Editorial

U.S. presidential election years are always momentous, but this one promises to be especially so. Rarely in recent memory have the primaries held so much attention, garnered so much media, generated so much discussion. Democracy is supposed to be like that. But the early heat and light are more from vicious rhetoric and punitive policy proposals than from the wholesome exchange of constructive ideas. Progressive religious people expect more because justice demands it.

Money talks. Negative ads work. Name recognition is the way to win. Half-truths are cheaper than truth itself. innuendo and dirty tricks are part of the process. It sounds more like a tawdry B-movie than the prelude to a national election. But that is the sad reality today.

Imagine if every progressive religious group put voter registration on its agenda, sponsored discussions on the issues (in a non-partisan way, of course), and drove people to the polls. Many who live outside the U.S. still marvel at our antiquated system of voting on a regular workday. Why not declare a national holiday, or, for heaven's sake, a national emergency? Maybe then participation rates would rise and those who feel the pinch most would have time and wherewithal to exercise their suffrage.

Non-profits like WATER cannot engage in lobbying, and far be it from us to comment on a particular candidate. But we can and do urge all of our U.S. colleagues to get involved in electoral politics as the best insurance against a disaster in November. The ramifications around the world are daunting. As they say in Chicago, vote early and often. Perhaps we need a bumper sticker: "Feminists vote religiously."

Beauty and the Body

by Mary E. Hunt

One of the earliest feminist publications was the compilation of mimeographed pieces by the Boston Women's Health Collective that later became Our Bodies, Ourselves (1971). The title carried two explicit meanings—that women's bodies belong to women, and that we are our bodies—and one implicit one, that our bodies are good. A quarter of a century, several editions and various translations later, a central concern for most women is still focused on the bodies we love to hate. Because so much of the input we get about our bodies comes from religion, and because feminists have been so helpful in countering the negative, I offer this reflection as a challenge.

Women's bodies are a patriarchal no-win zone. No one has a clue what the mythical Adam might have looked like, but who can not conjure a clear and enticing picture of Eve? She is her body in the most negative, objectified way possible. In its early days, the U.S. women's movement drew critical attention to the billboards and magazine ads for tobacco and alcohol that used pictures of nude or semi-nude women to sell products. Religious feminists joined the fray and pushed the proverbial envelope to add images of the divine and ethical teachings that demeaned women to those we wanted outlawed. Changes have occurred, but the issues now are simply more and more subtle. What I used to think of as gender-based oppression now is gender-driven bodily and psychological damage.

Twiggy, the skinny model, and Barbie, the doll which gives so many girls their notions of what a grown up woman's body looks like, are cultural icons. One could argue that they are innocent enough, but eating disorders that plague so many young women prove that icons have staying power.

I was surprised recently when teaching an undergraduate Introduction to Women's Studies class at just how widespread this problem is among college students. Stories of roommates bingeing and purging gave way to statistics. Happily, this year, for the first time in a long while, the numbers, while still astonishing, have dropped from 7.2% to 5.1% among college age women and from 1.1% to 0.4% for college age men. But the distressing news is that what used to be a white, upper middle class, high achievers' syndrome is now a growing problem among women of color as well. For women athletes, especially track and field competitors, it is so serious that most major universities now sponsor educational programs to head off the problem before it begins.

Literature on eating disorders reveals a range of reasons for the problems. Definitive answers remain elusive, but there is agreement that depression is a contributing factor if not the underlying cause. One reason for the large numbers is the media-driven model of what successful, popular women look like, an image that few growing girls can match. The dissonance is depressing since we only get one body. These same media images sell tobacco to young women who are taking up smoking in record numbers despite the plethora of health warnings. Such is one form of gender-driven damage for which no amount of female god/ess imagery or inclusive pronouns is sufficient to overcome. Still, with feminist theologian Carol P. Christ, I think that having female images for the divine can only help.

