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Abbreviations

CCEW Congregational Churches in England and Wales
CMS Church Missionary Society
CWM Council for World Mission
CCWM Congregational Council for World Mission
BMS Baptist Missionary Society
FMC Foreign Missions Committee (of the Presbyterian Church of England)
FOY Fellowship of Youth (within the Presbyterian Church of England)
GA Girl’s Auxiliary
IMC International Missionary Council
LMS London Missionary Association
MMS Methodist Missionary Society
OMC Overseas Missions Committee
   (the name of the FMC after the Second World War)
PCE Presbyterian Church of England
SCM Student Christian Movement
URC United Reformed Church
WCC World Council of Churches
WHMC Women’s Home Missions Committee (of the Presbyterian Church of England)
WMA Women’s Missionary Association
ABSTRACT

In this thesis I argue that the received understanding of the work of the Women’s Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of England is flawed in that it does not acknowledge the agency of women themselves in creating and directing the path of the Association and its work of mission. Using archive material from the Presbyterian Church of England, and the Women’s Missionary Association itself, I show that as the context in which they were operating changed, the Women’s Missionary Association responded to that shifting context, and that changes in their relationship to the national Church affected the work that they sought to do among the congregations. I uncover a hitherto hidden story and to relate it to the context of the United Reformed Church which stands in the tradition of Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Churches of Christ. I demonstrate how the Story of the Women’s Missionary Association interacts with changing paradigms of mission. Further, I discuss the role of power relationships between the Women’s Missionary Association and the Presbyterian Church of England and the changing role and powerfulness/powerlessness of women in the Presbyterian Church and its successor the United Reformed Church. I show how seeming powerlessness can confer power and how being invited to the seat of power can restrict agency for the women of the Church. Finally, I look at the implications for the contemporary United Reformed Church.
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Introduction

What makes me want to write about women involved in mission? My interest in the subject can be traced back to my childhood, when my great-Aunt (a Salvationist Songster) regaled me with stories of the women and men who went into the public houses of Hackney and Walthamstow in the East End of London to deliver the War-Cry and the Gospel to the men and women who were ‘lost’ in the ‘darkness of drink’. Even more heroic were those who travelled to China and Africa and other far flung places to convert ‘the Heathen’. The dark children of the dark continents had to hear the stories of Jesus, and it was our Christian duty to ensure that they did. The work of the missionary was some of the most important work that could be offered to God. Even though I was too young to consider becoming a missionary, I too, had a part to play in this most important work of the Church. Aunt Florence encouraged me to put pennies in the missionary box and take it to the Sunday school that I attended. This was at the Congregational Church and run by two remarkable women whose work for mission at home (in south-east London) and abroad (through the London Missionary Society (LMS) was inspiring to even a young girl. Miss Margaret and Miss Marjorie Brown also told stories of missionary heroes and heroines of the LMS, risking life and limb to spread the gospel of Jesus. This was in the mid-1960s and demonstrates how the congregations of the church I held a vision of mission that was adventurous and romantic, that saw the people to whom the gospel was being taken as “other” and in need of both salvation and civilisation. Whilst such notions prevailed in local congregations, the missionary boards were beginning to question both the prevailing theology and methods of mission, and to change both, finding new and more respectful ways of working as “mission partners”. As the British Empire came to its final close, and nations gained independence, the so-called “receiving churches” also began to question the traditional models of mission, and to proactively develop churches that were more suited to their context.

Later, studying seventeenth century history I was introduced to women who belonged to a bewildering array of radical religious Christian sects and whose preaching was biblical and inspirational. For a brief period in English History the voices of women were heard preaching, prophesying and interpreting scripture. These women were a force to be reckoned with, but following the English Civil War, as the country came under the rule of Cromwell women were edged out of their

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role as visionaries and preachers and men took back their power in the church. Of all the groups that remained following the Civil War, it was the Quakers whose women retained a serious role in the life of their denomination. I wrote an undergraduate essay on the role of Quaker women, reflecting that from the outset, the women had held their own gender-specific Meetings and that this practice continued, giving them a space and a voice parallel to that of the Men’s Meetings. The Women’s Meeting mirrored that of the men and its decisions carried the same weight. It was the first time that I had thought about institutional structures as potentially either oppressive or liberating to women of faith. I began to read and think about feminism and its relationship to past and present.

Twenty years later, in theological training I wrote an undergraduate paper on the role of missionary wives, based upon a series of interviews with women who had accompanied their husbands in the mission field from the 1940s through to the early 1960s. Their experiences were fascinating; I became interested in the history of overseas mission and particularly in the role of women in mission. The women that I met had a clear self-understanding as missionaries, and saw their contribution to the work of mission as having equal validity with that of their husbands. The various missionary societies that they served did not, however, value their work as of its own right. Their stories of the significant contribution they had made to mission in support of the ‘real’ [male] missionaries and their anger and sorrow at the lack of acknowledgement that they were more than merely housekeepers challenged me to reflect on the role of women in mission. These wives of missionaries, far from home, often parted from their children, ran clinics and schools, provided hospitality to visitors, led Sunday schools and Bible studies; vital work that was attributed either to their husband or to the mission station in general. The wife of a Methodist missionary spoke bitterly of being a “nothing more than a little m” – the (lower case) “m” denoting that the missionary was married in the printed yearbook – the names of wives were not recorded. I could barely believe that this was during the 1960s. It brought home to me the extent to which women’s voices, if not actively silenced, were overlooked, undervalued and unheard in the history of mission. Janet Finch perceptively states,

> Wives of the Clergy have often had the “unpaid curate” label attached to them; and, whilst on the whole they reject this as prescription, as description it is not wildly inaccurate. Many of them implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) regard their husband’s church as ‘our’ church, see their own role in ‘helpmeet’ terms and work alongside their husbands by being very active in (and perhaps taking responsibility for) the ‘women’s work’ of the church.

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2 It was usual for children to be sent back to England to attend boarding school, and often to spend the holidays with relatives.

Although writing of the wives of clergy, the description is equally suited to that of
the missionary wife, and most often these twentieth century wives saw that mission
was a shared venture, even if it was not acknowledged to be so by the
missionboards at home in England.

I followed this work up with a undergraduate dissertation on wives of Baptist
Missionary Society (BMS) missionaries, and found that their experiences were
similar, one woman reporting

We candidated as a married couple, although I don’t remember that we
were interviewed together...we had filled in an extensive application form
each and we each had to give details of six referees. We were asked to do
one term at Selly Oak and then some time (January–May) in Brussels
improving our French.

Our time at Selly Oak concentrated particularly on practical matters – bread
making, haircutting, mending vehicles, health and hygiene in the tropics
etc...[some] opportunities were more gender orientated...[he] did the car
maintenance and I did the bread making. I missed the first part of the term
as I was giving birth to our first son.4

Mrs PS and her husband had undertaken extensive professional training before
being accepted as missionaries. She is not the only woman to have described
missing some of the training because of childbirth; this does not seem to have been
a cause for concern for the Society, and perhaps indicates that the equality of the
partners was not fully recognised, despite the official position within the BMS by the
late 1950s.5

Having explored then, the experiences of women in other denominations, only one
of whom was a part of my own tradition (a London Missionary Society missionary
wife, who had worked with her husband in South Africa), I began to reflect on my
own understanding of what it is to be a member of the United Reformed Church
(URC), and in what ways the founding churches of my denomination had been a
part of the missionary enterprise.

As a long-time member of the URC I can readily recall sitting at the back of the
Church meeting as the debates about our own Congregation agreeing to the
national joining with the Presbyterian Church of England took place around me.

4 Marion Tugwood, Second Class Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven? B.M.S.
Missionary Wives, unpublished paper, 2004, interview with Mrs PS, a missionary
wife.
5 I cannot locate the source information for this date. A similar situation is
described by Renz in the training offered to wives of the Basel Missionaries, A.
Renz, “No Bird flies with just one wing” in F. Baumann, No Bird Flies With Just One
Wing: Reflections on the History and Identity of the Basel Mission, Basel, Basel
Mission, 1990, p59
Should we remain Congregational or become part of this new movement of unity?
Baptised into a Methodist church and having been taken to Sunday school in the
Congregational Church I knew nothing of the Presbyterian tradition, and as a child,
had neither voice nor vote. However, the Church Meeting decided that our
congregation should enter into the Union of the two churches.

I expected great changes following the creation of the URC, but although deacons
became elders there was little upheaval in the life of a small market town
congregation. It was some ten years later that, as a young worship leader, I visited
churches which had previously been Presbyterian as well as Congregational and
saw how it was a slow process to bring two traditions together. In the 1980s
worshipping in a pastorate that included a former Churches of Christ congregation,
I started to reflect more thoroughly on the theological and structural strands that
now formed a part of “my” tradition. The importance of lay ministry and of conciliar
structures, hearing the voices of the ‘people in the pew’, and seeing them play a full
part in the shaping of the life of the Church were important to me. The role of the
eldership and the general acceptance of women in ordained ministry were among
the things that kept me loyal to the new tradition and the older strands that had
been tied together to create it.

The roles of women and mission within the URC awakened in me a great curiosity.
Just how did our history on the mission field sit alongside the stories that I had
heard as a child, and what was the reality for women in mission? Three books, the
novel The Poisonwood Bible\(^6\), Tom Hiney’s On the Missionary Trail\(^7\) and Dana
Robert’s American Women in Mission\(^8\) fired an enthusiasm to find out more about
my own tradition, women and mission.

Historically, the Congregational Church had been a significant presence in the
mission field, through the London Missionary Society (LMS), one of the earliest
mission societies, at the end of the eighteenth century. As the institutional
churches took on foreign mission, denominational societies were formed and the
LMS, although intended to be non-denominational, became the vehicle for
Congregationalists to exercise overseas mission. The LMS worked in many mission

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\(^7\) Tom Hiney, On the Missionary Trail; the Classic Georgian Adventure of Two
2000
\(^8\) Dana Robert, American Women in Mission: A social History of their Thought and
Practice, Mercer University Press, Georgia, 1997
fields across the world, and has been well researched and documented in its
endeavours.⁹

Given that wealth of published material, I decided to explore instead the missionary
activity of the Presbyterian Church in England (PCE), of which little has been
written. A small denomination numerically, and late in its development as a church
in England separate from the Scottish Presbyterian Church, it has been largely
overlooked in both the history of the churches in England and the history of
missions.¹⁰ From the outset, the PCE had developed its own missionary endeavour
both through the formal committee structures of the Church in the shape of a
Foreign Missions Committee and also via the Women’s Missionary Association
(WMA) an autonomous organisation created and run by women, which trained and
sent single women into the mission fields of the PCE until after the Second World
War when it was merged with the Foreign Missions Committee (FMC) of the PCE, a
committee recognised within the official structures of the church.

The North West Synod of the URC has a formal link with the Presbyterian Church of
Taiwan, and Taiwan/Formosa was a significant mission field for both the PCE and
the WMA. Canadian Presbyterians in the North of the Island and English
Presbyterians in the South until after WWII had the field almost to themselves
apart from a small Roman Catholic presence. Initially I intended to focus on the
work of WMA missionaries in Taiwan and to interview the few women still living who
had served in that field.

It became apparent that this would be a difficult task; much of the archive material
in Taiwan is in Mandarin, Taiwanese or Japanese depending on the period it was
recorded, and so without extensive language study – not an area in which I excel! –
or excellent translation facilities there was little realistic chance of using that
material to its full extent. There is some published material in English from
Taiwanese sources about the role of the missionaries in creating the Presbyterian
Church of Taiwan (PCT) but this is not concerned with issues of gender nor is it
analytically critical of the missionary enterprise, rather it is more akin to the
narrative histories published by the various mission societies themselves on the

⁹ The main histories are Richard Lovatt, The History of the London Missionary
Society, 1783-1895 (two volumes) Henry Frowde, Oxford university Press
Society 1895-1945, Oxford University Press, London, 1954 and Bernard Thorogood,
Gales of Change: Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context: the Story of the
many other books and articles.
¹⁰ The history of the re-emergence of an English Presbyterian church in the 1840’s,
still part of the church in Scotland and the creation of an autonomous Presbyterian
church in England is documented in David Cornick, Under God’s Good Hand: A
history of the traditions which have come together in the United Reformed Church
in the United Kingdom, United Reformed Church, London, 1998, pp123-130
occasions of centenaries. The PCT is a church that looks back to its founding missionaries with affection, remembering the pioneers and taking from them inspiration to remain a mission orientated church in Taiwan and further afield.

Still hoping to gain insights into the life of a missionary in Taiwan/Formosa I undertook two interviews with one retired missionary woman and found it a frustrating business! Having researched in the area of interviewing and decided on a semi-structured format, I struggled to achieve answers to the questions that were of interest to me. Her reluctance to speak with a tape recorder in the room made accurate recording difficult. Although I gained much in terms of background information about the day to day life of a missionary after the war, and a sense of how profoundly this particular woman missed being in China, it was not the comprehensive account of call and motive that I had hoped for. This missionary’s Taiwanese experience had been short and most definitely not the best part of her working life, so could not offer the insights into the Taiwanese church that I sought.

Another woman that I approached declined to speak with me, although she did explain that relationships had been strained between herself and another missionary and so she did not talk about her experiences even with her family. This self-imposed silence was frustrating, raising many questions about the untold stories of both women and men, of loyalty to the church and/or mission in not speaking of difficult situations and relationships, of tensions that existed in the mission compounds, but rarely appear in the written record and official accounts of mission.

Alongside this somewhat disappointing start, I had begun to read in the archives of the WMA and PCE, deposited by the URC at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS), part of the University of London in 1982. In 1975 the PCE Foreign Missions Committee formally ceased to exist and became part of the Council for World Mission, the eventual successor body to the LMS.

These archives told a fascinating story of the WMA in England, the organisation, development and awareness and fundraising activity that enabled the women to continue to exist outside and alongside the official structures of the Church. This material has recently been ordered by the archivists so that like papers are grouped together, although for post-war material it is sometimes necessary to read minutes and letters from both the PCE and the WMA Collections to gain a clear picture of the internal struggles between the two.

Here was an area of my own denominational history that had not been explored and an opportunity to shed some light on the role of women and girls in the spreading of the Gospel outwith the male structures of the Church. The Women’s Missionary Association of the PCE was emphatically not an auxiliary movement of
the Foreign Missions Committee as the Centenary History of the denominational missionary effort was compelled to acknowledge, but its singular achievements and those of the women it sent into the field were, as with so much of women’s lives and contributions to society, ‘hidden from history’. Indeed, the ‘official’ story leans on the post-WW II combination of the WMA with the FMC to marginalise the Women’s Association as part of the “home base”, with the suggestion that it arose from the regular committees of the Church, rather than the innovative, self-governing and effective organisation it was for most of its existence.

It seemed that my original plan was not viable, and so, reflecting again on the experience of Quaker women, with their parallel Meeting, and the existence of two mission agencies in the PCE, I resolved to explore whether the separate structure of the WMA enabled women to act under their own volition and authority, giving them freedom to enable overseas mission from their English base. I surmised that a separate structure was beneficial to the women of the WMA in achieving their aims in missionary enterprise. I also wondered what had been the factors bringing about the merger of the two branches of mission within the PCE and whether the women’s voices had continued to be heard until the demise of the FMC in around 1975 as the missionary efforts of the URC combined under the auspices of the Council for World Mission (CWM)

As I wished to look at the WMA across its entire life-span, I also would need to think about how it reflected or reacted to the immense cultural change that took place between 1878 and 1975. “Women, Mission and Power: The Women’s Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1878-1972” is the title of this thesis, and I expect to demonstrate that the WMA had both an important role to play in the life of the Church and that this perforce changed over time. I intend to reflect on what the Church of today can learn from the experiences of our fore-mothers and whether the WMA has anything to teach us about organising for mission in the twenty-first century.

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12 This is the title of Sheila Rowbotham’s 1973 book in which she describes how male writers have written from a male perspective and the significant contributions of women have been left unexplored.

Presbyterian Mission and this particular woman

In choosing the area of research, it was necessary to reflect on my self-understanding as a reader of history, a feminist and missioner (as an ordained minister of the URC, leading a congregation) and on the ways in which I would use the available resources to make connections between past and current contexts. Although the tools of the historian are key to the research, so too is the ability to reflect theologically on what is read and understood. My own biases are a necessary part of my writing and this must be acknowledged; as Keith Jenkins argues history is ‘made’ not ‘found’ – so necessarily affected by the historian’s own context and perceptions.

I come to this work as a white, middle-class British women. A grand-daughter of empire, growing up through a period of profound change in the lives of women. As a child and young person I accepted many ideas about the nature of empire and mission which I would have to critically re-examine later. I collected pennies in a missionary box and believed deeply that the “poor children” overseas needed to hear the gospel, an idea that I carried with me for many years before re-imagining mission as encounter with people who already are made in the image of God and are spiritual beings. I would also have to do much soul-searching over received ideas of the superiority of the “our way” of doing church and understanding God and scripture. The complexities of the missionary enterprise would be brought home to me more than once as I thought about the women of the WMA and as I met Taiwanese women pastors who valued the work of missionaries on their island, and a black Methodist woman who did not!

I come to this work to remember and rediscover the stories of women who went before me and who, in part, shaped the church to which I belong. In order to do this, the stories of the women who believed in mission and who worked to make others capture that vision and support the need, have to be rediscovered, for “...to

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15 “Our way” was the “Congregational Way”; like my mothers before me, I found it hard to envisage a church different to the one that I knew being a suitable vehicle for worship and the transmission of the Gospel.
16 In 2010 I had the opportunity to visit Taiwan as the Church celebrated forty years of the ordination of women. The Presbyterian Church of Taiwan holds its history dear, and has maintained close relationships with the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the URC, the two main missions to Taiwan/Formosa.
17 In the town where I minister now, a Methodist woman shared her story with me, including stories passed on to her by her mother of the strictness of the missionary school in the West Indies and the cumbersome clothes that were thought appropriate wear.
be lost from people’s thought is like a second death.”

The many women active in the home base of missions have been even more overlooked than their missionary sisters, perhaps because theirs is not a story that lends itself to tales of heroism and the mystery of the foreign, the other.

I also come to this work as an ordained minister of the United Reformed Church, something that my fore-mothers in the Presbyterian tradition could not have imagined or aspired to. Reflecting on my own call to ministry, and the insistent nature of it over a number of years until I went into training, I also reflect on the call to ministry that was either stifled or had to be expressed in different ways in past generations. The women whose work I wish to examine wanted to serve the church to which they belonged and to make a difference to the spread of the gospel throughout the world. Within the constraints of the prevailing culture, they worked to make their voices heard and their passions felt.

In considering the work of the WMA in the English context, it has been necessary to also reflect on the work of their missionaries in the field to some extent. Such developments as the creation of a Girls Auxiliary and the decision to become part of the founding members of Carey Hall are based on the interaction of the needs of the mission field and the Home base. Thus, as well as discussing the structure and organisation of the WMA, there will also be some reference to the position of women missionaries, for this directly affected the work of the WMA Committees.

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18 Helen Dunmore, The Siege, 2001 Viking, London
19 The Congregational tradition has a longer history of ordaining women, the first being ordained in 1917 and sharing pastoral charge with her husband. However, ordained women remained a rarity among Congregational ministers until the 1970’s. Presbyterian Women were not accepted for ordination until 1959. For an overview of women in ministry in the non-conformist traditions see Elaine Kaye, Janet Lees and Kirsty Thorpe, Daughters of Dissent, The United Reformed Church, London, U.K., 2004.
1. Method, theory and sources

In this chapter, I describe the challenges of dealing with primary sources kept in archives. I consider the secondary sources available, which illustrate the fragmentation of the discipline of history, and reflect on the ways in which the work of the WMA must necessarily be considered through a multi-disciplinary lens.

1.1 Dealing with Primary Sources

Given the lack of information about the work of the Presbyterian Missionary Societies in England outside the work of retired (male) missionaries of the PCE, it was necessary to seek out other sources. At the point when the United Reformed Church came into being the London Missionary Society (LMS) had already begun its transformation into what would become the Council for World Mission (CWM). A whole process of examining the theological basis of mission and radically re-imagining it for a changed and changing world was taking place. The LMS missionaries had largely been in the countries of the British Empire and were greatly affected by the political aftermath of the Second World War.

The Foreign Missions Committee of the PCE, whose missionaries had worked in the Far East, mostly outside the boundaries of the Empire and whose experiences after the war were somewhat different was still working with an earlier model of mission. As the LMS moved toward partnership working, the PCE retained a paternal approach to its mission fields, believing that the churches that had been planted would need the presence of missionaries to recover from the war and to move forward. As well as this, the FMC needed time to bring its activities to an end, to reflect on new ways of working and to redirect its remaining missionaries to CWM. This process took until 1975. Realising the need to keep a record of the work of mission in one of the founding Churches and having already deposited the records of the LMS at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, the Presbyterian archive was also lodged there.

The Archive was held as it had been deposited, and there was considerable overlap between the papers of the FMC and the WMA. During the period of my study, the Archive has been recatalogued and as far as is possible organised into two separate sets of archive boxes, with the WMA and FMC being held as distinct parts of the

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20 The missionary bodies were the Foreign Missions Committee (FMC) of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Women’s Missionary Association (WMA)
collection. This is an invaluable resource, coming as it does from the committees of the church at home and overseas.

There is a wide variety of material in the archive, ranging through reports from the field, accounts, minutes of committee meetings in England and in the areas served by the missionaries, requests for money and news of missionaries’ health and activities. Personal letters and formal correspondence, photographs and printed materials are also part of the archive.

In an age of technology and aeroplanes, instant messaging and Skype, the archive gives a strong sense of the frustrations of distance and time to the missionary enterprise, and a flavour of the achievement of the women who mobilised the congregations of the PCE to embrace the vision of taking the gospel to the whole world and supporting that vision with action and enthusiasm. Appeals were launched and responses followed up in a pre-computing age, a huge volume of correspondence crossed the country. Women networked with other women, cajoled ministers to make appeals and to preach on mission, and procured artefacts and photographs to use in displays in churches throughout the country. In short, the WMA used all the tools at their disposal to ensure that the need for mission, missionaries and the financial means to support them was known throughout the network of PCE churches. They kept meticulous records of these appeals and of income generated, and this detail is found in the archive.

The headquarters of the PCE was hit by a bomb during the London Blitz, on 9th February 1945, and amidst the chaos and confusion many papers were lost; there is a missing section of the archive which needs to be guessed at from the material either side of it.21 This is a great frustration; records of decisions made, responses to memos sent between the missionary organisations, information from the field during the war are lost to history. In the context of this thesis it is particularly frustrating as it happened at the period when the whole debate over the separation of the work of the women’s and men’s boards was beginning to become real and urgent, both in the field and at Home. The frustration at the lacunae in the material is tempered only by the knowledge that the office staff did all they could to salvage the papers that had not been destroyed.22 As soon as was practicable the business of the church resumed, including that of the missions. Documents relating to the evacuation of missionaries from China reflect the effects of war on the work

22 Personal communication March 2013, from the minister of one of the office workers, who described going back into the building and filling cardboard boxes with as much paperwork as possible so that the administration of the Church could continue from temporary offices. This story was passed on months before she died.
of the church overseas. The closure of mission stations and the whole question of the potential of the China field following the war is raised by these documents.

From the earliest days of the WMA there had been a concern to ensure that women missionaries were equipped for their task, and training for the field had been undertaken in a variety of ways. The WMA was a key organisation in the building and supporting of Carey Hall in Birmingham, an ecumenical training college for women who were going to the mission field or planning to stay in the industrial areas of Britain as Home mission workers. Opened as a training institution in 1912, Carey Hall kept its own records, but also copies of the reports sent back to the churches that supported its work and sent women for training. As mission theology changed and as training became more geared to shorter terms of service, Carey Hall underwent a merger with the St Andrew’s Hall training college for men, during the early 1960s. The records of both institutions were purged, and much material was thrown away, but some of the archive of the work of Carey Hall and the women who went there to be trained has survived. This second archive is held at the University of Birmingham and offers a fascinating insight into the application process for the earliest missionaries and reports of life in the college.

From these sources and from reading as widely as is possible into the context(s) of the lives of the women who served as missionaries I seek to construct an argument to demonstrate that the WMA has something distinct to say about the role of women as supporters of mission and as a driving force for the church and further, that their experience may have relevance to the role of women in the contemporary context of the URC. From a position of inequality, the women of the WMA grasped their own vision and rose above the constrictions of the PCE to effect change and take forward the work of the Gospel as they understood it. In what ways might this speak to women within a structure that claims to offer them equality but is still shaped by the inequalities of society?

Approaching the archives requires care; the materials there are preserved both by design and by chance, some documents (for example, minutes of meetings) were kept by the church as a part of its historical decision making process and to record actions taken on behalf of committees and synods. Some are the result of serendipity, such as the personal letter slipped between the pages of a magazine. Sometimes a box has multiple copies of the same material, sometimes the hoped-for set of minutes are not to be found. In records from the nineteenth century most of the material is handwritten, and this can make the process of reading laborious indeed; spidery script, ink brown with age, on paper of a similar hue can mean slow progress. Wartime letters that cover every available piece of the paper, looping round its own margin to make the best use of a precious commodity send the
reader cross-eyed and reports reproduced with a ‘roneo-type’ machine can also be hard-going.

Whatever the reason papers are found in a particular box, there is an emotional tension about them: awe that in your hands is the stuff of history, the words of generations past recorded for posterity, combined with curiosity and satisfaction at holding the tools to unlock new understandings and thinking about that same history.

The items that exist in the archive have been written for differing purposes, sometimes self-consciously for publication, the annual reports from a mission station, for example, will intentionally relate successes in examinations at the mission school and account for the itineration of the missionary staff, so that the reader believes that mission funds have been well spent. Sometimes an appeal is launched to excite the churches to respond to a particular need – for buildings, personnel, or to address a deficit, on other occasions formal letters or memos inform those on the field of decisions taken which will affect their work. All of these varying purposes affect the way in which the archive material can be read. However, Rosemary Seton and Robert Bickers suggest that this may not be a wholly bad thing, “...the biases of the missionary reporter are often much more clearly acknowledged and better known than those of other writers...”

At least the researcher knows the starting point of the material she reads.

The feminist theologian Elizabeth Schüessler-Fiorenza borrowed Paul Ricoeur’s concept of “the hermeneutic of suspicion” to describe a feminist approach to Biblical studies – reading through a lens which constantly requires the reader to ask questions of the text, and particularly to look for bias within both text and reader.24,25 This questioning of the text is a useful approach for mission papers, both in seeking to read the story of women in mission, but also to attempt to grasp the nature of the documents of mission within their own context. What has been omitted? What has been assumed? Who is writing and for whom? Sometimes the answers to such questions are clear, sometimes not, nonetheless the activity of

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asking them leads to careful reading, and provokes both further questions and points to potential answers.

Questions such as these are relevant and appropriate to the materials in the archive. Minutes of meetings for example, might be thought to be a detailed and accurate picture of what took place at a particular meeting, but equally they can be written in such a way as to conceal the mood and tone of a meeting. Some minute takers write a virtually verbatim account of the proceedings, others merely the decisions taken – both have their advantages and drawbacks – ploughing through long accounts of a meeting can yield a nugget of information not otherwise available, but takes time, knowing what was decided about a particular matter can throw light on other material, but does not offer insight into the characters at the meeting. There are phrases such as “a lively discussion followed” or “a variety of opinions were expressed” that can alert the reader to disagreement around the table. As is often the case with institutional meetings, the agenda can be taken up with the business that is most immediate and relates to the institution itself, so the researcher must read much that has no bearing on the subject they are seeking out, in order to glean what information there is. When the archive is physically stored at a distance there are decisions to be made about how to parcel out time at every visit to the library, especially when opening hours are restricted, every request must count – how disappointed I was to open a box from the Carey Hall Archive and find a set of printing blocks for the cover of a commemorative publication! Both collections were just as they had been deposited when I started to work with them, the PCE/WMA records had a handlist to assist the researcher, but the Carey Hall Archive is in numbered boxes with no indication of the content – sometimes very exciting, sometimes not!

Correspondence makes up a considerable part of the missions archive and it must be handled with care – both literally and figuratively; the letters themselves folded and refolded are delicate and must be handled with due respect and the content too, commands proper consideration and thought. Within the archive boxes there are both formal and informal letters. Formal letters may have a bias of their own; if the author is requesting finance for a particular project, there may be a tendency to paint a bleaker picture of circumstances than may actually be the case, to sway the minds and hearts of the committee giving consideration to the missive. The frustrations of the time taken for request and response to cross the seas can be seen in letters which detail decisions taken in the field because the mission and missionary cannot wait any longer to resolve a situation. Minutes are received from China and Formosa months after the meetings have been held, and where the
committee in London disagrees with the committee overseas the dispute can be a year or more before it is sorted out.

In general reports to the committee there is sometimes mention of concern for the health of a missionary. Within the archive there are letters from doctors attending to missionaries who have been taken ill and sent home, or who have been sent for a medical examination by the Board when home on furlough. Such formal reports describe symptoms and recommendations as to whether the afflicted woman should return to the field but give no indication of the sorrow or joy this afforded to the missionary herself. Nor does it give any clue as to the views of the Board on hearing that a missionary that they had trained and sent was to be recalled. Occasionally a minute throws some light on such questions, as in the case of Miss Butler who had given long and devoted service along with Miss Stuart, who has been retired for seven years. She expresses a desire to return to the Field, even though her health is bad, and doctors advise against. A minute of “regret and appreciation” is to be sent to her. Nonetheless, the Committee refuse her request to return as a missionary. From 1885 to 1925, she had been in the field, founding two schools, working in the area of maternal health and visiting, as well as undertaking some evangelistic endeavours. Except for the Girls school (which had been closed due to the Japanese regulations, which required teaching in Japanese) all the work Miss Butler had started continued to thrive. The minutes indicate that Miss Butler did not give up in her quest to return to the field encouraging her home congregation and her mission congregation to send letters to the board asking them to change their collective mind,

A Letter from the Christian women at Shoka was read expressing in a quaint and touching way their keen desire to have Miss Butler back.

To no avail. Such glimpses of real life in the potentially dry material of the minute book give a sense of the real people involved in the enterprise of mission, painting a picture of a particular moment in history.

The committee’s view on those who chose to marry are rather better documented, recognising that the missionary is still “useful”, though she will now be a ‘wife’ and not officially a “worker”

Also noted that Miss Reive was married on Dec. 30th to Rev E Band. Council regrets the loss of such a valued worker, but wishes her every happiness in her new sphere of usefulness and Council very much regret that owing to her

26 W.M.A. Box 2, File 4, June 9, 1925, Committee Minutes, SOAS Archive
27 W.M.A. Box 2, File 4, October 13, 1925, Committee Minutes, SOAS Archive
28 W.M.A. Box 2, File 5, W.M.A. Formosa Council Minutes, January 1920, SOAS Archive
marriage with Mr Moody, Miss Arthur has had to resign her position as a WMA worker, but wish her much joy and usefulness in her new sphere.  

It was frustrating for societies to train women and then see their gifts and talents put to use in other fields and sometimes for other societies following their marriage.

In informal letters, there may be unwritten understandings between the writer and the receiver, and most often, there is only one side of the correspondence. As with interpretations of St Paul, one must guess at the situation that prompted the letter to be written. Here one can find rare insights into the reality of the missionary’s life; the long hours and fighting illness without recourse to modern medicine; covering for a colleague who cannot get out of bed; the overwhelming sense of the enormity of the task before them; the difficulty of carving out time for personal Bible study in the busyness of the days. Even so, there is faith and a sense of duty to God, to the Call to mission and to the WMA.

Personal letters vary in their honesty: some written to the women of the WMA board are polite but guarded, while others are clearly written with the warmth of friendship. What was the effect of letters such as these on the women who received them? There must also be many personal letters from missionaries not in the archive, still in boxes under beds and in attics. SOAS expects the holding to increase as papers are deposited after the deaths of the few still surviving FMC/WMA missionaries, and yet more will have been lost forever. In letters home or letters to friends, letters to colleagues on other fields was there a different tone? More or less honesty? And equally, without the responses we can only ponder the tenor of those replies, were they words of encouragement? Did they advocate leaving the mission field? Did they engage with or gloss over problems? Some things we have to accept we will never know.

Much of the material that was sent to London by the women in the field had been specifically written for publication either in the magazine “Our Sisters in Other Lands” or in the regular updates to be edited and sent to the branch associations of the WMA in the Churches, to encourage further and continued support of the missionary cause. These reports would be professionally printed, sent out and read

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29 W.M. A. Box 2, File 5, W.M.A. Formosa Council Minutes, January 1922, SOAS Archive
30 See for example, J.M.G. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case”, in Stanley E Porter and Craig E Evans, The Pauline Writings, London, T&T Clark, 2004, pp247-267, where Barclay discusses the difficulty of determining the nature of the question which is being answered when we have only one side of the argument. Thomas R. Schreiner in his chapter on “Understanding the Nature of Letters”, in Interpreting the Pauline Epistles, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2003, also considers what it means to have one side of the correspondence.
at meetings, then passed hand to hand by women in the branches. Here then, we
read of successes in converting heathen peasant women and men to Christianity, of
great numbers attending services of worship and of the growth of schools. Shining
examples, such as the young woman educated in the mission school who had
become a nurse in the mission hospital are used to encourage the people at home
that mission works and has worth to the church universal and to the PCE as
Presbyterianism is spread. The difficulties of life in the field are described in
general terms, but also dismissed, so as not to deter the potential recruit.
Sometimes there are descriptions of exotic flora and fauna, highlighting the
difference between life in England and life in the mission station. Always there is a
plea for more women to join in the venture. Such documents need careful handling;
the missionaries who wrote them were intelligent women who understood fully their
role in ensuring that enthusiasm for the missionary effort was maintained. They
would be spending their furlough talking to the groups for whom they wrote; there
had to be a balance between the celebrating conversions to the Christian faith and
recognising the enormity of what was still to be achieved. Allied to the appeal for
continuing support was the need to create a sense of achievement in the WMA
branches so that they would continue in their efforts to raise awareness of, and
money for, mission.

As well as the question of the reader – who is the audience for this document? –
there is also the question of the author – who is writing and in what capacity?
Coming into the London Headquarters of the WMA were copies of committee
meetings from the field, reports and letters from both home and abroad. Even
when women knew each other fairly well socially, if they were writing in their
capacity as chairman, their style and even their salutation would be formal,
although sometimes a post-script will reveal their friendship.

Reports from the branches were often lengthy, as if to assure the main committee
that a great deal of work was going on. Missionaries might write on behalf of a
synod committee with a formal request, or in their own capacity, requesting an
overdue furlough or special leave of absence to visit an ailing parent. Regular
reports from the field gave news suitable for inclusion in the magazine, sometimes
different in tone to an accompanying letter to a friend on the committee.

As well as the written archives, there was the question of how to approach other
primary material – there are boxes of photographs and memorabilia among the
collections. The photographs sent home from the field would be turned into the

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31 This story can be found in PCE/WMA Box 23, Monthly Reports SOAS Archive
32 Even where women were in the chair, or acted as convenor of a committee they
were known as the chairman.
material for lantern shows, and later slide-shows, used in publications and filmstrips all of which would be sent around the country as mission propaganda. They also give a little insight into the lives of those who had gone out to far-away places on behalf of the church, and an idea of the way in which they lived and the context in which they worked. Paul Jenkins describes how photographs can be a valuable resource as he examines closely four pictures from the Basel archive in an instructive article that made me return to the boxes with renewed enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{33} I had skipped over several group photographs, such as the one below of students, alumni and visiting missionaries, but went back to observe the comradeship in the picture, the number of women gathered together for one core purpose, and to note, that from the professional portrait photographs taken of each missionary before she left for her station, it was possible to also observe the ecumenical nature of the group.\textsuperscript{34}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ Carey Hall Staff Students and Alumni 1953.jpg}
\caption{Photograph of staff, students and alumni of Carey Hall, Summer 1953}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{33}Paul Jenkins, “Four Nineteenth Century Pictoral Images from Africa in the Basel Mission Archive and Library Collections”, in Bickers and Seton (eds), Missionary Encounters.

\textsuperscript{34}Photograph of staff, students and alumni of Carey Hall, Summer 1953, Carey Hall Archive, BoxCH1 University of Birmingham, Birmingham, U.K.
The primary sources form the basis for my reflecting and conclusions about the Women’s Missionary Association and its relationship to both the Presbyterian Church and the surrounding culture. There was much to be learned there, and much sought that cannot be found at this remove of time. However, the primary sources do reveal a story about the WMA and its missionaries that has been, at best, only partially told, and only from a particular standpoint – that of the men of the Church, and study of them allows it’s retelling from a different perspective.

1.2 Secondary Sources and Literature Review

Having decided to focus on women in mission, and across the existence of the Presbyterian Church of England until the formation of the United Reformed Church, I set about looking for material to assist me in this enterprise. My imagination had been fired by Dana Robert’s work *American Women in Mission*; Wilbert Shenk says in his general introduction to her book “Dana Lee Robert’s pioneering study...shows that from the beginning women were moved by the missionary call and wanted to play a full part. The lack of responsiveness by the official structures led...to new initiatives by women that greatly expanded the program scope and redefined the meaning of who is a missionary”.  

Robert examines both the work of the missionary and also the structures that women put into place to enable the work of other women in the field. I became interested in the work of the ‘sending’ society, those women who provided the resources for women who sought to follow their call to mission. I began to look at the material describing the work of missionaries to see what information could be gleaned about their support networks and the home base, in particular that of English Presbyterian Women.

Among those who write about women and mission history and feature English women, there are differing approaches. Lavinia Byrne offers an overview of the call to mission and its consequences, describing travel, the work of female missionaries, the training and utilisation of the skills of Bible women to gain access to places that they could not obtain and their encounter with the ‘other’, in faith, customs and alien environments. Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener edit a series of articles that extrapolate about the role of women missionaries and missionary wives from case studies of individual women. Some of the studies detail the life and work of “great” women – the pioneers of women’s mission activity – necessarily, as the work of the “ordinary” female missionary is often hard

36 Lavinia Byrne, (ed) *The Hidden Journey; Missionary Heroines in Many Lands*, London, SPCK, 1993
to find in the material available. Most of these case studies are from women in the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Methodist Missionary Association (MMA) and the London Missionary Society (LMS). These societies were run by men, and women in mission were recruited and worked under the management of male missionaries for the most part.

Mary Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus, along with Robert Bickers and Rosemary Seton, are both concerned with the challenge of reading sources and discerning where gender matters to the work of mission, they also explore to a lesser extent the political nature of mission.\textsuperscript{38,39}

Some of this work, and other interesting reflections on mission from the Victorian age up to the Second World War, focusses on the intersection of mission and empire, cultural assumptions of missionaries and colonial officials and the tangled politics of church and state. Thus, Elizabeth Buettner’s \textit{Empire Families} has a useful chapter on childhood separation in the context of Empire and mentions missionary families as among those affected by it.\textsuperscript{40} Norman Etherington in \textit{Missions and Empire} edits an exploration of themes within both mission and Empire, including one chapter on the role of women both as missionaries and the wives of the office holders of the empire, the different social circles in which they moved and the differing influences they brought to bear.\textsuperscript{41} Etherington also includes a chapter on the role of converts as evangelists (another largely untold story, touched on by Lavinia Byrne, the players in which are even more hidden than women on the mission field).\textsuperscript{42} Dana Robert’s editing of a collection of essays in \textit{Converting Colonialism} considers the vision of missionaries and the reality of mission, the ideals of Empire and the problems of colonial power.\textsuperscript{43} All of these voices have something to add to the conversation with the WMA, but material has to be gleaned from the pages, and everything read with an understanding that the lens of Empire is but one part of the reading of the English Presbyterian missions story, although the ideal of Empire and the story England told itself about the motivation for the spread of Empire are a large part of the context in which the WMA came into being.

