

x80476  
35  
GCH

DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS, INC.  
1232 Market Street, Suite 108  
San Francisco, 2, California

The following talk was given by a member of the Daughters of Bilitis, Inc. as part of a panel discussion on "The Young Adult and Sexual Identity" during the Western Regional Study Conference on The Young Adult in the Metropolis held at Glide Memorial Methodist Church, San Francisco, California, October 5-9, 1964.

It is my understanding that this particular phase of your conference on "The Young Adult in the Metropolis" has been turned over to the discussion of sexual identification. Certainly this matter of sexual identification is of prime importance to the young adult. This is a particularly trying period in the life of the young man and the young woman. This is the period of search - search for one's identity in a troubled and troublesome world. Who am I? What am I doing here? What is my life's work to be? How do I fit into the structure of this marriage, this community, this nation, this world, this Universe? These are compelling questions, and they must be answered.

Those of us who work with young people can only act as catalysts, as guides, as understanding and compassion. But if we are to be effective in helping these individuals to come to terms with their identity as self, we must also come to grips with the sexual revolution that is indeed taking place here and now.

There has been not only an upsurge in recent years in the literature concerning homosexuality, but a definite move by the homosexual community to force the issue - to resolve the misconceptions and the inequities that separate him from the rest of humanity. There has been an equally loud cry in the form of books, symposiums and Federal commissions concerning the role of woman in our society. There has been an increasing demand that we re-examine our concepts of man and woman, of what we call male and female.

In preparing this paper I turned to Roget's Thesaurus as a guide to what society has placed as standard for these terms. There I found man described as brave, resolute, determined, undaunted, virile, hardy, daring, courageous, stout-hearted, intrepid, fearless, bold, noble, upright, heroic. And woman was described as offeminate, soft, weak, feminine, tender, sympathetic, gentle, motherly, maidenly, artless, modest, unsullied, chaste, virginal.

All very neatly packaged. And that is the way it is. Check your TV commercials, the magazine advertisements, listen to your own counseling as you try to get the housewife to adjust to the "accepted" role of wife and mother, take a look at the toys you give your children to play with, listen to the educators who would deny knowledge to young women or at least limit the fields in which they may participate, listen to the admonitions to the young man who is considered sissified because he prefers art and music to baseball and football.

Anthropologists tell us there is no fixed definition of male and female, that qualities which may be considered as masculine in one society may be the direct opposite to what may be considered as masculine in another society. Anthropologists also tell us that homosexuality appears in almost all cultures. Zoologists tell us that homosexuality is manifested in all species of animals. And yet we persist in the myths and falsities of what is natural and unnatural human behavior.



For instance, we pigeon-hole woman "in the home where she belongs", relegate her to a purely biological role and then righteously protest when she comes to the realization that "holy matrimony" is little more than legalized or sanctioned prostitution and her children a weight around her neck stifling her very breath of life. To limit woman's capacity for knowledge, for service, for search of self - to limit woman's creativity to her biological equipment is to commit socio-icide. For as woman rebels against the role of slave to husband, family and home - she becomes the slave master over her limited domain. Having no other identity, no other role than that accorded by "The Feminine Mystique" (as Betty Friedan has so aptly put it), she latches onto her tight little world in fierce desperation. She makes more demands upon her husband and her sons. And she won't let go. Because she can't let go. If she does, what would happen to her? This is her very purpose for being - this "Momism" we deplore.

And yet deep within, women know this can't be true - and some do come to terms with a concept of self identity. They find creative outlets outside the home, they partake of the world and concepts and projects much larger than themselves. But this group is a minority - for our society, our churches, our institutions place every hurdle they can in the woman's way who dares to see herself in another role - that of the human equation.

Homosexual men and women are caught in the same trap - seeking a self identity, sometimes even sanity, in a world where they are considered illegal, immoral and sick - just on the face of it. Sometimes homosexuals get caught up in these labels, as they worship at the shrine of the "Great God They" in fear and in guilt. Sometimes they are misled into heterosexual marriage and thereby bring misery on others as well. But in the last fifteen years there has been a change. Homosexual men and women are coming to recognize themselves as individuals, who are different really only in their choice of love object. As they find their self identity, they also realize that the homosexual community, while it may offer momentary sanctuary, is not a complete answer to their needs. They must relate to the larger society. Not to make this transition is to them homo-icide. But it is the rare individual homosexual man or woman who can buck the odds and make the transition in the face of the hostility and the righteous indignation of the Christian community.

We have classified, categorized, pigeon-holed ad infinitum until the individual identity has been lost. For the root of the problem of sexual identification is self identity - not as man or woman, not as heterosexual or homosexual - but as human being and intelligence. In this atomic age when scientists have learned the common denominator of matter to be intelligence (for it has been proven scientifically that atoms have intelligence), we must also come to accept the common denominator of humanity as consciousness, as intelligence. And that this identity supersedes all else we may think we know about ourselves. Man, woman, heterosexual, homosexual, mother, father, son, daughter - these are all roles, variations of expression, and only facets of the whole being. For there can only be one true identity - the essence which has no gender, that which we call soul or spirit.

So with this premise in mind, perhaps you can understand why we who appear here before you today accuse the institutional Church of committing sin. Regardless of its intention, the Church has been instrumental in spreading misconceptions about man's sexual nature, cloaking a natural expression of love with dis-ease and inhibition. The sexual drive has been greatly misunderstood and misused. It has been viewed only as the physical act of procreation; it has not been seen



as the creative force of being. To stifle the sexual drive, the creative force of the human being, in stagnant patterns of conformity leads only to the dead ends of bewilderment, apathy and withdrawal, or revolution and violence. You have only to look about you to see these manifestations. Yes, the Church has been guilty of sin - of the separation of man from woman, heterosexual from homosexual, human being from creative spirit. And the gospel of love and of life has turned into the gospel of sin and of death.

But Christ did not do this to mankind; it was man's misconception of Christ's teachings, of man unconsciously superimposing his own interpretations on the pronouncements of the Church in the limits of his own awareness at the time. But now, in the light of modern scientific knowledge, man and woman alike must give up the concept that the three-letter word called sex is an evil in itself for the idea that the sex drive in conjunction with love and commitment is the healthy and creative force that will lead to the resurrection of the true brotherhood of mankind.

I speak to you as a member of the Daughters of Bilitis, as a Lesbian pleading not only the cause of the Lesbian but of all women, not only the cause of all women but of all men, not only the cause of all men but of all humanity - the new humanity which must emerge.