

GENDER, POWER AND LEADERSHIP

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In most sectors of public life women and men are now visible together, often sitting side by side at the news anchor desk and around the corporate boardroom. Although rarely present in equal numbers, both women and men exercise power and hold leadership positions. It is not uncommon for men to work for women managers. It is now less rare for male clergy to be associate pastors in congregations where the senior pastor is a woman.

So where are we now? Although women may exercise power, what kind of power? Do we have examples of men and women actually *sharing* power? And what can we learn from the varieties of ways in which women in public life and in faith communities are exercising leadership?

Some say feminism is dead; if so, it died with most people never understanding what it really meant. Others note that a third generation of feminists is now shaping society. In the past three decades we have seen a variety of men's movements emerge and wane. Many men fully ascribe to full partnership of women and men in church and society. Many men have changed their own leadership styles because they began to see patriarchal authoritarianism as inappropriately domineering.¹ Men in seminary today come from undergraduate schools where they may have taken courses in women's or gender studies. Some men are sharing homemaking and child care (even though studies show women still carry the largest load of work in the "second shift")².

So where are we in regard to gender, power and lead-

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¹ Anne Wilson Schaef in *Women's Reality* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981) wrote over 20 years ago about four great myths of the white male system: that it is the only one that really exists, that it is innately superior, that it understands everything, and that it is totally logical, rational and objective. "The final myth is that it is possible for one to be God." "Being a deity is not easy though. In fact, it can be lethal" for white men as well as for those whom this system oppresses. Schaef, 15. This is no less true today.

² See Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (New York: Viking Press, 1989).

ership? The questions are broad and deep and fascinating. And they involve us all, no matter our personal beliefs or ecclesiastical structures. We have all been changed and are changing. Issues of sexism, abuse, violence and oppression remain. Full partnership remains elusive.³

In this paper I shall not attempt to cover all the issues of "gender," "power," and "leadership" but I shall explore some salient issues, deepen them theologically, connect the personal with the global, and provide a sample way for men and women to reflect on leadership and power. I refer mainly to sexism as an oppressive system, very aware that racism, classism, nationalism (particularly militaristic nationalism)⁴ and other "isms" are interrelated. Such systems are self-sustaining by those holding the power. It is important to realize that given the nature of human sin and brokenness, such systems do not just cure themselves, nor fade away. Church and society may make progressive changes only to see oppression re-emerge in new, perhaps subtle, forms. I do not write to accuse specific men of being sexist, many of whom might well say, "That's not me." Each of us is racist, sexist, classist and more because we participate in the human condition of inequitable power systems. Rather than debate or defend, human beings do well to confess. Because I write as a Christian I use the word "confession" because only through confession of systemic as well as personal sin are we free to examine root causes and claim new life in Christ in order to be empowered for transformative change.

³ Norma Cook Everist, "The Possible Impossibility," *Lutheran Partners* Vol. 2, Number 1 (January/February, 1986): 7-11. "Dare we listen far enough to hear the radical nature of the other's quest and our own fear?" (8). "Relinquishing power to allow ourselves to participate in each other's power holds promise, yet we seem caught in the power cycle" (10). "We are tired and systemically adversaries of each other" (11). I quote this article published sixteen years ago to make the point that partnership, while more visible, is still elusive, at least in regards to full understanding and full exercise of shared power.

⁴ See Pam McAllister, ed., *Reweaving the Web of Life* (Philadelphia: New Society Press, 1982) for a classic work on the connection between misogynist and militaristic styles and tactics. The authors examine patriarchy and the resulting constant state of war, the relationship between feminism and powerful non-violence and new ways of using power for life. See also Aruna Gnanadason, Musimbi Kanyoro and Lucia Ann McSpadden, *Women, Violence and Non-Violent Change* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996).

I write as a radical feminist. (By "radical" I mean going to the "root" of the issues). I write as a woman, realizing that I can no more speak for men than a man can speak for women. I write as a teaching theologian, not only watching but helping shape the ecclesial changes in which we have participated. I write as a woman deeply committed to transforming partnerships of women and men, to shared power and to empowerment of all God's people to work for peace and justice; in a world still fascinated with killing, we are still called to life-giving powerful servanthood.

I shall explore: 1) The Power Cycle, 2) Theological Grounding in the Creeds, and conclude with 3) Engendering Theological Education: Leadership and Power.

THE POWER CYCLE

When we consider oppressive systems of exclusionary power, we can observe a cyclical movement wherein the oppressor seeks to keep the formerly (currently) oppressed in that position in the system.⁵ Even though there has been much change in recent decades, we need to look at the past in order to understand the present and to envision a new future of shared power and healthy partnership. I write of "oppressor" and "oppressed" systemically, not personally. Male and female readers of this article may find themselves "oppressed" in some regard, and "oppressor" in some regard, (the latter at least in terms of global wealth and poverty, education and deprivation of schooling opportunities.)

