



# waterwheel

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual

## Power: A Feminist Theological View

by Mary E. Hunt

Power perplexes me. I see it operative in virtually every human interaction, yet struggle to find ways to name, claim and share it that are consistent with my feminist values of inclusivity and justice. Here I make that struggle plain, inviting you to compare it with your own experiences.

Theology has a tried and sometimes true method called the *via negativa*, a good Latin way of saying what something is *not* in order to get closer to a view of what it might be. I think this has potential for developing feminist understandings of power, especially at a time when there is plenty of evidence that power corrupts so absolutely. The allegedly most feminist President in history is in deep weeds for his abuse of power. How do his feminist colleagues, much less his feminist wife, make sense of the results?

Much has been made by feminists of the notion of "power over" vs. "power among." In fact, few and far between are the examples of power well used, regardless of the model. I

know some feminist organizations, indeed some feminist leaders in religion, education and politics, who qualify as being among the tyrants of the western world. Their ways of treating staff members, their behavior toward their graduate students, their department when it comes to feminist professional boundaries make me wonder if they have somehow bracketed all feminist notions of power when it comes to personal practice. Or perhaps they consider such concerns the privatizing or individualizing of something that is in fact only structural, an argument I reject as self-serving in these cases. Power exists in many forms, personal and structural. Figuring out how to use it is part of the job of religious professionals.

Power was a dirty word in feminist circles in the early years when we were less sophisticated about its many often-subtle manifestations in everyday life. Shakespeare got it wrong: it is not the readiness that is all, but the power. I think of power as the ability to

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*How can we change old power structures using new models of power?*



*Women symbolically share power by washing hands during the opening ritual of "A Shared Garden" in Santiago, Chile.*

## Editorial

Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras and Nicaragua, countries with multi-billion dollar debts. Nature does not discriminate but people do, guaranteeing that when disaster strikes, those with flimsy houses will be hit hardest. Debt forgiveness is as important as blankets for relief work there.

Economics is one of those larger than life matters that does not compute until the price of a favorite imported product like gas or bananas goes up. U.S. media focus on the presidential zipper - school children know who did what with whom - while the minds, hearts and wallets of the world's poor countries are fo-

cused on international debt because it costs them every day.

External or government to government debt accrues while U.S. gears grind. It is complicated, but in essence wealthy nations continue to profit from their loans to poor countries. Poor countries stay that way because the service on their debt amounts to an enormous percentage of their Gross National Products. Microcredit and other laudable projects that take women seriously will never fulfill their economic potential until the debt problem is resolved.

Feminists of faith join a growing ecumenical

consensus. WATER and the Pope agree (a rarity!) that "An immediate and vigorous effort is needed, as we look to the year 2000, to ensure that the greatest possible number of nations will be able to extricate themselves from a now intolerable situation." The World Council of Churches meeting in Harare issued a strong call to follow the Book of Leviticus and declare a "Jubilee" in the year 2000, when debts would be forgiven and economic relations rethought. It is an ecologically sound, politically wise, ethically mature act, a good investment in a global future.

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WATER is a feminist educational center, a network of justice-seeking people that began in 1983 in response to the need for serious theological, ethical and liturgical development for and by women. We work locally, nationally and internationally doing programs, projects, publications, workshops, retreats, counseling and liturgical planning which have helped thousands of people to be part of an inclusive church and society.

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## Changes in power mean life will look and feel different for all of us.

### Power...

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make and actualize choices for oneself and for others. It is, in theory, accessible to all, but human structures assure that "power" remains in the hands of a few. These structures of "lordship" that Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza has so helpfully named as "kyriarchy" reign in the world as we know it - race, economic access, gender, sexuality and the like stratify people and groups. The results are disastrous, especially for women.

Virtually all social change efforts are power struggles, Marx be praised, but the struggle to change models of power is even more difficult. How can we change old power structures using new models of power? It is a "damned if you do and damned if you don't" situation. The alternative is even bleaker: to fight power with power is a sure recipe for violence.

Sometimes I despair of progressive efforts that are all process and precious little content, all movement toward and never reaching important goals. At such times I realize the religious value of seeing ourselves as part of historical processes. Then we do not need to live to see accomplished all that we think needs to change, but we will try.

