

**WOMEN AND EMPOWERMENT:
STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE LIBERATION OF
WOMEN FROM OPPRESSION**

by

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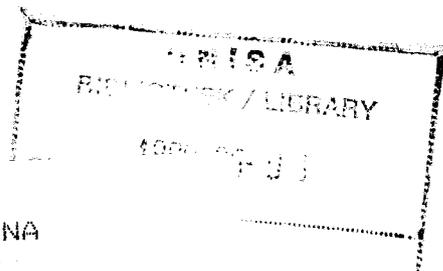
NOVEMBER 1998

"I declare that *Women and Empowerment: Strategies to achieve the liberation of women from oppression* is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references".

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Abstract :

Women and Empowerment:

Strategies to achieve the Liberation of Women from Oppression.

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Summary : Women today continue to struggle against male-dominated values and norms, and male prejudices, both in society and the Church. This balance of power needs to be altered to free women from the domination of men.

The strategies proposed in this dissertation are based on the Christian ethic of justice and equality. Their implementation, I argue, would empower women to resist oppression, independently of men, to achieve liberation and equality so that male-dominated ideologies and structures could no longer oppress.

A case study of women ministers in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa revealed discrimination against, and the limitation of the ministries of women clergy. The ethical dilemma of the Church appearing to follow, rather than to lead society on such issues was noted.

The attainment of the liberation of women is dependent solely upon themselves and the extent to which they are prepared to take responsibility for their own lives.

Title of thesis :

**WOMEN AND EMPOWERMENT: STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE
LIBERATION OF WOMEN FROM OPPRESSION**

Key terms :

Women and equality; Women's oppression; Liberation strategies; Women and empowerment; Strategies for women; Women ministers; The Methodist Church of Southern Africa; Language and stereotypes; Gender roles; Social conditioning and gender bias

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Heather Elaine Venables
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INTRODUCTION

"I asked a Burmese why women, after centuries of following their men, now walk ahead.

He said there were many unexploded land mines "

Robert Mueller

"But if God had wanted us to think with our wombs, why did he give us a brain?"

Clare Boothe Luce

The Church and the secular world in which we find ourselves today remains, as in centuries past, patriarchal and male-dominated. Against this background my dissertation on women and empowerment seeks to understand how such a situation of domination over women came about, and how women have reacted to this oppression by men. Finally, it provides strategies to achieve the liberation of women.

This dissertation has been written from a Christian ethical, and a feminist perspective. My understandings of the subject at hand stem from my experiences as a woman who spent a short time in the Methodist Ministry and as a feminist who is concerned about the oppression of women, as well as the apparent co-existence of apathy and the inability of women to raise themselves from their oppressed state. My thinking follows that of feminist theology, whose aim is to promote "the full humanity of women" (Ruether 1983:18), and whose methodology investigates the experiences of oppressed women against the background of the patriarchal society and religion by which women have been adversely affected. The feminist theology to which I ascribe "is concerned to see the end of the oppression of women. Their [sic] goal is the recognition of the full humanity and equal status of women and the empowerment of the female sex, which will enable women to discover, develop and exercise their God-given gifts and abilities, both in the Church and society" (Kretzschmar 1993:103). A second concern of mine is that the

Church, which I believe should lead and teach society on ethical matters, appears content to ignore what is taking place in society, even if this goes against the very tenets of its own existence.

This situation was made clear in the case study of women in the ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa¹ which was undertaken in an attempt to define the prevailing attitudes towards women in this ministry. Personal experience and the writings and experiences of other women and several ministers indicated that prejudices against women which operated so prolifically in the world, were also to be found within the Church as a whole and within the MCSA. The aim of this case study was to establish to what extent this was in fact true. Much of what was revealed in this study was reinforced by the research carried out by other authors and researchers, as well as by personal experience. Also emanating from this study was the perception that the Church, rather than leading society on ethical issues and moral questions, seems, in this regard at least, to merely reflect the prevailing attitudes of society outside the Church.

Although not all ethics are Christian, Christian values are ethical. This is because, "Every system of ethics must have some ultimate basis of goodness and obligation; [and] *God is the basis of Christian ethics*" [My italics] (Mott 1982:23). Barclay defines ethics as "the science of behaviour" (1971:13). This behaviour and its underlying values, in a Christian context would include: the 'right' and the 'wrong' of something; the 'good' of equality and the 'evil' of oppression and domination; the acceptability of people's behaviour towards one another. In addition to this, however, Christianity and Christian ethics are also concerned about the intention behind, and the consequences of, a particular act.

Albert Schweitzer attributes ethics and ethical thought and behaviour to the concept of 'Reverence for Life'. What he writes is not only applicable to people and their relationship with the world in a general sense; it also speaks pertinently about our

¹ Afterwards known as the MCSA.

relationships with one another as humans. He wrote²:

Ethics is nothing else than reverence for life. Reverence for life affords me my fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, assisting and enhancing life, and that to destroy, to harm or to hinder life is evil.

(Schweitzer, in Joy 1967:259-260)

Equally unequivocal in the ethical demands it makes on a person, is the question³:

What shall be my attitude toward other life? It can only be of a piece with my attitude towards my own life. If I am a thinking being, I must regard other life than my own with equal reverence. For I shall know that it longs for fulness (sic) and development as deeply as I do myself. Therefore, I see that evil is what annihilates, hampers, or hinders life. And this holds good whether I regard it physically or spiritually. Goodness, by the same token, is the saving or helping of life, the enabling of whatever life I can influence to attain its highest development.

(Schweitzer, in Joy 1967:262)

Schweitzer is concerned not only with the inherent 'goodness' of a person or the 'rightness' of an act (a deontological approach) *per se*; his concern about the latter is founded in his knowledge of the effect which such 'goodness' or 'rightness' and morality will have on life and creation as a whole (a teleological approach).

The message that, enhancing life is 'good' and hindering life is 'evil'; and that all life must be regarded with the same reverence one affords one's own life, is not only intrinsic to Schweitzer's thought, but to the very essence of Christianity itself. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* defines the verb "to oppress" as, to "keep in subservience by coercion", or, to "govern or treat harshly or with cruel injustice", while Kretzschmar defines it as "the imposition of the will of a certain person or group to the detriment of the latter" (1995:159). If one examines the concept of oppression, in the light of this, it reveals itself to be completely unethical and non-Christian. Thus the

² In *Civilization and Ethics*, Part II of *The Philosophy of Civilisation*. Translated by C.T. Campion. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929:xvi).

³ In "The Ethics of Reverence for Life." *Christendom*, Vol.I, No.2 (Winter, 1936:230).

question of discrimination against women and the oppression of women by men and by male-dominated structures, is a Christian ethical issue. It is an issue on which Christians ought not to be divided; it is something which should be absent in Christian churches; and it is a system which the churches should be leading the way to eradicate.

One way in which to attain equality for all humans, based on a respect for their humanity, would be to engender the ethic of Reverence for Life in people. However, the Christian ethic of love and equality is not very different from what Schweitzer has proposed, and yet there are many, among them people claiming to be Christians, who do not espouse the ideal, or the practice, of the equality of men and women. The problem, therefore, does not lie in the terminology of morality, or in the ethical foundations of what Schweitzer, or Christianity, advocate. The true problem is that people will not adhere to such ethical principles. It is no secret that many people who believe they are Christian do not reflect Christ-like values, yet they have the desire to link themselves to this religion.

The establishment of the equality of men and women would be complete were Christian ethics dominant in the world today. Since they are not, I have attempted to provide a system of strategies which could be implemented by women, to achieve their liberation from oppression, which neither require the assistance of men, nor a transformation of the mindsets of people, apart from those of women themselves, before they can begin to be successfully implemented.

Since I am concerned with the question of women's equality and women's liberation, and the attitudes and behaviour of people in society which have prevented such equality from existing, it may be thought appropriate to follow a deontological approach. However in my study, the problem with such an approach is that in using positive, or Government Law as a reflection of the values or norms of a society, one is not necessarily achieving an ethic which is considered 'right'. It is well known, especially to South Africans, how laws can be inherently wrong, unethical and evil, reflecting the prevalence of evil in that society as a whole; or how the laws and norms of society can be

influenced, or determined by powerful individuals or dominant groups within that society, whose interests are not in what is considered to be good, or right, or just, but rather in what is advantageous for them. Thus, while I am concerned with what is intrinsically right and ethical in the way in which humans are treated, it is obvious from the way in which society as a whole denigrates women, that different interpretations of what is 'right' or 'ethical', exist. Furthermore, the evidence of the existence of Natural Law and the universal principles of 'right and wrong' said to be inherent in people, cannot be regarded presently as having a major influence on people's behaviour, especially towards one another, if the current attitudes and ideologies on gender are anything to go by. Because of this, I cannot follow a deontological approach in this study.

Consequently, the ethical approach I have used is predominantly teleological. My primary concern is with the attainment of a specific goal: the empowerment and the liberation of women. Secondly, it is to convey the understanding that, if women are to bring about a particular result or to achieve a particular situation, namely their equality in status, and in the opportunities open to them, women must take the appropriate actions to ensure that this does indeed occur. While I do not doubt the ethical nature of the actions and strategies I have proposed, in terms of the teleological approach, any actions could arguably be morally justifiable if they served to promote or cause an ethical conclusion (Kretzschmar 1993). The establishment of the equality of women and men would be the achievement of such an ethical conclusion.

In this dissertation I have sought not only to present the problems women face because of their oppression, and the obstacles which stand in the way to their liberation, nor have I attempted to discuss the evils of oppression *per se*. Rather, I have tried to concentrate on what women can, and I believe should be doing, in order to reclaim their rightful position of equality, and to assert their God-given value as humans.

CHAPTER I : THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

In the previous chapter the fact that oppression is unethical, and that it is unChristian, was indicated. In this chapter an analysis of the oppression of women, because they are women, will be undertaken. Thereafter an attempt will be made to establish what it is that has caused women, as a group of people in society, to be oppressed. The reasons for such oppression will therefore be examined.

1.1. THE CATEGORY OF WOMEN

When one refers to the oppression of women as in my title, *Women and Empowerment: Strategies to achieve the Liberation of Women from Oppression*, this assumes that women are a particular category or group of people in society. Are women a separate category in terms of their being oppressed and therefore in being an entire group which needs to be liberated? Should women be a separate group within society or indeed humanity as a whole?

On the one hand there is the argument that women need to unite with those who suffer similar oppression to themselves, in order to gain in strength so as to be able to alter the balance of power which they would not be able to do if they acted individually. By acting together, women are also indicating that they are a group in society which is oppressed because of their belonging to that group. This should not create the impression that women are to be regarded in my thinking as a homogenous group in all areas and experiences of their lives. I simply group them together here as a category of people who have been oppressed because of belonging to this category, i.e., because they are women. It should be clearly understood, therefore, that women are not oppressed incidentally, and it is no co-incidence that all women happen to be oppressed by men; rather, women are oppressed because they are women. There are women who are also oppressed for other reasons (viz., race, religion, class) and some of these women are thus oppressed for these very reasons, other than, and in addition to their being discriminated against and oppressed as women.

The most important ethical issue here is not firstly to establish that humans should all be treated equally, but rather, in order to eradicate the oppression of women, one has firstly to establish in the minds of all people the understanding and the acceptance that women are human. As a result of this, i.e. their humanity, women should therefore not be oppressed but treated as equal to male humans in society.

Another argument to be considered, is that when women unite, as a group, these women may then first be regarded as women and secondly as human. This identification of oneself as woman, before one's identification as human, could, arguably, detract from a woman's humanity. Any detraction, separation or exclusion from 'humanity', on the basis of the pre-eminence of being categorised as a woman, would negate the argument that the woman should be accepted as equal to the male human on the basis of her humanity. The question to be asked therefore, is whether, as a woman seeking equality, she should align herself as 'woman', with the group called 'women' to fight for her equality; or whether she should insist on her equality on the basis that she is a human, albeit a human in female form. Are these two standpoints necessarily mutually exclusive, or could one maintain the identity of both groups, woman and human, simultaneously, if one is to enable this liberation of women to take place?

A Christian ethical approach would advocate an understanding of the equality of women, on the basis of their humanity, and therefore expect just treatment and ethical behaviour by other people. In the absence of the prevalence of such a Christian ethic, however, and faced with the pragmatic necessity of mobilising women in society to action, one would most likely find that focusing on the fact that a woman belongs to the group 'women' would be more successful than focusing solely on her humanity.

1.1.1 Women united, or merely categorised together?

A dilemma is created for women when they are described as a category of persons. For example, in the clichéd category of 'wives and mothers' women are seen as "the other" in relation to men, who are not usually referred to by the umbrella term 'husbands and fathers'. Men are regarded as men from puberty, and their relations with women neither

define nor detract from their manhood. They are not regarded as beings only in relation to women, nor are they regarded as 'the opposite' of women, but always and simply as men.

It is significant to note that single women would not fit into the category of women here since they cannot be defined in relation to men in terms of wives or mothers (assuming that they do not have any children); neither would they fit into the category of men, since they are female. As a result of not being able to be classified in this instance as woman or man, the single woman can therefore not be regarded as being human. For, to be human one has to be a woman or a man, and if woman is equated with wife or mother, and therefore is only acknowledged as someone, as a woman, if she is a wife or a mother, then the single woman who is neither wife nor mother, cannot be a woman and subsequently, she cannot be regarded as human. I would not accept the use of the phrase "the third sex" which some have suggested would be appropriate to describe the single woman, in order for oppressors of women to find a way out of the dilemma which they have created here for themselves. This example should indicate the problems that arise when women are only given an identity in their relationships with men, and not because of their humanity.

Women do, however, face a dilemma in deciding how best to tackle their oppression by men. If women do not fight for their liberation together, because they have been grouped together in being oppressed by men, then they may not possess the strength to overcome their oppressors. But if women, as a single group, resist their oppression by men, are they not, in aligning themselves as one gender, woman, against another gender, man, reinforcing the traditionally accepted differences between women and men? Surely the highlighting of such differences could lead women and men into the stereotypical and pre-cast roles which society has prepared for them, which will achieve the opposite of that which women would be hoping to achieve by their mobilisation into such a group? In the light of such emphases on the differences between women and men, the categorisation of women as a homogenous group, (homogenous in terms of their experiences of male oppression because they are women), shows Riley to be perceptive

when she asks, "What are the conditions for any joint consciousness of women, which is more than the mutual amity or commiseration of friends and relatives?" (Riley 1988:10). She continued, answering that, "perhaps it could be argued that in order for 'women' to speak as such, such formal consolidation of 'men against women' is the gloomy prerequisite" (Riley 1988:10). It may sound familiar, and even be realistic to assume that where there are two different groups (defined as different by whatever means) in a society, these two groups would be against each other, working and living in opposition to each other. This may largely be true, and a fair reflection of what generally does take place in our lives, but it does not have to be so. If women speak as women, and for women, it does not naturally follow that they are against, or antagonistic towards, men. It simply means that women are being themselves and choosing for themselves as women, expressing the type of human they *are*, and not as 'humans-in-relation-to-men' or as 'the opposite sex', as a complement to men. It may be that Riley is reflecting a common perception, the 'war of the sexes', but unconsciously, it seems, this view may also be seen as a sign of her pessimistic outlook on the possibility of empowering women to achieve equality.

Furthermore, one may have to argue that one needs to emphasise that one is a woman, not so as to create tension between women and men, nor to push women further into the so-called 'women's realm' in society to which she is expected to adhere, but rather because there are many who equate the man, or men with humanity. Gatens is correct when she suggests that males are almost regarded as sexually neutral. Not only this, but men also seem to be regarded in society as 'the norm', with women thus being placed in the 'abnormal', or opposite', or 'sexually identifiable' category. Ackermann cites the interesting observation of Dorothy L Sayers - what she calls "the prevailing myth in society that women are unlike men: they are 'the *opposite sex*', not 'the *neighbouring sex*'" (My italics) (Ackermann 1991:93). This is especially interesting in the light of the Creation story, where no notion of the concept of opposites in people or the rest of creation, was reflected; rather a fellowship, a sense of neighbourliness, and togetherness was present.

Instead of regarding 'human' as being the norm, incidentally in the form of either a woman or a man, the following is what usually takes place:

...The apparently sexually neutral human subject turns out to be implicitly a male subject whose 'neutrality' is conceptually dependent on the 'shadow' conception of the female subject. ...The male subject is constructed as self-contained and as an owner of his person and his capacities, one who relates to other men as free competitors with whom he shares certain politico-economic rights. While he has rights to privacy and self-improvement, he relates to women as though they were a natural resource and complement to himself. The female subject is constructed as prone to disorder and passion, as economically and politically dependent on men, and these constructions are justified by reference to woman's nature. She 'makes no sense by herself' and her subjectivity assumes a lack which males complete. She is indistinguishable from wife/mother. ...It is [the male] which is often presented as, in essence, sexually neutral. The agency of this subject is closely connected to its ability to separate itself from and dominate nature. The domination and control of the human body and its needs and desires by the sexually neutral mind sets the terms for modern debates on sexual roles and functions.
(Gatens 1991:5)

Clearly, the man is seen here as a person, a being who engages in various activities and relations which do not alter or affect his person. Being a woman is seen here as fitting into a particular role or vocation, without which she 'makes no sense'. It is unimportant who the woman is; what is important is that she is a wife and/or mother. In this way, and through her links to men, she becomes someone. She is not a person in her own right. The view that "Women and children are connected to society only through a father/husband/brother" (Gatens 1991:13), although expressed here as the view of Rousseau, with regard to *Emile*,¹ it was nonetheless the prominent view of his day, and is still, I believe, even if often subconsciously, the general view of men (and some

¹ Gatens suggests that Rousseau devoted *Emile* entirely to the question of the place of the sexes in the political and modern spheres. An indication of the views of Rousseau is given in the following extract: "As the figure of the tutor in *Emile* says: for man every question is one of utility, for woman the crucial factor is to conform to social expectation and this social expectation is reducible to what is useful to men" (p12 in *Emile*) (Gatens 1991:11).

women), regarding women today. Naturally, as has already been mentioned, women who are neither wives nor mothers (and presumably thus not 'useful' to men) would in this context not even feature in a discussion of being human. Women, many believe, are only someone when they are someone in relation to the sexually neutral, the man, the norm. Ackermann reaffirms how this mindset operates when she refers to Simone de Beauvoir's argument that "women's 'invisibility' is explained by the fact that males define us as the other. ...[as a result our] authentic experience of ourselves plays no part in shaping the cultural and language realities in which we live. We are present as the Silent Other" (Ackermann 1991:93).

The question must be asked, is working within a group, called women, beneficial to the individual woman or, as has been referred to above, does the identification of a person as woman or as man, and a focusing on the differences between these two categories of person, cause greater difficulties for women? One must recognise that were one to do away with the category 'women' as an oppressed group, or were one to stop fighting for women's issues and women's rights, as a group, (that is, as individuals who share the same type of oppression), then one would, in doing away with the group, also create a scenario in which the oppression itself seemed to have been removed. This therefore, is how the dilemma persists for women: they act as individuals who are not represented as a group and who therefore are not recognised as being oppressed, as a group or as individuals, since, if the group does not exist, then neither does their oppression (if their oppression stems from their membership of a specific group, such as women). Alternatively, they continue to identify themselves with the category 'women' who will, in all likelihood, at least, continually have to fight against oppression or, at most, to continue to be oppressed by men and the patriarchal world.² Despite this, it is my belief

² Although the term 'patriarchal' is often associated with the Early Church or times at least prior to our present age, I find it acceptable to continue to use the term since the world continues to be ruled, for the most part, by men. Juliet Flower MacCannell adds an interesting dimension to this debate when she suggests that what we have today is not the patriarchy itself, but a system of power which is not dissimilar to it either: the Regime of the Brother. Here the tyrannical "father" is replaced by "sons" who act like sovereigns and claim an absolute right brought about by the death of the "father" (MacCannell 1991:2-3). Kretzschmar notes that this certainly has been the case with

that a woman who does not have equality recognised, and who is not regarded as being equal to men, needs to stress her womanhood in order to be recognised as a human. Under the title "But for Her Sex, A Woman is a Man" (taken from Rousseau's *Emile*, p321) Gatens (1991:9) shows how Rousseau wanted to emphasise the differences between women and men, but not by presenting each as autonomous and different humans. Rather, the difference obtained was through contrasting the woman with the man, the norm, and showing how she deviated from this human. This woman is thus, once again, the 'shadow', the contrast, that which exists only because another, and a male, exists.

1.1.2. Woman vs human, or human as woman?

What is important in this discussion is that women, and men, are humans. And because we are humans, we have to be either woman or man. Grenz states,

While being related to both, human sexuality is not to be equated with either physical sexual characteristics or procreative capacity, for it is that dimension of human existence that lies behind physical features. Sexuality comprises all aspects of the human person that are related to existence as male and female. Our sexuality, therefore, is a powerful, deep, and mysterious aspect of our being. It constitutes a fundamental distinction between the two ways of being human (i.e., as male or female). This distinction plays a crucial role in our development toward becoming individuals and our existence as human beings. (Grenz 1990:9)

Because of this, it is unreasonable to assume that one can simply 'be human' without being a woman or a man. Because one is a human, one has to be a woman or a man; and because one *is* a woman, one has to be a human. Although it is important to be regarded as human and treated as such, it is essential that one understands, as a woman, that one *is* human, regardless of how one is treated or of the situation in which one lives. This does not suggest accepting one's plight, including oppression, passively, because one

regard to many black women in South Africa, particularly widows (Unpublished notes, 1997), now published: Kretzschmar, L & Hulley, L (eds) 1998. *Questions of life and morality: Christian ethics in South Africa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

knows intellectually as well as empirically that one is a human and that is sufficient confirmation of one's worth. Rather, it means that one maintains one's dignity and uses this as the source of strength with which to fight for its recognition.

Another important point is the fact that "the position of women in general [can be seen as] the index of human advance: men and women actually become human in relation to each other and if one sex is denigrated then humanity itself is the loser" (Mitchell 1975:2). Although I will argue later in this dissertation that women need to empower and then emancipate themselves, independent of and apart from other liberation struggles, the above quotation nonetheless reveals the disadvantageous consequences for society when any one group is oppressed. Here we see men, as one type of human, losing the value of their humanity if women have a diminished human value. This is so because humans are created to be men and women; men are only men because there are women and vice versa. Consequently, if women are regarded as unimportant or valueless, similar values will be reflected on males, even if there is not a widespread desire to acknowledge this fact. A sharp reminder of what I am attempting to examine, and something which plays a large part in the struggle of women, is reflected in Ackermann's question: "Why do women need to define our own humanity?" (Ackermann 1991:93). Very accurately she responds, "The answer is simple: because it has always been done for us. Women's humanity, our experiences, perception, thoughts and beliefs, have by and large been defined for us by men" (Ackermann 1991:93). The lack of recognition of the value of women, as well as the need for women to support one another in their struggle for equality and liberation are evident when one examines how women have continued to be oppressed for centuries.

1.2. REASONS FOR THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

1.2.1 Women and oppression

This dissertation presupposes the oppression of women and, taking that as its point of departure, tries to provide strategies of empowerment, working towards equality for women. Thus it is not my intention here to give a detailed and complete account of the causes and historical development of the oppression of women over time. Rather,

attitudes towards women, as reflected in the actions and statements made by patriarchal societies and individuals within them, and especially within the Church, are noted.

It will also be interesting to note whether the underlying causes of the oppression of women today are the same as they were decades, or centuries ago, or whether the reasons for the continuing practice of the oppression of women has changed. There is also the issue of the means used to oppress a group of people in society, and the need to ascertain how exactly and in what ways it is that women today are oppressed.

At a later stage I will give a brief history of the oppression of women, specifically in the Church, and consider its possible roots, but before doing so it is important to attempt to identify the relationship between oppression and women as understood from the way in which we express this problem. Here are four possibilities:

- (i) You are a woman because you are oppressed;
- (ii) You are oppressed because you are a woman;
- (iii) You are a woman therefore you are oppressed; and
- (iv) Because you are a woman you are oppressed.

(i) You are a woman because you are oppressed

This statement is inaccurate as it presumes that anyone who is oppressed must be a woman, or alternatively, that it is only women who are oppressed. The category of the person (woman) is deduced from the situation of the person (oppression), but this statement also presumes that no other groups of people are oppressed. It does not take cognisance of the fact that other groups in society, apart from women, are oppressed, which is not a true reflection of reality at all. Even more destructive a deduction can be made here; if a woman is identified as a woman, or recognised as a woman (and therefore also a human) because of her oppression, then were one to do away with her oppression, one would do away with the woman (and therefore the human) herself. The statement indicates that a woman is dependent on her oppression for her identity as a woman and subsequently as a human. Thus, in order to increase her value as a human or as a woman, one would need to increase her oppression. Put in another way, the better

wife or mother a woman makes, and the better she fits into her stereotyped roles in a patriarchal society, the greater will be her value, in the eyes of society at large (and her oppressors in particular) as a human. The irony here is blatantly obvious.

(ii) You are oppressed because you are a woman

This statement could be, and often is, quite true. However, the statement suggests only one possible reason for the oppression of women: the fact that they are women. Although it is true that women are oppressed because of their gender (and this is my specific interest in this dissertation), I am also sure that there are many women who would be frustrated if it were not accepted that certain other categories of people (outside of gender), are more likely than others to be subjected to oppression on several fronts. For example, a man may be discriminated against because he is black or Arabic, or even homosexual. However, a black woman or an Arabic woman would be discriminated against on two fronts as indicated by the examples given.

(iii) You are a woman therefore you are oppressed

This statement is accurate, as I believe was the previous one - 'You are oppressed because you are a woman'. It clearly indicates the link between being a woman and being oppressed. While by implication it suggests that all women are oppressed, a possibility with which I cannot disagree; it is true that it allows for the possibility, unlike statement (ii), of there being other factors, usually additional to being a woman, contributing towards a woman's oppression. Also, the affirmation of one's womanhood and consequently oppression, as seen in statement (iii) - 'You are a woman therefore you are oppressed' - is preferable to statement (ii) in which one is identified first by one's oppression and then as a result of that, presumed to be a woman.

(iv) Because you are a woman you are oppressed

Although this statement may appear similar to statement (ii) - 'You are oppressed because you are a woman' - I believe it is in fact closer in its meaning to statement (iii) - 'You are a woman therefore you are oppressed'. Statement (iv) - 'Because you are a woman you are oppressed' affirms firstly that one is a woman, and that one is as a result

of this, oppressed. The use of 'because' at the beginning of the statement, used in relation to the identification of the person as a woman, indicates that there are consequences of being a woman; the 'consequence' noted here is that of oppression.

In attempting to establish a link between women and oppression I would opt for statement (iii) - 'You are a woman therefore you are oppressed'- or statement (iv) - 'Because you are a woman you are oppressed'. In both of these statements the woman's identity as being a woman is maintained, while the reality of her situation as well as her experiences of oppression are not only acknowledged, but are also understood to have been a reaction to, and discrimination on the basis of the woman's gender.

1.2.2 Women and oppression in the Church

A short historical excursus of women in the Church is presented below as a background to the discrimination which women in the ministry, and women in general, face today.

1.2.2.1. The Early Church

Many people believe that the inequality between women and men began with the creation of the first two humans, Adam and Eve. Adam, the man, was created first; Eve, the woman, created out of Adam, came second. A simplistic position would be one that states that chronology determines superiority, hence Adam being considered to be superior to Eve. Not only is this simplistic, but as Mitchell indicates, with reference to the writings of Mary Askeil:

For the Earthly *Adam's* being *Form'd* before *Eve*, seems as little to prove her Natural Subjection to him, as the Living Creatures, Fishes, Birds and Beasts being *Form'd* before them both, proves that Mankind must be subject to these Animals.
(Mitchell 1975:10)

This indicates very clearly the ignorance of the chronological view in attempting to present such an argument. Notwithstanding this, the more dominant view expressed as the reasons for Eve's (and later woman's) inferiority to men concerns Eve's temptation of Adam, and their subsequent fall from Grace being attributed to her. Although it is

because of this, i.e., Eve's apparent sin, that many of the Church Fathers regarded her as not having been made in the image of God, there are indications that "even before the fall she was a second class citizen" (Keane 1988:6). With reference to Eve's tainting of Adam, Tertullian (c.160- c.240) wrote "You have led astray one whom the Devil would not dare attack directly. It was your fault the Son of God had to die..." (in Keane 1988:4). Consequently Eve was condemned by the Fathers, "for the role she played in the downfall of humankind and [in making] every woman an heiress to the blame" (Keane 1988:4). Such statements are indicative of the belief, largely accepted by the Church Fathers, that the human person is comprised of a duality of two mutually opposed elements: body and mind (or spirit) (Edwards 1991). This belief could be extended, as indicated by Edwards, as follows:

Spirituality and the image of God was regarded as male (since *Logos* was seen as male and his female counterpart, Wisdom, was forgotten). Femininity, on the other hand, was equated with the lower nature, with corporeality. As the body was inferior to the mind, so woman was inferior to man. As the body was a threat to the soul, so woman was a threat to man. As the body had to be subordinated to the mind, so woman had to be subordinated to the man. (Edwards 1991:31)

Where women were not condemned outright by the Church Fathers, their contributions and ministries were reduced to the margins of the patriarchy that was being entrenched. Ruether is correct when she writes that, "The naming of males as norms of authentic humanity has caused woman to be scapegoated for sin and marginalised in both original and redeemed humanity" (Ruether 1983:19).

While Genesis 1:27 is clear that both man and woman are created in God's image: "So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" and Jesus, in the New Testament, made no negative statements about women (Keane 1988:5), Aquinas (1225-1274) was adamant that women were "misbegotten males" made to "assist with procreation" (in Keane 1988:6) and that women were not as rational as men (the view of Aristotle and Aquinas in Keane 1988:6). This

reflects the negative, denigrating and oppressive mindset of the Church right through the Middle Ages, - a period that, especially for women, was a very Dark Age indeed. This would also indicate that God 'made a mistake' in His creation of women - creating flawed creatures which would diminish His image or make Him less than perfect. If the whole of creation, 'made in the image of God', is unacceptable, then so must God be unacceptable.

The important point that is raised in this context is the fact that the Church Fathers not only usurped positions of power and superiority over women, but also had the temerity to attribute divine authority to their opinions and teachings regarding women. Against this background it is not surprising to realise that from the earliest times in our history women were oppressed, not only individually and in the private sphere of their lives, but also deliberately and structurally, as part of the means of the patriarchal socio-political system of their time. This institutionalising of patriarchal ideals and values was very powerful, given that the institutions in which they were embedded were, for the most part the Church as a whole, and also the State as well as its various structures. It is not easy to question the values and systems of society that were so firmly embedded in the minds and lives of people centuries ago, and which have largely remained so today, yet it is imperative that this be done. The patriarchal ideology has been easily maintained because many women, as well as some men, fear that, in questioning the Church they may be questioning God. Another reason for the persistence of the patriarchal ideology is that the Church Mothers who should have been heard and included in the history of the Church, and included in the formation of liturgy and the general development of the Church, were silenced. Not Christian tradition, not Scripture, nor the Church, or its history or deeds, acknowledge itself to have been influenced by women. The Church has always been, and still is, controlled by men; the Scriptures were written by men, and Christianity has been interpreted for women through the eyes and value systems of men. This view is supported by revolutionary feminists, cited in Ackermann, expressing their belief that "the Judeo-Christian tradition which purports to speak of the human experience of God, has in fact been created by men for men and that it speaks to them not to women" (Ackermann 1988:10).

Despite this there are numerous examples of women who played important roles in the Church and who made significant contributions to Christianity. Women such as Paula (a friend of Jerome) and Melania, who founded the monasteries in Bethlehem and Jerusalem respectively (Keane 1988:9). Perpetua, probably the best-known Christian woman in the Early Church was put to death with her maid, Felicitas, in North Africa. The story of their sufferings was published as *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* soon after their deaths and became part of early Christian literature. It was read at church services and was so highly revered that St Augustine had to warn worshippers not to accord it the same status as the Scriptures (Visalli 1992:153). These are merely a few of the many more women whose contributions to Christianity and the Church have gone almost unacknowledged.

In the last decade of the first century, Clement of Rome paid tribute to the women such as Danaides and Dircae who were persecuted and who suffered greatly for their faith, just as men had done. Maximilla and Priscilla were two prophetesses of the Montanist movement. Although the Montanists were condemned and vilified by the Church, it was nevertheless acknowledged that the Montanists did not denounce or deny the basic doctrines of the Old Testament. Despite this, Origen spoke out strongly against such Montanist prophetesses. He said, "certainly women should 'teach what is good', but men should not sit and listen to a woman ...even if she says admirable things, or even saintly things, that is of little consequence, since they come from the mouth of a woman"³ (in Tucker & Liefeld 1987:105). Despite the prevalence of such blatant sexism resulting in the complete denigration of women, it was not uncommon at the time (into the second century), to find women leading Christian communities. However, the reason for this, rather than being an acceptance of the contribution women could make to the Church, was, as Sawyer suggests, attributable to the belief in imminent eschatology. Thus, "It would seem that female authority could be accepted and acclaimed for an interim period when history was about to come to an end" (Sawyer 1996:109).

Another means used to marginalise women is the process of exclusion. Because of this,

³ Origen, *Fragments on I Corinthians*, 74, quoted in Gryson, *Ministry of Women*, 28-29.

the historical records of the Christian tradition have often omitted the achievements of certain women, and importance of other women. At times historical records have diluted the important contributions made by women, or they have interpreted these contributions in a way that was acceptable to men. The example of Phoebe indicates this. Phoebe was one of, if not the first deaconess, of the Christian Church, serving at the church at Cenchrea, in the port of Corinth. She was highly regarded by the Apostle Paul in terms of her 'Christian status'; her 'position or office'; her 'service record'; and 'the importance of her work'; so much so that she was entrusted to carry the Epistle to the Romans to the Roman Christians (Tenney 1963:653b). Despite this, Origen described Phoebe's ministry as one of assisting people and exercising hospitality. The following quotation indicates Schüssler Fiorenza's response to Origen's treatment of Phoebe, as well as how this has been viewed by present-day feminist scholars:

Those women whom the patriarchal writers could not erase from historical consciousness they declared frauds or heretics or interpreted from a patriarchal perspective. Origen, for example, acknowledges Phoebe, but reduces her to an assistant and servant of Paul and argues that women who do good works cannot be accepted as deaconesses.
(Schüssler Fiorenza, in Tucker 1987:106)⁴

Such an example is not unfamiliar to women today, in the secular world or in the Church. In the MCSA, deaconesses have been seen by many as 'assistants' to male ministers. Thus the creation of inferior jobs, or orders in the Church, has been used to keep women from any responsibility and to deny them authority and power in the work which they do. The carefully selected words used by Origen to describe Phoebe as 'assisting', and of 'serving' Paul is a well-trying and successful means of men suppressing women. Women need to recognise and resist this.

1.2.2.2. The Medieval Church

In the Early Medieval Church, the Church's perspective on women was no less

⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Word, Spirit and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities," in Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds., *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 56.

demeaning or restrictive than it had been in the early centuries of the Church (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:131). Debates about pregnant and menstruating women receiving communion; about women participating in congregational singing; and debates on whether, and to what extent women should be blamed for having lured men into sin, persisted. Especially in the Roman Catholic Church there seem to have been, as still appears to be the case in the modern Church, progress and regression in terms of such policies from time to time, and from Pope to Pope. Another point to bear in mind is that there were often discrepancies between policy and practice in churches.

