

"The Body in Pain: Sexuality, Spirituality, Ecology and the Church"

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Presentation at Augustana College, Sioux Falls
April 15, 2005

Introduction

First, let me thank Ann and Paul for inviting me to be with you during this week as you focus on the critical issues around the theme of "The Body of Christ: Sexuality and Spirituality." These are issues I have been reflecting on for many years now, and I appreciate the chance to think out loud with the Augustana community this week. But I'm also reminded of the hazards of selecting the title for a talk before one has already written the talk! My ideas about what I want to discuss this morning have shifted a bit since Ann and I talked about a title last fall. If I were selecting a title today, it would be something like "The Body in Bloom" or "The Body in Birth" because I want to focus more on the possibilities for transformation of the Church from being a deeply divided body, one in pain, to a body in the midst of birthing a new possibility for a transformed life together – or perhaps reflecting this time of spring and Easter, a body in bloom, a body being resurrected. And I'd like to look not only at sexuality as it relates to spirituality, but also at ecology, that is, at the Earth and our place on it – as linked resources for getting there. So how about something like this: "The Body in Pain, The Body in Birth, The Body in Bloom: Sexuality, Spirituality, Ecology, and the Church"!

A word about how I have gotten to these ruminations may be helpful. For many years now in my work as an ethicist I have been concerned for developing an *ethic of sustainability* – one that fosters human and earthly flourishing on this Earth, this gift of God's good creation, and one that can be sustained through time and change. I believe an ethic of sustainability must touch us in all levels of our lives, from our deepest, most intimate levels such as we experience

in sexuality, to the level of the earth community itself, that is, ecology. And it must be an ethic that is grounded in that which ultimately sustains: spirituality, faith, God – the very life force itself.

In my doctoral work at Union Seminary, I used the rubrics of “Gay” and “Gaia” as ways of symbolizing these two end points and the ethic of sustainability. And I believe that much of what has put our Church Body in pain in recent years has been its refusal to be transformed by them, and instead to try to control, resist, or repress the energies that are released in our sexual and ecological relations with others. But I believe that with the guidance of God’s Spirit, the Church Body can lead to a new birth, a new blooming, turning our current pains into labor pains that accompany new life and transformation of the old. I’ll start this afternoon by developing some of my thoughts on what an ethic of Gay and Gaia, and ethic of right-relation *for all of us* might look like, and then move to some cautionary and hopeful lessons we can learn from a text of our own time, Alice Walker’s, *The Color Purple*. Then I’ll close with some comments about where we find ourselves today as a Body seeking to transform its pain, and we’ll open it up to conversation and joint reflection.

I. Gay and Gaia: Transforming Pain to New Life

Springtime, 1973. A teenage boy wanders out onto the Colorado prairie, seeking the solace and comfort in its wildflowers and gentle breezes that seems denied him in the boarding school environment he has left behind. Struggling with sexual and emotional feelings too confused for words, taunts of "faggot" and "homo" ringing in his ears, he heads toward the familiar cottonwoods and streams, seeking out a place where he feels embraced, a place where he feels connected to others and they to him, where he is able to love and be loved in return.

Summer, 1990. Now older, the boy relaxes in the arms of his lover's strong body, surrounded by the high North Cascades peaks still mantled in snow, serenaded by distant waterfalls and wind whispering through tamarack and pine. Embraced by erotic love and all of nature, he marvels at the gift of connectedness to others and otherkind.

Gay and Gaia, two parts of who I am, two ways through which I know and am known. Gay--the erotic lifeforce welling up within me, seeking connection and intimacy with others. And Gaia--the ecological lifeforce surrounding me and flowing through me, showing me the connection of all things with each other. Gay and Gaia tell me much about who I am and how I relate to others, human and "otherkind," with whom I share this planet. Gay and Gaia tell me about where and how I am located within the human and earth ecology, when that location feels right and when it is fundamentally at odds with whom I am convinced we are created to be.

Gay and Gaia also tell me about dislocation: how as a gay man I have been dislocated from both human and natural ecologies by societal beliefs that discount homosexuality as "unnatural," outside the bounds of natural, acceptable human behavior; how as a member of human communities growing voraciously out of control with respect to our nonhuman neighbors I have become dislocated from ecologically sustainable patterns and relationships in the broader earth community; how nonhuman members of the earth's biotic communities increasingly are dislocated and extinguished as human activities threaten the continuity of all life on the planet.

