Katherine K. Young

INTRODUCTION

This book is about how the women's movement is affecting traditional religions and civilizations throughout the world. Where it will lead is not yet certain, but one thing is clear. We can no longer understand our world, much less direct its course, without coming to terms with this phenomenon. Understanding the global impact of the women's movement on religion, however, is a daunting task. It has been difficult to recover the history of women in various religions of the world and search for a comparative perspective, and it is even more difficult to understand the flow of history *in medias res*. Identity, economics, politics, economics, ideology, and scholarship collide. In some countries, the women's movement is being shaped by the first wave of industrialization accompanied by the breakdown of extended families, rural communities, and traditional gender roles. In others it is shaped by the identity crisis that usually follows colonialism. Because the women's movement began in the West, it has been associated with cultural imperialism and secularism—anathema to new nations searching for identity in their own religious traditions. In the West itself, the advent of postindustrialism is causing profound upheavals in the workplace and basic social institutions leading some to question the meaning of progress.

The contributors to this volume have written extensively on the history or anthropology of women in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Australian aboriginal religion. And yet some have found that even less research has been done on women and religion today than was done at earlier times. In fact, the primary materials have often never been gathered.

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Diane Bell, an anthropologist, says that "if we begin with the ethnography—that is, what women are doing—and build from there to map women's strategies, we are writing a special kind of situated ethnography, one where the participant observation is with women, and one that relies on what can be learned from women of women's business." Bell studies Australian aborigine women's religion. Through her description of the women's domain, she is able to explain anomalies and points of confusion in the interpretations of her male colleagues. Drawing on her extensive field work on Australian aboriginal women and her job as an applied anthropologist—this involved mediation between the women and the Australian government over land—Bell explores upheavals in the religious lives of aboriginal women.

Katherine K. Young reports on interviews with both leaders of the women's movement in India and those worried about current threats to Hinduism. She thus exposes a growing tension in Indian society over the position of women. Nancy J. Barnes utilizes her Buddhist networks to piece together information of the nun's order in some Buddhist countries and on what is being done about reviving it in others. She also tells us about the accomplishments of exemplary Buddhist women today: spiritual leaders, religious teachers, reformers, and academics.

After assessing whether the position of women has improved in communist China, Miriam Levering looks specifically at women today in Chinese Christianity, Taoism, and Buddhism to see how have they been effected by the Chinese revolution. Barbara Reed analyzes published materials and interviews to understand the current relation between women and religion in Taiwan. Jane Smith examines a variety of sources to analyze the dialectic of religion and politics in four Islamic countries—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan.

To do justice to the global story of women and Christianity, Rosemary Radford Ruether reports on a questionnaire she devised and sent to female church leaders in west European, Latin American, North American, Asian, and African countries. Besides basic information on Christianity, she asked about women's church activities, the extent of professional ministry done by nonordained women, whether women are ordained, how many are ordained, how many female students and professors are in theological schools, the teaching of women's studies in those institutions, the networks of women in theology, and the major issues that feminist theologians

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address. Denise Lardner Carmody examines various Jewish experiments to bring women into sacred learning and religious leadership in both Israel and the United States.

Drawing on her knowledge of three religious traditions (Judaism, Australian aboriginal religion, and Buddhism), Rita M. Gross offers her methodological insights on women and religion. She explores the delicate issue of directing feminist criticism against other religious traditions. Because historians of religions are trained to understand other religious traditions with empathy—which involves bracketing out their own presuppositions in order to approach the religion on its own terms—it has been considered inappropriate to criticize them. Gross argues that it is "more appropriate to criticize one's own cultural-religious situation and the scholarly methods derived from it than the 'other'; when dealing with 'others' we should do the scholarly task of description and leave the judgment to the reader."

Research on women often goes beyond description; a feminist analysis subjects the topic of women and religion to critique. This has been the approach of several of the scholars in this book. Bell draws attention to the political nature of the study of women and religion in her discussion of the Australian aborigines. She argues that religion and politics (local, national, and academic) are so intertwined that to write of the former means becoming involved with the latter. Although Bell exposes the political dimension of religion and scholarly writing about religion, she does so without becoming ideological. Her interpretations are not politicized in the sense of weapons forged for an ideological battle; rather they serve to illumine the interactions of Australian aboriginal women and men as well as their interaction with male government officials and scholars of both sexes. Through her research, Bell recovers women's religious views and practices. Her findings allow her to appreciate the deep egalitarianism of former aboriginal religion and the complementarity of gender roles; these are fast being eroded by cultural assimilation into the frontier society of the Australian outback where men dominate. Because egalitarianism is at the core of the aboriginal worldview, Bell experiences no conflict between the restoration of traditional aboriginal values and her own goals as a woman. In this sense, her task is easier than that of other scholars represented here who find hierarchy and marginalization of women at the core of traditional religions.

