

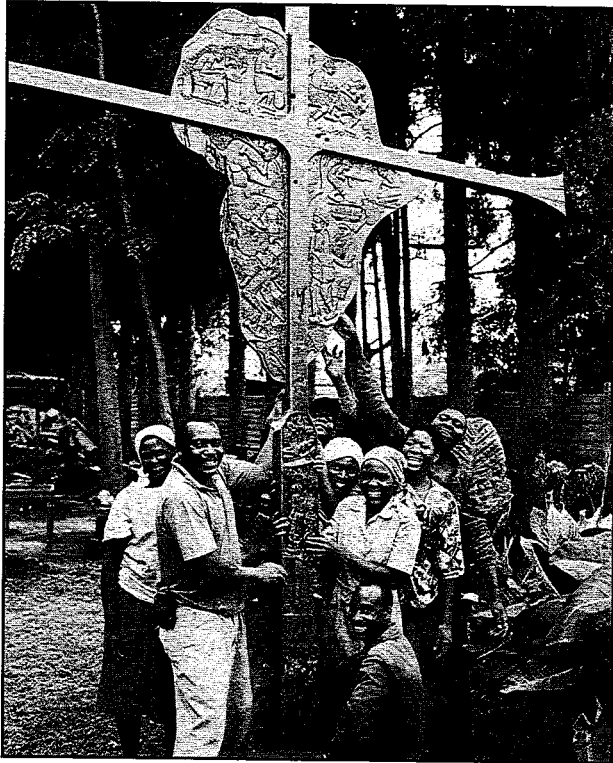
FAITH & FREEDOM

Reforming the Church's

Social and Political Witness

Winter 1998-1999

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Special Issue **World Council of Churches** **Eighth Assembly**

At the WCC's 'Jubilee' Assembly last December 3-14 in Harare, Zimbabwe, the symbol of the cross superimposed on the outline of Africa was prominently displayed. African participants responded passionately to the implicit message: that Jesus Christ offers hope to their suffering continent. But others asked: Is Christ still really at the center of the WCC's message?

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The IRD is a non-profit organization committed to reforming the Church's social and political witness and to building and strengthening democracy and religious liberty, at home and abroad. IRD committees work for reform in the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The IRD also sponsors the Ecumenical Coalition on Women and Society.

Contributions to the work of the IRD are critically needed. Your gifts are tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

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In This Issue

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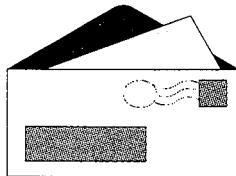
☛ I already support more ministries than I feel I can afford, but I had to write and support you at least this once because what you are doing is so important! Maybe there is hope for the Episcopal Church after all, with players like you and AAC [the American Anglican Council] involved....

Thank you so much for the wonderful liturgy you did at General Convention for the persecuted church! ...We used it [the liturgy] at an evening service on All Saints' Day. It was a real blessing.

*Patricia Streeter
Irvine, CA*

☛ I must say that it was with sadness that I read your [UMAction] letter. I am seeing too much evidence of people (i.e. Ed Robb) and groups (i.e. the Confessing Movement) who are trying to hijack the United Methodist Church and turn it into one more

LETTERS



institutional mask behind which to hide their fears, inadequacies, and prejudices. We already have enough of these (i.e. the NRA and the Southern Baptist Convention). The United Methodist Church can be a vital organization for good in our society if organizations such as yours will leave it alone....

*Michael W. Morgan
Miami, FL*

☛ You [Mark Tooley] have become quite a spokesman to those of us who are engaged in search for scriptural truth and theological integrity in the United Methodist Church. Your observations were right on target. God bless you, dear brother, for your will-

ingness to persevere under sometimes-harsh criticism....

*The Rev. Charles Sineath
Marietta, GA*

☛ I am not a Presbyterian, but my observation of the dangers that confront that church leads me to justify my intrusion into Presbyterian affairs sufficiently to make a small contribution [to Presbyterian Action for Faith & Freedom]. It is more token than true assistance, but I think even a token gift may encourage you and your associates with the thought that others are watching from without, and blessing you for the labors you devote to a critical cause.

*John R. Cassidy
Fairfax, VA*

Banner Year

Last year was a banner year for the IRD. We played a major role in providing a biblical witness at the notorious Re-Imagining Revival, at the Anglican bishops' Lambeth conference, and at the WCC Assembly. We experienced solid growth in membership and outreach—our *UM Action Briefing* now reaches 100,000 households. We sponsored our second Washington Summit for women, galvanized a group of church leaders to call for President Clinton's resignation, and saw landmark legislation to combat religious persecution pass the U.S. Congress. Our staff spoke at churches and schools across the country – and garnered considerable press attention. (Please write for a copy of our 1998 program highlights.) But, in the press of activity and with our small staff, we were not able to produce *Faith and Freedom*. For that we apologize—and pledge to do better in 1999. Thank you for your prayers and support.



Pilgrimage Toward a New Ecumenism

FROM THE
PRESIDENT

Two days before Thanksgiving, I took a flight to Harare, Zimbabwe. It was my first time to attend a World Council of Churches Assembly. Fortunately, I did not make this pilgrimage alone. Janice Crouse, the director of our Ecumenical Coalition on Women and Society, was my trusted companion in travel and work. Janice and I, moreover, were part of a six-person team sponsored by the Association for Church Renewal (ACR). Our association is comprised of executives of over 20 renewal organizations active in the oldline Protestant denominations of North America. The other ACR team members were:

- ◆ Thomas Oden, a United Methodist theologian and IRD board member, who led the team.
- ◆ Donna Hailson, also a theologian, representing the American Baptist Evangelicals.
- ◆ Parker and Patty Williamson of *The Presbyterian Layman*.

You will find the contributions of all these team members throughout this special issue on the WCC's Eighth Assembly, marking the council's "jubilee" or 50th year.

The ACR team took a message to Harare. "Proclaim Liberty: A Jubilee Appeal" challenged the WCC to reclaim its mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the earth (see p. 4). To accompany this appeal, we produced a 44-page booklet including position papers on missions, the theological basis of unity, religious syncretism, poverty and debt, the persecuted church, women's issues, and biblical foundations for sexual morality. (Single copies of this booklet are available to IRD members as long as the supply lasts.)

What did our team do in Harare? We distributed our appeal booklet and met with WCC delegates. We published reports, analyses, and press releases (see our website www.acrchurches.org). We participated in several unofficial seminars called *padares* (see my speech on p. 10). We assisted a worldwide evangelical coalition in preparing an open letter to the WCC (see pp. 15-16).

You will find a brief summary of the actions of the Assembly on p. 5. Some of these reinforced ACR's con-

cerns that the WCC leadership is enthralled with a vision of "macro-ecumenism"—a concept that embraces other religions, while discarding Jesus Christ as the source of unity (see p. 6). Yet there were important contrary voices calling the council back to its center in Christ (p. 7). Sadly, these more orthodox voices were often not included in the "diversity" of which the WCC boasted (p. 12).



Diane Knippers speaks out for religious freedom at an unofficial evangelical workshop in Harare.

