

## Consensus

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Volume 20  
Issue 2 *In Praise of Valiant Women*

Article 29

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11-1-1994

# Pastorpower

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### Recommended Citation

Weigel, Arnold D. (1994) "Pastorpower," *Consensus*: Vol. 20 : Iss. 2 , Article 29.  
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol20/iss2/29>

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In conclusion, therapy that utilizes "a theory from here, a technique from there" with no integrating structure or process runs the risk of unwittingly using concepts and methods that work against one another. Olsen's model provides a map of assessment that integrates the basic paradigms of family therapy and keeps treatment moving in a clear direction. This book is compact and helpful for individuals who are face to face with families as pastoral or family counselors.

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### **PastorPower**

Martha Ellen Stortz

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993

143 pp.

This is "a book for those who love to eat, rather than for those who love to cook". The author, Martha Stortz—Associate Professor of Historical Theology and Ethics at the Pacific Lutheran Theology Seminary in Berkeley, California—explains both the importance and the meaning of this claim when she says: "linger over each chapter, savoring the various ingredients."

This is an engaging, at times provocative, at other times affirming, but always a searching and reflective book on *pastor power*, on *leadership among the people of God*. Among the assumptions that the author makes are these three: pastors have power which they exercise in their leadership; pastors are power which they live out in their leadership; pastors hold power which they work with in their leadership.

In describing what this "fine meal" is about, I shall let the author's words speak for themselves:

This book examines three kinds of leadership: "power over," which can be seen as sovereign, parental, or bureaucratic power; "power within" or charismatic power; and "power with" or coactive power. The discussion of each form of power is presented in a case study, and the case study both critiques and illustrates the analysis of the kind of power in question. Finally, these models of leadership are analyzed theologically, from an emerging trinitarian perspective, to see how theological understandings of power might form, inform, and transform the use of power described (p. 9).

Some time ago, a good friend of mine, who was reflecting with me on the nature of leadership, said: "What you see depends on where you stand." The correctness of this claim is affirmed repeatedly by Stortz as she defines, explores and searches *power* through varied experiences, parables, perceptions and contexts. To understand power, the stories of power, "one has to

know where one is standing in the first place" (p. 15). Power, of course, has a multiplicity of meanings. "Power has been variously interpreted as commodity, as capacity, and as relationship" (p. 17). Stortz prefers to speak of power in Michel Foucault's understanding "of power as something that 'circulates' and that people and institutions simultaneously both exercise and are affected by" (p. 10).

Using a story from Robert Fulghum's famous *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* [1986], Stortz invites the reader to enter the world of *parable*, which she presents as "the world of multiple meanings" (14), and the world of *power*, which may indeed be interpreted as commodity, capacity and/or relationship. Leaders possess power: "1. the power to define a situation; 2. the power to name those involved in it; 3. the power to delineate space" (p. 20). But leaders, who function in structures and systems of power, are also and frequently possessed by power. "Two aspects of the power that exercises itself upon leaders are critical: 1. Authority: the power of legitimation and legitimating institutions 2. Community: the power of those who are being led" (p. 32).

Stortz delineates and examines a typology of power: "power over"—coercive power, "power within"—charismatic power, and "power with"—coactive power, without falling into the popular trap of dismissing the first as oppressive and dominative or of elevating the other two to levels of uncritical adoption and praiseworthiness. In her thorough-going approach to each of these "powers", the author provides a case study, that is the grounding of the particular experience, reflects on the "uses", the "abuses", and raises questions relative to how theological understandings of power might form, inform and transform the use of power.

The clarity provided by a typological model is to see leadership as a complex mix of personal, communal, and institutional dynamics. It renders impossible—or at leave naive!—a simple descriptive answer to the question, "What is your leadership style?" The leader being interrogated can only reply, "It depends." Pressed to elaborate, the leader can only say: "It depends upon me, of course, but it also depends on who, where, and in what situation." (p. 128)

This is a valuable and timely book, one which I appreciated reading, and on whose stimulating contents my "digestive juices are still working". Although the title *PastorPower* might suggest that this is a document primarily for clergy, I do not see it that way; this is a helpful study text for *the people of God*, whether involved in personal reading and reflection, or gathered in a congregation, in a small group, or in a classroom.