

# REACHING SIDEWAYS

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND IDEAS

Compiled by the Joseph Priestley District Women and Religion Committee

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Editorial Board; Sara Best and Jean Zoerheide

Publication and Mailing; Tom McHugh and Guy Best

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## ALL THINGS CHANGE

Our old files reveal funny, surprising, and even astonishing bits of history. In May of 1956, the Extension Sub-Committee on Ministers Serving Fellowships in Boston mailed to fellowships a list of qualifications for ministers. In part, this memo read:

"He shall be a man with several years of experience in a successful parish ministry behind him. He should be one who is well and happily integrated in the denomination, a man aware of and fully appreciative of our history....He should be an able enough preacher to attract new members....He should, of course, be a man who will command respect in the community."

Who could fault such characteristics in a minister? But were attributes, even in 1956, found only in the male species? Evidently, even a liberal group like the U-UA has experienced a few changes in the last quarter century.

- Sara Zenge;

Hagerstown, MD

"A condition of equality for all must exist without regard of differences of sex."

- Mary Wollstonecraft, 1759 - 1797

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

JPD Women's Retreat at Murray Grove  
September 20-22, 1985

The theme of our 1985 retreat is a gift from Sylvia Lewis, minister to last year's feminine affirmations at Murray Grove. She urged women to go forth into the world - with confidence;

"Each of us has a choice to make. It is the choice between power and weakness; between prominence and obscurity; between pride and shame . . . Blessed are the meek. How about - Blessed are those who are not afraid to be who they are, who stand up with pride, whose highest value is self respect . . . A great many foolish, stupid and ignorant people have somehow got into high places. Those people will try to make you feel inferior - that's how they hold on to their authority. Don't let them do it, not for a minute. LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE . . ."

Now, I'll tell you my dilemma. Because you had no say in my appointment as chair of our 1985 retreat, I have no constituency. Take a woman out of context and you take away her power! Patriarchal style, I look up-the-vertical to see how OUR retreat should be. You do not shine down. Feminist style, I reach sideways to connect. A few busy chairs are here.

This is moral conflict. I don't divine what's best for other people. I ask them. Please be my connectedness-by-mail. Tell me your concerns and visions for women. Ask for workshops that meet your needs. Recommend your friends. Ask yourself, "If I am self-effacing, am I my own friend." LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE.

Viv Beckmann, appointee, JPD W&R 1985 Retreat

West Chester, PA

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ON DEFINING FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY

Together, we are shaping a definition. The W&R Task Force (a committee of Pacific Central District) learned that there is a need for a specific definition of feminist spirituality. So we brought our separate strands of experiences, impressions, feelings, and thoughts together (in the form of words and phrases on newsprint) and wove them into this:

Toward a Definition of Feminist Spirituality. A belief system emphasizing the female aspect in our quest for personal and universal wholeness and harmony. In attitude, there is respect for the interconnectedness of nature and all its cycles and stages in life, empowerment and freedom of belief for ourselves and others, body-mind-spirit unity, inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, community rather than hierarchy, and the pluralistic nature of truth. Practices and rituals may draw from ancient religions (predating Hebrew-Jewish and Christian traditions,) current major religions, and rituals created by and for ourselves. Among the many symbols and objects revered are: the circle, darkness, the moon, earth, and the sea.

Our words are designed especially for women, but they may also include men. After all, both women and men may be feminists.

A definition is not a permanent monument, but a point of departure. Therefore we (as a group and as individuals) continue to grow and create and build toward a defining of feminist spirituality.

IN OTHER WORDS AND OTHER WORDS. Embraces all aspects of personality ... reverence for moon dark ... nurturing ... in every woman ... love ... connection with remote past ... all of creation is divine ... holism ... inclusive, not exclusive ... intimate ... power ... earth ... community, not hierarchy ... respect for earth ... affirms life ... challenges and reclaims traditional assumptions ... personal responsibility ... the church and goddess is within ... empowers ... circles, not pyramids ... not uptight about sexual preferences ... cherishing of age ... ritual ... reclaiming words: witch, magic, pagan, heathen, crone ... brings into harmony ... iconoclastic (breaking the icons we doubt) ... harmony with universal cycles ... everyone divine, "Thou art goddess" ... the birthing of the race ... divinity both within and without ... connection and interconnectedness ... immanence ... goddesses and the Goddess ... unity rather than dualism ... healing ... our changing perceptions of truths and Truth ... search ... intuition ... respect for all ages ... human beings as a part of nature ..., not apart from nature ... not dominion of "man" over the earth, but our planetary community of all living beings and all elements ...