The Presbyterian missions, both the WMA and the Foreign Missions Committee of the PCE, with the exception of a mission compound in India were not operating in

\textsuperscript{38} M. T. Huber and N. C. Lutkehaus (eds), \textit{Gendered Mission: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice}, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1999
\textsuperscript{39} Bickers and Seton, \textit{Missionary Encounters}.
\textsuperscript{40} Elizabeth Buettner, \textit{Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India}, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004
\textsuperscript{41}Norman Etherington (ed), \textit{Missions and Empire, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series}, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005
\textsuperscript{42} Byrne (ed), \textit{The Hidden Journey}, p67
the territorial context of the British Empire, their most significant contributions being in Formosa (present day Taiwan), Malaya and China, consequently their story is different to that of many other missions. The way in which the PCE and the WMA saw the events of WWII was somewhat different to the larger Societies with missionaries in many African Countries as well as in the east. However, as Brian Stanley demonstrates in his study of mission and imperialism, the missionary relationship with China was complex and challenged from the late nineteenth century by anti-foreign sentiment and accusations of intellectual imperialism. For a brief period it seemed that China might be partitioned by western powers, including Britain, and mission became entangled with political ambitions once again, both those of Britain and those of Chinese Nationalism, and these alignments would bring with them particular problems for missionaries in the field. Missionary endeavour would later become understood in terms of western capitalism seeking to undermine Chinese communism. This would affect the missionaries who wished to return to the field in the 1950s.

The Presbyterian denomination was numerically small, and apart from Edward Band’s Centenary History of mission in the denomination there was almost no mention of the Presbyterian Church or its mission in other books or journals. Band devotes a chapter to women (from five volumes of history), specifically the Women’s Missionary Association, taking in both the work at home and overseas, writing as if their work and witness were no more than an expanded footnote to the real business of men in mission. The later years of the mission are recorded by Reginald Fenn. In a narrative history, in the introduction to this short work Fenn says

There is all too little reference...to the youth work and women’s work which became a marked feature of the Church in Malaysia and Singapore and...the impressive work of the Formosan Women’s Missionary Association...

Fenn’s book was delayed in its publication due to the changes taking place in the mission field, Rev Boris Anderson, an FMC missionary writes in the preface,

Former English Presbyterians were now...coming to grips with...the Council for World Mission’s much larger work...In addition thought and discussion were already underway for a complete transformation of the Council for World Mission itself, ...the Council would no longer be a Western ‘Sending’

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45 Band, *Working His Purpose Out*. This is a narrative account of the Mission, concerned with the geography of mission and the great men who worked in the field, as pioneers and those who followed after.
Society but an international organisation in which churches from every continent could play a full part.\(^{48}\)

Mission would be different in this new way of working in partnership. The PCE and its successor the URC would need to rethink mission in a changed and changing context as empires fell, and theologies of mission developed in new directions. The CWM website offers the following statement:

The mission in which Christians engage is God’s mission. God sent God’s Son into the world. The risen Christ sent his disciples to continue his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians today share in this mission.

One of the main aims of personnel sharing is to learn from one another in partnership. CWM’s founding document, *Sharing in One World Mission* states, “We believe that we become participants in mission not because we hold all the answers and all the truth, but because we are part of the body of Christ. All of us are still searchers. We have glimpsed the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and what we know we love. But there are varieties of Christian experience and of Christian community we have not entered. There are doubtless many ways in which Christ comes to men and women that we have never seen. Therefore, we seek a form of missionary organisation in which we may learn from each other, for in that fellowship we believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to all through each.

The sharing of people is therefore multi-directional. Every church has something to offer and something to receive. Mission Partners go from North to South, South to North, South to South, and North to North. This multi-directional sharing should be “person-oriented”, and not merely “task-oriented”. There is an emphasis on personal character, spirituality and vocation. Each sharing of a mission partner should strengthen the mutual relationship between the churches involved.\(^{49}\)

There is in the statement an understanding of the equality of those who are called to Christian service that rises above gender and racial stereotypes and also goes beyond the old missionary stereotype.

As the role of women in mission moved through different stages from wife (and sometimes mother) to professional single woman to mission partner, it was clear that there would have to be an inter-disciplinary approach.\(^{50}\) Social history, mission history, church history, feminist theory and theology of missions all had a role to play in seeking to understand the changing nature of women’s involvement in the whole missionary enterprise for the PCE and their peculiar contribution through the WMA. From the long Victorian era through to the aftermath of the Second World

\(^{48}\) Fenn, *Working God’s Purpose Out 1947-1972*, preface
\(^{49}\) [http://www.cwmission.org/missionaries/](http://www.cwmission.org/missionaries/) accessed 02/12/2013
\(^{50}\) Even though single women Missionaries came to take their own place on the field, many missionary wives continued to support the work of their husbands and to develop work of their own as well. See Deborah Kirkwood’s article “Protestant Missionary Women: Wives and Spinsters” in Bowie, Kirkwood and Ardener, *Women and Missions*, for a discussion of the varied roles played by women.
War, the role of women in British society as a whole underwent a paradigm shift, and so I expected to find more information in writing outside the confines of mission history.

Vron Ware in her examination of white women, racism and history found that in seeking to understand women’s role in the political arena surrounding the abolition of slavery, much as in missions history the story that had been told was one “restricted to a limited ‘women’s contribution’ style of enquiry.” Nonetheless the evidence these studies offer could also be used...to speculate both on the changing dynamics of social, economic and political relations and on the politics of challenging slavery itself.” In the same way, the role of women in the development of the Presbyterian missionary endeavour can be reclaimed from being understood as merely a contribution and seen as the significant influence that it was.

Searching for missionary women in this broader context also proved to be challenging. There is much written on mission and empire, the entanglement of political expansion and religious ambition in mission, the conversion of people to both a faith and a certain understanding of civilisation as understood by western powers and within that context the problems of the legacy of a faith and church structures that were sometimes later understood as being a part of oppression of indigenous peoples. Although as noted above, the WMA and the FMC were largely outside the geographical reach of the British Empire they, too, carried with them notions of empire as the vehicle of progress and the means of ‘civilisation’ into the mission field. Even though their motive in mission activity was to share the Gospel, they also shared their cultural norms and understanding of the ordering of society and church. Later missionaries would be accused, along with the imperialist rulers, of ‘the colonisation of consciousness’. A missionary, or other agent can be said to "colonize" foreign lands not by physically occupying them but by getting the local people to think and behave more like people from the country that the missionary has come from. It has been suggested that “conversion is in and of itself a form of colonization”; in the 19th century missionaries (and others) believed that they were bringing the Gospel and civilisation to the countries that they lived and worked in.

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51 Vron Ware, Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History, London, Verso, 1992
52 Ware, Beyond the Pale, p43
53 See Susan Thorne, “Missionary-Imperial Feminism” in Huber and Lutkehaus (eds), Gendered Mission, pp39-65
54 Nathaniel Roberts, “Is conversion a ‘colonization of consciousness’?” in Anthropological Theory September 2012 vol. 12 no. 3 271-294, online at http://ant.sagepub.com/content/12/3/271/refs/html
The social history books that are concerned with changing trends either ignore faith as a part of people’s lives or concentrate on church growth and decline against a background of industrial and economic change. Writers of feminist history are interested in women in the private and public spheres, but again in the realm of the political and economic with little or no acknowledgement of the role of faith in shaping women’s experience. So, *Women’s History: Britain 1850-1945, An Introduction* covers women and work, the family, education, politics and sexuality but the only specific references to faith and/or Christianity is in relation to the movement for social purity led by Josephine Butler and places religion in the domain of male influence only as a force against recognising prostitution as oppressing women. There is no coverage of the Christian suffrage movement, or any reflection on how Christian faith was for many women a motivating factor in social action, ranging from visiting the poor and sick in their neighbourhood to campaigning for the vote. Even within the context of the family, the role of the Church and faith in the lives of the family is not mentioned, despite its playing a considerable role in both education (at the start of the period she considers) and the social lives of many in the industrial cities and towns of England. *Women in Britain* is political and economic history seen through a feminist lens, with some useful material on volunteering (which can be related to the work of local WMA branches) but no consideration of the spiritual lives of women.

Within the discipline of history there is a great deal of compartmentalism as if life could be seen in its separate areas of existence, women’s spirituality and faith being one such separate area, rather than as in integrated whole. This separation applies to the lives of both men and women, and both spirituality and faith are among the areas that are contained safely in ‘Church History’. In *Daughters of Dissent* the authors place their work in the category of “church women’s history” an almost novel class. It is disappointing that they, too, accept this dis-association from other areas of historical research, rather than claiming for women, and especially the women that they name and describe, their place within the mainstream of church history, their examination of the position and role of women in the church from 1840-1919, focusses on the three denominations that made up the URC, at the time of their research (Congregational, Presbyterian and Churches of Christ). They argue that the development of the dissenting tradition(s) from the Restoration in 1660 led to institutionalised denominations and following the Act of Toleration (1689) a desire to be more socially acceptable, “As Dissenters adopted

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56 Purvis, *Women’s History*, pp194,195,197
57 Sue Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900*, Basingstoke, Palgrave 1999
more of the culture of the rest of society so women ceased to play any significant public role”.\textsuperscript{59}

Nonetheless, even with the need to ‘add in’ the dimension of faith, these are works that consider the role of women in society – a role often hidden from history. Sheila Rowbottom's ground-breaking work *Hidden from History* explored the history of women in modern times, and questioned the absence of women’s stories and experience in the retelling and analysis of events.\textsuperscript{60} Part of the movement usually known as 'second-wave feminism' that came to fruition in the academic institutions during the late 1960s, Rowbotham showed that women had had a part to play within the political, economic and social life of Britain, but that this was undocumented – even key characters having been passed over in the official story. As social historians had questioned the notion of history as 'lives of great men', they had replaced that story with 'the working class man'. Women’s history was only seen through a male lens, and as an addendum to the real events that shaped the nation. Rowbottom re-discovered a female story and a new, feminist, social history. As the discipline of ‘women’s studies’ came to take its place in the universities so the role(s) of women began to be taken seriously among scholars.

The role of women in Church history and more specifically mission history has been hidden even from the feminist perspective until very recent times. Church history has occupied a niche that has largely failed to see it within the broad sweep of world events from the modern period, and the history of missions has been bound up (sometimes erroneously) with the history of empires. So, as social history has focussed on class and the workplace, on cultures and the role of the family unit, the role of the Church in shaping these areas has been omitted from the picture. As English political history has viewed women in the suffrage movements the story has been told first of ‘great women’, notably the Pankhursts, then of ‘working class heroines’ such as Selina Cooper, but the crossover between women seeking the vote and women working in other ways to ensure female autonomy, as in the mission field has been overlooked. Within the realms of economic history the significant fund-raising undertaken by Church women and its direct and indirect impact on empire and non-empire territories has not been taken into consideration. Women of the church have been hidden from history in more than one context. Mission history itself was slow to respond to developments in social history, and women’s history in particular, for example, *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* has articles on no less than 75

\textsuperscript{59} Kaye, Lees, and Thorpe, *Daughters of Dissent*, p1. The work goes on to explore the lives of women who did play significant public roles in the denominations, as scholars and ordained women.

leaders, of these a mere 6 are women and two of them share an article, despite having made separate as well as joint contributions to mission history. In the group entitled “Administrators” there are no women represented, two women (Ida Scudder and Lottie Moon) are listed as pioneers in their fields of India and China respectively. The other four women are in the group “Promoters and Interpreters”. The American pioneer Lottie Moon died on the way home to the United States, severely malnourished as she had been giving her food to Chinese in the mission compound at Tengchow. Following her death, she was lauded as “the best man among our missionaries”. This suggestion that Moon had been raised to the status of ‘man’ through her sacrificial death indicates that the worth of even these pioneering women was measured against male norms and in male terms. To claim her as the ‘best man’ effectively negates her status as a woman missionary in her own right.

In considering the role of women in the execution of mission across the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries it is necessary to reflect on the ways in which women have related to and played a part in the prevailing culture(s) during that period as well as to look for their role in mission itself. To this end I have sought out social history that is of a general rather than a particular, specific nature

Writing in the field of social history, and covering the twentieth century, social historian Sue Bruley states “it is my intention to locate women firmly in the overall history of the period. It is, therefore, “a woman-centred “history…” and “the central focus of the book is clearly set on female agency and female experience...my purpose is to give women a collective sense of their recent past”.

In the same vein, the preface to June Purvis’ collection of essays on the generality of women’s experience in Britain 1850-1945, reviews publications from 1973 to 1984 and aims to fill the gaps with chapters “about a key aspect of women’s lives in

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62 Ida Scudder was a pioneering female medical missionary, who inspired others to fund two hospitals and a training programme in Vellore, India. She used a vehicle to conduct roadside clinics and had teams of rural medical practitioners, each of which included an evangelist. Anderson, Coote, Horner, and Phillips (eds), _Mission Legacies_, p307

63 Anderson, Coote, Horner and Phillips (eds), _Mission Legacies_, pp213-4


65 Bruley, _Women in Britain since 1900_, Introduction 3-4
Britain” – much is covered, but there is no chapter on women and religion, or women and the church.  

Bruley describes the Victorian notion of “separate spheres” and contends that it was “…increasingly challenged, particularly from the 1870s” but “the notion of profound sexual difference was still dominant in the Edwardian period. The stress on women’s role as wife and mother was reinforced by the new idea of women as ‘mothers of the race’”. This role was particularly pertinent to ideology around the Empire and women as examples of the ‘civilising’ effect of Western culture on indigenous peoples. She draws attention too, to the greater social acceptance of the single woman and her role as a worker within a variety of public spheres. No longer objects of pity, some single women took advantage of the increasing opportunities open to them in education and in the world of work. In 1870 legislation making elementary schools compulsory for both boys and girls meant that young women had the opportunity to learn to read across all class divides. For some this opened up the way to higher education; for others although they would follow a more ‘traditional’ path of piece work or factory work followed by marriage they were still able, if so inclined, to read for themselves the news of Missions that came to them through publications such as “Our Sisters in Foreign Lands”.

By 1900, women constituted around 15% of the university student population but were only slowly being allowed to study for the same qualifications as men. Although some scholarships were available, most degrees had to be paid for and the majority of those women who attended university courses were middle-class. Some of these became teachers and doctors on the mission field, others used their intellect to organise and administer the work of mission in and from England. They were part of the so-called ‘white blouse revolution’ as shop working became acceptable for women and the female typist took the place of the male clerk in local government and the civil service. However, in almost every arena of work there was a marriage bar – marriage was regarded as a full-time occupation for ‘respectable’ women, and the developing Trades Unions Movement was primarily concerned with the welfare of the working man, and as in missions, it was only where women organised on their own behalf that pressure was brought to bear on the men who made decisions. Although in 1900 the vote for women was a long

66 Purvis, Women’s History: Britain, 1850-1945, p vii
67 Bruley, Women in Britain since 1900, citing the work of L. Davidoff and C. Hall, Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1859, Hutchinson, London, 1987, p13
68 The magazine of the Women’s Missionary Association.
70 See Bruley Women in Britain since 1900, Chapter 1 for the rise of the Unions and Women’s Associations.
way off, women were active in local government as members of school boards, promoting the parks and public baths, and as Poor Law Guardians. This growing confidence among women did not detract from the call to mission; women saw the opportunity to do worthwhile work and to fulfil their calling to the Church, where Ordination was even further in the distance than the widening of the franchise.

From the 1860’s through to the late 1950’s female emigration throughout the empire was encouraged by Government. Following the 1851 census results there was a perceived ‘surplus’ of young unmarried women in England. Interpretation of the results by W.R.Greg was published in an article entitled “Why Are Women Redundant?” in 1857. Although there were other, more accurate, interpretations of the data, Greg’s analysis gained currency. This so-called surplus gave rise to fears that there would be a large number of middle-class women with no purpose in life, as marriage was seen as their full time role. Alternatives were sought. Women with the means to do so could occupy themselves with charitable work; others became governesses or found a place in the household of a relative as maiden aunts. As education opened up new possibilities, in the 1860’s and 70’s women trained as nurses and teachers. However, the available openings could not keep pace with the demand. Frances Low, in 1897, wrote

> The congested condition of the labour market for educated middle-class women with the competition that prevails therein, and the increasing difficulty for middle-aged ladies to obtain any occupation in which they can maintain themselves, are serious problems which will ere long have to be faced.

Where Greg had seen assisted emigration to the colonies as a means of finding husbands for the surplus women, others saw potential for employment opportunities. Bessie Parke of the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society wrote

> ...our colonies are eminently in want of women of every rank, and that they are the natural destination of the great surplus that exists in England. If it were possible to plant those...in useful independence or happy marriage over the broad fields of Australia and New Zealand, who among us would say but that it was by far the best solution of our difficulty?

The Female Middle-Class Emigration Society and others like it helped to create a climate wherein the idea of single women travelling to the colonies and undertaking

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71 All the female emigration societies’ records held in The Women’s Library having been deposited there by the Women’s Migration & Overseas Appointments Society (previously the Society for Overseas Settlement of British Women) when it was being wound up in 1964.
73 Quoted by Swaisland “Recruitment of Single Women”, p72
work and, potentially, marriage was acceptable to public opinion in England.\textsuperscript{75} The rise in numbers of women in education sat alongside this change.

During this same period, missionary societies were seeking teachers and nurses to fill posts in mission schools and hospitals. To those women who felt a call to ministry over above charitable works and Sunday school teaching, the mission field offered the opportunity to use their education and to fulfil their sense of call. Mission societies had experience of the work of missionary wives, and there was a growing perception by the 1850’s that women would be the best agents of the Gospel for reaching native women. Single women had been gradually taking their place in the mission field from the late 1840’s, “...most seem to have been the daughters of clergy-men and as such would have been highly motivated and less economically secure”.\textsuperscript{76}

It was a life where there was the possibility of working in a way that suited oneself, and although most Mission societies did not expect or approve of their single women entering into marriage, it was one career where the marriage bar did not, in fact, stop women from pursuing their calling, alongside men who understood the nature of the work and the spiritual motivation to it. Just as married women had a significant part to play in the earliest days of organised missionary activity – another story hidden until relatively recently – so women who married in the field could also continue to exercise their skills and talents in ways denied to their counterparts at home.

The advent of the First World War saw major changes in society; particularly after the early wave of patriotism. As has been well documented, women took on many jobs that had been previously undertaken by men including in munitions and in tasks such as tram and train driving. There were new types of voluntary work developing as well, and middle class women were often involved in the area of supporting troops by provision of clothing and food parcels and in convalescent nursing of men who had returned home injured. “In medicine, women made a major impact during the war...the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies...sent hospital units to France, Serbia, Corsica, Salonika, Rumania and Russia...the War Office...by 1915...couldn’t get enough of them”.\textsuperscript{77} Prior to the war, it was difficult for women to practise medicine, and the mission field had been one

\textsuperscript{75} Bush, Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power, chapter on emigration pp146-170 examines the interaction between emigration and empire, and a desire, similar to, but not the same as, that of the missionary associations to find well qualified young women willing to go overseas in search of a new way of life.

\textsuperscript{76} Swaisland, “Recruitment of Single Women”, p75, where she also discusses the growing desire for single women to take part in mission.

\textsuperscript{77} Bruley, Women in Britain since 1900, p44. Women nurses contributed a great deal to the war effort as well. Medicine was not a glamorous option and training was, of necessity, rudimentary for volunteer women.
place where their skills were welcomed, indeed valued, for the missionaries often worked in cultures where male doctors were not acceptable for women patients. It would be some years before the missions experienced difficulty in attracting highly qualified women doctors to their overseas hospitals and clinics, but certainly by the outbreak of the Second World War, many reports and letters to the WMA board in London speak of the need to augment hospital staff with missionary doctors and nurse trainers. As opportunities opened up at home, perhaps the privations of the missionary life became less attractive.

Whilst the First World War allowed women in general greater independence that ever before, the numbers of men killed and maimed meant that there were very few families untouched by loss. The women at home had to deal with grief and rebuild family life.

When it came to considering the ordinary lives of young women and girls as a context in which to reflect on the Girl’s Auxiliary of the WMA the literature is sparse at best. Constructing Girlhood78 charts the changes in the lives of girls and young women through magazine reading. Penny Tinkler’s stated intent is to

focus on patriarchal interests in the paid workplace and those embedded in the institutions of heterosexuality, including marriage and the family, within which females were subordinate to men and provided for male sexual, emotional and domestic needs.79

This is a fascinating study of the development of a notion of adolescence as a particular period of life, bringing into focus many facets of the experience of young women and how they relate to the culture(s) around them and the messages that they receive about womanhood, but entirely neglects faith except for a few paragraphs on the “Girl’s Own Paper” which was intentionally missionary in the sense that it encouraged Christian morals and outlook in its readers.80 This lack of consideration of Christian (or at least missionary) material is somewhat strange given that at the period covered by the book – 1920-1950 – church attendance was usual certainly in the middle-classes, and saw a resurgence in the post-war years.81 and so alongside the fashion and short stories influencing their lives and choices, the written material in the form of magazines available through the church would still have had a role to play in the formation of ideals, hopes and aspirations. The magazines that she uses for illustrating the construction of girlhood and adolescence are those purchased at newsagents and booksellers and ignore those published by Girl’s organisations such as the Girl Guides or Girl’s Brigade, and by

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79 Tinkler, Constructing Girlhood, p5
80 Tinkler, Constructing Girlhood, p61, pp65-67
the mission societies. Tinkler discusses the image of independent, adventurous girls in fiction (both novels and stories in magazines) but asserts that the publications mitigate against this worldview and advocate passivity and subordination to men. Mission literature (especially that from a Women’s Association) might give a very different picture of the life lessons being given to girls and young women, and suggest different possibilities for those who felt the call to service overseas, and even to supporting mission at home. This would mean to take the role of faith in the lives of young women seriously, and to acknowledge that it played a significant part in their daily existence; however, Tinkler leaves aside this area of experience.

All of this material is in contrast to the findings of Elizabeth Roberts in her collection of oral history from working class women in Preston Lancaster and Barrow in Furness for whom Christianity was a significant part of their world and world-view. Religion constituted part of a shared universe of meaning, evaluation and significances. They are the beliefs that are taken for granted, the statements presumed to be obvious...also provided fundamental underpinning and comfort in what were quite often hard and troubled lives.

I consulted general histories, covering the period from the industrial revolution to the twentieth century to attempt to grasp the narratives of politics and economics which were the backdrop to the work of the WMA and the PCE, and looked at timelines of legislation as women were afforded more rights in society, I also looked for timelines of technological progress as this too had an effect on the work of missions and the relationship of the generality of English people to the rest of the world – even when flying was out of the reach of most pockets, the ability to send correspondence quickly across the world revolutionised communications between mission field and home base.

In considering the women who created and sustained the WMA and the changing contexts in which they worked all these strands need to be woven into a whole; although the story must be told within the framework of the PCE, it is part of a much larger story and a changing social, political, economic and theological context. In reclaiming the history of the WMA, I have woven together strands from all these versions of history and tried to fill in the “women of faith” shaped gap, with these particular women and their activities. For if the stories of women have been hidden, the stories of women of faith have been doubly so. Feminist historians have documented and challenged the ideas of ‘separate spheres’, and the marginalisation of faith as belonging to the private sphere, the feminine, incidental.

83 Roberts, An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940, introduction p4
to the [male] history of the public, political, masculine which is privileged in the
academy. 84 Leonore Davidoff says

We confronted a traditional and male-dominated historical profession whose
view of history centered on high politics and diplomacy ... In particular, we
recognized the power of marriage, family, and motherhood in determining
women's past lives. Following nineteenth-century nomenclature, women's
"separate sphere" became a dominant theme, particularly in relation to the
nineteenth-century English middle class.85

For feminists, the church has been seen as another space in which women have
been denied an authentic life; indeed, the church has been instrumental in
constructing ways of reading the scriptures which marginalise women, even
demonise women. In secular feminist thought the church is irrelevant, except as
another patriarchal institution. It is for Christian feminists to wrestle with the
scriptures, to re-read the stories of women in the Bible, to question the acceptance
of violence against women in the texts and to acknowledge and reclaim the role of
faith in the lives of ordinary women and the ways in which Christianity, despite its
oppressive structures and stories, has yet offered them liberation and affirmation.
As Jacqueline deVries says Christianity can be both "a source of oppressive
domestic ideology and a starting point for feminist activism". 86

1.3 Working with the Materials

In dealing with primary sources that are written there have been the issues that
face all researchers. What is "unknown and unknowable"? Behind the written record
there is much unsaid, the silences of the minutes and reports conceal other stories
that cannot be recovered. But the archive that remains is what has to be worked
with. A particular frustration of this project was the bombing of the London
Headquarters of the PCE during the Second World War, with the resultant loss of
many records. This is a significant loss only partially retrieved by secondary sources
written by the missionary George Hood. 87

The training facility for women, Carey Hall in Birmingham, which the Women’s
Missionary Association co-founded, part-financed and whose curriculum the

84 See for example, Jacqueline deVries and Sue Morgan (eds), *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940*, Routledge, London 2010.
85 Leonore Davidoff, "Gender and the "Great Divide": Public and Private in British Gender History", *Journal of Women’s History*, Volume 15, Number 1, Spring 2003 pp. 11-27, p11
86 Jaqueline deVries, “More than Paradoxes to offer: Feminism, History and Religious Cultures” in deVries and Morgan (eds), *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940*, p188
Presbyterian Church was instrumental in shaping, over time was subject to amalgamation with St Andrew’s Hall (another missionary training facility, originally only training men) and was always part of a wider training consortium. The archive that remains from many years of training is small indeed, and a reminder that any archive is itself an accident of history.

Jenkins considers the use of source materials, the privileging emphasis on the written, the recorded over against those things we cannot recover, but asserts that this must be coupled with the desire to ask questions and “to keep in focus those people and issues that are continually forgotten or swept under the rug”.\(^88\) When working with later materials, as the PCE entered into a period of financial restraint and sought to bring the women into the [patriarchal] structures of the Church this is particularly pertinent advice - reading with the ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ becomes not only a tool of the feminist theologian, but that of the historian as well. When allied to what Jantzen labels the ‘hermeneutic of reclamation’ the opportunity exists to bring women’s experiences and voices back into the arena and to subvert the story that has been told with the one which has been withheld.\(^89\)

Jordanova’s discussion of the writing of feminist history is more than a little reminiscent of Liberation Theology with its emphasis on the rise of histories that are from ‘below’ – the marginalised seeking to see their own part in history, to bring to the fore that which was hidden/ignored/undiscovered/wilfully suppressed.\(^90\) There is indeed something of this desire to privilege the stories of women in this thesis, but more than that, to let their voices speak to the current context, so far as that is possible, and to ask questions about contemporary understandings of mission as well as celebrating the past. It is still the case that “Women lead lives that have significantly different contours and patterns to those of men...Thus, adopting a feminist standpoint can reveal the existence of forms of human relationships which may not be visible from the position of the ‘ruling gender’” \(^91\) and so the story of the Women’s Missionary Association may have much to speak into the continuing story of mission in the URC.

Purvis has a useful and thought provoking discussion about the use of materials written for the purpose of enthusing others or expounding a cause and the care with which such material must be read and used; this ‘subjective perspective’ is evident in many of the primary written sources from the mission field: reports for

\(^{88}\) George Hood, *Neither Bang nor Whimper*, p61
publication were designed to elicit a particular response from the receiving supporters of mission or from the Mission Board itself, whether that be financial or a desire to recruit new missionaries.\(^92\)

Jordanova asserts “...we should not fetishize ‘primary’ sources, but seek whatever is helpful”.\(^93\) Primary sources are indeed exciting and often offer insights that other sources may not, but they also have limitations and other materials enlarge the picture, taking the researcher outside the narrow confines of the particular records of a person or organisation to the context beyond. It is this pragmatic approach that I have adopted in my own research. Though secondary sources about English Presbyterianism and mission are few indeed, and those about English Presbyterian women almost non-existent, I have used what is available to create the backdrop against which the Women’s Missionary Association was formed, and to try to understand the story that the denomination told itself about this organisation. I have used the primary resources that are accessible to seek out information about the training for and practice of mission. This material has also been the key to uncovering the ways in which the Women’s Missionary Association attracted funds and recruits, and sought to keep mission at the forefront of the thinking of every congregation within the PCE.

Writing in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, R Daniel Shaw states

> Missiology, itself a very young discipline, is intrinsically cross-disciplinary, drawing from a multiplicity of sources, including theology, the social sciences and religious studies. Having moved beyond the dated boundaries of colonial paradigms, missiology seeks to integrate perspectives and data from social, political, economic, and religious spheres long held separate.\(^94\)

To place Presbyterian mission and the role of women in context, it has been necessary to read widely; church history, the history of missions, sociology, feminist history and theory and theories of development have all had a part to play in attempting to create a holistic picture of the contexts in which the mission story of women in the PCE is to be understood, and to raise questions about what it might be saying to the contemporary Church. To uncover the story of the women in the WMA has meant reflecting on the “why” as well as the “how”. Their story is worth rediscovering as *story* and as part of the history of the denomination, but more than that, it is a story about women taking initiatives for God, women working outside the confines of their gender at a particular time, women

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\(^{92}\) June Purvis, “Doing Feminist Women’s History: Researching the lives of Women in the Suffragette Movement in Edwardian England” in Maynard & Purvis (eds), *Researching Women’s lives from a Feminist Perspective*, pp166-190

\(^{93}\) Purvis, “Doing Feminist Women’s History”, p101

empowering other women. All of these aspects of the story are part of my own understanding of what it is to undertake feminist research. Allied to the process of bringing the hidden story into the light and celebrating the women whose story it is there is also my own intention to seek to use this knowledge to shine light on the role of women in the URC today. One of the pertinent issues of feminist research is to ask the question “How can the knowledge created be useful outside the academy?” so that it does not exist in a vacuum but as a genuine contribution to understanding the present.95

Ironically, the period of mission expansion (1870-1930) also marks the point in time when separation of professions and university disciplines was taking place, so that mission history itself became a discrete subject, even separated out from church history. Wilbert Shenk takes the position that both “church history” and “mission history” have until relatively recently been treated as separate subjects for study with passing reference made to world events that have inevitably affected both the church and its mission.96

In order to understand the development of the Church, and of its mission (both at home and abroad) it is necessary that focussed history is written, but it is also desirable that this history can be placed against the broad sweep of events and within the ebb and flow of cultural and social trends so that it becomes part of the whole. Many strands must be woven together so that church and mission are part of the whole tapestry of history in any given period.

The Western church historiographical tradition was based on a dichotomy with church history on the one side and mission history on the other. Mission history was concerned with Christian activity outside the West. [and]. . . . the time-honored distinction that has been drawn between religious and secular history creates confusion today. If we are concerned to demonstrate how the church must be present in society in order to bear faithful witness, we must find ways of interpreting this relationship, rather than denying it.97

The historians of the British Empire (another discrete historical arena) have addressed the issue of mission in a variety of ways. Some have seen missionaries as part of the machinery of empire, some as allies of colonialism, some as an opposing force within the colonies, an irritant or worse, on the side of ‘the native’ or simply as an irrelevance to the great imperial enterprise. Brian Stanley has

95 Liz Kelly, Sheila Burton and Linda Regan, “Researching Women’s lives or Studying Women’s Oppression? Reflections on what Constitutes Feminist Research.” in Maynard & Purvis (eds), Researching Women’s lives from a Feminist Perspective, p41
96 Wilbert R. Shenk (ed), Enlarging the Story; Perspectives on Writing World Christian History, Orbis, Maryknoll, 2002
97 Shenk (ed), Enlarging the Story, Introduction xvi, xvii
examined the complex relationship between empire and mission and without contending that all missionary motives were pure and that all missionary approaches were appropriate, shown that the general motivation behind all missionary endeavours was the promotion of the Gospel and not to create a political or economic empire.\textsuperscript{98}

Another attempt to put missions in context during the “Imperialist Era”, determined to be the period 1880 -1920, occurred at Durham in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{99}

Making the fact and background of empire part of the mission story, the contributors seek to revisit the history of missions and consider the extent to which evangelisation and civilisation were factors in mission. What was the primary goal of mission? Where did mission and Empire share objectives (either intentionally or unwittingly)? Is the often made criticism of mission that it is cultural imperialism justified? In seeking to answer such questions through an examination of various mission agencies and fields the contributors each add their threads to the weaving of the story.

Within this wider picture, the role of women in the field is also seen to play a part:

...women’s increasing influence within the missionary movement of this era. Since women were perforce civilizing agents more than evangelists, their increased participation augmented both the healthier and the more dubious elements in a broadly cultural imperialism\textsuperscript{100}

Even this acknowledgment of women’s role places them in support of the ‘real’ missionaries and fails to note the work undertaken by women as evangelists and as people who could enter the domestic realm of other women in ways that their male counterparts could not. In his overview of British Mission Jeffrey Cox does begin to rectify the earlier absence of any real recognition of the importance of women’s work in the field, both as wives and as missionary women in their own right, but this is necessarily brief in a one-volume work. \textsuperscript{101}

Philip Leung, in \textit{Enlarging the Story} asserts:

...the most important force behind the missionary movement was religious...and not political or economic motivation. On the other hand...missions and missionaries...were situated in a socio-politico-cultural context. Their work and their values were inseparably linked to the society

\textsuperscript{98} Stanley, \textit{The Bible and the Flag}


\textsuperscript{100} Christiansen & Hutchison (eds), \textit{Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era}, Introduction p9

\textsuperscript{101} J. Cox, \textit{The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700}, Routledge, Oxon, 2010
and country they grew up in and the government and political system under which their missions were operated.\textsuperscript{102}

So missions and missionaries have to be seen in context, both in the West and in the field, acknowledging that they are products of their place and time, and that they carry with them a certain set of assumptions and social mores.

The mission field was one place where women had agency and could operate in their own right. That women of faith were interested in the sense of call and opportunity to express that faith can be seen in Susan J White’s volume on women and Worship\textsuperscript{103} where she makes a brief reference to the Suffrage movement setting up a “Woman’s Church” in 1914, where

Women are to preach the sermon, offer the prayers and take the collection...unthinking people will probably smile but, after all, there is nothing novel in the idea of a Church governed by one sex only; the novelty...lies in the fact that it is the sex usually governed which is to govern.\textsuperscript{104}

In her work on women in Trade Unions, Barbara Drake observes the various ways in which women organise and the roles that they undertake in society, as a background discussion to their organising as a labour force but nowhere is the role of women in religious life discussed, despite the role of women as organisers of “home” and foreign mission appeals, and within a variety of voluntary organisations.\textsuperscript{105} Even though her concern is with women of the working class, church involvement was a regular feature of life for many of the so-called ‘respectable’ working classes throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the skills they learned through being part of the local committee of a mission association were transferred to their union activities.

Looking for the hidden stories of women in the URC tradition, Daughters of Dissent explores the role of women as preachers and their road to ordination and acceptance in the non-conformist traditions which make up the URC.\textsuperscript{106} This movement too is pertinent to the role of the WMA; for some women a call to serve God in an evangelistic way could not be achieved through the church at home and so the mission field met that yearning within them, as the opportunity to become ordained arose, did missionary vocations fall? Or were these two developments not directly linked?

\textsuperscript{102} Philip Yuen-Sang Leung, ”Mission History versus Church History” in Wilbert R. Shenk (ed), \textit{Enlarging the Story}, p59
\textsuperscript{104} Quoted in White, \textit{A History of Women in Christian Worship}, p118
\textsuperscript{105} Barbara Drake, \textit{Women in Trade Unions}, Virago Press, London, 1984 (Labour Research Department, 1920)
\textsuperscript{106} Kaye, Lees and Thorpe, \textit{Daughters of Dissent}
In order to see the history of one particular strand of the URC’s inheritance in context (and so to raise questions about current contexts for mission) it will be necessary to weave together many threads, social, political, cultural across the sweep of two centuries of overseas mission. To retrieve, as far as it is possible to do so, the story of the particular contribution to that inheritance of women at home and in the field will require all the skill of reading between the lines, and around the minute books, as well as an awareness of the lens through which I read the texts – that of feminist, historian and theologian.
2. The Women’s Missionary Association In Historical Context

2.1 The Victorian Era

In this chapter I will set the WMA in the context of the lives of women in society across the time span of the organisation, that is, from the 1860s to the early 1970s. During this time, the lives of the majority of women changed considerably, and these societal changes had their influence and effect on the churches and the women who exercised influence and held positions of authority. It is the necessary background to the study of the particular structure and development of the WMA as the women who belonged to it both conformed to and defied expectations at different points in their history.

What did the women of the WMA understand by “mission”? They were highly motivated to send women missionaries into the fields that the church supported and to raise the profile of mission overseas within the congregations of the PCE. From the outset of the WMA they worked, extremely successfully, to obtain maximum funding for the missionary enterprise. These were women of the church seeking to serve Christ and the church through their endeavours, and so behind all of this activity was a theological understanding of the need that was to be met by all their efforts at home to send and sustain the ministry of the women that they sent overseas.

The WMA inherited an understanding of mission and a history of missionary activity from the Scottish Presbyterian tradition from which they came and would move into the same geographical areas of work. They also, as noted above came into being at the high point of expansion of the missionary movement from Britain as the British Empire continued to expand across the globe.

Roman Catholic missionaries had been at work for centuries, often using monasticism as the means by which they created a base and worked with indigenous peoples.\(^\text{107}\) David Bosch offers a comprehensive overview of the development of Protestant missions and the ways in which mission was perceived by different traditions.\(^\text{108}\)

It was not until the 1790s when William Carey had re-read and restated the ‘Great Commission’ of Matthew 28:18-20 that the churches of the Reformed traditions began to think about missionary activity.\(^\text{109,110}\) The words of Jesus, “All authority in

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\(^\text{108}\) Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp239-261

heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age.” were understood by Carey to have relevance for his own age, and to be an ongoing command of Jesus to the church.  

Gordon Olson coined the phrase “the Great Omission” to describe the lack of missionary zeal on the parts of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Knox, for which a variety of reasons have been posited; successors of the reformers believed that the ‘Great Commission’ had been fulfilled in the time of the Apostles, based on their reading of Psalm 19 and passages in Romans 10; the reformers were so busy struggling to defend their reforms and see them take root that they had no time to consider world mission; surrounded by Catholic enemies, they had no opportunity to come into contact with people of other faiths; having rejected monasticism, the reformers did not replace it with anything else, so had no organisational structure to assist them in undertaking mission. Within the reformed churches the concept that the ‘Great Commission’ was already fulfilled held sway.  

David Bosch offers an interesting and helpful overview of the different mission texts and understandings of the biblical foundation for mission in different times and between the Catholic and Protestant strands of Christianity. Bosch demonstrates that there were calls to mission at all times from the age of the Apostles onward, and that the Bible was always the motivation behind them. However, Carey’s interpretation of Matthew 28:18-20 persuasively argued, led to its importance as a key text in the calling of missionaries.

Once Carey’s challenge was taken seriously and the need to take the gospel to ‘Heathen’ lands was recognised as having currency, English Protestant churches had, beginning with the Baptist Missionary Society, developed a theology of mission that was out-ward looking. If the Great Commission was still to be fulfilled, the

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109 See Bosch, Transforming Mission, for a survey of changing attitudes towards mission and the differing biblical emphases which provided the impetus to mission, especially pp339-341  
111 For a discussion of the reasons for the “Great Omission” see John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith and Justice Anderson (eds), Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History and Strategy of World Missions, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennesse, 1988  
112 Bosch, Transforming Mission, pp339-341
church had a new purpose beyond the shores of European Christendom to preach the gospel throughout the whole of the world. The London Missionary Society (originally ecumenical the LMS became associated with the Congregational Church) and the Church Missionary Society (Anglican) came into being soon after the Baptist Missionary Society and began the process of recruiting men to go beyond the shores of England with the message of the gospel.