Paired together, Gay and Gaia may reveal connections that as a teenager I could only intuit: that the societal forces and dynamics involved in the relentless destruction of the prairie ecosystem where I lived, turning it into a rapidly spreading suburban sprawl, are related to those that tried to undermine and destroy my emerging gay identity and those of countless other lesbians and gay men. Similarly, Gay and Gaia can tell us what I later experienced with my lover in a mountain meadow free from homophobia: that the erotic energy that most deeply connects us with others also can point to a deeper ecological connection with all of creation.

My guess is that for many of you here today, pairing the terms "Gay" and "Gaia" together with "Sexuality," "Ecology," and "Spirituality," may evoke a certain sense of dissonance or

discomfort. At the very least, I hope you find it intriguing! In fact, my main hope this morning is to provoke our "ethical imaginations," to stimulate you to perhaps think a bit differently about some of the challenging ethical issues that divide us as a church and a global earth community today. Before I try to spell out more about what I mean by Gay and Gaia, and what an ethic of right-relation rooted might look like, let me tell you a bit about how I got to this point.

I grew up in the West in a large family that spent a lot of time outdoors: in the mountains, in the deserts, at the ocean. I grew to love this contact with nature, and eventually it led to my studying geology and ecology, to understand the origins of our planet, and what it takes for nature to sustain itself and continue to function. At the same time, beginning in my teen-age years I was dealing with the emergence of homosexual feelings and a gay identity in an isolated context where I had few people in which I could confide my feelings of confusion and fear. For many years I saw no connection between my love of nature and my erotic orientation toward other men, and I kept these parts of myself rigidly compartmentalized and separate.

In my early twenties I left geology for the study of theology and ethics, and within this I began to examine the way homophobia--the fear or prejudice against homosexual feelings and acts--operates in our society. I began to notice that discrimination against lesbians and gay men often was justified simultaneously by two contradictory forms of logic. On the one hand, homosexuals were seen as unnatural, outside the bounds of a world of nature presumed to be exclusively heterosexual. Since homosexual acts do not lead to procreation, the argument goes, homosexuality must be unnatural. On the other hand, lesbians and gay men were often condemned for being "too sexual," "too animal-like," "too close to nature," and hence a threat to culture and civilization, understood as set apart from nature.

As I researched this topic further, I began to see that the contradiction was not only in how homosexuality was perceived and understood, but also how nature itself was portrayed. Throughout the history of Western culture, nature has been seen both as a nurturing, procreative force that provides humankind with what is essential for our lives, but also as a wild, chaotic force that simultaneously threatens the accomplishments of human culture and civilization.

Moreover, the same contradictory association of homosexuals with nature has been applied to other historically marginalized groups, particularly to women, Native Americans, and African-Americans. Nature has been seen both as "Mother Earth," the all-giving, all-providing gentle and passive woman who meets our every need, but also as a wild, uncontrollable female force that threatened "man's" survival and therefore must be controlled and contained. A similar dualistic construct was applied to both Native Americans and Africans to justify their conquest and enslavement: Indians and Africans as less than fully human, outside the realm of full humanity; Indians and Africans as closer to nature, whose animalistic and oversexed character required subjugation and control.

The self-contradictory logic informing this stance results from the conflicting ways Western society has understood and symbolized nature as both nurturing mother and as threatening, uncontrollable chaos. Hence, when nature is viewed primarily as procreative mother, lesbians and gay men have been seen as the essence of unnatural because of the allegedly nonprocreative nature of our relationships. Heterosexual complementarity and procreation are posited as unchanging essential norms of nature and human nature; whatever falls outside this is therefore perverted or "unnatural." When nature is associated with sexuality as nonrational and noncontrollable forces that threaten a rational and ordered culture, gay men and lesbians are seen to represent the epitome of "animalistic" sexual otherness whose sexual expression escapes the bounds of culture and threatens the "natural" heterosexual social order.

Unnatural or "too" natural -- in either case Western constructs and practices have excluded people with homoerotic feelings and behavior from both human culture and nature. Homosexuality has been seen as a threat to a social order understood as either rooted in nature or threatened by nature. Those who have studied these dynamics have pointed out that common to all these constructs -- homosexuals, women, Native Americans and Africans as animalistic and oversexed -- is a pervasive and historically deeply rooted fear in Western Judeo-Christian culture of what the Greeks term eros or the erotic -- the drive to intimate, sensual, pleasurable connection with others. This, of course, is the basis of the schizophrenic message that lesbians

and gay men hear from most churches: it is okay to be homosexual, as long as you do not act on it. The point of exclusion, of separation, is the erotic -- acting on the urge toward intimate, sensual, pleasurable connection with others of the same sex. For lesbian and gay Christians, the ultimate irony is that a religion whose gospel message is focused on love, excludes us precisely for whom and how we choose to love others.