Mary Heath-Walter,

El Cerrito, CA

JEAN ZOERHEIDE

DOES A REVIEW OF "SEXISM AND GOD TALK" by Rosemary Radford Ruether

Introductory Note

My favorite critic wants me to give definitions of some of the words I have used in this review: Patriarchy, sexism, falsehood, for example. In our effort to bring religion into our lives between birth and death, we liberals have secularized our language and so flattened the meaning of words that were I to give easily understood definitions, our UU impulse would be to fix things up quickly. Ruether writes volumes on these words and we know there is no quick fix. What we are about is understanding these words and moving toward a more human realization of ourselves as individual I's - moral beings because we have become freer to choose our lives, to name what is wright and wrong, rather than having the choosing and naming done for us by some outside authority.

Rosemary Radford Ruether's book, Sexism and God Talk, Toward A Feminist Theology, published in 1983 by Beacon Press, is a book that thoughtful UU feminists cannot afford to miss because it clarifies the contributions to feminist liberation made by the liberal tradition (as well as by other streams of tradition) while at the same time it points to liberalism's limitations. Beacon Press has brought out many books of feminist scholarship; and in singling Sexism and God Talk, I do not mean to detract from the others. They all help provide an understanding of Patriarchy and its sources in that long cultural past which UU's of course share with Western Civilization.

Ruether says promotion of the full humanity of women is the critical principle of feminist theology, even though such full humanity has not been known in history. We do not have a single adequate feminist theology, but we can move toward one by evaluating and by integrating existing traditions, each one of which has limitations and each of which offers a critique and complement to the others. She examines five areas of cultural tradition: (1) Scripture, (2) marginalized or heretical Christian sects, (3) primary theological themes of the dominant and classical Christian theology, (4) non-Christian Eastern and Greco-Roman religion and philosophy, and (5) critical post Christian world views such as liberalism, romanticism, and Marxism. These are all sexist but offer intimations of alternatives, even though the alternatives are themselves distorted by sexism. What is new now is that women are beginning to claim full humanity for themselves.

Because present day Unitarians and Universalists have had their identities shaped by all or several of these traditions, we need to



understand all of them. For purposes of this review, I will lift out what is most pertinent for us as members of UU institutions shaped by the liberal tradition.

Unitarianism and Universalism grew from mainstream Protestantism in the late 18th century Enlightenment period, the same ethos in which our American Constitution and Bill of Rights were written. The ideology of bourgeois democracy common to liberal religion and the American founding documents stresses civic freedom. Social justice is defined as equality of opportunity, with the belief that as every person attains the advantage of education and entry into the professions all people would gradually enter the good life.

The accompanying belief in "progress onward and upward forever" assumed limitless resources for the earth whose treasures were available for the taking. As various groups of people emerged into human consciousness, they would create the necessary institutions and come into control over nature. This set of beliefs is recognizable as the "development model" which has guided American policy in regard to Third World Peoples, whether here or abroad.

The anthropology of liberal religion is based on the assumption that human beings are by birth ontologically equal and human nature is essentially good. History has distorted this basic quality by establishing privileged groups, say the liberals. Salvation is in the form of individual character formation and growth toward an imagined or recreated just society.

Among the limitations of liberalism cited by Ruether are these:  
(1) The emphasis on civil rights and equal opportunity for each person stops short of economic egalitarianism. In other words it is significant that private property is one of our prime values. We seek only to make women equal to men in the public sphere. We do nothing to achieve a genuinely just society for all, because we do not wish to disrupt the class system from which we generally benefit. Bourgeois women find their middle class loyalties in conflict with their sisterhood with all women. Women of color remain the most oppressed of the oppressed. Marxism, Ruether says, provides a helpful critique for this analysis.

(2) As women do move into the public sphere they are kept from true equality, whether in our country or in Marxist countries, by the imperatives of the second job-homemaking. Women not only work more hours than men, but men have the freedom to establish helpful

networks outside working hours for networks or education assisting them toward advancement. Thus women's ways lay behind men's. Liberal women in this second-class condition press to a more radical analysis.

(3) Liberalism would admit women to full citizenship but it fails to recognize the complexity of psychological and economic marginalization. (Marginalization, as I use it, describes the situation of people who are not necessarily excluded by law or obvious discrimination, but who are nonetheless left on the edges. They cannot achieve equality and are victims of the myth that it is all their own fault.

(4) Our liberal emphasis on progress has prevented our awareness of the finite earth which is our home. We have assumed that everyone has an equal right to take from the earth's abundance without any sense of partnership with nature. An ecological ethic needs to be developed to recognize the meaning of social domination. The welfare of the entire community must not be sacrificed to individual interests, race interests, or sex interests. The romantic tradition is reactive against rationalism and technology as they have shaped our world and alienated humans from the non-human parts of creation. Romanticism demands that we look critically at the liberal concept of progress.

