

# DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

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The Church must actively promote the redistribution of power, without discrimination of any kind, so that all men, women and young people may participate in the benefits of development.

It was this statement (par. 23 of the Report of Uppsala Section III) which prompted the observations that follow. One presumes that it was incorporated into the Report as a result of the impression made by the much-criticized composition of the delegations attending the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in 1968. As is well known, only 9 per cent of the delegates entitled to vote were women, while of all the delegates, both men and women, who were entitled to vote, only 4 per cent were less than thirty-five years old: these are facts which allow one to draw certain a posteriori conclusions concerning the power structures of the member churches. Virtually no statistics are available to tell us how many women and how many people under thirty-five occupy decision-making positions in authoritative ecclesiastical bodies. As far as women are concerned, what is ponderance of women who attend church services and other religious functions. But apart from these points, it is meaningful to undertake an examination of the problem they raise, namely that of the position of women, because ever since Amsterdam 1948 this has been a key topic in the deliberations and discussions of the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Movement.

## 1. The Theme of 'Women' in the Documents of the World Council of Churches

At Amsterdam in 1948 'The Life and Work of Women in the Church' was discussed as one of the concerns of the World Council of Churches. An inquiry among the various churches had produced so many answers, both from official church quarters and from various women's organizations and groups, that one thing emerged very clearly: we were faced here with a very real problem. Kathleen Bliss was entrusted with the task of assessing the material which had been gathered, and in his preface to her book, W.A. Visser 't Hooft wrote:

It is not only the opinion of Dr. Bliss, but the almost monotonous and impressive leitmotive of the reports from all countries that (in the words of the Amsterdam Assembly) 'the Church as the Body of Christ consists of men and women, created as responsible persons to glorify God and do His will', but that 'this truth, accepted in theory, is too often ignored in practice'. (1)

*what an idea!*  
*PRAXIS*

The second half of this sentence requires no alteration even today more than twenty years later. The problem of how to reconcile theory and practice or, to put it another way, the translation of theoretical insights into responsible action, is probably the core of the matter, and throughout this study we will find ourselves asking what exactly are the forces which are preventing this translation from taking place and which are thereby perpetuating discrimination against women instead of removing it? But first of all we may perhaps be permitted briefly to cast an eye back over the work of the relevant department of the World Council of Churches.

The 'Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church' was founded at Amsterdam in 1948, and at Evanston in 1954 the executive secretary of this Commission, Dr. Madeleine Barot, presented a report on its workings. She gave the reasons for changing its title to read 'Department on Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society', and the document she presented makes clear the total rejection of all forms of feminism:

The first title, 'The Life and Work of Women in the Church', must now be replaced by a new name that will not give the false conception that this is a Women's Department. The most accurate name we have found is: 'The Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society'. As titles cannot entirely describe the full work of a department, and as questions related to the place of women, of women's work, of women's organizations, must be considered in the light of the co-operation between men and women, this title has been chosen as the best possible one. (2)

Elsewhere in the same document we find a description of the church's task as regards women which may doubtless also be applied to the Department itself:

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to help them (i.e. women) find the right balance between their family responsibilities and their professional life; to help them, while changing from dependent, protected beings to responsible members of society to remain feminine even if they are working in an exclusively masculine environment. (3)

In 1955 this policy was further underlined by the so-called 'Davos Statement', where we read:

If the implications of the co-operation of men and women in all doctrinal and practical issues of the church were generally recognized by the member churches and the departments of the World Council of Churches, there would be no further need for this Department. For the good of the church and the effectiveness of its witness in the world, it is necessary, for the present, to continue to emphasize this special concern. The Department is trying to put the whole discussion on this issue on a new level and, on the basis of theological thinking and sociological

observations, to stimulate the churches to rediscover the full meaning of co-operation between men and women in church and society. It serves within a functional area, concerned with methods and procedures for achieving that co-operation, rather than as an agency related to organized constituency groups of men or women in the church. (4)

For the next few years the objectives stated here were to provide the course for action: the Department did not see itself as set up to represent a group 'being discriminated against' and did not see its task to be that of helping to change existing power structures. On the contrary, it saw the way open to the mutual study of basic problems. The themes of its earlier deliberations provide the milestones on this way, and the problems which were the centre of its preoccupations were formulated as early as 1954 by Madeleine Barot in the words:

Lastly, we see on every hand an attempt being made to determine what equality means when it is applied to men and women. All are agreed that equality between men and women does not mean identity, but what do we mean? A similar effort for definition is necessary when one speaks of the specific gifts - qualities - functions - of women. Too often, we say that woman must be free to utilize all the gifts that God has entrusted to her and, paradoxically, we are still imprisoned by the definition of womanliness based on a psychology and sociology which are out-moded. The day of aggressive feminism - denying that there are differences between men and women seems to have passed. Today, women do not desire to be like men, but realize that they can contribute fully as women, not conforming to patterns and methods of life and work which are masculine. (5)

These questions were given a provisional answer in the 'Davos Statement' to which we have already referred. The basic ideas, which occur over and over again, are the following:

The church is a whole, and can only be a whole if all its members make their own contribution.

The gifts of men and women are different. Their 'unity in diversity' is part of God's creation.

This is the reason why the exegesis of the two creation accounts has played a large part in so many discussion. 'The reason we are urging co-operation and partnership is because we believe it is biblical' is what we read in the Report of the Odense Consultation of 1958. (6) Partnership and co-operation were favoured because of the conviction that they are anticipated in the Bible. It follows that there has been intensive study of the relevant biblical passages, such as: Eph. 5.21ff; I Cor. 11 and 14; I Tim. 2.15; Gal. 3.28, etc.

such expression  
didn't exist?

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It was evident that although these principles are recognized as having biblical foundation, they were far from being realized even in the churches themselves. This is why the Odense Consultation in 1958 wanted to find out what obstacles were standing in the way of the realization of partnership and co-operation. It was equally obvious that the incentive to examine personal attitudes was coming from outside. This is how Madeleine Barot describes this matter in her little book Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society:

A wide enquiry has shown that the economic and political emancipation of women has already had profound repercussions. A great hope was born: would not a better use of these new feminine capabilities give birth to new forms of witness and service?

