

# REACHING SIDeways

## A Continental Exchange of Ideas/Views of Unitarian Universalist Women and Men

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### CONTENTS

- 2 EXCERPT FROM GOD AND THE MODERN WORLD**  
**3-6 ON IMPLEMENTING THE SEXISM AUDIT**  
**7-9 IN MEMORY OF HER**  
**10-11 THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST**  
**12-15 THE SACRED DIMENSION OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE**  
**16-18 CHANNING'S SISTERS AND BROTHERS**  
**19-21 ECO-SPIRITUALITY AND US**

# GOD AND THE MODERN WORLD

DR. WILLIAM F. SCHULZ

*The following is an excerpt from a sermon by Dr. William F. Schulz, president of the UUA and honorary minister of CLF (Church of the Larger Fellowship). The sermon, entitled GOD AND THE MODERN WORLD was given at the 1988 General Assembly in Palm Springs, CA.*

As feminist theologians have resurrected the Goddess, salvaging her memory out of the ruins of a male-dominated antiquity, they have been very careful to refrain from making the claim that She exists in any form apart from those in which She is manifested. They have been very careful, in other words, not to claim for the Goddess that She exists "out there" in any objective transcendent way, independent of the vehicles through which She makes herself known to us. Unlike the traditional male God of patriarchy, who is the Author of Creation but separate from it, the Goddess is understood to be identical with the rhythms of the natural world and the spirit of survival. The poet Ntosake Shange captured this quality perfectly when she said: "One day I was driving home after class and I saw a huge rainbow over Oakland. I realized that we (black women) could survive if we decide that we have as much right and as much purpose for being here as the air and the mountains do."

There is no point, in other words, in arguing about whether or not the Goddess exists. She exists just as surely as the air and the mountains do. The only question is whether we choose to regard the air and the mountains as nothing more than brute fact, a collection of sub-atomic particles, or whether we choose to appropriate them as

catalysts of wonder, gratitude, and inspiration. The Goddess exists just as surely as does whatever it is which prompts us to live our lives with meaning, integrity, and passion. She cannot be located apart from the face. She turns to us in the dress of the world, and even then, beckon us though She does, we possess the capacity to be dull to her dazzle. But no one - - except a solipsist - - can deny that She beckons.

What feminist theology offers us - - and while it is not the first or only theological posture to do so, it is the most recent - - is a functional definition of deity. It is possible, I suppose, even short of clinical depression or pathology, to live one's life as if it had not meaning, as if one's decisions didn't matter, as if love were a sham, truth were a joke, and beauty a chimera. It is possible to act as if how one treats other people were of no consequence. Such a person, I admit, is blind to the intimations of divinity.

But the role which deity has always played for humankind is that of Source of Value, Meaning, and Integrity. Whatever fills that role for us is co-extensive with the Glorious. It is, I want to suggest, a failure of the imagination to believe that the important question about God is whether He or She exists. The important question is, "Is my attitude toward Creation one of trust, generosity, and enchantment or suspicion, indifference, and cynicism?" The answer to this second question will in turn suggest an answer to the first.

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## ON IMPLEMENTING THE SEXISM AUDIT

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*Editor's Note: In the last edition of REACHING SIDEWAYS, I acknowledged that I had been suffering from that disorder known as "feminist fatigue" and the resultant despair had led me to decide in print that I no longer cared what 25 Beacon Street did or didn't do. As a result, I received two very interesting letters which I want to share with you, our readers. Whether or not I completely agree with the opinions of the following two writers, I believe that they are both sincere people who are seriously concerned about the sexism in our denomination and interested in finding new ways to end that sexism.*

*The first letter below is from Barry Johnson-Fay, UUA Trustee for the Connecticut Valley District and Secretary of the UUA.*

As you may know, I was a member of the Sexism Audit Committee, which worked with the professional consultants, the IBIS Group, in conducting the audit. As a member of the UUA Board of Trustees, I also worked with the Rev. Joyce Smith, Chair of the Committee, and Betsy Stevens of the Women and Religion Committee, to plan the approximately three hours of presentations of the audit results and recommendations which were made to the UUA Board in January and April of this year and the implementation discussions which occurred in April and June. In preparation for the June meeting of the Board, Joyce and I met with all the members of the Continental Women and Religion Committee who were at the General Assembly, to rework and refine some of the implementation recommendations contained in the audit. That process

included a meeting that I had with Elizabeth Fisher of the Pacific Central District Women and Religion Committee. With the input of Elizabeth and the PCD Committee, and the Continental Women and Religion Committee, several recommendations were broadened, and I think, improved. The UUA Board enthusiastically adopted these revised implementation plans, and a copy of the adopted recommendations that has been sent to all UUA district presidents, district executives, the chair of the Commission on Appraisal, the President of the UUMA, the President of LREDA and the chair of the Ministerial Settlement Task Force.

In your editorial you ask, "So why should I mind what 25 Beacon Street does or doesn't do? Why should any feminist care?" I have my own answers to that question, and I hope that you also harbor some yourself, even if fatigue and frustration tend to suppress them from time to time. I believe that our denomination is indisputably in the forefront of feminist issues among religious denominations, in spite of our slow pace and evident imperfections. The consultants who designed and conducted the sexism audit were very impressed with the level of participation and empowerment of women in the UUA, especially in the UUA staff and throughout continental and district committees. But we are not perfect in any area, and in many ways we have a very long way to go. Nevertheless, the consultants, the Sexism Audit Committee and ultimately the UUA Board of Trustees all enthusiastically endorsed the idea that the UUA can and should exercise leadership to "develop, articulate and distribute throughout the UUA (and more broadly)

shared visions of a gender inclusive Association, where women are assumed to be equal to men, and the feminist spirit and perspective are truly valued and celebrated." The Women and Religion Committee is charged with leading that effort and my meetings and conversations with them at the General Assembly and since that date have persuaded me that they are enthusiastic about the challenge and potential that this task brings with it. A Sexism Monitoring Committee has been appointed by the UUA Board, and it will begin working this fall, to observe, perhaps prod, and report on the progress or lack of it, in implementing the recommendations which the Board adopted. I will be serving as a member of that committee, and I do not expect that we will take our task lightly. I also have some fair amount of confidence that Bill Schulz and Kay Montgomery are committed to the findings and recommendations of the sexism audit and that the issues raised by the audit affecting the UUA staff will be addressed.