Feminism has precipitated a crisis in religion. A crisis occurs, says Ruether, when concrete experience contradicts the received interpretations of that tradition. UU tradition has taught us we are basically good and equal to men and to one another. We have equal access to education, we have equal access to jobs, we can participate equally in a society moving to better and better things for all. Our contradictory experience of dependency has been revealed to individual women through family conflict in which acquisition of poverty over-rides human needs, divorce and desertion bring economic hardship, aging brings redundancy, widowhood brings poverty, career and marriage combinations reveal limited opportunities at the same time women experience overwork and burn out. As we UU women share our experiences so different in particularity, but so common in raising questions about our value as women, we ask what does my church and my religion do to liberate me from feelings of unworth and how do they help to empower me to take control of my own talents and use them. Some of us experience a new sisterhood with women of all classes and ethnic backgrounds. We want our churches to participate in creating a new vision.

A second crisis occurs when leaders teach falsehood through self interest

or will to power. We UU feminist women are sensitive when we perceive arrogance in particular leaders. Our tradition of equality and democratic governance of congregations become critical in relations between laity and clergy.

A third and deeper level of crisis is reached, according to Ruether, when a total heritage seems corrupt and enslaves rather than liberates. Some UU feminists have arrived there, finding our churches not as different from those with flagrant anti-woman traditions as we would like them to be.

Theoretically Unitarian Universalist churches, historically open to the future, can respond to all these critiques. Where do we find the vocabulary for dialogue? Ruether has some suggestions for those familiar with Scripture. Can the symbols she uses help UU's? I look forward now to reading her more recent book, also published by Beacon Press, WOMANGUIDES.

Jean Zoerheide, Baltimore, MD  
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A RESPONSE TO THE LANGUAGE OF FEMINISM - SERMON DELIVERED 6-3-84  
by The Reverend Mr. David H. Cole at West Shore UU Church

Dear Reverend Cole:

Your sermon THE LANGUAGE OF FEMINISM was brought to our attention and we found parts of your talk very good and parts with which we take issue.

The power of the pulpit is such that it has great power to educate and, or, miseducate. Therefore, this would have been a great opportunity for you to deliver a sermon which reflected history and the "principles and Purposes" of our denomination, rather than misinformation.

Here are some of our specific concerns.

YOU'VE STILL GOT A LONG WAY TO GO, REVEREND!

How do we know you've still got a long way to go, Reverend. Allow us to make some observations based on your sermon:

1. It is interesting that the motivation for your preaching on this theme was a consortium of women who challenged you to preach on this topic. To the casual observer, this provides a clue that perhaps the whole subject is quite foreign to your accustomed way of thinking or realm of interest. Or perhaps even contrary to your own beliefs.

2. You boast, " I often kid that I am the last of the great male chauvinist pigs." Perhaps you are simply the last to understand the seriousness and bigotry of such a statement. Just for the sake of self-understanding, give this statement a perceptual twist and change it to the area of race; the statement might then read:

"I often kid that I am the last of the truly bigoted racists."

Not funny. And not a likely statement. Very few would kid about being a racist - but fail to understand the parallel in perceptions about gender-related issues.

3. Placing the blame for your being the "last of the great male chauvinists" on your conservative New England family upbringing is a real cop-out. Does this mean you consider yourself to be stuck in the ways of your childhood. No possibility of growth in understanding. Incapable of change. If you will look around your congregation, you will see hordes of people who have become quite accustomed to watching television - even though only radio was available when they were children. If you will examine your own lifestyle, you will no doubt realize that it is very different in many ways from that of your childhood. So when you choose to change, or when society decrees it, you make major changes. Don't blame your traditional family for your petrified beliefs of an earlier era.

4. Educate yourself about the facts of the women's movement before you go expounding erroneous statements from the pulpit. The women's movement did not begin "at the turn of the century when women campaigned for being franchised to vote." The aspect of the movement that you are referring to began in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Conference, with the moving spirits of the movement doing their writing in the first half of the 1800s (Margaret Fuller, USA) and late 1700s (Mary Wollstonecraft, England).

5. You say that rationally you have long since accepted the validity of the movement - admitting that your emotional and psychological adjustment "takes a long time." This confessional foot-shuffling is inexcusable in anybody, and most particularly for any person in a position of leadership in our denomination. ("Gosh, folks, I can understand why you want equality - but my family was racist, and I grew up racist, and if I stop being racist it will be a "long, slow process.")

6. It is commendable that you have some knowledge about Astarte, though calling her "the matriarchal god" would better be termed "the matriarchal goddess." This section of your sermon would have been more fully dimensional if you had mentioned that Astarte was only one of



many, many female aspects which are relatively little known in the Bible, both in the Hebrew Bible and in the Christian Bible.

7. When a book is entitled Man Made Language and its author's first name is "Dale" - it is outrageous to be talking about the book by saying, "Dale Spender in his book . . ." regardless of a later acknowledgement in the sentence that the author may be a woman! You've given the primary descriptor to the male, contrary to what is presumably the purpose of your sermon.