A second, somewhat less pronounced but far more widespread problem is what I think of as body hatred. It is hard to find a woman who loves her body, much less loves herself, fiercely or otherwise, Nitosake Shange. Years ago, in a moment of singular stupidity, I made a negative remark about a woman's body. A friend corrected me immediately, saying, "All women are beautiful." I knew instantly that she was right, I was wrong, and I have never said such a thing since. But then I did not realize what a hard time most women have internalizing that statement, especially when they are invited to draw out its logical consequences: I am a woman. I am beautiful.

(continued on page 2)
Beauty...(continued from page 1)

Some beauty standards differ across the world.
Women view small women as ugly, large
women as beautiful. Other cultures see smaller
as better, big as bad. Still others value certain
to the point of weight loss and
breasts. There is good feminist analysis to understand
where such standards come from and why they
endure. Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* is a
journalistic treatment of the problem; Kathy
Davis explores the dilemma of cosmetic sur-
gery in *Reshaping the Female Body*: bell hooks
deals with the question of "black beauty" in
*Sisters of the Yam*: "Black women's body est-
esteem is strengthened by good nutrition, exerc-
ise, and positive thoughts affirming that we
deserve to be well--that our bodies are precious"
(p. 97). Two things are clear: first, women rarely
have a hand in shaping the norms; and second,
beauty, not health, rules.

Religions which teach that people are made in
the image of the divine seem no more
equipped to build women's sense of themselves
as beautiful than any other segment of the cul-
ture. Perniciously, the same religious-right that
claims "family values" for itself is hand in glove
with the beauty-makers who consign older
women, those who leave aside makeup, hair
dyes and wonder-bras, not to mention athletic
women whose bodies ripple with health, to the
dustbin of "unacceptable." Such women are
branded unfeminine, butch or worse. Most
young women understandably steer clear of the
sensible shoes, the comfortable clothing and the
natural look that their feminist foremothers
fought for. They simply perceive them as "too
expensive," the price being their futures.

Why is it that beauty and
not health standards hold sway?

Why do we teach weight control
for fashion's sake rather than for longevity
and well-being? Why do we discourage women
from weight training that will help avoid
osteoporosis? Why do we still insist on high
heels for dress-up despite persistent back prob-
lems?

The same undergraduates who showed such
interest in eating disorders were visibly
uncomfortable with the notion that they were beau-
tiful. It was as if no one had ever said it to them
before. I invited them, as I have invited several
groups of women, to intone "All women are
beautiful," a kind of mantra, looking around at
one another as they chant. It is a powerful ex-
perience if only for the discomfort so many feel
at what, on the face of it, should be so natural.
In another setting, a woman well into her sev-
enties, married to the same man for more than
forty years, said that this experience was the
first time anyone had ever told her she was beau-
tiful. She liked it and even believed it, but it
was new for her. What an indictment of her
marriage, her society and her church, though I
hardly think she is alone in the experience.

A third dimension of this problem, this one
positive, is how women with disabilities are
reshaping the discourse. In her pioneering work,
*The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory
Theology of Disability*, Nancy L. Eiesland
focuses well beyond the questions of beauty to
the very foundational notion of what constitutes
embodiment. Drawing on the work of Nancy
Mairs and Diane DeVries, she shows just how
women with disabilities are "symbolically and
corporeally constructing wholeness and ordinary
physicality" (p. 48). Such theoretical heavy lift-
ing shows just how able these women are to
provide all of us with the means necessary to
rethink our bodies.

This is not romantic work, but tough, clear,
analysis of "physical contingency" and "socially
constructed barriers." That is, after all, the dy-
namic we all face, albeit to different degrees,
of bodies and genetic histories we were born
with and a society we can shape. Nancy
Eiesland stresses just how central the body is
for political struggles. She stresses that people
with disabilities have launched a movement based
on "positive self-image and self-help," a
winning combination for all of us.

I suggest that it is to women with disabilities
to whom those of us temporarily able-bodied
can look for some helpful insights and strate-
gies on the body question. With regard to the

Why is it that beauty and
not health standards hold sway?

