

Bridging the Gender Divide: Christian Perspectives August 9, 2018

James J. Bacik

Introduction

1. In the United States, women are in many ways second class citizens suffering from inequalities in government, business, wealth, income, sports, movies, educational leadership (college presidents).
2. Historically, progress for women has produced backlashes.
3. Religions including sacred scriptures have been used to justify patriarchy and sexism. Feminist interpretations of the Bible challenge that bias.
4. Pope Francis: "We are called to recognize every sign and mobilize all our energy in order to remove the walls of division and to build bridges of fraternity everywhere in the world." (July 2018 talk to theologians in Rome)
5. Helpful Reading: *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics* by Marie Griffith (Basic Books, 2017); *Wisdom's Feast: An Invitation to Feminist Interpretations of the Scriptures* by Barbara Reid (Eerdmans, 2016).

I. Women in U.S. Patriarchal Society Still Suffer Inequities Despite Some Progress

A. Women in Government

1. U.S. House: 83 of 435 seats (19%)
2. U.S. Senate: 22 of 100 seats (22%)
3. Governors: 6 out of 50
4. State Legislatures: 25% - this is 5 times as many as in 1971
5. Mayors of cities over 30,000: 21% are women.
6. No women presidents or vice-presidents in U.S. history.
7. In 2018 a record number of women are running for office.

B. Women in Business Leadership

1. CEOs of Fortune 500 companies: only 24 women in 2018 down from 32 in 2017
2. Board of Directors: essential to women advancing - only about 20% are women and 12 Fortune 500 companies have no women on boards.
3. About 36% of all U.S. businesses are owned by women. Almost all are small (fewer than 500 employees).
4. Many businesses are jointly owned by a man and a woman.

C. Worksite Discrimination – NBC News Wall Street Journal March 23, 2018

1. 61% of women say their male counterparts fail to treat them as equals (same percentage as in 1999). 44% say they have personally experienced discrimination.
2. A majority of employed men do not believe there is a significant gap in how women are paid, promoted and valued.

D. Wage Gap – cf Institute for Women's Policy Research 2018: the American Association of University Women (AAUW) report "The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap."

1. In 2017 weekly earnings for full-time women employees was just under 82.7% of men (virtually unchanged since 2016).

2. The percentage considering median annual earnings for full-time year round workers was 80.5%.
3. If part-time workers are included the gap is even greater since women are more likely to work reduced schedules because of child rearing responsibilities.
4. In 1980 – the weekly earning gap was 64% - most of the progress was since the 1980s and 1990s with more modest gains recently.
5. If the annual earnings ratio gap continued at the same rate as since 1985, it would take until 2059 to gain parity. At most recent rate it would be 2119.
6. Locations: the pay gap in 2016 in New York was smallest at 89% and largest in Louisiana at 70%. Ohio was 38th at 77%.
7. Racial Groups: Asian women 87% of white men; Hispanic women only 54%; Native American 63%.
8. Age: In 2016 women aged 20-24 were paid 96% of men; age 54 paid 78%; age 64 only 74%.
9. Education is not an effective pay gap solution. At every level of comparable education women earn less than men.
10. Women hold nearly two-thirds of outstanding student debt in U.S.
11. AAUW urges corporations to examine their wage inequality and take necessary steps to close the gap; encourage women to learn how to negotiate for a more just wage; Congress to enlarge the scope of the 1963 Equal Pay Act by providing stronger incentives for employees to follow the law and protection for workers seeking justice.

E. Athletics

1. Title IX passed in 1972 by Congress, which prohibits discrimination on basis of sex in many areas including sports has made a big impact on gender equality. Prior, only one in 27 girls played sports now it is two in five.
2. History: 1973 some 90 million viewers watched Billie Jean King defeat Bobby Riggs in a tennis match; 1981 NCAA held first national championships tournament for women in basketball, golf, gymnastics, lacrosse, soccer, softball swimming, tennis and outdoor track; 1991 U.S. women win the first ever World Cup for soccer; 1992 almost 2 million girls participate in high school sports - an increase of almost 1.2 million. Since 2000 Sidney Olympics there are as many team sports for women as men; 2012 London Olympics U.S. sends more women than men for 1st time; 2013 U.S. women win 3rd World Cup watched by over 2.5 million most ever for a soccer game in U.S. television history.
3. Gender inequality in collegiate sports: Scholarship dollars are split 55% men and 45% for women; operating dollars only 40% go to women; salaries for male head coaches at Division I schools \$3.4 million and women \$1.1 million.
4. Gender Inequality in Pro sports: PGA first prizes for men are about 5 times more than LPGA Tour; basketball the NBA salary cap is \$70 million, for WNBA in 2012 it was \$878,000; the 2015 U.S. women winners of the World Cup won \$2 million while the German men's team got \$35 million.

