GENDER and WOMEN'S *Leadership*

A REFERENCE HANDBOOK

2

Karen O'Connor

EDITOR

GENDER and WOMEN'S *Leadership*

A REFERENCE HANDBOOK

Karen O'Connor
American University
EDITOR

SAGE | reference

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

For information:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London, EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
33 Pekin Street #02-01
Far East Square
Singapore 048763

Printed in Mexico.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gender and women's leadership: a reference handbook / edited by Karen O'Connor.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4129-6083-0 (2 vol. set: cloth) 1. Leadership in women. 2. Women—Political activity. 3. Political leadership. 4. Sex discrimination against women. I. O'Connor, Karen, 1952–

HQ1233.G452 2010
305.42—dc22 2010009457

10 11 12 13 14 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Publisher:	Rolf A. Janke
Acquisitions Editor:	Jim Brace-Thompson
Assistant to the Publisher:	Michele Thompson
Reference Systems Manager:	Leticia Gutierrez
Reference Systems Coordinator:	Laura Notton
Production Editor:	Tracy Buyan
Copy Editors:	Colleen Brennan, Minda Heidenreich
Typesetter:	C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.
Proofreaders:	Rae-Ann Goodwin, Penny Sippel
Indexer:	Joan Shapiro
Cover Designer:	Candice Harman
Marketing Manager:	Amberlyn McKay

GENDER and WOMEN'S *Leadership*

A REFERENCE HANDBOOK

Editorial Board

PART VI

Women's Leadership in Religion and Religious Organizations

Contents

Volume One

---

* *The views expressed in this chapter are solely those of the authors.*

PART IV. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

PART V. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN THE BUSINESS AND PROFIT SECTOR

VOLUME TWO

49

Overview: Women as Leaders in Religion and Religious Organizations

Georgie Ann Weatherby
Gonzaga University

While commonly the most faithful to worship, women have had a fractious, contentious relationship with religion through the centuries (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). Offering a sense of stability (the hallmark of traditional religions), women have nonetheless sensed oppression via restricted, even marginalized roles and have, to varying degrees, fought back for change. Those most successful have made in-roads, but that widely depended on their particular church's overall openness to reform. Without the consistent push of women, however, the male-dominated, hierarchical status quo would have remained firmly entrenched much longer, in more domains.

This chapter will outline an overview of history by examining exceptional movements, women crusaders for change, and the progression of ordination rights. Females have led the charge, to some extent, in every faith realm. They will be shown to be courageous warriors, unafraid of tough challenges and major conflicts. As later chapters will reveal, they were often kept out of the limelight (ordination being the utmost form of this) because experiments with ruling power bestowed upon them demonstrated their superiority to men, hence a very real threat to existing traditions (Dhruvarajan, 1996). For some, even today, equality appears to be a losing battle. But these women, we will see, do not give up the fight easily. They are models of inspiration, living in legend long beyond their material years and reaching out for expanded inclusivity and positive change through all who study and emulate them (male and female) throughout history.

Women as Agents of Change in Catholicism

Within the Roman Catholic Church, "only a baptized man validly receives sacred ordination" (Codex 1577—not infallible, but definitive in nature). According to the Vatican's Encyclical Proclamation, Inter Insigniores (1976, Section 5), the personhood of Jesus and those he named as his Apostles were most clearly defined by their masculinity. The doctrine was expressed as divine law (Inter Insigniores, 1976, Section 1)—a doctrine not advanced by Catholicism's magisterium, but instead falling under the domain of canon law (internal laws that govern the Catholic Church, completely revised in the 1960s, during Vatican II, Canon Law Society of America, 1995; Inter Insigniores, 1976). In 1976, the issue was debated within the liberal spectrum of the Catholic Church, and it was decided that for a variety of reasons, the Catholic Church "does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination" (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 1976). Reasons offered included the Catholic Church's determination to remain faithful to its constant tradition. Also, its fidelity to Christ's will. And finally, that male representation was necessary, due to the "sacramental nature" of the priesthood