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THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: RELIGION, MODERNITY, AND IMPERIALISM REVISITED

Articulating a widespread view of feminists, Carmody claims that there are two matters that shape the women's movement: one is patriarchy and the other is the unique needs and contributions of women as a class. By "patriarchy" she means the predominance of men in formulating beliefs and institutions, and the fact that men, when defining the concept of humanity, have made women mere "helpers." Patriarchy, in other words, represents the experiences and desires of men (androcentrism) and legitimates a hierarchy of men over women (sexism). This is viewed as unjust (the underlying assumptions being that women have different experiences and needs, and that subordination is exploitation). She believes, for instance, that "the majority of Jewish women nowadays are aware that patriarchy is neither inevitable nor just." Gross draws attention to much the same thing when she refers to the idea of women naming their own reality and demonstrating that patriarchy is not a biological given. Critiques of patriarchy and hierarchy are closely related to the critique of domestic segregation of women and the call for women to move into the public sphere through jobs, education, and leadership positions. The women's movement is preeminently one for equal rights, equal status, and freedom to decide life patterns and careers. As Gross says: "The old gender hierarchy proclaimed that men have rights that women do not, and that gender dualism gave men the public domain and taught women to value the private."

Critiques of androcentrism, hierarchy, and segregation lead to a critique of the family, since it is structured and legitimated by patriarchal values. They also lead to a call for the solidarity of all women worldwide, the presupposition being that androcentrism, hierarchy, and segregation are extremely widespread if not universal. Feminist theology for third-world women, according to Ruether, is the "eruption within the eruption of an oppressed and dominated people."

Levering notes that in communist China the male-dominated party tried hard to prevent such an eruption. With its interest in class struggle, it classified women according to the status of their fathers and husbands, oblivious to the fact that even women of the landlord class had never owned property. Although they organized a women's federation to mobilize women, male party leaders did not allow it to represent women's interests. Accordingly, control of the party remained in men's hands. Western feminists argue that in the

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final analysis critiques must be extended to all forms of hierarchy and segregation, be they defined by race, class, or sex. They have traced the origins of today's patriarchal societies to major beliefs of the world religions. For example, Ruether says of Christianity that "patriarchy or male headship over women in both the family and in the larger society was understood as the divinely mandated 'order of creation.'" Feminists argue that these same religions legitimate current patriarchal institutions—political, economic, and social—and are themselves a microcosm of patriarchy. Feminist critique, accordingly, is often critique of the world religions.

In the modern period, women's critique of patriarchy began in the West, primarily in Britain and the United States. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in England in 1792, called for women to have the same opportunities in education, work, and politics. In England these demands were taken up by the Chartist movement of the 1840s, by prominent liberal intellectuals such as John Stuart Mill and his wife Harriet in the 1850s, and by a number of movements, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, to give women the vote. In 1928 British women gained the right to vote. Young points out that early British feminism was transported throughout the British colonies by administrators and missionaries. Ironically, they instituted some reforms for women in the colonies long before such measures had taken root in Britain itself. Colonialism was rationalized in terms of freeing native women from their oppressive husbands, religions, and cultures. In short, part of the "white man's burden" was a need to improve the lot of women. The British Raj, in fact, rationalized its domination of the Indian subcontinent on the basis of the need to put an end to the severe problems of Hindu women—their lack of education, inequality in divorce, plight as widows and suttees.

Other cultures took similar criticisms to heart. "Beginning at the end of the last century," observes Smith when writing on Islam in Egypt, "early feminism was part of Egyptian response to Western colonialism and the drive toward national independence." Of Buddhism and imperialism, Barnes observes that Asian Buddhists have had a painful confrontation with the ideas, institutions, technologies, and colonial powers of the West for the past century. Colonial governments and Christian missions profoundly undermined local political, social, economic, and religious traditions creating a dislocation that had not been experienced since the days of Islam. While wars of national independence and Marxist revolutions have ended direct Western rule, they have not ended the debilitating influence

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of modernity introduced by the West. For some Asian countries, such as Cambodia and Tibet where Buddhist monks have been massacred and institutions destroyed by Marxist revolutionaries, the damage, says Barnes, has been extreme. For other countries, the colonial experience has acted as a catalyst for Buddhists to creatively respond to the West and Christianity through reinterpretation of their own traditions. In short, the experience of imperialism distinguishes the women's movement in other parts of the world from that of the West.

