

## Book Reviews

---

***Women and Religious Traditions.* Edited by Leona M. Anderson and Pamela Dickey Young. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-19-541754-2. Pp. vii + 272.**

---

Pamela Dickey Young, professor and head of the department of Religious Studies at Queens University, and Leona Anderson, professor of Hinduism in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Regina, have collaborated as editors of *Women and Religious Traditions*, bringing together in one publication a series of carefully articulated representations of traditions and the role of women within them. Jacoba Kuikman, Eva K. Neumaier, Lee D. Rainey, Dawn Martin-Hill, L. Clarke, and Monique Dumais along with Pamela Dickey Young and Leona Anderson present essays that reflect a historical perspective and identify possible areas where women have been or might have been engaged, before going on to offer textual evidence to support such inclusion. The religions under consideration range from older traditions such as Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism to New Age movements, and the book includes discussions of Chinese traditions, the Quebec woman's movement, Christianity, Islam and Indigenous traditions. As a group, the contributors bring a diversity of background experience and current research interests—for example, Pamela Dickey Young is engaged in research on sexuality in the Christian tradition and she writes from this perspective in her essay "Women in Christianity." Leona Anderson's research interests include Sanskrit literature and Hindu ritual and iconography and her essay "Women in Hindu Traditions" reflects these interests. Dawn Martin-Hill is engaged in research on indigenous peoples and the decolonization of women and her essay "Women in Indigenous Traditions" provides the reader with an entry into the issues surrounding the place of women in indigenous society.

Throughout the book references are made to symbols and images of the feminine suggesting that women may be held in a place of reverence. Such reverence might also be termed deference—that is, deference because of fear, lack of understanding, or feelings of inferiority in their male counterparts. It is suggested that in many traditions the place of women in society has been defined by men in order to reduce the distracting influence of female sexuality. I found it interesting to note that the number of cases in which women who held high office and were worthy of acclaim were considered to hold such office because of their familial relationships with men who themselves had been held in high regard.

Woven into the exegetical material on women and gender issues in many of the essays is a discussion of sexuality and the place of sexual relations within the society. This leads, in some of the essays, to a consideration of the

place of homosexuality both in the historical archive and at the present time. Though it is not clear, it seems that a loose connection between women and religious tradition, women's sexuality and religious tradition, and homosexuality and religious tradition is intended to initiate further discussion or, at least, to show how a discussion of women's issues raises the possibility that it is sexuality which is at the root of the exclusion of non-male voices in religious traditions.

Such an important collection of articles needs to be disseminated among a wide audience to encourage reflection and discussion. As a reference tool this book is invaluable. It identifies many areas for further research. Each chapter contains within it many topics for discussion, any of which might be used as material for class lectures, research assignments, or study groups within religious institutions, as well as deepening personal understanding. The apprehension of the issues surrounding women and their role in socio-religious life should prompt reflection and further study amongst men and women in order to begin to address continuing social inequities between men and women.

The title of this book suggests that it will find a largely female audience, which is unfortunate as it encourages the perspective that women's issues are of interest only to women. As a leader in a religious tradition I have often heard my male counterparts offer the opinion that women do not want them included in the discussion. Perhaps this book will provide the opportunity to invite both men and women to express their understanding and increase their comfort with discussing the issue of gender relations as they pertain to sexuality, religious tradition and society.

Jennifer Davis, *McGill University*.

---

***Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change.*** By Gregory Baum. Ottawa: Saint Paul University, Novalis Press, 2005. ISBN 2-89507-570-0. Pp. 159.

***The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council.*** By Andrew Greeley. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005. ISBN 0-520-24481-8. Pp. 224.

---

This review essay pairs together two important scholars from the sociology of religion and Catholic theology on the North American scene after Vatican II. During the 1970s and 1980s, both Gregory Baum and Andrew Greeley, among many other theologians, were regular contributors and editors of the famous journal *Concilium*, progressive Catholicism's medium for interpreting the 'spirit of Vatican II.' Over the years, their work has challenged many Catholics to grow in their faith. In these two new books by Baum and Greeley respectively, the Roman Catholic Church's historical memory of the past forty years is reconstructed and documented from a sociological angle for a new generation