The stories of the pioneering missionaries were written as accounts in the many missionary magazines that proliferated with the growth of the societies, tales of wild beasts and difficult local leaders added colour to the picture of missionary life that was handed down to the supporters of mission in England. Most of the earliest stories were of male pioneers. Their wives are not mentioned in the literature, or if they are, it is in passing; Deborah Kirkwood says "...no doubt many who worked effectively but unobtrusively are lost from view. Bishop A Lee in his book *Once dark Country*, whilst dedicating this to his wife 'Without whom the life portrayed in these pages could not have been lived, nor the pages themselves written', tells us virtually nothing about Mrs Lee or what she did".114

Dorothy Carey had no interest in William’s evangelical ideas. She did not want to leave England for India, and she has been ignored or dismissed in a few sentences by Carey’s biographers. An illegal entrant to the country with three small boys and a baby on the way, Dorothy Carey did not find life easy in India. Poor living conditions and the humidity coupled with dysentery weakened her. The death of her five year old son in 1795 “tipped her over the edge of sanity” and she was confined to a room until her death in 1807.115

“This was reason enough for Carey’s biographer’s to dismiss her. But it was Dorothy’s sacrifice which enabled Carey to do all that he did”.116 Is it significant that the most sympathetic reading of Dorothy Carey’s life that I have come across is from the work of an Indian woman writer?

Mangalwadi points out that Dorothy’s story had an effect on mission societies such that they began to consider the wives of missionaries in the sending process “as a result of her mental illness...wives...were interviewed, their vision, abilities and mental health were examined...”117

116 Mangalwadi and Magalwadi, *Carey, Christ and Cultural Transformation*, p36
117 Mangalwadi and Magalwadi, *Carey, Christ and Cultural Transformation*, p37
If Dorothy Carey provided the model to which wives need not aspire, Hannah Marshman gave them a different problem. Writing of Ann Judson, an American Baptist, Dana Robert said “Unrestricted by precedent and unhampered by the expectations of other missionaries, [her] early accomplishments as a missionary wife cannot be stereotyped”, the same may be said for Hannah Marshman, whose work set the standard for others.\(^{118}\)

Married to the zealous Joshua Marshman, one of the pioneering “Serampore Trio”, Hannah showed her organisational ability from the start.\(^{119}\) She also took the lead in provision of education for girls.

With her strong character and indefatigable commitment to Christian service…She became a sturdy pillar of support to her own family of six, to William Carey’s turbulent family, to a series of missionary widows, and to many orphans (both native and missionary) over dozens of years. She managed scores of domestic servants from many castes, controlled community expenses, organized and directed elementary schools for native girls, and served as counsellor to Bengali and British women. She served industriously for forty-seven years in Bengal and outlasted the first generation of Baptist missionaries, dying at the age of eighty…Unfortunately, however, little was ever recorded of Hannah’s life, since the focus in Christian circles two hundred years ago was predominantly on what male leaders achieved.\(^{120}\)

Later, as more women were in the field and information about their activities was sent to England, similar tales of faith and danger were told about them. A short biography of Mary Slessor, the Scottish missionary, reads:

So Mary Slessor went, after a few months of special preparation to teach the natives of Calabar. She was at this time twenty-eight years old. Ever since she was a mere slip of a girl, she had longed to serve in that most discouraging of fields—“the slums of Africa,” it was called. The people who inhabited that swampy, equatorial region were the most wretched and degraded of all the negro tribes. They had for ages been the victims of stronger neighbors, who drove them back from the drier and more desirable territory that lay farther inland; and of their own ignorance and superstitions, which were at the root of their bloodthirsty, savage customs.[and]After two weeks in "Elephant Country," Miss Slessor made ready to return to the mission. Rowers, canoe, and baggage were in readiness, and a smoking pot of yams and herbs cooked in palm oil was put on board for the evening meal. Scarcely had they partaken, however, when Mary saw that the setting sun was surrounded by angry clouds, and her ear caught the ominous sound of the wind wailing in the tree-tops."We are coming into a stormy night," she said fearfully to Okon, who was courteously escorting the party back to Old Town.The chief lifted his black face to the


\(^{119}\) The collective name for William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward

\(^{120}\) A. Christopher Smith, “The legacy of William Ward and Joshua and Hannah Marshman. (Baptist missionaries sent to Calcutta and Serampore India in the late 18th century)”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, July 1, 1999
black sky and scanned the clouds solemnly. Then he hastily steered for a point of land that lay sheltered from the wind.121

At the same time accounts of the exotic parts of the empire were also being read about and talked about, Livingstone’s Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa had sold out over several print runs and many men joined the Foreign Service to further their ambitions and seize opportunities that would be denied to them in England.

By the mid-Victorian period, the key texts for mission were Matthew 28: 18-20 and Acts 16:6-10, where Paul’s vision of the man from Macedonia calling for help was interpreted universally as if the man were from any nation that had not heard the gospel. The story of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40) was also influential in persuading some that there were people in other lands waiting to discover the truth of the gospel. This new reading of the Biblical texts, providing ‘proofs’ that mission was a necessary part of Christian discipleship, along with tales of missionary heroism had given impetus to the missionary societies that developed and grew. Bosch illustrates the way in which a variety of texts have been used to underpin different theologies of mission over time, these texts were the foundations of the evangelical missions of the 19th century and beyond.122

Against this background the WMA came into being, and their theological understanding of the task was the same as other mission associations of the time – to take the gospel to the Heathen. Although in many places around the world, English-speaking missions followed the growth of Empire (and there is ongoing debate about the role of missions and missionaries as agents or opponents of the British Empire) their motivation for doing so was based on the need to save the souls of the peoples who had not heard the gospel.123 The Empire sometimes eased the way into a country; sometimes it hindered the activity of the mission as people viewed the missionaries with suspicion. The stated intention of all the societies was to create national churches that would adopt the “three self’s” as described by Henry Venn of the Church Mission Society and become “self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating”.

122 Part 2 of Bosch’s work follows the development of different understandings of mission and the texts that underlay them. Bosch, Transforming Mission, pp181-341
At the start of the great era of missions the early societies had intended for their work to be ecumenical, but by the time the WMA came into being, apart from a few faith missions, most notably the China Inland Mission, the majority of societies were already denominational. The PCE and the WMA, had the example of the Scottish Presbyterian Missions, and in a climate of denominational societies chose to create their own structures and organisation. As has been noted, there was a zeal for mission from the outset of the PCE, so that those advocating for the sending of missionaries would not, I suspect, have wanted to spend time and effort on engaging with another mission society.

As has been noted, the WMA was not an auxiliary of the Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England. It was a body that was constituted by the women who founded it. These women were middle-class, mostly married to men of the Church and conservative in their outlook. Their desire to send women missionaries into the field was influenced by the concept of “women’s work for women”\textsuperscript{124} – the realisation that women were more easily able to speak with women in other cultures, which all the societies had had to come to terms with. This was especially true in parts of India where groups of women were secluded from society in zenanas.\textsuperscript{125} Male missionaries could not obtain entry any kind of audience with the zenana women. No longer could it be said “Missionary was a male noun; it denoted a male actor, male action, male spheres of service”\textsuperscript{126}

Women, as wives, daughters and sisters of missionaries had always been in the field and had made significant contributions to the mission effort. Now, professional women missionaries were being sent to build on the foundations laid by the women who had gone before them, and to work alongside the missionaries and their wives.

Allied to practical need was the concept of Victorian middle-class women as a model of Christian womanhood. The majority of missionary societies had sent women into the field by mid-nineteenth century either as wives or as single women to support the work of mission in education and nursing roles. They started and ran schools,

\textsuperscript{124} I have been unable to find the first usage of this term, but from the early days of mission, the concept was understood, as the work of missionary wives became known. The ideas of women reaching out to women, and of sisterhood were powerful in encouraging women within the churches to empathise with both missionary women and those to whom they ministered.

\textsuperscript{125} A Zenana was a secluded area for women within the Indian home. The degree of seclusion varied according to the area of India, some places operating stricter rules than others. Zenana missions were also set up for China, where some women were secluded.

\textsuperscript{126} Valentine Cunningham, “Mary Hill, Jane Eyre and other Missionary Women”, in Bowie, Kirkwood and Arderner (eds), \textit{Women and Missions}, p89
offered basic first aid, taught young women domestic skills and also kept house, had children and entertained visiting missionaries.

The WMA did send women to teach and to act as medical missionaries, now that medicine was opening up as a profession, but the Board also required a thorough grounding in the Church and Biblical knowledge. Early application forms ask the candidates to expound the doctrine of the Trinity, to give their understanding of Salvation and describe the church work that they have undertaken among the lower classes and “heathen” of the towns and cities they hailed from. There was an assumption that these women would disciple others as part of their work. This would not be handed over to a male, ordained missionary, but would be the task of the woman who was in the field.

With access to only few applications to the WMA for missionary work it is difficult to determine the motivation of the women who applied. However, they each faced an interview with the WMA board which not all passed. Certainly being sent by a women’s organisation gave them greater autonomy in their work; there was no expectation that their work would be inferior to that of male missionaries, or that any area of mission work would be outside their remit. So as well as reports of pastoral visiting and requests for assistance, the archives hold reports of preaching and teaching, in the Annual Reports from the field, and, for example in minutes such as this:

Consideration was given to Marjorie Scott, in light of the letter from Dr Barclay stating the need for an evangelistic worker in the Field, she would be sent to Formosa. She would be supported by Cambridge, Islington and Kensington Branches of WMA.

Although many working class women were in employment as well as raising families, for middle-class women the expectation was that they would marry and keep house. Intelligent women, such as those who created the WMA, often found an outlet for their energies and ability in charitable work. For the younger generation of women in the Victorian era, the demands of Empire and the various conflicts that Britain was involved in meant that popular understanding of the 1851

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127 There are two to be found in Carey Hall, along with progress reports for those two women, the rest are currently closed to researchers. Carey Hall Archive, Box CH3, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K. There are also three in the SOAS Archive PCE/FMC Series II Box 4
128 PCE/WMA Box 2, WMA committee minutes & Correspondence, 1920, file 2, minutes of 14 June 1921, SOAS Archive, Italics mine
129 Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, One Hand Tied behind Us: the rise of the women’s suffrage movement, Virago Press, 1978, tells the story of the radical suffragist mill workers of Manchester and the Lancashire cotton towns took their message out to women at the grassroots, to the Co-operative Guilds and trade union branches.
Census data showed there were fewer eligible men available to marry. 130 If they could not find a husband, their options were limited; living with a relative as a companion, becoming a house-keeper or governess, stranded somewhere between lady of the house and ladies maid, with male relatives controlling their money and opportunities. Although training for teachers and nurses had begun by the mid-1860s, the market was “rapidly saturated”. 131 For some women in this situation, the mission field was a place where they could escape the strictures of life in England and also offered the possibility of meeting a man of moral standing who might marry them. The need for girls to be educated in something more than social skills, with the potential to earn a living was becoming more obvious. The take-up of places for professional training illustrates the willingness of women to learn.

A report into the education of girls in 1868 says,

> If one looks to the enormous number of unmarried women in the middle class, who have to earn their own bread, at the great drain of the male population of this country for the army, for India, and for the colonies, at the expensiveness of living here, and consequent lateness of marriage, it seems to me that the instruction of the girls of a middle-class family, for any one who thinks much of it, is important to the very last degree.” Mr. Fraser quotes a weighty opinion of Tocqueville, that the chief cause of the prosperity of the United States is the superiority of their women.

> It is true that this conviction, as relating to the Middle Classes, may be looked on as recent and still growing, and as one which still greatly needs to be inculcated on, and accepted by parents of that class. We have had much evidence, showing the general indifference of parents to girls’ education, both in itself and as compared to that of boys. 132

This ‘indifference’ to the education of girls could disadvantage them and indeed, some women who applied to the mission field would be rejected at the outset because their education was lacking.

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130 Cecille Swaisland, “Wanted-Earnest, Self-Sacrificing Women for Service in South Africa: Nineteenth Century Recruitment of Single Women to Protestant Missions” in Bowie, Kirkwood and Arderner (eds), *Women and Missions*, p72 in a paragraph headed “The Myth of Redundancy” Swaisland discusses the effect of a paper by W. R. Greg which misinterpreted the census data to indicate that there was a surplus of single women of marriageable age. The excess was in fact mainly due to older widows. However, the idea of a surplus of females at this time persisted until the early twentieth century. In fact there were other causes for the unmarried middle-class women – Swaisland cites men avoiding marriage due to the cost of maintaining a home, emigration of large numbers of men, and lack of employment opportunities for middle-class women which led to them living in the homes of family members as ‘old maids’ with few other possibilities open to them.


For other women, the sense of call that they felt to ministry could not be expressed in any other way. In the Presbyterian Church in England women might teach in Sunday school, but although in theory there was no barrier to them becoming ordained, the lack of educational opportunity at a higher level as well as cultural attitudes meant that this was not an option; the mission field was a place where they could express their faith and work alongside other women and men who felt a similar call to ministry.

In 1792, the same year that Carey published his treatise on mission, Mary Wollstonecraft published *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Her equally challenging work did not meet with the same universal approval and action. Very slowly, in the United States and in Britain, the idea of women’s rights began to gain credence. In 1876, around the time of the formation of the WMA, the London Society for Women’s Suffrage was formed, to campaign for voting rights for women. Among working classwomen the co-operative movement and the formation of trades-unions was another way that the desire for rights already given to men was expressed. Against this political backdrop, which would grow in momentum into the early twentieth century, I think it entirely possible that women who might never have been seen demanding the vote at a rally, nonetheless may well have sought other means to determine their own future, and the mission field offered such an opportunity.

Some women had fought to attend lectures and even take the university examinations, but it was not until 1878 that the University of London opened all its courses women and awarded them degrees.\(^\text{133}\) This opening up of higher education meant that more women pursued a university education, and for those choosing medicine it was easier to find an opportunity to practice in the mission field than in hospitals at home\(^\text{134}\). Throughout the 1890s student movements developed and many young women joined the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in England; this was a very evangelical movement and encouraged its members to consider overseas mission work as a career of choice. Even before the Edinburgh conference of 1910, the SCM adopted as its unofficial slogan “the evangelization of the world in this generation”.\(^\text{135}\) That slogan was taken up with crusading zeal at the conference.


\(^{134}\) Jeffrey Cox suggests that in 1916 there were around 1000 medical missionaries in India, China and some parts of Africa, approximately 300 were women, and in India they outnumbered men. There were probably as few as 60 women career doctors in England at this time. Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*, Routledge, New York and London, 2008, p218

\(^{135}\) This was the title of John Mott’s 1901 book, and the sentiment that he expressed at the Conference. John R. Mott, *The Evangelization Of The World In This Generation*, New York, Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Mission, 1901
in an address by Bishop Bashford, and used to encourage enthusiasm among the young people and laity present.\textsuperscript{136}

\section*{2.2 1910-1939}

The beginning of the twentieth century saw a continued interest in mission activity. All the major societies continued to recruit candidates for mission, and 1910 saw the first International Missionary Conference at Edinburgh. From the opening address, the tone was one of expectation that through mission from the Protestant churches of the West the whole world would be evangelised and the Kingdom of God would come in power. Brian Stanley states that the chairman of the conference, John R Mott believed that

\begin{quote}
the churches of the western world stood at a \textit{kairos} moment – in which political, economic, and religious factors had combined providentially to open a whole series of doors for missionary advance, especially in East Asia. These doors would not stay open for long; this was ‘the day of God’s power’ and the question was whether the church would be willing and bold enough to seize the providential moment. Such expectations were widely shared.\textsuperscript{137}
\end{quote}

At this broadly ecumenical gathering, the call was to urgent evangelistic action.\textsuperscript{138} The future of missions was to be debated and modern approach to the mission field developed. J.H. Oldham, the Secretary to the conference expected that the eight commissions\textsuperscript{139} set up to investigate and provide facts about all areas of mission would create a "science of missions" that would set the scene for the future of world-wide Protestant mission.\textsuperscript{140}

Despite the avowed intent of all the major mission societies to set up indigenous churches on the three self’s principle, there were very few delegates from such churches at the conference. Rather, the societies that raised the most money and


\textsuperscript{137}Stanley, \textit{The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910}, p3

\textsuperscript{138}The Conference was of Protestant Churches, including some high Anglicans, but not Roman Catholics or the Orthodox Tradition. For this reason it was not called an ecumenical conference, although it was later hailed as the start of the ecumenical movement in the West. Stanley, \textit{The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910}, Chapter 1

\textsuperscript{139}The eight commissions covered the following areas:
\begin{enumerate}
\item Carrying the Gospel to all the World
\item The Native Church and its Workers
\item Education in relation to the Christianisation of National Life
\item The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions
\item The Preparation of Missionaries
\item The Home Base of Mission
\item Relations of Missions to Government
\item Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{140}Stanley, \textit{The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910}, p5
worked in the most ‘primitive’ areas were afforded the majority of spaces. The role
of Women’s Associations and the auxiliaries was also played down and few women
sat on the commissions that would shape the future. Stanley points out in a brief
section on the Role of Women in Mission that the Commission on the Home Base
sent out a questionnaire that “invited its…respondents to identify any weakness or
difficulty arising from the existence of separate women’s boards”141. In the majority
of Societies these questions would be answered by the men who had control over
the women’s Boards. The Commission gave a chapter of its report to the question
of women’s organisations whether autonomous or semi-autonomous and came out
in support of the pressure that was already being applied to women’s groups to join
with their male counterparts. Such support was based on the desire to do away
with duplication of effort and administration and “frequently provoked envy on the
grounds of their [the women’s Boards] lower costs of administration, owing to their
greater reliance on volunteer labour…”142

Though the home base was an area in which women in all denominations had a role
to play, there was only one woman among twenty men on this commission, Helen
Barrett Montgomery, an American Baptist and a champion of women’s boards of
mission. A friend of Susan B Anthony, the American feminist Montgomery, wrote

“Jesus Christ is the great Emancipator of women” and “He alone among the
founders of the great religions of the world looked upon men and women
with level eyes seeing not their differences but their oneness, their
humanity”143

Helen Montgomery never lost her feminist ideals and was wary of proposals to
merge women’s mission agencies with the male boards, fearing that the women
would become merely fund-raisers for men, and lose the ability to control the path
of mission, and to ensure that women had some autonomy over their work. She
saw the role of women’s Boards of Mission as ‘creating a firm theological basis for a
globally emerging womanhood’.144 However, she was unable to attend most of the
meetings of the Commission, which may go part way to explaining why its findings
were that women and men’s missions should unite, auxiliaries being completely
taken into the structures of the male boards, and those few autonomous Women’s
Missionary Societies merging with their male counterparts.145 As there were other
able, though less well-known, women at the conference one might speculate as to

143 Gerald H. Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman M. Horner and James M. Phillips
(eds), *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary
Movement*, (American Society of Missiology Series) Orbis Books, Maryknoll, USA,
1994, quoted p67
VI, p313
why the Commission sought the presence of a woman who already had heavy
demands on her time and talents. In the end, although Montgomery protested that
the recommendations were based on opinion and not fact, and that no attempt had
been made to contact the women’s boards for factual information, the report was
issued with the recommendation for united working.\textsuperscript{146} Some of the women’s boards
capitulated immediately and were effectively taken over by the male mission
boards. Some remained independent for as long as they could – including the WMA.
Stanley says “women themselves were consistently opposed to the mergers with
the male-dominated societies which took place”.\textsuperscript{147} Perhaps they were already
mourning the power and control they would forfeit through agreeing to be part of a
male structure.

But this is to jump ahead; in 1910 mission was still exciting and appealing to
women (and men) as they sought to bring the Kingdom in. The theology of mission
is evangelisation and the expectation is of continual progress in saving souls and
building churches throughout the world. ‘China’s millions’ were understood to be
ripe for conversion, and the relative openness of the country to missionary activity
was cause for optimism. British Imperial rule in India and many parts of Africa was
still largely seen as a civilising influence and so conducive to continued missionary
expansion. In England the structure of society was much as it had been in the
Victorian era, and the belief that the world would progress as Western ideas and
ideals were spread was still in evidence.

The commission on the Preparation of Missionaries looked at all aspects of training
for mission work and had the desirable effect of being the catalyst for the building
of Carey Hall as a training centre for women\textsuperscript{148}. Systematic theological education
for women was possible at the college alongside placement work to see if women
candidates were suitable personalities for work in the field. It was a progressive
approach to training. Further, the Carey Hall project enhanced ecumenical
relationships as the BMS, LMS and WMA worked together to find funding for the
building and to bring women together for training before they left for the field. The
regime as noted in Chapter 3 was rigorous.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Great War did little to dampen enthusiasm for mission.
Whilst the war raged in Europe, the mission stations continued to work as usual and
the war appeared far away. Although there was a decline in church going and

\textsuperscript{146} See Stanley, \textit{The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910}, pp312-316
\textsuperscript{147} Stanley, \textit{The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910}, p315
\textsuperscript{148} Report of Commission V, \textit{The Training of Teachers}, Oliphant, Anderson and
Ferrier, Edinburgh and London, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, Chicago and
Toronto, 1910. This report is concerned with the preparation and training of
missionaries.
religious activity following the war and for many people the devastation caused a severe questioning of old certainties as seen in this entry in a soldier’s diary:

The longer I remain here the more the Bible seems a mythical book... I cannot easily swallow it...I believe there is a Supreme Being. One who rules the universe, but I cannot get any further at present. My religion is my dear old mother's as she taught me when a boy at home, & that is the “Golden Rule” (Do unto others as ye would that others would do unto you, do ye even so unto them) if I do that I shall be as good a Christian as the most of the world. I think I’m going mad.\(^{149}\)

However, among the churches, the evangelical thrust to take the gospel to every corner of the world remained undimmed\(^ {150}\).

During the inter-war years, the Student Christian Movements in Europe and America flourished, the YMCA and the YWCA were significant parts of this movement, and one of the chief characters in it was Ruth Rouse, born in the Victorian era and surviving both world wars. Her interest was in all spheres of the student and missionary movements, “her contribution was very special, a woman pioneering among pioneer women in a society dominated by men.”\(^ {151}\) The student movements kept alive the desire for mission and were also part of the ecumenical movement that was developing especially in the West. Rouse’s work was intentionally and determinedly ecumenical, and during World War I she worked with J H Oldham and Karl Fries to ensure continued mutual understanding within the World Student Christian Fellowship and between the missionary organisations on opposing sides during the conflict. The Church invisible was seen as more important than politics and even after the carnage of the trenches, there was a hope in the churches that now there was peace in Europe, the missionary impetus would be renewed. The continued optimism for progress may appear naïve with hindsight, but the war had brought about more yet technological innovations, which could be seen as signifiers of the continuing progress of humanity and the complications of the peace were not yet understood or seen.

\(^{150}\) Stanley and Cox are in disagreement over this: Stanley claiming that there was a new questioning of the underlying assumptions of mission, and Cox demonstrating that there were more missionaries in the field during the 1920s than in the high Victorian era. It is possible that both are right – as strategists began the process of questioning the geographical and imperial thrust of missions, more Christian women and men saw mission as necessary after the experience of the war.
\(^{151}\) Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*, pp213-214
The model and theology of mission remained largely unchanged. Communication with missionaries in the field was slow, reliant on letters and reports sent by post, telegrams being reserved for urgent business. The radio was being developed during the 1920s and 30s; it would become a key source of news for the masses, but in the years immediately after the first world war, news of mission still came to the churches through magazines and reports sent out from the centre. As already noted the attitudes of empire still prevailed and the civilising effect of the missionary’s work was still largely taken for granted. The Great Commission had still to be realised, and there was an upsurge of eschatological belief, in which the need for the gospel to reach the ends of the earth was the pre-cursor to the coming-in of the Kingdom of God. Such a hopeful outlook was the hallmark of mission thinking between the wars.

The work of the commissions of the World Missionary Conference continued first in the Continuation Committee (the thirty five members of which represented a wide geographical spread and included one woman, Louise Creighton who had been a delegate for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel), and later in the work of the International Missionary Council (IMC).152

In the beginning, some early functions of the IMC were to study mission problems and disseminate information; to coordinate missionary activities; to unite Christian forces; and to organize area and world mission conferences. These missionary conferences were utilized to stimulate missionary thinking, missionary cooperation and missionary advance. Four notable world conferences were in Jerusalem (1928); Madras, India (1938); Whitby, Canada (1947); and Willingen, Germany (1952). The IMC was sustained through thirty-five constituent bodies, which were of two kinds: National Christian Councils on the various mission fields of the world and the National Missionary Councils in the west. In addition to the thirty-five constituents, the IMC remained in contact with over twenty other councils and committees on mission fields.153

Thus the IMC continued to have an effect on the development of missions and boards. The FMC, already envious of the success of the WMA, and backed by the recommendations of the commission on the Home Base of Mission, put pressure on the WMA to become a part of the FMC and have all missionary work under one Committee within the EPC. Similar pressure was put on the GA to join their activities with the Fellowship of Youth.

One effect of the Great War was to open up opportunities in the workplace to women, especially younger, unmarried women and this had a consequence for the WMA in that younger women were not coming forward to take up places in committees. More workplace opportunities also meant that women had more choices if they did not want to marry young (or at all) and for the middle-classes it became more acceptable for young women to work in offices. This so-called “white blouse revolution” offered women not just new career options but also social life outside of Church activities in a new way.

Theologically and practically mission in the field had not changed a great deal from the late Victorian era, there were more home comforts available and some mission stations had access to cars and bicycles to assist itinerant ministry and communication between stations, but methods and motives were essentially the same. It was on the home front that things had begun to move and the WMA and GA would both find that their energies were taken up with internal EPC politics as well as their desire to recruit and train more women for mission.

2.3 1939-1972

If the Great War in Europe had not had a profound effect on the Mission fields, the Second World War would ensure a complete change of direction in missionary work and in the theology of mission in many mainstream denominations. It would also affect the lives of women far more as they undertook factory work and farm work, and as they could be called up to service in the Armed Forces. Although at first the call was for volunteers from the spring of 1941, every woman in Britain aged 18-60 had to be registered, interviewed, and required to choose from a range of jobs, although it was emphasised that women would not be required to bear arms. In December 1941, the National Service Act (No 2) made the conscription of women legal. At first, only single women aged 20-30 were called up, but by mid-1943, almost 90 per cent of single women and 80 per cent of married women were employed in essential work for the war effort.

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154 The Post Office had opened up some clerical jobs to women in the 1870s, and there were a number of women who trained as typists at the end of the nineteenth century. See Swaisland, “Wanted-Earnest, Self-Sacrificing Women for Service in South Africa”, p73-74

155 http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/women_at_war_01.shtml accessed 07/06/2012
War was an enormous strain on the labour force...and produced a revolution in the employment of women outside the household: temporarily in the First World War, permanently in the Second World War.\(^{156}\)

As well as the use of women, during WWII there were many Colonial regiments deployed and the theatre of war was far more wide-ranging geographically than WWI, so many servicemen fought alongside men of colour from India and Africa. Eric Hobsbawm notes “The colonies of imperial powers had no choice in the matter.”\(^{157}\) My own grandfather recalling his service in Africa spoke of the “Nubians”, who, to his surprise, were intelligent and hard-working. These experiences and the advent of the “Windrush generation”\(^{158}\) most of whom politely integrated into British society despite some shockingly racist attitudes, (both in society at large and within the churches) meant that the rhetoric of mission about the “heathens” would be difficult to maintain into the 1950s and beyond.\(^{159}\)

During the war, missionaries were caught up in the conflict across the world. A war which had begun in Europe, spread to Africa as Hitler’s army crossed the Mediterranean, and became truly world-wide following the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941 as the Japanese retaliated against American economic pressure.\(^{160}\) For the PCE, the war in the Far East meant disruption of missionary efforts in a way that WWI had not effected. Evacuation of mission stations had to be undertaken; missionaries were expelled from China and some were taken prisoner by the Japanese; three English Presbyterian women Missionaries died in the camps, Sabine Mackintosh, Ann Livingston and Margaret Dryburgh.\(^{161}\) Gladys Cullen survived and wrote in tribute about them when she returned to England.\(^{162}\)

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\(^{157}\) Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, p24  
\(^{158}\) The ship the *Empire Windrush* brought people from the Caribbean to settle in England, docking at Tilbury on June 22nd 1948. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/windrush_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/windrush_01.shtml) accessed 21/12/2015  
\(^{159}\) I worshipped for a time at a Black Majority Pentecostal Church in Moss Side in Manchester; some of the founding members had come together after the experience of rejection and hostility in denominations to which they had belonged in their country of origin - mission churches.  
\(^{160}\) Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, pp39-40  
\(^{161}\) When Singapore fell in 1942, Miss Dryburgh tried to escape from the advancing Japanese forces by ship, but was captured with other missionaries. The women were taken to a Japanese internment camp at Sumatra, Despite squalid conditions, Margaret Dryburgh retained her strong Christian faith, started arranging church services for her fellow inmates, hymn singing, writing classes and poetry sessions. She also ran a short story club for the prisoners and produced a monthly camp magazine. Along with another prisoner, Norah Chambers, Margaret formed a camp choir. She wrote down music from memory, for the Voice Orchestra to perform, as
On Formosa, the people would discover that “Japan...had its own ruthless brand of colonialism”. Under Japanese rule, the Christians learned to become self-governing and responsible for meeting and worship. After the war the Formosans received back missionaries on its own terms, having made real the one Synod for the whole of the island rather than maintaining the North/South divide created by the two Presbyterian missions on Formosa – English and Canadian. Following the war, the nationalist Chinese Koumingtang took control of the island.

The changed nature of the world politically meant that following the war different denominations moved their missionaries to new fields and competition became fierce. In particular, China was once again closed to missionaries, seen as dangerous western influences; societies had to decide how to deploy their China staff and re-think the nature of mission engagement. Where Churches had grown strong, as in Formosa, it was difficult for the missionaries to learn to become assistants, to have others making key decisions and to have the missionary direction of the church determined by new pastors and leaders.

At the same time, both rebuilding in Europe and the plight of those dispossessed after the conflict, engaged the imagination of people in the churches of all denominations. Although the war was over, rationing remained and calls for assistance from the towns and cities of England were as loud as those to continue the work of foreign mission. On mainland Europe, the plight of others was plain to see, and estimated 40.5 million people had been uprooted. Both Oxfam and Christian Aid have their origins in the need to rebuild housing and to clothe and feed refugees in Europe. As the situation in Europe became more stable, Christian Aid extended their work in the 1950s to undertake a wider remit beyond Europe, into newly independent nations in Africa and Asia. Oxfam broadened its objectives in 1949 to “the relief of suffering arising as a result of wars or of other causes in well as pieces of her own light classical compositions. The music was arranged in four parts, which were hummed by the women to give the effect of an orchestra. Even the Japanese soldiers were said to be amazed at what they heard, inviting themselves to the concerts. The Captives Hymn was one the pieces written by Dryburgh, which was sung each Sunday during church services. Constant hunger and disease eventually took their toll on Margaret, who died on April 21, 1945, a few days after the women were transferred to a camp at Loebok Linggau. Gladys Cullen also led services and Bible study in the camps.

162 The story of civilian prisoners was another largely hidden story. Apart from the 1948 Book Three Came Home, by Agnes Field it was not until the 1980s that the story of women in Japanese POW camps was made more widely known. The PCE published its own account of the internment More Than Conquerors in an undated pamphlet by Margery E. Grant.

163 Hobsbawm, The Age of Extremes, p172
164 Hobsbawm, The Age of Extremes, p51, Hobsbawm gives this figure as a conservative estimate.
any part of the world”\textsuperscript{165}. Both organisations promoted broader development goals. Christian Aid assisted in the development of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), sending qualified people to work with disadvantaged communities to increase their capacity to develop skills and techniques to provide food using technologies appropriate to the country. Oxfam and Christian Aid came out of the churches’ desire to assist people in their time of need, and neither had the objective of conversion as part of their Christian witness and service. The Biblical imperative here was to be found in Matthew 25:31-46. This was a part of the theological shift that was taking place among British churches. Alongside this, those churches that espoused the Social Gospel had already adopted John 10:10, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” as a mission text,\textsuperscript{166} seeing fullness of life as:

\begin{quote}
the abundance of good things that modern education, healing and agriculture would provide for the deprived peoples of the world.\textsuperscript{167}
\end{quote}

The philosophical aftermath of WWII was also different to that after WWI – many more certainties were questioned. The European empires began to crumble as peoples sought political and economic autonomy and this affected missions, as questions of cultural imperialism began to be raised and debated theologically.

Changes in the ways in which mission was effected in the field were not reflected immediately in the information that church congregations received. Until as late as around 1968/9 societies and committees were continuing to make appeals in the same ways as their forebears had done. Children collected pennies in boxes resembling native huts, the proceeds to be sent to the FMC and mission publications, though updated with photographs, still told stories of the need for conversion of peoples overseas. However, in a changing world the churches own story of mission, told and retold to itself, was no longer viable. As Bosch reflects, different understandings of mission sat alongside each other in every age of Christian mission, and the post-war period was no different.\textsuperscript{168} New theological thinking around the best way for the church to effect mission would take time to reach the majority of congregations. Besides the political and social change at home and abroad, many Europeans, including people from Britain were travelling overseas, not just with organisations such as VSO but as tourists and explorers of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[165] Information obtained from \url{http://www.oxfam.org.uk} accessed 13/05/2012
\item[168] Bosch, Transforming Mission, pp339-340
\end{footnotes}
other cultures. The so-called “Overland Trail”\textsuperscript{169} to South-East Asia and mainly through India and Nepal from the 1950s onward brought many young people into contact with cultures and faiths that they had only ever read about before. Some came to see (as indeed some missionaries had done) the sincerity of other faiths and such encounters brought into question the idea that conversion was necessary or needed.

In theology, there were moves towards the idea of “partnership” in mission; from the late 1940s this had been a discussion point, and as empires were challenged so new ways of doing mission had to be worked out. The LMS joined forces with the Commonwealth Missionary Society (formerly the Colonial Missionary Society) and became the Congregational Council for World Mission (CCWM) from 1966, as a working out of the recommendations of the World Council of Churches Amsterdam meeting in 1948 which encouraged closer working of Missionary Societies, Auxiliaries and Boards with the churches. Whether there was really a closer working with the church, certainly at the level of the congregation, is debatable. Missionary boxes and literature were still distributed, the people “in the pew” wanted to hear about the missionary endeavour in terms of heroic adventure, prayers were called for – all seemed just as it had always been. At the higher councils of the Church there was much more interest in new methods of mission, but this had yet to percolate down. The PCE would not become a part of this change until after the formation of the URC in 1972, when CCWM became the Council for World Mission (CWM) not a denominational Council.

There had been concerns throughout the Victorian era and on into the early twentieth century about the lack of church-going among the urban poor; following the Second World War there was a decline in church-going among all classes and the theological thinking about mission began to connect it with the need for social action and local action.\textsuperscript{170} Although this trend would not manifest itself seriously until the late 1970s and 1980s it was beginning to be felt in congregations before that, perhaps more so in denominations other than the PCE, but once the URC

\textsuperscript{169} Later known as the “Hippy Trail”, this overland route was first used by young people with wealth or by sponsored students who would travel east from England to climb mountains or carry out scientific studies and surveys, often publishing accounts of their travels afterwards. Many who read of such pioneering trips were less interested in science or mountaineering than with the descriptions of the exotic places and cultures on the way. Air travel was in its infancy and prohibitively expensive, but for those seeking adventure the prospect of an epic overland journey was both attractive and increasingly affordable.

came into being, this thinking would also come to dominate the former Presbyterian churches.
3. The WMA, within the context of the English Presbyterian Church

3.1 Structure and organisation
In this chapter I will uncover the history of the WMA, a possibly unique missionary organisation in England, created by women and run entirely by them, although allied to a mainstream denomination. Most women’s missionary organisations were truly auxiliary to the main (male led) missionary society. Even where they existed as Boards of Mission, they had no control over how the monies they raised were spent and even though they were instrumental in recruiting female missionaries, they had no say in their stationing. In America, women’s Boards of Mission had similar powers to the WMA, but that was not the usual English experience. The WMA is most unusual in its creation and development and in the ways in which women sought to retain the power, expertise and interest that they had in running the organisation despite many pressures to hand everything into the control of the FMC.

Although the Women’s Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of England was most certainly a “help” to the overall success of overseas mission of the church, it was far more than an auxiliary to the (all male) Foreign Missions Committee.

Edward Band’s overarching Centenary history of the English Presbyterian Mission fits with Elaine Kaye’s analysis of church histories in general

The patriarchal ethos of the nineteenth century, reflected in the denominational structures and the restriction of the ordained ministry to men, meant that...the official records...give prominence to the achievements of men but little to those of women.

The Women’s Missionary Association achieved much in the time that it existed, both as an autonomous organisation and later as a full women’s committee of the FMC. Despite Edward Band’s attempt to play down the significance of the WMA, their history and success tells its own story. Even so, the introduction to the guide to the Microform Collection of the Presbyterian Church of England Foreign Missions Archive

171 For example, the Wesleyan Methodist Women’s Board, founded in 1859, raised funds, paid for the training of female missionaries and made recommendations to the main board of selection. When they were appointed to send missionaries into the field, it was to teaching roles, infields where there was an ordained male missionary. G. G. Findlay, D.D., W. W. Holdsworth, M.A., B.D. The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, London, The Epworth Press, 1922, Vol iv, pp23-25

172 Elaine Kaye, Janet Lees and Kirsty Thorpe, Daughters of Dissent, The United Reformed Church, London 2004, p2
1847-1950 (School of Oriental and African Studies, 1987) where Rev Dr George Hood describes the WMA as “constituting the main ancillary organisation responsible for the recruitment, training and support of women missionaries” 173

By the 1840s many Missionary Societies had Auxiliaries – formal fund-raising organisations, affiliated to the Society, sometimes concerned with a specific area of mission and often run by women, usually under the supervision of the Board or other “sending” body. Sometimes the Auxiliary would raise its own funds for a specific cause, for example, the Medical Mission Auxiliary, which was created by the Baptist Missionary Society, as a separate entity in order to raise funds particularly for medical work, but was described as “…a handmaid to the existing societies”. 174

The BMS also created associate societies to raise funds. The Baptist Zenana Mission was initially autonomous, but most of the influential women were related to men of the BMS Board, and it was taken into the BMS, becoming a Women’s Missionary Association within the BMS. The Girl’s Auxiliary, founded in 1903 reported directly to the BMS. 175 In Methodism, the Ladies Committee, sent out ‘agents’ – not missionaries because they were not ordained, “In 1874, it [the ladies committee] became the Ladies Auxiliary for Female Education, a title making clear its relationship to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society”. 176 Other branches of Methodism had their own auxiliaries. 177

Many women were instrumental in ensuring the flow of funds into the coffers of the Boards of Mission, whilst being excluded from committees and decision making.

This independence marked another significant difference between the WMA and an Auxiliary body – from its inception the WMA recruited, selected, trained and sent its own missionaries – single women who reported not to the FMC but directly to the WMA committee. The Committee was made up of the wives and daughters of prominent men within the church, most of whom also had an interest in missions. The husband of Mrs H M Matheson was the first president of the RioTinto Company and a member of the FMC. Middle class, educated, eager to promote the missionary cause these women worked tirelessly to create the structures required to enable their vision as a missionary society.