Frequently women and church people in general protest they are not interested in power.⁶ "It is nonsense to say that women have never had any power in the churches; they have immense power, but power in the form of influence."⁷ Women, and other oppressed groups, excluded from exercise of direct power and official authority often exercised indirect power. People in power, by virtue of their gender or race or economic status, would often accuse the oppressed of

⁵ Based on doctoral research of Elizabeth Howell Verdesi. She studied women's participation in their own co-optation in the United Presbyterian Church, USA, and published an early feminist book, *In But Still Out: Women in the Church*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973 and 1976).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁷ Kathleen Bliss, *The Service and Status of Women in Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1952), 183.

being manipulative. Their power was deemed "irresponsible" because it was not legitimate. And it could not be legitimized because they were excluded from "legitimate" positions, e.g. bishop, clergy, congregational office, even the right to vote. Therefore those excluded would be labeled too emotionally "manipulative" to be taken seriously (e.g. housewives) and too "irresponsible" to be "given" economic advantage (e.g. African Americans during and following slavery) when they were, in truth, exercising the indirect power (including silence) they needed simply to survive in an oppressive system.

Likewise those victimized by oppressive systems would also be considered "ignorant." Such designation is ironic, because in spite of being kept out of full access to education, women, people of color in this country, and people in the "servant" class economically, often were more aware, more astute, more savvy than their oppressors, because they had to know two systems, the dominant, white, male system, and their own, in order to survive. And survive they did! But at what cost to them and to the full benefit (literally well being) and growth of society?

So, what does that have to do with the present? Are not women and African Americans now allowed to vote? Do not all have access to education?⁸ Have church bodies not changed structures so that women can hold any office, thereby being able to exercise "legitimate" power?⁹ The answer to those questions is only partially "yes." Even in places where exclusion on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation is no longer operative, vestiges of old prejudices and oppression remain. Investigating the power cycle can be helpful:

Ignore

When those in power hold that power clearly and firmly, they can afford to ignore the powerless. An example: In a press release the powerful are named while those without

⁸ The current debate over affirmative action, particularly in regard to higher education, gives evidence that some have not yet understood the history of discrimination, the dynamics of power of access and the ongoing systemic issues related to racism, classism (economic privilege) and sexism.

⁹ Many books explore the use of power in the church. Some helpful ones are: Joan Chittister, *Job's Daughters: Women and Power* (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1990); James Poling, *The Abuse of Power* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991); Martha Stortz, *PastorPower* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

power are referred to as "others," nameless, anonymous, and insignificant. An example: a clergy (man) entered a church office to attend a clergy text-study group. Seeing the (female) church secretary, but noticing no other clergy, he said, "Isn't anybody here?" In not noticing, in not really seeing, much less knowing the name, story, gifts of the "ignored," it is the powerful who remain ignorant. One does not have to stretch this point far to see the ineffectiveness of a leader who does not know, really see or understand the people this leader is called to serve. Powerful nations endanger themselves when they remain ignorant of the people living in other nations.

Those ignored may remain in that state for years, but if they should arise and declare, "Here I am" or "I am somebody" or "You cannot ignore us, for we will exercise the indirect power we have" (including collective efforts frequently referred to as "riots" or "terrorism"), then the powerful take note. Those in power may be extraordinarily surprised, expressing their shock and (however temporary) recognition of the other through *questions* such as "Where did that (they) come from?" or "Why aren't those (underdeveloped) nations happy with the benevolent aid we give them?" and *comments* such as "But she seemed happy all these years."

At this point, as at many points in the power cycle, there is opportunity for mutual learning. There is opportunity for men to ask "What is it like for you as a woman?" and a super-power nation to ask, "What is life like in your country?" When such learning begins, the oppressed, now acknowledged, will have opportunity to finally ask, "And what is it like to be a man?" "What is life like for you in *your* country?" This would not have been possible before because the oppressed people's view of the oppressor was only partial. They viewed the oppressor from afar primarily as powerful, rich, and privileged. Mutual learning takes time, genuine, not superficial, interest and, most of all, respect.

Trivialize

If the formerly ignored succeed in becoming visible, even present "at the table" on boards and committees, but the "shape of the table" does not change to fully incorporate the change in power relationships¹⁰ the powerful may attempt

¹⁰ See Letty Russell, *Church in the Round* (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) and Christine Grumm, "In Search of A Round Table," in *In Search of a*

new strategies to return things to the *status quo*. A woman is trivialized when, although her male counterpart is addressed as Rev. Johnson, she is introduced as "Tammy."¹¹ An African American man in the South was trivialized when not addressed as Mr. Jones, but merely as "uncle" or a generic first name that may not have even been his own, or "boy."

Trivialization may take the form of not-too-good-natured humor. Dealing with humor is difficult. If one's person or ideas are trivialized "humorously" and the person, new to the table, says something, the response is often, "Can't you take a joke?"

The oppressed group may trivialize through lack of full attention. Example: At a committee meeting a man with prestige of age and status may pay attention only when the issues in which he is interested are being discussed and then take out his "important" personal work when the discussion turns to items the new-to-the table people have placed on the agenda. (One such man, having used this tactic for a series of meetings of a task force which had been purposely balanced as to gender, lay/clergy, white and people of color, said candidly at break time, "These meetings aren't fun anymore since they let all of those people in.")