Many of the most revealing incidents in Harare took place away from the official business sessions. A festival celebrating the close of the WCC's "Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women" was held just before the Assembly. The concerted attempt there to portray women as victims of the Church, and to offer them healing through means outside Christ, disturbed us deeply (pp. 8-9).

Likewise, several *padares* on the sufferings of indigenous peoples

ended up blaming the Church and searching for salvation apart from the Gospel (p. 11). A seminar on homosexuality concluded that Scripture should not decide the question (p. 13). And over the whole Assembly loomed the discomfiting presence of Zimbabwe's strongman Robert Mugabe, with whom the WCC has a long relationship (p. 14).

The WCC is going through a mid-life crisis as it hits 50. It is not clear whether the council can, or should, survive. The organization has fallen captive to so many trendy ideologies that it hardly seems relevant anymore. Nevertheless, true ecumenism is very much alive among the WCC's claimed constituency.

I felt the electricity in one meeting of evangelical and Eastern Orthodox Christians, who shared a bedrock commitment to Jesus Christ despite their many differences. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit is moving to bring together a new ecumenical movement, including also Roman Catholics.

Either the WCC will be reformed, or it will be replaced as the Holy Spirit raises up more serviceable institutions of Christian unity.

IRD

by Diane Knippers

Proclaim Liberty: A Jubilee Appeal

The following are excerpts from a statement released by the Association for Church Renewal at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on November 9, 1998.

In the WCC document "Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches," we see two very different proposals for the next step in the ecumenical journey:

1) The WCC could embrace "macro-ecumenism," i.e., opening the ecumenical movement to non-Christian relig-

"While many of our North American churches suffer from a host of maladies, there is great spiritual vitality elsewhere. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America the Gospel is being proclaimed boldly even amidst poverty, violence, and persecution."

ions. As Christian communities immerse themselves in a wider network of social and popular movements, the WCC and its partners could be "prophetic within and beyond the churches." Such a vision would put the ethical principles and political objectives of these "popular movements" at the center of the WCC's work. It would necessarily replace Jesus Christ as the source of common identity and purpose.

2) Or, alternatively, the WCC could "search for new forms of relationships at all levels" with more conservative churches that have been absent or marginalized from the life of the council.... Such an effort would necessarily involve a strong reaffirmation of "the same vision of God's plan to unite all things in Christ" which inspires all the churches.... It would also imply a de-emphasis of some social and political stances by the WCC that many Christians cannot support....

We are convinced that if the WCC embraces "macro-

ecumenism," it ... would be a prescription for the death of the WCC as a carrier of the ecumenical hope. Apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we have no firm basis for any common identity and mission that transcends the barriers of race, culture, and nation....

We entreat the WCC to choose a different course, the one indicated by its own constitutional definition: the WCC is "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

We urge the WCC, in all of its worship liturgies and public statements, to refer to God by using the ancient and traditional trinitarian language of the Church....

We urge the WCC strongly to reaffirm Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God, and to repudiate the invocation of all other purported gods and saviors.

We urge the WCC to uphold a high view of the Holy Scriptures, as the authoritative message shaping all its words and actions....

We urge the WCC to sound forth again the call to all people of every nation: "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven"

We urge the WCC to base efforts toward social reform on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the vision of God's kingdom that it sets forth, and the power of transformation that it brings to those who believe....

We urge the WCC to affirm that the Gospel is the most effective force in history for raising the dignity of women and to proclaim that women are the beneficiaries, not victims of the Christian faith, despite its imperfect outworking in history.

We urge the WCC to uphold the biblical and traditional teaching of the Church on marriage: that the lifelong union of man and woman is the divinely-ordained channel for human sexual expression....

We come [to Harare] with great hope for the ecumenical movement. For while many of our North American churches suffer from a host of maladies ... there is great spiritual vitality elsewhere. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America the Gospel is being proclaimed boldly..., even amidst poverty, violence, and persecution.... We know that this spiritual vitality springs from the biblical, orthodox, Christ-centered and trinitarian faith upon which the WCC was founded. We appeal to the WCC in this Jubilee to fulfill the theme of restoration and to reclaim and uphold that same faith....

IRD

The WCC's Eighth Assembly authorized the attempt to establish a new "Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organizations." The proposed forum is intended to reach beyond the WCC's own 330 member churches and include the Roman Catholic Church and major Pentecostal and Evangelical bodies.

WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser said the forum was needed because the current "organized ecumenical movement" represents "only one segment of world Christianity." He explained to Ecumenical News International: "We will have to listen to and learn from those we want to gain as partners in the ecumenical movement, without necessarily trying to integrate them as members of the World Council."

There was significant opposition to the forum proposal. Critics asserted that it would create a body parallel to the WCC, but without the same structures of accountability. They also argued that the forum could divert attention from the imperative of reforming the council itself. An amendment that would have allowed only "occasional gatherings" among the WCC and non-member groups was defeated by a 287-128 vote.

§ § §

Responding to a threat of division in its ranks, the WCC Assembly created a "special commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC." The commission was instructed to propose "necessary changes in structure, style and ethos of the council" in response to complaints from Eastern Orthodox churches.

It was not clear how the special commission would be able to answer those complaints about the WCC's captivity to a liberal Protestant mindset (see p. 7). On the same day that the Assembly set up the commission, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church became the second Orthodox body to withdraw from the council. Moreover, the Russian Orthodox representatives declared that they were suspending their participation in the

WCC Central Committee.

"If we are satisfied with the results of the commission, we will resume our work on the Central Committee," the head of the Russian Orthodox delegation, Hilarion Alfeyev, told Ecumenical News International. "If not, our church will have to withdraw from the WCC."



ASSEMBLY BRIEFS

§ § §

The issue of homosexuality has officially been injected into WCC programs. The Assembly's Program Guidelines Committee listed "human sexuality" as one of seven future priorities for the council. The other six were: "an ecumenism of the heart," inclusive community, non-violence, economic globalization, Third-World debt cancellation, and new methods of doing the WCC's work with less funding and staff.

Prior to this Assembly, the WCC had paid scant attention to questions of sexual morality. But the issue was raised in Harare by pro-homosexual activists from Western European and North American denominations, who led a dozen unofficial workshops on

the subject (see p. 13).

Russian Orthodox delegate Vladimir Shmaliy warned that "any move to develop a homosexual agenda would severely jeopardize Orthodox participation in the WCC." But his amendment to delete human sexuality from the WCC program priorities was defeated soundly.

§ § §

The Harare Assembly followed the WCC's long-time leftist leanings on economic issues. A major resolution condemned "globalization," the WCC's derogatory term for free trade among free-market economies. "In view of the unaccountable power of transnational corporations and organizations who often operate around the world with impunity," the resolution stated, "we commit ourselves to working with others on creating effective institutions of global governance." It urged a "search for alternative options to the present economic system."