The relation between the women's movement and religion in the United States is explored by Ruether. She observes that the women's movement—beginning in the 1840s with women's participation in the abolitionist movement, which created awareness of their legal bondage—gave rise both to feminism in the church and in civil society. Women's demands for legal standing, voting, education, and jobs initially had little support from the churches, sources of conservatism and legitimators of the patriarchal order. But opportunities for theological education and the ministry developed gradually in some of them. The first turning point, argues Ruether, occurred in 1921 when women obtained the rights of full citizenship. Although women gave up good jobs when men returned from World War I, as they did during the great depression and after World War II, they could not forget how new experiences and their own income had increased their self-worth and power both within the family and in public.

The second turning point, says Ruether, occurred after many churches sided with the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Once again, as in the 1840s, women compared their own restricted roles to those of African-Americans. Opportunities for women in theological education and the ministry expanded rapidly, though not always at the same rate.

The third turning point is now occurring with the export of American feminism to churches in other parts of the world. Ruether observes that feminist theology, much of it from North America, is read by women in western Europe, Asia, and Africa. Books have been translated into German, Korean, Spanish, and other languages. This creates a common forum for discussion of topics such as biblical hermeneutics, interpretation of Christian symbols, anthropology, ecclesiology, christology, mariology (for Roman Catholics), sexuality, reproductive rights, violence to women, peace, economic justice, and ecological harmony.

Ruether's analysis of the dissemination of Western feminist thinking is confirmed by the other authors of this volume. Carmody

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observes that "American Jewish women probably are the vanguard of Jewish feminism." Although Barnes looks to Asia first as the homeland of Buddhism in her survey of the women's movement, she notes how often the momentum for change has come from the West. Leadership for restoration of the nun's order has come from "educated Asian women (and some men) who are well acquainted with Western culture and familiar with modern Western ideas on the equality of women. Joining them are many Western women who have received the lower ordination into the Theravada or one of the Tibetan Buddhist sects and aspire to full ordination." Because religions such as Christianity and Buddhism have international organizations, ideas are transmitted very quickly, at least among the educated elite. Transmission also occurs when women from various parts of the world are educated in North America and return home with feminist plans for the transformation of traditional religions. Levering mentions that there have been women students sent from China to Western theological seminaries who have returned with knowledge of Christian feminist theology. Their views have a "wonderful resonance within contemporary Western feminist theological discourse. Whether they have any of the same kind or degree of resonance within the discourse of the now very indigenous Chinese Protestant churches remains to be seen." Reed gives us a good example of the influence of Western feminist thinking in her profile of the Taiwanese feminist, Lu Hsiu-lien, who was educated at Harvard.

The relation of the women's movement to religion is best understood against the backdrop of the changes introduced by modernity and imperialism. Women's critique of hierarchy, after all, can be traced to liberal, egalitarian, and reformist ideals that informed political life in the modern West from the time of the Enlightenment. The women's movement initially spread around the world with Western imperialism. Democracy, socialism, and especially Marxism subsequently inspired movements for national liberation, women's liberation, and lay activism in various countries. Changes brought by the industrial revolution also played a part. The machine, for instance, equalized male and female bodies in the labor force; men's size, strength, and mobility were no longer relevant for many industrial jobs (and even less so with the subsequent advent of the computer age). The development of the condom (and subsequent forms of birth control) also contributed to the equalization of male and female bodies, for women no longer had to fear pregnancy and could be a stable member of the work force. Protection against pregnancy also gave them the same carefree access to sexual pleasure that men had always enjoyed.

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Modernity emphasized materialism and well-being in this world (rather than the divine realm). The prosperity of the industrialized West highlighted the poverty of other places. Christian missionaries took up the idea of the social gospel and criticized other religions for neglecting the social welfare of the people. This inspired both Christian missionaries and the other religions themselves to correct the situation. Women in particular took up the challenge. Ruether observes, for instance, that women in Christianity do the majority of lay, voluntary service; Christian women in India run schools, hospitals, and so forth. Barnes notes a this-worldly emphasis in Buddhist revivalism: it is responsible for schools, orphanages, disaster relief, and projects to aid the poor, the sick, and the elderly. "The reformers have been sophisticated, educated individuals," says Barnes, "and they are willing to modify tradition for the sake of goals relevant to modern life and reformist agendas." Young draws attention to the current popularity in India of *lokasaṅgraha,* or working for the welfare of the world. According to Smith, Egyptian urban women at the end of the late nineteenth century focused on social welfare efforts for their lower-class sisters. More recently, a this-worldly emphasis in religions reflects the growing secularism of the modern era and supports international efforts for third-world development.

Finally, with modernity came new forms of rapid communication and transportation. This played a role in transmission of ideas, which contributed to the sense of a women's movement first in the West and then elsewhere. In short, the women's movement has not occurred in a vacuum. It has been part of larger historical forces related to equality (made possible by political, economic, and technological development), hierarchy (increased by imperialism), a this-worldly orientation (connected to materialism, Christian notions of social gospel, secularism, and development projects), and globalism (inspired by new forms of communication and transportation).