Let me return to my original question--what is the connection, if any, between Gay and Gaia, between sexuality and the earth, between the erotic and ecology? When I discovered the connection between fear of the erotic in our relationships with justification of homophobia, I then turned to a rapidly growing body of literature where lesbian, gay, and feminist theologians and ethicists are working to rethink and reclaim the erotic as a positive and necessary element for how we relate to each other--that is, an ethic of right-relation. Following the lead of writers such as Audre Lorde and Carter Heyward, the erotic is being recovered as "our embodied yearning for mutuality"¹ in our relationships--for just, mutually supporting and empowering ways of relating to each other. It is this discovery of the rightness of our embodied relationships that has fueled and sustained countless lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons in our struggles for full recognition of our rights and our humanity.

Yet ecological ethics is *also* fundamentally about right-relation, about rethinking and reunderstanding the dynamics of our relationships with all other forms of life within the ecosystems that nurture and sustain us. Within the realm of moral reflection -- of who we are and how we interact -- both the erotic and the ecological, then, are rooted in concepts of right-relation. They are both powerful forces of right relation that can be either life-giving and fulfilling, or distorted. Distortion of the erotic and the ecological leads not to right-relation, but an ethics of domination, expressed through fear of the erotic as in homophobia, or a lack of respect for nature, as characterizes so much of our current relations with other parts of the natural world.

In recent years it has been thinking about these ways of thinking about the ecological and the erotic--our locations, dislocations and connections--that has shaped much of my ethical

reflection. I am convinced that only when we reintegrate these two powerful forms of connecting --the erotic and the ecological -- will we have the moral grounding and vision needed for living in and through these perilous times.

Let me now try to spell out more carefully what I mean by the terms "Gay" and "Gaia." I use the signifier "Gay" to draw attention to the presence of the erotic in *all* our lives as a pointer toward mutuality in relationship, which *for me* most deeply experienced in gay relationship, yet for others may be experienced most deeply in heterosexual, lesbian, bisexual relationship, or even in singleness. As Carter Heyward has pointed out, however, because of our historical exclusion at the point of erotic love, it may be the special privilege of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons to help lead the way in revisioning deeply rooted right-relation in our communities and relationships. Hence Gay as a filter or norm of this ethic specifically incorporates attention to homophobia and heterosexism in order to ask, "how do oppressive historical and contemporary attitudes and practices toward LGBT persons relate to exploitative attitudes and practices toward nature and the land?" Are there connections between attitudes and practices that lead to the domination of gay people and domination of the land? Gay also draws attention to the positive role of the erotic as a powerful force for connection in right-relation--so urgently needed for *all* of us as part of an ecological ethic.

"Gaia," on the other hand, draws attention to the metaphor of the earth as a living organism, now threatened by ongoing human assault. Gaia comes from the word for the Greek earth goddess and was first employed by biologists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis to underscore their belief that the entire planet operates as a self-regulating living system or single organism.² Here it functions specifically to remind us that *all* ethics must develop an ecological or "ecocentric" framework that incorporates the ecosystem as our primary community. Gaia reminds us of our need to shift away from anthropocentric ways of thinking that put human beings (or at least some human beings) at the center of our frame of reference and regard other forms of life primarily in terms of their instrumental value to meeting human needs and wants.

Grounding an ethic of right-relation in the paired norms of the erotic and the ecological, of Gay and Gaia, has important implications for how we think about right-relation on at least three levels: how we humans both conceive of and relate to God or the sacred; how we conceive of and relate to the rest of nature and our place in it; how we conceive of ourselves and right-relation within the human community. My work in Gay and Gaia is an effort to reflect deeply and critically on these themes: how we choose to live and be, where we find the sacred in our midst and how we discern it and name it, and what all this has to do with the earth community and our place within it.