During the Middle Ages the ministry of women was usually associated with nunneries and monasteries rather than with local churches. Where women did assist in local churches, this ministry did create controversy. Nonetheless, the office of deaconess was regarded as necessary, and two women, Radegund and Helaria were consecrated as deaconesses by Frankish bishops in the early years of the sixth century. This particular ministry lasted for more than a millennium in the Eastern Church, while such consecration of women deaconesses became less and less common in the Western Church by the sixth century. The method employed by the Western Church was one not dissimilar to more modern methods to sideline women: the status of women deaconesses was lowered until it was virtually non-existent; women were denied consecration so that they were no longer part of the clergy, and then in 533 the Synod of Orleans 'wholly abolished' the office of deaconess, "on account of the weakness of this sex" ⁵ (Wemple, in Tucker & Liefeld 1987:133). By contrast, Boniface, realising that the spread of Monasticism depended on the work and gifts of both men and women, was a strong advocate of women's involvement in missions in the Middle Ages. However, what should have, as a result of this, been a move towards greater equality between men and women in respect of their abilities and their usefulness in mission work, backfired for women when the monasteries were united under Benedictine Rule. This placed the nuns under Episcopal authority depriving them of their quasi-clerical functions. The nuns' situation worsened when council after council imposed increasingly strict regulations on

⁵ Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 141; Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3:259, 262-3.

their movement.

The situation of women in the Middle Ages provides an interesting contrast to that of today's women, both within and outside the Church. On the one hand women in the Middle Ages were treated poorly:

The low view of women in the Middle Ages was no doubt a factor that brought sexual harassment on women. Whether it was verbally demeaning them or physically abusing them, such harassment reached into the highest echelons of the church. Throughout the entire period women not only struggled for a meaningful place in the church, but also fought against the vicious slander inflicted on their sex as a whole. These outrageous attacks were more pronounced in the late medieval period - at the very time that some Renaissance humanists were beginning to look on women as their equals.
(Tucker & Liefeld 1987:165)

Despite the prevalence of such injustice and such discrimination against women, Tucker suggests that,

Medieval women as a whole were not forced into a position of second class citizens. 'The aristocratic ideal of chivalry and the Church's ideal of feminine submissiveness were indeed ideals. In her daily life the average medieval woman neither stood on a pedestal above men nor groveled (sic) submissively below them but was treated as a married friend'⁶. The same could be said for the 'sisters' in the church. In many ways they stood as equals to their clerical 'brothers'.
(Tucker & Liefeld 1987:170)

Thus, whatever the difficulties experienced by women in the Middle Ages, they did seem to command a certain amount of credibility and respect regarding both their abilities and themselves as people. Having achieved this in general life, it seems a great waste that their ministry appeared to have had little real value, due firstly to their being cloistered away from the outside world and therefore offering it little direct ministry, and secondly,

⁶ Susan G. Bell, ed *Women: From the Greeks to the French Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), 159.

to the decreased importance given to the work of charity and evangelism which had been so important in earlier centuries. One should also be wary of phrases describing the situation of women, as seen in the quotation above, such as that women were equal to men 'in many ways'. Also the suggestion that while some women neither 'stand on a pedestal above men', neither did they 'grovel below them'. The real question is whether they were considered as equal to men. Such vague and ambiguous statements are not helpful, and often in fact, prove to be obstacles to establishing the truth about a particular situation. In the questionnaire sent to ministers in the MCSA about women in the ministry similar comments to those cited above were made. Rather than answering whether they considered women to be treated equally in the ministry of the MCSA, they would respond: 'This is not a perfect world', or 'What do you mean by *equality*?' Their true opinions are obviously not revealed in such statements and they are therefore unhelpful in establishing the truth about the situation of women ministers in the MCSA. The manipulation of language as a means to control women must be recognised if it is to be challenged and eradicated.

1.2.2.3. The Church in the Sixteenth Century

Although the sixteenth century brought with it great changes and innovations, especially in the Christian Church, once again there was a discrepancy between the attitudes of people, such as the Renaissance humanists, and the actual practices of society at large, which affected women. For example, Erasmus, who was known as the "Christian conscience of his epoch",⁷ had views on women which appeared "devoid of the sexual bias that was so prevalent in the medieval world"⁸ (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:171-172); he also acknowledged the resentment felt by women when their views on doctrine were not taken seriously by the clergy, something reiterated by women in the Church today. Although upper-class Renaissance women were educated and less submissive than many of their contemporaries, the prevailing situation in society and church was not one in which women were regarded as equal to men. In a situation not vastly different from

⁷ Bouyer, in White, R E O 1981. *The Changing Continuity of Christian Ethics. Vol. 2, The Insights of History*. Exeter: Paternoster.

⁸ Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*. New York: Scribner, 1969, 22-23.

South Africa today, few opportunities for leadership roles in society were open to women, and the Church appeared content to maintain a male clergy. Martin Luther regarded women as inferior beings but conceded that it might be necessary for a woman to preach only in a place where male presence was restricted (such as in a convent), when it would be 'necessary' for a woman to do so (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:175). The Scottish Reformer, John Knox, cited the Pauline injunctions, as did Luther, to support his view that women ought not preach.

In contrast to male figures of the Reformation who received great prominence, not much publicity was given to prominent women of the day who remain today, still relatively obscure. Although Katherine Zell vociferously promoted the right to speak out on behalf of women, and against the stereotyped male attitudes prevalent in the church, she nonetheless did not actually proclaim equality for women in the church. Just as Katherine Zell met with opposition from the Church, so too did Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), the best known woman of the Roman Catholic Reformation. Despite being viewed with deep suspicion by many in the Roman Catholic Church, she was eventually canonized. Jacoba Bartolini was another prominent preacher in the Roman Catholic Reformation, under whose ministry many criminals and outcasts of society were converted. These three women were only three of many who performed similar ministries. Their relative obscurity and the lack of importance attributed to their efforts, when compared to that of the men who achieved prominence in the Church at the time, is indicative of the reduced significance attributed to the contributions of women to the Christian Church as a whole. Despite any inroads into the male-dominated clerical and religious spheres of society such women, as well as women generally, may have made, after the Reformation there was still "no significant place for women in religion. Public professional ministry was a male domain" (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:205).

In some ways, superficially at least, the Protestant Reformation appeared to have produced changes beneficial to women. Women were regarded as having value as humans, rather than as mothers and wives, but it was very clear that these roles were considered to be her Ministry. Secondly, the concept of the 'Priesthood of All Believers'

raised the status of the laity, but this did not increase the role or the importance of women in the Church, and women continued to be excluded from leadership and clerical positions in the Church. Thus it was observed that, "Through political, social, or personal prestige, [women] often wielded considerable power, but in religious matters their influence was achieved in spite of the Reformation mentality, certainly not because of it" (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:206). This is not dissimilar to what occurs in the MCSA today. As a policy, the MCSA ordains women as ministers and most men ministers support this practice, at least in principle. However, it was interesting to discover (especially as indicated in the responses to the questionnaire referred to later) the number of ministers who saw the function of women ministers to be in the 'caring', 'nurturing' areas of ministry rather than in leading and preaching. It needs to be understood that an acceptance of women ministers into the ministry does not do away with the fact that many varied interpretations of what the ministry is still exist.

1.2.2.4. The Church in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

In England in the seventeenth century apparently widespread calls for the support of the ideals of equality were made, especially in the social, economic and political spheres of life, manifested through the desire for democracy and equality; yet women did not have, nor experience equality in practice. It was through what is known as feminism today, the women's liberation which arose in that century, that women were beginning to make their views on their unequal status and treatment in society known. Women's Rights advocates, or feminists of that time, and even those of today, have been accused of belonging to 'white', middle class groups of women, especially European and American women, and of only representing the interests of those groups, (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995:122). Regardless of the extent of truth in such accusations, those women nonetheless resisted oppression by men, and insisted on gaining their liberation. They also began to question the legitimacy of control which men had over their lives. The feminism of the seventeenth century was described by Mitchell as, "a conglomeration of precepts and a series of demands by women who saw themselves as a distinct sociological group and one that was completely excluded from the tenets and principles of the new society" (Mitchell 1975:8). Mitchell also quotes Mary Askeff, writing on

marriage in the year 1700, as an example of the feelings and the strength of those feelings, experienced and expressed by women with regard to their oppression. She writes, "If *all Men are born free*, how is it that all Women are born slaves? As they must be if the being subjected to the *inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary Will* of Men, be the perfect Condition of Slavery?" (Mitchell 1975:9).

Although the Industrial Revolution, which started in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the emergence of capitalism, are often regarded as having contributed to the modernised form of the oppression of women, it is not accurate to identify this alone as the period when men began to assert their self-proclaimed superiority and power over women, nor that the means used in this oppression remains the same today. Certainly, capitalism exacerbated the division of the private and public spheres of life; where families had usually worked together from their homes and on their land to survive. With the onset of industrialisation and capitalism it was the men who moved out of the home and into the paid labour force and the women who remained, together with any children, at home in the unpaid labour force. This pattern of life and work has continued right up to the present. However, the contribution capitalism made to the oppression of women from the seventeenth century should in no way diminish the role of the churches at that time. During this period the churches most receptive to the idea of having women in the ministry were the non-conformist churches, such as the Baptists and the Quakers.

1.2.2.5. The Methodist Church

Given that the MCSA has only ordained women ministers for the past two decades, it is interesting to note how far back John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was encouraging women to participate in the ministry, even if this was sometimes done with a restricted scope.

At the start of his ministry, John Wesley had very conservative views on women in the ministry. Probably because women formed the majority in early Methodism, women often spoke at or led small groups, or classes, in the Church. As such groups grew, Wesley, with reservation, gave permission for women to 'speak' or to 'exhort' in public,

but not to preach, even though this did actually take place. By 1768 Wesley was so convinced that women's ministry was right, that he openly encouraged them to preach, despite much opposition. In later years Wesley believed that this opposition to women in the ministry had decreased. This was disproved when, after Wesley's death the opportunities for women to minister publicly declined. Thus, according to Earl Kent Brown, "Anti-feminist prejudice hardened in the decades following Mr Wesley's death, and nineteenth-century Methodism would be far less liberal on this matter than Mr Wesley had been" ⁹ (1938:77). Despite the increasing visibility of women in certain churches and the increasing instances of women in different types of public ministry, these opportunities were available to women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "only if they were willing to defy male leadership in the institutionalized churches or be associated with sectarian movements and endure the scorn of respectable society" (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:243).

In the nineteenth century many opportunities opened up for women in lay ministries in revival groups. Such ministries, as is still often the case today, usually involved women's participation in traditionally female tasks and roles, but they were at least an opportunity to work in the professional ministry. The revival of the Deaconess Movement was one example of this type of ministry, beginning in the Church of England in 1862, with the Methodists opening a training school and a deaconesses home in Chicago in 1887.

During this century several women gained prominence because of their public professional ministries. One of them was Phoebe Palmer, the most influential woman in nineteenth century Methodism, often referred to as the "Mother of the Holiness Movement". Her informal prayer meetings inspired other women to emulate this type of ministry; she was influential in establishing the Hedding Church, and founded the Five Points Mission, both city missions in New York. She edited, and was responsible for a great increase in circulation of the pamphlet, *Guide to Holiness*. She and her husband were involved in, and accredited with several revivals in America and Canada

⁹ In Earl Kent Brown, *Women of Mr Wesley's Methodism*. New York: Mellen, 1983:77, in Tucker & Liefeld 1987:242

after 1857, and in England after 1859. Despite her influence within Methodism, "Methodist women had gained little, if any, ground on account of her example" (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:263). One possible reason for this is that Phoebe Palmer herself insisted that women play a secondary role in ministry. While such a viewpoint is not uncommon among successful women, as is discussed in Chapter IV, it is something which must surely be regarded as unacceptable for women as a whole. The second possible reason for Palmer's lack of influence in effecting change for women in Methodism was that her situation,

...did not reflect the role of in the denomination at large. She was not the norm, and her influence on the position of women in the church was nominal. ...She was outside the mainstream of Methodism, and she and others viewed her ministry as unique - not the norm for women.
(Tucker & Liefeld 1987:263)

One woman who did not accept Palmer's view that women should have secondary ministries was Catherine Booth. She criticised Palmer's view and defended the public ministry of women in a pamphlet entitled *Female Ministry; Or, Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel*. She emphasised that there was biblical precedent for women in the ministry and indicated that opposition to this view was based more on contemporary culture than on biblical tradition.

Catherine Booth and her husband William, a Methodist minister, broke with Methodism and began working in a revivalistic ministry in London. Their involvement in inner city work led to the formation of the Salvation Army. Catherine's commitment to feminism, and specifically, to the promotion of women in the ministry, was evident in Clause 14 of the Foundation deed, submitted in 1875, which specified that,

Nothing shall authorize the conference to take any course whereby the right of females to be employed as evangelists or class leaders shall be impeded or destroyed or which shall render females ineligible for any office or deny to them the right to speak and vote at all or any official meetings of which they may

be members.
(Booth 1975:14)¹⁰

The number of women officers in the Salvation Army was testimony not only to Catherine's feminist convictions, but also to herself as a role model for younger women. In 1878, forty one of the forty nine Salvation Army officers in the field were women, and when it was decided to officially inaugurate the work of the Salvation Army in America, a team of seven women, known as the "Splendid Seven" was sent to America.

Thus, although women were able to exercise public ministries in nonconformist churches and religious movements in the nineteenth century, the mainline denominations were not quite as receptive to this practice. In the Methodist Church, for example, despite the inclusion of women in public ministry during the time of John Wesley, and the ministry of Phoebe Palmer as a lay preacher, the approval of deaconesses for ministry was given only in 1888 and the ordination of women as ministers only became a reality in the MCSA in 1976. The Presbyterians did not admit women to the professional ministry. When women such as Sarah Smiley, did preach in a church service in Brooklyn, New York, in 1874, this was strongly condemned.

1.2.2.6. Women and mission

Women were allowed to participate in missionary work in the nineteenth century, but this only served to show the lack of legitimate or substantial biblical reasons which were used to deny women places in public ministry. Where insufficient men were available to fill missionary posts throughout the world; or where men were not prepared to travel or to stay in certain areas, for family reasons or because of an unwillingness to live according to the constraints of the culture or difficult living conditions of a particular country, then women were not only accepted, but even welcomed, to do this work.

However, despite their achievements in the mission field, and the apparent progress made in changing attitudes to women and their abilities and the roles they were considered

¹⁰ Catherine Booth, *Female Ministry; Or, Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel*. New York: Salvation Army, 1975,14, in Tucker 1987:265-266)

capable of performing, women were nonetheless no less oppressed than they had been in previous centuries.

The pattern regarding women's ministry initially changed little from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. The mainstream churches continued to deny women ordination to the ministry and women were also denied leadership roles in the Church. As had been the case in the nineteenth century, the nonconformist and Sectarian churches offered greater opportunities for ministry for women.

1.2.2.7. Mainline churches

Within the category 'mainline churches', responses to the admission of women to the ordained ministry have varied greatly. The Roman Catholic Church has been the most inflexible in its position on women in the ministry. The question of women's suffrage also had ramifications in this church, bringing vastly different opinions to the fore. Archbishop Sebastian Messmer, for example, opposed women's suffrage on the basis of "the essential inequality of man and woman" (Tucker & Liefeld 1987:376). An interesting response to such a hard-line stance was the formation of the St Joan's International Alliance by British Catholic women in 1910, to support women's suffrage. While the movement was termed the "original Catholic feminist organization" by Ruether, it was also criticised for being generally ineffectual, especially since its first appeal for women to be given access to the diaconate was only made in 1961, and the call for women's ordination to the priesthood as late as 1963. However, the significance of Catholic women no longer passively accepting their prescribed role in church and society, and in the mobilisation of themselves in such a manner, should not be underestimated. At this time, a statement from Vatican II seemed to indicate that women had reason to expect changes concerning their access to the priesthood. The document asserted,

With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated

as contrary to God's intent.¹¹
(in Tucker 1987:377)

Despite such cause for optimism, nothing was to come from the Second Vatican Council regarding women being ordained to the priesthood. In fact, this merely seemed to be a typical example of the vacillation of the Roman Catholic Church in terms of the progress and regression it regularly undergoes on issues of a social nature, including that of women in the priesthood. In contrast to the earlier declaration, the 1977 *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* attempted to separate the concepts of women's inequality and their subsequent subjected state, and the tradition of excluding women from the priesthood, in order to justify the refusal to admit women to the priesthood.

The Anglican Church or the Church of England made slow progress on the issue of women in the ministry. In 1914 women were admitted to the parochial lay franchise on the same terms as men, and were allowed to serve as representatives on parochial committees; in 1919 full lay rights for churchwomen were granted (Tucker 1987:378). Early in the twentieth century Dr A. Maude Royden spoke out strongly on the hypocrisy of the Anglican Church as reflected in the convenient use of their terminology. Royden, once referred to by a contemporary as "the world's greatest woman preacher" was allowed to preach as long as she referred to this as 'giving an address'. She went to work in a Congregational church in London, and two years' later she founded an independent mission. She never held meetings on Sunday mornings as she wanted to avoid competing with the Anglican Church services. In 1919, after both the government and then the Anglican Church had granted full voting rights to women, the League of the Church Militant was formed to pressurise the Church on the ordination of women. However, it was only in 1985 that the General Synod finally passed the measure allowing deaconesses to become deacons - the lowest clerical office in the Anglican Church. One of the last mainstream churches to ordain women, the Anglican Church only allowed this in 1992.

¹¹ In Mary Luke Tobin, "Women in the Church: Vatican II and After," *The Ecumenical Review* 37 (July 1985): 295.

Although the Presbyterian Church was one of the most resistant to changes in the ministry of women, by 1956 women were admitted to the ordained ministry. The European Lutheran Church, despite great opposition, had been ordaining women in the 1960s, but it was 1970 when the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America voted to ordain women. In the Baptist Churches, the ordination of women was also accepted at different times by its various national Unions or Conventions. The earliest ordinations in the Baptist Church took place in the nineteenth century, while the Southern Baptist Convention agreed with this measure in 1964.¹² The first body of Methodists, the Methodist Episcopal Church ordained women in 1956. By 1970 most other Methodist Churches had accepted the ordination of women; the MCSA implemented this resolution in 1976.¹³

1.2.2.8. Causes of women's oppression in the Church

In the light of the above information tracing some of the history of women in the Christian Church, and when one looks at the situation of women's oppression today, one cannot help but ask, 'How could this have happened?' While I have attempted to provide a few of the views of the Church Fathers, or Patriarchs earlier, as representative of the general attitude of men towards women at that time, I do not in any way find clear-cut or unquestionable evidence that that was the root cause of the oppression of women. It is only an indication, and a good one I believe, of the areas from which the oppression of women appear to have emerged. Exactly how women were 'chosen' to be oppressed either by the patriarchs or by the capitalist system is not known. A 'basic theological reason' is suggested as a possible cause by Kretzschmar:

Because people are sinful they look for others upon whom to take out their aggression. Those at the bottom of the social ladder, particularly women, are more easily victimised. *Sin*, because it affects both personal and

¹² There appears to have been a change in position on this issue by the Southern Baptist Convention since that time, attributed to a more fundamentalist management, leaving the position of women in that church's ministry unclear. (Kretzschmar 1998, unpublished notes).

¹³ Full details of such resolutions can be traced in the MCSA Minutes of Conference from 1976 onwards.

social relationships, is at the heart of sexism, racism and any other form of the denial of our common humanity. (Kretzschmar 1995:154-155)

One could concede that sin is a possible cause for oppression, simply because oppression goes against the basic tenets of Christianity, namely of equality and liberation. However, this still does not fully explain why women as a group have been selected to be oppressed, even if it is true that women are at the lower end of the social ladder, as suggested by Kretzschmar. The question still remains, how is it that women came to be at the lowest end of the social ladder?

When one compares the oppression of women as a group to that of black people in South Africa under the Apartheid era, for example, the point I am making will hopefully be made clearer. The mindset which described blacks as inferior, barbaric and sub-human, fit only to be slaves to white masters was blatantly there for all who wanted to see it; the words used to describe blacks as inferior and needing to be ruled by 'superiors' were actually spoken and the many examples of the Acts and laws promulgated, all specifically designed to oppress blacks by structural means, bear testimony to the fact that, however one abhors this oppression, one should not have been surprised that black people were oppressed as they were, given the build-up to this situation and the history of the whites in South Africa.

In the case of women, while the statements made by the Church Fathers gave an indication, and a very clear one, of their opinion that women were not regarded as equal to men, there was nonetheless still not as publicly calculated and deliberate a statement of intention to oppress women structurally and/or privately or individually, as there was in South Africa with regard to the black people. From the point of view of those suffering oppression, their situation was not made any the lighter by their having had 'warnings' that their social or racial group was inevitably going to be oppressed. But for those trying to analyse or understand the causes of that oppression, such warnings or indications that a particular group in society are not regarded as equal to the rest of society, or as equal to the powerful group, is very helpful and may also provide a point

of departure in attempting to analyse and devise methods to do away with the oppression. For example, at the time of the implementation of the apartheid ideologies in South Africa, all the indications were that black people were not regarded as equal to whites, and that they were going to be relegated to an inferior status and a miserable life once Apartheid was fully entrenched. In the case of women, although the Church Fathers made derogatory statements about women, and women were usually excluded from positions of power, little evidence existed to suggest that these opinions would eventually evolve into a structured system of oppression of women in which structures would be devised to denigrate or physical separate women from the basic material necessities of life, as was done to black people in South Africa.

Why then, one asks again, were women a category in society that men oppressed? Was it because women were 'traditionally' known as the 'weaker sex' and therefore expected to fulfill roles which would be regarded as inappropriate for the 'stronger' males in their lives to fulfill? The link with 'nature', however differently users may at times understand that term, appears to be a useful place to start. From the times of Mary Wollstonecraft, and then de Beauvoir, up to today, many feminists have believed that women, by being able to distance or even to disembodiment themselves from their nature would be able to be liberated (Gatens 1991:5). However, this assumes that being a woman and having within one the possibility of procreation is a burden or else that it is inferior to the functions performed or the roles accorded to men. Instead of regarding feminism, as Richards does, as "a rebellion against nature" (in Gatens 1991:70), one should rather regard the women's struggle for liberation in society as a rebellion within nature. By regarding women in the liberation struggle as 'rebellious against nature', one reinforces the idea that the sphere outside the home is the 'workplace', and also the male sphere, with no thought apparently given to the possibility that the home may also be a place of work, or that women may work outside the home as well. Gatens suggests that the relationship between women's bodies and their oppression should be challenged on two fronts: firstly, to "challenge the notion that human beings are separable into a sex-neutral mind and a sexed body, and then secondly, to challenge the idea that the capacities of the female body dictate the scope of women's social being" (Gatens 1991:25) - especially since this

does not occur with males. One also needs to accept, in the case of males and females, that their bodies, or their nature, as women, are intrinsic to their identity as humans. One cannot be a sexually neutral human; a human must be female or male. Thus, if women distance themselves from their bodies, for whatever reasons, they are also denying their humanity. This is a subtle trap of which women need to be aware.

Richards is correct in defining status as "restricted to those activities that have high social visibility [and that a woman's work, because of its being done in the private sphere, and because men, mostly working in the public sphere, do not acknowledge, praise or discuss it], precisely because of its privacy - cannot possibly attract status" (in Gatens: 1991:64). She correctly points out too that it is generally not the work that women do that is undervalued, but rather, "it is because women do it that it is undervalued" (Gatens 1991:65). Thus the values (accorded by society) attributed to women and their work are influenced by the 'objective fact' (established by society) that domestic work has a low value. Since women are associated with this form of work there remains largely today a "convention value-judgement concerning female-classified occupations" (Gatens 1991:65). While this is certainly the case with regard to entire occupations such as teaching and nursing which tend to be female-dominated (in terms of the numbers of women, as opposed to men, doing these jobs); even today, it has also permeated the male-dominated areas of work and diminished the value of the jobs which women are performing in these spheres, even if the standards and skills involved are identical. Thus, in general, most work produced by women is regarded as inferior to that produced by men, because they are women and therefore assumed to be incapable of producing the same quality of work as a man. Women who are 'out of their depth', therefore, actually means women who are 'out of their homes', and therefore away from the capabilities and competence they are assumed to possess, that is, competence within the domestic sphere and its related chores.

In this regard de Beauvoir was particularly helpful in establishing "a viable distinction between women's biological sex and the way that sex is lived in culture - a distinction which would now be signified by the sex/gender distinction" (Gatens 1991:58). "This

work," Gatens judiciously points out, "is invaluable in terms of separating women's *social* or *historical* existence from her *possibilities*" (Gatens 1991:58). Unfortunately, this mindset is not widely accepted in either the private or public spheres of society today,

What is needed, in this area of the unequal value attribution for jobs and roles in society which are regarded as either 'male' or 'female', is the recognition that our values are determined and developed within a socio-political framework, and that if one wishes to alter these roles, it must be done by altering the socio-political structures and the values which emerge from such structures.

For example, domestic work and child-rearing, traditionally known as 'women's work' are usually accorded a much lower status than 'men's work', that is, working outside of the home (usually, regardless of what work the man does), and bringing home a wage with which to support the family via the economic structures of society. But why is a man's job of sweeping the streets, or of designing nuclear weapons regarded as being more important than any job done, or skill performed, by a woman at home or in relation to her family? Some would argue that this extends to all work that women do, even when they are working in the paid labour force outside the home.

A similar point is made by Lekaba-Ketshabile when she states that,

I also advocate that women who are not employed outside their homes should be recognised and acknowledged by the economic structures as workers. ...It is not true that women who are housewives do not work or are non-workers. For me the term "non-worker" referring to women is derogatory and it falsely classifies women.

(Lekaba-Ketshabile 1996:175)

Despite this difficult predicament in which women find themselves regarding the value or lack of value attributed to them and their work, women do not need to escape or transcend their values. For, if they were not woman they would either not be human, or they would be men! Assuming that the majority of women do not want to be men but want as humans, to be regarded as equal to men within the economic, social and political

spheres of life, then they will not want to alter their womanhood. Rather, they will seek to alter the structures and values in place that are obstacles to their being both woman and equal to men at the same time. This structural oppression of women as well as the struggle within women as to 'how female' they can afford to be while still wishing to be equal, will be examined more closely in relation to strategies for achieving equality, later in this dissertation.

I agree that while, "the precise origins of patriarchy are difficult to establish (and the earlier existence of matriarchal societies difficult to identify), [the important fact is that] the present actuality and power of patriarchs [can nonetheless not] be disputed" (Kretzschmar 1995:155). Yet Simone de Beauvoir's question still remains: "Why is woman the perpetual Other?" (Gatens 1991:51). Following this line of thought Gatens states,

...the problem is to find out why transhistorically and cross-culturally, woman consistently occupies the position of Other. ...What requires explanation is woman's fixed status as the absolute Other and man's occupation of a position of absolute Subject: why is there no reciprocity in the relationship between the sexes?
(Gatens 1991:51)

What is important here is that the oppression of women exists, whatever one's views as to how this oppression evolved to what it is today. While it may be useful to attempt to identify the root causes of the oppression of women, for the purposes of empowering and liberating women from this oppression, it is imperative that women are able to identify and implement strategies that are specifically intended to achieve this aim.

1.3. CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was twofold. Firstly, it was intended to establish the fact that women are a specific category of people in society, different from any other group. It is acknowledged that within this category the women are not homogenous in terms of their experiences, lifestyles, education, wealth, religion, employment, or for any other reason, except that they are all women. Because they are women they all suffer at least some type of gender discrimination and experience the oppression of men. Some of

these women may be discriminated against because they are women, in addition to another form of discrimination. This does not make them any more or any less a part of the group called 'women'.

Secondly, in this chapter I attempted to present an overview of the women's struggle for complete recognition in the ministry of the Church. This indicated that no era, and no denomination of the Christian Church was innocent of the charge of excluding women from its ministry, and of exploiting the women it did use in its ministry by restricting them to areas of ministry that involved less responsibility and less status than the work given to men ministers. The full potential of women ministers and women church workers was thus inhibited. The blatant abuse of women and the complete dismissal of any possible value in women by some of the Church Fathers, and subsequently other male Church leaders as well, was also noted.

It was felt necessary to mention some of the resistance to the ordination of women ministers, and to the inclusion of women into many other areas of male-dominated ministry. The dates at which some of these decisions were reached were cited to form part of the background to the case study on women in the ministry of the MCSA to be discussed in Chapter II. When women refer to particular difficulties which they have encountered in such ministries, or men ministers show their reluctance or opposition to women in the ministry, one is able to view this against the background of centuries of oppression of women in general, and in particular, the exclusion of women from positions of authority in the Church.

The sustained suppression of women's abilities throughout history, should neither create despondency in women because they believe the situation cannot be changed; neither should it be seen as an indication that, for the patriarchal structures and prejudices to have persisted for so long, they must be correct.

In the next chapter, in which a case study of women ministers in the MCSA is examined, several of the features of the oppression of women in the Church's long history will be recognised.

CHAPTER II : OPPRESSION IN A SPECIFIC INSTANCE: WOMEN IN THE METHODIST MINISTRY

2.1. WOMEN AND THE METHODIST MINISTRY

Some of the historical background to the struggles of women in the Church was given in Chapter I. This included 'landmark' dates regarding women in the ministry, especially when women were first ordained. Although women in the MCSA were ordained as from 1976, that decision of Conference¹ was certainly not accepted by all ministers. From that time, women ministers have continued to suffer the consequences of this resistance to their ministry. This chapter seeks to examine in some depth this resistance, and the ways in which it is manifest as the oppression of women in the MCSA.

Although it is a fact that since Conference's resolution in 1972, women in the MCSA have been allowed into the ordained ministry, it is not by any means a fact that they have been accepted by all their colleagues, or by the congregations which they are called to serve. The exclusion of women ministers from certain types of ministry in the churches in which they serve; the lack of opportunities for promotion, as reflected in the male-dominated hierarchy of the Church; and the daily abuse and discrimination experienced by women ministers (as noted from personal experiences and interactions with women ministers, as well as the findings of my questionnaire), all indicate that the oppression of women does indeed take place in the MCSA. This chapter aims to explore the ministries of these women in the MCSA, as perceived and experienced by themselves and their male counterparts. Also important, and in need of investigation, is the way in which the MCSA as a Church is handling issues raised in connection with women in this Church's ministry. Hence the *Minutes of Conference* from 1972 to 1996² will be used

¹ The word 'Conference' refers to the annual Conference of the MCSA at which representatives from all Districts, both clergy and laity, within the Southern African Connexion of the Methodist Church are present. In 1995 however, it was resolved that that was to be the last such annual Conference; this is to be replaced, starting in 1998 with conferences only every 3 years, the Connexional Executive meeting in the years between Conferences.

² In 1996 the *Minutes of Conference* became known as the *Yearbook* of the MCSA, but will be included in my references to the *Minutes of Conference* in this dissertation. Also,

as documentation to examine the official Church policy of women in this ministry and the situation in which they find themselves, while questionnaires on 'Women in the Methodist Ministry', which were sent to approximately half the ministers in the Connexion, have been used to ascertain the views of the ministers themselves regarding women ministers. The information gathered from this questionnaire, sent to all women, as well as a large number of men ministers of the MCSA in late 1996, indicates clearly that not only are there problems concerning the ministry of women but that this is acknowledged by a majority of women ministers as well as a significant number of men ministers. While the reluctance to accept women ministers and the discrimination they face is at times difficult to pinpoint, these issues are at least being addressed. Having said this, however, one needs to recall that these issues have been noted by Conference for over five years, as reflected in the *Minutes* of 1992 to 1996. In addition, it has been repeatedly resolved by Conference, over this same period, to establish committees and working groups to investigate the issue to facilitate a more complete incorporation of women into the Methodist Ministry. In some cases the wording of the *Minutes* has remained identical, and in other instances one finds the almost bizarre resolution that the entire question of women in the Methodist ministry be investigated by the Doctrine Committee. My criticism here is not directed at the Doctrine Committee but, given that women have been ordained for over twenty years, how could this Committee possibly find anything but that women are entitled to be ministers of the MCSA? An in depth reading and analysis of these *Minutes* will now be undertaken.

2.2. THE MINUTES OF CONFERENCE AND WOMEN

In the 1972 *Minutes of Conference*³ it was resolved that:

As a majority of Synods in the Church favour the admission of Women to the ordained ministry, the Conference approves:

when referring to the Conference of a specific year only the date will be indicated thus (1992). The abbreviated form, *Minutes*, will also refer to the *Minutes of Conference*.

³ In Section IV : Commission on the Renewal of the Church, subsection 3 'Women in the Ministry'.

(a) *the principle* of the admission of Women to the ordained Ministry, and refers the matter to Circuit Quarterly Meetings as Provisional Legislation to the District Synods for consideration and for report to the ensuing Conference
(1972: 77-78, my emphasis).

The decision "to Ordain women to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments", was reaffirmed by the 1973 Conference, accepting that;

...as provisional legislation the following draft regulations governing the admission of women to the ordained Ministry:

1. The regulations for candidature, probation and ordination shall except where otherwise stated apply to women as well as to men.
2. Women ministers are eligible for appointment, on the same conditions as men, to any station or appointment under Conference.

(Note : It should be remembered that, as is the case with men, the suitability of the person for the appointment, the conditions in the appointment and the wishes of the people expressed through the invitations system will be taken into account for the Stationing Committee and the Conference).

3. Stipend, allowances, housing etc., will in general be the same as for men.
(1973: 259, paragraph XXVIII)

The issue of marriage and also the classification of "Without appointment (Marriage)" will be referred to more fully later, especially with regard to the information from the questionnaires.

Several issues are of significance here. Firstly, the need to draw up specific regulations for women ministers when regulations concerning entry into the ministry as well as expectations of ministers in the MCSA were already in existence. While one may argue that the inclusion of this section is intended to dispel any ideas that women and men ministers will be treated differently, it ultimately produces the very opposite effect of

what it was intended to achieve. The inclusion of this paragraph, in all its detail, draws attention to the fact that women are in the ministry as ministers but, by implication, indicates that they are a 'separate category'; that they are in fact not part of the mainstream of Methodist ministers, for example, not dissimilar in effect to the inclusion of a 'Women's Page' in a newspaper. Women ministers are thus not regarded as part of 'the norm' or the general (and dominant) group, but are isolated and categorised, thereby also leaving open the possibility for stigmatisation and hence restriction to limited fields of work. The attempt to remind the reader that women ministers will generally be treated the same as men ministers could perhaps justifiably be compared to the Player Queen in *Hamlet*, who says that, "The lady protests too much..." (*Hamlet* III ii). In the paragraph quoted above, one reads statements such as: "...regulations shall apply to women as well as to men"; "...on the same conditions as men"; "...as is the case with men", and "...will in general be the same as for men" (1973: 259, paragraph XXVIII). Despite these four references to apparent equality of treatment and regard, qualifications such as "except where otherwise stated" (point 1) and "in general" (point 3) indicate how erratic such equality is. More offensive is the note after point 2:

It should be noted that, as is the case with men, the suitability⁴ of the person for the appointment, the conditions in the appointment and the wishes of the people expressed through the invitation system will be taken into account by the Stationing Committee and the Conference.
(1973: 259)

Secondly, although one would assume that the Stationing Committee would generally be sensitive to the suitability of ministers for particular stations, the apparent pains taken here to emphasise the necessity for suitable and acceptable ministers, especially within the context of Women in the Ministry, as reflected in this section in the Minutes included here, one is made suspicious of the motive behind this inclusion and unconvinced of its sincerity. One may argue that this "Special Resolution" in the *Minutes of Conference* of 1973 was intended to clarify the position of women ministers and indicate exactly how they would become part of the Methodist Ministry, and that, at the

⁴ This has in the past referred to the "competence" of men ministers. Here it could refer to the sex of the minister, the subtle implications of which could be a problem.

time, twenty-four years ago, it was both a prudent and a necessary move. Notwithstanding this there are two issues that need to be examined against this background. The first is the rationale behind the stationing of women ministers, as well as how such a rationale is interpreted by both men and women ministers alike. The second issue concerns statements in the *Minutes of Conference* on the stationing of women which were initially intended to clarify issues on stationing, but which, it may be argued, have not necessarily done so. This is dealt with in the next section.