CHANGES IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC REALMS

This section will look at general changes in women's lives in private and public realms traditionally legitimated by religions; specific changes in religious spheres and patterns of religious leadership; and limits to reform (especially limits imposed by issues of identity).

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One way that religion is affected by the women's movement is by the breakdown of domestic segregation and by the entrance of women into religious spheres outside the home. The corollary of the breakdown of segregation is change in traditional family structures and the religious laws, customs, and ideals regulating them with reference to questions of lineage, suitable marriage partners, desired number of children, usage of contraception, segregation, divorce, and remarriage. The first wave of attack on traditional family structures came from imperialists and missionaries: India, Muslim countries, and China were particularly affected. Young, for instance, notes that during the nineteenth century the Hindu family was severely criticized by the British Raj and Christian missionaries. Elite brahmanical values had endorsed arranged marriage, furthered the subordination of women to men in the hierarchy of the extended family of the husband's village, segregated women in the household, denied education to female children, made dowry the price of marriage for a woman, placed a premium on the birth of sons, encouraged a woman to love her husband as a god, prevented women from divorcing men or remarrying, and allowed only an ascetic mode of widowhood or suttee (the very rare practice of immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband should he die first).

Levering also notes similar problems faced by women in the traditional Chinese family system: arranged marriage, dowry and bride price, no divorce, the selling of women who were not needed or could not be supported by a family, and segregation inside the family. Both Hindu and Chinese elite family systems insisted on women being dependent on their fathers, husbands, and sons, a denial of independence.

The second wave of critique came from reformers within the religions who took up the challenge to transform family structures in order to measure up to the expectations of foreign rulers. Young describes how in India during the nineteenth century Indian men campaigned against child marriage, suttee, polygamy, female infanticide, lack of education and property rights for women, seclusion, and the ban on divorce and remarriage. About the same time, according to Smith, an early Egyptian response to Western colonialism was feminism. By the 1920s, segregation and veils were disappearing and Egyptian women were entering the work force in increasing numbers. In China after the May Fourth Movement of 1919, urban intelligentsia—communists, nationalists, and feminists—saw the traditional family system as an embarrassment to a modern nation and sought to reform it. Similarly, from the 1920s,

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women's lives were liberalized in Turkey. In the nationalist movement of Jinnah, which led to the formation of Pakistan, the education and participation of women was promoted, as it was under Bhutto. And in Iran the lives of urban women were changed under the Shah.

The third wave came from people within various societies who had come to accept the tenets of Western Marxism, socialism, or secular feminism, and worked to change not only family structures but also to eliminate religion itself. There has been a new generation of such Western-style feminists, for instance, in Egypt since the 1970s. In India, feminists, Marxists, and socialists are active in various causes related to women. Young describes a play called "A Daughter is Born," which has been performed by Marxists and others in the various villages of the province of Maharashtra to encourage reform. In China, says Levering, the communist party promised to end women's oppression because of the traditional Confucian ideology and its effect on the social and economic system by encouraging them to participate more actively in economic production, politics, and family life.

Out of these various waves, which often overlapped in time, has come new legislation in some countries. Young reviews the vast legal changes in India over the past century and the call today for a new uniform legal code so that all Indian women will be governed by the same law. Levering points to the marriage law of 1950, which gave Chinese women freedom to choose their marriage partners and to seek divorce. Smith notes changes in Muslim law (Turkey, for instance, introduced a secular civil code in the 1920s while the Shah in Iran and Bhutto in Pakistan liberalized Muslim laws).

In some countries, there is only now a call for change. Reed speaks of the Taiwanese woman Lu Hsui-lien who has written a book criticizing Chinese family structure and its features of patrilineality, ancestor worship, filial piety, preference for sons, taking the husband's name, denial of education to girls, dowry, bride price, and segregation of women in the private sphere. As a lawyer and political activist, she has fought these practices and has been imprisoned. Lu Hsui-lien suggests that women should abandon their husband's name, that their earning power should be the substitute for dowry and bride price, and that spatial segregation and job discrimination should end. Arguing for a truly equal society, she thinks that "feminist power is needed to eliminate the prejudices of patriarchal Chinese tradition and to build a new society based on rationality." But the government of Taiwan sees its identity in tra-

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ditional Confucian culture; it promotes Confucianism in the schools and celebrates Confucius's birthday annually. Confucian "Chinese Culture" is advocated by those men who want unification of Taiwan and mainland China.

Lin Mei-jung, an anthropologist, finds that an attack on traditional values affecting women has been interpreted by the men in power as an attack on the very definition of what it means to be Taiwanese. She recently wrote a book arguing against Confucian values because they represent a double superimposition—that of the elite on the masses and that of the dead Confucian values of mainland China before the revolution on the living, pluralistic values of a Taiwan that has developed its own distinct culture.