Globalization is the latest manifestation of absolute power, following on colonializing as a way in which the few make decisions for the many. In such a new context, where pernicious market forces drive most of the decision-making, new models of power seem politically pollyanna-ish, theologically naive. Still, I think there is evidence that without such changes the structures that ground life for most people, especially people who are poor, for women and dependent children, indeed for the environment and its inhabitants, may not function much longer.

Case in point: the fragile economic infrastructure that few understand and even fewer can influence. This seems to change when Alan Greenspan sneezes, to the detriment of some and benefit of others depending on their status in the power equation. This is power gone awry. What if Mr. Greenspan gets pneumonia? Another example is the UN. It is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the slogan "All rights for all." Yet it is

clear that at this time our globalized society has left aside more than a few people, not to mention animals, plants and other aspects of creation. A feminist revisioning of power can only help. What would it look like?

I struggle to rethink how power relationships can be adjudicated to maximize well being and minimize damage. I have seen and participated in some less than efficient models, some wastes of time and resources because "we are all equal so let's all do it together," when in fact some are better at a given task than others. This feminist misunderstanding of power was based on mistaken analyses that beg reformulation of power and its relationship to responsibility.

Power is not whatever the market will bear, nor is it some sort of bean counting based on all the previous historical oppressions.

Changes in power mean life will look and feel different for all of us. One approach consistent with feminist values comes from taking seriously the notion of Jubilee, as in "give it a rest." Some groups are proposing this as a serious economic strategy - the cancellation of great amounts of external debt, a kind of wiping the slate clean without which power changes will never happen. Nothing else has worked, so why not give it a try?

I envision a personal version of this, too - a letting go of roles and positions, of prejudices and preconceptions, to begin anew in the development of strategies and attitudes that respect difference and invite diversity. We will need to redistribute wealth, as well, to renew the structures of family and community, but it is within our power, that is, our ability to make choices. Such an intentional process will begin in small ways, at home and in the office, in the neighborhood and online, to figure out how we share the choices and the choice making that manifest power. Results will be slow, I predict, but at least we will be paying attention.

A Utopian view? You bet! But given the grisly alternative we currently experience, I will use what power I have to bring it about. And you?

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Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., feminist liberation theologian and ethicist, co-directs WATER.

## Theologians and Activists Shape Network

**A**ctivists and scholars met in Orlando, FL, last November to give shape to the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network. The group included people from a variety of countries, fields of study, faith traditions and theo-political commitments. The commonality is that each one sees her work - whether ministerial, academic, philanthropic or educational - as rooted in a feminist religious commitment and oriented toward social justice. Critical analysis for religiously based social change requires not only skilled practitioners, but also strong networks for support and solidarity. The nascent Network endeavors to be just that.

The Network came about as a response to the need for feminists of faith to connect with one another, discuss ideas, formulate projects and act together beyond denominational or "guild" lines. Another goal is to bring such a grouping

into contact with others like it around the world. It is an ambitious project that invites the collaboration of many. This meeting, like last year's, was held in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting.

An e-mail list is one way in which the group converses, with periodic meetings and seminars planned. Topics of concern include: the history of the development of feminist liberation theology; how to frame issues in the face of religious pluralism; how to deal with resistance to feminist work in religion; how to share economic and scholarly resources with women, especially students, around the world; how to encourage this important scholarly and activist work. The Network is envisioned as a locus for such conversations and a springboard for actions based on them.

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## Feminist Scholars and Activists in Religion Will Gather January 6-9, 2000, Daytona Beach, Florida

**W**ATER's Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network announces a gathering of "Study, Sun and Solidarity," January 6-9, 2000, in Daytona Beach, FL, at El Caribe Conference Center. This is a unique opportunity to spend time together in a relaxed and lovely setting, to engage in substantive conversation and collaborate across differences. It is intended for theologians, ministry professionals and social change agents who want to work together to bring the best insights of feminist liberation theology to bear on contemporary issues.

Travel is easy - into Daytona or Orlando Airports, then cab or van to the El Caribe Hotel on Daytona Beach, a very pleasant oceanfront setting. The meeting will begin Thursday evening, January 6, and conclude by noon on Sunday, January 9. The group will convene in the morning and late afternoon, with plenty of time in between for informal conversation and enjoyment. A \$50 pre-registration fee will hold your place. Space will be limited, so best to pre-register now, or at least before July 15, so that WATER can plan accordingly. Conference cost will include most meals; hotel arrangements can be made directly with El Caribe, identifying yourself as part of the FLTN group. Guests are welcome to come early for a little more r+r. Contact Mary Hunt at WATER for more information.