One cannot therefore discuss woman's place and service in the church and come to any conclusions without also examining her role and function in contemporary society. It took a relatively short time for it to become generally accepted that the church does not exist simply as an isolated body in antithesis to society but rather that - from a sociological point of view - it is a social group dependent in many different ways on society and therefore naturally enough exerting its influence on society too. This is why the Department included sociological and psychological problems and research data in its work as well as theological ones. The objective was to equip the churches to take up a position in the face of social problems and responsibilities. (8) This they were to do as a 'church for others', relying on their biblically-based insights.

*Quoted*  
In the course of this preparatory study and as a result of contact with experts from various scientific disciplines, problems of a specifically practical and concrete nature made themselves increasingly felt. As far as the church was concerned, one question to arise was that of the ordination of women; from the social point of view, one of the most frequent problems was that concerning the changing roles of men and women. (9). In the process a fact that was repeatedly encountered was the so-called double burden of both career and family imposed on women, and indeed the changing structures of the family, especially in Africa and Asia, and of marriage, especially in the USA and Western Europe.

Within the scope of this article it is quite impossible to enumerate all the topics which the Department dealt with. But it is certain that its work gave much food for thought to many people and provided a basis for the churches subsequently to take up considered attitudes towards certain problems such as the ordination of women for instance. Here, in the context of the church itself, this resulted in fruitful co-operation with the Faith and Order Department, and led to the question of the ordination of women being placed on the agenda of the World Conference at Montreal and to the publication of a combined pamphlet. (10)

If one examines attentively the names of those taking part in the various consultations organized by the Department, one discovers that, although men were deliberately included not just nominally but in the basic conception of the Department, the preponderant majority of those participating were in fact women. It is true (see above) that any idea that it should in any way represent the interests of 'powerful' women's organizations at the World Council of Churches had been firmly rejected right from the start. The Department had pledged itself to deal thoroughly with essential topics in loyal co-operation with both men and women, and in doing so it had achieved some very real results. Yet now, twenty years later, it would seem that the real balance of power within the churches has changed scarcely at all, if one thinks, for example, of the small number of women, delegates at Uppsala. All we can do is accept the fact that the good, thorough and comprehensive work of the Department has as yet failed to bring about a change in the existing set-up, and has not produced a genuine balance or a real partnership between men and women in the church. Thus we in the church find ourselves in about the same position as society itself, if one may be allowed to use so wide-ranging a comparison. Making allowances for a measure of exaggeration, one might almost say that these meticulous theological and psychological inquiries into the 'true nature of woman', her intrinsic gifts, the mission entrusted her by God, and the correct appraisal of the unalterable contrast between man and woman which is part of creation, have perhaps led to an inability or reluctance even to appreciate that 'discrimination' against women exists, even though its existence is borne out by the facts. It may be that lucid theological insights make people blind to the practical conditions which require change. At all events the enormous discrepancy between the splendid theological arguments put forward concerning the divinely willed and ordained co-operation of men and women and the various power structures to be encountered in the majority of churches belonging to the World Council of Churches may lead one to suppositions of this kind. There may indeed be a parallel here to the statements made concerning racial equality and the actual conditions generally prevalent.

Faced with these facts, we ought perhaps to look at the position of women outside the churches and see how it is regulated.

## II. The Declaration of Human Rights and its Consequences.

In June 1946 the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations decided to set up a commission on the status of women in society which was theoretically to meet once annually and to represent the particular concerns of women at the very heart of this world organization. Since the Declaration of Human Rights in December 1948, its work has had a theoretical basis as expressly formulated particularly in Articles 1 and 2:

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights ....

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as ..... sex .....

Of special significance to women are Articles 13 (the right to freedom of movement) and 15 (the right to nationality, of particular relevance to women marrying foreigners), and

Article 16: Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

Marriage shall be entered only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

Other relevant Articles are 21 (political rights), 23 (the right to work and equal pay), and 26 (the right to education).

In Human Rights Year, 1968, the twentieth anniversary of their declaration, the President of the French League for Women's Rights, Dr. Andrée Lehmann, declared: "It must be recognized that as yet no state has fully endorsed these ideals" (11). Nevertheless, the mere fact that these principles have been formulated constitutes a very real step forward, for now all those working towards their realization can always refer to this formulation. It is significant that a UN commission is making these questions its constant concern, and equally significant that a department is dealing with them at the World Council of Churches. Perhaps one of the most fundamental differences between their approaches is that the UN commission has worked out conventions on a whole range of practical questions and has brought them to the vote at the General Assembly or other relevant organizations, whereas the Département has opted for the more prolonged method of bringing about a change of conviction from within by establishing and publicizing fundamental insights.

One result of the work of the UN commission was the declaration concerning the elimination of discrimination against women (12) which was accepted by the General Assembly of the UN on 7 November 1967 following the comprehensive report drawn up by the Secretary-General in 1966. (13) This declaration is a working version of the general principles of Human Rights. In formulating what changes are needed in practical terms, it clearly shows up those points which have been the cause of difficulty and draws attention to the areas in which the equality of men and women, though accepted in principle, has not been realized, or at any rate not uniformly or completely realized. Thus it demands that the equality of men and women be incorporated in the constitutions of states, and that various statements of the non-governmental organizations of the UN such as UNESCO and the ILO, be officially ratified by all nations

(Article 2). It demands both active and passive electoral rights, and the right for women to assume every public office (Article 4) insists on the right to the free choice of partner, the right to freedom of movement, the right of inheritance, and the equality of the rights and duties of both parents with regard to their children (Article 6), it forbids white slave traffic and prostitution (Article 8), and expatiates on the real meaning of equal rights to education (Article 9).