Trivialization may take the shape of reference to the newcomers' "little" projects, or adjectives describing their person or backgrounds as "cute" or "quaint." The ideas of the newcomers may be said to be merely "interesting" and then dismissed for more "important" matters. Even saying "I'm trying to be sensitive" can be a way of keeping the other small and probably so fragile they cannot really deal with anything of substance. To be sure, a characteristic of genuine learning is sensitivity to the other, meaningful respect, curiosity, and openness to change. But often "being sensitive" is of the former quality, a way to disregard the "lesser" person.

Round Table: Gender, Theology and Church Leadership, ed. Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997), 28-39.

- ¹¹ Example in regard to classism: a flight attendant announces the names of the pilots as "Captain Duane Anderson" or "First Officer Kevin Smith" and the attendants who "will be serving you" as "Jeanie" and "Janet." Some flight attendants are now male and the very word "flight attendant" represents an effort to overcome earlier sexual stereotyping. A few pilots are women. But this continuing practice in regard to naming exemplifies the connection between classism and sexism.

One danger of trivialization is that the person with new position but less than full power may internalize such trivialization and fail to use full voice. To be inside a structure and trivialized may be more frustrating than the previous state of exercising power from outside the institution. This tactic of reserving power for the group traditionally in control will continue as long as the newcomers accept their trivialized position. Barbara Jordan, eloquent stateswoman and teacher, said, "you cannot give another person power but you can allow them to take it."¹²

If the power cycle is to be broken and shared power achieved, the formerly powerless will need to claim their own power. The powerful, however, do have a role to play, an important role, of relinquishment of power.¹³ The powerful can refrain from trivializing remarks, checking their attitudes as well as their actions. They may need to consciously "pay attention," learning to listen to different voices, different ways of running a meeting. Indeed they may need to participate in invitations to reshape the entire table. That will not be easy. Unless they do so, and, if their trivialization does not work, in order to regain power they may resort to ridicule.

Ridicule

Ridicule may be exhibited as exaggeration of trivialization, but it also takes on a character of its own. It is not only disrespectful, but often dismissive and mean. It is meant to be, for in the power cycle, the goal is to return the powerful to their full, complete positions of exclusive power. The formerly powerful may be feeling desperate.

Use of the term "politically correct," at best trivializes; when said with disdain, it ridicules. It takes the guise of being appropriate, but is most often used to defend oneself and one's position and therefore to dismiss. People who start a sentence, "I'm trying to be politically correct," or "I *have* to be politically correct" usually are saying of themselves, "I really do not get it yet." They implicitly say, "I know they have to be

¹² Quote from a speech by Barbara Jordan at the Lutheran Human Relations Association of American annual conference, June, 1964, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana.

¹³ See Marie Augusta Neal, *A Socio-Theology of Letting Go* (New York: Paulist, 1977) for a "theology of relinquishment." See also Celia Hahn, *Growing in Authority, Relinquishing Control* (Bethesda, Maryland: Alban, 1994).

here--by law or by virtue of a changing society--but I do not yet acknowledge the legitimacy of their presence and do not intend to engage their gifts."

Ridicule may be overt through racial slurs or macho power blocking. Women will be dismissed if they are not believed to be strong or gutsy enough to "take it." The temptation for women is to adopt such language or use of power, believing they need to do so in order ever to fit in. The power of ridicule, internalized, is that it keeps women from exercising new, equally powerful ways of reshaping the organization, and of leading in their own style. It also deprives those trying to hold on to power of benefiting from new forms of liberating leadership. Ridicule is a form of violence.¹⁴

Issues of power are always present. Those formerly holding all the power may try to regain that position, assuming that those finally gaining some power of their own will want to take *all* the power. (Such people have not yet experienced the benefits of shared power and equal partnership.)¹⁵ To successfully reduce someone or some organization's significance through ridicule is to seek to make them irrelevant.

Attempts to ridicule may surface at strange times and in "ridiculous" ways. Understanding that is crucial in order for women to sustain their long-sought positions. As author of this article, I testify that not merely once in awhile, but every time I am at an occasion where I am exercising power in ways that some still feel objectionable, or at least uncomfortable, I will experience ridicule, frequently obtuse to the point of ridiculous. Example: When preparing to preach and preside at a service of ordination (an act of significant power)¹⁶ in a

¹⁴ Schools are beginning to address bullying, seeing it as not just an adolescent prank, but as an attitude and action to gain power, fed by a violent cultural environment, which can permanently harm children.

¹⁵ A crucial example is the United Nations when a super power nation is unwilling to share power through an overarching organization that gives voice to many nations. The United States has over the years effectively hindered such a global partnership by not paying its dues. This tactic trivializes. Radio and print media, particularly those with a strong adherence to U.S. supremacy, frequently ridicule the United Nations. The power cycle is at work when the conclusion is drawn that the United Nations, now economically weakened, is no longer "relevant."

¹⁶ In my church body, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, since the time of this incident, ecclesiastical structures have been adopted whereby only the bishop ordains. Whereas there are seven women bishops--among sixty-five--it does reserve power for a certain elite.

church, I and other liturgical leaders robed and then proceeded to the narthex. As we were lining up for the processional, I asked an usher for a hymnal. He said, "Here's one, but it doesn't have pictures to color."