### Registration Application

Please register me for the FLTN conference January 6-9, 2000, in Daytona, FL.  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Profession \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip/Country \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Enclose \$50 pre-registration and send to WATER, 8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

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## In Memory of Her

Remembering someone you hold dear bestows real immortality. Let your memories speak to the living as well as about those you now hold in your heart. A gift of \$25 or more "in memory of her" furthers the work that realizes the dreams of those you remember.

*From WATER:*

With loving thanks for the life of **Nancy Swartzentruber Lapp**, Mennonite minister, musician and woman of remarkable complexity and courage. May your children and grandchildren continue your legacy of justice seeking and spirituality.

*From WATER:*

With gratitude for the life of **Joey Noble**, United Church of Christ minister, community activist, and longtime participant in and supporter of our work. May your spirit continue to bless us as your presence did for so many years.

*From WATER:*

With a hymn of praise for the life of **Lydwine van Kersbergen**, a Grail pioneer who served as its president in the Netherlands and in England, and who (with Joan Overboss) brought the Grail to the U.S. and to Australia. Your blessings on WATER and your steadfast encouragement ring clearly in our ears.

*From Janet Liechty, Mount Rainier, MD:*

In memory of **Nancy Lapp**, and in gratitude for the work her daughter **Cindy** carries on.

*From Sally and Donald White, Bethesda, MD:*

In memory of **Nancy Lapp**, mother of **Cindy** and grandmother of **Jamie** and **Cecilia**. Her life was an excellent example of what WATER is about. She worked and dreamed so we could dare to speak.

*From Mary Virginia Lawrence, Wheaton, MD:*

In memory of **Judith W. Harrington**, (sister of **Kathy Weber, csc**), a woman of marvelous contradictions. Gone too soon from a world she loved with passion. Judy cultivated beauty and life in her children, her grandchildren, her husband, sisters, family and friends; also in her many gardens, acres of trees and animals of all sizes. We miss her mightily.

*Beginning a new year is an open invitation to revisit the theme of love. This liturgy invites participants to explore love in a collective way: social love as social justice. Use it not only for the first month, but also for February and its Valentine connection, or any day your group wants to remember to love.*

### Preparation

Place a symbolic heart (picture, carving, decoration), four candles, bread, wine, juice and food on a central table.

### Naming the Circle

Today we gather as friends who love and are loved. As we pass this symbolic heart around, let us introduce ourselves by saying our names and sharing an idea, word or phrase that comes to mind when we hear the word love. (Naming)

### Call to Gather

The New Year as well as Valentine's Day offers us a timely theme of love. We are called upon to love ourselves, to love one another, to love the earth. Yet we found this celebration a difficult one to plan because of the societal interpretations of love. Everyone wants hearts and flowers, but these aren't enough.

If love and justice are friends, and we are all eager for social justice, then why are we not advocating social love? If there is personal justice that equals morality, then there must also be social love.

Love, like the divine, is hard to get a handle on. It is tough to name. And what we do name, all too often is not really love. It is good to know how and when to say, "I love you." Today, this year, let us practice.

**Chant:** "Women, Come," Traditional Round adapted.

- 1 - Women, come; friends, come;
- 2 - Come and join our circle forming.
- 3 - Laughter, sharing, tears are shed;
- 4 - Celebrate our love.

### Candle Lighting

(Each reader lights a candle before reading.)

**Reading:** Mary E. Hunt in *Fierce Tenderness* c. 1991.

No one has come up with a satisfactory definition of love. Or if anyone claims to, I would worry that it is the ethical equivalent of buying medicine water off the back of a wagon. But there must be some working definition....

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I venture to say that for women friends love is an orientation toward the world as if my friend and I were more united than separated, more at one among the many than separate and alone. Love is the intention to recognize this drive toward unity and to make it increasingly so over time. Love is the commitment to deepen in unity without losing the uniqueness of the individuals at hand. It is the force of attraction that generates something new out of a unity that is somehow separate from and beyond the two. Even in trying to describe it words are limited.

Friends can form a business, throw a party, build a house, collaborate on a project, take part in a social movement, and experience a similar generative energy found in bringing forth children.

