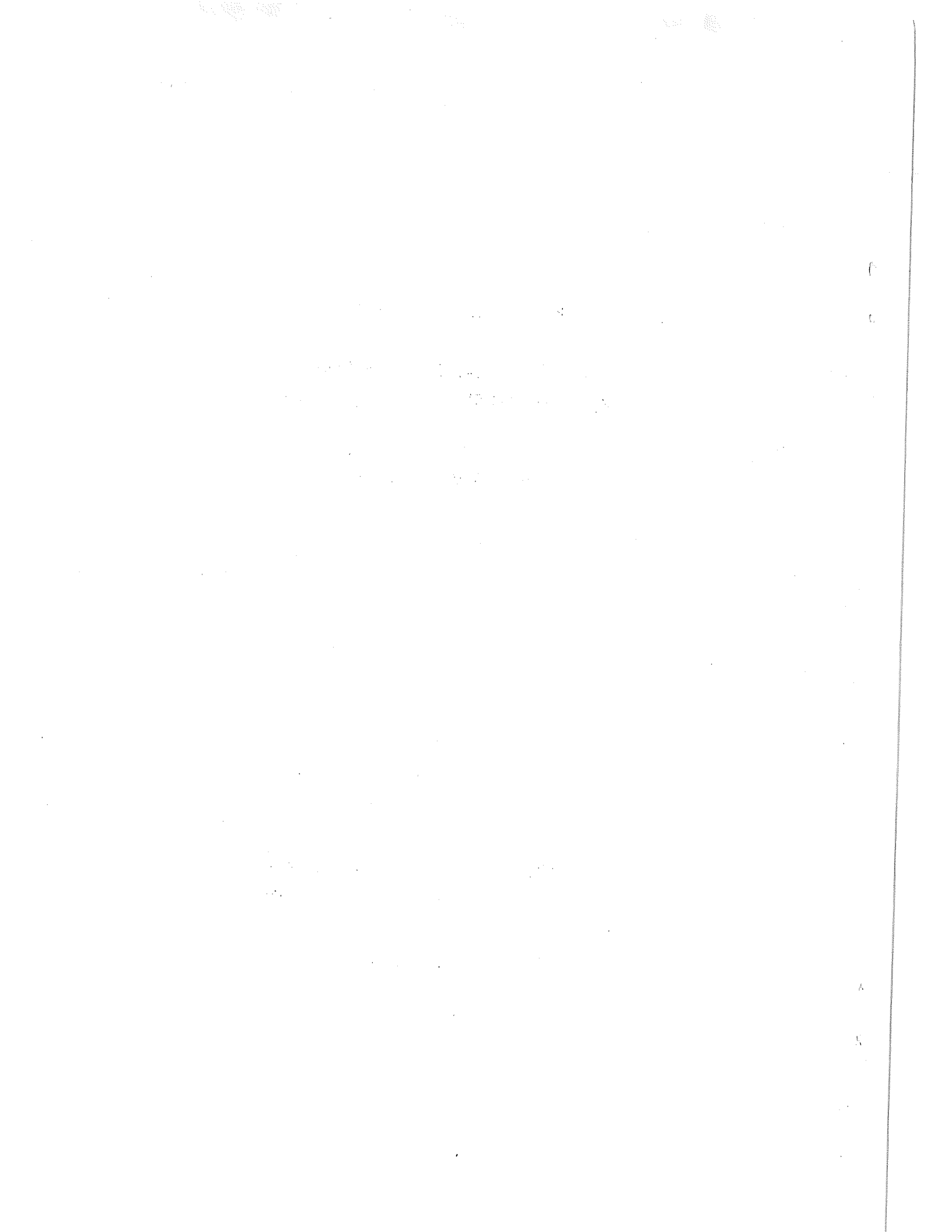




THE  
DEPARTMENT  
ON  
THE  
COOPERATION  
OF  
MEN  
AND  
WOMEN  
IN  
CHURCH  
AND  
SOCIETY

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WORLD  
COUNCIL  
OF  
CHURCHES



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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

Madeleine Barot

In addition to its assemblies and working committee meetings the World Council of Churches often holds special consultations, the participants of which do not officially represent their churches. No official decisions are made at such meetings. The World Council, however, is convinced that such encounter between representatives of different cultures and Church traditions are of great importance for the ecumenical movement as a whole as well as for the studies undertaken in this way. In July 1956, the Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society of the World Council of Churches held such a consultation at Herrenalb, Germany, in conjunction with the official meeting of its Working Committee and other Committees of the World Council.

The chief aims of this consultation were to help the Department to determine the present situation with regard to the cooperation between men and women in the different countries and churches; to take note of present studies and of action undertaken in this field; and to seek the direction to be given to the work of the Department in the months to come.

It has become clear that consultations of this kind and on the same subjects would prove equally useful in each member-church, between churches of the same denomination, as well as between different churches with the same national and cultural background, in order to determine more precisely the kind of cooperation to aim at and the means to attain it. We therefore publish this report in the hope that it will encourage the churches to establish their own study commissions; or at least to initiate discussion on this subject, and to inform us of results achieved. It gives a summary of a number of papers presented at this consultation and states the conclusions and practical recommendations made, which were later adopted by the Working Committee.

The first full day was devoted to biblical and theological study concentrating on three special questions which some theologians are discussing at this time among themselves. We tried to get an overall picture of present studies being made on questions of Christian anthropology and ecclesiology, which are related to our subject. We have tried to discover an order of priority on the questions to be studied and to eliminate false problems which so often hinder clear theological discussion.

The second day we tried to examine some of the main problems on which the churches and Christians in general have to take a stand, not only from the intellectual point of view but in practice; for they influence the status of women and are vital to the members of our churches as well as to all those women who have turned aside from their church because they do not find there the counsel and clear teaching that they need to solve their problems. There are many other questions quite as important as those that were examined on that day, particularly questions of education and of family life, but a choice had to be made.

The third day the status of women in the different churches was examined. How should the gifts of women be used in this 20th century? How should ecclesiastical structures be adapted to the new needs of society and to the

new possibilities offered by its members? Are the problems, which are hindering development, of a theological nature or rather are they of a sociological or psychological kind?

The foregoing studies were preceded on the first night by a description of the general situation concerning the status of women in West Africa, by Miss Galbraith; and in Egypt and other Moslem countries, by Mrs. Shukri. Mention was also made of countries under Communist influence, where greater efforts often seem to be made in the way of the emancipation of women and towards their full development, than in Christian countries.

All these reports launched an appeal to the churches to consider more seriously the present-day problems concerning women, to help them find their true freedom, that willed by God and not one proclaimed to them because of economic necessity or by political propaganda. The churches must recognize the need for this true freedom, in order to be able to give a Christian witness through their attitude and their teaching, and in order that the fellowship within Christian communities may be a sign of the coming Kingdom of God and an evangelistic force.

From the beginning of the consultation this appeal put its mark of urgency on the studies and discussions of the following days, a note which is essential to all Christian witness and missionary work.

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## II. THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

### A. Some Texts in the Gospels concerning the relationship of Men and Women.

Suzanne de Dietrich

#### 1. Jesus Christ - His Oneness with God and His Oneness with His Neighbour - HE is the Image of God.

According to some theologians, the Image of God is humanity in its fullness as revealed in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15). Jesus Christ himself reflects God because He is self-giving in his relationship with God, and with all others. In the famous "Ecce Homo" ("Behold the Man") passage in the Gospel of St. John (19:5), man is revealed in his fullness. As we can see all through the New Testament, Christ is neighbour to all human beings, but especially to the down-trodden, the publican, the harlot. And by acting as their neighbour, by establishing a relationship in an extraordinarily simple way, He often restores their human dignity. This is very important in the case of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus asks for a cup of water. It was very surprising at that time in history to find Jesus talking with a woman! In the Gospels we admire the perfect liberty with which Christ approaches every human being, and it is because He deals with men and women in real face-to-face encounter that they feel the need for healing and forgiveness.