I can count on it, and yet I can never know precisely in what form such ridiculing remarks will come. How can one maintain one's composure, not going "one down." but also not assuming a "one up" power position? When I am not thrown by the remark, I try to look the person in the eye, make a clear statement of fact, refusing to fall into the "humor" trap or accept the ridicule. I may ask a straight-forward question of the one trying to ridicule, "And how are you? How were your travels today?" That can break the power cycle and open new possibilities for partnership, at least for that conversational exchange. If, however, the intent to disable is deeper, I may need simply to preserve my own person and integrity, leaving the partnership agenda for another time. The key is to believe in oneself, not the ridicule. Understanding the power cycle can be helpful.

Caucus

When trivialized and ridiculed, it is not easy to continue in one's work, especially when the attacks are internalized. It is necessary to gather with others who do understand, who have seen what happened (or who will believe one's account) and devise alternative responses. People caucus by race, ethnic group, gender or class. Women have a strong history of sisterhoods, quilting circles, and book clubs. Excluded from the public sphere, they gathered in the private sphere. Today women still find such groups helpful for nurture, understanding and mentoring.

Such gatherings need not frighten the formerly all-powerful, but they often do. Fear brings out such comments as, "You must be getting together to talk about us." or "...to overthrow us." Women may simply be enjoying each other's company, not talking about men at all (which can be a relief--or deflating--to the man making the remark) Frequently such objections are met with a trivializing remark such as "I bet you're gossiping about us guys." and with the addition, "I'm going to have to break this up." At a meeting, a powerful man

may simply interrupt when more than one woman speaks, thereby taking over power in the discussion.

Even at this point in the power cycle, there is the potential for full partnership. Men, too, may want to gather in all-male groups. How is this different from "the old boys' club?" When women were---are, in some cases---excluded from ecclesial judicatory groups, from country clubs, etc. women are deprived not only of access but of decision-making and networking opportunities. But once such groups are open to women and men equally, there is room for healthy groupings by gender.¹⁷ Men may also need such a group for their own "nurture," even though that word would probably not be used.

As part of a course at Wartburg Seminary, "Colleagues in Ministry: The Community of Women and Men in the Church" (led by a male/female professorial team) during part of the 3-hour class, the group divides into gender-specific groups. (Some women speak much more freely then.) Last Spring the men's caucus went to the refectory for their time. Some men, who had not "had time" to take the course, wandered up to the table of men and joined in. Absolutely essential to achieving shared power is for men as well as women to accept the responsibility for working on partnership.

The Token Stage

Whereas full partnership of more equal numbers of women and men may seem threatening, ironically the token stage may be the most dangerous, because it is most artificial. Powerful groups may fear growing numbers. In the case of race or ethnicity, it has been said that integrated living begins the day the first family of color moves into an all-white neighborhood and ends the day the last white moves out. (In some cases this may be only a year or two). Decades after civil rights legislation on school integration and housing discrimination, there are few truly integrated, racially balanced schools and neighborhoods.

One church body was at the token stage. It reorganized to use representational principles for all decisions-making

¹⁷ A healthy example is the Association of Professors and Researchers of Religious Education, a professional academic group that has reached a more equal number of women and men than most professorial groups. For a number of years women gathered for a women's luncheon to caucus, share news of potential job openings, and to tell their stories. Now men likewise have a men's lunch-

groups from the regional to national level. Surprisingly, that large, over-night change did not produce more fear, but a feeling of "this is natural" Full representation of men and women has made significant differences on agenda items, policies and leadership style. It now seems strange when only one woman (or one man) is at the conference or classroom table.

Remaining at the token stage is dangerous for the individual, who may be over-burdened and isolated, and also for the group. The fear of "what could happen if all those people are allowed in" can lead to another stage of the power cycle. Those holding the power, whether we speak of sexism, racism or classism, will not magnanimously give it up. They may go even further to return things to their original (those believing in patriarchy or white supremacy might say "natural") state.

Get rid of

Fear of the one who is different, especially when that one is gaining in power, whether it be in numbers, money or "weapons of mass destruction" can escalate to the powerful believing they need to shun, fire, or exterminate the one who still has less, but growing power. Full, healthy partnership, is thwarted. Because it has never been experienced, nor can be imagined, it is feared. The final, now desperate, action of the formerly all-powerful is to get rid of individuals, programs or institutions where the formerly oppressed now enjoy power and place.¹⁸

When conflict arises in a congregation, frequently it is the one with the least power, by virtue of gender, or race, or status who is asked to resign.¹⁹ So the youth worker or the

eon. Topics may vary, but each group finds value in same-gender conversations.

¹⁸ Title IX, which provides for equal monies to be spent on women's sports programs in educational institutions, has changed for good not just women's participation in athletics, but also their confidence in their public leadership ability. Economic pressures threaten. Recently a commission was established to review Title IX with the possibility that access to sports programs will be lost, not only by women, but by men in sports "lesser" than the lucrative football and male basketball programs. Thirty years after *Roe vs. Wade*, the right for a woman to have choice in regards to her own body is being seriously challenged. Although ostensibly about life (women for abortion rights were never against "life") the issue is primarily resistance to women's power.

