bible teaching while awaiting dispensary treatment, there was a resident hospital evangelist to reach the Indian women.\footnote{Ralph Schram, \textit{Heroes of Health Care in Africa} (mimeo, 1997), p. 202. They were J.L. Njongwe and Mary Mahalele. Well known medics like Molema and Xuma trained in Scotland and the USA.} By 1910, both hospitals had been rebuilt and no longer lacked patients; St Stephen’s in Delhi still stands today.\footnote{Fitzgerald, ‘A “Peculiar and Exceptional Measure”’, p. 194, notes that, while reports from the doctors and nurses ‘convey the strong sense of religious purpose that had guided them to the mission field; yet the details of their work schedules...confirm that the pressures of medical work dominated their agenda.’} 

Just as zenana visiting could not be portrayed honestly in its reduced role as time passed because it had been a drawing card of such symbolic power,\footnote{This and preceding paragraph draw on Rosemary Fitzgerald, ‘From Medicine Chest to Mission Hospitals: The Early History of the Delhi Medical Mission for Women and Children’, in: Daniel O’Connor and others, \textit{Three Centuries of Mission: The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 1701–2000}, Continuum, London and New York, 2000.} so the stress on medical outreach to the home in much mission rhetoric is surprising, since they could not actually do extensive house to house visiting, and were finding the domiciliary work ‘the most trying and unsatisfactory’ by 1900, when the move from home to dispensary to hospital was well under way.\footnote{Ruth Compton Brouwer, \textit{New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876–1914}, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1990, p. 101.} The concentration of women doctors in India probably has many roots: the emblematic place of India as the centre of imperial responsibility and Christian duty, and the ultimate mission challenge; the fact that the special needs of oriental women had been an important strand in advocacy for women’s medical education; the way the separate female sphere eliminated competition with male doctors; the considerable appeal of the enormous autonomy and unprecedented and varied surgical opportunities which mission medical work offered.\footnote{Fitzgerald in: O’Connor, \textit{Three Centuries of Mission}, p. 353.}

The US educated far more women doctors than the rest of the world combined, their 1870 census recorded 525 women physicians already that year, whereas after Elizabeth Garratt’s registration in 1866, Britain had no qualified female medics until 1877.\footnote{Rosemary Fitzgerald, ‘Piety and Physic: Women Medical Missionaries in Delhi and South Punjab, 1860–1930’, paper presented to Imperial History Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, 13 March 2000.} It was the American Women’s Foreign Mission Society which sent out the first fully qualified female medical missionary, Dr Clara Swain, in 1869. The American Ida Scudder, had a classic (and
oft retold) call to pursue medical training (against all her previous intentions) when, on one fatal night, three elite men in turn, one Muslim, two Hindu, refused to call on her father, a mission doctor, to help their wives dying in childbirth. If she, a woman, would not come they would rather their spouses died than see a man – and so it proved. By morning, as the funeral bells were sounding, Ida Scudder saw her destiny. Like many early female mission doctors, she trained at the Women’s College of Medicine, Philadelphia, returning to India in 1900 for fifty years of devoted service. Her wider family gave four hundred years of medical mission service to India, through twenty-seven doctors! Maina Singh has recently analysed, how, again, humble beginnings in roadside clinics led to a hospital by 1902, a nursing school by 1909 and then by 1918 a medical school for women doctors at Vellore, and one of the 34 Christian colleges nationwide by 1922, when Scudder’s first fourteen women passed. When Scudder proposed it in 1911, the only other medical training for women was a thousand miles away at Ludhiana in Punjab, whereas there were already seven medical colleges for men in south India. By the 1930s, Vellore’s corporate life was lively and its alumnae were developing a professional identity alongside their Biblical and religious training. It is a fascinating footnote to the story of nineteenth-century female zeal for the zenanas to see what happened at the end of the 1930s, when the government of India phased out the LMP course (Licensed Medical Practitioner) and began to press for the full academic upgrading to MB BS through Madras University. To achieve this greater professionalisation, Scudder was prepared to waive the college’s existence as an exclusive female domain. Local missionaries saw that inter-denominationalism and coeducation were inevitable developments to create an All-India Christian Medical College. But the women back in the United States vehemently opposed the change in 1940, practically accusing Scudder of betrayal, for they despaired of retaining female enthusiasm and donations for a cause which would no longer have the emotional appeal of that special female separate-ness.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 200, note 76, and p. 287. See also p. 279, note 101: when a large Rockefeller grant was pledged to seven women’s colleges in the orient in the 1920s, Vellore was one of four Indian beneficiaries. The role of American benefactors in the inter-war period is also relevant in South Africa, where a major enquiry into the ‘problem’ of so-called ‘poor whites’ was funded by Carnegie, reporting in the 1930s. In the 1980s, Carnegie again endowed an enquiry into poverty there, but focusing on the black majority. See Morag Bell, ‘American Philanthropy, the Carnegie Corporation and Poverty in South Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 3 (September 2000).
31 Singh, pp, 297–301. Twenty Protestant denominations and seven British missionary societies were committed to creating the new college. For another example of how ‘the idea of separate women’s medicine had become outdated even in China by the late 1930s’, see Sara W. Tucker, ‘A Mission for Change in China: The Hackett Women’s Medical Center of Can-
An advert in the newsletter of the British Medical Women’s Federation in 1943, however, voiced a continuing need for Christian women prepared to commit themselves to teach female medical candidates at Ludhiana Medical College, which had been held back from full Punjab University degree affiliation for its medical course by a ‘disastrous’ lack of staff – though it is interesting that ‘We Daughters of India’ (portrayed in a sketch of three young women in saris) were not ‘beg[ging]’ for missionaries as such, but for Christian medical women.32

The final Indian mission example comes from the underdeveloped princely states of central India, where Canadian Presbyterians early emphasised the civilising alongside the evangelising aspect of women’s work, using institutional agencies and social services as well as direct evangelism from 1877.33 The numerical dominance of women missionaries was a striking feature of this venture – 49 single women had served there by 1914, as compared with 36 men.34 They began with zenana and school work, but it was medical activity that, even more, and in the face of initial hostile prejudice, ‘won the support of Indian and British officials and captured the imagination of mission bureaucrats in Canada’ from 1884, acting as an ‘open sesame to other stations and opportunities’. A male missionary told headquarters to ‘Send out as many lady missionaries, especially the medical ones, as you can’, because they got openings the men never could.35 But the locals were still wary. The Indore hospital waited eight years for its first obstetrical case. As nationalism spread, the more evangelistic men’s work was regarded with increasing caution while four of the five Kaiser-i-Hind medals that were awarded to Central Indian missionaries before the First World War, went to women. A woman doctor was the only missionary included in the entourage of the Agent to the Governor General when he attended the great Delhi Durbar in 1911. The evangelistic element in women’s work was more unobtrusive, while ‘medical work, the most popular and the least overtly propagandist form of mission social service, was pioneered by women, and it remained primarily their specialty’, in three mission hospitals for women. But Ruth Brouwer emphasises that women missionaries functioned as ‘resource people’ far more than as ‘role models’, except with converts and especially with orphans.36

32 Wellcome Library for the History of Medicine, London, SA/MWF Box 14, Medical Women’s Federation Newsletter (April 1943), p. 111.
34 Ibid., p. 13 and p. 29, note 10. Ten of the 18 doctors were women (p. 24).
South Africa provides a fascinating example of how Scottish male missionaries bungled their relationship with an unusually gifted medical woman and lost her to their cause. The special circumstances of India, by contrast, might well have kept her within mission medicine. Jane Waterston went out to the famous eastern Cape Lovedale educational centre in 1866 and founded the Girls’ Institution there in 1868, but left again in 1874 to return to Britain to qualify as a doctor. Fired by David Livingstone’s clarion call for the conversion of central Africa, she was part of the pioneer generation of female doctors studying with Sophia Jex Blake and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, neither of whom she particularly took to.37 Interestingly, her missionary destination overcame sex-discrimination obstacles in London. Very busy in 1876 and ‘aching to be out in Africa again’, she had ‘a lot of Hospital work at present as, where the door is shut for the lady medical student, it is open for the African Missionary.’38 She lectured on health to poor women of the East End of London only on condition that the National Health Society ‘clearly understood I went to it as a Missionary with the full intension of using, not cold, scientific light but the light of God to reach these women’s hearts and try and rouse them to care for their bodies because they had souls.’39

In 1879, qualified, she set off for Livingstonia Mission ‘as if there was a strong hand on my shoulder driving me to it’.40 A disastrous six months followed, however, and she ended up resigning, her faith in God and man and missionary work ‘shattered’. Not only did she have misgivings about brutal mission treatment of Africans, but a younger male mission hierarchy accustomed only to women teachers did not know how to find space for a ‘strong minded’, slightly older female doctor. In a setting where there was only work enough for one physician, ordained medic Robert Laws wanted Waterston to run a girls’ school. She felt personally and professionally slighted. ‘I was judged fit to teach Anatomy in London. I am thought fit for the Alphabet here … I refuse utterly to give up what I have learnt thoroughly and know[,] to do work (teaching the alphabet and looking after girls demoralized by idleness and bad ways before I came) which a girl at a much lower salary could do.’41 After a brief attempt to open up medical work back at

37 Lucy Bean and Elizabeth van Heyningen (eds), The Letters of Jane Elizabeth Waterston 1866–1905, Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, Second Series No. 14, 1983, ch. IV. See p. 77 for Waterston to James Stewart, 30 October 1874, ‘I cannot bear Jex Blake. Nature certainly made a mistake in making her a woman. She wants to make friends with me and I am keeping her at arm’s length. I will get a lot of my faults of voice and manner corrected by seeing how ugly they are in others’; also p. 105, Waterston to Stewart, 23 October 1876, ‘Mrs Anderson is very clever and does many a kind deed but there is a hardness about her that revolts me and certainly a godlessness that is painful to see. She is frank and honest, but hard and politic too’.

38 Ibid., p. 98, Waterston to Stewart, 14 May 1876.

39 Ibid., p. 109, Waterston to Stewart, 31 December 1876.

40 Ibid., p. 139, Waterston to Stewart, 25 August 1879.

41 Ibid., p. 168, Waterston to Stewart, 14 February 1880.
Lovedale, Dr Waterston spent virtually half a century in Cape Town, where she died in 1932 in her ninetieth year, after a busy career in private medical practice there, also pioneering midwifery and maternity services through the Ladies’ branch of the Free Dispensary. She stood up for the women of the Lock Hospital and the lepers on Robben Island, as well as sustaining a lively interest in colonial politics.42

Women missionaries in India, I have tried to show, were pivotal in opening up medical training for Indian women to become doctors. Black women in South Africa have entered nursing training in large numbers and initially through missionary institutions, but education for doctors has drawn women in much fewer numbers. Nevertheless, missionary men were key to the planning and delivery of medical training for blacks in South Africa, from the early days of the male medical aids training at Fort Hare in the late 1930s (a scheme which soon disillusioned staff member George Gale) to the setting up of the black medical school in Durban, where American missionary doctor Alan Taylor was on the founding committee and became the first dean in 1951, to be followed the next year by George Gale.

Shula Marks, author of the key historical analysis of nursing in South Africa,43 has commented that ‘No profession was more associated with the beneficent work of missionaries than nursing’.44 Before African women were drawn into health care, again the church was crucial. The pioneer at Kimberley hospital was Sister Henrietta Stockdale, training ‘ladies and God-fearing women’; while the sisterhoods overall left a legacy to professional nursing in South Africa, Marks argues, of ‘the military notions of duty and the religious ideals of service’.45 It was the Victoria Hospital at Jane Waterston’s Lovedale that pioneered courses for the so-called ‘Bantu Nightingales’46 from 1903, with Cecilia Makiwane becoming the first state registered nurse in 1907. The American McCord in Natal followed Dr McVicar of the Cape by 1910. The proliferation of mission nurse training of varying quality took time to win official recognition, and progress to full professionalisation was especially slow in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. Black girls’ education needed to advance for their numbers to grow to the uniform standard of qualification. Rural health needs especially remained dire. (A shorter, easier auxiliary nurse training was finally introduced in 1948.) The 150 members taking part in a candle-lit ceremony for the Bantu Trained Nurses’ Association in 1941 were portrayed by an American missionary facilitator, Ruth

42 Ibid., chs. VII–IX.
45 Marks, *Divided Sisterhood*, ch. 1; p. 43.
46 Ibid., ch. 4.
Cowles, as fervently committed to serving ‘as the light of the world because of their Christian faith’, marching out of their dedicatory church service singing ‘Onward Christian soldiers’.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 100–101.}

By the Second World War, about 25 hospitals, many of them run by missions, were training black, mostly African, nurses, and, in the post-war expansion, numbers increased from about 800 black nurses in 1944 to over 3,000 in 1957. By the end of the 1950s, black registered nurses amounted to nearly a third of the whites and black student nurses to over half the white numbers.\footnote{Marks, ‘The Nursing Profession’, p. 353.} When the Afrikaner Nationalist government sought to extend apartheid to the nursing profession in 1957, the Anglican Church and the Mothers’ Union joined political and human rights organisations in their protests. Yet Marks reminds us that nursing, ‘the most prestigious profession for black women’, was ‘rooted from the outset in segregationist practices and expanded in large measure because of white racism.’ White female hands on black male bodies made whites, especially men, anxious. The possibility by the 1950s of black nurses in authority over whites made Afrikaners, especially uneasy.

Some of South Africa’s most intriguing or eccentric early missionaries were doctors, e.g. van der Kemp, who came out with the LMS in 1799, and the famous David Livingstone. Even the first American missionaries to the Zulu in the 1830s included a doctor, Newton Adams (after whom a premier educational institution was later named), among them, but medical missions as such date from later in the nineteenth century. Gelfand portrays the pioneering period as covering the years up to about 1935, when notable mission hospitals numbered some 21 in total. The Zulu may have had no zenanas, but they got the most medical care, with 13 hospitals sited in Natal (including Swedish efforts), 6 in the Cape, 2 in the Transvaal and none in the Orange Free State. For the period of state support, from the mid 30s to the early 1970s, before the fuller assumption of state control, he lists 17 mission hospitals in the Cape, 29 in Natal, 20 in the Transvaal and 2 in the OFS.\footnote{Michael Gelfand, Christian Doctor and Nurse: The History of Medical Missions in South Africa from 1799–1976, Aitken family, Sandton, 1984, pp. 65, 145–46.} A recent marketing survey in the US has apparently shown the most positive response to Africa-related words with, first and perhaps not surprisingly, ‘Mandela’, and then the word ‘Zulu’, which, like ‘zenana’ in Victorian times, has become a widely memorable and magnetic term.)

Whereas the few female doctors and key nursing leaders form an exception to a largely male narrative of medical missions in South Africa, two urban mission midwifery ventures stand out as distinctively female in their foundation, concerns and long term impact. It was not simply that the pains and rewards of childbirth provided a bond between all women (for often the
white nurse trainers or doctors were themselves childless). Wider issues of healthy Christian motherhood in a racially divided society were also at play. Fortunately, superb feminist research is illuminating both women’s medical projects: Shula Marks is working on the history of St Monica’s in Cape Town and Cathy Burns has written a superb thesis on the Bridgman Memorial Hospital in Johannesburg.\footnote{Catherine Burns, ‘Reproductive Labors: The Politics of Women’s Health in South Africa, 1900 to 1960’ PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1994.}

St Monica’s developed out of the Anglican Mission to Muslims in Cape Town, as the Coloured population included descendants of Islamic religious leaders and adherents who were brought to the Cape under the Dutch East India Company, the so-called Malays. The Mission was revived in 1911 under Rev. Stephen Garabedian, and was particularly anxious to combat the influence of Malay men on poorer urban women, who were seen as in danger of seduction and losing their Christian faith. Hence, St Monica’s Home was established on the edge of the so-called Malay quarter to provide a refuge for Malay women seeking to convert and for lapsed Christians who had fallen under Muslim influence. It was Miss Shepherd, arriving in 1916 from the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, who realised that pioneer midwifery training would be invaluable and got a plan accepted by church and medical authorities. From 1917, Coloured women could train as midwives among Malay women, while also acting as missionaries. They got the same certificate as white nurses, to which the latter objected, while welcoming the expansion of training.

Continuity of staff (if one thinks of the Delhi Mission’s early travails) certainly helped St Monica’s get established. A local male doctor acted as Honorary Medical Superintendent for the first 34 years, while Ethel Hefford was Matron for 27 years, from 1918–45. Sister Tutor Thomas was likewise there for a good stint, from 1923–45. Mrs Garabedian, for three decades, gave spiritual help to the destitute, who were often unmarried mothers, encouraging them (perhaps predictably) to do needlework while waiting to give birth. Regular instruction in the Christian faith was given alongside the maternity work, with daily prayers in the Home chapel. By 1920, St Monica’s had certificated ten nurses, cared for 379 patients (delivering 179 in the Home itself – a much quicker institutional acceptance rate than in the East), and sheltered 20 women and girls. Weekly prenatal clinic work began in 1921, while an infant welfare clinic was opened in 1933. It is gratifying to learn that pupil midwives could get financial or equipment assistance from the Jane Waterston Memorial Fund! By the late 1930s, the Home had trained 135 midwives, while its golden jubilee in 1967 marked the graduation of 568 midwives from St Monica’s and the accommodation and refuge of over 28,000 women over the fifty years since 1917. A new hospital was opened in 1950, with 37 in-patient beds, a labour ward, operating theatre, nursery, out-
patient department and Nurses’ Home for 25 trainees.51 By then, a somewhat aggressive missionary venture had been transformed into a valued community resource for women and was held in great affection and respect.

Johannesburg’s Bridgman Hospital at least got to celebrate a silver jubilee (if not a golden) before the period of intensified apartheid segregation of city centres and state takeover of health facilities from the missions. The moving spirit in its foundation was the energetic missionary widow, Clara Bridgman, not herself a medic.52 As Burns writes:

The opening of the Bridgman Memorial Hospital in 1928 represented the culmination of two decades of public and philanthropic health work in the largest city in Southern African. By the time it was forcibly closed in 1965, 93 000 black women patients had passed through its well-kept gardens and enamel painted doors, into its often crowded wards, shiny operating theatres, and open-air pre- and post-natal verandas. No equivalent institution in Southern Africa brought together so many black women to prepare for birthing labour; to bear children; to learn the craft skills of midwifery in "delivering" babies, to receive and communicate hygiene and mothercraft instruction and for both emergency and routine medical care. Its wards were dedicated not only to live healthy births, but also to a vision of exemplary African Motherhood, and through this the reduction of infant and maternal mortality, the improvement of child rearing practices, and ultimately the betterment of the class of labourers upon whose exploitation the riches of the city and state depended.53

Burns is interested in the hospital as a site of research into black women’s bodies also,54 and an important focus for the energies of white women philanthropists,55 nurses and doctors. Their involvement with this institution ‘brought not only personal satisfaction’ but a way of participating in public debate about health care, welfare, black medical training, and ‘the capacities, potentials and rights of black women.’ But although the documentary evidence might lend itself to a view of the Bridgman ‘as emblematic of the gender prescriptive, racialized, civilizing and domesticating vision of white civic employees and missionaries of the day’, she acknowledges the many internal contradictions and cleavages which undermine such a straightforward approach, while seeking to incorporate also the way in which the hos-
Hospital was, aside from being a space ‘for the production and transmission of knowledge’, a site ‘offering rest, comfort, support and relief from pain.’56

The four most long-standing medical superintendents of the Bridgman were single women missionary doctors from Britain – Ethel Smith, Hope Trant, and Drs Robertson and Carlisle. But, unlike the tendency I observed in the records of the 1930s to question the entitlement of spinster missionaries to pronounce on Christian motherhood, their authority was unchallenged.57 The Bridgman was not only significant for black midwifery training. ‘It was also the most important site for the obstetric and gynaecological training of Wits [University] medical school students.’ But the hospital was never able to fund expansion into a hoped-for children’s ward or the network of preventive health care clinics, which Clara Bridgman deemed urgently necessary. Burns states that it is also still unclear how successful it was as a hospital in its mission to improve the health of women and to lower infant mortality. Maternal deaths ‘plunged to less than 0.5% by 1939, despite the great increases in the numbers of women admitted, and never rose above this low figure.’ However, the percentage of infant deaths that same year reached its peak of over 7% and remained high through the 1940s and 50s, possibly because far more problem deliveries came to the hospital. More worrying was the wider context of poverty, low wages, overcrowding and lack of facilities and infrastructure in the slums. Dr Trant was downcast to realise the ‘appalling’ fact that nearly half the babies born to their patients died in their first year; 64% were dead by the age of four. Even in 1955, ‘inadequate access to clean water and sufficient food remained the major problem for most black children in the city.’ Bridgman babies had lower birth weights than babies born to rural Xhosa women in the eastern Cape at the same time, for levels of maternal nutrition were higher there.58 The limits on what a mission hospital could do in an inegalitarian, segregationist and apartheid South Africa were clear.

When the Bridgman closed, many of its functions were taken over by Baragwanath, the huge state hospital 12 miles away from Brixton on the edge of Soweto. But, reflects Burns, ‘the new hospital was no longer the “house of friendship” that Clara Bridgman had envisioned’. The Star newspaper pointed out the scale of the Bridgman contribution in 1962, with its 280 monthly admissions:

Every day it has an average of 75 women and 55 children in its wards. There are seven full time doctors, 10 senior European Sisters, 17 African Staff

56 Quotes all from ibid., ch. 1.
57 Ibid., ch. 5.
58 Ibid., ch. 7, ‘The Bridgman Mothers’.
Nurses, and 60 African probationers. Last year, 500 babies were born in the hospital, including 65 sets of twins.59

Gender, Poverty and Health:
Evaluating Missionaries’ Social Analysis of South Africa

Women medical missionaries wanted to relieve suffering and point patients to God, but how well did they and their male colleagues see the ‘big picture’? How far did they acquire a social analysis of the origins of much of the ill-health in the Asian and African communities in which they worked? Here I can only begin to open up this topic for South Africa, where pioneering insights must be credited to two remarkable male doctors, one Christian, one Jewish, brought together by ‘a practical humanitarian socialism’.60 George Gale was a missionary’s son and himself a medical missionary among the Zulu for eight years, but a civil servant from 1939, and South Africa’s Secretary for Health and Chief Government Health Officer from 1946. Sidney Kark was founder, along with doctor wife Emily of Pholela Health Centre in 1940, of the prototype of forty-four such centres later envisaged as the first step in the establishment of a national health service for South Africa. Both Gale and Kark championed the variegated team work of community health centres ‘motivated by a genuine desire to promote the broad health needs of Africans’, their ideas ‘considerably ahead of their time’, both locally and internationally.61

Shula Marks not only spells out Gale’s clear Christian purpose and sense of missionary vocation throughout his medical career62 but shows his ‘unequivocally progressive’ approach in the 1930s, recognising the social basis of ill health and advocating health education and preventive medicine in the rural areas.63

Like his fellow-advocates of social medicine [Marks writes], Gale had little-doubt about the socio-political causes of much of South Africa’s burden of ill health and explicitly advocated socio-political means of preventing and curing it, even if in the final analysis he was powerless to implement the broader

59 Ibid., Conclusion. Over 50,000 babies were born at the Bridgman, whose buildings were then turned into the private Garden City Clinic (now open to all races who can afford its rates).
63 Ibid., p. 198.
policies he believed necessary... As a mission doctor, he neither romanti-
cised ‘healthy reserves’, nor blamed ‘the victims’ for their susceptibility to
disease.64

It was migrant labour that was harming the African reserves. Tuberculosis
and venereal disease could not be cured simply by building more hospitals
and clinics: ‘The overall campaigns [he argued] must include radical
changes in the socio-economic system under which non-European labour is
recruited, housed and fed.’65 But it turned out that Gale and Kark’s ‘rare
window of opportunity to initiate and develop far-sighted policies of social
medicine’ in the 1940s, arising out of wartime reformism and a crisis in
black health, aired ideas not revived in South Africa until the political con-
figuration began to change in the 1990s.

unless there were drastic reforms in the sphere of wages, nutrition, housing,
health education and recreation, ‘the mere provision of more “doctoring”
would never bring health to the people of South Africa’ – demanded a drastic
restructuring of the social order [comments Marks], which went well beyond
the white consensus.66

The Smuts government, in fact, rejected the report’s main findings. But it is
worth recognising that the modern practice of community-oriented primary
care owes much to this early ‘social medicine’, with its dual focus on both
biomedical and socio-economic factors in disease causation and prevention.
Hence, the important modifications offered by historians of medicine, like
Marks, who have hitherto long championed a

political-economy approach, arguing that most public health physicians, even
those who were benevolent and well-intentioned, failed to understand – never
mind expose – the capitalist economic structures and institutions that were
producing adverse health effects on a huge scale in black communities during
the era of segregation and apartheid. Class interests, blinkered vision and
rigid biomedical assumptions left physicians [this approach argued] treating
symptoms and attributing disease causation narrowly to harmful vectors and
other environmental factors.67

64 Ibid., p. 192.
65 Ibid., quoting Gale c. 1946–47.
66 Ibid., p. 206. For a robust defence of social medicine against those who would portray it
purely in terms of power, control and surveillance, see the review article by Alan Jeeves,
‘Health Surveillance and Community: South Africa’s Experiment with Medical Reform in the
Alongside the Karks’ book, he assesses Alexander Butchart, The Anatomy of Power: Euro-
pean Constructions of the African Body, Unisa Press, Pretoria, 1998, while also feeding in
original research on Dr John Ryle’s official 1947 visit to review the health centre project –
critically, as it turned out.
67 Jeeves, ‘Health Surveillance’, pp. 245–46, and see his note 2 for a detailed list of examples
of political-economy work.
The progressive professionals with a different vision in the 1930s and 40s are now being recognised – and medical missionaries are among them. ‘With first hand experience of the wide gaps in public health service, many medical missionaries gave their support to the proposed National Health scheme in 1944 and 1945, and backed its proposals for equitable resource redistribution.’ They were well aware of the role of poverty and the migrant labour system in undermining health – even though outsiders might not grasp this fact – but considered that meaningful steps to remedy dire poverty ‘did not have to await structural changes in the economy and society’. The Karks’ research suggested that equally poor families could have very different health outcomes, depending on factors which actually I would trace to Christian adherence: their family B, without strong church roots, commitment to the mission school or a tradition of temperance, had much untreated disease and used the health centre only after drunken brawls resulted in injury, whereas highly motivated family A, with those links of church, school and little or no alcohol, improved their condition markedly by their own efforts, despite being as poor, though they might, in turn, develop diseases of stress. It is also important to note, with our concern for gender and poverty, that not only was the health centre’s purpose ‘fundamentally to empower families, to show them that good health was something that they could achieve and maintain with the assistance of the centre, and to get them to take responsibility for their own physical condition’, but ‘its particular focus was on the needs of women and children’, e.g., tackling female infertility, and using community health educators to address devastating patterns of infant feeding.

Gale, the Karks and their colleagues were drawn to social anthropology in the hope that understanding indigenous belief systems would help them ‘learn how their patients conceptualized the destructive social changes impacting on them’ and then encourage behavioural changes ‘in ways that were respectful of, and did least violence to’ entrenched beliefs and social practices. The Karks, argues Alan Jeeves,

saw modernity rather than tradition as the root of the difficulties with which they were trying to deal. Persisting non-Western beliefs might complicate

68 Burns, ‘Reproductive Labors’, Conclusion.
69 See Jeeves, ‘Health Surveillance’, p. 255 for this assumption by Ryle.
70 Ibid., p. 256, and for families A and B, pp. 256–57; also Karks, Promoting Community Health, pp. 72–75. On p. 41 they note also that they were working before the use of penicillin, oral rehydration therapy, and a host of key vaccines. In addition, ‘There was much we could not change in the way of life of the Pholela people, such as their poverty and disturbed family living caused by the pervasive migrant labour system.’
71 Ibid., p. 248. See Karks, Promoting Community Health, pp. 62–65, for women’s stressful lives.
and impede people’s ability to adapt to social change, but industrialisation was, in their view, the root cause of chronic illness among the poor.\textsuperscript{72}

But there were still medical missions in 1950 operating within a much more spiritually adversarial universe of ‘Medicine versus Witchcraft’, as the Natal Mariannhill Catholics put it in celebrating their medical mission’s silver jubilee.\textsuperscript{73} One of their mission doctors, interestingly, who was not called a ‘medical missionary’, as Protestants would, because not a member of a religious order seeking conversions, was described as engaged in 1925–35 in a ‘single-handed fight with the dark powers of witchcraft’ as he documented the ‘sinister machinations’ of Zulu diviners and medical men, who might be ‘clever crooks or crazy cranks’. He only won acceptance after incontrovertible cures of a deformed foot, a paralysed man and a woman who had never previously delivered a live baby, alongside his willingness to treat Africans without asking whether they went to church or telling them to do so.\textsuperscript{74} However, an impressive African nun is also shown as seeing a ‘demoniacal connection’\textsuperscript{75} at the root of diviner powers.

Conclusion

Was it a subversive political act to feed hungry African children? Nursery schools run by Anglican women missionaries in Johannesburg townships took part in charitable school feeding schemes in the 1940s without incident. However, when Sidney Kark, not a Christian missionary and perhaps already an object of suspicion for involvement in student socialist politics in the 1930s, arranged free distribution of skimmed milk for malnourished rural children at health centres in the 1950s, he was investigated by the apartheid government for alleged ‘communist’ activities.\textsuperscript{76}

In assessing the impact of medical missions on African quality of life, it is vital to grasp that actual missionaries from the West may have mattered much less in many cases for decades past than the abilities and contribution

\textsuperscript{72} I\textit{bid.}, pp. 264–66.
\textsuperscript{73} Schimleck, \textit{Medicine versus Witchcraft}. At one of their offshoots, Centocow, Dr Max Kohler carried out consultations on the farm which later became the Pholela centre (p. 107).
\textsuperscript{74} I\textit{bid.}, pp. 76, 97 and ch.12. Ex-army officer Kohler was on the verge of using his gun during a frenzied ceremony for diviners: ‘To think [he is portrayed as saying, in the staged conversations in which this book abounds] that these madmen, these hooligans, these perfect images of the darkest devil himself, have kept such a splendid race as the Zulus in spiritual bondage for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years’ (p. 106). For his vehement assertion of the politically subversive role of diviners in sundry African risings, past and recent, see outbursts on pp. 117–18. A Swiss Catholic woman doctor, Bertha Hardegger, who had been at work in Basutoland since 1937 and was called ‘Mother of the Mountain’, was likewise depicted (p. 156) as engaged in a ‘single-handed but very successful fight on her lone outpost of medical missionary work against the forces of darkness’, deemed ‘darker and more fanatical’ there.
\textsuperscript{75} I\textit{bid.}, p. 112, quoting Bernadette Sibeko, an African Sister of St Francis.
to health care of those they trained. It was African nurses and midwives who were seeking to understand and uplift their communities. A European who encountered an African nurse at work in a large city location around 1920 came away feeling he had discovered ‘the most inspiring feature’ in African community life, and the placing of such ‘efficient and devoted’ women throughout South Africa might begin ‘to make some recompense for the locations themselves’:

I had not spoken to her for more than a minute before I realised that I was in the presence of a bright, intelligent, capable, managing woman, who had as proper a pride of her profession and as due a regard for efficiency as anybody could desire. She knows her location; the type of house that sends most patients, the prevalent diseases, the habits of the people, the families that are overcrowded, the rents of the different classes of house, the number of children attending the schools, the religious denominations at work in the location, and indeed all that concerns the welfare of the inhabitants.77

Cathy Burns notes the evocative funeral tributes to Bridgman-trained Letta Mosikatsana in 1992, resonating with Clara Bridgman’s founding rhetoric. Letta was ‘described as an exemplary mother, a woman never “off duty” in her community, as a “missionary for women and children’s lives”’. For schoolgirl Wilhelmina Madiba, Letta Mosikatsana at Alexandra Health Centre, Johannesburg, was a role model and inspiration to also enter nursing: ‘She was so smart, you know, with her crisp uniform, and she had a wonderful confidence. She truly inspired me. I thought, “Yes, I am going to be like her”’.78 Midwives like Letta, Burns continues, ‘transformed the concept of “mission” in ways not anticipated by Clara Bridgman and her allies.’ Instead of focusing on the slim chance of upward mobility which nursing provided and as some have characterised black nurses, many Bridgman-trained midwives were famed for their ‘continued involvement in community programmes and commitment to public health work.’ The black midwives Burns interviewed stressed that a commitment to women and the communities in which they lived was the ‘hallmark of good midwifery care’. How was it learned or imbibed? They ‘all pointed to their religious beliefs and their early teaching at the Bridgman’, so much so that one of them found it strange in later work in municipal health centres and state hospitals that prayer and religious imagery were not part of their daily routine.79 She concludes that

77 Quoted (though without further attribution) in: Schimlek, Medicine versus Witchcraft, p. 56.
78 Burns, ‘Reproductive Labors’, ch. 6, ‘Midwives and Medical Students: The Creation of a Professional Cadre at the Bridgman’.
79 Ibid.
black women’s responses to biomedical therapies and technologies were vital to the building and maintenance of the Bridgman in the first place. The labours of these women, both the midwives and the mothers of the Bridgman, formed the basis for the social and physiological reproduction of twentieth century Johannesburg.  

In reflecting on gender, poverty and church involvement, however, it seemed to me that here in Uppsala, the city which I associate with Bengt Sundkler, gifted and sympathetic pioneer of research into African independent churches in South Africa, we must not forget the churches of the ultra-poor where the offer of spiritual healing has brought sick people to a new faith. These churches themselves operate like hospitals or substitute as a cheaper, more nurturing alternative form of health care and support.

A very recent study by an African American woman of St John’s Apostolic Faith Mission, one of the few African-initiated churches started by a woman, Christina Nku, in 1938, emphasises the enduring appeal of such Christianity where poverty, unemployment and violence are all part of the ‘sickness’ for which desperate urban-dwellers seek a cure. Members in Guguletu, Cape Town, are empowered for day-to-day survival and provided with the tenacity to function in the wider world, she argues, by regular services of healing with holy water and laying on of hands under a special canopy in the church’s characteristic symbolic colours of blue and white. Healers active in the church ‘fuse the competencies of priest, medical doctor, psychiatrist, and welfare advocate’, while the strong sense of community and mutual aid alongside the incorporation of indigenous African religious practices within a Christian context perhaps ‘represent a health care system that successfully functions outside the conventional realm of hospitals and doctors’ offices’. Indeed, the ‘genesis and raison d’etre of St John’s were its healing rituals’.  

The needs and stresses of women on their own with children emerge clearly from her interviews. For daily safety (at the time of the deadly taxi wars in Cape Town), and for a future for their children, the women say: “We have to pray … We haven’t got the power … We keep on going because we

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80 Ibid., Conclusion. See also ch. 6 for good oral material on how women valued the pleasant material surroundings and the respect shown in their training, plus their pride in independent earning ability. Interestingly, midwives interviewed all recalled the names of their Matrons and main Sister Tutors, but not the female doctors! A white Wits woman medical student, by contrast, described Dr Carlisle as ‘a brilliant, brilliant teacher. I learnt everything I ever knew about midwifery from her.’

81 Linda E. Thomas, Under the Canopy: Ritual Process and Spiritual Resilience in South Africa, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC, 1999, pp. 6, 20 (where she gives the present national membership as over two million), 21, 80. See also ch. 6, ‘St. John’s Health Care System’. For a recent attempt to bring the historic Pentecostal churches in South Africa (like the original Apostolic Faith Mission), their African independent offshoots and later charismatic churches within one analysis, see Allan Anderson, Zion and Pentecost: The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist / Apostolic Churches in South Africa, University of South Africa Press, Pretoria 2000.
get the spirit from God because we know ourselves to be under God … Even when we leave the children behind [to go to work] we just say ‘God, you’re going to look after our children’…” 82 Thomas concludes that for them God is “a perpetually accessible caretaker addressing their needs in a loving and protective manner.” 83

So perhaps there are two basic aspects in the end to this issue of women’s medical missions from the perspective of gender, poverty and church involvement. While medical missions brought health care to women in both Asia and Africa, female physicians themselves were far more to the fore in the Indian than the South African work and had much more impact on the provision of female doctors – for whom there was a corresponding greater need than in Africa. Nursing, on the other hand, was an important and prestigious occupation for African women in South Africa and urban midwifery training in Cape Town and Johannesburg was a distinctive female mission niche with a religious and community strength. Outside of or alongside South Africa’s expanding formal sector of biomedicine, however, with its growing concern for a socio-political grasp of the causes and remedies of black ill-health, lay a more direct attempt to apprehend curative forces in the spiritual realm. Here too the mission impact was implicitly evident in the way the mushrooming independent churches 84 ran with the idea of power of the Holy Spirit to address sickness, poverty, and social and familial dislocation. In the current challenge South Africa faces to meet the health needs of its many impoverished people, it cannot afford to dismiss the offer of such healing.