F. Education

1. Since 2005 the majority of degrees (including masters and doctorates) were earned by women. Since 1980s women have surpassed men in college enrollment.
2. In STEM fields women earn about 42% of doctoral degrees.
3. About 20 U.S. universities offer a doctorate in Women's Studies.

4. Only 30% of college presidents are women – up just 4 points since 2011 even though in 2015 women were more than 50% of college students. In 2015 women were about 42% of full-time college faculty.
- G. Women in Hollywood
1. Women are 50% of movie goers
 2. Of the top grossing films of 2017, women were 8% of directors, 10% of writers and 24% of producers.
 3. Only one woman (Kathryn Bigelow) has won an Academy Award for Best Director.

II. History of Women's Movement for Equality in the U.S.

- A. In General
1. The history of feminism is commonly described in terms of various waves.
 2. There are important events (19th Amendment in 1920) recurring themes (gain more power).
 3. The history is full of splinter movements, conflicting ideas and internal disagreements.
- B. First Wave 1848-1920
1. Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 – almost 200 women met to discuss the condition and rights of women, passing 12 resolutions for equal rights, including the right to vote.
 2. Leaders:
 - a. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1904) daughter of a judge; strong abolitionist; studied at Troy Family Seminary, later rejected institutional Christianity; helped organize Seneca Convention and gave major talk emphasizing various injustices suffered by women and advocating women's right to vote; supported abolition of slavery and temperance laws against drinking; later put more emphasis on women's issues, even opposing the 1863 14th and the 1870 15th Amendments which gave African American men the right to vote while women were denied. The led her to using harsh racist language about former male slaves.
 - b. Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) raised in a Quaker family committed to social justice, worked to abolish slavery; in 1851 met Stanton and they worked together for women's suffrage, published women's rights newspaper, founded the National American Women's Suffrage Association led by Anthony which united divergent groups in the movement; 1872 arrested for voting in her hometown of Rochester; often attacked for destroying the institution of marriage (she was not married); at her 80th birthday (1900) she was honored in the White House by President William McKinley; her portrait was put on the 1970 dollar coin.
 3. Despite the early help of former slaves, Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) abolitionist and women's rights advocate and Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) self-taught, beaten as a slave, escaped as a teenager, eloquent preacher and lecturer, author, big supporter of women's right to vote, the suffragist movement became largely a white women's movement that used racism to further their cause (if uneducated former slaves can vote, surely white women should).
 4. Great achievement: the 19th Amendment was passed by the House in 1918 and by the Senate in 1919 and approved by the 36th state (Tennessee) in 1920 guaranteed women the right to vote. After this political victory the movement lost energy and focus until the Second Wave.