It is striking that there is no report on Buddhism when the topic is women's work and changes in family life aside from one cryptic statement by Barnes: "women appear to be no more highly regarded or better off than in many non-buddhist societies. This is a disturbing incongruity." But Buddhism, even in its earliest period, rarely addressed questions of family life.

Although new laws certainly help to bring about change, they may not be very effective. Sometimes a new government will even eliminate liberal laws. In Turkey fundamentalists today, against the government's will, are encouraging a return to Islamic dress and domestic segregation. In Pakistan Zia al-Haq reversed Bhutto's policies. In Iran the Ayatollah's Islamic revolution undid the Shah's reforms. But when legal changes are accompanied by industrialization and secularization, enormous change takes place. In India, for instance, new laws had little effect curbing practices such as dowry, but with industrialization, urban upper-caste women are entering the work force and traditional citadels such as arranged marriage and dowry are weakening. According to one report, urban young women, emboldened by interaction with men in the workplace and exposure to sexually expressive films, television programs, and videos are dating and a few even desiring sexual thrills to eliminate boredom. Levering reports that in China, too, young persons are more likely to choose their own marriage partners.

Even when there are no new laws in place to foster change, the very fact that women have begun to work outside the home has helped to breakdown domestic segregation and hierarchy. Smith, for instance, describes how providing education and jobs for women—which is proceeding at different rates throughout the Muslin world—has challenged the spatial segregation of women in the home. Women are no longer confined to certain rooms, and they are

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taking a more active role in decisions that affect the family. In China during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, political and economic roles were expanded for women, and women suddenly had greater freedom and mobility.

When domestic segregation breaks down and women begin to move into public realms, they start to demand participation in religious spheres outside the home. They seek access to exclusively male religious spheres or create counterparts for women. Women are also breaking down hierarchy by seeking entrance to the exclusively male spheres of religious power. When entrance is difficult, they seek positions of power in lay or female organizations.

Barnes describes in detail the restoration of the Buddhist nun's order that had fallen into oblivion or was seriously weakened in many Buddhist countries. She examines the problem of a valid ordination procedure and the politics surrounding it. Whereas one would expect this to be a battle of women against men, the lineup is no by means so clear. Some women's spiritual communities, such as the *dasasilmattawa* in Sri Lanka, enjoy their current independence. If they were to formalize their community into an order (*saṅgha*), they would have to be governed by traditional monastic rules; this would put them under the nominal domination of monks. Also the *dasasilmattawa* prefer to seek their spirituality through radical withdrawal rather than catering to the lay community and its modern penchant for reforming society through social work. Along with the *dasasilmattawa*, many Buddhist monks have not supported the ordination process for women. Barnes observes that it is mainly educated Asian women and men familiar with the West—and Western Buddhist women—who want the order restored.

Levering points out that after 1978 a few major monasteries were reopened in China. Seminaries are now functioning to train both male and female novices, and rural women are attracted to the convents. Many men and women are becoming monastics. For women in particular this provides opportunity to become part of the international network of Buddhism with its promise of travel to Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan, and the United States. Chinese Buddhist nuns are also trying to help Theravada nuns reestablish their lineage by accepting them into Chinese seminaries. There seems to be one innovation: some sources say that Chinese nuns and monks can now marry. As for the Taoist female adepts, they are also restoring their traditions at Taoist monasteries.

Ruether traces the history of women's demand for ordination in Christianity and the closely related demand for theological educa-

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tion. She notes the very uneven rate of change. The Salvation Army, Holiness churches, the Church of God, the United Church of Christ, and Disciples of Christ were pacesetters, while many liberal Protestants churches such as the Presbyterians were much slower. A number of conservative Protestant churches and Roman Catholicism have not yet changed their policies. Theological education for women became more common in the 1970s. By 1987, reports Ruether, half the students in liberal seminaries were women. She surveys the history of ordination in Canada, Europe, and elsewhere. Access to ordination is only one problem; women also have lower rank, salary, and administrative positions than men. As for bishops, Methodists and Episcopalians had one apiece. Despite all these changes, notes Ruether, female ministers are still at the bottom of the profession in status and seniority with few chances to influence things except in three areas—inclusive language, clergy-lay relations, and new liturgies. While women have access to theological education in Europe, there are few female professors. In the third world, graduate education, women on faculties, and feminist courses are still rare.