2.2.1. The stationing of ministers

Firstly, many respondents to the questionnaire (to be discussed in more detail in the next section), indicated that they regarded the Stationing Committee as lacking sensitivity and therefore concern in placing ministers. Certain men ministers felt that women ministers were often given more comfortable and secure appointments than they in general were offered. However, other men, especially those who appeared to have more stereotyped attitudes, maintained that women ministers needed to be protected and taken care of, particularly in the absence of a husband. Consequently they believed that women should not be sent to stations that were 'dangerous', that required much travelling at night, and travelling long distances in general, as well as travelling in areas where modes of transport, such as horses, may not be regarded as suitable for a woman minister. Angrier respondents were those who claimed to have knowledge of women ministers who were refused, or not welcomed, in places to which they had been sent. This refusal, whether initiated by the congregation or a minister in the Circuit, indicates that the "wishes of the people" in a congregation can be misused so that discrimination in various forms is allowed to occur. But this is not where the problem necessarily ends, despite the injustice and vastness of such a complaint *per se*; a greater grievance by ministers, especially women ministers, is that when a congregation or a Circuit refused to accept them, the Stationing Committee and Conference did not insist on the appointment going ahead, but succumbed to an attitude which reflected nothing less than the sexist and discriminatory demands of the society or circuit concerned. Therefore, instead of the Stationing Committee insisting that the woman minister go to the place allocated to her, they seemed to find a convenient escape from confrontation and 'rocking the boat' in the

guise of being sensitive, and recognising that the "suitability of the person for the appointment" was questionable, at least for that particular time, or for that specific station, or both. The question of stationing will be discussed further in relation to the questionnaire and its findings at a later stage.

The second issue concerns an inconsistency in the *Minutes of Conference* regarding stationing and discrimination. While it was deemed necessary to formulate "regulations governing the admission of women to the Ordained Ministry" (published in the 1973 Minutes of Conference) when women were first permitted to be ordained, the references to stationing and suitability for Ministry appear more to work against women, allowing for the perpetuation of existing opposition to women ministers by some laity and clergy alike.

It is interesting to find that in the 1996 *Minutes of Conference* one sees a resolution speaking specifically against discrimination of ministers on the grounds of race in the process of stationing. Paragraph 18.5.6. reads:

Ministers be stationed in our Circuits and appointed to serve Societies *without regard to race*, and that Bishops bear this in mind when stationing Ministers in their Districts, and Circuit Stationing Committees take this seriously when issuing invitations.
(1996:73, my emphasis)

The implication of this statement is clear: although the desire by Conference is that it should not be so, race is often an issue in the stationing of ministers. Despite the 'One and Undivided' façade of the MCSA, it is still very much a black-white church at Society level. Few Societies are fully integrated racially; where some integration occurs this is often in inner city churches or in suburban, previously 'white' Societies which black people living in the area have joined, with the church usually still having a white minister. It is very rare to find white ministers in so-called black Societies. This is an important issue, but the fuller implications of its inclusion in the *Minutes of Conference* are even more interesting and important. The question that one must naturally ask, in relation to this resolution, not only in the context of the race issue but in terms of the wider issue of the discrimination which would include sexism is: Why is there no such

statement on women ministers being "stationed in Circuits and appointed to Societies without regard to [sex or gender]"? The answer is simple, but the justification of the same less so. Either there is no consideration of gender (and the possibility of subsequent discrimination) in the stationing of ministers, particularly women ministers, which is why it is unnecessary to pass a resolution similar to the one mentioned above. Or, if gender is a consideration in the stationing of ministers in certain Societies, it is nonetheless not considered to be sufficiently important to be reported. The former possibility that gender is not a consideration in stationing, is refuted by the claims of many ministers, women and men, that many Societies or Circuits will not accept a woman minister. The latter possibility thus presents itself as the more likely. If this is indeed the case, that there is no specific resolution concerning the appointment of ministers to Circuits, regardless of their gender, because the issue is not important or at least not as important as the problem concerning the stationing of ministers because of their race, then one needs to know why. It is my opinion that at least part of the answer to this question can be elicited from the *Minutes of Conference* from 1992 to 1996.

2.2.2. *The Minutes of Conference: Texts on Women (1992-1996)*⁵

There are three main areas in the *Minutes of Conference* that need to be carefully considered in order to establish the official Church policy of the MCSA concerning Women in the Ministry and their responses to concerns and problems raised by Women Ministers themselves.

The repetition of the following paragraphs, in the years indicated, is important. These include the 'Statement on Women' (from 1992 until 1996), the 'Women Ministers' Consultation (from 1993-1996), and the paragraph 'Women Ministers' (from 1994-1996). Certain changes have indeed been made to these paragraphs, some small and apparently insignificant, others I would argue, subtle but nonetheless of great significance, in terms of how they impact on the oppression of women ministers in the MCSA.

⁵ The complete text of these sections of the *Minutes* are found at the end of the dissertation, entitled Appendix A

By repeating the paragraphs, 'Statement on Women', 'Women Ministers' Consultation', and 'Women Ministers', year after year, for more than five years, two things are indicated. Either, even if the matter at hand is regarded as important, it is not regarded as urgent, or that those pressing for changes in the ministry of the women are simply being humoured by those who actually hold the authority, to have something included in the *Minutes* but also to do nothing meaningful about it. This latter scenario would be a very subtle but nonetheless powerful means of oppressing women and maintaining the patriarchal tradition, as well as being a cowardly one. It is not uncommon to find this type of oppression, especially today, when it is not considered acceptable to be seen to be discriminating. Hence the issue raised by women ministers, and a number of their male colleagues, is recorded in the *Minutes of Conference*, where Committees, including the Doctrinal Committee are asked to investigate the problems that have been identified. While it is not completely accurate to state that nothing is being done about the situation of women in the ministry, the mere repetition of Conference's intention to investigate this issue is not sufficient to indicate their determination to actually resolve it. Because of this attitude, the MCSA could be accused of not taking this issue, and the situation of women ministers, seriously at all.

2.2.3. *The Minutes of Conference the absence of action*

The apparent absence of action and lack of interest on behalf of the MCSA regarding Women's Issues, with reference to the Ministry, as reflected when reading the *Minutes of Conference* from 1992-1996 leads one to the next area of concern. Is the Methodist Church's attitude on this issue one of total disinterest? Is it truly irrelevant what problems have been created by women entering the ordained Ministry; or unimportant that prejudices have emerged as a result of the imposition of women ministers on the Church as a whole? Are the difficulties women ministers face, and the difficulties that their presence in the ministry may cause men colleagues not important? None of these issues can in any way be considered unimportant or irrelevant. Yet, this is the impression that the *Minutes of Conference* create about the MCSA's views on these matters in particular.

2.2.3.1. The Doctrine Committee

It has been difficult, in consultation with various ministers in the MCSA, including several who are on the Doctrine Committee, to ascertain exactly what has been done by the Doctrine Committee on the issue of women in the ministry since 1992. In 1992 Conference resolved, "that the Doctrine Committee in consultation with the Christian Citizenship Department prepare a study document on the issue of gender in the Scriptures". This resolution was repeated at subsequent Conferences, until the latest one in 1996. It is interesting to note how the debate here seems to have extended beyond the ministry of women, possibly to the role of women and men in the church as a whole. If this is the case, it could be cause for concern, as could the fact that the Christian Citizenship Department, usually involved in social and educational issues, was asked to become involved in a discussion of women in the ministry. Few of the members of the Committee who were consulted recalled this issue ever being discussed at Doctrine Committee meetings. A possible reason given for this by a member of the Doctrine Committee was the fact that once the ordination of women had initially been debated, and had been accepted by Conference in 1972, the debate was never re-opened, and the issue of women in the ministry, it was said, was not questioned again, at least not on a Doctrinal level or by the Doctrine Committee.⁶

A previous convenor of the Doctrine Committee also indicated that the mandate on this particular issue, which was referred to the Doctrine Committee, was never made very clear, and despite their attempting to understand what was required of them in this regard, they were never completely able to come to grips with it. He also acknowledged that perhaps this Committee ought to have communicated this difficulty to Conference, but the significant fact is that they did not. Why, it must be asked, would such an important, erudite and highly regarded Committee ignore so important an issue? I use the word 'ignore' deliberately, since the issue was not dealt with (i.e. investigated and

⁶ However, this does not acknowledge the fact that recently a woman minister approached a member of the Doctrine Committee, asking that they, as a Committee, examine certain issues concerning women in the Ministry. This request was refused on the grounds that the whole matter of Women in the Ministry was no longer regarded as a relevant issue.

reported on to Conference) and the fact that it could not, or was not going to be dealt with, was not communicated to the Conference. According to the terms of reference, the Doctrine Committee would have been obliged to "prepare a study document on the issue of gender in the Scriptures", as was resolved by the 1992 Conference, yet they did not do so, and this was not noted in the *Minutes of Conference* in the ensuing years resulting in the same resolution being passed repeatedly, to which they failed to respond. But the responsibility for this failure to investigate what was deemed to be an important aspect of the Methodist Church Ministry and life, lies not only with the Doctrine Committee but with the entire MCSA. All ministers receive *Minutes of Conference* annually and they are available at several bookrooms for the laity. Did no minister question the fact that the compilation of a study document had repeatedly been requested? Was no one concerned, whether they shared the concern for the problems women ministers experienced or not, that such a precedent in terms of what was, in essence, an ignoring of a resolution of Conference, could lead to other issues being ignored? For example, has the date - January 1997- for the integration of Circuits, been ignored as well? And if and where it has, will this be tolerated? It is an indictment, not only on the Doctrine Committee but of every minister of the MCSA that such a resolution could be passed repeatedly for years with no indication of any report having been prepared and presented to Conference, bearing in mind how important this report is to the Women Ministers. Were there any objections to the stagnancy of this research? Was there no questioning Conference on the state of these investigations, and if there was, why was this not reflected in the Minutes? One wonders exactly what it was that caused the changes to 'Question 11 Doctrinal Matters' in the *Minutes of Conference* from 1995 to 1996. Most inexplicable, however, remains the lack of response by the Doctrine Committee in terms of its inability to present a report to Conference during the years 1992-1995.

The 1995 *Minutes of Conference*, 'Question 11, Doctrinal Matters', reads as follows:

- 11.1. WHAT IS THE REPORT OF THE DOCTRINE COMMITTEE?
Conference received the Report of the Doctrine Committee.
- 11.2. WHAT ARE OUR RESOLUTIONS ON DOCTRINAL MATTERS?
They follow.
- 11.3. WHOM DO WE APPOINT MEMBERS OF THE DOCTRINE

COMMITTEE?

Conference appointed a Doctrine Committee with the following terms of reference:

1. To advise Conference on doctrinal and ethical issues;
2. To assist Conference in doctrinal discussions with other denominations and ecumenical bodies;
3. To prepare reports on doctrinal and ethical matters referred to it by Conference.

(*Minutes of Conference* 1995:47-48)

The change made in the 1996 *Minutes of Conference* was to omit Questions 11.1 and 11.2 as recorded in the 1995 *Minutes* and to go directly to 11.3 (called 11.1). This may indicate that it was a superfluous exercise noting whether Conference had received the Report of the Doctrine Committee, since this would be the usual practice. In the light of our discussion it begs the question as to whether such a question as quoted above, would not be appropriate when one is aware that certain other reports requested by Conference in the past have not been compiled nor presented. Perhaps this observation is more interesting than crucial to this discussion, but the changes to the paragraphs relating to the *Minutes of Conference* as outlined in the following section are not merely interesting, but very telling in the pursuit of this study.

2.2.4. The *Minutes of Conference*: A closer examination

In 1992 the MCSA issued a statement reaffirming its commitment to the ordination of women although it acknowledged that certain implications of this matter were only then becoming clearer and needed to be looked at by a working group. In 1993 this statement was reiterated, but this time the Department of Education for Ministry was asked to address these concerns. The paragraph, 'The Ordination of Women', was removed after the 1993 Conference. Included in the *Minutes*, as from 1993, was a statement issued by the Consultation of Women Ministers in which they responded to certain points made in the previously included section entitled the 'Ordination of Women'. A year later, in 1994, there was a further inclusion in the *Minutes of Conference*, apparently a response by Conference to many of the issues raised by the Consultation of Women Ministers as well as the issues which were raised in the 'Statement on Women' as from 1992.

It is highly significant that, apart from a few subtle changes to these paragraphs in the *Minutes of Conference*, which will be analysed later in this section, these Statements and Resolutions have been repeated, as was mentioned in relation to the resolution regarding gender in the Scriptures with no reported progress having taken place at all. This begs the question: why is this issue not being treated as urgent or important, thus allowing progress to be made? This is especially ironic when, in the same document, Conference notes that "the Churches and Society continue to treat gender issues lightly" (1992: Para. 28.16.41).

2.2.4.1. 'Statement on Women'

Firstly, in 1992, Conference noted that "the Church *is* immersed in the problems of violence and economic and political issues *and that* women's issues are treated as peripheral" (my emphasis), while in 1993 the same section reads as follows: "...*because* the Church is immersed in the problems of violence and economic and political issues women's issues are treated as peripheral" (my emphasis). The first statement above may show an awareness that women's issues are relegated to less important positions when compared to violence, economic or political issues, but it also could indicate that all of these issues (violence, economic and political issues and women's issues) are problems of equal concern, without attributing greater value to any one of them. However, the second statement appears to identify violence, economic and political issues as being the cause of women's issues being treated as peripheral! This has the unacceptable consequence of allowing those who are sexist in their attitudes, as well as those who do not regard women as having any issues of significance to raise, to escape the accusation that they are passively allowing, or actively and intentionally pushing, women and their problems to a peripheral position. This opens the way to 'blame' economic problems, poverty and migrant labour for the poor treatment and the neglect of women. Certainly issues such as those just mentioned have caused great difficulties for women in almost every sphere of life, but, as is often acknowledged, such people often experience discrimination on two or even three fronts: because they are poor and women, or because they are black and women, or because they are poor, women, and black. The fact that economic issues play a part in their plight being worse than the plight of men in many

instances, and attempts to improve their plight being relegated behind more 'important matters' is one of the causes of their being shifted to the peripheries giving place to more 'relevant' and 'urgent' spheres. The reason that women's issues are treated as peripheral in the Church, as the *Minutes of Conference* of the MCSA seem to indicate, it needs to be said plainly, is because women are regarded as less important than men. Where women do have complaints, the present strategy seems to be to attempt to humour them and thereby to lull them into a state of helplessness and complacency so that men in power can get back to 'business as usual'.

Secondly, in the paragraph 'Statement on Women' one also finds the change of wording from "Conference believes that women: are created in God's image", (in 1992) to "Conference affirms that women: are created in God's image" (in 1993, and repeated in 1994 and 1995) with the omission of both words, 'believes' and 'affirms', in 1996, when the statement read, "Women are created in God's image...". Regrettably there are many who maintain that to quibble over words, or to analyse the significance of the choice of words used is 'just semantics'. This implies that the exercise is argumentative and academic in nature, something futile which is of greater interest value than something needing serious attention. Any changes in the wording of a document of this nature must be questioned. G.K. Chesterton makes the valid point:

Why shouldn't we quarrel about a word? What is the
good of words if they aren't important enough to quarrel
over? Why do we choose one word more than another
if there isn't any difference between them?
(in Peter 1977: 532)

This is a very pertinent observation and a point which, in this context is, I believe, very important to consider.

While certain sections of the *Minutes of Conference* are repeated without alteration, year after year, other sections have what appear to be more minor, innocuous changes made to them. But if they are indeed innocuous, in terms of the overall meaning of the statement, then why were they changed at all? The most plausible answer to this question is that the changes made to the *Minutes of Conference* on issues pertaining to

women have been made deliberately, with the intention of altering the meaning, or at least the connotations, of these sections of the *Minutes*.

The difference between the word 'believes' and 'affirms' concerning women being "made in the image of God, being in the majority in the Church and society and having great potential for empowering and developing citizens of the country" does not appear to have been made as the result of a devious or malicious motive, but it provides an interesting change nevertheless. The Oxford Encyclopedic Dictionary's definition of 'believe' is to "accept as true or as conveying the truth" or "think, suppose" (1991: 130a). While either definition would be semantically acceptable in this context, the former would naturally be stronger, showing greater conviction than the second, which would appear less definitive and confident. The change from "believes" to "affirms" in the 1993 *Minutes of Conference* is an interesting one. The word "affirms" could be used in its most liberal manner, that is, to make firmer or stronger, implying that the previous statement of Conference was not as decisive or forceful as it ought to have been, or as Conference realised they would have liked it to have been received. It could also be that Conference was simply ratifying or confirming what was stated in the previous year, thus defending itself against an argument that often the mere repetition of the same statements, unless accompanied by meaningful action, indicates a lack of interest or urgency. This discussion need not be completely resolved here, however, since in 1996 the Statement began, "Women *are* created in God's image...", (my italics), omitting both 'affirms' and 'believes', which appeared to be indicative of Conference's conviction regarding women in this statement. This phrasing also has the effect of presenting this view as a fact, and not as some ideal held to by a particular group or Church at a particular time; rather, it indicates that this is the situation, and these are the facts.

2.2.4.2. 'Women Ministers' Consultation'

Paragraph 28.12.26, Women Ministers' Consultation appeared in the *Minutes of Conference* in 1993. The description of the problems faced by women in these *Minutes* remained similar in both content and phrasing until 1996. However, subtle but important changes were made to the introduction to the statement as well as to the proposals for

eliminating certain problems. From 1993 to 1995 the introduction to this statement read thus: "Conference *receives* the following statement from the Consultation of Women Ministers". The change in 1996 ran thus: "The following statement *was issued* by the Consultation of Women Ministers" (para. 28.7.2) (emphasis mine). The meaning is similar, but the connotations are remarkably different. In the earlier version it is the Conference who is the subject of the action, with the Consultation of Women Ministers appearing to be passive partners, thus reducing their impact and authority on the Conference and on those who subsequently read these *Minutes*. Conference appears to be in control, and the Consultation of Women Ministers appears to move within the ambit (and perhaps, reading further into the matter one could also say into the sphere of power) of the Conference. The 1996 *Minutes* portray a profoundly different scenario. Here the Consultation of Women Ministers is the subject of the action- the Consultation issues a statement. This change makes the Consultation the subject and thus the direct initiator of the statement, where in the earlier *Minutes* it had been the passive object. The use of the word 'issued', in this context adds a decisiveness and a determination to the action of the Consultation of Women Ministers. It is the less conspicuous changes, like these, in the *Minutes* that reveal how easily one's understanding is able to be altered, by the selection and manipulation of words in a sentence. How the introduction to this statement came to be changed in this way I have been unable to ascertain, but the impact of the change is great.

The second area to be explored is the omission of the definite article 'the' from the opening statement, "We, the Women Ministers..." (1993: para.28.12.26) to "We, Women Ministers..." as from 1994, indicating a detraction from the unity and also integrity of Women Ministers. The reason this is so is that many women minister in the Church, and thus may loosely, if correctly, be termed 'Women Ministers'. However, the inclusion of the definite article in "We, the Women Ministers of the Methodist Church" is unambiguous in its specific reference to Ordained Women Ministers. This trend, seen in the 1996 *Minutes*, whether perceived or real, towards weakening the position and strength of Women Ministers, and therefore to the down-playing of the problems experienced by women in the ministry, is supported by a similar occurrence in the final

section of paragraph 28.7.2. in which Conference made the following recommendations regarding discrimination on the basis of gender. The use of the word 'should' ("The Church should eliminate sexist language", 1996) in place of the verbs 'calls', in "Conference calls the Church to eliminate sexist language" ; 'asks', in "...asks that matters concerning Women be dealt with at all levels of ministry"; and 'requires', in "...and requires the Church to eliminate discrimination against women in action, words and attitude" (1993: para. 28.12.26) considerably lessens the impetus of the 1996 re-worded statement.

The verb 'asks' is probably the mildest of the three appeals made by the Conference but nevertheless indicates here that Conference requires something of the Church. It is an indication that something is expected, not in the usual form of asking, in an open-ended way, but rather along the lines of a rhetorical question in which case Conference is in fact directing that "Matters concerning Women be dealt with at all levels of training", and expects this to happen. The word 'calls' is a very strong word, indicating an "order, demand or a requirement" (OED 1991 : 209b). While the word may, in the way in which it is used here also be used to mean "invoke, appeal to; request or require" (OED 1991: 209b), this is hardly less stringent in its appeal and in the reactions or actions which it demands. Finally, the verb 'requires' is unequivocal in what it demands - nothing less than the complete eradication of discrimination against women will be tolerated. 'Require' has no weak or neutral form. Its meanings, in a context such as this one, could include, "lay down as an imperative; command or instruct; order; insist on" (OED 1991: 1227b). The contrast between the fairly rigid and stringent demands made by Conference in the Statement in paragraph 28.12.26 of 1993-1995 and the re-worded version of 1996 is considerable, as well as disappointing. While the word 'shall' expresses an emphatic intention, the same thing is not true of the past tense 'should'. In that case, in the 1996 Minutes, the softer and more general 'should' emphasises the seriousness of the message as well as the directives issued by Conference concerning sexual discrimination. This, together with the way in which 'should' is loosely and ambiguously used today, changes a directive of Conference into a recommendation, the interpretation being thus left to the Church's or individual's discretion. The importance of such regression, especially in view

of the feelings of many women ministers (as will be discussed in relation to the questionnaire responses later) ought not be played down. The issue of women in the ministry ought not in any manner to be regarded as an irritant, or an opportunity for men (laity and the clergy) to display their tolerance and their ability to humour their female colleagues.

I now turn to the ministers themselves. Here I will discuss the views they expressed and the responses they gave to the questionnaires sent to them, concerning women in the ministry of the MCSA.

2.3. QUESTIONNAIRE ON WOMEN MINISTERS IN THE MCSA⁷

This section will deal with the findings of the research on women in the Methodist ministry, conducted using questionnaires. Before the analysis of the findings is undertaken, however, a brief explanation of the processes involved in the compilation, distribution and analysis of this questionnaire will be given.

2.3.1. Formulation of the questionnaire

The following processes formed part of devising this questionnaire:

- (i) The basic hypothesis of this research was that women ministers are not treated as equal to men ministers, and that they have not been accepted fully into the ministry of the MCSA.
- (ii) While the extent of dissatisfaction and discussion regarding women ministers among men ministers was not known, the objective of the questionnaire was to reveal this situation more accurately.
- (iii) The method used in compiling the questionnaire was both qualitative⁸ and quantitative.⁹

⁷ This questionnaire is to be found at the end of this dissertation, entitled Appendix B

⁸ A qualitative method refers to written, rather than numeric data, and is not counted or converted into numeric symbols. Comments made in the questionnaire were of this type.

⁹ The quantitative method was used to count replies such as 'Yes' and 'No' and to create statistics in the form of percentages, to be used in the analysis of the overall findings.

The quantitative approach, in the form of closed-ended or structured questions throughout the questionnaire, was used.

The qualitative method was also used with the inclusion of space for comments and the invitation to respondents to explain their answers. This also allowed for greater understanding of the issues raised. These answers, given in the words of the respondents, also indicated where differences of understanding and the interpretation of concepts, and of situations have, and still do, exist. In addition, such answers enabled the construction of a clearer picture of the prevailing situation in the ministry, which included suggested reasons for the values and opinions expressed by many ministers. Such information would have been lost had a purely quantitative approach been used.

The combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods also produced some very interesting information. For example, 86% of women ministers said they were discriminated against by male ministers, yet only 71% said they experienced oppression because of being in what was considered to be a patriarchal ministry. It is possible that fewer women felt their oppression was the result of 'institutionalised' oppression or that, as suggested in Chapter I, women may be confused or uncertain about the cause of their oppression. Another example of an apparent inconsistency in responses was when 32% of men ministers stated that the Methodist Church is sexist, while 64% had said earlier that women ministers suffered oppression as a result of being in a patriarchal ministry. Many of the comments made by men in response to these two questions, indicate that the understanding of concepts referred to in the questions was not always clear, and were perhaps also an indication of an ambivalence towards the subject. For example, they wrote, in response to the question whether the MCSA is sexist, "If patriarchal equals sexist; then yes, and "Yes in practice, no in theory, and vice versa", and "Some members are, some not", making one wonder why the discrepancy existed between the two answers.

When a respondent selects one of the answers provided, one may assume that the respondent was confident of their choice. However, the comments accompanying the

answers often indicated otherwise: sometimes there was a misunderstanding of the question or it was interpreted in a very particular way; in other instances the comments showed a degree of non-committal on the part of the respondent, despite the person already having selected one of the answers supplied. An example of the latter was found in response to the question of whether they thought the MCSA would ever be completely free from sexism. Despite choosing the answer 'Yes' or 'No', two accompanying comments were: "Will we be free from sin before the Second Coming?" and "Prejudice is a universal phenomenon and a permanent condition which finds expression in a variety of ways - one of which will be 'sexism'". By resorting to such general and probably very obvious statements, respondents were neither clarifying their answers nor conveying any new information. For example, if the answer is 'No', that the MCSA will never be free from sexism, this is not seen as a criticism of the MCSA but something that is beyond the control of the MCSA; something almost unavoidable, and therefore something which the Church would not be able to change even if it wanted to do so.

The use of the quantitative method allowed for the compilation of statistics which were good indicators of the number of ministers who concurred on particular issues. This also indicated the intensity of feelings on certain issues and the extent and vastness of perceptions, as indicated by the questions, on other issues. Clear differentiations between perceptions and reality were also made possible by using this method. Despite apparently common perceptions about an issue, the statistics clearly showed whether the reality was different.

(iv) The answers provided in the questionnaire were closed- ended or structured; they were of the 'multiple choice' variety. The answers ranged from a choice between 'Yes' and 'No', to 'I agree', 'I disagree', 'I strongly agree/disagree', etc. Every effort was made to provide the most appropriate range of answers as possible, thus enabling the respondents to be able to select one of the choices provided.

(v) Selecting the population. A sample of men ministers, approximately half the total number of ministers in the MCSA was selected. An effort was made to ensure the inclusion of ministers from urban and rural areas, from all provinces in South Africa, and from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland which also form part of the MCSA. With

approximately 8% of all ministers in the MCSA being women, it was decided to include all of them in the sample in order to establish as complete a picture as possible of their opinions and their understanding of the difficulties women in the ministry experience.

(vi) A Pilot Study was conducted using an equal number of randomly selected men and women ministers. Where this pilot study indicated that questions had been poorly phrased or ambiguous and were being misread by respondents, these were rephrased and restructured. It was also felt unnecessary to ask for comments to each question in the final questionnaire since some of these were shown to be superfluous in the pilot study. In some case questions were paired or linked, and one comment would therefore be sufficient to cover both questions. Certain questions were intended to be used for quantitative purposes only and thus did not require comments. Every effort was made to ensure that the questions were as simple and as clear as possible. Questions which were thought more likely to interest the readers were asked first, and general questions preceded specific ones in each section. The questionnaire was referred to a specialist in empirical research for comments and changes to the questionnaire were made according to her suggestions.

(vii) The questionnaire was divided into two sections, the first dealing with Women in the Methodist Ministry, the second relating to the respondents; personal information. The latter was used in an attempt to establish patterns in responses of different groups of people, according to gender, race, station, age, number of years in the ministry, etc., since it is possible that such factors could contribute to the answers given. These background questions were intentionally placed at the end of the questionnaire, having little interest value to the readers and because they were secondary to the questions on the actual subject of women in the ministry of the MCSA.

Section A was divided into the following categories: Discrimination in the Ministry in General; Personal Situation and Conflict; Ministerial Authority and Status; Stationing of Ministers; Stereotypes; Traditional Views on Gender and Language; and *Minutes of Conference*. The first six were included as areas regarded as important in terms of their relation to possible sexism and oppression and also since these were thought to cover many of the facets of the ministry itself. The final section, *Minutes of Conference*,

was included to establish the familiarity of the ministers with the policies and guidelines on women in the ministry in the MCSA.

(viii) Analysis of findings. It was most pleasing to have 48% of all questionnaires returned within a two-month period.

The closed-end questions were calculated as percentages. The comments made were used to establish general trends, the repetition of ideas, as well as contradictions and inconsistencies between answers to structured questions and the answers given in the respondents' own words. In my analysis of the questionnaire I found it useful to quote several of the comments made to clarify parts of the analysis and to give examples of the intensity of ministers' feelings on certain issues. Some of the comments, which were themselves sexist and also aggressive, were quoted to indicate the extent of the tension that the presence of women in the ministry appears to have created. The full analysis of my findings is contained in the next section of this chapter.

2.4. ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

While the results of this questionnaire were largely predictable, in that they confirmed the existence of the oppression of women, it is nonetheless important to present these findings as they reflect the prevailing opinions of both women and men in the MCSA. Each section of the questionnaire will be examined in turn so that common perceptions and opinions on similar issues can be weighed up and the views of various ministers examined in relation to one another. Although the percentage of men ministers who responded to this questionnaire was proportionately far higher than the percentage of questionnaires returned by women ministers, the overall response was 48% of the total number of questionnaires sent out. This result was pleasing and perhaps also indicative of the gravity and contentiousness of this subject in the MCSA at present. In the analysis of the findings of the questionnaire, the responses to the various questions have been grouped together according to their subject matter.

2.4.1. Discrimination in the ministry NB!!!

Two things were especially significant in the results of this questionnaire. The first was the overwhelming majority of women ministers (86%) who said that they experienced

discrimination against them in the Methodist Ministry by men colleagues. The 14% of women who said they were not discriminated against on the basis of being women, presents a conundrum. Either these women are genuinely not discriminated against by men in the ministry, or they are discriminated against because they are women, *but do not realise it as such*. Alternatively, if they are aware of this, then some of these women may not be willing to acknowledge this; the reason for this is not quite clear. Perhaps some of the comments made by women ministers referred to later in this section will shed some light on this situation. The other significant finding is the fact that 20% of men respondents regarded themselves as having been discriminated against by women, even if indirectly. Some of these men cited the fact that a type of 'affirmative action' was causing men ministers to be overlooked in favour of women in certain circumstances. Further examples of this type of preferential treatment toward women ministers were given by men ministers and will be referred to in the section on the Stationing of Ministers.

2.4.2. Equality and ministers

With regard to women and men ministers being treated "the same in all areas of the ministry and its demands", 66% of women were in agreement that this should be the case, with 55% of men agreeing. Most comments which supported the similar treatment of men and women ministers, suggested that similar work was being performed by men and women ministers, and there was thus no need for a differentiation in treatment. Other comments in support of this view were that "Ministers are equal in all spheres of the ministry in our Church" (m);¹⁰ "Inequality is not Christian" (m); "If called - same treatment; sexual differentiation should not be considered" (m); "Is no reason to be treated differently" (w); "Equality means just that!" (m); "If there is a difference in what a man and a woman can provide in terms of ministry then discrimination will be the inevitable result" (m); "Why should ministers be treated differently; we are equal in the sight of God" (m); "Equality is equality" (m); "We are all Methodist Ministers and therefore treatment should be the same" (m).

¹⁰ For the sake of clarity I have included the letters (m) and (w) after comments made by ministers to indicate whether a woman or a man minister made the comment.

In many instances the desire by woman ministers to be treated the same as their male counterparts appears to be an indication of their wish not to be discriminated against by men, nor to allow men ministers to be favoured. Many responses by men, as quoted above, appealed more to seeking genuine equality between ministers although, as can be seen from the comments below, some men reflect tones of hostility in their support of equal treatment; there appears to be the point of view that women are not really capable of performing this work, and that if they try to do so they will experience difficulties and misery for which they must expect no sympathy or help as they have brought this upon themselves by having entered this 'male sphere'. For example, "If women want to act the same as men then they must accept the same treatment" (m). NR!

There also appear to be a significant number of men ministers who oppose treating all ministers equally because they themselves are guilty of discrimination. This conclusion is based on statements made with reference to the questionnaire by men ministers: "[They should not be treated the same] because they are a weaker sex" (m); "There are some areas where women cannot be accepted by the community and I think most women ministers will not fit well in areas where there is a scarcity of road transport, e.g. Mountains of Lesotho" (m). The concern for a woman minister's safety, while seemingly sincerely expressed, nonetheless indicates a type of paternalism and even obligatory, and unnecessary, protectiveness by some men ministers. These feelings are reflected thus: "Some areas could be dangerous for women" (m); "In cases of the safety and security of the minister, being a woman may be an issue" (m); and more dramatically, "Would you vote in confidence to (sic) a single woman being placed in an appointment that would endanger her life?" (m). NB!!

Many of those who answered that men and women ministers should not be treated the same (34% of women and 46% of men) expressed a belief that people in general are very different as are their circumstances and they can never all be treated the same. With reference to this particular question the following answers are very non-committal because they are so general. For example, statements such as "Different people have different giftings which fit them for certain tasks and spheres of service" (w); "Men and

Notes of
Interview of ...
...

women are not the same, though of equal value. Their differences will impact on all areas of their life including their ministry" (m); "By nature we are not the same. It is God's purpose to create us differently" (m); "We have different gifts, talents and outlooks - we react differently to different situations" (w); "There are 'horses for courses'. Things like gifts, calling, talents etc should also come into play" (m); and, "Recognition should be given to each minister as an individual. Different skills, gifts and also limitations in terms of sexual orientation" (m). While what has been said here appears to be true, these comments indicate an avoidance of the problem rather than an attempt to 'stick their necks out' and try to solve, or seek remedies to the problem.

By contrast, it is quite acceptable that there should be "Certain leave allowances to women ministers in cases of childbirth" (m); "Differences could be made according to, for example, family situations or health, but not on the basis of gender" (w); and also that there are "...differences in circumstances which can merit 'special' treatment, e.g. husband/spouse with a career" (m). However, when a person's needs and circumstances do dictate one's treatment, it is interesting to note how often associations are created between particular groups of people and particular circumstances with concomitant sacrifices. This is particularly true in the stereotypical association of women with the family and family-related responsibilities, and of men with careers. Only one minister, a woman, said that "There should be more consideration re itinerancy demands of families for both men and women" (w). The most worrying responses, in terms of their traditional and conservative views are those expressed as follows: "Circumstances of married women (e.g. location of husband's work etc.) should be taken into account if necessary" (m); "Given the fact that many rural stations could not provide employment opportunities for a husband, consideration should be given to this in the stationing of women" (m); "[there are also] cultural situations which make working impossible for a woman" (m); "There should be careful consideration of the woman minister's marital status, especially in stationing" (m). What is of great concern to me is when the following statement is made by a woman minister: "Women ministers sometimes have family responsibilities and commitments" (w). This is true, but the reference here, being made only to women, reflects the view that this is the norm. Such an answer on a

questionnaire regarding this topic, compared to a question on the equal treatment of women and men ministers, indicates how easily people answer such questions and how clearly such answers reflect the complacency and *status quo* of the situations in which they live and work. Hence the importance of the family of the woman minister, and her husband in particular, takes precedence over her ministry, which is not usually the case with men ministers, whose families generally follow them wherever they go, including their wives, who often lose out on career promotions as well as other work-related opportunities, not to mention personal satisfaction, fulfilment and achievement.