The resolution was adopted after a passionate speech by United Church of Canada Moderator William Phipps. "We need to be serious about



Eastern Orthodox delegates voiced concerns about the WCC. The woman at right is Maha Milki Wehbe of Lebanon. She warned those at the WCC women's festival that they could become "a hollow drum which bangs a lot" if they forgot that "it is Christ who makes us succeed" (see p. 8).

redistributing income," Phipps declared. "Our people need a conversion experience ... and conversion has to do with economic relationships." **IRD**

Flirting with 'Macro-Ecumenism'

The WCC's attraction toward "macro-ecumenism"—which raised alarms in the Association for Church Renewal's "Jubilee Appeal" (p. 4)—was not on prominent display in Harare. The awkward word itself was hardly mentioned. But the spiritual romance it represents, the prospect of "opening the ecumenical movement to other religious and cultural traditions beyond the Christian community," did make several appearances at the Eighth Assembly. And this romance still exerts a strong pull upon the World Council, because it remains dear to the highest WCC leaders.

The notion of "macro-ecumenism" flowed through the plenary address given December 4 by Catholicos Aram I of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the outgoing Moderator of the WCC Central Committee. Catholicos Aram said the WCC's task was to "lay the foundation of a new global ethics in collaboration with other religions." This "new global ethics," he insisted, "should not reflect the Western Christian ethos ... but be based on a diversity of experiences and convictions." The WCC moderator was looking for "shared ethical values that transcend religious beliefs."

This same train of thought ran through several of the events associated with the Assembly. It was certainly present in the celebration of shamanistic rites at the women's festival (pp. 8-9) and the indigenous *padares* (p. 11). An earthly salvation was the aim in each case, and it was sought through a solidarity that was broader than Christian faith.

Most importantly, this vision of an ecumenism bigger than Jesus Christ appears in the statements of the WCC's highest staffers. Mary Ann Lundy, the outgoing deputy general secretary, drew this lesson in her address to the May 1998 "Re-Imagining Revival": "We are learning that to be ecumenical is to move beyond the boundaries of Christianity."

Lundy's point is made more subtly by General Secretary Konrad Raiser in his latest book, *To Be the Church: Challenges and Hopes for a New Millennium*. The WCC general secretary discerns three principal challenges for the churches of 2000: elaborating "a life-centered vision" in

their theology, coming to terms with cultural and religious pluralism, and responding to globalization. It is noteworthy that leading people to faith in Jesus Christ does not appear on Raiser's list of challenges.

In developing a "life-centered vision," Raiser intends to redefine the word *oikoumene* (meaning the "household" [of God]) that is the root of our modern term "ecumenical." In

the classic passage of Ephesians 2:19-22, *oikoumene* clearly refers to Christian believers who are built together "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone."

But Raiser prefers a more universalist concept of *oikoumene*, including all God's creatures in the ecumenical movement. "I would thus propose an interpretation of *oikoumene* as the 'one household of life' and of our task

as discerning the rules of living together in peace and wholeness as members of this one household where God through the Spirit dwells among God's people," he writes.

In regard to pluralism, Raiser speaks of "the fading dream of Christian hegemony." Christians and others must find "a sustainable form of living with religious plurality," according to the WCC leader. Unfortunately, he observes, "the exclusivism of parochial consciousness grows to a large extent out of religious beliefs, including Christianity." He lays out his ecumenical agenda: "Like all religions today, Christianity is challenged to reassess its long-standing exclusivist claims and to contribute to building a new culture which values and sustains plurality." Raiser does not state what those pernicious "exclusivist claims" might be; however, one suspects they might include the affirmations of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" upon which the ecumenical movement was originally founded.

Concerning globalization, Raiser writes that its negative effects "underscore the primary task of Christian churches to further the process of reconstructing sustainable human communities." Others might define "the primary task of Christian churches" differently—perhaps in a way that made some mention of Jesus Christ.



WCC Moderator Aram (left) and General Secretary Konrad Raiser have both pushed the concept of "macro-ecumenism."

IRD

by Alan F. H. Wisdom

'Anointed Voices' Call WCC Back

Prominent voices from many sectors of the Church are calling the WCC back to its center in Christ. Below are three such voices.

Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexei II

In an interview with a Polish newspaper last September, the patriarch explained Eastern Orthodox concerns about the direction of the WCC. The Russian Orthodox Church "sees participation in international ecumenical organizations as a mission," Alexei told the newspaper. "But like most other Orthodox churches, ours has to react critically to negative tendencies—which must be rejected categorically by Orthodoxy — in the World Council of Churches."

Patriarch Alexei said in the interview that "important theological principles and moral injunctions" had been discarded by "certain Protestant confessions" which had imposed their "altered principles" on other member churches through "mass propaganda."

"This is possible because extreme liberals, without representing the majority of Christians, have gained a dominant position," the patriarch said. "All of this has forced us to demand a total reconstruction of the World Council of Churches."

Bishop Paride Taban

The preacher for the WCC's Africa Day service was the bishop from the Catholic Diocese of Torit in Southern Sudan. Bishop Taban issued a summons for "anointed voices" to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to a suffering continent.

Bishop Taban did not mince words in describing Africa's problems. "People are hungering and thirsting

for hope," he said. "Let us not disappoint them." If present statistics are to be believed, said the bishop, "Our continent is now the heartland of Christianity." He did not have to draw the contrasts with the Church in the West.

"Africa has responded with great enthusiasm and generosity to Christ's call," the bishop declared. "We are a young and vibrant church.... God, our Maker, is alive and active in our lives. The role of family is paramount and fundamental in our culture and traditions. We have love and respect for life. Our cultures have an acute sense of solidarity and community. We maintain those values despite the intense attack of economic systems which promote selfishness and a philosophy of individualism."

Nevertheless, Bishop Taban said, "We do not come in triumph. The liberal culture of today no longer thinks of a common good, but rather me, my private good and what I need." He proclaimed, "God needs people whom He has anointed to go out to spread the Good News. Are there anointed voices to proclaim liberty to the captives, to set the downtrodden free?" In calling for anointed voices, Bishop Taban's own voice answered the call.

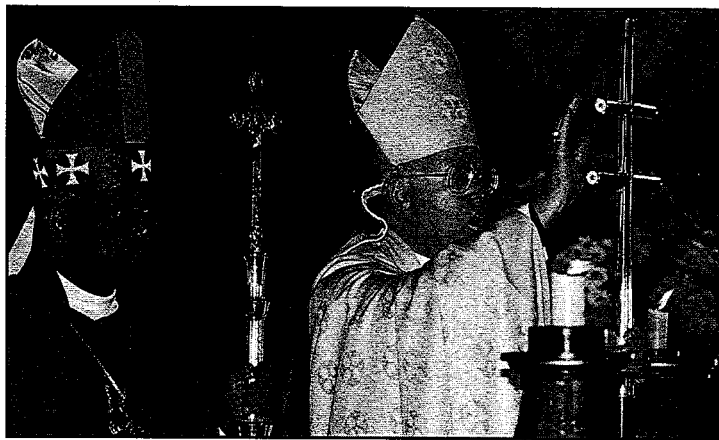
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Archbishop George Carey

Preaching to an overflow crowd at Harare's Anglican cathedral, the Rt. Rev. George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, told the WCC that it must

ground its work on Christ's mission, or it will sink. Carey's sermon, "Crisis or Christ," reminded the WCC that "in mission the church found its unity."