C. Second Wave 1963 to the 1980s

1. Began with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* first published in 1963 and sold 3 million copies in three years, criticized the systemic sexism that taught women their place was in the home and if this was unfulfilling it was their fault. It was a cultural problem that did not allow women to exercise their intellectual and creative talents. It gave white, middle class women a reason to be angry. Leaders were for right to have credit cards, apply for mortgages, and against domestic violence and harassment in the workplace.
2. Black women had a different set of problems. Many were already working outside the home in domestic jobs. Some black feminists started the "Womanist" movement with their own distinct concerns in mind such as forced sterilization.
3. Leaders:
 - a. Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) raised a Catholic, became an atheist, close friend of Sartre, published *Second Sex* (English translation in 1953) with these themes: male patriarchy defines women as "Other," subordinating women to men as the second sex; distinguished biological sex and gender (a social construction which stereotypes women in terms of what they don't have, seeing them as mysterious" and subordinate to the male norm of humanity. Influencing Betty Friedan.
 - b. Betty Friedan (1921-2006) raised in Jewish family but became an agnostic, graduate of Smith College, her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) dealt with "the problem that has no name" describing suburban housewives who have given up career opportunities to care for husbands and children and came to feel a sense of dissatisfaction. She based her promotion of women's rights on the "basic human need to grow" to be all that we can be. Later she was a co-founder in 1966 of the National Organization of Women (NOW) that advocated for legal equality of women and men. In 1970 (50th anniversary of the 19th Amendment) she organized the national Women's Strike for Equality. Later she put more emphasis on equality in employment and child care and less on abortion, rape, pornography, sexual orientation. She wanted to join forces with Catholics and others who have "true reverence for life" and fight for "the choice to have children."
 - c. Gloria Steinem (b1934) born and raised in Toledo, attended Waite High School, attended Smith College, worked as Playboy Bunny in N.Y. exposing its sexist philosophy that objectified women, founder of *Ms. Magazine* in 1972; 1991 supported Anita Hill. Wrote articles against female genital mutilation as an effort by men to control women's bodies, against abstract academic articles on feminism and pornography which amounts to male domination. She became a spokesperson for the feminist movement; was not very friendly with Friedan; helped popularize the feminist slogan "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." She has been in many causes; against Iraq war, South Africa and apartheid.

D. Feminist disputes represented by Friedan and Steinem

1. Both were passionate about women's rights and made important contributions; they supported Equal Rights Amendment, which never passed.
2. Friedan spoke especially for white middle class suburban women as was she herself and was wary that other concerns for lesbians and blacks would dilute the women's movement (though she did eventually support them). She thought Steinem was too radical, too

- inclusive, too negative about men and she refused to write for *Ms. Magazine* and in later years, starting in the 80s, was less active in various organizations.
3. Steinem: single career woman, (married in her 60s) journalist, spoke of women's liberation; had an abortion as a young woman and supported Roe, actually founded and successfully ran *Ms. magazine* which projected her views including her opposition to women identifying themselves as housewives. She has stayed active and gave a major speech at the January 21, 2017 Women's March in Washington before an estimated 500,000, calling for solidarity in defense of democracy and human rights for all.
- E. Happenings: Equal Pay Act of 1963 with limited results; protesting the Miss America pageant as demeaning of women; 1973 *Roe v. Wade* which some feminists saw as a victory for women's reproductive rights and pro-life women saw as an injustice to unborn humans, and insisting the discussion of abortion should have four concerns: mother, father, baby and society.
 - F. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) which guarantees equal legal rights for all regardless of sex, passed Congress in 1972 but it fell 3 states short of 38 needed for ratification.
 1. It was supported by NOW and feminists including Steinem.
 2. Opposition led by conservative Republican activist Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016), constitutional lawyer who argued it would demean family life and take away separate restrooms, dependent wife benefits under Social Security, exemption from draft. Historians credit her with being the major factor in defeating the amendment.
 - G. Third Wave Feminism 1991 to today? Some speak of a Fourth Wave
 1. Led by younger women using social media, building on previous achievements but from a critical perspective.
 2. Not much scholarly or journalistic agreement on specifics of the third wave (When did it start, is it still going on? Are we in a fourth wave, who are the leaders, what are the dominant trends etc.).
 3. More openness to talk about sexual differences; more explicit talk of female sexuality, represented by Madonna, *Vagina Monologues* (orgasm, birth, rape).
 4. Madonna (b 1958, raised Catholic, twice married, 6 children) Third Wave feminist and icon. In 1990, scholar Camille Paglia called her "a true feminist who exposed the puritanism and suffocating ideology of American feminism, which is stuck in an adolescent whining mode." She has "taught young women to be fully female and sexual while still exercising total control over our lives." Later in 2016 Paglia accused Madonna of "maudlin self-pity" and setting women back by objectifying herself sexually.
 5. The *Vagina Monologues* (1996 premiered) play by Eve Ensler intended to celebrate female sexuality and to stop violence against women. Based on women's personal descriptions of their sexuality. Example: "When you rape, beat, mutilate, burn and terrorize women, you destroy the essential life energy on the planet." Critics claim the play reinforces patriarchal stereotypes that objectify women and fail to see that sexuality stamps the whole person. Furthermore, the format of the play reinforces an individualistic sense of the gender problem while neglecting the social, cultural and political context.
 6. Emphasis on women being harassed by men: the charges of Anita Hill against Clarence Thomas in 1991 beginning the Third Wave. About 25% of female collegians report being harassed at least once in their lives; high profile abuse allegations: Harvey Weinstein, Charlie Rose, John Conyers, Al Franken, Kevin Spacey, Dustin Hoffman, Matt Lauer, Roy