2.4.3. Women ministers and oppression

There was an interesting discrepancy in the results to the question as to whether women ministers experienced oppression as the result of being in what is termed a "male-dominated environment", as well as whether there is sexual discrimination in the ministry. While 86% of women said they were discriminated against by men ministers, only 71% of women ministers agreed that they experienced oppression "as a result of being in what [was] considered to be a patriarchal ministry". It is difficult to understand the reason for this discrepancy, especially since there were very few comments made on this question. The most probable explanation is that woman ministers are, in this case, differentiating between individual men ministers having discriminatory attitudes towards women ministers, which was considered to be a common practice, and hence a common experience of women ministers. Conversely, on the question of a patriarchal ministry causing oppression, it appears that women ministers were reflecting on the Church as a whole, including the reactions of their congregations to them, when they gave their answers. Thus fewer women ministers felt that their experience of oppression was 'institutionalised' in nature, i.e., the result of the laws or practices of the Church as an institution with more women ministers experiencing discrimination from other ministers. This isn't an entirely satisfactory conclusion; it is an area that needs to be followed up in further research in the future. The alternative answer to this view is that there is a degree of confusion amongst women ministers as to the causes of the oppression they experience and the ways in which this oppression is manifest.

2.4.4. Discrimination, subtle or blatant?

An overwhelming majority of all respondents (67% of women and 62% of men) considered discrimination against women ministers in the Methodist ministry to be subtle rather than blatant. Most examples of such discrimination referred to stationing or the invitation system. For example, "Somehow women tend on the whole not to 'receive invitations'" (w); "...some Districts simply don't issue invitations to women", and "Women ministers are accepted as candidates, but find it hard to be 'invited' after completion of their training" (m). One male minister appears to have been epitomising the situation when he wrote: "We do not openly show our discrimination of women but they do suffer it. We refuse to give them stations. This is a contradiction. Why accept them in the ministry if we do not station them?" (m). These examples show an indirect type of discrimination, something which could appropriately be referred to as 'discrimination by omission'. It is difficult to identify or prove the discrimination expressed or experienced in such instances, since the discrimination cannot be interpreted according to acts or decisions made, but rather by what has not been done. Thus, by not inviting a woman minister to one's Church, even if it is because she is a woman, some believe that their actions are not harmful or detrimental to her in any way and that one is thus not actively discriminating against her. This subtle type of discrimination against women is reinforced by the views of the majority of respondents stating that women are regarded more often as 'Women Ministers' than as 'Ministers'. One woman minister stated that "...others call me mama Mfundisi instead of Mfundisi", while another minister, a male, stated that it was not uncommon to be told that "A woman minister has been appointed to our Church".

Although the majority of ministers indicated the prevalence of subtle discrimination against women ministers, there are apparently other ministers who do not hide their feelings as well. Statements made by ministers indicated that, "Ministers openly vote against women candidates with superb qualifications" (m); "[discrimination] is quite prominent, particularly when it is done by senior ministers" (m); "Some circuits and ministers (male) openly declare that they won't accept women ministers" (m); and that, "In some circuits where a woman candidated there has been outright refusal to her

appointment there" (m). The feeling was also expressed that such blatant discrimination was more common "in 'Black' rather than 'White' circuits" (m); "yes, in African Societies; No, in White Societies" (m); "In certain cultures" (m), and "...different views in 'white' and 'black' arms of our Church" (m). The following comments, made in all cases except one by women ministers, indicate that blatant discrimination, stereotyped expectations of ministers and hypocrisy, all played a role in the way in which women ministers were stationed: "[discrimination often takes the form of] an undermining of your credibility/authority" (w); "There are few invitations for women even today. Congregations still expect a man for the job" (w); "...other times some male minister sways the decision by saying: 'It's not a woman's Circuit', or 'A woman could not cope with that Circuit!'" (w). Probably the most harmful as well as cowardly or destructive attitudes of male ministers are reflected in the next two comments: "Some ministers will openly endorse the place of women in the ministry and then pass patronising comments about the work of female colleagues..." (w) and "Most male ministers simply say that they are not sexist but actions prove otherwise" (m).

NB An aspect of this topic that needs to be examined more fully is the apparent apathy or ignorance of some women concerning their own circumstances and the ways in which they could improve them. *NE* Some 5% of women ministers said that they did not know whether discrimination against them was subtle, compared with the same number indicating that they did not know whether discrimination was blatant. Part of the forthcoming discussion on strategies, which women themselves can employ to prevent their oppression, includes the view that women must begin to be the caretakers of their own lives, literally, in terms of actually caring about their situations and also by not leaving their fate in someone else's hands.

2.4.5. The Methodist Church and sexism

In what appears to be an interesting, if negligible, shift in the opinions of men ministers, 32% answered that the Methodist Church is sexist, while 64% in an earlier question agreed that women ministers suffered oppression as the result of being in a patriarchal ministry. By contrast 71% of women said that they suffered because of the patriarchal

ministry in which they operated, while 56% agreed that the Methodist Church is sexist. In my opinion this is indicative of the fact that women and men ministers have different understandings, either of the term 'sexist', or of what it means to experience oppression by a patriarchal ministry. Women ministers seemingly regarded the two situations as having a similar effect on them. It is also interesting to note that there is an almost exact inversion of the views of women and men ministers on this issue: 67% of women ministers said the Methodist Church is sexist; 33% said it is not; the corresponding figures for men ministers were: 32% - Methodist Church *is* sexist; 65% - is *not* sexist; with 3% of men not being sure on the issue.

The comments made in relation to this section of the questionnaire were also very enlightening. More of the comments made by women ministers were specific, for example: "Yes [to the Methodist Church being sexist] in structures and leadership, but congregations vary" (w); "...on other than official level - the members especially" (w), while more than 60% of the men's comments were non-committal and often oblivious to the extent that they were of no help at all. For example, "If patriarchal=sexist (sic), then yes. I actually think it is more a case of reflecting, rather than informing, social/cultural values"; "Some members are, some not"; "The Church as an institution has set itself against sexism, but there will always be sexists real or perceived", and then the most unhelpful statement of all: "No in theory, yes in practice; also vice versa". Women ministers were slightly less optimistic than their male colleagues about the MCSA ever being completely free from sexism.

Some men ministers cited idealistic or very general situations as those in which the absence of sexism would be found. Some of these comments are repeated because of their aptness, and include: "Will we be free from sin before the second coming?"; "Not until the parousia will there be such perfection" and "Prejudice is a universal phenomenon and a permanent condition which finds expression in a variety of ways - one of which will be 'sexism'". The latter comment is true, but it is nonetheless unacceptable in its complacency. It would be interesting to ask whether this same minister would have been prepared to tell black people in society that "Prejudice is a universal phenomenon

and a permanent condition which finds expression in a variety of ways - one of which will be 'racism'"? I think not. Such an attitude of disinterest, as well as an unwillingness to become involved in resisting injustices, and an attitude which attempts to justify such a standpoint, must be condemned.

Reflecting on proposed strategies for the liberation of women from oppression, the words of a woman minister expressing her belief that the Methodist Church could one day be completely free from sexism, are encouraging. She writes, "Yes, with a lot of work from the women". Not only is what she believes encouraging, it is also a realistic understanding of the problems and situation at hand and the indication of a preparedness to achieve equality through action. The main thrust of this dissertation is that it is only through what women do themselves, that they will be liberated. The oppression of women will not disappear unless women make this happen. No laws or rights, nor the support of any other group of people will achieve for women what they need, and can achieve for themselves. This is so because men currently possess the 'upper hand', in the power and authority which they possess in society and its many structures. Because it is not logical for men to disempower themselves, and to relinquish their power to women, women need to devise their own methods which are not dependent on men if they intend to achieve their liberation.

2.4.6. Single and married ministers

This section of the questionnaire contains several questions on single and married ministers (women and men), but the aim of this section was not primarily to establish the circumstances of these 'categories' of minister nor to explore the types of lives they lead. Rather, it is an attempt to understand whether one's personal circumstances, particularly those related to the absence or presence of a spouse, impact on a person's ministry, or the expectations of that minister. Responses by men ministers indicated a correlation in terms of their view that single and married women ministers should be treated the same in all areas (60% said they should) and their opinion stated that this was in fact the case (54% believed this to be so). In the opinion of women ministers 62% stated that single and married women ministers were treated the same while only 43% believed that they

should be treated the same. One is able to ascertain the following from the responses given on this issue: Most respondents regarded the family, as well as the work of a minister's husband, as being factors that needed to be taken into account in the case of married women ministers, but which did not apply to single women ministers. Single women were regarded as possibly being more free to perform certain tasks than were married women, but they were regarded as less experienced in dealing with certain pastoral situations than a married woman minister would be. It was also thought likely that single women ministers would face certain pressures from congregations because of being single women and that they were likely to have inferior accommodation and even inferior status compared to married women ministers. It was indicated that married women ministers often received no stipend and no accommodation, being dependent on their husband's support; they also often found it more difficult to get appointments than did single women ministers. Similar responses to this section of the questionnaire and the previous section on the equal treatment of women and men ministers, were given by men. While views such as, "...we have to be sensitive to the fact that before she becomes a minister she is a wife" (m), those referring to family responsibilities were well represented, so too were those insisting on equal treatment of all ministers: "They are all called by God to be ministers" (m); "They are both ministers doing the same kind of work" (m); "they have responded to the same call" (m); and "...they are all servants of God", (m) were some of the responses.

Also similar to the response to the question discussed earlier on women and men ministers receiving equal treatment was the one fairly hostile response by a male minister: "If you are accepted for ordination then you must not expect preferential treatment", and an even more revealing response by a married woman minister who wrote: "If a single woman is called she must be prepared to be treated like a minister". This seems to indicate the belief that men are the 'norm' in society and the view which equates 'man' with 'human'. Thus, what the male minister may actually be saying here, is that the woman minister, single or not, should behave like men ministers, and presumably think like them too, in order to eradicate any problems.

The matter of solidarity amongst women is vital to women's freedom from oppression and yet, what is seen here is that the tension between single and married women ministers is often great. Such tension is not restricted to women ministers, but when it does exist, it often emanates from the married women ministers who seem to regard themselves as more important, successful, experienced, and generally of having a higher status, than do single women. This was seen in the many references to single women not having certain 'experience' in pastoral situations. One assumes that 'sexual experience' is being referred to here, and it is presumptuous to assume that single ministers, male or female, are not aware of, or involved in such relationships themselves and are therefore less 'qualified' on the subject than married ministers are. For example, one assumes that all ministers giving counselling would not have had to experience alcohol and drug abuse, psychological problems, abusive relationships and have been actively involved in homosexuality in order to be able to minister properly to their congregations. Only when women act together will they be able to resist the derogatory and oppressive attitudes held by many people, including many ministers, several of whom found it acceptable to state that, "Marriage dignifies women..." (m); "If not married, she may fall" (m); "It is better to have a married woman minister than a single one because most single women are frustrated by not being married and that is evident, especially in the ministry (Doctrinally unacceptable)" (m); and also the idea that, "it is preferable for single women ministers not to marry in order to meet the demands of the ministry", but "If nature demands they must resign from the ministry" (m).

2.4.7. Discrimination - detrimental or advantageous?

Although sexual discrimination is largely condemned by the MCSA and most of its ministers in theory, this attitude is not always carried over into practice. Thus, while men ministers were more likely than women ministers to receive invitations, as well as promotions within the Church, 37% of women ministers said there were some instances in which being a woman was advantageous. Women ministers also indicated that they were less likely to be sent into the townships, 'dangerous' or 'physically tough' areas, than were men, and that "People often struggle to be openly confrontative/disagree (sic) - wanting to be 'polite' to a woman" (w). One woman minister reported that, upon

changing Circuits, "...the stewards would not let me live alone in the then unsuitable manse" (w). Such reports were corroborated by the view of an apparently bitter man minister who remarked that "Women ministers' stationing is a sensitive issue. While I can be sent anywhere to make way for women ministers' comfort, I am where I am because a woman minister had nowhere to go" (m). The possibility of women receiving special attention in the ministry as a result of their sex provided clear-cut views by both women and men ministers. Most respondents interpreted 'special attention' in terms of safety and childbearing, with a small minority suggesting this was the equivalent of 'kid-glove' treatment for women. Interestingly, 48% of women believed that they should be given special consideration in certain circumstances, with 52% against this view. Some 58% of men were in favour of such consideration being given to women. Almost 50% of the comments made referred to women ministers needing special consideration during pregnancy and the rearing of young children, with 35% of respondents referring to the safety of women ministers. There were very different views on safety and what is regarded as acceptable and unacceptable for women ministers. Women were regarded as "special" and as "delicate [needing to be] treated with care"; they are "...a weaker sex. Therefore it is not advisable to subject them to strenuous places like Lesotho" (m). It was also suggested that 'personal safety', 'late night meetings', 'travelling on foot and on horseback (in Lesotho) and also fears that may be specific to women (for example a fear of being raped) should be taken into consideration. Only 10% of respondents favoured equal treatment of all ministers. The reasons given for this ranged from wanting to avoid any discrimination against women, by creating "the concept that they are another brand of minister" (m) to a reminder that "...women are taking up what was regarded as a man's job all along"; as well as to the more categorical statement: "For men and women - if you can't take the pace - don't join!" (m).

2.4.8. Ministerial authority and status

On the matter of 'Ministerial Authority and Status', as referred to in the *Minutes*, there was, not surprisingly, much consensus and little debate in the form of comments made by different ministers. 29% of women ministers against 6% of men ministers felt that the training given to Methodist Ministers allowed for discrimination against women

ministers, but 29% of women ministers were satisfied that "matters concerning women [were being] dealt with at all levels of training - this compared to 69% of men. This may be due to an increased awareness by the Church of issues relating to women in the ministry, with a subsequent increase in profile of such issues, particularly at training level. Despite several supernumary and older women ministers not wishing to comment on training, since they felt they were unable to do so adequately, the figure of 33% of women ministers saying that they "Didn't know" about this issue, compared to only 17% of men ministers (many of whom are also supernumeraries), is cause for concern. One wonders whether this difference in "Don't know" responses is due to women ministers not keeping in touch with what is happening in the rest of the Church, or whether the men are keeping in touch more, or thinking that they are doing so, and therefore consider themselves sufficiently competent to comment on the issue. Alternatively, since women ministers are much less involved in leadership and planning roles in the MCSA, do they perhaps regard themselves as having less insight than men ministers on the subject?

Probably the most predictable results were the 91% of women ministers, and the 94% of men ministers who acknowledged that ministers are "generally granted status within the communities they serve". Of women respondents, 29% asserted that such status was equally distributed between women and men ministers; this compared to 49% of men holding a similar view. Speculation as to the reason for the higher figure for men could lead one to suggest that they are more idealistic, or even unrealistic, than women, reflecting what should be the case rather than on the actual situation. Despite the 19% difference in viewpoints between women and men ministers, with 62% of women asserting that men are granted higher status than women ministers while only 43% of men ministers concurred, there was no ambiguity and no need for interpretation on the question of women ministers having higher status than men ministers. No ministers, women or men, said that women ministers had higher status than a man minister in any community. Several comments rightly indicated that the status of ministers would differ from place to place and from community to community. What is of greater interest are two comments on this issue. Firstly the view that "...if you've earned it" (w), you as a woman minister will be accorded the same status as a man minister. Why should women

have to earn such status if men are automatically granted it? It is extremely disturbing that a minister, especially a woman minister, should hold such a view. Also significant is the comment, and a perceptive one I believe, that "men have higher status - women sometimes doubt themselves" (m). This goes back again to the understanding that it has to be the women who empower themselves.

Many women and men ministers (57% and 55% respectively) agreed that women ministers "do not experience a lack of authority when they are ministering", suggesting that one's authority as a minister emanates from God and not one's gender. One must not however, be so naïve as to assume one can ignore the perceptions, and subsequent actions and attitudes developed on the basis of those perceptions, of people who may choose to ignore such God-given authority. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the fact that the figures cited above regarding ministerial authority, also indicate that 43% of women ministers, and 45% of men ministers believe that women ministers do in fact experience a lack of authority when they are ministering. What is most encouraging in this area of the discussion is that 82% of women ministers believed that they could personally increase their authority in the ministry; this is compared to only 40% of men believing that women ministers themselves were capable of achieving this. This seemed to suggest that women ministers could achieve this themselves by being more knowledgeable, professional, organised and assertive, even if this does mean, unfairly, that women have to work much harder to achieve the authority that is granted automatically to most men.

2.4.9. Leadership and offices of authority

On the subject of the discrimination against women ministers "in the election or appointment of office bearers of importance in the Methodist Church", women and men ministers had almost inverse opinions: 32% of women ministers stated that there appeared to be no discrimination in this regard, while the same percentage of men said that there was discrimination against women in this area. Comments made by most ministers reflect the entrenchment of patriarchal structures. One man minister said, "The tendency is to give appointments based on sex and not ability" (m), while another argued, "If it's there then it's largely unconscious. Where there has been talent - e.g. Connie

Oosthuizen (Secretary of Synod - Natal Coast)¹¹ and Lindsay Hayward (youth),¹² top posts have been given to them" (m). However much this minister believes this, to identify these two positions as 'top posts' when one considers all the other positions, including that of Bishop, within the MCSA, he is clearly deluding himself, as is anyone who shares his view. Some ministers were quite optimistic concerning promotions and the election of women: "I'd say we are getting there" (w); "there are simply not enough [women ministers] to make an impact yet", (m) but these are overshadowed by statements such as, "[this] is true in theory but false in practice. People still want a man for the job" (w); "...there are however no women Bishops and only one superintendent" (m); and "...definite patriarchal bias - often women are worst culprits" (m). Yet again there is a reference to women, not only refusing or being unable to defend their rights, but apparently tolerating the prevalence of male dominance. Quite correctly, and necessarily, one woman minister asserts, "The laws of the church demand the election of women and Synods etc. need to be reminded of the fact regularly" (w). One hopes that such 'reminders' are indeed occurring but, against the background of very little mobilisation in the MCSA by women ministers, one remains fairly sceptical about this.

2.4.10. Gender and stationing¹³

The question, 'Is gender an issue in the stationing of a minister, male or female?' seemed largely to be interpreted as "is gender used to discriminate against women"- 71% of women ministers and 76% of men ministers believed this to be the case. A significant number of women - 19% - said that they did not know, with certainty, whether gender was or was not an issue in stationing. Without exception, women ministers made

¹¹ Rev Constance Oosthuizen was the first woman to be ordained in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, in 1976.

¹² Rev Lindsay Hayward was the first woman General Youth Secretary of the MCSA.

¹³ The vow, which is not part of the actual Ordination rite, is nevertheless asked of the Ordinand at the Ordination Service, "Will you go where you are sent?" The expected response is, "I will"; however, recently many married women in particular, not wishing to be stationed away from their husbands who are unwilling or unable to move themselves, have qualified their response to this vow accordingly.

comments referring to the negative or discriminatory use of gender in stationing. It was stated that "Women ministers are purposely sent to remote and/or less viable Circuits - to make them fail or frustrate them" (w); that "Some Circuits (rural) are seen to be 'male orientated Circuits' yet a cross cultural Circuit is quite in order for a single female minister" (w); furthermore, "...If a congregation 'won't' accept a woman minister the hierarchy accept it instead of sending her" (w). More important than the numerous references to the unsuitability of certain stations for women ministers, because they are in some way deemed to be unsafe, are the statements by men ministers which seem to reflect an unquestioning acceptance of the resistance to women ministers. Statements indicative of such an attitude are: "...some considerations have to be made when women are sent to some congregations, especially since they do not all accept women ministers in toto" (m); "[Gender should not be an issue] but it is de facto sometimes the case if there is resistance from the congregation" (m); and, "In some rural areas Xhosas are not much accepting females so much (sic) - therefore this can be an issue with them. But not all of them are civil people with acceptance" (sic) (m).

The refusal of women ministers to be stationed where they are sent provided a variety of opinions, some indicative of a greater equality existing between spouses in terms of whose work should take precedence, while several ministers, including men and women suggested that perhaps it is time for men to start following wives who are ministers, as they go to their appointed stations. Others reinforced stereotyped ideas that women, whether ministers or not, should follow their husbands. There also seems to be a strong move away from the conviction that the ministry should take precedence over the family, towards an assertion that, "...she has an obligation to her family! God first - family second - ministry third" (m). Many respondents suggested the need for a new attitude as well as new laws legislated by Conference in order to be more accommodating and less autocratic in stationing ministers, thereby allowing them to be more involved in this process.

The emotive argument that forcing a minister to 'go where they are sent' causes the splitting up of families, especially comparing this to the effects on the family of the

Migrant Labour System, was also used in this context by several respondents. One may however be missing the point entirely by debating the legality, or even the morality, of women ministers in certain instances refusing to go where they are sent. While this debate has become increasingly publicised and more so, requests for consideration of personal circumstances in one's stationing also appear to have increased since women entered the ordained ministry, it might not be as much an issue, or a 'Woman's issue', when one examines the following assertions: "There are situations where men ministers have refused to go because of a family situation and their ministry has not been questioned" (m); "Men come up with equally justifiable arguments" (m); "Ministers are supposed to go where they are sent but this does not always happen", and "Yes, many men ministers do it!" (m)

It seems that, despite any advances that have been achieved regarding a greater freedom of women to work outside of the home in careers of their choice, and even to travel as part of their work, one issue that has not been resolved is a family moving because the woman's work requires that this be done. This is very common in the ministry, where women ministers often find it difficult to 'go where they are sent' because of the unwillingness or inability of their husbands to move with them. Some couples, more commonly so in the black culture, have been forced to live separately so that neither person has to lose their job, when both of them are needed for the financial viability of the family as a whole.

2.4.11. The ministry of women

The number of women and men ministers who had had a positive experience of the ministry of a woman minister were high - 90% in the case of women and 82% in the case of men, - although only 78% of men ministers had experienced a woman's ministry compared to 91% in the case of women ministers. The latter may be because there are not very many woman ministers, and also because women ministers are often stationed in clusters ministries either in certain Circuits or Districts. Despite cause for concern possibly emanating from the fact that 52% of women ministers indicated that their Sunday Schools and Youth Organisations unintentionally encouraged stereotyped roles

of women and men, it is perhaps a good sign that more women ministers than men ministers (only 28% of men) recognised such stereotyped roles being taught. If one believes that women must first be aware of the truth that they are oppressed and also then understand the mechanism used to achieve this oppression, then this awareness in the education of children must be encouraged. Furthermore, this education needs to be examined critically by women so that they are aware of the type of adults they are producing. The 58% categorical 'No' by men ministers, that they do not encourage stereotypes in the education of their youth cannot be refuted, but it does make one curious as to the discrepancy reflected by this percentage of "No's", and the 43% of women ministers who answered "no" to the same question. One comment made by a male minister, even though it may be an isolated one, indicates that perhaps the issue of stereotypes is not as clearly understood and consequently, this question being not as well answered here, as it may have been. This minister said that his Church did not create stereotypes, "but in general roles suited to masculinity or femininity by nature and tradition". Men ministers may be seen to be acutely aware of discrimination against women ministers and wish to avoid being discriminatory, as well as any other type of ideology which is oppressive, but other statistics and many comments made by men ministers, as presented in this Chapter in response to this questionnaire, indicate differently. One hopes that the lower percentage of women recognising stereotyped education in their churches is an accurate reflection of the situation, because, the women ministers in those churches are aware of the effects of type-casting youngsters, especially, into predetermined roles which will be detrimental to girls and later discriminatory and oppressive to women. More research is needed to confirm this.

2.4.12. Stereotypes and the ministry

Continuing the discussion on stereotypes, some excellent examples were cited in the discussion of tasks which ministers perform, or were asked to do. Of the women ministers, 67% indicated that women in the Methodist Church were usually allocated tasks that were "stereotypically female" (an example of serving tea at functions was given in the questionnaire), with 56% of men agreeing that this was in fact so.

Furthermore, 77% of women ministers and 79% of men ministers believed that women ministers often performed such tasks "unconsciously and voluntarily". One blatantly sexist explanation for such behaviour was, "This seems preferable to having men do it!" (m). A patronising tone is reflected in the following example, "I have found that they are eager to help in the serving of tables *as most women are*" (m) (my emphasis). Several women ministers seemed to justify their actions by explaining, "If I am on a committee which is all male, I sometimes pour the tea or serve or whatever, which I really don't mind doing" (w); or, "Sometimes, e.g., when people have been eating at table I find myself collecting utensils unconsciously, there is nothing wrong with that" (w). One cannot prescribe to individual women what they should or should not do in these circumstances, nor do I intend to. The concern here is the obligation that women ministers often feel as a result of their upbringing or because of the situations they are in and the subsequent pressures put on them by others to perform certain tasks or behave in a particular way. Several notes made by men ministers are very accurate and need to be heeded, especially by women ministers. It is true for example that: "...women ministers have also to 'unlearn ingrained habits' of a lifetime" (m); there is also truth in the fact that "[Women ministers] allow themselves to be more used (sic) by female organisations more (sic) than male ministers" (m) and generally that, "They need to achieve some personal liberation in their own mindset" (m). Another male minister's perception, however, was that women ministers would "vociferously object" to being allocated such tasks, a possible reason for this, given by a different minister, was that, "...most ministers who are women are conscious of the danger of stereotyping and so have been resistant to subliminal pressure to conform stereotypically. However, this has not always been the same in the case of candidates for the ministry" (m).

A noticeable development of this trend towards the increased conscientisation of women ministers, and a more public display of it, was reinforced by the fact that 24% of women ministers stated that they had refused to carry out tasks which were unacceptable to them in terms of their sex, while 10% indicated that they had carried out certain tasks even though they had not wished to do so as they were unacceptable to them. Naturally, a certain amount of fear or anxiety may prevent such refusals, as

indicated by a woman minister who said, "When you are told you have no choice but to submit to the authority of the church or leave - what do you do then?" (w) This person did not indicate, nor did other women ministers, specifically what tasks they had refused to carry out; that would have been useful to know.

Surprisingly perhaps, since men do control the MCSA, 6% of men respondents indicated that they had refused to carry out certain tasks which were objectionable to them in terms of their sex, or, though they had not wished to perform such objectionable tasks, they had not actually refused to do so. Most alarming were the tasks which men ministers found unacceptable. One wonders who would have performed these tasks 20 years ago, and why some men ministers do not consider them as falling within the ambit of a minister's work. Some men ministers were not comfortable "being called out late at night to a single person (gay and women)" or being in a situation "only when it was myself and the lady alone - normal for wisdom reasons" (m). Such a stance presents itself as neither normal nor wise to me; but more appalling than this was the outcry of another male minister: "I am struggling naturally to see a woman giving birth; to touch her is worse" (m). One also suspects that such tasks, rather than being unacceptable, are merely uncomfortable or unpleasant, for certain men ministers who then exploit women ministers by shifting these tasks to the sphere of 'Women's Ministry'. It is possible that men ministers who have cited examples here of tasks they are unwilling to perform, are more escapist in their opposition to the task, than morally outraged at having to perform a task which is an offence to them as men, because they consider it to be discriminatory and demeaning in nature.

2.4.13. Religious terminology

On the matter of the portrayal of God as male thus excluding women or presenting an obstacle to their ministry, there were more women ministers indicating that this was in fact so than men ministers, although an even greater number of women ministers indicated that they were not affected by this at all. The only really significant finding of this section was that 7% of men ministers had never given either of these questions much thought, while there were no women who had not thought about these questions. Perhaps

this is what is important here - that the responses by women ministers on this issue were not reached without their having given the matter any thought.

On the question of using inclusive language in "all new documents, reports, publications, liturgies, songs, hymns and sermons" there seemed to be consensus, with 72% of women ministers and 69% of men ministers agreeing. What is noticeable though is that most of the comments made by men ministers gave a 'conditional yes'. For example: "Up to the point where it becomes disruptive" (m); "...provided we do so creatively and not clumsily. His/her is clumsy" (m); "As long as it does not portray God to be sexless", and "...provided we don't get ridiculous about it - insisting that we pray 'Our Parent which art in heaven'" (m). One wonders what such respondents have in mind when they agree in principle to the use of inclusive language; it is a great pity that they did not give examples of the inclusive language that they would like to see used, without being 'clumsy', 'disruptive' or 'ridiculous'. Such comments, together with the percentage of men ministers, and who are in the majority in this case, who appear to support the use of inclusive language makes one wonder whether this is not again an example of the Church 'in theory' versus the Church 'in practice'. It is easy, and indeed politically correct, to agree to such a proposal, but not quite so easy to carry it out while maintaining all one's conditions and justifications. This observation seems to be confirmed when one compares the responses to Questions 42 and 43 of the questionnaire. One notices that while 40% of women ministers did not regard the Methodist Church as sexist, 72% thought that the new liturgy should use inclusive language. A similar pattern is seen in the responses of men ministers: 58% said the Methodist Church was not sexist but 69% wanted new liturgies to use inclusive language. While one acknowledges that liturgy is not the sole indicator of whether a Church is sexist or not in its actions and words, such an inconsistency in responses by ministers nonetheless indicates confusion, or a lack of careful consideration concerning such issues and their implications.

The results on the question referring to God as Father or Mother interchangeably were enlightening, not because of the 67% of women ministers and 71% of men who opposed such a step, but because 14% of both women and men ministers were undecided

on the issue, and only 19% of women and 15% of men ministers actually supported such an interchange of terms. Most suggestions favoured the use of the word 'Parent' in referring to God, with only one suggestion that such a move would be "unscriptural" (m) and another view that this would be "heresy" (m). Some of the arguments in favour of keeping the current male-oriented terminology is that this is traditional. Another reason is that terms such as 'Father' are not actually male terms but are used generically to refer to God, our Creator, in this case. However, Wren indicates, and I have referred to his argument in more detail in Chapter IV, that more often than not, it is for ideological reasons and not generic ones, that men are reluctant to change the terms they use (Wren 1991:137-140).

2.4.14. Ministers and the *Minutes of Conference*

Having already examined the actual *Minutes of Conference* at the start of this chapter, the views and interpretations of these *Minutes* by Methodist Ministers will be interesting to note. The starting point of this discussion must be the familiarity of the ministers themselves with these *Minutes of Conference*. I found that 81% of women ministers said they were familiar with the paragraphs on women cited, while only 55% of men were familiar with these sections of the Minutes. No women ministers were 'vaguely familiar' with the *Minutes*, but 35% of men ministers said that they were in this position. This is important as 90% of women ministers indicate some knowledge of these issues, whereas 19% of women ministers said they were not familiar with the contents of these paragraphs in the *Minutes*. It must be acknowledged that the word 'familiar' may be used loosely or stringently by different respondents, thus including or excluding them from a certain category. Regardless of the flexibility with which one uses the word 'familiar' and also 'vaguely familiar', it is unacceptable in terms of the goal of empowering women in their effort to achieve equality (that is, acknowledged and actual equality) with men, if 19% of women ministers are not concerned enough to familiarise themselves with the very issues that affect them and cause them, and other women, difficulties in their ministry. If women do not address issues affecting themselves, and are not familiar with their own problems, as well as the opportunities that can be created or the opportunities already available to them to overcome their

problems, then they can only blame themselves for their plight. This is what they must realise.

On the question of the leaders of the Church¹⁴ being familiar with these sections on women in the ministry and in the Church as a whole, I found that once again women ministers, although on this occasion accompanied by their male colleagues, displayed little concern towards this issue, indicated by the fact that 48% of women said they were 'not sure' about their leaders' knowledge on this subject. It is also of concern that 34% of men ministers were unaware of the knowledge on this subject of their leaders; the fact that more men were aware than women ministers about their leaders proves the point that as long as women are not involved in their own development or do not have knowledge of their situation, they will continue to be dominated by men. One must remember that it is the job of the ministers, as the leaders of each Society, to make their leaders aware of such an issue, even if they do not agree with it. Not to do so would be to shirk one's responsibility as a minister. For a woman minister not to do so is to not only shirk her responsibility but also her obligation to other women.

The majority of ministers (76% of women and 64% of men) agreed that "women are not adequately represented in leadership structures", while only 55% of women and 45% of men ministers agreed with Conference's resolution that "All structures within the Church should include at least 40% women". Of the 40% of women ministers who opposed this resolution, many indicated that they were in fact opposed to legislation and a quota system being enforced. Others felt that qualifications, skills and suitability for the job were more important than gender. They also indicated that they wanted to know that they deserved to be in a particular position and were not 'second class leaders' who had been placed in a position only because they were women. Of the men ministers 53% were opposed to this resolution, with some respondents also indicating opposition to tokenism and a quota system. While a few men ministers suggested their own percentage

¹⁴ 'Leaders' here refers to the local office bearers in the Church. These would include Circuit Stewards, Society Stewards, Trust Stewards, Congregational Representatives, Choir Leader, Sunday School Superintendent, Youth Guild Leader, Presidents of the Women's Meeting and the Men's Meeting, and Class Leaders.

of women who should be included, the majority were of the opinion that 'the best person for the job' should be used as a guideline for filling positions. What interests me a great deal is that no minister commented on the inconsistency in the *Minutes* which read that "Women are in the **majority** in Society and in the Church" and then followed by the resolution which states, "[therefore] all structures within the Church should include at least **40%** women". Such a resolution is not only inconsistent, it is ludicrous, yet no one identified this, at least not in their responses and comments on the questionnaire.

The situation becomes more intriguing when one examines the responses to the question "Do you think that it is right that no women were elected to the office of Bishop at the Synods held in May 1996?" - this question was asked in light of the resolution requiring the inclusion of 40% women in all structures of the Church. 43% of women ministers said 'no', that it was not right that no women Bishops were elected, a similar figure to the 55% of women ministers who agreed with the inclusion of 40% of women in all structures in the Church. By contrast, only 19% of women felt it to be right that no woman Bishop had been elected. A staggering 24% of men ministers had not even thought about the issue. This, compared to 12% of women who had not thought about the issue, raises the same concerns about women ministers with regard to the different resolutions passed. It can evidently thus be assumed that no one gave much thought to these resolutions; that is to say, no one objected to the farcical contradictions they were creating.

This apathy, of all ministers, is reflected in the non-committal comments made by many respondents. For example, "They could all be women, but as it has turned out they are all men" (m); "If God wanted to raise up a woman for leadership surely it would be obvious?" (m); "A lot of men were also not chosen" (m); "Perhaps none was suitable" (m); and then a caustic remark, "If there are suitable women why not be Bishop (They're welcome to the headaches!)" (m). While it is true that all the Bishops 'could have been women', it is also true that none of them are women, and it is an insult to any one's intelligence to suggest this was because 'it just turned out that way'.

Of particular interest to me are two comments that were made. The first was a general comment by a woman minister on the question of the inclusion of 40% women in all leadership structures in the MCSA. She wrote, "Sometimes women are nominated and refuse to stand". A male minister, who did not think it was right that no women were elected to the office of Bishop in 1996 added that "Some women ministers declined the nominations". I was able to establish that this took place in the Central District, and that the woman involved did not stand as she felt she was 'not ready' to be a Bishop. While colleagues of hers disagreed with her, no attempt was made by women ministers to persuade her to stand. Could this really have been the reason that she felt she was 'not ready' or could this be the consequence of the oppressiveness we have been examining in this discussion?