Then he added, "But now there is a crisis.... The Roman Catholic Church is still outside the WCC. The Ortho-



Archbishop Carey (center) reminded the WCC that "the only reason for its existence ... is Jesus Christ."

dox are nervous about their continued participation in the WCC, the church in the West is in serious decline, and the future of the WCC is in doubt." Carey stated, "This is a time for the WCC to remember that the only reason for its existence, and the only hope it has for continuing to exist, lies in Jesus Christ."

While the WCC confronts vexing issues, from homosexuality to the Third-World debt crisis, these issues, the archbishop said, "must be addressed only in the light of the Gospel and our determination to take the Gospel everywhere.... If there is no God, there is no final justice, no peace.... Nothing beyond this life. Christ must be the heartbeat of our living, preaching, and work for justice and peace."

This article is assembled from coverage of Patriarch Alexei's remarks by Ecumenical News International, of Bishop Taban's address by Janice Shaw Crouse, and of Archbishop Carey's sermon by Parker T. Williamson.

IRD

Violence, Ideology, and Policy

Violence Re-Defined

by Diane L. Knippers

Violence against women is a major crisis in every region of the world, even within the worldwide Church. Eradicating violence will require women to work in solidarity to dismantle the structures, ideologies, and theologies that support violence. These were the messages proclaimed throughout the festival held to mark the end of the WCC's controversial "Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women." The festival was celebrated in Harare during the week prior to the WCC's Eighth Assembly.

In the opening ceremony, women poured water representing tears from various regions of the world into a large bowl. Then several women told horrific stories of violence. One Canadian woman recounted sexual abuse at the hands of her father, an Anglican priest. A woman from Papua-New Guinea spoke of savage beatings by her husband. A Taiwanese woman told of a Cambodian woman who was lured to Taiwan with the promise of work and then was forced into prostitution.

Included with such grotesque abuse of women were examples of "institutional violence" or "theological violence." Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, a U.S. theologian, claimed that "being silenced, being ignored, not being valued, not being taken into consideration—this is what violence is about." She and others had in mind the negative reactions that radical Western feminists received after events such as the 1993 "Re-Imagining God" Conference.

In a press conference later, I asked Aruna Gnanadason, who heads the WCC Women's Program, why the word "violence" was used regarding women who were denied church jobs or speaking engagements because of their unorthodox theology. Gnanadason acknowledged that violence was being redefined. "If a woman is a poet and isn't allowed to write poetry, that is murder too," she said.

Gnanadason is wrong. To call discrimination "violence"

demeans and diminishes the plight of women who truly suffer the worst kinds of physical abuse—those who are brutally beaten, raped, tortured, or killed. It disgusted me to see women who enjoy Western privileges and comforts claim a victim status along with women who suffer far more terrible abuses.

Also, there was no mention of the most serious abuses against women today — female genital mutilation in parts of Africa, bridal dowry burnings in India, or the enslavement of girls in Sudan. Of course, these are problems

whose sources lie mainly outside the Christian faith. But, by ignoring these problems, the WCC festival created the impression that the Church is a major source of violence against women and that Christian teaching needs to be radically changed to address this problem.

A more honest look at the world would produce a different conclusion — that biblical faith, in spite of its imperfect implementation, has been a force for protection and elevation of women in human history. Indeed, the power of God to transform lives was, for the most

part, ignored. Most speakers saw empowering women as the answer to human suffering and sin. Through solidarity, they implied, women can translate the Gospel into a narrowly political program. And so the festival — and its opportunity to address the unspeakable abuses some women do face — was reduced to what one delegate called "a hollow drum which bangs a lot."



Chung Hyun Kyung conducted "a healing act in the Shaman tradition" at the WCC women's festival.

Ideology Promoted

by Donna F. G. Hailson

The Decade Festival commemorating the close of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women was less a celebration of the church's oneness in Christ and more a forum for the airing of laments over maltreatment suffered by women. During the festival's "Hearing on Violence Against Women," for example, speakers detailed their experiences of rape, domestic beatings, sexual trafficking and "abusive practices by

church institutions.”

The hearing concluded with a “healing act in the Shaman tradition from Korea,” led by Chung Hyun Kyung, who used music and dance to lead women from “crucifixion to resurrection.” It was more than a surprise to see Chung back at the podium given the controversy that swirled around her plenary presentation at the last WCC Assembly (in Canberra, Australia, in 1991). At that time, Chung called upon participants to reject traditional Christian teachings and/or to meld them with spiritism, goddess worship, monism, eco-feminism, Buddhism and Taoism. In an interview at the Decade Festival, Chung reaffirmed her self-description as a syncretist and asserted that “it is an act of violence for a Christian to tell non-believers that they will go to hell if they do not accept Jesus as Savior.”

The Decade Festival concluded with the crafting of a written challenge to the WCC Assembly. The document, framed as a “living letter,” urged WCC delegates to “announce to the world that violence against women is a sin ... to declare poverty and all its dehumanizing consequences a scandal against God ... to adopt the UN Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Decade of Eradication of Poverty 1997-2007 ... to raise our voices against all vestiges of colonialism ... [and] to initiate actions to correct the gender imbalances that exist.”

Though the festival letter was billed as a consensus document, it was not embraced by all women at the Assembly. Some Orthodox and evangelical women took issue over a paragraph which called for a “vision of the human community” where “diversity is celebrated as God’s gift to the world.” In affirming diversity of race, sex, age, religion and cultural practice, the letter left room for interpretations approving of practices such as syncretism, homosexuality, and abortion. Another passage in the document called for protecting “reproductive rights” — another ambiguous phrase which might refer to abortion. Evangelicals and Orthodox would have preferred to see stronger stands taken against these kinds of cultural practices.

Hailson, an American Baptist pastor and writer, was a member of the ACR delegation in Harare.

Policy Advanced

by Janice Shaw Crouse

Participants dressed in vividly colorful national garb celebrated the end of the Ecumenical Decade on the campus of Belvedere Technical Teachers College, an institution built as a gift to Zimbabwe from the United States during the Reagan era. The Great Hall was filled with round tables covered in white cloths topped by colorful squares and huge bouquets of fresh-cut flowers. The “Out of Africa” ambiance did not, however, mask the decidedly leftist political agenda of the celebration.

The worship liturgies often substituted a leftist agenda for God’s truth; they sacrificed impact, insight, and inspiration on the altar of inclusion. The mishmash of cultures and concerns created services that touched all issues, but failed to touch our hearts. Examples ranged from minor to significant. In a traditional Malawi song, the poetic beauty of the song was distorted by replacing “God, the Father” with “God, Creator.” In fact, I could not find the word “father” in the whole liturgy booklet.

