14

Family and Work

Can Anyone "Have It All"?

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> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.
>
> —Gen. 3:6–7

When at the end of a sabbatical leave from teaching, I began this chapter with its assigned title, "Love and Work: Can Anyone 'Have It All'?" I experienced another wrinkle in my so-called desire to "have it all." At the congregation I attend with my husband and three sons, I had agreed to direct the Sunday School and teach a younger children's class as well as orchestrate the Christmas program. I had also agreed to lead a Junior Great Books group and to serve as art volunteer in my oldest son's second grade class. And, while any one of these activities alone would have sufficed, I was organizing parties and projects as room mother for my middle son's preschool. Unwittingly, I had become caught up in what one journalist calls the latest trend in education: parents-in-the-classroom and hence, "school-sponsored guilt trips." Besides full-time waged employment, cooking, cleaning, folding laundry, packing lunches, doing home repairs, "Supermom must now start teaching on the side"![1]

Why did I do this? Did I want to "have it all"? I volunteered for extra responsibilities partly because of my sabbatical. Perhaps I was paying my dues to my children, the school, and the church, in the intricate community network upheld mostly by "nonworking" women: dues for actually having forged a book out of the minutiae of such problems, *Also A Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma*. It was almost as if I had to compensate for defying a claim I had quoted at the beginning of the book's preface, " 'A woman . . . either has children or writes books.' "[2] But I also wanted to participate in my children's lives. So I tricked myself into believing that I had enough time and energy, a

common strategy for mothers who want to "have it all." Not surprisingly, I did not finish this chapter by the projected deadline.

While this variation on the theme of "having it all" is self-imposed and trivial in the overall scheme of life, I have come to recognize such daily, unrelenting personal conflicts as symptomatic of much broader patterns of work and family in our society. Distortions in these patterns must be better understood and challenged, and this chapter is one attempt to do so. Not only has the extra time taken to finish this chapter given me time with my family, it has deepened my reflections and sharpened my thesis: The more I think about the hackneyed cliché of "having it all," the more convinced I become about its ambiguous, deceptive, and even dangerous meanings, as well as the redemptive desire for human wholeness at its core.

The phrase "having it all" has acquired an assortment of moral connotations. On the one hand, aspirations to "have it all" assert that women have a right to have more than traditionally allotted them. When uttered with an increasingly negative and punishing tone, the implication of the phrase is that women want to "possess it all"—they want to have more than they should want or have. On the other hand, rather than acquiring, possessing, or having anything, women themselves often experience "having it all" as a "giving away" of themselves instead. Women continue to give and lose themselves to multiple competing demands. Under such circumstances, it would be more appropriate to talk about "doing it all."

Finally, "having it all" represents something other than inordinate desire. Embedded in the phrase is a positive, foundational claim that debunks work and family, self-love and love of others, self-fulfillment and self-sacrifice as false alternatives. Far from a distortion, the endeavor to "have it all" dares to suggest that women, like men, are created to love *and* to work. Central to the thesis of this chapter, the original ideals of shared responsibility for family and justice in the workplace merit retrieval as the kernels of truth behind the distortions and ambiguities of the phrase. My use of the phrase in this chapter varies between these three meanings, and is best determined by the context.

On the cover of *Also a Mother*, there is a reproduction of a painting entitled "Out of Reach, Daughters of Eve." In the book, I focus on the first phrase, "Out of Reach," but I do not explicitly discuss the second intriguing phrase, "Daughters of Eve." Although it may not seem so at first glance, women's identification with Eve and Eve's inordinate desire is intricately related to the issue of "having it all." Thus, after discussing some of the historical and cultural innuendos of the phrase itself, I will

revisit the symbol of Eve, arguing for fresh psychological readings of maternal desire and fresh theological interpretations of Eve, desire, freedom, finitude, and redemption as important resources in tackling the dilemmas illustrated above.