173 George Hood, Introduction to the Microform Collection, SOAS Archive, italics mine.
176 John Pritchard, Methodists and their Missionary Societies 1760-1900, Ashgate, Farnham, 2013 p251
177 Pritchard, Methodists and their Missionary Societies 1760-1900, p253
Band records in his centenary history, quoting from the Jubilee History of the Women’s Missionary Association,

It seems a pity that so little is known of that preliminary meeting held in Dr Dyke’s drawing room at 12 Oakley Square, N.W. toward the end of 1878...we may be sure that Mrs H.M. Matheson and Mrs J.E. Matheson were present for one result was that invitations to a conference were issued in their names. This conference took place in the college, Queen’s Square on 23rd December 1878, twenty one ladies being present. It was then that the W.M.A. was formed, its Constitution and Rules suggested and its officials elected.\textsuperscript{178}

Between the ‘preliminary meeting’ and the creation of the W.M.A. that group of women had not been idle; as soon as the association came into being they were ready to set up the first branches of the organisation, initially in the London congregations from which they were drawn, but then further afield, in Liverpool and Manchester and other presbyteries.\textsuperscript{179} They would use this network to communicate with local congregations and to raise funds for the women that they had sent to the mission field.

In 1878 the first single female missionary of the Presbyterian Church of England was sent to China. Miss Catherine Maria Ricketts was an educated and determined young woman, who had already made an impact in church life and in the Civic life of Brighton,\textsuperscript{180} being a founder of the Y.W.C.A and serving on the School Board for the town – one of the first women in the country to be elected to such a position. Catherine Ricketts was moved by a sermon calling for people to serve in China, and in particular, to evangelise the women and children of that nation. Although her call to mission was initially endorsed by the Foreign Missions Committee, Miss Ricketts was handed into the care of the W.M.A. from the start, and became the first of their missionaries.

Catherine Ricketts had a personal income which meant that she could enter the mission field as soon as a passage could be arranged. Future missionaries would need the support of the Association, thus from the outset, the executive of the W.M.A. realised that they would need to organise and energise the branches to raise funds and to keep the need for ongoing funding and recruits to the mission to the fore within the congregations of the church. This new venture provided an outlet for their intelligence and creativity, and allowed them to put to good use the organisational skills that they had been taught in order to run a middle-class...

\textsuperscript{179} PCE/WMA Box 20 File 001 Minute Book of the Women’s Missionary Association Dec 1878-Oct 1881, SOAS Archive
Victorian home in the running of a significant mission enterprise. “These women… [used] their administrative skills within a women-only framework.”¹¹⁸¹ And it was the women-only framework that allowed them the freedom to do so.

Thus the women of the WMA Executive committee were able to remain respectable women in Victorian society, practising their mission interests within the properly feminine sphere of a women’s meeting whilst simultaneously offering radical opportunities to single women. “Perhaps women put hope in their spiritual daughters because their own lives were forcibly domestic and constrained.”¹¹⁸² The Victorian ideal of the married woman as the ‘Angel of the hearth’ and (for people of means) the separation of the public and private spheres, the bread-winner and the home-maker meant that “During the second half of the nineteenth century, many educated women were faced with stultifying boredom as there were so few opportunities for satisfying employment.”¹¹⁸³ The work of the WMA ensured that its executive members and their counterparts in the Branch associations were satisfyingly employed in the work of mission. Organising meetings and conferences also allowed a measure of engagement with the public sphere, Christian ‘usefulness’ is a clear example of the way in which religious and philanthropic structures enabled women to undertake the role described…as ‘The Angel out of the House’¹¹⁸⁴. As well as running a Christian household, women were to take their Christian values and generosity outside the home, by visiting the sick and needy and/or sitting on committees to support foundling hospitals or other charitable causes. It was to enter, if only in a limited way, the ‘public’ space usually occupied by men, and it is noteworthy that the women of the WMA created structures that were a fair copy of those that the men used, and ran their meetings in the same ways as their male counterparts, as can be seen by the agendas and minutes, the roles assigned and the relationship of the regions to the centre.¹¹⁸⁵ Whether this was by design – disguising themselves as “regular” committees - or whether it was that they could not yet imagine another way is not recorded.¹¹⁸⁶ The exceptional nature

¹¹⁸³ Vron Ware, Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History, Verso, London and New York 1992, p126
¹¹⁸⁵ PCE/WMA Box 20 Minutes and Correspondence 1878-1911, SOAS Archive
¹¹⁸⁶ And perhaps women in the church have still not imagined another way; meeting follow the same patterns and politics in the twenty first century as they did in the nineteenth for the most part. Some Synod meetings and the URC General Assembly have used consensus as a means of decision making, to a mixed reception.
of this all female Committee continued into the next century and was noted in the minutes of March 1920,

Miss Lloyd, a missionary of the Welsh Presbyterian Church in India was welcomed to the meeting...She had been much struck by our big committee of women, for no woman sits on the committee of her church.\[187\]

It was no small undertaking to send women into the Asian mission fields. There needed to be robust administration at home, and adequate finance to ensure that the missionaries could be paid and other costs, such as transport and housing could be met. Missionaries were committed to a minimum five-year period of service, so the commitment to support was considerable.

The machinery of WMA fund-raising operated at several levels. From the central Executive Committee would come appeals to the whole church, most often for buildings such as schools or hospitals. For those missionaries without private means there were also salaries to be paid. The main thrust of fund-raising came from the Branch Associations. Branches would hold bazaars and sales of work, households were provided with collecting boxes for pennies, collections for special causes were taken up at branch meetings and all women who attended the meeting were encouraged to subscribe to the magazine “Our Sisters in Other Lands”.\[188\] The quarterly publication was full of missionary news and stories of conversion and backsliding, of answered prayer and unmet need, all designed to persuade WMA members to make a both a prayerful and a financial contribution to the work.

The WMA also encouraged branches to sponsor particular missionaries. A congregation might fund the woman that they had sent into mission, as did Didsbury Presbyterian Church in Manchester. The Liverpool Branch of the WMA raised the salary of the first female doctor to practice at the Swatow Mission Hospital, and when she married a ministerial missionary, continued to fund the salary of her successor.\[189\] Edward Band’s wife, Agnes (formerly Reive) came from Heaton Chapel Presbyterian Church and was supported by the Manchester WMA Branch out of contributions from a number of local churches, when she married, their contributions went to support Peggy Eldridge. A minute of 1920 reads the secretary announced that Wimbledon wished to support a missionary of its own, and she proposed that Miss Syminton be allocated to that branch. This was agreed to.\[190\]

\[187\] PCE/WMA Box 2 WMA committee minutes & Correspondence, 1920, SOAS Archive
\[188\] The first issue of the magazine was in May 1879, from 1881 it was published quarterly until December 1937, after which it was incorporated into “Far Horizons”, the FMC Magazine. Copies can be found in FMC/WMA Box14, PCE/FMC Series II Boxes 27, 28, 29. SOAS Archive
\[189\] FMC/WMA Box 15, file 3, SOAS Archive
\[190\] FMC/WMA Box 2, file 1, SOAS Archive
When ‘their’ missionary was on furlough supporting churches and branches were a priority for a visit and lecture. Deputation work was one of the ways that the WMA branches stayed informed and interested in the work, and missionaries could find their time taken up with giving talks and attending conferences whilst they were at home.

Such support was substantial, and continued long into the life of the WMA. The 1953-4 Accounts also contain a Memo discussing whether consideration should be given to “special projects” to enthuse a particular church or Presbytery. Some examples are given of such projects, which it is noted, have been discouraged by OMC, as having the tendency to narrow interests and cause difficulty when circumstances change, such as the known case of a Sunday School supporting an orphan scholar in a school in India which has now closed, and “Said orphan may possibly be nearing grandparent status by this time!”

There is also a note referring to the missionary salaries expected from WMA supporters:

“WMA has presbytery salary funds

Durham Miss N J Hope
Liverpool Dr Elizabeth Connan
Wimbledon & Clapham Miss B Brittain
Manchester Mrs Kiesow
Newcastle Miss Riddoch”

Individual Branches also supported Missionaries

Muswell Hill Miss Burt
Jesmond Miss Downward
Wimbledon & Clapham Miss Guald
Egremont & West Kirby Miss Holmes
Redhill Miss K M Moody
Frognal Miss D Pearce
Trinity Claughton Miss A Richards

Frognal Women’s Bible class supported an Indian child at £80.00pa and Northwood Sunday School contributed £15.00pa towards the support of an Indian child. The Baby Band supported the Tainan Clinic and Branches also supplied sheets and bandages for hospitals.

In a Report of the Annual WMA Meeting of 3rd May 1927 held in Newcastle, which appeared in the WMA monthly newsletter, there is a description of a Missionary

191 PCE Series II Box 21, quoted in the memo as an example as to why this may not be a good strategy.
192 PCE Series II Box 21, File 13, SOAS Archive
Breakfast, and meetings for Missionaries with various local dignitaries. At the Newcastle assembly every Presbytery was represented and Missionaries attended from various China fields along with and Mrs Band and Mrs Campbell-Moody from Formosa. Mrs Band had been a WMA missionary (Miss Agnes Reive) until her marriage. Both women were wives of FMC missionaries, and clearly still contributing to the missionary work in the field. The training and experience of single women was often a gift to the FMC or another Society when they married.  

Mrs Band spoke about Formosa and the progress in 60 years in creating a Christian community in which one in 180 are Christian, and of the hope “Our aim is to work for the taking over of the responsibility by the Formosans themselves. The missionaries are still needed to share with them our Christian heritage.” The ‘aim’ would be realised by the intervention of the Second World War, when the withdrawal of missionaries led to the native pastors and elders taking over the running of the church; clearly they had the ability to do so, but note the desire to ensure the ‘our Christian heritage’ is shared.

Mrs Campbell Moody spoke of the work undertaken in Bible study with women, (and also referred to the inclusion of men at some sessions).

The opportunity to meet missionaries and to hear first-hand accounts of their work was an important factor in keeping the local Branches enthused and committed to the work of mission overseas and to fundraising at home in the congregations. Women who had the means and could make arrangements to do so were sometimes able to visit the missions as a minute from Formosa tells:

> Mrs McQuillan: the Field Board extends a hearty welcome to Mrs McQuillam on her visit to the various Mission centres. The Board highly appreciates the services that Mrs McQuillam has already rendered to the Mission by means of film exhibition work, and hopes that through her visit the value of this work will be greatly enhanced.

And as, reported here, take back to the congregations the knowledge that they had gained. There were also deputations from time to time, formal official visits by members of the executive and some Presbyteral Chairmen to observe first-hand how the funds were being used.

Many of the women who were active in their branches were also active in other aspects of church life, and those who were Sunday school teachers were supplied

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193 Thus the five year rule: any WMA missionary marrying within five years of being sent into the field had to repay the cost of her training, passage and travelling outfit, pro-rata depending on how long she had served. This was standard practice for single women missionaries throughout all mainstream Societies.

194 PCE/WMA Box 23A, Monthly letters to WMA Branches, SOAS Archive

195 PCE/WMA Box 13, Organisations Internal, File 1, minutes of field board meeting, 2-6 January 1936, SOAS Archive
with materials to use in lessons that described the life and work of a missionary. From the early days of Presbyterian Mission, Formosa – the Beautiful Isle – had been designated “the children’s mission”. As the WMA had missionaries there, materials were provided for children to put on plays and pageants which had the dual purpose of educating the children about mission and also raising money from the sale of tickets. From quite complicated pageants that allowed some of them at least to play the part of heroes of mission – Burns, Barclay, MacGregor and Catherine Ricketts – to mimes such as that of ‘The Family Surnamed YELLOW’, a tale of missionary success in China in which, thanks to the preaching of the gospel, Mr Yellow and all his family are converted to Christianity. For the succeeding two generations the boys grew up to work at the mission hospital and the girls to work in the mission schools,¹⁹⁶ children were encouraged to think about the work overseas.¹⁹⁷ Hymns and rhymes were also used as tools of fundraising such as the final verse of this variation on ‘The House that Jack built’

And so we have come to tell you today
That we send our pennies so far away
To support the work so nobly done
That makes it easy for many a one
To believe in the Book of tidings glad
That comforts those who are sinful and sad
And strengthens the workers bold and true
Who carry the message for me and for you
To help the people of different races
Who dwell in all the country places
And some in the town of chief renown
That lies in the land that we can help¹⁹⁸

For each part of the rhyme there is an explanation related to Formosa, and the town referred to is Tainan. The accompanying text is an appeal to the children to relate to the people ‘far away’, and to recognise the need for both more missionaries and more money.

Outwith the standing committees of the Church the women who so ably ran the WMA were able to operate as they wished, and at a time when no woman was represented on any committee of the church, women held all the significant posts and made all the decisions regarding the organisation both at home and overseas.

The substantial sums of money raised through the Presbyteries and activities of WMA branches within the local churches was to be spent on the serious business of

¹⁹⁶ Racial Stereotypes such has this were a common feature of missionary literature, and here there are gendered stereotypes as well.
¹⁹⁷ The scripts to these are in FMC/WMA Box 15, file 3, SOAS archive
¹⁹⁸ A song for children in FMC/WMA Box 15, file 5, SOAS Archive
mission; the procedures for selecting and assessing potential missionaries were as thorough-going as the methods of fund-raising.

The would-be missionary had to make a formal application to the Committee and this was considered by the Candidates Sub-Committee. It included questions of doctrine, motivation and preparation for mission. Had the candidate taken part in Sunday school teaching, visiting the poor and the sick or any other Christian work? Are her parents willing for her to become a missionary? Does she have a reference from her minister?

A medical examination was required, and this was carried out by a doctor chosen and paid for by the Committee. Except under very unusual circumstances the missionary would undertake some training, and no appointments would be made without satisfactory completion. Finally the woman was warned “No candidate can be accepted for training until the candidate has satisfied the candidates' sub-committee of her biblical knowledge and that she has appropriate spiritual fitness and general missionary qualifications”199

A minute of the Executive Committee meeting 12th May 1925 refers to the procedure

The offer of Miss Jessie Connan, as missionary nurse, was brought before the Committee...Although a Baptist she is ready to accept Presbyterian standards, and she is free to go out in the Autumn. Her medical certificate is good and her answers to the "Questions" satisfactory...the Committee unanimously accepted Miss Connan for service in Formosa...200

The mission field offered the possibility of adventure, meeting with the exotic, and as “…religious non-conformity had perhaps promoted an early understanding of injustice and prejudice “201 the opportunity for Christian service. More work is needed to uncover and explore the complex motivations of women who offered for mission, but at a time when they were not permitted to serve as elders in the local congregation202 any women with a sense of Call to active ministry (over above the expected visiting and Sunday school teaching) had only one way to exercise that Calling – through mission, and more particularly mission overseas. Whilst the Victorian church recognised the need for ‘Home Mission’ and many women were involved in charitable works and encouraging the poor to attend church, especially

199 Recorded in the Presbyterian Church of England archive SOAS FMC/WMA Box 14, file 2
200 Recorded in the Presbyterian Church of England archive SOAS FMC/WMA Box 2, file 3
201 Ware, Beyond the Pale, p160
202 The Presbyterian Church of England agreed in principle that women could be elders in 1922, but in 1956 of a total of 4272 elders across the denomination, 414 were women, and the Church of Scotland looked to the English experience as they debated women in eldership in 1965. Pamphlet, Women as Elders: the Verdict of Experience, Church of Scotland, Perth, 1965
in the newly industrialised cities of Manchester and Birmingham as well as tackling the social ills of the capital, it was overseas that women could not only act as evangelists but also exercise virtual autonomy over their work and time. As Dana Robert puts it "A phalanx of unmarried women...carried out works of education, medicine and evangelism"\textsuperscript{203} For women in the Presbyterian tradition it was the WMA that facilitated the opportunity.

Before the missionary set sail, she was required to sign a contract setting out the terms of her employment, and penalties for marriage or return to Britain before the minimum length of service was complete. (See Appendix 1 for an example of terms). Whilst some missionaries met and married missionaries from the FMC or from other societies, the expectation was that the woman would dedicate her life to the service of the WMA, as in the case of Joan Stuart. A letter sent on her retirement, dated 11\textsuperscript{th} May 1920 says:

the Committee of the Women’s Missionary Association desires to put on record its grateful appreciation of one of its oldest and most valued missionaries, Miss Joan Stuart of Formosa, who has now retired after 32 years of service on the Foreign Field.

Miss Stuart went out the first time in 1885 and by her labours in Tainan and later in Shoka she contributed in very large measure, along with her friend Miss Butler, to the wonderful development of the work among the women and girls of Formosa. By self denying and strenuous toil in the early days access was obtained to the hearts and homes of the women, and by the founding of the then Tainan boarding school Christian education was organised among the girls of South Formosa. It is with deep gratitude to God that the Committee looks back on the work accomplished by Miss Stuart during the long rich years of happy service and prays that much blessing may be hers in the years to come\textsuperscript{204}

Unfortunately, the Baptist Jessie Connan sent a cable to the London Committee in 1926, just a short time after her posting to Formosa, seeking to resign, in order to marry Dr Wheatly and go to Africa with him.

...it was a great disappointment to the WMA as Miss Connan had only been in Formosa six months and Dr Landsborough was in great need of help at the hospital. Nurse Connan would have to refund the cost of her outfit and passage money. It was agreed to send a cable "Resignation accepted to take effect at discretion of Council. Cannot get substitute at present"\textsuperscript{205}

Nor did all who applied get accepted. Correspondence in 1928 between Miss Craig of the Candidates Sub-Committee and Dr MacLagan of the FMC indicates that a

\textsuperscript{203} Dana Robert, \textit{American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice}, Mercer University Press, 1997, p xvii
\textsuperscript{204} PCE/WMA Box 2, Minutes of Committee Meetings, file 1, SOAS Archive
\textsuperscript{205} Recorded in the Presbyterian Church of England archive SOAS PCE/FMC Box2, file 5
nurse Airey of Selly Oak Hospital whose name he had passed on proved to 'unsuitable' for the WMA.  

It was this robust approach to the selection of candidates for mission that led to the WMA actively participating in the plans for the creation of a missionary training college and assisting with the financing of what became Carey Hall at Selly Oak, Birmingham

### 3.2 Carey Hall

Even before Commission V of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference (on the Preparation of Missionaries) produced its report on all aspects of training, and in particular reported the need to “systematize and raise the educational standards of the missionary training offered to women” the WMA had been careful to ensure that its missionaries had good qualifications. Some preparation for the field was understood from references and interview, evidence of Sunday school teaching and visiting as preface to their Call was expected. Following selection, missionaries undertook some language training, often whilst they travelled, with further study on arrival. To further ensure the quality of their missions, the WMA had been involved in the discussions around the creating of a "Women’s Hostel"; a place where female missionaries would be trained before stationing. Initially, sites in London had been considered, but then the possibility of leasing land on the edge of Birmingham from the Cadbury family was raised. The Selly Oak site was already a training centre, with colleges for the training of lay leaders in the Quaker tradition (Woodbrooke), training of Quaker missionaries (Kingsmead) Sunday school teachers (Westhill) and adult education (Fircroft). Thus the subject areas and ethos of Selly Oak suited the needs of the WMA and others who had female missionaries to train. The archives record the appointment of the first head Miss Irvine, just as

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206 Recorded in the Presbyterian Church of England archive SOAS PCE/FMC Box 1, file 1
208 In the Friends of Carey Hall Minute Book of 1952, in the front are a copy of a circular and a note concerning a conference of 1906 with LMS, BMS.BZM & EPM to consider a united training college in London for lady missionaries. The Baptists were up for it, but the LMS board did not see it as a priority and so the proposal was shelved (and sent to the Free Church Council). Some of the members of this meeting later resurfaced as members of the Carey Hall committee. Carey Hall Archive, Box CH5, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
209 Kingsmead College was also used by the Methodist Church as a Missionary training Centre until by 1960 it was used for all their missionary training.
the building work began, and as soon as the building was opened in 1912\textsuperscript{210} (to much fanfare) the first students were accommodated, representing the three denominations. Sept 26\textsuperscript{th} 1912, the opening term, saw Misses Taylor, Ling and Edwards from the LMS, Misses Day, Lewis and Chandler from the BZM (Baptist Zenana Mission) and Miss Reive from the EPC.\textsuperscript{211}

Through the branches of both WMA and GA funds were raised for the development of the site in Birmingham where the college would be built. Carey Hall was an excellent example of collaborative working between non-conformist denominations - Baptist, Presbyterian and Congregational – and it was the women of the BMS, the LMS and the WMA who did the work that brought the college into being.

The women scholars of Carey Hall started on a punishing schedule of lectures in theology, opportunities for public speaking, placements in churches and urban charities where they would undertake visiting and leading devotions, a lengthy reading list to cover and Bible study as well.\textsuperscript{212}

This training, intensive in nature and in shared accommodation, brought about lasting friendships for the women in training across denominations and mission fields. Many of them ‘kept up’ with each other into later life\textsuperscript{213}. The first intake of students composed a College song, giving themselves a distinct identity among the other Selly Oak colleges.

\begin{quote}
Our Noble Selves
They talk of Edinburgh in the North
And eulogise the Woodbrooke lecture hall
With punting pond and lovely Firth of Forth,
Which glory in a Harris and a Small;
And possibly our neighbours may amass
More languages and music to enthral,
But none of them can possibly surpass
Our Mother and Each Other, Carey Hall!
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{210} Originally under the title “United Training Hostel for Women Candidates for the Foreign Field”, it was soon changed to Carey Hall (After William Carey) “A programme for Women’s meetings to celebrate the Jubilee of Carey Hall, Birmingham 1912-1962” p5 , Carey Hall Archive, Box CH9, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.

\textsuperscript{211} Minute Book, 1906-1913 Carey Hall Archive, Box CH5, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.

\textsuperscript{212} Examples of the Curriculum and reports on students detailing the lecture courses that had been undertaken are found in the archives

\textsuperscript{213} Personal communication from an LMS missionary trained at Carey Hall in the 1950s
If you study at the Willows or at Kingsmead,
You have to breathe an atmosphere of sot;
You simply have to read and read and read
To add to stacks of knowledge that you've got.
There's a wondrous facination[sic] they aver,
To rise at dawn, and late to bed to crawl,
But as for me – I's any day prefer
Our Mother and Each Other, Carey Hall!

Now Westhillers may beat us in the race
Of study of the child and nature's lore,
And Chelsea Buns (though in a smoky place)
In teaching household management may score.
Again we hear of Basler Missionsheim
Of Truro and St Denys and them all
But then we weigh against them every time
Our Mother and Each Other, Carey Hall!214

Missionaries were sent for one or two year courses and the college always hoped
for longer to work with the students than the Committee allowed, so in a letter of
1924 to Mrs Bell, we read:

I wish very much that our Presbyterian Committee would in all cases leave
this subject [length of training] more undecided as it is not until you live with
people that you can really discover where there are traits, often quite
unrecognised, which may be difficult if not righted in their future work.215

This was a continuing matter for debate between college and committee:

Miss Garnham is hoping to come to you for lunch on Wednesday, and I am
asking her to have a further talk with you about the Presbyterian students,
and particularly with regard to the length of their courses.216

During the course of study the missionaries in training were observed and the
college reported back to the Executive Committee concerning their progress – in
academic study, in their general conduct, their health and how well they got on
with other students. Sometimes fears were expressed about their suitability for the
mission field, as in a letter from Miss Irvine to Miss Craig,

Agnes Richards is such a child and leans so much on others it seems to us it
would be most unwise to let her go out until she is considerably older...she is
a thoroughly nice girl and a thoroughly good one, as you know, but we do
want something more than that.217

214 College Song, composed by students 1912-13, Carey Hall Archive, Box CH1,
University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
215 Letter dated March 29th 1924, from Miss Irvine to Mrs Bell of the WMA, Carey
Hall Archive, Box CH1
216 Letter dated 1st December 1930 from Miss Irvine to Miss Craig, of the WMA,
Carey Hall Archive, Box CH1
217 Letter dated 1st December 1930 from Miss Irvine to Miss Craig, of the WMA,
Carey Hall Archive, Box CH1
A great deal of such correspondence went to and fro between the college and the sending committees.

At the height of its work, Carey Hall was full to capacity, and throughout its active life as a training centre, under the guidance of various intelligent and forward-thinking women, innovative techniques in training were undertaken. The principals of the college were Miss Jessie Irvine (1911-1932), Miss Catherine MacKinnon (1933-45) and Rev Gwyneth Hubble (1945-1960). Gwyneth Hubble had not served in the field and so took an extensive tour of the BMS, LMS, EPM and Danish and Swiss mission stations during 1948-49.

From the start, students had to take part in community work and leading Bible studies, so that the theory and theology they learned in lectures was reflected in practice. Missionaries on furlough came to give lectures about their own experiences in the field, sometimes remaining at the college for several weeks as a resource for the students. Miss Roxburgh in 1948 encouraged the WMA to send some promising Chinese Christian students to study alongside the English students. One of these, a Miss Wang was entertained in the homes and churches of the WMA executive before commencing a term of study.

The mix of practical experience and lectures was certainly appreciated by Gwenda Lewis of the BMS (stationed at Vellor) who wrote to a friend in 1952 expressing the importance of working in local churches, leading Bible study and considering doctrine, opportunities which she had not had in her church life in West Ham. She had felt better equipped to go into the field due the lectures to her introduce to the country she would be serving. Meeting people from overseas at the college and

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218 It is likely that women’s training was more innovative than that for men, as the ordained status of male missionaries was deemed to make them suitable for the work to be undertaken. The training for ordination was supplemented by some mission training. Although the women undertook a great deal of theology, as they could not be ordained more creative approaches to training could be tried. The ‘placement’ style of practical training at Carey Hall was good preparation for the field, and the missionaries on furlough as well as lecturing, were given an opportunity to take courses and to have space for reflection and reading. In such a small world as that of missions, it is likely that they knew of the work of Florence Allshorn of the CMS, whose role in mission history was significant if largely unsung – her new thinking about the personal qualities and resilience needed for the field and attempts to make training reflect that were important in the training process, and continued to be so – using psychology as well as teaching practical skills. Her reflection on the need for furlough to be about personal growth shows considerable insight into the needs of the missionary as a reflective practitioner, but was largely unheeded as the needs of the churches to see how their money was bearing fruit led to the continued round of inspiring talks and worthy lectures.

See Eleanor Brown, “We are made to Love as Stars are made to Shine”, in Gerald H. Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman A. Horner, James M. Phillips (eds), Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement (American Society of Missiology Series) Orbis Books, Maryknoll, USA, 1994, Part one: Promoters and interpreters,
missionaries on furlough had helped to give her confidence along with the opportunity to learn to express her faith. Gwenda had overcome a crisis of faith whilst in training and valued the support that she had been given at that time. All of this had been necessary preparation for her years in India. This letter was sent on to Miss Hubble, and was among minutes covering the period 1949-1952.

Students leaving Carey Hall in 1962, to go into the China field had undertaken the following schedule of study over the course of either one or two years:

Central lectures:

- Christianity & Classical culture
- The Church and the sacraments
- Homiletics
- Doctrine of man
- Mark
- Ethics
- Principles of Missions
- Romans
- Ezekiel
- The Prophets
- History of Israel
- Life of Jesus
- Men and women in contemporary society
- Church History
- Practical theology
- Marxism in practice
- Intro to the Pentateuch
- Teaching of Jesus
- Outline of Doctrine
- Visual Aids (1 lecture only)

Seminars

- Piano and voice production classes
- Social Studies classes at Woodbrooke
- attendance at prayer group, meditation group

Visiting

- Talks to Guild meetings
- Taking a service
- Work in an Old People’s Day Centre

In addition, each student was expected to present their tutor with a list of books that they had read and were currently reading.

Most of the students who came to Carey Hall had already received some professional training and a good quality of education, so that although the course was hard, they were deemed at selection to be able to cope with it. In the 1940s it appeared that there was the possibility of ordination for women on the horizon, and Carey Hall was mooted as a possible training centre for female ordinands. A minute of 1944 anticipates that after the War there will be a call for Ordination courses and more positions open to women missionaries that require them to be professionally trained, and so the college might need to review the curriculum. Candidates for ordination would need more Biblical studies and theology classes, and the meeting

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219 Carey Hall Archive, Box CH4, Packet 3, Letter from Jean Hunt to Gwyneth Hubble, enclosing report from Gwenda Lewis, dated 15.02.1952. University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
220 Carey Hall Archive, Box CH3, Packet 1, Reports on leaving students. University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
expressed concern at the idea that women might be “external” students at the men’s colleges. On the other hand there were clear reasons for resisting Carey Hall becoming a training centre for ordinands, these were listed in the minute as being:

- The need for a male principal.
- Tendency for the theological training to overshadow the missionary training.
- Problems of trying to train graduate and non-graduate women at the same college.\(^{221}\)

It was decided that should any of the denominations agree to the ordination of women, those seeking training for ordination should apply to men’s colleges which accept women and Carey Hall should stay devoted to mission and the training of missionaries. This decision was taken in 1944, ahead of any demand from the churches for ordination training.\(^{222}\)

This was a clearly defined strategy, allowed a female principal to lead a female staff and college and was successful throughout the war and until the early to mid-1960s when the number of women candidating for mission decreased.

Later in the history of Carey Hall, as fewer women trained for the mission field, the courses of study were adapted to suit the requirements of the Home Office for its women workers. This endorsement by the Government attests to the high quality of the education provided. It was also a source of revenue for Carey Hall as fewer students meant less income from the churches. Other students were also accommodated; one Helen Steel was at Westhill College nearby and the Autumn magazine for 1962 records:

> Helen Steel is taking a preparatory course to make her fit to be a housewife, having, we hope, found in Carey Hall, something that would help her to be a minister’s wife! She hopes to married in the summer when David has finished his course at Westminster, Cambridge \(^{223}\)

During the aftermath of the Second World War when the country was rebuilding its cities the trustees and staff of Carey Hall embarked on an ambitious project to extend the premises so that they could take more students. The money to be raised was £20,000, £10,000 of which was raised from trusts and major donors, but the rest to come by subscription. Armed with a typewriter and address lists from the three denominations, under the direction of Gwyneth Hubble BA (the Principal at this time) an extensive fundraising campaign was undertaken, including individual

\(^{221}\) Carey Hall Archive, Box CH3, Packet 4, Minutes March 1944, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.

\(^{222}\) Carey Hall Archive, Box CH3, Packet 4, Minutes May 1944, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.

\(^{223}\) Carey Hall Archive, Box CH8, Packet 2, Carey Hall Magazine, Autumn 1962, p24, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
approaches to those who might make a gift, asking WMA local Branch Presidents to encourage their members and congregations to offer financial assistance and using the Old Scholars Association lists and the Carey Hall magazine to elicit donations. Despite the financial constraints of the time, attested to in correspondence to the treasurer of the appeal Miss D Porteous, such as

> I’m afraid people are rather scared of the approaching budget at the moment: Don’t you think so yourself? 224

> ...though I must say I hardly know how to support any way of raising funds locally. You will appreciate that rebuilding our City is proceeding very slowly & local calls are pressing... 225

money came in, often in small amounts and each donation was meticulously recorded and acknowledged. Those who donated were listed in the Friends of Carey Hall magazine, a publication created for those with a particular interest in the institution. Sometimes money came from unexpected sources, such as that mailed by Mrs John MacDonald of London NW12 on behalf of her friend Miss E H Owen with the instruction “This name is not to appear in ‘Friends of Carey Hall’ as she is a Methodist.”

Building work commenced and on Thursday March 13th 1952 the new wing was opened with a service of dedication at which the speaker was Rev Dr Robert Mackie of the World Council of Churches and the President was Mrs Coffey. Again, the ability to attract a speaker with a position of such high standing in the Churches as Mackie suggests that Carey Hall was seen as a high quality institution by all three denominations. Until the merger with St Andrew’s Hall, Carey Hall would continue to be run by women. The women of the WMA knew exactly what training their missionaries would receive because women from the WMA were Trustees of Carey Hall; they shaped the curriculum and reflected on the reports from tutors. They decided, along with the staff of the College whether a woman required one or two years training, they raised the funds for fees and bursaries and they brought their considerable expertise in networking and fundraising to the Board of Trustees. It was Mrs Band who made the suggestion of creating “Friends of Carey Hall” in 1952, encouraging committed giving and interest in the work of the college. There is some undated correspondence (most probably from 1950 or ‘51 226) about a plan to

224 Carey Hall Archive, Box CH8, Packet 1, letter from Constance Rae to Miss Porteous 5th March 1952, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
225 Carey Hall Archive, Box CH8, Packet 1, letter from J S Turnock, of South Devon to Miss Porteous September 1950 University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
226 The post-war budget of 1946 had made changes to covenanted giving, and questions in the House of Commons from 1952 indicate that covenants were being encouraged by charities as a tax-efficient means of raising money. The fact that the covenant was for a minimum period of seven years also allowed for forward planning. Hansard, Mr John-Boyd Carpenter, Charities, Deeds of Covenant written answers April 29, 1952, www.hansard.millbanksystems.com accessed 02.02.2015
encourage people to take out the new Seven Year Covenants to allow the college to regain tax\textsuperscript{227}.

1952 saw the 40\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary if Carey Hall as well as an extension to its premises. The Annual Report lists every donation received and the society from which it came. It also names all the collectors and the donations they have collected. For the WMA in the North (beyond Birmingham) there are donations from separate WMA branches and each of the branches is listed. Their donations outstrip those of the much larger LMS\textsuperscript{228}.

From 1951 to 1956, the college was almost full; most of the missionaries in training coming from the BMs and LMS, there were also some private students and occasionally others like Helen Steel, taking courses to assist them in supporting their husbands’ ministries. There were no fewer than eight representatives of the WMA on the College Board, and even though in most academic years, the EPC had only between one and three women in training, the Board Members took their responsibilities seriously. In two years mid-decade (1954 and 1955) the Presbyterian Church had to pay fees for guaranteed places that were not taken up. There was no increase in numbers training for overseas mission; by 1962 there were more women training under the auspices of the Women’s Home Church Association for work akin to that of Deaconesses in other denominations than there were women training for overseas mission.

During the 1950s the largest demand for training places came from the Baptists. Baptist mission theology did not undergo the same questioning and changes that the LMS and FMC struggled with.\textsuperscript{229} The Baptist take-up of training places compared to the other denominations at Carey Hall may be indicative of this difference in emphasis. The Societies that were beginning to see a different way and tell a different story about mission found it more difficult to attract candidates for the field. In 1956 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church voted to ordain

\textsuperscript{227} Carey Hall Archive, Box CH8, Packet 2, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
\textsuperscript{228} Carey Hall Archive, Box CH5, Packet 3, Annual Report 1952 40\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
\textsuperscript{229} The BMS website gives the following information about service overseas: “Our mid and long-term mission programmes are for those who are committed to serving God in some of the most marginalised and least evangelised parts of the world. Following a period of language learning and cross-cultural orientation you will work ... sharing your faith and helping to disciple local believers. The BMS World Mission Vision document states that the highest goal of all we do ‘is to bring people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ and an experience of the abundant life that Jesus described’. Mid and long-term mission workers live out this calling from several years to a lifetime in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.” This is a very different approach to that of CWM. http://www.bmsworldmission.org/serve-overseas/long-term-mission accessed 20/04/2015
women ministers, and this also may have had a bearing on the number of women coming forward to serve as missionaries; now if their calling was to a preaching ministry they had the opportunity to explore and follow that Call at home.

In 1966 Carey Hall and St Andrew’s Hall both closed and St Andrew's Hall Missionary College, Selly Oak was established in 1966 as a college for the study of Mission and the training of people involved in Christian mission in the premises of Carey Hall. St Andrew's Hall Missionary College itself closed in 2000.

With the closure of Carey Hall, the women of the EPC lost a uniquely female space for training. Missionary education was changing anyway, but the singular contributions made to it by a succession of able and talented Principals had now been gathered into this new institution. Women sat on the Board, as part of preparing the way into the union of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches, where all committees would be a shared space between men and women. By 1975, the Memorandum of Association for St Andrews Hall had been legally changed to reflect new realities, and the URC and CWM replaced CCWM and the Overseas Mission Committee of the English Presbyterian Church.

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230 Memoranda and letters from 1965 detailing the merger of the colleges can be found in St Andrew’s Hall Missionary College Archive, box SAH 1, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, U.K.
231 Carey Hall Archive, Box CH2, Packet 1, Memoranda and articles of Association, University of Birmingham, Birmingham U.K.
4. The Girl’s Auxiliary of the WMA

4.1 “The Girl” – An Edwardian Invention

As the WMA developed and expanded its operation, a Girl’s Auxiliary was created. Like the WMA the Girl’s Auxiliary held lightly to the structures of the church. It was an organisation characteristic of other groups and associations for young people that were being formed at the time. In this chapter I set the Girl’s Auxiliary in context, and then examine its genesis and relationship with the WMA.

During the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the increasing educational opportunities for women, especially middle-class women, led to an increasing awareness of the transition from childhood to womanhood. With its roots in the Victoria’s reign, it was from 1900 that the idea of the girl developed as a distinct phase in the life of women. The category of adolescent and the role of these young women or ‘girls’ became “increasingly visible in public life...”232 In her work “Girls” Catherine Driscoll tracks the development of this idea of girlhood/adolescence as separate from and different to both childhood and the life of a mature woman. This was, she contends, a particular aspect of late Victorian thinking as education, new legislation and the work of Freud in relation to young women played their part in ensuring that:

The Victorian period ...produced a recognisable figure of feminine adolescence....In newspapers, legislation and parliamentary debate, literary and visual representations, official reports, changes to established institutions and constitution of new ones and social commentary of various forms, we can locate multiple “Surfaces of emergence”...for a new modern girl233

She also argues that

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries adolescence gradually extended into an unspecific age category ending around twenty one or twenty five

thus the Girl’s Auxiliary of the WMA fits neatly into the age bracket that Driscoll identifies, from around fifteen to the mid-late twenties, and these young women are in that group which is no longer identified with childhood, but are not yet ready for marriage and motherhood.

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233 Driscoll, *Girls*, p35
The experience of girlhood in the nineteenth century was clearly diverse...The girls of the British Empire, for example, were invested with a representative status in cultural forms produced for British girls and girls in the British colonies. They were emblems of Britishness...and reinforced a home culture in the face of the colonial experience....the idea of the native girl also represented her culture – materializing an image of those cultures, their capacity to be inculcated into British/Christian cultures... Such images and ideas were part of the culture in which the Girl’s Auxiliary emerged and developed. They were allied to the concept of the Christian woman, as a civilising influence, both at home and in colonial contexts. The idea of the ‘native girl’ was used in missionary literature targeted at girls and women in England; “Our Sisters in Other Lands” told not only of the work of the missionaries of the WMA (‘emblems of Britishness’) but also described the lives and fates of girls and women in the Far East and India, (those who were to be inculcated into Christianity), the mission fields where the WMA focussed. The contrast between home life in England and that of the girls and women that missionaries met with in the field provided an incentive for fundraising, prayer and study. ‘Native girls’ were subject to early marriage, subjugation to their husbands, no education and concealment in a zenana, depending upon which part of the world is being described.

Mitchell argues ‘the word [girl] became enormously popular in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Young lady and young person – like lady and woman – had class referents; girl is inclusive. It takes in workgirl, servant girl, factory girl, college girl or girl graduate, shop girl, bachelor girl, girl journalist, and office girl. It includes schoolgirl as well, but she is not a child’

Mitchell further claims that girl was a significant term in “unsexing” young women – girls were not husband-hunting – it is a word denoting both immaturity and the sense of being in a liminal space.