82 Thomas, *Under the Canopy*, ch. 3, and p. 61 for quote.
83 Ibid., p. 64.
Poverty, Human Rights, and Church Involvement in Latin America*

Alf Tergel

Individual and collective rights in Latin America

The majority of Latin America’s population were poor. Human rights on this continent had therefore to be seen from their horizon. For them, issues such as freedom of thought, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of association were of secondary importance. Their fundamental rights were concerned with survival: work for all, land for those cultivating the soil, just wages, housing, free education, health care and protection against economic exploitation. Civil and political rights meant little for the poor as long as their fundamental needs remained unsatisfied. Respect for the right to life was another name for justice. From a Latin American perspective, human rights were thus primarily a matter of the right to life. The individualistic view of human rights is founded on the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Because of the Spanish tradition in Latin America, one preferred to speak of the rights of the people. The emphasis was thus laid not upon individual but on collective rights.1

Group rights are more important in Latin American culture than in North American society. This is hardly a matter of Marxist influence. J. J. Rousseau emphasised the general will in The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right. This does not mean that there is necessarily a causal connection between Rousseau’s general will and the Latin American social aspect of human rights. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to associate these rights purely with Marxism. Social rights also have their roots in the Enlightenment.2 In Latin America, human rights primarily meant collective rights. In North America, the situation was reversed. Collective rights could be traced not simply to Marxism but were also rooted in the writings of an Enlightenment thinker such as Jean Jacques Rousseau. Thus, priorities as regards human rights differ between North and South America and both types of rights have their historical roots in the Enlightenment. E. Weingartner in Behind

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1 Also published in Swedish Missiological Themes 3:2003.
the Mask, Human Rights in Asia and Latin America: An Inter-regional Encounter, 1988 emphasises the priority of collective rights.

Human rights and the Church

The backdrop to Medellin 1968 was the revolution in Cuba. Medellin was the Church’s response to the causes that produced profound social changes in Latin America. The Cuba model was popular and reached its high point at the Medellin conference. Medellin and the student movements coincided in time. Medellin rejected violence as a method for bringing about social change.

The Medellin Church demanded the liberation of the poor and this demand assumed concrete form in the struggle for human rights. The base communities nurtured this struggle.

The base communities made their breakthrough in Brazil. They were legitimised and supported by the conferences of bishops held at Medellin in 1968 and at Puebla in 1979. They spread throughout Latin America. Leonardo and Clodvis Boff assigned the base communities a central role in their liberation theology.

Those bishops who at a national level condemned the abuse of power, also pointed to the deeper underlying causes of the violations of human rights: an unjust economic framework, an improper distribution of land and wealth, lack of an effective social participation on the part of the poor and the ideology of national security. The bishops pointed out that there was a connection between violations of classical civil rights and the desire on the part of affluent elites to retain economic power. What was needed, was to bring about far-reaching changes in the economic and social system as a necessary step in guaranteeing the maintenance of human rights.3

E. Cleary (ed.), Path from Puebla, Significant Documents of the Latin American Bishops since 1979 (1989), is an extensive collection of documents from the Latin American bishops with a focus on social and economic rights throughout the continent. The attainment of social justice is a prerequisite for maintaining human dignity.

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Camillo Torres in Colombia

Camillo Torres (1929–1966) was a pioneer of individual and collective human rights in Latin America.

On 24 June 1965, Camillo made a public statement. He had chosen Christianity since it embodied the clearest way of serving one’s neighbour. He had become a priest as a commitment to loving his fellow human beings. As a sociologist, he had wanted to make that love effective through technology and science. His analysis of Colombian society had led him to the conclusion that revolution was necessary in order to give food to the hungry and water to the thirsty, to clothe the naked and to ensure the welfare of the majority. He looked upon the revolutionary struggle as a Christian and priestly one. Only through it, could those conditions be brought about which would allow human beings to love one another and to realise the love that human beings owe to their fellows.

Camillo Torres drew up a programme for the Colombian people’s united front, which was published on 26 August 1965. Those who had power in Colombia formed an economic minority that never made a decision contrary to its own interest. However, decisions that favoured the majority were needed in the socio-economic sphere. The political power structure had to be changed so that the majority were responsible for making the decisions.

The land should belong to those who cultivate it. Whatever is deemed to be for the general benefit of the people is to be expropriated without compensation. All who live in houses in the towns are to become owners of the houses in which they live. All public or private investment has to follow the national investment plan. A progressive tax is to be imposed on all those who live above a certain minimum. Banks, hospitals, the transport system, radio, television and companies exploiting the natural wealth of the country are to belong to the state. The state is to be responsible for the free education of all Colombians. Women are to participate on equal terms with men in the economic, political and social activities of the country.

On the question of implementing human rights, Camillo Torres’ message to women issued on 14 October 1965, is illuminating. Colombian women, like all women in underdeveloped countries, have always been assigned an inferior position to men. Among the common people, women often have a great number of physical duties but more or less no intellectual rights. The working class woman does not enjoy any social or legal protection. When the man leaves the family, the wife is left to carry the whole burden. Men also exploit the middle class woman. It is possible that in this class, relations with men are more on an equal footing. However, families cannot survive if the woman does not work. We know that the working woman, the office girl suffers from all types of exploitation and pressure from her boss. The upper class woman devotes herself to doing nothing apart from playing cards and taking part in the social round because of the lack of intellectual and profes-
sional opportunities in the community. The Colombian woman is a human being and not simply an instrument. She is aware that she is exploited not merely by society but also by her man. After the revolution, she knows that equality of rights and obligations will not simply remain an empty phrase but a reality that she herself will be in a position to guarantee.4

Brazil

The Brazilian Church worked actively for reform throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Since the mid 1960s, lay and grassroots movements have played an important role in the transformation of the Brazilian Church. They introduced the notion of belief linked to radical politics. Several Latin American liberation theologians like the Brazilian Leonardo Boff and the Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez have admitted that these grassroots and lay movements formed the starting point for their theological ideas. The grassroots movements were not solely responsible for the transformation of the Church. Without the support of the hierarchy, they would have been unable to transform it. The transformation process was dialectical. It was only because of institutional acquiescence that the radical lay movements were able to emerge and it was only when the hierarchy actively supported change that the Church strongly defended human rights.5

Between 1955 and 1964, the Brazilian episcopal conference, CNBB, was the most important force within the Brazilian Church. It was created in 1952 on the initiative of Dom Helder Camara, at that time assisting Bishop in Rio de Janeiro. It was one of the first national conferences of bishops anywhere in the world and the first in Latin America. It has played a highly important role in the development of the Brazilian Church. One of the basic axioms of the reformists was that the Church is part of the world and must participate in it. The Church cannot be completely above the world but should act as a symbol that helps to transform the world. For the reformists, the Christian message involved creating a just social order.6

Paulo Freires’ method and movement for grassroots education worked with the poor. Education became a means of bringing about social change. The movement encouraged people to see their problems as part of a larger social evil. The main idea was that human beings must be agents of their own history.7

Changes in the Church during the period 1964–1973 depended on a combination of transformations in Brazilian politics and society and

6 Mainwaring, op. cit., p. 48 f.
7 Mainwaring, op. cit., p. 66 f.
changes in the international Church. The young popular Church was encouraged by Rome and by the Medellin conference of 1968. Populorum progressio, published in 1967, was a source of inspiration for progressive Catholics throughout the whole of Latin America. In Rome, the episcopal synod on justice confirmed the Church’s need to support justice. Medellin was a turning point for the popular Church in Latin America. The conference represented a triumph for the popular Church. Salvation was understood as a process that begins on earth; faith was linked to justice; it was recognised that structural changes were needed in Latin America; and the base communities were encouraged. Medellin provided progressive elements in the Brazilian Church with legitimacy. The conference stimulated what subsequently became known as liberation theology with several of the pioneer figures in Brazil such as Leonardo Boff and Hugo Assman.8

Between 1974 and 1982, the Brazilian Church became the most progressive Church in the world. It was then that the popular Church emerged. The Brazilian Church went further than any other Catholic Church in the world in combining belief with commitment to social justice and the poor. The base communities multiplied rapidly.9

Helder Camara. Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife in North East Brazil had worked ever since the Second Vatican Council and his own elevation as archbishop in 1964, for social and political change in Latin America. This assumed that those in power would display a minimum of respect for human rights. Like Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King Jr in the USA, he was a convinced advocate of non-violent methods in bringing about social change and achieving justice and development in the Third World.

We want, Camara concludes, to eliminate poverty from the world, a poverty that is an affront to the Creator. We want all human beings to be able to fulfil themselves in such a way that no one is reduced to the status of a mere object; we want all human beings to truly experience that they are created in God’s image and likeness; we want all human beings to be able to fulfil their deepest vocation as co-participants in the creation, called by God to reign over nature and to bring the work of creation to fulfilment. We wish human rights to be more than mere empty words.10 For Camara, the ideal is a Christianity, which, instead of being alienated and alienating, is an incarnation of the divine, just as Christ is.11

Camara draws attention to the discrepancy between what he holds to be the true meaning of human rights and the actual situation in which people live in Latin America. The social aspect of human rights is at the forefront of

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8 Mainwaring, op. cit., p. 113 ff.
9 Mainwaring, op. cit., p. 145.
10 Camara, Kapplöpning med tiden (Race with time), 1970, p. 31 f.
11 Camara, op. cit., p. 57.
his concern. He wants people to escape from living in poverty and to be given tolerable living conditions.

**CNBB.** At the beginning of 1973, the general council of the national conference of Brazilian bishops (CNBB) issued a statement on human rights. Such rights are based on the Gospel. The Church must help downtrodden people to gain their rights and to inform people, support them and encourage them to build trades unions, cooperatives and similar organisations. The Church must mobilise the laity in a campaign to illuminate and defend human rights and to protest whenever they are violated. The Church ought to teach the faithful about a person’s rights and about their theological justification. It should emphasise the close connection between promoting human rights and God’s presence in history.

Human rights directed the Church’s attention towards the underprivileged classes and supported their just demands with practical action. As part of their evangelical mission, priests must persuade the faithful to fulfil their individual obligations by thinking of the need of their fellow human beings and forming teams at every level to develop personality. The Church ought to be conscious of its responsibility for defending human rights, not simply in the abstract, but by standing up for them, as a symbol and witness of these rights, and by forming groups to ensure that they are observed. The priests should give the liturgy a social dimension in order to make people notice the living conditions around them and to get them to pray for the oppressed.

The human rights which are least respected in practice, are the right to proper sustenance, the right to a just wage, the right to work and the right to humane working conditions, the right to own land for those who cultivate it and the right to life. The bishops emphasised that it is the natural right of human beings to fulfil themselves as persons and to have socio-economic structures that allow for their personal development.

The bishops wished to eliminate the differences between peasant families and large landowners in holding land, between employers and workers, between rich and poor in access to higher education, between rich and poor

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16 Op Cit, Proposal 1:12, p. 2.
18 Op Cit, Proposal 1:15, p. 2.
21 Op cit, Proposal 7:1,2, p. 4
with respect to income\textsuperscript{25} and finally between white and black.\textsuperscript{26} The Indians who were threatened with extermination should be given every conceivable support.\textsuperscript{27}

The social and collective rights form the focus of the Brazilian bishops’ attention. It is meaningless to speak about the implementation of individual human rights as long as the poor and oppressed lack the necessities of life.

**Leonardo Boff and the base communities.** The majority of base communities were to be found among the lower classes either in city environments or in semi-urban zones. The base communities consisted of manual workers. They brought together people sharing the same belief, belonging to the same Church and living in the same area. They were Church groups because they gathered within the Church. The base communities can be characterised as small associations of Catholics, meeting regularly to enrich their insights about the Christian Gospel, to reflect about social needs and to seek adequate solutions to these needs. They celebrated mass together and spread God’s word. They had socio-political goals. They were instruments of social change.

The Brothers Clodvis and Leonardo Boff define them as a liberating force that works for a new social order in which justice and equality prevail.\textsuperscript{28} Leonardo Boff writes that they pave the way for a society of solidarity instead of bourgeois society. The method of changing society is presented as a threefold task: see-judge-act. The concrete social issues concerned such things as running water, street lighting, bus transport and the cost of living. Those things of immediate interest led to concrete actions.

For Leonardo Boff, the base communities were a miniature of a new society where there is respect for our fellow human beings, a spirit of cooperation, a feeling of solidarity, recognition of the value of the lower classes and support for the poorest of the poor. The tasks of God’s people in their organisation of base communities are, among other things, the defence of human rights. Leonardo Boff developed the idea of base communities in his liberation theology.

In the base communities, Boff continues, people assumed responsibility for their fate. In the beginning, they read the Bible. Such a community gave the faith of its members a new depth. They came to see that the problems they encountered were of a structural kind. Their marginalisation was perceived because of the socio-economic character of the capitalist system. The desire for liberation was placed in a concrete, historical context. The community looked upon it not simply as liberation from sin but also as a libera-

\textsuperscript{25} Op cit, Proposal 9:9, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{26} Op cit, Proposal 9:10, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{27} Op cit, Proposal 10, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{28} C. Boff, *Feet-on-the Ground-Theology. A Brazilian Journey*, 1987.
tion that has economic, political and cultural dimensions. The Christian community, from Boff’s perspective, must defend human dignity. Human beings are seen as the image of God. This anthropology forms the basis of human rights and obligations.

A network of centres for the defence of human rights was created in Brazil. These centres would come to form a network giving access to sources of information and legal advice for peasants and worker organisations.

Summary

The local Church in Brazil underwent a transformation from supporting the status quo to active participation in the defence of civil and human rights. The Brazilian Church came to be seen as one of the most politically progressive Churches within Catholicism because of its stand on behalf the poor and oppressed. The base communities aim at achieving social change or transforming existing social structures. Through the national conference of the Brazilian bishops, which was founded in 1952, the Church has worked to create national programmes for the defence of human rights. CNBB encouraged the creation of human rights groups at all levels within the Church and inspired the creation of the base communities. The base communities in Brazil consist of lay people with a similar social situation and with the same commitment to the poor. The base communities embody a religiously motivated commitment to temporal justice. They work for a more just social order.

Gustavo Gutiérrez in Peru

The central figure of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez worked in Peru. In his classical work A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, 1973 he describes Catholic, political and social activism and its philosophical presuppositions. Among the issues mentioned is the Church’s commitment to human rights.

He returns to the same theme in The Power of the Poor in History, 1983. The issue of human rights was given a new emphasis in Gustavo Gutiérrez’ thought. There are two reasons for this. 1) The swelling list of martyrs in all the countries, and 2) the greater attention paid to the issue by the outside world.

30 L. Boff, op. cit., p. 32.
Gutiérrez placed social rights at the centre – people’s right to food, clothing, education, housing, health care and employment. Wherever children grow up in a society where their parents are unable to find work with the result that the children grow up undernourished and people are deprived of housing, education and health care for their children, human rights are being violated. Such rights must be at the very centre of humanitarian efforts in Latin America.³² The ruling classes regarded their interests as being threatened by Christians who worked on behalf of the poor.

Liberation theology expresses the right of the poor to think. By this is meant the right to express the other right that an oppressive system denies them, namely the right to a humane life.³³ People who are part of particular social processes create theology. All theology is in part a reflection of the concrete social process. Theology is not something revealed and timeless. It is an attempt to express the Word of the Lord today in the language of today. No meaningful theology can be decoupled from concrete history and presented as a set of abstract ideas. For Gutiérrez, reflections about belief are an attempt on behalf of the individual believer to think about their belief in definite social conditions in order to work out interpretations and lines of action which will influence these conditions and which will play a role in the events and struggles of a given society. Theologians do not work in a historical vacuum. Their thought has its own particular starting point. It is the product of the fundamental material conditions of society.³⁴

The eighteenth century bourgeois revolutions in Europe produced a code of modern liberties. Contemporary theology in Europe and North America is based upon them. They are the creation of the bourgeois middle class.³⁵ The starting point of liberation theology is not the issues of the modern bourgeoisie but the issues facing the poor. The oppressed and marginalised, Gutiérrez emphasises, are oppressed and marginalised by the bourgeois class. It is a question of a cleavage between the perspective of modern bourgeois theology and the liberation theology from the perspective of the oppressed. This cleavage is to be found at the historical, political and social levels.³⁶

Liberation theology pays attention to the historical and concrete situation of the poor and exploited. It refuses to gloss over the conflict-filled nature of society. The issues of the oppressed concern the economic, social, political and ideological roots of the society that oppresses them.³⁷ Gutiérrez sums up by saying that the main issue for liberation theology is not the lack of faith on the part of the bourgeois middle class. Liberation theology expresses the dialectical opposite of bourgeois ideology. Its starting point is the lower

³³ Gutiérrez, op. cit., p. 90.
³⁴ Gutiérrez, op. cit., p. 90 f.
³⁵ Gutiérrez, op. cit., p. 91 f.
³⁶ Gutiérrez, op. cit., p. 92.
³⁷ Gutiérrez, op. cit., p. 92 f.
strata of history, the exploited and marginalised people in society. The divid-
ing line in liberation theology is between oppressor and oppressed sharing the same belief. This dividing line is not religious but economic, social and political.38

38 Gutiérrez, op. cit., p. 93.
Human Rights and Social Progress –
the Example of Child Labour Law

Rolf Nygren

During this century, the protection of children against abusive or excessive labour has been the core of more than a dozen international conventions. The perhaps nowadays most well-known of them all, the 1989 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, that has been ratified by all nations world-wide except the United States and Somalia – explains in article 32 that the child has “the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development”.

The ratifying states shall therefore take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of that right, particularly

- by providing for minimum ages for admissions to employment,
- by providing for appropriate regulation of the work hours and conditions of employment and, finally,
- by providing for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the aforesaid article.

The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child – so far as it relates to child labour – is a general pledge by the world community to strike down and, in a longer perspective, abolish child labour completely. On the one hand, the political goal of the Convention as well as the role of the law is quite clear: Child labour must be abolished. On the other hand, the means to achieve that goal are astonishingly vague and ambiguous: The ratifying member states are supposed to take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to bring children out of the factories and into proper school training. We may have rather good reason to suppose that such a promise carries no great weight due to the fact that too many developing economies are still too weak to dispense with the contribution made by labouring children.

Cynically said, I guess that few human rights are so difficult to endorse today as children’s right to grow up without being forced to support their families economically by sacrificing their health, their intellectual develop-
ment and their school training. Child labour is and has historically been a fruit of poverty. Without abolishing poverty, there is no hope of getting rid of child labour. Poverty and child labour are social twins.

The child labour problem has been on the international policymakers’ agenda for at least 80 years, on the agendas of the Western nation states for almost 200 years since the industrial revolution. During the 20th century, the International Labour Organization (ILO) – founded in 1919 to contribute to a more secure world after WW I – has been the most persistent international organization to combat child labour. ILO has established work life standards and other instruments to eradicate the most harmful work and protect the most vulnerable on the labour market, i.e., the very young, as well as to eliminate all forms of child labour globally. No less than twenty one international conventions and ten recommendations regarding child labour have been endorsed by ILO-member states between 1919 and 1999. The efforts of the ILO are far from weakening. The general meeting of the ILO, that convened in Geneva in summer 1999, had to address the child labour question once again, now by adopting a new convention on abolishment of the worst forms of child labour. The size of the child labour problem itself has today grown to such a dimension that the number of children involved may have reached the level of at least a quarter of a billion. Perhaps no other social fact better illustrates the size of human poverty and misery.

However, let us start with the first, and historically most significant proposal to adopt minimum standards for young workers, the Minimum Age Convention agreed upon by the General Conference of the ILO convened at Washington, D.C. in 1919. This Convention addressed the abuse of children in industrial undertaking, but not commerce or agriculture. Industrial undertaking included particularly mines, industries, construction work and transporting of passengers or goods. No child under age 14 should be employed or work in any public or private industrial undertaking or in any branch thereof, other than an undertaking in which only members of the same family were employed. Every employer in an industrial undertaking should be required to keep a register of all persons under age 16 to facilitate the enforcement of the provisions of the convention.

The detailed enumeration of illicit industrial undertakings mirrored the difficulties of the convening parties in making clear what an “industrial undertaking” really could be. The ideal type, to speak in Weber’s terminology, was obviously the multifaceted mechanical industry of the industrial revolution. Undertakings of that kind were mainly the symbols of the 19th century economic success as well as its human exploitation: the mines, the factories, the engines, the transport systems, but not commerce or agriculture. The convening parties were, however, conscious that there was an almost invisible border between industry, commerce and agriculture. Their solution was to leave it to “a competent authority in each country … to define the line of division which separates industry from commerce and agri-
culture”. The Convention of 1919 so far emphasized the inventions of the previous century but not undertakings that had existed for many centuries, namely, the use of even small children in commerce and agriculture. Not surprisingly, almost a dozen conventions had to be adopted to supplement the Minimum Age Convention of 1919 until the endorsement of the Minimum Age Convention of 1973.

The 1973 Minimum Age Convention declares on the one hand that the minimum age for being admitted to work “shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case shall not be less than 15 years”. The minimum age for admission to any type of work in which the health, safety or morals of young persons can run the risk of being jeopardized shall not be less than 18 years. The intention of the convention is thus very clear: A ratifying country must pass appropriate laws to prevent anybody under age 15 to work and prevent anybody younger than 18 to work under circumstances that can damage his or her health and morals. Children’s right to sufficient education is generally emphasized; their work must not interfere with their school attendance. So far, the convention may seem well designed to do what its promoters had intended “to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons”.

But that is only one side of the coin, as it is in almost all cases of transforming human rights into national law. After the proud declarations of individual persons’ rights, come the more shady limitations of these rights. The Minimum Age Convention of 1973 makes no difference. A member state with underdeveloped economy and administrative facilities may, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned, where such exist, initially specify a minimum age of 14 years or limit the scope of application of the convention. That means that the absolute minimum age for any employment can be as low as 12. The provisions of the convention shall, however, be applicable as a minimum to the following: namely mining and quarrying; manufacturing; construction; electricity, gas and water; sanitary services; transport, storage and communication; plantations and other agricultural undertakings mainly producing for commercial purposes, but exclude family and small-scale holdings producing for local consumption and not regularly employing hired workers.

What about the enforcement of the convention at the member-state level? A “competent authority shall determine the activities in which employment may be permitted for children aged 13 to 15, but after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned, where such exist, “the competent authority may, by permit granted in individual cases, allow exceptions to the prohibition of employment or work … for such purposes as participation in artistic performances”. Permits so granted shall limit the number of hours during which employment or work is allowed. Finally, na-
tional laws or regulations or the competent authority shall prescribe the register or other documents which shall be kept and made available by the employer containing the names and ages of employed persons who are less than 18 years of age. After the majestic rhetoric come the compromises.

If we now try to compare the Minimum Age Convention of 1973 to historical legislation of Western and Northern Europe during the second half of the 19th century, not only the general definitions but also the particular legal solutions are strikingly similar: There are three groups of child labourers in need of protection according to their age. There is a strong emphasis that labour must not interfere with attendance at elementary education of the young. The state is almost quite free to make its own legal and administrative provisions that may not only establish a controlling and supervising authority but also limit the scope of the convention. Finally, home or family related business, including agriculture, remain an unregulated sphere where the family, not the law shall reign. So far, the ILO conventions from 1919 to 1973 are evidently marked by a Western legal legacy that reflects the thinking of the men who made them. The conventions obviously belong to the context of the industrialized West, not of the developing countries where child labour now prevails. Let us look briefly at some of these national child labour laws of the 19th century.

Child labour hardly exists today as a great social and moral problem in Western Europe or North America, but one or two hundred years ago, horrifying stories were told about the living conditions of the industrial worker class. No report aroused so much affectionate compassion as the one that told about small children sitting completely unprotected on elevated wooden platforms to sweep the inside of chimney flues. Few workers have done a more dangerous job than these five or six year old mini-workers. Poisoned by the black soot, few survived more than half a year. The “chimney children” were, of course, among the most extreme victims ever heard of in the pitiless history of human suffering during the early industrial society, but they were hardly unique. I have sometimes found myself deeply moved by physicians’ reports from the lumber industry districts of Northern Sweden at the end of the 19th century. These short stories tell about teenage girls who had lost their hands between unprotected transmission belts and cog-wheels or one-legged boys who had by accident come too close to the steam-driven saw-blade that cut off their feet in one second of inattentiveness.

From a more general health care perspective, these instances of sudden, brutal physical injury were only a part of a progressive undermining of the physical strength of a whole social class. In 1877, a Swedish governmental commission set up to investigate the question of child labour concluded in a way that was familiar to any commission of the same kind in any of the industrialized states of the West:
“According to medical testimony anemic and lung diseases are prevalent in the worker population as well as hypogastric illnesses to such an extent that in some industrial locations most of the workers advanced in years are suffering from chronic diseases. Many physicians agree upon the statement that the physical strength of most workers in some particular branches of the industry is broken already early in life, while most of them never live to reach any greater age.”

In the long run, state interventions to force industrial employers to improve the physical safety in their plants became unavoidable. The turn of the tide came after the 1850s and marked a policy shift from generally underpinning the principle of the freedom of contract as the indispensable prerequisite of industrial development, which from our particular perspective meant the freedom of the employer and entrepreneur to run his own business with the least possible involvement of state regulations. Such a policy shift was found across Europe where industry had reached any level worth mentioning. A significant part of that policy shift had to do with the conditions of the millions of labouring children. We shall illustrate that shift by addressing two of the most significant legal contributions to ban child labour, namely the British and the Prussian ones.

The European legislators of the second half of 19th century addressed two questions in particular: minimum age for being employed in industrial work and upper limit of working-hours. The British Health and Safety legislation served almost as a model to other legislatures. The British law developed in three steps, the first from around 1800 to the early 1830s, the second from 1830s to mid 1870s, and the third one from the passing of the Factory and Workshop Act in 1878 and on. The legislative efforts of the first three decades of the 19th century mirrored the rather conservative attitude of the British legislator, a careful protector of the principle of freedom of contract that had been of greatest significance to promote the industrial revolution in general in Britain. However, the restrictions made by the legislators to protect labouring children were more or less alleviated by the inefficient control of the observance of the law. During the 1830s, a quite new policy was introduced that took into consideration the fact that the structure of the British industry could be very heterogeneous. Enterprises with less than 50 employed, so called “workshops”, were separated from those with more than 50 employed, so called “factories” and among the latter, textile factories were separated from other kind of factories.

The Factory and Workshop Act, passed in 1878, upheld the distinction between factories and workshops in two significant respects. Children could be admitted to work in workshops already at eight years of age, in factories no earlier than at ten. Restrictions on maximum working-hours of children were imposed. No more than 6.5 hours a day in workshops and non-textile factories, no more than ten hours a day in textile factories. Employers were requested to give children younger than 14 the opportunity to attend school.
Restrictions were also imposed on exposing children to physically hazardous processes or keep them from coming too close to unprotected machinery. The efficient observance of the law was upheld by public inspection of the working premises and offices, including keeping records, registers and other documents requested by the law. However, all exemptions permitted from these general rules were the weak side of the British work safety policy during this era. Boys could be employed in nightshift in iron-, glass-, paper- and book-printing industry due to market considerations, which was generally not possible in other branches. This policy of exempting some industrial branches from the strict observance of the child labour law became a widespread phenomenon across Europe.

The progress of German child labour law was strongly promoted by Prussia where the situation of industrial workers under age during the first half of the 19th century was similar to those in Western Europe. Despite the proud promises of the Prussian legislator that every child was entitled to attend public school after reaching the age of five, the Prussian industry could nevertheless handle its young workers like “Kindersklaven”. The school authorities would, however, get quite unexpected support from the strongest of all Prussian institutions, the army. During the 1830s, too many conscripts had to be struck off the list due to their bad physical condition. The generals blamed the industrialists for having kept the conscripts in factory work too hard and too early in life. Given a conflict of interests between Prussian army and industry the result was given beforehand. In March 1839, a Prussian act on child labour was passed that became the foundation of later German law. The Prussian generals saved the Prussian children.

The act of 1839 made the age of nine the minimum for factory employment unless the child had not completed at least three years of school attendance or proven proficiency in reading and writing. The Prussian legislators made clear that insufficient schooling would not be tolerated. Nobody younger than 16 was allowed to work more than ten hours a day, or in night shift or on Sundays. Exceptions from the work-hour maximum could be obtained only temporarily and by local police department permission. In the 1850s, the minimum age rule was changed from nine to 12 years and the maximum work-hours reduced to six hours a day. Night shift work for those categories was outlawed. Local authorities had to supervise that no child was exposed to physically hazardous machinery and production processes. The Gewerbe-Ordnung of 1869 made the Prussian law common to almost all states of the Norddeutscher Bund. However, the Gewerbe-Ordnung did not establish an authority for supervising the observance of the law until the mid-1890s, which in fact must have alienated legal observance and praxis from the letter of the law.

To sum up: During the 1870s and 1880s, more comprehensive legislative means were undertaken in Western and Northern Europe to protect both physical and spiritual well-being of labouring children by improving their
working and health conditions as well as of the labour class in general. Some
features were more or less common. The European legislators had realized
that young children could be injured physically and retarded mentally by
being put to industrial or similar work too early in life and for too many
hours a day. Medical studies performed mostly in Britain and Belgium were
asking for the rapid introduction of protective legislation in order to bring
young workers off the most straining and health injuring jobs like subterra-
nean mining, hazardous machines and production processes. We recognize
the same pattern in the modern conventions. The working conditions are still
almost similar in the poor countries today.

Like the modern conventions, the child protection laws of the 19th cen-
tury classified the young labourers according to age: the very young, the
young and the semi-adult, all of them in need of different legal provisions.
These three groups were also clustered by the legislators of the 19th century
according to sex, which implied that the law had to provide sufficient protec-
tion to at least six different groups of young labourers, which is less salient
one century later.

But that was only one part of the problem. Most child labour law of the
late 19th century addressed the need to protect young labourers in industrial
work but paid very little attention to improve the situations for children in
traditional agricultural and other home- or family-related businesses. Family
related work was more or less by definition not a matter for state interven-
tion, due to the fact that it had existed since time immemorial. This is a point
where we can find the strongest similarity between the modern conventions
and their 19th century precursors. Public authorities could hardly do more
than request parents to send their children to school according to the law. So
far, mandatory school training, obviously without any profound intention,
became a significant part of the European programs to protect children from
labour excesses. Thus, the promoters of providing elementary education to
citizens strongly urged for such appropriate legal means that could keep
the children in the class rooms and away from the factories and family work
places. Not surprisingly, the teachers of the late 19th century became the
heroes of the child labour battle and we may suppose that they still are today.
Though modern conventions urge the right of the child to get elementary
school training, we know but little about how that right is implemented in
practice in the poor countries of Africa, Asia and South America.

But finally, both the modern conventions and their older precursors estab-
lished a too weak controlling authority to supervise the carrying out of child
labour law that was already from the very beginning too weakened by ex-
ceptions and compromises. The sad outcome was the most blunt and open
violations of child labour law. Such a combination of weak control and
safety net for the existing socio-economic system had one victim: the labour-
ing child. So it was in the 19th century, and so it still remains.
As a part of the official preparations to the conference of the ILO at Geneva in 1999, a big study was made of some fundamental aspects of child labour. The study stresses the disturbing fact that there are conceptual obscurities in the legal terminology itself, above all the perceptions of childhood that differ a lot between countries. In many societies, childhood does not end when a child attains a certain age; entrance into adulthood is a gradual process, or is based on criteria other than age, which make a precise definition of “child” difficult. The study also concluded that there are at least two main approaches to defining “child labour”: (i) any labour force activity by children below a stipulated minimum age, or (ii) any work – economic or not – that is injurious to the health, safety and development of children. There are also various combinations and modifications of these two alternate definitions. Nobody can, of course, deny that it is serious for the global combating of child labour to find that the international community seems to disagree on both what child labour is and whom the law shall protect. That is, frankly said, a foreseeable outcome of transplanting Western legal concepts into cultural contexts not used to Western legal ideas and values.

What can eradicate child labour today? International conventions and national implementations of them can do no more than define an ideal. The problem is that the law presupposes a social and welfare network that is mainly not at hand in most developing economies. International conventions and banning of child labour do not necessarily fill empty stomachs, but child labour will mostly do so. The experience of the Western countries, like our own, bear overwhelmingly clear witness that child labour disappears as soon as the salary of the child no longer plays a crucial part of the family economy.

We may use Swedish archival material to illustrate the transformation of economy from one where child labour was of significant importance to the household and one where it was not. We can start in the mid 1870s when the social transformation of the society from rural to industrial had come rather well along, and end in the early 1890s when the working class was just leaving its previous level of marked, general poverty. What can we learn about child labour in such a society where a first and ill-conceived child labour law had been passed in 1881? There are, I am sure, similar information and data available in archives across the Western countries, but the Swedish may be preferred for two reasons. Firstly, the demographic material from Sweden is more reliable than perhaps any other. Secondly, the data refer to a society in Europe that came out relatively late in the process of industrial transformation, which makes comparisons to modern non- or semi-industrialized countries in Asia and Africa relevant.

Even in the mid 1870s, the process of industrialization was concentrated in the city of Stockholm and only four of the 24 counties. The capital and the four counties now mentioned housed more than 35,000 of the recorded 80,000 industrial workers. One city, Norrköping, had an amazing concentra-
tion of textile workers, almost a perfect mirror of Manchester a century earlier. The general structure of the society was similar to what can be seen in today’s developing countries: The industrialization pushes an inflow of people to some few areas, while most of the country remains dependent on traditional agriculture.

The general trend between the mid 1870s and early 1890s was obvious. The use of child labour generally dropped in all branches except the very rapidly expanding lumber industry. The trend was particularly evident among those younger than 14 but also evident among the teenagers between 14 and 18. Even if we look at the absolute numbers of child workers, the same trend is obvious. The group of child workers aged 14 and younger were obviously after 1890 no longer important as a work force as they had been only 15 years earlier. And the reason for that was the general increase of adult wages, not legal provisions made to ease the conditions of children.

The more the adult parent could earn, the less significant became the contribution of the working child. A rise in the living standard more efficiently did away with the need of child labour than anything else. Law could do almost nothing to change that social and economic shift.

Therefore, let us look at this more in detail: how much did the children in fact work weekly and how much could they earn compared to their adult relatives.

Table 1. Male weekly hours of work in nine Swedish branches 1875/76

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Workers under age 15</th>
<th>Workers aged 15–18</th>
<th>Workers aged at least 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>min.</td>
<td>max.</td>
<td>av.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassworks</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining Industry</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Industry</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing ind.</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match Industry</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile Industry</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Industry</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawmills</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>72.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Industry</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breaks for meals and resting between 1.8 – 2.4 hrs/day included. Av. = average. 
Source: Betänkande angående minderårigas antagande och användande i fabrik, hantverk eller annan hantering. [State Report on the employment and use of minors in industrial work, trade etc.] 1877.

Though there was a rather strong variation between the branches, two factors are evident. Firstly, the working week was unbelievably long, compared to modern standards. Secondly, the young, even the very young were at work almost as long as the adult. The most excessive among those under age 15
exceeded in all the nine branches the average week of their adult co-workers. As soon as we shift our perspective to the situation in developing economies today, we will surely find similar statistics.

Table 2. Male weekly wages in nine Swedish branches 1875/76

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Type of labour</th>
<th>Workers under age 15</th>
<th>Workers aged 15–18</th>
<th>Workers aged at least 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glass works</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>24.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>9.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining Industry</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Industry</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>15.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>11.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>15.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>13.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match Industry</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>10.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile Industry</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>11.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Industry</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>12.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawmills</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>18.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Industry</td>
<td>Piece work</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>14.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time wages</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit: Swedish Krona
Source: Betänkande angående minderårigas antagande och användande i fabrik, hantverk eller annan hantering. [State Report on the employment and use of minors in industrial work, trade etc.] 1877.