**Response:** "Come Sing A Song With Me" by Carolyn McDade, from *Sister, Carry on*, c. 1992.

Come sing a song with me (3x)  
That I might know your mind.  
I'll bring you hope, when hope is hard to find.  
And I'll bring a song of love,  
And a rose in the winter time.



**Reading:** Carter Heyward in *The Redemption of God*, c. 1982.

Without our crying, our yearning, our raging, there is no God. For in the beginning is the relation, and in the relation is the power that creates the world through us, and with us, and by us, you and I, you and we, and none of us alone.

And at last, hand in hand, we are blessed.  
With you, I begin to see that the hungry can eat again, the rivers can flow again, the fires can burn again.

With you, I begin to see that the hungry can eat again, the children can play again, the women can rage and stand again.

It is not a matter of what "ought" to be. It is a power that drives toward justice and makes it.

Makes the sun blaze, the rivers roar, the fires rage. And the revolution is won again. And you and I are pushed by a power both terrifying and comforting.

And "I love you" means, let the revolution begin!

**Response:** "Come Sing A Song With Me" Come walk in rain with me (3x) ...

**Reading:** Denise Levertov in "Prayer for Revolutionary Love," from *The Freeing of the Dust*, c. 1975.

*Social  
as Social*

by Diana

That a woman not ask a man to leave meaningful work to follow her.

That a man not ask a woman to leave meaningful work to follow him.

That no one try to put Eros in bondage.  
But that no one put a cudgel in the hands of Eros.

That our loyalty to one another and our loyalty to our work not be set in false conflict.

That our love for each other give us love for each other's work.

That our love for each other's work give us love for one another.

That our love for each other's work give us love for one another.

That our love for each other give us love for each other's work.

That our love for each other, if need be, give way to absence. And the unknown.  
That we endure absence, if need be, without losing our love for each other.  
Without closing our doors to the unknown.

**Response:** "Come Sing A Song With Me" Come dream a dream with me (3x) ...

**Reading:** Alice Walker in "Love Is Not Concerned," from *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful*, c. 1983.

love is not concerned  
with whom you pray  
or where you slept  
the night you ran away  
from home  
love is concerned  
that the beating of your heart  
should kill no one.



Whisper words of assurance to them when they are close to stumbling.  
And love them tenderly.  
Amen. Blessed Be. Let It Be So.

#### Greeting with Peace

Love for one another overflows in blessings of peace. Come, share with one another a loving embrace. (*Embracing*)

**Song:** "Come Sing A Song With Me"

Come bless bread and wine with me (3x) ...

#### Blessing the Bread

Eucharist is a love feast. Today, let us bless this food by passing it around our circle so that each of us may bless it. (*Each blesses in turn*)

Blessed are you, Nourishing One, for you promise your people food for the journey, nourishment for the struggle.

Blessed are you, Protector of the Homeless, for you sent your people manna as they wandered in the desert.

Blessed are you, Lover of Life, for you are the bread of life.

Blessed are you, Holy Freedom Seeker, for you give us this day our daily bread, the bread of freedom, the bread of peace for all peoples.

Blessed are you, Bakerwoman God, for you taught our mothers to bake this bread. Fill us with its rising power.

Blessed are you, Holy One of Peace, for you keep us hungry for a world without war.

Let us extend our hands, palms up, and bless this bread. Blessed are you, Lover of All Seasons, bless this bread with your gifts of love.

#### Blessing the Fruit of the Vine

Blessed are you, Source of Life, for you invite us to come and drink deeply.

Blessed are you, One Who Remembers, for you beg us to drink this fruit of the vine in memory of all who have died for peace.

Blessed are you, Justice-seeking Friend, for you help us to remember women's lives, women's blood, women who have been killed, martyred, raped and wounded.

Blessed are you, Risk-taker, for even though we drink, you keep us thirsty for peace.

Blessed are you, Holy One of the Harvest, refresh us with a firm and daring spirit.

Blessed are you, Holy Liberator, for you create the fruit of the vine and show us the way to liberation.

Let us extend our hands, palms up, and bless this fruit of the vine. Blessed are you, Holy One of Love, bless this wine and juice with your gifts of love.

#### Sharing the Eucharist

Let us eat and drink remembering love.

#### Sending Forth

Strengthened by this community, let us go forth to bring love to the earth and her people. Please say after me:

May love be within us.

May love be around us.

May love be beside us.

May love be between us.

May we walk lovingly with Mother Earth.

May love fill our days and our nights.

May love fill all generations.