Moore, Larry Nassar, Bill O'Reilly, Donald Trump, Roger Ailes, Bill Cosby, The Me Too movement.

7. A recent poll that included a broad notion of verbal harassment (whistling, comments) showed 81% of adult women claim harassment; verbal 77%; touching 51%; cyber sexual 41%; assault 27% .

III. **Toward a Constructive Christian Feminism – a Contribution to the Fourth Wave**

A. Scripture: *Wisdom's Feast: An Invitation to Feminist Interpretation of the Scriptures* by Barbara Reid

1. The Bible is written by men living in patriarchal societies and betrays in many places a sexist bias (for example Ephesians 5 – wives be subject to your husband).
2. Suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) pointed out that the Bible has been used to block women's advances in the political, educational and work world.
3. Some feminists want to abandon the Bible and reject biblical religion while others like Barbara Reid want to offer a feminist interpretation that undercuts the basis of patriarchy.
4. Reid and others welcome men in the struggle to achieve equality and justice by changing relationship patterns and institutional structures .
5. Raising consciousness for women involves recognizing specific examples of discrimination, being outraged and then recognizing patterns of discrimination.
6. A method of interpretation developed by Elisabeth Schussler Fioreza: (1) Reflect on women's experiences of oppression and liberation; (2) Pay attention to social position (for example, a person who stands regularly in an unemployment line may find reassurance in the parable of the workers hired last getting equal pay (Matt 20:1-16); (3) identify the biblical authors who are men writing for, about men to serve men's needs. Rosemary Ruether says we should not regard as the Word of God any text that diminishes the full humanity of women; (4) Evaluate what the text does; for instance is Col 3:18 "Wives be subject to your husbands" liberating or oppressive?; (5) Imagine what a world of gender equality would look like; (6) Recall and reconstruct positive, often forgotten, roles of women in the Bible; for example we know Phoebe was a deacon (Rom 16:1) so there must have been more now forgotten – Jesus fed 5000 men plus women and children (Matt 14-21); ask where were the women not mentioned in the biblical stories; remember women abused in the Bible (7) Take action for changing patriarchy based on feminist interpretation.
7. Barbara Reid is editing a 58 volume series published by Liturgical Press titled the *Wisdom Commentary* all written by women.
8. Example: Genesis 2: 4-25 (the second creation story) God creates a human being from the earth and puts the human in a garden to keep it. God sees the man needs a "helper as his partner," and casts the human into a deep sleep and takes one of the ribs and fashions it into a woman. The man says "This is at last the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Standard interpretation is woman is derived and second best. Feminist interpretation: the woman is the pinnacle of creation gradually improved by God; the Hebrew words, translated as "suitable partner," suggest the woman is "equal and

adequate to himself “ or “a help corresponding to himself.” The Hebrew word translated as “rib” actually means side suggesting the woman stands along-side him as his equal. The man names his partner “woman” (not Eve till later - Gen 3:20) indicating he is not claiming control but identifying their relationship. The original author of Genesis no doubt saw it as representing the societal norm of male domination. However, the text now has an ongoing life of its own opening up the possibility of the feminist interpretation.

