



waterwheel

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

Where Do We Start?

by Mary E. Hunt

The so-called New Millennium invites a clear-eyed, critical assessment of where feminist religiously informed social change work begins. Otherwise we risk efforts that resonate more with the 60's than the 00's, strategies appropriate for the needs of country or region when globalization is a given. What is obvious is that new conditions frame the situation, prompting new language and new tools of analysis. What is equally obvious is that we need more people to think and do together if we are to make a discernable difference. I offer this sense of where we start as one way to get the ball rolling, now that the ostentatious Waterford crystal one has taken the plunge in New York City.

Twenty-first century life for those with resources is already far more technologically advanced than most twentieth century science fiction imagined. But so, too, is the gap wider between those on-line and those off-line; some of us have more computer power in our studies than do government officials in developing countries. So let's use it to look around at what's what:

On the political front, "Clinton fatigue" is another name for keeping progress at bay. The nation's right wing delights in pointing

the finger at Monica Lewinsky, who allegedly ushered the President into disgrace. In fact, scapegoating a woman simply distracts from a deeper issue, the success of a Republican Congress in preventing much change. The focus on sex worked well to obscure all that.

In an Election Year the stakes grow. Never has a candidate raised more money earlier than George W. Bush. Nor has any candidate in my memory presided over 111 executions as governor. Do the numbers, and they add up to a bleak sum.

On the economic front, the real power seems to be in corporations, not in nations any longer. One map of the world now reveals a comparison between the Gross Domestic Products of countries and the market value, the changing but telling amount of a company's total worth, of multinational corporations. Microsoft equals Spain at \$593 billion, while IBM is neck and neck with Colombia at \$201 billion. Wal-Mart matches Argentina at \$296 billion, and American Express mirrors New Zealand at \$66 billion. It is sobering news but helpful when deciding where to put pressure.

This globalized market coincides with the growing gap between rich and poor. In the

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FACING THE FUTURE:
Wise women at the
Feminist Liberation
Theologians' Network
gathering in Cambridge,
MA, November 1999

Clockwise from top left, Kathleen McPhillips, Satoko Yamaguchi, Mary Grey, Anita Nesiiah, Rose Wu, Rita Nakashima Brock, and Patricia Miller.

Editorial

The hype outstripped the reality of the so-called New Millennium.

Somehow, the sun came up the next day, most computers worked, and predictions of apocalyptic breakdowns never materialized.

It could have been because the next millennium per se is still a year off. Or because, as nature would have it, time is really only a human construct with eternity still firmly in the grip of the divine.

Whatever the reasons, the big bonus, after the commercialized efforts, was the real sense that we are all in the same boat, albeit still in decidedly different classes of service. Television's panorama of various people in different cultures greeting the New Year served as a powerful reminder that global diversity is, finally, a shared strength.

From a chief handing fire to the little boy on a Pacific island to the fireworks

over Sydney Harbor, from the splendor of the Eiffel Tower to the beautiful beach in Rio, demonstrations of communal enthusiasm and pyrotechnic plenty lifted hearts. No one won, no one lost. Everyone cheered. It was novel.

More than one sage commented that such concerted efforts show that humankind can marshal its resources for peaceful purposes. How long it had been since we viewed "the others,"

writ large, as us. When was the last time we just stood there, perhaps lifted a cup for no good reason except that we were privileged to live at this time, together? On that night it seemed like enough of a reason to celebrate. Now the task is to internalize the fact that we live that way every day, and it is a blessing.



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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 and projects, publications and workshops, counseling and liturgical planning which help people to actualize feminist religious values and bring about social change.

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"Backlash" is no longer an adequate term to talk about what is now everyday fare.

Where...?

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U.S., the top 2.7 million people have as much after-tax income as the bottom 100 million, a ratio that has doubled since 1977. Computers are not all that people who are poor are missing.