8. So your church simply doesn't have a large enough selection of degenderized responsive readings or hymns to fill out the year's worship service. That's what a theological education was for - to provide you with content and abilities to find and use all the resources available. When the creedlessness of our denomination welcomes inspiration from all sources, it would be an act of mental minimalism to limit the liturgy to whatever happens to be found in a bound hymnbook. And the more important point is that easy access (the gentler term than laziness) is taking higher priority than concern for the dignity and equality of all persons.

In your sermon, you do make some excellent statements (whose enactment encounters great resistance in your behaviors) and provide some good information. But it is possible that you are vastly unaware of how very far you have to go!

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Meg Bowman, on behalf of the entire Women and Religion Task Force,  
Pacific Central District.

San Jose, CA

THE WOMEN AND RELIGION TASK FORCE OF THE PACIFIC CENTRAL  
DISTRICT ANSWERS A LETTER FROM THE CONTINENTAL W & R COMMITTEE

(Ed. Note: Edited for reasons of lack of space. We are however, certain that the two writers, will be happy to send you a copy of their full response.)

Dear Friends: Thank you for spending the time to discuss our letter of September, 1984. We appreciate the thoughtfulness of your response although it is still unclear on several points..

We are concerned about:

1. The relationship of our Task Force to the Continental Committee.  
. . . . . If you are to "make a difference in the life of our UU institution, locally, continentally, or somewhere in between," how do you see yourselves doing this - if your "charge" has no relationship to the districts? It would seem to us that we should all be in tandem, cooperating, working together to the goals of implementation of more than cosmetic or symptomatic aspects of the W&R resolutions.
2. If the Continental Committee is an "independent" entity with no leadership relationship or responsibility to or from the local district groups, we are troubled by our lack of tie to the UUA. As UUs, working in a UU-established group on a UU-established task within the denomination, the lack of a tie to something larger, . . . leaves us in the position of, in essence, being cut off from our roots . . . What differentiates us from NOW or OWL, or the UUWF? Until your letter we had thought it was being under the umbrella of the "W&R Task Force," which later became the Board Committee . . . . It has been our relationship to you that has given us the right to request a standing in our District. Are we correct that the "apron strings" have been severed? We hope not. Lucile Schuck Longview has also told us that she is an "outsider by intention;" but the PCD Task Force has in the past considered that we are inside. Is it necessary in order to "challenge" to "deeper insight and further action" for a person/group (such as ourselves) to be an outsider? We hope not, particularly in the light of UU diversity, and more important, the UU axiom that the search is accomplished through challenge and disturbing of the conscience.
3. Communication  
If we have a relationship, how do we communicate? If, as you state, you are an independent body, of course this is not necessary. If you are in a relationship . . . . then what is this relationship? Do you want our inputs? If so, how do you get them? Using the "charge" as an example, would it not have been more inclusive to have circulated

the charge to the District Chairs for comment before sending it to the Board? We do appreciate your sending the minutes, but if your communication is through them, then it is:

- (a) a one-way street, and
- (b) our input is after the fact.

Is this the way you intend communication to be?

4. MATRIX and other communications

Thank you for the clarification of the MATRIX problem. While we do not expect the W&R Continental Committee to publish an issue, is there any way you or the staff could facilitate the round robin? . . . Could the W&R Continental Committee through a mailing to district chairs facilitate sharing what is happening in each district? We send our minutes, but except for yours rarely hear from others except JPD.

Districts sponsor retreats, convocations, etc., but we seem to hear of them after they happen, too late to attend ourselves. Could the W&R CC publish quarterly (or attached to your minutes) a list of upcoming events (not regular meetings) of W&R groups?

5. Assistance

You do not have to apologize for not being radical enough in your actions. However, could you serve as a disturber of the conscience of the UUA? An immediate action item is the protest of the change of name from "Womanspace" to "Humanspace" and the philosophy behind it at the General Assembly. . . This kind of being the conscience of the UUA is part of what we think of as radical.

6. Listing of Achievements

. . . . . We also are unclear about the listed goals and where we fit in. Is there anything we can do to assist in the work? We have been going-it-alone on some of these projects - we hope you have received our four publications - and would very much like to fit in so perhaps we could save both you and us a lot of work.

7. The conference

We are excited by the prospect of a conference in the Fall of 1985. To put it on our calendars, we need some idea of dates. Is there anything we can do to assist in your conference; host, program development,

volunteer staffing, etc. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of help.

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Again, thank you for your response. We thank you for clarifying that there has been a change in your work, that there has been a shift of priorities, in the charge, and in the methods of operating. This relationship is a pivotal question - and a real clarification in light of our questions above will better enable us to work on the prime goal - that of implementation of the 1977 resolution (and the subsequent ones) in the spirit of real equality.

Gail Hamaker, Palo Alto CA  
Meg Bowman, San Jose CA

CHANNING'S SISTERS AND BROTHERS

We continue to learn of interesting activities of W&R women all over the continent. While we cannot, alas, list these events before they occur, we can, and will continue to let our readers know what has happened in other districts. Through such shared information, we can each discover that we are not alone, that there are other UU's all over the continent who are working with us even though great distances separate our work.

