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WOMEN IN RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

"Introduction: Women as Leaders in Religion"

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"Introduction: Women as Leaders in Religion"

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GENDERING THE DIVIDE

RELIGION, THE SECULAR, AND
THE POLITICS OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

LINELL E. CADY AND TRACY FESSENDEN

WHEREVER RELIGION is seen to shape or constrain the meanings of human flourishing in the twenty-first century, gender and sexuality occupy charged terrain. This is so across the globe and in forums as diverse as fashion, diplomacy, education, immigration policy, marriage law, military strategy, health care reform, and humanitarian aid. Increasingly, women and sexuality take center stage in invocations of the secular, which promises—or threatens—to liberate both from religion's tenacious hold.

The conventional wisdom that secularization, sexual freedom, and women's emancipation run always on parallel tracks belongs to no one party, region, religion, or sect. As we write in May 2012, for example, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah has just dismissed an adviser to the royal cabinet, Sheikh Abdul-Mohsen al-Obeikan, who had been critical of measures meant to ease gender segregation and advance the status of women. Under King Abdullah's extremely gradual and cautious reforms, Saudi Arabia has promised women the right to vote, opened its first co-ed university, and strengthened legal redress for victims of domestic violence. The sacking of Obeikan came shortly after he publicly accused advocates of gender desegregation in Saudi courts of wanting to "westernise society" and to "replace justice based on (Islamic) sharia law with secular laws." That the reforms were introduced under the monarch of an ultraconservative Islamic state, that they are supported by observant Saudi Muslims, that the values of dignity and equality before the law have deep religious as well as nonreligious sources: none of this mattered for the framing of these inroads toward gender equality in Saudi Arabia as signs of encroaching secularization.

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In the United States, meanwhile, the provision for contraceptive coverage in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), signed into law by President Obama in 2010, has unleashed a storm of protest. Opponents of the provision, led predominantly by conservative Catholics and their allies, contend that the requirement to offer insurance that includes contraceptive coverage to benefits-eligible employees, under the broader heading of preventive medical care, unjustly compels some employers to "abandon" their "religious principles." That message has traction even in the face of concerted support for health care reform from religious organizations and actors who invoke scriptural injunctions to care for the sick and vulnerable. The view that the PPACA's contraceptive provision represents a "war on religion" was vigorously endorsed by GOP nominee Mitt Romney during the recent presidential election, who described it as evidence that the Obama administration was set on establishing "secularism" as an official religion.4

The assumption that advances for gender and sexual equality inevitably accrue to the power of the secular, to the detriment of religion, is by no means confined to conservative opponents of such advances or to those who remain blind to religious support for them. Consider Isabel Coleman's recent work on Muslim women's movements across the Middle East. Coleman justly praises these women's efforts to surmount the difficulties facing secular movements for women's freedoms. Where the latter's perceived associations with colonial and neocolonial projects, authoritarian states, and urban elites have limited their appeal, Muslim women's groups' "promotion of women's rights through Islamic discourse" allows them to press claims for equality without compromising their religious identity or commitments.5 Extolling the populist appeal and socially transformative potential of these movements, Coleman introduces their leading figures and organizations across much of the Middle East in a series of stirring profiles. All the more astonishing, then, to arrive at a concluding chapter subtitled—with no trace of irony—"Unveiling the Future." There Coleman predicts that the women's movements whose successes she details will mark "the beginning of what will undoubtedly be a long process of change—in many cases intergenerational change. The process will be uneven, and the outcomes from place to place will no doubt differ. I suspect that over the long term, Islamic feminism, like other reform movements that preceded it, will end up unapologetically secular. Only then will never-ending debates over religious interpretation be removed from politics."6 Without hesitation or strain, Coleman smoothly integrates what her book has so far compellingly presented as

counterevidence—that religious movements succeed where secular movements have failed in the project of advancing women's rights-into the broader emancipatory narrative of secularization. Standing squarely within the interpretive horizon of modern secular progress, Coleman concludes that "Islamic feminism is an important emotional and intellectual stepping-stone—and tactic—to reconcile religion to the demands of the modern world."7 However nuanced their interventions or vibrant their successes, Muslim feminists, in Coleman's examples, are powerless to overturn the logic of the secularizing process, which is apparently impervious to disconfirmation. The secularization narrative, in turn, threads the narrative of gender and sexual emancipation into its own triumphal plotline, such that, here, robust expressions of Islamic feminism betoken the victory of secular forces, whatever the evidence to the contrary.

That a story about Muslim religious activism for women's freedoms can so easily be made into a story about the invincible march of secularization shows what anthropologist Webb Keane calls the "moral narrative of modernity" in action. "The moral narrative of modernity," writes Keane, "is a story about human emancipation and self-mastery. According to this moral narrative, modernity is a story of human liberation from a host of false beliefs and fetishisms that undermined freedom in the past." This is the path along which both women and individual conscience are freed from the illegitimate authority of religious constraint. To this view, those who persist in the observance of religious law, "displacing their own agency," as Keane puts it, onto "rules, traditions, or fetishes (including sacred texts)," are a puzzle and a problem, perhaps even a threat to freedom as such. They "are not merely behind the times; by denying the agency that is properly theirs, they can even undermine the gains made by others over the course of that long struggle."8 For feminists, particularly, to question the moral narrative of modernity, with its tacit assumption that secularity must and will prevail, is to risk giving up on progress altogether.

Feminist historian Joan Scott urges us to open the question of secularization anyway. In her anchoring contribution to this volume, Scott argues that secularization is not inherently liberating for women and, indeed, is historically grounded in their exclusion from politics. Scott reminds us that women were absent from the "originary moments of secularism (in its democratic or republic forms)" in the making of modern nation-states, whose founders did not consider women political equals. The early French revolutionaries who "banished women from political meetings and active citizenship," she points out, did so by drawing upon arguments from nature, not religion: the difference of sex alone was

legitimate and sufficient ground for *ine*quality. French women did not receive the right to vote until 1944. American women were enfranchised only in 1920, long after the ratification of the religion clauses of the First Amendment that separated church and state.

Why then is it that advances in women's rights are so easily seen as the inevitable fruit of the secularizing process? Put another way, why do women come so late to a narrative of emancipation that is presumed to have already included them? Following Talal Asad, Scott identifies the ready equation of secularization with gender and sexual equality as an especially resilient "myth of liberalism," a redescription of "the political exclusion of women, the propertyless, [and] colonial subjects in liberalism's history" as the gradual but inevitable extension of "liberalism's incomplete project of universal emancipation." In this sense, she suggests, the narrative of secularization that gathers women and sexuality into its liberating trajectory is a recent offshoot, belonging to the same historical and political contexts that give rise to a hyperbolic discourse of a "clash of civilizations."

In a particularly influential framing of that discourse, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris propose that the true conflict is in fact a "sexual clash of civilizations." ¹⁰ In this model the secular West, as champion and guardian of gender equality, must contend with the rest, most especially the Muslim world, whose deeply patriarchal cultures do violence to women's flourishing—a narrative invoked across a wide political spectrum in support of U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq." Noting that the burgeoning scholarly literature on secularism, meanwhile, gives little sustained attention to discourses of gender and sexual emancipation, and to constructions of women's rights in particular, Scott calls for a new genealogy of secularism that illuminates the politics of gender—a politics, she argues, that has been effaced and misappropriated for a variety of projects.

Contributors to this volume take up Scott's call by reading secularism through the prism of gender and sexuality in a variety of contexts. In essays that range across regions, traditions, and temporal frames, scholars of religion, history, sociology, anthropology, politics, and literature explore the historical and conceptual articulations between discourses of the secular and secularizing processes, on the one hand, and variously formulated projects of gender and sexual emancipation, on the other. Many of the essays focus on particular countries, including Egypt, France, Bosnia-Herzegovina, India, and the United States, though in each case the analytic limits of national borders become apparent as

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the aspirations and anxieties of nations play out on a broader stage. Without dismissing the salience of national contexts, other essays focus primarily on discourses and institutions that are transnational in scope, such as the Roman Catholic Church, veiling, or international law. Contributors hew to no party line. Secularizing movements are seen both to advance and to constrain possibilities for gender and sexual equality. Taken together, however, the essays and cases call into question a rigid secularism that positions itself as the solution to conflicts over gender and sexuality, rather than a structural feature of the conditions that generate them.

To question the secularization narrative at all, of course, can feel like a precipitously risky move at a moment in the United States when conservative religious leaders and their political allies appear to be working in lockstep to scale back advances in gender and sexual equality.12 Examples are dispiritingly easy to list: the Vatican has targeted the largest body of U.S. nuns for censure and disciplinary oversight on the grounds of their alleged "silence" on abortion and same-sex marriage. Laws spearheaded by religious groups and passed in state after state prohibit gay marriages and invalidate existing ones, in some cases eliminating recognition of civil unions. States have enacted laws that limit women's access to reproductive health-care services, emboldened by the recent campaign orchestrated by the all-male Catholic hierarchy. In view of entrenched or resurgent patriarchal religious power in the U.S. and globally, any call for a rethinking of secularism as a force for sexual equality and women's freedoms might seem like a naive proposal for unilateral disarmament in the face of mounting and increasingly militant opposition.¹³ The examples gathered here nevertheless suggest that insisting on a strict separation between religious and secular domains, and counting on that separation itself to do the work, may in the end do more harm than good to the cause of sexual equality and women's flourishing.

Why call for a rethinking of the religious/secular divide now, when gains for gender and sexual equality have come so heavily under siege? In part because the political exigencies of the moment work so strongly against seeing the limits and vulnerabilities of that divide, leaving us with distorted views and unpalatable options. In light of what the essays here bring into focus as the far messier ways that religious and secular identities are lived, co-constructed, and traversed, too strict an insistence on their separation might press us to stand for women and against religion, even at the expense of women who identify with forms of flourishing and belonging for which secularism does not allow or account, or,

perhaps, to side with religion (or "religious freedom") over against those whom the religious control of gender and sexuality subject to real and growing harms. When framed as polar opposites and antagonists in struggles over gender and sexuality, moreover, religious and secular actors can often be seen to reinforce and empower one another, supercharging the subject of debate and redoubling the determination of each side to prevail. In the United States, for example, the legal separation of religious and secular domains is precisely what grounds the claims of religious actors to special, opt-out status vis-à-vis legal protections for gender and sexual equality, as the eagerness of religious organizations to seek redress in court when required by law to honor such protections repeatedly attests.14 Finally, calls for more vigilant separation of religious and secular spaces in the cause of gender and sexual equality obscure vast areas of convergence between them, historically and in the present, whose effects are multiple and whose implications for gender and sexuality resist any simple reduction. In the United States and elsewhere, for example, the discourses of Christianity and secularism have been productively allied in projects of civil rights, women's suffrage, colonial domination, and Islamophobia.

Thinking Differently

To shift the paradigm away from the sexual clash of—and within—civilizations, which presents secularism as the answer to the problem of the regulation of sexuality and gender by religious forces, how might we instead begin to see religion's hold on sexuality as itself a feature of secular rule? How has the secular, and not only the religious, settled on sexual governance as the arena of conflict between them? Essays in this volume highlight two trajectories, among multiple and conflicting paths, that lead to the religious control of sexuality under conditions of secularism.

PRIVATIZATION OF RELIGION

One trajectory has to do with the privatization of religion in modern democratic states, a move driven by Enlightenment aspirations to free politics and public life from divisive and authoritarian influences. What Mark Lilla extols as the "great separation" that delineates the transition to modernity is the moment when politics was avowedly set off from religion and reason liberated

from the parochialisms and absolutisms sanctioned through divine authority.¹⁵ This arrangement opens a space of reason and deliberation, not dogma, for the exercise of democracy, as it promises at the same time to protect religious belief from coercive intervention from the state.

Sealed at a safe distance from allegedly universal reason, however, the private sphere is secured not only as the space of personal and potentially idiosyncratic belief, to which all in a secular democracy are entitled. It is also the space of sexuality, and, until their relatively recent, uneven, and incomplete political enfranchisement, the space of women. The privatization of religion under the reign of secularism, then, leaves religion to find its strongest articulations in this private domain, the domain not only of legally protected belief but also of the regulation of gender and sexuality in the service of religious conviction.

The gendering of religion in modernity, then, is not merely a peaceable settlement that assigns the private sphere to women, religion, and the family and the public sphere to men, rationality, and citizenship. As Joan Scott suggests in this volume, patriarchy thrives on either side of the public/private divide: men are at once "the public face of the family and the reasoning arbiters of the realm of the political.... The public/private demarcation so crucial to the secular/religious divide rests on a vision of sexual difference that legitimizes the political and social inequality of women and men." The association of religion with domesticity and (feminine) sentiment and the religious control of women and the family in matters of sexuality, marriage, and reproduction are two sides of the same coin.

Contributor Margot Badran takes up this paradox in her case study of Muslim women in late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Egypt, a period that saw the simultaneous rise of a secular state and society and the reconfiguration of religion within the private domain. The secularizing of the state, law, and education went hand in hand with Islamic reforms, as religious authority moved into a newly emerging private sphere, anchored by the nuclear family. The distinction between public and the private domains was naturalized and sharpened by its ostensive gendering: men were identified with the public, secular domain and women with the private, familial, religious domain. Yet the consolidation of patriarchal religious authority over the private domain during this period also constituted, Badran argues, a "religio-legal consecration" of the newly emerging nuclear patriarchal family. Even as secularizing currents did bring celebrated advancements in women's chances for education and paid work, they equally "reinscribed gender inequality" in the "cloistering

mechanism" that was the legally constructed, religiously sanctioned nuclear family, where conservative religious forces secured a powerful and tenacious system of patriarchal control. This ambiguous legacy of the privatization of religion in Egypt, Badran contends, remains hidden and operative within its twinned narratives of secularization and gender emancipation.

Zilka Spahić-Šiljak's case study of socialist and democratic formations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, formerly part of Yugoslavia, captures a similarly mixed picture. As Spahić-Šiljak shows, the era of the socialist secular state (roughly 1945–1990) saw increasing opportunities for women in the workforce, education, and political life, reflecting the state's official endorsement of gender equality. But these gains did little to overturn the patriarchal vision of gender roles embedded in cultural and religious traditions, which were officially suppressed but vibrantly cultivated within the private sphere, where women were appointed the primary "guardians of tradition." Although aggressive socialist state policies secured advancing opportunities for women within the workforce and political life, they remained severely constrained by the resurgent power of patriarchal religious and cultural traditions in the private sphere. The transition from a socialist to a democratic state did not dislodge the power of deeply conservative ethnonationalist religious traditions that continue to limit women's equality.

Spahić-Šiljak underscores the disjunction between legal and rhetorical discourses of gender equality and the realities on the ground. From a legal perspective, she observes, "gender equality and women's human rights are better framed and secured today than they were under socialism, though the new constitution gives greater emphasis now to civil and political rights than to the social and economic rights guaranteed by the former socialist state." But the "prestige, protection, and deference" showed religions under democratic rule has given them renewed power to enforce the traditional patriarchal vision of complementary gender roles that associate women with the role of mother and guardian of religious tradition. Secular discourses on gender emancipation in Bosnia-Herzegovina today, meanwhile, are routinely disparaged as Western forms of neocolonialism. With Badran's, Spahić-Šiljak's case study underscores the limited reach of secular laws for gender equality.

The privatization of religion and sexuality in secular modernity takes different forms, generating distinctive and contradictory sexual politics. Saba Mahmood addresses these differences through a focus on Middle Eastern states that, unlike liberal secular democracies, maintain versions of religiously based family law—reflecting the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and its millet system.

"The telescoping of the sharia into family law," she notes, "did not simply curtail the scope of religious law but also transformed it from a system of decentralized and locally administered norms and procedures to a codified system of rules and regulations administered by the centralized state." The marginalization of religion from political and civic affairs in postcolonial states came with its securing a "privileged place in the regulation of the private sphere." Only by recognizing the deeper imbrications of religion, sexuality, and state governance, Mahmood contends, can we understand why sexuality remains so ubiquitous a flash point across the contemporary world as well as the limits of the modern secular dispensation for promoting sexual and gender equality.