Levering reports that in 1990 the first class of educated Roman Catholic nuns after the revolution in China graduated from St. Joseph's convent: nursing, English, cooking, and sewing were to be their professions. Since the Chinese church has not had an official connection to the Vatican since 1957, says Levering, there would seem to be opportunity to ordain nuns, but so far church leaders have not taken this initiative and seem more concerned with the maintenance of traditions. As for Protestants, there are few women ministers in the cities, though in some of the main seminaries half of those in the program now are women, a third of those who go abroad are women, and there are also a number of women on theological faculties. In the rural areas, however, women are very active as leaders for prayer groups, which may be attended by as many as a thousand people, though they may turn to men to perform the sacraments.

In Rabbinic Judaism, claims Carmody, "learning has been the badge of merit and women have generally been excluded from learning . . . ; [there was] virtually no entry to the precincts where the religious elite dealt with the questions shaping what it meant to be a Jew." One liturgical experiment related to Jewish feminism is that of a group called the Upstairs Minyan. This congregation at the Hillel Foundation of the University of Chicago is affiliated with Conservative Judaism. After its founding in 1965, women gradually participated in different parts of the service until they were leading

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regular Saturday morning services, wearing the prayer shawls and skull caps typically worn by men for Sabbath worship, changing prayers to include women, and training women in Hebrew and musical tradition. Jewish women have also sought entrance to seminaries. In the early 1970s Sally Priesand graduated from the Reformed Seminary of Hebrew Union College and became the first woman rabbi. Other women of the Reformed tradition followed suit. Women also began to attend the Jewish Theological Seminary and became Conservative rabbis. And women in the Reconstructionist tradition did the same. Besides becoming rabbis, women have become cantors.

Some women are taking on positions of religious leadership in Islam. Smith notes that there are a few Muslim women in Egypt who teach the Qur'ān and the Islamic tradition (albeit just to other women, given the context of segregation of the sexes), though this role has usually been reserved for men. In Indonesia, the Aisyihah movement—named after the Prophet's wife A'isha who was learned in religious matters—educates women about Islam; a few women are also functioning as imams (prayer leaders).

Young reports that in the modern period there are now ashrams in India for women or female sections of ashrams. A few women are foregoing marriage to become ascetics; this has been virtually unheard of in traditional Hinduism. A number of famous Hindu gurus have chosen a woman as their successor, and a few women have independently become gurus. In several Hindu sects, women have also taken up study of the Vedas and performance of Vedic rituals, once a male, Brahmin preserve. This, in turn, may qualify them for future roles as priests, though this is still rare.

Those religions that have a laity have been more willing to accept female lay leadership than to open positions of formal priestly or monastic leadership to women. Reed, for instance, reports that Buddhism, Taoism, and especially Chinese popular religion are proving attractive to women today in Taiwan as they look for ways to avoid the constraints of Confucianism. Women have access to religious experience and leadership through oracles, divination, and healing. In these religions, women with grown children are volunteers in temples, though the official roles are still played by men.

Barnes draws our attention to the growth in Buddhist lay movements, some of which have become sects in their own right. Modeled on Christian organization and proselytism, they are established to institute reforms and serve the community. With the development of Buddhist lay movements, leadership opportunities for

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women have increased; women have become "spiritual leaders, teachers, scholars, organizers, and shapers of a new Buddhism for the modern world" in countries formerly dominated by monks. The lay movement has also brought more women into the practice of meditation in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma; many of the teachers have been women. According to Levering, there is a great amount of lay activity in China: women chant sūtras or go on pilgrimage together, and some attend sessions where the leader goes into trance, communicates with Guanyin, and practices healing.

Ruether comments on new volunteer lay roles in Roman Catholicism and lay professional ministries that are completely female. In addition to her documentation, it may be useful to examine the Canadian experience reflected in a document prepared by the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches of that country.[1] It observes that both churches have been promoting lay ministries and lay apostolates. For Roman Catholics, the Vatican II decree *Lumen Gentium* (1964) argued that there are two priesthoods—the common one of the faithful and the hierarchical one of the clergy; both in their distinctive ways participate in the *one* priesthood of Christ. In Canada, women serve on pastoral teams and sisters have been appointed to vacant parishes. Both laywomen and nuns have been authorized to preside over the liturgy of the Word and to administer communion from reserved elements. For Anglicans the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference state that all Christians, not just those who are ordained, are to minister to God. All major issues in the church, moreover, are to be decided only with full participation of lay and ordained people.[2] Ruether observes that Protestant women in India have inherited large networks of social, health, and educational institutions built by female missionaries and run them as lay professionals. One of these institutions completely run by women is the YWCA. In fact, in many Asian and African countries, women leaders, both in the church and in society, have had their initial training in the YWCA. Similarly, Levering reports that because there is a shortage of clergy in China, nuns and lay leaders preach, lead prayers, and offer pastoral care, though they do not offer the sacraments.