¹⁹ Reluctance of the group to fire the "person of color" or "the woman" may represent only accent to the token stage or fear of being seen as less than "politically correct."

diaconal minister quietly takes another position in another church while the senior pastor assembles a new staff of my people. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was called by God to exercise power, through her own body, in a way that was socially unacceptable. Joseph, with good reason, "planned to dismiss her quietly..." (Matthew 1:18b) But he did not. And she did not refuse to use the power she had to bear the one who would turn power upside down. She said, in the active passive, *ad sum*, "Let it be with me according to your word." (Luke 2:38b)

Although the youth worker sees the long-established senior pastor as having plenty of power, that pastor may feel threatened by the youth worker. A patriarchal system keeps leaders from seeing why people do not feel safe.²⁰ The super power nation may not be able to understand why other nations, towards whom they have been so "benevolent", do not love them. Surprised and threatened, the super-power often either over or underestimates the power of the less powerful. Not understanding, the "safe" response is to get rid of the one with emerging power, in "self-preservation."²¹

The reader by now has no doubt recognized the similarities of the power cycle to the abuse cycle in domestic violence. The abuser trivializes, belittles and tries in every way possible to diminish the self-esteem of the abused. Escalating ridicule and verbal abuse follow. The abused is often isolated, shamed into staying at home, cut off from friends and assistance that would validate the abuse and offer support (paralleling the caucus stage). Finally, the cycle reaches the violent stage, either physical, sexual, emotional or a combination. When the abused is "beaten down," the power cycle returns to what may seem like a period of calm, but actually provides the abuser with restoration of power and the ability to "ignore" the personhood of the abused. The abused, returned to bondage, longs for a normal relationship; ignoring the sys-

²⁰ Many church bodies have had to struggle with the issue of leaders who abused the power of their office through sexual exploitation. In 2002 the Roman Catholic Church struggled very publicly in the courts and the news media. Entrenched patriarchy drove them to attempts to trivialize the matter rather than dismiss priest perpetrators.

²¹ "Homeland security" is the term for the incumbent U.S. government's restructuring of governmental agencies in response to terrorism. The name of the build-up of military forces, poised for war is "Enduring freedom," both terms connoting the comforts of power without naming overt oppressive use of power.

temic issue, she may try to imagine it will not happen again. It will take courage to once again assert herself. With the cycle of abuse habitually in place, the victim is actually accused of triggering the violence, even without overt action or self-assertion. The abuser, fearful of loss of control, will escalate the violence periodically. The victim is most in danger of severe violence when she threatens to leave and break the cycle of power.

In order for full partnership to be realized the formerly powerful and the newly powerful need to listen to each other, but also to use power in new, mutually respectful and energizing ways. This will mean a radical change in relationship, both in the personal and the global spheres. This will include changing the shape of the table,²² using new strategies so all voices are actually heard, and adopting fully participatory methods of decision-making. This task cannot be left to the formerly powerless to "take care of."

In many parts of society such new shared power and energizing partnership is being realized.²³ However, on the way towards this new promised life together, we sometimes feel afraid (the powerless) or threatened (the powerful) and long for return to old familiar systems where both were in bondage. The powerless, careful not to assume too much power, thereby adopting the old ways of their former dominating oppressors, sometimes participate in their own co-optation.²⁴

If people allow themselves once again to be silenced, or let themselves be put away silently (for their "own good") or participate in their own co-optation, the power cycle returns. Once again, stripped of their power, they can be ignored, abused, or dismissed. Patriarchy resumes. If threatening governments are annihilated, not only is healthy global partner-

²² Russell, *Church in the Round*. "Like the eucharist and like the church that gathers at Christ's table, the round table is a sign of the coming unity of humanity. It achieves its power as a metaphor only as the *already* of welcome, sharing, talk, and partnership opposes the *not yet* of our divided and dominated world." P. 17.

²³ See Deborah Tannen, *Talking from 9 to 5* (New York: William Morrow, 1994) for helpful scenarios for understanding women's and men's conversational styles.

²⁴ The body of work of Elizabeth Howell Verdsi's *In But Still Out* describes two places where women had power in numbers in the Presbyterian church, the women's home mission movement and Christian education. In each case when their numbers, resources, and effectiveness became powerful, they allowed themselves and that power to be co-opted.

ship thwarted, but the powerful are left with the idolatrous burden of occupying the conquered under the guise of liberating them.

Two other dangers threaten full partnership: de-valuation and abdication. Women who have entered previously all-male institutions in large enough numbers now speak up easily and equally. The opportunity is now finally there for men and women (or races or nations) to share power. Men entering previously all-female institutions e.g. women's colleges, the nursing profession, or day care is another story.²⁵ It is risky for the powerful to associate with the powerless; they may lose status. Note the lower pay scales of previously all-female professions even when society says they value care-giving or elementary education. To keep the women's sphere from becoming powerful, society may de-value the entire enterprise, even with some men in it. Men's entrance (e.g. women's diaconal orders) will need to be done with care, and with full awareness of power dynamics lest women participate in their own co-optation with men quickly "rising to the top" in leadership roles, or the institution losing its power and identity altogether.²⁶

Likewise, full sharing of power is thwarted when, rather than rejoicing about equal numbers of women and men in previously male-dominated institutions, men begin to abdicate. It is as if the organization or profession is now tainted with so many women's voices. Men--those who have not yet had the opportunity--will need to learn the value of partnership. It is likened to Euro-Americans fleeing an integrating neighborhood. Even in the absence of outward racist acts, racism reigns. Even in the absence of a woman's "take-over" men leave a seminary or a church community where some have begun to fully exercise power. The result of getting rid of those newly claiming power or of abdication of the formerly all-powerful is return to the first stage of oppression and the power cycle starts all over.