9. Another example: (Luke 10: 38-42) Martha is upset that Mary has left her to do all the work. Jesus says Mary has chosen the better part. Standard interpretation: a conflict between action and contemplation (favored by Jesus). Feminist interpretation: conflict is likely about women ministering in the early Church represented by Martha (Greek word diakonia usually means church ministry). So Martha is upset that Mary is not joining her in church ministry. Luke uses the story to take sides against women taking active roles in Church ministry. NT makes clear women did have active roles. Paul mentions Phoebe, deacon and Junias an apostle (Romans 16) and speaks positively about coworkers. Paul does say women should be silent in church and consult their husbands. (1 Cor 14: 33-36) Various feminist’s responses: Paul did not write it; he is rejecting what others said and chiding them for it (Or did the word of God originate with you [men]? (verse 36); Paul is ambivalent, sometimes egalitarian (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:11-12) and sometimes negative (1 Cor 11:3; 14:34; Col 3:18; Eph 5:22). Suggesting he held personal equality but did not fully realize social equality. In John’s Gospel (11:1-12:11) Martha is given prominence but there is no rivalry with Mary who is also active anointing feet of Jesus who defends women’s ministerial actions (Jn 12:7-8).

B. A Christian feminist spirituality

1. Trinitarian like all Christian spirituality and centered on love of God and neighbor.
2. Including concerns of women of color, poor women, lesbians, stay at home mothers, pro-life feminists.
3. Sees men not as oppressors or enemies but as potential partners and collaborators in creating a better world.
4. Celebrates feminist imaging of God as Spirit, Compassion, Wisdom.
5. Finds comfort and guidance in Jesus who broke societal norms traveling with women (Mary of Magdala) engaging them in religious conversation (woman at the well) referencing women’s experiences in teaching (women and lost coin); attending to his mother when dying on the cross; giving Mary of Magdala the mission of witnessing to his resurrection.
6. Criticizing patriarchal bias in the Church, pushing for greater women’s involvement, including the diaconate and priesthood.
7. Rejects the assumption that pro-life women are part of the problem.
8. Supports Synodality of Francis as a way of giving women greater influence.

9. Celebrate outstanding Christian women: Mary of Nazareth, Mary of Magdala, Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, Therese of Lisieux, Teresa of Avilla, Catherine of Siena, Hildegard of Bingen.

IV. Men and Patriarchy

A. Advantages

1. Economically: higher salaries, greater wealth, more job opportunities, more power and influence in public offices.
2. Politically: more leadership positions, more power.
3. Culturally: more influence.
4. Domestically: more choices, more control over large expenditures.

B. Disadvantages

1. Not enough incentives to develop interpersonal skills; dialogue, compromise, mutual love.
2. Constrained by stereotypical male traits: emotionally restrained, sexually active, rational, fewer and less intimate male friendships, limited career opportunities.
3. Reluctance to admit weaknesses leads to other problems; higher suicide rates, not seeking professional help to deal with emotion problems, restricted conversations with spouses and friends.

C. Men and Feminist Movement (cf Robert Bly *Iron John* (1990))

1. Men have been beaten down; become soft; lost energy and desire; passive; vulnerable, domesticated, deceitful in relationships, ignores hurts instead of getting angry, shamed by women.
2. Bly wants men to follow the advice of Hermes to Odysseus: "Raise the Sword." This means: develop warrior energy, set boundaries, learn to fight constructively with women, act bravely for a higher cause, develop the erotic energy by learning from the Wild Man, Iron John.
3. To do this men must go into the garden, a place of solitude and reflection to gain inner strength.

D. Men Today

1. Richard Rohr *From Wild Men to Wise Men* (2005 edition) Many men today suffer from "father hunger" that can lead to "father wound." In contemporary patriarchal society fathers are often absent: too irresponsible, too busy, too unknown in their work life. This often leads to troubled young men with low self-esteem and self-confidence that may be acted out in overly aggressive, controlling ways (abuse of women).
2. Men must forgive their fathers reconnect with them and develop healthy relationships with other men.
3. Follow the example of the wild man John the Baptist who calls us to courageous self-sacrificing action and the Beloved Disciple who calls us to loving relationships.
4. Rohr's interpretation of Grimm's 1848 tale Iron John: King sent hunters into the forest who all disappear making it an unsafe place. A foreign hunter goes in and eventually helps capture Iron John who is imprisoned in a cage in the royal courtyard. The eight year old prince rolls his golden ball into the cage. The wild man finally talks the boy into stealing the key from under his mother's pillow and letting him out. Iron John starts to leave but the young prince seeks to go with him and he puts the boy on his shoulders and goes into the forest. Boys must separate from their mothers to define their own

way as Jesus did at age 12. The king represents those who give in out of fear and do not explore the unknown.