In the above instances, we find a number of changes that can be called reforms. New laws bring about changes in family life. Reforms are also introduced from within the religions. These are sometimes along sectarian lines. Some sects decide to restore ancient practices that had been abandoned in the course of time. Certain Buddhist groups, for instance, are restoring the order for nuns

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that was established at the time of Buddha but had been abandoned in some countries. Some Protestant Christian denominations are accepting women as ministers and teachers, which had precedent in the early church or an early phase of the sect (especially those founded by women). And some branches of Islam are allowing women to function as imams and teachers to groups of women, which had been the case during the life of the Prophet himself. Even when no precedent can be found, established branches or sects of a religion have also taken the initiative to introduce changes. Reformed, Reconstructionist, and Conservative branches of Judaism have opened their seminaries to women, have made women rabbis, and have introduced changes into their liturgies to incorporate women's experience. Some Hindu sects have introduced radically new changes by passing the mantle of guru to a woman or by training women in the sacred knowledge and rituals of the Vedas, which qualifies them for Brahmanical priestly roles. Such reforms (whether based on earlier practices or current changes), however, have taken place within general institutional structures that have been broadened to include the participation of women. On a few occasions changes have stimulated the formation of new sects.

While reforms—both those restoring former practices or introducing new changes within existing institutional structures—have occurred, they are by no means universal. There may be a difference between precept and practice. Through reforms, women may now be eligible for leadership positions, but the actual number of women placed may be few. Reforms are also not universal, since some sects or branches of a religion appear not to have changed. Orthodox and Hasidic Jews, fundamentalist Christians, Roman Catholics, and Muslims in Saudi Arabia are cases in point. Many orthodox Jewish women, for example, reject reforms and feminism, and look to orthodoxy as a way to discover and develop their identity. Hasidic women also scrupulously preserve tradition. They see in the feminist critique of male and female roles in the family a cultural imperialism of Western Jews (who assimilated into gentile traditions) over east European Jews or an affirmation of secular values over religious ones. Most women of these more orthodox Jewish traditions, then, want to maintain traditional family forms, symbolism, theology, and ritual (P. Nathanson; personal communication).

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In Christianity, some traditionalists have refused to change, claiming that the issue is one of religious identity established by scripture and tradition. In Canada the position of Roman Catholic women and the need for changes were explored in a study kit called *Women in the Church*, more popularly known as the green kit, published in 1985.[3] The green kit inspired conservatives to promote their own position in what became known as the "blue kit." The bishops, however, did not endorse its distribution to parishes. As a result of such conflicts, the role of women in Roman Catholic churches varies by region and diocese. Nevertheless, women are represented nationally on bishops' study committes and internationally on their synods. While some female leaders continue to support the church, others have left over the issue of ordination.[4] In short, although some churches have officially remained traditional, they are experiencing internal tensions over the role of women.

The recent "Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue Agreed Statement" for Canada—after surveying the position of women in these two Canadian churches with reference to history, geography, national identity, social activism, women's Christian movements, and the experience of women in Canadian society—concludes that the experience of the frontier improved the position of women over that in the European mother countries, while the experience of industrialization moved women into the economic mainstream. Today, with a growing number of working and professional women and with federal and provincial human rights legislation in place, there is an insistence that discrimination on the basis of sex become a thing of the past. Some Canadian Christian women, says the statement, are increasingly aware that "in the church more than in any other sphere their sex is a discount, if not a discredit . . . ; some have left the church altogether; some others have changed denominations; still others, while remaining loyal to their communion, have joined groups seeking change; and many are quietly resentful. On the other hand, more traditional Canadian Christians argue that there is no necessary analogy between what the secular world considers the proper status of women and what divine revelation establishes as the proper status of women.[5]

In China there is also difference of opinion. Urban people may seek reforms but, according to Levering, people in the rural areas are not so keen on reform. They wished to restore traditional family structures by having enough money to be able to afford a wife, or to be able to keep the one they have and not be threatened by divorce.

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Issues of reform are closely related to issues of identity. Reaffirmation of traditional identity has already led some to criticize Western women who are held responsible for the sexual revolution. Many Muslim women praise modest Islamic dress, for example, as a way to avoid the immorality of Western woman. Smith reports that "most would say that Islamic dress is their consciously and freely adopted symbol of identification with a religious system to which they wish to express a deep commitment and allegiance." Hindus have long praised the chastity of Hindu women and compared it to what is perceived as the promiscuity of Western women. With the recent crisis of Hindu identity, this idea is currently popular in certain circles. Even Lu Hsiu-lien, who has criticized the traditional Chinese family, does not want to eliminate the notion of chastity. She wishes to reinterpret it as a means of maintaining self-respect, a self-motivated behavior for character training, a love of self rather than fear of social disapproval, and a moral principle for both sexes. Western feminism is also held responsible for the deterioration of the family. The escalating divorce rate, single-parent families, and neglect of elderly parents are all held up as problems caused by Western feminism. Many women of other countries do not wish to go in this direction; this is why they wish to make changes on their own terms. Even some third-world activists of a more secular hue are quick to criticize any superimposition of Western feminism on their identity.