Jesus' concern for women is expressed in several places in the Gospels (e.g. Luke 8:2 and 3) "And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and...". In the Gospel of St. Luke (7:36-50), the Pharisees are shocked by his attitude towards the woman, a sinner, whom He permits to anoint His feet. Women were among the first who started the



"Diakonia", and in a way the Samaritan woman was the first missionary of the Christian faith. By the reactions of these women we can see that those who entered into conversation or dialogue with Jesus felt known and understood at once, and no longer alone. This is particularly striking in the anointment scene in Matthew (26:6-13) and Mark (14:3-9), where we see that the way to kinship is the way of suffering.... We women, before Christ, feel understood in the depth of our being; we see the fullness of humanity reflected in Him.

## 2. The Priority or Primacy of the Kingdom.

In the Gospels Christ both proclaims and embodies the Kingdom. He does not look at us as men and women, but rather as the lost children of the family of God. He draws the line between two categories of people: those who hear and those who do not. He is unusually stern with the Pharisees, not because they are men, but because they are leaders carrying responsibility who are spiritually satisfied and therefore closed to mercy. On the other hand, Jesus is unusually mild with the fallen women, not because they are women, but because they are in need of salvation, and - what is more important - they are aware of it. Wherever Christ stresses the primacy of the Kingdom, He prepares the ground for the message of salvation.

## 3. The New Fellowship.

This primacy of the Kingdom is the way towards a new fellowship. In all His relationships Christ deals with persons, not with mankind as a whole. In a way the new fellowship transcends the old. The family based on blood relationship leads to the second family, the family of God.

The old Jewish thought that Isreal had to go on until the promise would be fulfilled, was linked up with a widespread belief in after-life in ancient Isreal - the blessing going on from father to son. All this is transformed by the new Kingdom of God in Christ, making a deep revolution in Jewish thought. Looking back on history, I am quite surprised to find that we often seem to have returned to this Jewish tradition, by concentrating on the blood family instead of upon the family of God in the Church. We are often willing to sacrifice for a blood family, but not for the Church family.

The new primacy of the family of God is revealed in Mark 3:31-35 and 10:28-30, and the stress on the new family becomes evident in Luke 12:52 and 53 and 14:26 and 27. In all these passages the man-woman relationship in marriage is not mentioned, because they are considered as one.

The whole question of the family becomes a real problem for the Church. In the areas of rapid social change, the problem has to be faced immediately and very urgently. If individuals are taken out of the whole pattern of family life - either by some process of industrialisation or westernisation, or even by conversion - the results may be disastrous, unless they are able to find a place in a new, living, organic structure: the Church. The Church must again become (as in its early years) a living congregation, a real community, a real family, the Family of God, where single women, including missionaries and other Church workers, and other lonely people, are accepted and wanted. \*\* (see footnote).

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\*\* The following are a few telling quotations from the discussion:

"We have no time to learn how to live with one another. We have no time"

4. Christian Marriage is seen as a parable of God's love for His people and of Christ's love for His Church. Marriage - the two becoming one - implies that each will live for the other in self-giving love or mutual self-giving, losing one's life for the other, and requiring no reciprocity (Mark 10: 2-9 and Matthew 19:3-9 and 5:27-32). Marriage is not the only way, but it is considered the normal way.

The path the Church has to take to-day is a very narrow one, remembering always the great mercy Christ showed to those who sinned against the flesh, and on the other hand the absoluteness of His requirements. See again Matthew 5: 27 and 28. "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Christ's commandment undoubtedly shows the narrow way of a single love.

This also raises difficult problems for the single woman. How far can a single woman have a friendship with a married man? In the last resort she cannot have a full friendship with a married man (or a married woman), for even an intellectual friendship takes something away from the oneness of the couple. She must constantly keep the couple in mind. On the other hand, the couple should be spending and open enough to accept these friendships. And these problems must be faced in the light of the Biblical texts. For example, the Pharisee looks at the woman anointing Jesus' feet, but Jesus pays no attention to the relationship between these two. He only sees the love and devotion of the woman.

5. The New Dimension of the Gospel concerning Sin and Forgiveness.

In John 8:2-11 we read of the woman, taken in adultery, being accused by the Pharisees, whereupon Jesus said to them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." All of us are inclined to pass judgment and yet we should know that Christ is the only One who should condemn and judge.

In Genesis 3, when the relationship between God and man was broken, man and woman could no longer stand naked in front of each other. They had lost their "transparency". But now when Christ looks at us and through us, His love restores this transparency, and we should be able to look at ourselves as we are and at others as they are. We should be able to accept ourselves and others as we truly are. In human love also some of this original transparency is restored, and we can live together under the sign of forgiveness, in an act of trust, because we are both under God's grace.

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\*\* (footnote continued from preceding page)

"to learn how to be open and to lose ourselves. The whole of our culture takes away our time."

"The answer to loneliness is in belonging. One way of feeling free is when people listen to me. One of our ways towards freedom could be to practise listening. We begin to listen to someone and we give them a degree of freedom. But listening takes much time, much more time than just listening to what is said."

"We need to try co-living, living together as Christians, in small cells, and in larger community."

## 6. The Fullness of Life

The fullness of life as revealed in the Gospel is never exclusively related to marriage, but rather it is related to spending and losing one's life for Christ's sake (Mark 8:34 and 35). This can happen, but also one can be quite self-seeking in marriage. It must be stressed that marriage is not necessarily the only way to fullness of life. Since the Fall we have been like self-centred tops turning on ourselves, and from this we must be redeemed. Also, we must deliver young people from the idea that marriage automatically leads to happiness, and that happiness itself is synonymous with fullness of life; also a self-centred person can be happy without fullness of life. On the other hand, a marriage with a lot of trouble and suffering can lead to fullness of life.

We should never forget that it is great suffering for most women not to have a companion in marriage, and not to be a mother. If there shall not be frustration for the woman who does not have the privilege of marriage, her life also must be regarded in the light of a gift of God, just as the married woman must receive her companion as a gift of God. Christ does not deny the needs of nature, but he opens new possibilities for fullness of life. He shows us that in the realm of the Kingdom, fullness of life is to be found by spending one's life. If a woman cannot experience married life with all of its joys and suffering, she can nevertheless reach fullness of life if she too is willing to lose her life in the service of God and man.

St. Matthew in chapter 19:10-12 and 15:27-32 raises the question of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, which if it is accepted as the will of God can also lead to fullness of life. Yet celibacy outside the "koinonia" or fellowship of the Church nearly always leads to frustration.

Fullness of life, both inside and outside of marriage, is a genuine readiness to love and to spend one's life. Both celibacy and marriage are extremely narrow ways, yet for every Christian there can be fullness of life if one does the will of God.

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### B. Is the couple the "Image of God"? How has Human Sin distorted the Original Intention?

A. J. Rasker

1. In Genesis 1 God, in a kind of consultation with Himself, decides to create MAN ("Let us make man"), and, further, to make this new creation more "in our image", "after our likeness".

2. What do these words mean? Professor Rasker stresses Genesis 1 v.27 as being the central word (rather than v.26), that God created them male and female and blessed them and promised them first fertility and secondly dominion over the earth.