Amen. Blessed Be. Let It Be So.

**Chant and Dance:** "Women, Go," Traditional Round adapted.

The dance is: step with your right foot, close step with your left foot. We will chant and dance in a circle until people return to their original starting place.

1 - Women, go; friends, go;

2 - Go and share our social love.

3 - Laughter, sharing, tears are shed;

4 - Celebrate our love.

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*Diann L. Neu, MDiv, STM, MSW, co-founder and co-director of WATER, is a feminist theologian, liturgist and psychotherapist.*

Love  
Justice

L. Neu

**Response:** "Come Sing A Song With Me"

Come share a rose with me (3x) ...

#### Reflection

We have heard a variety of perspectives on love. Let us take some time to reflect on what love is for us, on when we love. Let us share in groups of three. The group will, of course, reflect on what it wants, but recall that the personal is social, the very personal is social love. Therefore, we might want to think "because I love x, I do y." Or "because I do a, I know I love b." Singing will gather us back into the circle. (*Sharing*)

**Song:** "Come Sing A Song With Me"

Come sing a song with me (3x) ...

#### Prayers for Loved Ones

This time of love invites us to remember those we love and those who love us. Let us share our prayers for them and respond to each with: "May our love deepen." (*Sharing prayers, then closing with:*)

Holy Mother of Love Beyond our Knowing,

Cradle our loved ones in your bosom.

Hold them close in your loving care.

Shelter them securely in stormy weather.



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## Miracles from Shared Gardens

by Graciela Pujol, Uruguay

Excerpted from a report by a participant in all three Gardens, translated by Sally Hanlon

When I heard, two years ago, about a North-South women's project in the Americas known as "A Shared Garden," I felt drawn to this dream - at that point it was but a dream - of creating and sharing from our own religious traditions new spiritualities, ethics, theologies.

I was caught by the project's name, like a metaphor on moving from a world vision based on the loss of paradise - burdening women with guilt for the legacy of subjection, pain and death - to a new vision of a Land for women and men, to be sown in a reciprocal relationship, a Land capable of bearing abundant fruits.

[T]hree gardens, similar yet different, each shaped by participants who, though heterogeneous, included a majority from the host country, a local coordinating team, a particular socio-cultural-political context.

Coincidentally, these were three especially significant contexts for the Americas as a whole: The United States, as hegemonic center of power, and Washington, DC, in particular as the seat of political power; Chile, one of the last bastions of military dictatorship in Latin America, today become paradigm for the "successful" application of Neo-Liberal policies; Brazil, the country with greatest contrasts of income distribution, especially the northeast region, with its scandalous poverty.

Getting in touch with the U.S. situation enabled me to understand the emphasis placed on political work by groups of women and religious...their understanding of theology as theo-politics...observing a white-haired and apparently fragile woman [member of a religious group lobbying Congress] facing up to those powerful men, taking on the titanic task of seeking to influence political decisions affecting human rights, decisions affecting women's lives negatively. It was something really unusual, from a Latin American perspective.

One of the most striking experiences was our immersion in the reality of northeastern Brazil...Divided into groups of 6 or 7, we visited different poor neighborhoods in the area of Camaragibe, Recife and Olinda,

where women's community experiences are in process: daycare programs, community centers, craftspeople's organizations. Change was not viewed among these women as anything in the near future... But they did have a stubborn trust in solidarity, as the one way to survival.

At several points during the three gardens, we could perceive intensely the contradiction between what we were saying and our body language...As soon as we got together, we'd want to devise strategies for transforming other women, for "converting" them. Still, it becomes very revealing when we do move beyond the level of speech, and throw our whole selves into it; signs turn up that, if we're able to read them, show us our own limits and cultural traits.

This type of international gathering: Is it worth the trouble for the results obtained? One aspect leads me to believe that yes, this is worth the effort: living out the diversity.

Being able to gather together and share life in the same place, indigenous, white and black women of different ages, from different religious creeds, and with no particular creed at all; lesbians, heterosexuals and bisexuals from different nationalities and languages, with diverse jobs, professions and practices, with different levels of instruction and formation, from different social and economic levels - I'm absolutely convinced that this was an irreplaceably rich experience. And it was even stronger for those women who had never before left their homeland or their city.