From Lucile Schuck Longivew comes news about a Woman's Gathering in the Mass Bay District on March 2, 1985. The subject was "Women Together - Remembering, Examing and Moving Forward." Sixty-seven women registered. The next event is a week-end at Plainville Womancenter on May 3 and 4. As Lucile says, "There's lots of work to be done."

Meg Bowman of the always active Pacific District writes that they are now distributing Marylou Haddit's dramatic reading CELEBRATION OF MID-LIFE AND MENOPAUSE. The "militant menopausal women" of the Bay Area have performed it many times to the delight of everyone. They will be reading CELEBRATION in Nairobi in July, (U.N. Decade for Women Conference) as well as reading WHY WE BURN: SEXISM EXORCISED, OUR STUNNING HARVEST, and one in progress, DOUBLE CROSSED BY THE DOUBLE STANDARD. The booklet of readings is available at \$4.50 each. Also available are copies of Ramona Barth's EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY, the story of the free-spirited feminist who burned her candles at both ends. All six of these booklets are available at a cost of \$27.

Meg also reports that the PCD Retreat ALL THINGS WARM AND WOMANLY sold out per usual. For future planning, she writes that the W&R Task Force will have two retreats in 1986. The first will be at Mill Valley on



May 17-18, 1986, and the second at Napa Valley over the Labor Day weekend, August 29-Sept. 1. Make your plans early for either or both.

Betty Hoskins, from the Central Mass. District, writes us as follows;

REACHING SIDEWAYS provides UU feminists with a place to share with each other our analysis of (and our frustration with) the patriarchy in the UU denomination as well as in the rest of the world. Another opportunity will come with the UUWF Biennial this June. I'm the laywoman respondent to Elizabeth Schussler-Firenze, the major theologian from outside the denomination who is to set the stage for our consideration.

It may be helpful to display for many UUs what is being rethought within the Judeo-Christian (as well as the Wicca) tradition, as was done in WOMAN SPIRIT RISING. We may be able to separate which of our patriarchal forms have, for us, obsolete theological underpinnings. I also want to consider an additional perspective.

Feminism can be seen as a thread running through all the previous world religions, a leavening and a hidden herstory in all (including the UU trilogy of theism, Christianity and humanism.) Feminism can also be seen as a separate vision, still being named and formed in our conversations, rituals, intellectual examinations, and actions with each other, a religious and living community that is now growing and expanding. I want not only to address the difficulties but also to consider our vision; what are we working toward, together.

In thinking about patriarchy and what's destructive about it, I have come to a question. I want to name it, and claim it as a focus, and to invite other feminists to dialogue with me and each other:

WHAT WOULD A RELIGION, A WORLD VIEW, BE LIKE  
THAT WAS NOT BASED UPON SACRIFICE

As I've begun to think about it, I see the absence of victim blaming, of being expected to gladly send sons off to war, of being expected to donate organs. (Altruism may be another matter.) I'm not nearly so clear on what the positives would be, and this is the direction in which I want to invite this community to think.

Betty Hoskins,

Worcester, MA

The editors particularly invite each of our readers to share with us news of your events, activities and/or thoughts. Perhaps an apt closing to this section is a paragraph from Sara D. Zenge, of Hagerstown, Md., who sent us a \$10 contribution to support our publication and wrote the following:

"It surprises me that there are UU officials who should be getting this publication but who are evidently not willing to support it with a \$4 contribution. But if it is necessary that others of us pay for their copies, I trust they will give the information serious consideration. You may forward my comments to any of them."

VOICE OF THE CHAIR  
The Women and Religion Committee of the  
Joseph Priestley District

The Women & Religion Committee sponsored a workshop at the JPD Spring Conference. It was interesting to delve into the history of both Universalism and Unitarianism to find that women have been outspoken and dedicated to religious and moral reform as well as advocates of inclusion without discrimination as to race, religion, or sex. Often the most effective operative has been working together in coalition with each other in order to achieve a goal. An interfaith network coalition in Wash. D.C. supported by the UUA and the UUWF as well as other religious organizations is called IMPACT. This office, which provides information on legislation and an opportunity for citizen action also has the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights as one of its programs. This is an excellent example of coalition. IMPACT's address is 100 Maryland Ave., NE, Wash. D.C. 20002 (202) 544-8636.

We are also planning several opportunities for bringing women together for support, change and growth. This summer at UUMAC, the UU Mid-Atlantic Community, Mary Ann Kelley will lead a workshop, A VOICE FROM THE PAST - a comparison and contrast of the condition of women in the 1880's to the 1980's. In September we will have an ALL WOMEN RETREAT 20-22, to be held at Murray Grove. This will be a sharing, caring, empowering weekend. Contact Viv Beckmann, West Chester PA  
On October 11-12, at the JPD Fall Conference, we will be sponsoring a workshop.