SECURING THE NATURAL

A second trajectory that deepens the religious investment in sexuality in a secular age has to do with the pivotal place of the body—and, more broadly, of the "natural"—in the religious/secular divide. As Scott suggests, secularists "removed God as the ultimate intelligent designer, and put 'nature' in his place." The public/private divide that allows for secular governance was secured by the laws of nature, not God, as these made themselves plain in gendered, sexualized bodies. The French revolutionaries whose 1793 convention outlawed the political participation of women, for example, did so on the grounds that the "private functions for which women are destined by their very nature are related to the general order of society; social order results from the differences between man and woman. Each sex is called to the kind of occupation which is fitting for it; its action is circumscribed within this circle which it cannot break through, because nature, which has imposed these limits on man, commands imperiously and receives no law."

For these champions of secular rule, the iron law of nature is incontrovertible and clear. But so too is this the case for religionists who likewise appeal to the "natural," particularly as it bears on intimate functions and the comportment of the sexes, as a realm of universal law. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, accepts the provisionalization of its teachings on Catholic faith and practice under the conditions of secularism: these are binding only on Catholics, while secular law is binding on the subjects of the secular state, including Catholics. But the Church also invokes the category of natural law as binding on all, without regard to citizenship, legal status, or religious affiliation. According to Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), a

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key Vatican II document that clarifies the 1869 doctrine of papal infallibility, the pontiff exercises "infallibility in virtue of his office when, as supreme pastor and teacher of the faithful . . . he proclaims in an absolute decision a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals." Of these, "faith"—that is, faithful membership in the One True Church—is understood to be obligatory for Catholics only and beyond the power of democratic governance to enforce. "Morals," however, because they ostensibly inhere in natural law rather than in Catholic teaching, remain binding on all, Catholic and non-Catholic, without regard for democratic norms.

As Gene Burns has detailed, the Church since 1965 has come increasingly to pronounce on questions of morality and overwhelmingly to define morality in terms of sexuality and gender. Particularly since the 1968 encyclical Humanae Vitae, which reiterated its condemnation of all forms of artificial birth control, the Catholic Church's ever more visible commitment to regulating sexuality—a way of consolidating its authority in an era of secularism and religious pluralism—has strengthened its ties with conservative forces in the United States and worldwide. In this way the ostensibly progressive reforms of Vatican II yielded new reinforcements for an ideological hierarchy in which "morals"—the Church's teachings on sexuality and gender, understood to be universal and absolute—occupy the highest position, Catholic faith and doctrine the middle ground, and Catholic social teaching on issues like war and poverty the lowest, most discretionary rung.¹⁷

The Catholic Church is hardly alone among religious voices in invoking nature as an authoritative ground, authoritative because the laws of nature, unlike those of religion as delimited by the secular state, are avowedly *not* a matter of opinion, not optional or partisan. For example, the World Congress of Families, an international network representing a range of religious cultures in its pro-family platforms, recently convened in Madrid to reaffirm the besieged "natural family" rooted in the "lifelong union of a man and woman through marriage, bound by faith and tradition." Repeatedly invoking nature and science, the group targeted "ideologies of statism, atomistic individualism, and sexual revolution" as primary threats to the traditional family. Here we see what Olivier Roy argues is a broader global phenomenon in the past half century, a growing split between religions and their surrounding cultures, with gender and sexuality as the primary wedge issues. "Secularization has not eradicated religion," Roy observes, but rather contributed to the "militant reformulation of religion in a secularized space." ²²⁰

Secularists, meanwhile, lay claim to the authority of the natural on similar grounds. Religious and secular forces alike constitute the natural as the domain that lies beyond the power of the other to determine or control. Secular critics often fault the unnaturalness of religious formulations of what constitutes appropriate gendered and sexual behavior (e.g., chastity, veiling) or of practices alleged to be religious in origin (e.g., genital cutting). At the same time, as Jakobsen and Pellegrini point out, secular states also reinforce "specifically religious ideas about, for example, 'natural' versus 'unnatural' sexual acts and appetites." They do so no longer in the name of religion, however, but rather in the name of morality. In her contribution to this volume, Molly K. McGarry shows that while lawyers and judges in the nineteenth-century United States operated on the uncontested maxim that "Christianity is part and parcel of the common law," their twentieth- and twenty-first-century counterparts have only rarely gone on record to suggest that "Christianity is not part of the common law," since the invocation of "morality" could now stand in "for the overt mention of Christianity as such."

McGarry traces a genealogy of "moral turpitude," a legal category with roots in Calvinist Protestant theology as it was embedded in English common law and imported to the United States. Historically invoked primarily in immigration cases, the term's concern with "base or shameful character, vileness, and depravity" underscores how modes of national inclusion also define gendered boundaries of sexual morality. Inconsistently enforced but brought forward most often at moments when the U.S. has sought to define exceptional threats, the strange career of "moral turpitude" reveals a swath of secular law structured by the uneven operations of religion and its sexualized and racialized effects.

In their contribution to the volume, Jakobsen and Pellegrini go further, suggesting that among the paradoxes of the modern secular state is the ease with which moral claims about the sexual, gendered body are inserted into a range of issues that at first glance seem to have nothing to do with either gender or sexuality, from end-of-life issues to organ donation to prison reforms. In each instance, they argue, the body serves as a site through which religion is (re) activated or remains operational, and social violence justified, via the language of morality. Through a reading of the contemporaneous reception of the Kinsey reports on human sexuality and Reinhold Niebuhr's reflections on the tradition of just war, they explore how the body comes to be positioned between religion and the secular state, such that the moral regulation of the body by religion becomes a sign of the state's own good works. This certification of the state's

moral goodness, they argue, also works metonymically to ensure the justice and peacefulness of the secular state, even in times of war.

SEX AND GENDER IN SECULAR CHRISTENDOM

Jakobsen, Pellegrini, and McGarry find in American law, sexology, and civil discourse in wartime a variety of paths by which religious exclusions are carried forward in secular guise. Among the pitfalls they illuminate in any call for a strengthened secularism as the answer to the limitations ascribed to religion, then, is the capacity of secular structures and discourses to sustain features of the religious structures and discourses that give way to them.

This capacity may be especially visible in those processes by which what was once known as "Christendom" gives way to the ostensibly secular West. As Talal Asad reminds us, the Renaissance encounter of European explorers with so-called primitive and oriental peoples created a two-pronged theological challenge for European Christianity, which was to reconcile human diversity with the Mosaic account of creation and to square foreign belief systems with revealed Christianity's incontrovertible truths. The Enlightenment solution to the dilemma of difference, racial and spiritual, was to recast Christianity in light of the universal morality it allegedly augurs—the "one religion," as Kant put it, "which is valid for all men and at all times"—and then to plot all peoples and religious practices in progressive relation to this one, essential religion, as distinct from its phenomenal forms. Henceforth, Asad suggests, the Christian story of redemption, told in ways that sought to accommodate the heathen peoples encountered in colonial expeditions, could give way to a secular narrative of (Western) progress, told in developmental terms.

Secularism and Christianity are, in this way, mutually implicated in the moral narrative of modernity, most visibly in what Webb Keane identifies as its "projection onto chronological time" of a view of human flourishing rooted in the Protestant Reformation.²³ According to this view, religious practices not centered on legitimate belief, faith, or conscience—not centered, that is, within the interior space to which Luther assigned true, unmediated communion with God and to which secular modernity tends to assign religion, in its benign forms, in general—signal backwardness, a stubborn refusal of history's ineluctable forward march. This is the path along which reliance on rituals, icons, and taboos, often violently enforced, gives way to the freedom of conscience seen to characterize both advanced religions and secular agency.

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Christian and secular pundits since 9/11 have routinely called for the hastening of a "Reformation" in Islam, on the model of the Protestant, that would speed its path into the modern, secular world.

What Azza Karam spells out in this volume as the reigning assumption about religion among many secular feminists today—"that religion is oppressive, subordinating and marginalizing of women in general and a blight to women's rights movements, let alone gender equality"; in short, that "religion = women's (sexual, political, economic and sociocultural) subordination"—was and remains a staple of the triumphal narratives of modernization that undergird the West's imperial projects, from the British Raj to the conquest of the Philippines to the invasion of Iraq. Far from being anti-Christian, however, these discourses often tacitly set Christianity ahead of these other religious cultures as belonging to a later, surer stage of development on the path of civilization. Proof of Christianity's special standing is given in its purportedly more enlightened treatment of women. The marriage of gender emancipation and colonial ambition, under the sign of an enlightened Christianity, has long proved mutually empowering for the parties involved: in her history of the racial origins of feminism in the United States, for example, Louise Newman shows how nineteenth-century appeals on behalf of women's rights drew strength from and furthered a range of "civilizing missions and imperial projects" by which the U.S. extended its power over so-called primitive peoples at home and abroad.²⁴ Women who identified the cause of women's rights with the superiority of Western, Christian civilization—in part through the shrewd deployment of a vocabulary that kept the implicit degradation of non-Western, non-Christian women in view: the harem, the seraglio, foot binding, child marriage, suttee—commanded all the authority of the West's imperial reach even as their access to public, institutional forms of power remained quite limited.35

To return, then, to the question of how women come to be included, as though always already there, in a story of secularization founded on their exclusion: the moral narrative of modernity, to which secularism and most articulations of feminism subscribe, implies the commonsense assertion that some societies or communities are more advanced than others and that the treatment of women indexes just who is ahead and who behind on the path that moves religion into the modern secular world. This moralization of history, with its tacit assumptions about what constitutes a modern, progressive person, works in part by aligning this modern, progressive person with the purportedly universal values of individual freedom and agency, thus always and implicitly broadening its scope of inclusion. If the association of both women and religion, together

with sexuality, with the private sphere is the move that opens the space of the secular as the space of freedom and agency, then women's emancipation from this binary framing can nevertheless be conceived as the remaining necessary step in the overall trajectory of secular emancipation, which is thereby shown to be self-correcting and self-transcending—that is, truly universal.

Imagining secularism to transcend its founding exclusions by virtue of its universality accomplishes several things. It shifts the burden of constrained agency to backward, obstinately religious cultures; it equates secularizing cultures (or those assumed to have been shaped by the values of Christian civilization) with universal values; and it puts those cultures on the right side of history, that is, in a privileged relation to progress and time. From this perspective, the more relevant divide for secular feminists may no longer be the difference between women and men but rather between two camps of women, those whom secularism has not yet emancipated into the structures of universal agency and those whom it has.

Christening this emancipatory secularism a form of "antisexist patriarchy," Nacira Guénif-Souilamas tracks its recent emergence in her case study of postcolonial France.²⁶ The equation between secularism and gender freedom is newly championed as the safest shield against an archaic sexism purportedly lurking in Islam, the religion leaking into a secularized Western Europe from its former colonial margins. Although a late coupling, the marriage of secularism and gender emancipation, Guénif -Souilamas argues, now assumes the status of a "sacred union" in postcolonial France. "With very little in a century and more of French colonial history to support it," she wryly notes, "this marriage must constantly be staged and restaged in order to serve as an unquestionable sign of modernity and as the test to pass for the erstwhile colonial subjects who seek the privileges and rights that come with French citizenship." To make her case, she explores contemporary French expressions of belief and belonging, religious and secular, deciphering their gendered, ethnic, and racial languages. She suggests that an antisexist patriarchy has emerged to obscure and avoid thorny issues of social, gender, and racial inequality within French society. In the past decade especially, Guénif-Souilamas shows, highly stylized public controversies over the veil, genital cutting, polygamy, and forced marriage foreground the gendered and sexualized otherness of Islam in a furious effort to secure traditional French identity and values from the influx of the alien.

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd calls our attention to similar dynamics in Canada and the Netherlands, where "claims to the secular have been mobilized in opposition to 'Islam' to secure a particular kind of gendered secular national identity." Hurd focuses on the rise to prominence of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali-born former parliamentarian whose extraordinarily well-publicized conversion away from Islam is used to model what it means to be a modern Dutch woman. In the hands of its Dutch redactors, Hirsi Ali's highly personal story comes to stand in for the triumph of the Netherlands over the immigrants who threaten its commitment to modern values, including gender and sexual emancipation for all: she, Hirsi Ali, has joined "us." In so doing, the unveiled, attractive Hirsi Ali embodies and legitimizes secular Dutch gender norms in and through the rejection of Islam. Hurd traces this story line as it extends beyond the national level to international relations and global politics. From scholarship to policy to humanitarian and military intervention, the project of saving women both rests on and gives credence to secular anxieties about religion in general and Islam in particular.

Exposing the imbrications of secularism and Christianity belongs to the larger project of dismantling an essentialized, idealized secularism by tracing its multiple strands and their intersecting histories. These strands are not part of a single teleological process, but rather a composite whose intersections are, in Scott's words, "disparate, discontinuous, and contingent." Secularism, as contributor Rajeswari Sunder Rajan writes elsewhere, is a "diffuse package of ideas, ideals, politics, and strategies" that varies across place and time.27 Rajan cautions against assuming that the urgency of countering secularism's imperial uses in Euro-American contexts will "resonate in the same way in other geopolitical contexts." Interpretive pressures to flatten the dynamics and variations of secularism within national contexts, she cautions, sustain the impression of a single time line with a uniform set of emancipatory strategies.28 In a similar vein, Ann Braude reflects on interpretive puzzles surrounding the use of the categories religious and secular to describe the United States. Observing that Christian and secular are interchangeable modifiers for America in the minds of some Moroccans, Braude calls attention also to the stereotypes their oppositional formation effortlessly sustains. Only a more capacious take on both terms, she insists, can capture the range and diversity of the American religious-secular landscape.

Imagining Otherwise

As the cases in this volume suggest, to insist on the sovereignty of the secular as the corrective to religions' legacy of patriarchy and colonialism is often to

reinscribe the same legacy, backed now by the authority of secular states. But even when the clear dividing line "works"—even when the religious and the secular appear to be neatly cordoned off from one another, as in the separation of church and state in liberal constitutional democracies—the problem of domination persists. Legally separated from the liberal state, religion becomes a protected space of exemption from democratic norms, where, for example, the patriarchal control of women and the family may become further entrenched with the blessings of secular governance, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or where the right to legally mandated health care or same-sex partner benefits may be trumped in the name of "religious freedom," as in the United States. In these examples, secular and religious actors can stand in sharply drawn opposition to one another even as they jointly sustain the same powerful narrative: one that confers exceptional standing on religion.

To tell a different story requires us to draw on a range of methods, optics, and vocabularies from within and across the humanities and social sciences. None of the disciplines represented in this volume, of course, floats free of the secularist assumptions of the academy. The place of religion in the formation of the modern disciplinary landscape is thus itself part of the challenge of rethinking the narrative of secularism and gender emancipation. As Tomoko Masuzawa suggests, when "religion came to be identified as such—that is, more or less in the same sense that we think of it today—it came to be recognized above all as something that, in the opinions of many self-consciously modern Europeans, was in the process of disappearing from their midst or, if not altogether disappearing, becoming circumscribed in such a way that it was finally discernible as a distinct, and limited, phenomenon."29 Scholars in the social sciences, particularly, embraced a secularist model of the differentiation of spheres that isolated religion in such a way that it could henceforth be addressed by specialists or safely ignored. A 2006 article in the flagship journal of the American Political Science Association, for example, notes that "apart from economics and geography, it is hard to find a social science that has paid less attention to religion than political science."30 There, as Elizabeth Shakman Hurd observes, "most realist, liberal, English school, feminist, and historicalmaterialist approaches treat religion as either private by prior assumption or a cultural relic to be handled by anthropologists."31

What would it mean to think about religion as something other than a protected, ideally circumscribed space? In his contribution to the volume, sociologist Gene Burns underscores the importance of distinguishing between

cultural and institutional forms of secularization, which significantly do not always overlap. While secularism as a cultural discourse may or may not be liberating, Burns argues that the institutional formation of secular liberal states may offer greater resources for promoting gender and sexual equality, a claim he advances through a case study of the Roman Catholic Church in the modern period. Secular liberal states, Burns contends, provide "more room for cultural difference and political challenge" than do other state formations. This feature helps to account for their mixed legacy. On the one hand, this space accommodates new and existing organizations, values, and practices that constrain women's flourishing, as we see in the case of Egypt and Bosnia-Herzegovina. But it also makes room for the emergence of progressive social movements and, significantly, creative reinterpretations of religious traditions that advance equality and human dignity. Makes room, doesn't make. Far from any inexorable historical process at work in its dynamics, Burns emphasizes, "secular liberalism's default option is to allow status quo social hierarchies to persist." In so doing, he highlights the misplaced confidence that comes with imagining the liberal separation of religious and secular domains to possess some intrinsic moral and political capacity to advance the cause of gender justice.