On the religious front, good news is hard to find when we most need it. The Vatican's recent accord with U.S. bishops, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, codifies the going trend of keeping all but the most obedient theologians out of Catholic higher education. The coalition between Islamic, Catholic and other fundamentalist groups continues to rear its head in international gatherings.

Progressive Protestant women are still feeling the aftershocks of the Re-Imagining Conference, now nearly a decade later.

Methodists are trying their own ministers for doing their job in presiding at the covenant services of same-sex couples. What's growing is "me faith" as people construct their own sense of the divine with scant reference to a community.

On the cultural front, mysteriously, two big election year issues are same-sex marriages and gays in the military. Presidential candidates fall all over themselves to figure out how to posture for maximum vote-getting, minimum backlash. Watch this sleight of hand: progressive people who favor inclusion obviously support both. But the price is high - reinforcing and reinscribing two of the most conservatizing institutions imaginable in the name of justice.

The recent court decision in Vermont all but assures that the state will develop some kind of quasi-marriage model. Likewise, Britain's decision to drop the ban on gays in the military, in conformity with the European Court's decision, provides a feasible model for allies like the United States. But each would-be gain is really another support for the hegemony of couples and the legitimacy of the military. Pick your poison.

On the feminist front, differences among women, so important to understand and appreciate, are manipulated to divide and conquer. "Feminist" is considered by some to be white, womanist to be black; "mujerista" as Cuban American, "feminista" as Latin Ameri-

can, and so the fragmentation is foisted upon us. The differences are real and they make a difference, but none of the proponents intend that their effort at identity should serve to factionalize. Each seeks rather to clarify so as to be most effective from her starting point. Again, the gains turn quickly into losses.

The very term "feminist" is demonized. Young women are told it is old-fashioned, synonymous with lesbian, worse yet, unnecessary, outmoded, uncool. Still, Gloria Steinem points out, as a result of feminism we now have a generation of the most pro-active women who ever lived. Where's the mistake?

On the racial front, the categories of identity are manipulated to obliterate any sense of a people. White Americans take little responsibility for race privilege, and profit from it with impunity. Those from racial minority groups in the U.S. are so used to thinking in race-based categories that they forget that in the eyes of the world they are Americans first, members of their group second. The result is fragmentation, false consciousness and a viciously racialized society.

Hate crimes related to race are on the rise; affirmative action is on the decline. People of color are pitted against one another, as in the complicated case of six-year-old Elian Gonzalez, where Cuban fights Cuban and only Florida politicians gain points. Finally, no one wins and many people lose, beginning with a little boy.

This hard look at ourselves hurts. But it also helps to redefine and reshape priorities. "Backlash" is no longer an adequate term to talk about what is now everyday fare. "Solidarity" as its antidote rings hollow to many people in a postcolonial, postmodern moment. So the task is to find new language, new strategies, new colleagues as the times demand, because the feminist call to do justice and the feminist response of hope trump even the clock.

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

Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network— “Study, Sun and Solidarity”

Twenty-five women from a range of activist, scholarly and ministerial pursuits gathered at the El Caribe Hotel in Daytona Beach, FL, for “Study, Sun and Solidarity” on January 6-9, 2000, the first weekend meeting of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network. Participants had that rare chance to be with one another in a lovely, relaxed setting, far from the noise of professional meetings, unhurried by the demands of the work site. Small group discussions, sustained conversations on the beach, leisurely chats over healthy meals all added to the rich mix.

Plenary sessions featured relatively brief presentations, ample time for give and take across disciplinary boundaries. The agenda included a critical historical look at feminist liberation theologies led by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and an illustrative example of feminist social change sparked by Janet Kalven's new history of the Grail, **Women Breaking Boundaries: A Grail Journey, 1940-1995** (SUNY Press, 1999). Mary E. Hunt raised the matter of solidarity work in a time of backlash while Kwok Pui-Lan and Laura Donaldson addressed the complexity of postcolonialism with a look at “Fragmentation, Difference and Solidarity,” from a volume they are editing on the topic. Diann Neu coordinated the liturgy and ritual, song and dance.