II. Reflections on *The Color Purple*

As an ethicist, I am by vocation about the business of looking at the world around us, and at who we are in this world, and helping to discern and clarify the choices, values, and actions that can make our world a better place--for its human and nonhuman members. As a way of moving into this, rather than using the traditional language and method of ethics, I begin more indirectly, by reflecting out loud on a well-known section of the story of Celie and Shug in Alice Walker's book The Color Purple.

Why start here? The story of Celie and Shug is certainly not my own story; in fact it is rooted in realities that in some ways are very different from those that have shaped my story. The Color Purple tells the experiences of a poor African American woman immersed in relationships defined largely by race, gender, sexuality, class and a rural, agricultural context at the turn of the century in the South of the United States. Yet part of what I believe is necessary to assure the survival and thriving of all our stories and of our planet is to learn to listen to the stories of others so that we can learn to see the world and our place in the world differently, more fully, in richer shades of color and involving more intricate webs of relationship. Even with these differences, the things that Celie and her lover Shug come to love are very similar to the things that I love, that shape my values and commitments as I move within a very different social and ecological fabric, yet one also shaped largely by race, gender, sexuality, and class.

In one remarkable section toward the end of The Color Purple, Celie and Shug talk about these issues by talking about God and what God looks like. How we image God, the sacred, that place/person/spirit where our deepest commitments lie will tell us a lot about who we are and how we choose to live, the very stuff of ethics.

At one point in their conversation about God, Shug asks Celie "Tell me what your God look like, Celie." Celie answers "He big and old and tall and greybearded and white" to which Shug responds that Celie's God is "the one that's in the white folks' white bible." Celie is shocked by this assertion, and Shug goes on to describe her very different understanding of God.

Here's the thing, say Shug. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifest itself even if you not looking, or don't know what you looking for. Trouble do it for most folks, I think. Sorrow, lord....

She say, My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me; that feeling of being a part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and I cried and I run all round the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happen, you can't miss it. It sort of like you know what, she say, grinning and rubbing high up on my thigh.

Shug! I say.

Oh, she say. God love all them feelings. That's some of the best stuff God did. And when you know God loves 'em you enjoys 'em a lot more. You can just relax, go with everything that's going, and praise God by liking what you like.

God don't think it dirty? I ast.

Naw, she say. God made it. Listen, God love everything you love--and a mess of stuff you don't. But more than anything else, God love admiration.

You saying God vain? I ast.

Naw, she say. Not vain, just wanting to share a good thing. I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it....

Well, us talk and talk about God, but I'm still adrift. Trying to chase that old white man out of my head. I been so busy thinking bout him I never truly notice nothing God make. Not a blade of corn (how it do that?) not the color purple (where it come from?). Not the little wildflowers. Nothing.

Now that my eyes opening, I feels like a fool. Next to any little scrub of bush in my yard, Mr. _____'s evil sort of shrink. But not altogether. Still, it is like Shug say, You have to git man off your eyeball, before you can see anything a'tall.

Man corrupt everything, say Shug. He on your box of grits, in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain't. Whenever you trying to pray, and man plop himself on the other end of it, tell him to git lost, say Shug. Conjure up flowers, wind, water, a big rock.

But this hard work, let me tell you. He been there so long, he don't want to budge. He threaten lightening, floods, and earthquakes. Us fight. I hardly pray at all. Every time I conjure up a rock, I throw it.³

What can we discern from this story to begin to point us toward an ethic of right-relation at all levels of life, toward healing the Church Body in Pain? What does looking for the color purple, rubbing high on my lover's thigh, paying attention to trees -- what do these have to do with the complex and important issues of ecological ethics, global justice, and gender and sexuality issues in ethics? Quite simply, quite a lot. For Shug knows in a deeply intuitive way that good theology and good ecology ground good ethics. That is, Shug knows that how we image what is most sacred to us -- the Theo-Logos, if you will -- and the words we use to understand life on this earth -- that is, the Eco-Logos -- shape who we are and how we live.

Shug's understanding of the sacred, that which she holds in awe, reverence, and respect, is very similar to my own. Like Shug, the ways I have been touched by God lead me to believe in a world where everything is deeply interconnected. That is, God is in everything that ever was or ever will be. It is this sense of the sacred found in the interconnectedness of all that leads to my conviction that we need a fundamental shift from an anthropocentric, human-centered perspective, to an ecocentric, all-of-life-centered worldview. Who we are and how we act must always be seen within the larger ecological context in which we live, not just our human communities.