It is hardly possible to prove that the excessive work hours were the result of the piecework system used in the nine branches. It can, however, prove that workers younger than 15 years of age were able to earn almost half the weekly wages of the adult workers. That makes clear that a child under 15 could increase the family income by almost 50 percent, which explains why child labour became an indispensable source of income for thousands of families. No law could prevent the young being sent to the factory. The lower the wages the family had to live on, the greater significance was the contribution of the child to the family’s subsistence. This must have been very evident during the 1870s and early 1880s, when the living costs were unusually high. On the other hand, increasing adult wages after the mid 1880s reduced the need to get extra income by putting children to work. But there were always families who must continue to rely on the contribution of their young ones, especially single parent families: a single mother must
have remained dependent on her child’s income quite apart from the economic fluctuations. So far, child labour was both a question of class and gender. Laws aimed at protecting children from being economically exploited could do nothing to change that fact.

But this is also the case today. The more the number of orphans grew in the world, the more single mothers we get because of human misery, underdevelopment, medical maltreatment and insufficiency, the more burdens will be put on the shoulders of the young, especially young girls, who make up at least half of the mass of labouring children. And that’s the reason why we will see a continuously growing number of child workers in the future quite apart from what national laws and international conventions passed during two centuries have had to say. Law itself cannot feed an empty stomach. That is my very pessimistic conclusion.
Introduction

The presentation will focus on sub-Saharan Africa and I will suggest a framework emphasising developments in the post-colonial period, i.e. over the last 40 years. My main focus will be on the relationship between World Bank and poverty issues with some references to gender aspects.

During the period in focus I see two distinct phases; 1960–1980 – the period of the African post-colonial model, and 1980–2000 – the period of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) and multi-party democracy. These periods run more or less parallel to distinct quarter century phases in the global economic conjuncture, i.e. between 1950–1975 recording global economic growth averaging 5 per cent a year, and 1975–2000 in which the global growth performance dropped to only 2.5 per cent per year. Poverty issues were introduced on the development agenda only at the end of the first period, in 1973, by the then president of the World Bank, Robert McNamara at a speech in Nairobi, Kenya. Awareness of gender and environmental issues emerged toward the end of the 1980s.

Features of the post-colonial model:

Contrary to what most people perceive, there was rapid growth in African economies from the time of independence, around 1960, until the early 1970s. The major challenge of the new African governments was to create new post-colonial nations, i.e. nation building. This constituted modernisation within the nation state framework and with three major actors:

1. the state, the main agent of modernisation, regulation and consensus generation;
2. the local and external capital sectors;
3. the agricultural sector.

The latter two sectors were to generate the economic surplus for national development and modernisation. The agricultural sector had a critical role to
play in the early phases of modernisation through providing food for the rural and urban population, raw materials for a growing industry and for export and to constitute an important demand factor for industrial products. Important trade-offs in the model were:

1. The state was to see to the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population, and supply water, education, and health services. This trade-off was based on a form of social contract between African state leaders and the population that was based on the common struggle for independence.

2. A trade off between development and political pluralism. The position of the new leaders and their governments was that political pluralism would delay the process of development through modernisation. The state should be seen as a state for all people. Subsequently most sub-Saharan African countries established one party states.

Development assistance was important for:

1. Infrastructure, energy, harbour developments etc. implying large investments to do away with bottlenecks or hindrances for production and transport. This was the same approach as that employed in the post World War II development in the reconstruction of Europe, where the World Bank also had the leading role. The development philosophy was that if physical, infrastructure and machinery are in place, development will take off. This thinking reflected among other things the modernisation theory with its trickle down of benefits or growth to all members of society and the stages of economic growth theory promoted by W. W. Rostow, an American economist. The World Bank was a major actor and a strong supporter of the African state in the task it had taken upon itself to modernise the African societies.

2. Development and fulfilment of basic needs. The Nordic countries and some other donors strongly emphasised support to those sectors which to some extent helped the state meet the demand put on it by the social contract.

Economic growth started to decline towards the end of the 1960s, but most African countries were food secure until the early 1970s. However, the economic growth and expansion process of the 1960s resulted in increased social differentiation; the fruits of modernisation did not trickle down, instead, poverty and political unrest occurred. This was particularly the case in Latin America, in countries such as Chile and Brazil. The fear, on the part of dominant western countries, was that increasing and deepening poverty would result in broad political unrest that would play into the hands of the Soviet Union.
In 1973 the World Bank made a major change in its development and support strategy by focusing on the 40 per cent poorest in the poorest countries. The critical increase in smallholder production and productivity were to be realized through a broad rural development support approach comprising areas and activities such as credit supply, land reform, education and health and agricultural related support activities, i.e. through so-called integrated rural development programmes.

During the mid-1970s there also occurred a major, although temporary, shift of global economic and political power from the developed western countries to the developing countries in the south. This emerged as a result of the creation of OPEC in 1973 and subsequent increases in oil prices which led to uncertainty in the west about future global developments. Fear arose that other developing countries controlling strategic raw materials also would create cartels and raise prices. Thus in 1974 negotiations started within the United Nations with the aim of creating a New International Economic Order, NIEO, which should provide for developing countries a fairer share of the fruits of global development. Emphases in the negotiations were on higher and more stable world market prices for raw materials produced in developing countries, better control of trans-national companies, the securing of development effects from transfers of technology from the west to the south, a larger share of global industrialisation to occur in the south, etc. These demands were put forward by the developing countries and, in the context of uncertainty, western countries agreed to negotiate on these terms.

The west also at the same time increasingly started to buy into the “successes” of the south by providing increasing amounts of development assistance and loans. The first period of OPEC saw major improvements in international financial liquidity due to the circulation of OPEC oil incomes to the western financial centres. At the same time the western and the global economy went into stagnation and recession due in major part to increasing oil and raw material prices. The increases in loans and development assistance were often not well planned and were directed to poor projects and programmes that did not generate economic benefits and development. These financial transfers were to constitute the basis for the debt crisis that became manifest in 1982 when Mexico was unable to honour its debt. Thus the fear of a strong south diminished towards the end of the 1970s; the economic growth declined globally and the non-oil producing countries of the south became increasingly indebted.

During this period the African states, struggling to maintain expansion, became increasingly authoritarian and rent seeking and showed less and less respect for the social, ethnic and cultural diversity of African societies. The African states were unable, due to the character of their interventions policies, to extract a sufficient economic surplus from the rural areas to underwrite their expansion. Rather African states sought recourse to resources in loans and development assistance, i.e. through the support of International
Financial Institutions and donor agencies. These were under heavy pressure to disburse. The outcome was based on aid dependency and a closer alliance between African states and external institutions and governments. The aid dependency that emerged in the 1970s still remains for most African countries. So-called HIPC (highly indebted poor countries) arrangements have recently emerged as a mechanism to link debt reduction with poverty reducing development strategies. However, such arrangements are available for only a limited number of highly indebted poor countries and the extra resources made available are most often insufficient to address the indebtedness/development problems.

Towards the end of the 1970s most African peoples were left with neither development nor channels to express their discontent. As a consequence the African states and their leaders gradually lost their political legitimacy as the political, economic and social crises deepened. By 1980 the post-colonial African development model had failed. Sub-Saharan countries were in a state of severe economic, political and social weakness when their doors were open for the new development strategies of the IMF and the World Bank.

The period of structural adjustment and multi-party democratisation, 1980–2000

Important changes in the preconditions for global development occurred by the inauguration of Reagan as president in the USA and Thatcher as prime minister in Great Britain. This manifested the advent of the neo-liberal economic paradigm whose essence was to replace the state with the market as the driving force for development. Within OECD, the organisation of the developed industrialised countries, it was decided to develop a common policy towards developing countries based on this strategy (Gibbon et al 1992). The IMF and the World Bank were given the responsibility to design the content of such a policy. This led to the creation of the structural adjustment programmes, SAP, in the early 1980s.

During the first period of SAP, the focus was on “getting the prices right” (World Bank 1981, the so-called Berg report, named after its editor Elliot Berg). Other major elements of SAPs were to reduce the role of the state, to enhance privatisation and liberalisation of the economies, reduce or take away all forms of subsidies on transport, inputs, for consumers etc. Poverty issues were played down or seen as rather unimportant at this stage, the main focus being creation of new growth in Africa. The argument was that proper macro-economic frameworks would both help to develop political stability and would help attract foreign direct investments to support the renewal of African growth. In this spirit, the first generation of SAP pro-
grammes were termed as economic restructuring or rehabilitation pro-
grammes.

SAPs failed to deliver the expected results, but a few countries were held up as good working examples, e.g. Ghana in the mid-1980s and Uganda at a later stage. In response to this outcome a major modification of the strategy came in 1989 through the World Bank report, “Sub-Saharan Africa: From crisis to sustainable growth” (World Bank 1989). The emphasis was now shifted to creating “an enabling environment” for the private sector to unfold. A strong focus was given to entrepreneurship and in this perspective African smallholders were conceptualised as private entrepreneurs rather than the traditional view of them being stubborn and backward. Focus on the gender gap was dealt with rather in passing in areas such as education (ibid., 79) and agriculture (ibid., 103–4). Increased weight was also put on the need for institutional reform. No mention was made in the report of the need for democratisation. The focus was rather on improved governance, making the government more effective so that it could support and provide a stable legal framework and an improved infrastructure for society and the private sector. The concept of sustainability is also inserted in the report with reference to the Brundtland report, “Our Common Future” of 1987, emphasising the role of and the need to care for the environment for future generations. Food security is also underlined. It is stated that severe food shortages were exceptional in 1960s while “now they are widespread”. More than 100 million Africans were facing chronic food shortages. But the report made no systematic treatment of poverty issues. They were dealt with more systematically in the subsequent 1990 World Development Report (WDR).

The Nordic countries had for some time resisted the shifting of their assistance to the SAP programmes, but in November 1984 it became clear that they were ready to swing in this direction. Thus the emphasis of Nordic assistance on the social sectors was also weakened. The Nordic countries were, however, concerned about the impacts of SAPs on poverty and requested the World Bank to measure the impact (Havnevik 1987). However, no alternative policies or strategies were put forward. The most systematic UN critique of SAPs came from UNICEF through its report on the need for “Adjustment with a Human Face” (UNICEF 1987).

A major change in global politics occurred with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. This brought the issue of democratisation onto the development agenda. Earlier, SAPs had been pushed outside a democratic context, only few top bureaucrats of African governments participated in the decisions with IMF and World Bank officials in regard to SAPs. In the early 1990s major western powers, the USA, Great Britain, Canada, promoted multiparty democracy and Human Rights in order to legitimise the new world order with only one super power emerging, the USA. Thus political conditions were added to the economic ones. The IMF and the World Bank had to take the political conditions on board and pushing, at the same time,
economic reform. Demands for political reforms had also grown from within many African countries during the latter half of the 1980s. This put African governments under pressure both from outside and inside. Having the international financial institutions and donor agencies add the multiparty system to the conditions required by SAP economic reforms, resulted in some African researchers claiming that the west wanted to provide for African democracy without choice (Mkandawire 1996).

The economic reforms of the 1980s had not helped unseat African dictators and authoritarian leaders. Often African governments signed SAP agreements, took the loans and assistance, but showed limited interest in implementing the programmes with the given conditions, a situation termed slippage. Slippage highlighted political aspects of SAPs and occurred because implementation of the programmes threatened bureaucratic elites through eroding their command over regulatory and various control mechanisms of the state. Such mechanisms had grown increasingly important for rent seeking activities on the part of government officials and leaders.

The World Bank and Poverty

Many donor agencies, and in particular the Nordic ones and UNICEF, held the opinion that the World Bank and IMF, in their formulation and implementation of SAPS did not take poverty issues seriously. This pressure led in the late 1980s to the adding of a poverty mitigation element (PAMSCAD) to the Ghanaian SAP model, without, however, any change in its inner logic (Gibbon 1992). Subsequently most of the second generation SAPs, also had added a social component to them and were often termed economic rehabilitation and social action programmes. Although the programmes’ emphasis on the social sector increased, it was mainly an “add on” to the basic SAP programme. Gradually attempts were also made by the IMF and the World Bank to involve the recipient governments in more constructive ways in the formulation of the programmes, i.e. the so-called “ownership” issue.

In the early 1990s many donors pressed the Bank further on the poverty issues and a process of Poverty Assessments were initiated by the World Bank in a number of countries, often in cooperation with civil society organisations. In 1966 the World Bank summarised its experiences with poverty reduction in the report, “Poverty reduction; progress and challenges in the 1990s” (World Bank 1996). Now poverty reduction is seen as the most urgent task facing humanity. It remains a rural phenomenon and data on poverty is stated to have increased significantly. The World Bank’s strategy to reduce poverty comprises:

1. Broad based growth. – This item comprised labour intensive investment and projects, access to assets, making markets work for the poor, helping
to overcome discrimination against the poor, increased support to women and indigenous groups in terms of appropriate technology, access to and rights to land, child care and unemployment.

2. Develop human capital of the poor. – Here the emphases were early childhood development, primary education and education for girls which was seen to have a most powerful effect on dimensions of development.

3. Provision of safety nets – for vulnerable groups. The World Bank stated that it was increasingly involved in analysis and design of safety nets for sick, old, disabled, those in poorest regions and those suffering from temporary set-backs.

Empirical data show, according to the Bank, that: “No country has been able to sustain its effort in reducing poverty without continuing positive economic growth. In the vast majority of areas where poverty persists, expected levels of growth have the potential to provide much needed jobs and higher incomes as well as the additional resources needed to fund human capital development and safety-net programs. Sub-Saharan Africa is an exception, however, with expected levels of growth well below what is needed. Significant strides will be required in this region to make adequate strides in reducing poverty.” (World Bank 1996:xi)

But at the same time, at a Sida seminar in Stockholm on December 10, 1996, key World Bank officials from its Poverty Division came to present their perspectives and work on poverty. One representative stated that, “the World Bank’s traditional approach to poverty reduction in Africa, i.e. investing in broad based growth, human capital and safety nets had not worked in Africa” (Havnevik 2000). In rural Africa, according to the World Bank representative, “there was a black box”, which the World Bank Poverty Division did not understand; and this, supposedly, after some 23 years of concern with poverty issues.

Some of their World Bank colleagues in the Social Development Division had, however, started the process of opening the black box and investigating its content. This was the group that later developed the studies resulting in the report, “Voices of the poor – crying out for Change” (World Bank/Oxford University Press 2000). First, the study on voices of the poor was conducted in connection with the poverty assessment process in Tanzania in 1995. Subsequently a much broader global study was carried out in which some 20 000 poor women, men, youth and children were interviewed to inform the World Bank researchers about their perceptions of poverty.

It is this report that Agnes Aboum on Monday in her presentation referred to as “the power to speak has been hijacked by the World Bank” (Aboum 2002). The “Voices of the Poor” report is organised around the discussions and answers by poor in 12 chapters. The study was conducted in 23 countries in 1998/99. “Its origin lies in the conviction that at the start of the 21st century any policy document on poverty should be based on the experiences,

The Voices of the Poor report identified 10 interlocking dimensions of powerlessness and ill-being that emerged from the poor people’s experiences; livelihoods and assets are precarious, places of the poor are unserviced and stigmatised, the body is exhausted and sick, gender relations are troubled and unequal, social relations are discriminating, security is lacking (both protection and peace of mind), disregard and abuse by powerful, institutions are disempowering/excluding, organisations of poor are weak and disconnected and capabilities are weak (lack of education, skills and confidence).

The chapter on gender relations in particular bears out the increasing strain in the woman/man relationship from women increasingly taking on income generating activities in order to supplement the family income. This development has generated changes in the decision making and power relations in the household which men have a problem accepting.

The report ends in “The Challenge to Change” where it is stated that listening to the poor is only a beginning. The crux is deeper change which requires commitments in three domains; professional, institutional and personal. At professional level, a paradigmatic shift, “entails modifying dominant professional preconceptions with insights from participatory approaches and methods. It implies starting with the realities of the poor” (World Bank 2000:288).


Wade draws attention to the fact that the chief economist of the World Bank, and later Nobel laureate, Joseph Stiglitz, in an article published in April 2000, criticised the IMF for being arrogant and for providing the East Asian countries with the wrong medicine, austerity policies. Such policies only made the situation worse, according to Stiglitz. He linked the IMF advice to the US Treasury’s basic policies of “building free capital markets into the basic architecture of the world economy” (Wade 2001). The World Bank had been a useful instrument for projecting American influence in developing countries. The USA as well maintains a discreet but firm institu-
tional control of the World Bank and can veto changes on all key institutional issues with its 17 per cent of the votes.

In January 2000 the World Development Report on Poverty appeared as a draft. According to Wade, who had analysed the draft carefully, it started with recognising the importance of economic growth as the engine of poverty reduction, but in addition it emphasised empowerment, security and opportunity as key elements of the strategy and in that order. It highlighted empowerment and security over the more growth oriented part on opportunity. The section on empowering the impoverished was highly controversial in the World Bank and IMF. Here it was discussed, “how to create and scale up organisations of poor peoples networks, cooperatives, trade unions and the like so as to articulate their interests in the political and market realms; and how to make state organisations more responsive to their citizens” (ibid.).

The draft report’s approach to security was also controversial in that it argued that effective safety nets should be in place before free market reforms were pushed. The argument was that without safety nets, the reforms will create losers without any support to fall back on.

The approach was strongly in contrast to that of the US Treasury and the then deputy secretary Lawrence Summers. Summers subsequently instructed the World Bank president, Wolfensohn to sever the connection between the Bank and Stieglitz. Ravi Kanbur, the chief editor of the WDR on poverty, continued to struggle for the perspectives of the draft report, but gave in and resigned on May 25 2000. He refused press interviews, and according to Wade, he did not wish to disassociate himself from the Bank fearing it might lead to a broader revision of the draft report (Wade 2001).

In the WDR that finally was published, three substantive changes were made in comparison to the original draft (Wade 2001):

1. A chapter was added focusing on growth and poverty, which seemed inconsistent with the rest of the report.
2. The chapter on free market reforms and unemployment deleted the emphasis on the need to first establish social safety nets, but called for them to be put in place at the same time as introduction of labour shedding reforms. The original emphasis on the hazards of free market reforms was toned down but at the same time that of their benefits were strengthened.
3. A long section on the need for capital controls was heavily reduced compared to the original draft and arguments for a “cautious approach” to liberalising financial markets were substantially watered down.

Most of these changes accommodated the view of the US Treasury. According to the analysis and information provided in Wade’s article, it might therefore be legitimate to raise the question as to which interests the World Bank really promote. Clearly the experiences of the poor, as they emerged in
“The Voices of the Poor” document, have been used in a way that counteracts the recommendations of the poor themselves and as well the spirit of the “Voices of the Poor” report.

Conclusions and the future

In 2000, 2.8 billion people lived on less than 2 USD a day, 1.2 billion on less that 1 USD a day. Of the latter about 300 millions were in Africa, half of the people on the continent. The average income of the richest 20 countries is 37 times the average of the poorest 20, a gap that has doubled over the past 40 years.

The objective of a UN conference in 1990 to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half by 2015 will fail. Likewise the objective of the FAO Food Summit of 1996 to reduce people facing food insecurity by half by 2015 will not be met. The failures will occur by large margins, and this failure is already known today, nearly 15 years before the objectives are planned to be attained.

The patterns seems to be that when official objectives are not reached, new and unrealistic ones are set – and applauded. The analysis of the reasons for lack of attainment that can provide ideas about how to improve future strategies and policies do exist (refer Olukoshi 1998) but most often they are not acknowledged, because the findings are uncomfortable.

This paper has attempted to show that the strategies for poverty reduction and African development have failed in two rounds. First during the post-colonial model of the African governments, covering the period from 1960 to 1980. This opened the way for the IMF/WB structural adjustment programmes to be implemented from the early 1980s onwards. These programmes have also failed to deliver the expected results. In Africa poverty has even deepened.

Presently there exists great uncertainty as to the direction in which Africa will develop and how support strategies should be formulated. Africa has developed its own initiative, the New Partnership for African Development, NEPAD. However, this strategy also avoids analysing the shortcomings of the previous strategies pursued by African governments and by International Financial Institutions.

How can we avoid failing the third time? A proper analysis of past development experiences and failures in Africa is needed. Such an analysis will, however, on the one hand, lead us at the heart of global institutional economic power. It may seem that this power is neither sufficiently analysed nor contested in a way that can put future strategies of poverty reduction, gender equality and justice (Jarl 2000) and broad based development on a sound track. Neither academics, nor activists, NGOs, the churches or others seem to be sufficiently willing to involve themselves in the analysis of alternative
human and spiritually based development strategies – and at the same time contest the existing development and power relations.

A thorough analysis of failed strategies will probably, on the other hand, also lead us in the direction of the need to accept that we, the well to do people of the north, are part of the problem including our privileges, levels of consumption, attitudes, perspectives etc. Maybe the church, or parts of it, is the last resort for addressing these comprehensive problems?

References


Olukoshi, Adebayo (1998): “The Elusive Prince of Denmark. Structural Adjustment and the Crisis of Governance in Africa.” Research Report No 104, Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala. (This report is only one of many that emerged out of the major research programme, “The political and social context of structural Adjustment in Africa”, at the Nordic Africa Institute over the ten year period 1990–2000. The findings of this programme, among others, based on the research co-operation with numerous African research networks, provided an important input for assessing the experiences with structural adjustment over the last two decades. But the wealth of empirical information and analyses were hardly used in the modification, preparation and formulation of ongoing and new strategies.)


Dialoge for Life – Feminist Approaches to Interfaith Dialogue*

Helene Egnell

Feminism is, according to Ursula King, “the missing dimension in the dialogue of religions”.¹ Interfaith dialogue is mostly, at least on the official level, carried out by men, and gender issues have rarely been on the agenda.

Likewise, interfaith dialogue has not played a great part in the development of feminist theology, as Rita M Gross has lamented.² Feminist theology has not dealt explicitly with interfaith issues to a great extent, and there has been a surprising lack of awareness of the importance of dialogue between Christian feminists and those of other faiths.

During the last decade however, Christian feminist theology has increasingly taken account of the reality of other religions. In literature, there is an awareness of the demands of a pluralist society, interfaith conferences are arranged, and networks for women in theological research and pastoral work are consciously set up as inter-religious enterprises. Examples are the African Circle of Concerned Women Theologians, the European Society for Women in Theological Research, and the Initiative Conference of European Women Theologians.

In this paper I will argue that to a certain extent, feminist theology and theology of religions deal with the same issues, and pose similar challenges to the churches. They also pose challenges to each other, which could enrich theological creativity in both fields, if taken seriously.

Common challenges to theology from feminism and interfaith dialogue

In feminism and interfaith dialogue, there are parallels regarding issues dealt with as well as in methodology. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki has pointed out that there is a correlation between religious imperialism and sexism. She says:


Absolutizing one religion, such that it becomes normative for all others, is a dynamic with clear parallels to sexism, whereby one gender is established as the norm for human existence. Therefore the critique of sexism can be extended as a critique of religious imperialism.3

This implies that feminist theology and a theology of religions share the common task of criticizing absolutism, and would gain much in discovering the common mechanisms behind religious absolutism and sexism.

Diane M Brewster has argued that the importance of contextuality, the demand that people must be free to define themselves, and the stress on relationships are three principles that interfaith dialogue and feminism have in common.4 She further argues that both feminism and interfaith dialogue challenge theology on two central points: our understanding of the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth, and the limits of our “God-language”.

Christology is apparently a major issue in these areas, though from different viewpoints. In feminist theology, the question put by Rosemary Radford Reuther, “Can a male saviour save women?”, still has no definite answer. Not only has the maleness of Jesus, when used as an argument against the ordination of women, been a problem, other ingredients of traditional Christology have been questioned by feminists, for instance the idea of a father sacrificing his son (divine child-abuse as someone has put it) and the concept of redemptive suffering that has been used to keep women in abusive relationships.

Consequently, there has been a lot of energy spent on defining and formulating why Jesus Christ, in spite of everything, is central to the faith of Christian feminists. Solutions include the rediscovery of the Wisdom tradition, where Jesus is seen as the prophet/incarnation of the female Wisdom principle, rather than the male Word. Kwok Pui Lan has highlighted the “hybrid” nature of the Christ-concept, claiming that every generation must answer Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?”5

These solutions could have significance also for interfaith dialogue, in which the problem is how to express the uniqueness of Jesus in terms neither of confrontation nor fulfilment.6 The Wisdom concept opens up a pluralistic approach to other religions in general, as well as provides a point of depa-

ture for a common search for wisdom. Kwok Pui Lan gives examples of answers to the question, “Who do you say that I am?” inspired by indigenous Asian religious traditions, like “the feminine principle of Shakti” or “a priest of Han”.

The limits of God-language, is another area that has engaged feminist theologians. It has been claimed that if God is neither male nor female, it is tantamount to idolatry to make male images of God the norm. Sallie McFague has made us aware of the metaphorical nature of God-language in Models of God and Metaphorical Theology. Thus, feminist theologians explore which metaphors can be used for the Divine within the limits of a Christian context. Likewise, interfaith dialogue forces the question of the nature of religious language and symbols, their contextuality and ultimate inadequacy. Diane Brewster puts the question thus: Although “many of us involved in interfaith dialogue find much to be treasured in other religious traditions that we encounter, what can we use and still remain Christians?”

Challenges of interfaith dialogue to feminist theology

Taking the issues of interfaith dialogue seriously could help feminist theology to explore deeper concepts that are already central to it, such as the principles of contextuality, self-definition and relationship mentioned above by Diane Brewster. There is already a growing awareness of the complexity of reality, wherein male/female is only one strand in a web of race, class, ethnic, and other affiliations. The issue of religious plurality could help deepen this awareness. Contact with feminists from other religious and cultural contexts could also prevent white western feminists from falling into the colonialist trap of condemning other religious or cultural habits from a western perspective. The ideal of letting people define themselves is put to the test here.

Is a pluralist position the only possibility for a feminist engaged in interfaith dialogue? Rita M Gross argues that it is, saying:

“I am inconceivable that a feminist theologian would go through all the heartache of being excluded from her own religion and doing the theological work required to include herself back in, only to turn around and make exclusive or inclusive truth claims about the religion that excluded her!”

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7 I have developed these ideas in my M Phil dissertation Sophia in Interfaith Dialogue, Irish School of Ecumenics/University of Dublin 1997.
8 Kwok Pui Lan 2001 p. 17.
9 Brewster p. 404.
10 Gross, p. 89.
I don’t find that self-evident. It should be perfectly possible to arrive at a “feminist Barthian” standpoint, and claim that “religion is patriarchal” while revelation alone, through Jesus who is Wisdom incarnate, is liberating. Or, to be an inclusivist, claiming that Jesus is the supreme expression of Shakti, Prajna or whatever feminine religious principles may be relevant.

However, I think Rita M Gross has a point when she says that, since a major value of feminist theology is to include the voices that have not been heard, to widen the circle, to learn how to welcome diversity, it makes no sense for those values to stop when they hit the boundary of one’s own religion. The necessity of “widening the canon” is an important concern of feminist theology – but other religious traditions have not been among the sources commonly used. On the other hand, Gross warns against “inappropriate appropriation”, when symbols are thoughtlessly borrowed from other traditions without proper knowledge of their original settings. Parts of the feminist spirituality movement have been guilty of indiscriminate and unauthorized borrowing from Native American traditions.

Challenges of feminism to interfaith dialogue

As feminist theology in general, feminist approaches to interfaith dialogue include a deconstructive as well as a constructive project. Unlike most other dialogue settings, the participants generally do not come with the presupposition that their own traditions are sufficient. On the contrary, they come with the deeply felt insight that all religious traditions include elements that are oppressive for women, and they seek to identify the sources of oppression, as well as the means to change the traditions, together.

Ursula King has noted, that while the Chicago Declaration Toward a Global Ethic says that there are “condemnable forms of patriarchy” all over the world, “no connection [is] made with the patriarchal exploitation and subordination of women by the religions themselves”.11

Women in interfaith dialogue have less “vested interests” in their religious institutions, and thus are able to articulate more freely their personal feelings and opinions; they can challenge “malestream” interfaith dialogue to a critical evaluation of the oppressive aspects of religions.

There also seems to be a tendency to acknowledge conflict in dialogue carried out among women more than in dialogue among men.12 This is remarkable because, in general, women are considered to be more prone to avoid conflict and seek harmony than men. Maura O’Neill suggests that the reason is that in the areas of religion and philosophy, women have been si-

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11 King, p. 8.
lenced for so long that they take the opportunity to express their anger and deal with it when they dialogue among themselves. I don’t find this entirely convincing. I would rather suggest that it is in relation to men, that women seek to avoid conflict, but can engage in conflict among themselves; But I don’t know if this would be supported by scientific research.

There are also areas of conflict that are specific to a feminist interfaith dialogue. The most obvious example is Jewish-Christian dialogue, where Jewish women have accused Christian feminists of anti-Semitism, when they too easily have contrasted Old Testament misogyny with the liberating message of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{13} Another is the critique from Third World women against the perceived imperialism of western feminists when they criticize oppression of women in non-western settings,\textsuperscript{14} as well as differing opinions among Third world women themselves on issues regarding cultural practices.\textsuperscript{15} When these conflicts are acknowledged and dealt with, conflict can be found to be an asset, an opportunity to develop respect for the other, and as a source of growth and insight.\textsuperscript{16}

This tendency to acknowledge conflict could be interpreted as an outcome of the stress on relationship and personal experience in feminist theology. Kate McCarthy argues that feminist theories on “women’s experience” offer “resources for a new approach to [religious pluralism] that is both exciting and timely”.\textsuperscript{17} “Women’s experience” has been a key phrase in feminist theology from the beginning, and has developed from a naïvely universalistic concept to an awareness of the complexity of women’s experiences depending on class, race, culture, sexuality and other factors. This grappling with complexity could in itself be an important contribution to interfaith dialogue. However, in spite of differences, there are aspects of women’s experience that remain constant across cultures. Kate McCarthy highlights three of these as relevant for interfaith dialogue: the experience of otherness, a plurality of social location and an embodied spirituality.

Otherness is a theme that has been developed in feminist theology: the experience of being other, excluded in church and theology as well as in society, of being other than the (male) norm. This otherness is made into a resource, which could be especially useful to a theology of religions, which has to account “for otherness without subsuming it or annihilating it, and without abandoning one’s own distinctive religious identity”.\textsuperscript{18} One could

\textsuperscript{14} See for example Kwok, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{16} O’Neill, pp. 95–96
\textsuperscript{18} McCarthy p. 165.
also explore the parallelism between “woman” as Other and “the pagan” as Other in theology.

Feminist theologians have developed an awareness of having multiple identities. To define oneself, as Carter Heyward does, as a “white Anglo Christian lesbian priest and academic”,19 is to belong to several different communities that interact and can be in tension with each other. This consciousness of multiple social locations could be a “foundation for a new kind of affirmation of religious difference”.20

McCarthy further argues that the pattern of embodied spirituality in feminist theology could facilitate an “experientially grounded rather than conceptual inter-religious exchange”.21

An experientially grounded interfaith dialogue must build upon relations between the participants. Women participating in interfaith dialogue have often insisted that the dialogue should start in a sharing of personal experiences and life-stories. It is significant, that Rita M Gross’ and Rosemary Radford Reuther’s “Buddhist-Christian conversation” Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet starts with the authors telling their “Autobiographical Routes to/Roots of Dialogue”.

“Hearing into speech” has been a key word in feminist consciousness-raising groups, coined first by Nelle Morton. It is essential to create an atmosphere of listening, to enable people who have been silenced, to speak from their own experience and not what conforms to conventional expectations. The experience of being listened to in its turn creates a willingness to listen. In interfaith dialogue, this could help to heighten the awareness that each participant comes with her/his own understanding that might not be identical with that of other adherents to the same religion, or, for that matter, to other women.

Relation is another important concept in feminist theology. It has been developed in the area of ethics, where Carol Gilligan has found that women develop relation-centred ethics in contrast to the stress on rules and autonomy in male ethics. Relation is also a soteriological and ontological concept, where “right relation” or “mutual relation” is a definition of salvation, and God is understood in relational terms: “Where there is no mutual relationship, there is no human experience of God”.22 Such an understanding of ultimate reality as relational should be fundamental to a theology of religions.

Likewise, Mercy Amba Oduyoye characterizes African women’s theology as a theology of relations, from which follows that as it is developed in

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19 Quoted in McCarthy p. 165.
20 McCarthy p. 167.
21 Ibid., p. 169.
22 Chung Hyun Kyung, quoted in McCarthy p. 170.
consciously multicultural and multireligious contexts, it is culture-sensitive and intentionally dialogue oriented.23

Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet, the title of Gross’ and Reuther’s book is significant. It indicates that in interfaith dialogue in a feminist key, it is not dogmatic issues that are in focus, but it is more concerned with what contributes to the survival of the planet, peace, justice and the well-being of women and men.

The dialogue, besides critiquing the oppressive elements of religions, is about sharing what is liberating and life enhancing in the respective traditions.

For many feminist theologians from the Third world, interfaith dialogue is also an intra-faith dialogue. They appreciate the spiritual heritage from the indigenous religions, which were there before Christianity, and they are not afraid to pick the liberating elements from Christianity and indigenous religions in a kind of “life-affirming syncretism” as Chung Hyun Kyung puts it, while discarding oppressive and life-denying elements. Chung claims that this is what Asian women have been doing all along:

Since women were excluded from the public process of determining the meaning of their religion, they were free to carve out a religion on their own, without the constraints of orthodoxy. Their “imposed freedom” allowed them to develop in private a religious organic whole that enabled them to survive and liberated them in the midst of their struggle for full humanity.24

Instead of looking down upon these women, despising their “ignorance” and condemning their “syncretism”, Chung elevates them to models for how theology should be and even tries to reclaim the word “syncretism” from its negative connotations.

One characteristic of the emerging spirituality of Asian women is a celebration of plurality, says Aruna Gnanadason:

Asian women of all faiths together are engaged in a common spiritual search for a new society. They transcend with ease narrow divisions of faith, caste, cultural identity, and ideology to reflect and act on issues of importance.25

Gnanadason talks of a “spiritual search for a new society”. This holistic approach, which refuses to divide reality into a “spiritual” and a “material” realm, is typical for feminist theology, as it is for liberation theology in gen-

eral. And the “issues of importance” to be reflected upon, are probably not Christology or eschatology, but rather trafficking in women, environmental pollution or the debt crisis. Dogmatic issues are considered important only insofar as they can provide tools for creating a just society, mutual relations or contribute to the survival of the planet.

Paul Knitter, Marjorie Suchocki and others as have suggested that “justice” should be the common norm to evaluate religious traditions in interfaith dialogue. For many feminist theologians it seems that “life” is the key word.

A feminist interfaith dialogue is a dialogue of life. The words “life-affirming”, “life-enhancing”, “survival-centred”, echo through the writings of especially third world feminist theologians like Chung Hyun Kyung, Mary John Mananzan and Mercy Amba Oduyoye. It is a celebration of God as the life-giver, and the criterion for judging diverse expressions of religion is whether they are life-enhancing or life-denying.

Conclusion

We have seen that feminist theology contains resources that could enhance interfaith dialogue. Among them are concepts like relationality, otherness, contextuality, the freedom to define oneself, hearing into speech, widening the canon as well as feminist discourse on Christology and religious language. On the other hand, feminist theology also could benefit from taking interfaith issues more seriously.

Feminist theologians, especially from the Third world, also seem to suggest a norm for judging the validity of religious practices that has to do with what enhances and affirms life.
 Doing Theology by Learning from the Poor

Olle Kristenson

Theological reflection on poverty and the spiritual challenge from the poor are the major interests of liberation theologians in Latin America. In fact this focus is what characterises liberation theology, distinguishing it from western theology. One of the leading liberation theologians, the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez puts it like this: “The theology of liberation begins not with the problematic of the ‘modern (bourgeois) human being’, but with that of the poor and dispossessed – those whom the bourgeois dominators seek to maintain ‘without a history’. ... ‘Progressive’ theology seeks to answer the questions of the nonbeliever; liberation theology confronts the challenge of the nonperson.”