3. This distinction of man into male and female is essential, not accidental. God has not made man in abstracto, a human being in general and then added the distinction as an interesting but non-essential extra. He has willed two different beings, who together are in the image of God and after

His likeness. The dominion over the earth and the fertility on the earth is promised to man as male and female, not to a sexless human being in general. So a mutual partnership is essential for men in the image of God. Man and woman are to each other demand and response, seeking and finding, need and fulfillment. But the essence of man, his destiny, is not the development of the individual but the belonging to the other. This is said in Genesis 2:10, which can be taken as a further explanation of Genesis 1:27, where God is introduced expressly as saying, "It is not good for man to be alone." As long as man is alone, God could not say (Gen. 1:31) that all that He had made was very good. As long as man would remain alone, creation would be without fulfillment, without its crown and completeness, without a full expression in it of the character of God, which is Love.

4. God makes the woman (according to Gen. 2:1 ff) as a help to man. This is not a degradation of woman, but an honouring of her, as the word "help" is the richest word imaginable. Woman is given to man to overcome his loneliness, so that together they may be in the image of God, which is in His love. They are called to, promised to, live in the love of God, after His likeness; not being alone but together in community. This is valid for marriage, but not only for marriage, for outside of marriage there is also a great deal of encounter between man and woman, of cooperation and mutual responsibility - as father for daughter, mother for son, brother and sister, friendship and comradeship. Also in this sense it is not good for man to be alone; the two need each other for fulfillment, creativity and fertility in all spheres of life.

5. The Fall is the corruption and perversion of the being in God's image and after His likeness. It is described in Genesis 3 as "a grasping of the image of God in a way of disobedience". First the woman and then the man is tempted with "the longing to be like God". This sounds the same as to be in the image of God, but it is completely different. It is the seeking for divinity of human nature. It is the seeking for a likeness of God, not as a gift and a grace, but as a possession and a glorification. This not only brings about separation from God, but also separation of man from woman. They are still partners, but partners now in disobedience, and so their partnership is broken. They who had nothing to hide from God must now cover themselves before Him. They who had nothing to hide from each other must now cover themselves from each other. And soon they find themselves in bitter mutual reproach. This, which is also characteristic of the relationship of man to man, is especially true of the relationship of man to woman.

Does this mean that the image of God is corrupted? This is the very difficult question which is asked by theological anthropology. When we regard the image of God as divinity in human nature, the answer is "yes". But when we regard the image of God as that in which man is created as the love of God, it is different. God's image, God's love is not corrupted, but God's likeness in man is corrupted. Man and woman are still together in partnership but in a perverted and broken way.

6. But, we should not dwell on the corruption in human nature, for in the Biblical witness the final word is not corruption but God's grace. The curse which God lays in Genesis 3:13-19 (first upon the serpent, then upon the woman and finally upon man) is a curse in which pain and death are laid upon human life (Man shall earn his living by hard labour and die). But the curse is filled to the brim with blessing and the promise of life. In verse 20, it is

written that the woman shall bear their common children, by Grace. Their life will go on in their children. Although their partnership will be a disturbed and distorted one this same partnership will be a means of goodness in the hands of God. The man looks at his wife and calls her "Eve" or "Life", because there is life even in death and she, his help (meet) who has disappointed him, will again be his help (meet), the representation of the help of God. So that man, even though he is a sinner, is not alone and is allowed to live by forgiveness. Eve, "the Living One", is the answer to his demands, the fulfillment for his need, and he is the answer to her longings.

#### Is the image of God lost?

No, it is not lost. The order of God's loving-kindness, - in which man was made male and female in partnership, - this order is kept intact (even though corrupted by man) and is used by God as a means for His saving Grace. Even after the Fall, man and woman live (although in a very painful way) under the promise that they may be creative and fertile and reign and fill the earth.

The image of God, the original image, which is the faithfulness of a God who wills not to be alone and who wills not that His creatures be alone - this image is still intact, and in this image man and woman are allowed to go on together. Their likeness to this image may be very deficient, but it is never without promise. This 'togetherness' is valid for marriage, but it is also valid for all other human relationships, for all kinds of cooperation. It is not without great dangers and not without deep corruption, but it too is not without great promise. So we, men and women, are still together, as sinners, but living out of Grace. And we are allowed to live in the image of God, after His likeness.

7. Again, however, this does not mean that we are the image of God. Only One is, Jesus Christ, the New Adam, the real Man. If we want to remain in the image of God, in the love of God, we must remain in Christ and try to follow Him, which is both a calling and a promise, as described in Ephesians 4 and 5. Our calling and promise in Christ will be characterized by mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, - the way out of death in marriage, and in all relationships - by obedience and humility, love and joy. (John 4:10; II Cor.3:18).

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#### C. The Divine Order for the Relation of the Sexes: Equality, Hierarchy and Submission

André Dumas

#### A heated discussion

The title of this paper as such already reveals a controversial note. No doubt, each one of us would like to make the Bible incline towards his own convictions. For some, it is impossible to consider that the Biblical revelation has established between man and woman - created, loved, called, and saved, together - the slightest deviation from a complete equality and reciprocity. Any mention of an order between the sexes which goes beyond the patriarchal

realities of the Biblical age will therefore appear to them as a poisoned well at the very heart of the Christian message on the cooperation of men and women in the Church, the world, the family, in marriage, etc... For others, on the contrary, this order is a formal and permanent institution made by God "within" and for the couple. For them, it seems like heresy, timidity, and finally evil to ignore the existence of this revealed order; for the Christian vocation of man and woman is precisely to understand the deep goodness expressed in this order, to lead their life according to it, and thus to witness to God's order in the midst of the disorder of the heathen world - be it of an anarchic or an oppressive kind.

Passionate debate is a good stimulus to theological research. It shows that our dogmatic discussions always have vital consequences in relation to pastoral counselling, liturgy and even civilisation. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit! But passionate belief also involves the great danger of stifling the fraternal dialogue between believers. When Christians line up in two camps opposite each other, both heavily armed with a whole series of Biblical verses, there is often little chance of proceeding towards a better understanding and putting into practice the Living Word. In this brief summary, I can only advance some theses which may help to overcome the deadlock at which our dialogue frequently arrives to-day.

1. The Bible teaches mutual submission between the sexes.

In order to support this thesis we have to take exactly those passages which seem to be the least reciprocal and which proclaim the most clearly a hierarchy between man, as "head" of woman, and woman as submitting to this head. I am thinking of the famous verses in the Epistles of Saint Paul and Saint Peter, in which they give an explanation of the account of the creation of the couple in Genesis. Firstly, these texts are, for the most part, a section of the so-called codes of sub-ordination or submission, quoting at the same time several ethical examples, such as: the citizen and the authority of the state, wives and their husbands, slaves and their masters, children and their parents, and sometimes also believers and their Church leaders. Now, each of these "codes" is introduced by a preliminary formula addressed to all the different categories, who are admonished separately afterwards; "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephes. 5:21). "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:3), etc... Thus, the introduction to these codes which appear to support hierarchy prepares us to read them from the viewpoint of mutual and universal submission.

Their structure confirms this preparatory announcement: far from beginning with the duties of the "heads" and then going on to those who are governed, - the usual way of proceeding when dealing with human hierarchy - these passages are always primarily addressed to those who are in the state of subordination. Also, they enlarge in an incomparably more detailed way on the ethical and Christological implications of the first paragraph, than on the second which deals with those who are in authority - with the sole exception of Ephesians 5, which will be explained anon - sometimes even omitting this latter exhortation completely. (This is even more evident with St. Peter than it is with St. Paul).

Finally - and this is the most important observation - the content of

these "codes" reveals in detail that, fundamentally, the message addressed to all is exactly the same, whatever their situation may be: the same message of submissiveness is preached, for instance, to the slaves as to the citizens and the wives. They are asked to live this submission directly "in the Lord". On the other hand, those who have authority over others are not told to use this authority, but rather to submit themselves also indirectly to their neighbour. That is why Ephesians 5, for example, develops widely the analogy between the husband and Christ, Who delivered himself, gave himself, and bound himself to His Church. Thus, in mutual submission, will be achieved the unity of the different members of the same Body.