It was a good next step in the direction of working together across differences, a useful model for future programs. WATER hopes to sponsor more such events for other groupings, especially for students. Following are reflections from a few of the participants that capture the flavor of the event:

What a great way to begin the millennium! As a group of academics and activists, we spent the weekend at Daytona Beach pondering the issues of feminist liberation theology and the vision of women's struggles in the new millennium. We shared our stories, participated in liturgies, and went for a boat ride to watch the birds and the spitting oysters.

Laura Donaldson and I talked about the postcolonial challenge to feminist theology and how it impacts our ways of thinking about identity and difference. While some liked the word “solidarity,” others much preferred “coalition building.”

I was delighted to meet activists who have worked on issues of human rights, farm workers, and gay and lesbian rights. It was important to forge the links between those of us who are in the academic circle and those who work on the frontline. I hope the network of theologians will be broadened to include more women of color. We need to learn to work across differences more than ever in this age of globalization.

— Kwok Pui-lan, Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge MA

Burnout! Twenty-four years of trying to rescue South Carolina's ailing/failing educational system had taken their toll. I was clinging

to the thought of a sabbatical followed shortly by retirement.

“Study, Sun, and Solidarity,” promised the advertisement, an early-January gathering of feminist liberation theologians, theoreticians, social activists, and liturgists. My recent work on women's multifaith perspectives, liberation theology, and global child advocacy would justify my attendance and I could drive from home.

So, I found myself at WATER's Florida retreat.

“Perhaps you need redefinition more than retirement,” said Diana Reed Jackson, founder of a women's multifaith center in Orlando. Anne Kendrick, human rights activist, enjoined, “Get on with it, Carol!” Kwok Pui-Lan, concerned that so many women focus on their wounds to the exclusion of social action, recommended a book by Sharon Welch:

Sweet Dreams in America: Making Ethics and Spirituality Work. I hesitated. “This critical theoretical perspective is too dense and inaccessible for most of the people we are trying to reach,” I said. “We need more of a spiritual focus.”

“For me a critical perspective is spiritual work. We need to apply a hermeneutics of suspicion to maintain the gains we have made in the academy,” said Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, whose work as a feminist liberation theologian I admire.

This song/prayer from a source I can no longer remember describes the sense I had as the retreat ended:

Gathered here in the mystery of the hour.
Gathered here in one strong body.
Gathered here in the struggle and the power.
Spirit draw near.” Amen and Blessed Be.

-- Carol L. Flake, University of South Carolina, Columbia SC

It is always inspiring to experience the diversity and energy of women's groups. As a Brit I am also deeply encouraged to know that the worst excesses of the American super giant are being heavily critiqued by vibrant women – after all, women can change the world!

I am excited by the possibilities of networking more closely “across the pond” and look forward to a BISFT (Britain and Ireland School of Feminist Theology) and WATER joint conference. As a Celt, my own suggestion for that conference would be a close look at the ambiguities of the postcolonial discourse. Where are we situated in this complex world? Can any of us claim to be “sinless,” caught as we are in its seductions?

— Lisa Isherwood, Britain and Ireland School of Feminist Theology, Wales

Liberation theology by its nature is rooted in the practical realities and struggles which shape real human lives, and the collective lives of their families and societies. This awareness was one of the great gifts to me of the weekend of “Study, Sun and Solidarity” – a gentle reminder that theology cannot be done with any credibility by scholars hunched alone over books or peering into their computer screens. I needed to
(continued on page 6)

Winter can be difficult. It often seems more darkness than light, a time for withdrawal and hibernation rather than community. During winter, faith may be tested to the core. It is also a time when spiritual roots can deepen. If a winter is especially hard, many are ready to bid it farewell as soon as possible.