Gutiérrez often talks about two fundamental insights present from the beginning in the reflection of liberation theology: its theological method and its perspective on the poor. One way of describing the theological method is found in the new introduction to Teología de la Liberación:

The first step in theology ... is the faith which is expressed in prayer and commitment. ...

A faith lived ‘in ecclesia’ and oriented towards the communication of the message of the Lord. The second act, which is the reflection as such, tries to read this complex practice in the light of the word of God. ... a central task for this reflection ... should be to strengthen the necessary and deep connection between ortopraxis and ortodoxia.

Gutiérrez is saying that Christian doctrine must always be a reflection about actions based on spiritual experiences of different kinds. And spiritual experience is not just a question of prayer and celebration of Holy Communion; it is also as much a question of spiritual experience of Christians “committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America”. Praxis comes first, and after that the theological reflection, which does not mean that the reflection as such should be considered secondary. This reflection is necessary and should be critical as Gutiérrez states in

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1 Gutiérrez 1983a, p. 92.
2 For instance in ibid., p. 200.
3 Gutiérrez 1988, pp. 38f.
4 Ibid., p. 61.
one of his definitions of theology: theology is “a critical reflection on the (historic) praxis in the light of the word of God”.5

The second insight is its intention to do theology from the poor, or “desde el reverso de la historia” (“from the underside of history”), as Gutiérrez puts it.6 That means that theological reflection must start with the challenge from the spiritual experience of the poor. Theology can never be neutral and the starting point for liberation theology must be the perspective of the poor. With this perspective, new insights in Christian belief appear.

Two factors are basic for the interpretation of poverty and the poor. One is the growing consciousness among the poor themselves that they are human beings with rights. This aspect has been called “the irruption of the poor”7 or “popular revolution”8 and points to the fact that the poor have become subjects or agents of their own destiny. The church could obviously not be indifferent to this and was deeply challenged by this awareness of the poor. For the liberation theologians it was necessary to respond to this, which has marked liberation theology ever since:

This is “an experience which is present in the heart of the movement which the poor in Latin America started in order to manifest their human dignity and their condition as children of God. ... What we have called the irruption of the poor in Latin America, which constituted the beginning of liberation theology ... has confirmed that this entry of the poor into the scene of the Latin American society and church has opened new furrows for the Christian life and reflection.”9

The other factor is a growing knowledge and concern about the situation of the poor, especially in Latin America. Pope John XXIII talked about the ‘church of the poor’ in a radio speech in September 1962, just a month before the opening of the II Vatican council, and this theme was one of his concerns with Vatican II. However, the theme of the poor was not really dealt with in the council, mainly because the poor were not really present in Rome; most of the bishops from the South were missionary bishops. At the end of the council, Pope Paul VI met with the Latin American bishops and it was agreed that they should meet for the II General conference for the Latin American bishops. This was held in Medellín in Colombia 1968 and at this conference the theme of poverty and the poor was really on the agenda.

Liberation theology is not just a question of how to respond to poverty as such; it is also a way of reflecting about the spirituality of the poor. This spirituality finds its own expressions and nourishes the spiritual life of the universal church.

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5 Ibid., pp. 31 and 85.
6 For instance in Gutiérrez 1983a, pp. 169–221.
7 Gutiérrez 1983b, p. 12.
8 Dussel, pp. 205f.
9 Gutiérrez 1983b, pp. 11f.
This is the area where Gutiérrez is working and reflecting theologically. How can we talk about our faith in an unjust situation?

On this continent we are today raising a lacerating question: How can we tell the poor, the oppressed, and the insignificant: God loves you? The daily life of the poor appears in fact to be an outcome of a negation of love. The absence of love is, according to the analysis by faith, ultimately caused by social injustice. The question ... is much wider than our capacity to answer it. Its width ... makes our answers very small. Nevertheless, this interrogation is there, inescapable, demanding and calling into question.10

Poverty cannot be reduced just to its economic aspect, even if this is fundamental. That is why Gutiérrez says that the poor person is also “the insignificant; considered a ‘nonperson’, someone whose rights as a human being are not fully acknowledged”.11 The reasons for this are obviously lack of economic means, but also colour of the skin, being a woman or belonging to a despised culture. Poverty is something complex and full of nuances and Gutiérrez stresses that when he talks about the rights of the poor with reference to the Medellín document on Peace,12 he does so taking into consideration this entirety of the dimensions of poverty.13

It is important to describe reality as it appears. That is why Gutiérrez is so clear in describing poverty and its consequences for the poor. “Today we perceive much more clearly what is at stake in this situation: poverty means death. … Death, this is what it is all about, when we talk about poverty and destruction of human beings and peoples or cultures and traditions.”14 He also frequently uses the phrase of Bartolomé de Las Casas that the Indians die “before their time”.

According to Gutiérrez we may never romanticize poverty. Poverty can never be an ideal; it is always something evil and must be understood as something contrary to what God wants. But we must also avoid romanticizing the poor. There is a risk of making idols of the poor, a tendency to consider the poor person as someone always good, generous, very religious thus making us think that everything that comes from the poor is good. Gutiérrez comments that it is easy to forget that “poor people are human beings pierced by both grace and sin”. It is true that generosity exists, “but to say that this is always the case is to not know about the complexity and ambiguity of the people”. —“The ultimate reason for the commitment to the poor is not based on their moral or religious qualities but on the goodness of God which should inspire our own behaviour.”15

10 Gutiérrez 1996b, pp. 244f.
11 Gutiérrez 2000, p. 15.
12 Medellín 2:22.
13 Gutiérrez 2000, p. 15.
15 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 149.
But we have to remember, Gutiérrez says, that the poor, insignificants and excluded are not passive persons just asking for alms. They are not just short of food, housing, clothes etc. They also have their own resources, their own cultural values etc. In a wonderful passage in his book *Beber en su propio pozo*, Gutiérrez describes the world of the poor:

The life of the poor is without doubt a situation of hunger and exploitation, of insufficient medical care and lack of decent housing, of difficulties in having access to education, of low salaries and unemployment, of repression and struggle for their rights. But this is not all. To be poor means also a form of how to perceive, to know, to argue, to create friendship, to love, to believe, to suffer, to celebrate and to pray. The poor constitute their own world.

Without romanticizing poverty or the poor, we must be aware of this perspective. In spite of scarce resources and a difficult situation, the poor develop a way of handling the situation, and that is promoting new values. And we are invited to take part in this experience; we are challenged to solidarity, which will open up new insights:

To commit oneself to them means to enter ... into this universe, to inhabit there and consider it not to be a place to work but a place of residence. It is not a question about going there a couple of hours every day in order to give testimony of the Gospel, but to part from there every morning in order to proclaim the Good News for all human beings.

The significance of the Medellín conference for the Catholic Church, especially for those within the tradition of liberation theology and what is called “the church of the poor”, can hardly be exaggerated. This conference intended to take the Vatican II to the Latin American soil. The methodology of the conference was in line with the method already used by the emerging liberation theology of see – judge – act. The conference was divided into 16 commissions and each of them presented a written report.

Gutiérrez participated in the conference as an adviser of CELAM and was the main author of the document of peace. Here social injustice in the Latin American society is described and is called “institutionalised violence”, the consequences of which,

are violating fundamental rights. ... We should therefore not be surprised that the ‘temptation of violence’ has been born in Latin America. We cannot abuse the patience of a people that through years have endured conditions that hardly can be accepted by those who have some awareness about human rights. Before such a situation, that means a serious outrage against the dignity of man and therefore against the peace, we as pastors address ourselves

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16 Ibid., pp. 133f.
17 Gutiérrez 1983b, p. 186.
18 Ibid., p. 186.
to all members of the Christian people in order that they assume their responsi-

The bishops also point to the relation between a situation of violence and the demand for human rights in Latin America. Against this background, they as a conclusion present a list of pastoral actions by which the church is challenged “to defend ... the rights of the poor and oppressed, demanding our governments and our leading classes to eliminate all that demolishes social peace: injustice, inertia, venality and insensitivity”.20

This is also the perspective of Gutiérrez. He seldom explicitly speaks about the principles of human rights in general. To him it does not make much sense to speak about the universality of human rights if specific attention is not paid to the situation of the poor and their socio-economic rights as referred to in this passage in the Medellín document.21

Defending human rights means above all defending the rights of the poor. It is a prophetic theme, and one deeply rooted in the tradition of the church. And it must be kept in mind in order to avoid falling into the liberal focus with regard to human rights. The liberal approach presupposes, for example, a social equality that simply does not exist in Latin American societies. Our understanding of true meaning, and biblical requirement, of defence of human rights will originate with the poor of Latin American society ... this task is an expression of the gospel proclamation. ... The church does not receive its prophetic inspiration from adherence to a liberal program, but from its roots in a world of poverty.22

More interesting for our analysis is of course the Medellín document about poverty, Poverty of the Church23. In its first paragraph the bishops declare that they “cannot stand indifferent to the tremendous social injustices that exist in Latin America and that maintain the majority of our people in a painful poverty in many cases very close to an inhuman misery”.24 They also recognise the Latin American context “of poverty and misery in which the majority of the Latin American people live”. They note that “the bishops, priests, monks and nuns do have what is essential to live ... while the poor are lacking the indispensable and are struggling between anguish and uncertainty”.25 This part of the document relates to the first step – to see – here and in other parts of the Medellín document called Latin American reality. After this assertion comes the second part – to judge – called doctrinal motivation, in which the bishops make a distinction between three dimensions of pov-

19 Medellín 2:16.
20 Medellín 2:22.
21 Gutiérrez 2000, p. 15 and Gutiérrez 1983a, pp. 87 and 211.
22 Gutiérrez 1983a, pp. 211f.
23 Chapter 14, pp. 137–142, in the Medellín document.
24 Medellín 14:1.
25 Medellín 14:3.
erty\textsuperscript{26}, which is essential for how Gutiérrez interprets poverty. Poverty is viewed as

a) a lack of what is essential for a decent life, real poverty, which is not just material, and is always something contrary to the will of God.

b) Spiritual poverty, which means openness to God and what he wants with our lives. Gutiérrez compares this dimension with an attitude of “spiritual childhood”.

c) Poverty as commitment, which means openness to God and what he wants with our lives. Gutiérrez compares this dimension with an attitude of “spiritual childhood”.

In their interpretation of this doctrinal motivation, the bishops conclude that Christ “not only loved the poor, but ‘rich as he was, he made himself poor’, lived in poverty and centred his mission in the announcement to the poor about their liberation and founded his church as a sign of this poverty in the midst of the human beings”. Therefore “the poverty of the Church and its members should be both sign and commitment”.\textsuperscript{27}

In the third and final step – to act – called pastoral orientation, the bishops talk about preference and solidarity, testimony and finally service,\textsuperscript{28} where they show specific “preference towards the poorest and neediest” and underline their will to “approach the poor making their access and welcome to us possible”.\textsuperscript{29} Talking about preference could be seen as a prelude to what perhaps could be seen as the most important outcome of the third general conference in Puebla 1979, namely the preferential option for the poor of the church. This has been called the most important contribution from the church in Latin America to the theological reflection of the universal church. This concept introduces the fourth chapter in the Puebla document, A Missionary Church Serving the Evangelisation in Latin America.\textsuperscript{30} The bishops talk about how “the poor, encouraged by the Church, have started to organise in order to integrate their lives with their faith and are therefore reclaiming their rights”,\textsuperscript{31} echoing one of the fundamental insights of the liberation theologians, above referred to as the irruption of the poor. The bishops also refer to “the prophetic denunciation of the Church” which in many cases has

\textsuperscript{26} Medellin 14:4.
\textsuperscript{27} Medellin 14:7.
\textsuperscript{28} Medellin 14:9–18.
\textsuperscript{29} Medellin 14:9.
\textsuperscript{30} Puebla, n 1128–1293; the preferential option for the poor is developed in n 1134–1165.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., n 1137.
led to “persecutions and humiliation of various kinds, where the poor themselves have been the first victims”.32

It is important to underline that the words ‘preference’ or ‘preferential’ reject any notion of exclusivity. The poor should “be the first – not the only – for our solidarity”.33 God is concerned about all human beings, but must pay specific attention to the poor because they are more vulnerable and will easily be marginalized if not. This little word ‘preferential’ is crucial; it both stresses that the perspective is universal, and yet also gives an idea where the primary concern must lie.

Deeply connected to the preferential option for the poor is the phrase ‘the epistemological privilege of the poor’, used by some liberation theologians.34 This concept has sometimes been misunderstood to the extent that it is only the poor that are agents of making theology. The expression wants to underline that the relation to the poor is not just an ethical question, as in Western theology. For liberation theologians solidarity with the poor has consequences for how the social and political reality is perceived. Gutiérrez underlines that this does not mean that only the poor are doing theology. His interpretation is that the preferential option for the poor means something more than just an intellectual understanding: “it is a question of life, of commitment, of spirituality, and proclamation of the Gospel but also a theological labour as a consequence of this”.35

If it could be said that it is the poor who are the starting point for liberation theology, it is liberation that is the centre of content.

When Gutiérrez talks about liberation he does so in polemics with a far too optimistic view of the possibilities of development stating that a development, which does not include a dimension of liberation, is doomed to fail:

> We think that the word ‘development’ does not well express those profound aspirations. ‘Liberation’ seems more exact and richer in overtones; besides, it opens up a more fertile field for theological reflection. ... Liberation, therefore, seems to express better both the hopes of oppressed peoples and the fullness of a view in which man is seen not as a passive element, but as agent of history.36

This text reflects the first lecture by Gutiérrez mentioning liberation theology. Whether this was the birth or not could be discussed, but it was the first time when Gutiérrez used it in public. This took place in Chimbote, 400 km north of Lima by the sea, in July 1968, a month before the conference in Medellin started. It was a meeting for priests, nuns and other pastoral agents and Gutiérrez had been invited to speak about “Theology of development”.

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32 Ibid., n 1138.
34 For instance Hugo Assmann, referred to in Frostin, p. 6.
35 From a letter to the author, 15 April 1998.
Enrique Camacho, a North American Dominican, one of the organisers once told me how he had written the theme on the blackboard. When Gutiérrez entered the hall, he went directly to the blackboard and wiped out ‘development’ and replaced it with ‘liberation’.37

Finally, it is therefore necessary to remind us about the centre of liberation theology. What does liberation really mean? What kind of liberation are we talking about? For Gutiérrez it has always been essential to point to the relation between liberation and freedom.38 One crucial text for him is from Paul’s letter to the Galatians, 5,1: “Freedom is what we have – Christ has set us free.” Christ did not just liberate us, he did it so that we could be free, and have liberty. It is thus a question of both liberty from something and liberty to something. Paul saw this as liberation from sin. For Gutiérrez, sin means rupture from the friendship with God and people around us. Sin is the ultimate cause of injustice and oppression but also the ultimate cause of all that impedes personal freedom.39

This is why Gutiérrez speaks about the three dimensions of an integral liberation: social or political liberation, personal liberation and soteriological liberation – liberation from sin or liberation in Christ. These are not to be seen as different, parallel processes or different chronological steps, but as dimensions of one single process.40 Liberation thus means liberation from economic and social situations that are oppressive and excluding, which forces many people to live in conditions of life contrary to the will of God. But liberation from oppressive socio-economic structures is not sufficient; also a personal transformation is needed, which permits us to live with inner freedom confronting every kind of servitude. This is not to be seen as a synthesis of the political or religious liberation but as a hinge between them. Finally, liberation from sin goes to the ultimate root of all kinds of servitude. This theological analysis leads Gutiérrez to affirm that only liberation from sin can attack the real source of social injustice and other forms of human oppression and then reconcile us with both God and men.41

This reflection on liberation is very closely related to how we understand salvation and Gutiérrez therefore means that liberation theology is a theology of salvation. And he defines salvation “as God’s gratuitous action in history”.42 There is only one history, God’s history, and God intervenes with his saving love in history. Therefore salvation does not make any sense if it is not connected to the “process of liberation”, which is the core in liberation theology.

39 Gutiérrez 1996a, p. 144.
40 Gutiérrez 1988, pp. 113ff.
41 Ibid., pp. 46f.
42 Ibid., pp. 48f.
In a meeting in September 1996 organised by the Latin American bishops’ council (CELAM) about the future of the theological reflection in Latin America Gutiérrez spoke about *A Theology of Liberation in the context of the third millennium*. Dr Enrique Iglesias, president of IDB also addressed this meeting. In his contribution, Gutiérrez commented on Iglesias’ reference to the new century as “a century, which is both fascinating and cruel”. It may according to Gutiérrez be an attractive way of describing the future, which to a certain extent is true, but analysed more profoundly it reveals a tragic reality.

The future will be fascinating for those who have reached a certain level in society and can participate in the decision-making and have access to the fruits of technological progress. But for those who stand outside this, the situation will be totally different. The future will not be fascinating and cruel for the same persons. “Next century will be cruel for the insignificants of history.” And that is why Gutiérrez is more concerned about the future for the poor than for the future of liberation theology. Against this background he is reflecting over a passage from Ex 22, 25–27: “If you lend money to any of my people who are poor, do not act like a money-lender and require him to pay interest. If you take someone’s cloak as a pledge that he will pay you, you must give it back to him before the sun sets, because it is the only covering he has to keep him warm. What else can he sleep in? When he cries out to me for help, I will answer him because I am merciful.” This passage is part of those prescriptions that Moses received from God in order to transmit them to the people of God for their behaviour. This text invites us, says Gutiérrez,

to ask a question that might help us to see what is at stake in this moment: Where can the poor in this world sleep? ... In a world marked by a technological and computer revolution and also by a globalisation of economy, ... will there be a room for those who are poor and excluded and today are trying to liberate themselves from inhuman conditions that trample on their identity as human beings and children of God?

This was the great concern for Gustavo Gutiérrez and for liberation theology when it was first formulated in the end of the 60s and it continues to be the first priority for this theological tradition. Liberation theology develops in the encounter with the poor and their needs. The scarcity of fundamental rights for human beings constitutes a challenge for the church to work theologically with this situation. From this experience, people acquire tools for

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43 Published in El futuro de la Reflexión Teológica en América Latina, Santafe de Bogotá 1996.
44 Gutiérrez 1996a, pp. 118f.
46 Gutiérrez 1996a, pp. 116f.
their struggle for fundamental human rights and these emerge from their own faith.

Discussion

In the discussion after my contribution, I was asked to very briefly comment on the gender aspect in the theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez. It is true that this has really not been a big issue in his theological reflection, at least not on the surface. Nor has he particularly stressed the ethnic issue. It is definitely clear that the issue of social class has priority over gender and race, which does not mean that gender and race are not important for him.

I could give you three examples. Gutiérrez ends every gospel reading, saying: “This, sisters and brothers, is the Gospel of the Lord.” Spanish is a deeply macho language where all adjectives are expressed in their male forms. Grammatically it is sufficient to say hermanos, meaning both male and female. But in order to emphasise the role of the women, he does not just express both forms, he puts the female form first. Another example is taken from the introduction to the first edition of Teología de la Liberación from 1971 (and of course in later editions), where he stresses, “this book is an attempt at reflection, based on the Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation”.

He has commented on this that there were people who asked him if it was really necessary to add women, and he insisted on this.

The third example is taken from a text from 1978, in which Gutiérrez analyses the historical power of the poor and refers to the process by which people develop “an elaboration of the faith out of their own experience – an elaboration of which they themselves are the primary historical subject.” And he mentions that this also takes place “among women in today’s society – especially women, who as members of the popular classes, are doubly exploited, marginalised and degraded”. It is interesting to note that Gutiérrez thus was one of he first that used the phrase “doubly exploited” about women in the south.

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Historians have to a large degree seen the legacy of Western mission education as merely modernising the domestic dimension of the indigenous women’s identity. ¹ While this might be true in some instances, it is, however, necessary to differentiate between the various mission organisations, their different denominational and national backgrounds, as well as time-span. This paper will look at two Anglican mission schools in Palestine that, in contrast to contemporary British government educational policy, offered Arab women not only a liberal education but also the notion that a professional life and gainful employment were legitimate and acceptable options for young women. The driving force behind this Anglican education was influential women missionaries and teachers, who not only provided a place to obtain theoretical knowledge, but also took the girls out of their homosphere and taught them to socialise in a multi-religious environment.

A. L. Flemming, in her study of American missionary schools in India, argues that one cannot overestimate the importance of role models of independent, responsible women that the missionaries and teachers provided. ² I will argue that as teachers of young women in a society that valued education and female educators highly, women teachers at these Anglican institutions must have played a significant role as models. However, Muslim and Christian Arab women had to adjust to a society characterised by rapid social, economic and cultural transformation. They had to use the Anglican schooling and female ideals in ways that suited the modern Palestinian woman living under the pressures of tradition and change in a colonial-like environment.


The main challenge in pursuing the issue of missions’ influence and different legacies is the sources, or rather the lack of available material. Women played a central part in the Protestant missionary movement both as agents and on the receiving end of these activities. Mission archives thus include not only information on women going out as missionaries, but also provide data on social and economic conditions that are often undocumented elsewhere. Some researchers have pointed to the fact that the missionary enterprise is often concerned with social groups or classes, which were excluded from both colonial and indigenous official discourse. Missionaries have rescued many communities from history’s ignorance and condescension, which would include non-Western Women, who were important historical actors, yet had left little written documentation of their lives. Even so, while the material about and by Anglican women teachers, is plentiful, there is little in the way of a record of the indigenous men and women’s version of the encounters. However, in decoding missionary discourse, it is possible to construct a starting point for understanding the dynamics of the relations between, in this instance, Anglican women teachers and Arab girls and women in Palestine.

The British Mandate in Palestine

During the thirty years of British rule (1918–48) Palestinian society underwent a process of modernisation which had great implications for the role of Arab women. As a result of the establishment of new schools and jobs in government departments, women became visible in the public arena. In Jerusalem, active urban life began to flourish; people attended films, literary and cultural lectures, sports events, concerts, and courses held by various clubs and institutions. Schools had bazaars and fetes, including theatre presentations. These changes were also felt in other urban centres, notably the harbour town of Haifa. Gradually urban, middle to upper class women were beginning to challenge traditions that had kept them secluded from public life. Education was the first and crucial step in this development.

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6 E. Fleischmann, Jerusalem Women’s Organisations During the British Mandate 1920s-1930s, Jerusalem, 1995, p. 12.

The demand for education among the Arab population was much greater than the Government schools could absorb all through the mandate period. The lack of state schools, and a growing sense of competition with a highly educated Jewish population, led Muslim Arabs to make use of the secondary education provided by private institutions. While private Arab schools were opened during the mandate period, offering primary and higher education for boys and girls., in Bir Zeit, Arab youth, and especially women, had to a great extent to rely on foreign missionary schools for secondary and higher education. These Western missionary educational institutions had high attendance all through the mandate period. They were especially important for Arab women, since the only government run secondary education offered was two teacher training institutions. The influence of secondary missionary education for women in Palestine is thus of interest especially concerning Arab middle and upper class women. So far very little research has been done on this topic.

**Academic Standards**

The Jerusalem Girls’ College (JGC) and the English High School for Girls in Haifa (EHS) were both established by the Anglican organisation. The Jerusalem and East Mission (J&EM) were secondary schools for girls at the beginning of the mandate period. Both schools had a British middle and upper middle class profile and were open to Arab as well as Jewish pupils. The majority were Christian Arabs while the number of Muslim girls attending increased significantly during the 1930s. For the minority of Jewish pupils the Anglican schools represented a European, non-Zionist alternative education.

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8 A. L. Tibawi, *Arab Education in Mandatory Palestine*, London, 1956, p. 171 and p. 177; Girls’ education among the Jewish and Christian communities was universal, i.e., eight years of schooling. The Muslim population continued to lag behind. While Jewish education was universal almost right from the start, this was never to be the case for the Arab population. In 1941, only 32.5% of the total Arab school age population was attending school, Government as well as non-Government. Of the Jewish school-age population in the same year 97% were attending school. In other words, there was universal education among the Jews while the Government (Arab) education was still far from that achievement. Jewish education had, besides British government support, considerable funds from abroad.

9 Tibawi 1956, 62-3. Besides the Anglican Jerusalem Girls’ College and the English High school in Haifa, other prominent institutions were the Schmidt’s Girls’ College (German Catholic), the Pension at St. Joseph (French Catholic) both in Jerusalem, or the American Friend’s Girls’ College in Ramallah.


11 In 1930 there were 226 pupils at the Jerusalem Girls’ College, of these were 140 Christians, 53 Muslims and 33 Jewish. *Bible Lands* VIII, 1931, p. 96.
Without research material on other Christian schools for girls in mandate Palestine, it is impossible to compare curriculae and standards of education at the different institutions. Even so, in the 1920s and most of the 1930s, the EHS and especially the JGC seemed to have had a high academic standing. According to one Anglican report, in the mid-1930s, apart from the Zionist Schools, which enrolled Jewish pupils only, there were, besides the JGC, only two other schools in Palestine, the English High School for Girls in Haifa and a German Catholic School in Jerusalem, that offered a complete Secondary course for girls. The Jerusalem Girls College is unique in providing, in addition to the ordinary high school courses, not only a course in Elementary Teacher Training, but other post-matriculation classes as well.\(^\text{12}\)

The academic standards of the College were also of high quality, as observed by one of their British external examiners: \textit{The Jerusalem Girls’ College is the best educational institution, by far & large the best, in this part of the world – I dare say in the Near East. I have been correcting some papers written by their girls, the top ones are quite unlike anything else one ever sees here, and overall they might have been written by English women.} \(^\text{13}\)

This high academic standard was a result of the women principals’ educational ideals and practical strategies. The JGC as well as the High School in Haifa were strongly influenced by three long term principals, who were highly educated and looked upon themselves as professional educators. Mabel Warburton played a central role in financing and establishing the Girls’ College in Jerusalem and hand-picked both her successor, Winifred Coate, as well as S. P. Emery who headed the High School in Haifa from 1932 to 1948.\(^\text{14}\)

To what extent were the Anglican teachers models for their pupils? It is important to remember that the Anglican teachers represented two different women’s roles. The three principals were highly educated, independent, single women who spent most of their lives in teaching or mission work. Among the staff who stayed for shorter periods, however, quite a number of the teachers did get married and gave priority to family life, which meant an end to their professional lives. How was this duality in ideals reflected among the Anglican graduates? To what extent is it possible to say that they identified with the British women’s models and how was this expressed within the Palestinian context?

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\(^\text{13}\) Stewart Perowne, Box 2, letter to parents 9. 7. 1929, StAP.

\(^\text{14}\) Okkenhaug 1999, Chapter 6.
The Old Girls’ Journal

The source material mainly consists of reports in the JGC Old Girls’ Journal and reports in the Jerusalem and East Mission’s journal Bible Lands.\(^{15}\) There is hardly anything on the Jewish students, and only a little more on Muslim graduates. The reason might be the fact that it was more natural for Christian Arab women to keep in touch with their former Christian schools.

Three school years, from 1923 to 1926, give a list of the members of the “Old Girls’ Guild” which include occupational status. This is not much to build on although it does give an indication of the development of graduates’ post-college life from an early period. This material does not give the numbers of graduates for each year; however, it seems likely that most of the graduates did join the Guild during this period.

In 1924, the membership of the “Old Girls’ Guild” consisted of 88 graduates. Of these, twenty were married and at home. Another thirty were at home. Of the women who were gainfully employed, twelve were teaching, eight had government jobs and seven were in business, while five were pursuing further studies. Only five were employed as nurses, and these seemed mainly to be Jews.\(^{16}\) The low status nursing had among the Arab population explains these low numbers in what the British saw as a natural female occupation.\(^ {17}\) In 1926 of the six nurses, four were Jewish.\(^ {18}\)

In contrast to nursing, teaching was the profession, which had the highest standing among Arab women of the upper and middle classes in Palestine during the mandate period.\(^ {19}\) There was a growing acceptance within the Arab society of education as very valuable and the teacher, male as well as female, had a high social standing. An additional factor was the British Government’s role in defining what occupations were suitable for Arab women. Besides teaching positions in government schools, the mandate administration mainly employed upper-middle class women as health workers and clerical workers in the different departments.\(^ {20}\) These “structures” were reflected in the occupational choices of the Anglican graduates. In 1926, out of 129 members of the old girls’ guild, the profession with the largest number

\(^{15}\) I have only one interview with a former student, Cynthia Davison, who attended the JGC for a few years in the 1930s.


\(^{17}\) Emery, 2/4, StAP, p. 112. Fleischmann 1996, p. 89: There was a dearth of Arab nurses. A special committee found that nursing was considered undesirable by Arab women for a variety of reasons, among them the problems of dealing with men, the “lack of protection” and gossip amongst the men in the wards, the menial nature of the work and its low status, and its effect in lessening their chances of marriage. Heather Bell writes of the reluctance among Arab women in the Sudan to train and work as nurses, see H. Bell, Frontiers of Medicine in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899-1940, Oxford University Press, 1999.


\(^{19}\) Fleischmann 1996, p. 82-83 and 99-100.

\(^{20}\) Ibid, p. 83.
was teaching, with 30 so employed. Sixteen were employed by the government (including the post office), six in business and office work and nine were continuing their studies. Less than half were not working outside the home.

The substantial number of JGC graduates who did pursue a career or further studies was reflected in the “Old Girls’ Guild” journals. Besides detailed descriptions of students’ academic success, the space was dominated by reports from young, single women who were pursuing careers in teaching, health or business. The reason for this career dominance, might be the fact that more of these women were eager to write to their old school, being single and having more time. A chosen number of letters appeared at length in the magazine. The majority of these were either from former students who were gainfully employed, or were continuing their studies, either at the American University in Beirut or at universities or training colleges in Europe or the United States. The fact that JGC graduates went on to higher studies outside Palestine was, however, part of a general trend among educated Arab women. According to Fleischmann, considering the obstacles that existed during that time preventing women from attending universities away from home, it is noteworthy that quite a number of Arab women managed to obtain higher degrees in places like Beirut and England.

British Educational Ideals and Professions in Palestine

In Palestine the department of education was clearly inspired by the “domestic revival” that took place in inter-war Britain. One common element that characterised the education of senior elementary school girls in England during the 1920s and 1930s was a heavy emphasis on teaching of domestic subjects to train thrifty wives and mothers. In Palestine the colonial administration defined the British civilising mission as elevating the status of women. While their education should provide an “opportunity for self-expression”, in practical terms it meant basic skills in modern hygiene and domesticity. At the Women’s Training College in Jerusalem the subjects reflected the modern domestic approach. In addition to Arabic, English and the normal school subjects, special attention was paid to house craft and domestic science “in all its branches ... as time went on, all urban girls’

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23 E. Fleischmann, Jerusalem Women’s Organisations During the British Mandate 1920s-1930s, Jerusalem, 1995, p. 16.
schools were staffed with Arab teachers able to teach cookery, laundry, house craft and infant welfare.” The training centre for teachers in rural schools provided a simpler course on the same lines, and reflected the need to improve living conditions through modern sanitary concepts. It included hygiene, domestic science, baby welfare, the principal of rural economy and gardening.

Compared with the government schools, the Anglican schools for girls had a very different social and academic profile. While the home-side of the domestic ideal was stressed in the Bible Lands reports, there was an extended national and political side to the modern homemaker: the leaders of the country must have wives who will have the wider vision which education brings, and who will take an interest in the affairs of the country as well as the home; in a word wives who will be able to share their lives to the fullest extent. Regardless of this indirect public role, in the early 1920s, Bible Lands was unambiguous on the issue of women’s education: It is chiefly for the home that the women of Palestine are to be educated; their place will probably always be pre-eminent there, and it is right that it should be so.

This did not, however, mean a life of seclusion. Just as the American Presbyterian missionaries in India strongly encouraged the girls at their schools to become involved in voluntary charitable organisations, the Anglican teachers stressed that an important part of the role of the educated mother was to take responsibility beyond the home, e.g., visiting health clinics, educating her neighbourhood, and thus bringing the message of modernity and civilisation to her people.

The improvement of the women’s domestic role, as it was in the mainstream notion in Britain, is clearly the centre piece of the official Anglican rhetoric. A look at the actual syllabuses at the JGC and Haifa, however, reveal that the emphasis on domestic training in the Bible Lands reports was for rhetorical use and did not reflect the actual time devoted to domestic training in the schools. In the JGC syllabus, domestic science was clearly not a subject that was given high priority. On the contrary, the emphasis was on

26 Bowman 2/2 Memorandum by Government of Palestine: “Description of the Educational Systems, Government, Jewish and Private, and method of allocation of Government Grants.” 1936. StAP, Bowman Middle East Window pp. 259-260: Besides modernising the domestic sphere there was also another motive behind the government education scheme. Palestine experienced a great migration from rural to urban areas during the mandate period. To solve the social problems created by this migration, the administration aimed at training village men for trades enabling them to stay in their village. Thus the Government Rural Teacher Training courses for men to a large extent taught courses in agriculture (for example at the Kadoorie Agricultural school) and manual training. As a parallel the rural Arab women were encouraged to take up “the beautiful native embroidery of Bethlehem, Ramallah and other Arab villages”.
27 Bible Lands VI, 1923, p. 303.
28 Bible Lands VI, 1923, p. 304.
theoretical and higher education and this strategy was created and set out in practice by Mabel Warburton. This strategy was also followed by Winifred Coate and at S. P. Emery in Haifa.

Mabel Warburton, who had attended the prestigious Cheltenham Ladies’ College in the late 1890s, repeatedly stressed her identification with the women education pioneers in Britain. To her, Frances Buss and Dorothea Beale were clearly ideals. However, the message from these pioneers was not confined to a British environment. On the contrary, Warburton emphasised the international aspect of their scheme to improve women’s conditions: *There is work for women to do in the world; so prepare yourself that you may nobly and worthily perform your part.* Such was the message of the founders of these Schools to the Girls of England. *It is the privilege of Englishwomen to carry this message to the girls and women of other nations. It is an immense inspiration to the teachers in the Jerusalem High school, representing amongst themselves the traditions of some of the greatest women’s Colleges and Girls’ schools in England, to feel that to them is given the opportunity of preparing there, in the Holy City, (...) girls of many nationalities – (...) – to go forth into the world with width of sympathy, learnt by mutual intercourse in work and play, with spirituality in mind.*

The theme of *serving your community* was the topic of a speech Mabel Warburton gave to the Old Girls’ Guild at the JGC in 1931. This ideal, however, not only meant voluntary service but also gainful employment. Warburton was proud to know that young Palestinian women were at work all over the Near East, as teachers, nurses, social workers and in government posts, with the spirit of the College motto: I serve.

The ideal of educating the JGC students to take on jobs that would improve social conditions in Palestine, was echoed in the reports from former students writing about their post-JGC life in the school magazine. One former JGC student, who worked as a teacher, first at the JGC and from 1940 on at the EHS, was Sirarpi Ohannerssian, an Armenian Christian woman. She had the Palestinian Diploma, which was equivalent to a London degree.

Another young woman, showing how a former JGC girl could offer her services to her country, was Fahima Nasr. She was the first woman to complete the Palestine Diploma. She obtained a Government scholarship to take a special course in Education in England to prepare her to take up a teaching position at the Government Women’s Elementary Training College. Thus the JGC produced much needed teacher candidates for government schools.