5. Rohr runs workshops for men which stress these points: training men to be Elders; every man is a Beloved Son of God; men are ready for serious spiritual journeys; Male spirituality is grounded in the Paschal Mystery; men need prayer and meditation to deepen their relation with God; men need wise mentors; they have a responsibility to mentor younger men; must seek honest mutual relationships with women; critique their own power and use it for justice; calling God Father is a valuable part of the Christian tradition because it can be a source of energy; Jesus is the model of inner motivation and ability to deal with stressful situations.
 6. Some men in our culture feel powerless; women generally rule the domestic world; their bosses rule the work world.
- E. Carl Jung (1857-1961) is influential on contemporary discussion of male spirituality.
1. The theory generally claims that the male psyche includes an opposite sex, mostly unconscious feminine archetype known as the "anima," characterized by Eros or psychic relatedness.
 2. Through the process of individuation, directed by the organizing archetype known as the "Self," a man can move toward psychic wholeness by bringing the feminine anima principle into the light of consciousness, where it can energize and expand his relationships and activities. By a similar dynamic, women achieve wholeness by embracing their contrasexual archetype called the "animus," characterized by Logos, or outer-directed rationality.
 3. Contemporary Jungian scholars tend to interpret this theory metaphorically so they can speak of "evolving masculinity and femininity as two energies within each individual," without perpetrating a sexist bias. On the other hand, when spiritual mentors employ the theory in a literal and uncritical way, they often reinforce the gender stereotype that men are rational and women are emotional.
- F. Toward a male spirituality effective in a patriarchal world
1. All Christian spirituality is Trinitarian (praising our Father, committing to the Word made Flesh, serving as a vehicle of the Spirit) and involves an everyday life of faith, hope and charity (concrete love of neighbor). Spiritual regimen is important: prayer (private and liturgical) meditation (imaginative and transcendental) regular examination of conscience.
 2. Not all men are fathers or brothers but all are sons who can improve that relationship by healing memories, expressing gratitude for blessings, imitating virtues, forgiving vices, caring for parents following the example of Jesus son of God and son of Mary and Joseph.
 3. Acknowledge clear differences: women bear and nurse children, men generally have greater upper body strength; avoid stereotypical descriptions of men as more rational and women as more emotional. We cannot assume that men seek success and fear failure and that women seek intimacy and fear being alone.
 4. Each man must find his own path to spiritual growth. For some this means: becoming more interdependent in relationships; seeing God as compassionate and forgiving; recognizing the role of divine grace in failure and success; learning from Christ, the

community builder; participating more fully in the church; treating those who are different more charitably; spending more time in meditation and prayer; and trusting less in self and more in God. For other men, the path is set by a quite different set of spiritual tasks: developing greater self-confidence; dealing more effectively with strong women; seeing God as Abba; imitating the commitment of Christ to the cause of God and humanity; taking a leadership role in the church; working for justice and peace; relating prayer and everyday life; and cooperating with God in bringing the kingdom to fulfillment.

5. We should reject theories of gender complementarity initiated by Hans Urs von Balthasar and held by Pope John Paul and Francis that identify men with active life in the world and women with domestic life, thereby limiting their public roles in church and society (no possibility of women's ordination).
6. All men should work to transform our patriarchal society through any available means: standing up for the rights of LGBT community; husbands developing more equitable mutual relations with spouses; working for social justice that helps women achieve equal pay, opportunities for leadership etc.; learning to argue constructively with feminists; supporting Equal Rights legislation; promoting women in the corporate world; fathers helping to form their children as mature self-confident adults; helping eliminate poverty, lack of education, unemployment, underemployment; assist women's movement as invited and empowering not guiding or controlling.
7. An integrated male spirituality includes: mature sonship (relate better with mothers and fathers living and deceased); personal growth (putting on the mind of Christ); active dedication to transforming the destructive elements of patriarchy in to a more just and equitable social network.

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