(St. Pierre, 1994). Retorts were far-reaching, including those from the Biblical Commission that stated there were no concrete grounds rooted in biblical tradition that specifically excluded women from the right to ordination. The commission did not view Old or New Testament interpretations as sufficient for such a firm, guarded stance by the Roman Catholic Church (St. Pierre, 1994). In response to these strong statements forged to keep the dialogue intact, Pope John Paul II ended the discussion in 1988. He proclaimed "Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance . . . I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful" (John Paul II, 1988).

In this statement, he quoted Pope Paul VI, who earlier pointed out that women being stricken from the priesthood was in tandem with God's plan. While later being referenced as close to infallible, the statement does not qualify as such. Under church law, such assertions must arise from issues of faith and morality. This qualifies as neither. It also has to be not only based on the authority of the pope, but all of the bishops (including archbishops and cardinals) throughout the world must agree on it. The only statements that meet these considerations are the two infallible ones on record: the Assumption of Mary into Heaven (Pope Pius XII, 1950) and the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (Pope Pius IX, 1854). It is essential to note that these statements were both already assumed to be true over the centuries. Such declarations were simply underscoring ongoing beliefs to be valid.

Pope John Paul II's statement on women's ordination is considered the most definitive statement ever on this issue by a church authority and was embraced as the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, even though it was not deemed infallible. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1995) bolstered the validity of the statement further, and spurred on groups of organized women who intended to fight this definitive conclusion.

It appears that deaconesses were utilized in the very early church (see the Council of Chalcedon, 451 C.E.). They had to be aged 40 years or older and have fully explored (contemplatively) the implications of this vow. If this holds true, any later exclusion could not be held as divine in nature. For women, and the church, ordination of any sort (deaconesses notwithstanding) brought them closer to the priesthood. Also in Ordinatio Sacerdotalis, Pope John Paul II tempered the blow, asserting that

> the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. Rather, it is to be seen as the faithful observance of a plan to be ascribed to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe. (John Paul II, 1988)

Serving traditionally feminine roles, women in the church populate social concerns/justice committees, teach religious education and theology, lead spiritual direction, and wash altar wares, among other stereotypical duties (Weatherby, 1990). Like the secular world, the division of labor has been pronounced in the church, in other words.

As a result, women's groups arose to lead the charge for equality. They set their sights on priestly ordination within the Catholic Church, but they modeled leadership on every front where they felt slighted (Wallace, 1992).

The Women's Ordination Conference is a highly organized worldwide group that gained strength throughout its history and aimed its efforts at equalizing voices in the church, regardless of gender (Henold, 2008). The Women-Church movement was a more radical (and even less embraced by the Vatican) offshoot of this push for women's rights to be on par with those of men (Winter, 1989). Call To Action (CTA) has further advanced the causes of women, among the many groups oppressed by the church. An advocate of CTA, and powerhouse in her own right, Joan Chittister is highlighted here. As a Benedictine (Roman Catholic) nun, she has been a model for women religious the world over. Through inspiring lectures internationally, prolific book authorship, and meaningful weekly column writing for the *National Catholic Reporter* ("From Where I Stand"), Sister Chittister has captured a wider audience than most women of the church. Holding a master's degree from the University of Notre Dame and a doctorate in speech communication theory from The Pennsylvania State University, she has been a guest on *Meet the Press* and *Now With Bill Moyers,* and she has served as a commentator for the BBC in its coverage of Rome. She has received numerous honors and awards for her distinguished leadership, including *U.S. Catholic* magazine's Furthering the Cause of Women in the Church award. A promoter of peace, her work extends beyond that of purely women's rights. She is an ardent defender of human rights for all. Her direct work with the Dalai Lama attests to this call. Of her 40 books authored through the years, she is able to reach the individual reader with a personal identification style. Her *40-Day Journey With Joan Chittister* (2007) is but one instance of this ability to transport the reader on their own spiritual journey via her own simple, meditative exercises. In her book *In My Own Words* (2008), she addresses head-on the issue of women's rights and when the move to be heard should be initiated. These lessons are interwoven with life-giving ones on belief, humanity, contemplation, hope, peace, and sin. Again, the reader is drawn in on a one-on-one level, teaching humility (Chittister's hallmark) from the inside out.

