

A DECADE WITH THE WOMEN AND RELIGION RESOLUTION

The implementation of the Women and Religion resolution is revolutionizing the Unitarian Universalist Association and I have a few minutes to let you in on the secret.

The resolution passed the 1977 General Assembly unanimously, minimal discussion, no debate. Few, if any of those present, imagined that an innocent sounding resolution titled "Women and Religion" could, like the Trojan Horse, have anything of consequence inside.

Ten years already and the resolution is alive, well and changing the underlying assumptions of our religious community. Yet implementation has barely begun.

The purpose of this resolution was to release the spirituality of women from the misogyny so prevalent in the scriptures and prophetic statements of global religions and especially of the Judeo-Christian heritage. It was those very statements which we, as women ignorant of the implications of our former UUA Principles, had agreed to cherish and spread.

What is not generally acknowledged is the fact that implementation of the Women and Religion resolution was instrumental in opening the Unitarian Universalist Principles for review and revision. A workshop requested by a participant at the Grailville, Ohio, Women and Religion Conference in 1979 considered whether the twenty-year old principles affirmed women as they affirmed men.

The answer was "no!". "Nor", said those present, "do they indicate a respect for the totality of life and for the earth which we deem important." The drive for the revision of the UUA Principles began that night. The process was significant. Women, half of humanity, have historically been excluded from shaping religious traditions. In this instance, in contrast to the all-male committee at merger, women comprised the majority of the seven member working group.

That committee reported to General Assembly in Columbus in 1984 and an amendment was added from the floor, by a male feminist, I'm told. That amended report, then approved by the General Assembly and again a year later in Atlanta, established the current statement of UUA Principles.

The new Principles turned the Denomination toward a <sup>new</sup> consciousness exactly because of the amendment added from the floor in Columbus. "We covenant to affirm and promote" it says, "RESPECT FOR THE INTERDEPENDENT WEB OF ALL EXISTENCE OF WHICH WE ARE A PART."

The seventh Principle turns the Denomination toward a life-giving future.

A NEW BEGINNING

A NEW PARADIGM

A NEW REALITY CONSTRUCT BASED ON FEMINIST VALUES.

Instead of hierarchy being the underlying assumption of our world view with domination and oppression assumed, the current Principles embrace a sense of connectedness and respect for the totality of life that women named at the workshop in Grailville.

The new statement of Principles is the most visible and the most revolutionary accomplishment of a decade with the "Women and Religion" resolution. The seventh Principle, in particular, carries, deepens and broadens the egalitarian concept of the "Women and Religion" resolution and gives us a basic underlying assumption on which our denomination can build toward an all-inclusive future.

A less visible but equally important result of a decade with the "Women and Religion" resolution is the coming to awareness that is taking place among us. Women's spirituality is being released from the fetters of patriarchal consciousness.

There was a time before patriarchy--if you don't recall, consult "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" by Shirley Rank. It is a much needed and valued seminar series to help us reclaim and encompass women's long-buried religious story.

Hopefully there will be a time after patriarchy. If life is to continue on this planet we must hasten that day's coming. The UUA took its first step toward a life-giving future by adopting the new version of the Principles. How we define and value relationships within the interdependent web will determine whether we are in deed and in action free of the ages old custom of naming by the powerful.

This day and henceforth we reach for a feminist future!