All this is fundamentally in accordance with the order of Creation. In fact, Genesis 1 shows the inter-dependence of the two sexes in the unity of the couple, the image of God; and Genesis 2 does not aim at setting up an order of values nor yet one of nature, as between man and woman, based on the latter chronologically taking the second place, but it seeks to show explicitly, through the creature's own recognition, that the Creator was right in creating a human couple instead of just a solitary being.

On the other hand, we have to recognize that the interpretation of these chapters of Genesis, sometimes given by the apostles (cf. II Cor. 11:8 or I Tim. 2:14), is not in agreement with our general thesis. That interpretation affirms a hierarchy willed by God from the very beginning. I shall not try to minimize the difficulty involved in this contradiction within the Scriptures. I shall, however, recommend that these passages be re-read in order to see whether they really proclaim an apostolic doctrine, or whether they are not rather arguments taken from the Rabbinic tradition of the time in order to substantiate the exhortation, addressed to the wives, to submit themselves.

Apart from these few verses, we find no mention of a hierarchy between the sexes, either in the Old Testament, the Gospels or the Acts. On the contrary, we find that total reciprocity is continually enjoined. In this connection the most striking example is not Galatians 3:28, "In Christ there is neither male nor female", - for this soteriological rather than anthropological assertion is not contested by anyone (cf. the corresponding verses in Romans 10:12; I Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11), - but I Cor. 7:1-16, the great chapter which the apostle Paul wrote especially with regard to marriage.

In conclusion, the Biblical passages on the order of the sexes do not establish a hierarchy, but demand complete reciprocity, which should manifest itself in mutual submission, in accordance with the situation in which God has placed each individual.

## 2. The Bible refers to hierarchy between the sexes as of a self-evident and natural fact

This second thesis seems to be the very opposite of the first. In reality, however, it is linked up with the first - just in the same way as there can be a link between a sermon and a given situation, between God's order and reality.

It would be dishonest, indeed, to deny that in Biblical times woman comes after man, for the Biblical authors and their readers. The Old Testament is full of indications which are significant in this respect: the wife forms part of the property of the husband in the Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:17). When

making vows to the Lord, a woman counts for just half the price of a man (Leviticus 27:1-7). After child-bearing, if the mother has given birth to a girl and not a boy, the time of her impurity is doubled (Leviticus 12). Circumcision, limited to males, made of them the blessed "links in the chain" of the People of Israel. The gradual exclusion of women from Israelite worship can be seen even in details such as the omission of I Samuel 2:22 by the Septuagint, because this verse mentioned the ancient practice of women worshipping at the entrance of the tabernacle. This fact of women taking the second place in patriarchal customs, as related in the Old Testament, is well known to everyone, but it is interesting to note that the Biblical authors do not pronounce a derogatory judgment on such customs. From the theological point of view, one could certainly relate this minor status of women to the state of disorder caused by sin in the life of man and woman ("And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee..." Genesis 3:16). But the Old Testament itself does not put forth such an explanation. Rather it describes this situation as an established fact.

The New Testament, also, is marked by this fact. True, in the Gospels, there is a remarkable and extraordinary equality in the way Jesus teaches men and women. The Gospels are always a reminder of what God willed at the beginning of the world (cf. Matthew 19:4 and 8) - an eschatological announcement of the Kingdom. But this reminder or announcement fits into the centre of a present and permanent situation. Already in I Cor. 15:4-6, the apostle Paul does not mention that the risen Christ appeared first to the women, because at that time it was not usual to accept witness from a woman. In all the passages of his Epistles, he supports his exhortation for mutual submission by references to proprieties, customs, laws, and the current opinion of the churches. He does not consider it necessary to enlarge on any of these explicitly, for they were known to and accepted by all, even by those parish women who argued with the apostle about the ways of signifying such submission within the new Christian community. Just to give one example, I am inclined to think that in the background of the whole parable of Ephesians 5:25-30 there is the implicit belief in a certain impurity of the wife, from which her husband delivers her. Paul shared this belief with the Ephesians, but as it has nowadays disappeared from most Christians' belief, this classical passage of our Marriage Liturgy is thus rendered very obscure to us.

This natural hierarchy is neither contested nor explained. The Bible does not elaborate on the specific hierarchical position of the two sexes from the psychological, sociological, metaphysical or mythological point of view. This indifference towards a problem, which presents such immense difficulty to us in the very way in which it is exposed in the Bible, shows how little the Revelation witnesses were preoccupied with establishing the natural hierarchy of the sexes as a divine institution. They were far more concerned about announcing the coming of the Lord, and in preaching liberation and submission to both sexes, without even questioning their situation at this time. This confirms the general impression of the New Testament. Jesus used the parables, not because of their intrinsic moral value, but in order to preach the coming of the Kingdom. In the same way, the apostles did not aim at changing or evaluating social conditions, but admonished each new convert to continue leading his life in his former status, but under the new grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.



3. To-day, can we state that the different exhortations addressed to the men and women of the early Christian communities correspond to the evangelical exhortations addressed to the "weak" and the "strong"?

I put this last thesis in the form of a question, because it seems to me less certain than the first and less evident than the second.

Only once does the Bible give a psychological explanation of the hierarchy of the sexes, and that is in I Peter 3:7 - "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker sex (literally: vessel)." This reference to feminine weakness seems to be, indeed, the implicit link between all the prohibitions and protections, customs and opinions, to which I referred in the preceding paragraph. But obviously, this feminine weakness to-day is not so generally evident as it was in Biblical times. The anachronism revealed in so many of our sermons, liturgies and catechisms on the relationships between the sexes is rooted in the fact that we go on repeating an exhortation based on alleged masculine "strength" and feminine "weakness", without realizing the theoretical nature of these categories. We thus run the risk of just repeating, without illuminating or convincing.

And yet, the substance of the Biblical Word would keep its full richness if we only knew how to address it to the appropriate people. To women, which means in fact to whoever is weak (be it a man!) or, better still, to the weak side in each one of us it says: "Be neither ashamed nor fearful of your weakness, but trust in the strength of your partner, as the Church puts her trust in the Lord." To men, which means in fact to whoever is strong (be it a woman!) or, rather, to the strong side in each one of us, it adds: "Show neither selfishness nor pride in your strength, but use it in the service of the weakness of your partner, as the Lord has done for His Church."

This is not a literal exegesis, but I believe that it is really faithful to the intent and context of the great Biblical passages on the order of the sexes. It is only in this Christological perspective that the hierarchy of the sexes shows forth its real meaning. It is no longer in opposition to general submission, as becomes the case in every doctrine which limits all self-effacement, service, obedience, and confidence, to the female sex, and all initiative, responsibility, direction and leadership to the male sex. (For, despite all precautions, that is precisely the great danger into which, for instance, Karl Barth seems to have fallen, in his ethics on the order of the sexes.) On the contrary, this exegesis represents so to speak the submission each one of us should show in our own particular situation, allowing us to live reconciled with ourselves through the grace of God.

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- D. Should Differences between the Sexes be considered as belonging to their very Essence, or are they different according to their Function?

Eric W. Heaton

### I. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- a) What is the respective contribution to this whole subject of men and women, of:

- 1) Students of the Bible;
- 2) Systematic theologians;
- 3) Historians;
- 4) Philosophers;
- 5) Psychologists;
- 6) The experience of untrained, ordinary people in the life of the Church and outside it?

In other words, are we in danger of being too biblicist? Are we in danger of using the Bible for non-Biblical ideas, using it as a means of covering our own ideas? A member of the Church of England must ask such a question, as will a member of the Orthodox Church and of the Roman Catholic Church - also most English Christians, whatever their allegiance.