The diverse social spaces created by secular liberal societies decrease "the likelihood that a single institution or set of cultural assumptions will dominate a society." Whereas Burns pursues this point from the perspective of institutions, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan addresses its significance at the level of subjectivity. Sunder Rajan is particularly attentive to the distinctive ways in which disciplinary formations address the religion-secular divide. She notes places where the historical marginalization of religion in the social sciences has now been inverted in response to post-9/11 assumptions about the oppression of Muslim women that license military interventions on their alleged behalf. The urgency of dismantling that cover story has prompted scholarly efforts to valorize the religious agency of women in Islam. Sunder Rajan cautions that such valorizations inadvertently risk pressuring women to take sides, deciding between the promises of secular freedom, on one side, or the resources of religious faith and belonging, on the other. Insofar as this is the case, scholarship in the social sciences that is sympathetic to religion and religious actors may now more forcefully restate, and enlist women to uphold, what more traditional scholarship has long assumed, which is that the religious-secular divide is an either/ or proposition.

Such a pernicious framing loses traction, Sunder Rajan contends, in the light of a more attentive and finely grained exploration of women's experience. As she illustrates through a close reading of several Indian texts, literature may be less susceptible than the social scientist's data set to the sorting pressures of binary classification. "The work of the literary," she contends, "is precisely to access this kind of conflicted subjectivity, one that is necessarily fragmented contradictory, and multiple." Opening a window onto layered subjectivities, literature allows us to "read religion from a critical but not alienated perspective."

Sunder Rajan proposes that the emergence of secular modernity makes more widely available a form of reason or imagination, a "supplementary argumentative idiom," that possesses the capacity to alter, whether subtly or more radically, an individual's habits and powers of critical reflection. Its presence need not exclude religious norms, sensibilities, or identities, even as it may modulate one's relation to them. It need impose or adjudicate no conflict between freedom and belonging, the dichotomy forced by a crude religion-secular binary. As a mode of creative apprehension vis-à-vis one's own religious identity and commitments, the secular imagination might offer itself now as a more acute and vital engagement with religious possibility, now as a "necessary exit route" for "those seeking to escape too-rigid religious strictures or flee the claustrophobia of community." As Sunder Rajan insists, the maneuvering room that secularism's imaginative idiom opens to subjectivities that may also and simultaneously be religiously constituted need not be viewed as a "vacuous liberal freedom," nor a contest of winner take all.

David Kim turns our attention to the political and cultural limitations of that winner-take-all secularism. This "reflexively secularist" gaze, Kim argues, is "a disciplinary habit that casts religion as a cause for concern—as a threat to peace, to political stability, or to the enactment of freedom and justice—rather than a potential source for peace, freedom, and justice." This is especially the case when secularism is deployed as a liberal remedy against conservative religious affronts to gender and sexual freedom. Secular liberal rhetorics of equality, liberty, tolerance, and pluralism ring with emancipatory promise. Kim contends, even as they increasingly function as covers for *inequality* and political complacency. What might instead be gained, Kim asks, in recouping a religious idiom of transformation and renewal, one that privileges notions of authority, generosity, transcendence, compassion, and love? Risking "an insistence on imagining the world otherwise than it is now"—a world where, for example, "an abiding concern for women and girls to transcend the constraints

and suffering of social injustice is not only possible but necessary"—Kim urges a political progressivism reinvigorated by the religious imagination. Tellingly, conservative religionists and secularists conspire against this religious imagination, whether in the name of orthodoxy or secular modernity. This structural collusion, anchored in the reigning secularist settlement, closes off transformative possibilities that Kim calls us to revitalize.

To imagine differently is to escape the rationalist template that locates religion and the secular in tidy, wholly separate compartments. This template is, perhaps, most deeply inscribed in the souls of academics whose institutional abode epitomizes "the very process of 'becoming modern' and 'becoming secular." The status of religion within the secularist dispensation is too often a caricature, the antithesis of the secular as imagined by its most ardent defenders: otherworldy, supernatural, authoritarian, irrational. Contributors to this volume propose a range of strategies for moving past this picture: from multiplying genealogies of the secular to capturing the supple workings of the religious and secular imaginations to giving voice to those whose experience of religion in a secular age resists any simple bifurcation between them. In the process, the stark separateness of religion, which anchors both its marginalization and its privileging, may give way to a more pluralist rendering. Because, as Braude notes, it is "most often women who pay the price" for the oppositional framing of religious and secular domains, the task is urgent.

Gendering the Divide

Our title, Gendering the Divide, is meant not only to call attention to the multiple, intricate ways that the religion/secular divide both grounds and is grounded in the matrix of gender. We hope in so doing to provide traction for reappraisal and thus mean to subject the religion/secular divide to the kinds of nuanced, recalibrating inquiry that opens up other areas of experience when gender becomes a focusing lens.³³ In the first instance, we consider how the dividing line between religion and the secular is made to seem natural, normal, and difficult to contest by being plotted onto the naturalized, normalized difference of sex—and the work that plotting performs. In this sense, to gender the divide is to historicize and contextualize what passes as a static binary between the secular and the religious, a binary that, like gender, is at once taken for granted and assiduously enforced.

The risk of calling attention to this pervasive gendering of the religion; secular divide, however, is that of freezing possibilities we seek to multiply by appearing to take the divide at face value and so to leave unchallenged a broader series of interlocking oppositions—between freedom and constraint, public and private, metropole and colony, enlightenment and unreason, male and female, secular and religious, to begin the list—whose operations mutually constitute, signal, and sustain one another in modernity. These interlocking oppositions have powerfully shaped the formation of our academic disciplines, where the causal connections between emancipation and secularizing processes are routinely assumed and broadcast.

In the second instance, then, we wish by "gendering the divide" to unsettle the binaries that limit the places one might intelligibly inhabit or from which one might plausibly speak. The public/private divide, as Jakobsen and Pellegrini remind us, "is not any one thing nor any one place." So too with the divide between religion and the secular. Or women and men: the unbridgeable "gap," writes Scott, the absence everywhere of predictable or perfect "fit between physiology, sexuality and desire ... explains the recurring (perhaps perpetual) difficulty of pinning down the meanings of sexual difference. Sexual difference is an intractable problem." To linger with gendered difference as an intractable problem, "an irritant to explanations that assume full rationality (of economic, social and political practices)" suggests Scott, may also be to "take our distance from the emancipatory story secularism has learned to tell about itself."

Notes

- "Saudi King Fires Sexist Adviser"; "Saudi King Abdullah Sacks Conservative Adviser."
 Our thanks to Elizabeth Shakman Hurd for calling this example to our attention.
- 2. For example, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, http://www.becketfund.org/ibelievepetition/ (accessed July 1, 2012).
- 3. See Nazworth, "Christians Rally on Both Sides of Health Care Debate"; Millhiser, "Religious Groups Line Up to Support Affordable Care Act"; Catholics for Choice, "Catholics Support Access to Contraception"; Farnell and Scheeler, "Faith Leaders Rally Around Affordable Care Act"; Tabachnick, "Jewish Groups Back Health Care Act, "Major Mainstream Religious Leaders Support White House."
- 4. Volsky, "Romney." See also the petition at http://www.mittromney.com/s/stand-religious-liberty. Charges that Christians are under siege by a secularism, construed as a rival, if disingenuous, religion, have figured for decades in the strategies of conservative religious opponents of abortion and homosexuality. See Goldberg, Kingdom Coming

- 5. Coleman, Paradise Beneath Her Feet, xviii.
- 6. Ibid., 274.
- 7. Ibid., 275.
- Keane, "What Is Religious Freedom Supposed to Free?" See also Keane, Christian Moderns.
- 9. Asad, Formations of the Secular, 59.
- 10. Inglehart and Norris, "The True Clash of Civilizations."
- II. Judith Butler suggests how the narrative of violent deliverance from Islamic sexual repression was played out at Abu Ghraib, in the form of sexual liberties visited upon Muslim detainees in the name of Western freedoms. Butler, "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time."
- 12. In a May 2012 editorial the *New York Times* asserts that the "Republican assault on women's rights and health is undeniable, severe and continuing" and lists as evidence various legislation that would restrict women's right to abortion even in life-threatening circumstances, eliminate public funding for Planned Parenthood and Title X (a federal program that provides preventive care to poor women, including contraception and screening for breast and cervical cancer), repeal measures intended to bolster the 1963 Equal Pay Act for victims of gender-based wage discrimination, and weaken the Violence Against Women Act. See "The Campaign Against Women." These examples might give pause to those who invoke a "sexual clash of civilizations," which frames the West, and the U.S. in particular, as the champion of the rights and dignity of women.
- 13. We thank Kathleen Sands for capturing this issue in such compelling fashion.
- 14. See "D.C. Archdiocese."
- 15. Lilla, The Stillborn God, 3-13.
 - . Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964, http://www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/v3.html (accessed July 1, 2012).
- For a fuller discussion, see Fessenden, "Sex and the Subject of Religion." This discussion draws gratefully on Burns, *The Frontiers of Catholicism* and Ronan, *Tracing the Sign of the Cross.* The workings of this new ideological hierarchy are starkly visible in the Vatican's April 2012 decision to revoke the power of self-governance from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious after a finding that its members have made statements that "disagree with or challenge the bishops, who are the church's authentic teachers of faith and morals." The nuns were specifically rebuked for being guided by stronger commitments to social justice than to the church's teaching on abortion. "American Nuns Vow to Fight Vatican Criticism."
- 18. World Congress of Families, "Steven Mosher Answered Key Questions."
- 19. World Congress of Families, "The Madrid Declaration."
- 20. Roy, Holy Ignorance, 2.
 - Asad, Genealogies of Religion, 18-21, 40-43; Kant quoted on 42.
- 22. For fuller discussion, see Fessenden, Culture and Redemption, 170-171.
- 23. Keane, "Christian Moderns."

- 24. Newman, White Women's Rights, 181.
- 25. For fuller discussion, see Fessenden, Culture and Redemption, 161-62.
- 26. In this sense, as Jakobsen and Pellegrini suggest, in this volume, "secularism can ground its own form of sexism" and colonial domination, "even as it is deployed against 'other' forms."
- 27. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, "Introduction," in Rajan and Needham, *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, 3.
- 28. The companion volume in this project explores diverse forms of secularism in France, India, Turkey, and the U.S., capturing their distinctive hues and histories, as well as their global interactions. The case studies illuminate the Western Christian roots and inflections in the religion-secular template, as well as the creative appropriations, alternate genealogies, and transformations of the template in its global and temporal diffusion. See Cady and Hurd, Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age.
- 29. Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions, 19.
- 30. Wald and Wilcox, "Getting Religion."
- 31. Hurd, "A Suspension of (Dis) Belief."
- 32. Masuzawa, "The University and the Advent of the Academic Secular," 119.
- 33. Our locus classicus for this kind of pluralizing inquiry is Scott's "Gender."

Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister

RELIGIONS DOMINATED BY WOMEN

Susan Starr Sered

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11

Leaders and Experts

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN FEMALE-DOMINATED RELIGIONS

Looking at Shaker history, Marjorie Procter-Smith has concluded that gender ideology and gender of leaders are firmly interlocked. She shows that "the system of dual [male and female] leadership was in place in the [Shaker] societies several years prior to the appearance of Youngs' *Testimony*, where the doctrine of a dual deity was first expressed" (1985, vii). And, during the period of Mother Ann's Work (the internal revival during the mid-nineteenth century in which messages were received from deceased Shaker leaders, God, and Holy Mother Wisdom), "As women became increasingly prominent as instruments [mediums], female symbols became increasingly prominent in the symbol-system of the sect" (1985, 196). The pattern that emerges is of women stressing female symbols after they become prominent in leadership; we can assume that this functions to validate their authority in much the same way that masculine symbols validate the authority of male leaders in other religious traditions (Catherine Wessinger, personal communication 1993).

A feature of all the religions treated in this book is that both in theory and in practice leadership roles are open to women, and women predominate in most positions of authority and prestige. Although few of the female-dominated religions claim that women are "better" than men, quite a few assert that women are more suited (or uniquely suited) to fill leadership roles. For the most part, leaders in women's religions embrace rather traditional (albeit expanded and empowered) female roles and traits. For example, when Virginia Kerns asked the Black Caribs why women are more prominent in ritual, she was told that actually anyone can participate in ritual (except children) but women are more interested, more attuned to the supernatural as they age, have better memories than men and so remember the intricate rituals, and feel more gratitude and duty toward the ancestors. As we saw in earlier chapters, many of the rituals performed by the Black Carib women involve cooking and other activities that are common parts of women's lives.

When Patricia Lerch asked her Brazilian informants why more women than men are Umbanda mediums, the qualities most often named in describing mediums were those also used by informants in discussing the attributes of a good mother or wife. Women's life experiences were said to prepare them for the role demands of spirit medium. "Men are perceived to be weak creatures unable to endure the spiritual tests and the rigors of development. Where do women get their spiritual strength? Strength comes from dealing with everyday life" (Lerch 1982, 248). Suffering trains one for mediumship, and in the words of one informant, "Women suffer more than men, both on the spiritual level and on the material level. This history of suffering makes women better suited to be mediums. Women suffer because of their husbands. . . . Women learn to suffer with patience and resignation" (1982, 249). Women's suffering typically stems from domestic problems—in particular, unfaithful husbands. Male infidelity means that men do not give enough money to their wives, so that the wives cannot educate their children and manage their households properly. This situation reflects both the economic marginality of most Brazilian women and the infamous sexual double standard. Yet the outcome is that women are deemed to be the preferable religious leaders in Afro-Brazilian cults. In addition, the actual work performed by mediums is more similar to Brazilian women's work than Brazilian men's work: According to Ruth Landes (1947), women are seen as more suited to the types of duties involved in religious ritual—cooking sacred foods and caring for the altars—because that is what they do at home.

Suffering is a theme that emerges repeatedly in the life stories of women leaders, and is used by many of the women's religions to explain why more women than men are leaders. In a study of women Spiritist healers in Puerto Rico, Koss-Chioino commented that pain seems to be more central to women's than to men's life experiences. Women in sexist societies suffer from the denial of their talents and worth, in addition to the physical and psychological distress that all women undergo throughout their reproductive cycles. I would argue that the feminization of suffering is used to justify women's religious leadership in societies in which leadership is perceived to be a male prerogative. Pain—a female prerogative—explains why women can be religious leaders.

HIERARCHICAL RELIGIONS

Scholars have asserted that women's organizational style is less hierarchical than men's (e.g., Barfoot and Sheppard 1980, on Pentecostal churches.) According to Michelle Rosaldo (1974, 29), well-articulated systems of rank are a male rather than female mode. Emblems and insignia of rank, such as those found in armies, are rarely created by women. A range of theories have been offered to explain this gender difference. Drawing on Nancy Chodorow's ideas, Iris Marion Young (1983) argues that because boys are mothered by women, they come to relate to others in an oppositional (dichotomous) way. This leads to a mode of conceptualization that emphasizes mutually exclusive

dualities (body/mind; self/other), which results in hierarchies and oppression of all kinds. Carol Gilligan (1982) has argued that men's thinking is more competitive, more concerned with winning and losing, whereas women's thinking centers more on cooperation and care (see also Johnson 1988, 94–95).

