

FEMINISM IN THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

There are a number of strands of feminism at work in the Unitarian Universalist Association as there are in the larger culture. I shall speak briefly of two of them. The strand that directs its attention to gaining equality for women in on-going institutions is frequently referred to as liberal feminism. That was the concern of the feminists who first began action for women after merger. The three resolutions of 1964, 1970 and 1973 on this side of the page spoke to their issues. Although results were slow in coming women have gained access to a broad variety of positions in the UUA.

The second strand of feminism aims to change the religious system itself--the principles, the dogma, rituals, <sup>symbols</sup> images and the like that affect the image and sense-of-self of all women. This strand of feminism is sometimes referred to as radical feminism---radical in the sense of going to the roots of the problem--as in radical surgery in the field of medicine.

The 1977 resolution on the reverse side of the page seeks the root cause of sexism in religious ideology. It urges the denomination to take up the endless task of examining our on-going androcentric theology to see in what ways it sanctions the subordination of women. This resolution is very basic to the work the Panel on Theological Education is doing as you review the programs of theological schools.

By unanimously adopting the Women and Religion resolution the 1977 General Assembly gave your Panel a charge. You carry that charge

as the representatives of the UUA who are empowered by the board of trustees to act on one section of resolve number two in that resolution. An important part of that resolve encourages Unitarian Universalist Theological schools to put traditional sexist assumptions into historic perspective and to avoid sex bias in the future. In light of the vast amount of ~~theoretical~~ theology that empowers men and diminishes women, that is no small task.-- a task they are not apt to undertake without considerable prodding.

I can't speak of feminism in the UUA without talking about the work feminists did and caused others to do on the principles of our denomination. The principles from the time of merger in 1961 stated that women as well as men would cherish and spread the words of the great prophets and feminists knew how misogynous some of those statements were. For this reason we caused the principles to be opened for review and revision.

We must value our current principles for they can and must be made to embrace a theology that affirms the full humanity of women and men. "The interdependent web of all existence of which we are all a part" provides a feminist sense of relationships that need not lead to domination and subordination but affirms and values the totality of life.

I want you to know why I have valued sharing with other lay women in the Theological Opportunities Program at Harvard Divinity School. There we have examined traditional religious concepts and seen time and time again how the myths and stories of religious heritage have diminished women, causing us to dislike and deprecate ourselves. In TOPs we<sup>as lay women</sup> have been doing the work which our denomination embraced by adopting the Women and Religion resolution.