No need to give WATERwheel away, cut it
up, copy it or forego sharing. If you know
someone with whom you'd particularly like to
share this issue, just send us her or his
name and address and we'll mail a compli-
mentary copy direct. Better yet, send us a
list of friends and relatives you'd like to ac-
quaint with WATER, and we'll introduce our-
selves.

If you or someone you know would like to
receive WATERwheel on tape, we will be
happy to arrange for audio transcription of
the issue(s) you desire. Contact WATER, 301-
589-2509. Cassettes will be made by Volun-
tees for the Visually Handicapped at a cost of
$10 per tape.

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., feminist liberation theo-
logian, is co-director of WATER.
A global network of women who publicly and with enthusiasm embrace their work as feminist liberation theologians is now under development. We invite your input as this effort unfolds. The first meeting was held in conjunction with the Women's Ordination Conference Gathering '95 in the Washington, DC area in November. More than 100 people attended. It was a lively time with plenty of small group discussion and a consensus that we need to move forward. Another 40 or so people from around the world responded by mail (e-mail and otherwise), most of them from the United States, but also women from India, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Costa Rica, Japan, England, Sweden and South Africa, among other countries.

From all of this input, we see that we need an efficient, economical and effective way to link up feminist theologians and ministers in order that all are made aware of the work we do, the backlash we face, and the common ground and actions we can chart in the attempt to strengthen our movement.

To that end, we need to network on four distinct levels:

- By creating a U.S. and Canadian feminist theological network as a space for feminist theologians to meet, since feminist scholars here connect only within the context of the malestream academy and/or churches. Ideally, we would do so across religious and ethnic/racial boundary lines.
- By linking already existing networks in the U.S. and Canada across religious and ethnic/racial lines.
- By gathering and sharing information about existing networks around the world and finding ways to encourage further networking on national and continental levels.
- By connecting with feminist "theological" networks and groups from religious traditions other than Christian, since the primary location of this group and of feminist theology in general is Christian.

One of the primary goals would be information sharing: for example, notice of where and when conferences will be held, calls for papers, needs for solidarity and reaction to unjust situations.

Another important goal is support for one another in this work, especially as we seek to frame the issues on our own terms, not respond to how they are framed for us.

We envision periodic gatherings, from conferences to cyberchats, from sessions at professional meetings to small colloquia at which we will deepen our issues without fear of reprisal or the need to defend feminist presuppositions.

We see ourselves as creating a U.S. network which will simultaneously link with other existing networks. By so doing we also hope to encourage other colleagues around the world to set up their own national or continental networks. For example, one colleague from India wrote that she had sent our letter to 20 other people; clearly there is a network waiting to be recognized.

Several issues arose at the November meeting for which we ask your input:

- In the U.S. context, the word "feminist" is greatly controverted and often rejected in favor of self-designations such as "womanist," "mujerista," etc. as terms describing the particularity of the work being done by women from the respective racial/ethnic groups. "Feminist" in this construction is seen as Euro-American rather than as an umbrella term. In most other countries this seems not to be the case as feminist is used as a political term to characterize women's liberation movements. In this sense, feminist theology has become recognized internationally as a different way of doing theology. A whole body of theory is connected with the term "feminist." However, we are aware of the problems this debate creates and in no way wish to use "feminist" in an exclusivist way.

In our November discussion we did not come up with a better term. Nor did we resolve the problem of self-designation that would consist of a very long string of names listing differences. Hence, we turn to you for further reflection on the question of "what's in a name" and how we should name the U.S. network.
- This project will be housed at WATER, but since it is new and WATER is small we do need to get serious about funding before we promise more than we can deliver. Your suggestions on funding sources are needed now. Also, if we move to a membership fee for this specific project, what would you see as a reasonable fee for individuals/for groups/for existing networks?
- E-mail turns out to be a wonderful way to communicate for those with the technology. Please indicate if you are on-line or plan to be soon. It eliminates paper, postage and copying; it is fast and can be used to spread the word easily.
- Let us know about your networks with which we should be in touch. Please send us names of contact people and their addresses so we can begin to string together an international list. Also, we welcome your suggestions of publications in which we might put information about such a growing "network of networks." These publications might be of interest to our members as well.