It may be argued that the work of ministers is to minister and to preach and not to become involved in issues and debates which detract from one's calling and inhibits the minister in her/his work. However, the *Minutes of Conference* and the resolutions in them affect the way in which some, if not all, ministers are able to minister and preach. But the Minutes seem to have been relegated to a sphere of debate, ridicule or rejection, used by ministers who wish to create issues and look for problems, rather than to be the meaningful guide and directive which they are intended to be. If the *Minutes of Conference* are superfluous because they are not taken seriously, then so are the resolutions passed by Conference, and each minister becomes accountable only to themselves. One cannot be allowed to make sweeping statements and bold resolutions that please the populace, and then choose to ignore them. As a minister of the MCSA, one not only assists in ridiculing the Church but also allows oneself to be used as an unthinking pawn if one does not notice what resolutions the Church passes. The same could be said of a minister who did not ensure that the Church was accountable in carrying out the resolutions passed. The point was, I hope, made abundantly clear at the start of this chapter when reference was made to the repetition of the same resolutions on women ministers in the *Minutes of Conference*, for five years! These seemingly went unnoticed, or, if indeed noticed, it was allowed to continue unquestioned and unchallenged. When I questioned various ministers, including members of the Doctrine

Committee, on this matter, the impression I got was that they were amazed, and even bewildered that I was raising such issues (or 'non-issues') at all.

2.5. CONCLUSION

The two main issues to be discussed in this chapter were firstly, to examine the ministries of women in the MCSA as perceived and experienced by themselves, as well as their male colleagues. Some women ministers were oblivious to any discrimination against them, or said that they were not discriminated against in any way. They were satisfied with their ministry and with the contribution which they were making to the MCSA. Other women felt their ministry was being impeded to some extent by men and male prejudice. Some women in this group felt helpless to change their situation, accepting that they should either comply with the existing situation or leave the ministry altogether. The smallest minority of women, however, felt that something should be done to change the position of women in the ministry, as well as the attitudes of the men. Despite such a view the evidence suggests that even these women have not managed to do much to appease this oppression.

Secondly, the intention was to investigate the way in which the MCSA is handling issues or problems raised in connection with women in this Ministry. It is quite clear that there is very little being done to resolve the problems associated with women in the ministry. The repetition of often vague directives, to various committees, to address such issues, and the apparent lack of accountability of these committees in terms of having to achieve anything within a given timeframe, reinforces this view. The stark contrast between the attitude of the MCSA and the Methodist Church of Great Britain in this regard will be seen when the MCGB's proposals on this issue are dealt with in Chapters III and IV.

The questionnaire findings clearly indicated that the majority of women ministers consider themselves to suffer discrimination by their male colleagues and sometimes by the Church as an institution. Not only did the opinions and observations of many men ministers corroborate this, but a significant number of the comments made by men ministers on their questionnaires reflected blatant sexual discrimination and an

intolerance of women in the ministry of the MCSA. Of great concern here firstly, is that there are so many ministers in the MCSA who, despite their apparent Christian convictions, are practising oppression. They are coercing women to behave in ways, and to perform tasks, that are acceptable to the male-dominated ideology and value-systems of the MCSA; they are treating women unjustly, and are therefore guilty of injustice themselves; they are imposing their will on women, to the detriment of women (OED1991 and Kretzschmar 1995). In short, they are not, by their attitude and behaviour, showing themselves to be Christian at all.

The documentation of the Church, in the form of the *Minutes of Conference*, did little to redeem the Methodist Church in this regard. Despite several indications of intent to identify and explore difficulties experienced by women in the ministry, these proved to be nothing more than politically correct statements apparently aimed at appeasing dissatisfied and unhappy women ministers in particular. Furthermore, the MCSA seems to have forgotten its mission to lead and to teach people the ethics of Christ, the 'Good News' of the liberation of all people through Christ. Rather, the MCSA seems content to follow the exploitative and selfish desires of an ethically wanting society. Based on this evidence, it has to be stated that the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, whatever protestations it may make to the contrary, continues to "treat gender concerns lightly".

The MCSA was used in this study as an example of a particular group of women who are oppressed in different ways and to different degrees in the work that they do, because they are women. I have at times made reference to the strategies that women can and must use, and need to develop, in order to release themselves from the specific form of oppression to which they are subject. Later in this dissertation, with particular reference to this study of women ministers in the MCSA, I will attempt to provide examples of strategies that women can use to ensure that they do indeed achieve liberation for themselves.

CHAPTER III : REACTIONS TO THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

Throughout history many individuals, and groups of people, have been oppressed. These people have reacted in different ways to their oppression. Broadly speaking there have been and still are those who accept their oppression, and those who react against or resist their oppression. But even these two very broad categories of behaviour are not the same for individuals in an oppressed group. There are those in the 'accepting oppression' group who accept their situation because they have been persuaded or brainwashed into believing that they deserve their current situation, or certainly that they deserve no more than they have. Such people, one could argue, either do not believe they are being oppressed, or if they do recognise that they are oppressed, they believe that this is right and acceptable. There are also those who accept their oppressed state, not because they agree that they ought to be oppressed, but because they are afraid of their oppressors or because they are unsure how to go about resisting their oppression. Similarly, there have been a large range of different reactions by people who have resisted oppression. Many of these reactions, including some of the more well-known, and especially the political, liberation struggles of the world, have been well documented resulting in much publicity as well as public support, often on an international level.

While the struggle by women to be liberated from male oppression is something that the world is aware of, this is certainly not a liberation struggle that has evoked large-scale concern, sympathy or support. Rather, what public comment has been made was apparently more of a curiosity or query regarding the necessity of women involving themselves in a liberation struggle at all. Perhaps part of the problem here is that where women's protests do occur, they are often very general, and even vague in nature, rather than specific, thus giving opponents the chance to ask what exactly it is that women are looking for. One must remember that the world today remains a male-dominated one. Hence, power and control, not only of money, politics, education and the rest of society and its structures, but also the dominant and internalised values that prevail, are those which reflect the values of men. The liberation of women, and the subsequent sharing of control with men would involve the loss of power for men. Since it is clearly not in

their interest to do so, they are likely to continue to perpetuate male ideology. This ideology, in turn, will be reflected in the values of society, which would not include major concerns about, or objections to, the oppression of women.

Fortunately, unlike many women's movements, feminist theologians and women academics have produced much more specific strategies and ideas which would be helpful to women in their quest for liberation and equality. In this chapter the works of several theologians and their proposals regarding women's liberation will be examined: Also to be examined are the more general perceptions of how women have reacted and still are reacting to their present circumstances.

3.1. STRATEGIES OF PARTNERSHIP

This group of strategies includes the views of those who see men and women as inextricably linked, as part of one whole which is adversely affected by the denigration of any section of it. Felicity Edwards wrote on the subject:

And if women, who once were being held in one kind of subjugation or another, are being set free for at best a much more abundant life, it is not only for their benefit but for the benefit of all human persons and the structures they devise and work with. Correlatively, those who subjugate, subordinate and oppress may be seen to be doing to themselves as much harm as they are doing to those they hold back, both positively in their active impeding of progress and negatively in what they miss by not receiving what the other has to give.
(Edwards 1981:23).

Many proponents of the strategies and approaches to achieve women's equality presented here will suggest that this line of thinking is the most biblically accurate, and therefore more appropriate and correct than any other strategies or approaches that have been proposed. Examples from the following three groups of 'partnership strategies' will be looked at here:

- Partnership with men,
- Partnership with the broad spectrum of groups involved in liberation struggles, and
- Women in partnership with each other

3.1.1. Partnership with men

For the purposes of this discussion, 'Partnership with Men' will refer to those partnership relationships or strategies which are not comprised solely of women but which do include men, whether as individuals or as part of any group of men.

3.1.1.1. Women and men as complementary

In 1981, Edwards argued for the necessity of understanding that we humans, whether female or male, need to integrate all the different parts of ourselves in order to fully realise our whole being. She wrote that, "No one is exclusively either male or female" (1981:32); rather, women have aspects of masculinity in their physiology and in their personality, just as men have aspects of femininity in their physiology and personality. In order to become a whole person, one needs to integrate these various facets of oneself. She therefore suggests that neither female nor male, nor indeed female or male attributes within a person, are dispensable. If either person in society or a group is missing, or if one attribute is missing from a person, then the group or the individual, because they are lacking something because of this, will therefore be incomplete. She goes on to suggest the implications for the Church in failing to integrate people, and their various components, as well as failing to reconcile women and men in social structures:

As in one person masculinity and femininity complement one another, so in the ecclesial body, the church, female and male, with their indispensable femininity and masculinity are essential to complement one another. As in the person suppression of either masculinity or femininity is to the detriment of the whole, so in the church community subjugation of one to the other is to the impoverishment and detriment of the whole.
(Edwards 1981:32)

Edwards extends her argument further into the realm of the church and the community when she says,

The presence of women working alongside men would both complement their masculine contribution and would, by assisting them in the development of their own femininity, facilitate their becoming more whole, integrated persons and therefore not less, but more efficient in ministry. ...Can we not develop a pattern

of ministry, where men and women work more and more together, each enhancing, enriching and complementing the contribution of the other, male and female, masculinity and femininity together making for the integrated wholeness of the body?
(Edwards 1981: 32-33)

What Edwards writes is very logical, but the failure of men to treat women equally and with the respect befitting a human being is not the result of men not acknowledging that women are human. Neither is it because men do not recognise that both men and women have an indispensable role to play if people as a race are to survive. Rather, it is because men have chosen to regard women as inferior humans, as people who can share the workload in society, but only by performing tasks that males deem acceptable. This is no accidental misunderstanding on the part of men, nor is it a lack of awareness of how the earth and societal structures ought to function. This is the way in which men control women and keep society's power in their own hands, and for many men there is absolutely no reason why they should want to change the *status quo* in this regard. In a similar vein, Edwards' apparent idealism is evident when she suggests that,

Inter-dependence and mutuality between man and woman (which are better words than equality, because they are dynamic rather than static) would then mean, *inter alia*, at the level of the community, sharing the load, sharing the responsibility (the answer-ability to God), sharing the leadership, each in the appropriate way, and envisaging the goal as filling the whole universe with God's presence (Eph. 4:10).
(Edwards 1981:34)

Once again the assumption in her thought is that men will actually want to give up some of the power they have in society and over women. In this context one accepts that Edwards is presenting the Christian ideal of how people should live and express God and God's will through their lives. However, there is so much sexism in 'Christians' and in the 'Christian' churches that it makes one realise that Christian ideals are not sufficient to persuade oppressors that what they are doing is wrong and unjust, especially in terms of the Christian ethics with which they should be familiar and which they should be practising. Any Christian would be aware that the abuse or exploitation of another; the

restricting of another; the demeaning of another; the forced subservience, and the oppression of another, are not part of Christ's teachings, and are therefore not acceptable to Christianity.

One would achieve the same desired results of equality or mutuality, as Edwards would hope would result, if one were able to persuade people to adopt Albert Schweitzer's universal ethic of "Reverence for Life". It is not surprising that the simplest ideologies and ethics, are the ones which people often find the most difficult, or the most uncomfortable and inconvenient, to adopt. For example, the Christian ethic to, "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12:31) and to, "do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8), while simple enough to understand, is nonetheless not followed by all who call themselves Christian.

In the same way that Edwards hopes that a common goal and a mutuality between men and women, working together, would eradicate discrimination against women, so Schweitzer calls people to respect and thus revere all of creation. If we regard fellow creatures and creation as having been divinely created, and if we accept our responsibility for the whole of the earth, as true stewards, then there would be no need for any other ethic or standard of behaviour. Schweitzer wrote the following in explanation of his ethic of "Reverence for Life": "If I am a thinking being, I must regard other life than my own with equal reverence. For I shall know that it longs for fulness (sic) and development as deeply as I do myself" (in Joy 1967:262).

However simple, and they are very simple, to implement, the Christian ethic and Schweitzer's ethic of "Reverence for Life" are (one could argue that they are one and the same), they have not become entrenched in people's lives because accepting them means one can no longer be selfish, nor can one exert power over others. Likewise, a decision by men to refrain from oppressing women is simple, but it is also just and unselfish, that is, one suspects, exactly where the real problem presently lies.

Secondly, if women hope to liberate themselves by working together with men, then they

must realise that just as they may be helped by men in this regard, so too, could they be impeded by the men from achieving their goals if this was the 'hidden agenda' of the men concerned. Even if it is true that it is in humanity's interest, and therefore also in men's interest, to liberate women in order that all people will be truly liberated, to the extent that men will be liberated from their acts of enslavement, on a practical and day-to-day level men either do not, or will not, understand this. Just as for example, many whites in South Africa found it difficult to understand that apartheid was ensnaring whites as well as blacks, and that only through their relinquishing power would they, as well as black people be free, so men need to grasp this. It is only now, four years after democracy began in South Africa, that whites are realising how debilitating and restrictive their oppression of black people was to themselves. Since it is more than optimistic to expect that the women's liberation movements in South Africa, or anywhere in the world, would ever capture the conscience of the world, or even the country, as did the political struggle for freedom in South Africa, one realises that it is only women that can be relied upon to achieve freedom from this oppression. This in no way suggests that men should be discouraged from participating from this struggle; rather, it places the responsibility for the women's struggle with women themselves.

It is true that all people will only be truly free and truly human, as God envisaged and planned our humanity to be, when there is no domination or denigration of any of the peoples in the world by any others. My argument does not dispute this at all; instead it hopes to find a method, a strategy, which those persons more blatantly and more directly affected by discrimination and oppression, i.e., women, can utilise themselves to achieve their freedom. The result of this would logically then be the liberation of all people from the oppressive, enslaving and power-hungry ideologies which they held or under which they suffered.

3.1.1.2. The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women

The following discussion on The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with

Women¹ is used here as an example of a particular reaction to women's oppression. This was a fairly high-profile and international response by the World Council of Churches to the plight of women, because of their sustained oppression by men and male-dominated structures and societies. In the words of the WCC,

The decision to highlight this issue for a ten-year period was a response to deep and growing concerns, coming from all over the world, about the situation of women in societies and churches. The WCC was also reaffirming a commitment, evident from its very beginnings, to work for the full equality and partnership of women and men in the church.
(World Council of Churches [s.a.]:5)

The decade referred to here included the years 1988-1998. It is especially interesting to evaluate the success of this campaign in terms of its aims since we are now at the end of this Decade. Of further interest will be to compare its success to that of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) campaign, on which it was hoped there could be a marked improvement. It was hoped that the UN Decade would achieve, amongst other things, a radical transformation regarding the exploitation of women; job security; sexual abuse and violence against women and the double or even triple oppression of women who, in addition to being poor may be victimised as a result of their race or poverty (WCC [s.a.]:7). However, the closing comment of the WCC indicated that such transformations were not radical or ultimately very successful on a large scale. It revealed that,

The sad truth is that not much has changed since the time of the UN Decade. Most women today face more difficult conditions than they did fifteen or twenty years ago.
(World Council of Churches [s.a.]:8).

While the concluding comment of the WCC on the success of the UN Decade may be correct, similar criticisms may also legitimately be levelled at the WCC after the culmination of their decade-long campaign. This is especially true in the light of the

¹ In January 1987 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches designated the years from 1988 to 1998 as an Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (World Council of Churches [s.a.]:5).

second chapter of this dissertation , dealing with the Methodist Church and women in its ministry, where it is clear that there is as much opposition to women ministers, and consequently discrimination against these ministers today, even if it is more subtle now, as there was ten years ago, when the WCC Decade began, and even long before that. This problem takes on greater significance when one notes the major reason cited by the WCC as a possible cause for the failure of the UN Decade, that is, that it "...did not adequately touch the concerns of church women or challenge the churches to take stock of the position of women in society" (WCC [s.a.]:9). As a woman who was in the Methodist ministry during the WCC Decade it was quite clear that this campaign had as little effect on women parishioners and women ministers as they suggest the UN Decade campaign had on women in general.

It may be useful at this stage to examine the aims of the WCC Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women before continuing the discussion here. The aims of the Decade which were brought about by, "The increasing awareness within the ecumenical family of issues that profoundly affect the lives of women and prevent the churches from being inclusive communities", are reflected as follows:

- ~ empowering women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and their church;
- ~ affirming - in shared leadership and decision-making, theology and spirituality - the decisive contributions women are already making in churches and communities;
- ~ giving visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation;
- ~ enabling churches to free themselves from racism, sexism and classism and from teachings and practices that discriminate against women;
- ~ encouraging churches to take actions in solidarity with women (WCC [s.a.]:6).

Before continuing the analysis of the WCC Decade and its aims, it needs to be explained why this discussion has been placed under the heading 'Partnership with Men'. There is significant overlap of the contents of this section and the next section of the chapter,

entitled 'Partnership with the Broad Spectrum of Groups Involved in Liberation Struggles'. The WCC and the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women may be much more inclusive than a 'partnership with men' strategy employed to empower and emancipate women. Hence the WCC campaign may seem to be closer to any one of the liberation struggles in its aims, especially since these include challenging oppressive structures in society, shared leadership, decision-making, and the struggle for peace and justice.

However, since most, if not all churches, are in reality dominated and controlled by men, regardless of the overwhelming number of women church members compared to men members in churches, any of the programmes or strategies adopted and implemented by the Churches of the WCC would then in fact be strategies which have the support and agreement of the men leading those churches. Any subsequent partnership entered into by the churches with, or on behalf of women, therefore has the permission of those male-dominated churches and must therefore be regarded by women with suspicion at most; or at least with caution. But how does one then explain the fact that churches which have accepted the aims of the WCC Decade to have "shared leadership and decision-making (WCC [s.a.]:6), and to enable churches "...to free themselves from sexism... ...and from teachings and practices that discriminate against women" (WCC [s.a.]:6) are still struggling to appoint women as bishops, as well as to other positions of leadership in their churches?

In the light of these extracts, how does one explain the numerous difficulties expressed by women in the ministry at present, as well as the discrimination they face because of the prejudices of the same men who, at least publicly, claim to support the goals of the WCC Decade, because it benefits them in some way to do so? While the goals of the WCC are laudable, women ought not to allow such statements to be their opiate. For it is not what is intended, what is hoped for, nor what is written about, that will free women; rather, it is what is actually done, and also that which produces tangible benefits for women, which is what women should be supporting. It is true that in many churches the leadership and the policy of the church differs from the attitudes of the

ministers lower down the hierarchy. This sometimes causes the perception that a church which presents itself as having noble and ethical ideals is, instead, regarded as a church that is hypocritical and which has double standards. If women are not to feel that they are being placated and humoured by men in the church, in their appeals for equality and their protests against sexist bias, then the church concerned needs to not only acknowledge the discrepancy between its ideals and its praxis, or between the values of the leadership and the practices of its ministers and laity, but it should also indicate how such differences will be eradicated.

Just as Edwards has argued for the need for women and men to complement each other to achieve the true humanity God intended, so too did the WCC Deputy General Secretary, Mercy Oduyoye make a similar point when she wrote²

Solidarity belongs to the faith. We speak in terms of unity and community; we call ourselves families and communions. We believe that we belong together, that as the church we are one body and when one part suffers all suffer and the gift of each is the asset of the whole. We believe that the love of God binds us together and inspires our love for one another. We believe in a creator God, whose creatures all human beings are - male and female.

The Decade calls us to learn afresh the lessons which the theology of creation teaches us. Not only to learn, but also to live out the consequences.
(WCC [s.a.]:9)

The point has already been made, in section 3.1.1.1. of this chapter, that although creation, and therefore humanity, as a whole suffers when one part, such as women, is denigrated or oppressed, men either do not experience or recognise how they are negatively affected by such an oppression of women. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that without the experience of a society which is free from the oppression of any people, individuals or groups in a society, one will not experience the freedom and the benefits of a completely liberated humanity. It seems the old adage that you cannot miss

² In her book *Who Will Roll the Stone Away?* (1990) - WCC Risk Series

something you have never experienced is more true than we, and especially men, realise. Whether such losses and the subsequent detrimental effects of oppression are felt is not the primary issue here. If men are oppressing women despite any negative repercussions, they are assumably doing so for a reason, even if it is not a logical or an ethical or an acceptable one. Men may gain a feeling of power, of increased self-esteem; whatever the reason, as long as men perceive benefits accruing to themselves as a result of the oppression of women, they will continue this practice. It is true, as has already been said, that the easiest and simplest solution would be for men to respect humanity and to acknowledge that they are part of creation and therefore revere creation. This done universally would eradicate not only sexism, but all forms of prejudice, victimisation and oppression, just as the adoption of Albert Schweitzer's philosophy of Reverence for Life would do. Clearly, humanity as a whole has little intention of doing this, at least in the foreseeable future. Women, bearing the brunt of discrimination and oppression in society must thus not wait hopefully but helplessly for the day of their liberation, rather they must actively involve themselves in implementing strategies to ensure the attainment of their goals and their freedom.

It is only when Churches themselves become egalitarian bodies that they will be able to really assist women in their fight against prejudice and oppression, in their homes, in their work-places and in society as a whole. This oversight on the part of the WCC is probably the single reason why its own Decade, like the UN Decade which preceded it, had little impact on the quality of life of women within and outside of the church. Just as the WCC wrote of the UN, "The sad truth that not much has changed since the time of the UN Decade. Most women today face more difficult conditions than they did fifteen or twenty years ago" (WCC [s.a.]:9), so could a similar criticism be levelled at the WCC. In addition to such a criticism the WCC must also face the graver suggestion that it acted unethically in its treatment of women. To promote ideals and hopes, but to do so in such a way that they are perceived as tangible realities, as things truly attainable, is not only unreasonably idealistic and dishonest, but also unethical. To ignore the oppression that exists within the WCC member-churches and then to assume that those same oppressors should work with women to eradicate discrimination outside the church,

is a questionable practice. If Karl Marx had been writing about women, saying that "religion is the opiate of the [women]," then he could not have been more accurate. It is because of the hypocrisy and unreliability of men, and male-dominated bodies and structures throughout history in general, that women need to look to themselves, and to other women, as those most likely to procure their own liberation.

3.1.2. Partnership with liberation movements

Many feminist theologians have argued for the need for women to join with other liberation movements and struggles in order to achieve their liberation. The argument is that all discrimination is anti-Christian and that all types of discrimination, whether on the basis of colour, race, gender or any other, could simultaneously be eradicated if there were a return to Christian ethics. "This approach assumes that liberation is the core of the Christian gospel" (Walker 1989:9).

Walker continues by arguing that,

...the most helpful approach is to see feminist theology (along with other liberation theologies like the Latin American variety, Black theology, Kairos theology, etc). As such it is from their situation of oppression and the realisation of their need for liberation, that feminists realise their need for incorporating the feminine into their models of the divine.
(Walker 1989:9)

Kretzschmar takes this a step further by suggesting that, "While personal liberation and empowerment are vital, these must be developed simultaneously with genuine social transformation" (Kretzschmar 1995:160), and also that,

Any steps toward liberation, empowerment and transformation require an analysis of self and society. Both women and men need to develop a consciousness of gender related issues (and the interplay between gender, race, culture and class).
(Kretzschmar 1995:158)

Undoubtedly it would be unlikely for one form of oppression to be eradicated in our society. However, if there were to be a renewal of ethics within people, and an

understanding to such an extent that the oppression of others was no longer tolerable, then there would be a complete transformation of people as well as of society. But even a cursory examination of people, and how societies and groups in the world function today, may indicate that people are either no longer capable of, or willing to, adopt the love, and in this context also, the Christian ethic, which would be the requirement for a new set of relationships to be born. Again it needs to be stated that it is not through a lack of understanding of what is required by people for there to be no oppression that this does not occur; rather, it is an unwillingness by people to do what they know is right. Placed alongside these criticisms which have been presented, Ackermann's thoughts on the equality of women and men, seem to me too improbable to ever possibly materialise when she explains,

...my starting point is my humanity. I have a deep conviction that our humanity is precious, that whatever it means to be created in the image and likeness of God, it *does* mean that we are all precious and equal, and that the hierarchies and domination are an affront to our humanity. And as we *all* have our humanity in common, separateness and divisions are not conducive to the living out of what it means to be human. The gift of my humanity by a loving God makes sense of loving my neighbour as myself. As Martin Buber put it 'love your neighbour; he/she is like you'. Loving what is like you means doing so because she or he is your equal.
(Ackermann 1989:75-76)

My intention is not to demean the hopes and goals of those who suggest that the adoption of a universal ethic in society will enable the transformation of that society. My belief is that realistically, even if some suggest this is a pessimistic view of reality, one is not going to witness a large-scale conversion to ethical behaviour, values and attitudes. Because of this, one needs to find alternative ways in which to prevent oppression of people, despite the desire that exists in some to remain oppressors.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has argued against a solely 'women's perspective' as the focus of a liberation struggle since she asserts that this ignores the real situations in which women find themselves. If, for example, a woman is black and is oppressed

because of her colour and her gender, then, she argues, one cannot identify only the sexist discrimination against her as an issue that needs to be addressed. Intrinsic to that person's life experience is the racial and sexual discrimination to which she is subjected. Fiorenza's second concern is that women's liberation movements have largely been initiated and dominated by, and thereby catered to the needs of, middle class white women. Hence they have not met the needs of the majority of women the world over who do not fit into this category. This is part of her reason, I assume, for insisting on the need to take into consideration the entire life context of a woman, including her race, culture and traditions, when analysing the oppression under which she lives. Fiorenza argues,

...insofar as the feminist movement has projected itself as a single oppositional front which has been articulated in terms of the sex/gender system and has generated a universalising critique of sociopolitical structures from the standpoint of [Euro-American] (sic) *woman*, it has tended to constitute its feminist counter-public as a hegemonic sphere of privileged, white Western women.

Situating feminist theorising and theologising within the logic of radical equality rather than within that of female/ethnic identity allows one to contextualise so-called natural binary sexual arrangements together with those of race, ethnicity or class as sociopolitical ideological constructions. Women live in structures that are not simply pluralist. Rather, 'they are stratified, differentiated into social groups with unequal status, power, and access to resources, traversed by persuasive axes of inequality along lines of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and age'³ By insisting in its own discourses on the theoretical visibility and difference, for instance, of black, poor, colonial, lesbian, or working women, feminist theory and theology make it clear that 'women' do not have a unitary essence but represent a historical multiplicity, not only as a group but also as individuals.⁴ (Fiorenza 1995:140)

³ See also Nancy Fraser, *Unruly practices: power, discourse and gender in contemporary social theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989:165.

⁴ See also, E. Frances White, "Africa on my mind: gender, counter discourse and African-American nationalism", *Journal of Women's History* 2/1 (1990):87.

Contrary to White's statement, that women are, "...stratified, differentiated into different social groups with unequal status, power, and access to resources, traversed by persuasive axes of inequality, along lines of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and age", quoted here by Fiorenza, it is inaccurate to state that women "do not have a unitary essence". The very fact that all women are oppressed because they are women, disproves this. Women are oppressed in different ways and to different degrees, and some women, in addition to being oppressed because they are women, may simultaneously be oppressed for other reasons, such as being black. This does not discount that women, as a group of people in society, are oppressed. The experience of oppression is common to all women; this is their unitary essence. Certainly the vulnerability of a poor, black woman will be seized upon by oppressors because they are aware that the person belongs to three of the most helpless and vulnerable groups of society and she is therefore less able to resist their oppression herself, as well as being less well-connected to powerful people who would be able to defend her against such oppression, than a wealthy white woman is likely to be. This in no way detracts from the fact that, because she is a woman, she is seen as a target for oppressors. Although the types of discrimination, the extent and the degree of covertness of the discrimination vary from woman to woman, this does not alter the reality that she is, and will be, discriminated against because she is a woman. My concern here, as presented in the first chapter of this dissertation, is that if one identifies the cause of women's oppression as their belonging to a group called "women", then, should one remove the group, or the classification of women into this group, one negates the oppression of the group. There can be no oppression of a group, and of individuals in that group, if the group no longer exists. Similarly, in the case of a black woman, one must acknowledge that she is oppressed both because she is a woman and because she is black. While feminists will necessarily be concerned that many women are oppressed on multiple fronts, their main concern is to eradicate all prejudice against women.

The feminist movement will become fragmented if it refuses to accept that women *en masse* are oppressed by men. Further circumstances, such as poverty, status, race, religion etc., may cause intensified discrimination, but, this should not cause one to lose sight of the basic fact that women are oppressed because of their gender. Attempting to

categorise all possible combinations of oppression experienced by women would not only be impossible, but it would also implement the 'rule and divide' strategy of oppressors who would not feel intimidated if faced by fragmented, esoteric or 'specialist-type' women's groups, an absurd list of which could read as follows: black women, white women, Indian women, European women, American women, black lesbians, white lesbians, black/white handicapped women, black/white poor women; black/white rich women; black/white working women, Hindu, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist women, married, single and divorced women; single Hindu poor women; married black handicapped women, etc. It is clear that the innumerable categories of women which could be identified would make this, a serious issue, into a flippant, unreasonable and even a ludicrous situation, which would in no way promote women's equality with men. It is unlikely that Fiorenza or White intended to create or to advocate such a situation. Thus the statement that, "By insisting in its own discourses on the *theoretical* visibility and difference, for instance, of black, poor, colonial, lesbian, or working women, feminist theory and theology make it clear that 'women' do not have a unitary essence" (White, in Fiorenza 1995:140), is reflecting the reality of the situation, and the various situations of women, rather than suggesting that there is nothing in common in the struggles which women wage daily.

On a local level it is interesting to observe how women's liberation movements worked together with liberation movements on a national level to achieve freedom for all South Africans before the 1994 General Elections. While not all South Africans, especially black South Africans, are entirely satisfied with the extent of their liberation and the benefits of liberation which they have gained, compared to those that they believed they would gain after the elections, it is even more true to say that women have gained even less than black people as a whole have in the country since the achievement of democracy.

The ANC Women's League has lost much of its former prominence and importance while other more general women's rights campaigns have all but petered out. This leads one to the conclusion that while men in the liberation movements needed the support of

women's movements, even if only for the sheer numbers in these groups, to fight for the liberation of the black people, it is true to say that since this liberation has taken place, there is no longer a perceived need for these women's movements, or for men to support the women in their struggles which they continue to fight. It is obvious, therefore, that by combining women's struggles with the broad spectrum of liberation struggles in any place, and at any stage, the women are enabling that liberation, whether economic, political or otherwise, to occur. This also means that those seeking liberation are not doing so on the basis of the ethical need for a common equality amongst all humanity, nor on the pattern of a type of Christian or universal ethic of equality. Instead, the women are used to bolster support for the movement, and on attainment of the specified goal of liberation, the women are left to their unchanged situations, and to their humoured efforts towards equality. It is for this reason that I am against women combining resources with liberation movements which do not have, as their focus, women's liberation. For not only do women continue to be exploited for the ends of such struggles, but their own struggles are simultaneously neglected and overshadowed.

3.1.3. Women in partnership in the MCSA

The document, "A Cry of the Beloved", prepared by the Commission of Women Presbyters, and the Church Report to Conference 1995 for the Methodist Church in Great Britain⁵ will be used as the basis for an examination of the responses by women in the Methodist Church to their oppression. A second report, "Women's Research Project", summer 1992, sponsored by Faith and Life, SPIN, Thames Northern Province and Yorkshire Province, researched and prepared by Keran Olm-Stoelting, for the United Reformed Church, while of great significance to the topic at hand here, will not be referred to specifically. Both reports refer to the WCC Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. In "A Cry of the Beloved" it was stated that the Commission was "set up in 1993 as a response to the twentieth anniversary of the ordination of the first women presbyters during the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women" (1995:3). Keran Olm-Stoelting, the researcher of the project, described her involvement as, "...a deep commitment to the goals of the Ecumenical Decade of

⁵ Afterwards noted as the MCGB.

Churches in Solidarity with Women" (1992:1). Despite the WCC not attaining, at least not on a large scale, all the goals they had set out to achieve in their campaign in 1988, it is satisfying to observe that at least some churches saw that the Decade as a catalyst to the examination of the role and the plight of women in their own situations.

Just as women react differently to the oppression they experience, so too have various churches reacted in their own ways to the oppression of women in their church, caused by the church itself, as an institution, and by its members. It is clear, looking at the definition given below by Kretzschmar, that many women ministers in the MCSA have internalised their oppression and have become "compliant victims":

Internalised oppression occurs when the poor, weak or oppressed accept the 'order systems' of the powerful. These 'order systems' may be theoretical, legal, economic, religious or whatever. This acceptance is not simply verbal or intellectual, it requires that one patterns one's behaviour on what is regarded as 'right' or 'the way things are'. Once the oppressed accept the legitimacy of these systems, they have internalised the system that is oppressing them.
(Kretzschmar 1995:153)

There can be little doubt that "internalised oppression" is the most powerful tool used by men, and eventually by women themselves, against women. Once a perception has been entrenched in a person, that person is easily manipulated by those perceptions and is therefore not easily persuaded that their entire thought process and pattern of behaviour is distorted. This type of behaviour and attitude was noticeable in the comments made by several women ministers in the MCSA in their answers to the questionnaire regarding women in the ministry, as detailed in Chapter II. Not only did some women ministers defend the patriarchal hierarchy as well as the prejudices of the Church, but they also vehemently attacked the challenges made on the patriarchal Church.

3.1.3.1. The Methodist Church of Great Britain - a response

The brief given to the Commission on Women Presbyters in Great Britain, at its inception in 1993, was the following:

...to study the experience of women presbyters in the

Methodist Church and the Church's response to that experience; and to report to Conference in 1995 with recommendations on how women presbyters can more effectively enrich and offer a critique of the presbyteral ministry as a whole.
(1995:3)

Even a superficial comparison between this mandate, including a specific time frame, is very different to the broad and relatively vague statements, which remain largely unchanged from 1992 to 1997, as published in the MCSA *Minutes of Conference*, which were discussed earlier, in Chapter II.

3.1.3.2. The brief given to the Commission of the MCGB

The response of the MCGB to the plight of women in its ministry is indicative of a body which, quite correctly, intends to direct, rather than mirror the values and the attitudes of society. Too often, even in the MCSA, the latter prevails. The impression created in the MCSA is that, in a form of 'political correctness', women were given permission to be ordained as ministers in 1974. However, the real test of whether such a change was to be a positive and a successful one was reflected in the lack of foresight of the Church in its apparent unwillingness to implement structures which could have made the process much smoother for women, as well as more widely acceptable to the Church's members and ministers as a whole. By contrast, the MCGB clearly set out the brief to the Commission, to address such issues and to seek solutions, as follows:

1.3.1. **Our first concern is to be of help to the best interests of women in ministry.** They have had a new experience which for some has often been hidden out of a loyalty to the Church. Methodism, against some opposition, made a decision to ordain women in 1974, but gave very little thought to the consequences. The decision was essentially a theological one. But how this decision would affect the Church and the women who became its ministers, was all left to the women and to the Church to find out.

1.3.2. **Our second concern is to be aware of feminist issues and a feminist critique of the Church.** We recognize the right of women to seek mutual support and to advocate their views. Secular and religious history

endorses our belief that a minority position is only heard and its view is only able to influence institutions, when people who hold to that position stand and campaign together. Change cannot easily happen without pressure. The word "Protestant" has an honourable place in our continuing life. Moreover we have seen the position of women ministers in our Church as part of the wider issue of how women are treated in the world. Here the Church - as in so many other matters - is a prophetic community.

1.3.3. Our third concern is the **presbyteral ministry** shared by both women and men. Several of our respondents have said that the problems some women face are exactly the same problems for men as for women. They point to their wish for styles of leadership that are not hierarchical or patriarchal and recognise the vulnerability and openness in ministry to which many women testify. They see the need to resist the categorising of gifts as being 'female' or 'male'.