In this liturgy participants say goodbye to a difficult winter and welcome the renewal of spring. They light candles and ring bells to let the winter go. They plant bulbs and reflect on the springtime blooms that promise "all shall be well again."

Preparation

Place a bell, nine small candles, crocus and daffodil bulbs, containers with rocks or soil, and a pitcher of water on a central symbol table. (You can grow bulbs in the house in winter by placing them either in a special bulb vase with water, or a container with rocks and water or soil and water.)

Call to Gather

(One lights a candle.)

It has been a hard winter this year. We have had more ice and snow than we can remember. As the crocuses ready to peek out from the earth and the birds return to singing, their promise invites us to pay attention to the spring renewal that will soon happen around us. Yes, it is time to let go of winter and remember all shall be well again.

Naming the Circle

(Another lights a candle.)

Let us create our circle by speaking our names and saying, "All shall be well again." (Naming)

Letting Go of Winter

(The reader lights a candle.)

We need to let go of winter, all forms of winter, so all can be well again. Please respond by saying, "Go, winter, go." Depart, deadening spirit of winter from our lives...

Response: Go, winter, go.

Be gone, all slippery ice, slushy sleet,

dangerous snow and piercing winds...

Response: Go, winter, go.

Be gone, all ice, sleet and cold in our personal lives: snide remarks, judgmental statements, cruel jokes, nasty gossip, untruthful comments...

Response: Go, winter, go.

Be gone, times of loneliness, depression and harshness...

Response: Go, winter, go.

Be gone.... Tell us, beginning with "be gone," what you wish to let go of. We will respond with "Go, winter, go."

Hear our prayer and go, O Spirit of Winter. Depart from our neighborhoods and from our lives for another year.

Be gone. Be gone. Be gone.

Song: "Julian of Norwich" by Sidney Carter on *All Shall Be Well Again* by Gordon Bok, Ann Mayo Muir, Ed Trickett, Folk-Legacy Records, Sharon, CT, c. 1983.

Loud are the bells of Norwich,
as the people come and go.
Here by the tower of Julian
I tell them what I know.

Chorus: Ring out, bells of Norwich
(Ring the bell)

And let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again I know.

Love, like the yellow daffodil,
is coming through the snow;
Love, like the yellow daffodil,
brings joy to all I know. (*Chorus*)

Ring for the yellow daffodil,
the flower in the snow.
Ring for the yellow daffodil
and tell them what I know. (*Chorus*)

All shall be well, I'm telling you,
Let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again I know.

Reading: Native American Song, from *Earth Prayers*, edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, c. 1991.

(The reader lights a candle.)

All winter long
behind every thunder

guess what we heard!
--behind every thunder
the song of a bird,
a trumpeting bird.

All winter long
beneath every snowing
guess what we saw!
--beneath every snowing
a thaw and a growing,
a greening and growing.

Where did we run
beyond gate and guardsman?
Guess, if you can!
--all winter long
we ran to the sun,
the dance of the sun!



Song Refrain

Ring out, bells of Norwich (*Ring the bell*)
And let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again I know.

Reading: Emily Dickinson, from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas D. Johnson, c. 1951.
(The reader lights a candle.)

A light exists in Spring
Not present in the Year
At any other period—
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad
On Solitary Fields
That Science cannot overtake
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,
It shows upon the furthest Tree
Upon the furthest Slope you know
It almost speaks to me.

Then as Horizons step
Or Noons report away
Without the Formula of sound
It passes and we stay—

A quality of loss
Affecting our Content
As Trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a Sacrament.

Song Refrain

Ring out, bells of Norwich (*Ring the bell*)
And let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again I know.



Reading: Psalm 148, adapted by Diann Neu.

(*The reader lights a candle.*)
Let us read this antiphonally.

Side 1: Alleluia!