²⁵ And men who associate with women of power may be ridiculed by other (fearful) men.

²⁶ The fear verbalized in the 1970's when many Protestant denominations began to ordain women in larger numbers was that male laity would leave the church. That did not happen. Women clergy report that men in the congregations have welcomed their leadership more than other male clergy.

But we may be much further along the way toward full partnership than we realize. The danger is to believe we are all threatened and to act on that threat. The joy is to explore new ways to live together. For women and men this means embracing also our sexuality--which involves power--in healthy partnership. Many men, not wanting to offend, are uncertain of how to approach women, (whether to shake hands, hug "from the side" or not touch at all), particularly in a society finally aware of sexual (power) abuse. Women and men ask where it is appropriate to meet with a person of the opposite gender. Ministerial leaders question how to have appropriate professional relationships *and* honor their marriages. Discussion on boundaries is important, but not just at the regulatory level. We are called to radical new possibilities for partnership, beyond abuse, beyond the power cycle, beyond fear towards respect and joy! We shall learn partnership by being partners and by faithfully collaborating on the journey.

To believe we are created for interdependence, to confess our ability to disable, abuse and annihilate the other is to be open to redemptive possibilities. Such radical examination of the human predicament opens the way for the grace of reconciliation, new life and spirit-filled empowerment for ourselves, each other and for ministerial leadership. We must all take responsibility for working on this together.

THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING IN THE CREEDS

Writing from a Christian perspective, I shall briefly draw on the three articles of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds in order to gain insight on gender and power towards more healthy partnership and leadership. I trust that those of other faith traditions will be able to glean something from this section and to draw on their own beliefs to explore these perspectives.

Creation

Biblical accounts of creation reveal a delightfully diverse array of wonders. And, scripture says of such creation, "it was good" (Genesis 1). Study of the nature of eco-systems reveals interdependence. A careful reading of Genesis 2 reveals men and women created for partnership. We are created for creativity, designed for diversity.

Distrust, fear, pain come after the fall. No matter one's specific view of creation and biblical interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, we see in the response to God after the fall three central themes which, simply by looking around in the world of human encounter, one can say are "true." They hid themselves (Gen. 3:8). They were afraid (Gen. 3:10). They blamed (Gen. 3:12-13). The catechetical "We are to fear, love and trust God so that...." is replaced. Instead of fearing God in positive awe and reverence, we are afraid only of being placed in personal jeopardy. Instead of trusting God, we hide from God; instead of striving to be trustworthy in our relationships, we abuse in private; instead of creating intentional, safe places for us to honor one another's differences, we disown our personal prejudices and regularly oppress others. Instead of loving one another, we blame others, excuse ourselves, and ultimately blame God.²⁷

Redemption

Many feminist scholars are exploring the problems with sacrificial atonement theory.²⁸ Limited by an emphasis on Jesus' death to appease an angry Father God, or by a forensic view of justification, emphasizing only guilt, judgment and Christ vicariously serving our sentence, we have a Christianity focused on violence, death, and judgment. Not that those are not biblical images, but they are not the only images. And even the scriptural passages using these themes do not leave Christ on the cross. For example in Hebrews 10 which provides a long discourse on Christ replacing the sacrificial offering of the first covenant, Christ offered one sacrifice, "an offering that is effective forever" (10:12). No longer do we need to engage

²⁷ Numerous biblical interpretations for centuries have used Genesis 2 and 3 to prove woman's subordination to man. Such "orders" of creation have kept women from being ordained. The descriptions, even caricatures, of the fall have blamed woman for the fall of "man." I shall not explore those familiar dogmas here. Women have also been blamed for causing the violence done to them. Many feminist scholars have written on this subject. Particularly well known is Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

²⁸ See Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) and numerous other works. "Racism, sexism, intimate violence, and homophobia are abuses of power that are devastating to love. They prevent us from being fully present and alive. They diminish the presence of spirit by wrapping oppressor and oppressed, perpetrator and victim, together in emotional chains...." (157).

in leadership which sacrifices the person or the gifts of any for the status and security of others. Even this sacrificial view of atonement does not justify subjugation or abuse, but rather offers "complete freedom" by means of the death and resurrection of Jesus, opening : "a new way," a "living way," through the curtain into the presence of God and one another, "washed with clean water" because God is trustworthy (even when leaders are not). Therefore, "Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good." (10:19-25).