To you, and the many others who have been working for feminist concerns for so long, it may well seem that the UUA is only going through empty motions which will not result in real change. But I expect that you also know that many men and women within our denomination have yet to become sensitive to feminist issues and values, and part of our ongoing task is to raise consciousness and to educate, so that more and more Unitarian Universalists will really own and share those values. The recent sexism audit and the responses of the denomination to it must find ways to function at many levels, to help us all move forward from where we are now. I think the result will be a gradual development among Unitarian Universalists of that vision of a gender inclusive Association, where women are assumed

to be equal to men, and the feminist spirit and perspective are truly valued and celebrated, and a commitment to try to make that vision a reality.

Your good and hard work with REACHING SIDEWAYS has been and will continue to be a valuable and inspiring part of that movement. I hope that you will keep up your spirits and your good work.

Barry Johnson-Fay  
UUA Trustee for the Connecticut  
Valley District  
Secretary of the UUA  
Branford, Connecticut

*The following memorandum, from the UUA Board of Trustees, dated July 21, 1988, was enclosed in Barry's letter.*

Enclosed for your information, is a copy of the Sexism Audit Report conducted by a committee appointed by the UUA Board of Trustees. In response to the report, the Board at its April and June meetings adopted the following recommendations:

1. That the Board of Trustees establish a committee to monitor the implementation of the Sexism Audit, said committee to be made up of five members and to include the following, to the extent possible:
  - a. a senior manager from the UUA staff
  - b. a representative of the non-exempt staff of the UUA
  - c. a member of the Sexism Audit Committee
  - d. a member of the Racism Monitoring and Assessment Team
  - e. a UUA Board Member

- f. a district president
- g. a religious educator
- h. a member of the Women and Religion Committee

The committee shall monitor the progress of work in implementing those recommendations from the Sexism Audit which have been approved by the Board and/or the Administration. The committee shall meet three times a year and shall report to the UUA Board at the April 1989, 1990, and 1991 board meetings.

2. That the recommendations listed below be referred to the Administration for implementation, and that the Administration report annually to the Board on the implementations of said recommendations, beginning in October of 1988.

- a. Address the exempt/non-exempt split at UUA headquarters.
- b. Provide visible and concrete support for efforts to promote inclusive language by committees and organizations.
- c. Revise Search Committee handbook to include information on legal requirements in the hiring process.
- d. Add to the Congregational Handbook a section on sexism, sexual harassment and legal rights of employees.
- e. Conduct workshops on self-empowerment and sexual harassment for all staff at 25 Beacon.
- f. Provide a series of management development seminars based on self-empowerment principles, topics to include supervisory skills, performance appraisal, managing conflict and goal setting.
- g. Review and revise personnel policies, considering new policies in the areas of parental leaves, and flexible work arrangements.
- h. Develop an orientation program for 25 Beacon with the goal of developing

staff cohesion as well as providing information.

- i. Shorten and revise, for easier use, "Checking Our Balance: Auditing Concepts, Values, and Language."

3. That the Panel on Theological Education be requested to encourage the theological schools to conduct sexism audits to look at their practice, curriculum and administration.

4. That the Ministerial Settlement Task Force be asked specifically to include in their study the issues raised in the sexism audit report.

5. That the Board ask the UUMA (in conjunction with LREDA, if mutually desired) to form a task force to study the issues of sexism as raised in the Sexism Audit, and in particular to review the present status of religious education in terms of gender, salaries, and influence, as well as to explore ways to move towards gender balance.

6. That the Committee on Committees, in consultation with the Women and Religion Committee, review recommended changes regarding the composition and mandate of and support for the Women and Religion Committee.

7. That a comprehensive report of the process, findings, and recommendations of the Sexism Audit be published in the World in its July/August issues and that the UUA provide a copy of the report to all districts, the Commission on Appraisal, the UUMA, LREDA, and the Ministerial Settlement Task Force, and offer to provide copies to others upon request.

8. That the Board ask the Women and Religion Committee to develop

articulate and distribute throughout the UUA (and more broadly) shared visions of a gender inclusive Association where women are assumed to be equal to men, and the feminist spirit and perspective are truly valued and celebrated: with the request that they report to the Board by April 1, 1989.

9. That the Board ask the Women and Religion Committee, with the suggestion that they receive input from UUMA, LREDA, MSUU and lay leadership groups throughout the UUA, to review expectations for ministers and ministers' roles, particularly focusing on: (a) supporting ministers with childcare/family responsibilities: and (b) examining ministerial authority in terms of such things as empowerment of the laity, participation and shared responsibility.

*The second letter I mentioned at the beginning of this section of REACHING SIDEWAYS is from The Reverend Bets Wienecke, Extension Minister of the Live Oak UU Congregation .*

As the newly elected President of the Ministerial Sisterhood for Unitarian Universalist women ministers, I want to let you know I appreciate your on-going and unique contribution to publishing a continental journal for women and men concerned about the issues relating to women and religion.

After reading with interest and empathy your acknowledgement of your "feminist fatigue," I want to assure you that not all UUA clergy are simply involved in "bread and butter issues" but are deeply concerned with revisioning the religious community as a non-patriarchal institution and how that affects "ministerial authority in

terms of such things as empowerment of the laity, participation and shared responsibility." (As stated in the Women and Religion Task Force of the Pacific Central District plan and your editorial.) Those of us who have joined the Ministerial Sisterhood are deeply concerned about the implications of acting out of feminist values and process within our Association and societies.

We feel a deep need to address the relationships between feminism and social justice. To further this concern, the Ministerial Sisterhood Sermon Award Committee will be soliciting sermons addressing this issues this year and the winner will be announced at the 1989 General Assembly.

It seems to me that "Reaching Sideways" is a fine example of the "empowerment of the laity, participation, and shared responsibility." Your work and energy to produce a journal which gives voice to feminist issues and concerns and views is empowering and helps to keep us all connected. Thank you.

In sisterhood.

The Reverend Bets Wienecke  
Extension Minister,  
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777 Camino Pescadero,  
Goleta, CA 93117

## IN MEMORY OF HER: REFLECTIONS

*From a Sermon delivered Nov. 13, 1988 at Cedar Lane Unitarian Church, Bethesda, Md.  
by the Rev. Alida DeCoster*

"Dear God," wrote a little girl named Sylvia, "are boys better than we are? I know you are one, but try to be fair."