(Commission Report 1995:3-4)

The Commission made several pertinent points in its brief:

Firstly, women were of predominant interest in the report. It sought to identify 'where women were' in terms of their ministry, and the difficulties they were experiencing. The Commission also indicated that a possible cause of the many problems in the ministry today may have been that the decision to ordain women, and the consequences of doing this, were not carefully thought out at the time. It indicates a desire to find and solve whatever problems currently exist in the ministry.

Secondly, although the Commission's primary concern was to ultimately improve the situation of women in the ministry, they took cognisance of the fact that men often contributed to the oppression of women, and also that the presence of women in the ministry was something which many male ministers had not been prepared for when the initial decision to ordain women was taken.

Thirdly, of great significance is the fact that the Commission did not regard feminism, or any other type of women's movement, to be a threat to the Church.

Finally, there is the crucial recognition by the Church of its position in society, and the reminder that, because of its prophetic ministry, it ought to lead and not follow society.

It is clear, just from the brief of the Commission set up by the MCGB, that the problems experienced in that Church were similar to those experienced by the MCSA when women were initially ordained, as well as to those which continue to exist today. However, the acknowledgement by the Commission that the MCGB "...made a decision to ordain women in 1974, but gave very little thought to the consequences" (1995:3), indicates a very different perspective to that held by the MCSA. References already made in

Chapter II to the repetition of vague and unhelpful statements in the *Minutes of Conference* over several years regarding the problems of women ministers, up to and including the 1997 *Yearbook*, bear testimony to the fact that the MCSA has little or no intention of really addressing such issues in its Church and therefore of allowing the possibility of alleviating them. In stark contrast, the attitude of the MCGB, even if this is not the predominant attitude of all male ministers and parishioners at this stage, indicates a real concern about this situation and its resolution. Summed up in the Commission's own words, "Our interest is to provide a basis for the whole Church to hear the experience of its women ministers and to understand it" (1995:4).

Thus, the decision in the Commission's Report, to place the Church in its true position, that of a prophetic community, which should lead rather than follow society, was a valuable, if not vital, realisation. Because of this, the MCGB was able to recognise the need for challenges and protests against those entrenched in their dogmatic positions. It was also able to understand how opposition to the ordination of women was not an isolated example of the discrimination against women, but a reflection of the situation of women throughout the world. The direct reference to 'feminist issues', and a 'feminist critique' of the Church, is also indicative of a frank approach to the issue at hand. Because the word 'feminist' often evokes fear and antagonism in unenlightened, insecure people (as was clearly evident in the responses of many ministers in the MCSA in the questionnaire discussed in Chapter II), it was a brave, and probably deliberate inclusion

on the part of the British Commission to reveal its standpoint. It is probably not fair to judge the MCSA on the basis of the experiences of ministers within the Church, or by personal experiences and observations, and then to judge the MCGB solely on its brief and stipulated intentions for a Commission and its subsequent report on women in the ministry. Yet, by their very nature, aims are more positive, hopeful, idealistic and much more liberal than the situations in which they are implemented and in the way in which they impact on the lives of those associated with them. In this regard, a more balanced comparison will be made in the next section, where the results of responses by presbyters to questions on their experiences in the ministry will be presented.

3.1.3.3. Developments within the MCGB

In both the MCSA and the MCGB several committees were set up to deal with various facets of the difficulties experienced by women ministers in the Church, difficulties experienced between ministers because of the presence of women ministers in the ministry, and problems associated with "Inclusive Language". Both the South African and British Connexions acknowledged that women and men are made in the image of God and that this reality should be reflected in the use of inclusive language in the Church.

The number of women in leadership positions in the Methodist Church elicited different responses from the two Connexions. The MCGB did not give quotas for women in leadership, but stated that the Church had to be challenged, "...to pursue new styles of leadership" (1995:5), and that "the highly professional style of leadership in the (predominantly male) ordained ministry should not provide the only model of leadership. [Rather, it suggested], alternative styles of leadership must be enabled to flourish" (1995:5). By contrast the MCSA stipulated in 1992, and has done so in an unaltered statement in the annual *Minutes of Conference* until now, that "...all structures within the Church should include 40% women since women are in the majority in the MCSA" (*Minutes of Conference* 1992-1996; *Yearbook* 1997). Despite the target 40% of women stipulated by the MCSA, that percentage has as yet not even nearly been attained. The fact that there are still no women Bishops, and that less than 5% of Superintendents are

women, suggests that there appears to be no intention on the part of the MCSA to fulfil this target.

The MCGB presents a different picture: In 1994, 13,8% of all women presbyters were Superintendents (compared to 37,9% of all male presbyters who were Superintendents). In 1974, the first year in which women were ordained as presbyters in the MCGB, only 1,2% of all presbyters were women, but 3,6% of all women presbyters held the position of Superintendent. Notwithstanding this, it remains a concern that, "While over a third of all men presbyters are Superintendents, less than one tenth of women presbyters are" (1995:6). In addition, not all districts in the MCGB have the same proportion of women presbyters as the Connexional average (1995:6). However, there should be far greater concern in South Africa, where the Methodist Church has not even deemed it necessary to actually implement any meaningful programmes to redress past imbalances and discriminatory practices against women in the ministry.

In 1993, the Commission invited responses from presbyters about their experiences in ministry; 52 written responses were received - 33 from women and 19 from men. This is in itself interesting when compared to the responses to the questionnaire on Women in the Methodist Ministry which I sent out in South Africa in which the percentage of male respondents was far higher than the corresponding percentage of women respondents. It is perhaps in such responses that the feelings and attitudes of presbyters or ministers themselves, rather than the aspirations of the Commission, are revealed. The responses to the oppression of women in the ministry of the MCGB are not unlike many of those given in the questionnaires analysed in Chapter II with reference to the South African Methodist situation.

The responses cited in the Commission's Report ranged from the desire to maintain the *status quo*, to passive responses by women, and also to those which indicated greater resistance and the need to take action of some kind. Examples of passive acceptance of respondents' situations, and even of attempts to negate the seriousness of their plight, are found in the following extracts:

(At theological college) ...except for two, the women were hard work: not aware of gender issues, exclusion or being patronised. This was a very isolating experience in itself.

Then add the painful rejections, the members who left, the harassment of comments and unwanted touching at inappropriate times and places, the language problems and falling sometimes into the trap of being 'one of the boys' just to get the job done. It is very easy to get depressed, to lose hold on who I am.

And so it goes on.... I am tired of being squashed by masculine power, by inflexible structures, of walking into 'hidden furniture' - realising that bumps hurt, by being dismissed as emotional by men.

...the jokes continued 'Look how membership has fallen since we began ordaining women. When our Circuit has no women ministers everything will be o.k.' Ha-Ha. Do I laugh or do I cry?"
(Commission Report 1995:8-9)

These examples not only reflect very poorly on the Methodist Church as a whole, but they also clearly show the sense of helplessness and the resignation of many of the women ministers to the situations in which they have found themselves. Even a description of what would generally be regarded as sexual harassment, in the second extract cited, resulted in the woman presbyter possessing feelings of depression and despair, rather than what could be considered to be a more appropriate emotion such as anger or outrage. One deplores the attitude of the male presbyters involved in such incidents, but concurrently, one must condemn the inaction of the woman presbyter concerned. The process, deliberate, one assumes, used by men presbyters to wear down and weed out women ministers through the cowardice of passing remarks, through blatant or subtle sexual harassment, as well as via the 'invisible' pressure of the patriarchal tradition, reinforced by the outnumbering of women presbyters by males, cannot be allowed to continue. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to prevent if one is part of a minority group in an institution, and if the hierarchy of that institution does not accept one's grievances as legitimate. It is most pleasing to note that the Commission of the MCGB had, as one of its recommendations, the establishment of a Grievance

Procedure, which would enable presbyters to, "seek appropriate redress if they believe they have suffered sexual discrimination, harassment or abuse, or if they are subject to curtailment in circumstances they believe to be unjust" (Commission 1995:18).⁶

Although the institutionalised intolerance of sexism does not eradicate the prejudices of individuals, it is hoped that the implementing of the above recommendation relating to grievances would prevent at least some men presbyters from continuing to believe that women can be denigrated and demeaned, as the following responses indicate is something which does still occur today:

A Circuit steward said to a middle-aged married woman presbyter, 'If you were younger, prettier or had younger children, we would not have had you'.

Also,

I heard a man complain that the initials MLA (Minister in Local Appointment) ought to be MWLA to stand for "Menopausal Women in Local Appointment". The two things seems to be related - it is an inferior option, suitable for women.
(Commission 1995:18)

In view of such comments it seems ludicrous to suggest to men that they are being adversely affected by their demeaning women. Likewise it seems almost fantastical, to attempt to present a picture of humanity restored to its initial glory, to its 'Pre-Fall' state, to the Christian ethic in which one's love for one's neighbour is the catalyst for one's respect for all humanity. Surely, if one needs to explain such concepts to presbyters, to men who claim to be Christian, who claim to practise Christian ethics, and who claim a full understanding of God and God's plan for creation, then one has already defeated one's purpose. It is for this very reason that women cannot hope to change the ethics of people, especially of men, by simply appealing to their altruism; at the very least women can hope for such a reformation, but they should not wait until such a change has

⁶ Recommendation 6 stated, "That the Methodist Church be instructed to explore the introduction of a general grievance procedure for all presbyters and members of the Diaconal Order and to report to Conference by 1997" (Commission 1995:18). I have as yet not been able to establish whether such a report was received by Conference, and if it was, what the outcome of this was.

occurred before themselves beginning to implement the means to achieve their own liberation from the oppression of men.

In sharp contrast to those comments made above, two men presbyters wrote the following:

I am aware now that in the last twenty years there have been times when I have been blind to the existence of sexism in the Church and times when I have colluded with it and still do...

What am I saying in all this? My experience of the ministry as a male is that it is very painful, it is only since women came into the ministry that this seems to have been vocalised, for which we should be thankful. (Commission 1995:18)

These responses by two men presbyters is reassuring and gives hope for a future in which women can be left to perform God's work and not be forced to indulge in power plays with men or else be subservient to them. However, a note of caution exists here, when one presbyter admits to having colluded with a sexist Church or sexist practices, and when he acknowledges that this continues. As stated earlier, appeals to Christianity and ethical behaviour on their own will not remove discrimination, as long as the oppressor benefits from such a stance and from such practices. This is the goal towards which the Church should be aiming : making sexist practices and attitudes both undesirable and costly, to their perpetrators.

3.1.3.4. Equal Opportunities Policies

Equal Opportunities Policies (EOPs) were initially adopted by the Methodist Conference of Great Britain in 1987 for its lay employees, but the Commission has suggested they would be beneficial to the whole Church, especially to the ministry of women presbyters.

Included in the recommendations of the EOP are:

1. Monitoring the number of candidates for the presbyteral ministry who have been accepted and declined, female and male in an attempt to show any statistical variance which may act as a pointer to possible discrimination.

2. Training should include the examination of sexism in the individual's attitudes and reactions, especially in the training of Superintendents and Chairpersons⁷
 3. Greater consideration given to the needs of women presbyters, their partners, households and families and the exploration of more flexible patterns of ministry.
 4. Greater flexibility in terms of maternity and paternity leave.
 5. The need to find ways in which ministers married to each other can have both of their ministries honoured, valued and nurtured.
 6. The possibilities of adopting a grievance procedure be explored.
 7. The setting and monitoring of an annual target figure for the number of women Superintendents.
 8. The keeping of records for each District on the percentage of women presbyters and women Superintendents in its Circuits and discussing cases in which such averages and targets differ from the Connexional figure.
 9. The exploration of the possibility of developing a positive action training programme for women presbyters for potential Superintendents.
 10. An exploration of the possibility of positive action in each District to meet the needs identified by women presbyters to develop their skills and gifts.
 11. The appointment of a group of people "offering theological and sociological skills to identify and examine the ways in which power is exercised in the MC by its presbyters".
 12. That the Chairman's Meeting be asked to study this section on EOP and consider its implications and the guidelines which they offer.
- (Commission 1995:22)

It must again be emphasised, that one accepts that ideals, and even recommendations, such as those cited above, are by their nature more likely to be accepted in theory, and less likely to be adopted, at least without alteration, in practice. Hence, to compare the experiences of women ministers in the MCSA with the high ideals of the MCGB is unfair and probably inaccurate. However, if one examines the proposed policies and actions as presented by the MCGB, and compares them to the vague and unstructured sentiments expressed in the MCSA *Minutes of Conference* from 1992 - 1996, as well as to the 1997

⁷ In the MCSA Chairpersons are known as Bishops.

Yearbook, then the South African Connexion is left badly wanting. Since there is little or no perceived benefit to men ministers in the MCSA by the continued inclusion of women in its ministry, it is unlikely that there will be increased support or lobbying from them to improve the situation of women ministers, or to increasing the number of women entering, and remaining in, this ministry.

3.2. CONCLUSION

I have sought to indicate some of the ways in which women have responded to their oppression by men, as individuals and as groups of women. It is my view that women need to operate as a group in order to pressure male structures, and to challenge the dominant male mindset, in order to have their equality and their value acknowledged by men and in society itself. However, the past structures in which women were involved, such as the general liberation movements, and the ideologies to which they appealed for the equality of women on the basis of their humanity, have done little to achieve an improved situation for women. As long as women include men in their plan to achieve their liberation from men, they are operating at the discretion, and the mercy of the men. It must not be forgotten either, that if women are to gain power in society, this will mean men losing some of their power. While it would be the just and right thing for them to do, and the only thing for the Christians among them, to do, it is also probably the least likely decision that they will make. It is, quite simply, not in men's interests to relinquish their power.

Once again, it is up to women themselves to take responsibility for their situation, and to truly 'Protest' and put pressure on the MCSA to ensure that specific programmes are implemented to ensure the non-discriminatory practice of the acceptance of women presbyters, and the equality of treatment of ministers in stationing; to force the non-discriminatory treatment of women ministers by male ministers; to identify the consequences of discriminatory practices within the Church; and to set out clearly defined criteria and targets for evaluating the progress that is being made, within given time frames, in redressing past imbalances in leadership positions in the Church and in the establishment of equality of treatment and of circumstances for all ministers.

CHAPTER IV : STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE LIBERATION OF WOMEN FROM OPPRESSION

Earlier in this dissertation several factors which contribute to the oppression of women as well as reactions to such oppression, were identified. A case study on women in the Methodist Ministry was undertaken in an attempt to identify and understand both the causes of that particular oppression as well as the ramifications of it. It is hoped that this chapter will present what will be considered to be feasible strategies for women to use to facilitate the alleviation of their oppression by men. These strategies are intended to cover those aspects of the oppression of women which I consider to be most debilitating and far-reaching in their effect on women.

4.1. STEREOTYPES

It is well known that perceptions are often more powerful than reality. Similarly, the powerful impressions created by stereotypes are not easily eroded. The distant origins and subsequent entrenchment of stereotypes is largely inexplicable and their removal extremely difficult. It may be useful here for the sake of clarity to define the term 'stereotype'. "Stereotype was initially a term used in the printing business, to denote 'a solid metal duplicate of a relief printing surface" (Webster's Dictionary), or "a printing-plate cast from a mould of composed type" (Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary). Such definitions have been extended today and are more commonly used to refer to: "a person or thing that conforms to an unjustifiably fixed, usu. standardized, mental picture" (Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary), or to "Something repeated or reproduced without variation; something ...lacking individual distinguishing marks or qualities; esp. a standardised mental picture held in common by members of a group and representing an oversimplified opinion" (Webster's Dictionary).

When one considers the stereotypes which appear to govern the expectations of women and predetermined gender-specific tasks and roles, it is not difficult to identify aspects of the definitions given above in them: fixed expressions or expectations which are 'unjustifiably' so; a lack of variation, individuality or differences between the subjects which are stereotyped; the importance of conformity and the oversimplification of one's

definition and consequent expectations of a person or a group of people.

Kloppenborg is correct when asserting that,

Pressing a molding material on a shape results in a stereotype with extreme durability. This image for the printing world is highly accurate when we consider the metaphysical meaning of the word. Stereotypes which are based on generalizations - whether they are socially, culturally, religiously or otherwise legitimized - seems to have a similar lasting durability.
(Kloppenborg 1995:vii)

Whether stereotypes are accepted and referred to habitually and subconsciously by people, or out of preference, is not always most relevant; what is, is that the use of stereotypes is probably among the greatest obstacles to the liberation of women from oppression today.

A similar situation reflecting the power and influence of stereotypes, albeit in a racial context was the one involving Martin Luther King Jnr on his arrival at Crozer Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania in 1948. Cone recorded that King "...was determined to prove that he was as good as the next man":

I was well aware of the typical white stereotype of the Negro - that he is always late, that he's loud and always laughing, that he is dirty and messy - and for a while I was terribly conscious trying to avoid identification with it. If I was a minute late to class, I was almost morbidly conscious of it and sure that everyone else noticed it. Rather than be thought of as always laughing, I'm afraid I was grimly serious for a time. I had a tendency to overdress, to keep my room spotless, my shoes perfectly shining and my clothes immaculately pressed.
(Cone 1993:27-28)

It should not be regarded necessary for a person to have to prove to society that they are unlike the stereotyped preconception of themselves. But, as with all marginalised and repressed people, the onus to remove such a stigma rests with the victim of the

stereotype. Making a concerted effort not to conform to stereotyped behaviour, as in the case of Martin Luther King Jnr, is certainly one way of altering perceptions, but it is also an infringement of the freedom of the individual in expressing themselves as they want to without being concerned about how such expressions and behaviour will be interpreted.

In terms of this dissertation, what is needed therefore, is a conscious and very determined effort by women to refuse to be part of any stereotyping and, for them, within their own spheres of influence, to highlight both the existence of, and the detrimental effects of stereotypes.

4.1.1. Advertising and stereotypes

Many preconceived ideas about women are gained from advertising, and those which have been ingrained through family systems and other types of socialisation are often reinforced by what advertising presents. Because of this, the whole question of advertising needs to be seriously and urgently addressed if existing stereotypes of women are to be altered or eliminated. Two of the main issues that must be addressed with reference to advertising are, firstly, the types of advertisements that prevail, as well as their portrayal of people by means of stereotypes; and, secondly, the issue of who controls advertising.

Opinions vary as to whether reality is reproduced and reflected in advertising or whether advertising itself influences and therefore creates, reality. What is certain, however, is that advertising has a very powerful influence on people, whether by establishing ideas in people's mindsets, or in influencing existent ideas and values. Because of this, perhaps the most powerful and also the swiftest way to eradicate existing stereotypes of women, would be for women to become more interested and involved in advertising as a whole. Such an involvement and interest could include the following strategies:

(i) Women should critically analyse all advertising to which they are exposed. Such an analysis should identify: the targets of each type of advertisement; the methods used

to sell the product or service; the use of stereotypes and the role that women play in advertisements. Understanding how such advertisements operate is vital if one intends to be impervious to their specifically destructive influences.

(ii) Women must refuse to participate in advertisements which are insulting to women, or in those which perpetuate sexual discrimination and oppression. Women should also not allow their children to participate in advertising which reflects stereotyped gender roles for girls and boys. If women are united in this regard, advertisers will have to refrain from advertising certain products, which they would previously have done in ways now unacceptable to women, or they will have to alter the way in which they use women and gender roles, to advertise their products.

(iii) 'Black Business' in South Africa has realised that society will experience no true transformation unless economic power which is, arguably, all power in a capitalist society such as ours, is transferred at least to some extent, to black people. In a similar way, women also need to mobilise themselves towards achieving some control over advertising as an industry. The control of a significant number of advertising agencies by women would allow the production of advertisements which are not derogatory to women and which do not reinforce traditional discriminatory gender roles. Businesswomen could support such agencies by investing in them and by giving their accounts to these, rather than to male-dominated agencies. All women could support such initiatives by purchasing products advertised by these agencies rather than the products advertised by agencies which denigrate women.

(iv) Women should boycott products or services which, through their advertising, denigrate women or which reinforce stereotyped and oppressive gender roles. Furthermore, companies which make use of the latter type of advertising strategies should be informed that their products will not be supported as long as such advertising persists. Such correspondence could also be forwarded to the press as well as to the Gender Commission and to organisations such as People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA). With such public stands against discriminatory and demeaning advertising,

it would be less easy and less comfortable for other advertisers or agencies to continue to present derogatory material regarding women. Pressure should also be placed on government and other public organisations, or organisations receiving 'taxpayers' money' in the form of funds or subsidies, not to use advertising agencies which demean women, or, better still, to support advertising agencies promoting the equality of women.

4.1.2. Socialisation and stereotypes

There are various facets of life in which the socialisation of people occurs, for example, in homes, schools, churches, etc. Invariably the process of socialisation does not escape the pervasive influence of stereotypes. Stereotypes are particularly dangerous because they appear to be innocuous, that is, if they are identified at all. Where they are identified, they are usually regarded as being 'the norm' themselves. Deviating from such stereotypes, in one's behaviour or in one's expectations of the roles people should play in society, suggests an abnormality in, and possibly also an unacceptability of oneself and not in the stereotypes themselves. Perhaps more common is the situation in which stereotypes have been ingrained in people to such an extent that they are not able to recognise them, nor to differentiate between them and their own beliefs and values. The difficulty of trying to eradicate stereotypes is heightened when people are not actually conscious of the fact that they have preconceived ideas about gender and gender roles. This is clearly evident in Kaufman's explanation of how children learn their gender roles:

Most children learn their gender roles primarily by role-taking.... They learn the "proper" attitudes, values, behaviours, and goals associated with the sex status. They learn the rights, obligations, and prestige accompanying their sex status. Gradually and irrevocably, the children internalize their gender roles until the attributes come to seem like the only possible way in which to behave and feel.
(Kaufman 1982:19)

Furthermore, Kaufman has indicated that there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that,

...children are displaying a knowledge of which set of gender roles - and consequently which sex - is more valued and therefore destined to achieve in this society. In short, stereotypes and perceptions of power, competence, prestige, strength and size are

attached to children's earliest understandings of their
gender roles.
(Kaufman 1982:3)

Statements such as the latter show the unobtrusive way in which stereotypes permeate our lives and our belief systems at a young age. In the light of this, the socialisation of children, and the role that women play in this process, becomes increasingly complex as well as increasingly important.

An interesting and perhaps inexplicable paradox exists concerning the socialisation of children. Women are largely responsible for raising children and for instilling values in them; generally speaking they can probably be considered to be the people most influential in the socialisation of children. This is due to the historical association of women with children, continuing from the most intense nurturing after birth, until the children are older. However, the end of the child-rearing phase does not signify the end of the woman's role as home-maker and wife; her changing family circumstances merely cause adaptations to her role, but still keeping her in a socially peripheral and subservient position. Women, living mostly in patriarchal societies which are oppressive to women, should not only be aware of such oppression, but should wish to see its demise. And yet, paradoxically, it is the women themselves who entrench society's gender stereotypes in their children. A woman wanting to prevent her children from becoming what society expects of them, has to be aware of the existence of such predetermined gender roles, and has to be prepared to take a stance which resists such societal norms, in order that future generations of women are not coerced into playing roles which are not acceptable to them. Clichéd examples of "mini lessons" taught, such as telling boys that it is effeminate to cry, and insisting that a girl sits 'like a lady', might appear innocuous in their context, but they form the basis of the child's concepts of gender as well as linking particular behaviour to a particular gender. Although the focus of this dissertation is on what women can do, apart from men, to liberate themselves from oppression, it must be understood, in the context of the socialisation of children, that the inculcation of non-discriminatory attitudes and a sense that all people are equal, are as important in boys as in girls. Success in this regard would pave the way for a more free and easier life for

tomorrow's women. Given that women are the worst affected by stringent gender stereotyping and subsequent forms of discrimination against women, it is not easy to understand why women persist in the socialisation of their children in this way.

There does seem to be one type of woman who is prepared to sacrifice her independence and her equality with men for a life free from responsibility. Such women appear content to allow their husbands to make decisions concerning the family, the house and the finances. In such a case the men are obliged to bear all the responsibility and the pressures of the family. This type of woman will, in all likelihood, bring up her children to accept similar roles, so depicted, for men and women. She may do so because she actually believes that men are obliged to take care of women, or because this option is a comfortable and carefree, if dependent, way of life. Comfort apart, one also needs to wonder why it is that so many women are dependent on men. This is especially true of married women who often display a dependency towards their husbands. It is not completely accurate to say that 'historically' men have been the family's breadwinner. Since the Industrial Revolution this was the case, but history obviously precedes that event, and prior to that time, all members of families contributed to the produce or the income made for the family.

Over the last thirty years research has shown that the identity of women, as well as the unspoken and spoken influences impressed on girls from adolescence, are two very important factors in the unwillingness of women to be independent from men, as well as their inability to assert their equality with men. Furthermore, such research also indicates that the mature adult woman of today is commonly stereotyped as someone dependent, compliant and submissive; something which is no longer attributed to nature, as the references to a 'weak self' in the nineteenth century were, but which is attributed to the 'developmental tasks of adolescence' (Kaufman 1982:32). Kaufman cites the results of the research of Bardwick and Douvan on this subject:

Until adolescence the ideal of equal capacity, opportunity, and lifestyle is held out to girls. But sometime in adolescence the message becomes clear that one had better not do too well, that competition is aggressive and unfeminine, and that deviation threatens the heterosexual relationship.

[While young girls are not] prohibited from going to college, seeking school office, or achieving honours, their concerns (produced by the 'ferment' of such biological changes as menstruation and a revival of eroticism) turns increasingly to the culturally prescribed goals and roles associated with marriage and maternity.
(Kaufman 1982:31)

Such a change in the adolescent is attributed to a compliance with what Bardwick and Douvan refer to as the 'domestic script' - a role which requires interpersonal rather than competitive skills. The adoption of such a role would include "a withdrawal from the development of independence (sic) activity, ability, and competition, and the absence of a professional work commitment" (Bardwick and Douvan in Kaufman 1982:55). If an adolescent girl does indeed adopt such behaviour and such an attitude because her perception is that not doing so would jeopardize her future and her security, then it is not surprising that women appear content to be thus dependent on their husbands, financially as well as intellectually. Such an erosion of confidence will cause a concomitant erosion of identity in the woman. Uncertainty about the acceptability of one's character, one's thinking and one's behaviour will cause a constant vacillation away from reactions of displeasure and towards behaviour which will illicit reactions of pleasure and acceptance at who one appears to be. Thus,

...the gender identity process for females includes an implicit conflict. That is, the female child (like the male) recognises the superior prestige of the male but then identifies with the devalued role of her own sex.
(Kaufman 1982:17)

It seems that only girls experience such conflict and confusion, and that this may be a learnt behaviour. Boys are taught that their identity is an unalterable entity, separate from their gender, their work, and their personal relationships. Girls are taught that they only become someone in relation to men. Having accepted and internalised this basic premise, from which to formulate ideas about gender roles and functions, Bardwick (in Kaufman), suggests that women appear to easily adopt the less prestigious roles of wife and mother and simply accept that there will be little distinction made between their social role and their actual identity as persons (1982:33):

The girl's identity is critically dependent upon the man she marries and the children she has. She perceives her major task as assuring her acceptability as a person who will be loved, *a person someone will marry.*[My italics] [Hence] for girls, identity formulation is delayed until they marry.
(Kaufman 1982:33.)

If one accepts that women do only gain their identities as people on marriage, one could deduce that single women therefore have no identity at all. As such they cannot accurately be described as persons! This dilemma indicates the dangers of using gender rather than humanity as the basis for defining a person.

A Christian perspective on the equality of men and women is provided by Karl Lehmann, who asserts that, "Before God and in Jesus Christ there is no devaluation of the female" (1988:30). Although he acknowledges that,

...from the time of the New Testament through the entire history of the Church there has been a struggle between the recognition of equality and the acceptance of the historical situation of suppression and subordination,

he also insisted that,

Person transcends all "roles", likewise that of spouse, mother, friend, partner, or rival. There is no value that depends upon whether she fits into a pre-given role. She ought never become a means to an end. The dignity of the person requires an ultimate immediacy of human beings before God and an inviolable freedom and dignity. Only God guarantees this dignity which is to be respected in every case and unconditionally.
(Lehmann 1988:30)

As a Christian, and a Christian ethicist, it is vital to convey such a message to all people, inside and outside the Church. The importance of conveying such values to children should be impressed upon adults. Despite the precarious situation, and often the hostile reception of religion and religious ethics in schools, because of the many interpretations of the legal Constitution of South Africa and what religious freedom means, efforts must nonetheless be made to convey the idea that, based on our common humanity, all people

are indeed equal. Part of the socialisation of children, especially of girls, should include an understanding that,

She is absorbed neither in her role as faithful companion and mother nor in the task of completing the main work of the male and working together with him. She has value, dignity, import, rank *not through her husband*. *She has value and dignity in herself* [Kasper's italics] (Kasper, in Lehmann 1988:30).¹

Women themselves can and should be resisting the categorisation of themselves in terms of roles rather than as persons, but even more vital, in the long-term approach to the eradication of the oppression of women, is changing the perceptions of society. It is my belief that this can only be done through children, before such preconceptions become imbedded in their value systems and in their concept of what is 'normal' and therefore, 'acceptable'.

4.1.3. Socialisation in the Church and religion

There are numerous instances in which women are defined in terms of either the social role they perform or in terms of their interpersonal relationships. Religion and culture are often contexts in which it is not possible for women to assert their individuality or their autonomy. Both religious and cultural traditions exert a powerful emotional influence over their followers. It therefore becomes difficult to refute or alter even some of the practices of a religion or a culture without the feeling that one is rejecting the entire religion or culture. Even within Christianity, there are a variety of beliefs regarding the role of women in the church and in society as a Christian woman. What makes such situations more complicated for women is the fact that most of these structures are intrinsically patriarchal, as are the messages and the interpretations of the Holy Books and traditions which they espouse. Because of this it is difficult to find churches which are able to be objective (in terms of gender equality and gender stereotypes), concerning Biblical hermeneutics, without being influenced by the hidden agendas and vested interests of the dominant gender in the Church upon which the

¹ From "Die Stellung der Frau als Problem der theologischen Anthropologie" in *Lebendiges Zeugnis* 35, 1980:5-16, especially p10.

outcomes of interpretations would usually depend. What is needed therefore, is for women to educate themselves regarding their religion, the Scriptures and church canon, and their religious traditions.

While those controlling the power structures in churches and religious institutions will only completely lose their own power or authority if they relinquish it (or if there were to be some sort of religious revolution), the unquestioned authority which they possess would nonetheless be eroded by challenges from women who are as knowledgeable and competent in church affairs as men are, even if, by not placing them in positions of authority and responsibility within the Church, this knowledge and insight has not been acknowledged.

There are numerous problems facing women in the ministry of many of the Christian churches that do allow for the ordination of women. Many of these problems derive from the belief held by some men that women are not equal to men; others from the belief that, even if women and men are equal, the ministry is something which ought to be restricted to men. Most disconcerting, however, are the problems which stem from the belief of many women ministers that they are not equal to men ministers. It was clear from some of the responses to the questionnaires in my case study that many women ministers regarded their ministry as a complementary, supportive ministry and not one which was of value in itself, nor independent of the male ministry. Whatever perceptions women have of the ministry and whatever roles they envisage themselves performing in the ministry, something that women need to bear in mind is the truth that,

...women have real "liberty" to serve in subordinate positions only *after they are able to enter the highest church offices*. [Italics mine] Insofar as it does not demand access to the highest echelons, the women's movement in the church will make it possible for the hierarchical church to use women's gifts and work for strengthening its own exclusive clerical structure. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:32)

It is interesting that many ministers, especially women, still feel that women are either not a legitimate part of the Methodist ministry or that they should be focusing on the

'female oriented tasks', whatever these may be. This is particularly interesting when one considers that women were running Methodist societies, and even preaching, with John Wesley's blessing after 1768². Two such Methodist women were Mary Bosanquet and Sarah Mallett. John Wesley's reassessment of the position of female preachers was attributed to Mary Bosanquet. Although she spoke in public on many occasions in the late 1770s, she stopped short of calling herself a preacher.³ It is unclear whether this was her own decision since Sarah Mallett was granted permission 'by order of Wesley and the Conference' to preach in 1787.⁴

Against such precedents set over two hundred years ago, it may seem strange that women have not been fully accepted and incorporated into the Methodist Ministry. However, what acceptance of women preachers and of the ordination of women ministers there has been to date, may not be due to an increased liberalism in the MCSA and its male hierarchy, but instead due to another phenomenon that has arisen in society, as indicated in the quotation below. Mary Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792, made the following observation:

When women were made guardians of religious faith, religion had less prominence within culture - to business or to reason. And men were given charge over these. Thus, the shift for women did not alter their subordinate status in relation to men, even though they could be honored as their equals, even their superiors, in religious faith.
(in Johnson 1983:13)

² The changes came, with regard to the understanding of their "Extraordinary Call", when Jobez Bunting refuted the definition of 1771-1780: "Developments at the turn of the century reveal that the women preachers ... lost much by the death of Wesley". (John Wesley, *The Women Preachers of Early Methodism*, Paul Chilcote, 1984, p274, Unpublished PhD Dissertation).

³ The Journal of Mary Bosanquet Fletcher, in Henry Moore, *The Life of Mrs Mary Fletcher*, 3rd ed. London: Methodist Conference Office, 1818), pp38-39, 96-97, 119-120) in Johnson 1983:72).

⁴ In "An Account of S. Mallett", *The Arminian Magazine*, 11 (1788), pp186-188, 238-441) in Johnson 1988:76).

There is a case for suggesting that religion today has little influence on the lives of the majority of people, given the extent of secularisation which has taken place, as well as the increase in focus placed on individuality and on personal achievement and competence. This viewpoint should certainly not be discounted when examining the factors leading to the accessibility of the ministry to women and to the ways in which women have been included. Whether one accepts Wollstonecraft's point or not, there is still the issue of women in the ministry and women wishing to enter the ministry, that needs to be addressed. I have identified several practical strategies which could be implemented in attempting to liberate women in the Church from the oppressive socialisation and control of men. They are as follows:

(i) Women as legitimate members of the Church

An understanding needs to be developed in the Church as a whole that a woman's place, whether as a member or a minister, in organised religion, is not actually a 'woman's rights' issue. Rather, a woman belongs in the Church and is entitled, on the basis of her humanity and her inseparable inclusion in the 'image of God', to participate fully as an equal partner and person in the Church (Jongeward 1975:114).

(ii) The organisation and mobilisation of women within the Church

In the MCSA women should consider forming a Women Ministers Consultation, or other similar women's group, which would function differently, and have different aims compared to the existing societies and women's groups. This would allow for increased opportunities for networking, for support and for devising specific strategies to deal with problems facing women ministers, individually or collectively. The strategy of networking need not only apply to women ministers but should extend to the vast numbers of lay women as well, who form the majority of the members of the MCSA. Such women should be encouraged to support a lobby to increase the numbers of women ministers in the MCSA as well as the number of those women in positions of power and authority in the Church. The latter is extremely important since it is unlikely that any suggestions made by women ministers would receive serious consideration, unless of course the percentage of women representatives at decision-making levels increased.

Hence lobbying to address such imbalances of power in the MCSA should be one of the first objectives of the Women Ministers Consultation.