One final comment before launching the discussion: Despite the mutuality of our marital partnership, my husband Mark will seldom, if ever, get asked to be "room *mother*" or "picture *lady*." Some schools try for "room parents" and "art volunteers," but the problem is not just linguistic. It concerns an entire way of constructing reality. Imagine a man writing an article about whether anyone can really have it all. People commonly assume that combining work and family poses few overt conflicts for men. In this sense, the dilemma itself represents an internalized, genderized oppression for many women. Until recently, "having it all" has been defined as a woman's dilemma. But as my comments will imply, this is a limited interpretation. Solutions to the dilemma of combining family and work necessarily involve men. A growing number of men today sense the loss in their lives that results when they leave relationships and family work to women. Thus, while my focus is primarily women, the issues for men are interrelated, every bit as complex, and deserve comparable treatment. (See the chapter in this volume by Rob Palkovitz.)

What Do Women Want?

The question of "having it all" arose as a peculiarly European-American, middle-class women's dilemma in the mid-twentieth century. The first women who thought about "having it all" were fighting powerful demons—a post–World War II North American mind-set that idealized the breadwinner husband, his homemaker wife, and the increasingly isolated suburban, nuclear household with its fascinating gadgets and fast foods. Behind this stood the nineteenth-century Victorian ideal of motherly domesticity, now firmly reentrenched after the period of World War II, during which many wives and mothers had worked in the defense industries. These images were bolstered by religious ideals of moral piety, sexual purity, and wifely submission, and were built on unspoken assumptions about class and ethnicity.

Although people acted as if everyone had always formed families in this way, these gender roles reflected twentieth-century Western ideals, and remained unattainable for most working-class and minority families. When the women's movement of the 1960s challenged the 1950s image of happiness and demanded something women had never had before—parity with men in the marketplace and in the household—

they were accused of unreasonably wanting to "have it all." Moreover, in seeking equal pay and shared family responsibilities, they neither anticipated the resulting emotional and social roadblocks nor understood how their challenge to sexism was blind to racist and classist superstructures that helped preserve structures of inequality.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, European-American women did not "have it all," but some women seemed to have more than many women have today. Women have always held major responsibilities for family life, but in preindustrial times these responsibilities came with certain public claims. Women possessed indispensable skills, particularly as midwives and respected healers of the family and community. They produced clothes; they planted, pickled, and preserved food; they manufactured medicines, soap, and candles. Their participation in society, while under the rule of men, assumed an authority of its own, essential to the survival and well-being of the community. Women had vital work to do and contributions to make, however much this was directed by the edicts of men.

For many European-American women in the nineteenth century the Industrial Revolution displaced this authority and created what Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English call the "Woman Question" or the "'woman problem.'"[3] The market economy shattered the previous unity of work and home and established a new world of work for men. Except for family farms and small family businesses, and for many people of color and the lower class, a line taut with moral tension arose between the public realm of waged work and the private realm of home. As women's productive activities were engulfed by the factory system, they lost a sphere of significant influence. Relegated to the increasingly restrictive domain of the home, many women lost their last few threads of connection to public life, and many men grew distant from family life. Without their former roles in the community's survival, women found themselves dependent on men for status, economic security, community, food, clothing, and recreation, and bound anew to the trivialities of daily home life. Hence the "women question"—What would become of women in the modern world?—became a gripping public issue in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even then, it was a question implicitly asked about women from a certain class and ethnic group. Most minority and working-class women (and children) were too busy working long hours in factories and in domestic service at highly exploitative wages; hence they faced different problems of personal and community survival.

As the twentieth century closes, the question of "having it all" is simply one more variation on the European-American woman question

with which the century began. Second-wave feminists—representing the period from approximately 1966—revolted against confinement and marched for equal opportunity. The ensuing rearrangement in domestic and economic life affected women's roles and identity as much as the Industrial Revolution did men's when it moved their work out of the home. Women have entered the work force at a rate of over a million women per year for the last decade, more than doubling the number of employed women since 1950. The number of married women in employed positions is more than five times what it was in 1940. In 1950 the Bureau of Labor did not even keep statistics on how many women with children under the age of one worked outside the home; today half of such women do. Overall, two-thirds of all mothers are now in the labor force.