The fact that Warburton had included “Syrian” women on the staff from the very beginning, meant that a teaching position was easy to imagine for

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31 J&EM, XL/3.
32 Emery, 1/5, StAP, 29.9.1940.
Christian Arab women as a future career, as well as attainable at the Anglican schools. Besides the Anglicans’ own need for Christian Arab teachers, there was also a great demand for teachers in elementary Government schools, i.e., Muslim-dominated, schools. While teaching in mission schools continued to be defined as a *calling* and it paid low wages, Palestinian women working in government schools seemed to have earned a relatively good living.\(^\text{33}\) For some, a job at one of the Anglican schools was the beginning of a teaching career at the better-paid government schools. One of the EHS teachers, Terese Nasnas, was, for example, appointed 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) mistress at the best government school in Jerusalem.\(^\text{34}\) Other JGC graduates became Principals of government schools, while some were training future teachers in the Government Women’s Training College.\(^\text{35}\)

Teaching was not only regarded as a highly respected woman’s occupation, in addition there was a great demand in Palestine for Arab women teachers, making accessible a relatively independent life. These factors made it attractive for young Arab girls to train as teachers and at the JGC the Arabic-speaking girls *generally preferred to prepare themselves for a teaching career*.\(^\text{36}\) However, it was not always acceptable for Christian Arab women to go out to live and teach in a rural village. Those in Muslim rural areas to some extent resisted sending their own daughters to the Government training college for Arab women teachers in Ramallah, which did not manage to educate enough teachers for elementary schools. The first Muslim woman teacher who got her degree at JGC had, for example, secured a job in a Government school before she had finished her studies.\(^\text{37}\)

All courses at JGC were open to all girls regardless of nationality or religious background. In the 1920s, there were, however, differences in the choices of subjects pupils made, which to some extent followed national backgrounds. In contrast to the Arab girls, the Jewish, Armenian, Russian and Greek girls, to a large degree, entered the commercial courses. There might be several reasons for this. The former group of girls may have come from families with a commercial background and wanted to enter the family business. On the other hand, the Armenian, Russian and Greek communities might have had less demand for female teachers. These were small communities with a long tradition of being educated in Western mission schools. The Jews had their own Zionist teacher’s training, which meant that the Jewish girls who wanted to become teachers in Jewish schools would have to be

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\(^{33}\) As was the case with British women teachers who were paid less than their male colleagues, the Arab women teachers in government institutions earned less than male teachers with similar training and experience. See Fleischmann 1996, p. 82.

\(^{34}\) Emery, 3/1, StAP, p. 424, September 1942.


\(^{37}\) *Bible Lands* VII, 1928, p. 916.
educated there. These Christian (non-Arab) and Jewish girls might also be more “modern” in their outlook than the Arab girls, or come from families that accepted a wider range of opportunities for their daughters.38

Even though teaching in an elementary school could be looked upon as an extension of women’s crucial role as character-makers of children and thus not threatening to the traditional woman’s role, there was opposition to the notion of women working in 1920s Palestine. The fear of offending traditional opinion is seen in Warburton’s assurance to wealthy, potential donors in Palestine and Syria that the chief aim in a girls’ education was to fit her for marriage and home-life. This did not, however, mean mainly domestic training, but a general liberal education, since these middle and upper class women would most often not need to know how to clean or cook, only to supervise servants. Letters from former students to the Old Girls Journal show that young mothers were supervising the household. Mrs Daw (Alice Kawar) wrote from her home at Haifa, were she had two small children. Despite the fact that the household had one servant, Mrs Daw did most of the sewing and gardening and amused the children.39

However, the emphasis in the “Old Girls’” journals was on academic qualifications and professions, reflecting the importance of the professional aspect in Warburton’s and later Coate’s and Emery’s educational strategy. Already in 1919 Warburton warned against a purely upper-class profile of the student body at the JGC, because that would attract students from a social background that would not encourage a career for the JGC graduate: If the fees are too high, one would only get the rich ... to do class without much backbone, thus choke off the girls who will take up professions and be of use to their country.40

The importance of professional classes, besides teacher training, is seen in the fact that already from the early 1920s Warburton introduced special training courses which would give young women the possibility of gainful employment. This employment would, however, be within the acceptable feminine areas such as health, education and office work; employment that paralleled acceptable professions for single women in Britain at the time. Even so, these were all new areas for Arab women and especially within government and to some extent business administration, there was a large, new job market for women with higher education and a good knowledge of English.

Warburton wanted her students to pursue a combination of study that was attractive to potential employers. However, she did not want to give up the general education for specialised courses. Even for clerks employed by the

38 These sources are from the 1920s and do not say anything about the development in choice of careers according to religious background later on.
government, it was important to have a good, liberal educational background: the Heads of Department rightly set more value on mental and moral calibre in the girls employed as clerks than advanced technique, which practice is bound to give.41

The JGC did do their utmost to make the training accessible for their students, making room for those girls who for some reason were forced to leave school before finishing the whole course.42 Muslim students were especially in danger of not completing their training, and not until the late 1920s did a Muslim woman actually obtain a teacher’s degree from the JGC.43 Being married off was probably the main obstacle for young Muslim women in finishing her higher education. Even if the woman had managed to finish her teacher training, very often she would not be able to teach for more than a short period. This was, however, not only a problem in mission schools. H. Bowman, the Director of Education, defined the main problem of women’s education in Palestine as wastage.44 Trained women teachers are apt to marry as soon as they may, since they are specially prized by Arab husbands who want educated wives. The result is we have a continual wastage of trained teachers, and it is very difficult to keep up the numbers for that reason.45 However, there were quite a few women who did not marry at all or worked for several years, not marrying until their 30s.46 The financial aspect, in addition to the prestige attached to a trained woman teacher, made Muslim families accept that their daughters chose to be gainfully employed for a longer period after finishing their education. This general change was also felt at the Anglican schools.47

Christian girls were, however, also taken out of school at a young age because of marriage, before finishing their education. This continued to disappoint the Anglican teachers, and at one instance in 1941, Emery voiced her frustration at the engagement of one of her Greek Orthodox pupils: “I went to engagement ceremony. I was cross about it, because the child is only 15, and though her mother assures me that they will not be married for two or three years, I do not trust her to hold to it. The engagement ceremony here is always performed by a priest and it is fairly binding.”48

A number of Christian Arab girls did, nevertheless, not only complete their higher education, but continued studying at a university. Even so the total number of Arab women who attended university in this period was small and of these, Christian Arab women were in the majority. In 1929 two

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Bible Lands VII, 1928, p. 916.
44 Bowman, Middle East Window, p. 260. Bowman 2/2, StAP.
45 Bowman 2/2/20, StAP, “Royal Commission hearing, 27.11.1936, tenth meeting, public”.
47 Bible Lands VII, 1928, p. 916
48 Emery, 3/1, StAP, p. 294, 9.2.1941.
of the three best JGC graduates of that year had started studying medicine in Beirut. Some years later one of these women was working as a doctor in Palestine.49

Women Volunteering for Social Service

It was, however, not only through their professions that the JGC’s creed to communal service was followed. Some former students, married as well as single women, initiated charitable societies, working to improve health conditions of children and other social causes, especially among the rural population.50 These activities were part of a wider, international trend that had started in the late nineteenth century among the upper- and middle classes of educated women, who had engaged in charitable reform activities. According to Fleischmann, the sheer proliferation of women’s organizations in Palestine in the first four decades in the twentieth century is striking.51 In a society where Arabs were without formal political influence, social service organisations were one important means of gaining influence and status.52 Voluntary activities in Christian as well as Muslim Arab society found common ground with the creed of the British women educators. The young Palestinian woman who volunteered to do service was clearly doing it to improve her society. For Arab women, social work was one way of expressing a new, modern identity. As in nineteenth-century England, the Arab voluntary organisations represented a change in thinking about human association.53 The urban JGC graduates who took the Anglican civilising mission to rural areas in Palestine, were thus part of a wider social development, showing that educated women as individual Palestinian Arabs felt the need to reach out on the basis of common education or shared interests.54 This is clearly expressed in one woman’s appeal to her fellow JGC graduates: We, educated and happy women, ought to give more thought than we do to those unfortunate members of our own sex who in the midst of civilisation and surrounded by the light of education are living more like beasts of burden than anything else. In essence they are not different from their more fortunate sisters. The place and influence of woman is the same everywhere. We do not always realise that women’s role is the same in all grades of society. The one who rocks the child’s cradle is everywhere rocking the cradle of the

50 Ibid.
51 Fleischmann, 1996, p. 159.
53 Ibid., p. 207.
54 Ibid.
nation, fixing the destiny of the race. This same ignorant woman has her share in moulding society as you and I have.55

These young Palestinian women, serving their society, reformulated the traditional ideal of women as mother/wife into a role of mothers responsible to society, nation and race. Through this redefinition they were able to take on a modern role as social reformers and educators.

A central, practical concept of a modern life was cleanliness.56 This was introduced to uneducated, rural women, regardless of national and religious background: They are first taught the virtues of cleanliness and how to attain it. (...) The houses are periodically inspected. Expectant mothers are looked after (...) and go to our sewing party (...) and make garments for the baby (...) in an atmosphere of friendliness. They sympathise with each other and are (...) treated with modern methods.57

There are also other examples of young Arab women who were following the creed from their old school and yet implemented the Anglican ideals. Manzoumeh Khayat, for example, who after eight years at the JGC, obtained her teacher’s Diploma and started a small school at Bireh, where she was teaching seventeen Christian children. The same ideals of hygiene, order and modernity that Anglican teachers envisaged for their schools, were adopted and the young teacher was able to report that all the children were clean and healthy and in blue school uniforms.58

One of the earliest “Old Girls”, Emilia Saad Kakeesh, who had started at the then Jerusalem Girls’ High school in 1920, was ten years later a teacher at a government school in Jerash, a small village in Transjordan. Besides teaching, this young woman followed the JGC’s calling for service in the villages. In co-operation with a British woman, Saad Kakesh had initiated a scheme for improving the conditions of local women through voluntary health work and evangelisation.

The Anglican-educated Arab woman’s views of the village women were very similar to the views expressed by British women in the J&EM journal Bible Lands. This can be seen as a reflection of internalisation of the Anglican views of Palestinian society. However, it also shows the great contrast between the urban, educated Palestinian woman and rural society: “In Jerash many women are ignorant: An English lady who lives here has got me to help her with classes for these women. We teach them singing, read the Bible to them, improve their everyday lives. It is not easy, but real improvement is

57 In 1934 Alice Mekhalian begun training as a nurse, and the head at the Infant Welfare centre appealed for another voluntary helper and two former JGC students, at least one married, volunteered.
showing in the lives of the mothers. Their houses are cleaner, they bring up their children more wisely, and they are more gentle in their manners.”

The Modern Woman: Freedom and its Restrictions

Also within the Jewish society in Palestine, middle class women organized to create new welfare services. The Anglican creed to serve thus found common ground with women’s partaking in the construction of the new Jewish state. For one young, Jewish woman, the idea of serving her society had been to study agriculture, which was very common for Zionist women to do in the 1920s and 1930s. This was clearly a Zionist-oriented woman, a member of the Zionist Sports Association, Maccabi, who dreamed of living the life of a peasant. Family expectations and duties had, however, put an end to those idealistic plans. Three years after graduation from the JGC she wrote that, “I had to give up my ideal and enter our branch of business in Jerusalem. Our office deals with transport and clearing of goods, and my work is to arrange for the delivery and collection of goods, to collect money and do the bookkeeping at the Jerusalem branch. (...) The people I come in contact with are mostly merchants, agents, drivers and porters. It is not easy for a girl to work with people of these classes, but I am accustomed to it now (...) and have overcome most difficulties.”

The Jewish girls’ frustration regarding encounters with people from the class of merchants, drivers and porters is interesting. Not only does it reveal a mentality far from the egalitarian, socialist ideal of the dominant Zionist ideology, it also indicates to what extent the student-body at the JGC was homogeneous in regard to social and economic class, regardless of religious background. In fact the ideals of the British middle class were seen in the post-school lives of these girls. Several of them went on trips to Europe, to finish their education, to become “refined” ladies in Florence or experience hiking in the Swiss Alps. A few of these trips were financed by scholarships from the government in Palestine or missionary societies but most seemed to be there on private means, which gives a clear indication of solid economic background.

In the early 1930s, Sophie Halaby and Pauline Paul studied art in Paris, while another pupil, Raya Gorodeisky went to London to study music. While these former JGC students did not express any feeling of obligation to serve their communities, there were others who deliberately designed their

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post-JGC training for a future job in Palestine. Julia S., for example, went to a teacher’s college in London where she had to prepare for lessons in Palestinian geography and for a syllabus for an elementary Palestinian school. Julia S. was, however, not the only highly educated daughter in her family. She had a sister who went to Oxford. These two young Arab women wrote about their travels in England, where they had visited a farm in South Yorkshire. In their report to the “Old Girls” in Jerusalem the sisters wrote that the stay had, among other things, given them the opportunity of listening to a radio-programme called *Freedom in the Modern World*. In this way the Anglican graduates emphasised that they belonged within a modern context.

The identification with the Anglican schools is also seen in the fact that several of the graduates from the JGC and EHS, during their stays in Britain visited their former teachers and spent holidays with them. Warburton invited these young Arab and Jewish women to her London home, thus creating a personal link with their post-graduate life. While Warburton and other Anglican teachers catered for weekends and holidays, Winifred Coate and her sister Mary Coate, who lectured in history at one of the first women’s colleges in Oxford, Lady Margaret Hall, seem to have envisaged a scheme for JGC graduates to study for a degree at this college. Mary Coate was not only actively involved in recruiting Oxford graduates as teachers to the JGC and EHS, she also worked to get young women from these institutions to continue their studies at Oxford. The outbreak of war in 1939 and Winifred Coate’s move to Lebanon a few years after that seem, however, to have rendered the scheme unworkable. Even so, in 1943 there were two JGC graduates, one a Jew and one an Arab taking Honour Degrees at Oxford.

The wealthy, cosmopolitan aspect of the Palestinian Arab upper middle class, sending their daughters to the same boarding schools as their counterparts in Europe, is exemplified with N. Shammas, who during the school year 1929–30 stayed at a boarding school in Switzerland, by the Jura mountains, for foreign girls who stayed there to practise French. Here she practised the piano at the conservatory of Neuchatel, with the best professors of Switzerland. Her school background, however, showed through, even though there were twenty girls from all parts of Europe. My special friends were the English girls. I knew their language.

Her former College had not only prepared N. Shammas for socialising and studying with European girls, the stress on physical training made her

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64 Ibid. In 1934 Julia S., for example, met Warburton *twice last term, had tea in her cottage at Waltham Cross. We walked in Epping Forest afterwards and her dog Michael was mad with joy. I am going to spend a weekend there next term*.
appreciate outdoor joys and rough games. What she enjoyed most about the Swiss Alps was “mountaineering: climbing up and sliding down a steep mountain. It is very adventurous and very amusing to see some one slipping and tearing her clothes.”

Shammas visited several European countries, including Germany where she stayed with friends during Christmas, and Paris where she visited her aunts. The experience gave her a background against which she could view her own society, echoing Warburton’s credo that one should never cease learning and developing oneself: “My trip was a holiday, a lesson in life: the people are extraordinarily energetic (...) compared to our people. Men, women, boys and girls one can see life in them: they move in work, business, and enjoyment. All their life seems to be hurried, especially in Paris.” Despite the admiration for Europe and Western life, there is also a strong sense of national identity: “[In Paris] They were all surprised to see an Arab, and I could easily notice their mistaken ideas about us. (...) They were kind and inquisitive as to our ways, habits and people. I was proud to call myself an Arab, and enjoy the respect they all had for a Jerusalem visitor.”

This young Palestinian woman was convinced “that I shall always happily run back home to my country after my holidays in Europe.” The British education was thus not felt as a contradiction to a meaningful life in Palestine.

Some of the “Old Girls” did not, however, return to Palestine after their studies abroad. Especially Christian Arab women moved with their families, most frequently to the United States and South America. They were part of the large number of Christian Palestinians who emigrated from Palestine during the mandate period, of whom Mrs. Farraje and her family were typical. Mrs. Farraje, who had started at the JGC as early as 1918, had by the 1930s moved with her husband and children to El Salvador, where her parents, brother and sister also were living.

By the Second World War, the social changes were starting to be seen in improved living conditions also in rural areas and in a general Westernisation within all layers of society, regardless of religion. Palestinian women were gradually challenging dress codes, although unveiling was not widespread before 1948. In the Muslim village, Bethany, changing to Western dress and acquiring European habits was considered so fashionable that some placed it ahead of obedience to religion and custom. There was a great admiration for British ways and any work for the British was considered prestigious. Said K. Aburish tells of his childhood in this village when, during the 1940s, men stopped wearing native dress, except on religious holi-

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
days. Aburish’s mother took the lead among women in the village and shed her native dress in favour of Western clothes but continued to wear a silk scarf over her head.

Aburish who was born in the 1930s and his younger brothers and sisters were all dressed European style: “The more western our dress, the more we liked it, and the more other children envied us. My sister Wagiha Mahboud’s dresses were the envy of everyone because she looked like any western girl. She looks like a pretty English girl. We ought to change her name to Elizabeth.”

This Westernisation was also very noticeable among the JGC and EHS pupils. When Dorothy Norman was to teach at the JGC in 1943, she was astonished by the appearance of her class consisting of “sophisticated damsels: The eldest is nearly 20 and the youngest 17 and they are extremely grown up young ladies with painted nails & cinema star hair designs.” The fact that such explicit expression of modernity was not adopted by some of Emery’s former students, might indicate that graduates from the EHS adopted their Principal as an alternative “modern woman” model: “Three of my 5th form have come to see me (...) looking so charmingly fresh & educated that I was content to see them, for they are really properly educated girls, not silly painted creatures.”

Emery, who witnessed the whole period from 1919 to 1948, was very aware of the changes that had taken place in regard to women’s accepted roles, especially in terms of breaking the norms of seclusion. During a stay at Baakleen, a Druze village in Lebanon, Emery was surprised, not only by the high level of education of a young woman, but by the liberal behaviour of the older generation: “They [the Hamadies – a large Druze family] are very pleasant and cultured people, and rather to my surprise Madame Hamadie came in and sat in mixed company, and then came her big daughter, who is very emancipated and had just taken her degree at Beirut University. The village women wear a plain veil, (...) while well-to-do Druze ladies, though they may receive their husband’s friends at home, do not walk unveiled in the street up here, though perhaps they do in Beirut.”

In 1947, at the wedding of one of the former EHS students, from a wealthy family, who could afford to invite 200 guests to a magnificent buffet supper, the dress and socialising of the young women was striking: “Maleeha Behai [the bride] wore a sari. It looked most lovely. The other guests all wore full evening dress, I was very pleased at the choice & good taste of our Old girls, most of whom were there. They all looked charming, except one overbuxom married one who was tightly & flashily dressed. (...)

74 D. Norman, StAP. To family 8.2.1944.
75 Emery, StAP. To mother 22.9.1946.
76 Emery, 3/1, StAP, p. 414. Summer 1942, Druze village, Baakleen, in Lebanon.
[there was] a good deal of dancing. I was interested in this, because fifteen years ago none of our girls, – apart from the Jews, – would have been allowed to dance; but last night both Christians, Druze & Behais, & at least two Moslem girls, were dancing easily & sensibly, though I think only with brothers, fiancées & close relations.”

This change in accepted norms of behaviour for educated, middle-class Arab women was, however, not a straightforward adoption of Western ways. In the words of Fleischmann: “The strong hold of culture and patriarchal institutions in dictating social and behavioral norms was not pried loose, despite indications of evolution. Most fathers, brothers and husbands still adhered to upholding certain cultural and social practices such as gender segregation, restriction on their female relatives personal mobility, and the exercise of male authority over women in the family.”

A complex blend of modern and traditional expectations existed side-by-side, as seen in the stories of two Christian Arab sisters, Julia and Henrietta S. from Haifa. This example also shows that even though the Principal, Emery, clearly regarded these women as friends and colleagues on equal terms with the British staff, she did not attempt to interfere with the paternal authority that still ruled highly-educated Arab women’s lives. Both of the sisters attended the EHS, the eldest, Julia from 1919 on, and both later taught at the school. They were able to pursue a professional career and to study abroad. However, at the same time they submitted to deep-rooted traditions concerning the issue of marriage.

By 1924 Julia S. was taking the Oxford and Cambridge school certificate examination. In the spirit of the school, she did not, however, only concentrate on scholastic achievements. She was also a keen girl scout, who, together with another girl from 8th grade, showed exceptional initiative by writing to secretary Bickersteth in London, complaining of unfair treatment: “Miss Warburton’s guides are going to Jaffa. We are disappointed that they are not giving the Haifa guides a chance to join them.” By 1929 Julia S. had become a form mistress of the junior classes at the EHS.

Henrietta S. was Emery’s favourite “Old Girl”. While being a “head-girl” during her studies, after finishing school she also became a teacher at the EHS. Despite being a good teacher, Henrietta S. wanted to try a profession outside the teaching field, and got a job at the British Barclays’ Bank, as the

77 Emery, StAP. To mother, 19.1.1947.
79 Most probably Julia S. studied at a teaching college in London in the early 1930s. The family did certainly send their younger daughter, Henrietta, to England for further studies in the mid-1940s.
81 J&EM, LV/3. To Bickersteth from Emily Abu Fadil & Julia Sifri, 8th Form, Haifa High School, 13.4.1924.
82 Bible Lands VII, 1929, p. 1049.
private secretary of the manager. However, this was rather dull\textsuperscript{83} to the academically gifted young woman, and with the encouragement of her former Principal, she applied for and got accepted at Hull university. Emery felt that not only did this young woman carry a good inheritance from her family background, but, in addition to her good upbringing, Henrietta had also internalised the values of her English High School education: “She loves books & ideas, & strides along in low shoes like an English woman, & also she is unusually modest.”\textsuperscript{84}

Despite the freedom to pursue higher studies and a professional career, Julia S., while working at the EHS in 1936, was expected to conform to the tradition of arranged marriage. Not only was this marriage arranged by her family, she had only known her future husband for a couple of weeks before getting married, and she was going away to West Africa to live with her husband. That this was difficult to accept for the sisters, is clear from the unheard of reaction of the younger: “Henrietta, was then about 12 (...) and was so furious that she refused to attend the wedding, as she told me long afterwards.”\textsuperscript{85} Notwithstanding empathy and friendship, Emery did not attempt to interfere in this marriage arrangement. Encouraging young Arab women to pursue university studies in Europe and a professional life was acceptable, as long as it did not go against the family. Emery wanted to modernise the Palestinian woman but not through confrontation. The Anglican Principals were not interested in provoking the traditional Arab society; that would have undermined their reputation and attendance. When pressured to choose between a loyalty to a female colleague and the traditional male-dominated values, the British headmistress favoured the latter.

**Arab Spinsters and Professional Lives**

To be highly educated and have a profession was no hindrance for Arab women getting married after some years. As models for this pattern, the Anglican graduates had short-term members of the British staff, many of whom did get married and ended their professional life. Some former JGC students, however, identified with their career oriented, single principals and continued to work all their lives, never getting married. This was not uncommon among the educated Arab women who, like the female education pioneers in nineteenth century Europe, looked upon themselves as privileged to be the first generation of professional women.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{83} Emery, StAP. To mother, 28.10.1945.
\textsuperscript{84} Emery, StAP. To mother, 17.11.1946.
\textsuperscript{85} Emery, 2/4, StAP, p. 152.
At the Government Training college in Ramallah, the Principal and the domestic science mistress were the Protestant Arab Lubbat sisters, both JGC graduates. The Principal, Elaineh Lubbat, belonged to the generation of women who had started their schooling before the First World War, when she had been a pupil under Helen Gardner at the Anglican school St. Mary’s, in Jerusalem. In 1921 she was one of five students at the JGC (then Jerusalem High School) who “passed most successfully the [final] examinations.” Already then Elaineh Lubbat was showing a great talent for theory as well as practical teaching. These qualifications led the education department in Jerusalem to give Lubbat quite a degree of independence in the organisation of the training college. After the college was closed down, both sisters went to Tripoli and started a similar college for village teachers.

One of the outstanding former JGC students who devoted herself to an educational career was Hind Husseini, who also became a known Palestinian national activist. Shortly after the war in 1948 she established an institution for the orphans of Deir Yassin. Hind Husseini was a student at the JGC in the 1930s, where she appears as a keen sports-woman. In 1934–35 she was Captain on one of the College’s netball teams as well as heading the list of tennis tournaments. After finishing her training, she was a teacher from 1938 until 1946 at the Islamic Girls School in Jerusalem, run by the Supreme Muslim Council.

In 1936 Hind Husseini headed an Arab schoolgirls march to protest against continuing Jewish immigration. A photograph of this event shows a slim, straight postured young woman with a modern, short hair-cut, clutching her handbag, heading an orderly march of Arab girls all dressed in Western school uniforms. This is an example of how a gifted Arab woman could adopt the British school model and use it successfully to meet demands within the Palestinian society, including organising public protest against British mandate policy.

Hind Husseini and the Lubbat sisters were exceptional in their choice of an independent career. Even so, it does seem that more young girls went abroad to continue their studies in the 1940s. The change that had taken place during the years of British rule is seen in the fact that in some families there were now two generations of graduates from the Anglican schools.

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87 Bible Lands VI, 1921, pp. 99-100.
88 Mrs. E. Mead in interview with Okkenhaug, 1.2.1996. Mead, the only British teacher at Ramallah was very fond of the two women, and their friendship lasted for many years. Mead was ashamed of the meagre pension the British state gave to their former employees, and tried to help the sisters in different ways.
92 Emery, StAP. To mother, 14.7.1946 and 22.9.1946.
However, while the mother had been at home after being educated at the EHS, twenty years later her daughters were teaching at the same school, thereby exemplifying one result of a being brought up by an educated mother in modern, domestic surroundings.

The process of change can also be seen in the way the Principals viewed the “result” of their educational efforts, not only academically, but also in “character training”. In Jerusalem the outbreak of war in the autumn of 1939 gave an opportunity to the Palestinian teachers and senior students at the JGC to prove themselves. During the first weeks of term there was a great lack of British staff, and thus the Arab students in the Teacher Training Class worked as temporary staff. These thirteen quite young girls, mostly Christian Arabs, taught the Junior forms, while the Palestinian staff (Arab and Armenian), who usually taught the Junior classes, were then teaching the Upper school, awaiting the coming of British teachers. The Palestinian women showed, in an exemplary manner, that they were able to teach and organise all levels of an Anglican College.

Conclusion

This study is limited by access to source material and coloured by the fact that most voices are heard within the Anglican framework. The former pupils are either expressing themselves in publications edited and published by the Anglican schools, or their behaviour is interpreted and portrayed by their former British teachers. Of the young women who write of their choices, values and lives, there is a Christian majority. However, it seems like the pupils, Muslim, Christian and Jews from a similar urban, middle upper middle class background, were in sympathy with the Anglican values and found ways to use their education within their own society. This was for example the case with participating in volunteer social work, which played an important role especially in Arab society during the mandate period.

Besides finding the theoretical aspects of a liberal education liberating, it is also important to emphasise the British stress on girls’ physical training. To most Arab girls, this was a novelty when introduced at the Anglican High Schools in 1918 and it gave these young middle and upper class women a new experience of their physical strength.

While the position of women in pre-World War One Palestine had to a large extent been one of Hareem among the Muslims and of seclusion among the Arab Christians, the mandate meant job openings for young, single

93 Emery, StAP. To mother, 19.1.1947 and 27.4.1941.
94 Bible Lands X, 1939, p. 1138. Article by W. A. Coate: Even Winifred Coate had to admit that her faithless fears were unfounded; the expected breakdown of discipline did not occur.
95 Newton 1948, p. 147.
Arab women in the public sphere. Education was much sought after and urban, middle class women had the opportunity to train for a profession and work outside the home. A British education and having worked at a British institution, either in a Government office or as a teacher, was in no way a drawback for a young woman’s status. However, after some years she was expected to conform to the traditional role of home and motherhood, within the deep-rooted structure of the Arab family. This was parallel to the British woman’s ideal where a professional life was to a large extent incompatible with family life and motherhood.

There were, however, British single women, most conspicuous the long term Principals, who represented devotion to a professional life and career. Some exceptional women among the Anglican graduates did take on a life in the same mould. In the available sources, these were all Arab Palestinians. Years after the JGC and EHS were extinguished in 1948, Arab graduates were to play a role in the Palestinian Diaspora, when former JGC students were to be found in leading positions in the directions of education in Jordan and Libya by taking on the role of modern educators. To what extent this was an inspiration from their teachers and the heritage from the British pioneers or a result of social developments within mandate Palestine, is difficult to say. Clearly the Anglican secondary schools met a demand from Arab, and to some extent Jewish girls, who valued their education. For some the British teachers became models. However, the students used the inspiration from these women to meet new demands from their own societies in Palestine. Especially from the last part of the 1930s, the main demands on the Arab as well as Jewish population were of a nationalistic character. Nationalist loyalties do not, however, preclude personal relations and gender identifications across “nationalist boarders”. Despite nationalistic pressure on both sides, Arab and Jewish Anglican students and graduates differentiated between the British government and British women teachers. They could be loyal to and identify with the latter as role models, while disagreeing with government policy.

Further research is needed to locate former pupils’, both Jews and Arabs, response to the British education. This would have interest not only in regard to women’s roles and opportunities, but also concerning the Anglican schools’ explicit aim of peaceful co-existence between Muslims, Christians and Jews. How did pupils from different religious and national backgrounds identify with the Anglican’s attempt at creating a sense of citizenship shared by both Arabs and Jews? The location of a joint history would serve as a fruitful addition to the existing mutually exclusive national narratives of Jewish Zionists and Palestinian Arabs.

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96 *Bible Lands*, January 1962.
Religion as a Source of Activism and Internationalism. Aspirations for Social Justice, Peace and Equality in the YWCA 1894–1940

Hilda Rømer Christensen

In recent years the role of religion has come to the fore of debate in women’s history in the Nordic Countries. This has happened after a long period of ignorance, where prevailing Protestantism has been dealt with as an unproblematic or outdated framework for analysis. The role of religion is now being explored and debated in the context of gender and the social and political movements among women and in society at large, not least women’s emancipation and the welfare states.1

In this chapter I shall substantiate this angle in relation to the Young Women’s Christian Association. So far the association has figured as a rather under-researched and neglected field in the landscape of women’s organisations.

The Young Women’s Christian Associations were founded at both national and international levels in the wake of 19th century revivalism. They developed into leading Protestant women’s associations in several Western countries and internationally during the first decades of the 20th century. It is striking that the national associations held broad compositions and succeeded to a considerable degree to attract women across social, ethnic, national and gradually also across confessional lines.

The YWCAs were founded in parallel with significant institutions of modern industrialised society such as the nation states and affiliated trends of internationalism, imperialism, socialism and feminism. How did the YWCA negotiate, imitate and eventually transgress boundaries and categories that were created in this process? In terms of gender, class and religion? And how did the YWCA itself contribute to settle modern and hegemonic ideas in these respects?

In the following I am going to discuss the YWCA in conceptual and cross national perspectives. Empirically I will contextualise the YWCA as a woman’s movement and the ways in which the YWCA branches of Protestantism translated into social activism as well as activities for peace and gender equality.

The broad aspirations of the YWCA and the international scopes makes the association an exiting topic to study and adds complexity to the general narrative of the women’s movements. The chapter develops the YWCA in relation to first wave feminism that culminated in the first decades of the
20th century, and focuses on the subsequent period between 1920 and 1940, where feminism broadened into social feminism and extended international networking in relation to the League of Nations.

At the same time the chapter deconstructs religion as a unified and stereotype concept in demonstrating various expressions and strategies. The role of religion is dealt with primarily as a filter and guide for the visible and public engagements of the YWCAs both at national and international levels. In that sense the account presents a constructed picture of myriads of movements and issues that might be challenged by other approaches and emphasis. ²

The YWCA in the Framework of Social Movement Theories

Does the YWCA as an old and historical movement at all qualify as a social movement? The answer of course is dependent on the definition of a social movement. In the following I will subscribe to a broad idea of social movements understood as a web of organisations, aiming at collective, organised agency and at reforming society in a comprehensive sense. ³ A more narrow definition has been spelled out, by restricting the label of social movements to the so-called emancipation movements. I.e. the ones that have fought for human rights, equal worth and individual autonomy for an excluded group. A position that tends to reduce a social movement to the progressive political elements and to the question of citizenship. But leaving untouched issues of tradition and regression, that might be at stake in even the most radical movements. ⁴ In the following I would like to move beyond this kind of opposition and seek to relate the multiple ideas and activities of the YWCA to a broad continuum of feminisms where anti-feminism forms one pole and radical feminism the other pole.

The Swedish sociologist Ron Eyerman has convincingly widened the scope of social movement analysis and demonstrated that the cultural praxis of a social movement might refer to a diverse heritage that cannot be reduced to straight political expressions. In particular he focuses on history and traditions expressed in art and music. Both as a hidden conceptual framework and as a resource of mobilisation for social movements. Cultural practices accordingly can be seen as an aesthetic extension of the cognitive practices and processes of knowledge production in a given social movement. ⁵

This links to figures of identity and discourse that have been in focus in poststructuralist scholarship. The new issue at stake has been identity politics or the recognition of identity as reflexive. I.e. that actors in new social movements have become aware of their capacity to create identities and of power relations involved in their social construction.
Does the YWCA and related revival movements count as early expressions of modern reflexivity? Yet revival movements confronted individuals with religious thoughts and choices. A fact that is challenging the idea of secularisation of Western societies as something that does away with religion as such. Rather secularisation might be regarded as a process through which religious issues are transformed from the agenda of society to the personal or individual level. Meaning that the wider culture, knowledge and world-views were secularised, while religion and Christianity were imposed as personal matters.  

Through such processes that seem to be founding elements in the formation of modern societies, religion and Christian behaviour became issues of consideration and choice, rather than something given and unreflected. Here the YWCA together with other religious movements performed the double aim of confronting young women with personal religious reflections. And also to maintain, modernise and extend Christian values and morals at both open and hidden stages in society at large.

**The YWCA in the Context of Suffrage and Women’s Movements**

The idea of organising young women in separate Christian organisations was launched along with the waves of revivals that swept through the Western world. The formation of national YWCAs took place as parallel phenomena in several tone-setting Western countries during the second half of the 19th century. In some of the countries the YWCA became the nexus of protestant women’s activism, while in other places, such as Germany and Norway, influential umbrella associations of (mature) Protestant women were established alongside with the YWCAs.

The YWCAs held impressive membership figures that counted in the landscape of women’s associations at the time. The British YWCA already around 1902 held 100,000 members. This compares to the 54,000 members of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies in 1913, and to the 237,000 members of the more conservative, and Anglican Church affiliated Girls Friendly Society. In the USA the YWCA held 212,000 members in 1910 that extended into around 650,000 in 1930. This compares to the mass mobilisation of women for suffrage, estimated at around 2 millions at the culmination in 1917. On the continent Denmark and Germany counted as impressive YWCA countries. In Denmark the YWCA was the largest women’s association throughout the interwar years. In 1937 it had nearly 34,000 members compared to the 10,000 members of the old and prominent women’s rights association, Dansk Kvindesamfund. In Germany the YWCA also grew immensely during the first decades of the 20th century. The membership extended from 92,000 in 1900 to 260,000 members at the peak in 1930 shortly before the Nazi take-over.
of the Proletarian or Social Democratic Women’s movement that counted around 100,000 in 1910, while the umbrella association Bund deutscher Frauenvereine held almost 330,000 members at their peak before World War I.  

Dependent on time and space, relations between the suffrage and confessional movements were sometimes conflictual and competitive, and sometimes marked by peaceful and complimentary co-existence. Some women of YWCA convictions did take part in the suffrage mobilisation and even formed their own associations, e.g. in Denmark and Sweden. While some of the tone-setting British YWCA women joined existing non-militant suffragist associations. At the same time the YWCA contained communities that were hesitant or directly against woman suffrage. In Germany the associated Deutsch Evangelischer Frauenbund left the umbrella association, Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine in 1918 because of dissent on the suffrage question.  

World War I implied women’s mobilisation for what seemed antagonistic ends. On one hand the governments sought to mobilise women’s associations for patriotic work. On the other hand women mobilised and protested against war in Haag in 1915 and subsequently launched the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in 1919. The international fellowship of the YWCA did not prevent the national YWCAs to join the practical war-work in the framework of their respective countries. The war work even meant a boost for the national YWCAs in several respects. British and American YWCA workers engaged extensively in the organisation and recreational works for munition workers and war relief services both at home and abroad. The German YWCA joined similar efforts organised in the framework of the Nationaler Frauentjenst, initiated by the German women’s movement.  

Women’s war work brought the YWCA and other women’s associations closer to the governments and legislation in the national framework. The enfranchisement of women in several Western countries during or right after World War I: United States (1920), Germany, Holland and Austria (1919), Great Britain (1918–1928) and the Nordic countries (1906–1921), advanced further integration. Both at the electoral and lobbying levels.  