We indeed find that most women's religions preach "egalitarian" ideologies that every human being regardless of sex, class, or age has the potential for communicating with the spirits. However, in actual fact, in all the women's religions certain categories of people are more attracted by, or attractive to, the gods or spirits. In contrast to sociological theories that show women opting for nonhierarchical organizational styles, in all these religions there is some sort of hierarchy based on spiritual development. 2 Although women's religions tend to provide equal opportunities to potential leaders with little regard to class and education, rank can be achieved through acquiring skills and followers. Unlike in many male-dominated organizations, neither wealth nor schooling determines who acquires skills and followers: ritual skills and clients often accrue to the poorest, least educated, and most unfortunate women. Still, and let me emphasize this finding, women's religious organizations do not seem to be any less hierarchical than men's. Organizational sociologists know the "iron law of oligarchy"—only the very smallest groups do not have hierarchy. Thus the fact that women's religions are hierarchical is not totally unexpected, because all groups other than very small ones have hierarchy. Patricia Martin's study of feminist organizations in the United States strengthens this observation: despite a myth of nonhierarchical relations, no particular internal structure seems to be a defining characteristic of feminist organizations (1990).

Sande: A Case Study

Sande initiation rituals in which all initiates are covered in white clay seem to dramatize the innate equality of all members. At the same time, Sande chapters are hierarchically organized. The route to leadership in Sande is through acquiring more knowledge. Increased adeptness is acknowledged by rites that raise some women to higher ranks. Leaders or headwomen have special skills—they are responsible for the initiates' training, and function as midwives and advisers on gynecological problems. Some women are so adept that they are known over a wide area and travel across linguistic and ethnic boundaries. The Sande leadership structure is as follows: The Majo is the headwoman; the Sowei are in charge of teaching the initiates; the Ligba initiate the girls; the Ndoli are dancers (some of whom wear masks); the Klawa are counsellors for the initiates; the Sowei Ligba are in charge of providing protection for members of the Society.

This system of ranking has implications aside from ceremony. Caroline Bledsoe argues that Sande serves the interests of older women while contributing to the oppression of younger women. In that sense, Sande actually intensifies power differences among women. Sande leaders' power over female initiates' sexual and domestic services can be used to gain the loyalty of young men or those from outside lineages whom elders—male and female—seek to con-

trol. Bledsoe interprets what initiates learn in bush school as "ideological dressing on a rigid gerontocratic hierarchy" (1980, 69).

Bledsoe has observed that the skills Sande initiates learn are ones they already know—that the learning is symbolic. But unlike Carol MacCormack who explains that what the girls really learn is cooperation (see Chapter 6) or Bruce Lincoln who argues that initiates learn to see the inner cosmic significance and sacrality in everyday activities (see Chapter 7), Bledsoe claims that what initiates really learn is "absolute obedience to Sande leaders, both while they are in the bush school and in later life. Disobedience or disrespect may be threatened with infertility or even death" (1980, 68). The leaders can convincingly threaten infertility and death because they are the midwives. Both men and women fear and respect midwives whose power stems from their exclusive knowledge of obstetrics and gynecology. And despite myths to the contrary, Sande leaders actually hide more than they teach about reproduction and midwifery, and even try to keep the knowledge of childbearing secret. Women believe themselves to be utterly dependent on the midwives, and the midwives are able to use women's dependence on them during birth to extract secrets that further enhance their social power.

Other Examples

The manifestations of hierarchy vary among women's religions. The Afro-Brazilian religions are characterized by elaborate hierarchies based on spiritual talents rather than on knowledge (as in Sande). Diana Brown found that in Umbanda centers, mediums who are sought out for their consulting abilities gain great prestige and advance rapidly through the ritual hierarchy of the center. In contrast to our expectations of supportive and nonhierarchical relationships among women, most cult leaders do not want their mediums to practice outside the public sessions held at Centers.³ (The leaders say that most mediums are not sufficiently developed spiritually to handle private sessions; the mediums claim that the cult leaders are jealous.) On the other hand, mediums wear simple white outfits and there are no class indicators such as jewelry to show socioeconomic status. In many cases poor and black mediums may outrank rich and white ones, and women may outrank men.

In Burma all the *nat* wives (mediums) attached to a particular *nat* have an internal hierarchy, led by those who are full-time devotees. Devotees feel a certain rivalry among themselves regarding whom the *nat* visits in dreams and to whom he reveals his presence. Although there is no official centralized organization of mediums associated with particular *nats*, there is an informal yet clearly recognized hierarchy based on spiritual development.

Unlike Sande leaders, the $z\bar{a}r$ leader is a fellow sufferer, someone who deals with the same sorts of problems as her followers. Her authority does not lie in orders that the patient must obey, but in her personal charisma and her skill at the process of negotiating with the spirits. On the other hand, $z\bar{a}r$ leaders are addressed as shaykha (a title of respect), and have followers (or "daughters") ranging in number from fifty to several hundred who attend annual rituals

provided by the leaders for their followers. Not only is there a difference in rank between leaders and followers, but also between initiated and non-initiated followers. At zār rituals non-initiated women attend, but have a lower status; for example, they may not sit on the mattresses, or be served coffee.

Ironically, despite the existence of the Mother Church (see Chapter 12), Christian Science congregations are more democratic than most other women's religions. There is no clergy and officers are elected from among members of the congregation. On the other hand, and this is the essential point, Mary Baker Eddy insisted on being acknowledged and obeyed as the sole discoverer and founder of Christian Science.

The Shakers described an explicit chain of command, beginning with Almighty God and Holy Mother Wisdom, then Jesus and Ann Lee, and then the first church elders. Each Shaker community had a fully articulated hierarchy of religious and secular leaders: deacons, trustees, and elders directing the spiritual and working lives of members. Members were divided into three classes of families: novitiates, junior or second class who still owned their own property but ceased using it to join the production-consumption Shaker cooperative, and senior or third class who had renounced their property and signed a binding covenant with the Shaker community.

On the Ryūkyū Islands laypeople have rather minor ritual roles; specialists are responsible for the majority of ritual action. In the past the noro priestesses lived in semi-seclusion, apart from their fellow villagers, often in a special dwelling near the sacred grove. Douglas Haring quotes an informant from one of the smaller Ryūkyūan Islands, "They [noro] are women who live apart, wear kimono twice the usual length, with double-length combs stuck in their hair. By this costume they convince simple folk that they have come down from heaven and have alighted on a mountain top" (1953, 112). On the main island of Okinawa during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a strict religious hierarchy was established by the government. The hierarchy was composed of a high priestess, village priestesses, kin-group priestesses, and household ritual experts.4 These female ritual experts were arranged into a precise, elaborated, and strict hierarchy. Today there are four different names for priestesses (the meanings of these names are not always clear) and a significant distinction between noro (high priestesses who are responsible for leading and preparing public rituals) and ordinary priestesses who are housewives or grandmothers.5

HISTORY AND PATH TO LEADERSHIP

What kinds of women become religious leaders or experts? Do they exhibit from a young age leadership abilities that are nurtured by the previous generation of leaders? Are they women who are misfits—never quite able to fulfill the role marked out for women in their particular cultures? Are they women with heightened spirituality—women who are chosen by the gods? Or are they women with an eye to personal gain and profit?⁶

In the following section we will see that the two most common themes in the life histories of women leaders are illness and an initial resistance to taking up the leader role. But since the life histories of most of these leaders are reconstructed through the leader's own memories, I wish to begin by making some general comments about autobiography. Typically, when people tell their life histories, they relate stories with plots, themes, and character development, rather than a random series of unrelated incidents. Although life in fact is made up of millions of random and unrelated incidents, when people are asked about their lives, they tend to try to make some kind of sense or order out of what they have experienced. In the case of religious autobiography this is even more true. In constructing religious autobiography—in answering the question "How did you come to be active in this religion?"—individuals sort through their life experiences and select those incidents and events that to their mind show spiritual development. The material presented below should not be treated as "objective" or factual accountings of people's lives, but rather as religious interpretations of events deemed significant by specific individuals for very specific reasons.

All of what I have just said regarding religious autobiography in general is even more true in the case of women leaders. Sidonie Smith explains that women who tell their stories "understand that a statement or a story will receive a different ideological interpretation if attributed to a man or to a woman. As a result, the [female] autobiographer . . . approaches her 'fictive' reader as if 'he' were the representative of the dominant order, the arbiter of the ideology of gender and its stories of selfhood" (1987, 48). In other words, when women religious leaders tell their life-stories they are well aware that their stories will be judged by people who, to say the least, are uncomfortable with the very idea of a woman leader. A similar point has been made by Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet: "[I]n women's life stories, the social self does not merely occupy a place within the social order; rather, its place is overdetermined by the status of woman. This means that women's life-stories, unlike men's, deal not only with the relation between the self and the social sphere, but also, and above all, with woman's condition and with the collective representations of woman as they have been shaped by the society with which the woman being interviewed must deal" (1991, 78).

In sum, I ask the reader to take the life histories of women religious leaders with a triple grain of salt: as autobiographies, as religious autobiographies, and as autobiographies of women religious leaders.

Illness, Visions, and Being Called by the Spirits

In Chapter 5 we saw that illness is often what leads women to become involved in women's religions. In several religions prolonged illness is a mark that a woman is destined to be a leader. For example, in Brazil signs of incipient mediumship include excessive crying, protracted illness, unexplained events, unsolvable problems, and unusual occurrences. (Psychological testing of women mediums in Brazil demonstrate that mediums tend to be reasonably well adjusted; cf. Leacock and Leacock 1972, 326–327). The path to becoming a medium usually involves a stage of sickness or other misfortune that a cult leader

interprets as caused by undeveloped mediumship. Umbandists believe that the ability to be a medium is innate, inheritable, and God-given. Resistance is dangerous—it can lead to further misfortune or even death. Husbands of future mediums may object to or disbelieve in the *mediumidade* of their wives. Most women mediums and cult leaders believe that a married woman should have her husband's consent, but that if he won't give it, the spiritual order should take precedence over his resistance, otherwise her illness will worsen.

On some of the Ryūkyū Islands, priestesses are selected from certain families or lineages. On the other hand, the woman is only considered qualified to be a priestess upon experiencing kamidari—the mark of the divine in the form of visions, hallucinations, dreams, and abnormal behavior. Shamans (yuta) judge if the illness is kamidari or not. Only then will the candidate learn the dances and rituals and stories of noro. Ryūkyūan yutas, like Afro-Brazilian mediums, show life histories of marital discord, intrafamily conflict, chronic illnesses, and hallucinatory experiences.

Historians and anthropologists stress that many Spiritualist mediums had lost their fathers at a young age, suffered from insufficient parental affection as children, or had unfortunate experiences with husbands or male friends. However, since most women in most societies have suffered from insufficient parental affection or from bad relationships with husbands or male friends, I am reluctant to pay much heed to this supposed attribute. Of greater interest is the claim by mediums themselves that they did not consciously choose to become mediums; rather, the spirits chose them. It was often at adolescence and marriage that potential mediums displayed the alarming symptoms and illnesses that would be interpreted as the call of the spirits. Still, according to Laurence Moore, "There was no consistent marital pattern among Spiritualist mediums: some were married, some had been divorced and remarried, and some remained single" (1977, 107).

Alex Owen contends that it is significant that Spiritualist mediums often experienced illness at key stages in the development of sexual maturity and adult femininity. Illness at these times offered attention and recognition, but also provided an arena for expressing conflict. "In other words, spiritualist mediumship was both expressive of an inner struggle with the problem of femininity and instrumental in reconciling that tension" (1981, 209). Again, I am not surprised to hear that women in sexist societies feel conflict at periods in their lives in which they are brought face to face with the ways in which women's freedom is restricted.

Burmese women also do not choose to become shamans. Instead, the nat falls in love with a woman and wishes to marry her. If she resists, she will suffer. It is said that nats love women who have beautiful souls. The nat makes itself manifest through dreams or possession. Typically, another shaman identifies the nat in a new devotee. Being loved by a nat is not sufficient to make one a shaman or "nat wife"; what is needed is a formal marriage ceremony. The marriage ceremony is quite expensive—costumes, orchestra, fees for shamans, and food for guests. It may take years to accumulate enough funds to carry out the ceremony.

Finally, Gehan Wijeyewardene observes that an urban Thai medium typically considers herself "called" to her role, and describes having initially tried to escape the *caw* (spirit), who continued to persecute her until she agreed to be his "horse."

Before going on, I wish to reiterate that the stories of illness I have just cited do not necessarily mean that women religious leaders have been ill more than other people; these stories do mean that women religious leaders tend to attribute greater significance to their illnesses. I am struck by Joan Koss-Chioino's observation regarding women Spiritist healers in Puerto Rico: these women describe having felt deep concern for the illnesses of their family members from an early age, and that they are especially aware of the illnesses they themselves experienced as children (1992, 18). If I understand Koss-Chioino correctly, women healers in Puerto Rico are characterized by cognizance of illness, and not necessarily by actual sickness. My suspicion is that this pattern may be true in other religions as well.

Training

One path to leadership that is rarely (although very occasionally) found in female-dominated religions is that of a woman consciously choosing a leadership role, and then undergoing lengthy, formal training to learn the role. The absence of formal training is consistent with the aversion to sacred texts and official doctrines that characterize most of the women's religions (see Chapter 12).

The path to Spiritualist mediumship, for example, does not include any sort of prescribed training or apprenticeship. Indeed, lack of education was seen as conducive to successful mediumship. Many sympathetic contemporary accounts of mediums stress their naivety and lack of worldly knowledge.

A very short formal training path is found among Christian Science practitioners who must take a two-week course that allows them to be officially recognized as healers. The career of a practitioner begins when she has shown success at healing family and friends. Then, through word of mouth her abilities gradually become known in her own congregation. As the practitioner becomes better known, patients give testimony to her healing prowess at church during the Wednesday meetings, and the practitioner begins to be seen as a source of information concerning Christian Science beliefs. Finally, after she has healed a number of serious illnesses, the practitioner applies for formal recognition from the Mother Church as a healer. According to Margery Fox, "Formal recognition actually means in social terms that a number of people in the branch congregation have made the decision to depend on this person for friendship, comfort, health, and religious instruction and advice. They have entrusted her with the most important elements of their lives" (1989, 106).

A somewhat exceptional pattern is exemplified by the Afro-Brazilian religions in which mediumistic abilities require formal training and developing. Once an individual decides to become a Umbanda medium she passes through approximately four years of preparations and preparatory roles (Lerch 1982). In Bahia Brazil, initiation requires time and money—three months of absolute

seclusion in the cult house, abstinence from sex, rich foods, and amusement. There is a large fee for initiation, which is usually paid off gradually in service to the cult center.

Mothers and Daughters

In many of the female-dominated religions, the women who become religious leaders are women whose mothers were religious leaders. For instance, when a Korean shaman dies her spirit usually possesses her daughter or daughter-in-law (Harvey 1979, 127). Among Spiritualists in South Wales today, mediums are often daughters of mediums (introduction to Spiritualism takes place in childhood, yet regular involvement does not usually happen until after marriage.) Mayotte women are much more likely to be possessed by spirits if their mothers or sisters are; this is not true for Mayotte men (see page 191). And on Okinawa it was formerly the custom that a noro was succeeded by her daughter.9 And still today, in the life stories of priestesses collected by Yoshinobu Ota, we find one who was "called by the deity to succeed her mother . . . as a priestess" (1989, 117).

In Burma certain nats are particularly popular because they are served by natkadaws (nat wives or shamans) who go from town to town offering prayers and dances to the images of their nats. Typically, these women are daughters of other natkadaws. Two shamans interviewed by June Nash reported that they were asked by their dying mothers to become natkadaws, refused, became seriously ill, were advised by other natkadaws to join their ranks, and recovered.