Of particular relevance to the questions we have been asking are Articles 3 and 10. In Article 10 the 'right to work' defined in the Charter of Human rights is given an interesting practical interpretation when the demand is made that women, regardless of their legal status, be allowed to train for a profession and practise it, to choose their profession freely, to enjoy equal pay, paid holidays, social security and family allowances subject to the same conditions as their male colleagues. In practical terms this last stipulation implies that a woman may also be the 'head' of the family. A further section (Article 10.2) lays down stipulations with regard to marriage and motherhood:

In order to prevent discrimination against women arising in the event of marriage or motherhood and to safeguard their proper right to work, measures must be taken to prevent the dismissal of women in the event of marriage or motherhood, as well as to ensure paid leave of absence for maternity with the guaranteed freedom to resume their former employment, and to provide the appropriate social services, including child care facilities.

We will return to this Article in due course. It shows us why it is so difficult to translate the postulated equality of men and women into practical terms. To it may be added Article 3:

Every relevant means must be taken to educate public opinion and foster a world-wide desire to eradicate prejudices and to abolish all practices, customs, etc., based on the idea of the inferiority of women.

This makes it very clear that the abolition of discrimination against women is not just a case of and indeed may not primarily be a case of the need to alter existing legislation and constitutional requirements, but rather that it involves a gradual education of public opinion, in which an essential factor is the removal of deeply-rooted prejudices; the deepest aspects of human existence are caught up in such a process, for the existence of the sexes and the contrasts between them are of course a fundamental condition of human life.

If we ask how the UN and its associated non-governmental organizations are attempting to attain the objective outlined above, we shall see in the first place that not only have a great number of special statements been worked out and placed before member

states for their consideration and ratification, but that working groups have been set up to consider a variety of problems both on a world-wide and on a regional scale, that surveys of women have been undertaken in different countries (USA, Sweden, Federal Germany, etc.) - in short, that a process of collective thinking based on the Declaration of Human Rights has been set in motion. This process of educating opinion has developed with growing impetus from purely formal and rather empty ideals to concrete social and economic stipulations. At the same time the need to develop the so-called underdeveloped countries both economically and socially has done much to contribute to the increasing relevance of the problem of the equality of women. This is an aspect to which we shall have in due course to return. At this point all we need emphasize is that the Declaration of Human Rights has given rise to a new era as far as the position of women is concerned in so far as it propounds an ideal and formulates a fundamental principle which are accepted as binding and which can be invoked in cases of abuse; these in turn have resulted in pacts and conventions which have the force of law or at least should have as soon as they are ratified by a state. But the Declaration of Human Rights is of course also subject to all the problems attending international agreements and to the relative in-effectuality of even the most beautiful ideals. It is precisely here that we must ask ourselves what the churches can contribute and what are the implications of the gospel which they preach. There can be little doubt that from the historical point of view the Declaration of Human Rights was in large measure impregnated with Christian elements. Consequently it is all the more urgent that we should ask to what extent the churches today are really committing themselves to interpreting, fulfilling and ultimately also to improving the stipulations that were formulated, in it or, in other words, whether they are capable of recognizing the 'humanum' which they too are seeking, when it is being sought and paraphrased by the secular world.

### III. Towards a Definition of Discrimination against Women

I have before me a Swiss newspaper dated 1969, or to be more exact a supplement which was issued along with a number of Swiss newspapers, the object of which was to encourage a sensible choice of career. On the front there is a photograph of a boy and a girl; they are supposed by the author to be school-leavers, both faced with the choice of a career, and the slogan beneath applies to both of them: 'It is all too easy to choose the wrong career'. But how are these two young people depicted? The boy is several inches taller than the girl and is shown in profile looking keenly ahead into the future which for him is bound to mean a 'career'; he is alive to the opportunities the future has in store. Unlike the girl - she stands slightly turned towards the young man and is leaning her head against his shoulder, her eyes closed; she is dreaming of a future, not choosing one, just letting it emerge. In any other context we would immediately think 'what a charming young couple'. They are facing the future together, and for the girl this future does not mean first and foremost a career - it means marriage. Of course this photograph is



advocating a sensible choice of career for both the boy and the girl; yet the implication it in fact conjures up is that the boy is choosing a career with which he can support a family whereas for the girl the whole thing is far less important.

Naturally we do not wish to read too much into one picture chosen more or less at random. But it can serve to remind us how discrimination arises and what its nature is. The discrepancy between conscious intentions and subliminal wishful thinking is an essential part of the problem. Today agreement is often quickly reached on the level of deliberate intentions and principles. Yet these cannot be realized because subconscious attitudes steer a course in a different direction.

But what is really at stake in this whole question? Again and again woman is not seen as an independent human being (cf. the picture described above.) Instead she is seen in connection with her husband and family. Simone de Beauvoir has described the situation thus in her lively, outspoken but fundamentally irrefutable book The Second Sex:

A man would never set out to write a book on the peculiar situation of the human male .... A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man. The terms masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general: whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity ... She is simply what man decrees; thus she is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being; for him she is sex - absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other. (14)

One does not need to share the author's whole philosophy of life and follow all her trains of thought to recognize the relative accuracy of her description. The phenomenon she is alluding to is unique in one respect, in that this kind of discrimination is not aimed at a minority like, for example, the Jews, or the Negroes in the USA; on the contrary, it concerns one half of the human race, regardless of nationality or colour - that is, if we are really to describe the different position of women as discrimination pure and simple. This is what Simone de Beauvoir does not hesitate to do, basing herself on her conception of humanity. This she shares with Jean-Paul Sartre, seeing the human being as one who chooses his own identity and thereby transcends the limitations of factual reality. Because woman is more tied to biological demands, man has assumed pride of place:

The female, to a greater extent than the male, is the prey of the species; and the human race has always sought to escape its specific destiny. The support of life became for man an activity and a project through the invention of the tool; but in maternity woman remained closely bound to her body, like an animal. (15)

In remarkably similar though more empirical terms the American Betty Friedan speaks of the 'sexual ghetto' in which women are held captive behind a 'silken curtain' unless they are alive to the situation and take precautions against it:

What do we mean by the sexual ghetto? Ideologically speaking it is what I have called the feminine mystique, or, in other words, the contemporary tendency to define the relation of woman to man exclusively in sexual terms, whether as wife, mother, sex-object, or housewife, but never first and foremost in human terms, as a personality or as an individual.