Romans explores at length the meaning of redemption. Chapter 5:6 "When we were still helpless Christ died for the wicked..." And, "... it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us..." We will be saved by Christ "from God's anger!" and "We were God's enemies." (Rom. 5:8-10) But even those verses also include the words that God has "poured God's love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit who is God's gift to us." (v. 5) and we who were God's enemies are now "God's friends" (v. 10) and now we "rejoice" (v. 11). We dare not justify abuse or revenge theologically.

On the other hand, American civil religion has no room for confession and atonement, only for chosenness, glory and pursuit of happiness. It has been necessary for Christians to emphasize a "theology of the cross" rather than profess a "theology of glory" which can be used to justify a U.S. pursuit of its own happiness at the expense of others. A righteous, omnipotent God does still rule.²⁹ Churches that have diminished the cross in favor of popular feel-good musical staging³⁰ deprive their "audiences" of the power to deal with the real challenges of a violent society. But there is an alternative approach, one that furthers life-giving partnership and leadership.

The second article of the creeds begins with incarnation, Jesus putting on flesh, being born of a woman. Birth, nurture,

²⁹ Hebrews 10 does raise the issue of taking God for granted, and of fear, not of one person, through oppressive human systems, needing to live in fear of other human beings, but of living in awesome fear of God. "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" (Heb. 10:31) Even this passage, however, speaks of a "living" God, not of a God who glorifies death.

³⁰ This comment is not meant to cast aspersions on the church-growth movement *per se*, but to point out how closely the creeds of some of these churches ("joy" and "success") and of people being merely audience mirror that of American civil religion.

and bodies are central. Christ's ministry is one of healing, companionship, and powerful servanthood. Jesus' death was gruesome and humiliating, but the story does not end in the tomb. He rose. We have a cross and resurrection theology. Significantly, the women who had been present all along, following "from a distance," (Luke 23:27 and 49) unnamed and ignored, are the ones who dared to prepare to care for the dead Christ's body (Lk. 23:55-56). They were the first to see, and once they claimed their voice and "told all the rest" (Lk 24: 8), they were named. And for this they were ridiculed and disbelieved (Lk: 24: 11).

All four Gospels record, not the victorious Jesus "home free" only for himself but returning to the disciples and, gifting them with ministry and mission. The victory is over death not (even in spite of human doubt and denial) over people. The ascension account (Acts 1: 1-11) includes the question, "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" (v. 11) This does not give justification for rape of the earth, or conquering nations for the sake of "the kingdom." The disciples are left on earth for a ministry of life.

Sanctification

The Spirit's power is unlimited. Ministry is not a competitive sport. In one's fear of impotence a person believes, "If you have more power, I will have less." The Pentecost account (Acts 2) presents an inclusionary Gospel message and multiplied gifts for ministry (Lk 2:17-18). Acts is filled with events of healing, liberation and new life in community. "All who believed were together and had all things in common," sharing their goods to distribute to those in need, eating together and praising God, unafraid of growing numbers people with Spirit-empowered ministries, (Acts 2:43-47). But soon after, Peter and John are in trouble for healing a nameless man lame from birth (Acts 4) and hierarchical powers scheme to get rid of them. They get off with a warning to "speak no more to anyone" (4:17), but say "We cannot keep from speaking of what we have seen and heard" (v. 20). Empowered, shared, life-giving ministry multiplies and will not be silenced. New divisions, jealousy, and conflict will arise, and with it oppressive ecclesial systems; but stronger yet, because of the resurrection, is the potential for leadership rooted in reconciliation, which can relinquish self-proving power. Only then will we be

able to believe and claim the new Gospel reality that "If you are fully exercising the Spirit's power, I will have more power" and gifts and ministry will grow.

The third article of the creed begins with "I believe in the holy Christian (catholic) church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins." This sets ground work for life together for empowering leadership. To return briefly to Romans, chapters 1-5 leads to Romans 6-13. Not that the need for Christ's atoning work, nor confession and absolution are no longer needed. Indeed, they are needed every day; each morning Christians can splash water on their faces, reminding us that we have been washed clean through Christ's life, death and resurrection. We who have been "buried with Christ and shared his death, by the power of God, might live a new life" (Rom. 6:4). Sin has no more power over Christ, and therefore over Christ's people now called to live in community (6:5-11). Power itself has been transformed. We have died to that which holds us prisoners (Rom 7:6). Community itself is put to death and raised to new life for more liberating ways of living together. This calls for liberating styles of ministerial leadership. Paul goes on to explore the life in the Spirit, the Spirit that is life (Rom 8). New life with the resurrected Christ brings reconciliation and liberation that in turn calls for transformative, liberating styles of ministerial leadership. Thus follows Romans 12 with its profound body of Christ theology.³¹ How then can we learn to be the body of Christ, learning from one another?

ENGENDERING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: LEADERSHIP AND POWER³²

The Church has always and still today needs leaders to help God's people carry out God's mission in the world. Faithful leadership needs to reflect transformed uses of power

³¹ See also Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians body of Christ chapter 12. It is preceded by the admonition in chapter 11 against not discerning the body through exclusion by some going ahead and eating their own meal while others are hungry. "When you come together to eat the Lord's Supper wait for one another." (13:33) Chapter 12 is very clear that one member of the body cannot say to another, "I have no need of you." Interdependence of all members is in Christ. Chapter 13 succeeds Ch. 12, presenting a new way of living together, which is love.