God is not only a man. His name is Harold Wishart. At least that is what another little girl thinks: "Our father Wishart in Heaven, Harold be thy name."

The topic of the Meadville Winter Institute in 1987 was Islam. For a week, I, with sixty or so other participants, heard lectures, attended workshops and saw films about this major world religion and culture. I learned a lot. Many of my prejudices were challenged. I came away understanding that Islam manifests itself with as much diversity as Christianity.

The experience which had the most impact on me, and on many of us, was attending an evening service at a Mosque in Madison, Wisconsin. During worship, men and women are separated. Women and children are upstairs in a balcony overlooking the action. Men lead worship, and, as is found in most traditions of known history, men own and control the religious symbols. Men are the readers, the imams, the public controllers of society. This has not always been the case in human history.

While I was in that balcony, I had many feelings. I felt discounted and angry. I felt great solidarity with the women. And I felt proud of being a woman, united with a female essence of power in life giving. We must have some power if we need to be controlled that way.

I have a woman colleague in the Luthern Church locally who described to me the furor that was caused over the recent Reformation Sunday service. The local committee had invited an ordained Luthern woman to give the sermon. The Missouri Synod, which does not ordain women, threatened to boycott the service.

In a course I took at Syracuse University several years ago on Women and Religion, we studied the history of religion from a woman's point of view. I wrote papers on Hindu women's rituals, and nuns in North America. We talked at length about "universal asymmetry" in gender roles. What is apparent in studying cultures, based on the evidence we have, is that women fairly universally have had power in the private sphere of the home and men had power in the public sphere, including control of religious institutions.

What began to intrigue me was the very real traditional power women had in their roles of life-giver, wife and mother. It is generally understood by feminist historians that industrialization and technology have greatly undermined women's ancient power as givers of life. It was only in the nineteenth century that the place of work and the home became separated in western societies. Only then were women severed from the role of participating in the economic support of the family, unless they were poor and were forced to work in factories. Thus came the trivialization of women's lives in society and a loss of identity and economic power.

Another innovation of the nineteenth century was the mass production of alcohol, which, linked with urbanization and drinking away from the home in neighborhood bars, led to widespread alcohol abuse. Battering and desertion became epidemic in industrialized areas.

Hence we see the beginning of a woman's movement in western society in the nineteenth century as a response to trivialization, isolation, devaluation and widespread alcoholism. More and better education of women gave them a new perspective. The Women's Christian Temperance Union may be seen as a prudish movement today, but in its first thirty years, it had a profound effect in unifying and politicizing women. It was, to a great extent, a religious crusade, and out of it grew the women's suffrage movement. Without the risks, the fervor and the success of those early movements, we would not be nearly so far along today as we are in equalizing sex roles.

Once women won the right to vote, there was a period of political dormancy. Energy in promoting this cause was spent, wars and depression were our primary concerns, and very likely it was assumed that having the vote would solve women's problems, just as the long awaited passage of prohibition was supposed to cure the ills of drink.

The nineteen fifties were a throw-back of sorts. In reaction to the chaos of war, and in the need to provide work for the returning veterans, came an exaggeration of the virtues of private life. Women were often very isolated in the suburbs with children, and many yearned for an identity with more effectiveness in the public sphere. This was the beginning of

what is now known as the Second Wave of feminism which occurred in the sixties and seventies when women demanded to be recognized for their talents. In the last twenty years, we have seen dramatic inroads of women into traditionally male dominated fields. Bobbie (Rev. Roberta Nelson) and I stand before you today as ordained ministers. I am proud to say that even 100 years ago that could have been true among Unitarians and especially Universalists.

Yet the integration of women into the power structures of male society, while not yet fully achieved, is also only the beginning. What about men? What about families? What about the future of society? What about the nature of power structures themselves?

Men and women are different. The difference is mysterious and wonderful. And we are also very much alike. There are many reasons why today universal assymtry in gender roles is simply obsolete. With overpopulation and the high cost of raising children, few are opting for large families. While there might be great satisfaction in fulltime housekeeping and child-rearing for some who can afford it, for most women it is a temporary occupation. We live so much longer today and have so much technology to help us in the home that we are freer to develop other talents and make public contributions.

What about the role of men in the home? This is interesting. While women want men to help around the house and complain when they don't, many women are unwilling to give up their traditional power of decision-making in the home. Dad is taking care of the baby, but is he doing a good job? If we really expect



men to welcome us into the public sphere and share their power and prestige, then we must also give up our psychological dominance in the home. There is power there too.

There is a new stage of feminism which is beyond anger. The widespread entry of women into the public sphere comes in an era when a shift in consciousness is needed world wide if we are to survive as a species and as a planet. We need a new paradigm. We must learn to live together in peace, and important lessons from women's lives and experience are needed by the world as a whole.

For women in general, nurture is primary. Relationship comes first, before individuation, before public identity and professional accomplishment. This does not mean that women are naturally better people. Many women are embroiled in power politics and want to dominate. It is an eternal question whether this kind of behavior is innate or culturally determined. I believe that certain kinds of social organization encourage and support certain kinds of behavior. Riane Eisler in *The Chalice and the Blade* has demonstrated that in neolithic times, societies cooperated "in partnership" for centuries with little warfare. In those times, in those cultures, men and women enjoyed more equality in public and private spheres. This is possible again. It is happening. And it is imperative for our survival. Our planet needs a more cooperative, nurture based model of social organization.

Change is never easy. It is easier when love is part of the strategy. Feminist theorists, both men and women, talk of the need to relax rigid hierarchies of dominance. No one likes giving up power un-

less they see some greater power emerging from the giving up. This is spiritual power which is power with rather than power over. Eisler makes a very helpful distinction between hierarchies of dominance and hierarchies of actualization. What we want to move away from are hierarchies of dominance in which power is held rigidly to control and exploit. Hierarchies of actualization allow natural leadership to emerge. Maturity is rewarded automatically by respect. Parents are in charge of children. Workers with more experience supervise. There must be some hierarchies in life, but they should be life enhancing, not oppressive. This is the kind of learning women's experience and feminist studies are bringing to our world. Women's voices are being heard more, and the result can only be better harmony. How precious is the comradeship of nurturing men!