In connection with this view of woman Betty Friedan speaks of a coming revolution:

In my opinion, the sexual ghetto inhibits not only the development of women, but also the freedom of men and their search for happiness, and the development of children. It inhibits sexuality and sexual love, although paradoxically this is concealed under an obsession with sex. And it basically even inhibits the economy, even though it might not appear that the highly-developed industrial affluent society is immutably founded on the perpetuation of the sexual ghetto. Were this really true, it would indeed be a grave miscalculation both from the historical point of view and for the foreseeable future, because the sexual ghetto is very much a house built upon sand and the breeding-ground for a revolution which will have to be faced and to which an end must be put.

I am convinced that this feminine revolution will take place non-violently. What we need are simply innovations, technical innovations, such as any progressive country today is perfectly capable of carrying out ... This could be done everywhere as soon as the problem arises. (16)

We have deliberately chosen two extreme views in order to demonstrate what was felt twenty years ago by Simone de Beauvoir and what is felt today by Betty Friedan in two Western countries to be the real nature of discrimination. Alongside them there are countless other women in these same two countries who would regard such views as exaggerated and indeed unjustified, and who would fail to detect any trace of discrimination against women either in the USA or France; the same facts can be given different interpretations based on a different set of values. We shall return presently to their Christian interpretation which is our chief concern here. But first let us submit the fact to a closer scrutiny. Let us try to exclude value judgments and penetrate the jungle of prejudice, attempted emancipation and confused interpretation in as unbiased a manner as we can,

and then ask ourselves what are the sources of discrimination against women: there can be no doubt that we shall then come up against one or even two basic facts of human nature. The first is the undoubted fact that it is women and not men who bear children and feed them in their infancy, and the second perhaps: that the sexuality of women, their needs and experiences, are basically different from those of men because of their different physical make-up. Concerning this second point there is a wide divergence of opinion and it is moreover very difficult to distinguish here between culture and nature, especially as it is now realized that sexual attitudes are very largely dictated by cultural and social factors. It is almost impossible to assess the changes that have already taken place and will continue to do so in this area, as women increasingly find that their sexual experience need not be conditioned by the fear of unwanted pregnancies or the fear of the failure to produce the offspring they themselves want or which are demanded of them by their family or tribe. Many generations of women of every nationality have been influenced or inhibited in this respect by all kinds of false expectations, quite apart from the measures still taken in many tribes to prevent women from enjoying satisfaction and to make them into the passive possessions of men. In talking of 'false expectations' we have of course been guilty of a value judgment. What we meant was the expectations are false if they result neither from the personal feelings of a mature woman nor from the loving partnership of two free individuals.

But because so much of all this is uncertain and in the process of imponderable changes, let us confine ourselves in the following remarks to that ineluctable fact which has been with us since the beginnings of the human race - motherhood. The fact that it is the woman who bears children and that these children are in their infancy totally dependent on human help, which generally means that of their mother, in order to survive, renders the life and position of women fundamentally different from that of men. Demands for equality can do nothing whatever to change it. It is true that much has changed even in this respect. Wherever methods of birth control have become accepted and permitted, the number of births has been substantially reduced, and this has led to decisive changes in the lives of women. Modern medical treatment and methods of painless childbirth have exerted great influence. Social measures, such as the granting of leave of absence to working women during the final weeks of pregnancy and after the birth, and protection against dismissal because of having a baby, have been introduced in an increasing number of countries (cf. the unanimous stipulations in all the international conventions). On the other hand, mothers are subject to all the horrors of modern total warfare, to the threat of starvation owing to the growing discrepancy between rich and poor, and to the levelling tendencies of technological civilization. The contemporary world offers no refuge to any category of human beings, and secularized society has little reverence for mothers and motherhood.

Nevertheless the fact remains that women become mothers and, as Simone de Beauvoir said, are bound to carry more responsibility than men and to be more practically involved in the duties of bringing up children. This is clearly seen, for instance, in the case of women students who, though as gifted as their male counterparts, are unable to follow them as regards career, etc., once they have children; a further consequence of this is that there are few women in senior positions because they are bound by family responsibilities to their homes during the crucial years when their husbands are working on untroubled in pursuance of their scientific, professional or political careers. Can all these facts really be summed up under the heading discrimination? Would it not be much more justifiable to talk of woman's privilege, of God's particular gift to her? The experience of countless women would favour this interpretation. There can be no doubt that discrimination does not reside in this fact itself so much as in its social consequences. According to Professor Dreitzel of Berlin, the process of discrimination consists in

the interpretation from outside of group membership, with the interpretation from outside of group membership an order of preference of certain relevant areas of behaviour is imposed on certain people although it is really not their own; their behaviour is measured according to type-categories which do not arise from mutual interaction and interpretation but from external patterns of behaviour being granted by the group outside. (18)

In the case of women this outside group consists of the wielders of power, i.e. in all societies built on a patriarchal system, these are the men. By interpreting the role and function of women basically in terms of motherhood, they confine women to the sphere of the family and the household. In doing so they establish priorities which are then accepted by a large majority of women but which in modern society are increasingly proving to be discrimination. The traditional division of labour between the domestic and the public sphere is no longer valid in an industrialized society; all areas of society are dependent on the cooperation of women and mothers are very deliberately included in this universal responsibility, as for example when the present Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, described the task of women as follows:

Hard will be the task and difficult the way which lies before us. But we women are not merely a part of the population. We are more than that; we are responsible for the population of today, we are responsible for the population of tomorrow. In our hands lies the future of our nations. The future lies with the babies we bring into the world, the children we bring up. It is on what they are that our future depends. (19)

Even where this is recognized in theory, the consequences which could make possible the complete integration of women are seldom drawn, and this results in a form of discrimination against women.