- b) What is the proper procedure?

Are we to try to establish a theological, philosophical principle, and then with that on a piece of paper go away to act upon it? Or, are we rather to face a number of concrete human situations and to view them in the light of our Christian faith, in the light of the Christian Church?... I believe that the Bible does not speak specially to a Biblical scholar, but that it speaks to the Church, and that its members, enlightened and empowered by their life in the Church, then speak to the concrete situation. The Bible never answers questions exactly as we by our experience feel compelled to formulate them. We must also learn to recognize that the Bible also asks its own questions and that we too often forget that those questions are important questions to answer.

### II. MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS

- a) How are the differences between the sexes discovered?

Apart from the physiological differences, is it possible to identify these differences outside of personal relationship between man and woman? And in this relationship is there not a basic difference which finds, not fixed and unalterable, but various and changing expression? By sex do we not mean essential differences discovered in relationship and not differences analyzed in isolation? My answer would be "yes".

- b) What really lies behind the question asked, the subject of this address?

What practical issue is involved? Do we not really want to know whether we should ignore the differences between the sexes as far as we can, or whether we should accept these differences as God-given and work out their significance?

c) Can we ignore the differences?

Certainly we cannot ignore the physiological difference. Then, is this physiological difference of importance? Hebrew anthropology, the New Testament as well as the Old, insist that man is a whole, a psycho-physical unity and that the body cannot be ignored. According to the Bible, man is known in relationship, above all in relationship to God which makes a man a man, and in relationship to other human beings. Men and women do not have bodies, they are bodies. Do we accept this Biblical anthropology? Or do we consider that the body is a "physical frill", an addendum to personality, independent of it?

d) If marriage is built on sex differentiation, however much it transcends physical relationship, we must ask whether marriage built on these differences is essential or functional? What does the Bible say about this? (See Mark 10: 2-9). This is the most authoritative interpretation which we possess of the first two chapters of Genesis, because it contains both questions from the Old Testament and it is a Christological interpretation. Jesus Christ treats the couple as a married couple. Marriage expresses the original purpose of God. Does it express His eternal purpose? If marriages, or some marriages, are made in Heaven, do they continue to exist in Heaven? Galatians 3:28 (largely used in this connection) I believe is totally irrelevant, as are the parallel passages in Colossians 3:11 and Ephesians 4. I believe they mean that "No one is inferior in Christ."

What about our Lord's saying in Mark 12:18-25? It is important to get this in its total context. What is normally quoted is verse 25. Some interpret that in Heaven there is no such thing that can properly be called marriage; i.e. the sexless relationship. Or are we to interpret it as an ad hominem argument? Jesus says that we cannot draw too close and too earthly a picture of Heaven. He does not allow the question. He is saying that we must not let the conditions of this world determine the life to come. Do we believe; or do we not believe, that a man and his wife know each other eternally as man and wife, whatever the relationship - but obviously purified and enlarged? And does re-marriage of Christians after the death of a former partner suggest that the enlargement of the marriage relationship in the consummation of all things consists in part of the removal of the limitation known in this life whereby the marriage relationship has at any one time to be an exclusive relationship?

e) On what evidence and by what right do we presume to describe life in the Kingdom of God, or life after death? Can we have enough knowledge of the nature of our being in the Kingdom of God to argue that sex differences upon which marriage is built are excluded? I should say that we cannot have that knowledge. Must we not base our thought on what we already know and affirm that a differentiation between male and female (which is found throughout the whole of the created order and not only in man and woman), a differentiation which governs all our relationships, is basic to our condition, certainly now and, as far as we can conceive, forever? This rules out sexlessness.

f) Do we agree that Christian marriage is the archetypal relationship ("The type of relationship from which other relationships should take their direction") between man and woman? If so, does it not follow that thinking about the relationship between men and women in the wider fields of the Church and society must start, not end, there, with the archetype? The Bible has little or

nothing to say about the relationship between men and women outside of marriage. (Would you not expect this in a Jewish society?) But the Bible has much to say indirectly (both in the passages about marriage and in those about individual men and women) about the dignity of their personal status as human beings created and redeemed by God. This teaching is not less important.

g) Is it not vital to guard against:

1. the idea that marriage is in itself fulfillment and that it excludes all other relationships? Is it not true that marriage is the point at which relationships begin in the family, the source of the family, in the society in which the family lives, and so on and on, reaching out from the couple into the wider circles of society?
2. the idea that unmarried people are so to speak not on the central line of God's created purpose? Is it not true that nobody in this fallen world is on that central line and that married people equally fail to realize the fullness of the archetypal relationship?

The problem of the unmarried person (both man and woman) does not allow of any easy solution, but is it not true that the problem is more to be solved in the sphere of Christian action than Christian theology, in relationship, in mutual service? Is it not false to say that God is denying to unmarried persons a significance and a fulfillment, with which He automatically endows married persons, by the simple fact of their co-habitation? Is it not true to say that the relationship or vocation which is the ontological feature of marriage can be known in diverse ways by the unmarried in a Christian community? If the Christian Church were purged of its patriarchal notions and if it were a really dynamic Christian fellowship, would the unmarried person be alone? Would not he or she, being unmarried, gain a range of relationships something akin to the relationship known in marriage?

h) Do we not need to recover, not only true theological principles, but above all the fellowship of men and women in the Body of Christ (as it was intended to exist as a real thing) in local communities? It is a practical problem. I find nothing in theology to stand in the way of women working in partnership with men, doing all that they can do, being what they are, and not what feminists or others say they ought to be.

### III. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS RAISED IN THE DISCUSSION

a) What is the fundamental nature of woman?

No real answer was attempted, except to say that the physiological can be defined; also that tenderness, upward-looking, compassion seem to be feminine characteristics, which vary greatly from person to person. A woman's fundamental nature is something which she "discovers when she meets man;— it is her discovery of what she is." She (and man too) should have the greatest amount of freedom, within the Church and society; all imposed restrictions should be removed, so that she can be what she really is.

b) But what are the differences between the sexes?

Various points of view were expressed. There are some people who believe there is a difference between the sexes (a) because of literal translation of the story of Creation in Genesis, i.e. man was made from the earth, woman from the rib of man; and (b) that the differences only seem to come after the Fall, when Adam and Eve took their different names. It was pointed out by Canon Heaton (who is suspicious of theological discussion founded on two mythological chapters in Genesis) that the writer of Genesis lived after the Fall. We have no way of knowing if such distinction, based upon "before the Fall", is right or wrong. Some biologists claim that there is no ultimate distinction between the sexes. Certainly in the first six weeks of embryonic life there is no differentiation of sex; we all have a common origin. What is important is the acceptance later by each person of his or her God-given sex and the recognition of the fact that no man nor woman is either 100% male or female.

c) Is this differentiation between the sexes restricted specifically to a man and a woman in their relationship to each other as male and female, and within the context of marriage?

From one point of view the cooperation of men and women in society is basically the continuation of society through reproduction. That is the way God made the world. But this relationship is not limited to one man and one woman; it has social implications. Viewed from the perpetuation of the species, the man's relationship while indispensable is very casual, whereas the function of the woman is just the opposite. Theoretically, the mother could fulfill all of the functions, without the necessity of the man. This point of view was disagreed with. The contribution of sociology, psychology, education and theology, not to mention the experience of families, all point to the fact that the father is indispensable both as an individual in the home and in society. Perhaps part of the modern sickness of so much family life is because the father's relationship has been considered too casual. But where the whole person or family really develops, the father is absolutely essential. Isn't this also good theology?

d) What does the Bible tell us about our life on earth?

It shows us how we must live together (with marriage as a central fact in human relationships) as sinners, but living under the promise of redemption and forgiveness, of reconciliation and fidelity. These qualities can be exercised in all human relationships.

e) Is there any eschatological significance in the sex differentiation?