# "THE LAST TEMPTATION of CHRIST"

The hot topic within religious circles these days seems to be "The Last Temptation of Christ," and just as when Kazantzakis first authored the book, the opposition has done little less than commit Scorese to hell themselves. Many religious fundamentalists seem ready to pull out the sack cloth and ashes decrying the film's producer as a modern day Pontius Pilate who is crucifying Jesus a second time. Similarly, Kazantzakis found himself excommunicated from the Greek Orthodox Church after publishing the work.

Of course, we Unitarian Universalists have had our fingers in the proverbial pie along with all the rest. Our constituency tends to be more laissez-faire about the issue questioning what all the fuss is about anyway. Aside from being considerably bored throughout the film myself and feeling a little worry for the protestors of what they consider sacrilege, I too had few theological qualms with the production. It seemed reasonably in line with biblical orthodoxy (but, then again, orthodoxy is considerably unimportant to me), and it made a respectable effort to address the more ultimate issues of life. And of course, wouldn't every true UU delight in Paul's declaring that he didn't care if Jesus wasn't resurrected, it was the idea of a resurrected Jesus that really mattered.

What I do have "qualms" with (to say the least) is the relative ease and comfort with which all religious groups - from left to right, up and down the scale, and every color of the rainbow - have ignored the misogynistic nature of the film and even of opposition to it.

A look at the protests to it point to the heart of the matter: Why is the film objectionable? Because Jesus' fantasy entertains sin. What is the sin? Sexual intimacy with Mary Magdelene. What is Mary Magdelene? A whore, bitch, prostitute, slut. The culmination of degradation. She is the product men buy, not the woman a man loves. To think that Jesus could desire this detestable woman is sacrilege for the film's opponents. The majority of the protest should be against the pimping of Mary a second time; of relegating her to the role of perpetrator of Jesus' sin.

The problem here is not that Jesus is portrayed as desiring Mary; instead the issue rests in the assumption that sexual desire is in and of itself sinful. (And let us not forget, women are rarely portrayed as being led to downfall by sexual desire for a man, instead she lures a man into his tragic demise). Even the depth of Jesus' love for Mary seems not to have the power to redeem the overwhelming stain of his desire. This theme runs so deep that Jesus' idyllic fantasy of life with Mary results in her death during pregnancy.

Yet the misogyny doesn't stop at Jesus' relationship to Mary. A black snake (a symbol with racist as well as misogynist implications) with the voice of Mary tempts Jesus in the desert and is revealed as the devil when Jesus resists. Thus, the formula is clear: Woman = Sex = Evil. Even the sweet little girl with blonde hair and blue eyes (conveying more white supremacist assumptions) who lovingly brings Jesus his utopian fantasy of lie with Mary Magdelene is also found to be the devil in disguise. Finally, the timeless line from

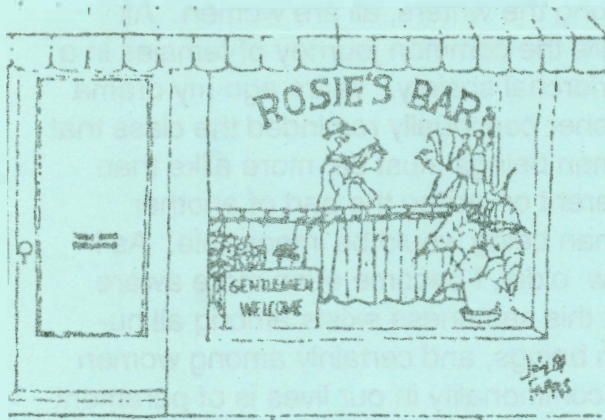
this film which I will always remember is, "Remember, all women are but one woman, they just have different faces."

Cognitively I "know" that this movie simply tried (not with much success, I might add) to make sense of Kazantzakis' work. Yet, on an emotional level, the "knowledge" that Kazantzakis was a naturalist who embraced earthiness and sexuality as the life-blood of human existence doesn't console me. The "knowledge" that for Kazantzakis, god and the devil were often indistinguishable - even no more than two overwhelming forces within a person - that "knowledge" doesn't alleviate my frustration. Emotionally, I can't forgive Kazantzakis for constantly using women to represent sexuality - always and only sexuality. I can't forget that this embracing of sexuality is often played out as a man

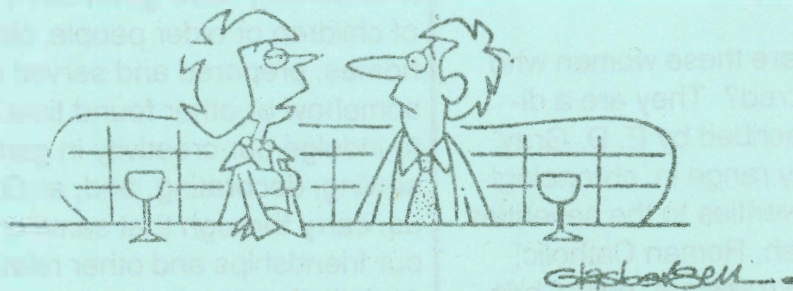
facing the reign of god or the devil in himself. I can't reconcile the view that naturalism = earthiness = sexuality = women. Kazantzakis offers us great freedom and overwhelming passion and beauty in this and other works. Yet his formula is too static; his metaphor too laden with sexist assumptions to adequately speak to women.

The film doesn't even translate Kazantzakis' message well on the screen, and amid the wailing and gnashing of teeth done by our conservative counterparts, no one even takes notice of the misogyny of it all.

Dorothy Rogers  
 UUWF, 25 Beacon Street,  
 Boston, Mass 02108



"Well, if I'm a career girl, then you must be a career boy."



"Melvin, I am self-supporting, articulate and have never spit on you. So why do you call me 'baby'?"

## THE SACRED DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

edited by ELIZABETH DODSON GRAY

When I read the first of Elizabeth Dodson Gray's books, "*GREEN PARADISE LOST*," (formerly "*WHY THE GREEN NIGGER*,") I marveled at her use of simple, down-to-earth language to describe what were complicated concepts---at least in the form I had read them before. Her writing was personal, directed to me, or so I felt, and I identified with her attitudes and her experiences as my own.