According to Janice Boddy, a Sudanese woman who is interested in becoming a shayka (zār leader) learns by apprenticing, often with a close maternal kinswoman. The proclivity to be a shayka tends to be handed down in the maternal line. The leader learns how to call the spirits, bargain with them, and recognize their individual characteristics. She does not declare herself a shayka; others have to attribute this status to her as her reputation grows. Similarly, Ethiopian women zār leaders claim their status through transfer of power and knowledge from their mothers. Men, who do not inherit zār spirits from their mothers, may claim that zār spirits had kidnapped them during childhood (Messing 1958).

The propensity for daughters of leaders to follow in their mothers' footsteps is consistent with the emphasis on family relationships and the pattern of matrifocality in women's religions.

Korean Shamanism: A Case Study

Korean women called by the spirits to become shamans try to avoid taking on the shaman role, primarily because shamans and their families are regarded somewhat as deviants and outcasts. The path to becoming a shaman is not an easy one, and no one claims to have sought or selected this career. Potential shamans are tormented by gods and ancestors until they feel compelled to accept. The only other choice would be to deny the calling and die insane. The central event indicating the shamanistic calling is *sinbyong* or possession sickness. Once a woman accepts the role of shaman, the same spirits who had tormented her become her allies.

The spirits tend to call a potential shaman in middle life, at a time when she is suffering from a specific misfortune or more general discontent. Symptoms of *sinbyong* include a wide range of physical distresses (dizziness, headaches, digestive disorders), hallucinations and strange dreams, and inappropriate behavior (such as speaking openly about matters that are normally not discussed). The behavioral symptoms, disruptive to the family and community, are what confirms the diagnosis of possession sickness.

Youngsook Kim Harvey traces the typical spiritual development of a Korean shaman: (1) The victim feels conflict between her own needs and the housewife's role, in addition to conflict with her husband or in-laws. (2) She tries unsuccessfully to cope with these conflicts but feels trapped by them. (3) She becomes ill with vague physical symptoms, and is given a period of time to retreat from household responsibilities. (4) The symptoms persist, the woman is exempted from household duties, and her family tries to find a cure for her illness. (5) The victim recovers. (6) Old patterns of interaction within the family are resumed. (7) She becomes sick once more. This process may be repeated a number of times, until finally an experienced shaman makes a diagnosis of sinbyong (possession sickness), and initiates and trains the novice shaman.

Harvey documents one case in which the process continued during twenty-eight years. That particular shaman's life story, not atypical, included being forced into an arranged marriage, refusing to consummate the marriage and being raped by her husband, trying hard but unsuccessfully to accommodate herself to the housewife role, deaths of her children, illness, re-marriage to a man who became involved in extra marital affairs and who brought financial ruin on their family, abandoning her infant daughter because she did not have the financial resources to care for her properly, and—finally—a diagnosis of possession sickness.

Brian Wilson details the life story of another shaman: She was raised by a mother who supported the children because the father was ill. Her older sister was given away to another family. As a young girl she wanted to be a boy, and she resented having to obey an older brother. Her parents sent her to Seoul as a housemaid. She was married to a man not of her own choosing. Her adult life included many hardships, including the war and being financially responsible for her baby while her husband was away. One of her children died, her husband cheated on her with another woman, and she quarreled with him. Finally, she became possessed by her dead mother-in-law's spirit, which gave her a new power over her husband.

Although victims of *sinbyong* are likely to behave in ways that are both socially unacceptable and extremely disruptive to family life (e.g., they may stop performing their household duties), they are not personally blamed for their behavior because Koreans believe that spirits like to possess people who have been mistreated by their families. By allowing the victim to take on the role of shaman, her family may disprove suspicions of mistreatment.

Traits of Leaders

The life stories of Korean shamans are especially important because the shamans themselves make use of autobiographical details to demonstrate to their clients the powers of the gods and the dangers of ritual neglect. Earlier in this chapter I suggested that religious autobiographies are not objective histories. Instead, they are selections and interpretations of events that seem to the teller, at the time of telling, to explain why her life is the way it now is. I believe that illness is significant to female religious specialists not because they are ill more than other people, but because they themselves see their illnesses as meaningful to their religious roles. In light of the discussion of sickness and healing in Chapter 5, I do not find this to be at all surprising—women's religions excel at interpreting, sacralizing, and curing illness. The importance of a history of illness for a religious leader is not the illness per se (except insofar as it makes her more understanding of her clients' illness and suffering¹⁰), but rather her triumph over illness. Female religious leaders with a history of illness dramatize and personify the existential claim that suffering is not inherent to the human condition.

The reported reluctance of the leaders to take up the mantle of leadership demands a different sort of explanation. As I demonstrate later on in this chapter, the status of female religious leaders tends to be ambiguous because none of these religions is located in a truly nonsexist society. The fact that in many situations the potential leader is chosen (or even harassed) by the gods and does not herself choose the specialist role is a solution for female leaders who do not wish to openly challenge prevalent sexist norms. This is consistent with what we have said about gender ideologies in the previous chapter. I find it interesting that even in those women's religions in which leaders are highly respected, they rarely take credit for their own skills or achievements. Esther Pressel quotes one Umbanda medium as telling her that she does not know how to heal on her own, "I do things my spirits tell me, but I myself do not know how to perform them" (1974, 152). Mexican Spiritualist healers also deny credit for their healing, although they do demand that patients obey their healing instructions.

Finally, a few words are in order concerning the types of women who become religious leaders. In Table 5, I have summarized twelve of the most common character traits of leaders in women's religions. Several of these traits warrant further comment. First, many religious leaders are especially gifted musicians, orators, or actresses. These talents are necessary for religious specialists who excel at possession trance; they must be adept at portraying the various spirits and gods, many of whom are male or in other ways very different from the possessed woman herself.

Second, the leaders seem to be both especially intelligent and especially intuitive and empathetic. I find it interesting that psychologists have noted that these two attributes tend to go together, especially in girls. Sharon Conarton and Linda Silverman, in the context of a book on feminist psychotherapies, contend that: "Bright children in particular have high degrees of emotional sensitivity, and are likely to show compassion for others even as toddlers. . . . The gifted

Table 5. Traits of Women Religious Leaders

Empathy: A zār leader is thought to be one who "really understands" (Kahana 1985, 133). Korean shamans are typically highly sensitive to intuitive cues of others, and excel at interpersonal skills.

Rapport: The most important attribute of a Christian Science practitioner is rapport with her patients. Despite the fact that practitioners send bills to their patients, the affective ties between the two are extremely important (Fox 1989).

Kindness: Afro-Brazilian mediums must be loving, kind, patient, motherly, and pure (Lerch 1980; 1982).

Intelligence: Korean shamans tend to be unusually intelligent (Harvey 1979).

Age: On the Ryūkyū Islands younger women typically show less interest in their role as *kaminchu* than older women. Older priestesses seem to have their thoughts and attention on spiritual matters, and behave and speak differently from other people.

Eloquence: Common characteristics of Korean shamans include intelligence, ability to improvise, verbal fluency and persuasiveness, goal orientation, sensitivity and intuition, calculating and manipulative interpersonal skills, a sense of justice, artistic talent, and physical attractiveness (Harvey 1979). A characteristic shared by most Christian Science practitioners is eloquence (Fox 1979). Christian Science healing is carried out through verbal exchange. Richards (1973, 72) has found that Sande leaders are women who are gifted in the traditions of the group and are great religious and moral leaders who employ myths and mysteries in explaining phenomena.

Acting ability: The Spiritualist medium role necessitated the ability to represent or speak for spirits. Many mediums were fine actresses, able to enact the personae of a large number of spirit controls—both male and female.

Musical ability: Zār leaders tend to be particularly talented at drumming and remembering special songs for summoning spirits, and excel at entertaining, surprising, and thrilling their audiences (Kennedy 1978).

Poise: Afro-Brazilian priestesses are known for their poise. "Under her guidance there flourishes a realm of peace and security" (Lande 1935, 388). Zār leaders also tend to be self-confident people who have the ability to inspire confidence and hope in others (Kennedy 1978).

Courage: The prestige of the Afro-Brazilian medium stems from the fact that it is difficult to become and continue being a medium; it requires fortitude, courage, and the ability to withstand pain and suffering.

Authority: Senior priestesses in Afro-Brazilian religions are characterized by their sense of independence and power. Among senior priestesses possession was actually discouraged as they liked to think of themselves "as mastering the deities instead of serving them" (Landes 1947, 53-54). The Afro-Brazilian religions teach that the gods use misfortune to punish people, and priestesses know how to manipulate the gods to cure. Gods are considered whimsical and unreliable (Landes 1940, 267). Priestesses ("mothers" in Bahia) are considered far more reliable, and know how to control the gods.

Competitiveness: Modern Spiritualist mediums tend to be competitive, exhibitionistic, and manipulative (Macklin 1977).

female usually excels at taking care of others. Her antennae may be . . . [especially] attuned to the needs of others" (1988, 45–47). Given that many of the women religious leaders excel at spirit possession (see Chapter 9), it is interesting to note that David Gutmann has found that men whose TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) scores indicate strong ego boundaries also tend to score high

on other measures of morale, social effectiveness, and mental energy. For women, on the other hand, he found a trend in the opposite direction: Women whose TAT scores showed weaker ego boundaries (please recall that in Chapter 9 I connected weak ego boundaries to the ability to become possessed by spirits) "often achieved top scores on interview rating of contentment and effectiveness, and they achieved notably higher scores than women with a more 'masculine' style—that is, women who approached the TAT in a reasonable, delaying and boundary maintaining fashion" (1965, 231). Put differently, women who excel at spirit possession might very well be women who are generally competent and strong—in other words, good leaders.

Third, many women religious leaders take up the mantle of leadership in old age. Regarding new Japanese religions, Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura makes the point that mature foundresses "have experienced the whole life cycle of a woman, having lived as a girl, a wife, a mother, and sometimes a divorcee or widow. . . . Nine times out of ten the women founders have lived dramatic lives of material as well as spiritual oppression; their own suffering allows them to attain a most penetrating insight into the sufferings of others" (1980, 141). It is far from coincidental that most Japanese foundresses began to preach after their children were grown and their husbands' (and, I may add, children's) demands on their time had lessened (cf. Sered 1987; Sered 1991a). As I suggested in Chapter 7, few wives and mothers are able to (choose to?) abandon their family responsibilities to pursue extraordinary religious paths. ¹¹ Moreover, religious leadership roles (and especially healing roles) allow women to continue to use mothering skills in a postmaternal period of life (Koss-Chioino 1992, 20).

And finally, almost all of the traits I have summarized are indicative of knowledge or talent rather than of authority. In many women's religions what we seem to find is more of a specialist or expert role than a true leadership role. With the glaring exception of Sande, very few of the "leaders" of women's religions exercise much direct control over the lives of other participants. This is consistent with the growing literature on the more cooperative leadership style of American women ministers and rabbis (cf. Simon, Scanlan, & Nadell 1993). I would especially note Edward Lehman's study of mainstream Protestant ministers in which he found that men were more willing than women to use coercive power over the congregation whereas more women ministers sought to empower their congregations (1993).

LEADERS AND GAIN

A familiar theme in the literature on women and religion is that women gain—materially or emotionally—by becoming leaders. A great deal of this literature focuses on psychological issues—women use religious leadership to compensate for deprivation experienced in other aspects of life. (I have argued against this model in Chapter 2.) Some writers have proposed even narrower compensation models: Becoming a religious leader allows a small number of women to reap economic gains. I have not found this explanation

convincing. Quite to the contrary, few leaders in women's religions seem to accumulate real financial benefits.

For example, Spiritualist mediumship was one of the few career opportunities open to women in the nineteenth century, and opponents of Spiritualism accused mediums of tricking clients out of money. However, according to Laurence Moore (1977, 108), few mediums became rich. Not all mediums even demanded payment in return for their services (although most were willing to accept it). Spiritualist believers were unlikely to give regular financial support to mediums, and the role of permanent minister was generally unavailable. In fact, many mediums ended their careers as paupers, alone and destitute.

Like Spiritualism, Christian Science offered women leadership opportunities at a time when almost no other religious denominations did so. Christian Science practitioners theoretically can make a living from their healing work, yet a recent study suggests that most make very little money from their healing practices (Fox 1989).

Neither do Burmese *nat* shamans make sufficient money from conducting rituals for this to be seen as a reason for a woman to become a shaman. Korean shamans, on the other hand, do charge for their services, and the money earned by a shaman is often the difference between abject poverty and some degree of financial independence. However, studies do not indicate that Korean shamans ever become wealthy.

More meaningful benefits seem to lie in the realm of relationships. June Macklin (1977) argues that being a Spiritualist medium allows one to redefine and reorganize events in a way that ensures some control over important relationships with family members. Becoming a professional medium provides an acceptable escape route to some women who are unhappy with their husbands and domestic life. Laurence Moore concludes that mediumship offers a deliverance from boredom, marital abuse, and loneliness. "Mediumship was an occupation not often pursued by women who enjoyed physical well-being, economic security, a happy family and social life, and sexual fulfillment" (1977, 129; for my critique of sexual frustration theories see "Conclusion," p. 279). Spiritualist culture gave women possibilities for attention, mobility, and status denied elsewhere, and possibilities for circumventing rigid gender norms. The professional medium had far greater opportunities for travel and adventure than other American women.

Patricia Lerch (1982) found that Umbanda spirit mediums reported satisfaction with their role for a number of reasons: listening to other peoples' problems teaches how to deal better with one's own, pleasure from being able to help troubled people, having a purpose in life, recovery from lingering illness, and a steadying influence that their possessing spirits had brought to their own lives. According to Esther Pressel, "the mastery of [their] personal difficulties is a type of self-reward" (1974, 205). Only for a very few people is the role financially rewarding, and even they do not become rich from it. The rewards are more subtle: freedom to leave the house and socialize, respect for unself-ishly helping others, a social life at the Umbanda Center, the attention one

receives while possessed, and the fun and drama of the rituals. Other advantages of being an Umbanda medium include prestige (clients think of them as having access to super-human wisdom), power (by being at the center of a client network a medium can offer clients practical help through reallocating resources, goods, and services), and modest economic benefits that can supplement, although not usually replace employment (Lerch 1982).

These examples indicate that three of the most important gains experienced by leaders of women's religions are enhanced spiritual talents and insights, increased success at dealing with relationships, and the possibility of acquiring some of the social advantages normally available only to men.

Becoming a shaman in Korea leads to a reversal of power within the family. "Such a radical role reversal is possible only where players temporarily suspend the conventional order of things in favor of a new order of reality imposed by a power transcending the man-made social order. The agent of this transcendental power is the mudang [shaman]" (Wilson 1983, 125). Once the diagnosis of possession sickness has been accepted, a number of changes take place in the family dynamics. First, the victim's in-laws no longer accuse the victim of faking illness to avoid work. And, once the in-laws accept her calling, the victim no longer accuses her in-laws of causing her illness. Since both the woman and her family are now seen as fellow victims of supernatural actions, they bond together to begin to deal with and benefit from the changed situation. The former dyadic relationship between the in-marrying victim and her in-laws is transformed into a triadic relationship involving the spirits who must be consulted about any actions involving the victim. The "victim," of course, is the only one who has direct access to the spirits, so her position in the family is enhanced. Further strengthening her position is the fact that the possessing spirits are often ancestral ghosts from her husband's lineage.

When a Korean woman takes on the role of shaman, other members of her family take over her former household responsibilities. In some cases the housework and childcare are assumed by female relatives; in other cases the husband needs to become involved in household chores and childcare. Typically, once a woman becomes a shaman—communicating with the spirits, financially independent, newly self-confident—roles within the family are transposed, with the shaman functioning as the household head. A Korean shaman experiences the freedom and power normally found in the male domain. According to Wilson, the shaman may wish that she could have been born a man, but "Not penis envy, she wanted power and has acquired it now as a healer" (Wilson 1983, 124). He quotes one Korean shaman: "When I die, I want to be a male spirit. I want to be a great general like the Spirit General so I can lead hundreds of thousands of people" (1983, 122).

