

Report of the closing session. (September 12)

How to promote Christian thinking on cooperation of men and women in Church and society; ~~restoring~~ ^{THE NEED FOR} international contacts and ecumenical dialogue.

For this session, "a tour de table" was proposed, ^{DURING} ~~in~~ which each participant ^{WOULD GIVE} ~~gave~~ his or her personal opinion with regard to the following aspects ^{THE} ~~of our days~~ of discussion:

- ~~Which~~ ^{WHICH} topics ^{could} be seen as areas of consensus, a common denominators, cutting across national or cultural frontiers;
- ~~which~~ ^{WHICH} questions ^{were} perceived as controversial, not in general but in the hic et nunc discussions of this group; ~~which~~ ^{WHICH} points ^{were} ambiguous or ^{REMAINED} ~~unresolved~~ ~~and~~ OR ON which no agreement was reached;
- ~~which~~ ^{WHICH} areas ^{were} seen as important for the future-questions for further study, concrete steps for action, priorities for a possible future meeting.

1. ¹ ~~The~~ following report, making use of the tape-recording of the session, attempts to summarize the main points of the discussion. First, the areas of consensus which emerged:

- The group was unanimous in asserting that discrimination against women, in subtle or more overt forms, exist in large areas of both church and society and is built into the structures, attitudes and relationships of people. In the churches, particularly, there is need for updating, and for full acceptance of the evolution in men/women roles that has taken place in society. It was noted that the prejudices ^{were} ~~are~~ similar in all the churches, Protestant and Catholic (those which ordain women and those which do not). Certain patterns of discrimination appear to reassert themselves even in the younger generation, e.g. among the radical student groups in France and the United States. We seem hardly to be able to change the self-image of men and women; their self-concepts are bound to the masculine character of our culture and institutions.

- The experience of the meeting has shown that the problem of man/woman relationships and cooperation is a very general one, appearing in all nationalities, cultures, religions bodies, age-groups, professions, but at the same time ~~it~~ finds very ~~different~~ expressions in different socio-cultural settings. Hence, the importance of international and ecumenical ~~and~~ exchange.
- There is a increasing awareness that the question of women is not a separate question, but that it touches the roots of human existence conceived as a duality of man-woman. There is a no "women question" which is not also a "man question" ^{IMAGES... (SEE FURTHER)} ~~through~~ ^{NEVER} the growing impact of technology in society, also men are searching for a new identity: a certain crisis of man is due to changes in the patterns of work, which influences his sense of achievement, changes ~~in~~ the use of free time etc. Therefore the problem is not so much the advancement of women, but rather the advancement and full development of human beings, men and women. Therefore, men and women should be working together to break down the stereotypes, the false interpretations of "nature" and "role", the attachment to outworn images. ^(Images of man and woman are so interrelated that a change in the one will involve a change in the other) Some point to the danger that people, stressing the necessity of a solution for the crisis of man, do so in order to avoid to deal seriously with the problem of discrimination against women.
- > In the Christian tradition, the mind-body dualism, the distrust of sexuality and affectivity and the insistence on procreation as the primary aim of marriage, have contributed to a repression of free and human expressions of sexuality.
- Modern science and technology have given human beings almost complete control over their own bodies and organic processes. Concern was expressed over man's ability to live with and use these new powers in a human and humanizing way.