Praise Wisdom-Sophia.
Praise Her from the heavens;
Praise Her in all places.
Praise Her, all you angels;
Praise Her, all you earthlings.
Praise Her, suns and moon;
Praise her, stars and galaxies.

All: Praise the name of Wisdom-Sophia!

Side 2: For She loved
and they were created.
And She established them
forever and ever.

What Wisdom-Sophia desires and
decrees will never pass away.

All: Praise the name of Wisdom-Sophia!

Side 1: Praise Wisdom-Sophia from the
earth, you sea creatures and deep waters.
Fire and hail, snow and frost,
and stormy winds fulfill Her will.
Mountains and hills, fruit trees
and all cedars,
Living creatures and all cattle,
reptiles and flying birds.

All: Praise the name of Wisdom-Sophia!

Side 2: Activists and leaders,
healers and teachers praise Her.
All peoples of the earth praise Her!
Children and elders, young and old,
women and men.

All: Praise the name of Wisdom-Sophia!

Side 1: Praise the name of Wisdom-Sophia.
Let Her be exalted and honored,
For Her glory fills both heaven and earth!
She acts for all Her people—

All: Praise the name of Wisdom-Sophia!

Side 2: Let Her faithful ones praise Her!
Let Her daughters and sons praise Her.
Let the people close to her praise Her,
singing "Alleluia" forever!

All: Praise the name of Wisdom-Sophia!

Song Refrain

Ring out, bells of Norwich (*Ring the bell*)
And let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again I know.

Reflection

(*The guide lights a candle.*)

Winter and spring represent the seasons of
our lives. This year, what is the winter to
which I am saying goodbye? What is the
springtime for which I hope? What bulbs do
I want to bloom in my life so all can be well
again? Let us take a few minutes for quiet
reflection, then I will invite us to plant bulbs
and share with one another our reflections.
(*Reflecting and planting*)

Song: "Garden Song" by D. Mallett, in
Songs for Earthlings, edited by Julie Forest
Middleton, c. 1998.

Inch by inch, row by row,
Gonna make this garden grow.
All it takes is a rake and a hoe
and a piece of fertile ground.

Inch by inch, row by row,
Earth will bless these bulbs I sow.
Earth will warm them from below
Till the rain comes tumblin' down.

Blessing the Bulbs

(*The blesser lights a candle.*)

Hold your bulb and pray after me.

Source of Life, One who brings forth
crocuses and daffodils (*Echo*)
Praise to you for blessing the earth
with beauty. (*Echo*)
Renew us with flowing water (*Echo*)
Singing birds and spring light. (*Echo*)
All shall be well again. (*Echo*)
All shall be well again. (*Echo*)
All shall be well again. (*Echo*)
Amen. Blessed Be. Let It Be So. (*Echo*)

Song Refrain

(*Ring the bell*)

All shall be well, I'm telling you,
Let the winter come and go.
All shall be well again I know.

Sending Forth

(*One lights a candle.*)

Let us go forth to notice the renewal
of the earth.
May our eyes be open to the bulbs
peeking out of the soil.
May our ears hear the singing birds.
May our feet touch the earth gently.

Let us go forth to return blessings
to the earth, sea and sky.
May our earth be renewed.
May our waters be clean.
May our air be pure.
May all be well again.
Amen. Blessed Be. Let It Be So.

*Diann L. Neu, M.Div, MSW, co-founder
and co-director of WATER, is a feminist
liturgist and licensed psychotherapist.*

FLT Network...

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hear the stories of women fully engaged in social justice projects, and to hear the insights of women who could see clearly from their own lived experience how sinful social structures operate. Because the primary focus of my own work is on the church of the future, and on doing justice in terms of symbol and text, the dialogue drawing on academic insight, reflection and active social justice engagement among the participants in this meeting helped balance and re-focus my thinking.