Let this notice also serve as a call for connecting us to additional interested colleagues. Pass the word. The Vatican's allegedly infallible statement against the ordination of Catholic women is a good example of the kind of upping the ante that we predict is ahead of us. We need connection more than ever. Let us know your ideas, and be assured that we appreciate your participation.

Downfall

When volunteer Jean Bollinger reorganized the WATER Resource Center this winter, she moved more than just books. As she climbed to the top of the step stool to shelve volumes on patriarchal theology, a low rumble emanated from on high. Then Patriarchy came tumbling down! Jean jumped out of the way; WATER baby Cecilia Anne remained safely ensconced under Feminist Theory that day. There are no injuries to report. Books on feminist, womanist and liberation theologies, liturgy, psychology, spirituality, lesbian and gay studies remained securely in place. Patriarchy has now been appropriately circumscribed.

WATERwheel Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 1996 3
Women's bodies belong to women. This is a fundamental of feminism. We are our bodies and we only get one for a lifetime. We are learning to accept our embodied selves the way we are, not the way beauty ads and a patriarchal culture want us to be. This is not easy work. It calls us to overcome many myths about womanhood.

This liturgy praises our bodies and recognizes that all women's bodies are beautiful. Use it, or parts of it, for personal reflection. Adapt it for a group ritual.

Preparation

Ask women to read the texts. Place mirrors on a table in the center of a circle. Provide a loaf of bread and cups of wine and juice.

Introductions

Welcome to this liturgy, “Praise Our Bodies.” We celebrate our bodies. What do you think and feel when you hear the word “body”? (Pause) Let’s introduce ourselves by speaking our names and sharing a thought or feeling about our bodies. (Sharing)

Call to Gather

Our bodies are ourselves. They reveal, literally and truthfully, the stories of our lives. We present ourselves to the world through our bodies or not at all. We experience the presence of God in our bodies or not at all. For we are simply no-bodies without our bodies. Our bodies are sacred, beautiful and wise.

Let us give thanks for our bodies, ourselves, by singing. Let us walk in a circle as we sing, then stand still for the last line of the chant.

Chant: “We Bring Who We Are” by Colleen Fulmer, from Dancing Sophia's Circle, c. 1994.

I am who I bring from yesterday.
I am who I am today.
I am who I am for all the days to come.
I am a Woman, a glorious creation of praise.

We are who we bring from yesterday.
We are who we bring today.

We are who we are for all the days to come.
We are Women—glorious creations of praise.

Readings

Listen to what women say about our bodies. Let us respond to each reflection by saying, “All women’s bodies are beautiful.”

One: The body is a sacred garment. -- Martha Graham, from Blood Memory, c. 1991

Many: All women’s bodies are beautiful.

Two: The body has its own way of knowing, a knowing that has little to do with logic, and much to do with truth, little to do with control, and much to do with acceptance, little to do with division and analysis, and much to do with union.
-- Marilyn Sewell, from Cries of the Spirit, c. 1991

Many: All women’s bodies are beautiful.

Three: Over the years our bodies become walking autobiographies, telling friends and strangers alike of the minor and major stresses of our lives.
-- Marilyn Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy, c. 1980

Many: All women’s bodies are beautiful.

Four: The rain beats on me, but the rain cannot wash off the beauty of my body.
-- Yoruba Proverb

Many: All women’s bodies are beautiful.