Now there is another book, this time edited by Elizabeth Dodson Gray, and I no longer marvel, I expect the book to speak to me and to my experiences as a woman. I am not disappointed.

The basic concept behind this book is that women's experiences have a sacred dimension, one which has been ignored by male writers, certainly by male theologians. What an exciting concept! Of course we women have experiences which are sacred! I recognized the validity of that idea as soon as I began to read Elizabeth Dodson Gray's General Introduction. I also knew that the publishing of this book is of great importance to women everywhere because for the first time that I know about, women, many women, have the opportunity to name what is sacred in their experience.

Who, then, are these women who are naming the sacred? They are a diverse group as described by E. D. Gray. She writes that they range in chronological age from the twenties to the seventies, that they are "Jewish, Roman Catholic, Quaker, Buddhist, Protestant, post-Christian, Goddess women," and surely their backgrounds are equally diverse. Of par-

ticular interest to Unitarian Universalists are the two women Gray describes as "One co-founded a women's retreat center. One has shaken up an entire denomination with her anti-sexism resolutions." She is writing, of course, about Carolyn McDade and Lucile Schuck Longview, and these two women, who are, I am sure, well known to all who read this journal, have written a portion of the book. As Gray states, "In our diversity we bring you truth; where we are undifferentiated, we bring you limitation."

But although I can agree with the statement that diversity brings truth, (which sounds very much like an orthodox Unitarian Universalist remark), still a paradox exists. Beneath the superficial differences among the writers, all are women. All share the common journey of females in a patriarchal society. Years ago my drama teacher continually reminded the class that human beings must be more alike than different or acting the part of another human being would be impossible. As I grow older, I become even more aware that this sameness exists among all human beings, and certainly among women the commonality in our lives is of paramount importance. The majority of us, no matter who we are, have given birth, taken care of children or older people, cleaned our homes, prepared and served meals, and somehow or other found time in our lives to indulge our creativity in gardening, sewing, decorating, and, as Gray reminds us, carry through that same creativity in our friendships and other relationships. And this is why we women experience ourselves when we are reading this book. The women who wrote about their own

experiences were also writing about us. They were undoubtedly aided in finding the words to express their sacred experiences through the lectures at Harvard Divinity School in the Theological Opportunities Program lecture series, but in so doing, they found words for all of us.

If I were asked to name which sacred experience of women in the book I find most interesting or meaningful, I would have to name several. (As I write I recognize the fact that my choices are subjective and have more to do with my own personal experiences and my current attitudes than they do with the superior merit of any of the writing.) First of all, I would have to list the part written by Carolyn McDade & Lucile Schuck Longview which is called "*Coming Home Like Rivers to the Sea: A Women's Ritual*," a worship service first given at the 1980 "Women and Religion" continental convocation of Unitarian Universalists held in East Lansing, Michigan. I am certain that many of the readers of this journal were there. So was I. For me it was an important milestone in my work in Women and Religion because, for the first time in my life I was attending a conference which centered on the sexism in our denomination and offered positive ways to make changes.

The religious service, "*Coming Home Like Rivers to the Sea: A Women's Ritual*," featured a water ceremony as the central part. As the authors of this service write, "it was a ritual of women's being connected by a universal symbol, water, a ritual of women being connected to the totality of life- - - the ceremony flows from what the participants bring to it. Each brings a container of water that has special meaning to her."

Although I was present at this service, I missed the wonderful words said by those women who were bringing water from their own areas and speaking of its significance to them. Alas, I was seated too far back in the room. But fortunately for us all, Carolyn and Lucile saved the written version of what most of the women said, and they present these words as part of the service. Of particular significance to me are the words of Jean Zoerheide, who is the Consulting Editor of this journal. Jean brought rain from Maryland and said, "These drops of rain fell in Maryland a few days ago. While I held my pan to catch them, dripping from the roof, I could see rain almost filling a slight depression in the driveway where city starlings came to bathe. Cleansing is the property of rain, not purity. From what ocean, stream or field were these molecules drawn upward by the sun? With what other drops did they join to form the cloud that released them to rain upon my state? As I return them to their eternal cycle, I wonder whose distant thirst they will quench in some other land and some other year. Interaction, not purity, is the property of rain: cleansing, refreshing, life-giving, transforming rain!"

I think that it is time for UU women to again use this water service for worship as prepared by Carolyn McDade and Lucile Schuck Longview. As women we need the music of poetic language and the personal experiences of the participants which this service gives us. As women we are interested and involved in the particular, not the abstract. As women our sacred experiences are "here", in reality, in the ordinary, not "there", in the extraordinary, in those areas declared holy by males.

My next choice of the most memorable portion of this book for me is called "*The Meaning of Eating and the Home as Ritual Space*," by Sharon Parks. It is through this portion of the book that words were given to some vague, nebulous feelings I have had about meal preparation and dinners for special family occasions. I should perhaps start this discussion by stating that my mother did not pride herself on her cooking. She avoided cooking whenever possible. As a woman who received her law degree in the Class of 1911 (yes, there were law schools for women at that time in this area.), she was convinced that cooking, or eating a meal, was not, and should not be of great importance to an educated woman. (The educated women of that time were also taught in books by doctors that education would affect the reproductive organs of women). Needless to say, cooking was not a great priority of mine during the period when my children were small. And yet----still ----- I recognized a happiness in me when my children told me they had enjoyed the meal, or when I prepared the meal ordered by the birthday child of his or her favorites, or the deep satisfaction in preparing and serving a holiday meal. But I didn't really understand my own feelings until I read the words of Sharon Parks who writes as follows:

*Our need to eat is a vulnerability directly related to our vulnerability to love. We need each other to survive. We cannot separate the fact 'because I was loved, I am' from the reality 'because I was fed, I am.' We are physical beings made in and for relation, and our word companion means 'one with whom we share bread.'*

Last of all, but certainly not least, I would like to call your attention to that portion of the book which is called "*Our Bodies are Still Ourselves as We Age, and They are Still Sacred*", by Jeanne Brooks Carritt. The author is both writing to me and about me when she writes:

I am not overly fond of my aging body when it complains to me too often. I am getting old and I find it difficult not to accept society's definition of beauty - - that wrinkles and sagging skin are ugly.