Theology and ecology both have shaped my views strongly on this point. Theologically, my view of the divine has been influenced markedly by the insights of process and feminist theologies, that God is found in the interwoven processes that shape our lives. And ecologically speaking, far from being independent and autonomous Enlightenment creatures, human beings and all living creatures are interdependent with each other and the larger ecosystems for our well-being and survival. We live foolishly--and unethically--when we live in ignorance and isolation from other parts of the earth community: after all, the earth and most of its members can get along very well without us but we cannot live without them. We ignore the earth or damage it at our peril. As Chief Seattle is recorded to have said so prophetically over 100 years ago, "Contaminate your bed and you will suffocate in your own waste."

To begin to see and think from an ecocentric perspective, I think theologian Sallie McFague is right on target when she calls us to image the earth as God's body--that what we do to the earth, whether acts of tender care or of ruthless exploitation, we do to the divine, to what is sacred. For too long we in the West have seen the earth as separable from the divine, and in some traditions, not just separate, but antithetical. God has been imaged as a distant sky monarch who reigns over the earth, commanding our allegiance, demanding that our eyes turn skyward, away from the earth. Not to do so, not to deny the earth for the sake of divine demands--or in its secular, capitalistic versions, for the sake of economic "progress" and "development"--was the primary sin. Yet as McFague says, when we image the earth as God's

body, sin--that which is unethical, which alienates us from the good and the sacred--sin is seen differently. Sin is now the refusal to be part of the body, to refuse to accept with gratitude our interconnectedness with all that is. McFague writes, "To sin is not to refuse loyalty to the king, but to refuse to take responsibility for nurturing, loving, and befriending the body and all its parts."⁴ Yet as long as our view of the sacred and the world remains anthropocentric, we will not see this. Like Shug says, "You have to git man off your eyeball, before you can see anything a'tall."

Also like Shug, my understanding of the sacred is one where pleasure, especially erotic pleasure, is central to our moral calling. As Shug says, "And when you know God loves [them feelings], you enjoys 'em a lot more. You can just relax, and go with everything that's going and praise God by liking what you like." The joy and pleasure of the erotic found in the mutuality of relationship is one of the deepest sources of knowing our interconnectedness with others. As Shug says about experiencing God in connectedness, "when it happen, you can't miss it. It sort of like--you know what, she say, grinning and rubbing high on my thigh."

Celie's response to this is what our society's and religious communities' responses too often have been. "Shug!" she say. "God don't think it dirty?" Too often we've been taught to fear the erotic as a source of sin and temptation, rather than to celebrate and respect it as a powerful source of connecting with others. So we try to box it up and control it, keep it in the bedroom and out of sight, and certainly not on library shelves where "innocent" children might encounter it. It's that wonderful mixed message so many of us received: "Sex is dirty and nasty and filthy, so save it for the one you love." Do we wonder, then, that this repressed erotic energy too often comes out distorted as abuse and domination rather than mutuality in connection?

It will only be when we are able to reintegrate our sexuality with our spirituality -- to reintegrate the energy that flows from within with the energy that draws us from without -- that we will have the moral grounding and maturity needed to live into our ethical values. This is the central claim of an ethic of right-relation and sustainability, and is one of the lessons that Celie learns at the end of her life journey. A story that begins with the violent rupture of her sexuality

and spirituality through the brutal rape by her stepfather culminates with her saying "Lately I feel like me and God make love just fine anyhow." How ironic that a Western religious tradition centered on love too often has made "making love" to appear to be the opposite of God!

This is what I believe is at stake, finally, in many of the issues of gender and sexuality that confront us today in our churches. It is the violation of right relationship along lines of gender and sexuality through fearing and distorting the erotic, channeling it only into safely controlled norms -- that is, compulsory heterosexual marriage -- that leads to the abuses of sex and power that have engulfed our society. Because religious and societal attempts to control the erotic have been the source of much of the oppression of those of us who are lesbian, gay, and bisexual, our voices are critical to revisioning what right relationship might look like at all levels of our human and natural communities.

Hence, central to an ethic of right relationship is the realization that the erotic and the ecological are deeply intertwined. They both have to do with our fundamental interconnectedness--the energies and activities that bind us into ecological and human communities. Those who oppose this view of the sacred understand this point all too well. It is not coincidental that often the same people who oppose civil rights for gay men and lesbians, and procreative choice for women, also oppose legislation to protect the environment, and label those who oppose them "feminazis" and "ecofascists."⁵ Yet the truth is that the more we are in touch with the erotic within ourselves--connecting to the deepest parts of ourselves as we connect with other, what Audre Lorde calls "self-connection shared,"⁶--the more we are able to live ecologically, living from within outward, interdependent, interconnected, and interwoven with each other and all the earth's fabric.