STATUS

Leaders operate within cultural contexts that are, to a greater or lesser extent, patriarchal. Women religious leaders—women who are recognized as being in some way more powerful than most people—threaten patriarchal structures

and ideologies. Thus, for example, opponents of Christian Science, both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focused their attacks on Mary Baker Eddy (and especially Eddy as a woman) more than on the teachings. On the other hand, within the religion, a great deal of respect accrues to the successful practitioner, and Christian Science practitioners are well esteemed in their church communities.

Korea: A Case Study

The ambiguous position of women leaders in female-dominated religions located in patriarchal societies is illustrated by the Korean shaman. There are two words describing this role: mansin and mudang, one polite and one derogatory. The two words reflect a cultural situation in which the power of the shaman is scorned by men, but understood and utilized by women. Wilson makes the connection between the systematized oppression of women and the image of shamans in Korea. "The stereotype of mudang as ignorant, irrational, perverse creatures is but an extension of the Confucian stereotype for all Korean women. The mudang dares put her 'ignorance' and 'irrationality' on display, in dramatic form, for all to see and hear" (1983, 126). On the other hand, at the Korean kut ritual,

Garbed in the red robes of an antique general or wielding the Spirit Warrior's broadsword as she drives malevolent forces from her path, the Korean mansin [shaman] claims an imposing presence. Even in everyday dress and sprawling comfortably on the heated floor of her own home, she speaks with authority. By virtue of the powerful gods who possess her, she can summon up divination visions and probe the source of a client's misfortunes, exorcise the sick and chronically unlucky, remove ill humors from those who have difficulty finding mates, and coax a reluctant birth spirit into an infertile womb. The professional shaman makes the gods and ancestors a vivid presence in the home; she spots them in her visions and gives them voice in trance (Kendall 1989, 138).

In ancient Korea there were both male and female shamans. Although ancient rulers most likely combined the roles of politician and shaman, these two functions were gradually differentiated. By the historical period female shamans outnumbered male shamans and political leaders were almost all male. Traditionally, female shamans have had three major functions: as priestesses they presided in national ceremonies, both agriculturally oriented ones and rites offered for the well-being and blessing of the royal family; as exorcists they were invited to drive out evil spirits and solicit the favor of the gods when there was a sickness in the family; and as diviners they foretold the future of the nation and of individuals.

A number of factors explain the overwhelming preponderance of female shamans in contemporary Korea. First, shamans were systematically removed from positions of national importance and driven underground and degraded. This led to the profession's becoming increasingly dominated by women; men had other more powerful and more appealing career options open to them.

Korean shamans have been able to obtain limited material and social benefits from spirit possession. Shamanism allows some women to escape from oppressive and stressful family situations, to form lucrative and satisfying careers, and to use their skills for socially recognized beneficial purposes. Women have few other ways of obtaining these (or similar) goals in Korean society. During the Yi Dynasty (1392–1910), whose founding fathers were neo-Confucianist scholars, Korean shamans were attacked for their "lewd" and deceitful practices. In the twentieth century both the Japanese colonial administration and the independent Korean government persecuted shamans for "superstitious" practices that are counter to modernity. More recently, the government once again has allowed shamanism, but shamans and their families are considered as having outcast status. Shamans, singing and dancing in public, have been disliked by Confucians, among other reasons because they do not behave in the proper, modest female manner. Officials have labeled shaman's activities as fraudulent, and endeavored to protect the public from being "duped" (Kendall, personal communication 1992).

A second reason for the preponderance of female shamans stems from the fact that within the home Korean women have been responsible for dealing with the same sorts of ghosts and spirits that shamans call on. Women—housewives and shamans—deal with the restless and potentially dangerous dead.

Despite centuries of persecution, shamans have continued to play an important role in national ceremonies. Kendall notes that in the village that she studied shamans are hired to make an annual offering to the community tutelary god, to exorcise malevolent forces, and (before water pumps became available) to petition the rain dragon during droughts (1985, 31). Her description of the activities of Korean shaman also includes numerous small-scale, institutionalized, domestic rituals (such as lunar calendrical rituals) on behalf of children and other family members. In short, Korean shamans are at one and the same time community priestesses and community outcasts.

In the following pages I present two models that describe the statuses of women religious leaders. These two models are not absolutes, however, and many leaders experience both models, either sequentially or simultaneously (one at the hands of their adherents and one at the hands of the society at large). What I see as especially interesting in both models is the role of the leader's sex in accounting for the status accorded her.

Model 1—Persecution

Social ostracism was often the fate of Spiritualist mediums, and many mediums were repudiated by their families. Professional mediums were criticized for abandoning the traditional female domestic role, and (justifiably or not) for promiscuity. The history of the latter half of the nineteenth century shows growing legal restrictions placed on mediums. Mediums were sometimes arrested (on various charges), and the increasing institutionalization of the medical profession cut into the demand for medium healers.

The life of a Spiritualist medium was not easy. "It was difficult at best to maintain professional status on traits universally recognized as qualities of physical and intellectual weakness, even if they did imply moral superiority [see Chapter 10]. . . . Seance goers often treated a private medium, because of her passiveness, as an unimportant intermediary, to be praised if things went well, but only for her strange gifts rather than for her trained skills. A good sitting might save the medium a scolding, but not necessarily the humiliation of being bound, gagged, and searched to insure proper 'test conditions'" (Moore 1977, 119). The ritualistic testing of Spiritualist mediums for fraudulence should be interpreted both in terms of sex and class. When working-class women mediums were bound with leather straps and locked in cabinets by upper-class men "the motif of male mastery surfaced. . . . Female powerlessness was especially evident in these bondage rituals and it is possible that male spirit aggression [by female mediums] was a partial response to this enforced denigration" (Owen 1981, 231).

The case of Spiritualist mediums is not unusual. According to Procter-Smith, Shaker founder Mother Ann Lee was persecuted as a female religious leader. She was accused of being a witch and a destroyer of families, both of which are common charges against powerful women (1985, 19; cf. Barstow 1986 on Joan of Arc; Wessley 1978 on the founder of the Guglielmites). Lee was also accused of harlotry, drunkenness, and an assortment of other crimes. She and her followers were beaten and driven out of their homes in a number of towns. Finally, Mother Ann was tied by the heels behind a wagon and dragged for several miles over an icy road. She died from these and other injuries in 1784. It is significant that much of the public criticism leveled against the Shakers focused on derogatory depictions of Ann Lee as a woman. "People were outraged by what they thought of as the popery of celibacy, which threatened to break up families. But they were even more incensed at the idea of full equality of women with men, which clearly struck at the roots of family and society, neither of which recognized anything approaching a legal autonomy of women" (Whitson 1983, 15). Thus, in different ways, Lee's gender was relevant both to her followers and their detractors. For her followers, Lee was the female completion to the male Jesus (see Chapter 10); for her detractors she was the epitome of a woman who rejected the subordinate role deemed as "natural" by the society of her day. 12

In Burma, female *nat* shamans are sometimes believed to be sexually promiscuous. Being loved by a *nat* means having [metaphorical] sexual relations with him, and shamans dance in public—possessed, wildly, and with abandon. In the Burmese village studied by Melford Spiro, 60% of the male population believe that all shamans are dishonest and 30% believe that most are dishonest. Women, on the other hand, believe that shamans are honest, but still have a low opinion of them. Mothers have been known to beat their daughters to try to prevent their marrying *nats*. Shamans themselves seem to share these cultural attitudes. Again, let me stress that in the charges leveled against these shamans, the fact they that are female is central—they are accused of **sexual** promiscuity.

Model 2—Respect and Honor

In contrast to the previous examples in which leaders were accused of witch-craft, promiscuous sexuality, and breaking up families, the status of Sande leaders is consistently high. They are believed to possess powers greater than those of regular mortals. These very independent women usually have husbands and children in the outside world, yet disappear for weeks, months, or even years into the Sande bush schools, where their power is near absolute. When they leave the Sande bush, their elevated status carries over into village life.

Similarly, Gehan Wijeyewardene relates that nineteenth century female Thai mediums came from high-status groups, upper-class elites, and royalty. Wijeyewardene cites a description of Princess Ooboon Lawana (sister-in-law to the chief), who "was called upon to question the spirits whenever any difficulty occurred either in public or private affairs" (1986, 154). This same woman was also a large-scale trader. In modern times, urban "mediums and clients, particularly regular clients, describe the relationship as a total one, almost like that of devotee to deity" (1986, 163). Male monks in Thailand are highly respected, and on the face of it, female mediums do not seem to compete with or contest monks. Yet "in their own view, they seem covertly to be challenging the status of monks" (Wijeyewardene 1986, 184). Some mediums suggest that the rituals of monks are inadequate, or similar to their own rituals. The medium may even see herself as filling a role that is yet more demanding than that of the monk. A monk can leave the order, but a caw [spirit] may not allow his horse [medium] to leave.

Also on the Ryūkyū Islands the status of the *noro* (priestess) is high—they are a sort of peasant aristocracy. Villagers stand in awe of the *noro*, and treat them with respect. Douglas Haring conducted fieldwork on Amami Island where priestesses wear white robes and head cloths, silver and feathered ornaments, and a sacred necklace of rock crystal beads interspersed with curved semiprecious stones believed to be magically potent. One of Haring's informants recalled that in his childhood the *noro* would ring bells on the mountains all night "and the people thought the gods had come down" (1953, 113). Priestesses on Okinawa, according to William Lebra, are always seen as working for the benefit of the community and not in their own self-interest (1966).

On Okinawa the impressively dressed chief priestess was spiritual head of the island, and perceived as the earthly abode of one of the most important gods. The chief priestess was also involved in secular affairs of state. Lebra cites accounts by Chinese and Japanese visitors to Okinawa in which the chief priestess is described as being above the king in rank, and in which priestesses judge and punish crimes. ¹³ A high level of theological sophistication characterizes many priestesses: speculation about the nature of the cosmos "seem often to be objects of discussion among the priestesses who are in charge of ritual affairs" (Mabuchi 1968, 135).

During the time of the Okinawan Kingdom, the noro were a female theocracy with enormous influence at court. With privatization of land under Japa-

nese rule during the last century, however, many noro lost their traditional agricultural land and economic independence. The land reforms of 1899–1903 under Japanese rule placed their land in the hands of male relatives. The evidence indicates that it was the Japanese, not the local Ryūkyūans, who chipped away at the priestesses' power base.

According to Ruth Landes, in Bahia, Brazilian people may complain about the high fees of the priestesses, but have no doubt about their abilities. Clients and mediums evince a great deal of respect for the priestesses, begging blessings from them, averting their gaze, and speaking very softly in their presence. "Trained to rule independently, she [the priestess] has developed into a type of matriarch that is not only unique in modern times but is anachronistic in patriarchal Brazil" (1940, 268). Priestesses call themselves by the names of their gods rather than by the names of their husbands to show their personal independence—that they belong to the god or goddess and not their husbands.

In the Brazilian case it is crucial to take into consideration issues of class. Diana Brown found that in Umbanda, lower-class women frequently become mediums and leaders and can achieve positions of considerable local influence. Lower-class men, in contrast, are relatively more powerless in Umbanda. In the middle-class sectors, leadership roles for women are rarer and men tend to predominate. This finding leads us to consider the intersection of gender and class in women's religions. In Sande, on Okinawa, and in nineteenth-century Thailand women religious leaders came from the elite classes and were treated with extraordinary respect; in Brazil, contemporary Korea, and the zār region women religious leaders come from lower socioeconomic classes and are treated ambivalently. This contention is strengthened by Margery Wolf's analysis of a low-status Taiwanese village woman who began to display shamanistic behavior; although she had many of the attributes of a successful shaman, she was eventually labeled crazy "because of her marginal status in the community and in the male ideology" (1990, 419).

MEN AND LEADERSHIP

Given that the theme of this book is women's religions, it is somewhat of a tautology to point out that most leaders are women. A more interesting question is whether there any men who are leaders, and if so, what are their roles. We can discern five patterns of specialist roles for men.

Pattern 1: Gender Reversal

On the Ryūkyū Islands there are male ritualists called *uranai* who are diviners and fortune tellers. When performing rituals, they dress and talk like women. In modern Korea almost all professional shamans are women; the few men are marginal and, until recently, dressed in women's clothing. Melford Spiro (1967) found that in Burma many male shamans were homosexuals. Similarly, Edison Carneiro has discovered that Afro-Brazilian priests in Bahia try to assimilate the ideal type of priestesses, acting in a feminine manner and being

homosexual (1940). And Gehan Wijeyewardene notes that urban Thai male mediums are often homosexual or transvestites. Some are blatant in their adoption of women's clothing and few are married to women (1986).

In women's religions, where (as we saw in the Chapter 10) ideologies of gender difference tend to be highly elaborated, leadership is so totally associated with female characteristics that a man must "become" female in order to take on leadership roles. This pattern is particularly significant because it is not a common one (in reverse, of course) in male-dominated religions. While celibacy for women is encouraged in certain male-dominated religions, I know of no instances in which women who are religious leaders are expected to dress like men or become lesbians. In Judaism, for example, women are explicitly forbidden to wear men's clothing, and women who become religious leaders are typically women who excel at female (not male) tasks. 14

Pattern 2: Shared Leadership

Mother Ann Lee shared leadership with her brother William and her adopted son James, and Shaker organization insists on a woman and a man at each level of leadership. At Christian Science Sunday services two readers—almost always a man and a woman—lead the service. Again, this pattern is not a common one in male-dominated religions, where women may have roles as assistants but rarely as equal partners in leadership. In Catholicism, for example, nuns are not the structural equivalents of priests, and there is no woman sharing the papal throne at the Vatican. And to take an even more extreme example, in Islam there are no formal leadership roles for women whatsoever.

Pattern 3: Secular Administrators and Scribes

In a number of the women's religions men hold important secular positions as administrators. Men in Afro-Brazilian religions serve as ogans (providers) who pay for ceremonies, keep the cult house in repair, and, if necessary, defend the cult before the police. Women are the spirit mediums, but men are in charge of the finances and the organization. On the Ryūkyū Islands there are men who represent the village in dealing with the priestesses—these men raise money from villagers to support the cult, and take care of the cult's finances. In Christian Science women predominate as practitioners and men predominate in the higher-paying administrative jobs in the organization. A variation on this pattern is men who specialize in writing books and religious tracts. (See Chapter 12 for a discussion of the role of sacred writings.) In particular, among Spiritualists and in the Afro-Brazilian religions, men seem to be tremendously prolific writers.

This third pattern is also uncommon in male-dominated religions, where women are typically excluded from both administrative and spiritual leadership positions. To take an example from modern Israel, women have been prohibited from serving on municipal religious councils—bodies that perform purely secular functions of allotting and overseeing finances for religious institutions.

It could be argued that if men govern the financial and bureaucratic aspects of the religion, it is not really female dominated. Therefore, I have been careful to include in this book religions with a male/female—administrative/spiritual mode of leadership only when the administrative side is not believed to be more important than the spiritual side and when the male administrators do not have the power to control the actions or beliefs of the female practitioners.

The absence of patterns 2 and 3 (in reverse) in male-dominated religions reflects the reality that male-dominated religions occur in cultures in which gender inequality is consistently a matter of male dominance and female subordination. Male leadership is perceived as natural, right, and complete; there is no need to share leadership with women. In contrast, women's religions occur in cultures in which there is at least some degree of male dominance and female subordination. Thus female leadership is treated somewhat ambivalently, and certain sorts of roles are reserved for men.