I am aware that the agism which exists against older women also exists against older men. My husband tells me that only after he retired did he really understand emotionally what it is to be a woman because retired men are also treated as 'the other'----or as second class males. Still, I continue to see men who are two and three times the age of the heroine play romantic leads in T.V. shows, and I have never seen a woman whose face shows the wrinkles of her age play the part of the romantic interest of a young male.

Jeanne Brooks Carritt writes that our attitude toward the older woman comes about because we have "lost the sacred, our connections with the whole," through losing our understanding of life as "a process and not as a product." We no longer have the old woman, the Crone, in our culture who takes care of the sick in body, in mind, and in spirit, is the mid-wife and the undertaker. All of these jobs are now performed by professionals, and the tradition of the knowledgeable old Crone which lasted for hundreds of years is lost. Instead the Old Woman becomes a

witch who is burned at the stake----as thousands were from the beginning of the witch mania which began in the fifth century and continued for 1300 years, or she become the sweet little old lady, somewhat plump, and always innocuous who sits and waits without complaining for some "demonstration of interest and concern."

Oh, yes, I can certainly say that Jeanne B. Carritt speaks for me when she ends her piece with these words:

*Time slows us all down. But it provides us with opportunities for deliberation, for gathering up the pieces of our lives, for weaving them together into a sacred whole. The chlorophyll of spring and summer covers up the red and the gold, but what a glorious surge there is in autumn when the chlorophyll disappears and the red and gold is revealed in all its brilliance before the leaves turn brown.*

You will undoubtedly find your own favorite portions of this book as you read it-----portions which give a sacred dimension to experiences of yours as well as the author's. In the brochure I have enclosed in your journal this time, you will find the form to order your copy from Roundtable Press, Four Linden Square, Wellesley, Mass. I have also included a brochure with an order form so that you can order the music of Carolyn McDade who is our very own minister of music.

Sara Best

Chevy Chase, Md.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR UU WOMEN

1. The UU Women's Federation offers the Feminist Theology Award for innovative, product-oriented UU women/feminist scholars. Applications must be submitted by 1/2/89, and are available from UUWF, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA. 02108; tel. (617) 742-2100, x 653.

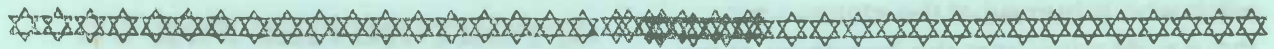
### APPLICATION/SELECTION TIME-LINE:

- 0 Applications due: Jan. 1, 1989
- 0 Reading and decisions: Nov 1 to Jan '89
- 0 Further explorations and refinements as needed: Jan. to Mar '89
- 0 Recipients notified by: May 1989
- 0 Award presentation: June, '89 UUWF Biennial Convention

2. The UU Women's Federation Circuit Rider Program offers programs and workshops in the feminist theology/theology, feminist ethics, women's spirituality, UU women's history, intergenerational issues, women's life transitions, women's leadership models, and leadership skills. To enlist a women's help in presenting programs for your church/society/women's group, write UUWF, 25 Beacon St., MA., 02108; tel. (617) 742-2100, X 653.

## SCANDANAVIA: FOCUS WOMEN

SCANDINAVIA (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Amsterdam) June 27-July 16, 1989 (20 days) \$2190 plus air. (Additional six days London Theatre Package only \$383). Includes hotels, most meals, all land transportation & transfers, meetings with women leaders, Fana Folklore, city tours and much more. University credit if desired. Co-sponsored by W&R Task Force, PCD, and San Jose State University. Contact Meg Bowman  
San Jose, CA



## CHANNING'S SISTERS AND BROTHERS



*Editor's Notes: Begun at the suggestion of Lucile Schuck Longview, this column is intended to be a means of sharing both information and news of the activities of women and men all over the country. In this way we discover that we are not alone, that there are other UUs all over the continent who are working with us even though great distances separate our work.*

### FROM "GLEANINGS"

From the MSUU Fall newsletter, "GLEANINGS", we learned that there were NO sermons submitted for their MSUU Sermon award last year on the topic of "UU women, singular or plural, past or present." We can't believe that there were no sermons delivered on that topic last year. What we strongly suspect is that some very good sermons did not compete for this award because of the author's humility, (my sermon simply can't be that good), or lack of knowledge, (what kind of award did you say that was?)

We encourage all readers of, and writers for this journal to submit a sermon either delivered by them, or by somebody else to MSUU on the same topic as last year, AND/OR feminism and social justice. This opportunity is open to anyone in the denomination, male or female, lay or clergy. The winner will be the honored guest at the MSUU annual meeting dinner or luncheon at the 1989 General Assembly. The sermon will be printed either in "GLEANINGS" or distributed separately to all women in UU ministry. (It will also be printed in "REACHING SIDEWAYS" if I receive your permission to do so.)

The sermon is to have been preached



between APRIL 17, 1988 and APRIL 17, 1989. Entries must be received by April 30.

Send three copies, author unidentified, to Linda Whittenberg, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, P. O. Box 1352, San Luis Obispo CA 93406. Beth Ide and Denise Tracy are also on the Selection Committee.

### FROM THE UU WOMEN'S FEDERATION

We want to remind you that the UU Women's Federation has published **TRANSFORMING THOUGHT**, Volume I of position papers on feminist theology. The authors are Priscilla Baird Hinckley, Lucile Schuck Longview, Carolyn McDade, Judith Walker-Riggs and Beth Williamson. Volume II of the position papers will be out in Winter 1988-89. Its authors will include Dianne E. Arakawa, Jane Boyajian, Carol Graywing, and others.

**TRANSFORMING THOUGHT** may be purchased for \$10 per volume. However, both volumes will be given free to those who contribute \$50 or more to the UUWF Feminist Theology Award. Send your check payable to UUWF FTA for \$10, \$20, or \$50 to the UUWF in Boston.

"REACHING SIDEWAYS" is proud to have some of its authors included in the first Volume of these position papers. We are also proud to have been listed as a newsletter for women in an issue of "**THE COMMUNICATOR**". We ask, however, dear readers, that you make note of the



fact that "REACHING SIDeways" is published three times a year instead of six.