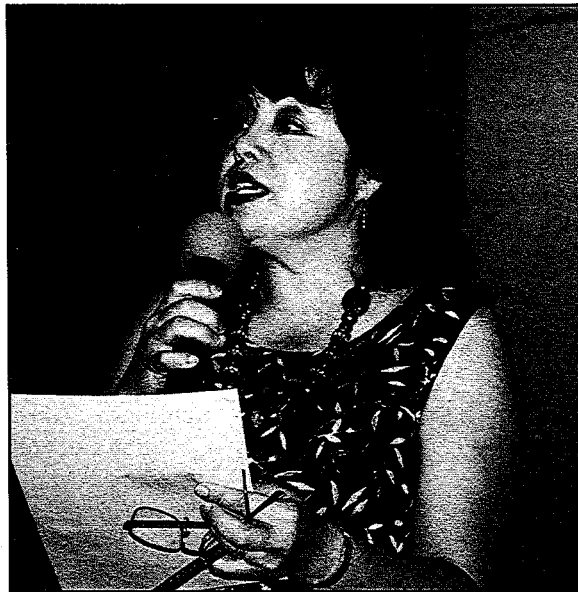
Some participants complained that the festival seemed eager to substitute a matriarchal structure for the despised and, admittedly flawed, patriarchal system. In fact, handwritten female appellations were penciled in over the blacked-out male words of the printed text!

Missionaries were cast in the worst possible light. One litany’s words: “We weep for those who have been damaged by mission done in your name, but without the sensitivity of your Spirit.” Obviously, there have been insensitive Christian missionaries, but such blanket statements present an imbalanced picture. Blatant insinuations of policy permeated the litanies: “We weep when people have been marginalized or abused because of their gender, faith, class, disability, or sexual orientation.”

There are significant problems associated with having ceremonies and worship services saturated with a political agenda. By blaming the International Monetary Fund, capitalism, the World Bank, colonialism or men in general for all women’s suffering — instead of identifying sin as the root cause — the focus of worship shifts away from our relationship with God.

The transformation that Jesus can bring to human beings is forgotten. The problem, then, takes shape in areas outside our control. We denounce “structural adjustment policies” glibly, while ignoring the sins for which we personally are called to repentance.

IRD



United Methodist delegate Minerva Carcaño is a theological liberal. But even she was distressed by the shaman ritual. “I affirm that the source of healing is the mercy of Jesus Christ,” she said.

On Religious Liberty

'Have You Journeyed with Us?'

Below are excerpts from a challenge that IRD President Diane Knippers delivered to the WCC Assembly at an evangelical padare (unofficial seminar) in Harare.

Evangelicals have journeyed with the ecumenical movement in human rights advocacy. We have learned that various human rights are linked with one another. We join ecumenical Christians in repudiating the idea that human rights are secondary to peace or to prosperity. We have learned the language of universal standards and that as advocates we may appeal to international mechanisms. But we are asking, have you journeyed with us? In particular, is the World Council of Churches willing to stand with evangelicals in defending the cornerstone of human rights—freedom of conscience?

We must do the WCC the courtesy of our forthrightness at this point. The record of the WCC on the question of religious persecution is shameful. At two previous WCC assemblies, the council's highest body ignored poignant pleas from endangered Russian Christian dissidents.

This problem is not simply an historical one; it continues today. Perhaps the most severe religious persecution in the world today occurs in Sudan. A Muslim extremist government has waged a "holy war" for most of the past three decades to impose Islamic law upon the mostly Christian population of southern Sudan. More than 1.5 million have died in the conflict.

Yet, despite the cries of Sudanese Christians, the WCC has taken little public notice of their plight. Instead the council has participated in a series of Christian-Muslim dialogues, at which the Muslim side has included representatives of the Sudanese government and other intolerant Islamist regimes.

One conference in 1994 was held in Khartoum [the Sudanese capital]. The keynote address was delivered by

Hassan Al Turabi, the head of the ruling National Islamic Front of Sudan. The final communiqué from this conference was an outrage. It gave no indication that WCC or other Christian representatives challenged the Sudanese government on its human rights record. And it declared that all participants shared a respect for "religious liberty."

A second major instance of religious persecution today is the People's Republic of China. The communist regime in Beijing insists that Chinese Christians must belong only to churches affiliated with the Protestant China Christian Council or the Catholic Patriotic Association. Christians who refuse to submit to the state-sanctioned organizations, or who disobey the regulations, are subject to harassment, interrogation, closure of their churches, and sentencing to *laogai* (reform through labor) camps.

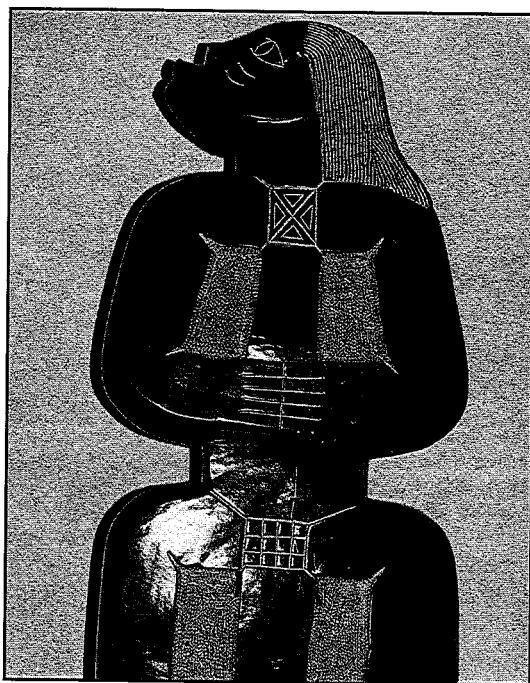
Over the years, the WCC has had remarkably little to say about human rights in the world's most populous nation. For the most part the WCC has confined itself to transmitting the perspective of the China Christian Council, [which] almost invariably echoes the propaganda line of the Beijing government: that there is no systematic religious persecution in China today, ... that underground "house churches" are rare and unrepresentative and heretical, that the only Christians imprisoned in China are those who have committed crimes.

At this Assembly, there are two appeals of conscience which the world churches gathered here must not, cannot, ignore. The first is the recent appeal of the house church leaders of China. The appeal calls on their government to recognize the house churches as valid, orthodox churches, to release all Christian imprisoned for their faith, and to begin a dialogue with the house church leaders.

The second is the appeal of Bishop Taban of Sudan, who spoke to us to passionately last Saturday. Bishop Taban said of the people of Sudan: "The cry that arises from all this suffering and pain is: 'Is there anybody, anywhere, who knows us? Is there anybody, anywhere, who really cares?'"

Evangelicals are saying "yes."

We assert that one of the practical expressions of the unity of the Body of Christ is the empathetic identification with suffering brothers and sisters. Will the World Council journey with us?



The logo of the WCC's Eighth Assembly expressed the sufferings and aspirations of African peoples. These surely include the cries of persecuted Sudanese Christians.

IRD

Hearing the 'Heartbeat of Mother Earth'

Indigenous peoples of the earth heard at WCC *padares* (unofficial seminars) that solidarity and self-determination is their only hope. Several sessions focused on the plight of indigenous peoples, accusing Christians of having stolen their spirituality, language and land.

A *padare* on the Sami people—reindeer herders from the Arctic who are fighting Norway, Sweden and Finland for control of their land—began as a geography lesson. Anger accelerated as the speakers told how Sami faith had been discounted by Christian missionaries in the past and is still demeaned by the church today. “Our people have Shamans,” said a Sami leader. “When a woman is pregnant, the Shaman communes with the ancestors.”