Many of our Executive Committee will be attending the UUWF Biennial and the General Assembly in Atlanta. If you are also attending, please look us up. We'd like so very much to connect with you. See you in Atlanta!

Kay Cox,

Springfield PA

## HOW ADEQUATELY HAVE WE IMPLEMENTED THE 1977 W & R RESOLUTION?

When I first read in the Febr. 15, 1985 issue of the UU WORLD that the adequacy of response to the 1977 Women and Religion Business Resolution was the question to be discussed in a published symposium, I found myself overwhelmed by a mixture of emotions. At almost the same time, I was delighted, distressed, and angry.

Now I am aware that harboring three such diverse emotions is almost an impossibility. To be more accurate, I must correct myself and state that each emotion was brought forth in turn, not simultaneously, as I considered various aspects, the significance, and the particular timing of having such a symposium. First of all, I had to consider the coming election of new officers of this denomination. Was such an invitation to write by the UU WORLD intended to somehow sweeten the actions and the inaction of the past administration by phrasing the question in quantitative terms? For example, we were asked, "How adequately have we implemented the 1977 Women and Religion Business Resolution? Such a method of phrasing the question implies that something has been done!

In addition, only the 1977 W & R Resolution was mentioned. Both the 1979 Battered Women Business Resolution and the 1980 Implementation of Women and Religion Resolution, which were intended to reinforce and help to implement the 1977 Resolution, were ignored. As a matter of fact, we were asked by the UU WORLD, "Is it time for another resolution?" The obvious answer to such a question is NO! We have already had three resolutions, none of which has been implemented. Why should we spend our energies writing still another resolution to be ignored?

These statements obviously come from my emotions of anger and distress. They also indicate my mistrust of the motives of some of those involved in posing such a question at this time. Lest I seem overly paranoid, I should perhaps inform my readers that mistrust, according to Elizabeth Janeway in her book, POWERS OF THE WEAK, is one of the most important powers of the weak. We can MISTRUST the statements of those who are in charge. We need not accept statements given to us as factual. We can doubt, and question, and criticize.

Such doubt and criticism, which leads to the transformation of our churches, is also very much a part of the heritage of Unitarian Universalists, and has been for a long time. Our theologian, James Luther Adams, quoted in the UU WORLD, Vol 15, No. 1, Jan 15, 1984, in some definitions of the role of the laity in our churches, made the statement that. . . .

"The prophethood of believers entails the obligation to share in the analysis, criticism and transformation of institutions, including the analysis and transformation of the church."

With such validation, I therefore felt justified in my anger and distress at our denomination's handling of the Women and Religion Business Resolutions; at the timing of the symposium on the adequacy of implementation of the 1977 W & R Resolution; and at the supposition that somehow or other, action on the 1977 W & R Resolution was now over and a new resolution required.

Only after I had raised these doubts to myself, analyzed and questioned the whole situation did I begin to have other points of view. I remembered again that resolutions are very frail instruments for the challenge of thinking patterns of a whole denomination. Lucile Schuck Longview, in one of her earliest papers that I recall reading, REFORMATION BY RESOLUTION, reported exactly that. We of the UU denomination, because of our congregational polity, and because of our demand for democratic process, must rely on the resolution process to change our thinking. . . a process which is really lacking in sufficient strength to accomplish our purposes, and is not taken seriously enough by either Administration or Board

Then my thinking along these lines led me to a strong sense of delight. I became aware that the UU WORLD's question about the 1977 W & R Resolution, at this time or at any other time, indicates that somebody, somewhere, understands that women are angry about the lack of response to their situation and the trivialization of their demands for equality into calls for changes in language in hymn books, etc. There seems to have been a complete unwillingness to understand that we women require a whole new pattern of thought, one that sees us as human beings.

BUT . . . .and this is a large word at this time. Even if few changes have so far occurred in our denomination as a result of our W & R Resolutions, we have begun a process which, if we continue to press, will bring us success. We have established W & R Task Forces in many of our Districts. We have a W & R Continental Committee, even if we question their actions from time to time. Most importantly, the number of us involved in Women and Religion activities continues to grow in numbers. Our voices are being heard by other women and men. I am delighted that the UU WORLD published a symposium on the topic of the 1977 Women and Religion Resolution. The topic is alive and going strong.

- Sara Best

Chevy Chase, MD



## A SEQUEL TO AN ANDROGYNOUS FAIRY TALE

as told by a Two-toed Gnome--  
told by another Two-toed Gnome.

"Living equally ever after!" It has been ten years now since that eventful conversation over coffee led several of my two-toed friends and myself to the astonishing realization that the differences between our lives in the Enchanted Forest as the tenders of the Gnome Trees and the lives of the three-toed Gnomes in charting, developing and defining the Enigma were arbitrary.