In this border place, between childhood and womanhood, girls could consider making new choices, and among them, for those in the English Presbyterian tradition was a life on the mission field or a role at home supporting those who

234 Driscoll, *Girls*, pp36, 37
235 The ‘heathen’ women often depicted as oppressed by their culture, and by the men in their families; the Gospel and the presence of missionaries as friends was seen as liberating. No such notions of liberation for girls and women in England were mooted, an ironic acceptance of the prevailing culture by women who are challenging that same culture. For comment on this paradox, see Susan Thorne, “Missionary-Imperial feminism”, in Huber M. T. and Lutkehaus N. C. (eds), *Gendered Mission: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1999, pp39-66
236 *Our Sisters in Other Lands* uses such images in articles and appeals, along with descriptions of local customs and idols to encourage support for mission. PCE/WMA boxes 14 and 17 contain copies of the magazine. SOAS Archives
were working overseas. This was a period when women were beginning to enter the workforce, a process that would accelerate with the advent of the First World War. During the inter-war years it was these ‘girls’ who would express their independence through work before marriage or by taking on charity work. The GA reflected the varying classes and experiences of young women at each point in time; although it was undoubtedly, throughout its history, run by middle-class, educated young women, in the local groups and congregations there were factory and mill girls, elementary school teachers and young women in service: in minutes of meetings following the First World War and leading up to the Second World War there is reference to the difficulty of balancing meeting and work time for many of the GA members, and the Second World War would bring membership to a crisis point, not only for the GA but for other similar mission organizations.

Driscoll suggests that during the late nineteenth century, girls clubs were part of the formation of a recognizable girl’s culture, specifically age and gender specific. Some had Victorian roots, for example, Girls Friendly Societies, and these persisted into the early twentieth century because of sponsorship through churches and schools. Others such as the Girl Guides responded to a desire to undertake more adventurous activities, in part emulating Boy’s clubs. The GA was a part of this cultural movement whereby girls/young women sought to have a visible place and space in society, something that they alone owned, where they could share friendship and interests. This was recognizably different from Women’s groups and organizations, and it can be noted that the WMA struggled to recruit ‘Girls’ into their meetings, largely because of the formality of the proceedings compared to the companionship found among the young women at their own meetings.

From the late eighteenth century, the mechanisation of industries such as cotton spinning and weaving, the development of factories and the growth of cities were features of the industrial revolution in Britain. From the Reform Act of 1832 through to the beginning of the Great War in Europe in 1914, Britain expanded and consolidated its empire. The long reign of Queen Victoria, who took the throne of England in 1836, and remained monarch until 1901 gave stability to the nation. This period saw a great deal of social change in England. At the beginning of the industrial revolution child labour was the norm, both in rural areas and in the new

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238 This can be seen in the minutes of meetings and lists of members found in the GA archives. PCE/WMA Box 13, part II files 9 and 10
factories. Most people did not have access to education, and living conditions for the poorest in society were overcrowded and insanitary.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the factory acts and education acts were passed making it illegal for children under the age of nine to work, and policing the work of minors had improved. The 1876 education act effectively made education compulsory. Primary education was the expectation of all, and the state took over from Sunday Schools as the medium for teaching. By the beginning of the twentieth century, children could expect to remain in school until the age of 14, and the concept of childhood as a distinct phase of life, different to adult’s experience was emerging among all classes, not just those with money. Historians of education and childhood would argue that 1901 saw the beginning of a period where “youth” was important as a concept.  

The empire had reached its zenith during the mid-nineteenth century, and in a series of articles edited by John MacKenzie social historians would argue that the period 1901 to 1914 was a time when it was necessary to consolidate the idea of empire. This had been recognised earlier with the formation of the Boy’s Brigade; founded in Edinburgh in 1858 to encourage boys into the army and to be good citizens. It offered a mixture of religious education and military drill. Using Boy’s Brigade principles during the Boer War, Baden-Powell had created an auxiliary band of boys to be scouts during the siege of Mafeking. Written up as a series of weekly magazine articles, and later a handbook, his methods became the basis for the Boy Scout Movement which he founded in 1907. His sister Agnes and wife Olave became the founders of the Girl Guide Movement, whose first handbook was tellingly entitled “How Girls can help Build up the Empire”.

Lord Meath was the inaugural chairman and president of the Duty and Discipline movement, holding those posts between 1912 and 1917, and oversaw the publication of a number of papers warning of the dire consequences for the Empire if the young did not better understand the importance and the glory of the British Empire. Two out of every five young men had been rejected for the army at the call-up for the Boer War and this had led to a rise in interest in the health and

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243 The Handbook *Scouting for Boys* was published in 1908. The blurb on an Oxford University Press 2005 reprint reads “...the book is at the same time a roughly composed hodge-podge of jingoist lore and tracker legend, padded with lengthy quotations from adventure fiction and B-P’s own autobiography, and seamed through with the multiple anxieties of its time: fears of degeneration, concerns about masculinity and self-restraint, invasion paranoia.”
'moral fibre' of the nation. Meath wrote, in an article entitled 'Have we the "Grit" of our Forefathers?'

If the British Race ceases to be worthy of dominion it will cease to rule...Britons have ruled in the past because they were a virile race, brought up to obey, to suffer hardships cheerfully, and to struggle victoriously. 245

In order to combat the indiscipline and poor health of the nations’ youth “Improving children’s fitness was seen as integral to national security and Imperial survival” 246

Schoolchildren were fed a diet of imperial propaganda and recitals of the military and naval glories of England 247

Reading materials often took a sermonising tone and usually had a clear moral bias. The Upper and Middle classes were portrayed as inherently noble and high-minded; “their values were...selflessness, fair play and courage. Beyond this, Britain’s empire was represented as just reward for a superior race and...gave promise...of fascinating mystery and hair-raising adventure”. 248 Children’s fiction described a world where children had considerable freedom and autonomy, but cleaved to the high-minded values of that ‘superior race’. 249

Paul Ward argues that from around 1900 fear of German expansionism led to a national re-imagining of masculinity “from moral earnestness and religiosity to athleticism and patriotism” 250. This ‘active manliness’ further reinforced the ideal of women in the domestic sphere, at the same time as the movements for women’s suffrage were gathering pace. That women wanted to participate in the life of the nation is seen in the creation of many women’s organisations, such as the Primrose League (founded 1883, Women’s Council founded 1885), the Navy League (1901), the National Service League (1902) and the Victoria League (1902) all, like the WMA outside official structures. Apart from the Victoria League, which offered practical aid to British refugees, and sent books and magazines to British soldiers across the Empire, these were lobbying groups wishing to influence government policy for Conservative values, the building of battleships and the training of men for the army. The Girl’s Auxiliary of the WMA then, comes into being in a context where “youth” is a distinct social category and there is a perceived need to young people to understand their place in the maintenance of the Empire.

245 J. A. Mangan, “the grit of our forefathers’: invented traditions, propaganda and imperialism” in MacKenzie (ed), Imperialism and Popular Culture, p129
247 Gavin & Humphries (eds), Childhood in Edwardian Fiction, p12
248 Childs, Labour’s Apprentices, p106
249 See for example, E Nesbit, The Railway Children and the School Stories of Angela Brazil, as well as the many compendia for Boys and Girls published during this period.
250 P. Ward, Britishness since 1870, Routledge, Abingdon, 2004, p38
4.2 The Girl’s Auxiliary: Formation and Organisation

The Girl’s Auxiliary of the WMA was created in December 1902, at a meeting of some 60 Girl Delegates from the Presbyterian congregations of North and South London, called together by invitation of the Executive Committee of the W.M.A. It was initially led by Miss Oldham. The WMA records its aim as follows:

The aim of the Girls’ Auxiliary is awaken and deepen interest in Foreign Missions among the girls of the English Presbyterian Church, and to keep before them the claims of the foreign field on their lives. Among the methods used are Missionary Conferences for girls only, and Congregational Missionary Study Bands. An attempt also is made to give the girls a practical interest in the work of our own Mission by making articles for use in our Hospitals.  

In 1905, the aim was restated thus: “...uniting the girls of the Church in preparation, thought and prayer for further responsibility in Christ’s Kingdom”. It fits neatly into the social trends described above; a social yet useful gathering for those between childhood and the responsibilities of adult life, conscious of Britain’s role overseas, encouraging a moral outlook and offering the opportunity of practical service.

Like other youth organizations, this association developed its own structures and life. The Girl’s Auxiliary was to mirror the organisation of the WMA, but to run its own programmes. It was to contribute young women to the mission field over the period of its existence. The Girl’s Auxiliary can be seen as a tool for recruiting missionaries, its success and its demise reflect the emphasis that Presbyterian women placed on the work of mission and the structures that they put into place to ensure that the mission would continue was a significant part of their service to the Church, both at home and in the mission field.

Affiliated to the WMA, the GA formed branches in the Presbyteries alongside the WMA branches. By 1911 ten of the twelve English Presbyteries had Girl’s Auxiliaries up and running; for middle class parents of girls this may have been a preferable option to the Girl Guides who were viewed with some suspicion for making girls too much like boys. Equally, for some young women, the GA gave them a role in the church which was their own.

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251 PCE/WMA Box 18, GA, File 2 SOAS Archives  
The Presbyterian Church of England in both the FMC and WMA worked in mission fields that were, with the exception of India, outside the boundaries of the British Empire, with most of the activity being in China and the Far East. Nonetheless, mission had some of the same appeal as empire and was accompanied by high ideals. This was the social back ground to the formation of the Girl’s Auxiliary – Miss Oldham had caught the zeitgeist and wanted to set up some organisation to enable young women to play their part not in the Empire as such but in the building of the Kingdom of God through supporting mission and learning about the work and activity of missionaries supported by the WMA.

A pamphlet of 1905 describing the organisation in the GA states

Aim The Girls’ Auxiliary exists to bring before the girls in the Church their responsibilities and obligations towards non-Christian peoples and to help them to respond to the challenge made by them to this generation.

Organisation The G.A. is affiliated to the W.M.A and has representatives on its committees. The G.A. is also affiliated to the Fellowship [of Youth] and co-operates with the Young Peoples’ Councils, but is entirely self-governing. Each congregation, having a Branch, is entitled to two representatives on the General Committee of the Presbytery, which Committee transacts all ordinary business of the G.A. in the Presbytery and keeps in touch with headquarters. The Officers and representatives of each Presbyteral Committee and of scattered Branches have the right to sit on the General Council which is the controlling body. Where there is no Presbyteral organisation, Branches and floating members keep in direct touch with headquarters.

The Work of Branches consists in organising study circles, discussion groups, reading unions and lending libraries, in working for hospitals in China and India, and sometimes for sales of work, and in getting up demonstrations and general meetings. Co-Operation with Branches in neighbouring churches often proves valuable.254

In creating the GA the WMA was looking to the future as well as the present; these girls were to be their successors in running the WMA organisation. The women at the fore-front of the WMA were in no hurry to relinquish responsibility for the roles that they held. They were able to exercise their intellect and abilities in the service of mission and this became a long term commitment. As missionaries went into the field for life, so the WMA executives were willing to offer their services for as long as they were required. Although they recognised the need for successors, they also found it difficult to step aside.255 The minutes of their meetings indicate that women resigned from their posts only if too ill to continue, or in the case of Presbyteral positions because they moved into a new area. Given the opportunity to influence

254 PCE/WMA Box 18, file 2, SOAS Archive
255 The women of the WMA were not alone; Olave Baden Powell was made Chief Guide in 1918 and remained in post until her death in 1977. Margaret, Countess of Jersey, was President of the Victoria League for twenty six years.
what was one of the key areas of the work of the Church and to organise and run their own organisation, such women did not want to let go of the reins. From AGM minutes, it is possible to sense, too, the institutional reluctance to relinquish the services of competent officials, who have a network of contacts and the collective memory of the organisation. However, for the WMA to continue, younger women had to be attracted into its ranks, and given the chance to realise their own potential; to a certain extent this was the hope invested in the GA.

In a special letter to the WMA Presbyteral branches, in October 1913, the GA is given special attention:

W.M. A. Special Letter to the Branches

From Elizabeth W Bell, President and Jane P Craig Secretary

In addition to their present activities (Study Circles and Hospitals Supply Scheme) the girls are keen to give practical help, and definite responsibility should be assigned to them. They might furnish the programme at some meeting, prepare maps for the use of Branches...bring prayer scrolls up to date from list of names on new Prayer Union Cards; start, or take charge of local Missionary Library; do canvassing for “Our Sisters”; suggest fresh outlets for energy and interest in the Branch, and be given opportunity for taking the initiative...\(^{256}\)

The letter indicates ways in which the GA might become integrated into the meetings of the WMA. The Branch might harness the enthusiasm of these younger women to take on such tasks as could prepare them for a role in the WMA branch meeting when they were older. Both the WMA and the GA were a conduit for the flow of missionary information into the congregation but as a less formal organisation (despite its clear structure) the GA also functioned as a social meeting place for young women.

The Girl’s Auxiliary enabled young women to come together in friendship groups within congregations or across a geographic area. They would sometimes share their meetings with young women from the Methodist Auxiliary.\(^{257}\) They organised their programme themselves and ran their own committees. The meetings as stated in the constitutional documents and letters in the archives of the WMA, were a mix of Bible Study, ‘gatherings’ fund-raising by events as well as systematic giving and practical action such as sewing for the Mission Hospitals. The meetings were regular, usually weekly, and attracted young women aged from around fifteen into their late twenties. There were residential conferences, organised and run by the young women on the committees, at which missionaries were invited to speak.

\(^{256}\) Presbyterian Church of England archive SOAS PCE/WM Box 18, Girl’s Auxiliary file 3
\(^{257}\) Presbyterian Church of England archive SOAS PCE/WMA Box 18, Girl’s Auxiliary file 7
These were both social and educational events, allowing young women to go away together in a socially acceptable setting. Vivienne Griffiths describes girl’s friendship groups as a form of resistance to societal expectations, allowing girls and young women to act in ways that are simultaneously conformist and non-conformist.²⁵⁸

Although a church-based group, with clear aims involving the support of mission, the GA became a place of friendship for girls and young women, and illustrates the tension described by Griffiths well; its activities were conformist and acceptable to parents and church alike, but it also offered opportunities for leadership, learning administrative skills and making friendships across class boundaries. Residential conferences were a place to meet and share hopes and expectations outside of formal, adult influence, but they were acceptable to adults because of the presence of missionaries and sometimes a WMA member chaperone.

Like the WMA the GA was not officially under the umbrella of any of the committees of Synod. The GA was represented on the committees of the WMA and accepted by the wider church, but was not, during its most active years subject to the rule of the Synod committee structures. Once again, the women of the Presbyterian Church had taken an initiative and not sought or waited for the permission of the men ‘in charge’. The GA had the blessing of the WMA, especially as it was initially seen as a bridging organisation between the younger ‘girls’ and the Branches. The only way in which the structures of the church affected the GA was in the allocation of its income. Because it was a youth organisation, monies raised for mission (unless for a particular appeal) were to be divided between the WMA and the FMC, as any funds raised under the auspices of the Welfare of Youth Committee for mission automatically went to the FMC which was funded from central funds of the PCE.²⁵⁹ However, the WMA received the lion’s share of these funds, even at a later date when the GA was officially placed under the umbrella of the Welfare of Youth; the GA elected to sponsor named missionaries (sponsorship which was treated as being for a particular appeal), and also allied itself with Formosa²⁶⁰ where the WMA had as many active missionaries as the FMC.

The GA was successful in recruiting young women into its ranks and in ensuring that the needs of mission did not go unheeded in the local congregations. Following

²⁵⁸ Vivienne Griffiths, Adolescent Girls and their Friends; A Feminist Ethnography, Avebury, Aldershot, 1995, pp125-127. Griffiths explores friendships between girls aged 11-18 and identifies the need for shared interests, a sense of belonging and shared values. Although this is a piece of work undertaken with a cohort of girls in the 1980s, the Girl’s Auxiliary meets the same criteria and developed the same lasting and significant friendships that she observed in the participants of her study.

²⁵⁹ PCE/FMC Box 22, a memo from 1928 sets out the position with regard to division of funds raised by different groups within the FOY

²⁶⁰ Formosa had been designated the mission field for children and young people in the church to specifically take responsibility for.
a report of its work to the Synod of 1910, it was agreed to the set up a ‘Home Preparation Union’ to run parallel to the GA.

The Home Preparation Union had a definite focus on recruiting new missionaries, and was aimed at the young women in the GA. The HPU was seen, too, as a bridging organisation between the GA and the mission field. It followed the pattern of other existing unions such as that of the LMS\textsuperscript{261}. The conditions of membership were as follows:

- Daily prayer for missionaries
- Daily systematic study of the Bible
- Definite missionary study during some part of the year
- Some definite work in connection with a church or mission
- An annual subscription of 2/6, payable in October, otherwise membership lapses in December.
- Each member is expected to report on her work at least three times in the year
- The course of study is general theology and mission, and the local practical work is considered very important\textsuperscript{262}

In both the GA and the HPU, there was an emphasis on Bible study, and on the importance of the work of mission. Whilst these organisations must be seen in the overall context of a changing society, they are still rooted in the church and in a particular understanding of mission as the taking of the gospel to foreign lands. Although the social context is one of empire building and maintenance, the work of mission is seen as something distinct and where girls and young women might forge a role in their own right and exercise agency in how this was expressed within church and society.

Although the PCE might possibly be accused of cultural imperialism later in its history, because of the mission fields in which it worked (with the stated exception of India) it could not be accused of being part of the machinery of the British Empire. However, although supporters of the mission field in Formosa reading between the lines of official reports and alongside the newspaper articles would have an understanding of what it meant to be under the control of an imperial power when Japan took the island and the missionaries suffered alongside the indigenous people, there was never any questioning of the idea of empire. As the

\textsuperscript{261} In 1915 the LMS assisted the BMS to set up an HPU, and its terms of reference were similar to those here.

\textsuperscript{262} PCE/WMA Box 9, File 7, Memo to GA branches stating that the HPU, officially started at the Synod of 1910 is ready to accept members from 1911.
Japanese imposed their language and school curriculum, both Formosans and missionaries accepted this as the right of the imperial ruler.\(^{263}\)

With the advent of the First World War, the long Victorian Era (or the short Edwardian era) was about to come to an end, and the role and position of women, already being questioned by suffragists and suffragettes was about to change.

The effects of industrialisation, empire, mobilisation for the production of food and munitions during two world wars and the opening of educational and professional opportunities for women have had a profound effect on women’s work and their self-understanding. That the context for women in mission might be affected by the experiences of women in political life ‘at home’ was recognised by some first-wave feminists\(^{264}\). All of this change is well documented by feminist historians.\(^{265}\) At the same time, traditional and patriarchal structures, whilst they have been challenged, have withstood attempts to change them so that at least some of the social pressures to be ‘good wives and mothers’ have remained strong, particularly in largely conservative institutions such as the church in the west.

The experiences of women and the retrieval of women’s place in history have been the subject of much study. Only slowly is the discipline of Missiology beginning to catch up with what has been achieved in the political and social sphere\(^{266}\).

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\(^{264}\) In 1913, Ruth Rouse argued that women involved in the suffrage movement should offer their expertise to the missionary societies. “…The progress of the women in western lands has produced in regular succession exactly the class of workers called for by the needs of the east: spirited pioneer wives brave enough to enter unopened fields, well educated enough to understand and support their husband’s work and to lay the foundation of special work for women and girls” Ruth Rouse, *Foreign Missions and the Women’s Movement in the West*, 1913 Reprinted for the Student Christian Movement by the *International Review of Mission*

\(^{265}\) See for example, the work of Rowbotham and Finch, and others.

However, whilst it has not been my own intention to critique the work produced in complementary disciplines, but to draw on it in developing my own thesis, nonetheless it is indicative of the unfortunate fragmentation of thinking among historians that a work which seeks to examine women’s experience can make almost no reference to the Church and none to women’s spirituality throughout the period. Had this history focussed only on the late twentieth century perhaps it might be argued that the beginnings of a decline in Church membership was pronounced enough to justify this omission, but in 1900, and certainly until the end of the First World War (arguably well beyond that into the 1950s) the church remained a significant social institution as well as a source of spiritual nourishment to women of all classes. The lists from Presbyteries of subscribers and the initiatives that involved collection of many relatively small sums of money are testament to the involvement of working class women in the mission enterprise.267

The histories of Non-Conformist missions across denominations show that it was not only middle-class women who felt called to mission. Bruley does not fully acknowledge the role of the Church in women’s lives, rather, writing of the circumscribed existence of women on the new suburban housing estates of the 1930s which could lead to depression, she says, “The women who were most likely to succumb to suburban neurosis were in the lower middle class and upper working class. Those more affluent than this often kept up hobbies and interests outside the home such as music, church, welfare or local council work.”268

Pioneering women historians of the 1970s often approached the subject of women’s history from a Marxist position, so the oppression of women as workers and homemakers was a chief concern in their work. This legacy may be part of the way in which the story of women continues to be told, and Bruley, writing from a feminist perspective whilst not overtly Marxist is yet within that mould. So it is perhaps surprising that the church is overlooked as a bastion of male power – certainly until late into the twentieth century women were not accepted into the official leadership roles. In Presbyterianism the role of women as elders was being debated as late as 1968, and the Congregational church was ahead of its time ordaining women in the 1930s, and then only ‘exceptional’ women.269 Women certainly challenged that power by working outside the formal structures of the churches or by wielding economic power from within, but nonetheless men sat on the Boards and Committees, occupying the public space.

267 Presbyterian Church of England, Women’s Missionary Association Archive, SOAS, London, Box No.8 contains records of Presbyteries and subscriptions to the WMA. Annual reports of local associations describe fund-raising activities.
268 Sue Bruley, Women in Britain since 1900, Palgrave, Macmillan, Basingstoke U.K., 1999, p74
During the inter-war years the GA initially continued to thrive, but by the end of the 1920s there was a move to consolidate some of the committees and organisations within the church. The Synod was working to ensure that all bodies connected with the PCE were properly under its guidance. The executive continued to suggest that the WMA amalgamate with the FMC, and that the GA had a more regular relationship with the committee structure of the Church.

A letter of 6\textsuperscript{th} December 1928 to Miss Prestige of the G.A. from P J MacLagan, The secretary to the FMC refers to Scotland and the position of the GA there. As in England, it is autonomous; it also has representation on the Foreign Missions and Welfare of Youth Committees. The Scottish GA insists on an age limit so that it does not fall into the hands of seniors.

MacLagan suggests a similar situation be pursued for England, and is especially keen on the age bar, and though he acknowledges that this may be difficult to ensure in congregations, thinks it feasible at least for the Central Committee

\textit{my view is that it would be well advised to remain as it is – G.A. to the W.M.A., but an autonomous organisation, and that some way should be devised by which the G.A. as such could be kept in touch with the W. of Y. and F.M. Committee}”

As to touch with the F.M. – I understand that present the G.A. has representatives on the W.M.A. Advisory and Committee. It has, however, no direct touch as such with the F.M.C. or the F.M.Board. I have suggested to Miss Johnston that this might be secured through the W.M.A. in this way. Members of the F.M. Board are, of course, also members of the F.M. Committee. Now there are twelve women members of the F.M. Board. Each year four of these women members drop out, and the W.M.A. suggests two of the four members to be appointed in their place. The W.M.A. could, if it were willing to do so, see to it in making its nominations that there would always be at least one G.A. representative among the twelve women members of the F.M. Board.\textsuperscript{270}

MacLagan as secretary to the influential and important Foreign Missions Committee took seriously the contribution of the GA to the life of the church and its missions, and although wanting to draw it closer to the controllingstructures is offering a place at the table (quite literally) to these young women – although note that it is the WMA who will lose a representative rather than the men of the church!

The negotiations to connect the GA with the Welfare of Youth committee continued, and as the nineteen-thirties dawned, a coming together looked ever more likely. In a letter of 3\textsuperscript{rd} June 1931 from Miss Craig) of the WMA to Enid Green, Gen Sec of G.A, this merger appears to be ready to go ahead, as Miss Craig recalls the contribution of the GA to the WMA.

\textsuperscript{270} PCE/FMC Box 22 Youth Organisations. SOAS Archive, file 6
The W.M.A. recalls with deep thankfulness the start of the G.A. 29 years ago when Miss Oldham invited some girls of our Church and the officials of the W.M.A. to meet Miss Lorrimer (Mrs Crichton Miller) then President of the G.A. of the U.F. of Scotland. Her account of the success of this movement aroused great enthusiasm and under favourable conditions our own G.A. was launched.

Missionary Study Circles and Working Parties for Hospital supplies were effective means of creating and fostering interest among the girls and fruit was quickly seen in offers of service for the Mission Field.

Ever since those early days there has been a steady stream of girls from our own Church – many of them members of the G.A.- offering for work abroad and many of them are now serving on the W.M.A. staff at home as officials at Head-quarters, Vice-Presidents, Presbyterial Secretaries and branch officials.

....The Home Church has also during all these years found able and willing leaders in the G.A. for many departments of service, notable perhaps the Sunday School and K.M.B.271

At first the G.A. did not wish to collect funds but soon this outlet of service was sought by them, and great interest circled around Miss Mary Paton, for whose support the G.A. became responsible.

The W.M.A. sends cordial and affectionate good wishes to the G.A. as it enters on a new phase of its History....272

Although the formal gathering-in of the GA to the FOY committee did not occur until 1945, the loosening of ties to the WMA dates from this letter. Branches of the GA continued to exist, and remained active during the war years. However, the disruption of war meant that fewer and fewer branches could maintain their regular meetings and by 1945 only seven were formally still in existence, although individual young women received the newsletter and continued to support the missionaries as they were able. But the days of young women in the GA being wholly responsible for the support of a missionary as they had been for Mary Paton were over.

The difficulties of meeting during the war were referred to in the GA Newsletter Dec 1942, which began with a letter from the President, Janet D Thomson, indicating her desire to make a list of members serving in the Forces, both to keep in touch during their period of service, but also with a view to utilising their experience when the war is over. She makes a plea for meetings to go on as far as is possible, and makes reference to mission work in the Far East being hampered by the war and in need of prayer. Clearly those in the GA who had not joined up were involved in the war effort, for there is also a note reminding members “don’t let your meetings

271 The King’s Missionary Band – a mission focussed group for children
272 PCE/FMC Box 22, Youth Organisations. SOAS Archive, file 6
become a knitting circle – remember Thought, Prayer and Service are all aims of the organisation.”

There follows news of missionaries, including the death of Miss Jeannie McKay of Chuanchow, 15th Oct 1942 – she had spoken to the Harrogate Conference, so was known to a number of the GA members. It was also reported that Ruth Milne was working amongst internees. Even during the conflict such news as was available was passed on, to maintain interest and contact with the missionaries, many of whom had spoken at the Annual Conferences.

As evidence of the changing relationships of the GA to other parts of the Church the F.O.Y. Missionary Committee news is also included – a list of “actable” plays has been produced, a filmstrip is available of China work and a new study booklet is being prepared. All are available from Mr Stubbs.273

The Newsletters from 1943 and 1944 are brief, reflecting the effect of the war on availability of paper and resources for printing and distribution. In each case there is a devotional opening, followed by news and missionary reports.

The 1944 report speaks of the inability to organise a conference for these years, due to the war and the difficulty of ascertaining numbers of participants, communication was disrupted as well as much else and suitable venues were being pressed in to service for the war effort. Money was still being raised in some branches and with some success for 1944 had realised as much as in 1937 (i.e. before the war had such an effect on the economy).

October 1945 saw the final Newsletter with a personal letter from the President describing the final meeting of May 22nd and reporting the passing of the resolution that means the G.A. ceases to exist, as it becomes part of the FOY Missionary Committee.

The President then stated that since its inception in 1902 the missionaries sent overseas who had been G.A. members numbered forty. From 1902 until 1929 the G.A. had been Auxiliary to the W.M.A. In that year it was decided to become a part of the youth work of the Church under the guidance of the Welfare of Youth Committee but still appointing its own officials and holding its own Council meetings and Annual Conferences. Now it was felt, as the voting showed, that the time had come for the inclusion of this Girl’s Association into the wider youth work of our Church, namely, the Fellowship of Youth which aimed at influencing every young person in our Presbyterian Church of England, dealing especially with work overseas through the Missionary Committee.274

273 PCE/FMC Box 22, Youth Organisations, SOAS Archive, GA Newsletter Dec 1942
274 PCE/FMC Box 22, Youth Organisations, GA Newsletter 1945
The decision to amalgamate with FOY is seen against the background of the war, the difficulties of communicating during those years and the scattering of members due to their being called-up and/or evacuated.

The FOY Committee had always had as part of its brief an interest in mission, however, that was only a small part of the activity for which it was responsible. It was hoped that the inclusion of the GA would invigorate the mission aspect of the overall programme. That aspiration did not come to pass.

Three things were lost with the amalgamation of the committees: a very specific understanding of the work of the missionaries and the desire to support this work in practical and financial ways, the branch meetings with their bible, prayer and mission focus, and the opportunity for young women to organise meetings for themselves and to set their own agenda and priorities, reporting to other women.

For mission, for the church, and for the role of women all of these were serious losses.

Before the GA became part of the FOY committee, and ceased to exist as a separate voice for mission in the local congregations, there had been a joint conference in Southport, with representatives of the GA’s of Scotland and Ireland to discuss “the problem of the age limit and the serious leakage caused by the EX-G.A.s not passing into the Women’s Missionary Association”.

Part of the raison d’être of the GA had been to recruit members for the WMA, that it had had a measure of success is noted above, but the conference

...quite frankly admitted that the G.A. was failing in some way if its Members at the age of thirty did not appreciate their obligations to the Church...but it was found that:-

(a) the majority of Women’s Meetings were held at times quite impossible for business girls.

(b) that Ex-G.A.s who had passed into the W.M.A. missed the Study Groups, Discussions, etc, at the very formal meetings held...would welcome the fellowship, stimulus and inspiration of an Easter Conference...

It was proposed to create a Missionary Fellowship composed of ex-members of the GAs of Presbyterian, Congregational and Baptist churches and the Wesleyan Girl’s League of England, Ireland and Scotland and that united meetings be held in towns (control over frequency and timing would be a local issue) and also to have an annual Easter Conference. Membership would be open to all ex-GA members over thirty whether married or single, and to younger women if no GA existed in their

275 PCE/FMC Box 22, Youth Organisations, Undated Roneo paper
276 This reference to GA members as “business girls” indicates the changes in women’s employment opportunities and expectations between 1902 and 1945.
277 PCE/FMC Box 22, Youth Organisations, Undated Roneo paper
Church. Members were to attend the WMA meetings (or equivalent) wherever possible.

There was an open invitation to offer criticism or approval of the idea, to send addresses of any ex-GA member you knew of, to engage in prayer, join the scheme and offer ideas for conferences. All responses were to be sent to Miss A V Austin, 86 Dragon Parade, Harrogate, Yorks.

There is no record of whether or not such a fellowship came into being; if it had done so, it could be expected that some information would remain, particularly if a national Easter Conference had been organised. It would have required considerable cross-denominational communication and local organisation in an era before the telephone was widely used. And it was mooted at a point in history when life was about to be seriously disrupted, and for the Presbyterians the organisation in England was about to adopt a new way of working.

With the demise of the GA and nothing concrete to replace it, the focus on mission was dealt a blow. The concentrated efforts of numbers of young women in the congregations were removed; the Bible study groups had no reason to gather and although the friendship groups that were formed among young women undoubtedly remained strong, the regular branch meetings ceased so that there was no committed meeting together. The church lost a strong ‘pull’ factor in keeping young women interested in belonging to the PCE. Young women lost a space in which to develop their skills and abilities in leadership, running committees and both speaking and being heard. The cause of mission had been the vehicle for women, young and older, to address meetings, to encourage others to action, to lead prayer and to play a significant role in the work of the church. Within the FOY those opportunities did not exist in quite the same way. Male leadership was normative in the church, the FOY with its greater range of interests did not afford the same openings to speak to church meetings, and more social than spiritual, the Bible study skills of debate and reflection were not exercised as often.
5. From “Mission To” to “Mission With”: A Paradigm Shift

Earlier, I stated “The FOY Committee had always had as part of its brief an interest in mission. It was hoped that the inclusion of the GA would invigorate this aspect of the overall programme. That aspiration did not come to pass.” Overseas mission became an optional extra rather than a reason to exist.

This change in focus as the two youth organisations came together needs to be set in the context of the beginning of new thinking and theologies of mission. Following the Second World War a number of significant developments took place.

First, the devastation of Europe and the need to care for refugees led to the creation of Refugee Action movements; the churches supported and were active in the creation of such organisations, but the mission boards saw them as part of home mission activity. Christian Aid and Oxfam both came into being in the 1940s, initially as refugee agencies. Both became Development and Campaigning Organisations, and were instrumental in the creation of the World Development Movement in 1969 specifically to campaign about injustice in international politics.²⁷⁸

Because these new movements focussed on Christianised Europe, and the boards focus was on the un-Christianised parts of the globe, this work was not in their remit. However, the approach to mission was changing in some fields, with an emphasis on ‘development’ rather than evangelism, as can be seen in this description of the work of a BMS missionary:

...from 1954-1965 David Stockley taught the use of new crops and methods...In 1965 the Stockleys were transferred...by the late 1960’s David Stockley was in demand as a consultant...During the 1970’s Stockley promoted irrigation schemes and modern methods of rice cultivation. David Stockley was awarded the OBE in 1977 for his contribution to agricultural development in Bangladesh.²⁷⁹

Secondly, as is well documented by social and political historians, the Empires of the European countries began to fragment and dissolve. Although the PCE and the WMA had worked mainly in countries outside the Empire (notably China, Taiwan and Malaysia) the shifting international relationships and the stirrings of questioning the role of missionaries affected them as well. This was also the period of the rise of communism and socialism as proselytising ideologies, and actual reality for many people; now atheism seemed to offer the poor the hope that Christian missions had been preaching and allied to political will drove the church in China out and in Russia some Christians chose to operate an underground church rather than worship in the officially sanctioned churches.

Thirdly, as the idea of Empire changed and transformed into Commonwealth (for the British Empire at least) or independent nationhood, with greater or lesser degrees of assent from the Imperial powers, so the theology of mission began to change. Slowly the concept of partnership would come to be dominant. Mission would be a shared activity, with the idea of a “sending” and a “receiving” church breaking down as Christians sought to learn from each other.

Finally, as in the First World War, many occupations previously the preserve of men had opened up to women. Women had been employed in translation, code-breaking and espionage as well as undertaking fire-watch duties and farming, to name but a few. The opportunities that were opening up to young women seemed to be many and varied; a life in the mission field held less allure than formerly, to both men and women.

To examine the effect of these changes on the mission of the PCE, it is necessary to take a step in another direction. Whilst, following the war, the PCE and the FMC continued to operate as they had done before it started, returning missionaries to the field and agonising over the recruitment and affordability of new personnel, within the Congregational Unions of England and the London Missionary Society a paradigm shift was taking place that would affect all missionary thinking and work in the post-war years and into the present day. Bosch writes of the move to this different way of working in mission, of ‘fraternal workers’ coming from Western churches to the younger churches, and of the tension between the understanding that the church is missionary by its very nature and the changed world in which mission and missionaries must operate in the post-war period.

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He also reminds us that

...a paradigm shift has always meant both continuity and change, both faithfulness to the past and boldness to engage the future, both constancy and contingency, both tradition and transformation.\footnote{See David Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission}, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2003, p366}

Thus, the Council for World Mission, with its emphasis on partnership lives in creative tension with BMS World Mission’s more avowedly evangelical approach to mission.

### 5.1 The Creation of the Council for World Mission

It is a truism that history is written by the victors, and most accounts of the creation of the Council for World Mission are recorded by those who wholeheartedly supported its formation and ways of working. As the British Empire moved towards becoming the Commonwealth, so the London Missionary Society (LMS) also began a process of change. This has largely been documented by those who both proposed it and engineered it. The voices of caution raised at the time of its inception have remained mostly unexamined and there is work to be done in revisiting the short history of CWM and evaluating the understanding of the impact of its work within the congregations of the churches it serves.

There are two major currents which run through the story of change: the move to integrate Missionary Society and Church and the move from western dominance to mutuality.

The change from missionary empire to missionary commonwealth was as lengthy as the political equivalent but not so traumatic, and yet they do match in surprising ways.\footnote{Geoffrey Roper, Unpublished Paper presented to the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries, Conference Summer 2010}

The process by which the colonies won their freedom from British rule was fraught with conflict and controversy throughout.

Struggles over issues of colonial freedom left their mark on domestic British politics for decades. Ultimately, most British people gave up worrying about the countries of their former empire: their government decided to concentrate on relationships in the mainland of Europe [and] The Commonwealth, however, reminds us of the presence of past Empire by sending students and other citizens to live alongside us in Britain. We have among us, both in our churches and in the wider community, many people
whose roots are in the age of colonialism and/or from the countries of the former mission-fields.\textsuperscript{283}

To a certain extent church relationships mirror those changes: Anglican, Reformed, Methodist and Baptist relationships within Europe assumed a great deal more importance by the end of the twentieth century than they did at its beginning, and the EU was more often reported than Commonwealth news.

The LMS had always had an ambivalent relationship with the British Empire. Since the transformation of the London Missionary Society began in the period of imperial decline, attitudes and power relationships of empire played their part. But in many LMS mission fields the Bible did not follow the flag.\textsuperscript{284}

The original object of the missionary society formed in London in 1795 was “to spread the knowledge of Christ among heathen and other unenlightened nations”.\textsuperscript{285} It was deliberately not directed towards evangelistic or pastoral efforts among expatriate Europeans abroad. Although it had started as a deliberately non-denominational society, other denominations created their own societies and it soon became supported by Congregational churches.

The various international missionary conferences that culminated in the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 had shown the willingness of societies to work with one another, and on the field, missionaries from different societies often worked together. The Continuation Committee after 1910 led to the creation of the IMC, and the various conferences that it organised. The Jerusalem Conference (1928) saw a discussion of the relationship between the ‘older’ and ‘younger’ churches, the beginning of the gradual move to partnership working. Tambaran (1938) continued the discussion but with a more theological bent leading to a new realisation that Europe and America were also mission fields. "For the first time the recognition that church and mission belong together indissolubly began to dawn in a way that could no longer be overlooked."\textsuperscript{286} The World Council of Churches (WCC) was formed in 1948, the next IMC Conference at Willingen in 1952 began to find a new model of mission based on the idea of missio Dei. It also recognised that it was incongruous


\textsuperscript{284} The first LMS destination was the island of Tahiti, never a British colony and now part of French Polynesia. The missions in central Africa, (although starting from the British-controlled Cape), were pioneered by Moffat and Livingstone well ahead of the British flag. Robert Morrison entered China over 200 years ago and, while missions prospered in the vicinity of European concessions and in Hong Kong, their influence extended well beyond any places where British power held sway.


\textsuperscript{286} Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, p370
to have a Council of Churches and a Council for Mission operating separately: in 1961 the IMC was integrated into the WCC.

Newbigin summarised the agreement at Willingen thus:

(1) “the church is the mission”,
(2) “the home base is everywhere”
(3) “mission in partnership”

Bosch fleshes out these statements, to show that we cannot speak of church and mission as separate from one another, that every Christian community is a missional community and that there can be no ‘guardianship’ of one church over another.\footnote{Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, p370, citing Lesslie Newbigin, \textit{One Body, One Gospel, One World}, London and New York, International Missionary Council, 1958} This theology would (and still does) inform the work of CWM.