In several senses the idea of waves, of crests and abbeys of the women’s movements, also applies to the YWCA, even though the peak periods of the YWCA seem to be slightly displaced from the peaks and burn-outs of what is usually regarded as the first wave of suffrage movements. Moreover it seems as if the YWCA have operated with more continuity than the women’s rights associations that catered for suffrage mobilisation. While the national YWCAs in the big belligerent countries and in Scandinavia survived, several women’s suffrage associations went through organisational changes in the interwar years. Notably in the US and in Britain where mem-
embership declined and women’s suffrage associations reduced their adherence and were re-organised. In Germany the YWCA even survived the Nazi regime as one of the only women’s associations. The association made a forced but nevertheless doubtful Anschluss to the Nazi Jugend associations, while the old umbrella association Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine dissolved right after the Nazi take-over in 1933.

In the particular context of suffrage mobilisation and World War I, it seems as if the YWCAs had their peak periods, in times of pre- and post-suffrage mobilisation. Making the YWCA a kind of reservoir of building up women’s consciousness and of subsequent translation of political influence into practical welfare and labour-initiatives. Yet the YWCA became a framework for joint work at many levels in the interwar years: for networking and community based organisation and for the development of social and industrial work.

This applies particularly to the British and the North American YWCAs that in the interwar years endeavoured to network among the female elite and to the formation of cross political initiatives and lobbying. Also on the Continent, particularly in Germany, the YWCA associates intensified their intervention in social issues and made coalitions from their Conservative angles.

The integration of the YWCAs in political and public affairs during the 1920s had different consequences. The role of the American YWCA broadened and became similar to a social institution that catered for the welfare of young women both at work and in recreation. While the British YWCA went through a painful period of conflicts that resulted in secessions and a reduction of membership by the thousands. Several prayer minded groups left the British YWCA due to the new and liberal outlook obtained by the leadership during the war work. In Germany the goal-orientated involvement in state affairs not least in the area of moral and youth education intensified. At the same time the German YWCA paid tribute to the youth mobilisation during the 1920s built on authoritarian aesthetics, emotions and hopes for a new national-religious awakening, that paralleled and interfered with anti-democratic and Nazi currents.

How was the co-operation among associations marked by such profound differences possible? Here the World’s YWCA came to play the role as a melting pot aimed at negotiating the different views and emphases.

When it came to addressing international relations, the hegemonic role of the Anglo-American YWCAs in the World’s YWCA headed off German aggressions in the wake of the Versailles Peace Treaty: In the rejection of incorporation of territories that earlier belonged to Germany, in terms of weakening the growing racism in relation to the occupation and the presence of black soldiers in the Ruhr district, as well as the underlying wish for war-revenge. Not least the financial arguments counted here. The German YWCA was saved from bankruptcy in 1923 through a joint initiative of the
World’s and the British YWCA. Besides, the international networking and friendships among top YWCA women dating back to pre-World War I times were important. The charmed international circle that along with Nordic YWCA leaders, also included the influential German YWCA leader, Hulda Zarnack, played a major role in retaining the cross-Atlantic and cross-North Sea dialogues.

Hegemonies and Multiple Voices

It is obvious that certain national features determined the take-off and profiles of the YWCAs in different national settings. Religious regimes made up of revivalist patterns, church structures, political cultures and the general level of industrialisation and modernisation seem to have influenced the contested field of how gender was perceived and how religious convictions translated into activism.

At the same time the so-called international processes of diffusion made substantial impact especially at the end of the 19th century, where improved infrastructures, modern travel technologies, and the rising prosperity of revival communities facilitated religious encounters in many ways. Religious communication and inspiration was eased by the interpersonal communication at numerous meetings and conferences and in the ever growing amount of written communication and printed material.

International diffusions, however, was not just an innocent exchange of ideas and practices. Co-operation in the field of religious associations were both over-layered and also negotiated through geo-political powerstructures. Also here the making of an overarching fellowship was somehow a challenge in relation to the profound differences not only in national but also in religious matters. Making the assessments of conflicts and disagreements important elements of the historical accounts of the association.

The World’s YWCA was founded in London in 1894. Besides the dominant USA and British YWCAs only two Nordic YWCA branches were among the four founding members. The declared object of the World’s Association was the “union, development and extension of the YWCA in all lands”.

From the very beginning the stage was set by Anglo-American interests and conflicts. In this perspective the formation of the World’s YWCA can be regarded as an exercise in settling the spheres of interest between the then most advanced and dominant YWCA countries, Great Britain and the US. While Britain was the leading part in the 19th century, the balance shifted towards the USA during the first decades of the 20th century, not least due to the financial power. Yet the Chinese YWCA, where the USA catered for nearly half of the national budget in 1921, makes up an illustrative point.
Another line of dominance in the YWCA landscape was articulated in the relationship between different Western trends: Between the predominantly Lutheran orientated YWCAs of the Continent, Germany and the Nordic countries that in several respects differed from the Anglo-American convictions and practices. Here two interrelated issues made up the main challenges: One question was how to define and interpret the Evangelical basis and its boundaries. Another issue was how to translate Christianity into social activism.

At the YWCA World’s Conference in Budapest in 1928, quite far-reaching changes were made in the YWCA Constitution both regarding the confessional basis and the organisational structures. The changes, aiming at enhancing greater diversity and internationalism in the association, caused great controversies in relation to the old Continental associations.

The question of church orientation had been painful already in the affiliation of the Lutheran associations at the beginning of the 20th Century. During the 1920s the Anglo-Americans pressed for the World’s YWCA to adjust to ecumenical principles, meaning that the YWCAs were open to members from various branches of the Christian Churches. During the 1920s the issue became of more than theoretical interest due to openings of YWCA work in Southern and Eastern Europe and in Latin America, that made the question of how to deal with members of Orthodox and Roman Catholic convictions urgent. 27 The new Constitution from 1928 allowed Roman Catholics and Orthodox membership. Yet resulting in serious criticism from the Nordic Associations and from Germany. The step even caused the secession of the Finnish and the South African YWCAs.28

Some of the criticism, however, was exhausted by the launching of a more democratic constitution of the World’s YWCA and a more international composition of the World’s executive. It is worth to note, that the democratic changes came about, not least due to pressure from the Nordic YWCAs.29

For the first time in history a non-Anglo-American woman was made the president in 1930, namely miss Asch van Wijk from Holland. She belonged to the Dutch reformed Church and she was expected to bridge the gaps between the antagonised angles. The removal of the headquarters of the World’s YWCA from London to the international capital of Geneva in 1930 made up the external symbol of this new period of diversity and internationalism of the YWCA.

Gender Perceptions and Emphasis

At a principal level the Lutheran influenced associations of the European Continent stressed women as individuals and religion as a genderless force. The Anglo-Americans stressed the gendered nature of the associations and
the role of women in religious and political practices. Anglo-American
woman associates were freer to handle religious rituals outside the churches,
while the Lutheran associations were church affiliated and relied heavily on
professional interpretations made by (male) clergy. The strong ties with the
Churches rendered several of the Continental YWCAs, e.g. in Denmark,
Norway and Germany, a high degree of legitimacy. At the same time female
theologians had to fight for legitimacy and equal status. A fact that all in all
weakened the principal radicalism of Lutheranism that allowed for the as-
assessment of evidence for God regardless of gender.

The World’s YWCA accordingly became the framework for complicated
negotiations over questions of gender difference and equality issues that
linked to religious and political traditions and regimes at the national levels.

Both the British and the American YWCAs were religious in orientation
but inter-denominational, meaning that their associates came from a range of
Evangelical churches. Both associations were based on 19th century Victo-
rian and religious values and functioned as independent of both state
churches and of the men’s YMCA. From the very beginning the Anglo-
American YWCAs were headed by women, even though men were allowed
as both board-members and trustees. Along with the suffrage mobilisation
the YWCAs gradually developed a high consciousness of itself as a Chris-
tian Women’s Movement, in stressing the specific role and duties of women
also in public life. All in all national and regional diversities were epitomised
in the affiliation of national membership associations to the World’s YWCA.

Due to the Anglo American dominance, the emphasis on the YWCA as a
women’s association was mirrored in the priorities made by the World’s
YWCA. In the Constitution of 1898 it was made explicit that the general
secretary ought to be a women, while the executive committee might consist
of both men and women. Meaning that the German YWCA as a male headed
association met the requirements of the World’s YWCA when they joined in
1898. The Germans even maintained the principle of a male theologian. In
reality however, the general secretary Hulda Zarnack played a substantial
role when it came to international and women’s issues of the association.30

When the Danish association became affiliated to the World’s YWCA in
1902 changes were made in order to enhance the independence of the
YWCA. The former male-dominated executive of the Christian youth work
was succeeded by a semi-independent executive of the Danish YWCA parallel
to the executive of the YMCA. This marked some, but not total inde-
pendence from the men’s YMCA and the affiliated Inner Mission Associa-
tion.31

In Norway the formation of a national YWCA structure was more com-
plicated. Norway had acted as a founding member of the World’s YWCA
represented by an Oslo-based YWCA association. However the formation of
the gender-mixed Christian youth organisation, Norges Kristelige Ungdons-
forbund, in 1905 in the wake of Norwegian independence from Sweden
raised highly principal questions. How could a mixed organisation relate to the World’s YWCA?\textsuperscript{32} This made up a challenge to the principles of separatism of the World’s YWCA. The matter was not settled until 1920 when a semi-independent Norwegian YWCA was established.

The Swedish YWCA was different and held an independent status of both the men’s YMCA and the Swedish Church. A fact that made the association weaker in the landscape of women’s and youth organisations compared with Norway and Denmark. Gradually the Swedish YWCA developed into a liberal and internationally orientated branch of Protestant work for women. Together with the Swedish YMCA this contrasted the conservative and patriotic attitude of the church affiliated young people’s societies, Ungkyrkorörelsen.

From early on the Swedish YWCA was made the Scandinavian darling of the World’s YWCA “… for of all the Scandinavian countries the work in Sweden is on the best and sanest lines …” wrote Clarissa Spencer, general Secretary of the World’s YWCA in 1909.\textsuperscript{33} The close links between the Swedish YWCA and the World’s association were consolidated through the World’s Conference in Stockholm in 1914. The Swedish YWCA later affiliated with the occumenical trends during the 1920s and in the 1930s not least through Elsa Cedergren, who became a well-known and forelooking YWCA chair in Sweden. At the international scene she was a key person in diplomatic exercises in order to maintain the German YWCA an independant religious association in 1933 and in terms of making world peace a core issue of the World’s YWCA.

During the first decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century the World’s YWCA declined invitations from the men’s YMCA for closer co-operation. The World’s YWCA consented to informal exchanges of ideas, problems and experiences, but declined any forms of organisational unity. Not only single national merges like the Norwegian one, but also the gender-mixed World’s Student Christian Federation challenged this pattern of gender divided work.

The reasons varied from time to time, but the stress on women’s need to maintain freedom and independence and the acknowledgement of women as a minority group in many public arenas were stressed once and again. Not least the opportunity to develop women’s leadership abilities has been – and is still today regarded as a main motivation for the separate organisation.\textsuperscript{34}

In the last section below, I will deal with how the YWCA and its convictions of being a women’s movement translated into co-operation at an international level during the 1920s and 1930s.

Social Activism

Another challenge was how to deal with social and industrial issues, questions that became vital in Western countries along with industrialisation and
I will give some examples of how the multitude of voices and versions of Christian interpretation were translated into social activism in the framework of the YWCAs. One framework was the broad Anglo-American idea of Christianity – known as The Social Gospel, an activist theology that fueled progressive reform in urban America at the beginning of the 20th century. Social Gospel theology and practices often contradicted the Lutheran emphasis on the division between spirituality and social activism.

The idea of the Social Gospel implied that the Kingdom of God was not a distant place in a future world, but was to be implemented here and now. The Christian message was to be realised in concrete actions, not least in the social realm. Christians must work for “the progressive transformation of all human affairs by the thought and spirit of Christ”, wrote one of the proponents, the American theologian Walter Rauschenbusch in 1912. In Britain the trend was even labelled New Theology and announced as the religious counterpart of socialism. According to the prominent British YWCA leader Emily Kinnaird, the aim of social intervention was seen as a measure of prevention. It was the duty of a Christian association to deal with social issues in order to restore family life, health and religion. The broad idea of the social gospel was a tool that enabled religious activism to integrate social and political matters without losing the spiritual legitimacy.

The Lutheran dominated YWCAs of Northern Europe maintained a dualistic outlook that emphasised the disparities of religion and soul on one side and of social and material issues on the other. In 1910 the conflict was summarised by a Lutheran clergyman in stressing the duality between social and religious issues: “The social issues are entirely of this world, while Christianity is quite other-worldly or heavenly.”

The expansion of social consciousness and of translating Christian convictions into social and political actions can be substantiated within the framework of both views.

The Anglo-American YWCAs primarily tried to negotiate and find their way in the formation of modern labour politics. In the wake of World War I, e.g., several new initiatives were launched intended for the commitment of women to labour issues, including the British Working Women’s College at Beckham in 1920 and the London-based Industrial Law Bureau, while the American YWCA launched the well known Summer Schools for Women Workers at Bryn Mawr College and the Southern Summer School for Women Workers in Industry. The American YWCA through the Industrial Clubs and educational activities paid an important tribute towards educating and organising both black and white women voters and in bringing them to testify for legislatures about industrial conditions.

In the Continental Lutheran framework religious convictions were translated primarily into social and church related institutions and educational activities. In Copenhagen the YWCA launched a whole network of social
institutions, among them one aimed at caring for battered women in the early 1920s.

In Germany an important step was taken with the launching of the Seminar für kirchlichen Frauendienst in 1926, approved by the state and the Evangelical Church as education aimed at youth and welfare institutions. The school became important during the nazi regime as a refuge and for the creation of female resistance to nazi ideology. In the mid-1930s, Anna Paulsen, a well-known theologian and chair of the school, wrote several books on biblical interpretations of women and gender relations. She criticised the ideals of the Zeitgeist that valued mothers over single women without children and vindicated the right of women to be respected in the sight of God, yet making theological interpretation a tool for nazi criticism. 40

The YWCAs explored the political culture of the USA and of Britain, dominated by social liberal ideas, Christian socialism and pluralism that tended to be open to the intervention of women’s associations in social political affairs and appeals to the state. In the Lutheran countries, the fields of social politics and labour were discursive possessed by hegemonic and class-antagonistic orientated Social Democrats and in Germany by a dictatorship that reduced and degraded the role of women, a fact that made the YWCAs less frequent co-operators in state and labour affairs.

At an overall level the YWCA innovated social Christianity and managed to translate Christian goals into social practices. In several ways the YWCAs acted as buffers and interpreters at both spiritual and practical levels. Also the YWCAs in numerous ways managed to identify ignored social problems and to forge new professional possibilities for women. In this way the YWCAs often acted in the cracks and as a buffer between dominant 20th century social movements of liberal, socialist and feminist convictions.

International Networking: Peace and Disarmament

The stress on the YWCA as a women’s organisation also implied the YWCA co-operation with other tone-setting women’s associations at the international level. With the end of World War I, and the formation of the League of Nations in 1919, new possibilities for the international women’s associations were opened. The international scene in Geneva created a unique place where international women’s associations pioneered their aspirations and pushed for change in the field of foreign policy and international relations to also include social issues and peace as well as the quest for gender equality.

Despite the provision in 1919 that all League of Nation positions would be open equally to women and men, the status achieved by women soon turned out to be very disappointing, yet motivating closer co-operation between a handful of international women’s association, formalised in 1925
through the creation of the *Joint Standing Committee of Women’s International Organisations*. 41

The collaborating associations were labelled as the “Principal” and the “Chief” women’s organisations by the inviting organisation the International Council of Women. 42 When it was discussed to confine the committee to strictly feminist societies, it is striking that the representative of the World’s YWCA disliked the term feminist and corrected the rhetoric. The YWCA asked “for representation not as feminist but as a matter of principle because we believed that women had a certain contribution to make on many of the subjects before the league commissions”. 43 This mirrored the internal competition among the women’s international associations and their different outlooks. Here the “woman” approach of the YWCA was more in line with the outlook of the League and of the International Labour Organisation than the radical feminist approaches that stressed universal equality and citizenship. 44

Through the creation of the *Liaison Committee of the International Women’s Organisations* in 1931, this collaboration was formalised even further, and came to incorporate co-ordinated actions towards the League of Nations. An off-shoot of this was the creation of a special disarmament committee in 1931, *The Disarmament Committee of the Women’s International Organisations*. The committee held a broad composition of 14 international women’s associations, including also Jewish and working-class women as well as the old and radical *Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom*. 45 It is interesting that the Disarmament Committee was chaired by the dynamic YWCA secretary Mary Dingman, who undoubtedly influenced the profile of the committee in avoiding radical stances and in the ability to link with high politics and big business. The committee turned out to be immensely efficient both regarding top level networking and regarding initiatives at the rank and file level such as collection of Disarmament petitions and in the creation of spectacular activities to the up-coming Disarmament Conference to be held under the aegis of the League of Nations in 1932.

The women’s Disarmament Committee carried on after 1935 under the name of the *Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women’s International Organisations*, when it even became known as the Dingman Committee, but not without criticism. The *Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom* gradually found that the Dingman Committee was too independent and did not function as a collaborative committee for independent organisations, which was the original idea. 46

The success of the committee was suspended by the steadily shrinking role of the League in maintaining collective security. During the 1930s disagreements among the great Powers weakened the League’s ability to resolve major disputes and most of them began to rearm.
Equal Rights or the Status of Women

The focus of networking among international women’s associations gradually shifted. From an initially narrow focus on the appointment of women to international agencies and posts, the perspective expanded during the 1930s to include equal rights for men and women in a wider sense. Catalysts of this development were the Open Door International and Equal Rights International. Their entry on the international scene led to a revitalisation of the agendas in Geneva, but also caused antagonistic conflicts between the proponents of equality on the one hand, and of supporters of gender-difference on the other. The disagreements crystallised around the issue of protective labour legislation for women, and culminated in the debate around a general resolution on equality, the Treaty of Equality. Within the international women’s organisations, this treaty provoked a debate for and against special protective legislation for women that spelled out different notions of equal rights both within and across international women’s associations. Some supported the demand for consequent equal rights legislation, while others thought that equal rights had broader implications. One of the members of the Peace League, said that she could not “accept the interpretation, which makes equal rights imply identity of law as regards men and women”.

In spite of different opinions both the International Council of Women and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom acceded to the equal rights treaty.

While the World’s YWCA sided unanimously with those who supported special legislation for women and collaborated closely in this field with the ILO, which right from the very beginning in 1919 had initiated special legislation, the World’s YWCA found it particularly important to maintain these agreements in countries with weak welfare and labour legislation, as well as in relation to women in industry. As a substitute for the treaty method the YWCA initiated knowledge-based and bureaucratic strategies. Already in 1934 the World’s YWCA commissioned a study of women in industry and in professions, as well as in local communities, in the church and at home.

In 1935 the international women’s associations requested that the status of women and the equal rights treaty was put on the agenda at the General Assembly of the League of Nations. While the Treaty was turned down, unanimity was obtained concerning a general inquiry into the status of women. A request had been made by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women and the World’s YWCA. Here the World’s YWCA was completely in line with more moderate forces in desiring a gradual implementation of equal rights. In the following years a study was completed to which both governments and women’s organisations contributed. The World’s YWCA agreed with other international women’s associations, that the association would focus its efforts on the economic aspects of the status of women, in collaboration with the International Federation of...
University Women and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. In the words of the World’s YWCA: “Because of our various categories of members which include students, business and professional and industrial women, we felt we had a special concern in this phase of the study and were the best equipped to work in this field.” Several other international women’s organisations focused on civic and political aspects of the enquiry, which also reflected the various political interests and the informal division of labour among the tone-setting women’s associations.

Again in 1937 a range of international women’s organisations pushed for the passage of an international convention on equal rights. While the World’s YWCA maintained their earlier reservation they also exhorted the League of Nations to commission an analysis of the results of the Status of Women Enquiry. The initiative yielded a resolution that pointed optimistically to the gradual implementation of equal rights legislation and suggested the preparation of a three-year study of women’s legal status. World War II however hollowed the results.

Conclusions

When preparations for the United Nations were under way in 1945, a sub-commission was appointed on the Status of Women under the Economic and Social Council. Here a handful of women who had been active in the League were actively pushing for new initiatives, resulting in the inclusion of the equality and women’s issues at strategic and institutional levels: The principle of equality between men and women was made explicit in the new United Nations Charter from 1948 and a permanent Commission on Women was launched.

As concerns the initiatives in the 1930s, the role of the World’s YWCA was to assist in the adoption of the principle that the status of women was not merely a national but an international matter. At the same time the World’s YWCA also participated in the foundation of the gradual and moderate principle on this matter. The World’s YWCA did not represent the most radical and visionary views, neither here nor in the efforts for peace. Instead the association favoured reconciling and moderate initiatives that also maintained and bridged the relationship between women’s international associations and international institutions, such as the League and ILO. It even looks as if the World’s YWCA made it possible for the various initiatives actually to be implemented. It did so by virtue of its prominent status in the efforts for peace and social rights. All an all the YWCA approach indicates a context of real politics and of practice rather than of theories and utopias.

In a current and global perspective, it is interesting to note that the YWCA still seem to attract women particularly in post-communist and post-
colonial settings. At the World level the Association today claims a membership of 25 million, more than ever before in its long history. At this level the YWCA seems to form part of the new third wave of women’s movements at the dawn of the 21st century.

Finally the ideas of British sociologist Anthony Giddens regarding different forms of policy seem to be useful in assessing the YWCA and women’s movements at a theoretical level. Giddens affiliates particular political forms to specific types of movements in modernity and late modernity. He links the concept of *emancipatory politics* to movements aiming at emancipating “others”, and points to the Labour movement and liberal-democratic movements of the 19th and 20th centuries as classic examples, while the idea of *life politics* marks a new way of political activity. This includes politics of self-actualisation that is focused on the self and on ethical choices and unfolds as a political activity attached to late-modern, global orientated movements, like the ecological movement.

The feminist movements and their objectives do not fit the typology, according to Giddens, because they seem to transgress the boundaries. They contain elements of emancipatory, self-reflective and historical transcendence that do not adjust with the suggested divisions. But he draws no analytically consequences of this insight.

For a closer historical and source-bound look, I have demonstrated that the YWCAs count as social movements in either understanding. The claim is that the YWCAs formed a type of movement that operated in the space between classical emancipatory politics and life politics. The YWCAs at certain points participated in the discoursive formation and in the grounding of women’s rights and emancipation. At the same time the YWCA, forged by its religious commitments, continuously performed the task of putting ethical and moral questions to the fore, both at the personal, national and global levels. This approach might apply to the entire cluster of feminist movements and pay tribute to recasting future research perspectives.

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2 Cf. Bergman in this volume.
3 Gundelach (1988), 24. The broad definition acknowledges both progressive and regressive elements within social movements as well as social movements with different political ends.
4 E.g. Dahlerup 1998.
6 For an elaborated debate of secularisation see Sanders (1995), 16ff.
Great Britain: start in 1855, national association in 1884. USA YWCA start in 1859, two branches joined in a national association in 1906. Germany, start in Berlin 1855, national unit founded in 1893. Denmark: start in 1883 and a national federation 1902, Norway: start in 1887, national unit 1905, Sweden: start 1885, Finland: start 1896.


Numbers extracted from Brian Harrison (1987).


See Fürsorge für die weibliche Jugend nr. 7, Juli 1910 and Stibbe (2002).

Law (1997), 7ff and Rømer Christensen (1995), 92ff

E.g. the influential chair of the Danish YWCA Henriette Knuth and in Britain, the outspoken antifeminist lady Artholl were hesitant or against suffrage. For Germany see Ute Gerhard (1992), 203-204

Rice (1947), 157ff and 161 ff.

This involved the general secretary of the German YWCA, Hulda Zarnack, in refugees and welfare work for women munition workers as well as committing her to the public of Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine. Hulda Zarnack biography, dat. February 21, 1923, in German YWCA Archives, Gelnhausen.

Years of women's suffrage in the Nordic countries: Finland 1906, Norway 1913, Denmark and Iceland in 1915, Sweden 1919-21.

E.g. the British National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies in 1919 broadened into the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship while another branch developed into the Women’s Employment Federation in 1934. One branch of the NUWS survived as the Fawcett Society. See Harrison (1987) 4-5 and Pugh (1992) 43 ff. In the US the influential National Women’s Party membership went down from 50,000 at the peak in 1919 to 159 in 1921. cf. Cott (1987) 72, and the moderate American Women’s Suffrage Association lost momentum. The successor, The League of Women Voters survived with only appr. 100,000 members.

The Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine did not accept and was furthermore due to its basis not allowed to join other associations, or to “make” a forced Anschluss to the Nazi Frauenfront and Bund Deutscher Mädel. See Gerhard: 373ff. This was contrary to the German YWCA that made a critical Anschluss. In reality the association only survived as a fragile framework, partly affiliated to the Bekennendr Kirche, a stepstone to Nazi resistance. See Rømer Christensen (1996).

Most notably several of the first women MPs in Britian, even-though they belonged to different political parties, were close YWCA affiliates. E.g. the Conservative Lady Nancy Astor and lady Artholl as well as the labour MPs Marg. Bondfield, Mary Phillipson and Edith Picton-Turbervill.

E.g. the Danish Gerda Mundt, member of the Danish Parliament for the Conservative Party and the German Paula Müller Ortfried, chair of the Deutsch Evangelischer Frauenbund, DEF, and member of the German parliament for the conservative party during the entire Weimar period. Gerhard (1992), 204. It is striking that the religious branch of the German women’s movement, the DEF was thriving during the 1920s and counted approximately 200,000 around 1930. The growth was affiliated with and politically translated into the conservative Deutsche Nationaler Volkspartei.
23 Olesen (1996).
24 The term Union was changed into Federation in 1898, cf. Rice (1947), 111.
25 In 1891 it was reported from India by the prominent British YWCA leader, Emily Kinnaird, that 2-3 different YWCAs were being started in new lands on lines mirroring the home culture of the YWCA worker, rather than the country in which they operated. Rice (1947), 49-50. Accordingly the international co-operation was launched to avoid competition.
27 E.g. Brazil 1920, Chile 1921, Bolivia 1930, Czechoslovakia 1919, Estonia 1920, Romania 1919, Bulgaria 1922.
28 The conflict is elaborated in: Christensen (2002)
30 In 1930 her position was changed according to the new Constitution of the World’s YWCA that required national associations to be headed by women. Rice (1947, Appendix I and II.
31 Also the new structure safeguarded the male dominance of the joint executive of the YMCA and the YWCA. The male President of the Inner Mission automatically became president.
32 Rice (1947), 143ff, Parm (1926), 120-131.
33 Sweden – Report from Miss Spencer 1909, in YWCA Archives, Geneva. Clarissa Spencer was general secretary from 1904 to 1920.
34 Rice (1947), 142-143. – Other current priorities of the World YWCA in 2001 are advocacy of Social and Economic Justice and People Centred Development, see: WWW.worldYWCA
35 Rauschenbusch (1912). Among other publications of Rauschenbusch were The Social Principles of Jesus in 1916, written for the American YWCA and A Theology for the Social Gospel in 1917.
36 Mayor (1967), 70 ff
37 Emily Kinnaird: After the Conference. in our Outlook, 1909: 30-31.
38 In German: Die sozialen Dingen sind ganz diesseitig, ganz weltlich, das Christentum ganz himmlisch.
40 e.g. “Ehelosigkeit” in 1935 that responded to Nazi eugenics and “Mutter und Magd” dealing with women’s call in 1938. See Anna Paulsen Biographisch-Bibliografisches Kirchenlexikon. Band VII. 1994. Spalte 38-39, and WWW.bautz.de/bbkl/p/ Paulsen
41 Miller (1991), 65
The radical branch embodied by the American National Women’s Party and the controversial chairwoman, Alice Poul.

Including the League of Jewish Women and the International co-operative Guild of Women.

The Peace and Disarmament Committee and the International Women’s Peace League apparently competed for the honour of the Nobel Peace Prize. The Peace and Disarmament committee was nominated for the Nobel peace price and was granted financial support by the Nobel committee, while the Peace League and its chair Jane Addams won a shared Nobel prize in 1932. Rupp (42-43, 221).

The purpose of the Equal Rights Treaty was to initiate equal rights legislation from above, and the countries that signed the treaty were to work towards equal rights or gender-neutral legislation. The Equal Rights Treaty was introduced by a Conference of American States in 1933, where it was signed by a handful of Latin and South American countries: Cuba, Equador, Paraguay and Uruguay.

E.g. the Night Work Convention and the Childbirth Convention, both of 1919.

Miller (1994) 27.

Cf. interview with Musimbi Kanyoro, General Secretary, World YWCA, July 2001 and Musimbi Kanyoro: YWCA, where the W Matters. Paper, YWCA/WMCA of Denmark, May 18-19, 2000

Giddens (1991), 159 ff.

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The Heathen Woman in Norwegian Missionary Writing

Lisbeth Mikaelsson

The figure of the poor heathen woman has been an important part of Protestant mission propaganda. The basis for such renderings of the female is undoubtedly women’s life conditions in many non-Western societies, hard as they were and still are in many places. The figure of woman is also a rhetorical and ideological device serving the interests of the Western missionary institutions. This paper will briefly discuss how the category of the heathen woman is constructed in Norwegian missionary writing, stressing its functions as discourse about legitimatising missions. Not social facts, but literary representation is therefore the subject of this piece.

Autobiographical accounts published by Norwegian missionaries in the shape of journals, autobiographies and mission reports are the basis of what I am going to say. This literature constitutes a major genre in Norwegian religious writing. In a comprehensive investigation of such texts, I recorded 228 books and booklets published in the period between 1843 and 1994. Authors number 136 persons, 93 men and 43 women. Male texts amount to 176 titles, female texts to 52 titles. While the list is not complete, it covers most of the titles published during the time period.¹

Women representing the “Macedonia call”

Both male and female authors in Norwegian missions pay attention to sexual oppression. Gripping anecdotes demonstrating the deplorable state of the female is a frequent element in their works. Often the stories are eye-witness accounts, exemplifying women’s poverty, helplessness, and violent treatment by husbands and in-laws. Debilitating and brutal customs affecting the female, like Chinese foot-binding, are reported and become the point of departure for general comments on women’s fates in “heathen lands”. Often women are reported to be no better off than animals, and sometimes a wife is less valued than her husband’s livestock. Some of the stories get a happy ending due to missionaries’ intervention, as when orphans left to die are

¹ The topics presented here are treated more fully in my book Kallets ekko. Studier i misjon og selvbiografi (2003), and the article “Gender politics in Female Autobiography” (2003).
rescued, or girls destined for brothels are instead admitted to mission schools. The same sort of topics is also found in mission magazines. The morale of many stories is to establish the unique and irreplaceable work done by Christian missions. All in all a considerable part of Norwegian missionary literature, from its earliest period up to the present, casts a sombre light on the plight of women outside Christendom. Naturally female authors tend to include such topics more than their male colleagues, but they also figure in men’s texts. More nuanced understanding of foreign cultures in later decades has not erased the poor woman motif from this literature.

Why do women figure in this way? How is this heart-breaking agenda to be understood? The simplest answer points to the reality experienced in foreign societies, and I do not doubt that many stories and comments have their roots in observations of real happenings. But literary representation is never a simple reflection of events or of the social structures in question. Besides, what counts as a significant event is culturally relative. Taking the author’s value system into account is always necessary, along with her intentions about the text she creates and the purposes it is meant to serve. Like any other writer, the missionary selects the incidents she wants to stress out of a complex totality, and if not quite sovereign in her choice of topics, she (or he) is still the master of her version of the world.

Sad stories have an emotional impact. Readers are impressed by strange life conditions and exotic customs. To convey human dramas and tell interesting tales can be a purely literary intention, which, in that case, should not be overlooked.

However, for our purpose, it is more relevant to look at the cosmological and rhetorical framework to explain the frequency and similarity of these writings. Characteristic of a great many texts is a polarized, mythical conception of the world in which all kinds of defects, including oppression of women, are ascribed to “heathenism”. “Heathenism” is a comprehensive category; and every other religion belongs to it, as well as cultural and social features that somehow are bound up with religion in missionaries’ views. A mythical polarity between heathenism and the realm of God in a Christian sense saturates many texts. Interestingly, Western-type modernization (schooling, health care, ways of life, etc) gets absorbed in this polarity pattern and becomes part of God’s agenda.

The state of women and girls appears as the embodiment of heathen superstition, immorality, cruelty, and lack of civilizing discipline. Consequently, women’s poor situations appear as a main, negative symbol of the effects of foreign religions. Such ideological presuppositions can explain why authors rarely comment on suppression of women in Western society, or for that matter, in the missions themselves. To admit the same type of defects and shortcomings would break the mythical pattern so vital to the whole missionary enterprise. In fact, silence about troublesome facts seems to be an important textual strategy, decisive in the missionary construction of
foreign cultures as well as their own self-image. However, it must be added that what many missionaries have observed in Asian and African societies far exceed the defects they knew of at home.

It may be cynical to talk about the textual politics invested in the heart-breaking life stories, but the texts themselves in many cases explicitly combine female tragedy with the necessity of bringing the gospel, while presenting missionaries as indispensable agents of change. Rhetorically, women’s distress functions as a “Macedonia call”, as it exemplifies the vision of the Macedonian crying "Come across to Macedonia and help us” to Paul the apostle (Acts 16,9). There are several explicit citations of this passage in the literature in question, which convey another biblical justification for foreign missions besides the famous exhortation of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. The civilizing agenda of modern mission is mythically rooted in the conception of a heathen world calling for assistance and charity from Western churches, and women especially play the part of the helpless Macedonian. Without disregarding the sincere feelings and life experiences of missionary authors, the pitiful female functions as a mission legitimating motif, justifying the missionaries’ struggle to defeat and extinguish other religious traditions. Johan Ofstad, for instance, presents a striking “Macedonia vision” when he is about to leave India for the last time. He pictures to himself the sight of a miserable girl holding a starving baby in her arms in the railway station of Calcutta. She becomes a monument over India, the country where Brahma and Buddha “have led the masses deeper and deeper down in darkness and misery”. Such reminders particularly call for the solidarity of the female readers, notably the chief money-raising cadres in Norway.

Granted that this analysis holds good on a general level, can it really explain all the particular features of individual texts? Probably not, but it should also be kept in mind that almost all the writings in question have been produced within the special confines of a literary circuit dominated by the interests and viewpoints of the missionary organizations. In such a context autobiographical accounts have been expected to nourish supporters’ commitment to the missionary cause. Neither reader expectations nor publication policy have encouraged authors to declare controversial opinions or bring forth memories that could harm the mission institution. Critical views on women’s positions in the churches, missions or Western societies in general

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2 Ofstad 1964:178.
3 An early example is missionary in China, Sophie Stanley Smith (1860–1891), who challenges her readers to follow her own example of feminine solidarity: “Dear sisters, we ask you in the name of the Lord: how can you with a clear conscience stay home, bound by some earthly tie that God can untie, when you know that thousands and thousands of unhappy women live in the deepest darkness of heathenism, without any joys in life and without any hope for eternity?” (Smith 1914:127). My translation.
would definitely not be appreciated. As it is, textual silences might as well be the result of censorship and editing by publishers.4

Women’s humanity

Foreign missions in the modern period have assisted local women in many ways, especially through schooling and health care. The missions have also brought new ideas about what it means to be a woman. In Norwegian missionary writing the ideological alternative to “heathen” denigration of the female is the idea of the equal humanity of women, which is carried into effect by the “humanizing” aspects of mission enterprises such as orphanages, schools and hospitals.

There are several dimensions to the humanity of women–theme. It is repeatedly pointed out, also by male authors, that Christianity gives women a new, more positive self-image and status compared with that in their “heathen” surroundings. Such transformation is related to psychological factors such as self-respect and dignity, in contrast to former debasement and powerlessness. It is also associated with ethical norms that value women’s lives and health, as opposed to the treatment of women as commodities and objects of sexual indulgence. Women’s equal presence at church rituals likewise expresses the same complex of ideas. The transformed status of Santal women is expressed in the following way by Johan Ofstad:

Every time a Santal woman puts her sacrifice in the brass bowl on the altar, a modest and quiet incident is taking place which has historical importance for the Santal people. Great things are often hidden in small ones. According to habitual ways of thinking, a woman has nothing to do with religious matters, but in the Christian congregation she is a human being who is reckoned with. She has a religious task to execute.5

Perhaps her church affiliation really had fundamental consequences for the Santal woman, considering her former position. Conceptions of sexual equality may have a revolutionary potential, but church history also proves that conceptions of women’s equality go together with patriarchal structures as well as the cult of domesticity. Generally speaking this type of gender discourse is not controversial as long as it does not threaten gender hierarchies in mission or church. One may well ask if female missionaries have quenched their own dissatisfaction with patriarchal mission structures when confronted with the many miserable fates among local women and the improvement they have experienced through the missions.