Well may one ask what the attitude of the movement for the emancipation of women is to these problems. In this movement, or at least in its middle-class manifestations in the Western world, the idea used often to be put forward in the past that a woman's choice lay between marriage and motherhood on the one hand, and career and action in a wider field on the other. This view has certainly not been borne out by subsequent developments. The desire to get married is very wide-spread in the industrial nations, and in many of the so-called underdeveloped countries it remains quite impossible for a woman to live alone and embark on an independent career. The need to combine the two roles is therefore something universally felt today, and even the example of celibacy in religious communities and orders seems at the moment to lack any great influence. A very large number of modern women all over the world is claiming that women have the right to love, marriage, motherhood, profession and career, and this right is being protected by all the international organizations (see above). But in practical terms the different position of women resulting from motherhood in its broadest sense and also from the different sexual role of women is not being taken really seriously and is not being made an integral part of the structure of society. The effect of this is discrimination. Equal rights simply cannot mean complete equality in this particular case; equal rights can only mean the impartial inclusion of these differences in the society which men and women are building together.

#### IV Instances of Practical Discrimination against Women

In the limited scope of this article it is quite impossible to provide anything like a truly comprehensive survey, all the more so as such a survey simply does not exist on a world-wide scale. All we can do is select certain exemplary aspects and provide the most accurate data we can with reference to them.

##### The backward state of women's education

It is beyond question that women's education is lagging behind that of men all over the world. The gap is admittedly decreasing year by year, but it is still a fact to be reckoned with. Sweden is generally regarded as the most advanced country as far as the emancipation of women is concerned. In 1968 Sweden submitted a report to the UN which had government approval and which provides a wealth of figures connected with these problems. It puts forward exceptionally progressive ideas such as, for example, the introduction of domestic science and instruction in housecraft for boys as well as girls. The basic school education for both sexes is a matter of course in all industrial countries and it is equally self-evident that girls have the theoretical right to attend whatever school they wish. Yet in this report we read:

.... There are at present about as many male as female pupils in the various institutions to which pupils can go after comprehensive school in Sweden, namely schools of general studies, vocational schools, teacher-training establishments, and so on. There are still fewer women university graduates than men but

the number of women enrolling at universities and colleges is increasing rapidly. Out of a total of 22,300 newly enrolled students in the autumn of 1965, 9,300 were women.

Thus the problem of inequality is no longer due to women being heavily under-represented in education. The difficulties now consist rather in the considerable differences between the sexes as regards distribution between different kinds of education. Girls on the whole go on for vocational education on a far smaller scale than boys, and they choose shorter courses of further education. For instance, girls are now just as numerous as boys in the general non-vocational streams in the high schools, whereas the technical high-school streams offering vocational education are dominated by the boys. In the continuation school, a new type of school offering two years' education after comprehensive school, over 95 per cent of the pupils in the technical stream are men, while 75 per cent of those in the social stream are women. The technical stream is the more vocationally oriented of the two, the social stream providing no more than preparatory instruction concerning vocation education. (20)

It is obvious from the above that even when opportunities are equal, girls do not make the same choice as boys. We can assume that this results from the influence of the patterns generally accepted by society and we may well ask whether this is indeed a case of 'discrimination'. But perhaps we do not as yet know enough about the background to such matters, and a study is actually in the process of being carried out by UNESCO on precisely this subject. Specialists in four countries - India, the UAR, the USA and Romania - are trying to find out why still so few women are going on to vocational training in the scientific and technical stream. Only in India has this inquiry been completed. There it has been established that 'as a result of still prevailing traditional habits' far fewer women are even now choosing this type of career, but that once they have the training they are increasingly being given positions though, in spite of this, few women are to be found in permanent responsible positions. The summary of this report concludes with the words: 'The socio-economic bases of this situation still need to be made the subject of further detailed study. (21)

An issue of Convergence, the international journal for adult education, has also been devoted to the problem of the education of women. This provides a wealth of material as far as the theme of this article is concerned. Let us at least quote two typical examples. One article in the issue is devoted to 'Education for Womanhood in East Africa', in which - as in other contributions to the same issue - reference is made to the special difficulties that arise in rural situations. The emancipation of women is to a very great extent the result of industrialization. Let us quote:

East African women, particularly those who live in rural, are brought up to consider men leaders and themselves of secondary status. Women are brought up to obey their husbands rather than to develop a relationship of companionship in marriage. They learn to do housework, take care of children, and to farm. The biggest events in a woman's life are coming-of-age marriage, and child-bearing. Her status derives to a great extent from her husband's status. Places in agricultural colleges are offered to women in Uganda and in Kenya but, at this stage, most women lack the necessary entrance qualifications. In Malawi, six women achieved higher results than the men in the entrance examination for the agricultural college. However, the college did not feel that it could admit these candidates because the accommodation was not geared to their needs. Also, it was felt that to appoint women agricultural officers, when there was a high rate of unemployment among men, would be unpopular. This may be so, but it is not logical to accept the fact that women can do all the hard work of the farms and yet should not compete with men for professional posts in this field. Women are quite likely to take scientific agriculture seriously if some of them can see a career in it. As an alternative, it was proposed to run a short course of the non-career type at the Soche College for these able Malawi women. They might, as a result, improve their marketing. (22)

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Such examples must suffice, though they could be reinforced by the observation that in countries where tradition is strong and there is little technological development, the basic school education of women is also influenced by similar conditions, namely that where there is a scarcity of teachers and schools, boys as a rule take precedence over girls, while the latter are more dependent than boys on obtaining places in boarding schools. Progress towards equality seems to be taking place most successfully in countries under the influence of Marxism. The facts we have to hand certainly seem to support the thesis we were outlining above, that the practical inequality between the sexes continues to exert a discriminating influence even when equality has been achieved in theory. Only when this practical inequality in the situation of women is taken into account in the drawing up of curricula, the allocation of grants, and indeed in all the aspects of éducation permanente shall we be able to speak of equal opportunities for both men and women. This point of view is very well expressed in another article in the journal already alluded to; it is devoted to the situation in France, and in it we read:

Women who are past the stage of formal schooling or whose studies were interrupted by marriage or child-bearing can avail themselves of several opportunities: for example, courses which are provided practically free of charge by the National Centre of Education by Correspondence and Tele-

vision and its regional outlets. Yet since the family responsibilities of women make it difficult for them to profit by such opportunities, some are asking what the term 'continuing education' can and must mean for women and their goals in life. (23).