Heterogeneity meant risks, which we need to recognize and confront. A young woman from the Northeast, with just a grade-school education, said, "When they invited me to come, I thought, 'What will I do among all those theologians with all they know?' When I got here was I scared!...As we got to know one another, I realized that we're all in the same boat." One black woman, a mother from Bahia and follower of Candomblé, observed, "What makes us different are the names we put on our practices."

[I]n the words of Ivone Gebara at our first Shared Garden, on summarizing this experience as a whole: "[W]e're putting seeds in the earth, and observing - like a miracle - how they grow."

## Resources

Adleman, Jeanne, Gloria Enguidanos, eds. **Racism in the Lives of Women: Testimony, Theory and Guides to Antiracist Practice.** Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 1997 (385 pages, \$29.95).

A welcome volume to guide readers toward new forms of behavior, new social structures, new thinking.

Amott, Teresa and Julie Matthaei. **Race, Gender and Work: A Multi-Cultural Economic History of Women in the United States.** Boston: South End Press, 1996 (442 pages, \$21).

Excellent economic analysis which ought to inform ethical and theological writings about women and actions on our behalf.

Baker-Fletcher, Karen and Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher. **My Sister, My Brother: Womanist and Xodus God-Talk.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997 (307 pages, \$18).

This respectful dialogic approach takes readers a long way toward understanding the complexities and richness of African American theologies as articulated by womanist and Xodus proponents. Exciting.

Bell, Diane and Renate Klein, editors. **Radically Speaking Feminism Reclaimed.** North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press, 1996 (623 pages, \$29.95).

Contrary to postmodernist claims, these authors proclaim feminism alive, well and providing the best possible approach to social transformation. A rich collection.

Best, Marigold and Pamela Hussey. **Life Out of Death: The Feminine Spirit of El Salvador.** London: CIR 1996, available from EPICA, 1470 Irving Street NW, Washington, DC 20010 (210 pages, \$12.95).

The aftermath of war is as destructive as its full fury. These women dig deep into their traditions for resources to deal creatively with loss and find hope.

Dierks, Sheila Durkin. **Woman Eucharist.** Boulder, CO: Woven Word Press (811 Mapleton Avenue, 80304) (317 pages, \$16.95).

Why and how Roman Catholic women are simply celebrating Eucharist makes a fascinating read. The sheer ordinariness of it now and the deepening of women's spiritual maturity stand out as welcome advances.

Jackson, Eleanor, ed.; John Shepherd, translator. **The Question of Woman: The Collected Writings of Charlotte von Kirschbaum.** Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996 (202 pages, \$16).

That Karl Barth's work was deeply influenced by, not to say in many instances done by, Charlotte von Kirschbaum is a truism in theology. Now an English-reading audience glimpses her life and her own work. A dramatic tale; time to speak of Barth and von Kirschbaum in the plural.

Jensen, Anne. **God's Self-confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women.** Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996 (347 pages, \$34).

The English translation of the work of the Early Christianity team in Tübingen, this study sheds light on women's role and self-understanding in the early years of an influential movement.

Kirk-Duggan, Cheryl A. **Exorcizing Evil: A Womanist Perspective on the Spirituals.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997 (403 pages, \$20).

A good look at how these powerful songs can be sung in the key of justice.

Kroeger, Catherine Clark and James R. Beck, eds. **Women, Abuse, and the Bible: How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or to Heal.** Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996 (256 pages, \$14.99).

A good example of how the Bible is used variously, and a strong statement on why Christian churches have to be vigilant with regard to sexual abuse committed in "their" name.

Mandell, Gail Porter. **Madeleva: A Biography.** Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997 (303 pages, \$17.95).

Catholic women's higher education was deeply influenced by the poetry and power of Sr. Madeleva Wolff, CSC. This biography does justice to the complexities of the woman and her times.

McKinlay, Judith E. **Gendering Wisdom the Host: Biblical Invitations to Eat and Drink.** Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996 (280 pages, \$19.95).

A provocative probe of gender in biblical narrative and politics.

Northrup, Leslie A. **Ritualizing Women: Patterns of Feminine Spirituality.** Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1997 (176 pages, \$13.95).

A helpful summary and beginning analysis of who's who and what's what on the women's liturgical scene.

Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. **Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1995 (229 pages, \$18).

African women have their own, powerful approach to dealing with injustice and building human community. This is a marvelous synthesis and story of that effort. An essential read in theology.

Priests for Equality. **The Inclusive Psalms.** W. Hyattsville, MD: Priests for Equality, 1997 (204 pages, \$14.95).