³² This session plan, written by Norma Cook Everist, will be used as part of a course, or a retreat, in various seminary communities around the world. This material is being prepared for a work group resulting from a global consultation

for the sake of healthy partnership of women and men. The following session plan was designed to be used in various global contexts, as a whole (classroom or retreat setting) or as part of a longer course on leadership. It is based on the proposition that both men and women need to take full responsibility for seeing how their gender shapes their theology. It provides opportunity for women and men to learn from one another. The methodology honors (feminist) experiential and relational learning as highly as (male) "traditional" hierarchical and competitive models. Establishing and maintaining a trustworthy learning environment is essential.

Objectives:

1. To experience a trustworthy learning environment where power is not abused, but shared
2. To reflect on the nature of power and oppression in the past and present
3. To consider theologically God's creative and protective power, the servant Jesus, and the Holy Spirit's empowerment of the community
4. To envision new ways of shared power for leadership

I. Gathering Activity

1. Bring to class (or think about in class) an image or symbol of power. (A participant may wish to share an object or to demonstrate a pose or action that symbolizes what power means to them)
2. Reflect on what you have seen and heard from each other. Listen carefully. Ask questions of each other, but do not negate the other's image of power. What have you noticed as men? As women?

II. Going to the Root of the Issues

1. What are some ways historically that churches and their congregations and institutions have used power effectively? Positively? Negatively?

on "Engendering Theological Education for Transformation" of The Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, Switzerland, 2001-2002. While the session plan should not be duplicated further, readers are welcome to use ideas from this plan. This author would welcome learning from readers what participants experienced, and can be contacted at ncookeverist@wartburgseminary.edu.

2. Do you believe God truly is omnipotent? Discuss some biblical images of power, God's power and human power. How do you believe God intends human beings to use power in relation to God and God's mission and in relation to one another?
3. What is the nature of oppression? How have you experienced oppression? As men? As women? How are you oppressed? How are you an oppressor? Listen carefully, trying not to be accusatory, or defensive of one another.
4. Theologically, systemic sin is frequently seen in systemic oppression of entire groups of people because of their gender, their race, their religion or their ethnicity. What are some blatant or subtle examples in your society? Globally? In many, if not most, cultures the feminization of poverty keeps women in economic bondage. How does this effect women and children? Men?

III. Biblical and Theological Exploration

During this part of the session, the group could explore any number of biblical, theological, historical, ethical, sociological issues. One possibility is to work with one or more New Testament texts on leadership and servanthood, such as Mark 10: 32-45:

1. Read Mark 10: 32-45 silently. In small groups of two or three, ask each other:
 - What is Jesus saying about powerful servanthood?
 - What is Jesus saying about himself?
 - Why don't the disciples understand? Why don't we understand?
 - How is Christ's work of going to the cross and resurrection related to his baptism? To our baptism?
 - How do you as a woman, or as a man, hear "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all"?
 - How has the church misused this text in regard to the service of women, and to the relationship of women and men in leadership?

- What are some new ways to think about "servant leadership" when you hear, "For the Son of Humanity came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many?"
2. Broaden the lens by going back and reading Mark 10: 23-31. Ask yourself and each other:
 - What does following Jesus into service mean in relationship to "leaving everything?"
 - How is a man today in your context regarded when he "leaves" his family for leadership service in the church? How is a woman regarded?
 - What is Christ really asking? What new and transformed relationships do we receive "for the sake of the good news"?
 3. If there is time, go back to Mark 10:17 and read through to the end of the chapter. Compare and contrast vs. 17-22 and 46-52:
 - o What is the same? What is different?
 - o Where does each of you, as a woman or as a man, find yourself in this story?
 - o How does economic and societal position affect the ways we relate to Jesus?
 - o How are these verses related to vs. 23-47?
 - o What does it mean to follow Jesus? What does this have to do with leadership?

IV Reflections as Men and Women Together

1. How have you experienced men and women exercising power?
2. How do you as a man, or as a woman exercise power? How does that change in your different roles, e.g. when you serve as a leader, and when you are following someone else's leadership?
3. Share a brief story of ineffective, misguided, or dangerous leadership you have experienced. Listen carefully to each other as men and women.

V Carrying the Conversation Further

1. Tell some examples of leaders whom you believe have exercised leadership wisely and justly? (Examples in history, globally, or in your own context). Share some stories of your own experience with leaders who share power well.
2. As a woman, or as a man, name one of your role models. What characteristics of that person do you value and are you choosing to use in your own leadership?
3. In groups of two, act out your vision of shared power. Use pairs of men and pairs of women. Then, in the same manner, share your vision for the future.
4. Transformative Action: Develop a strategy to work towards change in an ecclesial institution of which you are a part and which is near you. What are the differences if you are "inside" the institution or "outside" looking in? Inside the power structure? Outside the power structure? With whom would you work? Where do you start? What are some realistic steps you can take?

This sample session is but one example of many ways that together we can address issues of gender and power and, together design styles of leadership which reflect the Gospel.