Other Trends

The improved status of minorities and women was noted above. The armed forces and the churches have been institutions particularly affected by these gains. Racial quotas, whether affirmative or negative, will not be a factor in the military of the future. Open recruiting and for-the-most-part genuine equal opportunity will lead to continued high levels of minority participation, and to increasing numbers of blacks at higher rank levels. A continued movement toward full equality for women who choose non-traditional roles may also be expected. In the armed forces, this will probably lead to removal, before the end of the century, of the legal bars which now prevent women from serving in combat roles. By 2000 AD women are likely to be fully integrated in every occupational and combat speciality.

Nowhere has the feminist movement had a greater impact than in the churches. It is entirely possible, given the traditionally higher level of participation in religious activities by women than by men, together with the rapidly expanding church leadership opportunities for women, that female leadership may become dominant in some denominations by 2000 AD. The most striking evidence of things to come is to be seen in seminary enrollment, with some denominational seminaries reporting that women comprise up to one-third of their entering classes, and up to one-half in some interdenominational seminaries. The expected number of woman graduates probably cannot be absorbed by civilian churches, and with increasingly open military officer procurement policies, the number of women entering the chaplaincy is likely to increase rapidly.

The decline of the “mainline” liberal churches and the increasing conservatism of American religious life have been mentioned earlier. Another significant trend is the proliferation of new sects and cults on the religious scene. New Christian or quasi-Christian sects tend to be ultraconservative. Some cults formerly regarded as “fringe groups” are following the classic pattern of institutionalization and movement toward the religious mainstream. Particularly striking are the non Judeo-Christian religions currently taking this path, including the Black Muslim movement, which is now reaching out for broader recognition and acceptance. Buddhist movements in Hawaii and the west coast are also moving toward recognition as part of the mainstream (witness the recent inclusion of Buddhists in California state legislature prayer formalities in those regions.

The trend toward conservatism and the proliferation of cults will not significantly affect civil religion ceremonies, which are generally supported by conservative groups. Conservatives are