Religious communities represented by extraordinary leaders such as Chittister are founded on the principles of selfless service. From hospitals to schools, from orphanages to institutions for the poor (houses of charity, women's and children's soup kitchens, and the like), these women religious are getting the job done for the oppressed and underprivileged. Without complaint or fanfare, they

are working for their cause—dignity for the human person and the sacredness of life. We can find their influence everywhere we look, and they tend to embody what Harry S Truman once said: "There's no end to what you can accomplish, as long as you don't care who takes the credit." "What we do to others, does redound to our own benefit" (Chittister, 2005, p. 67).

Women as Agents of Change in Protestantism

Women in the Protestant tradition are subject to a wide variance in rules, based on their particular strain of the faith. Sometimes separated from mainstream Protestants, women in the Episcopal Church of the United States are allowed the exalted status of priests and even bishops. However, there are related Anglican communities that forbid such ordination (countries with these restrictions include parts of Africa, Jerusalem, the Middle East, Papua New Guinea, and Southeast Asia).

Baptist churches vary by type of denomination. For instance, the Southern Baptist Convention does not support women's ordination, whereas the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (reminiscent of its name) actively recruits female ministers. While many Lutheran churches around the world approve of women's ordinations and initiate them frequently, those of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod take a more traditional stance and refrain from allowing females to be ordained. The Presbyterian Church of America (not to be confused with the Presbyterian Church–USA, which is highly egalitarian) does not elevate women via ordination. The United Methodist Church grants full rights of clergy to females, and the Unitarian and Universalist churches have welcomed many women ministers into their fold. Evangelical and Fundamentalist churches (including literalist "Bible only" worship groups) tend to hold to a vision of women that does not include them at higher levels of church rule, and sometimes argue for subservience of women in the home and the workplace as well. (For a more complete list of Protestant faiths and their multifaceted stances on this issue, see Women's Ordination Conference Web site: www.womensordination.org/content/view/8/59.)

When one searches for female Protestant Church founders, who then led their movement to recognition and growth, Mary Baker Eddy stands alone. It was through her deep convictions and belief in spiritual healing that the powerful Christian Science movement was born. She wrote *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures;* founded the First Church of Christ, Scientist of Boston in 1879; and produced numerous periodicals, including *The Christian Science Monitor* (von Fettweis & Warneck, 1998). She was a social justice advocate (freeing her husband's slaves upon his early, untimely death, "unwilling to accept for herself the price of a human life," and advocating only natural cures, as Jesus had used (no drugs or doctors allowed; Wilbur, 1907).

Later, a separate section will feature a discussion of Pentecostal (usually aligned with Evangelicalism) and Charismatic strains of Protestantism. It is essential to note that these too, run the risk of being combined even though some are very liberal in their allowance of women to fill crucial roles while they are at the same time traditional in gender division of labor issues outside of the church (various Pentecostal faiths). The Catholic Charismatic Renewal (non-Protestant), on the other hand, while much more emotional than a regular parish attending Mass, tends to be highly conservative in its support of all that the Vatican stands for, and the divisive nature of gender roles inside and outside of the church. As of 2003, the Pentecostal/Charismatic community was estimated to contain one-half billion adherents (Poloma, 2003). There are also Charismatics located in new-wave churches as well as among indigenous cultures in developing nations (Hollenweger, 1997). "The core or underlying spirituality mixes with many theologies, traditions, and cultures to produce a wide range of types of Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality" (Albrecht, 1999, pp. 28–29). John C. Green, James L. Guth, Corwin E. Smidt, and Lyman A. Kellstedt (1996) give us a sense of the strength and diversity of this movement:

> In the United States, some 23 percent of all evangelical Protestants, 9 percent of mainline Protestants, 13 percent of Roman Catholics, and 36 percent of Black Protestants claim to be "Spirit-filled" . . . Americans who claim to be Spirit-filled tend to self-identify as "Pentecostal" (4.7 percent of the total respondents) or as "Charismatic" (6.6 percent of respondents), but much less frequently as both "Charismatic and Pentecostal" (0.8 percent). (p. 225)

Often students of religion become confused by what qualifies as a Protestant faith. Part of this is due to the extreme ends of the continuum that these religions stretch to, representing all of the room in-between as well (after all, there are hundreds upon hundreds of types of Protestantism to choose from). Sometimes the women associated with such varied forms of worship are instead identified with their political zeal on the leadership front. The truth is, the first meeting of the women's suffrage movement took place in a church (a little known fact) in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, with female activists leading the way, including Lucretia Mott (a Quaker) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (a self-avowed atheist; McMillen, 2008). It was not as fashionable to identify these female trailblazers with a deep, abiding faith as it was to paint them as rabble-rousers who stirred up trouble for trouble's sake. To depict them as God-fearing freedom fighters who happened to be women made for less interesting press. Like those who dispute the need for female representation at the top of the religious hierarchy today, antisuffragists (men and women alike) maintained that women have all the power they need through the backdoor influence of their "voting" husbands. Overturning such patronizing assumptions is viewed as secular and nonreligious (Weatherby, 1984, 1990) and therefore is not to be associated with "women of the church" in any direct, significant way.

Women as Agents of Change in Islam

Ordination is not at issue in the Muslim faith. Religious and spiritual leaders and authority figures are not consecrated in a sacred way familiar to much of the rest of the world. Women in some schools of the faith are allowed to lead women's congregations in prayer (salat), but not in the company of mixed genders. More conservative schools (such as the Maliki) do not allow this in any case (even a group strictly composed of women).

With honor killings the norm for (almost exclusively) women who bring dishonor to their family (brutal murders with corpses often left in ditches or on the side of the road to rot, rather than being offered a proper burial—all for usually out-of-control circumstances, such as being raped, e.g.), in some of the more traditional countries, females are not allowed to be formally educated or to even sit in the same part of the mosque as their male counterparts (due to the possibility of distraction on the part of the men). Although countries within the tradition of Islam differ in their approach to the place of women (tradition-laden Pakistan versus forward-thinking Jordan, e.g.), it is difficult to find women leading the way in their religion, though the late Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister of Pakistan, was the first woman elected to lead a Muslim state (Najeeb, Zaidi, Shulka, & Prasannarajan, 2008).

But the distinction between politics and religion is clear where gender is concerned (though politics is infused with religion in Islamic states—they do not honor a separation of church and state in any form). Muhammad's wives are cited as having the most influence, religiously, throughout history by scholars in the field. As an instance of this power, Khadija, his first wife, is claimed to have attributed the identity of the angel Gabriel to the words he heard in his first trance. This is, harking back to the antisuffragists, a backdoor approach to the issue of leadership. It is perhaps the only one open to women in a "closed" faith society (limiting worship options, much less active involvement in mosque life through the centuries). Some brazen girls have reportedly been semi-permanently disguising themselves as boys for the purpose of full access to schooling and spiritual life in parts of the Middle East. To be revealed in such a charade risks life and limb, so these extreme tactics are viewed as brutal reminders of the daily barriers to women in many Islamic nations.