The idea behind such a suggestion comes from the formation of the Black Ministers Consultation (BMC) in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The BMC was founded by the first black President (now known as the Presiding Bishop) of the MCSA, Seth Molefi Mokitimi. He believed this organisation to be essential for the development of confidence in black ministers at a time when all Circuits were Superintended by white ministers. He also felt the BMC would build self-esteem as well as greater responsibility amongst black ministers as they struggled with the ever-encroaching Apartheid situation in South Africa. The motive he had was clearly indicated in his obituary:

For him it was not a case of thinking White, or thinking Black, but thinking RIGHT, and interpreting the mind of Christ, offering his reconciling power in every human situation - in the home and family, in race relations, in national life, amongst Christian churches, groups and in the Christian brotherhood. Nothing grieved him more than strife and ill-feeling amongst his brethren in the ministry, the regional retreats he organised having been designed initially to eradicate these tendencies and serve as an agency of goodwill and reconciliation.
(Minutes of Conference 1972:11)

Thus, such an initiative could be used as a guide to women in the MCSA as a possible way forward in organising themselves to address their situation of oppression. The key here, as outlined above, is that this is not an attempt to create opposition and competition within the MCSA, whether between black and white, or male and female ministers; it is an attempt to 'think right' before one attempts, through the use of Christianity, to justify any form of oppression. Women and women ministers in the MCSA as a whole could use this example from the history of their Church to reinforce the idea that any form of oppression is evil and unacceptable.

(iii) Education of women in the Church

Any improvement in the status of women and of women ministers in the MCSA should be linked to an education programme. Such a programme could depend on formal

education as well as a re-education of people on the level of attitudes to gender and stereotyping that prevail in the Church, but it would require a willingness to redress inequalities in the Church. Women in the Church could address these issues themselves, and lead groups or societies within the Church reporting these issues, or expert women could be brought in from outside the Church to facilitate such education.

On another level, women must also consider doing more formal studies in theology and related subjects. The gaining of such knowledge would have an empowering effect on the person studying as well as increasing the respect that would likely be afforded them because of their newly gained knowledge. A concerted effort by women ministers to upgrade their qualifications, and to increase their knowledge of the Church and Theology, would enable them to be in a position to assert themselves on such subjects; to be independent thinkers, and not to have to rely merely on men's opinions. These women would very likely be afforded greater respect than they would have had without having obtained such knowledge and education. Schüssler Fiorenza argued that,

...the most important task and goal for the women's movement in Germany today should be to find every conceivable means for making it possible for women not only to study "lay" theology but also to complete the full course of theology concluding with the M.Div., licentiate, doctorate or habilitation. We need to work for university positions for women assistants, lecturers and ordinary professors in theological faculties.
(Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:36-37)

Schüssler Fiorenza is absolutely correct in what she says here, and although her statement was made with reference to Germany, it is as applicable to South Africa today. In fact, she made a similar comment about the under-representation of women and the low numbers of women working on Masters and Doctorates in the field of Theology at the University of South Africa on her visit to South Africa in 1994. In a paper entitled "Feminist studies in religion and a radical democratic ethos" she wrote:

...prior to my arrival in South Africa I had naïvely assumed that the need for more women scholars in religion and theology would engender the same political pressures that led to the inclusion of a significant number of women in political parties

and in the new government. Yet, as far as I could find out during my visit, the need for feminist scholarship is not yet widely recognised. Although only a very few South African women hold doctorates in theology or religious studies this is not seen as a grave lack. For instance, there seems to be only one white woman who has completed a doctorate in my professional area of specialisation, Christian Testament studies. Moreover very few women have full-time university posts or hold full professorships. Finally, there seems to be very little ongoing discussion of how standards of excellence must be rethought and reformulated if affirmative action measures are to work and have an impact on the humanities or on religious and theological scholarship. If the number of white women in religious studies is miniscule, the presence of qualified black/Indian/ or coloured women scholars is even more dismal. Little research, particularly on the questions and needs of black/coloured/Indian women seems to be done. Nor is much attention given to the academic mechanisms, cultural prejudices, and professional obstacles that keep women out of religious studies and theology. This discouraging state of affairs seems not to be of primary concern among administrators and faculty in religious studies or theology so that the amelioration of this situation could be expected in the not too distant future. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995:125)⁵

A further suggestion made by Schüssler Fiorenza, which the MCSA and the women's groups within it in particular, would do well to consider, is the exploration of ways to facilitate the theological education of women, especially in financial ways such as offering financial support or scholarships for talented women to study theology. The creation of good, credible women role models is also of vital importance (Schüssler

⁵ While the picture presented by Schüssler Fiorenza may not be completely accurate today, in terms of the numbers of women with academic qualifications in Theology and its various branches, she does nonetheless identify a serious problem in the academic field in South Africa; a field which is seriously lacking in well qualified women academics and in women academics who hold positions of seniority and authority in academic institutions. This was reiterated in the call for women theologians made by Susan Rakoczy, IHM Catholic Sister and lecturer at St. Joseph's College, Cedara (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology* Vol. IV, No.ii, July 1997:9).

Fiorenza 1993:36).

(iv) Re-evaluating and restructuring women's groups in the Church

Women ministers and lay women need to carefully examine the aims and functions of existing women's groups and societies within the MCSA, as well as, where applicable, under whose convenorship they function. Many such groups in the Church appear to perform mainly social functions. While they do have value in terms of the support and fellowship they offer their members, they also are often guilty of aligning themselves solely with tasks or activities which have traditionally been regarded as belonging to the female sphere, such as baking cakes and visiting the sick. With the numerous problems facing women in society in general, and the problems regarding women in the ministry, such groups ought to seriously consider altering their focus to incorporate such issues as using their membership to exert influence on the MCSA to achieve the type of Church which women would consider ethical and just.

(v) Recovering, re-learning and rewriting women's history in the Church

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is probably the one Christian feminist and theologian most insistent on the importance of recovering and rewriting the history of women, and the contributions made by women in the Church, as a whole and in the Christian tradition. She interprets Biblical texts and Church canon from a feminist perspective. She argues that Biblical texts, having emerged out of, and having been created in, a patriarchal tradition, are androcentric. Apart from a critical feminist interpretation of texts, Schüssler Fiorenza also seeks to "read the silences and gaps in historical records" (1992:10). These 'silences and gaps' are the historical facts, incidents and persona that have been omitted, or whose importance has been greatly reduced in value in the process of the recording of history. While this brief statement of the method Schüssler Fiorenza uses, and of what she hopes to achieve in terms of Biblical hermeneutics, hardly does her justice, it is mentioned here solely to highlight an area of study and research which has long been neglected but which is vital to the creation of an acceptance of the true part which women have played, and still do play, in the Church, as indicated in Chapter I. Women in the MCSA should attempt to follow the developments made by Schüssler

Fiorenza and others and even, individually or through women's groups, to attempt to embark on their own research on similar issues.

Although not many concrete strategies to lift women from their oppressed state have been put forward in South Africa, there are nonetheless many women's groups operating at present. Their main aim appears to be to give support to women; to allow women to be heard and to tell their stories, and to educate women on issues which it is hoped will bring about an improvement in their lives. Gloria Plaatjie, a lecturer in New Testament at the University of the North has run workshops for women at grassroots level, listening to their stories and offering them support; Christa Landman and many other South African women have been involved in programmes aimed at teaching religious skills to women in order to empowering them; while Devarakshanam Betty Govinden has called on women to move away from passivity in order to oppose the unjust experiences, especially regarding violence against women, to which women are exposed. (*Bulletin for Contextual Theology* Vol. IV, No. ii, July 1997).

- (vi) Establishing a formal programme to promote the equality of status and opportunity for women in the MCSA.

Achieving the implementation of a programme to promote the equality of women, in terms of their status, as well as the opportunities open to them in the Church, should be a priority for all women in the MCSA. The MCSA would do well to examine and act upon a report given to the Conference of the MCGB, "A Cry of the Beloved", produced by the Commission on Women Presbyters and the Church Report to Conference, 1995. The report itself was discussed in the previous chapter but it is mentioned here because it initiates one of the strategies that women could adopt in the Church in order to empower and liberate themselves. It is my belief that the MCSA needs to conduct similar research and, based on its findings, to adopt an appropriate formal policy and programme with clearly defined aims, methods of implementation and a predetermined framework.

It is worthwhile repeating the brief that was given to the British Methodist Commission

at the outset of their research, viz.,

...to study the experience of women presbyters in the Methodist Church and the Church's response to that experience; and to report to Conference in 1995 with recommendations on how women presbyters can more effectively enrich and offer a critique of the presbyteral ministry as a whole.
(1995:3)

The four directives isolated by the Commission for study were: "women ministers' personal experience; the Church's response; the contribution of women ministers; and what the whole ministry can learn from them" (1995:3).

Such an examination of the current situation in the MCSA would allow for the identification of the problems and difficulties as experienced by women ministers in the MCSA. It would also indicate any difficulties experienced by men ministers who are struggling to adapt to changes in the Church. Upon identifying such problems and areas of conflict, the Church would then be in a position to respond to such problems. Devising such a plan of action would need to include the following components:

- (i) All ministers in the MCSA should be consulted so as to receive their interpretations of problems relating to gender in the ministry of the MCSA. Individual societies and circuits of the MCSA should also be included to receive their feedback on this issue.
- (ii) Problems and areas of conflict should be clearly defined.
- (iii) Attempts should be made to establish possible causes of problems and reasons for conflict.
- (iv) Recommendations should be made on ways of dealing with identified problems.
- (v) A timeframe for the implementation of the recommendations should be drawn up.
- (vi) The MCSA would need to set up a body to monitor the implementation of recommended policies.
- (vii) A means of measuring the success of implemented policies would need to be formulated. Consideration could be given to the introduction of a quota or target system to facilitate greater representation of women at all levels of ministry. Targets are often seen as preferable to a quota system, as was the case with the British report on Women Presbyters, which recommended the use of a target system. The difference between the

two systems is as follows:

A quota is an absolute minimum, usually tied to a proportion of a workplace. For example, an organisation with over 20 employees is required by law to employ 3% disabled people. A target is a guideline, often related to proportions. It is not an absolute, but more of an indication of whether or not satisfactory progress is being made. Where it is found that insufficient progress has been made, investigations can be carried out to discover why this might be.

(Commission on Women Presbyters 1995:19)

(viii) The MCSA would also need to formulate a policy to deal with non-conformity to the policies adopted as a result of research on women in the ministry.

The areas the MCSA would need to cover in devising strategies to achieve the equality of status and of opportunity for ministers should include the following:

- (i) A general education programme for clergy and laity concerning sexuality, gender roles, stereotypes, discrimination and the oppression of women.
- (ii) Access to the ministry including the nomination of candidates. This would also include an investigation into cases in which candidates or probationers were considered unsuccessful in the progress they were making or who were considered to be unsuitable for the ministry.
- (iii) Equal opportunities in the training of ministers and candidates for the ministry.
- (iv) A more flexible stationing policy for all ministers.
- (v) Equal opportunities for promotion. Criteria for promotion should be clear and accessible to all ministers.
- (vi) The adoption of a Grievance Procedure, or something similar, as was proposed by the Commission on Women Presbyters in Great Britain. This Commission noted that the Church (referring to the Methodist Church of Great Britain) did have a disciplinary procedure for presbyters but that there was no parallel system under which presbyteral grievances could be explored and resolved. Furthermore, while the MCGB did have a grievance procedure for its lay employees there was no way, at the time of the Commission's report, for presbyters to "seek appropriate redress if they believe they have

suffered sexual discrimination, harassment or abuse, or if they are subject to curtailment in circumstances they believe to be unjust" (1995:18). In order for any programme aimed at establishing equality to be successful, it is my belief that such a Procedure would be crucial. Without redress for discrimination and unfair treatment, and without the knowledge that something could be done about one's grievances, any programme aiming to achieve equality would be futile.

However, none of the strategies proposed as well as the envisaged changes will be possible unless women are willing to take responsibility for their lives, circumstances, and their futures. It is meaningless supporting 'Women's Rights', or policies aimed at achieving equality for women, if one persists in performing stereotyped tasks in the church. Whether pressure is exerted from male ministers, or whether a woman justifies living up to the stereotype of her, 'out of habit', as long as a woman minister sees the serving of tea as her responsibility but problem-solving, spiritual and intellectual matters as male concerns, she will be perpetuating her oppression and she alone must take full responsibility for this.

While the above suggestions for a formal programme to monitor and eradicate sexual discrimination and the oppression of women are related to the MCSA, a similar programme could be adopted in any other institution. For this reason it has not been felt necessary to outline a specific proposal in relation to any other sphere of economic or social life, but this in no way excludes the possibility of doing so.

4.1.4. Education, socialisation and stereotypes

In the previous section, the pervasiveness and destructiveness of the oppressive socialisation of women in the Church, often through the use of stereotypes, was detailed. However, the use of stereotypes, and the instilling of stereotyped gender roles and expectations is not very different in formal education to that which occurs in the socialisation of children in private homes. Whether women accept and agree with their roles and their position in society, or whether they are inadvertently passing on previously learnt and internalised patterns of thinking and behaviour to children, the fact remains

that many women seem to reinforce stereotyped gender roles in the children they encounter. Such reinforcement of beliefs and values in children occurs through overt teachings and by the observation of role models. Although men are often guilty of teaching discrimination and encouraging the acceptance of gender roles, my contention is that women are in a position to change this situation. In families and in school education women are the dominant teachers. If women are educated to understand the intricacies and the consequences of their oppression, they will be in a unique position from which to instil the values of gender equality in young people.

There are many aspects of a child's education that contribute to their understanding of gender roles in society. Several of these have been identified and possible ways of dealing with them are now suggested below.

4.1.4.1. Confidence-building in girls

Women teachers should make a conscious decision to pay greater attention to girls in co-ed schools than they probably do at present. Personal experience as a secondary school teacher, as well as the observations of other teachers, shows that boys in co-ed schools are generally more confident and more easily accepted as leaders by their peers than girls are. Boys are expected to be outspoken; it seems they are often funnier than girls and that they are generally more able to capture the attention of the class than girls are. These differences between girls and boys are not because girls are less witty or less intelligent than boys, but rather that their wit and intelligence is often suppressed. This is because girls subconsciously understand that when they are in the presence of boys they should withdraw in order for the boys to take the lead. An explanation of such behaviour is found in Kaufman's description of a "theory of identification", in which it was found that,

Although females may recognize their relatively powerless and devalued roles in life, they are expected to approve of their place in the social order. It follows that they will experience self-doubt, fear, conflict, and anxiety over challenging the male role.
(Kaufman 1982:18)

Women teachers need to be aware of such behaviour as well as its causes and should encourage confidence development and more outspoken behaviour in girls. What is particularly effective in situations in a co-ed school, where boys dominate a group and girls withdraw, is to directly address what is taking place in the class: identify the different behaviour patterns; ask students to give reasons for the occurrence of such behaviour; identify the feelings of the students towards what is taking place, both towards themselves and each other; try to establish whether they wish such behaviour to be perpetuated and, if not, encourage them to suggest possible ways to change the attitudes and resulting behaviour of themselves and their peers. It may be thought necessary to have such a discussion, or parts of it, with separate groups of girls and boys. Once gender expectations and stereotypical behaviour have been exposed and explained, it will be difficult for the students to interact without constantly being aware of the discussions they have been involved in and, therefore, of how and why stereotypes operate. While not all students are likely to agree that their preconceived ideas on gender are wrong, because they are oppressive, they will know that their behaviour is the result of an informed choice that they have made. The excuse of habit, or of tradition, will no longer be valid. Such an exposure of behaviour patterns will have a profound effect on at least some of the students, something which they will most likely refer to in all situations in which they find themselves, in - as well as outside of school.

4.1.4.2 Language and its influence in education

The use of inclusive and also of non-sexist language⁶ is something that should be encouraged, but, as noted in more detail in section 4.3. of this chapter, this practice will not be able to achieve much in terms of the attainment of equality on its own.

⁶ Saayman defines inclusive language as "the opposite of **sexist** (exclusive) language. [It] is characterised by the use of exclusively male forms of language when referring to women as well as men (for example words such as **manpower**, the use of only male pronouns, et cetera.) It is also characterised by the use of stereotyped and condescending terms when referring to women and their role in society (for example referring to women as **the weaker sex**) (Adey et al. 1989:226)".

What I have found very effective in seeking to alter stereotypes is using examples of people, careers and situations which the students do not naturally associate with a particular gender. For example, when referring to a doctor, lawyer or engineer, I will use the pronoun 'she', and when referring to a secretary or a teacher I will use the pronoun 'he'. I may be challenged on the basis that I am not reflecting reality in the use of such examples. I am neither attempting to reflect nor to distort reality entirely by doing this. What I am hoping to achieve is to instil in the students' minds the possibility that a woman could be an engineer, an architect, or a member of any other traditionally male-dominated profession. Similarly, the example of the male secretary need not be as ridiculous as it at first sounds to South African teenagers, especially when one makes reference to the number of male secretaries, for example, in the political sphere, in a country like England. Also, having accepted the possibility that male secretaries and female engineers exist, the student will actually notice such situations when they come across them; without having had the stereotype altered first, they would not 'see' the male secretary or woman engineer because it is something unfamiliar and uncomfortable to their dominant mindset. Once the students have their own preconceived ideas exposed and challenged, they are unwilling to get 'caught out' by using stereotypes, or by revealing their subconscious thoughts which may be sexist. Some may also wish to indicate that they are not sexist, and also not conformist in their behaviour. The latter is an especially useful approach when dealing with teenagers, who, although they spend most of their lives conforming to certain things, would vehemently deny that they did not act and think independently.

Other aspects of language that women teachers need to be aware of, include the use of words which may, in their denotation, appear innocuous, but given their connotations, the meaning may have a stereotyped, if not sexist, association. For example, the use of a phrase such as 'lady-like' conveys some of the most stringent and repressive possible meanings for a woman. Stereotypically, a 'lady' would be polite and uncontroversial, and would do what society expected of her. While she would most likely be regarded as attractive to men, she would also be subservient to them.

Care should also be taken when using words with similar denotations, but whose connotations may vary according to the associations it is given by a specific gender. For example, a 'confident' boy would often be mirrored by an 'outspoken' or 'loud' girl; a 'persistent' boy, by a 'nagging' girl. Such labelling according to gender has the effect of encouraging boys and demoralising and restricting girls, as well as probably confusing them! The detrimental effect of such language use on girls was reinforced thus by Kaufman,

...in the achievement literature even similar behaviours by both sexes were labeled and consequently interpreted differently: masculine behaviours associated with competitive striving were associated with healthy responses in the male but were often seen as pathological or neurotic in the female.
...preoccupation with self among adolescent males is often interpreted as generally leading to autonomous achievement striving but as potentially leading to narcissism among females.
(Kaufman 1982:3)

A greater awareness of the power contained in the words one uses, and of the fact that words often have associated subconscious meanings, meanings that are sometimes only pertinent to one gender, or derogatory to one gender, is needed when teaching children. Our words are seldom neutral and people are not impervious to their influence.

4.1.4.3. Women teachers - role models in education

Women teachers are among the most influential role models in the lives of their female students. These teachers not only set standards of behaviour and levels of competence and knowledge to which some girls aspire, but they also give girls a firm idea of the type of women they do not want to be when they are older. Feigned incompetence on the part of women teachers when in the presence of male teachers or a male caretaker, or the adherence to regimented gender-specific tasks, will not only be observed by girls, but will also, depending on the perceived benefits of such behaviour, possibly be imitated by them. A woman who cannot perform a task, simply because it is regarded as a traditionally 'male' task, even though it requires no particularly specialised knowledge, would often be seen by young girls as a woman expressing her femininity. A feminist

may perceive this to be incompetence. Such 'femininity' may attract male approval and may even be rewarded, but girls are not always aware of the unwritten contract that companies such behaviour. A woman who is superficially appreciated and accepted for her beauty and charm, and her desire to please, rather than to compete with men, is not permitted to abandon that role at a later stage in her life in favour of a more equal and intellectually meaningful partnership. By the time this realisation dawns, the sacrifices required to reverse the situation in order for the woman to assert the person she wants to be, are often too great for the woman to accept. Such sacrifices may include the loss of opportunities to further her education; the loss of work experience and the chance of promotion (perhaps due to family commitments); an under-developed confidence, competitiveness and independence, which would be found in most men who had been prepared for, and given the opportunities to achieve in these ways, all their lives. Girls therefore must have some understanding of who they are and of what they want out of life that will satisfy them in the long term. Such an understanding should form the 'non-negotiable' part of her life and subsequently, should be the basis from which her decisions about her career, her relationships and her life as a whole will be taken.

A second important role model for girls at school is the visitor or guest speaker who is invited to address the students. It has been my experience that such visitors fall into three main categories: speakers dealing with deportment and appearance-related issues; speakers on rape and violence against women; and speakers on career-related topics.

The first group of speakers mentioned are probably the most horrifying. Stereotyped, sexist beliefs, reflecting rigid gender expectations, are presented. Most women teachers support such visits, believing they are useful and 'practical'. The girls I have taught are very willing to follow the guidelines and suggestions made by such visitors. Girls who are not interested in topics of this nature are often regarded as 'butch' or lesbian.

Rape is an issue that needs to be addressed publicly; so is violence, and the abuse of women. It seems that because so many South African teenage girls have been raped, many girls regard this act, even if criminal, as fairly 'normal'. Other girls know that rape

is a serious subject, but think it is unlikely that they will be raped. Such attitudes indicate the necessity of having discussions on rape in schools. My concern, despite this, is that the impression created when girls are addressed, almost alternately, on subjects relating to their appearance and then on rape, (with a little career counselling interspersed), is that the message conveyed to them declares that women are objects of beauty and that women are victims. They resign themselves to the fact that the only area of their lives over which they seem to have control, and for which they are promised great rewards, is their appearance.

Although it has been mentioned that talks on careers are sometimes given at schools, recently, most of these talks seem to be used more to advertise a particular educational institution, especially the many new, privately owned tertiary institutions that have opened, rather than to inform the girls of the almost limitless possibilities open to them in terms of a career.

National and provincial education departments in South Africa need to seriously consider the way in which, formally and informally, intentionally and unintentionally, gender is taught in our schools. Just as teachers, and schools who discriminate on the basis of race or religion are disciplined and dealt with, so should gender discrimination and the reinforcement of oppressive stereotypes be regarded as unacceptable and illegal. Teachers and schools have no right to impede or limit the opportunities and the future of the girls they are allegedly educating in this way. The power and influence of teachers, both in terms of what they teach and in terms of the role models that they are, cannot be underestimated. Linked to the teacher as role model is the whole issue of the language to which children are exposed. This is something which, unobtrusively, but powerfully, impacts on their expectations regarding gender roles throughout their lives.

4.2. LANGUAGE AND STEREOTYPES

In each of the various stereotypes discussed above, language forms an integral part. Unfortunately, many discussions on language and the contribution it makes to sexual discrimination are limited to a discussion on the necessity of 'inclusive language'.

Believing that a widespread use of inclusive language, what Jehlen aptly refers to as "a certain piety on the subject of pronouns" (1991:190), will signify the eradication of sexual discrimination, is naïve to say the least. In fact, in many instances, all that the use of 'he/she' as an inclusive pronoun does, apart from indicating the liberalism of the user in that they countenance the possibility that the person being referred to may be female or male, is to show a tolerance in using this type of pronoun. Women should not aspire to a situation in which they are tolerated, but one in which they are genuinely accepted as equal members of society. It is not being suggested here that 'he/she' as an inclusive term should not be used in place of 'he' (whether the generic use or otherwise), but rather that one does not over-estimate its influence, nor believe that a common usage would be indicative of a non-discriminatory society. Similarly, it is inconceivable that any sensible person would have believed that the removal of a 'White's Only' sign could have signified the end of apartheid in South Africa. What is needed is to ensure that language becomes truly useful in altering preconceived ideas about gender.

A commonly presented argument against the use of 'he/she' is that 'he' used on its own is used generically and therefore includes 'she' or women, as well as 'he' or men, just as in the case of 'man' which, when used generically, is intended to include all humans, of both genders.

The problem with using words which are intended to be generic are two-fold: Firstly, what people think they are saying and what they intend, is not always what they are actually conveying. Sometimes the error may be an incorrect use of language, but most commonly the fault lies in the fact that, when a person's subconscious comes into operation, so do the preconditioned ideas of the subject to which they are referring.

Wren illustrates this point by citing an example from Erich Fromm:

'Man's basic needs are life, food, *access to females* etc', [Wren's italics] an utterance which begins with the supposedly generic meaning and shifts gear in mid-sentence, showing that the speaker was thinking of male humans *all the time*.
(Wren 1991:139-140, my italics)

Secondly, it is not always clear when the use of generic terms such as 'man' and 'men' should be interpreted generically. For example,

'Man overboard' still means 'child, woman or adult male', but 'men working overhead' is ambiguous, while 'men only' means that women and children may not enter.

(Wren 1991:139)

Whatever the intentions of the speaker, it is nonetheless clear that,

Persistent use of the ambiguous generic suggests that male humans are normative, and females derivative, ...[and that] the male meaning is central and the generic meaning obsolescent.

(Wren 1991:139-140)

Quite obviously then, a preference for using 'man', or 'he' rather than 'people' or 'he/she', is an ideological and not a generic preference (Wren 1991). The subject of inclusive language, while topical and interesting, is nonetheless merely one example of how language can be used to reinforce sexual discrimination as well as gender stereotyping.

Another area of language that has subtle but powerful ramifications is where what is not said is of greater significance than what is said. This occurs regularly in private conversations, public addresses and in advertising, amongst many other situations. For example, a radio advertisement invites 'You and your wife' to try a new holiday resort. Implicit in the wording is the understanding that the audience is male, or that the important, decision-making listeners are the men. Because of the importance attributed to the men, and the perceived lack of economic power and independence of the women listeners, it is thought necessary, or appropriate, to only address the men. If advertisers are employing this strategy intentionally, then they presumably regard the women as not being capable of effecting any serious financial or other reprisals. Many similar examples have been cited by professional women who have received invitations which are extended to include their wives! This is a good example of what Schüssler Fiorenza refers to as an "unreflected 'common-sense' assumption that equates male reality with human reality" (1996:135). The use of language in this way conveys the message once again that men are the norm in society. It therefore becomes unnecessary to indicate that

one is addressing men, but it is necessary to indicate when women are included. Because of such assumptions it is regarded as reasonable and necessary to indicate, after an accident, how many people, including women and children were affected. While a reporter may wish to convey the full horror and tragedy of the accident, by indicating that children have been killed and had their lives cut short, it is unclear why it is deemed necessary to indicate that women are included in the term 'people'. Such an attitude is beyond reason, unless of course it is true that the dominant feeling in society is that 'men' and 'people' are synonymous, but 'women' and 'people' are not. In order to be regarded as humans, and not a different species or a sub-species of humanity, women must reject and protest against the use of such expressions.

Such an inability to recognise that one has ingrained prejudices against women, as well as associated assumptions about who and what women are, and are capable of, was glaringly illustrated at a Graduation Ceremony at the University of South Africa in May 1995. After the conferring of Doctorates the Vice Chancellor stated that he wished to be the first to congratulate the 'new doctors' by using their new titles. He duly congratulated 'Dr ...', 'Dr ...', until he reached the only woman, a nun, whom he referred to as 'Sister ...'. After nervous laughter from sections of the congregation, he corrected himself and managed to refer to her as 'Dr ...'. This example clearly illustrates that, whatever political correctness one learns in adulthood, this is easily overshadowed by prejudices which have been ingrained in childhood. This indeed reinforces my belief that, even though one does seek to 'retrain' adults about gender, a complete alteration in gender stereotypes and prejudices can only be achieved before a child more-or-less permanently internalises such values and beliefs.

The whole question of language naturally overlaps many other subjects: advertising, education, society, the media, the Church and religion, etc. Because of this the power of language and its influence is magnified to the extent that no part of society is outside its sphere of influence. Consequently, it must be appreciated that no efforts to achieve the equality of women will have a chance of success unless they address the issue of the power and manipulation of language.

It must be emphasised once again, that it is not in men's interests, practically speaking, even if it is ethically the right thing, to support the liberation of women from oppression. Kretzschmar confirms this in her assertion that, "Patriarchy, then, is perpetuated by men because it is in their interests to do so. They protect and promote patriarchy because they benefit from it" (Kretzschmar 1995:155). Men currently possess most of the power in our society, and in the world. It may therefore be said that men control our and other such societies and their various structures and institutions. Men would thus, in supporting gender equality and the promotion of the liberation of women, in effect be relinquishing their own power. It is vitally important that women understand the ramifications of such a situation, as well as the necessity of the mobilisation of women, independently of men, to empower and to liberate themselves.

4.3. WOMEN'S FEARS AND EQUALITY

The greatest difficulty when dealing with the fears women have regarding their empowerment and subsequent liberation, is that fear itself is both debilitating and disempowering. Consequently, before any empowerment of women can take place, the fears they have must either be removed, or they need to learn to deal with them. While it is self-evident that each woman will have fears particular to herself and her circumstances, I have identified three fears below which I consider to be very real and pertinent, as well as very widespread among women.

4.3.1. The fear of feminism

Numerous definitions of 'feminism' abound. The Collins Cobuild Dictionary suggests that feminism is, "the belief that women should have the same rights, power, and opportunities as men" (1988:287a). A further suggestion is that feminism is, "The advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes" (Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary 1991:518a). Alternatively, there is the simple definition, printed on a bumper sticker: "Feminism is the radical notion that women are people" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995:123). I would argue that, since the oppression of women is dehumanising, feminism is simply the process in which women's humanity is acknowledged, or restored, in the eyes of their oppressors.

When one refers to such definitions of feminism, it is perhaps surprising to think that feminism can evoke feelings of anger in some, and feelings of fear in others. In the previous section I alluded to the differences between the denotative and connotative meanings of words, and how connotative meanings are often more important to people. A similar situation exists in defining feminism. Schüssler Fiorenza describes the results of the multiple definitions of feminism, as well as the intensity with which people are loyal to their connotations of the word. She wrote,

Recently US polls have shown that about 70 percent of women refuse to identify themselves as feminists because to their mind this label characterises a person as fanatic, biased, man-hating and crazy. Even though they endorse 90 percent of the aims of the women's movement and acknowledge that they themselves have benefited from its social achievements, women nevertheless frequently do not want to be brushed with the label 'feminist'.
(Schüssler Fiorenza 1995:122)

Such an illogical and irrational stance is not easy to fathom, unless one introduces the emotion of fear, which has itself often been described as illogical and irrational.

In a paper published in the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* in 1981, but prepared initially for the Presbyterian Committee on the Role of Women in the Church, Felicity Edwards wrote:

May I say right at the start that I am anything but a scathing, seething, cynical feminist. Nor am I a 'back-to-the-kitchen', 'women-like-children-should-be-seen-and-not-heard' kind of human person.
(Edwards 1981:23-24)

It is ironic for me that Edwards firstly appears to find it necessary to explain what a feminist is (or isn't), and secondly, that she appears so keen to disassociate herself from any of the demeaning and inaccurate connotations of what it means to be a feminist. If such a credible, respected theologian raises such concerns about the discriminatory connotations of the term 'feminist', such as 'scathing', 'seething', or 'cynical', some of which, as a feminist, may be attributed to her, then there seems little hope in attempting

to remove such a fear from the minds of less educated, less informed, and generally less empowered women in the rest of society. It may be argued that she was indicating what feminism is not, or that she was responding to existing criticisms of feminism in this statement. Despite this, the expression used here is nonetheless not successful in maintaining that feminism is unrelated to a 'scathing', 'seething', or 'cynical' person. Similarly, if one told a prospective employer that one was 'not a thief, or a gossip, or a shirker', it would be unreasonable to expect them not to remember such associations at a later stage.

Because of the origins of feminism as a liberation movement in a white, middle-class European/American women's context, there are many people who do not wish to associate themselves with the name 'feminism', especially those who are black, poor, and African, or at least not American or European. It is interesting to observe, as Schüssler Fiorenza has done, that men are often the ones to object to a women's affiliation to feminism on the grounds that she is affiliating herself with the type of white women's movement referred to above. Ironically too, feminism was identified with colonialism, whereas patriarchal male dominance was not (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995:123). Men who fear the feminist movement therefore define feminism in terms which suit their agenda in order to emotionally manipulate and intimidate women. Although these women may know that they have no aspirations towards the ideology of white, middle-class, European or American women, they also know that they are women who believe in the full equality of all people. Faced with the choice between their private knowledge of what they know they believe to be true and ethical, and the public accusations by men of having succumbed to alien cultures and ideologies, they are intimidated to reject feminism outright, or to refrain from publicly espousing their views on feminism, depending on the extent of the success of the male propaganda.

Surely a person who supports the equality of women and men based on their common humanity is, by definition, and in practice, a feminist. Such a person should not allow others to determine the meaning of their words, thereby allowing their words to be manipulated and, in so doing, forfeiting control of their life and thought to others. As

simplistic as it may sound, women must know what they think about the oppression of women; that is, they should have observed the existence of such oppression and taken a moral stand against it and in relation to it. Furthermore, women must be prepared to stand up for what they regard as ethical in terms of society's treatment of women. If women are not prepared to do this, they must recognise that no-one else will have a reason to do so either.

4.3.2. Fear of independence

Many women find themselves in relationships of dependence on men. Reference has already been made to the fact that there are women for whom such a relationship is comfortable and convenient, but the point was also made that there are various reasons for wanting, or not wanting, such dependency. The most common and influential cause of this can be attributed to the development of children. Referring to Bardwick's research, Kaufman explained how such development of independence or of dependence, occurs:

During the ages of 14 through 16 boys consistently view their families as combative, with the major battles over independence, behaviour control, and an individual sense of autonomy. In terms of actual development of internal controls and values, the boys have developed much further than the girls. Boys think of their future in an instrumental way.... A boy's hopes for adult status reflect his faith in himself, and the goal he chooses is realistic in terms of his talents and opportunities. He is highly motivated to be independent, and his identity and capacity for erotic ties depend upon autonomy and separation from the parents His vocational identity and his sexual identity are separate.
(Kaufman 1982:33)

Clearly then, girls are taught not to want to be independent, nor to plan their own, autonomous futures. It should thus not be surprising that very young children are only too aware of what is expected of them in this regard. Jerome Kagan's research reflected the results of the internalisation of cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity in three year olds. He explained,

Children of this age can tell us that daddies should be aggressive, big and strong; mummies should be little, pretty and cuddly. They understood that little girls are expected to be more conforming and dependent than little boys, *and they are likely to become very upset if their peers violate these normative prohibitions.* (in Kaufman 1982:19, my emphasis)

Not only is an independent spirit in girls discouraged, but so too is any deviation from the gender script which the three year olds appear to have established themselves, a script which will dominate the girls for the rest of their lives. The increase in inhibitions as one gets older is likely to cause a greater adherence to such predetermined gender roles. The more the woman adheres to such expected behaviour, the more dependent she becomes on men and subsequently the less likely it becomes possible for her to escape or alter this situation. Therefore, just as the prisoner in solitary confinement is left feeling insecure, frightened and vulnerable, so women who are excluded from many of the vital aspects of society through their dependence on men, are left feeling isolated. The belief that she would not be able to cope in the male-dominated spheres outside her home could further erode such a woman's confidence thus leaving her feeling incompetent and useless. Dependency causes, or at least contributes towards, these feelings, and the prevalence of these perpetuates the apparent necessity of dependence: A deepening spiral that is difficult to break. Kretzschmar's term, a "learned dependency" applies here. This is the result of a woman's acceptance of the authority of powerful male-dominated systems, and the internalisation of her position of weakness and submission in relation to them. Such a pattern of behaviour is treacherous, as the woman may believe, "in some distorted way, that [she herself is] to blame for what happens to [her]" (Kretzschmar 1995:153).