- In approaching the meaning of sexuality, we must take ^{AS} starting point, a serious study of the scientific findings, e.g. in neurology, genetics, physiology, biology and psychology generally. We must also take into account the findings of sociology and anthropology as to the ~~the~~ different meanings and modes of expression of sexuality in different cultures.
- In the many expressions of discrimination we can see the influence of power structures, as supported and supported by various forms of discrimination. Hence, in order to bring about significant changes, it is necessary not only to influence public opinion in general, but to frame strategies for action, to build pressure groups to change the structures from without and from within; in short, the problem clearly has a political aspect.
- The younger generation does seem to be little interested in the discussion about cooperation of men and women in the churches, ^{AND} ~~see~~ in critical analyses of existing patterns of man/woman relationships. They ^{REFER TO} ~~indicate~~ their ways of breaking through existing patterns, but it is clear that they can profit from freer structures, which do not exist in other sectors of society. Therefore they have by no means ^{solved} the tensions and discrimination, and are themselves victims of certain traditional masculine-paternalistic attitudes and behavior patterns.
- There is a gap between the ideas of a group such as is present at this meeting and the concrete reality of the man and woman in many other circles of society.

2. The following areas were perceived as controversial or did not get an conclusive answer.

The place of women in the Church.

Some, particularly younger people, see this question as marginal, and would rather put the emphasis on the place of women in society, in economic and political activities etc.

Others see the promotion of women in the church essential, because the churches should be the first to bear witness to the equality of men and women. Discrimination in the

churches (in the institutional structures and in the attitudes of individual members) diminishes the credibility of the christian teaching on human dignity, and makes any action of christians against discrimination rather doubtful in the eyes of non-Christians.

Women in the ministry of the Church.

For some this question is not so important, because ministry (and particularly the catholic priesthood) is, in its traditional interpretation, losing its attractiveness and its relevance to our time, and there is no clear concept of its meaning and value. Too, if women would enter ecclesiastical structures there is danger that they will strenghten these structures in their hierarchical-clerical tendencies. These structures should first be changed. Much more in this perspective the stress should be laid on women's participation as responsible laymembers in the Church, and not so much on their place in the ministry of the Church.

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Others regard the opening of the ministry to women as a vital for a renewed ecclesiology and for the demanded change of the structure of ministry. The acceptance of women in the priesthood will bring about a new reflection on the meaning of ministry and a new theological reflection of the equality of men and women. More-over it is a test case: are church authorities genuinely willing to accept women as equal partners in cooperation? From the point of view of scripture and theology there are no valid arguments against the entry of women into the priesthood. From the point of view of pastoral theology there are even many arguments in favour of women ministers.

Official bodies to promote the cooperation of men and women in the Church.

For some it seemed desirable to set up official working groups or secretariats, e.g. a central office in Rome (to correspondent to the Department of cooperation of

men and women, of the World Council of Churches) as well as similar bodies on the national or local levels, to which a systematic study and coordinated action ^{WOULD} ~~should~~ be entrusted in order to overcome the existing deficiencies in the cooperation of men and women in the Church.

Another view holds that the most efficacious action comes from the "grass-roots", from independent groups or movements. An official body holds the danger to loose flexibility in the long run and risks to be forced to compromise. If more explicit attention to the question should be given, cooperation of men and women should not be treated as a separate issue, but should be introduced as a basic concern within the various departments of the Church e.g. the Council of the Laity, the secretariate for Justice and Peace, the Secretariate for Unity of Christians, and in their national commissions.

Women's Associations.

Some of the participants brought forward that ^{CONTRIBUTES TO} women's groups ~~are~~ essentially ^{TO} for the improvement of men/women relations: women need to relate to other women to find their own identity and to become conscious of the contribution they could make as a group and as individuals to church and society. Attention was drawn to ^{AN EXTREME EXAMPLE:} the existence of a Women's Liberation Movement in the U.S.A.: women felt the need to work directly on their own problems of emancipation and did no longer expect ~~any~~ relevant support from men in their search for a equivalent place in ~~the~~ society.

Others sought that women's groups were gradually losing their relevance as an adequate approach to reflection on and ~~the~~ pursuit of equal changes for men and women. The well being of men and women is so interrelated and mutually dependant, that separate groups may involve the danger that men and women do not reach each other with their ideas and ^{IN THIS WAY} ~~do~~ strengthen the position of men or women as "the other". Mixed groups will help to overcome an incenscious discrimination from both sides and in changing the self-image of both men and women may hope to build the basis for a balanced cooperation.