Women as Agents of Change in Hinduism

Females have been afforded a restricted role in the concrete, traditional Hindu spiritual world. They are considered naturally chaste and virtuous, and therefore somewhat hidden. They are not afforded an identity separate from that of their husband (see Dhruvarajan, in this handbook). In fact, when he dies, it is not uncommon for the wife to throw herself on the funeral pyre, or to have her own family do so for her, as her life is seen to end as a result of her husband's death. Émile Durkheim (1897/1966) termed this *altruistic suicide*, when one overidentifies with another and cannot live without the other, and thus, takes one's own life. One is determined to possess no separate essence of one's own. This is not only a personal perception, but a view placed upon the woman from the outside world as well. Friends, family, and society contribute to the futile feeling of a life unfulfilled in the absence of a partner.

However, via their embodiment as sages, seers, and goddesses, Hindu women have been able to exert broad influence in a mythical sense that has converted itself into living legends among the people. After all, God is viewed as a being with male and female aspects. There is no preferable gender for this higher power. Like the Greeks and Romans (and Catholicism's worship of the saints, to a certain degree), Hindus have created a sense of strength in women (and men as gods, for that matter) via the goddesses that walk among them, and who are responsible for everyday occurrences, all the way up to supreme, earth-changing powers. In this regard, men place their women on a pedestal, and women have divine, powerful creatures to emulate. Durga is just one example. She is a warrior princess type of goddess, much aligned with the mythological Athena in Greek fables. The Hindu fable features Durga coming to the aid of those who invoke her, and her strength and courage are shown to make her invincible on the battlefield. She is able to create chaos out of order, if need be, and in the reverse, calm any out-of-control situation. Indira Gandhi, the famed female political leader and peacemaker in India, is likened to this goddess figure, often associated with ultimate salvation. It is this image (embraced by the lore of various Indian goddesses), contrary to the dependent, fragile nature expected of real-life women, that offers hope to an otherwise silenced majority force. The dilemma remains, however, that women (and men) honor religion as the utmost center-force in their lives. In that realm, little leadership progress has been achieved regarding visible female roles in worship, beyond the mythical content of warrior princess tales.

Women as Agents of Change in Buddhism

Within the Buddhist tradition, *bondage* is negatively equated with either a man or a woman clinging to gender identity (from the sacred passage called the *sutta*). As Buddhism first developed, it was noted that women were allowed to join the monastic community and fully participate in it, with certain provisions (Murcott, 1991). Other accounts reveal that in these early years, women were still viewed to be inferior and were in many cases even denied education (Paul & Wilson, 1985). The result has been an analysis that portrays Buddhism's attitudes toward women as deeply ambivalent (Cabezon, 1992). One cannot attain ultimate nirvana (enlightenment) while maintaining gender beliefs at all, it seems. Therefore, the entire debate on gender attitudes is rendered relatively moot. Instead, much like the biblical interpretation, "lust" is accorded the role attributed to the downfall of all humans.

It is difficult to study the progress of women in the upper echelons of Buddhist tradition, as gender-neutralized language is common in order to disguise identities. However, much of the language in historical texts alludes to the fact that a woman can never attain the highest levels of Zen achievement. Like biblical images of God, the "perfectly rightfully Enlightened one," "the King of Gods" is never depicted as anything other than male. If a woman should become enlightened (a rarity, but there is record of it happening several times throughout history), it is noted that she is reborn in male form (Shaw, 1994).

Gautama Buddha first ordained women as nuns 5 years after his own enlightenment and 5 years after first ordaining men into the sacred order of the sangha (Harvey, 2000). Since that time, a battle has ensued on the gender equality front. It is important to observe that during the Congress on Buddhist Women, the Dalai Lama unwittingly pointed out similarities to the Christian literalist interpretation of the Bible (promoting slavery, male superiority, etc.). He stated "Were the Buddha to come to this 21st century world, I feel that most likely, seeing the actual situation in the world now, he might change the rules somewhat" (qtd. in Chodron, 2005, para. 11). The Dalai Lama later pointed out that women are more nurturing and are less likely to wage war. He is sympathetic with feminists, as long as they do more than "shout." He advocates for their positive contributions to the world and seems to indicate that he does not approve of the sexist sentiments associated with Buddhism over the years. Women have a steep path ahead of them, but many today are training to be teachers of the tenets of their faith—highly regarded spots strictly reserved for males in the past (Cabezon, 1992).