### The economic position of women

Under this heading it is even more difficult to provide a general survey without being guilty of making sweeping and inaccurate generalizations. In the first place it is all too easy simply to accept the Marxist thesis of the universal exploitation of women and of women at the last remaining proletariat or the last colonies not yet granted independence. But the variations between conditions in various parts of the world and in various cultures are very great. It would moreover be unjust to minimize the fact that women, particularly middle-class and upper-class women, have been and still are given a position of security by their husbands' incomes and that if they have children and have a large share in their education they are justified in regarding their husband's income as their own because they contribute their share towards the running of the home and the education of the children. Nevertheless the 'right to work' was in fact one of the objectives of the middle-class movement for the emancipation of women and was incorporated into the Declaration of Human Rights under Article 23.

In a very interesting report from Pakistan (24) (1964) we are told that 91.2 per cent of the female population was not actively earning a living. Of course this figure should be compared with another which informs us that only about one-third of the total population was actively earning a living. In the same article we are told that in 1951 30.7 per cent of the total population was employed and that of this number only 5.8 per cent were women. Let us compare these figures with the corresponding ones of industrial nations: in 1961 34.4 per cent of the total number employed in Great Britain were women. In Austria it was 41.3 per cent and in the USSR in 1965 it was 49 per cent. (25) These figures clearly prove that on the one hand a country's economic and technological development and on the other hand varying conceptions of the roles of men and women are both significant factors in the inclusion of women in the working population.

Does the inclusion of women in the working population mean that discrimination will be overcome? Let us again turn to the report from Pakistan; there we read:

Women form barely one-half of the 100 million population of Pakistan. They, as in all underdeveloped countries, are more hard pressed. The principle of one man feeding ten mouths has been in vogue until recently, so the women found themselves enslaved because of their economic inactivity. Women in our country are considered to be liabilities rather



than assets and they suffer from an inferiority complex. There is no doubt that this is a direct result of our cultural heritage but I believe that one of the most significant and obvious reasons is their overall economic inactivity and dependence on the male. This is also one of the root causes of the low status of women. (26)

What clearly emerges from this passage is that the economic independence of women is regarded as an integral part of their emancipation. On the basis of the considerations we have already outlined, one could of course raise several points of criticism in this connection. If the implication is that the economic activity of women should result in their embarking on a full-time career alongside their traditional domestic duties, this will lead to a duplication of the demands made on them and consequently to seventy or more working hours per week, a total which has been worked out in studies of women in the USA and in many Western European countries. This is why more opportunities for part-time employment are being sought in the so-called capitalist countries. (27) The trades unions are opposing this solution by pointing out that an increase in part-time employment for women leads to new forms of discrimination and that the only solution to the problem resides in an all-round reduction of working hours. In a study carried out by the OECD (28) a plea is made for more flexible working hours and the synchronization of school hours with working hours. What is above all apparent here is that on the one hand the complete economic dependence of women has the effect of discrimination but that, on the other hand, such discrimination cannot be abolished simply by the establishment of theoretical equality.

In this context we can only touch on two further points which are however of considerable importance: the opportunities for professional promotion and equal pay. The second of these forms part of the Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23,2) and is also the subject of Convention 100 of the ILO of 1953 which has to date been ratified by fifty-four countries. Of course this does not mean that differences have been entirely swept away as yet. This is a reflection of an earlier situation in which women were able to earn less because they were provided for by their husbands' incomes.

The Swedish report to the UN to which we have referred already contains a plethora of ideas on these topics, going far beyond the principle of equal pay for equal work. Among the reforms it urges we find the adjustment of the taxation laws, the right for either a wife or a husband to remain at home for as long as the children are small without losing, for instance, their claim to a full pension, and equal holidays, etc. As far as opportunities for professional promotion are concerned, it should be pointed out that the great majority of women in all industrial countries are employed in what is termed the tertiary sector and predominantly in subordinate positions. Concerning the situation in

Europe we read in a publication of the ILO (1968):

Women's employment, the problems that it raises and the measures that may be taken to facilitate it and to enable women to enjoy equal opportunities in regard to access to training and employment have received much greater attention during the recent period than in the past. This has been the result of many factors. In particular, countries faced by a tight employment market have been concerned to make fuller use of their labour reserves, including married women outside the labour force, and this has brought to the forefront the problems involved for many of these women in reconciling their home and work responsibilities. There has also been a growing awareness that women, who still tend to be concentrated in relatively few fields of employment often at low levels of skill, might be relatively more threatened than men by the repercussions of structural and especially technological change, which ... tends to raise skill requirements and to reduce the amount of unskilled work to be done. The contrast between the tradition-bound concepts of 'women's work' that still prevail in many places, and the rapid pace of economic evolution, bringing with it profound changes in patterns of employment, has been increasingly felt and greater efforts are being made to bring about a more realistic view of women's occupational future and needs.

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This passage reveals the extent to which these matters are at present in a fluid state and how it is likely that developments will tend towards the fuller integration of women in the working process. Probably much the same can be said as far as the role of women in politics is concerned; but in the scope of this article there is no space for examples of this, though doubtless here, too, there are instances of discrimination. But this is an aspect which is very closely connected with women's education and with careers for women, both of which we have looked at in somewhat greater detail. Instead, let us at least mention another quite different area of discrimination which, interestingly enough, has been overlooked in all the documents produced by the UN and its associated organizations.