Ancestors decide which of them will return to earth in this birth, and the woman names her child accordingly. Thus the Shaman links two worlds. This, said the *padare* leader, is “what missionaries took from our people.” A Sami woman complained that when she had tried to introduce a Shaman element into her church’s liturgy, “conservatives” had resisted.

At a seminar next door entitled “Spirit of the Land—Rhythm of the Drum,” the North American Indian leader told participants: “You are now on Indian land, and you will respect our traditions, something that the white invader never did.” Beating a drum, the leader began to chant a prayer. Then he torched a clump of sage and spread wafting smoke around the room with an eagle feather.

Three other Indian leaders went around the room to shake hands with WCC delegates. “The handshake is very important to us,” the leader said. “This handshake was broken by the white man. He stole our land and our spirituality, which is intimately connected with Mother Earth. You will not break this handshake.” For the next 45 minutes, the speakers told sto-

ries of abuse and oppression that Native Americans have suffered.

“I was silenced by the church,” said a woman from Turtle Island who identified herself as a United Methodist leader. “I will be silenced no longer... We are uniting with indigenous people



Indigenous *padare* leader beats his drum as he declares that healing “will come only from ourselves.”

around the world. When we are on the land, we feel the spirits of our ancestors. How else could five pagans stand up against five million Christians? We have a different salvation plan, and it has to do with the land.”

A Peruvian man rushed forward. “We must unite,” he said as the *padare* leader pounded his drum. “The church cannot save us!” (another drum beat). “Let us search for an inter-religious dialogue that will give us solidarity” (more drum beats and ap-

plause). The leader summarized this 90 minute visit to Indian land. “Indian people have been severely hurt for 500 years,” he said. “But we know that if there is any healing, it must come from ourselves. It will not come from the church (drum beat). It will not come from the government (drum beat). It will not come from the white man (drum beat). It will come only from ourselves. You cannot heal us, but you can stand with us in our healing ... and you can work for your own healing also.”

These *padares* were more than multicultural entertainment. They were designed to demonstrate the WCC’s ongoing Indigenous People’s Program. The purpose of that program is “to clarify the past and present issues of denial, destruction and denigration of indigenous spiritualities and ancestral values.”

The program seeks: “indigenous sovereignty,” “repossession of their lands,” “self-determination and autonomy,” and “religious rights to develop their own spiritual life.” WCC directives for the program include an explicit rejection of “the assumption

that the Gospel/Bible culture [is] the only Good News.” Consistent with that assumption, in more than three hours of *padare* discussion, nobody mentioned Jesus Christ. **IRD**

by Parker T. Williamson

Williamson, Executive Editor of The Presbyterian Layman, was a member of the ACR team in Harare. A new book by Williamson, called Essays from Zimbabwe, includes all his coverage of the Harare Assembly. It is available for \$4.50 from PLC Publications, P.O. Box 2210, Lenoir, NC 28645.

How Ecumenical Is The WCC?

Dr. Thomas Oden, a professor at Drew University School of Theology, headed the ACR team in Harare. Below are excerpts from brief observations that he published during the WCC Assembly:

It is potentially somewhat encouraging to evangelicals to see that new language is proposed for the WCC to “nurture relations with and among churches, especially within but also beyond its membership.”

Might this be understood to imply a closer relationship with the World Evangelical Fellowship or with the National Association of Evangelicals or parachurch evangelical missions? Perhaps so.

But more importantly, there is as yet no indication in the amendment that this conversation might reach out to evangelical and orthodox Protestants within the member churches of the WCC, who are systematically excluded from the central stream of ecumenical engagement, all the while that mainstream is employing the rhetoric of inclusion.

There is great sensitivity to the fair and full representation of youth and women and the aged and the disabled and all those who are marginalized. But there is virtually zero recognition or sensitivity to the lack of fair representation of evangelicals who patiently continue to support their liberally-led member churches of the WCC.

§ § §

It is recognized already that many concerns “labelled as ‘Orthodox’ are in fact shared by many other partners

within the fellowship” (Assembly Workbook, p: 10). The Orthodox criticisms of the WCC are not precisely the same as those of the evangelicals, but there is a profound overlapping of these concerns with only a few exceptions. There is a widening recognition among Orthodox that evangelical Christians support their fundamental concerns in the WCC.

§ § §

The language of the WCC leader-



The United Methodist delegation in Harare featured leading liberal lights: Bishop Melvin Talbert, Dr. Janice Love, and Bishop William Boyd Grove (left to right). Millions of evangelical United Methodists did not have comparable representation.

ship constantly reflects the assumption that the WCC is a political action group. It seems fixated on “constituency-building” (Assembly Workbook, p. 9). It constantly appeals to the vocabulary of image-management and maintaining its profile as a trustable organization.

The modern ecumenical movement, as distinguished from ancient ecumenical teaching, has to a high degree capitulated to the pragmatic and relativistic modes of argumentation of modern consciousness, and thereby defaulted on asserting any serious truth claims. Note this reasoning: “A common ‘vision’ for the WCC, if it is to be inspirational and compelling, must draw on images

which speak to the whole church and use the language of commitment.” That is to say: the aim is to devise a “vision” that seems to be inspirational. To do that it must, like any public relations effort or advertiser, use images that persuade and evoke the feeling of commitment (Assembly Workbook, p. 117).

§ § §

Most misleading, however, is the tendency [for the WCC] to blame the economic climate, currency shifts, and “the dominance of the market economy” [for the council’s financial difficulties]! These last seven years have been a period of unexcelled historic opportunity for investment portfolio growth, with double digit averages. The WCC, which has constantly polemicized against international corporations and global business empires and the capitalistic economic order generally, is now very unhappy that its “investment portfolios produced unexpectedly poor results” (Assembly Workbook, p. 23).

§ § §

The *padare* is “a space for sharing experience,” but the assumption is that the experience to be shared is all contemporary experience, exclusively in the present tense. This leaves largely unexplored the historical experience of Christian believers of all ages. The focus is purely on the present context, stressing not its unity in Christ and the historical communion of saints, but its present cultural varieties.

Padare is “not a forum to mobilize people in favor of influencing the assembly on any issue. It is not part of the decision-making agenda” (Assembly Workbook, p. 93).

Thus the WCC has offered a space or forum for self-expression that gives the impression of increasing its democratic or populist base, but in fact is carefully blocked off from parliamentary influence.

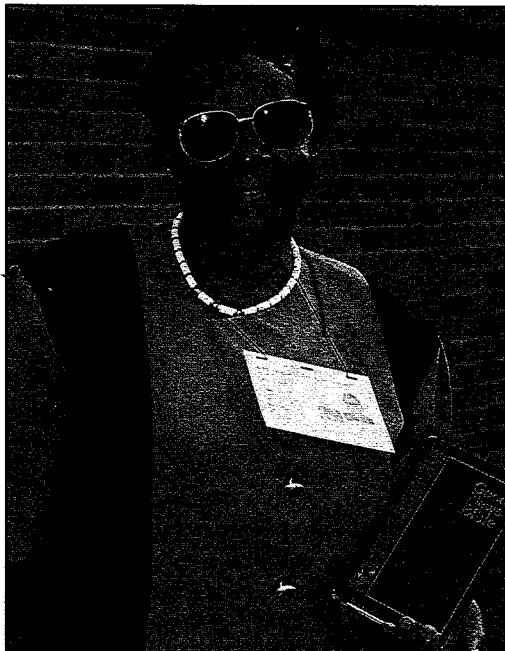
IRD

An Inconvenient Interruption

A *padare* (unofficial seminar) session on homosexual issues yielded a striking illustration of the gap between the liberal Western mindset of the WCC elite and the orthodox faith of most of their African Christian hosts.