Five: The bodies of grownups come with stretchmarks and scars, faces that have been lived in, relaxed breasts and bellies, backs that give trouble, and well-worn feet: flesh that is particular, and obviously mortal. They also come with bruises on their heart, wounds they can’t forget, and each of them a company of lovers in their soul who will not return and cannot be erased. And yet I think there is a flood of beauty beyond the smoothness of youth; and my heart aches for that grace of longing that flows through bodies no longer straining to be innocent, but yearning for redemption.
-- Janet Morley, from Celebrating Women, c. 1995

Praise Our

by Diann L. Neu

Many: All women’s bodies are beautiful.

Six: Thru animate eyes
I divide the seasons
of time.
I am aware of what they are.
I am aware of their potential.
With my mouth
I kiss my own chosen creation
I uniquely,
lovingly,
embrace every image
I have made
out of the earth’s clay.
With a fiery spirit
I transform it
into a body
to serve
all the world.
-- Hildegard of Bingen, from Meditations with Hildegard translated by Gabriele Uhlein, c. 1983

Many: All women’s bodies are beautiful.

Reflection

Take a mirror. (Pause) Look at your self (Pause) Look at your body. (Pause)

Reading: from the Song of Songs 4:1-5, translated by Marcia Falk, c. 1990

How fine you are, my love, your eyes like doves’ behind your veil
Your hair—as black as goats
winding down the slopes
Your teeth—a flock of sheep
rising from the stream
in twos, each with its twin
Your lips—like woven threads of crimson silk
A gleam of pomegranate—
your forehead through your veil
Your neck—a tower adorned with shields
Your breasts—two fawns in fields of flowers

Litany of Thanks For Our Bodies

Let us give thanks for our bodies. For this antiphonal blessing, stand and repeat the last line of each verse in the first person.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for creating us in your image.

Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for creating me in your image.

One: Praise the Heart. Feel your pulse. Place your hand on your heart. Pay attention to your heart beat. (Pause)
Bodies

Reflection: The heart weighs only half a pound. Its rhythmic contraction pumps the circulation of blood. Its millions of cells work together to beat each second for about four billion heartbeats in a lifetime.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our hearts.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my heart.

One: Praise blood. Stretch and move, bend forward and backward. Pay attention to the circulation of blood throughout your body. (Pause)
Reflection: Blood is the fluid that circulates in the heart, arteries, capillaries and veins. It carries nourishment and oxygen to all parts of the body and takes away waste products from all parts of the body.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our blood.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my blood.

One: Praise lungs. Place your hands on your rib cage, take a deep breath, inhale and exhale, expand and contract your lungs. (Pause)
Reflection: The lungs, our basic respiratory organ, draw in oxygen and blow out carbon dioxide.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our lungs.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my lungs.

One: Praise the brain. Place one hand on the top of your skull and the other over the back of your skull. Gently massage your head. (Pause)
Reflection: The brain constitutes the organ of thought and neural coordination; the center of intelligence, memory and control of muscular movements.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our brains.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my brain.

One: Praise eyes. Open and close your eyes. Look around the room. Look into the eyes of those here. (Pause)
Reflection: The eyes are the organs of sight. They mirror our interior wisdom.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our eyes.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my eyes.

One: Praise ears. Place a hand over each ear. Remove them. Listen to the sounds around you. (Pause)
Reflection: The ears, organs of hearing and equilibrium, consist of a sound-collecting outer ear separated by a membranous drum from a sound-transmitting middle ear that in turn is separated from a sensory inner ear.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our ears.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my ears.

One: Praise vocal chords. In a whisper, all at the same time, say your name. (Pause) Say it louder. (Pause) And louder. (Pause)
Reflection: Vocal chords are either of two pairs of folds of mucous membranes that project into the cavity of the larynx. They give voice to our uniqueness.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our vocal chords.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my vocal chords.

One: Praise bones and muscles. Touch some of your bones and muscles. (Pause)
Reflection: Over 200 bones covered with muscle give framework to our bodies.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our bones and muscles.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my bones and muscles.