The changes that would come about formally in the 1960s and 1970s had begun at the meeting of the WCC, the inaugural meeting of which had been in Amsterdam, from 22\textsuperscript{nd} August to 5\textsuperscript{th} September 1948. John R Mott, addressing the conference, looked back to the missionary conference of 1910 as the starting point for this ecumenical, global work.\footnote{Brian Stanley, \textit{The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910}, William Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K., 2009, p5} Meetings during the 1930s and early 1940s had prepared the way for this creation of a world Christian body that would link the churches in mission and service.\footnote{Bernard Thorogood (ed), \textit{Gales of Change: Responding to a shifting Missionary Context}, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1994, p12, points out that this is the same year as the creation of the United Nations Organisation, and is indicative of a post-war desire for nations to work more closely together.} The Rev Leslie Cooke, who became general secretary of the Congregational Union in 1948, had attended the ground-breaking ecumenical gathering at Amsterdam that same year.

Norman Goodall (who had been foreign secretary of the LMS for India and the South Pacific but by then served the International Missionary Council) told the LMS Board in the December of 1948:

‘Now for most of us in the L.M.S. this [the ‘new thing’ that had happened at Amsterdam] means that the Congregational Unions of England and Wales (and this is true of its sister Unions) must be able more and more not only to speak as a Church with a world outlook but to act as an instrument of the world mission of the Church. Its representatives in the Assembly of the World Council, those who represent Congregationalism in the departmental activities of the Council and most of all those who sit on the Central Committee and Executive, must be able to act instinctively as leaders in an ecumenical movement which exists to further the Church’s world mission. This requires something more than the “missionary spirit” in the individuals who serve in this way. ...It calls for a close awareness of the whole range of facts, processes and problems which arise as missionary work is done, whether by independent agencies or in daily, administrative partnership with
younger churches. That is to say, it requires inside knowledge and responsibility for the daily business of the L.M.S. If all this slips into the background of the contribution which the representatives of the Congregational Unions make to the life of the World Council of Churches, something vital will go out of the ecumenical movement. 

The various continuation committees developed out of the work of the missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910 had led to this new understanding of the need for both ecumenical working in a structured way and the full participation of the ‘younger churches’. The LMS and Congregational Unions led the way in creating a new model; in 1966 the Congregational Council for World Mission (CCWM) came into being.

This signalled the change from mission understood as the work of a few individuals, who formed a society for mission, to mission understood as the activity of the whole church, expressed in a council of the Church.

In 1977 this body became the Council for World Mission, bringing together the LMS, the Commonwealth Missionary Society (formerly the Colonial Missionary Society), and the Assembly Committee of the PCE along with representatives of the so-called younger churches. This was a period of decisive movement towards recognising in places of mission (the ‘receiving’ countries) local churches with local leadership.

Where missionaries were in place, after the Second World War and as decolonisation happened all over the former Empire, their roles had changed. They were advisors, they were there to train local pastors and ministers, they served because of expertise in a particular area. Many of the ‘daughter churches’ of the Empire, became full members of CWM. The theology of partnership working, the idea of mutuality and of local churches taking on the responsibility for deploying the missionaries that they called, would become the new normal way of working. The new slogan was ‘from anywhere to anywhere’, and ‘sending’ churches were to learn to become ‘receiving’ churches, and if they ‘sent’ missionaries, to do so on terms dictated by the ‘receiving’ church. Thirty one member churches in forty countries make up this global partnership for mission, including the URC and the churches of the Congregational Federation with their shared historic links to the LMS.


291 Thorogood (ed), Gales of Change, preface

292 Some of the Congregational Churches in England and Wales (CCEW) chose not to become part of the URC. Some had already left the CCEW, at its formation in 1966 to become the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. The majority of CCEW churches grouped together to form the Congregational Federation in 1972,
The early twentieth century was also a time of theological debate. The Victorian and Edwardian Missionary movement had been predicated on the orthodox position of the gift of Salvation in Christ. As theologians explored new ways to state the faith which were more radical than traditional certainties and the “otherness” of God over against incarnational theology so it became more difficult for both preachers and missionaries in the reformed tradition to speak and teach in a prescriptive way. The dialogue and tension between liberal theology and more traditional understandings was reflected in the theologies of mission. As the world, and especially Europe, recovered from the ravages of war, the new agencies seemed to many Christians and churches to have a more urgent call on their financial, prayer and physical commitment than the missionary endeavour as it had been widely understood in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Understanding of the need for foreign mission to evangelise the world was diminished in the churches as they developed a greater sense of the need to alleviate poverty, to seek peace and to challenge injustice.

5.2 Different Ideas of Mission

The new agencies, and in particular, Christian Aid, took on the characteristics of a traditional missionary auxiliary as they grew. Christian Aid aims to contact all churches in Protestant denominations, has local committees and organisers and as well as the annual collecting week encourages year round support, with materials and resources for worship freely available. With the United Reformed Church it has a special programme “Commitment for Life” to which congregations can belong and which supports specific countries and projects. Information about the projects is regularly disseminated to participating congregations, in much the style of the missionary reports of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There are trained speakers who will attend a Guild or similar meeting, or take a role in worship leading, just as missionaries on furlough were called upon to do in the past. For (including Congregational Churches from Scotland and France) whilst some remained ‘unaffiliated’.


Many middle-class Christians were involved in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament during the late 1950’s and 1960’s. See Hastings, A History of English Christianity 1920-2000, for an overview of 1960’s developments in Protestant theological thought, p510

See the Commitment for Life pages of the URC website, for details of projects supported http://urc.org.uk/mission/commitment-for-life.html accessed 16/11/2015
many congregations, Christian Aid represents their contribution to foreign mission, and for some, the lack of evangelical preaching along with the assistance given feels right – to offer love in the name of Christ and not to expect conversion as the *quid pro quo*.

For other churches, Christian Aid seems to lack the necessary missionary zeal to save souls and so they support independent missionary efforts or channel giving and prayer through the more avowedly evangelical Tearfund, which started in the 1960s under the auspices of the Evangelical Alliance. Tearfund offers a programme of child sponsorship which Thorogood describes as “frowned on by all the missiologists I respect, but welcomed in many local churches.”

However, whilst there may be varied and valid reasons for frowning on such programmes, Thorogood himself in the same article of 1987 sets as a priority the need for congregations to relate to a “personal face”, and acknowledges that an organisation [such as CWM] can appear too remote and so engender a loss of relationship with the local church.

This loss of relationship is almost complete following later developments in the life of CWM; whilst the missionary effort required funds, there was a need to keep contact with the Churches, to tell the stories of mission, even if that was a different story to the one that had been told before, but that situation changed

The sale of the Nethersole Hospital in Hong Kong for £135 million in 1994 increased CWM’s assets by £100 million, which both enlarged the scope and scale of CWM and its member churches’ ability to engage in mission.

Referred to as the “gift of grace”, proceeds have been made available to member churches over succeeding years in ways that are reckoned to enhance their mission capacities.

With this ‘gift’ economic power transferred from the churches to the missionary body obviating the need to depend on the churches and to articulate the vision to them. There was less urgency in the need to report to the churches, and the magazine was sent to “missionary enthusiasts”. The website became the main means of communication.

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298 Thorogood, “Sharing Resources in Mission”, pp441-449, 445. ‘Keep the personal face’ is one of the six priorities that he sets as necessary to build a new way of working among the churches of the world, and especially the traditional ‘sending’ churches in their relationships with the newly independent ‘younger’ churches.
Within CWM a decision was taken to relocate to Singapore – to place the Secretariat in a location closer to much of its current work, and to make good a commitment to all the member churches, to counter the charge of western centrism. This decision to move from London, the historic base of mission was met with protest from some churches and personnel in the West; once that would have stopped the move, but in 2010, the protests were met with polite, but firm, dismissal and the organisation relocated.\textsuperscript{301} This relocation was also to seek not just to counter western centrism but to acknowledge that the historic empires had fallen. The West could no longer assume the right to be at the centre of mission. In relocating resources, financial and in personnel there is the hope and promise that the privilege of empire will be no more. Just as the missionaries found it difficult to hand over the life of the church to the indigenous Christians so it was difficult for some to envisage the base of mission leaving Britain.\textsuperscript{302}

5.3 The United Reformed Church

In an historic act in 1972, Congregationalists and Presbyterians in England and Wales joined to create a new denomination; the United Reformed Church (URC).

The talks, negotiations and meetings that led to the formation of this new church had been going on since the war, and even before. This union was a clear expression of the dominant theme of ecumenism at the time: that of organic union. Its authors believed that it would be only the first step on the road to union with other denominations as barriers of church structure and polity were broken down.\textsuperscript{303} This had been the main thrust of ecumenical thought in England during the 1950’s and 1960’s, but the idea of ‘unity in diversity’ had also run parallel to this and even as the URC finalised the Act of Union, Barry Till suggests that there was a questioning of “the necessity of visible organic union of the church”.\textsuperscript{304}

\textsuperscript{301} The debate started with the refusal to CWM of a Certificate of Sponsorship by the U.K. Border Agency which meant that Rev Dr Collin Cowan was unable to move to London from Jamaica to take up his post as General Secretary. After much campaigning the visa was eventually granted but this led the CWM officers to rethink the location decision.

The decision was a reversal of a previous decision to remain in London, and came about after difficult meetings and a struggle to come to a decision. The URC published a short paper about the situation, and personal communication with a minister close to the discussions in August 2015 indicated that a significant number of people wanted CWM to remain based in London, where its LMS roots were.

\textsuperscript{302} Personal Communication with a retired LMS missionary.

\textsuperscript{303} Since then there has been Union with Churches of Christ (1981), the Congregational Church of Scotland (2000) and talks about talks with the Methodists. Currently the URC sits as an observer in the Anglican/Methodist talks, and was party to the discussions that resulted in the Anglican/Methodist Covenant.

For the PCE, 1972 should have marked the end of the Foreign Missions committee as all its missionary activity now became part of the CWM. However, Revd Boris Anderson as Secretary for World Church and Mission of the URC provided continuity with Presbyterian past, and was responsible for administering some funds from the Overseas Missions Committee of the PCE, so that integration was a gradual process lasting until 1975. Presbyterian missionaries, sent under the "old" procedures completed their terms of service, whilst the church grappled with new ways of both understanding mission and working in the mission field.

Technological advances during the course of the century meant that short terms of service began to be possible, which of necessity changed the nature of the missionary's engagement with the people in the field.

One of the paradigm shifts in missionary service occurred when it became possible to fly home in 24 hours. Shattered in one blow was the concept of total detachment from the home base and total immersion in an isolated place of service.  

The advent of air travel enabled short-term mission to be possible, and changed the nature of long-term service, as Thorogood suggests, the missionary was no longer unreachable in the field; shorter, more regular furlough could be entertained. The romantic idea of the missionary working for God in an inaccessible part of the world faded as greater numbers of people began to fly for business and to their holiday destinations.

The changed theology of mission and the discerning new ways of being a missionary can be seen in the following two case studies, one a woman career missionary and one male short-term missionary, who went into the field with his wife. The missionaries involved have given permission for their stories to be used; they were interviewed in 2012, without recording equipment, in an informal setting, in their own environment. The names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.

These case studies are here to show the difference in mind-set and approach of the two missionaries involved, and to a certain extent, the differing demands on them from the WMA/FMC and LMS/CWM respectively. Evelyn was to fit into a pattern of missionary work that was well established, and for which her training had fitted her. The expectation of the WMA was that she would serve for a minimum of five years before furlough and would be in the field for all her working life. She would work with other missionaries engaged in similar tasks and report regularly to London. Peter, on the other hand, had to argue his case for a new style of missionary working and hope that the training he was offered would be helpful in the situation to which he was called. Evelyn's reports were to inform and encourage

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305 Thorogood, Gales of Change, p7
the people at home, to garner funds and to keep mission at the forefront of congregational thinking, as well as to give statistics and financial information to the Board. Peter would not so much report, as bring back an understanding of Sikh culture and how to live as a resident alien of faith, so that he could better engage with the people he felt called to be amongst in the English context.

5.4 PCE Service in China and Formosa

The story of “Evelyn” is worth recounting in some detail as it demonstrates both the church and working background that were taken into account by the WMA committee when sending her for training. By the time Evelyn was a candidate for missionary service, the professionalization of women’s roles was more socially accepted, and it is unlikely that the committee would have taken on a young woman with no formal educational qualifications, so her teaching certificate was as necessary as the reference from her minister in her successful application. She was a missionary of the FMC/WMA 1943-1975, working in China (Amoy) and Formosa fields.

Evelyn was one of the last of the “career” missionaries, and of the Presbyterian Church of England; by the time her term of service was over, the PCE was part of the newly formed URC and the work of mission was being taken on by the CWM.

Born in 1915, Evelyn grew up near Newcastle in North East England. Her family were Presbyterian and belonged to Jarrow Presbyterian Church, one of the largest and most influential churches in the North East. She grew up in the great depression when the North East was particularly hard hit and her family were among the poorer members of the congregation. Her mother baked bread for her and her sisters to sell to supplement the dole that was their household income.

The mother of George Hood (later a missionary and historian of the PCE/FMC in China) was a leading member of the WMA in the area, and the Presbytery were the sponsors of a missionary – Celia Downward – who had come from the Liverpool Presbytery but was funded by Newcastle. The WMA influence was strong within the church and Evelyn grew up with stories of missionaries, lectures on their successes and fundraising activities of the WMA.

Evelyn won a scholarship to the Grammar school and was also a regular attender at Miss Hill’s Bible class where girls aged 14-18 years undertook Bible study and discussion. She became a church member in 1932 before going to college for two years to train as a teacher. It was whilst she was in training that Evelyn determined to become a missionary; her background in church life and membership of a lively
Student Christian Movement group at college were instrumental in this. She wrote a letter to the WMA enquiring about work in China. When she left college, Evelyn continued to go to SCM meetings on Saturday mornings where as well as Bible study the group discussed world events such as the Spanish Civil War and the situation at home as the depression continued (of eighty teachers in her class only ten had managed to get a job in education). Evelyn herself had a position as a peripatetic teacher in fishing villages round Tweedmouth, which involved her having to lodge away from home and move around frequently. Later as the war loomed, she taught in Jarrow and saw her entire class fail the scholarship exam and so face a life of unemployment. She worried for them and filled her time with “good works”, visiting and sewing. She also taught the non-academic stream and focussed on budgeting and stretching their money, and on giving sewing lessons so that they would make good housewives. By 1938 she was involved in community work and offering first aid classes.

The economic situation in Jarrow had changed as re-armament began, and there was work for all; her father resumed his trade as a mechanical fitter, working on warships. However, because of the dockyards, the area was to be evacuated. With her mother and siblings, Evelyn went to Shildon, near Durham where she took charge of a group of evacuees between 1939 and 1941, although her mother returned to Jarrow with the younger children. It was in 1941 that a letter came from Miss Jessie Galt asking why she hadn’t yet formally applied for missionary work in China. She wrote back but continued her life in Shildon, although she did take the step of speaking to her minister about her wish to become a missionary. He commended her to the Foreign Missions Committee, who in turn introduced her to the Women’s Missionary Association. Because Evelyn was due to be called up, the WMA arranged for her to go to Carey Hall in Birmingham for the coming academic year. Her registration as a student meant that she would neither be called up nor sent for war-work at home.

Evelyn’s training commenced in September 1941, along with seven other students; she was the only Presbyterian among them. The staff was ecumenical, the Principal, Miss McKinnon was Church of Scotland and had had one tour of China, the London Missionary Society had a missionary tutor who had served in India and the Baptist tutor had also worked in India. Each society looked after its own students, but they were taught together. During the war years there were usually around 20 students in all at Carey Hall. Despite the war, they had a good time and made lasting friendships (when Evelyn retired she chose to live near to a female LMS missionary with whom she had a close relationship).

During her two years in Carey Hall, Evelyn attended lectures and had a “China class” which covered Chinese culture and history from Marco Polo onward. Of the
twenty hours of lectures, 15 were given by male staff of the Selly Oak colleges and 5 by the women missionaries. There was a Saturday morning class at which the content of one of the lectures had to be summed up by a student and was then discussed; this was good preparation for addressing a group and answering questions during periods of furlough.

She was sent out to local churches to address women’s meetings and undertake pastoral visiting to extend her skills before entering the field.

Due to the war, Evelyn was unable to leave the U.K. and was passed into the care of the Women’s Home Church Committee, which was responsible for the work of Church Sisters in urban areas. She was called into the office of the Principal to be told, “The ladies of the HMCA are going to look after you”.

She was sent to Liverpool to continue pastoral work and speaking engagements. Had she found this experience fulfilling, Evelyn might have considered staying in England to work out her calling, but it was a difficult time. First, she was answerable to a minister who did not value her contribution to the church and presbytery, secondly, it was very difficult to find a place to stay. Liverpool had been heavily bombed and housing was at a premium. The council had been building new houses but these had no spare bedrooms, there were few single women to share with and she ended up sleeping in a curtained off area of the church where at least she was close to the lunch stop building. Although she was ordained as an Elder and acting as a Church sister, her training was in teaching not preaching and she struggled with leading the small congregation with little support. A letter to the HMCA asked if she might moved – she was not successfully making new members and not doing the work for which she had been trained. The HMCA could only offer London and so she went to Tavistock Place, the Presbyterian Church central building. The minister of the church there was a primarily a preacher and Evelyn took on all the pastoral visiting of the elderly. She often used up her tea ration at the meetings she held in the church.

On 9th February 1945 Tavistock Place suffered a direct hit by a bomb, senior officials were among those killed, but Evelyn survived. At the joint funeral for the staff who had died, Evelyn met with missionaries who had been expelled from the field due to the war and who were teaching at SOAS or doing other work in the city.

After VE day Evelyn resumed her study of Chinese which she found difficult; she sent a letter of resignation to Miss Galt, who called her to a private meeting to discuss it. Jessie Galt had not told the rest of the committee, and persuaded Evelyn that she would improve her language skills in the field. VJ day had just occurred and there would be a renewed need for missionaries in the East. It was agreed that
“the Hats” need not know of the resignation and Evelyn would set sail for China as soon as possible. She was furnished with a list of clothing and household items that she was supposed to take with her – many of the garments had been on the list from the start of the WMA and were not necessary; all the household goods could be obtained locally once the missionary arrived, so Evelyn travelled somewhat lighter than her sisters before her.

All the societies wished to resume their work and lists of missionaries waiting to embark were in all the shipping offices. The first leg of Evelyn’s journey was to be from Glasgow to Northern Ireland, on a boat that would go on to New York - one of the first non-military vessels to undertake regular sailings after the war. There were ten missionaries on board. The journey continued in convoy with a US steamer as they carried some prisoners to a further port before crossing the Pacific where they were unable to dock at Shanghai due to a strike by dock workers. After four days of waiting they were able to land, Evelyn went to the LMS mission station, which was full to overflowing with people fleeing China or on their way to join Mao. She found a space on the veranda in which to sleep, but soon had to leave as the senior PCE missionary in the area had left a letter saying that she was to go immediately to Amoy. After much difficulty she obtained a passage to Hong Kong on a Blue Funnel steamer full of white Russians en route for Australia. With her trunk and cases she camped on the deck along with a friend from Carey Hall, Mary Smith a nurse who was headed for the hospital at Amoy. On arrival at Hong Kong all those who disembarked were vaccinated against the plague that was rife. Amidst the confusion heat and disease, Evelyn received an invitation from the British Consul to join his yacht with his wife and daughter and to travel to Amoy. There she met Dorothy Price. Their team was to be completed by the arrival of Margery Booth who had been a teacher in Formosa before the war and then done chaplaincy work for the duration of it. Dorothy had opened up the mission house and recovered such furniture as she could; Margery arrived followed by David and James. There was no formal plan or agenda. The FMC had sent them to gather information and begin such work as they could. There were tensions in the mission; Margery and Dorothy were of very different temperaments and clashed often. Dorothy was tutoring both David and Evelyn in Chinese and he found it difficult to take instruction from a woman, but had to persevere as he was to preach. Brian and Connie Andrews came out later, Brian would also preach, the women were to visit and make contacts with women in the villages, as well as teaching; Dorothy Price was experienced in kindergarten teaching and training local women for this work and Evelyn worked with her. Later, they would continue with this work in Formosa.

Whilst Chinese politics were still in a state of flux, the missionaries rode bicycles round the rice fields to visit the churches that had continued throughout the war or
travelled up and down the coast in trading boats – the roads having been bombed by the Japanese. Money collected from the bank was sewn into underskirts for safety while the missionaries travelled. Later, when the banks were closed by Mao the missionaries bartered with local people for food, before they were finally expelled from China.

Before her service in Formosa, Evelyn came back to England. Her furlough was spent raising awareness of the continuing work of overseas missionaries, attempting to recruit new workers and encouraging the churches that supported missionaries to continue to do so. Although the overseas missions had always competed with home missions for priority, the need for reconstruction following the war meant that the meetings she spoke to were “the same, but different”. She also found church life difficult after the autonomy that she had experienced in the field. Her minister thought that she should be on the eldership whilst she was in England. Her earlier ordination\(^{306}\) was recognised as temporary, only necessary because of her work as a Church sister at that particular time. The elders of the church refused to see her ordained – even as a missionary (another temporary ordination) and despite her experience. The minister took her case to the Newcastle Presbytery and in 1948 the Presbytery ordained her to eldership. Following the death of her father, the WMA extended the furlough by six months and as well as helping her mother and sisters Evelyn undertook more church visiting engagements.

Whilst home she attended the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church; it was customary for missionaries to meet the Moderator and the Assembly if they were available. It was a very formal meeting, dominated by the men of the church. At some point during the Assembly there was usually a lunch for the committee members of the WMA, who came dressed for the occasion, including wearing their hats. Evelyn recalls these women as formidable; all of her mother’s generation and aware of the position that they held within the Presbyteries. As the world moved on, and second wave feminism made its mark she says “we didn’t think of burning bras, we thought of burning hats!” perhaps more so after she was censured for wearing a trouser suit!

Her final tour was of Formosa; many of the China missionaries were sent there after China became impossible for them to work in. Formosa after the war experienced an influx of denominations seeking to found churches as China became

\(^{306}\) The PCE (and later the URC) ordained elders, setting them apart for the work of God, as people of Spiritual standing in the church. Together with the minister they were (and are now) responsible for ‘right order’ in worship and the pastoral care of the congregation. Being a member of the eldership carried authority with it. Ordination was usually understood as being for life, but temporary ordination was given to missionaries on furlough so that they could be full members of their local Synod whilst in England. Such temporary ordination was usually afforded to women, as male missionaries were, with very few exceptions, ordained ministers.
a closed field. Used to ecumenical working in China, Evelyn found Formosa to be much more Presbyterian in character (the main Protestant missions had been PCE in the South of the island and the Presbyterian Church of Canada in the North) and the church there was developing its own sense of identity as the two Synods were brought together and local people took control of the post-war situation. The Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (formerly Formosa) had remained strong during the war years and welcomed the missionaries back in a different relationship that reflected some of the changes in mission theology and practice which would inform CCWM (the Congregational Council for World Mission) and later CWM (Council for World Mission).

Evelyn never assumed that once she had become a missionary that she would ever cease to be one; it was a calling and a life-long calling. Teaching was a means of opening the gospel to the children who came into her classroom. Bible stories were the medium for language skills to be learnt in kindergarten, though older children were taught in a more formal way. She is happy in her retirement that the missionary influence continues, particularly in Taiwan where there is a scholarship to the Tainan Theological College in her name. Though she understands the philosophy and theology of mission expounded by CWM it is not the same as that which inspired her to mission. Evelyn agrees that some of the evangelisation of the FMC/ WMA missionaries was as much through their example as through their teaching and preaching, but the desire to save souls and create churches was the motivating factor. Of course, all motives are mixed and the desire to leave England, to see new places and to take control of her own life were also part of the matrix of motives that sent Evelyn to her minister and ultimately to the WMA and Jessie Galt.

5.5 CWM Short-term Tour of Duty

“Peter” and his wife were part of a different group of missionaries. Their call was to short term mission and was pioneering at the time he mooted it. Although thinking within some mission societies – notably CWM - was changing, new ways of being practitioners of mission had yet to be worked out. In a post-colonial era, as churches founded by the missionaries of the past demanded autonomy and even a moratorium on missionaries from the white West, there had to be a different approach but this was yet to be worked through. Peter was instrumental in assisting the Congregational Church and CWM to see possibilities for missionary work that broke the old mould.

Peter had no calling to mission when he candidated as a young man for the Congregational ministry, rather it was his intention to become a youth minister, and through the lectures at college he was introduced to World Religions and in
particular Hinduism. Returning missionaries spoke to the students about their experiences, and Peter found a growing interest in contact with other faiths. Within the church and its training programmes there had been a shift away from overseas mission to ‘mission on the doorstep’ as membership numbers had declined and the optimism of the past had been replaced by the political reality of the withdrawal from empire.

A decisive moment came with the showing of a film “Our Missionaries in India” at a local church. Peter and his wife wondered if they should offer to go to India together. They spoke to the Principal of the Congregational College and were referred to the General Secretary of CCWM, Bernard Thorogood who visited them to discuss the call. From the outset they were clear that this would be a short-term piece of work, that although they brought skills in ministry and botany to take into the field there was no suggestion that this was a life-long commitment to convert those of other faiths. Indeed, Peter was one of those who were at the forefront of the idea of dialogue with those of other faiths and his case for being sent into mission was centred around wanting to learn how to practise faith as an “alien” and in an environment where he was in the minority. This experience he believed would enable him to minister among people of other faiths in an “immigrant environment” within the U.K. His call came at a time when issues around race, faith and immigration were gaining prominence in the British Political scene and it could be seen that there would be a need for people to work in a nation that was newly-aware of plurality. These were persuasive arguments, though a far remove from the idea of mission to India in the past; this was about learning from and about other faiths as well as exercising Christianity; it was a position of humility not triumphalism. The worth of such a missionary approach would be seen in the home church in better understanding of neighbours, in a deeper faith that gave confidence to engage with those of other faiths moving into the cities and towns of England and in the understanding that the missionary brought back. This would not be measured in numbers of converts overseas, nor easily written about in missionary letters home; it was a completely new approach.

Though the church was convinced by the call, it raised a number of questions. How would a missionary be prepared for short-term service? Programmes of training and formation assumed still that this was a life-long calling. Yet it was clear that there would need to be preparation and Peter was sent to Selly Oak to undertake training, a year that was both exciting and frustrating as he planned for work as a chaplain in Allahabad where his wife would work as a botanist at the agricultural college and also struggled with patronising attitudes to the ‘Third World’ and a

307 During the period of Peter’s service CCWM would make its transformation into CWM and the URC would come into being.
continuing mind-set that said the churches overseas could only function with missionary input from the developed world.

As others before them had found, the best laid plans are prone to change and for people of faith discerning the will of God within that change can be difficult. The Indian Government did not want to accept missionaries and refused visas, so Peter remained at Selly Oak for a time. This period which could have been seen as time wasted was a significant period of formation for Peter as he reflected on the wider purpose of God and his call as part of something greater than self; though a modern missionary, in this respect he shared much with those how had gone before.

When the posting was worked out it was to Bangladesh, where Peter would help the church search for its sense of independence in a newly independent country. The four-year term posed its own questions – was it worth spending six months on learning Bengali? Were Peter and his wife wanted by the church or were they a token presence to prove that the churches of the West had not forgotten the mission churches, and would still offer resources of personnel and finance? Should the missionary start any new initiatives, or by the time trust is won and work is underway will s/he be leaving? How does the short-term missionary carve out his/her own role?

Useful advice came from the Chair of CWM; do not look to the future he counselled but concentrate on the job in hand, and be aware that a timed piece of work can be a catalyst for real focus. This was helpful to Peter in gaining perspective, but not with some of the other issues that had to be faced in a country politically unstable following civil war, with extremely poor internal communications, dealing with the disappointment that it was not their first choice of mission field and a lack of clear purpose. Added to this, Peter’s wife suffered several miscarriages and the resultant grief caused much soul searching and shouting at God. Even in the mid twentieth century the isolation and ever present awareness of the frailty of life meant that Peter understood much of what his forebears had undergone, even if his personal understanding of the place of the missionary in a foreign culture was not the same as theirs had been.

A request for help in setting up a children’s home gave a particular purpose to the work; here was a tangible project to take them through to furlough.

From 1973 to 1977 Peter and his wife lived and worked in Bangladesh, with one period of Furlough in 1975. Just as the missionaries of the 1800s had created the role of missionary and determined priorities in the field, so they had to do this over again in a different global and theological context. No longer certain that they held the sole truth, no longer unconcerned about whether their presence was welcome,
no longer sure that they were superior to those among whom they worked. A fresh type of missionary approach was needed, one that valued the other and respected existing faiths, one that was willing to share in learning about God whilst retaining a distinct Christianity. This was no small challenge attempting to put into practice a theology of mission that the church in England was only just beginning to formulate. Certainly as Peter and his wife grappled with all of this, my own experience was of being given Sunday School prizes that described missionary heroines in terms that Evelyn would have understood.

In England at this time, in the lives of the congregations, overseas missions still meant heathens that needed conversion, and the life of a missionary was for the chosen few to dedicate their lives to. Within the CWM thinking and theology was changing, but that had yet to make an impact on the workings of the church, even in its central departments. It was to this context that Peter and his wife returned. Missionaries had returned in the past, sometimes through ill-health, sometimes disillusioned, some to teaching posts or roles in mission administration, but the church was uncertain what to do with a missionary-minister trained in Manchester and Birmingham and ordained in the Church of Bangladesh. For a while the real possibility existed that Peter would join the Church of England as the (by now) URC didn’t seem to have a place for someone with his particular skills and experience. Fortunately within a week of explaining his situation to a moderator of the URC Peter was introduced to a church in Southall where his knowledge of Sikhism would inform both his ministry and his academic work. As a consultant in world faiths to the World Council of Churches, his direct experience of living and working among other faiths was invaluable and a part of his ministerial calling.

5.6 Reflecting on the Case Studies

The differing experiences of the missionaries that were shared with me gave a picture of the changing understanding and nature of mission. The ending of the Second World War and the collapse of the structures of empire had a huge impact on the work of mission, both as the U.K. learned a new humility in its approach to people and places that had been under its rule and as those countries gained independence and demanded autonomy for all their institutions, including the churches. Even where, as in the East, in China and Formosa/Taiwan there had not been British imperial rule the changing nature of global politics and growth of national identity had its impact on mission and missionaries. Evelyn had to adjust to new national structures in Taiwan as the Presbyteries of North and South of the island came together, but found the nature of her work remained much the same. As primarily a teaching missionary perhaps her story is different to those of the evangelists after the war, but nonetheless the missionaries were still seen as having a role to play in the church and to bring experience and links with the wider
Christian family. With mission societies being challenged by these wider changes and in the U.K. a change in congregational understanding of mission to encompass more fully what had previously been known as “home mission” as their main expression of missionary endeavour, there was a gradual re-thinking of mission. Whilst training institutions still worked to the model of a whole-life call, a new generation of pioneering missionaries, epitomised by Peter and his wife, were seeing no incongruity between a call to service in the church which encompassed both overseas mission and mission on the doorstep along with a local congregation in their home setting.

The first missionaries had to forge their identity in mission, to create communities of new Christians and train indigenous workers. They took with them the culture of church in which they themselves had been formed, and offered this as a model to the people they worked with. Despite, from the earliest days, an intention that the ‘new’ churches should be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating, it was difficult in practice for the missions and missionaries to give birth to churches and then to trust the indigenous congregations to develop in their own ways. The experience of the Great War in Europe and the Second World War impacted both numbers responding to the call to overseas mission and to the ability of the new churches to lead themselves. Those called to short-term mission had a new path to tread; they too would have to create (re-create) the identity of the missionary, and approach the concept of conversion with more humility and sensitivity. The understanding that God was already at work in the people and the country through their faith and belief outside and alongside Christian teaching would be a guiding principle in the new era of mission. The realisation of the Three Selfs would mean that any resources or support were seen as the co-operation of one Christian church with another rather than as a method of control from a foreign church. It could be argued that short-term mission, whether that is measured in years or months is a more difficult missionary endeavour with which to engage. Where there is a specific project for which a particular area of skill or expertise is required the missionaries role is relatively clear; where there is a more traditional desire to live and work among others in order to both show and tell the Gospel the later acceptance of the validity of other faiths potentially makes the missionary’s task more problematic, less a question of ‘converting the heathen’ and more an entering into respectful dialogue.

Whether the call is to a life overseas or to a diverse ministry that includes overseas work the missionary is changed by the experience. Evelyn said that after more than thirty years of retirement she still “feels Chinese” and is frustrated by the lack of interest in overseas work in her local church. Peter brought a greater ecumenism to
the URC, and the wider U.K. church, from his experience in Bangladesh and has used his experience to reflect on being a minority faith.

5.7 Mission and the Local Church

I had expected to find over the course of this study that the WMA had much to teach the URC in terms of mission. What I have discovered is that at every point of its existence the WMA was an organisation that fit the context and culture of the times. It developed from the constraints of Victorian Society through the women who took advantage of the educational and career opportunities that opened up to them as the twentieth century progressed, and met its demise in two ways, both linked to context: within culture and church. First, the financial constraints post Second World War led to its eventual amalgamation with the FMC. This was a church context; the WMA was still successfully raising money even during the rebuilding of the nation’s cities following the ravages of the war. The EPC, though, like most churches was suffering from falling income at a time when demands were high to continue the full programme of activities within the church and society. Although the women fought for, and won, rights to representation on the mission board, to retain the editorship of the missionary magazine and to continue to be part of the selection process for women missionaries, there was a loss of real power. This transfer of power over control of finances and of policy to the FMC meant that the extensive efforts of the WMA in consciousness-raising and money-raising were diluted among the other concerns of the mission board. The many local committees were now encouraged to contribute to all the missionary efforts of the EPC and lost the very real sense of ‘ownership’ that had existed in their relationship with the WMA and its missionary women. In many churches the local WMA committees were disbanded as mission became part of the wider activity of the church and as its definition changed, to incorporate and encompass local, social concerns as well as pertaining to activity of the church overseas.

Secondly, following the Second World War development agencies such as Christian Aid, Oxfam and VSO came into being and wider British society saw that aid and interest in peoples overseas could be offered in ways other than solely through the church and mission. The VSO programme allowed people with skills to use them in developing newly-independent nations and with a short-term commitment. During the post-war period, the legitimacy of empire began to be questioned, both in Britain and in the colonies themselves. The move for independence from Britain gathered pace across the former nations of Empire and the Commonwealth came into being as a means of holding together the countries that had once “belonged” to
Britain and continuing trading links with them.\textsuperscript{308} During the war years many missionaries had withdrawn from China, and from 1950 all missionaries were expelled by the government which saw them as a dangerous western influence. These moves internationally had an effect on mission and missionaries; although the EPC through both the FMC and WMA had operated largely outside the empire the changes that were taking place in understanding how one country should relate to another across the globe also affected the ways in which mission theology developed. Where missionaries returned to the field it was often to a new situation; sometimes churches had collapsed, sometimes they had found that they did not need the white missionary at the helm to operate well.\textsuperscript{309} In some places, they were sent back home. It is no coincidence that CCWM and its successor, CWM came into being at around this time; a new theology of mission required new structures and a different understanding of mission relationships. The idea of partnership working and of the so-called receiving countries becoming the sending countries arose partly as a response to this new spirit of international co-operation and partly as a response to the difficulties of financing and maintaining traditional mission stations in countries which no longer welcomed such an approach. The cultural context in both Britain and in the countries where the missionaries had operated had changed considerably. FMC missionaries, male and female, did return to the field, and their mission model remained largely unchanged from earlier times until the EPC joined with the Congregational Church to form the URC. In these final years, it was difficult to maintain missions funding and few candidates came forward for consideration. The final EPC missionaries returned in 1975 or transferred to CWM. If any person in a URC congregation felt a call to mission, they would be referred by their Synod Moderator to CWM.

\textsuperscript{308} Even this new body underwent a process of change from the “British Commonwealth” to the “Commonwealth of Nations”, with Britain being an equal member with the other nations.

\textsuperscript{309} During the war, the Formosan Presbyterian Church had continued to function and make converts, Missionaries returned to a confident daughter and had to re-negotiate relationships. This is seen in correspondence from the field. In India, visas were refused to career missionaries from the late 1970s, but from the 1950s the Government was less welcoming to missionaries; there was a gradual freezing out. (Personal communication from Peter). China became a closed field under Communism. From the 1970s in Asia and Africa there would be the call for a moratorium on missionaries ‘Missionary go home!’ was the slogan of some theologians, believing that the indigenous church could not develop whilst missionaries were still in place. (See Adrian Hastings, \textit{A History of African Christianity 1950-1975, (African Studies)}), Cambridge University Press, U.K.,1979 for details of John Gatu, the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa issuing a now famous call for a moratorium on the sending of missionaries and money from Europe and North America to Africa in 1971, p225).
Overseas mission for a URC congregation now potentially takes two forms – support of Christian Aid and/or support for a particular project to which they have a link. Working in partnership the URC, Christian Aid and the World Development Movement have a programme called Commitment for Life, working in four countries alongside partner organisations in that country who deliver the projects on the ground, and offering congregations the opportunity to choose a country to support. Via reports on the internet\(^\text{310}\), churches can keep up to date with the projects and there is annual worship material available to encourage support. Although it does not have the ‘ownership’ associated with sponsoring a missionary, Commitment for Life does attempt to connect donors with a particular area of work. Most churches supporting Commitment for Life in the North West of England also support Christian Aid Week with volunteer collectors and fundraising events.\(^\text{311}\)

The congregation among whom I minister supports Commitment for Life with a special Sunday each year, has an ‘Austerity’ Lunch annually to raise money for general Christian Aid project work and provides door to door collectors during Christian Aid week. The Christian Aid Organiser ensures that news updates are inserted into the church magazine and special appeals are publicised. At the same time, the church supports a Christian project in Moldova, in Eastern Europe, run by the Baptist pastor there and supported through an organisation in Britain called Breadline. The project was introduced to the congregation by an Anglican friend who visits regularly and provides photographs and updates on the work. Particular project areas enthuse people to a flurry of fundraising activity – over the past three years the congregation has contributed the cost of three dairy cows and seven bee hives to enable the church to provide work and food for people in the vicinity. A group of women committed to the project make greetings cards to sell throughout the year and the funds raised are sent via Breadline to Pastor Slavic. He has visited the U.K. and, like a missionary on furlough, been a guest at the churches that support is congregation and preached in them. Personal contact and regular news, along with the knowledge that all the money goes to the place for which it was intended, keeps interest and support for the church at Chisinau high on the agenda of the congregation.

The methods of the WMA are at work still in encouraging people to consider the needs of others in far away places; inter-denominational working is still important; raising money is still required of supporters. However, there are two changes that are noteworthy, first, Christian Aid encourages its supporters to also become campaigners and to question the structural, global issues that are at the root of

\(^{310}\) [http://urc.org.uk/mission/commitment-for-life.html](http://urc.org.uk/mission/commitment-for-life.html), accessed 20/10/2013 the site describes the partnership and the projects currently supported.

\(^{311}\) Personal communication with Area office of Christian Aid.
poverty, and secondly, the alleviation of physical poverty is seen as the first Christian duty, with the need for conversion a much lesser priority. My mothers in Christ would, perhaps, have argued with this approach, but in the hospitals and schools that they founded lies its genesis. Though they saw medicine and education as tools to spread the gospel, they were also aware that many people accepted the gifts of reading, writing and healing without converting to Christianity, and they in turn, accepted this fact of mission life. The work of Pastor Slavic is much more akin to the mission that the women of the WMA sought to complete, quite overt in its approach, and with avowedly Christian projects but just as missionaries in the early twentieth century were criticised for making ‘rice Christians’ so he has to fend off criticism that his church is only growing in number because of the economic projects with which it is involved.
6. Power: Women, Men and Mission

6.1 Introduction

The story of the Women’s Missionary Association is interesting in and of itself, in the context of women’s history and social change affecting the lives of women, but this story also speaks of the various ways in which women and men exercise power within and without a powerful institution – in this case the Presbyterian Church of England. Throughout the story of the WMA there is a continuing motif – the negotiation and re-negotiation of power, with the PCE, the GA, and within the WMA itself. The power of the British Empire is the backdrop to the drama of the WMA. Power becomes a main theme when the whole story is told; God-given, man-made, women-challenged, and so power must be reflected upon in coming to any conclusions about the WMA and their importance to the contemporary URC. In order to discuss the concept of power in relation to the WMA, it is necessary first to seek a working definition.