We had discovered that this division in our roles was based on a decision made long, long ago when the Enigma was still called Paradise and we Gnomes lived together in our Gnome Trees in the Enchanted Forest region of the Garden of Eden. Why that decision could just as easily have gone the other way; Or we could have drawn straws or flipped a coin for that matter. What after all, is in a toe that such weighty matters should rise and fall upon it.

You remember our surprise that our discovery, so liberating to all of Gnomekind, was not greeted with great joy and celebration. We brought such wonderful news after all. Those among us who wished to leave the Enchanted Forest could do so. There was no reason we had to stay. And those among the three-toed who wished to tend Gnome Trees could do so. It could be rather pleasant work at times. Which is not to say there were not problems both in the Enigma and in the Enchanted Forest.

We all knew of the dilemmas and dangers, pressures and strains caused by the serious and weighty matters dealt with by the keepers of the Enigma. Not so many realized the troubles in our Forest. Not only did we feel a tinge of pointlessness in our responsibilities for the protection of Gnome Trees, and no wonder, the cure for the Gnome Tree Blight had been developed many millenia ago - and how could we have forgotten that. But there was a dark shadow, a danger lurking in the corners and among the branches of many of our Gnome Trees - a danger we had only hinted at in whispers and hooded glances. Violence in the Garden of Eden. Violence and danger, fear and shame in our separate Gnome Trees.

We all knew, everyone knew, that one of the weighty responsibilities that went along with that third toe was the protection of the tenders of the Trees from all harm and fear. And yet there was harm and there was fear. Fear even, it was quietly hinted, fear in some cases of our protectors themselves. But that could be changed. A mistake had been

made, and everyone wants to mend a mistake. It is only right and fair after all.

But we had forgotten about Power and Glory! Not only did many three-toed not want to share Power and Glory, they had come to believe that Power and Glory were dependent upon that third toe. Even more dismaying, many of the two-toed agreed!

"Wrong," we insisted. "We must examine these ideas, find out where they come from. Banish those outworn stories and legends and beliefs that distort the full development of our potential as Gnomes. Deception and injustice hurt us all and they aren't fair." And fairness, you will remember, is a very important Gnome concept.

So we talked and we talked and it became obvious that something must be done. Finally a few of us two-toed Gnomes joined by a sympathetic three-toed Gnome came together to draw up a proclamation to be considered by our great council, the General Assembly of Gnomes. Our proclamation declared that a search was to be enjoined to discover and uproot those outworn stereotypes that had kept us two-toed Gnomes busy protecting those Gnome Trees from a blight that no longer existed.

We called for an urgent inquiry into those stories and myths which had insinuated their way into our Forest bringing fear and violence right into our Gnome Trees themselves. Gnomes do not like to be misled. It embarrasses them and makes them angry. We wanted to be certain that we were not being misled any longer. We wanted to be very certain that we weren't misleading and deceiving ourselves. We called for Justice and Truth, Fairness and Equity to replace Power and Glory.

Our great Assembly of Gnomes gathered and considered our proclamation and declared it wonderful and right. The voice of the Forest was being heard in the land for the first time and the General Assembly issued forth a proclamation decreeing that harmful and prejudicial gnomes must be corrected and also calling us to come together in a common exploration of Gnome myths and stories that had led and continued to lead to unfair and sometimes cruel treatment of two-toed Gnomes and that had made it seem natural that three-toed Gnomes should control our lives.

What a stir there was! The Council of Elders took this proclamation as their own. Recognizing the need for wise and seasoned leadership that we two-toed Gnomes, innocent and untutored Forest dwellers, have

in being educated to the truth of our own ideas, they began implementing the proclamation as they were certain we had intended.

Many of the Elders busied themselves full time correcting the prejudicial gnomomenclature as though that were the only concern of the pronouncement from the forest. Others, interested in obtaining Power and Glory for some (a few) two-toed Gnomes overlooked our call for justice, truth and fairness everywhere - - in the Forest as well as in the Enigma.

It was seen as Good and Right that some two-toed Gnomes be allowed to share in Power and Glory, handicapped though they might be by their toe deficit. This admission of two-toed Gnomes into the Enigma occasioned great joy among those in the Forest.

A number of two-toed Gnomes were even admitted to the Council of Elders and to their Pulpits and Board of Directors and it was seen as good. Some, not many mind you, but enough, two-toed Gnomes were allowed to demonstrate that they would be as good and excellent in furthering and protecting the agendas and priorities of the three-toed Gnomes as they were themselves.

A great celebration went up in the land. Look at what fine Gnomes we are! Two and three-toed together, well, maybe not altogether together, we administer, instruct, rule and preside. Power and Glory aren't entirely dependent upon that third toe after all. Thank you and gratitude to all in the Forest who led us to the recognition of this truth!

But anger and even some resentment began to surface in the Forest. "This is not what we meant at all! You have turned our wonderful proclamation into another myth. We told you that we wanted fairness and justice for all, not Power and Glory for a few!! We want to search out and uproot those myths that have kept two-toed Gnomes invisible and Gnome Tree tending undervalued. Instead you have deceived yourself and many of us into believing that a deep and fundamental change has occurred because a few two-toed Gnomes have Power and Glory when it has not. Nothing can now be exempt from our questions - - certainly not Power and Glory."