A somewhat unusual case is that of the Black Spiritual churches in the United States. According to Hans Baer, "Because of the disproportionate number of female members [women may outnumber men by a ratio of as high as 43:7], women in Spiritual churches generally make concerted efforts to encourage males to belong, often by granting them religious offices. Spiritual women generally are not interested in establishing matriarchal congregations, but rather sexually egalitarian ones. In order to induce males, often their spouses, sons, nephews, and brothers, to join, they may make certain concessions that may eventually culminate in males attempting to assert dominance (Baer 1993, 77). Again, we would not expect to find the reverse situation in maledominated religions for the simple reason that in patriarchal societies men would be unlikely to make concessions in order to include women in their religious organizations. Women's presence would not be necessary to legitimate the religion; quite to the contrary, the exclusion of women (who are, by definition in patriarchal societies, of secondary status) can be used as a symbol of the high status of a religious group.

Pattern 4: Assistants

Men serve as holders of priestesses' umbrellas in Okinawa. In the Afro-Brazilian cults men drum while female mediums dance and enter trance. This pattern—men as specialist assistants to women leaders—is the only one with widespread parallels in male-dominated religions. To women who have cleaned the altars in Catholic churches, arranged the flowers in Protestant churches, and prepared the cakes and cookies for *kiddush* at Jewish synagogues, this pattern is easily recognized. In women's religions the men who become religious specialists are typically men of low status, and their status is not enhanced by becoming assistants to the priestesses or shamans. Given the generally sexist orientations of the societies in which these religions are situated, assistant to a leader in a female-dominated religion is not a high-prestige job for men.

Pattern 5: Animal Sacrifice

The oddest pattern that I have discovered is that in the small number of women's religions that practice animal sacrifice, men perform the actual killing. This is true in Thailand, in certain Afro-Brazilian cults, and in $z\bar{a}r$ initiation rituals. For example, Boddy points out that in $z\bar{a}r$ sacrifice it is the $z\bar{a}r$ leader's son rather than the leader herself who actually sacrifices the animal (1989, 129). As I argued in Chapter 10, this most likely reflects the fact that in women's religions women are so thoroughly associated with life that it is appropriate for men to deal with death.

SOME COMPARISONS

Analysis of female religious leadership takes on meaning in the context of three types of comparisons: (1) women religious leaders versus men religious leaders, (2) women religious leaders versus women secular leaders (3) women religious leaders in female-dominated religions versus women religious leaders in male-dominated religions. We will now look at each of these in turn.

Women Religious Leaders versus Male Religious Leaders

Although the differences between female religious leaders and male religious leaders are far from absolute, several trends merit comment. Women religious leaders, more than men, seem to straddle the public and the domestic spheres (Sered 1991). They use their homes as ritual spaces, they help other women deal with children and children's illnesses, and they officiate at rituals at which cooking and food are central elements.

Richard Hutch has summed up several other differences between male and female religious leaders. Women typically become leaders through a slow process of self-recognition, whereas men more often report a "once and for all" achievement during a single, identifiable stage of life. We have indeed seen that the life histories of many women leaders involve years of illness, visions, and struggling with the call of the spirits—a process that often begins in early childhood and only ends in old age (see Chapter 7). Hutch notes that women leaders are often concerned "with the internal processing of personal experience as a source of religious authority in itself" (1984, 159). For male leaders, the source of authority is more often external—education, ordination, centralized hierarchies. The material we have seen strengthens Hutch's observation. Particularly instructive is the case of the Korean shamans who use their own life stories to explicate the ritual troubles of clients.

Another difference between male and female religious leaders has been noted by Brita Gill. Writing about her own experiences as a Protestant minister in the United States, she refers to her "ministry of presence—a ministry that is oriented to individuals, not just to problems" (1985, 90). This certainly is in line with what we have described in this book. Male leaders, implies

Gill, are more concerned with rules, symbols, and knowledge. The association of women religious leaders with personal relationships rather than with theology or organization is significant. We will return to this theme in the next chapter.

A last way in which female religious leaders differ from male religious leaders concerns their status in the society at large. Women who wish to become religious leaders challenge patriarchal notions of women's place (subordinate) and women's role (familial). Not surprisingly, the model labeled above as "persecution model" is far less common for male religious leaders (except for founders of new religions).

Women Religious Leaders versus Women Secular Leaders

Women religious leaders resemble women secular leaders in many ways. Both sorts of leaders tend to attribute their success to outside factors: spirits, ancestors, easy exams, or lack of other qualified candidates, rather than to their own innate ability or hard-earned achievements (Powell 1988, 107). This fits well with the socialization of women to be subordinate.

For a woman to achieve a leadership position, whether religious or secular, she needs to be known personally. Studies of gender and management have shown that when strangers evaluate one another they consistently see men as dominant, but when group members know one another, gender differences tend to disappear (Powell 1988, 109). In women's religions leaders are personally known to their followers: the model of a priest who is sent or a rabbi or minister who is invited from the outside to an unfamiliar congregation is not one we have seen in women's religions. Female religious leaders tend to slowly build up a clientele through word-of-mouth recognition. The example of Christian Science practitioners illustrates this well.

Women Leaders in Female-Dominated Religions versus Women Leaders in Male-Dominated Religions

The literature on women leaders within male-dominated religions shows both similarities and contrasts to women leaders within female-dominated religions. One common trait is an emphasis on healing. Illness and cure is a common theme in the lives of women religious leaders both in female-dominated and male-dominated religions (cf. Weinstein and Bell 1982 on Christian women saints). Since in many cultures women are especially concerned with healing, and healing and religion are often intertwined (see Chapter 5), this is not surprising.

On the other hand, women leaders in male-dominated religions are, on the whole, excluded from public leadership roles—and especially roles as ritual officiants. The types of roles open to women in male-dominated religions tend to be as teachers of children, assistants, nurses, and caretakers. ¹⁶ In female-dominated religions, public ritual officiant roles are available to women leaders.

Studies show that women leaders in male-dominated religions often buy into the anti-female ideology of that religion. Weinstein and Bell, for instance, show that female Catholic saints "seem to have internalized the denigration of their sex's spirituality" (1982, 227). Female-dominated religions, on the other hand, typically celebrate or even exalt femininity (see Chapter 10).

Audrey Brown has conducted a particularly fascinating study of women and ritual authority in [male-dominated] African-American Baptist churches of rural Florida. In common with leaders of many female-dominated religions, the women leaders in the Florida churches are, for the most part, elderly, experts in fertility and childbirth, and involved in food rituals. On the other hand, she found that "Even though women are often better educated than males and frequently economically independent, it is their nurturing and sustaining qualities that are glorified in church life. Female assertive behavior or aggressive leadership is discouraged and censured" (1988, 2). This is in dramatic contrast to female-dominated religions where women leaders are typically strong and articulate.

In addition, Brown found that many Baptist women leaders were aging wives of pastors. These women often had eight or more children. This clearly differs from leaders in many female-dominated religions, who more typically have lost some or even all of their children (see Chapter 4). It does seem that African-American Baptist women leaders express greater satisfaction with traditional female roles than leaders of female-dominated religions do. And whereas the African-American women seem to have found Baptist theology and philosophy sufficient for interpreting their life experiences (e.g., marriage and many children), leaders of female-dominated religions do not find male-dominated theology and philosophy helpful for making sense out of their life experiences (e.g., child death).

In contrast to female-dominated religions where marital status is irrelevant, "Regardless of a woman's Christian virtue, she cannot become a [Baptist] deaconess unless she is married to a deacon" (Brown 1988, 3). Here we note one of the most significant differences between the two categories of women religious leaders. Women leaders in female-dominated religions frequently inherit their roles from their mothers, often in the form of inheritance of the deceased mother's guardian or shamanic spirit. Women leaders in male-dominated religions often acquire their roles by virtue of their husband's status: sometimes as the wife of a male leader and sometimes as the widow of a male leader. This distinction is particularly important. The leader who inherits her position from her mother symbolizes both an independent, female chain of command and the centrality of motherhood in religious life. As I argued in Chapter 3, this is consistent with the trend in female-dominated religious to address women primarily through their identities as mothers. The leader who acquires her role through her husband symbolizes the tangential—even incidental—position of women on the male chain of command. The spouse-of-the-leader model strengthens the bias toward addressing women through their identity as wife. As I argued in Chapter 3, the role of "wife" tends to be less autonomous and less empowering for women than the role of "mother."

Notes

- 1. Spiritism is a mixture of Spiritualism, Kardecism, folk Catholicism, and traditional folk healing.
- 2. The closest to nonhierarchical religions are those of the Black Caribs and the Feminist Spirituality Movement. Yet the former does seem to have a cadre of elderly women who are in charge of the rituals, and certain branches of the latter have priestesses and even high priestesses. It is of interest to note Karen Sacks's findings that among the North American Cheyenne, men's hunting societies were not hierarchical, while women's quilling and rawhide painting societies were hierarchical (1979, 80).
- 3. In the more traditional (more African) cults, communication with the supernatural is often through divination, which only the chief priestess knows how to do. The chief priestess divines by throwing cowrie shells into stated patterns that allow her to learn the will of the gods. Although the manner of interpretation of the cowrie shells is highly traditional, individual priestesses may prescribe different remedies.
- 4. The latter two roles were traditional; the first two were imposed by the government.
- 5. I thank Teigo Yoshida for helping me clarify the rather confusing terminology regarding contemporary priestesses (personal communication 1992).
- 6. A preliminary question here is which women in female-dominated religions can be considered leaders. In some religions the answer is clear: an explicit hierarchy exists and women at the top are the leaders (Shakers, Sande). A much thornier situation arises in the religions involving spirit possession. I would consider the Spiritualist medium to be a leader in the sense of a specialist with extraordinary skills and talents, although, as we see in this chapter, her status is not high and she does not organize a chapter or church. I would not consider women who dance at $z\bar{a}r$ ceremonies to be leaders, because in many parts of Africa most women are initiated into the $z\bar{a}r$ cult. For the $z\bar{a}r$, the leaders are women who are addressed by others as "leader" (shaykha). The most difficult decision concerns the Afro-Brazilian cults. In these cults there are certain women who are priestesses or in charge of cult centers. They are clearly leaders. Yet I am inclined to also treat the mediums as leaders, albeit on a lower level, both because (unlike in the $z\bar{a}r$ cult) most people do not become mediums, and because mediums are consulted for healing advice.
- 7. Western scholars claim that the difference between priestesses and yuta in the Ryūkyū Islands is that the former concentrate on public rituals and the latter on private rituals. It appears, however, that there may be far more overlap between Ryūkyūan priestesses and shamans than meets the casual eye. For example, all Ryūkyūans belong to kin-groups, each of which has a woman kaminchu who attains office by virtue of being born on a high spiritual level. Her identity is detected by the older women of the kin-group and confirmed by a shaman. On the Ryūkyūs it is quite common for a woman to begin as an ukudi or family priestess and then also become a yuta. The priestess and shaman systems on Okinawa tend to interpenetrate in the person of the kin-group priestess, who frequently is also a shaman.

Hisako Kamata convincingly argues that the distinction between yuta and noro may be a late development. She notes that the practice of closing the eyes and shaking the head up and down is common to both yuta and noro. Even of greater interest is her discovery that because divine possession is evidence of eligibility for the noro role, it sometimes happens that the same women are priestesses presiding over village rituals and festivals in one village, yet are regarded as yutas in other villages. Evidence is also cited that suggests that in the past both men and women were yutas, and that the status

of yutas was much higher than at present. They worked for the government as custodians of oral history and possessors of knowledge (1966, 62).

Similarly, Yoshinobu Ota has studied the southern Ryūkyū Islands and found that certain women experience series of traumatic illnesses that lead them to consult a shaman. The shaman may interpret the illness as a sign that the woman was born with "high shiji"—a sort of enhanced spirituality. "This shaman will tell her that, in order to put an end to the recurring sickness, she must become either a priestess or else a shaman" (1989, 115). Ota relates life stories of three priestesses and one shaman, and all the stories are rather similar in terms of illness and initial resistance to the calling.

- 8. Skultans (1983, 18), on the other hand, suggests that the connection between the death of one's father and mediumship may well have been financial—young women deprived of the economic support of their fathers were more in need of pursuing paying careers. Few other paying careers were open to women in the mid-nineteenth century.
- 9. It then became customary for a noro to be succeeded by her brother's daughter. In more recent times the position is succeeded by the son's wife (Shimabukuro Gen'ichiro quoted in Kamata 1966, 59).
- 10. For example, Korean shamans explain that their own personal deprivations as women allow them to identify with their clients—clients' problems are similar to ones they themselves have already worked through (see Wilson 1983).
- 11. I. M. Lewis interprets the high involvement of older and infertile women in possession cults in terms of their cultural status of "half-men" (since, non-fertile, they are no longer fully female). According to Lewis, this is what underlies the androgynous character frequently attributed to the leaders of peripheral cults (1971, 95). While I agree with most of Lewis's ideas, in this case I am far from convinced by his interpretation. It seems to me more likely that women without small children are able to become leaders because they have greater control over their time. I am also not convinced that women religious leaders are androgynous in any very deep sense. Rather, because in most cultures leadership is defined as a male trait, when a woman becomes a leader she looks as if she has adopted a male role. However, the data that I present in this book demonstrate that women religious leaders do not copy male modes of leadership, male identities, or male character traits.
- 12. Humez argues that even among Lee's followers gender was a problematic issue. "Shaker manuscript records for the first thirty years of the nineteenth century abound in evidence of continuing male rebellion against female headship" (1992, 89).
- 13. "It was apparently this state of affairs that led a Chinese traveler in 1683 to assume that there were no courts of law, since he observed no male judges" (Lebra 1966, 102).
- 14. Catholic nuns do in a sense abandon their femaleness, but they do not acquire male gender roles. Among the Bimin-Koskusmin of New Guinea, some older women ritually become men (or really androgynous) in order to be ritual leaders (Poole 1981).
- 15. According to Esther Pressel, the few male Umbanda mediums tend to be young, and as they age either drop out or become center directors looking after the financial affairs of the center. In some newer Afro-Brazilian groups there are men who are in charge ("fathers") who have a very low status both socially and religiously and who do not command the respect that the "mothers" command. In centers run by a man, women still retain important functions. It is telling that criticism about "fathers" is always more venomous than about "mothers" and priests are often accused of being insincere, dishonest, or evil (see Carneiro 1940).
- 16. In certain male-dominated religions there are other roles—for example, ascetic, temple dancer—that are sometimes available to small numbers of exceptional women.

Postscript: Reading from Both Right and Left to Center

Katherine K. Young

In this postscript I will relate the general discussion of my introduction on fundamentalism to the insights now available from evolutionary psychology. This is in the nature of a thought experiment—speculative by nature—and interdisciplinary.

Is there any approach that would provoke deeper insights into the two poles represented by feminism and fundamentalism—or even to reconcile them? One way, I suggest, is to understand more about the dynamics of stress. There are three basic reactions to stress: adaptation, fight, or flight; faced with threats to their identity, groups either adapt (which, if successful can eliminate the source of stress altogether, though it might leave them with no identity), withdraw to a marginal realm, or, failing that, fight back. Closely related to threats to religious identity are threats to masculine identity, moreover, which can also trigger fight or flight. My interest here is mainly with "fighting back."

One important example of "fighting back," men's reaction to stress, happened during the rise of early states. Urban men were in danger of losing their masculine identity. This occurred because male size and strength, on which their identity had been based, were no longer necessary in daily life. The major markers of masculinity, therefore, were the ways in which it was culturally distinct from femininity. This led to sexual segregation, distinctive forms of dress for each sex, denial of education to women, and so on. These became deeply embedded in elite culture. In later centuries, these restrictions have increased in times of stress and decreased in time of less stress but have usually had serious implications for women, especially elite women, by reducing their identities to motherhood.

Nyitray points out that "the history of political control over women/females in China is well documented: on the level of the family, mechanisms to properly 'educate' women accelerated during periods of social stress and cultural upheaval." This education included exhortations to obedience, chastity, and so forth.