One: Praise breasts, wombs and ovaries. Touch your breasts and womb, or where they used to be. (Pause)
Reflection: Breasts are the tear-shaped external symbol of our womanhood associated with nurturance. The uterus is the center of reproduction. The ovaries release an egg each month and produce female sex hormones.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our breasts, wombs and ovaries.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my breasts, womb and ovaries.

One: Praise female bodies. Recognize the design of your body. (Pause)
Reflection: Our bodies are ourselves.

One: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for our beautiful bodies.
Many: Praise to you, Sophia-Spirit, for my beautiful body.

Song: "I Am Enough" by Colleen Fulmer, from Dancing Sophia's Circle, c. 1994

I am enough, I am enough
Just as I am, I am enough.
Just as I am, just as I am,
I am enough, just as I am.

I am a woman, I am a woman,
My body's sacred. I am a woman,
My body's sacred, my body's sacred,
I am a woman, my body's sacred.

Reflection
Our bodies are ourselves. They image God, Sophia-Spirit. They are sacred, beautiful and wise. What have you noticed about your body? (Pause) Let us share our feelings and thoughts with one another. (Sharing)

Chant: "I found god in myself" by Nitosake Shange, from for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf
i found god in myself,
and i found god in myself
and i loved her fiercely, i loved her fiercely
i found god in myself

Blessing of Bread
(One woman takes the bread, saying:)
As it was and is in the beginning, at a woman's breast, real milk, nourishing food, I say, this is your sacrament:
Take. Eat. This is my body Which I give for the life of the world. Let us eat, remembering the bread of life. (She breaks the bread and passes it)

Blessing of Wine and Juice
(One woman takes the fruit of the vine, saying:)
As it was and is every month in a woman's body, real flow of blood, life force shed for many, I say, this is your sacrament:
Take. Drink. This is my blood Which I give for the life of the world. Let us drink, remembering the blood of life. (She pours the drink and passes the cups)

Greeting
Let us close by acknowledging that we are beautiful. Look around this circle. Notice the women here. Women are beautiful. All shapes, colors and sizes. Let us hug one another saying "You are beautiful."

Chant: "We Bring Who We Are" by Colleen Fulmer, from Dancing Sophia's Circle, c. 1994

Diann L. Neu, M.Div., MSW, is co-director of WATER.

WATERwheel Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 1996 5
Who's Who at WATER

New faces abound this spring. Mariana Rivas from Montevideo, Uruguay is on hand as an energetic intern perfecting her English and learning about the U.S. Her mother, Cristina Grela, coordinator of Catolicas por el Derecho a Decidir in Uruguay, is a longtime collaborator with WATER.

Audur Eir Vilbjalmsdottir, the first woman ordained a priest in Iceland, joins countrywoman Solveig Boasdottir for a Visiting Scholar stint at WATER. It was obviously predestined that WATER and Iceland would meet...

Eri Delorier is a Georgetown University senior majoring in Theology and English who is doing an internship at WATER.

Deborah Savard comes from the Life Experiences Activities Program to contribute her skills.

Progress report: Cecelia Anne Lapp StoltzfuS graces the office two days a week with her mother, Cindy Lapp. She is a healthy, happy baby surrounded by aunts galore. To see her at the computer at four months or to watch her sleep amid the phone calls is to realize that children humanize a work place and some work places can accommodate children, at least until they start unshelving the book cases.

Margaret Sequeira, Wesley Seminary student and longtime WATER friend, joined the staff. She keeps the mailing list up to date and ably handles other computer-related needs.

E-mail Changes

Watch for word on our forthcoming World Wide Web page. It is amazing how quickly these seemingly exotic modes of communication become like dialing the phone.

Meanwhile, our e-mail access is changing:

1. We are now water@hers.com if you want to post to the whole list.

2. We are now mary.hunt@hers.com if you want to post to us at the office. PLEASE SELECT CAREFULLY since a message to water will go to four continents while a message to mary.hunt will go to one machine.