It was however admitted that out of a sociological and psychological need and for practical reasons too, women's groups will continue to exist (as there will remain men's groups).

- Approaches to study and research.

Although there were no such as opposing views, there was a difference in approach. Some took a philosophic deductive approach to the totality of being, viewing masculine and feminine as principles of the cosmic order, and evolving a coherent theory of man/women relationships in this universal perspective. From this philosophy of life norms could be derived regarding the vocation/role which women must assume in order to find her place in the hierarchic order of the cosmos (elements of chinese philosophy were introduced here).

By way of contrast for those who took the inductive approach of social sciences, the study of the problem of women's emancipation ~~must~~^{should} be based on hard empirical data. In order to help to overcome discrimination and to change public opinion and individual attitudes, rigorous scientific studies of the actual situation ~~are~~^{were} indispensable. It was admitted that one should be on guard against a tendency to take statistic outcome of researches as normative. To bring about changes in the complexity of social relationships, structures and attitudes, a close cooperation between scientists and action-groups was considered necessary.

3. ~~Open Questions~~ Open Questions.

How can we bring about changes in attitudes and in the self-image of both men and women? (problem of conscientisation). Why is it that men do not seem to put themselves into question ^{SO MUCH} as women do. Is there something like a "crisis of men" coming up? How can we help both men and women to become more aware of existing prejudices and more open to change.

What is the meaning of sexuality in human life? What could be the meaning ^{OF} celibacy? Are we moving toward a "desexualisation" in society, a world of "unisex", or are we just entering a period in which the meaning of sexuality is being understood and integrated in a more harmonic concept of human existence?

How can we communicate with and learn from the younger generation? How can we stimulate them to analyze their situation and come to new models of relationships for the future? Is there something as a strategy possible to find new modes of expression of cooperation of men and women in the couple, in family life, in education, in the professions, in the church? How to get them accepted? How does one "experiment" without involving the danger to become isolated or "excommunicated".

Statistics tell us that for the near future a very high percentage of young women will marry (e.g. 97 % in Ger-^{HARRIAGE AND}many). Should we not work at better concepts of ^Vfamily life to overcome the traditional fixation of roles and images of men and women.

Has our western culture (especially in the northern european countries) created special difficulties and a disequilibrium in the relations of men and women? Western ideas, norms and attitudes have been introduced in non-western countries (colonial imperialism) and it is obvious that our concept of personality and ^{OF} man/woman relationship had often damaging results (through the education we gave) for the development of a "new generation", *BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT ADAPTED TO LOCAL CULTURES (ACCULTURATION - PROBLEM)*

How can we help the masses of women to understand the problems of men/women relations; how can we educate them to prepare themselves for an integrated place in society. Are there special problems for the single professional woman in our society? Where can their contribution be stimulated and getting acknowledged.

4. Practical recommendations for study and action

- To organize another meeting of this general type.
- Future meetings would be enriched by the participation of:
 - . representatives of other cultures, particularly from the new nations;
 - . men and women in approximately equal numbers; to guarantee an equivalent contribution and to enrich the discussion.
 - . representatives of the generation under 30 - - "young people can change your ideas more than many books".
- The next meeting should be more clearly interdisciplinary in approach, with a more specific topic, and papers distributed to participants in advance.
- The next meeting should focus more strongly upon the future.
- Possible topics: the couple, the family, the aspect of "love", the cooperation of men and women in religious groups, ~~fundamentalism~~ ^{Fundação Cuidar o Futuro} of the church, emancipation of women versus emancipation of society.
- To develop a program of action and ^{study} in order to discuss the various methods and strategies for social change.
- To stimulate research on these questions; particularly in programs of research ~~already~~ already planned, to introduce the aspect of men/women differences as bearing on the subject under study.
- To exchange references with a view to building up a critical bibliography.