A graceful text for worship.

Riggs, Marcia, ed. **Can I Get a Witness: Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women, An Anthology.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997 (200 pages, \$18).

The words of so many powerful women assembled carefully in this collection make clear what words like "faith," "witness," and "struggle" mean in the concrete work of social change.

Schneider, Carl J. and Dorothy. In **Their Own right: The History of American Clergywomen.** New York: Crossroad, 1997 (310 pages, \$39.95).

A more modest sub-title would help, but this cross-denominational study is a useful look at many of the mainline Christian churches' struggles to incorporate women into their ministries.

Smith, Ann, Lucy Germany, Sr. Helena Marie and Nancy Grandfield. **Women Prints: A Detailed Plan of Action for the New Millennium.** Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1997 (231 pages, \$17.95).

The Beijing issues are spelled out in clear, concrete steps for people who want to implement them in a Western context.

Snyder, C. Arnold and Linda A. Huebert Hecht, eds. **Profiles of AnaBaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers.** Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1996 (438 pages, \$28.95).

The history of these women fills in a large gap in church history, an important chapter for understanding women's role in the Reformation.

Stebner, Eleanor J. **The Women of Hull House: A Study in Spirituality, Vocation, and Friendship.** Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997 (246 pages, \$19.95).

Thorough, insightful and full of wonderful stories of these women, this history confirms the suspicion that women friends are a powerful force for justice despite their individual limitations.

Tsomo, Karma Lekshe. **Sisters in Solitude: Two Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Ethics for Women.** Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996 (198 pages, \$19.95).

These nuns practice their own disciplines and make their own way in a tradition which is only now beginning to come to grips with the full humanity of women.



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## **WATER and Company**

Fall is a busy season at WATER. Cuban colleague **Clara Luz Ajo** defended her doctoral dissertation at the Methodist University in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on the subject of concepts of the body in Santeria and the Episcopal Church in Cuba. **Mary Hunt** was privileged to serve on the committee. While in Sao Paulo, Mary also conducted a workshop with *Catolicas pelo Direito de Decidir* on feminist theology and ethics.

Mary and **Diann Neu** led more than 120 people in a day long workshop on "The Theologies and Liturgies of Women-Church" at the annual Call to Action conference in Milwaukee, WI. It was a wonderful chance to meet WATER colleagues and advance that important agenda, with **Diann** coordinating a **Women-Church Convergence** liturgy and **Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza** giving a powerful keynote address.

The **Loretto Community** engaged in a "Future Search" with supporters like **Mary Hunt** in tow. They found the future and they are it! **Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite** was inaugurated as the new president of Chicago Theological Seminary, where **Mary** took greetings from WATER and sister centers in support of **Susan's** continued justice work in this new position.

The **AIDS National Interfaith Network** convened hundreds of religious leaders from dozens of faith traditions at the Carter Center in Atlanta for a meeting on Religion and AIDS. **Mary Hunt** was the theologian who threaded together presentations and offered commentaries on where those tough issues seem to be heading.

It was a marvelous meeting that drew on what ethicist **Daniel C. Maguire** calls the "renewable moral energy of religion" for the millions of people around the world who are infected with the virus.

At the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, **Mary** gave a paper on **Mary Daly's** new book, **Quintessence**; **Hunt** responded to a panel on "Remembering Conquest," in which scholars looked at the impact

of colonialism on anti-violence work. **Mary** also joined the international, interreligious "Good Sex" team for their premier presentation of findings.

**Sandra Duarte de Souza**, a doctoral student at the Methodist University in Sao Paulo, Brazil, is at WATER this season writing her doctoral dissertation on ecofeminism. **Ninna Edgardh Beckman** from Uppsala, Sweden, is in the office doing research for her dissertation on women-church.

**Diann Neu** led monthly liturgies at WATER: "Hallowed Be the Turning into Darkness," "Give Thanks for All Good Blessings," and "Come Wisdom-Sophia: An Advent Prayer." She coordinated the **Women-**

**Church Convergence** that met at Grailville in September and met with individuals and groups for spiritual direction

and psychotherapy. Her prayer "In Praise of Hands" is published in **Gifted and Called to Raise Up Our Children** by Children's Defense Fund.

**Diann, Mary** and **Cindy Lapp** each have prayers in **Sing Out New Visions** edited by **Jean Martensen** and published by Augsburg Fortress Publishers.