The seminar was carefully constructed to reinforce the views of participants—who appeared to be overwhelmingly West

European and North American, and strongly committed to the normalization of homosexuality in church and society. But a Zimbabwean woman interrupted the indoctrination with questions that made the other participants uncomfortable.



Roselyn Manika brought her Bible to the gay *padare*. Other participants did not want to talk about Scripture.

First to speak was a lesbian who said she and two gay men had conducted “extensive research” on whether homosexuals could change their orientation. “We couldn’t find anyone whose orientation was actually changed,” the lesbian leader reported. She did not disclose any information about the researchers’ sample or the questions they asked. She presented no statistical data. “Unless we stop saying people can change, we can’t get on with liberation,” she concluded. “When gays and lesbians are diminished, all are diminished.”

Next a Norwegian gay man gave a survey of history from a homosexual perspective. He claimed it was not until the Middle Ages that homosexual relations were called a sin. He concluded, “We are here at the WCC today, not as persons on the outside looking in, but as people on the inside coming out.”

After these two speeches, participants divided into small groups to “share our stories.” Two Americans

dominated the discussion in one group. Robert E. Koenig, who identified himself as a Presbyterian/United Church of Christ minister, praised the pro-gay position of the UCC and confessed that Presbyterians “still have a lot of work to do.” The Rev. Canon Brian Grieves, Director of Peace and Justice Ministries at the Episcopal Church Center, said he was “ashamed of what happened at Lambeth” when Anglican bishops from around the world issued a strong statement condemning homosexual activity.

After extended discussion, a Zimbabwean woman asked permission to speak. “I am very confused here,” Roselyn Manika said. “When I became a Christian, I was taught that the Bible is the Word of God.” She asked the others, “How do you read the Bible and do all these things that you are talking about?” After extended silence, various group members offered the following responses:

- ✘ “We’re not here to talk about that. I don’t want to talk about it.”
- ✘ “I don’t know about the Bible, but this issue that we are here to discuss is a power issue.”
- ✘ “We have to discuss the dominance of heterosexuals ... their control of us. Why should heterosexuals tell us that their way is right?”
- ✘ “Obviously the Bible came out of a different time. The important thing that Jesus lifted up was that people should support one another.”
- ✘ “I think you take [the Bible] too literally, you need to take into account the cultural context.”
- ✘ In light of the population explosion, there ought to be a greater appreciation of homosexuals. “Nowadays, homosexual relationships are to be preferred to heterosexual ones, because they don’t increase the population.”
- ✘ “On this Bible question, I would hope that Scripture would not be used as a basis. The Bible can be used to support anything. The Bible is against usury. And that’s the basis of the whole capitalist system.”

Padare leaders brought the small groups back together. People spoke of how good it was to have a time of sharing feelings and experiencing one another’s pain.

“We want this issue to be brought into the agenda of the WCC,” said the lesbian leader who opened the *padare*. A woman in the group identified herself as the WCC’s “official listener,” and she assured those present that their concerns would be presented at WCC hearings later in the week.

IRD

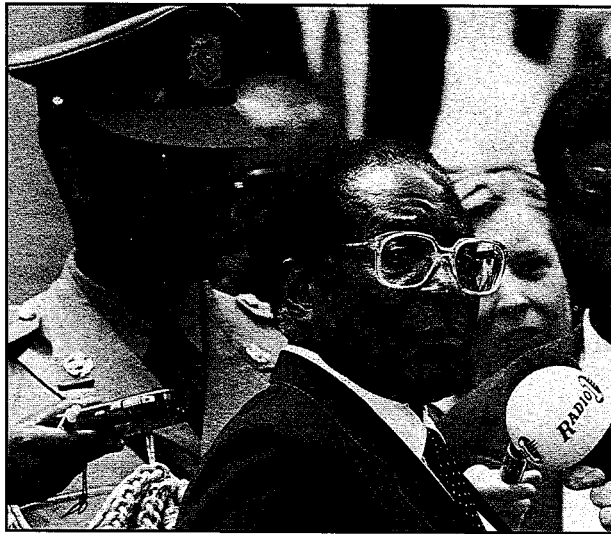
by Parker T. Williamson

The WCC and Mugabe

Guests of the Strongman

The WCC's gathering in Zimbabwe was originally intended to be a happy reunion. Delegates would be greeted warmly by the host government of President Robert Mugabe. Both Mugabe and his guests would share fond memories of the 1970s, when the WCC supported the Zimbabwean leader's guerrillas in their successful insurgency against a white minority government. But the current context of Mugabe's rule—a collapsing economy, sporadic outbreaks of rioting, and denunciations of human rights abuses—made the rejoicing seem a bit forced.

On December 8 the African strongman addressed a



President Mugabe was warmly received at WCC Assembly.

plenary session of the Assembly. He arrived accompanied by two truckloads of camouflage-clad troops armed with automatic weapons. Mugabe thanked the church council for its "courageous gesture" in funding his Patriotic Front movement during the 1970s. "Today I present to you the country towards whose liberation you struggled, a free Zimbabwe!" Mugabe proclaimed triumphantly. His WCC audience applauded loudly.

The Zimbabwean president pronounced Africa's experience of Christianity to be "an ambiguous one." He blasted the church for "lending holiness to one supposedly superior race and its high-handed, exclusionary structures of misgovernance." At the same time Mugabe credited Christian missionaries for establishing educational and health care institutions where none had existed.

Mugabe spoke of the continuing struggle to survive that his and other Third World peoples endure. He blamed these problems on external forces. "It is a very

conservative world where rich nations trample upon poor ones with disgusting impunity," Mugabe lamented. He spoke of "a global conspiracy against our poor nations." Evidence of the conspiracy was found in the high indebtedness of developing nations, the low prices paid for their products, sudden movements of capital out of those countries, and the repeated droughts they have suffered.

The Zimbabwean leader suggested that "perhaps our world would have been a lot better, a lot safer, if we had given communism both a spiritual and democratic God [rather] than accept rampant capitalism as godly." The delegates clapped thunderously.

Mugabe was a self-described Marxist in the 1970s, when the WCC awarded several hundred thousand dollars of "humanitarian aid" to his Zimbabwean guerrilla alliance. Even after it was revealed that Patriotic Front troops had massacred civilians (including missionaries) on several occasions, the WCC reaffirmed its support.

Since taking power, Mugabe has operated within a system that has the external features of a multi-party democracy. But the most recent U.S. State Department Human Rights Report observes that "the political process remained heavily tilted in favor of the ruling party." Those who oppose the government are subject to surveillance by state security forces, arbitrary arrest and conviction on trumped-up charges, police brutality and torture, and confiscation of their properties. There are only three opposition members of the parliament.