Do we, as individuals and in relationship, have eschatological significance? Do we believe that we shall in the life of the Kingdom be in any sense ourselves? Is that not safe-guarded in the very difficult concept of the resurrection of the body - that there is continuity of the personality? It is radically different from various oriental notions that the consummation consists in the notion of complete absorption in God. What does it mean if one is going to exclude the relationship in which he, or she, became one flesh with someone else? St. Paul says in I Corinthians 15 that we should not speculate about the kind of body we shall have, because there will be unimaginable and great change.

Canon Heaton thinks that both womanhood and manhood are projected into the next world, but he refuses to define what these two really are. Isn't it a bit difficult to say on the one hand that womanhood and manhood belong to our essence and on the other hand to be quite unable to define it? Therefore, isn't it essentially functional and belonging to this creation only, not to the New Creation?

The Canon ended the discussion by saying that he finds it necessary to express the fundamental, radically essential nature of the differences between the sexes, but that what interests him is "what we ought to act on now."

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### III. SOCIETY

What are some of the Issues, on which the Churches should take a position, affecting the Status of Women?

#### A. Questions before the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations' Economic and Social Council

Mrs. A. Forrest Anderson

To some, at the time of the creation of the United Nations Organization, it seemed unwise to establish a special commission for the consideration of women's questions. Why not leave them to the Commission on Human Rights, or to the other commissions? But it was decided that women were greatly discriminated against, and so the Commission on the Status of Women was set up ten years ago. Its terms of reference are: the civil, political, economic and educational rights of women.

The United Nations in its Charter refers to men and women in equal terms and as having equal rights. The Charter also referred initially to many other goals, which later seemed to need clarifying and amplifying, and so a wider statement of beliefs was adopted, the Declaration of Human Rights. But even this Declaration proved to be too general in its statements on certain items of concern of the Status of Women Commission, and it has sought a clearer definition of agreement.

The questions being studied by the Commission are:

#### a - Civil Rights

Marriage often deprives a woman of some essential rights, both personal and property rights. Sometimes this is due to laws, sometimes to customs.

#### 1) The authority of the husband:

- a) He decides common matters and has parental authority;
- b) He represents his wife in legal proceedings;
- c) He can oppose her working outside the home, and in some countries he can definitely prohibit it;

- d) He has power over his wife's property, over their common property, and over the property of the family; in some countries the wife may not acquire, administer, enjoy or dispose of property;
- e) Sometimes the wife may, at the dissolution of the marriage, find herself with no share of the property acquired during the marriage.

2) The nationality of the woman:

Both marriage and its dissolution can affect the nationality of a woman:

- a) Often she is required to change her nationality to that of her husband; or
- b) She loses her own nationality if she marries an alien; or
- c) An alien woman acquires automatically the nationality of her husband; or
- d) If the husband chooses to take the nationality of another country, then his wife must also. \*)

3) The domicile of the woman

In many countries a woman may have no domicile other than that of her husband. If later they are separated, or the wife is deserted and she wants a legal divorce, she must locate him and try to get the divorce by the laws of the country where he has gone, not necessarily where they married or lived together. In other words, a deserted wife cannot establish a domicile other than that of her husband.

4) Other Concerns

In less developed countries there are the additional concerns of child marriages; bride-price; widows being inherited by the families of the husbands; and others.

b - Political Rights

- 1) In 64 countries women have an equal vote with men, including three where voting is compulsory for men, not for women;
- 2) In 3 countries women are subject to certain restrictions not imposed on men;
- 3) In 2 countries women have the local vote only;
- 4) In 15 countries women have no voting rights.

c - Economic Rights

1) Opportunities in professional and technical fields:

In March 1956 the Secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women asked the United Nations to make a study of the training and opportunities

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\*) The U.N. Commission is asking that a woman be given the choice, not that an automatic decision be imposed upon her.

open (and not open) to women in professional and technical fields.

2) Problems due to Family Responsibilities:

Women with family responsibilities are faced by the problems of :  
 (a) lack of maternity leaves; (b) lack of nursery facilities for small children; and (c) lack of recreational facilities for older children; (d) care of the sick and aged.

3) Equal Pay for Equal Work:

The International Labour Organization Convention has called for the support of this principle; it has been ratified by only ten countries.

4) Promotions:

Women, simply because they are women, are frequently passed over for promotions. Women are rarely even considered for the top jobs, even those women who are qualified by training, experience and ability.

5) Part-time Work:

An inquiry is being undertaken by the I.L.O. Women often lose the opportunity to work if no part-time work is available, for many can only work part-time due to family responsibilities. Also, lack of training for the women and the failure to develop the handicraft and cottage industries, have prevented women from taking part in the economic life of some countries.

6) Dismissal:

In times of unemployment and depression, women are generally the first to be dismissed.

7) Age:

- (a) there is a strong tendency (even in the Church) to establish a lower retirement age for women, reducing their work-life span, and often at a time when many women are reaching their peak in working capacity; and
- (b) older women frequently have difficulty in getting jobs.

The Commission is not trying to get women out of the home to work, but wants to protect the rights of those already working to support themselves or their families.

d - Educational Rights

1) Elementary Education: Discrimination against women and girls is most evident where compulsory education does not exist for girls, and compulsory education for girls is much less frequent than for boys. Sometimes, due to lack of facilities, to custom, tradition or religion, or to economic conditions (the girls stay at home to do the housework) education which is compulsory is not enforced.

2) Secondary Education: Education at this level is frequently much less compulsory, especially for girls. There are fewer girls' schools and sometimes the curriculum is different, and inferior, for girls.



- 3) Technical and Vocational Education: There are substantial differences here. Sometimes there are no schools for girls, or there are different curricula. Also, there is frequently the traditional belief that girls are incapable of entering certain "masculine" occupations. This produces a vicious circle - the girls are not admitted to training, hence no jobs - there are no jobs for them, so they do not need training.
- 4) Higher Education: The percentage of girls is substantially less. Fewer apply for admission, often because fewer have had the earlier preparation. Some countries do not have professional training for women because many careers and professions are closed to women.

How does the Commission Work Towards Constructive Change?

- a - It brings matters to its international forum where they are exposed to the public opinion of the world;
- b - It seeks by all methods at its disposal to persuade the General Assembly of the U.N. to insert clauses in its international covenants (for all nations to sign and then act upon) which will advance the status of women - a slow method, but an important one.
- c - It uses every other means at its disposal:
- (1) the I.L.O. about economic opportunities;
  - (2) UNESCO about educational items;
  - (3) the U.N. Social Commission for areas and problems needing its kind of help;
  - (4) technical assistance programmes to include advancing the status of women;
  - (5) the World Health Organization;
  - (6) the Food and Agricultural Organization, etc.
- d - It directs many requests to Non-Governmental Organizations. At the establishment of the U.N. the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the parent-body of the Commission on the Status of Women, was given the privilege of placing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in consultative relationship to it and to its sub-bodies. The C.C.I.A. has such a relationship, and many other organizations, including the Y.W.C.A. No session of the Status of Women Commission passes without sharing the advice and experience of the NGO's, and many resolutions are directed to them for their help.

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B. Other Issues

1. The questions of Family Planning and Public Morality were presented by Mrs. C. J. Dippel-Schreiber and Propst zur Nieden, who pointed out the need for the churches to take steps quickly in these important fields. The churches need to take the initiative in giving sound marriage counselling, practical guidance and pastoral care on the

the question of family planning. The Church needs to bring the discussion out into the open in decency, freedom and the clear light of God's truth.

2. In the area of Public Morality, the Church needs to consider the immense importance of the modern media of advertising, publicity, etc., and to take a social responsibility in helping its people to make the right decisions in the use of these media.