Women as Agents of Change in Judaism

The Jewish tradition differs markedly according to which arm of the faith one pursues. But overall, the Talmud states that women are a "divine presence" (Kiddushin, 31b), that they have "greater faith" than men (Sifri, #133), but on the other hand, that they are "light on raw knowledge," possessing more intuition (Shabbat, 33b). The theme arises time and again that the influence of women is found most convincingly through that of their husbands. In fact,

> throughout the Middle Ages, which continued for about a thousand years, we do not find so much as a single woman of importance among the sages of Israel . . . Moreover, over a period of a thousand years, not a single Jewish woman wrote a halakhic, literary, theoretical, mystical, or poetic work, with the exception of a handful of poems written by (Sephardi) Jewish women in Spain. (Grossman, 2004, p. 278)

Orthodox Judaism historically forbade women to hold the higher leadership offices within the synagogue structure. Advanced study was confined to men, until this past century. Different degrees of Orthodoxy sport varying rules regarding the allowance of public leadership roles for women. Within the Modern Orthodox realm, women receive advanced secular education and are determined appropriate for equal levels of religious education. There opportunities far surpass those offered within the stricter Orthodox arm of the faith.

To turn the argument completely around, it is explained that men lack the spiritual essence common among women and therefore are given more obligations. This makes it all appear as punishment and necessary teaching for the naturally less gifted sex. This seems to raise a constantly reappearing theme throughout world religions. As in the Middle East, men cannot be trusted (hence, veiled, fully covered females). In this form of Judaism, men must reach a higher plateau already occupied by the superiority of women. Again, the man is depicted as weaker, and more of a potential problem. These admissions have, by some, been accused of being raised only to placate women, however. So far, no women rabbis have been ordained in the Orthodox form of Judaism. That could be presented as the ultimate measure of equality in the long run. In the meantime, in this faith tradition, as in most others, women do a great share of the hard behind-the-scenes work, which allows males to stay in the limelight without cause for concern on the preparatory front. Females are making significant strides in leading prayers, however, and this may be the first step toward full recognition in the synagogue.

Conservative Judaism has progressed in recent years in regard to women's roles and responsibilities. They are allowed to actively participate in publicly reading the Torah (ba'al kriah), being part of the minyan, serving as a cantor (shalich tzibbur), serving as a rabbi and halakhic decisor (posek, an arbiter in matters of religious law), wearing a tallit and tefillin (Berkowitz, 2006).

There have been improvements in the treatment of women through the years. For some time, there has been a bat mitzvah for girls to equal the bar mitzvah of males coming of age. And while there are restrictions on record associated with a menstruating female and also one who has recently given birth to a child, in reality, few in these modernized congregations follow these rules. In 1983, women were afforded the right to be ordained as cantors and rabbis via a faculty vote of the Jewish Theological Seminary. With these rights come weighty responsibilities, and the women in question appear to be well aware of them, and eager to take on the tasks associated with such obligations. It appears that, as with numerous other faiths, they were engaged in these duties before permission of their association with them was granted officially.

Among those women in the Reform movement of Judaism, equality in genders is standard. Interestingly, they are proud to assert their active participation in the same grouping of rituals (as outlined earlier) in the more recent changes in Conservative Judaism (Torah readings, cantor and rabbi activities, etc.). Beyond this set of inclusive practices, the Reformists observe any parental Jewish tie, not just a maternal one (which is the historical requirement) for children to claim Jewish identity (Committee on Patrilineal Descent, 1983). Reformers recognize that Jewish laws and doctrine of the past have been outdated, and they actively seek to update their rules to reflect modern-day equality of men and women.