I came away with a sharpened awareness of the need to "think strategically," of the importance of postcolonial studies, and of how complicated and interconnected the backlash is. The first night it seemed that many women involved in feminist liberation theology needed a safe place in which to talk and unburden, to tell their stories and vent their frustration. Yet many also needed to couple ritual celebration with strategizing and awareness, and to build a personal and collective support structure of authentic spirituality and a capacity for discernment.

— Susan K. Roll, *Christ the King Seminary*,
Buffalo NY

A rich variety of excellent presentations critically analyzed feminist liberation theology's multitude of ideas for social transformation. These thought-provoking presentations were well balanced with plenty of time for enriching group discussions. The information-packed, analytic presentations and group discussions were balanced with time for individuals of diverse identities and careers to dialogue, socialize, and enjoy the beautiful Atlantic Ocean together.

The meetings were intellectually challenging and personally empowering. The Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network has a bright productive future I want to support.
— Ruth Whitney, *University of South Florida*,
St. Petersburg FL

Making Waves

The **Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network** met in late November at the Bunting Fellowship Program of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University where colleague **Rita Nakashima Brock** is the director. More than forty women from ten countries gathered to discuss the current state of the movement and their respective work in it. It was decided that electronic communication would begin - perhaps a quarterly e-mail update rather than a regular list serve. The group repaired to Harvard Divinity School for a joint reception (Diann Neu's idea for bringing many women together) with the **Womanist Scholars in Religion** and the **Women's Caucus of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature**. Womanist professor (and WATER advisory board member) **Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon** was honored for her pioneering work in the field.

At the AAR/SBL... A lively session, "Publish and Perish," honored the fifteenth anniversary of the **Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion**. Congratulations to co-editors **Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza** (WATER advisory board member) and **Emilie Townes**, co-editor emerita **Judith Plaskow** (WATER advisory board member) and co-editor in waiting **Kwok Pui-Lan**. **Mary Daly's** legal case against Boston College for violating her tenure rights was featured in a panel entitled "Feminist Pedagogies and Academic Freedoms." That case continues with marvelous educational fallout around the world through provocative press.

The Rev. Dr. Traci C. West, professor of Ethics and African American Studies at Drew University, evoked a great Saturday afternoon crowd at Vertigo Bookstore in Washington, DC, for a reading from her powerful new book, **Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics** (New York University Press, 1999). WATER was delighted to co-sponsor the event that drew a good number of our colleagues to a successful and educational reading. Such neighborhood-based cultural work is especially important on topics such as violence. Traci West handled it with skill and style.

Bridget Mary Meehan premiered her television show, "God-talk," available in the cable market around the country. Many WATER colleagues have already appeared: **Kelly Brown Douglas**, **Maureen Fiedler**, **Ruth McDonough Fitzpatrick**, **Diana Hayes**, **Mary E. Hunt**, **Andrea Johnson**, **Diann Neu**, **Chris Schenk** among others. See Bridget Mary's website, www.Godtalktv.org for a good source of information on how to tune in in your area. Or e-mail sofiabmm@aol.com for more info.

Maureen Fiedler's radio show "Faith Matters" is another good media outlet for progressive ideas. She airs Sunday mornings at 10 am EST. WATER colleagues **Rebecca Alpert**, **Darlene Garner** (WATER advisory board member), **Deb Kolodny**, **Diann Neu** and others were among her first guests. See www.quixote.org/fm for more information on radio stations, or on Sundays at 10 am go to www.workingassetsradio.com and listen live via your computer.

Mary E. Hunt celebrated World AIDS Day in a Tallahassee, FL, interfaith liturgy with a lecture on "Speak Now or Forever..." sponsored by Big Bend Cares, a local HIV/AIDS support organization. She offered in-service feminist ethical training for the staff and colleagues of Big Bend Hospice looking at "Changing Times, Changing Ethics."