3. Professor E. de Vries, Chairman of the Study on the Christian Responsibility towards Areas of Rapid Social Change, pointed out that everywhere the march towards the emancipation of women is the most striking and far-reaching change. He asked for a strong collaboration between the Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women and the Department on Church and Society, which is directing the special Study mentioned above.

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#### IV. THE CHURCH

What are some of the Questions upon which the Churches need to act?

##### A. The Relation of Women's Organizations to the present Ecclesiastical Structure

(Dr. Porter and Dr. Wyker were asked to speak about their organizations).

##### 1. The Y.W.C.A. - Dr. Una Porter

The Y.W.C.A.'s are trying to see their place as a women's movement in relation to present ecclesiastical structures. We know that we cannot be what the Church is. We don't try to be a Church, but part of our task is to relate our members to their own churches.

As the membership of the Church consists of men and women, the needs of women should be considered by the leadership of the Church, which is wholly in the hands of men. Can the Gospel be proclaimed; can the Love of God be mediated to the whole race, by men alone? Is there not room for some interchange between men and women representing our Christian faith, and together bringing a live and creative function into the Church, even as a new enrichment has been experienced by what the Younger Churches are bringing to us to-day?

We are not looking for a position for women to serve in that ecclesiastical structure as an aim in itself, but we ask that we may be enabled to make a contribution. We should like to do all we can, being what we are, and not being either feminists, or what Biblical ecclesiastics say we ought to be. The growth of underdeveloped countries and areas can only be achieved if women are given the chance to grow as human beings. In areas of rapid social change, women are affected in a special way. Is there a weakness sometimes in the Church's endeavour to meet the needs of people, due to the fact that the work of the Church is planned at top levels entirely by men?

Being a world Christian Women's movement, our length of experience in

dealing with people of other races, creeds, nationalities and cultures has been at times a valuable reservoir for other more recent world organizations to draw on. Dr. Visser 't Hooft encouraged us in our ecumenical studies and activities. Our level is a different one to that of the World Council of Churches, for we do not move on a theological plane. This limits us in one way, for we have within our membership Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox and Coptic Orthodox church members, as well as members of the various Protestant denominations. In this connection, however, we do meet at a deep level in our struggle, particularly with our Roman Catholic members, to find those places where we can wholly and trustingly meet one another spiritually. We have discovered that this is done in the realm of personal encounter, love, and prayer. You will agree that this is a very deeply Christian level, though not theological.

The Y.W.C.A. and Church women's organizations do their work outside the Church, because the ecclesiastical structure does not yet make room for many women and the rich contributions which they have to bring.

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## 2. American Church Women's Organizations

- Mrs. James D. Wyker

The development of the Church women's organizations in America is a thrilling story of evolution. Women's organizations were not started to achieve equal rights for women in the Church, or to find a "place" for them. They were organized to meet a need. Many years ago, when woman's "place" was only in the home, a few brave souls came timidly into a church to form an organization in order that missionaries might be sent to other countries to share the Gospel of Good News. The women had prayed, and had been reading the Book. The Book said, "Go - even unto the uttermost parts of the earth", and women are so naïve that when it said "Go" they thought it meant just that!

We learned recently in our country of a statement which was found written in the early pages of the Presbytery, back in 1811 (and I am sure that such statements could be found on the records of other churches) :

"The women may meet to carry on their work, but if there is any praying to be done, they must call in a minister or an elder, for no one knows what these misguided females might pray for."

Those were wise men! It is dangerous business to "tamper" with prayer if one prays - believing! We are told the men laughed as they saw those Mite Boxes filled with pennies, nickels and dimes. One could not blame them. However, there were no business and professional women in those days, no career women of any kind. They brought what they had - "butter and egg" money. Our country was then an agricultural society. Missionaries began to go! That "small change" has now grown into thousands of dollars and hundreds of people have gone to share the Gospel story around the world.

The women did not just send. They followed the missionaries with living concern, read about the countries to which they had gone, and prayed for people in far-away places.

Certainly the church women in our country have not been wholly responsible

for the missionary programme of the Church, but they have been as "gad-flies", working, urging, insisting, giving! They have studied not only the missionary work, but other countries, and have grown to love people in many lands. In some women's organizations they now meet to study, to have programmes and to work for the Church, but their missionary giving is done through the church budget.

Then came the next step in the evolving story. Some of the women began to have misgivings. They saw a discrepancy in their behaviour. They were sending missionaries, asking them to live out the Gospel of love in other countries, treating all people as children of God regardless of race, colour or sex, but they themselves were not always following this practice in their own communities. The women knew that in our large country, made up of so many different nationalities and colours (we are called a "Melting Pot" as you know) they must be, themselves, what they expected others to be. The next struggle began: the study of race, Christian family life ("Our own homes must reflect our Christian experience," they said) and social and community issues of all kinds were discussed, and the women went into action. In one of our state legislatures, church organizations had been working for a bill that had to do with more protection for working women and children. The bill did not carry and the women were leaving the State House feeling discouraged, until they heard one legislator say to another, "When these church women begin to realize the power of good they have, it is going to be too bad for us."

Wars came, two world wars in our generation, and again the women were disturbed. Would men go on, they asked themselves, generation after generation, killing off the best young men in each country; settling few problems but creating many more? Again the women studied and prayed! They were convinced that, next to the churches, the United Nations is the best instrument for peace. Therefore, they began to form study groups and to prepare materials interpreting its work. As reactionary groups across the country have been attacking the United Nations and seeking to destroy its usefulness, 2000 local Councils of Church Women and many denominational women's organizations have been steadily and calmly getting facts before the people. They have become concerned about many problems relating to World Order.

Having heard many sermons and speeches on "The Unity of the Church," the women decided that while the Church debated the issue, they would just begin to work together! In most of our countries, you do not have the problem (and the impetus) of many different denominations as we have in the United States, but long ago we began to see that, as important and rich as this development has been, Bishop Brent was right when he declared; "A divided church cannot save a sinful world."

Therefore the women decided to get together! Representatives from three national church women's organizations came together in Atlantic City, New Jersey, December 1941, and voted to become The United Council of Church Women. The fact that on December 7th, our country had declared war against Japan did not stop the women. All the more reason, they declared, why the churches must get together and hold together. The women in the membership did not represent their churches. They were just individual church women discovering the joy of getting acquainted with other church women, and finding that there were many things they could do together which they could not do separately.

In 1950 the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United

States of America was formed and the United Council of Church Women within the new National Council. For two years before they voted this action, women in local and state organizations had debated the issue. Many women felt it was not wise to lose their independence, to be forced to speak and act only as the Church did. Others believed that if we are to become increasingly a part of the Church, then we must be in the Church, not outside.

"Unfortunately, this fuller integration, which is becoming a reality in both the National and World Councils, does not always exist in our various communions. Some have achieved a high degree of integration; a few have adopted the policy but not the practice. Others vote freely for desegregation of the races but persist in spiritual segregation of women, either by actual vote or by remaining silent on the issue. Such unity means that women should be willing to lose their identity as separate organizations when integration of women into the total life and work of the Church is a reality. Women may continue to work in groups at certain times, but such groups should be functional under the direction of boards, well-balanced in membership of both men and women." \*)

The General Director of the United Church Women does not say that women's organizations will "die out". She states they should be willing "to lose their identity as separate organizations when integration of women into the total life and work of the Church is a reality."

No, such a movement will never "die"; it will evolve into something greater. Some women will always wish that things would stay as they were - back in Ladies' Aid days! But the Church marches on - seeking to meet the needs in each new era, and wise are the women who keep growing with the Church, holding to the truth that is eternal but willing to use new methods in a period of rapid social change.