Colonialism certainly caused enormous stress for colonized people, because all identities—including the gender identities of men and women—were attacked. In this case, fighting back by men required creativity and positive overtures to their own women—especially because colonial rulers blamed these societies for their historical mistreatment of women. According to Bartholomeusz, "We find that the anxiety over the condition of the female among Sinhala Buddhists toward the end

of the nineteenth century hinged on the rhetoric of shame and promise." Something similar happened to Hindu women during British rule. (The British shamed Hindu men for their mistreatment of women, which inspired the men to institute reforms.) And, according to Nyitray, the renewal of Confucianism in China as a reaction against Marxism can be attributed partly to "government fears of declining morals in the face of rising capitalist tendencies" and to the desire for a regional identity (including that of other Confucian-influenced cultures such as those of Japan and South Korea) to counter Western influence.

Attacks on identity have proven stressful in the past, and those on the identity of men in particular (which led to a consolidation of their power) have had serious implications for women over the centuries. When it comes to identity, men have projected their stress onto women, who come to embody the problem. As Simone de Beauvoir has noted, women "tend to carry the projections of 'all that is undesirable or threatening in human existence—sexuality, emotion, pollution, sin, and mortality'—necessitating their control and containment." Commenting on this, Nyitray in this volume observes that "It is not surprising, therefore, that ... [men's] response to perceived external threats encompassed a heightened sensitivity to internal threats as well." (It could be argued, of course, that sometimes women project their stress onto men as well, as contemporary expressions of misandry in popular culture reveal.)

Stress, therefore, can cause men to "fight back." They might want to help the women in their communities and therefore be reform-oriented (a kind of adaptation), or they might want to project their own stress onto women and therefore reassert the original solution to stress: segregating women and denying them rights in order to ensure that women remain under their control as a way to maintain identity (women would have less opportunity, for instance, to marry outside the group). Because the underlying problems are not addressed, however, this is a temporary solution. Although control of women established some general trends that prevailed until modern times, these were often relaxed in times of security but rigidified in times of stress. The higher the stress, I suggest, the greater the urge to distinguish between men and women as antidote, which would lead to real male dominance. The lower the stress, the greater the equality. But there is a corollary: the higher the stress created by alien critiques of the treatment of women, the greater the urge to include women in "fighting back" as equal partners to prove their equality (which makes it likely that women will come along rather than defect), although this equality is sometimes short-lived if the original identity problems remain unsolved.

Now it could be argued that modernity is causing historically unprecedented stress through urbanization, industrialization, capitalism, the shrinking intergenerational family, and the weakening of masculine identity. As for masculine identity, that was problematic in the second half of the nineteenth century. Even then, men

complained about the feminization of culture in general and of Christianity in particular. Colleen McDannell² shows that the artifacts of homes and churches were overtly sentimentalized during this period and covertly feminized. Not surprisingly, men were alienated. They were alienated even more by the fact that women not only firmly controlled the home but also set the tone of theology, and publicly crusaded against the shortcomings of men (often arguing that women were innately morally superior to men).

According to Anthony Rotundo (and others),³ moreover, sexual segregation was partly caused by the fact that men went off to work in factories and offices, leaving women at home to care for the children. With largely absent fathers, the major influence on boys now came from mothers. Boys were dressed like girls (producing the Little Lord Fauntleroy look), which restricted mobility of any kind, let alone rough-and-tumble play. By the age of five, however, boys were not easy to control. Many rebelled to such an extent that they were described as "wild" and even "savage." As "Red Men," they associated themselves with ferocity, which became a source of identity. These boys were so violent and sadistic that adults became afraid of them and took steps to control their subculture. Although these new controls helped to some extent, not all boys made the transition. They faced new kinds of anxiety, moreover, in early adulthood: how to cope with rejection in courtship, how to find the middle-class jobs on which masculine identity and status were based, and confusion over what masculinity really was. Many of those who could not achieve marriage, suitable employment, and a healthy masculine identity withdrew into the home for rest and recovery. (The term "male neurasthenia," which appeared in 1869, referred to the debilitating effects of this stress: fear of failure, insomnia, tension, depression, fatigue, effeminacy, and so forth.) This is an example of the flight response to stress.

And once again, machismo was the antidote. At this stage of life, however, it was practiced secretly in fraternal lodges such as the Odd Fellows, the Freemasons, the Knights of Labor, the Grand Army of the Republic, the Lions, the Elks, the Shriners, the Order of Red men, and so forth. According to Mark Carnes,⁴ entrance into these lodges was a ritual of initiation into manhood. (It is striking that they fostered the machismo of their earlier games as boys. These men once again pretended to be "Red Men," for instance, or warriors from ancient Babylonia, Greece, or even the American Civil War.) This identity crisis and the heroic romanticism that it spawned were overcome partly during the Spanish-American War of 1898 and again during World War I and World War II, when men's bodies were once again valued by society (even though the ultimate value was given to dead ones). Other ways of overcoming these identity problems included secret male cults of machismo, competitive sports, organizations such as the Boy Scouts, and sexually segregated schools. These things provided support for the identity of boys and men but often, once again, by withholding it from that of girls and women. This means

that it would surely make sense for women, both feminists and fundamentalists, to take seriously the problem of stress and masculine identity.⁵

Underlying the expressions of stress that I have just mentioned is an even deeper reality of interest here. This consists of several interrelated problems that are caused by the human condition itself: maleness, femaleness, and reproduction, which necessitates male-female bonding. I suggest that the deep structure of fundamentalism is linked with these stresses, especially as they have been challenged by modernity. As a result, they cannot be explained simply as the most extreme form of "patriarchal evil."

Earlier sources of masculine identity are now obsolete. Elsewhere, Paul Nathanson and I have discussed the underlying problem of masculine identity.6 Cross-cultural evidence suggests that a healthy identity for any individual or group must be based on at least one distinctive, valued, and publicly celebrated contribution to society as a whole. For women as a class, the basic source of identity has been motherhood; because only women can gestate and lactate, survival (of the family, community, and species) depends more immediately on them. The functional equivalents for men have usually been based on being protectors, providers, and progenitors.7 Although most societies have appreciated the first two, these functions do not rely exclusively on maleness; societies have used culture, therefore, to bolster masculine identity either by exaggerating their importance or by banning women from certain cultural activities. Otherwise, how could men form masculine identity as providers and protectors of women? The state now does these very things. The identity of men as progenitors, moreover, is now threatened by sperm banks, new reproductive technologies, and women's push for reproductive freedom—that is, autonomy—through either single motherhood by choice or the legalization of marriage for female couples (although the legislation would include male couples). It is important to acknowledge that there are problems for both men and women if the identity of women is reduced to biology and that of men relies mainly on culture. In the former case, women are virtually denied culture by excluding them from education and jobs and in the latter cultural props for identity can be easily deconstructed given modern knowledge and the intellectual fashion of deconstruction.

Nathanson and I predict that the loss of not one or two but all functions traditionally defined in terms of masculinity will create unprecedented stress for men. The signs are already evident: soaring dropout rates of boys from schools, for instance, and high suicide rates among men. But we can also predict a growth in fundamentalism. In that case, we can also predict that one major response—at least in those religious communities that remain intact—might be the attempt by men to re-create some form of exclusivity that will provide them with at least one course of healthy identity. In other words, they will fight back, perhaps under the more broad religio-political banner of fundamentalism. Some might combine all this

with machismo to hide their vulnerability or correct their identity problem by reasserting separate spheres and privileges for men.

Another approach, however, is flight. Both dropping out from school and suicide are examples, after all, of flight. Remember Rotundo's account of the nineteenth-century lodges as safe havens for secret ritualized machismo? That is, the response of men today in some religious circles. In liberalized wings of Judaism, reports Fishman, congregations have become startlingly feminized. With women occupying many of the religious and organizational leadership positions, men in many cases no longer seek out these positions. More seriously, she observes, worshipping congregations are composed largely of women. This phenomenon is found not only in liberal forms of Judaism but also in liberal forms of Christianity—especially those of Protestantism (something that had already happened in the nineteenth century). For religions that want men to participate, this is surely a major problem, not only a sociological one but a theological one as well. It is not a problem, of course, for those feminists who believe that women are better off with each other than with men—and that if men refuse to meet radical feminist demands, then so be it.

But there is an even deeper problem underlying that of masculine identity. Today, we are witnessing a historically unprecedented breakdown of the cultural support for bonding not only between men and women but also between men and children. According to Don Browning,

These ideals may be collapsing wherever modernization and globalization spread. In some places, modernity's threat to males does more than disconnect procreation from care and male sexuality from long-term commitment to wife and child. Modernity threatens other male prerogatives because it also beckons women into the market and loosens traditional restrictions on their thoughts and actions. Modernity is a threat to men; it makes women a threat as well. Such dynamics are in the background of the great confrontation between religious fundamentalism of various kinds and the emerging dynamics of modernization and globalization. This conflict, often viewed as one between the United States and Islamic fundamentalists. is more a conflict between modernity and those using religion to form a dogmatic reaction to it. Nonetheless, one of the consequences of modernity has been to aggravate the problem of male responsibility—what I have called the "male problematic." This is the threat of modernity to loosen further the already archaic and fragile tie of males to offspring and their offspring's mothers. This also accounts for the reaction of traditional males to modernity's threats to their customary patterns of responsibility and privileges.8

Insight can be gained into the problem (including men's reaction of wanting dominance when extremely stressed) by looking at a key development in evolution.

The fidelity of women to men—often a fundamentalist platform, I suggest, was not originally based on a demand made by men (and therefore an expression of male dominance) but rather on a primeval contract made with men but by women and for women. Support for this idea comes from evidence of our primate ancestors and the prehistory of our species.⁹

According to David Geary and Mark Flinn, females across species invest more in parenting than do males whereas as males invest more in mating effort because they gain from obtaining additional mates (due to the difference between large amounts of sperm and fewer eggs). Among mammals, females have even less opportunity than males for multiple mates because of internal gestation and obligatory postpartum care (such as lactation) and this makes them more interested in male parental investment. Geary and Flinn surmise—based on an examination of the changing sex differences in the fossil record of various primates (including those in hominid evolution) as well as contemporary primate behaviors—that some aspects of the social behavior of [the proto-human] Australopithiecines might have been more like that of gorillas than in chimpanzees or bonobos, especially patterns of male parental investment (which is strong in both gorillas and humans). The social organization with male gorillas is single-male harems. Males control the females in their harem by preventing the access of other males and thereby ensuring that the offspring are their own. Not surprisingly, male gorillas provide far more parental investment than other primates do. In addition, coalitional behavior, which is found in both chimps and humans, might have developed independently in the latter. These two developments help to explain why human families have been characterized generally by male-female bonding, marriage, and parental involvement.

The need for male dominance (fighting other males to create their harems) gradually declined among proto-human males. Among the factors that differentiated them from other primates were less obvious signs of estrus among females, which no longer attracted many males (and therefore led to less fighting for male dominance and access to females), less difference in size between males and females, and so forth. This made emotional bonding between males and females more important than sheer male power and dominance. With a longer gestation period came a greater need, moreover, for provision and protection of females through pregnancy. In addition, the much longer period of childhood development required even more attention to provision and protection.

With the development of human intelligence, women must have realized that it was to their advantage to form enduring bonds with men and gain the resources (provisions and protection) that men could provide. To ensure the advantages of men's parental investment without their physical dominance, women came to the conclusion that their own fidelity could be exchanged for the parental investments of men. This was probably the first social contract. Eventually, it became deeply embedded in culture and given the highest authority possible (ancestral, religious, or legal). This continued throughout human prehistory and early history. The

gorilla social structure of harems did not completely disappear. Now kings, much like gorillas, had harems, which expressed their total dominance over both other males in the society and the females of their harem.

With the development of male dominance, especially after state formation, however, voluntary female fidelity was changed to female obedience. The contract's original reasons became obscured. This made it seem, once modern feminists revealed the "patriarchal" aspect of history, that men's desire for power over women was the raison d'être for all their actions (and that all of human history could be understood in the stark but simplistic terms of a conspiracy of men against women).

Keeping this evolutionary history in mind, let us return to Browning's link of modernity, masculinity, and fundamentalism.

The fundamentalist reaction to modernity's threat to male prerogatives and responsibilities contains a grain of insight. It at least raises a very important question: How can male family involvement be maintained in the face of the challenges of modernity without absolutizing male patriarchy on the one hand or dismantling, in the spirit of an anomic new freedom and equality, male responsibility on the other? The dogmatism of traditional paternalisms may be no worse than the new message being shouted from the rooftops that says both men and women are equally entitled to be self-regarding yet tentative about marital, family, and parental commitment. The fundamentalist reaction intuitively understands the importance of this question even though its solution is unjust to women and children and wrong in its interpretation of both tradition and modernity.¹⁰

Because religions have regulated reproduction through the institution of marriage and fostered male-female bonding, their fundamental critique by feminists is obviously deeply threatening to the men of these communities (and by extension to the men of all communities). So is the feminist demand for reproductive autonomy by which some feminists mean that women should have total control over reproduction. This discussion of the historically unprecedented threat to an underlying social contract between men and women helps us to understand why gender is the fault line in every modern society.

The stakes around identity are indeed high, which is what the rhetoric of demonization reveals. For this reason, I think, we need more deep thinking about the important insights provided by both feminism and fundamentalism. To avoid the extremes, we must acknowledge that the fundamentalists rightly intuit reciprocity (which they call complementarity) and want to safeguard it, without referring to evolution. In any case, we should give them credit for their insight and courage in this regard, as we think about the true significance of any social contract between men and women.

But we must also remember the Achilles heel of the fundamentalist position: that there is an inherent danger of *real* male dominance arising from the relegation of women's identity and activity to biology and the private sphere, which could again create all the problems of androcentrism in the past. Now that the mask of male dominance is off, fundamentalists should recognize that only when women have real choice will they enter willingly into a new social contract with men.

Men should take all this seriously, of course, because women can already virtually cut them out of the reproductive process. As a result, men should learn to live with, or appreciate, the important contributions of feminism: its critique of misogyny and feminine stereotypes; its insistence on education for women along with the possibility of well-paying jobs and careers for them; its warning of the need to stop violence against women and children; its demand that we eliminate double standards, and so forth. If this argument is not convincing, remember that male gorillas paid a heavy price for access to reproduction. They had to fight other males to become the alpha reproducer. The losers, of which there were many, well, died; others just had to do without sex and offspring.

But the social contract's breakdown can be threatening to heterosexual women for additional reasons. It would eliminate marriage, which not only brings men and women together but also encourages paternal investment in family life and children. Given what we know about evolution and the role of world religions in protecting the reproductive cycle, which lies at the heart of human existence, the new scenario would create a very different future. Better reform than revolution, I suggest, so that both women and men can renew their social contract but without the hierarchical accretions.

Notes

- 1. Karen McCarthy Brown, "Fundamentalism and the Control of Women," in Fundamentalism and Gender, ed. John Stratton Hawley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 188, citing Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex.
- 2. Colleen McDannell, Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).
- 3. E. Anthony Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era (New York: Basic Books, 1993).
- 4. Mark C. Carnes, Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).
- 5. Some feminists do recognize that bolstering traditional notions of gender as a way of dealing with the (male) stress of rapid social change is related to fundamentalism. Epstein, for instance, refers to the historian Betty DeBerg who argues that fundamentalism's preservation of traditional gender roles in the wake of their collapse during the "turbulent, fast-paced change" of the nineteenth century "preeminently fuelled fundamentalism's widespread appeal." Epstein has no sympathy for this response, however, because "clergy

strove to 'masculinise' Christianity over against its deleterious 'feminisation.'... To do so, they not only used misogynist rhetoric, but also curtailed women's range of public and ecclesial activities." Epstein is right; swinging to the opposite extreme is no real correction. If gynocentrism is wrong, so is androcentrism (and vice versa).

- 6. Paul Nathanson and Katherine Young, Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 87–88; 231.
- 7. David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 75–76.
- 8. Don S. Browning, Marriage and Modernization: How Globalization Threatens Marriage and What to Do about It (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 75–76.
- 9. The following discussion is based on David C. Geary and Mark V. Flinn, "Evolution of Human Parental Behavior and the Human Family," *Parenting: Science and Practice*, nos. 1 and 2 (2001).
 - 10. Browning, Marriage and Modernization, 75-77.