

CLAIMING our RITES



STUDIES IN RELIGION
BY
AUSTRALIAN WOMEN SCHOLARS

Edited by
Morny Joy and Penelope Magee

Carole
Cusack
1999

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Studies in Religion by Australian Women Scholars

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In memory of our mothers

Beryl Joy 1916-1994

Madeline Magee 1909-1966

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Preface

In the last fifteen years much has happened in the world of religion in Australia. One outstanding dimension of change has been the increased participation of women in religious leadership, theological studies and the study of religions. The transformation may be vividly illustrated in the publications programme of The Australian Association for the Study of Religions (AASR).

In 1979 AASR published *Toward Theology in an Australian Context*. There were twelve contributors. They were all men. In 1980 came *Religious Experience in World Religions*. This time a solitary Australian woman (Michelle Stephen) appeared with the twelve male contributors. Then came *Ways of Transcendence* (1982). Its nine authors were again all men. And the point must be made that this male dominance seemed to be eminently normal.

True, awareness was growing that profound changes were about to engage us. In the Introduction to that 1979 anthology I confessed that there were "gaps, silences, omissions", and duly noted the absence of Australian women's scholarship, including that of Australian feminist theologians. Women, I wrote, had "found authentic voice in North America but still struggled to be heard in Australia" (p. 5).

Today those voices do speak and are heard. A decade after publishing those all-male anthologies, AASR is proud to present a volume conceived and realised wholly by Australian women scholars in religion. Many more could have been invited. All are part of the new and impressive world of Australian and international women's scholarship.

As this book has taken shape over the past three years, I have watched a monumental trans-Pacific collaboration between Penny Magee in Australia and Morry Joy in Canada (facilitated by the magic of telephone, fax and high-speed courier). These two editor/authors have been meticulous, tenacious and sensitive. Their book is a stunning collective achievement.

Victor Hayes,
Editor, AASR Publications