### **FROM THE W&RIF of the PACIFIC CENTRAL DIS.**

From the **W & RIF** newsletter of the PCD we learn that Meg Bowman was the featured author at San Jose University Student Union on March 8 with a presentation of "Seneca Falls - 1848" as part of the Women's Week celebration, and that Rosemary Matson has been selected by the Monterey County Commission on the Status of Women as one of ten outstanding women of Monterey County for 1988. Rosemary was also kind enough to send me a copy of the front page of the "**Carmel Valley Sun**," which featured a picture of her and two Soviet women who were visiting the valley. The two Russian women were enjoying a brief visit with the Matsons after attending the Fifth Annual East-West Seminar for Peace in Santa Cruz, June 26-July 1, where they joined women from Finland, Sweden, other Soviet women, and women from the United States who meet annually to promote international women's networks and set strategies for peace, justice, and better understanding between nations.

### **FROM THE "NEARLY THERE" NEWSLETTER**

I am very late in including this statement from Marjorie Smith, which was published in June of 1987 in the "**NEARLY THERE**", **NEWSLETTER**, but I have decided that her statement is timeless and that you, our readers, deserve the inspiration you will receive by reading it. (I have made some cuts, which do not, I think, affect the strength of her piece. She writes as follows:

*"It is very true, I believe, that implementing the Women and Religion Resolution sometimes demands of us that we be disobedient to the Fathers of the church. Still, we can observe the basic tenets of democratic societies -- which Unitarian Universalist Associations/Fellowships/Churches claim to be -- and insist on challenging the status quo. My fervent hope is that fewer and fewer women will feel compelled to ride to the rescue of those Fathers, and that more and more women will **INSIST** upon the realization of our most impossible dream -- the realization of religious communities that truly reflect the spirituality of every human personality; a whole personality within which resides both female and male, in gloriously varying degrees.*

*I criticize our church for the very reason that I love it truly and yearn for its as yet unrealized promise of wholeness.*

*To question the conventional notion of authority is basic to our UU theology and central to our religious quest as a faith and as a denomination..*

*We must, each of us, affirm the truth that **UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM IS A FAITH OF PROCESS.***

*Whether I choose to participate directly in Goddess Worship/celebrations or not, I affirm every woman's God-given right to do so. Whether you choose to participate directly in Women and Religion work as an insister, I expect you to affirm my right to do so. For I am convinced that the imperative I feel to challenge the church to be a whole church is also God-given, and is not only a right, but a sacred responsibility.*

*I believe, as Rosemary Radford Ruether does, that Women & Religion work's insistence on change within our religious institutions is at heart a re-vision in the tradition of the exodus community . . . a journey toward liberation which calls for a re-visioning of the very meaning of ministry and sacrament. And further, I believe that it is imperative that we cease infantilizing our males and increase our efforts to realize the promise of stated and cherishable principles of religious faith and quest. I whole-heartedly believe in our church's women's ability to support each other in the basic principles of religious/spiritual quests.*

*"Dissent is unpatriotic everywhere," said James Baldwin. It is imperative that we, each of us, refuse to give truth to that myth.*

### **FROM YOUR NEWSLETTER?**

I know that "REACHING SIDEWAYS" is receiving the newsletters of a good many of the W&R groups in our denomination, along with the ones I have already mentioned in this section. We have heard from Michigan, we know about the retreat held in Oct. by W&R in the Joseph Priestley District, (our own) and about the retreat held in Nov. by the W&R group in Florida. We have also heard from the New Hampshire Vermont District and occasionally we hear from "SWIRL".

We would, however, love to hear from all of the districts which have W&R groups. Please send us your newsletters and let us know what you are doing so that we can tell other readers. We cannot guarantee to give you "news" in the sense of the very latest happening. But it is important for all of us to know what is being said and

thought by other groups in the country so that we can continue to be inspired by the W&R activities and words of as many groups as possible.

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### **EDITORIAL**

Recently I have been asked what kinds of writing "REACHING SIDEWAYS" wants. The question cheered me because it indicated that this individual was thinking about writing for us. Very often I am certain that there are writers among you, dear readers, who need but a little urging to put their thoughts into a written form. Please consider yourself urged. "REACHING SIDEWAYS" is interested in a great variety of material from the women and men in our denomination who want to stop the stereotypical attitudes and action toward gender in our denomination. If you hear a sermon on this topic, or if you write one, we are interested. If you read a book which deals with the history of how women became the "other" gender, we would like to hear about it. Or perhaps you want to write about the kinds of situations which affect women---about the feminization of poverty---or sexual harassment in the workplace. We would love to read what you have to say on the subject.

We are also interested in articles which take a different point of view than that expressed by another writer in our journal-----including disagreement with ideas expressed by the editor. We believe that airing our diversity offers a wonderful opportunity for all of us to find our commonality.

The deadline for our next journal is March 1. Please call me if you are delayed in mailing your work. My number is

Or mail your work to my address: Chevy Chase, Md. I look forward to hearing from you. Sara Best



# ECO-SPIRITUALITY AND UUs

A recent issue of "critical mass", published by the students of Starr King School for the Ministry, posed the question, "Does Green or eco-spirituality, including neo-paganism, offer anything to the Unitarian Universalist tradition?" My response to the editors was a resounding Yes!

In voting to include "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part" in the UUA Principles and Purposes, UUs have agreed. The concept of interdependence stands (moves? dances?) at the heart of Green spirituality.

Green politics is a holistic worldview embracing the 10 Key Values (listed below) of the Committees of Correspondence which coordinate Green political activity in North America. Charlene Spretak, spokesperson, says that the core concepts are sustainability and interrelatedness. These (concepts) are similar to the operative principles of the Green Parties in Germany, England and Italy. An American novel, ECOTOPIA, by Ernest Callenbach, (Bantam, 1975) played a major role in inspiring the ecological vision in Europe. It is also my guiding vision for economic and social justice, including female leadership in a nonviolent society which uses technology appropriately.

## TEN KEY VALUES OF NORTH AMERICAN GREENS

1. Ecological Wisdom
2. Grassroots Democracy
3. Personal and Social Responsibility
4. Nonviolence
5. Decentralization
6. Community-based Economics

7. Postpatriarchal Values
8. Respect for Diversity
9. Global Responsibility
10. Future Focus

The motto of the German Greens is, "We are neither left nor right; we are in front." Neither big business, nor big, centralized government can be expected to solve our problems.