I recently saw a cartoon in a newspaper. It was the picture of two little cocoons on the limb of a tree. They were looking up at two beautiful butterflies flying around above them. Commented one to the other, "They'll never get ME up in one of those things!"

That little cocoon hasn't got a chance. In spite of itself, it will evolve into something better. That is the story of evolution. That is Eternal Life.

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B. The Place of Women in the Ministry of the Church and in the Government of the Churches

- Marga Bührig

I should like to make a small correction in the formulation of the subject: "The Status and Place of Women in the ministries of the churches." This minor correction, however, has certain theological implications. I think that the reason for the application of this correction is the plurality of the services.

\*) From the report made by the General Director of United Church Women to the Assembly in Cleveland, November 1955.

Germany The "Vikarin" has full proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, but there is a distinction made between this and the full ministry, a distinction almost impossible to define. In the Eastern Zone, there is a great need for pastors, so many Vikarinnen have taken over, out of necessity, the full responsibility of pastors. The congregations readily accept them.

Great Britain a) In the Baptist Church in England the ordination of women is permitted, but no woman has been ordained since 1945.

b) In the Methodist Church in England, seven out of ten services are conducted by lay men and lay women (Women are not permitted to administer the Sacraments). In addition there is the remarkable pastoral and teaching as well as spiritual ministry of the "Class Leader", who is always a layman or a lay woman. Here cooperation enters very seriously and is real. These lay leaders are the local church court (also, men and women serve in the National Assembly). This is the priesthood of all believers at work, for every member is considered a minister and an evangelist.

c) The English Presbyterian Church has recently received a woman in the ordained ministry, after having had women elders for a long time.

Jugoslavia Many young women study at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade and afterwards they work in the villages, where they can do almost any kind of church work.

Netherlands Women can preach and teach the Gospel, but they cannot proclaim the Word nor administer the Sacraments. They have the right to serve the Church in the full ministry (as Vikarinnen) when a minister is absent, but they cannot be full pastors in their own right. The Reformed Synod studied and discussed the question. But many presbyteries were against it, so the subject was postponed.

Norway Parliament wanted to ratify the U.N. Charter on Human Rights. The majority of the delegates in Parliament voted in favour of ordaining women, against the two Faculties of Theology and nine Norwegian bishops. On the whole there were no serious theological arguments against it. In this case the State did not find the cooperation of the Church. The argument of the Church was that such a decision would be against the tradition of the Church and would in the end split the Church as such.

Sweden The situation is very rigid at present, although there are quite a number of women theologians.

U.S.A. a) the American Lutheran Church: The only thing women cannot do is proclaim the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, but they do everything else as church workers, and they have very responsible positions, often as pastors' or parish assistants. But there are few women on governing boards, and only one is now on the National Central Board.

b) the Methodist Church has recently voted in its General Assembly to ordain women to the full ministry. Even married women can now be ordained.

basis for cooperation, and that therefore the churches can and must lead in achieving right relationships between men and women, and in showing examples. In some countries the churches are losing women because their gifts are not fully used. We note, however, that where the sense of missionary vocation is strong in the Church, cooperation of men and women is often in practice, frequently of necessity.

We realize that cooperation between men and women will work out differently in different social situations and in the various Church traditions. There is no desire to impose a particular pattern of cooperation in any area or upon any church. Rather, in the richness of ecumenical exchange, we hope to learn of many different ways in which such cooperation is contributing to the wholeness of the Body of Christ.

Our task is:

- a) to discover existing ways of cooperation;
- b) to help to initiate new ones; and
- c) to help to better the present patterns.

The Department must be concerned with society as well as with church life. The changes in society and the challenge of non-Christian thought and patterns of life which members of the Church are facing are a challenge which must be answered.

## B. Activities of the Department and Recommendations of this Consultation, as approved by the Working Committee

### 1. The work of National Study Commissions

The interest of Church leaders in a number of countries in the work of the Department has resulted during recent years in the establishment of committees or study commissions on the Cooperation of Men and Women. Some of these are under the auspices of National Christian Councils. Others have been established by confessions. The Department welcomes such groups which can study the implications of the problem in a national situation, and help to interpret to the member-churches.

### 2. A Yearly Consultation on an international level

As at Davos in 1955 and Herrenalb in 1956, the Department voted to hold another consultation in July 1957, at New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A., at which representatives - men and women, clergy and laity - from a number of different churches will meet together to review different aspects of the question of cooperation and to make further plans.

### 3. Regional Conferences

In collaboration with other Departments of the World Council of Churches and in consultation with member-churches, the Department is planning to have conferences in various parts of the world. It is especially concerned with

holding such meetings in areas where cooperation of men and women meets with special difficulties, lack of education of women, non-Christian influences upon the status of women, or for other reasons. The Department is happy to work with member-churches which may initiate such conferences.

The Department is hoping to have such a conference in the Middle East or in Greece, when circumstances permit; and in West Africa in January 1958 in relation to the All-Africa Conference, at Ibadan, Nigeria.

#### 4. The Initiation and Stimulation of Theological Study

The Department has asked theologians and biblical scholars to specialize upon these questions. Some have written articles on the biblical and theological bases of cooperation. Others are asked to join in study groups with specialists in other fields such as history, anthropology, biology, psychology, etc. Some documents are now available, and in time a larger number of such documents will be prepared. Also, the Department is asking professors of divinity schools to encourage students to do serious study on this subject and to write dissertations.

#### 5. Keeping this Concern before the other Departments of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council

Another task of the Department is to encourage the departments of the World Council and the International Missionary Council to include the concern of cooperation in all of their activities. A first step may have to be the inclusion of more women in the membership of departments and committees of the W.C.C., as members of conferences and of planning committees. The Department on Cooperation helps in this regard by making available the names of well-qualified women who can so serve. It works closely with all departments as they plan programmes and projects in order that the question of cooperation may be considered as a part of every programme. It looks forward to the time when the practice of cooperation will be considered a richness which cannot be disregarded, and the lack of it as real poverty.

#### 6. Cooperation with Women's Christian Organizations

Many women's organizations, and in a special way the YWCA's (Young Women's Christian Associations), are very successful in helping their members to develop their gifts and to take greater responsibility in all realms of life. The Department keeps in touch and tries to discover with them the best possible ways to prepare women to take a fuller share, either individually or in groups, in the work of their church and of society.

#### 7. Cooperation with Organizations already engaged in Cooperation

Cooperative activities between men and women have been carried on for a long time by the Student Christian Movement, the other youth movements, the Christian Home Movement, etc. The Department hopes to learn of examples of groups promoting effective cooperation and to make known their experiences and achievement through its Bulletin.



8. Encouraging Christian witness within Secular Organizations already working in the same Field

Among the many organizations devoted to the emancipation and education of women, the "Commission on the Status of Women" of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and its related national commissions, are places where Christians must bring their Christian witness. The Department, through the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, must continue to participate in this work alongside the non-governmental organizations.

9. Publishing Materials

This Department has a number of documents available in French, German and English on the following subjects:

the biblical teaching about men and women;  
 sociological, psychological and theological considerations about cooperation;  
 information and reports about the place of women in different churches and areas of the world;  
 practical problems concerning cooperation;

and more must be made available.

Also, the Department is planning to issue a new study outline, and a Bulletin, so as to be able to share news and opinion, in a two-way exchange, with leaders of churches and organizations.

10. Travel

Staff members and other representatives of the Department travel to different parts of the world to carry its concerns to church leaders and administrators, to theological professors and students, members of men's and women's organizations, both within and outside the Church; and, where cooperation is not possible at the time, to help to diagnose and to work towards a future solution. These visits frequently have to focus upon women's groups, especially when the women are not yet being given full opportunity to participate in all the activities of the Church or of society.