Young reports how Madhu Kishwar, an Indian activist on women's issues, rejects the label "feminist" because it is culture bound (a product of European and American thought), reflects a unidirectional flow of power from West to East, and is a tool of cultural imperialism. She observes that although Western feminists attacked them and pressured them to follow Western thinking, they avoided imitation. Nowhere was this more obvious than on the issue of men's partication in the women's movement. Leaders of the Indian women's movement rejected confrontation with men on a priori grounds (contrary to Western separatist feminists) just as they rejected unconditional acceptance of men's participation (contrary to socialist feminists). Rather, they acknowledged a diversity of responses on various issues. Because of this nonideological response, says Kishwar, they received over the years much support from men.

Some Western feminists consider rejection of Western feminist ideas as uncritical (a naivety regarding the nature of patriarchy, an

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emotional reaction against anything Western, or even a fundamental misunderstanding of what is causing the profound social changes in the West). Other Western feminists argue that they are sensitive to the importance of "context" in their studies: variations from one country to another, from the first world to the third, from rural to urban areas, from upper to lower classes, from socialist to capitalist countries. Even though the women's movement as a whole monitors problems caused by sexual behavior and family organization in general, local groups emphasize particular issues: genital incision and excision are a cause célèbre in Africa, for instance, while dowry-deaths are in India. But some women in the third world argue that there is a potential problem with the concept of contextualization. When Western women presume that women's movements in various countries are merely variations on a Western theme, they ignore some real differences, especially the concerns of these third-world women who see in the invitation to throw off oppression a threat to their own national, religious, and familial identity.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

What is in the future for women and religion? One author in this volume is optimistic. Barnes sees a vibrant future for a reformed Buddhism on its "triumphant . . . march westward in collusion with feminism." She also judges the Buddhist record on religious symbolism to be good. Attributing dualistic, conflictual, and hierarchical thinking to Western religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Barnes finds in the Buddhist concept of nondualism a new model for feminist thinkers who "have valued connectedness rather than separation and opposition. . . . It is now time for Buddhists and feminist thinkers to blend their insights and intellectual skills, and borrow from each other's strengths. From its joining of forces it should be possible to establish powerful alternatives to a dualistic outlook on our complex, tormented modern world."

Another author in this volume is pessimistic. Bell suggests that the subtle interplay of independence and interdependence in Australian aboriginal religion may be lost, since aborigines have lost control of their lands and their hunter-gatherer mode of subsistence. They must now deal with laws, courts, and white male frontier society in the northern part of the continent where paternalism and sexism are pervasive. Aborigine women are losing some of their

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former power with the breakdown of aboriginal society and religion. To counter this, they are becoming involved with the "institutions of self-determination related to the state, statutory authorities, and development lobbies." In the future, thinks Bell, this may take them more and more away from their traditional ritual activities, communal values, and negotiations with men.

Most authors in this volume still maintain some hope for change, though they are cautious. Many suggest that tension, if not confrontation, will mark the future of religions as they struggle to come to terms with the women's movement. Questions of identity will influence the future as they have the past. For some third-world women, the problem will continue to be how to maintain some authentic selfhood that is different from the West. More religions may react negatively to the growth of secularism by trying to preserve some continuity of religious identity. Even in the West, parallel religious communities, calls for a radical transformation of symbolism, theology, and ritual, and a separatist orientation that rejects men (all of which amounts to the call for a new religion) are causing issues of identity to arise.

Religious identity, according to Smith, will continue to be very important for Muslim women. The fact that Islam claims to be a universal religion means that, at least in the background, there will be an expectation of common traditional roles for women. Many Iranian women will continue to veil themselves to show solidarity with Muslim men against Western imperialism, Marxism, and secularism. While they are searching for an Islamic approach—and often look to models provided by women in the early days of Islam, such as that of the prophet's daughter Fatima—they are also against feudalism and extremist fundamentalism. Smith thinks that Islam will be marked by more strife. She observes that the value of education and jobs for women have generally increased in the Muslim world, though there are great differences between urban and rural areas, and reforms in personal status laws lag behind the political rhetoric. Underlying these debates is the tension between needing women for modern national development and observing traditional religious restrictions. Underlying this tension is an even deeper one: the struggle between secularist ideology and Islamic revivalism. Smith is confident that Muslim women will find a way to resolve or live with the tension in such a way that it does justice both to being Muslims and being women.

But despite their desire to affirm the family along with new power for women (expressed as greater participation in making de-

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