And the voices of the Forest would not be stilled. The Council of Elders, not evil Gnomes you know, was distressed. "If Power and Glory is not what you meant, then give us another proclamation telling us what it is that you do want."

Well, a two-toed Gnome's work is never done it seems. Should we toe the

line and issue another great proclamation. If we do, who's to say what will become of it. By virtue of the significant and well trained understanding of the Elders a great and wonderful edifice has been erected around the first utterance from the Forest. In that edifice has been collected all concerns of two-toed Gnomes whether relative to the proclamation or not. The Elders have a big investment in maintaining that edifice. Edifice building has become big business you know. Should we risk having another proclamation stored in that same edifice. A two-toed Gnome can't be too careful, especially when we are determined to examine and question and even challenge Power and Glory in the name of Truth, Justice, Fairness and Equity.

Or should we put our energy into building new windows and doors and skylights into the existing edifice so all of Gnomeland can peer in and see the Proclamation plain. The work of the Forest is far from done. There are many decisions to be made, agreements and understandings to be developed if we expect to live equally ever after!

Written by Susan Page Beattie  
in collaboration with Lucile Schuck Longview

Presented as "UPDATE ON GNOMELAND at the Massachusetts Bay District Women and Religion meeting , WOMEN TOGETHER, Remembering, Examining and Moving Forward

First Parish Church, Lexington, Massachusetts, March 2, 1985

\* \* \* \* \*

#### YOU AND THIS JOURNAL

To all of you who have responded with contributions for the year '85 we pledge to continue the task of publishing REACHING SIDEWAYS.

To those of you who have not yet contributed, may we suggest:

\$ 4.00 covers the direct expenses of getting three issues to you with all-voluntee workers diligently at work.

\$10.00 enables copies to be sent to UU officials who do not contribute, but to whom you may wish to send a message.

Please send full mailing information with your check: Name, Street & Apt. No., City, State, and ZIP to: Tom McHugh, Treas. REACHING SIDEWAYS Potomac, MD

A SPECIAL NOTICE TO WRITERS: September 17, 1985 is the deadline for the receipt of you material for publication in the next issue.



SILENT NO MORE

April 12, 1985  
My daughter's birthday

After enjoying my first copy of REACHING SIDEWAYS, I thought perhaps fellow Unitarians might be interested in reading why and how I became the coordinator for the Maryland Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights organization.

First of all, I had no aspirations for such a position. I was content to give a little money and some volunteer work for the cause. That seemed enough. It wasn't until we personally needed this medical service that I became fully aware of the importance of having the right to determine the direction of one's life, that I became truly involved with all aspects of the issue of abortion.

As a religious liberal, I became incensed as I learned that there were forces that were using their power to induce the state to impose their particular religious beliefs which would once again make abortion a crime.

The belief that a fetus is a person from the moment of conception and that to terminate that pregnancy was murder is a religious belief my husband and I do not share.

All this became very important when we learned at age 48 that I was pregnant. The financial commitment for two children in college and one in high school; the concern for a child with aged parents, and the yearning to get on with other interests gave us a lot to think about. Choice coupled with responsibility is never easy - we chose abortion, with sadness, a sense of loss, but also with relief.

I've listened to and read good arguments on both sides of the issue. I've searched my conscience about my own experience and each time come up with the same answer. We did what was best for us as a

## Coalition For Abortion Rights.

Equipped with nothing but my dedication, I secretly hoped that one of the other applicants would be chosen. I laid awake nights thinking that I must be crazy! How could I be the coordinator for the whole state of Maryland. In my mind Maryland had now grown to the size of the United States.

To make a long story short, I got the job as feared, complete with boxes of old files, a typewriter which I didn't know how to use and an overwhelming and confusing manual on what a coordinator is supposed to do.

I didn't have time to feel sorry for myself. Practically my first venture was a confrontation with The Reverend Dr. Jerry Falwell on "People Are Talking," a popular TV talk show here in Baltimore. After that, I felt anything else would be easy!

It's been almost three years now since I laid awake worrying. At times it has been discouraging. I've weathered a few storms, gloried in a few victories and learned an awful lot. I've proven to myself that it isn't an impossible job and that makes me feel good. Maryland still seems of heroic size but it's getting smaller.

I know rough times lie ahead for the abortion rights issue. Those who put fetal rights before the welfare of women and families have made great gains and may be successful with the help of those in high places. It's frightening. We have so much to lose!

Because of the commitment of many denominations including the UUA\*, and the personal involvement of so many Unitarian Universalists, I take heart and feel proud that we are there working to make this a better world.

Eleanor A. Johnson, Md RCAR-Coordinator

\*The Joseph Priestley District is a member of Md RCAR



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