Diann Neu is working on **WATER SPIRIT**, WATER's Feminist Liturgy Project, which will produce three volumes documenting the rituals she has created and celebrated with the WATER community over the past sixteen years. The proposed titles are **Return Blessings: Eco-Feminist Liturgies Healing Women and Earth**; **Circles of Life: Feminist Liturgies Blessing Women's Life Cycles**, and **WATER Spirit: A Year of Feminist Liturgies**. Imagine having your own collection of WATER liturgies to consult throughout the year.

Resources

Barr, Jean. *COMMON SCIENCE? WOMEN, SCIENCE, AND KNOWLEDGE*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998 (165 pages, \$13.95).

The questions are hard, the answers not easier, but it is time to insist on the active presence of women and persons from minority communities in the formation of the sciences.

Bellis, Alice Ogden. *DOING THE TWIST TO AMAZING GRACE*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998 (117 pages, \$9.95).

A smart book for educated non-specialists who ask tough questions about faith and need this accessible but learned response.

Brenner, Athayla. *A FEMINIST COMPANION TO READING THE BIBLE: APPROACHES, METHODS AND STRATEGIES*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998 (654 pages, \$39.50).

Another useful compilation of important feminist work on sacred texts.

Clark, Michael. *DEFYING THE DARKNESS: GAY THEOLOGY IN THE SHADOWS*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1997 (117 pages, \$12.95).

An honest, painful read that speaks volumes on the integrity of a gay man struggling to find light. Abundant insight found here.

Donchin, Anne and Laura M. Purdy, eds. *EMBODYING BIOETHICS: RECENT FEMINIST ADVANCES*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999 (286 pages, \$23.95).

A welcome resource for teaching and discussing tough issues with trustworthy help.

Durkin, Mary Cabrini and Sheila Dierks. *JUBILEE JOURNAL: A WORKBOOK FOR FORGIVING FOR THE MILLENNIUM*. Boulder, CO: Woven Word Press, 1998 (119 pages, \$8).

Forgiveness is a tricky dynamic because cheap grace abounds. This journal offers various options for moving on.

Feinberg, Leslie. *TRANS LIBERATION: BEYOND PINK AND BLUE*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998 (147 pages, \$20).

Finally, a good introduction to transgender issues by someone who knows from deep personal experience.

Handel, Linda. *NOW THAT YOU'RE OUT OF THE CLOSET, WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE HOUSE?* Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998 (244 pages, \$20.95).

Gently written, this invitation to fuller living is practical and savvy.

Hartman, Mary S., ed. *TALKING LEADERSHIP: CONVERSATIONS WITH POWERFUL WOMEN*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999 (300 pages, \$19).

Listen to bell hooks, Peggy Antrobus, Patricia Schroeder, Anna Quindlen and others for hints of what makes for power.

Hughes, K. Wind and Linda Wolf. *DAUGHTERS OF THE MOON, SISTERS OF THE SUN: YOUNG WOMEN & MENTORS ON THE TRANSITION TO WOMANHOOD*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 1997 (228 pages, \$19.95).

This transition is a delicate dance made easier by skillful teachers. Here is a welcome way to learn and teach.

Karhausen, Michael. *CHILDREN IN CHINA*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997 (117 pages, \$25).

With more than 10,000 Chinese girl children adopted by U.S. families, it is nice to have a resource for learning about the millions of children living in China. Beautiful photographs; insightful words.

Newsom, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. *WOMEN'S BIBLE COMMENTARY (EXPANDED EDITION WITH APOCRYPHA)*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998 (501 pages, \$27.95).

This expanded edition of a much-used commentary is even more useful than its predecessor.

Nissinen, Martti and Kirsi Stjedna. *HOMOEROTICISM IN THE BIBLICAL WORLD: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998 (208 pages, \$24).

This is a Finnish study of references to texts that shape the arguments in a changing field. Some helpful insights.

Pratt, Minnie Bruce. *WE SAY WE LOVE EACH OTHER*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1985 (98 pages, \$8.95).

