

## **Sapiro, Ch. 7 Women and Religion**

- 1. Organized religion has been widely criticized for oppressing women.**
  - a. women have tried to change it from within; women have created their own religious orders
  - b. religion strongly forms people's belief systems - espec. women's (chart, 218)
  - c. religion is not a single entity, though the systems have certain basic things in common
  - d. major world religions express, in their teachings, a fear of female power - the fear has sometimes become so intense that women have been brutally persecuted, as in the witch trials of the 14th-18th centuries
  
- 2. Traditional Religious Teachings about Women and Gender**
  - a. religions offer morals/rules to guide conduct
  - b. in most religions, god is male - father, brother
  - c. in most religions, women and men have separate sex roles based on ancient-world texts
    - i. women should not speak in public
    - ii. women cannot worship with men or be ordained
    - iii. women and men are primarily sexual; sexuality is to be feared and controlled; as such, women are the gates of moral purity
  - d. in most religions, women are subordinate to men
    - i. women's conduct is regulated by religious beliefs
      - (1) abortion and birth control
      - (2) public-speaking and public-sphere roles
      - (3) prohibitions on homosexuality
  
- 3. Feminist Spiritual Alternatives**
  - a. Quakers - Angelina and Sarah Grimke
  - b. Shakers - Mother Ann Lee
  - c. contemporary feminist theologians
    - i. changing androcentric God talk
    - ii. changing rituals to affirm females
    - iii. wiccan and pagan religions - return to pre-Christian roots
  
- 4. Women's Religious Activities and Influences**
  - a. everyday life as spiritual practice - "chop wood, carry water"
  - b. wifehood as spiritual discipline - making a home
  - c. serving the public - volunteer work and charity - what the Jews call *tikkun olam* - the "responsibility of restoring the world to its wholeness"
  - d. as religious authorities and leaders
    - i. women Church leaders - Mother Ann Lee, Mary Baker Eddy,
    - ii. women seeking ordination (mostly in liberal churches and synagogues)
    - iii. ordained women changing the attitudes of their congregations
  
- 5. Religion and Society**
  - a. religious beliefs can't be separated from other belief systems
  - b. the faith-basis of religion leaves women particularly vulnerable; it is impossible to prove "what God says" about something or to appeal to rationality
  - c. many women find the "separate spheres" doctrines of their religions to be comforting because they assign roles

- d. religion is appealing because it is tradition- and ritual-oriented, and we hesitate to abandon those traditions