### The commercial exploitation of sex.

The fight to end prostitution and improve welfare work amongst prostitutes was once a prime concern of the feminist movement. It was included in the declaration on the abolition of discrimination against women as Article 8. In the affluent society, however, the problem has reappeared in a new form. The female body is being utilized for commercial motives and is thereby being degraded, at least in pictorial form, into becoming an item of consumer goods; there is not a magazine without pictures of women in a state of more or less undress, which are supposed to have a particular lure; no advertisement is free from sex. In

his book Die Krise des Mannes Bednarik writes in this connection:

A result of the commercialization of sex, human beings are coming more and more to regard sex as a saleable commodity. This is particularly true of women, though men are not exempt .... By a long detour our age has succeeded under the slogan of sexual freedom in making sex a greater commercial proposition than ever before and in turning it into an item of consumer goods, admittedly in abstract form, whereby sex is sold not as satisfaction but as stimulation. (30)

Clearly enough, men have played up the use or abuse of the female body, but women have met them half-way. This in turn is influencing the image of woman more than we may care to admit and is producing a renewal of discrimination since it scarcely contributes to fostering respect for women as worthy and equal partners. Whether the other aspect of advertising, that which is aimed at the housewife, does more to make women appear as real partners, is another matter. This type of advertising always depicts women in their 'traditional sphere' as housewives, and it has discovered a clever formula for making this traditional sphere palatable to women. The housewife is presented unrealistically; she is always young, attractive, soignée she never has dirty hands, and her life is one that men and women dream about - intimate, secure, insulated, made into a dream world or paradise, as it were, by every conceivable labour-saving device.

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It could be said that these are the specific problems of just a few countries in the world, those belonging to the so-called affluent society. But owing to the media of mass communication this image of woman is in fact being disseminated universally, and how is it to remain without any impact in places where men and women are leading lives full of suffering and deprivation? Such an image is bound to awaken unattainable desires, and is steering the emancipation of women, already under way in a completely false direction.

### V. The Contribution of the Churches to the Overcoming of Discrimination

Many of the texts we have quoted have shown that great strength is required to overcome existing forms of discrimination. Moreover the international conventions themselves make it clear that much still remains to be done in this field. It is an integral part of discrimination that many of the most basic concerns of a group being discriminated against very often fail to penetrate beyond the sphere of those affected. In other words problems concerning women are dealt with by women and this may lead to the formulation of their concerns, but hardly to any real solution. This was one of the weaknesses of the so-called feminist movement; it should not be blamed for this - what other alternatives did it have? Today the imperative question is, how are these concerns to be dealt with in the future; and it is precisely

here that we encounter a wide divergence of opinion. There is something of a new wave of the feminist movement at work in the world, that is, action groups of men and women (with women usually in the majority) passionately committed to the solution of these problems. What is certain is that women cannot avoid committing themselves in practical terms. In general, their chances of success are greater if they do so not in isolation but in the context of a comprehensive movement (e.g. Marxism). Can the church's mission be regarded as a movement of this kind, and what could the contribution of the churches be?

When perusing the documents of the 1966 Geneva Conference with regard to the problems discussed here one gains the impression that, in the first place, the recommendations of the international organizations are accepted but that, in the second place, totally different standpoints and attitudes are juxtaposed to them with little point of contact; these latter stem from the Christian tradition of marriage and family guidance, reinforced by certain tendencies in modern psychology. Has the church or the gospel a specific contribution to make to the overcoming of discrimination against women? Undoubtedly there are the rudiments of one in the documents of the World Council of Churches which we quoted to begin with. But these can and must always be given a personal interpretation. I shall here offer the following points for further discussion.

1. In the New Testament the dignity of the individual is recognized and taken seriously - not only that of men but of women too. In the Report of Section IV of the Geneva Conference we read (par. 36):

'Woman's role in contemporary society is to realize her individuality.' (31)

The significance of the dignity of the individual is underlined with particular emphasis in the Roman Catholic documents. It was precisely this realization that led so many Christians, in many parts of the world, to found the first schools for girls, thereby opening the way for the emancipation of women; for non-Christians, for example Muslim and Hindu sociologists are unanimous in the view that education was the first step towards emancipation. (32) It would be rewarding to study the motives which led to the foundation of the first schools for girls in different countries and cultures and to clarify the part that was played by Christian missionary societies and churches. Be that as it may, the appreciation of the individuality of all men and therefore women, too, is part of the indispensable contribution of the gospel. It opens up a way for human relations to be developed on a personal level, for relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, to be deepened; it also opens up genuine possibilities for the single person to stand alone, something which is by no means everywhere possible for women in contemporary society. The extent to which the

theory and practice of celibacy, a single state seen in spiritual terms as a charisma, can help in this context is a matter which will have to be realistically aired and debated by men and women in conjunction.

2. The New Testament, like the Old Testament was of course written in a society based on a patriarchal structure, and this structure is presupposed in its text. But it is no more binding on us than is the conception of the world we encounter in the creation accounts. What is significant and of help to us is the way in which this patriarchal structure is every now and again broken through in the New Testament and made into something relative. Instances of this occur in Christ's encounters with women, encounters which contradict all the codes of behaviour prevalent at the time. We come across further examples of the same kind in the New Testament epistles, especially in the so-called tables of domestic rules (e.g. Eph. 5.21 ff.) Here the patriarchal social order of the period is interpreted with reference to Christ and is thereby exploded from within. The term used here for 'submission' - hypotassesthai - is one not often used in the ordinary language of the time. As such it is typical of the New Testament, and is applied to Christ himself, for instance in I Cor. 15. (33) The term is used when wives are told to submit themselves to their husbands, with the added comment that they should do so 'as to the Lord'. In the same way, however, husbands are told that they should love their wives even as Christ loved his church. These separate exhortations to the two partners in a marriage, further underlined in v. 21 by the words 'submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God', produce between them a true mutual partnership which endows the conventional relationship based on submission then accepted by society at large with new impetus from within, or indeed even undermines it.