But revisioning and changing our way of seeing is never easy and meets with lots of resistance, both external and internal. As Celie says about gittin' the man off her eyeball so she can see the world in its fullness, "But this hard work, let me tell you. He been there so long he don't want to budge. He threaten lightning, floods, and earthquakes." Yet this deconstructive

task -- calling into question familiar ways of seeing -- is central to opening up new and more liberating images, and it forms a key starting point for healing the divisions in our Church Body.

Conclusion:

So, what can the Church, this Body in Pain, learn from all this? Can we transform this pain of division into the pain of labor and help it to give birth to something new, a transformed reality that honors the mystery of God's life force from the depths of the intimacy of sexuality to rich diversity of *all* of God's creation? I think, hope, and pray that we can. And I think a place to start is with deep listening: to each other, to each other's pains and joys, to the pain and joy of creation itself.

And from deep listening comes committed action, Obviously in the complexity of the world in which we live, there are no easy answers, no quick fixes. Enormous global economic, political, and cultural forces are at play locally and globally that can leave us feeling overwhelmed and defeated. But if ethics is rooted in both *who* we are and *how* we act,, and if Christian ethics is rooted in the reality of an incarnate God healing a world divided by suffering, it can give us some clues as to where we might begin:

- We could start by seeing ourselves differently. Teach ourselves and our children that we are interdependent members of one ecological and spiritual web. Every action that we take or don't take has consequences for the whole – ecologically *and* spiritually.

- We could begin by imagining what just and mutual relationships at *each* level of our lives would look like--within our families and friendships, as well as between nations, and the other creatures and ecosystems of the earth. And we could work to realize these in areas where we have some say, and pressure our government representatives in others.

- We could begin to picture the world the way Latin American Christians believe God does--*from the underside*. We could start to evaluate the health of our communities by the well-being of their most vulnerable members -- both human and otherkind -- not by the wealth of the affluent and powerful.

- We can foster community where pleasure and the erotic expressed in right-relation are celebrated and honored--where we can reintegrate our deepest sense of self in community with others.

- We can celebrate the diversity of life at all its levels and in every manifestation so that it becomes *second nature* to resist violation of any kind of the earth's members.

- We can ground it all in good theology--and good ecology--so that our prayer, our communing with the sense of the sacred in our lives, becomes like that offered by Celie at the end of her transformation in The Color Purple. A story that begins in the violent act of rape, in such erotic brokenness and alienation that Celie is able to pray only to a distorted image of God, ends in a prayer of erotic and ecological joy: "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God."⁷ The pages in between these two prayers reveal a life-long journey of movement of healing and reconnecting sexuality and spirituality in the context of both human community and the wider earth. The personal and the communal, the human and the whole earth, the erotic and the ecological--the well-being of each depends on the interdependent well-being of each other and the whole.

May this then be our hope and prayer for the Church, *Our Body in Pain*: that we may listen deeply to each other and to God's creation, listen to God's mysterious and diverse life force and Spirit speaking through each of us, and work together to transform these pains of division into the labor pains of new birth.

¹Carter Heyward, "Sexuality, Love, and Justice," in Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984), 83-93.

²James E. Lovelock, Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); James E. Lovelock, The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth (New York: Norton, 1988); Lynn Margulis and Dorian Sagan, Microcosmos: Four Billion Years of Evolution from Our Microbian Ancestors (New York: Summit Books, 1987). See also Lawrence E. Joseph, Gaia: The Growth of an Idea (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

³Walker, The Color Purple, 166-168.

⁴Sallie McFague, "Imaging a Theology of God's Nature: The World as God's Body," in Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader, edited by Curt Cadorette, Marie GIBLIN, Marilyn J. Legge, and Mary H. Snyder (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992), 285.

⁵In the summer 1995 debates around the efforts of the Republican Contract with America to roll back environmental legislation, Representative Randy Cunningham (R-Calif.) made this association clear when he decried those supporting continued environmental protection as the same people "who would put homos in the military."

⁶Audre Lorde, "Use of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches (Freedom, Calif.: The Crossing Press, 1984), 57.

⁷Walker, The Color Purple, 242.