5 Ofstad 1939:166. My translation.
Missionary feminism

The solidarity with non-Western women found in modern missions has led scholars to coin the expression “missionary feminism”. Such a concept is non-existent in the missions and may sound strange, bearing in mind evangelical conservatism and its hostility to political feminism. However, the mobilization of great masses of compliant women for the missionary cause within – as in Norway – an organizational framework dominated by men, should not blind us to the fact that many of them have worked for the liberation and independence of women within these frameworks. Both the theme of women’s distress and the accompanying theme of how Christian missions are restoring women’s humanity must be seen as particularly aimed at female readers and mission supporters, procuring a necessary incentive for their work.

Mission and gender are complicated matters, affected by colonialism, nationality, class, denomination, and time period. The hierarchical assumptions in Western women’s responsibility for their “heathen sisters” are harshly pointed out by Susan Thorne, and for her, “missionary feminism” becomes “missionary-imperial feminism.” The pitiful figure of the poor, helpless female can be seen as a construction of “the other” which carries with it a Western hegemonic attitude. Admitting this ambiguity, in my opinion the magnitude and variation of activities, conducts and attitudes in foreign missions should prevent easy denunciation of missionary feminism. The most interesting question to ask in relation to the women’s distress–theme is perhaps not whether it is too exaggerated or one-sided, but to what degree the missions have given privileged assistance to women.

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Church-related Women’s Groups in Southern Malawi as Challengers of Identities and as Contexts where new Identities are Built

Anna Apell

Within the link of co-operation between University of Malawi and the University of Linköping, I visited Zomba, Malawi in July–Sept 2000 and held interviews for an essay which was then written back in Linköping. It deals with the interpretation of baptism among women belonging to the church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist church (Baptist convention churches). It was a contribution focussing the experiences and thoughts of women. It is shown how women’s thoughts about Christian baptism also are thoughts about the relation between Christian faith and culture, community and life conditions. Some of the interpretations given by the women are the expected ones within the different denominations. However, I argue that some of the more common interpretations have obvious relations not only to biblical texts and Christian traditions but also to the mental world of these Malawian women and to their traditional culture.

A special observation is that the missionary (European) interpretation of Christian faith presupposed that the demarcation system between sacred and profane was very alien to Malawian traditions and to most Malawian women interviewed. This cultural conflict made the coming of Christianity to, for instance, the Chewa people and their matrilineal society a mixed blessing for the women. To a certain extent women are liberated from traditional oppressive structures, but they are still under submission of their uncles, brothers and husbands. Within the churches, the patriarchal structures of the 19th Century western churches and societies were transferred to African societies, especially in some synods of CCAP, in which women are not allowed to posit religious leadership. It is then interesting to study how some women acted as prophetesses at rain shrines in the traditional society. (Phiri 1997)

Since baptism is a rite of passage, the interviews also concerned the women’s views of traditional Malawian puberty initiation, which has been a controversial issue within the missions and denominations. Through the analysis of baptism and traditional puberty rites it becomes clear that the traditional identity and self-understanding of the women was founded on their roles as mother and wife in the family. The most important duty of the women is the responsibility for the continuation of society. According to the women there was still a need for a female puberty rite, now arranged under
the auspices of the church, but still with the same functions and main content of the traditional rite: the place where the girls or young women were taught how to act as an adult women in relation to men, children and elder members of society in such way that the society will survive and be sustained. This puberty rite organised by the church (or approved by the church) was described as a background material for the interpretation of the interviews. The material on this rite used in the essay was collected by Rachel Banda.

During my stay in Malawi I was introduced, through Rachel Banda and Fulata Moyo at the department for Theology and Religious Studies, to some church-related women’s groups where Malawian “missionaries and laywomen” try to stimulate greater freedom for women. Women are encouraged to follow other norms than those of the traditional culture. They are taught how to sew in order to take care of themselves and to be able to earn some money for themselves. They are also taught nutrition, health, cooking, growing cycles etc. In some groups, married couples are reminded of the importance of keeping to one wife (not least because of the threat of HIV) and that the man should share the responsibility for the home. Studies of the Bible and of Christian faith is part of every meeting. Everything is taught from the conviction that the traditional core values can also be criticised from an ideal where freedom and equality in Christ is normative for both women and men. Some of these groups are parts of a network inspired by a few university teachers.

In relation to the essay, these women-groups can be interpreted as being new alternative forms of women initiation rites (cf Turner), where women are redefining themselves as women by questioning many of the distinctions and demarcations so important in traditional rites (and re-using and changing inherited symbols and thought-patterns). It is obvious that both “traditional” and “churchly” views on the relation between men and women are questioned and that this affects also economic and developmental topics. It is also obvious that the relation between Christian faith and traditional cultural forms is reformulated. But the rethinking and reformulation also challenge earlier views on educational differences and social barriers, and they create new contacts between women from different denominations, and sometimes also Muslim women take part.

These different women’s rites and groups should be studied in a broad perspective. There has developed an interplay between more traditional women’s initiation rites in the villages (Schoffeleers 1997, Chakanza 1995), initiations organized by churches as alternatives to the traditional rites (Chakanza 1995, Chingota 1995) and both more experimental groups associated with congregations (such as the “grassroot church-initiation” described in the essay and in Banda 2001) making use of traditional materials for new purposes and these Christian women groups more explicitly trying to change the roles and self-interpretations of women in a developmental perspective. The life, experiences, visions and different kinds of arguments of women
members of these rites and groups should be described in as “thick” a description as possible (cf Browning 1991/1996). The visions and counter-visions of the leaders and instructors should be described as well as how they are grasped and interpreted by different participants. What do the participants tell about their experiences outside the groups, about reactions from their husbands and relatives and practical changes? How are the visions of the leaders and the experiences of the participants treated and cultivated within the groups and in relation to the practical activities, and how is this interpreted and justified by different participants? How can what happens in the rites and groups be used by certain women for questioning old identities and building new ones?

A good context for such a study is the PhD programme on Identity and Pluralism which is to be started by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Linköpings university at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. The idea behind this programme is to use different research methodologies and theories in describing in different ways pluralistic situations where identities are formed and reformed in a search for solidarity and community, also across differentiations and demarcations, that is situations where people try not to contra-distinguish but in some way relate pluralism to their identities. Within this programme we also try to use Non-European situations as mirrors that help us to better grasp what we also find in Swedish situations. These Malawian rites and groups would be an excellent example of such mirrors.

References:


Education or Christian Education?
Missionary Girls’ Schools in Japan
in the Transition Years of the 1930s

Seija Jalagin

In 1935, Iku Koizumi raised a critical voice about women’s education in Japan. Writing in the Japan Christian Yearbook she accused the school system of not reacting effectively enough to the rapidly changing social situation in Japan:

[Women] ask for bread, but they are fed with stones. They are bound by an impractical, unsocial, impersonal system of education which undermines and stunts their youthful life.¹

Koizumi’s critique focused on the entire educational system, not excluding the mission schools. Her aim was not just to encourage improvements in education, but to improve the social status and human rights of all Japanese women through education. For her, women’s status and rights were the ultimate goal and education played a crucial part in reaching it. Koizumi’s critique was motivated by the “uniformism” of the educational system, that, according to her, was unable to react to the profound social changes of the time. Instead, it tended “to develop all people into one type.”² As a devout Christian, Koizumi was concerned with the deteriorating status of mission schools compared to national schools in Japan. Her views reflected the strait mission schools as private institutions in the 1930s facing both rapid social changes and rising ultra-nationalism and militarism as well as secularisation of the nature of mission schools. Mission schools were giving up, and had already largely given up, direct proselytising in their transformation process from missionary agencies to high-standard private schools. By the 1930s, they were elite schools hoping to convert at least some of their students.

Koizumi combined the uplifting of women’s social position and Christian education into the making of “Christian womanhood” in a way seldom heard in the comments of foreign missionaries in 1930s Japan. In the discourse on Christian education for girls there were demands for more efficient religious instruction and the building of Christian character, whereas the concept of Christian womanhood, so important in nineteenth century discourse,³ seems

¹ Koizumi 1935, 103.
² Koizumi 1935, 105.
³ Hill 1985, 56–60.
to have vanished altogether. We need to ask, then, what were the objectives of Christian schools and education for girls in Japan in the 1930s? This paper studies the discourse and reactions of foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians stimulated by changes in the political, social and religious arena. I will concentrate on secondary education for girls since most of the social and Christianising pressures focused on this level. Japan’s national education system thoroughly covered elementary level and, although the missionaries would have liked to influence girls from an earlier age, there was not much more they could do. College and university grade education, on the other hand, was a different problem. Secondary education preceded it laying the foundation for higher education, and was also responsible for schooling the majority of Japanese girls in the field of Christian education.4

The forum for exchange of thoughts on Christian education was the yearbook of the Federation of Christian Missions in Japan which consists of reports, analyses and articles of the missionary and, to some extent, the overall Christian circle in Japan.5 There were other Christian periodicals in Japan, but the Japan Mission Yearbook (since 1932 the Japan Christian Yearbook) reflects the views of the foreign missionaries which are of special interest in studying the role of mission schools as agencies of evangelism. The material consists of Japanese addresses as well, especially when there were subjects to be covered more extensively.

In the 1930s, Protestant missions celebrated their eighth decade in Japan, having started the work in 1859 when Japan reopened after 200 years of national isolation. By 1935 there were 1865 Protestant churches in Japan which represented all the major denominations6 and had a membership of approximately 200 000 Japanese Christians. The amount of baptisms was between 8 000 and 18 000 yearly. In 1938 the number of pastors and evangelists (both foreign and Japanese) was 2 865 out of which 625 were women:

4 Reporting of the situation in Japan to the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1928 the delegates of Japan missions highlighted that Christian education for girls could gain, and indeed had already gained a lot. Kindergarten work was well on its way, as was the girls’ secondary education. “Findings of delegation to Jerusalem. Religious education”, 276.

5 The Japan Mission/Christian Yearbook was the channel between foreign missionaries in Japan. All Protestant missions, regardless of nationality, were expected to subscribe to the publication. The yearbooks usually had 300 pages, the majority of which was dedicated to articles surveying the current situation in Japan from the point of the Protestant movement. This included usually a general survey of Japan, and a yearly report of the Protestant church (later also of Catholic and Greek Orthodox Church) in Japan. In some yearbooks there were special sections for various themes like Church and evangelism, Christian education and Christian social work. The yearbooks also included yearly reports on cooperative Christian organisations in the country, Missionary obituaries and directories and statistics.

6 The Japan Christian Quarterly and the periodical magazine of The National Christian Council.

7 Most of them came from Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

8 C. W. Iglehart 1936, 132; Mayer 1939, 188.
missionaries, Bible women, and “a number of very able women pastors”. Of the 360 foreign missionary women, the majority worked in the education sector. From the very beginning, education had been one of the primary means of getting into contact with the local people. In fact, it can be said, as Miss N. B. Gaines expressed it in 1927, that “the beginning of the Protestant Church in Japan was Christian education”. This is particularly true of girls’ education, since the first mission school for girls started in 1870 in Yokohama, two years before the founding of the first protestant church. The school had, in fact, been active even before this. It was started by an American missionary wife at her home in the early 1860s. This school was duly followed by several others within the next decades. In the Meiji era (1868–1912), the contribution of mission schools to women’s education was outstanding. Missionary schools for girls were, in fact, pioneers in Japanese women’s education. At first they outnumbered, then equalled the amount of public schools, until they were eventually left in a minority position to face the tightening competition for students and faculty with national schools. In 1882 there were seven Christian girls’ schools as opposed to one government school. In 1911 there was around 100 secondary schools, out of which 49 were mission schools. By 1926 the number of girls’ schools had grown five times higher with the 540 schools exceeding the amount of boys’ schools by 40. Only 39 of the 540 originated in Protestant churches or missions enrolling some 12000 students. These figures tell of the heavy investment in women’s education by the government, which naturally exposed the mission schools to fierce competition. In addition, the college level education for women, in the private as well as in the public sector, was proceeding fast.

The original goal of mission schools in Japan was, as in all missionary work, to convert the Japanese to Christianity. In addition, Christian values were anticipated to contribute to the social transformation of Japan into a civilised, i.e. western-style society. These ideas, nowadays depicted as imperialistic, were in late nineteenth and early twentieth century supported as liberal not only by foreign missionaries, but also by many Japanese Chris-

9 Mayer 1939, 183.
11 Gaines 1927, 143. The early converts came to attend the English or French Bible lessons offered by the missionaries, since before 1873 the practise of Christianity was banned from the Japanese.
12 The founder of the Ferris Seminary was Mary Eddy Kidder (later Miller) and the school is still active today, under the name of Ferris Girls’ School and Ferris University.
13 Schneder 1928, 52.
14 The 500 boys’ schools enrolled 300 000 students whereas the 540 girls’ schools had 250 000 students. The 12000 in Christian schools was less than 5 % of all the girls in secondary education. Schneder 1928, 52.
15 “List of educational institutions”, 500–501. At the same time there were 10 Christian colleges for women with 1802 students, and two nurses schools with 54 students.
16 Schneder 1928, 52.
The educational missionaries and mission schools in Japan were, however, part of the larger context: the global Christianising programme. As part of this education, in the 1920s it was given its own, specific target:

The purpose of christian education in Japan is, as everywhere, the development of Christian character and the relating of it to a Christian world in the making.”

In the case of girls’ schools this meant, accordingly, that the students were to be exposed to Christianity in every possible way. Converted graduates would form the body of Christian wives and mothers in homes, and in professional areas such as teachers in schools, Sunday schools and kindergartens as well as nurses in orphanages and the like. Alongside lay other factors that gradually tended to surpass conversion as the primary goal. Paul Shew has analysed Christian education in Japan as an instrument for “personal and social transformation”. Christian values were expected to transform the individual and her guidelines of behaviour, as well as those of the whole society. Another justification for the existence of Christian education in Japan was education for the sake of education, the intellectual side of schooling. Thus the girls’ mission schools in Japan needed to be studied in the general Christian and educational context of their time.

Rivalry with government schools

Mission societies and missionaries historically considered Japan highly civilised, and an extensive compulsory education system, proclaimed by the Meiji government in 1872, further added to this. From the very beginning the missions were directed into secondary education although in some rural areas they might have started with elementary schools. Eventually Christian education included all levels of educational institutions from kindergartens and Sunday schools to universities, not to forget the theological institutions that trained workers for churches. The discussions that emerged in the late

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17 Shew 2001, “Education for Personal and Social Transformation”. According to the advocates of the modernisation process in Japan, the individualistic and equality-oriented ideology of Christianity represented the values and methods that had made the West superior in technical and economic ways. In 1868 Charter Oath the Meiji government had set as its goal to seek knowledge throughout the world in order to make Japan fukoku kyōhei, ‘rich country with strong army’. Sansom 1987.
19 Shew 2001, “Education for Personal and Social Transformation”.
21 Writing to the mission magazines and publications the Japan missionaries could not refer to poverty or uneducated masses as in the case of black Africa, inland China or most Muslim countries. Nevertheless, the Japanese were naturally regarded as heathen, immoral and thus unreliable.
1920s were largely concerned with secondary and higher Christian education, in female as well as male sectors. This stemmed from the change in Japan’s educational field that had begun at the turn of the century and reached its peak in the 1930s. By the late 1920s the mission schools were losing the battle for (able) students and teachers against government schools in all levels. The government’s increased investment in education not only meant that the Christian (girls’) schools lost their majority position, but that they found themselves being materially and financially less equipped than the national schools.22 This became one of the major issues of education discourse amidst the Christian circle in the 1930s. They never failed to bring out the success stories achieved in Christian education but at the same time they were puzzled by the superiority of the national schools. In this situation the role and meaning of Christian education, the missions schools, had to be reconsidered.

Foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians were unanimous that the Christian schools were superior in teaching methods, initiative and emphasis on the “character building” of their students.23 “Character development” is a rather blurred term which may be understood as aiming at the conversion of the individual, or at least at her internalising the moral and ethical values of Christianity. The writers in Japan Mission/Christian Yearbook in the 1920s and 1930s used it in the way people speak to their own kind: the definite meaning and contents were familiar to all concerned. On the other hand, it can be interpreted, as Paul Shew has formulated it, as a “catch phrase.”24 The foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians referred to it as a synonym for all action aiming at the personal transformation of the individual. If this transformation achieved its peak, the result was conversion. If not, the result was social development along the lines of Christian morals. The 1920s’ and 1930s’ discussion in the Japan Mission/Christian Yearbook is actually well in line with what Patricia Hill said about the American women’s foreign mission movement’s education for heathen women: “Gradually, education of women in foreign lands became not so much a strategy for evangelisation as an instrument for social change.”25

Some studies have also shown that it was a common strategy in (girls’) mission schools, especially the boarding schools, to isolate the students from

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22 “Findings of delegation to Jerusalem. Religious education”, 274; Kagawa 1931, 184; Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 158.
25 Hill says that the schools aimed at educating the women, “not for marriage and maternity, but for positions of leadership in their own societies”. Hill 1985, 134. This applies to Japan as well, since the wives of the ministry, teachers and other professional women, also the ones in leading positions, came from inside the mission schools.
heathen influence in order to develop a strong Christian character.26 “Character building” was thus something foreign and Japanese Christians stressed in contrast to national education wherein the schools were regarded as neglecting the individual development of students. Meanwhile, in Christian schools, the exposing of students to Christian atmosphere in religious classes, morning sermons, daily chapels and other religious meetings was expected to build “stalwart Christian character”,27 with or without conversion as the ultimate end.

Character development did not, however, ease the deficiency the mission schools were experiencing in other sectors. The most able students headed for national schools because of their status and the opportunities they offered for entrance into higher schools.28 The national schools also attracted the most able teachers with better salaries and pension systems.29 Since most of the mission schools had been established by the late 19th century, by the 1920s their facilities were old and in need of renovation. In addition, their financial state deteriorated seriously during the 1930s. In the late 1920s the girls’ schools got about one third of their yearly budget from missions and almost two thirds in tuition fees.30 Gradually the foreign donations reduced as the recession hit hard in Europe and North America. School properties and buildings were originally funded by the missions, and they continued to finance the salaries of foreign missionary teachers.31 Thus they were, despite several decades of existence, financially far from independent.

The financial bond between schools and missions was really the only factor that defined these institutions as “mission schools”. As this bond loosened, the schools were seen heading towards a crisis in relation to Christian endeavour. Relationships with native churches were another worry. Missionaries shared an opinion that as the churches were growing stronger and more independent, their relations to schools weakened.32 In the 1930s, with the economic basis staggering, retaining their relationship with churches caused schools a serious problem: some writers pointed out that it was difficult to guide students to active church membership after graduation.33 Thus the mission schools were left as isolated missionary agencies within the Japanese society. In 1939 one writer explicitly stated that

27 Matthews 1927, 133.
28 Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 196.
30 The figures are based on a survey carried out in 1927. The questionnaire was answered by 38 girls’ schools. Shaw 1928, 81. See also Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 85.
31 Shaw 1928, 81.
33 “Findings of delegation to Jerusalem. Religious education” 1928, 275; Stegeman 1939, 211–212.
New methods of raising money and balancing budgets further strengthened the schools’ independence of churches and missions. One of the most common ways was to increase the amount of students. Naturally this augmented the income in the form of tuition fees but at the same time it affected the quality of teaching. The overcrowded classes diluted contacts between teachers and students and made it increasingly difficult to tutor the girls into Christianity. This process completed the development that had begun a few decades earlier. The Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890 figures as the starting point of Japanese nationalism in education. In 1899 the Monbushō (Ministry of Education) issued Directive Number Twelve, which ordered the removal of all religious instruction from schools. The schools could no longer require students to attend religious sermons, or even offer religious courses. The directive was sanctioned in a way that schools were compelled to choose between religious curriculum and government accreditation. Without accreditation graduates lost the right to take entrance exams for higher schools. Many schools had to close down and the ones that continued to work suffered from decreasing numbers of students. The Japanese Christian educators managed, with great effort, to persuade the government to give Christian schools similar status to national schools and still maintain some religious curriculum, but it eventually reduced the amount of proselytising in schools. After this, the schools flourished, at least in number of students, until late 1920s when new strains materialised.

Mission schools amidst political and social turbulence

As the 1920s had been a decade of mass culture, rapid urbanisation and industrialisation more and more women were drawn to work outside the home and pressures were created in education as well as in the families. The 1930s brought with it a radical political change that, although it could not turn back the wheel of social transformation, controlled the lives of masses in other

34 Stegeman 1939, 204.
35 Another method was to raise the tuition fees. Hoekje 1940, 104. Especially the boys’ secondary schools and even colleges launched endowment campaigns to collect donations from Japanese Christians. These campaigns proved quite successful, for the most notable schools at least. E. T. Iglehart 1938, 233.
36 It should be noted that the directive was intended to “fully control and centralize educational curriculum”, and not so much to control religious instruction. Wollons 1993, 28. It can also be said that it aimed at controlling the Buddhist educational institutions more than the Christian schools which were a rather marginal factor anyway.
ways opposed to the international air of the preceding decades. In this situation the girls’ schools survived better than the boys’ schools. In 1931 D. B. Schneder concluded that public opinion still regarded the girls’ schools as being as qualitative as the national schools, but that the female graduates were not facing as hard a competition to higher schools as the male graduates.38 According to Toyohiko Kagawa, famous leader of the Christian social movement in Japan,39 girls were “generally easier to handle, meeker than boys, in closer relations with their teachers, easily managed, less scientific-minded than boys; most of them want to enter into homes after their graduation”.40 Kagawa’s critical remarks were not acknowledged by missionary educators in girls’ schools. They maintained that it was especially the girls’ schools that had proven the most successful agencies of Christian endeavour in Japan.41 Their argument was based on conversion statistics and popularity of the schools.

The estimates of converted graduates ranged from 10 to 50 percent. Loretta L. Shaw, writing in 1928, regarded the real proportion even higher, since all girls did not get permission from their parents to be baptised.42 The Anglo-American-Japanese Commission on Christian Education in Japan, in its 1932 report, gave as high a figure as 69 % in women’s colleges and 49 % in high schools for girls.43 The parallel figures in men’s educational institutions were 26 % and 30 %. Iku Koizumi, on her part, doubted that many of the converts were true Christians. The reasons were diverse:

> It is not even wrong to state that the number of Christian students is diminishing yearly. What does this indicate? It can mean that there is a lack of positive attitude among the educators, or it may mean the lack of personal religion. In young women, there is a natural inclination toward religion, but to develop this earnest search for truth, outside aid must co-operate, – that is, it is necessary to strengthen their faith and to work into their hearts.44

She demanded urgent actions for the improvement of instruction. There was a need for a more personal touch such as group discussions led by people who could talk about their own religious experiences, as well as discussion groups of teachers and students.45

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38 Schneder 1931, 167.
39 The Kingdom of God movement.
40 Kagawa 1931, 183.
42 Shaw 1928, 87–88.
43 Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 148.
44 Koizumi 1935, 112.
45 Koizumi 1935, 112–113. Also Toyohiko Kagawa had criticised religious instructions. According to him, Bible teaching was not enough to “make a boy into a good Christian”. He pointed towards the teaching staff, which according to him, had to be hundred-percent Christian. Kagawa 1931, 181, 183.

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Foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians were genuinely concerned with the future of Christian education. This can be interpreted as anxiety for the schools as educational institutions, but even more for the future of Christian values in Japanese society. There were social and ideological factors that were gravely affecting the mindset and reality of Japanese women.

May Fleming Kennard, in depicting the world of Japanese female students, used the term “chaos”. According to Kennard the girls were torn in different directions so that they no longer knew themselves. Women were “embracing the difficult problems of their own place in the family and community, as women, struggling against the oppressions of the past”.46

Citing a college senior she claimed that “the most striking characteristic of contemporary women is variety. There is no woman one hundred percent typical of Japanese women today”.47

Kennard’s view reflects the emancipating task the mission schools regarded as they themselves having in guiding the Japanese women towards a Christian womanhood after the model of Western societies (although it was not explicitly outspoken). She referred, first of all, to women awakening to politics which drew them away from Christian thinking. There were the moga (< modan gaaru) or “modern girls”, the “Marx girls”, and women were neither left behind in literature, art nor education.48 Kennard was concerned with the popularity of communist thought among the female students because of its emancipating ideal. The Marxist ideology raised “social passion” in these girls who were, however, not capable of action to improve the lives of working class women or the poor in cities and rural areas. Kennard reminded us that social reforms were really carried out by outstanding Christians with strong church background. Challenged by communist ideals the Christian movement needed a new kind of gospel:

It is the exceptional young women who can think her way through the luke-warmness of official Christendom and the godlessness of Sovietdom to the militant Gospel of the Son of God. And the large majority, bewildered by the respective claims of Marx and Jesus, drift to and fro in their indifference, or are appalled through their own inability to do anything effective.49

Where Kennard depicted the young girls’ awakening social conscience without the ability to transform it to action and called for a stronger emphasis on Gospel at schools. Iku Koizumi pointed a critical finger at the schools themselves. She accused them of not having enough real will to make changes in curricula and teaching methods. With the changing social situation, the Japanese ideal of educating the girls to become ryōsai kenbo, ‘good wives,

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46 Kennard 1931, 195.
47 Kennard 1931, 195.
48 Kennard 1931, 195–196.
49 Kennard 1931, 199.
wise mothers’, as it was stated in the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890, was not enough in Japan of the 1930s. According to Koizumi, only schools with reformist spirit could create something new. To her the only ones that could come in question were the Christian schools, since “Christianity is a religion of freedom and creativeness.”\footnote{Koizumi 1935, 104.} In female education, primary status was to be given to “freedom and liberty” in order to develop the personality: “To grant freedom and liberty to youthful, growing lives is the duty of Christian educators.” The schools were, however, more concerned with restrictions. By these she was referring to general courses that filled the whole curriculum and overlooked the needs of the majority of women. Since there was an increasing amount of women working outside home to provide for themselves and their families, it was not enough to train women to become wives and mothers:

What women today need most as a result of their contact with society are first, a professional education which will give them a greater capacity for economic self-reliance; secondly, a higher education which has to do with real academic research; thirdly, an education based on the principle of “good mother and wife,” which will vitalize motherhood in the real sense.\footnote{Koizumi 1935, 106.}

Koizumi did not oppose motherhood as reality in women’s lives but she acknowledged their need to be both mothers and professionals:

Many modern women must find work. It is no longer regarded as a shame to work. … To work is the duty as well as the right of a human being, and for a woman marriage and outside work do not necessarily conflict.\footnote{Koizumi 1935, 108.}

In Koizumi’s opinion, the same applied to men. Contrary to foreign missionaries, who aimed at educating Japanese women to become better (wives and) mothers or unmarried professionals, such as teachers (like the missionaries themselves), Koizumi stressed the needs and reality of the profoundly altered occupational conditions of women. Of the secondary school graduates 64 percent were seeking employment to support their families, but according to the statistics only 6.4 to 7.2 percent found work.\footnote{The figures are from a Department of Education statistics. Koizumi 1935, 107. In the 1931 questionnaire the replies show that majority of the ones who answered considered “the occupational opportunities and social prestige of the graduates of Christian schools” inferior or moderate compared to those of government schools. Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 216.} Since mission schools were operating particularly on the secondary level, and claiming to be successful, Koizumi demanded that they react more effectively to actual conditions. She gave four reasons why women should work and how they would benefit from working outside the home. The first was the socialisation of...
women, but it was the second that introduced the emancipatory voice of this Japanese writer: economic independence would greatly contribute to uplifting the status of women in society and “ameliorate the improper treatment meted to them by men”. 54 With the third place came the “development of personality” which was usually stressed as first place by the missionary educators. The fourth argument can actually be counted as part of personal development, since Koizumi expected Christian education to add to the altruistic life of the girls, i.e. the internalising Christian ethics to help and serve fellow human beings. In education one way to promote equality between the sexes was, in Koizumi’s opinion, to cease placing boys and girls in their own schools. This was contrary to the existing policy of mission schools, especially since the missionaries in girls’ schools based the claims of their success on the autonomous role the girls’ schools occupied. Their very existence was the proof of these women’s success.

Koizumi’s concern with the effects of the social transformation in Japan is a remarkably rare voice in the discussion about Christian education for girls in Japan. As already noted, the missionaries were more concerned with the institutional indicators and less interested in the broad strategy of mission schools. Thus they were, as Koizumi had pointed out, more interested in “restrictions” and technical issues and tended to look backwards in justifying their role in a situation of tightening competition. The critique was not new, however, and even the situation in boys’ schools had indicated the same sort of trouble facing the girls’ schools in near future. In 1929 some Japanese Christians called for a commission to investigate the situation of Christian education in Japan. 55 An Anglo-American-Japanese commission was appointed in 1931. Its work was preceded by two preliminary questionnaires to the foreign and Japanese personnel in charge of the Christian education. The Commission gave out its report in 1932. It consisted of a thorough survey of the situation and a long list of recommendations on each of the educational levels separating the men’s and the women’s schools. The main points were the acknowledgement of the rivalry between the national and the mission schools in which the latter were about to lose, and the commission’s recommendation not to waste their energy in competing with the government schools but rather to justify their presence in Japan by specialising in certain areas. Therefore, the commission considered it vital that no new Christian schools be established but that effort should be concentrated on improving the quality of the present ones. The commission predicted that

54 Koizumi 1935, 108. Similar arguments were presented in Anglican mission schools in Palestine where education was seen as a means to economic independence. Okkenhaug 1999, 52.
55 The idea was encouraged by the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1928 where the religious education was seen as one of the important ways of promoting Christianity in the world. Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 3.
along the rapid development of girls’ high schools and the beginning of the promotion of higher education for girls through both the public and private agencies, we believe that Christian education for girls is approaching a crisis similar to the serious crisis now faced by the Christian schools for boys.\(^{56}\)

The commission requested the evaluation of the schools “with a twofold standard, educational and Christian.”\(^{57}\) Recommendations included specialisation on the part of the schools, more emphasis on religious education in the form of curricular as well as extra-curricular activities, closer contacts with homes of the students, and alterations in the curricula in order to prepare some students for college level and some for home-making.\(^{58}\)

By 1937 some of the recommended changes had been carried out. The crisis in the boys’ schools had indeed hit the girls’ schools and they reported a decrease in the amount of students, especially in the higher level. This was said to be a national trend and not a problem of mission schools only. Some schools had reacted to the trend by adding new programmes to the curricula in order to maintain the interest of potential students and their families. They offered two-year homemaking subjects (which were also recommended by the commission in 1932) as well as other courses to respond to the practical needs of working life, such as “typewriting and the use of the abacus for computation … law, Japanese penmanship, commerce, handicrafts, and chicken-raising.”\(^{59}\) This writer, however, still maintained that it was the special character of the Christian schools in “character-building on the model of Christ” that formed their “sense of mission”.\(^{60}\)

The Christian schools largely maintained their established methods and strategies. In 1939, when Isabelle McCausland wrote in her article, Christian women at work in Japan, that

No back-to-the-home movement nor appeal for more college entrants can affect this great proportion of the female population of Japan!\(^{61}\)

The article had no effect on the school sector. In the same yearbook Michi Kawai, a noted Japanese Christian educator, still regarded the character-building as the “real objective of Christian schools”. This was best guaranteed by paying attention to the quality and nature of the teachers.\(^{62}\)

The problem was not, however, so much the religious education. Toyohiko Kagawa had claimed that the schools needed a hundred-percent Christian staff, also in important subjects such as science and mathematics.\(^{63}\) This

\(^{56}\) Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 166.
\(^{57}\) Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 166.
\(^{58}\) Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 166–169.
\(^{59}\) DeForest 1937, 167–168. DeForest also reported that girls’ schools had invested in health education and in employing nurses to give medical aid to the students. DeForest 1937, 163.
\(^{60}\) DeForest 1937, 169.
\(^{61}\) McCausland 1939, 130.
\(^{62}\) Kawai 1939, 143–144.
\(^{63}\) Kagawa 1931, 182.
was easier said than done, which reveals the secularisation process of the educational missions. The schools could guarantee at least some Christian educators by continuing to employ foreign missionaries but for several subjects they had to hire the ones they could get. In the politically turbulent years of late 1930s, when the position of foreign missionaries was getting more and more difficult in Japan, and they discussed their role in Japan, one school master stated that “we can find plenty of English teachers, but we want missionaries”.64 Iku Koizumi had also highlighted the role of foreign teachers in promoting international goodwill and peaceful relations between nations.65

National politics versus international Christianity

Koizumi was not the only Japanese Christian to adapt the internationalism of Christianity into national education. In 1939 Takuo Matsumoto called for greater efforts to Christianise regardless of who was doing it. He welcomed the foreign missionaries to stay in Japan, since proselytising was the most important task. In the ultra-militaristically governed Japan, Matsumoto opposed the idea of national church, and stated that the conversion of Japan was the only way of promoting Christianity in the whole of Asia.66

The changing reality in the occupational sector as well as in political life was acknowledged by many, but changes were difficult to carry out. In order to maintain their status, the schools consented to several nationalist features that were in drastic contrast to the international nature of Christianity. The breaking out of direct war between Japan and China in 1937 marked the beginning of patriotic demands on schools, too. Some teachers and students were called to service, and in girls’ schools students prepared clothes for the military.67 At this point it was proudly reported in the Japan Christian Yearbook that “these schools were second to none in their readiness to contribute toward the comfort of the men in the ranks”.68 Many schools requested and received Imperial portraits, visited Shinto shrines (and explained these visits as patriotic, not religious acts in the same way as they celebrated national holidays), increased courses in commercial subjects, as well as Japanese history and language, and Chinese at the expense of English.69

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64 Stegemann 1939, 205.
65 Koizumi 1935, 115.
66 Matsumoto 1939, 123–124.
67 E. T. Iglehart 1938, 236.
68 E. T. Iglehart 1938, 236.
69 Stegeman 1939, 206. Before 1934 only 12 schools had acquired Imperial portraits, but by 1937 27 schools had reported of acquiring them or planning to acquire them. DeForest 1937, 160–161.
The closing years of the 1930s forced the mission schools to re-evaluate the internationalism connected to Christianity and mission work. Paradoxically, this also meant that the former definition of internationalism as an indication of western culture had to give way to the idea that the Japanese had a right to choose the elements they regarded as most suitable and useful for themselves. In this way the political changes contributed to the independence of the Japanese Christian movement and churches from the leadership of the foreigners. The “private Christian schools were ultimately marginalized by the enormous government educational bureaucracy, to the degree that they did not pose a threat”, as stated in Roberta Wollons’ summary of the process.

In the Japan Christian Yearbook, 1939, that year was reported as “a year of comparative calm” for protestant churches. In March the government proclaimed Religious Bodies Law, which gave Christianity a status of religion in line with other religions. The fact remained, however, that the amount of baptisms was reduced. In 1940 all Christian churches were forced into one entity, Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan (Japan Christian Church), which consisted of several factions. Each faction was formed by one denominational church. All protestant mission schools were thus under one united church. The war in Europe made the British organisations especially suspicious in the eyes of the Japanese and the Episcopalian-Anglican church (Seikokai) cut all its financial bonds to England as the Salvation Army had done a bit earlier. This accelerated the takeover of the churches and schools by the Japanese who now formed the majority of the school boards and church administration. Before the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, the Protestant movement in Japan witnessed the majority of foreign missionaries leaving Japan and returning to their home countries. Less than 200 of the former 1 000 were reported still in Japan in summer 1941. In the 1941 Japan Christian Yearbook, Charles W. Iglehart wrote: “To say that the year 1940 in the Christian movement was a time of crisis is to understate the matter.”