3. To subscribe or unsubscribe to the water list: send your message to majorjdomo@hers.com with the words "subscribe water" or "unsubscribe water" in the message body. That's it. The machine will do the rest.

Good luck and happy surfing.

Ivone Gebara Update

The situation of Sr. Ivone Gebara remains precarious. To this remarkable woman, in effect silenced by the Vatican and sent to Brazil to study theology away from her important work in Brazil, WATER sends our support; to those who have insisted on this situation, we send our protest. Her work on eco-feminist theology is a crucial part of the global conversation. Her position on reproductive choice, namely that abortion should be decriminalized in her country, is odious to the Vatican but reasonable to those who understand the suffering of women.

A helpful response from feminist colleagues would be to engage the leadership of her community in some constructive dialogue about the case. Rather than taking a petition approach, we believe short, respectful letters are best in that they would show the leadership the range of people who support her.

One such letter reads: "I write with deep concern over the situation of Sr. Ivone Gebara, a friend and colleague in feminist theology. I am deeply troubled by the Vatican’s interference into her life and work, as well as the community’s compliance with the Vatican’s wishes that resulted in her being forced to leave Brazil for studies in Belgium.

"I take this to be a very serious breach of the community’s right to reproductive choice, namely that abortion should be decriminalized in her country, is odious to the Vatican but reasonable to those who understand the suffering of women and her work among you."

"Her writings are cited widely in many languages, as she is one of a few women who have managed, against great odds, to communicate the faith experiences of Latin American women. "Her writings in feminist theology, especially her efforts to articulate an eco-feminist position in Latin America, are widely respected. When this kind of work is blocked, the entire community is deprived of insights and analyses that will take us into the next century with creativity and courage."

Letters should be addressed to Sister Stephane-Marie Boullanger and General Council, 8, Avenue Daniel Lesueur, 75007 Paris, FRANCE.

Copies should go to:

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, Cardinal Prefect, Eduardo Cardinal Martinez Somalo, Piazza Pio XII 3, 00193 Rome, ITALY, fax 69-88-4526

National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, Se-Sul Quadra 801 Conjunto, Caixa Postal 13-2067, 70259 Brasilia, DF, BRAZIL, fax 55-61-225-4361

Ivone Gebara, 133, Winston Churchill Ave. 1180 Brussels, BELGIUM

Saving Ways

Making the most of our resources is an art form (not to say religion) at WATER. We recycle everything within our purview, from paper scraps and plastic yogurt cups to time, space, money and woman-power.

WATERwheel takes shape on the backs of old draft envelopes, neatly salvaged snips of reprocessed mail. A recent heaven-sent donation of used office equipment meant we could recycle our outgoing chairs to a women’s center that welcomed them for its expanding quarters. Volunteers, wonderfully willing and adept, carpenter and paint old boards into new shelves for our burgeoning library of books sent hot off the presses by publishing houses that value our critical assessments.

Given the option, we choose women-owned and operated businesses to serve our program needs—meeting places, retreat centers, sound systems, purveyors of performance art, supplies, materials—thus recycling our resources back again to women, knowing as we do what limited access most have to deep pockets.

Like our grandmothers taught us, we make each penny do the work of three—buying only what is necessary, passing along to other worthy causes, returning to women. We invite you to add your saving ways to ours. Recycle your money to women’s organizations that make a difference. And be assured that every cent you give to WATER has only begun its mission of making big transformations out of small change.
Resources

A good look at an oft overlooked problem. The conclusion, that class issues will be resolved by Christian churches long before issues of gender, is distressing but persuasive.


Buy it, give it, treasure it. This is one of those rare books that will appeal to a wide audience, help women deal creatively with aging and set a new standard for self-other-help books.


Justice-seekers must be tenacious in the face of injustice. Hard questions are key when answers are at once so obvious and so obscure. This is Carter Heyward's message in a series of essays, sermons and speeches.


A lovely book of quotes and images to spark the imagination and warm the soul.