Another name for Green spirituality is deep ecology. This is the belief that all meaningful ecological analysis begins with the spiritual question of the individual's "right relationship" with his/her environment. Do we see ourselves as having dominion over the earth's resources or as having responsibility for the gifts of creation? As "ecologist" Thomas Berry points out, if there were a world council of all creatures, we would be the ones asked to leave for being irresponsible earth citizens. We are guilty of speciesism, of favoring selfish human ends over the life and health of other creatures.

Like UUs in our Women and Religion resolution (1977), Greens espouse post-patriarchal values. Unlike UUs, they practice this value "religiously", apportioning speaking time in meetings as well as seats in the Bundestag equally and alternately to women and men. The UUA, meanwhile, is now led by a feminist-identified man and will be led increasingly by women ministers - the majority of those currently in seminary

The Green parties have always been rooted in ecological concerns, having been formed as an amalgam of the ecological and the anti-nuclear movements. UUs are



in near-universal agreement about these same ethical concerns. Almost all of us see protecting the environment as very nearly a sacred trust, not debatable.

Where does simple concern for not "dirtying our own nest" cross over into eco-spirituality? The Green vision is a holistic vision. It deals with the mind/body/spirit of the individual. It celebrates as often as it debates. Large U. S. Green gatherings of which I am aware begin and end with outdoor rituals, affirming our dependency on and relationship with Mother Earth. At its deepest, such ritualized expression of gratitude for the earth's bounty is Green spirituality.

All effective ritual works at a non-conscious level, calling into consciousness that which gives us meaning. Through such ritual we develop a profound awareness of our love for this planet. This awareness is often expressed using the term *Gaia*, the name of the Greek Mother Earth goddess. In this way, we begin consciously to identify with the needs of the planet as a whole. This expansion of ego boundaries beyond the self is a classical sign of spiritual growth.

Many of our newer churches are set in a wood and use large walls of glass to incorporate nature into our worship. At our summer camps, we gather and do large outdoor rituals, often celebrating nature as much as we celebrate one another in community. As Women & Religion Committees and Cakes for the Queen of Heaven study groups proliferate, more of these outdoor rituals acknowledge the importance of the elements, air, earth, fire and water through gesture, symbol and chanting. Invariably in such outdoor settings, when not limited by the space itself, we group into large circles, so every

one sees and values one another, large and small, young and old. UUs are already Green in spirit.

This is where the neo-paganism comes in. In this movement, our intuitive knowledge is celebrated as the goddess within. Neo-pagan ritual is done in circles and uses the four elements and symbolism drawn from nature to celebrate our harmonious dependency on Mother Earth. The parallels in form and practice to both Green spirituality and unencumbered camp-style UU spirituality are obvious. Both Greens and UUs are drawing on the neo-pagan movement for chants and interdependency symbolism such as the spider's web. And where do pagans get their ritual? The same place they have for many thousands of years: they make it up! So goes pagan humor.

Obviously, rejection of hierarchical authority is a value shared by all three groups. The recent UUA acceptance of the Covenant of UU Pagans (CUUPs) affirms that pagan values are not in conflict with UU values.

I'm aware that many UUs would be shocked to learn that we are aligned with neo-pagan values, much less that we are borrowing their rituals in informal settings. The appropriate response would be to educate ourselves as to the beliefs and practices of neo-pagans. Most of these fears would doubtlessly be calmed. It is important, in such an exploration, to understand the difference between paganism, as exemplified by Starhawk, which is benign and loving - while empowering - and Satanism, which celebrates evil and is disempowering. We must understand the difference between good and bad witches, between white and black magic. In such discernment, the media is almost no help.

The UU Pagans do not represent the first time a young group of radicals has rejected the authority of their UU elders and embraced God(ess) as immanent. Ironically, our forebears, the Transcendentalist, and Thoreau in particular, are now saints of the Green movement.

We as leaders of the UUA can take steps to learn about deep ecology (Sessions and Devall's book of that title), and Green spirituality (Charlene Spretnak's The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics, as well as the neo-pagan movement (Margo Adler's Drawing Down the Moon, 1987 update, Beacon Press, and Starhawk's The Spiral Dance). We can also participate in Native American ritual as a means of gaining awareness of the earth as mother.

When we do, we will begin to identify with our planet. When we as individuals have been transformed, we may transform the awareness of those who appear to hold our planet's destiny in their hands. Many times in the past, UU's spiritual awareness has led us to take a leadership role in change. Our "respect for the interdependent web" principle and our feminist commitment have the potential to make us once again influential beyond our small numbers.

(Has anyone noticed the correlation between our current size and the Biblical number of 144,000 needed to bring the Realm of God?).

Sarajane Siegfriedt, Washington.  
(Sarajane chairs the Pacific Northwest District Adult Religious Growth and Learning Committee and has written a 12 week adult discussion curriculum, Deep Ecology and Creation-Centered Spirituality: The Interdependent Web). She works in telecommunications systems marketing and is the mother of a 5 year old boy.



"You told me to get all dolled up for you..."



"It's been nice chatting with you, Loretta, and remember me to the little man."

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Reaching Sideways Journal

#### A THANK YOU NOTE

The cost of this issue has been met by the contributions which we have received from friends of REACHING SIDEWAYS. All of the diligent labor of the publishing crew does save money, but the cost of printing and postage must still be paid.

To every one of you who have contributed to REACHING SIDEWAYS, we say thank you. The date on the address label shows the time of your last contribution. We deeply appreciate your support.

If there is no date on your address, then we have not received a contribution from you. You are receiving REACHING SIDEWAYS because we believe the issues in this journal are important to you. But we cannot continue indefinitely to send you copy. We need contributions from each reader who now receives REACHING SIDEWAYS. There is no other source of revenue or assistance which enables us to continue to send our journal to all who receive this issue. We will certainly fulfill our commitment to those who contribute.

Our suggestions for amount of contribution are:

- \$4.00 covers the direct cost of three issues
- \$10.00 enables copies to be sent to Unitarian Universalist officials who may not subscribe, but to whom we wish to send our message.

Please notify us by check in the mail of your wishes. If you have friends who might be interested in our journal, send us their names too and we will mail them a complimentary copy.

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