6.2 Definitions of Power

Power is defined by the Oxford Dictionary of English as “the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way, the capacity or ability to direct or to influence others or the course of events, political or social authority or control, especially that exercised by a government, a person or organisation that is strong or influential within a particular context,” along with a number of more specialised, technical definitions.312

These definitions are neutral, in that they speak of capacity and ability, and as such should apply equally to the capacities and abilities of both women and men, but Denise Ackerman states,

Grappling with the concept of power, feminist theologians have, however, encountered three persistent problems: definition of power, the relationship between power and difference...and the theological meaning of power.313

The problem of definition is not so much what the dictionary says, but how that is played out in the ordinary lives of women and men. That ability to influence or control can be used for good, for ill and in what seems to be a neutral way. These

312 Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson (eds), Oxford Dictionary of English, Oxford University Press, 2005
modes or expressions of power are allied to Ackerman’s second problem – the relationship between power and difference where that difference is gender.

Part of the difficulty in defining power is that, as James Poling says “…power, in its ideal form is virtually synonymous with life itself. To live is to desire power to relate to others”.314 In this view, every person who is in relationship with others is part of a web of power in which “Power is gauged by the complexity of the relationships that can be contained in an interaction.”315 Poling goes on to say that “The power of the individual is enhanced when the web or relationships is benevolent and encourages the most creativity”.

Poling’s picture of the ideal form of power is attractive, but in order to be possible, as he later suggests, there also need to be benevolent structures in society that allow these interactions. The structures of society and the relative power of individuals within those structures, including the church, are often not benevolent. Poling identifies this lack of benevolence as abuse;

Abuse of power is made possible by institutions and ideologies that distort human experience according to some structure of dominance. Those who are privileged have the social sanction and resources to abuse and deprive others. In our society, parents have the power to abuse children, men have the power to abuse women, whites have the power to abuse blacks, dominant classes have the power to abuse those who are marginalised….Religion functions in an ambiguous way in relation to society. It often challenges the way power is organised in society according to a vision of what is good in some ultimate sense. But religion can also function to license questionable behaviour….Religion often reinforces the subordinate status of women by elevating their maternal roles without critically assessing the social environment in which women as mothers are unjustly treated. Beyond this, the basic metaphors about God and God’s relationship to the world sanction abuse of power unintentionally.316

So, Poling sees that power is potentially good, or at least neutral, and ideally allows growth of persons and the institutions to which they belong. However, the reality is that abuse occurs. Others explore the ways in which power is not used for such development and creativity, for example, Robin Greenwood and Hugh Burgess in their consideration of how the church might offer a different model of power in and to society, state

..in everyday practice ‘power’ is often associated solely with ideas of domination, authority, control, hierarchy…That power is so immediately recognised in this way reflects our view of the world, dominated by great powers, global enterprise, trans-national corporations… [and] Like the mother of the sons of thunder, part of us wants our children to be the ones who sit on the right and on the left. The world’s violence, politics, starvation,

315 Poling, The Abuse of Power, p24
316 Poling, The Abuse of Power, p91
business, communities and churches are filled with this confusing mixture of rivalry and mutual care.  

This is their starting point, and the search for a different model of society is set over against this world-view. Paul Beasley-Murray in an overview of power exercised in the local church seeks illustrations from a wide variety of contexts. So he references Charles Coulson, one time adviser to President Nixon who was jailed for his part in the Watergate conspiracy, whose reflection on power was ...although power may begin as a mean to an end, it soon becomes the end itself...[and] power is like salt water:the more you drink of it the thirstier you get.  

Michel Foucault like Poling views power as a complex web of relationship, however, he reflects on the effects of power within those relationships, seeing the structures of dominance as a given in the world. In this understanding all people have some power, even those who appear to be oppressed or powerless; they each have some sphere of influence however constrained that might be. Power is not a chain of command; it does not rest entirely in the hands of one person, rather it shifts and changes within a network of relationships where oppression and domination fluctuate depending on the context. 

Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising their power. 

Acknowledging Foucault’s concept of power as a network, in her consideration of justice, Iris Young seeks to locate power, rather than to accept it as ‘given’. Thus, she says, 

Conceptualizing power in distributive terms means implicitly or explicitly conceiving power as a kind of stuff possessed by individual agents in greater or lesser amounts....regarding power as a possession or attribute of individuals tends to obscure the fact that power is a relation rather than a thing. While the exercise of power may sometimes depend on the possession of certain resources – money, military equipment and so on – such resources should not be confused with power itself. The power consists in a relationship between the exerciser and others through which she or he communicates intentions and meets with their acquiescence.  

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320 Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference, p31, italics mine
It is through individuals that the structures of society are given legitimisation and authority; collectively we acquiesce to the exercise of power. Young gives the example of a judge and a prisoner – the judge only has power over the prisoner within the context of a whole series of practices and support from people from administrators through to lawyers;

Many people must do their jobs for the judge’s power to be realized, and many of these people will never directly interact with either the judge or the prisoner....understanding power as ...possession of particular individuals or groups misses this supporting and mediating function of third parties.\footnote{321}

Interlocking relationships both exercise power and are subject to the exercise of power in any particular context. Institutions exert power accorded to them by the many individuals who make up society. In this and the foregoing models, the neutral agency that is ‘power’ is used, or abused – to create situations of dominance and subservience, which even though the exerciser of such power may change and fluctuate according to circumstance and context, nonetheless privileges certain people and/or groups over others.

### 6.3 Power and Empire

“Although missions could not avoid empire, they were determined to put it in its place.”\footnote{322} So concludes Andrew Porter at the end of his survey of British Protestant missions and their complicated relationship with the British empire. In \textit{Religion Versus Empire}, Porter demonstrates both collusion with, and resistance to, aspects of empire by individual missionaries and by mission societies. His claim is that the primary aim of the missions, to bring the gospel to indigenous people, and so

\begin{quote}
The great majority of missionaries displayed a fitful interest in empire, giving it their temporary and often grudging attention chiefly when it hindered evangelism or might bring its authority to bear in a necessary defence of missions’ past achievements or basic freedom to carry on their work.\footnote{323}
\end{quote}

In Porter’s analysis, it is perhaps only the faith missions which seriously raise questions about the nature of empire, and those questions address the symbiotic relationship between mission societies and the institutions of empire rather than empire \textit{per se}. Theological reflection on the nature of empire itself raises a different set of questions about the nature of the missionary task in relation to empire. Joerg Reiger in \textit{Christ and Empire} challenges the reader in two directions.\footnote{324} First, he sets

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item Young, \textit{Justice and the Politics of Difference}, p31
  \item Porter, \textit{Religion Versus Empire}, p324
\end{itemize}
the entire history of mission, beginning with Christ himself, in the context of empire, and the ever present temptation to acquiesce with the imperial powers, especially when the church and/or its mission is privileged by empire. Second, he challenges the reader to resist empire by engaging with Christ. This encounter with empire that Reiger sets before us is more subtle than the obvious power and geographical reach of the historical colonial empire(s) which Porter considers, yet the hidden nature of the all-pervasive idea of empire that Reiger identifies in contemporary society (and most obviously in the U.S.A.) also echoes through the lives of missionaries and the activities of mission societies.

Although, as Porter demonstrates, the Protestant missionaries resisted facets of empire, the concept of it was powerful. When we read...

...Lockhart [of the LMS] and many after him, readily endorsed the close relationship of Christianity and civilisation together with the educational institutions that supported them, they were also closer to the faith missions in having serious reservations about aspects of commerce...  

And that there was conflict between home and field and between missionaries and local Christians over “...the transfer of responsibility from European missionary to church members”.  

We can begin to grasp the nature of empire, and the difficulty for British missionaries (and others from imperial states) of the past; cultural imperialism affects the imperial subjects in both the home country and the colonies, in different ways, each with its own problems associated with resistance. The questions that Reiger poses are not questions that the women of the WMA could think of asking, nor did they. However, in their response to the call of God and the gospel of Jesus, they challenged and resisted the patriarchy that was a sign of empire in their day. As the rhetoric of empire sought to make indigenous people ‘other’, the missionaries both used that same rhetoric to further their cause at home and yet recognised the humanity of the people they lived among and worked alongside them in spreading the gospel.  

Bearing in mind Reiger’s incisive text, and the assumption of the ever-presence of empire, it is possible to reflect on mission and empire within the context of the lifespan of the WMA.

Martin Luther King wrote from jail,

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325 Porter, Religion Versus Empire, p302
326 Porter, Religion Versus Empire, p256
328 This understanding of local peoples as brothers and sisters, Bosch refers to as being “Constrained by Jesus’ love” one of the motifs of the Enlightenment mission. Bosch, Transforming Mission, p286
I have travelled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi...I have looked at her beautiful churches with their spires pointing heavenward...I have found myself asking, Who worships here? Who is their God?

This is a pertinent question to ask of the churches of the British Empire, those buildings reflecting the church architecture of England with pews and platforms, lecterns and communion furniture, transplanted to the mission fields. Whether or not mission societies and/or individual missionaries worked with the agents of Empire or resisted its excesses, the context for the development of mission during the high Victorian era and beyond was the expansion of Empire. The Empire and the mission societies lived in dynamic tension for much of the time, each both supporting and critiquing the other. The British Empire wielded power over its subject peoples that was both political and economic, employed both force and persuasion, and believed that it was morally superior to them, bringing civilisation to those who were yet “uncivilised” to western eyes and ideas. As the British Empire expanded it was accompanied by a concept of God that was male – God is “He, Lord, Master, Father, King, Shepherd, Judge” and a God of conquest. The God of authority blesses those in authority, the leaders of Empire, and their hierarchies.

The editor of the report of the 1888 international missionary conference held in London writes: "It is to the race which is sending the blessings of Christianity to the heathen to which God is giving success as the colonisers and conquerors of the world".330

The majority of those who took English culture and values with them to foreign lands could not conceive of another way of ordering society than the British way; they took with them their belief in

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly,
And ordered their estate.331

and sought to replicate the structures of “home” abroad. For some, this was also their opportunity to raise their own social status, and so obtain power that would not have been available to them in England.

The missionaries and the mission societies that sent them sometimes benefited from the power of Empire, but came to the foreign field at the command of God, and following the instruction of Jesus. They therefore believed that they were

329 Porter, Religion Versus Empire. This is the main thrust of Porter’s work, as he seeks to offer a complex understanding of the relationship(s) between mission and empire.
330 Porter, Religion Versus Empire, quoting Rev James Johnson, p285
331 From the hymn All Things Bright and Beautiful by Cecil Frances Alexander, published in Hymns for Little Children, 1848. This verse is omitted from contemporary hymnbooks.
morally superior to the agents of Empire, but could be subject to the power of the state even so far from home.

Missionaries vary: some assumed settler attitudes; others strenuously withstood them, championed the advance of indigenous peoples, provided educational opportunities, medical treatment and ultimately career advancement for Asians, Africans and the peoples of the South Seas. 332

Most brought their own cultural values and believed in the ‘civilising’ effect of the church on the peoples with whom they worked. Some of the early missionaries were aware trying to both understand and empathise with the cultures in which they found themselves 333 and English ways came with English missionaries. 334 The missionaries also brought with them medical and educational resources; this gave them power in the places where hospitals and schools were set up. Education, in particular, meant access to jobs and social mobility, and in the sphere of medicine, many were given the opportunity to train as nurses and medical assistants and work in mission hospitals.

Some missionaries saw the institutional mission compound, the school and the hospital as diversions from the real business of mission, that of bringing people to Christ. In 1865, the China Inland Mission was founded, soon to be followed by other missions with a desire to go into isolated “as far as possible beyond any European influence or colonial rule and at a distance from other missionary bodies.” 335 One such missionary, independent and self-supporting though aligned with the CMS in Africa wrote,

There is...very much confusion...caused &[sic] very much nonsense talked by Evangelicals and Broadchurchmen both confusing the work of saving men from the power of Satan and that of building up political, commercial, & social civilisation. I believe these two to be very frequently opposed, & I know they are invariably distinct. 336

Throughout the history of the British Empire there were challenges to being ruled from the throne of England, some missionaries were caught up in such uprisings. In

333 William Burns, an early FMC Missionary adopted Chinese dress and lived simply among the Chinese. Later it was only the China Inland Mission that took this approach.
334 Visiting Taiwan, I saw church interiors that could have been transported straight from any English Presbyterian Church, and along with Taiwanese hymns sang Sunday School choruses. An LMS Missionary to South Africa told me of the different uniforms women from different denominations wore in the 1960s, inherited from an earlier time and understood as part of being’ in the church’.
335 Porter, Religion Versus Empire, p194
336 Porter, Religion Versus Empire, quoted p198. The use of the ampersand is seen in Porter’s text.
places outside the Empire there were other challenges; in Formosa the Japanese invasion led to the missionaries experiencing life under colonial rule along with the Formosan church members.

Following the World Wars, which each had their effect on missions, there was the gradual withdrawal from Empire. As the geo-political situation changed, so the church, both at home and overseas was affected. The theological shift towards partnership was slower than the move towards Commonwealth, but it moved in the same direction – from power over to shared power. The call of Christ to “love your neighbour as yourself” was made manifest through social action, respect for other faiths and no longer only in conversion. Roper suggests that the shift

...does parallel, in broadest outline, the move from colonies controlled from Whitehall to the modern Commonwealth of free and equal independent states served by a secretariat which is still based for convenience in Westminster. Like the Commonwealth, the English language is paramount and social bonds may on occasion be strengthened by discussion of the weather and cricket while drinking tea.  

There were those who advocated retaining the vision of mission that had been paramount in all societies during the great expansion of mission,

The missionary obligation of the church is laid upon it by its Lord. It is not the fad of the few. It is not something that a Christian accepts if he feels like doing so. It is part of his discipleship. It is the whole church that is concerned; not just the missionary enthusiasts.

Within this shifting picture in world terms, in England the opportunities open to women and their role in the public sphere was also changing. Within the churches, however, women still struggled for power.

6.4 Feminist Understandings of Power

Writing from feminists and feminist theologians recognises that whilst women may need to reflect on their position of relative powerlessness within a patriarchal society, this is not a straightforward undertaking because of the complex nature of power. So, for example Serene Jones writes about the struggle of women to find

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337 Geoffrey Roper, Unpublished Paper presented to the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries, Conference Summer 2010. This situation, true in the 1940s and 50s was to change as CWM developed.

338 Geoffrey Roper, Unpublished Paper presented to the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries, Conference Summer 2010, quoting James Maxwell, Servant of the Church, London, Livingstone Press, 1952. This concept of whole church mission translated into an understanding of mission being by the whole church and on its own doorstep, the needs of people at home and the beginnings of serious decline in church attendance deflected interest from overseas mission.
place in the church and society, and suggests that power and domination relationships are also in need of analysis;

Feminist theory asserts that one must attend to the power dynamics that shape social worlds. It further asserts that power is not something that may or may not be present. Rather, it is ubiquitous; it permeates all aspects of our interactions with other persons and with institutions and ideas as well.\(^{339}\)

This dynamic of domination usually sees women as subordinate compared to men and/or institutions (run by men). However, Jones writes that it must be acknowledged that women can hold positions of dominance, and that all such power relationships are both individual/personal and also collective/institutional. Within this dynamic she further claims that feminist theory asserts that both perpetrators and victims have agency; thus the oppressed person can determine to speak out, to make changes or to offer resistance to the situation of oppression.

Carter Heyward and Pamela Cooper-White look at power relations in a different way; acknowledging that patriarchy mainly sees power as ‘power over’ others, as control of situations and people, they each look for new ways of constructing power relationships. Carter Heyward suggests that a power-over model of relationship leads to alienation between those who hold/wield power and those who do not. The means by which such alienation is redressed is through a reimagining of power as mutuality. Mutuality may be but is not necessarily equality, rather it is

...a vision of justice in which, by the power of God, we call one another forth into our most liberating creative possibilities. Mutuality...signals relational growth and change and constitutes an invitation into shaping the future together.\(^{340}\)

It can be objected that Carter Heyward is writing and thinking out of a particular context (that of a Christian feminist lesbian) and into the particular context of the church. Although she argues for mutuality as a model for relationships within church and for relationship with creation, it is Pamela Cooper-White who takes the ‘I-Thou’ of Martin Buber and the idea of alienation versus mutuality to create a concept of power that is ‘power-within’, ‘power-with’ and ‘power in community’.\(^{341}\)

In order to achieve power-with (mutuality), a negotiation of consensus in a society or situation or relationship, it is necessary to have power-within “...one’s own inner


\(^{341}\) Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church’s Response*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1995, pp 21-22 refers to Martin Buber and the I-Thou relationship. Cooper White argues that when ‘thou’ becomes ‘it’ there is no relationship and it is easy(ier) to take control/power over the other, who has become object rather than person.
wisdom, intuition, self-esteem, even the spark of the divine,” it is incarnational understanding. In traditional theological terms, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Cooper-White makes explicit what we suspect in the writing of Carter Heyward, that these models are largely enacted in personal relationships and smaller group settings. They are a reaction to the power-over model of societal order, “efforts at deconstruction rather than an effort at construction of a new social vision.” Cooper-White suggests that there is the potential for abuse even within these mutual understandings of power: always they labour under the dominant paradigm of power-over. When mutuality is attempted in group situations and conflict is buried or unacknowledged and leadership eschewed, she comes to the conclusion that power in community transforms power-over into ‘power-for’, where authority is loaned to certain individuals or groups, creating legitimate authority but also encompassing the notions of power-within and power-with. Thus, empowered individuals have dignity and worth in themselves and together create a matrix in which all have a voice. She acknowledges that this is a radical vision in a society that works with a power-over model and the vested interests of wealth and privilege at its heart, but offers it as a way of understanding both the potential for personal relationships to be transformed and for re-ordering society to become more akin to the Kingdom of God. Whilst some women in the WMA probably had relationships of mutuality, these were women immersed in the mind-set and power structures of their day although some were willing to challenge the status quo. Lavinia Byrne selects an eclectic array of texts to demonstrate that faith was a factor in social change and notes in her commentary:

Inspired by a great vision of what might be, as opposed to what presently was, they [women] tackled social problems such as alcoholism and its effects upon the home, the exploitation of prostitutes, and taboos surrounding dress and clothing...The God of battles is invoked in... Millicent Fawcett’s account of a meeting convened by Josephine Butler and those who campaigned on behalf of ‘the new teaching and revolt of women’ That is to say, who opposed the provisions of the Contagious Diseases Act.

Nonetheless, their vision of a transformed society was of one where particular wrongs were righted and certain injustices highlighted and corrected, rather than a total overthrow of the power of the state with a new way of working. Given this, we need to consider the WMA in the light of less radical understandings of power.

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342 Cooper-White, The Cry of Tamar, p33
343 Cooper-White, The Cry of Tamar, p34
344 Cooper-White, The Cry of Tamar, pp34-38
345 This can be seen in some examples of correspondence, for instance, the letter from Daisy Pearce to Jessie Galt recommending Heng Hoa Ko for training at Carey Hall. As a teacher, training other teachers, Daisy writes as an equal to the college principal about one of her outstanding students.
6.5 Biblical and Liturgical Understandings of Power

If Poling is correct in his assertion that power is a desire to relate to others, and that desire had the potential to become abusive in its usage, then those who find themselves in the position of privilege are likely to desire to retain that privilege and to continue to relate to others in the way that has allowed that privilege. Power in society is most often in the Modern era exercised through the State, Connell reflects that

... the state is not inherently patriarchal, but is historically constructed as patriarchal in a political process whose outcome is open. The process of bureaucratization is central here, as conventional bureaucracy is a tight function of the structure of power and the division of labour. Together with selective recruitment and promotion, these structures form an integrated mechanism of gender relations that results in the exclusion of women from positions of authority and the subordination of the areas of work in which most women are concentrated.347

This analysis of the construction of the state can equally be applied to the church as a bureaucratic organisation, so following this pattern (and leaving aside the tangled web of power relationships between Church and State since Constantine adopted Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire) within the particular context of the Christian church, using both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament, those in power have used images of God and the language of liturgy to uphold their position.

The God of the Hebrew Bible is a God of Power, and as the worship of the Presbyterian Church included the Psalter as part of its regular diet, the congregation were reminded of this powerful God in the words that they chanted week by week, for example, Psalm 68, verses 1 and 2 give a flavour of this mighty power, and the fate that will befall the wicked – those who do not obey the Lord.

Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered:
let them also that hate him flee before him.
As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.348

This was the powerful God of creation, who spoke and brought into being all that is; the leaders of the church favoured the second creation story above the first, standing in a long tradition from the early Church Fathers and the authors of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin. So, rather than being reminded in sermons and Sunday school lessons

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.  

Women were reminded

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This isnow bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.  

They also were accustomed to hearing themselves referred to as 'brethren' and taught to understand that the term 'man' usually meant 'women' as well. In a sermon preached on the story of the Prodigal Son by Andrew Boyd, entitled "Man, Come to Himself” says “And, oh, brethren, how much is conveyed to us by this deep natural belief,…that so long as man is wrong, so long as man is astray- man is not himself!”. Throughout his sermon, ‘man’ and ‘men’ are used to refer to all in the congregation, both women and men. The absent mother in the story is mirrored in the absent women in his congregation. Although Boyd is, in this sermon, at pains to seek the grace of God through the story, he refers to the idea of a wrathful and judgmental God. He would have recognised the description given by Dorothee Soelle of 'Father God':

We conceive of God as a powerful, indeed as an all-powerful father. …the _pater familias_... The father was power incarnate, lord over life and death. He was economic power, moral power, political power; and he was also the embodiment of kindness. Both these components are present in the image of God the Father, and they are what makes it such an important and powerful image.  

Such language, the language of Scripture, of The Book, the central symbol of reformation theology, allied with the ordering of society, where men held power and ran the institutions, informed women that their status was secondary to that of men, that their role was as “an help meet” for men. In this role, women were encouraged to be the ‘servant church’. Natalie Watson suggests that the servant

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351 Andrew Boyd, “Man Come to Himself” in a collection of sermons titled _Counsel and Comfort Spoken from a City Pulpit_, Longmans, Green and Co, 1868, held at the Open Library, [http://openlibrary.org/details/counselandcomfortfor00boyduoft](http://openlibrary.org/details/counselandcomfortfor00boyduoft) accessed 09/02/2015
metaphor as a way of understanding church is unhelpful for women – the life of the church is identified with the life of Christ, and for women, his suffering.\textsuperscript{354} Thus suffering and acceptance of it becomes part of their discipleship, disempowering them from challenging difficult situations; in this way service becomes subservience.

And yet, that same Bible, which would be well known to them from Bible Study classes and sermons preached in church, even through the lens of male interpretation, contained stories of women in both Old and New testaments. These Biblical women had the potential to be an inspiration; questioning and challenging (as the Syrophoencian woman (Mark 7:24-30) and the woman at the well (John 4:4-42), present at the Cross in the suffering of Jesus (Matthew 27:55-61, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:49, John 19:25b-27) witnesses to the Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-9, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-10, John 20:11-18). Mary’s song (Luke 1:46-55), in the tradition of Miriam (Exodus 15:20-22) and Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10), proclaiming the Kingdom of God, is in contrast with the passive handmaid of the Lord. As well as the Bible, there were other texts that women could read and look to for both inspiration and a different way of being women. In her article on Emma Jane Warboise’s Overdale, Julie Melnyk considers the novel as a form of theology and sermon writing for women during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods; she suggests that the sermon as a form is male and univocal whilst the novel whether male or female in authorship is multivocal.\textsuperscript{355} Thus, using the example of Overdale she is able to demonstrate a response to theological debate in the Church of England and also to ‘hear’ the voices of different women as they react to the new vicar. We see the different responses women can give to ecclesiastical authority; submission from his wife, subversive resistance from a pillar of the church and challenge from a ‘new woman’. Reading novels was a socially acceptable pastime for women of the middle and lower middle classes, the group from which the WMA and the GA largely came. Novels that challenge the status quo might encourage independent thought in their readers. Lavinia Byrne seeks to make a similar argument in her consideration of women hymn writers seeing their work as a subversive voice; words of desire for emancipation and a looking forward to a better time.\textsuperscript{356} However, she chooses a very small sample to bear the weight of her argument, and a survey of those women that she highlights (using HymnQuest software to search for their work) shows that overall the works that have continued into use in hymnbooks are largely a conventional and conservative offering. There is no doubt that many of them, for example, ‘In Heavenly Love Abiding’, The

\textsuperscript{356} Byrne (ed), \textit{The Hidden Voice}, Chapter 1
Master Comes!’ and ‘A Wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord’, include the sense of looking forward – but this is to the eschaton – a biblical hope – and it cannot be made to refer to a desire for the emancipation of women within the context of the hymns themselves.\(^{357}\) Perhaps a wider survey of hymns written by women would yield more evidence of a desire for emancipation, but this would require research beyond what has been retained in hymnbooks which are themselves the product of editing and reflections of changing theologies. Nonetheless, it is an interesting line of enquiry for considering ways in which women may have sought to struggle for a voice and agency within the confines of the church. Certainly, the role of women in writing hymns is of note as a way for them to express their own theological understanding and devotion to God.

If theology was expressed through the novel, hymns and the bible study circles which were part of the life of the church, devotion to God was most clearly seen in service. Women in the church had opportunities to serve in their local congregations through pastoral visiting, visiting the poor and Sunday school teaching. Christian women in the home were to serve their husbands, fathers and brothers by keeping house and providing meals. Dorothee Soelle writes of the mother of Christ,

> She [Mary] serves without complaint...And even if we cannot be “pure” like her, we can at least be as submissive as she is. Raising someone up on a pedestal is a strategy of domination. Women are glorified, elevated and praised, so that they can be humiliated, restricted and blocked at every turn.\(^{358}\)

For Protestant Victorian women, the ‘Angel of the Hearth’ was the archetype of womanhood to which they should aspire, this mythical Christian housekeeper/mother/wife was the impossible standard put before them.\(^{359}\) Hers was the pedestal on which they, too, should stand. As Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza notes, “...men are ministers in virtue of ordination; women are ministers in virtue of unpaid service”.\(^{360}\) At the outset of the Presbyterian Church of England, some women saw the prospect of service through the creation of a missions society. Never mind that the church had already appointed a Foreign Missions Committee, these women saw the opportunity to take the idea that other mission societies had already begun to recognise in ‘Women’s work for women’ and make it their own.

\(^{357}\) Written by Anna Laetitia Waring (1823-1910), Emily May Crawford (née Grimes) (1864-1927) and Frances Jane van Alstyne (née Crosby) (1820-1915) respectively.

\(^{358}\) Dorothee Soelle, *The Strength of the Weak*, p43

\(^{359}\) Descriptions of the personal appearance and accomplishments expected of women in both nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries can be found in Byrne (ed), *The Hidden Voice*, pp71-73

6.6 Women and power

Fran Porter, writing in the context of the Northern Ireland troubles of the 1970’s, sees women describe the powerlessness they feel in being unable to change their situation on a personal or social level.\textsuperscript{361} For some of the women she interviewed, this meant disengaging with politics and the possibility of change. For others, however, “this does not mean that they can completely control their social environment, it does mean that they become active agents in their situation, seeking to address it in whatever form is appropriate for constructive purposes”.\textsuperscript{362}

Perhaps there is a parallel here with the middle class women of Victorian society, confined by cultural expectations, yet looking for ways to realise their potential in the public sphere whilst not abandoning the culture that gave them status and security.

This idea that women can both conform and resist within the structures of a church is explored in Mary McClintock-Fulkerson’s writing.\textsuperscript{363} Using the examples of both Presbyterian Women and Pentecostal Women she shows how groups that would not identify themselves as feminist, and are firmly part of their tradition yet challenge that tradition by their practice within the church.

She writes:

One would expect that not only compliance but the resistance as well of the women in...a community would take its shape from these rules of the regime.\textsuperscript{364} Resistance not formed in relation to that system would simply not be heard and could not have the system as a target. A judgment about resistance is, then, a relational one. It asks how women’s regimes of practice forge alternatives out of the construction of gender in their Christian traditions and the way in which they continue to support and reiterate the gender-oppressive practices of their tradition.\textsuperscript{365}

McClintock-Fulkerson undertakes a survey of American Presbyterian Women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through their literature and recorded practices, in which they can be seen to accept the reading of scripture which prioritises those texts which inhibit women from speaking and leading in church whilst using their women’s organisation to educate women in knowledge of the

\textsuperscript{362} Porter, “The In-the-Middle God”, pp91-101
\textsuperscript{363} Mary McClintock-Fulkerson, \textit{Changing the Subject: Women’s Discourses and Feminist Theology}, Eugene, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001
\textsuperscript{364} The ‘regime’ referred to here is the ways in which the canon of scripture is preached, understood and lived in a given community.
\textsuperscript{365} McClintock-Fulkerson, \textit{Changing the Subject}, p176
Bible and allow for discussion and preaching by women for women in the ‘circles’ that they formed as sub-sets of the wider organisation. She sums up their resistance thus,

...in a fashion of gentility and nonconfrontation...PW [Presbyterian Women] bypass the restrictions of the system and create their own community and public space. They transgress by taking up registers of authority by speaking, teaching, exhorting and preaching in their own literature. They transgress the limits of their canonical system with the sheer productive work of running a woman’s organization for almost a century...PW take up the...position denied them by the church. They enter the public realm on their own terms of value.

6.7 Power Dynamics and the WMA

A number of parallels can be seen with the women of the WMA, who also entered the public realm on their own terms, and in their organisation challenged the PCE. However, from the outset, whilst still surrounded by a similar mind-set concerning their domestic and family responsibilities (the Victorian “Angel of the Hearth” alongside the “Republican Mother” of the PW), the women of the WMA were less genteel in their approach, bypassing even more of the system than their American sisters to control finance and take authority over their organisation. The WMA understood as did the PW the importance of the written word in magazines and articles, pamphlets and Bible study materials. These materials in themselves offer resistance to the male ‘reading’ of the world, giving a woman’s perspective and in the case of the WMA couching mission in terms of the work of women through Our Sisters in Other Lands and speakers at mission meetings.

The Presbyterian women of the WMA take up the position denied them by the church, sitting on their committees, making decisions about candidates for mission, holding national meetings and conferences. In the field, women sent by the WMA preached the gospel as part of their evangelistic work. Their work also empowered other women, as the WMA sent them to serve in foreign fields:

...the mission field offered them [young women] unexpected authority and power, contrary to their own beliefs of feminine subordination. They could lead an independent life, pursuing a career as teacher, doctor or missionary.

366 McClintock-Fulkerson, Changing the Subject, see chapter 4, pp183-285 for a full discussion of the purpose and significance of these circles.
367 McClintock-Fulkerson, Changing the Subject, p233
368 Ibid pp 203-5, McClintock-Fulkerson sees this as a dominant ideology for American white middle-class women from the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, and a continuing influence as technology means that a higher standard of cleanliness is required in the home.
In a colonial or semi-colonial situation they enjoyed privileges and commanded respect as members of the white race.\textsuperscript{369}

In England, where such independence was not possible for many middle class women, through the structures of the WMA women held onto power tenaciously. Here was an area of church life that they had grasped and made their own.

Complementary to the FMC, it could not be suggested that they had undertaken something radically new – all churches were involved in mission by the start date of the WMA. Their resistance to the role allocated to them by the church was well concealed by the conventional nature of the project they chose to pursue; the conversion of the heathen. Thus, until the FMC forced a confrontation over the authority and financial control of the WMA, the organisations worked in creative tension with each other. Power was assumed to lie with the General Assembly and the Synods, and the women did not overtly challenge this assumption. When it was realised that the WMA was not actually under authority the power struggle began.

The complex negotiations between the two committees are a testament to both the skills and intelligence of the women of the WMA and reflect the power that the organisation wielded through its structures and relationships; the missionaries and the names of the WMA committee were known throughout the denomination and so it was impossible for the FMC to take over the reins of the WMA without proper consultation and negotiation. The talks and disputes, arguments over money and representation would drag on for over a decade\textsuperscript{370}, and even when eventually the WMA had to capitulate to the demands of the church, they were able to take places on the FM committee, their magazine editor took on the combined missionary magazine \textit{Far Horizons} and the influence of the many branch organisations remained significant, for the WMA formed networks of women’s groups all with a common aim. This was part of their strength, coupled with strong leadership.

From a twenty-first century perspective we might claim these women as feminists; challenging the male power over mission and over women’s vocations; speaking (through \textit{Our Sisters}) on behalf of those perceived to be oppressed by culture and religion; supporting education and training for women, both in preparation for the mission field and in the mission field where Bible Women and native nurses assisted in the work of mission; enabling young women to take on roles of responsibility through the GA and encouraging theological debate and reflection through the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{minutes} Minutes of a sub-committee on organisaton, full WMA committee minutes, notes and correspondence regarding the negotaitons are held in PCE/WMA Box 14, files 2 and 3, and PCE/FMC Series III Box 32 files 3 and 4, SOAS Archive
\end{thebibliography}
Home Preparation Union. In these ways we might name them feminist. In other ways, the WMA were seen to collude with male power; male clerics usually opened their conferences and regional gatherings, sometimes preaching as well. Women were ‘speakers’, though the theological and missiological content of their words matched that of their male counterparts. Their structures mirrored that of the PCE Committees, they sheltered under the guise of gentility.

Some of the WMA may have identified as feminists in their desire for the extension of the franchise to women – many moderate women believed that women’s votes would make a difference to the way in which the nation was governed. Equally, some women believed that their husbands, fathers and brothers could adequately represent their interests in parliament. However, the degree to which the women of the WMA approved of or actively supported the fight for votes is not documented in their missionary papers. Lavinia Byrne suggests that women of faith were motivated by their beliefs to undertake both social action and the fight for the vote; it is likely that some of the WMA were sympathetic to the cause of female enfranchisement, although this is not recorded in the WMA papers. As opportunities opened up to women, we see that female doctors were recruited and sent into the field. When women’s labour was needed by the government, there is evidence of the GA meetings suffering due to young women being called away from home to help with the war effort in both world wars.

It is unlikely that the WMA would have seen itself as a vehicle for feminism, but they fit into the category identified by Serene Jones as feminist.

From the outset, the goal of liberating women had two aspects. First, feminist sought to identify the various forms of oppression that structured women’s lives, and second, they imagined and sought to create an alternative future without oppression. Oppression is not always easy to name. In fact because oppression affects the very way one thinks about oneself and one’s world, it is often quite difficult to even see, much less name... it is hard to envision new ways of living when everything one experiences is rooted in old, oppressive forms of knowing and acting.

The WMA were not overt in this pursuit, but they were concerned to create an environment where women were free to act with agency of their own, as individuals and collectively in the branch associations. As Jones identifies, their experience was of the existing forms of knowing and acting in a male oriented and dominated church, so the structures they chose to combat oppression were those of the

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371 As has been noted in Chapter 3, the WMA were instrumental in developing Carey Hall as a training centre for women missionaries.
372 PCE/WMA Box 13, Part II contains minutes of the GA Committee from 1913-1945; these include discussions of the difficulty of meeting regularly when ‘girls’ were needed for other work.
oppressor and though they could see the oppression of native women, they found it more difficult (at least at the outset) to identify their own. Pamela Cooper-White suggests that this is due to a process of internalisation of the messages that society gives both women and men about their place and role. “This internalised oppression...is more insidious even than overt acts of oppression”. 374

Not feminist in the contemporary sense of the word and yet not the stereotype of the Victorian wife and mother, the women of the WMA are part of an unfolding story of the struggle for women’s rights and recognition as children of God. Rosemary Radford-Reuther wrote “The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women...”375 and in this understanding of feminism and theology the WMA had a role to play both in England and in the fields where their missionaries served.

6.8 Women and Power in the Church

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, women have had the opportunity to take on roles of leadership and power at times of social change, when theology has been developing in new directions and when the structures of religious organisations are in a state of flux.

When Christianity began to develop as separate from the Synagogue and attain a distinctive theological understanding of Jesus as the Christ, and as Paul began to undertake his missionary travels so church bases and new congregations of believers were formed. In Acts, Luke writes of this growing movement, and the role of women as financial supporters and as leaders of communities is recorded (Acts 16:11-15), Peter’s wife is seen to accompany him on his missionary journeys (1 Corinthians 9:5). Paul’s letters also refer to women as co-workers, and names them in greeting along with male church leaders (Romans 16:3,6,7,12,13,15, Philippians 4:2, Colossians 4:15). Whilst the church was nascent, women appear as significant, if radical, persons in the record. Schüßler-Fiorenza suggests that in the early church there was a “Discipleship of equals” that included women.376 Later, as the church is given status and authority, as Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, women are absented from the picture, and more, creates a church in the image of Roman imperial structures – a patriarchal church in which women are a hierarchical subsystem, excluded from leadership and defined by role as wife

374 Cooper-White, The Cry of Tamar, p26
and mother. A few female saints are lauded within this model, but these are exceptional women.

Throughout the west women who actively wanted to pursue a religious calling were confined to the convent or to personal piety. Some women rose to become powerful Abbesses, but this was a possibility for only a few. In England, the Reformation removed even that option, but as the Bible became more accessible through the technology of printing, men and women engaged in religious debate so that as Charles I’s religious and economic policies brought about dissent, the Civil War saw a flourishing of radical ideas and the creation of a huge variety of sects. In this time of foment and change, women again grasped the opportunity to be heard and were preaching to the soldiers of Cromwell’s army and in radical gatherings across the nation. Following the Commonwealth and the Restoration, women were forbidden from preaching once again, though the major non-conformist sects remained in existence. As the polity and structures of these sects developed into more formal churches, women were pushed to the sidelines once again. Men took the seats in the decision-making bodies of the churches. Following the Act of Toleration in 1689, most non-conformists became culturally very conforming. The rise of Methodism and the evangelical revivals in Britain led Wesley reluctantly accepting women preachers; following his death in 1791 the Methodists actively discouraged women from that role; it was in the schismatic Methodist churches that their influence continued for a time, a few even being ordained within the Primitive Methodist Tradition.

Over time, many English Presbyterian ministers became Unitarian, and the remaining Trinitarian Presbyterian congregations became part of the Synod of Scotland. Thus, by the High Victorian Era as non-conformity grew to match the numbers attending the Anglican Churches, the Presbyterians in England sought their independence. Internal strife within the church in Scotland aided the process. When this independence came, although not a social change on the scale of Civil War, or even the revivals of the eighteenth century, it was a time of transformation and change for English Presbyterians. As the new church began to function, some

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377 Schüessler-Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, this model is described in textual and diagrammatic form on pp224-231
378 The notable exception to this was the Society of Friends (Quakers), who had a separate Women’s Meeting which operated in parallel to the Men’s meeting and had authority to make decisions. Quaker women continued to speak in Meeting if led by the Spirit.
379 These were a very few, and by 1932 when the various branches of Methodism rejoined, there was no dissent when it was agreed that women would not be Presbyters. Methodist women could be Deaconesses from 1890 and many were pioneers of work in the inner-cities of industrialised England, or offered for Overseas Missionary work. It was not until 1974 that the first women were ordained to the Presbyteral Ministry in the Methodist Church.
women grasped the opportunity, not to preach, but to exercise influence through the missionary endeavour. The women who created the WMA were the wives of powerful men in the church, men who sat on committees at a national level and had an interest in mission. Perhaps they (the men) thought that the WMA would act as an Auxiliary body to the FMC – a model that was evident in other denominations and which allowed men the power of decision making over missionary postings and also over financial transactions. However, the WMA came into being as the missionary world was working out the role of the female missionary and the slogan “Women’s work for women” came to be used to justify women missionaries taking on a more evangelistic role in the field especially with regard to the Biblical teaching offered to other (particularly sequestered) women, women’s medicine and in the field of education.