We come across the same mutual relationship in I Cor. 7 when in each practical case of marriage or remaining single, one party is never addressed to the exclusion of the other; instead husbands and wives are addressed in different or identical words according to the particular situation. It is hard for us to realize the implications this had at the time, when husbands were regarded as a matter of course as the heads of their families, indeed to such an extent that they always spoke on behalf of their dependants.

Once we have realized how the gospel shattered the accepted order of its day from within and brought about its upheaval, we must proceed to ask ourselves what the corresponding approach ought to be today. For instance, it might imply that we should refuse to be satisfied merely with the equality of men and women. But at this point it is essential to preclude a dangerous misunderstanding. What we have just said must never be allowed to stand in the way of the achievement of equality; indeed it can only

begin to have any relevance once equality has been permanently secured. There can be no question of opposing the complete emancipation of women, or indeed of not committing oneself to it, of drawing back because one has realized that it alone is not enough. But what does need to be stressed is that equality does not mean complete identity; what it means is the genuine acceptance by both sides of each other's different situations. Partnership of this kind is by no means confined to the personal sphere of marriage and the small family unit of today - indeed this may well not be its primary context at all; it must apply to the co-existence of men and women in every area of life. As D.S. Bailey so cogently says:

Fifty years ago, in connexion, with emancipation, reference used to be made to the 'woman's question'. Neither then nor later was it recognized that there is also a 'man's question' which has never been fully considered, and which many are not disposed to acknowledge or to take seriously. None the less, the two 'questions' are interdependent, and cannot be isolated one from the other. It is futile to discuss woman's social role and to assume at the same time that man's has been predetermined and must not be disputed. There can be no satisfactory solution to the cultural problem of sexual relation until man himself sees that his own social role is not self-evidently that which tradition has assigned to him ... (Man and woman) have simply been called to a life of partnership in all things - and as partners, therefore, they must seek together in love and humility to understand and fulfil their common destiny as Man. For each sex this is bound to prove a hard demand at first. While headship has its powers and privileges, subordination is not without its compensations and its opportunities for exploitation. (34)

This seems to me to be a good line of approach to this mutual problem in the contemporary context. Two points which require particular attention in this connection are the role of the man in marriage and the family and the role of the woman, even if she has children, in her career and public life. This presupposes that both sexes must learn to accept that aspect of their lives which by tradition has hitherto been suppressed so that they can integrate their personalities: men must become more aware of the emotional side, and women must care more about rational thought.

3. In the New Testament the relationship between man and woman is never seen in isolation; it is always viewed in a larger context. Thus they are never just confronted with each other, but are always drawn into a wider context as members of Christ's body. A classic instance of this view is Gal. 3. 28: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' Here the relationship between man and woman is seen in the framework of other relationships of superiority and inferiority.

An integral part of the new life in Christ is the fact that old polarities are no longer relevant. Those that are enumerated here are ones which at the time clearly denoted traditional gradings and orders of precedence. Nor should we forget that the background to this enumeration is the custom whereby a Jewish man would give thanks in his daily prayers for not being a Gentile, a bond man or a woman. In the Christian community gradings of this kind are done away with: but what did this mean in practical terms? It certainly did not mean simply a levelling off, any more than can easily be seen in the two other groups to which reference is made. Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles together made up the community, though the distinctions between them as regards origin remained valid. Israel will for ever be the root of that tree into which non-Jewish Christians are grafted (cf. Rom. 11) Thus at one and the same time both unity and diversity were preserved, slaves and free men both belonged to the community, but slavery as an institution was not abolished. In the same way men and women were brought together in a new unity 'in the Lord' although the patriarchal system was not done away with.

Today our reading of this text is different because the equality of man and woman is no longer a question of principle. But we should perhaps pause to consider the way in which those to whom this passage is addressed are joined together anew. We are not just told that polarities no longer have any meaning; we are also told that those formerly separated from now on together form the body of Christ, hence they are both together included in the church's mission in the world. Admittedly the passage has often been interpreted simply as a statement on the kingdom of God to come, and as a result it was regarded as irrelevant to the problems we have been discussing. This is true in so far as in the context only those baptized are in fact being referred to: in other words, it is a statement about the Christian community which represents an anticipation, as it were, of God's kingdom. What is said in the passage therefore certainly cannot be applied to society without qualification. Yet we ought surely to learn to consider things more from the point of view of the future and of the new creation in Christ. In the New Testament the eschaton is always projected right into the present. The new world gives direction to the old world, not vice versa. Surely this is of significance in a 'dynamic society'?

In the examples we have given of discrimination today we alluded in various ways to the connection between technological or economic development and the emancipation of women. In proportion to the extent to which a country becomes involved in the dynamic of such development and acquires its share, so to speak, in world history, women too become involved in this historical process and are emancipated as a result. In Europe all this began to happen about a century ago, generally without the churches or even in opposition to them. One wonders what will happen today as regards this world-wide process. Will the churches simply give their belated and retrospective blessing to what is taking place without them and what is passing them by? Or will they

take as their model the body of Christ, which is a community of heterogeneous and free members and which includes the partnership of men and women, and really be able to provide guide-lines for this process of development? Will they realize that their mission as regards the partnership of men and women is also a break with tradition, or will they just cling to 'sacrosanct traditions' in this particular respect? The strength of such traditions is great, as is the temptation to hold fast to the stoicheia tou kosmou ('elements of the world'; cf. Gal. 4.1. ff). Certainly, they will only retain their credibility in this respect if they cast aside their reservations and alter the power structures within their own ranks so as to bring about a genuine sense of partnership between men and women. Perhaps this way, though it will not be easy at first, will then lead them to a new awareness of the riches of the gospel and make them better able to fulfil their function as the 'city on the hill' and the 'light of the world.'

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