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70 Stegeman 1939, 207.
71 Wollons 1993, 35.
72 The law entitled Christian churches to use the definition “religious body” whereas others were termed “religious groups”. The religious bodies could, among other things, own property. “The Religious Bodies Law”, 309.
73 Mayer 1940, 163–164, 173.
74 C. W. Iglehart 1941, 37.
Conclusion

The 1930s accelerated the development that had begun in the preceding decades, namely the secularisation of the mission schools. The girls’ mission schools had been the success stories of the missionary effort in the educational sector and had brought prestige and self-esteem to both the foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians working in them. With the tightening competition on the part of the government schools, the mission schools for girls gradually developed into elite schools offering internationally oriented education and introducing such novelties as health education, physical exercise and English language. Some families chose these schools to guarantee their daughters a prestigious schooling that would in time contribute to the girls getting well married. Others chose mission schools for purely religious reasons, and some for lack of other relevant choices. By the 1930s these schools formed an island of missionary endeavour with gradually diminishing Christian curricula. Thus the discussions about Christian girls’ schools in the 1930s concentrated on trying to find ways to add to the extension and effect of Christian instruction, as well as to the material capability of the schools. The suggested methods were regarded as insufficient since the social changes, mainly the accelerated tendency of women to work outside home, and the political changes in the form of ultra-nationalism and militarism, forced the schools to consent to the will of the government and paralysed all effort toward adequate reforms.

The opinions, articles and surveys published in the Japan Mission/Christian Yearbook in 1927–1941 by the Christian educators and other related persons, both foreign and Japanese, expressed their deep concern for the future of Christian schools in Japan. They were right to ponder whether the schools were giving their students Christian education or just education, since in many cases even the converted graduates did not find their way to church. On the other side, it is also true that these schools helped produce an ample body of Christian workers for churches and schools.75 “The forgotten women” were the silent, modest members of homes and parishes, many of whom were educated in Bible schools.76 Nevertheless, the political and social changes of the 1930s added to the diminishment of the religious effect of these schools on their students.

Rivalry with government schools coincided with the financial problems of mission schools, and together these were serious problems. The relations between schools and missions loosened at the same time that it was getting more and more difficult to create solid contacts with native churches. All these phenomena made the mission schools isolated missionary agencies and accelerated their secularisation. The evangelising agenda further weakened

75 Christian Education in Japan – A Study 1932, 234–236.
76 MacCausland 1939, 136.
as the ultra-nationalist and militarist government launched new patriotic regulations to which the mission schools had to consent in order to be able to continue their work. In a way the focus of the girls’ mission schools had already, before the patriotic 1930s, realised the social change in their students and in Japanese society, and the financial and political change helped raise the issue of where should the emphasis of girls’ education in mission schools be; in conversion, in the building of Christian character, or in reacting to the changes of the social position of women? Amidst this debate, the Pacific War started and caused an exodus home in the missions. After the war, the schools took up where they had left to flourish again with the Christian boom in the 1950s.

All in all, the post-war era has seen the tendency of the 1920s and 1930s completed. Although the American occupation of Japan secured religious freedom and thus secured the existence of the former mission schools, the secularisation of both their curricula and spiritual atmosphere has continued. In 2000 the amount of Christian junior high schools and high schools was 381 with a little over 100 000 students. At the same time Christian universities enrolled some 200 000 students. Thus Christian education in Japan has shifted from a compulsory level to a higher level. At the same time these figures indicate that Christian education in today’s Japan, with well over 300 000 students, far outnumbers the proportion of Christians in Japan as a whole, which is only about one percent of the total population, being 1.5 million in 1995. The Christian educational endeavour “outstripped the growth of Christianity in Japan as a whole” which could not but affect the depth of Christian spirit in the schools.

Nowadays the former mission schools for girls are still private institutions carrying with them the past of a Christian school but facing increasing trouble to keep up the Christian spirit. They are now administered and owned by the Japanese themselves, and in that sense they have grown independent of missions, which was the original meaning. While they have always in their long history, now almost 140 years, “enrolled a majority of non-Christian students, in recent decades their growth has resulted in similar practises for the employment of faculty and staff”. Again they are discussing their role as Christian institutions.

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77 There were also 82 elementary schools with 6 305 students. Statistics in Shew 2001, “IV Conclusion: Declining Christian Presence in Academy”.
78 Statistics of Religions in Japan.
80 For example the Ferris Girls’ school in Yokohama, Toyo Eiwa Gakkō in Tokyo, and Kwassui Jo-Gakkō in Nagasaki. On Kwassui Jo-Gakkō, see Engelman 1990, 158.

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An Overview of African American and Afro-Caribbean Churchwomen on Survival and Resistance

Veronica Kyle

Abstract Statement

The issue of survival and resistance to social, economic and racial oppression has been the theme of Black Women’s existence in the New World. The theme of survival and resistance played itself out under the unsuspecting arms of the Christian Church where Black women from previous centuries until today carry out strategies of empowerment. My initial introduction to the history and work of the Black Women’s Club Movement (BWCM) in America caused me to rethink my role as a Black woman. My research led me to the origins of political activism, mobilization, social resistance and development of Black women in the church. My graduate thesis explored the race-gender, class and spiritual consciousness of Black women from antiquity to the present. Since Black women have been traditionally the keepers of their communities, I wanted to conduct what I called a (Her)storical overview of Black women and their activism, especially in the church. My frustration with the lack of visible progress in many Black communities in both the United States and elsewhere throughout the Diaspora led me to look for alternative ways of empowering marginalized people, including myself.

The following is but an overview of my initial work. I do not pass my work off as seasoned scholarship. I am simply a Black churchwoman who needed to make sense of my inherited call to follow in the footsteps of the women who led me as a young “colored” girl to the church in Alabama to “get to know Jesus” as my grandmother would often say. What I hope to convey in these pages is that Black church women have always understood their power and influence, have rarely allowed patriarchal oppression to limit their involvement in creating opportunities to enhance the quality of life for Black women and the race in general. I also believe that by teaching Herstories in our church circles today, women would become inspired and encouraged to achieve even greater levels of social activism.
The Questions

Let me start by asking you the reader the same questions I ponder each and every time I am asked to preach/speak on the issue of women and the church.

Since the invasion of slavery, colonialism and Christianity on the African, Caribbean and American continents, our churches have been overflowing with women of color. Yet, are women really benefiting from this experience? Has the Church as a whole intentionally organized to lift the quality of women’s lives worldwide? Are churchwomen today really conscious of our roles as spiritual and social facilitators of our own destinies? Is the church actively engaged in helping women to reconstruct their own realities or are we simply following a script and a very predictable role week after week when we enter the doors to worship our God?

At times, I feel as if we are not doing enough and that many of us have not a clue that we can and should be doing a great deal more to improve our lives as women. Yet, when we begin to employ a gender lens, as we examine the role and contributions of women in our churches, we unearth covert and overt ways of women’s resistance to the power structures of organized religion. Most of us are not passive participants; we are instead active resisters.

Many would argue that the Church has been and continues to be a major source of oppression in the lives of women. Yet, for many Black women our path led us to the Church where we saw (week after week), our mothers, grandmothers, aunts and other women folk call on Jesus for strength and endurance. Black women who were involved in church shared a deep personal relationship with God and Jesus.

Womanist theologian Emile Townes offers this assessment for the relationship of Black women and Jesus: Jesus was not only Lord and Savior, he was brother and friend. Through this personal relationship with Jesus, Black women were able to transcend the inhuman structures that surrounded them in a slaved South and repressive North. (Townes, p.82. 1993) And I would add a colonized Caribbean.

The late 1700s brought with it a religious revival for Black women. Life for most women of color was difficult at best, but the church became a place to revive, refresh and renew our broken spirits. It was in those private women’s groups that we affirmed and reinvented our selves as the strong and intelligent matriarchs of our families and communities.

Townes informs us that Black women’s spirituality took an “intriguing avenue”.

Black women in religious circles did not depict themselves as the larger society portrayed white women – fragile and impressionable with little capacity for rational thought. Black women did not break from the orthodoxy of the Black church, but restated what Evelyn Brooks characterizes as a ‘progressive and liberating’ language for women caring for the souls of women folk.
When one is actively engaged in the principles of Womanist care, a new theological paradigm emerges; a paradigm that places God and all God’s power at the feet of all who enter the doors of the church. Black churchwomen engage in what Womanist theologians call, “Womanist care”; they are for Black women regardless of their social and economic status; when she gets involved in the womanist care of her church she is privy to a new and empowering world paved by the footprints of Jesus.

The problem however, is that women are functioning within the constraints of the patriarchal church structure. Although churchwomen have managed to carve out a comfortable existence in our churches, I am not convinced that we are intentionally working toward the creation of a liberated church environment where all persons share equally in the decision-making process. Looking back into the pages of herstory, 18th and 19th century churchwomen seemed to be much more intentionally activist than we are today.

What are women talking about in their local women’s groups? How effective are the women in developing opportunities for women to empower themselves with a gospel for the 21st century?

The Black women’s Christian church experience was born out of the bowels of patriarchal colonialism fueled by economic greed. It was clear to me in my research that the early church mothers understood this reality and came to the church table willing and ready to fight for their rights to sit on a basis of equality with their male counterparts.

Are we as churchwomen aware of the patriarchal nuisances that continue to reinforce the status of “woman’s place” as being behind the men in this society? Finally, how involved are the local and national church leaders in the quest to create a truly liberated church by putting into practice a liberation theology that includes women and children and their unique struggles?

Black women, the world over, know the tenets of survival, in all its many dimensions. Black women have been “active resisters” and survivors in every social domain. Some Black women resisted by conquering the mountains of Jamaica, (Nanny of the Maroons), creating a refuge for her people. Others by leading her people (Harriet Tubman) through swampland and rivers in the South to create an Underground Railroad to freedom in the northern parts of the United States of America. Pauli Murray, an ordained priest of the Episcopal Church and a civil rights leader, once stated “survival” is the highest achievement of African American women.

If anyone should ask a Black woman in this country what has been her greatest achievement, her honest answer would be, “I survived” (Jewell, 1993).

Black women have echoed this declaration of survival globally. The following quotes are taken from Jewell’s, Gumbo Ya Ya, A Book of Womanist Sayings:
In order to survive, Black women have become master in the art of being bi-cultural, (Julia A. Boyd).

Nsarayaba – I Rise Again. (Garifuna, or Black Caribbean)

Going Slowly does Not Stop One From Arriving. (Fulfulde Proverb)

Women understand the problems of the nation better than men, for women have solved the problems of human life from embryo to birth and from birth to maturity. (Councilor Mandizvida of Mucheke Township, Zimbabwe, 1985)

She could work miracles; she would make a garment from a square of cloth in a span that defied time. Or feed twenty people on a stew made from falleh, from the head cabbage leaves and a carrot and a cho cho and a palmful of meat. (Lorna Goodison, Caribbean poet, from My Mother).

Black women are intimately connected to survival activism and the Black church has always been available as a platform for us to promote our causes. I have experienced the evidence of our activism as women in the church in the United States and in Jamaica. Even in the face of Christian patriarchy, Black women continue to forge ahead “getting the job done” on those issues that we passionately believe despite their trilogy of oppression. The trilogy of oppression, (race, class and gender), that has plagued Black women’s lives is undeniable. Yet, Black women’s trilogy of power, (survival, resistance and liberation) brings forth positive manifestations of activism in the midst of our struggles. The poem titled, “I am a Black Woman”, by Mari Evans in 1970, captures the Black woman’s survival spirit:

I
am a black woman
tall as a cypress
strong
beyond all definition still
defying place
and time
and circumstance
assailed
impervious
indestructible
look
on me and be
renewed (Busby, 1992).
Throughout the African Diaspora, Black women have lived out the words of this poem.

Covert resistant acts are very much a part of the Black woman’s trilogy of power. Take the case of Rebecca Cox Jackson (1795–1871): Upon receiving an inner call from what she called a “female divine spirit”, she left the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and began preaching her own theology (Andrews, 1986; Delmotte, 1997 and Hayes, 1995). Jamaican history reminds us that maroon women like Nanny and a female slave called Cubah, “Queen of Kingston”, planned and carried out covert military attacks against their British oppressors.

Mathurin-Mair reminds us of the way in which Black women have found themselves, despite dominant restrictions in our churches:

... There they found outlets for their energies as teachers, lay preachers, group leaders, activist and martyrs even... The organizational skills, the discipline and the assurance which women gained through such reputable church activities have been at times charged with the ethical values of Christian beliefs. They inspired women to extend an otherwise limited agenda of social concerns in order to confront issues of deepest moral and political import ... (Mathurin-Mair, 1986, p. 3)

Black women have to their credit, a wonderful legacy of female leadership in both religious circles and throughout the wider society. This legacy is the very reason for the boldness that is often displayed by Black women in our churches. The African woman was not silent, secluded, or suppressed. How women are perceived in leadership has historically been a problem for both men and women. We simply have not heard our stories and many of us struggle to embrace them.

Feminist scholarship reminds women that we must draw from the wells of leadership left by the legacy of women from the past. What does this have to do with Black women, leadership and the church today? Black women reigned as queens, rulers, scholars, and warriors. Their accomplishments have given us a legacy of tools for empowerment in a gender blind society. We need only to look back, study and learn our history as women from the African Diaspora to know what is possible when we combine our strengths to achieve a common good. These stories help us find the “extraordinary” inside the “ordinary”. It is through these stories that we can begin to create new paradigms that alleviate many of our social ills. I am not suggesting by any means that we are solely responsible to liberate ourselves from the many problems that we face today. But I am offering the notion that we must begin to renew our minds with the understanding that we are covered in the blood of Jesus and granted power and wisdom to seek out ways to make life better for ourselves and our families.

Womanist research shows that although Black men and women worked together to form churches and to combat racism, Black women often faced
tremendous sexism in the newly formed Black churches. As a Christian woman presently involved in church leadership, I am deeply inspired by the stories of my foremothers.

I want to highlight a few of those organizations that represented Black female leadership throughout the Diaspora to show that their primary mission was to wage resistance against racism, protect the bonds of sisterhood and to elevate the Black race. Understand that the majority of these organizations were born out of Black women’s church involvement. Despite existing social oppressions the Black church was a safe place to create liberation strategies. (Sharp, 1993; Williams, 1993; Vassell, 1993; Riggs, 1994 and Sanders, 1995)

The following achievements bear witness to this fact:

1800’s – Brazil: Boa Morte, originally an anti-slavery society, is one of the oldest Black Women’s (BW’s) organizations in the Western Hemisphere and it still exists.

1896 – USA: National Association of Colored Women, a merger of clubs founded earlier by Mary Church Terrell and Josephine Ruffin. Their motto: “Lift as We Climb”; This organization continues today in its mission to empower Black people politically, economically and spiritually.

1902 – Canada: Colored Women’s Club of Montreal evolved from a support group for Boer War victims.

1935 – Trinidad and Tobago: Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association


The following achievements of Black women in Jamaica were taken from Linnette Vassell’s thesis, Voluntary Women’s Associations in Jamaica, The JFW, 1944–1962. Bear in mind the parallel between other women in the Diaspora and Jamaican women’s social causes.

1929 – After the failure of the JSA, Miss Marson established the Jamaica Business Women’s Association (JBA) to promote business ethics and to improve working conditions for women in business.

1936 – Women’s Liberal Club.

1936 – Jamaica Women’s League (JWL) Initiated by Mrs. DeCordova and other elite women.
When I look at the above accomplishments of Black women throughout the Diaspora, the question that comes to mind is, how can today’s Black women share their skills and resources to provide spiritual nurturing and empowerment for themselves and other women of the church?

I am reminded that the issue of interpretation is perhaps at the forefront of deciding whose story gets told throughout the ages. Biblical scholar Sharon Ringe offered this conclusion on the issue of interpretation in a global context:

Interpretation is therefore best done as a community project, where the voices of poor women and rich women, white women and women of color, single women and married women, women from one’s own country and from other parts of the world, lesbians and heterosexual women can all be heard, if not in person, at least in their writings…Interpretation itself is thus an active project, undertaken in a particular context, in dialogue with many partners both ancient and modern, and with the pastoral and theological purpose of hearing and sustaining a word of healing and liberation in a hurting world. (Newsome and Ringe, 1998 pp. 7–9)

We must begin to listen to each other and to gather from our individual struggles and triumphs that we as women must come together to create the church and the world that we desire. I celebrate our gathering and opening ourselves to share honestly our stories and how we as churchwomen have also contributed to the oppression of others, including ourselves.

Engendering research would support the idea of using women’s experiences to develop feminist thought. The reality is that race, gender and class oppression has shaped the Black woman’s experience. I hoped to discover that although many of the women in my research would not call themselves womanist, feminist or otherwise, their lives had sprung forth out of a legacy of survival and activism nonetheless.

Womanist activism is the work of Black women and other women of color whose life mission is to empower their people to rise above the effects of race, gender and class oppression. When I began to read about Black churchwomen from the past I started to understand my mother, grandmothers, aunts and other women who seemed to have this resolve to survive and the uncanny ability to make a way out of no way.

Many new questions surfaced in my mind and I was convinced that this sort of study must be done by Black women throughout the Christian Diaspora. The primary focus of my study was to seek the signs of liberation in the Black woman’s struggle.

The following questions came to mind and I began to ask other churchwomen from around the globe the following questions:

1. What influences Black women’s decisions to participate in church?
2. Do the survival issues of Black women draw us into the church arena, where the church becomes a coping mechanism?
3. Is the church a source of resistance and empowerment for Black women?
4. How effective is the church in accommodating the needs of Black women as we move toward the 21st century?

After spending six years working, living and sharing experiences with women in Jamaica, I am struck by the way in which our lives as Black women parallel one another.

The varied history of Black women’s struggles have left us divided as a collective group. We need to get to know each other and include our church sisters of all races, cultures and social backgrounds.

Historian Bettina Aptheker, 1980, refers to Black women’s experiences (and I will add all women) as tapestries of life. Like tapestries it is the sum total of all of our experiences that makes and shapes our identity. That identity often decides how we interpret our struggles and what we do about them. From Black women, we inherited a legacy of warriors and a spirit of survival.

I decided to conduct a study that would allow me to be in dialogue with the two groups of churchwomen that have influenced my identity as a lay pastor.

The women in my study are members of the Hellshire United Church of Jamaica, St. Catherine and Avalon Park United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois. Both groups of women are of African descent and represented both lay persons and clergy. The groups were interviewed, observed, and involved in group rap sessions, workshops, church socials and retreats. I conducted this study not as someone on the margin, but as an active participant observer. At times it was difficult to not dominate the discussion and I struggled with the many roles that I represented within the fellowships.

The group membership consisted of students, working women, single parents, married women with and without children, widows and divorcees. Many of the women are now in positions to focus on their individual needs as women for the first time in their lives after rearing children. There were also many mothers of young children both married and single.

The interview schedule was organized around four main indicators:

**Influences** – What were some of the reasons that women participated in the church and who were these women? How have those influences shaped our religious theology? What messages did women receive from older churchwomen in their youth? Do the reasons for our church participation differ because of our nationality as Black women?
Survival – Was the church simply a way to cope and survive in a world that has not been openly accommodating to Black women? For some women, does the church serve merely to comfort and provide refuge, as Kesho Scott (womanist scholar) calls it in her book titled, *A Habit of Survival*, but offers no real means of self-empowerment for Black women? What if Black women viewed their ability to survive as a form of power? Can surviving women’s oppressive conditions lead to empowerment? If so, what then do we do with this power?

Empowerment and Resistance – Are women welcomed and included in the decision making process no matter what the issue? Is the church an important source of empowerment for Black women? If so, in what ways do women act out empowerment and resistance in the church? Does that resistance carry over into other areas of their lives, such as home, work and the community? If the church today is a source of empowerment for Black women, in what ways are these empowerment issues the same for Black women in Jamaica and America? What forms of resistance did Black women engage in that traditional research methods overlook or simply dismiss? Do Afro-American and/or Afro-Jamaican women recognize their empowerment issues?

Visions of women’s place in the church in the 21st century – Where are we headed? Will the church play a major role in the lives of Black women as we move into the New Millennium? Are the women too busy “surviving” to envision their futures? Are we doing enough to alleviate the many issues that black women face such as poverty, homelessness, abuse, and lack of education and health care?

Other Factors That Influence Women’s Religious Choices

I also wanted to know if age, education, parenthood, marital status or occupation had any influence on a participant’s response to social issues, and I therefore included questions concerning these categories on the questionnaire. One such question was, Do we feel spiritually equipped to advocate a better life for others and ourselves?

The Group Sessions

One of the most fulfilling and challenging parts of this research was the group rap sessions. In these sessions the women were able to elaborate on
their remarks given on the questionnaire, as well as bring forth any additional viewpoints. I longed to bring the voices of the past to those in the present on the subject of “womanist activism”.

The Healing Power of Telling Our Stories

Stories help us to preserve history and connect it to the present. When we share our stories we are opening the “heart/center” of our being. We are saying this is something that I remember because it made a contribution to my being, no matter whether that contribution was bitter or sweet.

Currently I am serving as Chaplain for the Hellshire Women’s Fellowship of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. I often asked a woman what keeps you coming back each week? Who has had the greatest influence on your decision to place yourself at the center of church work? The answer that is most often given is the “influence of the elderly women”. It is from our elder sisters that we learn how to “survive and revive” against the odds. They continue to be our unsung She-ros. Older women were credited for encouraging them to stay in church.

The Hellshire Women’s Fellowship: Then and Now

It was the women who almost exclusively ran every aspect of the church, including a Friday night family fellowship. The women would often share personal concerns within the fellowship. Often the women would bring other women, who had no intention of ever joining the group officially, but enjoyed attending the meetings. I also wanted to make the presence of our fellowship known throughout the national structure by bridging our women with other women within the United Church and the Jamaican community. The small numbers associated with the Hellshire church had in many ways, rendered the women silent in the face of the larger more established church bodies.

Some of the first objectives that I laid out for each group were for me to have the chance to spend a concentrated amount of time with the members. Perhaps a weekend retreat to explore the issues laid out in this study: influence, survival, empowerment, resistance and visions of our futures as churchwomen. The first exclusive Hellshire women’s retreat was a one-day retreat, which I gladly accepted as an alternative. As for Avalon, my request was easy, for many of the women had begun this sort of activity years ago and at least once a year went away for the weekend to focus on spiritual
concerns. In both cases it was a challenge for the women to step away from the demands of family and take time for themselves.

Avalon Women’s Retreat

The focus of the retreat was *Sacred Pampering and Spiritual Renewal*. We had in our midst persons who volunteered to conduct workshops on the following issues:

1. Taking Care of Our Bodies at Different Life Stages
2. Sacred Pampering-Giving Ourselves the Time that We Deserve
3. God, Sex and the Single Woman
4. Our Relationships with our Partners – Making It the Best that It can Be
5. How to Make/ Handle Transitions in our Lives.
6. Letting Go of Emotional Baggage that Robs our Joy
7. How do we create economic venues for women in our communities?
8. How to invest in the stock markets?
9. How to create a credit union that offers low interest loans for start capital to women?

In addition to the workshops we offered complimentary facials, massage, morning yoga and aerobics to all of the participants.

Hellshire’ First Retreat Experience

The retreat was held on the north coast of Jamaica, just seconds from the beach. Let me pause to state that the Avalon fellowship lacked the participation of young adult (18–30) women. When I approached young adult women about this issue at Avalon I was told that the regular monthly meetings, in their opinion, were too “domesticated” … “I don’t want to come once a month to talk about what we are going to serve on Women’s Day”. Another stated that, “the only time we do interesting and fun things is when we plan a special retreat and it’s usually on Saturdays, and I have to work”.

By contrast, Hellshire has active members in their twenties and early thirties. I attribute this to the newness of the fellowship and the fact that in the Hellshire community there are not many other convenient social outlets for women. With the Hellshire church being the only church in the community, it becomes a place of fellowship for women and their families. The outline of workshop topics below will offer some insight into the progressive nature of the Hellshire group:
The group invited Linnette Vassell (a historian and global expert on issues regarding women’s political activism who is also a United Church member), to speak on gender biases in the social context of women’s lives. The women spoke passionately on the issues of empowerment and resistance and survival. I shared the views of the Hellshire women’s fellowship with the women of Avalon and vice versa.

The Avalon/Hellshire Questionnaire Workshop

One of my biggest challenges with the interview schedule was getting the women to meet to discuss their answers. I had the idea that after interviewing as many of the women as possible, one on one, that it would be interesting to see how they dealt with the questions in a group setting.

What follows is a super-condensed version of those discussions, which lasted three and a half-hours. Most of the women gave convenience of location as their primary reason for first attending Hellshire and Avalon churches. Whenever possible I will integrate the responses of the two groups to follow as a conversation.

Note: (A) indicates Avalon and (H) indicates Hellshire responses.

(A)&(H) "It’s right across the street from my house.”
(H) “Getting to church shouldn’t be complicated, otherwise I wouldn’t go.”
(A)&(H) “It was my children who brought me to this church. They started coming when the other minister was here and one day I decided to bring them instead of sending them.”

**What has kept you here at Hellshire/Avalon?**

(A)&(H) “I like that there is a male and female in leadership.”
(A)&(H) “It’s a family church.”
“It’s the powerful ministry that keeps me here. I never heard sermon topics like these before. All I had ever heard was those fire and brimstone stories.”

“I know what you mean, I never left church feeling inspired, just fearful.”

“The church is involved in community work.”

“Location, I can see the church from my house.”

You began to speak on some of the differences, about your experiences here compared to other places where you have worshipped. Can you elaborate?

“It’s Afro-centric and I’ve learned a lot about my history.”

“The basic informal approach to ministry.”

“Its more community oriented.”

“I wish Avalon was more spiritual at times. I’m from a holiness background and I am used to more emotion.”

The next set of questions dealt more specifically with gender issues. I wanted to find out if the women felt validated and free to voice their joys and concerns. I also wanted to get a sense of how they define sisterhood and spiritual nurturing, and whether or not other women from the past had influenced their spiritual journeys.

Where have you received your greatest source of strength?

“From God through my mother and grandmother.”

“My mother. Through rough times and hard times she always finds a way to persevere ... And I think it’s because God is by her side.”

“I get my strength from talking with the female deacons, pastors and God.”

One woman found strength in being a leader for the church.

“My greatest source of strength comes from the trust that the leadership has placed in me to do the will of God.”

“As clergy, I turn to God and my partner for encouragement.”

What messages did you receive from churchwomen as you were growing up? What messages do you receive from churchwomen today?

“The messages were passive obedience, putting the needs of others before your own.”

“Women are living testimonies to God’s greatness and wisdom.”
(A)&(H) “Women are the pillars of the church, they get things done.”
(A)&(H) “We tend to do the ‘dirty’ work in the church. We cook, clean, and tend to the children.”
(H) “Today women are leaders, preachers and elders.”
(H) “In this church, but there are churches today that still don’t allow women to speak, or enter the pulpit, except to clean it.”
(A) “Women can be important at church even if they are weak at home.”
(A)&(H) “This is true, some women are treated badly in their homes, they have no authority. But in church they can be teachers, preachers anything that they desire, you don’t always need education either.”
(A) “Black women are glamorous, especially on Sundays.”

Do you feel that your voice, opinion is validated, welcomed and encouraged in your church?
Both groups offered a unanimous yes to that question of empowerment and validation.
(A)&(H) “Yes, we are involved in various discussions and our views and opinions are very often acted upon.”
(H) Yes, but (A)&(H) “not on the national level where a few make the decisions for all.”
“Yes, but not on really important stuff.” Another woman asks: “What important stuff are you referring to?” Still another voice: “Well maybe it’s because you are afraid to voice an opposing opinion.”

Why would one be afraid to voice an opposing opinion?
(H) “It may be a man’s world ‘out there’, but ‘in here’; here women run the show!”
(A)&(H) “The men work with us not against us.”
(A)&(H) “I would like to see more men in this church. Where will we find good mates?” (Single women in their early twenties)
(A)&(H) “Our men have their priorities wrong, it’s money, money, money.”
(H) “Jamaican men are still caught up in this macho mentality of, I’m the boss, so do as I say.”

Finally, as we move into the 21st Century what changes, if any, would you propose for the church with regard to women and society in general? And is your present church addressing changes?
(H) “Information is the greatest source of learning, communication is vital and our church must be at the hub/the nerve center.” The church
needs to find a way to create jobs, more training programs and opportunities for its members to earn a decent living.

(H)&(A) “The church used to be the voice for the people in the 60’s and 70’s. Now the church has lost its fighting spirit.”

(H) “The church must become more committed to seeing people grow and develop. If the church is not committed how does it expect others to come to Christ?”

(A) “The church needs to take a message of Hope and Liberation to the streets.”

(H) “Here at Hellshire we need to physically complete our new building and then recommit ourselves to evangelism.”

(A) “Avalon’ model is a church that is Politically Aware and Politically Alive.”

(A) “The church must allow women a full range of motion, in terms of creativity and leadership. It seems that the old boys network is drying up.”

On the issue of women and their role in the church of the future, they had this to say.

(A & H) “What is the Black church without our women?”

(A) “Our seminaries need to revamp their programs. The stiff shirt mainline theological rhetoric is not cutting it. We still haven’t given female clergy enough opportunities for leadership.”

(H) “The 21st century, the very thought of a new millennium leaves me trembling for our young people. Lord have mercy!”

The data collected for this study has brought forth numerous issues relating to womanist theology. With very few exceptions, the women’s views in this study paralleled one another.

Influences

- Black churchwomen (BCW) view their connection with God and the church as an integral part of their being.
- BCW found their greatest source of strength in their churches.
- The historical struggles of Black women have influenced the reason we are so connected to the Christian church.
- The African American women in this study highlighted the issue of racism, slavery and colonialism much more than did their Jamaican counterparts.
- The Jamaican sisters were much more removed from the issue of racism, and at times struggled to make the connection between their history of racial oppression and their faith journey.
Survival

- BCW sees the church as a place to gain strength and spiritual renewal, enabling them to shoulder their day to day burdens.
- “Doing church” is a coping mechanism for most BCW.
- On the issue of the church being a habit of survival, the women saw that as an attitude of the Black woman’s existence. “If church is a habit of my survival then it is a good habit, like eating right and doing exercise”, said one of the participants.

Empowerment

- The church was seen as a primary source of empowerment for Black women.
- Both groups credited their affiliation with other churchwomen as a source of support and affirmation.
- This issue of leadership did not always transfer to their private domains, but often manifested itself in the workplace.
- Both groups stated that in their present church affiliations they were able to participate in all levels of church leadership.
- Opportunities to participate in the church’s leadership and activities, such as the worship service, Sunday school and the choir have given many of the study participants the confidence to exhibit leadership in other areas of their lives. “Before reading the bulletin in worship I had never stood up before an audience. Now I conduct a prayer meeting on my job once a week.” … “I now speak up on the job when my boss floods my desk with work at the last minute”, chimed another.

Resistance

On the issue of resistance, both groups shared some interesting ways of resisting gender bias and subordination in their homes, workplace, church and in their communities.

- “In my home, I am the only female in a household of four. Everybody does homework, including laundry and dishes. I refuse to raise sons who can’t take care of themselves.”
- “Growing up I heard stories about women in my family plowing entire fields, building homes and taking care of their families. I knew that I could do anything I put my mind to and I wasn’t going to let anyone stop me.”
Members in both groups remarked on issues of their male partners complaining about the women spending so much time at church. None of the women stopped going to church, despite the stress it was causing at home. Many expressed that after a while they were able to say to their mates: “God has been the best thing that ever happened to me, and I am not giving God up.”

The women say the education of themselves and their children is a form of resistance to the status quo. This form of resistance was by far the most sanctioned amongst the groups, but for different reasons. Jamaican women focused on the issue of class, seeing education as a way to elevate the status of their children socially and economically. African American women focused upon race. Sighting racial discrimination as the number one reason to make sure that their families got a “good education”.

Visions of the Church Women’s Place in the 21st Century

In our discussions, both groups acknowledged a need for churches today to take on a new initiative, to create educational institutions that would empower our young to face the 21st century. This included giving our children more accurate information about their history, socially and biblically.

“Technology and creativity is a must for Jamaicans. The church and school are the main forums for this transformation.” Technology was echoed by the women of Avalon as being paramount for the future of the Black community.

Many women found it difficult to answer the questions regarding visioning their future. “We’re too busy managing today’s crisis to slow down long enough to think about the future.”

Most felt that the church of the future would have to go public and stand up for righteousness. “We need to get out and stop this drug and crime spree in our communities.”

The women of Hellshire saw the over-all role of the Jamaican church as too passive with regard to social and political issues. “On the television in America we always see Black pastors speaking out against crime and government. They create businesses that are then operated by church members. We have some, but we need more. I think our Jamaican pastors are not willing to speak out because they might have to stand alone.”

Avalon women felt their church was, at times, too politically involved and needed to focus more on spiritual growth. But several members countered this assessment and offered this analogy: “How can you grow spiritually if you have no political or economic power?”

Due to historical circumstances beyond the Black woman’s control, we have spent more than two centuries forced to reconstruct our identities without the knowledge of our origin in the motherland, Africa. Large bodies of
water separate us from other Black women who have shared our past of struggle, hardship, and triumph. Yet, each one of us is but a stranger to the other. We have been forced to name ourselves by our affiliation to a particular country.

I learned through my involvement in North America and the Caribbean that we are kindred spirits dealing with the same issues. My international sisterhood circle of women from all parts of the world has caused me to realize that all women share a kindred sisterhood of economic oppression if nothing more. Many of us do not have our own resources to go about our daily lives and most of us are forced to rely on the socialization of men to “take care of us”, while we take care of the home and the children. The women in my study felt that the church continued to perpetuate such a notion.

Recommendations:
Womanistcare/Soulcare: The Process of Empowering the Lives of Women and their Communities

I am proposing that those of us in leadership positions in our churches develop ministries that will provide the healing, nurturing and empowerment that our women and men need. We must find creative ways to address issues in our lives that call for us to go within ourselves to find the answer and to emerge courageous enough to challenge ideologies that promote gender imbalances and keep the marginalized at arms length. All of us in leadership must begin to protest against those in our midst who continue to promote the status quo.

We must teach ourselves how to develop spiritually in order to heal our broken bodies and restore peace and harmony to our spirits. Most churches do not implement such concepts because those in leadership have not been adequately trained to do what I choose to call soulcare and spiritual direction.

Rev. Linda Hollies’ book, appropriately titled, Womanistcare: How to Tend the Souls of Women, defines womanistcare as, “Caring through Storytelling”. Rev. Hollies goes on to assert that as women our stories are uniquely important to our development as whole persons. When we create avenues for each of us to tell our stories, we are assisting each other in the womanistcare process of making sense out of what has “felt” like nonsense.

When women feel strong and affirm creativity, life changing developments take place. We can then make the connections between the past and the present, learning that each time frame of our history will equip us to deal with present circumstances. We must first learn to trust each other.
Trust is often a barrier that keeps women from mobilizing. In our womanist circles, as leaders we must insist on creating an environment where women can feel safe to reveal the private without penalty, for as women we have known, all too well, the penalty of self-disclosure. Both fellowships spoke often of how unsafe and invalidated they each felt in their gatherings. Many talked of when another church sister hurt them in times past.

Yes, we must first admit that as women we have hurt one another. We have heard, but did not listen; we have spoken hurtful words and untruths about each other. If we cannot reveal the “private” we will continue to keep hidden the most “powerful” parts of ourselves. That power is our truth, and the truth is the real essence of our being.

I am proposing that the Church and its leaders work “intentionally” with women to construct a theology that is “gender balanced”, “gender affirming” and “gender empowering” as we move unrehearsed into the new millennium. The Church Universal needs a rebirth of spirit and conviction if it is to secure a place for itself in the 21st century. This I contend will not be possible without holistically incorporating women and their history into the Church’s theological agenda.

The late writer Audre Lorde, encouraged Black women to be the voices that speak when others cannot:

And when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid
so it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.

“Litany for Survival” (Hayes, 1995 p.47)

Our foremothers used the church as a place to strategize and carry out their social/political agendas. Something has changed all of that. We no longer bring our issues to the church. Many of us have found other (secular) arenas to carry out our social/political convictions. I am suggesting that we return our voices back to the Church. It is my hope that this paper will offer renewed hope and vision for not only Black women, but all women who are in search of a new way of being with the ministry of the church.

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