A treasure trove of sources which no feminist library can afford to be without. For reference and reflection, inspiration and information, this is a volume to buy and use.


This classic is now available with a new afterward in which Dr. Schussler Fiorenza all too modestly outlines the book's "theoretical accomplishments."


Like a good movie, don't miss it. A strong, clear voice for justice rooted in the African American community and connected to the world at large.


The life of an ecumenical pioneer adds flesh and blood to the growing legacy of women in the field.


An original idea given clear and helpful expression: that "Word" limits, while voices expand.


Images help to stretch the imagination. This book does that.


These annuals provide a rich and varied tapestry of European feminist theology, accessible in German, French and English. Theological libraries need these books.


This special issue on WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY, WOMEN'S LIVES includes an introduction by Judith Ochsorn and Ellen Cole, as well as essays by Rosemary Radford Ruether, Diann Neu, Toinette Eugene, Barbara Britman, Mary Hunt, among others. A good textbook for those who want to take women's spirituality seriously.

For Our Children


A pioneering effort to make children's faith inclusive from the beginning. Well chosen illustrations and nice stories make it a good start.

WATERwheel Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 1996
1996 Spring Programs at WATER
FYI: Here's what's happening at the office.

Wednesdays at WATER
Many people have asked for a regular evening time at WATER, time for programs, feminist theological discussions, feminist liturgies; time to browse in the Resource Center; time... So we begin Wednesdays at WATER. The office will be open until 9 p.m. each of the following Wednesdays. Programs begin at 7 p.m. $10 +/

Feb. 2  Liturgy: Ash Wednesday
Feb. 28  Program: Seder Meal Training
Mar. 13  Liturgy: Celtic Spirituality
April 10  Open for browsing, volunteer work
April 17  Liturgy: Women Mystics
May 1   Discussion: May Sarton's Impact on Religion
May 8   New Group: Feminist Mothers, Feminist Children (Call re: child care)
May 15  Liturgy: Daughters and Mothers
May 22  Discussion: Religion and Violence
May 29  Open for browsing, volunteer work
June 5   Discussion: Where, How, Why: Studying Feminist Theology
June 12  Open for browsing, volunteer work
June 19  Liturgy: Summer Solstice
June 26  Open for browsing, volunteer work

A Support Group for Lesbians
Tuesdays, 6:30-8 p.m.
February 13, 20, 27, March 5, 12
Lesbian women benefit from being with other lesbians to focus on topics of common concern. This five-week support group will address, among other topics, being/living out; passion and sexuality; body image; lesbian spirituality; relationship to family, lover(s) and community.

Feminist Spirituality Group
Thursdays, 6:30-8 p.m.
February 15, 22, 29, March 7, 14
Lent is a good time to pay attention to spiritual life. This five-week group for women will address prayer, integrating spirituality/sexuality, inheriting a spiritual legacy, relationships, images of God/Goddess/Sophia, and relating to religious traditions.

Breakfast at WATER
Tuesday, February 13, 8-9:30 a.m. - Five new books in feminist theology and spirituality
Wednesday, March 6, 8-9:30 a.m. - Celebrate International Women's Day
Thursday, April 11, 8-9:30 a.m. - Explore how computers are revolutionizing our ways of being religious

WATER Services
Feminist Psychotherapy, Spiritual Direction and Ministry Supervision for individuals, couples and groups; consultation for liturgy planning and life cycle ceremonies; internships and Visiting Scholar opportunities; Resource Center with books, tapes, periodicals to borrow; writing, lectures and workshops on feminist issues in religion.

Inside
Editorial, 1
Beauty and the Body, 1
Global Network of Feminist Theologians and Ministers, 3
Downfall, 3
Praise Our Bodies, 4
Who's Who at WATER, 6
E-mail Changes, 6
Ivone Gebara Update, 6
Saving Ways, 6
Resources, 7
1996 Spring Programs at WATER, 8

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WATERwheel Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 1996