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwean economy has deteriorated severely. Unemployment stands at 40 percent, and the currency lost 70 percent of its value over the course of 1998. Many Zimbabweans privately fault the ruling party for its rampant corruption.

Yet WCC leaders did not publicly criticize Mugabe's regime on any of these counts. What alarmed them instead was the president's attitude toward homosexuals. He has been quoted as describing gays and lesbians as "lower than dogs and pigs." Mugabe told journalists: "We do not believe they [homosexuals] have any rights at all. They can demonstrate, but if they come here, we will throw them in jail."

In response to this threat, the WCC negotiated a special "memorandum of understanding" with the Zimbabwean government. It guaranteed that gays and lesbians participating in the Assembly would have free entry to the country and enjoy freedoms of speech and press within Assembly venues. The WCC did not choose to advocate such freedoms for the mass of the Zimbabwean people. **IRD**

by Alan F. H. Wisdom

Evangelicals Speak Out at WCC

While the World Council of Churches (WCC) struggled to develop a “common understanding and vision,” evangelicals within the WCC coalesced across the spectrum of Protestant denominations to build networks with Orthodox and Pentecostal believers. Those trying to navigate this stream at the Eighth World Assembly found it as exhilarating as a whitewater trip down the Zambezi.

Representatives from different groups tried to forge alliances that, they hoped, would bring ecumenism back into the mainstream of biblical orthodoxy.

Canon Dr. Vinay Samuel, observer-team coordinator for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT), was invited by the World Council of Churches to navigate that passage.

The biggest problem facing the ad hoc evangelical coalition was figuring out ways to steer clear of the shoals that threatened unity.

There were lively exchanges among evangelicals from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America. The group included theologians, lay delegates, and observers of diverse age, sex, nationality and denominations. “The open, flexible, and competent discussions we had together were among the highlights of the Assembly for me,” said Rolf-Alexander Thieke, a German Lutheran theologian.

A six-member team of evangelicals representing the Association for Church Renewal, a North American group of church renewal executives and board members, distributed “A Jubilee Appeal” (see p. 4) calling the WCC back to its biblical moorings. They also published articles presenting an evangelical perspective on the major issues facing the Eighth Assembly. Other groups that sent representatives with evangelical concerns included: the World Evangelical Fellowship, the Assemblies of God, the Latin American Theological Fraternity, the Reichenberg Fellowship, and the Mennonite World Conference.

The evangelical coalition drafted a letter to the WCC

expressing concerns that emerged from a half-dozen meetings during the Assembly. The central theme running through the meetings was that evangelicals and their concerns are not adequately represented in the WCC. Hwa Yung of Malaysia voiced a major concern of evangelicals — the lack of emphasis on holistic mission. Evangelicals also pointed out that without a strong WCC commitment to its constitutional basis of unity in Christ a mission imperative cannot exist. “Being at Harare, I clearly saw what is at stake when the WCC tends to promote an agenda quite distinct from the original vision at its founding in Amsterdam,” said youth delegate Kosta Milkov of Macedonia.

“The vast majority of the members of the U.S. Protestant churches in fact hold to a biblical Christian faith that is closer to Orthodox and Two-Thirds World evangelicals than our liberal denominational delegations that were in Harare,” said IRD’s President Diane Knippers. “Because these ecumenical gatekeepers do not represent us, we are systematically denied access to the WCC’s great ecumenical project.”

Knippers also expressed concern about the processes of the WCC. “The WCC seems to be captive to western liberal Protestantism — a small, shrinking minority of Christ’s Church — and to its emphases on individual autonomy and moral relativity,” Knippers said.

Parker Williamson, Executive Editor of *The Presbyterian Layman* added, “WCC officials—whose liberalism was clearly not in tune with the overwhelming majority of Christians at the Assembly—pursued a relentless divide-and-conquer strategy.” “Celebrating diversity meant holding hundreds of *padares* and sessions with open microphones so every point-of-view could be expressed,” Williamson said. “In the midst of the cacophony of ideas, the WCC’s Central Committee set forth its plan. Without a clear alternative and in the press of time, the people acceded in the name of ‘unity in diversity.’”

Evangelicals sought to present a positive approach rather than focus exclusively on points of controversy. “There are



The evangelical message to the WCC Assembly praised the spiritual vitality that African Christians had contributed to the worship services.

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

areas where we applaud what the WCC does," said Tom Finger of the Mennonite Central Committee. "For instance, the Mennonites support and participate in the WCC's Program to Overcome Violence. But we want to ensure that this and other programs maintain a biblical and Christocentric focus."

While there were points of difference between evangelicals and the Orthodox, the dialogue between them encouraged both sides. Young evangelicals from Orthodox-

**"A personal turning to
God must be at the heart of
the Church's mission of
social transformation."**

**Evangelical Letter to
WCC Eighth Assembly**

majority areas asked to be included in the second phase of the dialogue, pointing to their fellow believers who are engaged in graduate-level study of Orthodoxy. Some evangelicals said they considered the Orthodox-Evangelical *padare* a high moment of the WCC Assembly.

Other evangelicals conceded the shortcomings of evangelical involvement. "We need to recognize our areas of weakness and acknowledge that the WCC might have reservations and hesitations about evangelical involvement in the journey of the World Council of Churches over the past 50 years," Samuel said.

A team of about a dozen writers volunteered to draft the evangelical letter to the WCC's Eighth Assembly. ACR members who helped to draft the letter were: Diane

Knippers, Donna Hailson, and Thomas Oden. "The letter is a frank and loving Jubilee call to the WCC from evangelical participants at Harare," Samuel said.

The message praised the faith of many Assembly participants, the vitality of the worship experiences, the beauty of the ecumenical vision and the continuing dialogue with the Orthodox delegation.

The letter expressed regret that "theological input into the African plenary did not represent the theology and vision of many African churches, which are committed to scripture's centrality, along with cultural renewal and social, political and economic change." It lamented that "the final commitment at this plenary [on Africa] did not mention Jesus once."

The letter voiced concern that "serious theological reflection was largely absent" from Assembly sessions. "Some major speakers and presentations fell outside the boundaries of the creedal bases of all member churches and the Council's own faith base," it added. "The importance of the family and of biblical sexual morality were little featured in the plenary, *padare*, or hearings."

The letter urged "a renewed emphasis on mission and evangelism which will empower the churches to communicate the gospel throughout the world." It stressed that "a personal turning to God must be at the heart of the Church's mission of social transformation." The evangelical message concluded: "The WCC must operate more in accord with the Christocentric, missionary emphasis of its original vision. Jubilee is also a time to return to the beginning."

Knippers commented: "In spite of our deep differences with the WCC, we will not be alienated from the unity to which we know the Holy Spirit is wooing the churches. We look forward to greater participation in the quest for unity in Christ, either through a radically reformed WCC or through new avenues we are confident that God will raise up as needed."

IRD

by Janice Shaw Crouse

This article first appeared in Jubilee, the official newspaper of the WCC Eighth Assembly.