Seeing this ‘special need’ for women missionaries to minister to women overseas, gave the WMA a powerful ideal which encouraged them to remain separate from the FMC, whose remit to take the gospel to men and women was allied to, but different from, the driving force of the WMA. It was difficult for the men to argue against this idea of women’s work for women, especially as almost all missionary societies had taken it up.

6.9 The WMA and the PCE

Following their meeting in a London parlour, the inaugural committee of what was to become the WMA did not ask permission to undertake their venture. The national church had endorsed the need for a missionary arm, and they took this to heart. These women were the wives of prominent churchmen; they were not unaware of the way that the church worked and therein lay their initial power. This knowledge, that if they were to ask for permission to set up the WMA they would be regulated by the church and have to report to the men of the Foreign Missions Committee and have no agency of their own, meant that they started to organise alongside, but outside, the church.

The WMA also came into being at the opportune moment when the PCE was still settling into its new role as an independent body, and taking its place among the other English denominations. While the men were distracted with their committee structures and appointments, and ensuring that the new church was properly organised and run, the founding group of the WMA went about creating the organisation in the Presbyteries and churches that would be its firm foundation both in fund-raising and in enthusing other women to support the cause. This was a properly constituted, and entirely separate entity. If this had happened later in the
story of the PCE, it is likely that the Synod would have immediately taken control of
the situation and ensured that the WMA reported to the FMC from the start – and
was properly auxiliary. However, in that moment, as the fledgling PCE sought to
put into place all that was needed, the WMA began a journey that was for many
years unstoppable.

Given the growth and success of the WMA it is certain that these women were
sincere in their desire to serve, but they were also subversive in their resistance to
the formal structures of the church, like Shiprah and Puah the Hebrew midwives of
Exodus 1:15-21, these women appeared to be following protocol but in fact had
their own agenda. In the shifting net of power with the PCE the ostensibly
powerless wives of leading men used their knowledge of the ‘system’ to set up a
parallel system with equivalent committees but run by women. Although they would
not have named it so, I believe these women were aware of the ‘power-within’ that
gave them confidence and the assurance that what they were doing was in
response to the call of God and appropriate way to serve His purposes.

They used their position of privilege to take control (power) over the nascent
organisation, and used their networks with other like-minded and socially
positioned women to start committees at every level.

The Board of the WMA were responsible for the appointing of missionaries and
raising and spending money at home and in the field. Because they had financial
control this gave these women their own agency – they did not have to ask or
report to the committees of the church before doing as they felt best for the
mission in the areas where they had send women to work. The Founding mothers of
the WMA were wealthy middle-class women and doing charitable work was how
many such women spent their days. The men of the PCE did not foresee that the
Association, which Band neatly contrives to attribute to the Synod of 1877, would
take on a life of its own, led by able and intelligent women throughout its history.380
Band reports that the Synod “…would welcome the formation of special Associations
on the part of the ladies of the Church for the encouragement of this work”.381 The
work referred to was the girl’s schools started in Swatow by missionary wives.

Perhaps the women would have struggled for their autonomy if the FMC had been
lacking in funds, but at the outset two sources of income were available to it; first,
the new church eager to take its place on the mission field allocated monies to the
FMC, secondly, the Scottish Auxiliary (which was a true auxiliary of the Scottish
Presbyterian Church) also assisted the PCE in both supplying the first two pioneer

381 Band, *Working His Purpose Out*, p576
missionaries and money to support them. The Barbour family of Bonskeid were the Presidents of the Auxiliary from before the formation of the PCE until 1946 and bequeathed money to the FMC as well as supporting the Scottish missions.\footnote{Band, Working His Purpose Out, p577} Thus, at the beginning of the story of the WMA, there was no call on their funds from the FMC.

The WMA sat in relationship to the PCE but outside its formal structures. This gave the women who led it considerable freedom to shape its workings. Although they emulated the male model in terms of visible structure, they did not have to abide by its rules, for they were outside it. The almost invisible barrier of autonomy liberated them from compliance with the PCE, unless they chose acquiescence. As good Presbyterians they recognised that they needed to be in close contact with the FMC and that the Synods needed to support their work. By creating a series of WMA committees at Synod level the WMA looked as if it were a regular organisation of the church. Some Synod moderators recognised that the WMA was not under their authority and from time to time concerns would be raised about this. However, the organisation was hugely successful and had created an interest in mission across almost the whole church. Despite the legacies and budget allocation from the PCE to the FMC it was often in deficit. Band is obliged to inform his readers

> In contrast with the serious annual deficit in the F.M. funds which occurred over many years, it is gratifying to notice that during the same period the W.M.A continued to maintain a credit balance. This satisfactory state of affairs may have been due to smaller commitments, greater keenness among its members or better organisation for enlisting funds. At any rate, there was no shortage, and actually in 1944 when its income amounted to £13,000, the W.M.A was able to contribute £1,000 to the F.M. accounts.\footnote{Band, Working His Purpose Out, p573-74}

Having financial power and a committed organisation of women gave the WMA political power as well; for many years they were able to withstand calls to join with the FMC, and succeeded in challenging the synods when the campaign to draw them into the structures of the church really began to find pace. The women of the WMA Committees, despite pressure from ministers and the resolutions of General Assembly still voted to maintain their autonomy. That they felt empowered to do so is, I believe, because they were secure in their ‘outsider’ identity. Resident aliens in the PCE, they both fitted in and yet held onto their otherness. At meetings for women, run by women, where men were invited to lead the worship (by virtue of ordination), but where prayer and Bible study would be shaped by women, the WMA branches felt confident to vote as they pleased, and as they believed that God
had called them. Their work was important to them and to those who benefited from it in foreign lands, and so they were able to long resist being drawn into the national structure, after all, they had a national structure of their own.

At the Board level, the WMA had considerable power to exercise; as applications for mission came into them, they had power over the selection of candidates, control over their training and the direction of their work. They formed the interviewing panel and read her application and the testimonials from her church and minister, they tested her Call and took the decision to accept or reject her, without any reference to the FMC. If a WMA missionary wanted to marry, the Board had to concur with her decision; in the field they took the decision to move her to another station; from the home base they fixed her stipend and allowances. The members of the Board understood fully the enormity of their decisions, for the woman involved, for the mission field and for the integrity of the church. They wanted the best candidates for the field because they wanted to offer the best to God.

By its creation of a large network of regional committees and representatives in local churches and its reach into the Sunday schools via the largely female teaching force, the WMA had numerical power over against the efforts of the FMC, whose regional committees communicated with the local churches via written reports and appeals and through the use of missionaries on furlough. The FMC engendered much interest in overseas mission, for as long as that remained a priority of congregations and/or their ministers, but they did not have the same reach into the life of the local churches. The FMC never offered the possibility of “sponsoring” a missionary, as the WMA did, thus giving a church or Synod, or WMA local committee ‘ownership’ of the mission itself, and a degree of power over how the money it had raised was being used. Although the WMA appeared deferential to the structures of the church, and indeed, their own committee structure mirrored that of the FMC, their wide-ranging network gave them the subversive power of presence. Once there were women in the roles of advocates for mission in local congregations, it was difficult to question their right to speak up and speak out on behalf of the WMA, and, by extension, the heathen millions who needed to hear the gospel. The WMA also became powerful in that those in the network who saw their task as Christian women to raise awareness of the needs of mission field also sought to raise funds to send missionaries to that same field. Their fundraising was hugely successful and again stood over against the methods of the FMC which relied on appeals and congregational donations to the FMC funds. This success made it difficult for the FMC to rein in the work of the WMA because it was so visible in the local congregations.

"Women’s work for women” had become a mantra for those who advocated sending women into the mission field, both wives and single women, and pioneering work
had been done with women by women from the earliest days of Protestant missions. This slogan played into two ideologies around women that prevailed in Victorian England and which would resonate long into the twentieth century. First, the idea of Christian Womanhood – the woman as an example of how to live as a follower of Christ. Women were imbued with purity, peace-making and prayerfulness, and could model these qualities to the heathen women in the mission field. These attributes, different from those of “Christian Manliness” endowed women with a power to embody Christian ideals in the mission field and thus be an effective and strong bearer of the gospel. Secondly, the belief that the transmission of the gospel in the home lay in the power of the mother. The role of Susannah Wesley in the teaching of John and Charles is celebrated in Methodism and provides a template for women with children. If Christian women were the means by which heathen women were converted, then the newly-Christianised women would teach their children (and more importantly, their sons) the faith and the gospel would spread throughout the world. The WMA used both of these ideas in its justification for sending women into the field, but as we have seen, and as was the case with many women in mission situations, once the WMA missionaries were in the field as well as doing “women’s work”, they also acted with autonomy and under their own agency to preach and teach in the places they were sent. The supposed powerlessness of women in India and China was pressed into service to empower the women who would go to the mission field.

This idea of women’s solidarity with other women was used by the WMA as a tool for fundraising and for telling the stories of success in the field. The magazine of the WMA was entitled “Our Sisters in Other Lands”, immediately marking it out as a publication for women. Here, again, was an area in which the WMA was able to exercise power that would not have been available through the FMC; women edited and oversaw the processes of printing and distribution of the magazine. Copy for it was gathered from the reports of missionaries and the activities of the local branches giving visibility to the work of women both in the exotic climes of the mission field and in the churches and communities where they lived. As well as the power of production, the WMA used to the full the power of communication; their literature was in every household in the PCE, and the Chairs of the Branches highlighted stories and appeals at the WMA meetings, the Sunday School teachers meetings and in the Church meeting. The centre was always in contact with the churches and always accessible to answer questions and organise speakers or lantern-slide shows.

The WMA Board also had power over the information that was sent into the churches; the reports from the field came into them, they had the final editorial decision over what went into Our Sisters and what was unsuitable reading for the
money-giving congregations. When missionaries were home on Furlough, it was the London Board that decided where their speaking engagements would take them and what aspects of the work were to be emphasised. From the national committee came special appeals and the big conferences where women could meet up from all over the country and compare notes on the work that they did in local congregations as well as meeting missionaries who could tell their story and encourage the Branch Associations. These meetings, as well as local ones, were important; here friendships were forged and renewed, creating powerful relationships among the women of the church and the WMA at every level. These supportive relationships strengthened the dedication to the cause of mission as well as developing bonds of co-operation between branches and individuals.

In winning the war for hearts and minds, the WMA were far more skilled than the FMC, understanding the importance of the relationship between donor and project, and the need for continual updates and fresh information.

### 6.10 Power and the WMA: Struggle and Resistance

Until the 1920s the WMA operated as it would; from then on the pressure to amalgamate with the FMC would become insistent. The WMA committee acted within its own power, and some decided that this was ‘un-Presbyterian’. By the 1920s this was causing concern among the men of the church, as can be seen in a letter from J.M. Molyneaux dated December 1922 to Mrs Bell of WMA Committee, following the moderators speech to the General Meeting of the WMA on 30th November:

Molyneaux refers to Moderator Robertson’s praise of the work of the WMA as well as his dissatisfaction with its status ... as being both inside the church but outside the authority of the Synod. Despite his enthusiasm for the efforts of the WMA, Moderator Robertson clearly sees the women in the role of ‘helpmeet’ for the men of the church, and this in itself would alarm the women, who had no intention of yielding control to the FMC.

Mr Robertson spoke enthusiastically of the efficient work done by the W.M.A., its zeal, its organisation, its success ... also of the splendid service rendered by women throughout the Church and how glad the men were to receive their help. They welcome women to deacon’s courts, managers

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384 A charge levelled at the WMA as early as 1910, in a document headed RELATIONS of the FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE and the W.M.A., PCE/WMA Box 14, 1910 minutes of meetings, SOAS Archive
meetings and even to the eldership. It was regretted that the W.M.A. stood on a different footing ... and grave dissatisfaction was expressed.

The W.M.A. was outside the church and yet drew its resource from the church. The church had no control over the W.M.A.

The Moderator’s speech was the first public shot across the bows of the WMA in a bid to encourage “joint working” and an amalgamation of the WMA and the FMC. Following the ‘un-Presbyterian’ charge of 1910, a circular letter was sent to the Presbyteral chairmen of the WMA, which points out the financial crisis for missions in general at this time and asks should the church retrench? A rhetorical question of course, the need for world evangelisation being at the forefront of mission thinking. The letter acknowledges that the FM Committee has been using reserves for its work and only then does it turn to the work of the W.M.A. speaking of “the knowledge, interest and felt responsibility with regard to Foreign Mission work which the W.M.A. has fostered and increased among the women of the Church...”

then...

The funds of the F.M. and the W.M.A are quite separate. The W.M.A. take the responsibility of sending out more than thirty ladies to the foreign field and of supporting the work done by them. One common fund may sound theoretically a better plan, but we believe that divided responsibility works better. We love our Association which has to many meant spiritual upbuilding and outlet for loving service, and we claim that the W.M.A. takes a large and important share in the work of Foreign Missions

The funds of the W.M.A. are barely sufficient to meet present expenses, the balance last year between receipts and expenditure being only £30 19s 6d. This year further salaries have to be met and the F.M. Councils at various centres are urging on us to send ladies to Chianghoa, Swabue and N.Hakka-land where as yet ladies have not been permanently stationed. It would therefore in no way help the present strain simply to divert W.M.A. funds to the use of F.M. funds, and we appeal to the love and loyalty of members of the W.M.A. to see that this does not occur.

Finally the letter urges the branches to assist with raising money for the F.M. shortfall. This very political document is carefully crafted to show support for the FMC whilst making clear the position of the WMA with regard to both joint working and the allocation of funds. Whilst asking for assistance with the FM shortfall, this is not to replace the regular giving to the WMA.

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385 As noted above, women elders were extremely rare, certainly before the 1940s, nor does one get the impression that women were “welcomed”!
386 Letter to Mrs Molyneaux, dated December 1922. PCE/WMA Box 11, SOAS Archive
387 Circular letter, dated 30 May 1910, PCE/WMA Box 14, 1910 minutes of meetings SOAS Archive
This resistance to joint working would persist for as long as was possible: within the branches there was no appetite for the WMA becoming a part of the FM Committees, and the Presbyteries consistently voted for the organisations to remain separate.

6.11 The Girl’s Auxiliary and the WMA: Struggle and Resistance

In the meantime, this was not the only power dynamic within which the WMA operated; held in tension with the FMC, the WMA had to negotiate its relationship with the GA, an organisation that the WMA had started and supported, which was a part of its fund-raising and awareness raising among the local congregations and which, rather like the WMA, had taken on a life of its own.

The GA was a source of recruitment for the WMA and some forty GA members candidated for the mission field. However, the WMA had always seen the GA as a source of WMA members, especially in the local branches, but the young women who found friendship and a spiritual space of their own in the GA meetings did not easily become part of the women’s committees. No upper age limit for the GA had been set, and ‘girls’ in their thirties remained in the GA where they had control over the programme that they followed, the speakers invited and the Bible study time that they set aside, rather than become junior members of the Branch committee.

The WMA national committee tried in vain to persuade its unruly daughter to behave. Letters and minutes exhort GA members to leave the GA and join the WMA branch associations; all fell on deaf ears. In theory, the WMA were those with the power; the auxiliary was just that and reported to the WMA. The ‘Girls’ should do as they were bid; but the GA exercised the power of a daughter over a mother. They just carried on doing what they wanted to do, all the time smiling and being polite, but not moving into meetings that they found too business-like, and dull.

As early as 1913 this tendency could be seen, a minute of Tuesday 10th December 1912 reads

> It was agreed to invite two members of the G.A. in addition to the President to become members of the W.M.A. Committee.388

In February of 1913 another minute records

> A letter was read from Miss Moore Anderson thanking the Committee on behalf of the G.A. for the offer of additional representation. While deeply appreciating the opportunity given to them, the President, Secretary and Treasurer find it is impossible for them to attend regularly, so they

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388 Minutes of meeting of the WMA Executive Committee, 1912, PCE/WMA Box 1, file 4, SOAS Archive
suggested that three of the six London officers might be empowered to attend. On the proposal of Mrs Johnston, seconded by Mrs Macpherson, the committee cordially agreed to this change.\(^{389}\)

I suspect that the GA officers did not want too close a scrutiny of their activities, and were in a position to allocate some other members of the GA to sit on a committee that they found irksome.

In the GA there was the opportunity to hold office and to have sway over the meeting; the women of the WMA Branches were not going to move aside for these younger women to take their place as chairman, treasurer or secretary, positions that carried weight and power in themselves. Even ordinary members of the committee had a place within the congregation that they would not otherwise have attained – the main committees were only exceptionally open to women and then to very few, within the structures of the WMA women could fulfil a calling to serve the church in the same ways as the men. Because of the success of the WMA across the whole church, the women in the local branches received back some of that reflected glory and gained status and credibility within their own church communities. Before the First World War for the majority of women it was only in organisations such as this that they could achieve recognition of their skills and talents.

Rebecca Chopp says:

Analysis of political and social institutions, of how they relate to and reinforce or disrupt the concepts and myths, composes the third element of the study of gender. The church as an institution has long promulgated ideologies of the superiority of men and inferiority of women in its social organizations as well as in its myths and theories. [and] The refusal to allow women to occupy positions of religious leadership outside of women’s organizations reinforced patriarchal myths and concepts. Paradoxically, however, the training that women received in these women’s organizations in the late nineteenth century may well have contributed to women’s move into the public realm...\(^{390}\)

The dynamic that Chopp describes can be clearly seen in the WMA and the GA and their relationship to the PCE and, indeed, to each other, as the WMA having created a structure akin to the patriarchy of the PCE, behaved in ways that also reflect the assumed authority of the male committees. The WMA with its assumed superiority as the longer established body and its greater power over all aspects of the work of mission, was willing to undermine the GA, and in the end to sacrifice it. The PCE

\(^{389}\) Minutes of meeting of the WMA Executive Committee, 1913, PCE/WMA Box 1, file 5 SOAS Archive

essentially claimed that the amalgamation with the FOY was for the GA’s own good – an assertion made without listening to the voice of the young women involved and in which the WMA were complicit. In all this conflict, the national synod assumed superiority over both the women’s organisations, regardless of the strictly legal position which made them separate and autonomous.

Again, this dynamic is seen at work in the WMA and the GA; these women took their women’s organisations and made them a place where identity was forged. The organisational identity was significant in showing to the church that women could effectively run a missionary organisation, that young women could arrange and promote a national conference, that together they could be responsible for the creation of a seat of learning that commanded respect. Just as significant was the identity that belonging to the WMA or the GA provided, ordinary women in the church were part of a work of the Kingdom that was over against their role as wives and mothers, even as workers, they were part of the missionary enterprise. For some it was an opportunity to chair meetings, to hold office and to be heard in the church meeting. Within the WMA and the GA women developed the skills that had hitherto been the preserve of the men of the church.

The Great War in Europe had a massive impact on the social structure of the country but did not seriously affect overseas mission in the field. In secular society in England that pattern of social disruption opening doors for women that were previously closed could be clearly seen as women were called into the workplace to fill the jobs left by men who had volunteered or been sent to the front. Women doctors were afforded the opportunity to treat male patients; women were employed in clerical positions in large numbers. And although a limited number of women were given the right to vote in 1918, the doors that had opened were firmly closed once again, the marriage bar in most jobs was reinstated and where women retained the right to work, they were paid less than their male counterparts. The less affluent women in the WMA and members of the GA would have shared this experience and perhaps this would affect the ways in which they viewed the FMC and the Fellowship of Youth as they attempted to encroach on the territory of the women of the church.

The WMA had been quite subversive in the way in which it set up and organised itself - hiding in plain view – camouflaged as a legitimate committee of the EPC whilst having its own constitution and rules and wielding power in its own right. For many years this was, if not overlooked by the men of the Assembly committees, at least tolerated. With money and numbers behind them the women had economic power that it would be difficult for the FMC to challenge. However, the Missionary conferences and their continuing committees had suggested that the Auxiliaries of Missionary Societies be more fully integrated with their founding bodies. Although
the WMA was not an auxiliary this recommendation gave the FMC fuel with which to ignite the discussion about the WMA joining the FMC. The negotiations were long and protracted. They affected the GA as well; if the WMA was to become a partner, co-worker, a subsidiary of the FMC then the GA could not continue to have a life of its own either.

Already the GA funds had been divided between the WMA and the FMC in line with the division of money from the FOY, some of which was allocated to the mission of the church (i.e. the FMC). Greater working together with the FOY was suggested and by 1931, this was theoretically in place. The WMA, fighting their own battles with the FMC, were willing to sacrifice their daughter organisation to the FOY to buy themselves some time to regroup and continue to resist the call to amalgamation. The correspondence seen above shows the reluctance of the GA national committee to accept that the WMA could make this decision for them and the way in which the WMA was determined to exercise its power over the organisation. The struggle between them allowed the WMA to flex her muscle before the Assembly committees, to show that the WMA was still a force to be reckoned with and would not meekly submit to the will of the FMC however much support it had from the EPC.

Despite all the resolutions the merger with the FOY would probably not have taken place in reality had not the Second World War intervened; at a local level the branches of the GA continued to meet, the emphasis on mission and on the fellowship that they found with one another over-riding the instruction to join with the FOY for activities. The promise had been that mission would be, and indeed always had been, a part of the remit of the FOY and so it would not disappear from the agenda. The presence of the GA members in the FOY meetings would encourage more focus on mission; they would lose nothing and gain a more varied programme. The GA members, however, could see that there would be greater competition for places on the organising committees and that the culture of the church favoured young men over young women, they could see, too that the more varied programme was inevitably going to seriously dilute the core purpose of the GA. Their passive-active resistance to joining with the FOY was a successful strategy; they could not be compelled to attend FOY meetings, their GA meetings were not disruptive of church life and if a room was not made available they could meet in a house. They were used to running their own meetings and organising themselves; it was business as usual until outside forces brought about change. As noted above, the effect of the War was to scatter the members of local branches and the opening up again of opportunities for paid work gave young women different priorities for their time and energies. The FOY continued into the late
1960s as a force within the life of the PCE but it was never at the forefront of raising awareness of mission or generating large sums of money for work overseas.

Giving up the GA was not the strong move that the WMA thought it to be. Although the GA did continue in its own way, it was no longer even semi-official in the local areas. This in turn weakened the influence of the WMA branches. The WMA conferences, nationally and at Presbyterial level had voted consistently to remain independent. Now more pressure was brought to bear on them to accept that it was best for men and women to work together for mission and both Boards to share responsibility for the workers in the field.

The WMA were at the centre of a complex web of power relationships; within the congregations of the church, the branch associations had given women a voice and agency that would have been difficult to otherwise achieve. The experiences of those women in the local committees would be put to use as the PCE elected more women to the eldership, and as they took places on committees of the wider church. This empowerment of women would probably not have taken place without the WMA. The women who served the WMA in local associations and branches wielded the cultural power needed to persuade others (and especially the men in their congregations) that women on committees, women taking decisions, women leading, was normative. This empowerment offered also to the younger women who made up the GA led to a complicated power relationship with that daughter organisation. The WMA, like Shiphrah and Puah the Hebrew midwives, had stood aside from the commands of those with explicit authority and done what God had called them to do. As the WMA birthed excitement for mission and nurtured their enterprise, so the GA, as it grew, watched and learned, and they too sought to stand aside from the authority of the WMA. At a time when these two women’s organisations with the same objectives could have stood together in solidarity, they struggled with both the FMC agenda to bring them under the control of the church and with the external social pressure of the war. The women abandoned the ‘girls’ to the control of the FOY, and in doing so weakened their own presence in the congregations and their case for remaining autonomous. There is no evidence of a deliberate attempt by the FMC to ‘divide and rule’ in the case of the two women’s organisations, but in effect that is what happened. I call to mind the story of Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16), women who could have stood in solidarity with each other, but who were divided by patriarchy. Setting woman against woman, Sarah against Hagar, the WMA against the GA ensures that the patriarchal system ‘wins’ and is perpetuated.

Once the WMA became a Committee of Synod, though it retained much power and has been shown above, negotiated more than a token voice in the running of mission overseas and in organising at home, nonetheless the women were subject
to the Synod, and the FMC became the body that deployed missionaries in the field, although the WMA could still make recommendations about a particular woman.

Foucault says Power is “… a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise [it] just as much as those over whom it is exercised “… and the WMA were caught in a web of power relationships. Having exercised their power over the GA, they found themselves vulnerable to being caught into the machinery of the committee structure, and the power of the outside forces in the Edinburgh continuation committees, the advent of war and the changed situation of the church brought pressure to bear that led to their capitulation. Thompson, writing of the American situation says,

there developed a strong impulse to “rationalise” missionary work and combine women’s boards with their male equivalents….Despite promises given, the number of women executives slumped” and just as significantly, it seems highly probable that the dissolution of these women’s boards also reduced missionary giving overall.

This was undoubtedly the situation within the PCE, although the continuation of the branches meant that the process of decline was slower than if there had been a full amalgamation which excluded the women and their own structures from the powerful committee system.

The WMA, though it had a voice on the FMC, lost its economic power and with it the power to determine the location and work of women missionaries. Their ‘church within the church’ the subversive sisterhood of branches and committees that seemed “authentic” but were autonomous could no longer operate as it had done in the past. And as the PCE made new decisions about its future, things would change again for the women of the church.

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7. Conclusion

Here I reflect on my personal journey through this research and how it has impacted my own practice in ministry and on what the URC might learn from the WMA. What insights and inspiration do the women with a passion for mission bring to the contemporary church? Is there a case for women working together alongside the usual structures of the church? Many interesting questions are also raised about the nature of empire, and of resistance which will require further study and consideration.

In considering the power relationships within the PCE, and the dynamic of power between the WMA and the GA, I have become more aware of the undercurrents of power in the congregation within which I minister. Talking to women who have been in the church community for many years, I have discovered the Women’s Friendship Circle to remain a place of social interaction with a history of serving the church in the sphere of domesticity – providing refreshments (sometimes on a grand scale) for events, cleaning the church and flower arranging. Along with these activities, women used the time together to discuss the life of the church and to share opinions which were then conveyed to the [male] deacons, along with an indication of the strength of feeling from the women’s meeting. The women I spoke with understood that this was a way of wielding power in the church which was denied to them through the formal structure of the diaconate. Later, when women were elected as deacons and later still to the eldership of the URC, the Friendship Circle played its part in continuing to shape activities and policy outside the church meeting at which few felt confident to speak. The other women’s group in the congregation is the Ladies Guild; this meeting engages speakers on a wide variety of topics as a means of keeping in contact with the wider community, both local and sometimes global (speakers from mission projects, Christian Aid and Campaign Against the Arms Trade featured in their 2014 programme). As well as this link to wider concerns, the worship has been led by women of the Guild since its formation in 1882. Choosing the readings and offering a short talk has encouraged women in their faith and in their ability to express that faith. The Guild has been a place of spiritual and emotional nurture for women in this church community.

Listening to the voices of the women in the congregation and reflecting on the ways in which the WMA organised has caused me to reflect on the nature of equality in the church. The experience of church meeting as a place for male voices to be heard from the floor of the church has encouraged me to use ‘break-out’ groups for discussion of many of the agenda items, especially where a variety of views are likely to be held. In these smaller groups, women (and some men) find the
confidence to speak, even to interrupt if the delegate reporting to the meeting from the group misrepresents an opinion. I have learned to seek to listen more closely to the hidden voices in the congregation, even if the business takes longer. I leave more space for prayer and for waiting on God in the meetings that I chair.

This recognition of the need to run the church meeting differently led me to also reflect on the nature of other committee meetings; in the councils of the church the model is still of a formal structure and adversarial speech as the tool for debate. Kirsteen Kim relates a story about a foreign student finding no space for the Holy Spirit in a service of worship in an English church. Perhaps a little less structure would allow the wind of the Spirit to blow more easily among the committee members in the URC? Is the traditional way of doing things too ingrained for change?

Paul tells us “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28). When the URC came into being in 1972, there was a decision that all the work of the church should be done in co-operation, men and women working together. For Presbyterian women this meant that both their overseas interest through the WMA committee and their home mission through the WHMC would cease; there were to be no formal women’s organisations in the URC.

Elaine Kaye, writing in Daughters of Dissent, seems to see this development as wholly positive, though she notes that “some have felt the lack of women’s organisations keenly”. I wonder why this has not been noted prior to the publication of Daughters of Dissent, and where the space would have been for those women’s voices to be heard. This was a harsh blow for the women who had found their identity in the life of the church through those women’s committees and the initiatives that they birthed. As with the demise of the Girl’s Auxiliary, the friendship groups remained, within the congregations the leadership and organisational skills of the women who had run local branches of the committees remained, if the church chose to utilise them. As well as this, much was lost; the sense of national unity, of common purpose and of a place within the life of the church that was for women and run by women, a way for women to be a part of the wider church. Women who would fear to attend the Synod meeting as a representative would be prepared to meet with other women for a common cause;

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395 Kaye, Lees and Thorpe, Daughters of Dissent, p48
396 Personal communication with a retired missionary whose sister had been very active in her church WMA, Summer 2013
they had confidence in their area of expertise. The promise of equality in the new church was not enough to make it happen; just as the vision of partnership was embraced by the mission strategists of the church long before the congregations began to grasp what it meant for mission, so the vision of co-operation would take its time in permeating the whole of the church. Women in eldership are now commonplace, but in some places prejudice against them remains. One woman elder in a church where I lead worship told me that when she had been nominated as an elder she was told quite bluntly that she had been asked “because none of the men will stand”, and this in 1980! There is an implicit assumption that women will not fulfil the role as well as a man, here articulated, and undermining one woman’s confidence thirty years on.

The first General Assembly of the new URC in October 1972, in its rules of procedure stated that

The Nominations Committee shall ensure that normally, in any committee not less than one quarter of the total membership (excluding ex-officio members) shall be men and not less than one quarter shall be women. A similar proviso shall apply in regard to ministerial and lay representation.

but by 1976, no woman chaired a department or a national committee; this would change over time, and women took their places in greater numbers on committees and in training for ordination during the late 1970s and the 1980s. It was not until 1990 that a woman was elected to the position of Moderator of a Provincial Synod. Since then, women have been Moderators of General Assembly and the General Secretary has also been a woman.

These women are in powerful positions, able to influence the direction of the Church, and are highly visible, however they do not necessarily represent the position of other women in the church. The power struggle for women has changed.

Chopp writes “…we know that we are already at the table”.

The question is, how do we make that place count? Do we [women] become part of the mainstream, accepting male ways of working and adopting male models to reach the positions which allow influence and agency, or do we, as Schüssler-

397 Personal communication, following church AGM March 2104, at which a call for Synod representatives had been made, a very competent member of The Guild apologised for not offering her services, stating that she would feel afraid to speak in the Synod meeting and feared that she would not be able to report back adequately to church meeting. She had just given the Annual report on the activities of The Guild.

398 Although officially churches may not discriminate between men and women in the process of calling a new minister, it is known that some churches will find many ‘reasons’ not to interview women. Personal communication from a Synod Moderator.

399 Quoted in Kaye, Lees, and Thorpe, Daughters of Dissent, p51

400 Chopp, Saving Work, p175

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Fiorenza suggests become ‘bilingual’, learning the male systems but living as resident aliens, ready to transform them from within? Ironically, the very visibility of women can be used against them: the URC can be at times self-congratulatory about its policies of inclusion, it can point to women in eldership, women convenors of committees and high-profile women in the church structures and assume that women have equal power and right to a voice, whilst ignoring the sexism and inequalities that spring from years of historical silencing of the voices of women.

In their struggle with the national Synod, the women of the WMA understood what they were likely to lose in joining with the FMC. Perhaps the URC might reflect on what it could gain from women working as women in certain areas of church life. Whilst inclusive language remains a sticking place for some congregations, it must be acknowledged that the place of women at the table remains below the salt despite one or two place names on the top table. One of the positive outcomes of the WMA was the confidence that it instilled in women to be more than their assigned role in society. For many women in the contemporary church such confidence would be a God-given gift. In both the WMA and the GA, women led other women in Bible study, and here is another area that could bear revisiting. I observe women give way to male opinion, and put their views only apologetically in Bible study sessions, I feel the suppressed anger and hear the sharp intake of breath when I (a woman) dare to suggest that Eve alone was not the cause of every sin known to humanity, or that Mary of Magdala is only a prostitute by repute and there is no verse that says so, and I see the conversation turned, and the group allow it. I wonder if it would be the same in a same-sex group? Without the knowledge of the confidence of GA members who would write Bible Study pamphlets for distribution within the Presbytery, I would not perhaps have observed so keenly the tentative nature of contributions by the women in the regular study group.

In the URC “mission” generally means working in and with the community in the vicinity of the church building. If the meaning is stretched, it includes supporting special projects and bodies such as Christian Aid. Mission is most likely equated with social action of some kind. The place in church life where the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), had held such sway has since been filled with local issues and pastoral care within the congregation. No longer is there a call from the man from Macedonia (Acts 16:9), rather a return to John 10:10 – abundant life, and in our own locality. Without the knowledge of the confidence of GA members who would write Bible Study pamphlets for distribution within the Presbytery, I wonder if it would be the same in a same-sex group? Without the knowledge of the confidence of GA members who would write Bible Study pamphlets for distribution within the Presbytery, I would not perhaps have observed so keenly the tentative nature of contributions by the women in the regular study group.

401 PCE/WMA Box 1, file 2, December 1907 minutes a report from Birmingham regarding Bible study notes.
prayerful reflection. There is a possibility that there will be too many Tabithas (Acts 10:36) and not enough Lydias (Acts 16:13-15) or women at the well (John 4:4-30). The national church has been preoccupied with falling numbers and internal debates about human sexuality; such concerns and debate have sapped the energy of some local congregations, yet from within the church there has also been a challenge to engage more with the Bible, pray and to take seriously the call to evangelism.  

There is a recognition here of the value of the approach taken by the WMA and GA in their Branches, for these were their guiding principles. Feminist theologians have encouraged women to look for the stories of women in the Bible, to wrestle with the text, to engage with the world and the church as women; this our foremothers in the WMA did, and to great effect in their desire to spread the Gospel and in empowering women within the PCE. Following the social change after the Second World War, and the excitement of the formation of a visible sign of ecumenism, the URC adopted the idea of mission as a local activity. Often, this is expressed in action but not proclamation. Vision for Life was intended to address this lack of confidence to speak the gospel as well as seeking to live out Kingdom values. From considering the work of David Bosch, and his restatement of the truth that mission begins with God, that it is the missio Dei in which we engage, I realised that as Kim so explicitly demonstrates, that the local must work with the global; that as well as joining in with God’s mission in our narrow context, even with other Christians in that place, it is necessary to reconnect with the idea of sisterhood (and brotherhood), of learning from the wider church. For my context, this may mean a re-evaluation of our church relationship with Christian Aid and a re-engagement with CWM.

In many ways, both the WMA and the GA were of their time, the changes that took place throughout their histories were as much to do with society, culture and politics as to do with theology, and the theology of mission was also influenced by those same factors. Women found their voice and their purpose in a mission focussed organisation, which was the springboard for many other creative developments – the GA with its conferences, the forty women it enthused to offer for a life of missionary service, and its close friendships – Carey Hall, an ecumenical venture in excellent missionary education – breaking the barriers to women sitting on national committees and reaching towards equality. All of this was enabled by their outsider status, by their use of their apparent powerlessness to build a power base among the congregations, so that they could fulfil their vision of women’s

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403 Vision4Life was a national initiative that ran from Advent 2008 to Advent 2011 with each of the liturgical years having a theme – the Bible, Prayer and Evangelism.
work for women. Women whose circumstances meant that they could not leave their town could by their efforts empower others to do just that.

As society changed, and women took advantage of opportunities in England, the WMA continued to raise funds and to recruit missionaries. Their collective purpose and commitment to the cause of mission, along with their bonds of friendship and solidarity gave them confidence in their calling.

It was when the two organisations ceased to be autonomous, ceased to be ‘resident aliens’ that they lost their power and urgency. How can the women of the URC today move outside the structure, evade the rules and escape the oppression of a patriarchal church? What might be the rallying call that makes us leave our water jars and go into the world to bring people to meet Christ? These are not easy questions, but we have an example of what an effective force women working together as women can be. As a Christian, I feel called to mission, both in the social action of the church but also in finding ways to tell the story of Jesus Christ and to invite others to come and see how life-affirming and life-transforming that encounter can be. During the writing of this thesis, I have had to confront my own received ideas about mission and the missionary call; those tales of heroines and heathens ran deep, as did the notion that mission was ‘over there’. I found that I was more a daughter of empire than I cared to be, but emerge, still a work in progress, more convinced of the ordinary humanity of missionaries past and encouraged to work where I am to join in with what God is already doing. No heroism required! That decision to engage more with CWM and the WCC is part of an ongoing reflection about partnership in mission. As a woman in a multi-cultural society, whilst always desiring to bring people to meet Christ, I am aware of sincere faith in Muslim and Hindu neighbours; respecting their beliefs enables conversation, if not conversion. As a preacher, engaging with Bosch and mission texts has been thought provoking, as has reading Christopher Wright and considering the metanarrative of the Bible as the foundation for mission.405

In reclaiming this part of the story of women of faith, and the ways in which they seized the initiative to follow their calling as Christian women, I hope that our collective remembering of history, and of the role of Presbyterian women in mission will help us to overcome the amnesia that has existed in regard to female followers of Christ before ordination and service on the main committees became a possibility. The WMA in its day, and beyond, as a committee of the Presbyterian Church was a driving force for mission, the resourcing of mission, Christian education of congregations and Sunday school classes and for the discipleship and

spiritual growth of hundreds of young women, some of whom are now wise, older women in the Church.

“You draw your long skirts deviant across the nineteenth century
registering injustice failing to make it whole
how can I fail to love your clarity and fury
how can I give you all your due take courage from your courage
honor your exact legacy as it is
recognizing as well that it is not enough?”

Appendix 1

From the Constitution, Organisation and Rules of the Women’s Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of England, revised 1905

Relations of the WMA to its missionaries

Salaries: not exceeding £15.00 per annum, and not exceeding £120.00 until 2nd language exam has been passed.

£50.00 for outfit, and £50.00 for medical instruments if needed. Housing provided. The cost of passage to the field and return for furlough will be paid.

Four years is the minimum length of service and the Missionary, previous to her departure, shall be required to sign an agreement, setting forth the terms of her engagement, and binding herself, in case of her breaking her engagement with the Committee by marriage or for any cause other than ill-health, within the specified number of years, to repay the Committee the sums paid for her outfit and passage, a proportional part being deducted for every year which she shall have served in terms of her engagement – the said number of years to be reckoned from the date of her arrival in the country where she is to labour.

Six months’ notice of resignation but if she resigns within the number of years specified, will repay costs as above and is not entitled to passage home.

If the Missionary is subject to instant dismissal (e.g. incapacity to work with others, insubordination to the Home Committee) passage will be paid home.

Normal terms of service

China, furlough after seven years’ service, then every five

India, furlough after five years’ service then every five.

After January 1899 all missionaries are expected to take out a policy with North British and Mercantile Insurance Company for a life annuity commencing at age 55

It is expected that there will be regular correspondence with the Committee, annual reports, quarterly accounts and letters suitable for publishing.

Language study is to be undertaken for two years

Mission Councils are to be convened and business conducted, as well as monthly conferences.
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