Back in print, this is powerful poetry on loving women - mothers, lovers, and friends.

Ranka, Kristine M. *WOMEN AND THE VALUE OF SUFFERING: AN AW(E)FUL ROWING TOWARD GOD*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998 (254 pages, \$19.95).

A clear outline of a seemingly intractable problem, this book provides a good balance between acceptance and resistance.

Roberts, Wendy Hunter. *CELEBRATING HER: FEMINIST RITUALIZING COMES OF AGE*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998 (162 pages, \$15.95).

A study of the power of ritual to transform and an invitation to join in the doing, this book is a must for feminist worship groups.

Ravenwolf, Silver. *TEEN WITCH: WICCA FOR A NEW GENERATION*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn

Publishers, 1998 (251 pages, \$12.95).

When a young girl in your life wants to explore Wicca, this is the book to offer. It is written with sensitivity to the young and assurances to their elders that this will be a fruitful, not flaky, search.

Say, Elizabeth A. and Mark R. Kowalewski. *GAYS, LESBIANS AND FAMILY VALUES*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998 (134 pages, \$13.98).

The notion that same-sex couples cannot form families is put to rest finally and with style in this gem.

Schneider, Laurel C. *RE-IMAGINING THE DIVINE: CONFRONTING THE BACKLASH AGAINST FEMINIST THEOLOGY*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998 (205 pages, \$19.95).

The heart of the matter is who gets to name the divine and what the divine will be called. Laurel Schneider provides some next steps beyond the confines of traditional formulations.

Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks and Mary Potter Engel, eds. *LIFT EVERY VOICE: CONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES FROM THE UNDERSIDE*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998 (339 pages, \$20).

This reissue of a useful text is made even better by the addition of writing by Ada Maria Isasi Diaz and Andy Smith.

Wade-Gayles, Gloria. *FATHER SONGS: TESTIMONIES BY AFRICAN AMERICAN SONS AND DAUGHTERS*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997 (336 pages, \$14).

Myths are shattered in these powerful reflections on black fatherhood that make a beautiful gift for fathers of all races.



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March 8 International Women's Day Liturgy

Give thought and thanks to women of the world with Diann Neu, liturgist, and Cindy Lapp, musician, on Wednesday, 5:30-7pm, at the WATER office.

June 11 Pentecost Liturgy

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Author Suppers and Book Signings

Join local women writers at the WATER office on Wednesdays, 5:30-7pm, for discussions of their books. A soup and bread supper will be served. Please RSVP 301-589-2509 by Monday before the event. Donation: \$20+/-.

March 22 Sharon Ringe, Professor of New Testament, Wesley Theological Seminary, Wisdom's Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel (Westminster John Knox, 1999). Sharon will provide a feminist biblical view of friendship and community.

April 5 Carroll Saussy, Professor Emerita, Pastoral Theology and Care, Wesley Theological Seminary, The Art of Growing Old: A Guide to Faithful Aging (Augsburg Press, 1998). Carroll is the best ad for her book, a zestful artist with insightful ideas on how to embrace the inevitable with style.

April 19 Mary Lou Randour, Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Animal

Grace: Entering a Spiritual Relationship with our Fellow Creatures (New World Library, 2000). Mary Lou will share her experience of the transformative influence animals can have on us, and how we need to expand our consciousness and take compassionate action on their behalf.

May 3 Kelly Brown Douglas, Professor of Theology, Howard University Divinity School, Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective (Orbis Books, 1999). Kelly will discuss her pioneering work on life-affirming sexuality in the context of the Black Church.

May 17 Mary E. Hunt, Co-director, WATER, Good Sex: Feminist Religious Wisdom (Rutgers University Press, 2001, co-edited with Patricia Beattie Jung and Radhika Balakrishnan). Mary will overview the works of a dozen feminist scholars from eight countries and six religious traditions who reflected together on the positive aspects of women's sexuality.