Another indication of this type of oppression is the realisation that, "the battered wife, the fearful or repressed woman, the sexually abused daughter, the acquiescent worker, the obsequious Christian are all examples of women who have somehow become compliant victims" (Kretzschmar 1995:199). The liberation of such women is made all the more difficult because, before any progress, in terms of their liberation, can be made, they first need to become convinced that they are not responsible for their own abuse. How it is that a woman becomes so completely immersed in oppressive male values is

almost inexplicable. However, this phenomenon may be aptly explained by noting the insidious nature of most forms of indoctrination so that, before one is able to realise the captivity into which one is being drawn, the process has already been completed. For this reason, despite my belief that only women can save themselves from oppression, the necessity of women controlling or seriously influencing the agents of male propaganda and stereotyping, namely, education, socialisation, the media and religion, must be regarded as paramount in the women's struggle.

It should also be remembered, however true it is that the mind can be used as a means to oppress women, the converse is also true, viz., the mind can be the means to liberation itself. Martin Luther King Senior, although referring to the oppression of black people in America, had a message equally apt for women when he said, "nobody can make a slave out of you if you don't think like a slave" (Cone 1993:24).

4.3.3. Fear of success

Much of the fear women have of becoming successful is rooted in early childhood lessons centering around the idea that a girl's identity is dependent upon the men with whom she is associated, usually the man she marries. Hence, flexibility and accomodation, rather than competition and assertiveness, are seen as the means to achieve this end.

Throughout history men have shown discomfort and insecurity when faced with the prospect of successful women. The fears men had concerning women's advancement, in the years 1700 to 1815, were identified by Mary Astell as:

- (i) Women would assert authority over men
 - (ii) Women would leave their husbands and children
 - (iii) These women would foster heresy
 - (iv) They would upset society's balance
- (Johnson 1983:7).

These male fears appear to have changed little in the last two centuries! Clearly

expressed here is the fear that men will lose their authority over women; the fear that women will realise they do not need to be dependent on men; and the fear that 'society's balance', that is, the balance held by patriarchy, of men possessing all power, and women having little or no real power, will be shifted; and the fear that women will reject the predetermined roles allocated to them. For some women, it also appears that little has changed over the past two centuries, especially in their desire to please and not threaten their male partners by being too successful, usually in their careers. Because of this, many successful women have relinquished their power and independence, in the form of respect, satisfaction and financial reward, because they have perceived these to be negatively affecting their partnerships and the balance in these relationships. Thus, despite having broken out of the predetermined mould by achieving success in her work, a woman finds it difficult to put aside the ingrained idea that her partner is entitled to expect to lead in the matter of success and achievements. The refusal of women to allow an ambitious male's career to dominate her career and even her life, is often cited as the cause of relationships disintegrating; this is usually attributed to the woman's inflexibility and selfishness rather than on the man's unwillingness to alter his ambitions or priorities. While it is hoped that eventually men will change in accepting a successful partner and a relationship of equals, until then, all the woman can do is to face the consequences of her success as they arise. Such an uncertain, and even personally unhappy situation, may not be entirely satisfactory, but it should be more so than continually suppressing her ambitions in order not to achieve success and thereby threaten her partner.

4.4. WOMEN UNITED

In Chapter III of this dissertation different reactions to the oppression of women were discussed. Mention was also made of several types of partnership, in terms of the feasibility of their being able to facilitate the empowerment and liberation of women. It is my contention that the success, first, of empowering, and second, of liberating women from oppression, is dependent on the extent of unity among women. Such unity could occur through organised, formal meetings, or in informal and spontaneous gatherings and even from the knowledge that women have agreed to support one another.

Several requirements ought to be met in order to achieve such unity. They are the identification of women, as women, and with women; women taking responsibility for themselves and one another; and, creating a powerful group through the unity of women.

4.4.1. The identification of women

Before any headway can be achieved in liberating women from oppression, there must be an acknowledgement by women that:

(i) Although women are by nature and divine design an intrinsic and equal part of humanity, in many societies women are categorised primarily in terms of their gender, that is, as a woman. Such an overshadowing of the humanity of a person allows for the possibility of regarding women as a sub-species of humanity. It should be remembered that while the terms 'male' or 'men', and 'human' are used almost interchangeably, the same is not true with reference to 'women' and 'human'. As has already been mentioned, the apparent necessity, probably subconscious, of numerous people to refer to 'people, including women and children', is quite clearly a manifestation of this particular distorted mindset. The point is taken though, as presented by Edwards, Schüssler Fiorenza and Ackermann in Chapter III, that women are part of humanity and that the equality of all humans is indissolubly intertwined. However, there is a vast difference in claiming that women are autonomous, self-sufficient individuals *per se*, and in insisting that a strategy be formulated specifically for women to use, in order to achieve their liberation. I am thus in no way attempting to disengage women from humanity; neither do I believe that such an attempt would be useful, if possible. A distinction must therefore be made between one's concept of humanity and the equality of all humanity, and the methods one uses in order to procure such equality.

If all people accepted that women are demeaned and devalued because of the low value given to them in our society, but that this ought not to be so, then complete equality and the establishment of the true value of all humanity would indeed be achieved. I acknowledge that this would be the finest, and the most ethical, and Christian, way of achieving the goal of liberating women. But the link between the devalued value of all people, because of the oppression of women, is not widely acknowledged, especially not

by many men who regard themselves as already being 'free'. Because of this, and because I do not believe that the acceptance of such a view would presently, practically speaking, be seen by men, to be in their best interests, I have argued for women to do what they can, as women, independent of men, to achieve their liberation. Lehmann expressed his concern on the subject as follows:

Only if the female is granted her proper personal dignity can one also speak of the development and the task of her proper Self...

However, with the same discrimination, the newly attained Self must not close itself absolutely, arbitrarily, and narcissistically. It is a basic mistake ever to consider male and female as centers closed in upon themselves. Then almost the only equality is one of competitive or even inimical juxtaposition and opposition. The recognition of personal dignity is something completely other than consenting to an individualistically understood autonomy. With all his or her distinctive value, ordination to society and its tasks is still part of the essence of the person. Male and female together realize the complete human being. 'And God created human beings as his image: as the image of God he created it, (thus) man and woman he created them' (Gen 1:27, following the translation of O.H. Steck).

(Lehmann 1988:31)

While I acknowledge the concerns of Lehmann, and the criticisms levelled at those who believe that any person or group of people can live independently of the rest of humanity, I nonetheless maintain my belief that women must identify themselves as a gender group, distinct from men, for the purposes of achieving their equality.

(ii) However privileged a woman is, socially, financially or educationally, the reality persists, that is, that women are oppressed. The degree of oppression varies and in some cases it is compounded by other forms of discrimination. Some women also manage, despite the obstacles they face, to rise above their oppression and still succeed. Such success, especially in the workplace, is not always an indication of total success or fulfilment either, since women are in the unique position of having to achieve in one part of their lives at the expense of another. The same is generally not true of men who are

generally not expected to perform dual or multiple roles in society. Success is therefore often a temporary, as well as a particularly illusive situation for women.

4.4.2. Women accepting responsibility

Perhaps decades of oppression and dependence have caused an incapacity in women to take responsibility for their lives. In the information obtained in the case study on women in the ministry, it was startling to note the apathy and the ignorance of many women on matters relating to their circumstances. Often there was a correspondence between the conservative nature of a woman minister's response, and the apathy or ignorance reflected by that woman minister in relation to gender roles in the MCSA. Even in cases where women were outraged at the treatment of women in the MCSA, they did not appear to have established the link between knowledge and liberation. Ironically, several men ministers who responded to the questionnaire were more enlightened on issues relating to women within the church than were their female colleagues. A crucial lesson that ought to be learnt by all women is that ignorance often results in oppression whereas liberation can be assisted by knowledge and understanding. In the MCSA women need to know the laws and regulations governing and guiding the ministry in order to be in a position to fight for equal status and equal opportunities. In life in general, women need to be aware of what is taking place around them; to keep up to date with available information and social issues, and to carefully consider where they stand on such issues. An inability to identify, or articulate, one's ambitions, one's frustrations and one's fears leaves one powerless in attempting to improve one's situation. Again the question of being interested in oneself, and being concerned about one's situation, is considered vital to the success of empowering women. A refusal to take responsibility for oneself and the improvement of one's circumstances; a lethargy in ensuring that one's life is a manifestation of people living in 'God's image', is a refusal to seize the liberation to which all people are entitled.

4.4.3. Unity is strength

A terrible cliché, but a powerful truth: unity is strength. If one is not convinced of the truth of this statement, one should consider the equally clichéd phrase, 'Divide and Rule'

which acts as its foil. Numerous historical examples, in South Africa particularly, and internationally, prove the success of such a philosophy. The necessity of adhering to the principle of unity is crucial since upon this principle rests not only the strength of the movement but the strength of its individual members as well. Precedence for such a view is to be found in Matthew's words, "Every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matthew 12:25). Hence my suggestion earlier, with reference to the MCSA, that women need to organise themselves into groups in order to confront the issues affecting them. As long as women remain isolated from one another, in their individual homes, and metaphorically by distancing themselves from the difficulties, as well as the support of other women, then they have been successfully 'divided' and disempowered, enabling the continuation of men's rule over them. Women should also not be deterred from affiliating themselves with feminism because there are those who have told them that this reflects their subservience to colonialism and its related repressive mindsets. Nor should women reject feminism itself because they cannot agree on an appropriate name which is free from the numerous accusations levelled at the term 'feminism' in the past. Cheryl Johnson-Odim warned how debates over semantics could divide women and weaken their cause. She stated that,

Since 'modern day' feminism is still in the process of incarnation, especially at the international level, I question whether the coining of a new term simply retreats from the debate, running the risk of losing sight of the fair amount of universality in women's oppression.
(in Schüssler Fiorenza 1995:132)

Another aspect of unity pertaining to women is the consideration of whether to combine women's liberation movements with other liberation struggles, since they are all in fact aiming to bring about a complete liberation from all forms of oppression at all levels of society. As stated in the previous chapter, my position is that women ought not be tempted to join forces officially, or even less formally, with such movements. Previous instances of this type of union and combination of forces have shown how women's support has been welcomed, and used, to achieve the particular type of liberation sought by a movement, for example, racial and political liberation. However, upon the achievement of this goal, the women, even if they are now to some extent, in a better

position than they were twenty years ago, have still been left to fend for themselves. Where one would have expected successful liberation movements to have then, in turn, reciprocated the women's support and assisted them to fight for their liberation as women, this has not occurred. The African National Congress' Women's League is undoubtedly still a powerful organisation in South Africa, but the amount of publicity it receives, and the acknowledgement of its support from within the ANC as a whole, is negligible compared to its status in pre-election South Africa.

Although Walker reminds us that "liberation is the core of the Christian gospel" (1989:9), it is unfortunate that many of those seeking liberation do so from another premise, one which is not based on Christianity or the Gospel. Their liberation appears to be defined by the achievement of certain set goals. Once such goals, for example, the liberation of black people in South Africa, have been achieved, the movement ceases, or it alters its structure and function, as in the case of liberation movements which have become political parties and/or governments. Also, if liberation is defined as the achievement of one specific goal, then when this does happen, it does not necessarily mean that all forms of oppression have simultaneously been eradicated. If liberation movements were truly striving for the eradication of oppression *per se*, joining forces with those groups would be the right thing for women's movements to do. But, since all liberation struggles seem to have very fixed and often selfish (in the true sense of the word) goals, it is my belief that women's lobbies would only be impeded and sidelined through such a union. The unity discussed must be firstly and foremostly, the unity of women.

4.5. CONCLUSION

Against the background of a firmly entrenched and long-standing systematic suppression of women, there have been varying forms and degrees of resistance by women. It was felt, however, that a system of strategies, of the more day-to-day, practical type, needed to be made available for women to implement in their own lives. Individual women, as well as groups of women would be able to make use of these strategies. Included in the strategies were indications of the influence and the damage which could be caused by language and stereotypes, the socialisation process (at home, school and in the Church),

and the fears which women have. Suggestions were made regarding the handling of such obstacles, in an attempt to empower them to recognise and resist their oppression so that they could then overcome it and be liberated from its shackles.

The presentation and discussion of various strategies aimed at empowering and liberation women from oppression are in no way thought to be an exhaustive or 'foolproof' system by which to achieve such liberation and equality for women. Rather, my main aim has been to indicate my concern that women do not have strategies with which to fight against oppression, but, graver still, that they seem oblivious to the importance of having some form of plan or strategy with which to resist oppression and to escape its destructive influence.

CHAPTER V : CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have sought to understand how it is that women have been oppressed and have been disempowered, throughout history. I have sought to convey the idea that women are both responsible for, and capable of empowering themselves so that they can overcome their suppression and be liberated from men.

I have attempted to show that the liberation of women is an urgent and important ethical issue. This is especially true for the Church and for Christians, since such oppression goes against all that Christianity represents. As indicated in the Introduction of this dissertation, Christianity has as its essence, the belief that all humans are equal and have equal worth, both in the sight of God, and because they were created in the image of God.

Chapter I focused on "The Oppression of Women". The point was made that women are human, and as such, should be accorded the value of a human being. However, it was also noted that women, because of their gender, are part of the category of people known as 'Women'. It was acknowledged that all women are human. However, the emphasis of this could be lost when a woman, in seeking to overcome her oppression, aligns herself with other women who have a similar goal. By so doing, and thus by focusing on herself as a woman, and not as a human first, the woman may detract from her humanity. This is not a desirable situation since it does not easily allow one to appeal for equality on the basis of one's humanity, the impression having been created that 'woman' is not always assumed to be synonymous with 'human'.

This creates a dilemma for women, since it is necessity that encourages women to form groups in the first place. Women need to be united in order to strengthen their resistance to male oppression. Women's groups are also invaluable means of support in the struggle for liberation.

The important point was made that women are not regarded as homogenous in any

regard, besides that of their gender, simply because they are classified, in terms of this gender, as women. What they do share, as members of this category of people, is gender discrimination and oppression by men, male ideologies and male-dominated social and business structures, simply because they are women. This is true, even if each woman's experience of discrimination and oppression varies in form and degree from those of other women. In the light of this, the point made by African women that the white, middle-class European or American type of feminism is not representative of them and their experiences and needs, is taken.

In this dissertation, what I have sought to do by grouping women together as a specific group in society, is to attempt to mobilise women to work together to achieve the recognition of their equality. This is in no way intended to create the impression that any part of the group called 'women' speaks for, or is representative of, any of the other women in the group.

The position of women in the Church and in the Christian tradition was also discussed in Chapter I. This indicated that while women were granted certain offices and permitted certain ministries within the Church over time, to the situation we have today, the dominant attitudes of men towards women in the Church have changed very little.

Part of the history of women in the Christian Church was outlined in Chapter I. This was done, not as a complete or detailed historical account, but rather as a background to this dissertation. It also formed the basis for comparing the situation of women today regarding the oppression of, and the different means used, to oppress women, especially in the Church.

In Chapter II a case study of women in the Ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa was presented. It must be stressed that this case study was used only as an example of "Oppression in a Specific Instance: Women in the Methodist Ministry", in South Africa today. This is by no means a comprehensive history of women in the Methodist Ministry, nor an attempt to give the history of the MCSA. Rather, the

questionnaires were used to establish the specific attitudes and experiences of ministers in the MCSA with the regard to the presence of women ministers in its Ministry.

In their responses to my questionnaires, women and men ministers in the Methodist Church of South Africa, indicated that the Church had not used its opportunities to recognise the value and equality of women. Thus, rather than leading society in this regard, the MCSA has merely reflected the attitudes of society towards women.

In the analysis of the findings of the questionnaires, several comments which had been made by respondents were cited. This was done to give a direct indication of the feelings, as well as the intensity of those feelings, of some of the men ministers towards women ministers in the MCSA, as well as an indication of women ministers' perceptions of themselves.

As seen in Chapter III, the reactions of women to their oppression within the Church and society at large were varied. The fact that some women do not regard themselves as being oppressed, and of living conformist and dependent lives, was a concern. Other women acknowledged their oppression but appeared helpless to change their situation. The greatest concern, however, is the apparent apathy of women concerning their liberation. The point has been made repeatedly, that without the enthusiasm and the desire of women to improve their lot; to empower and to liberate themselves, to "claim our rights", such liberation is not attainable.

In an address on National Women's Day in 1996, President Mandela clearly indicated this. He said,

The success of these measures will require of women that you organise to define your needs and priorities and bring them to the fore in a united voice. It will require speedy movement towards a national and truly representative voice of the women in South Africa.
(Mandela 1996:55)¹

¹ Here he was referring to the establishment of the Gender Commission, which includes the Office of the Status of Women in the Presidency, and to the proclamation of the

Therefore, both individual, as well as collective efforts are needed by women to ensure that initiatives such as the Commission on Gender Equality are implemented and function effectively.

Also in Chapter III, the question of how women have organised themselves in their struggle, was addressed. One of the ways in which this has been done in South Africa in the past was for women and women's movements to align themselves with other liberation movements (especially those striving for racial equality), to achieve the complete liberation of humanity, free from all forms of discrimination. The fact that this did not take place, indicating that this was not a particularly useful strategy for women to have followed, was shown in Chapter III.

Today the liberation of all people, in terms of race, has been achieved in South Africa., at least in law and in theory. However, women have not been liberated, indicating clearly that, although an "integral part" of the struggle for liberation, the liberation of black people and women in South Africa has not been achieved simultaneously. Black women can, as a result, expect to be discriminated against on one less front today, and white women can be content that, since apartheid has been dismantled, they may no longer be regarded as part on the category of 'oppressor' in our society. But this doesn't change the situation of the oppression of women; this they must fight for themselves, despite having given their support to other liberation movements in order to achieve their specific aims.

Because of this, women must work together, in organised programmes and groups, and also simply by supporting and encouraging, and giving opportunities to other women, to loosen the shackles of their oppression.

In this regard, Beverley Haddad was correct when she wrote:

Making a way out of no way is what ordinary African women in South Africa experience every day of their lives. It requires risk. It requires faith. It is a quest for survival. Thus this daily experience gives shape to the

Commission on Gender Equality Act.

theology of survival. It is a working theology lived out in the shacks of the flooded Edendale valley, in the impoverished huts of the far-flung rural plains, and in the homes within crime-infested townships. Ordinary African women find a God who helps them each day to make a way out of no way; a God who is with them in their struggle for survival.
(Haddad 1996:199)

However, on another level the cry rings out for practical means and plans which could improve the day-to-day plight of women, especially South Africa's women. This is what the strategies set out in this dissertation have sought to achieve.

The perception of men is that it is not in their interests to liberate women, thereby relinquishing some of their power, control and authority in life. Women therefore need to ensure that they take the initiative, and the responsibility, in actually making use of such strategies, to empower, and ultimately liberate, themselves.

With regard to the Church, as an institution; women ministers as conveyors of the prophetic mission of the Church; as well as Christian women, one must insist that the Christian ethics of equality, of value for humanity, and of liberation but not oppression, are accepted and practised by the Church, through its members.

Despite having been excluded from the liberation that has taken place in the country, South African women should nonetheless gain inspiration from what progress has been made, not because it was to their benefit, but because it is an indication of what is yet to come. As Isaiah wrote, "Rise up ye women" (Isaiah 32:9), so too should women associate themselves with the words of Adam Small:

...and we are dumb
(far too long)
but now, now
(incredible?)
we are climbing up, *up*
out of the rubble, rising
with a will, dear God
up!
from the rubble

**(celebrate:
there's a miracle) - we are
rising up!
out of the rubble we are
rising up...**
(Small & Wissema 1986:12).

APPENDIX A

Extracts from the *Minutes of Conference* of the MCSA concerning Women in the Ministry

References:

✓ indicates that wording and content has remained unchanged.

No symbol (or blank columns) in years following the initial statement indicates that that particular section of the *Minutes* had been removed
 Italics have been used to highlight significant changes that have been made from one year to the next.

[] indicates that a specific part of a statement was maintained in the next year's *Minutes*.

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<p><u>Para. 28.16.40</u> <u>Ordination of Women</u> [Conference reaffirms its commitment to the ordination of women; but notes that the fuller implications of this practice are now clearer, and therefore resolves to establish a working group] to address, <i>inter alia</i>, the following by the November Planning Meeting:</p> <p>difficulties facing women working in a male-dominated environment;</p> <p>the full implications for married women;</p> <p>the stationing of women;</p> <p>prejudicial decisions taken by some Church courts concerning women</p>	<p><u>28.12.25</u> [] under the Department of Education for Ministry to address ...</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓ ✓ ✓</p>			

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<p><u>Para. 28.16.41.</u> <u>Statement on Women</u> Conference notes: that in 1988 it endorsed the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women; that Churches and society continue to treat gender concerns lightly; <i>that the Church is immersed in the problems of violence and economic and political issues and that women's issues are treated as peripheral;</i> that women are frequently the victims of violence and of misinformation by media and anti-justice structures; that women continue to be under-represented as is the case at <i>this</i> 1992 Conference.</p> <p>Conference <i>believes</i> that women: are created in God's image; are in the majority in the Churches and in society at large; have great potential that needs to be unlocked for the benefit of the Church and of Southern Africa, and that the future of any country lies in its ability to empower its women to play a constructive role in the development of its citizens.</p>	<p><u>28.12.27.</u></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p><i>because the Church is immersed</i></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p><i>the 1992 Conference</i></p> <p>Conference <i>affirms</i></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p><u>28.13.20.</u></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>Omit '1992'. Just 'continue to be under-represented'</p> <p>✓ Omit 'Conference affirms'</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<p>Conference therefore resolves: to support the mid-decade gathering of all women planned for 1992 and that all Districts have their own mid-decade evaluation workshops; that all structures within the Church should include at least 40% women; that the Church should play a meaningful role in preparing women through education for elections and voting; to encourage awareness campaigns in our Churches on the issues of violence against women, rape and child abuse; that our Churches open their doors for open debate on public issues, and that these should include AIDS, Reproductive Rights of Women, Family Planning and Family Life; that all new documents, reports, publications, liturgies, prayers, songs, hymns and sermons use inclusive language</p> <p>that the Doctrine Committee in consultation with the Christian Citizenship Department prepare a study document on the issue of gender in the Scriptures; to appoint a co-ordinating committee to deal with issues concerning women in the</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>that the Doctrine Committee in consultation with the Department prepare a study document on the issue of gender in the Scriptures</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>a co-ordinating committee should deal with issues concerning women in the</p>

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
	<p><u>Para. 28.12.26.</u> <u>Women Ministers' Consultation</u> Conference receives the following statement from the Consultation of Women Ministers: We, the Women Ministers of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa express our concern that the full implications of Women in the Ministry have not been clarified. The Ordination of women has been accepted in the Methodist Church for the past twenty years. However, there are still problem areas [Examples are that women are not adequately represented in leadership structures, the stationing of women is affected by the sexist attitudes,] issues pertaining specifically to women have not been addressed, and exclusive language is still being used in official correspondence.</p>	<p><u>28.13.19.</u> <u>Women Ministers' Consultation</u> ✓ ✓ We, Women Ministers ✓ ✓ [] and issues pertaining specifically to women are not being addressed.</p>	<p><u>28.13.18.</u> <u>Women Ministers' Consultation</u> ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</p>	<p><u>28.7.2.</u> <u>Women Ministers' Consultation</u> ✓ ✓</p>

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
	<p>(Cont.) Conference therefore reaffirms Minutes 1992, paras. 28.16.40 and 28.16.41. and confirms the existence of the Methodist Women Ministers' Consultation. Conference calls the Church to eliminate sexist language, asks that matters concerning women be dealt with at all levels of training and requires the Church to eliminate discrimination against women in action, words and attitude.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>The Church should eliminate sexist language; matters concerning women should be dealt with at all levels of training; and the Church should eliminate discrimination against women in action, words and attitude.</p>

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
		<p><u>Para. 28.13.21.</u> <u>Women Ministers</u> Conference <i>resolves</i> that: the Presiding Bishop initiates discussion with Bishops with a view to addressing problems relating to the stationing of women Ministers; a Connexional Pastoral Committee for women Ministers be appointed Bishops set up working groups in their Districts, comprising men and women Ministers, to deal with prejudice against women Ministers and related matters; Standing District pastoral committees be established to reconcile Ministers who find themselves in conflict or disagreement with one another and appoints the following committee to facilitate and monitor the process: [The Revs W de Waal, Y Edwards, L A Hayward, K Ketshebile, L Ketshebile, J W Massey, C Morgan, M Sifile, P M Mvunyiswa, D B Plint, P Verryn (Convenor), Bishop N S Lukhele, Bishop P J Storey.]</p>	<p><u>28.13.20</u> <u>Women Ministers</u></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓ that this Connexional Pastoral Committee have as its convenor, a woman Minister, who shall be nominated by women Ministers at their Consultation.</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p><u>28.7.4.</u> <u>Women Ministers</u></p> <p>✓ the Presiding Bishop <i>is asked</i> to initiate</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>the following committee is to facilitate and monitor the process: []</p>

APPENDIX B

P.O.Box 93828
Yeoville
2143

Dear reader,

I am presently involved with a Masters Dissertation in Theological Ethics, concerning equality and women in society, with reference to the Methodist Church. As a Methodist, I am interested in the resolutions taken regarding women in the Methodist Ministry as indicated in the Minutes of Conference from 1992-1995, and whether these are being met.

It would be extremely helpful to me, and much appreciated, if you could provide me with the information as required in the questionnaire so that I can establish as clear a picture as possible of the current position of women in the Methodist Ministry. Please be assured that this information will be treated with complete confidence and anonymity; your name is not required, nor is the questionnaire which has been sent to you numbered in any way.

I have sent this questionnaire to both male and female ministers in the Connexion, to ascertain their views regarding women in the Methodist Ministry. I would be grateful if you, as a Methodist Minister* could return this questionnaire to me, so that I can have as fair and accurate a reflection on the equality of male and female ministers in the Methodist Church. I also wish to identify any perceived or actual conflicts which exist as a result of women in this ministry.

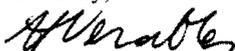
You can answer the questions by circling the answer which seems most appropriate to you. Please try and answer spontaneously, and without thinking about your answers for too long. Your personal opinion is what is sought and what will be of most value to me. In order to make this study as authoritative as possible, please do not omit any questions.

After certain questions, there is a space for comments and elaboration of your reason for a particular choice; your detail and examples here would be extremely helpful.

I have enclosed a self-addressed and stamped envelope for you to return the questionnaire to me. I would appreciate it if you could return this to me as soon as is possible in order for me to collate and analyse this research.

Please accept my thanks in advance for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Should you not wish to complete this questionnaire, please be so kind as to return it to me in the self-addressed envelope.

Sincerely,



Heather Venables

*For the purposes of this questionnaire the term "woman minister" or "women ministers" will include deaconesses and probationer deaconesses and probationer ministers.

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: WOMEN IN THE METHODIST MINISTRY

Please indicate your answers to the following questions by **circling one** of the possible answers.

DISCRIMINATION IN THE MINISTRY IN GENERAL

1. Is there discrimination against your sex in the Methodist Ministry by members of the opposite sex?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

2. Women and men ministers should **not** be treated the same in all areas of the ministry and its demands.

- (a) I agree completely
- (b) I agree
- (c) I disagree
- (d) I disagree completely

Comment:

3. Women ministers experience oppression as a result of being in what is considered to be a patriarchal ministry (i.e. what was referred to in the 1993 Minutes of Conference as "a male-dominated environment" -para. 28.12.25).

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

4. In the Methodist Church women are regarded as ministers rather than as women ministers.

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

5. If you believe there is any discrimination against women in the Methodist Ministry, do you consider it to be subtle?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

Comment:

6. If you believe there is sexual discrimination against women in the Methodist Ministry, do you consider it to be blatant?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

PERSONAL SITUATION AND CONFLICT

7. Do you think the Methodist Church is sexist?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

8. If you answered Yes to 7, do you believe that the Methodist Church will ever be completely freed from sexism?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

9. Are single and married women ministers treated the same in all areas of ministry?

- (a) Yes
- (b) Sometimes
- (c) No

10. Should single and married women ministers be treated the same in all areas of ministry?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

Comment:

11. Are single and married men ministers treated the same in all areas of the ministry?

- (a) Yes
- (b) Sometimes
- (c) No

12. Should single and married men ministers be treated the same in all areas of ministry?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

13. It is preferable for single women ministers not to marry in order to meet the demands of the ministry?

- (a) I agree
- (b) I disagree
- (c) It makes no difference

Comment:

14. Is it easier for male ministers to be married than for female ministers in the Methodist Church?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) No difference

15. Men ministers marry in order to have someone to support and assist them in their ministry.

- (a) True
- (b) False
- (c) Possibly

16. Is there any sexual discrimination against you in the ministry which is to your advantage?

- (a) Yes (If possible, please give examples below).
- (b) No

Comment:

17. Should any special consideration be given to women in the ministry as a result of their sex?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

Comment:

18. Women can only be successful ministers by some form of denial of their femininity.

- (a) I agree
- (b) I disagree

Comment:

19. Are you aware of any women ministers who, in your opinion have attempted to "be like men", however you may understand such behaviour and/or attitudes"?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Not aware of any

MINISTERIAL AUTHORITY AND STATUS

20. The training given to Methodist Ministers allows for discrimination against women ministers.

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

21. At present, "matters concerning women [are being] dealt with at all levels of training" in the Methodist Church (para. 23.13.18).

- (a) I agree completely
- (b) I agree
- (c) I disagree completely
- (d) I disagree

22. Do male ministers treat women ministers any differently to the way in which they treat members of the Women's Auxiliary, the Women's Manyano or the Women's Association?

(a) Yes

(b) No

23. Are ministers generally granted status within the communities they serve?

(a) Yes

(b) No

24. Where status in a community is granted to ministers, is it granted equally to women and men ministers?

(a) Yes

(b) No; men ministers have higher status

(c) No; women ministers have higher status

25. Women ministers do not experience a lack of authority when they are ministering.

(a) True

(b) False

26. If you answered False to 25, is there anything that a woman minister can do personally to increase her authority?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(c) Don't know

27. Do women ministers experience discrimination by their congregations because of their sex?

(a) Yes

(b) Sometimes

(c) No

28. There is no discrimination against women ministers in the election or appointment of office bearers of importance in the Methodist Church.

(a) True

(b) False

STATIONING OF MINISTERS

29. Is gender an issue in the stationing of a minister, female or male?

(a) Yes

(b) No

Comment:

30. Should gender be an issue regarding the stationing of female and male ministers?

- (a) Yes, definitely
- (b) Occasionally
- (c) Under no circumstances

31. Is it **fair** for gender to be an issue in the stationing of ministers, female and male?

- (a) Yes, definitely
- (b) Occasionally
- (c) Under no circumstances

32. Can a woman minister who refuses to be stationed away from where her husband is employed and the family is situated justify her ministry as an ordained person?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

Comment:

33. In the light of the vows taken by ministers in the Methodist Church at ordination to go where they are sent, is it acceptable for a woman minister to refuse to be stationed as Conference sees fit, because of her husband's obligations?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

Comment:

STEREOTYPES

34. Have you had experience of the ministry of a woman minister?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

35. If you answered Yes to 34, was this experience:

- (a) Positive
- (b) Negative

Comment:

36. Does your Sunday School and Youth Organisation encourage stereotype roles of women and men? (i.e. roles which men, and women, are generally expected to perform, or which they usually do perform)

- (a) Yes
- (b) Yes, unintentionally
- (c) No

37. Are women ministers in the Methodist Church usually allocated tasks and services which are stereotypically female? (e.g. serving tea at functions)

- (a) Yes
- (b) Occasionally
- (c) Never

38. Women ministers in the Methodist Church unconsciously and voluntarily perform stereotypically female tasks (i.e. without being asked to do so)

- (a) True
- (b) False
- (c) Sometimes

Comment:

39. Have you ever refused to carry out certain tasks in the ministry because they were unacceptable to you in terms of your sex?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) This situation has never arisen
- (d) I did not wish to perform the task, but did not refuse to do it

Comment:

TRADITIONAL VIEWS ON GENDER AND LANGUAGE

40. Does the portrayal of God as "male" exclude women or diminish their ministry?

- (a) Yes, to a large extent
- (b) Yes, to a small extent
- (c) Not at all
- (d) Not sure
- (e) I have never really given it much thought

41. The traditional portrayal of God as "male" is an obstacle to the ministry of women.

- (a) True
- (b) False
- (c) Not sure
- (d) I have never really thought about it

42. Do you agree with Conference's resolution "that all new documents, reports, publications, liturgies, songs, hymns and sermons use inclusive language" (para. 28.13.19)? (i.e. his/her, instead of only 'his')

- (a) I agree completely
- (b) I agree
- (c) I disagree completely
- (d) I disagree
- (e) I have never really given it much thought

43. Do you consider Methodist Liturgy, in its references to people, to be sexist? (i.e. to exclude women by the use of certain terminology)

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

Comment:

44. In the interests of using inclusive language in the Methodist Church, would you advocate referring to God as Father or Mother interchangeably?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Not sure

MINUTES OF CONFERENCE

45. "Women are not adequately represented in leadership structures" (para.28.13.18).

- (a) I agree completely
- (b) I agree
- (c) I disagree completely
- (d) I disagree

46. "All structures within the Church should include at least 40% women" (para.28.13.19).

- (a) I agree
- (b) I disagree

Comment:

47. With reference to the statement in the Minutes quoted in 46, do you think it is right that no women were elected to the office of Bishop at the Synods held in May 1996?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) I have never really thought about it

Comment:

48. Is it acceptable to you that "the Presiding Bishop initiates discussions with Bishops with a view to addressing problems relating to the stationing of women Ministers" (para.28.13.20), given that all these people are male?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) I have never really thought about it

Comment:

49. Are you satisfied that a male minister is the convenor of the Committee to facilitate the reconciliation of Ministers "who find themselves in conflict or disagreement with one another" (para.28.13.20)?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) I have never really thought about it

Comment:

50. Paragraph 28.13.19 states that the Church needs to "encourage awareness campaigns in our Churches on the issues of violence against women, rape and child abuse". Have you personally encouraged an awareness of these issues within your congregation?

- (a) Yes, regularly
- (b) Occasionally
- (c) Never

51. Do you believe that you have addressed the specific issues mentioned in **50** in your sermons?

- (a) Yes, regularly
- (b) Occasionally
- (c) Never

52. Are you familiar with the contents of the following paragraphs from the 1995 Minutes of Conference: Paragraphs 28.13.18-20 (i.e., Women Ministers' Consultation; Statement on Women; and Women Ministers)?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Vaguely

53. Are the leaders and committee members in your church familiar with the contents of the paragraphs from the Minutes of Conference as mentioned in **53**?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Not sure

SECTION B: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please circle the answers provided below which apply to you.

1. Sex (a) Female (b) Male
2. Age (a) 20-30 years (b) 31-40 years (c) 41-50 years
(d) 51-60 years (e) Over 60 years
3. Category (a) Probationer minister (b) Probationer deaconess
(c) Ordained minister (d) Ordained deaconess
4. Race (a) Asian (b) Black
(c) Coloured (d) White
5. Do you regard ministry as: (a) a calling (b) a career?
6. Area in which you are situated: (a) urban (b) rural
7. Are you: (a) single (b) married (c) divorced?
8. Province in which you are situated:
(a) Northern Cape (b) Kwazulu/Natal (c) Free State
(d) North West Province (e) Northern Province (f) Gauteng
(g) Mphumalanga (h) Eastern Cape (i) Western Cape
(j) Other area in Connexion
9. Years in ministry: (a) 0 to 7 years (b) 8 to 15 years (c) 16 to 25 years
(d) 26 to 34 years (e) Over 35 years

If you would be prepared to allow me to contact you regarding an interview, please write your name and telephone number below.

OPTIONAL

Name: _____

Telephone: _____ Code: _____

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT IN COMPLETING
THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

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