Do these mothers "have it all"? Unfortunately, in many regards the phrase "having it all" is a romanticized, distorted, and even oppressive concept. Women have not come close to "having it all" if that means equity with men in the workplace and family. Women on average still make only about 70 cents for every dollar earned by men. Most have entered lower-paying occupations (clerical, sales, service, factory). Few have given up major domestic responsibilities, and many have added to their household chores. The statistically fastest growing family category in the United States is not the dual-career family for which the phrase "having it all" was primarily coined. This family type is far surpassed statistically by female-headed households of unwed or divorced mothers. Yet primarily white, married women with careers (as distinct from jobs) continue to receive an undue share of attention and acclaim for integrating family life and work. Glorified titles like "supermom" and "superwoman" are bestowed on them, while noncareer working women and single mothers are often blamed for the circumstances they must endure.[4] Typically, single mothers are not seen as "having it all" because they do not "have" a man. But in terms of managing households and holding down jobs, they are almost always trying to "do it all," often on low or poverty-level incomes.

When "having it all" really means "doing it all," it is a dubious honor at best. In many ways, the idea of "having it all" was doomed before it began. It arose within an economic and social system that viewed childrearing, homemaking, and community life as "non-work," and which naively viewed market labor as almost completely independent of the labors of family and community. The dilemmas of work and family simply reveal the distortions in these views. Childrearing, housework, and community service are hard—and socially essential—work. Most women have always worked, many from the crack of dawn until long

after sunset. They have provided enormous productive, reproductive, and maintenance labor, often with little or no compensation. In a word, they have controlled neither the extent nor the fruits of their labor. At the same time, the market economy has persisted in assuming that labor-power resides in lone individuals, neither hindered nor helped by personal relationships, marriage, or family commitments.[5] Yet, for most men, ability to put in a forty- to eighty-hour work week or to move across the country for a job promotion is heavily dependent on the clandestine labors of a "wife" who sustains home and community.

In trying to sustain work and family, middle-class women have finally glimpsed problems that working-class women and single mothers have always known and endured: What Arlie Hochschild popularized as the "second shift." In one study, working women "averaged three hours a day on housework while men averaged 17 minutes; women spent fifty minutes a day of time exclusively with their children; men spent twelve minutes." Based on studies on time use done in the 1960s and 1970s, Hochschild estimates that over a year women worked an "extra month of twenty-four-hour days."[6] In time-use studies done beyond the United States, the distortions are even more apparent. A 1980 United Nations report indicated that women worldwide perform two-thirds of the world's labor, receive ten percent of the pay, and own one percent of the property.

Many women do not face the dilemmas of "having it all," as they are extolled by the media and popular culture. Working-class women have had no choice but to manage reproductive and productive labors side by side, simply in order to survive. Besides gender discrimination, Asian-American, African-American, American Indian, and Hispanic mothers face racial and economic discrimination, which affects the ability of women and men alike to find satisfying, well-paid work. Men often receive less education, toil at manual labor, and face threats of homicide, substance abuse, crime, and incarceration. As a result, mothers have often had to be independent centers of strength, essential for the survival of the group and seldom confined to the private domain. Conflicts of family and home are interwoven with the problems of racism, and with dilemmas raised when the educational accomplishments and the employment rate for women are higher than that for men, or when the support system of extended family begins to break down, or when children are trapped by pervasive poverty.[7]

The pattern of working beyond the call of duty to secure the survival of children and family, as well as caring for white children, persists today.[8] The anguish of those striving to "have it all" does not make much sense and even seems elitist and uncaring to those robbed of the

chance to establish safe, strong homes, or to those fighting to prepare their children for survival in a hostile and discriminatory environment.[9] The question of whether anyone can "have it all," therefore, has not been a pressing question for most women of color, poor women, lesbian women, and women in other countries. Their questions are more rightfully questions of having *anything at all*—questions of personal validation, of survival as a people and a community, and of securing a way where there is no way.

For different reasons, many upper-class women have also not encountered the plight of "having it all" experienced by the middle-class. Upper-class mothers who have desired creative, professional work and even those who do not seek paid work have often simply bought from those in lower economic brackets—housekeepers, live-in nannies, gardeners, caterers, decorators, and contractors—the home services needed to sustain family life. While money does not solve all of their internal and practical issues, it has helped many well-positioned women to avoid at least some of them. In so doing, such women perpetuate the illusion that reproductive labor requires no labor. And they approximate an ideal of "having it all" that actually depends on the labors of less well-situated women. Women's "liberation" in this vein simply shifts the weight of domestic chores "from one group of exploited women—mothers—to another group—the babysitter, housekeeper, cleaning woman, day-care staff, teacher."[10]

Hence, the dreamboat of "having it all" not only crashes up against the market distortions of human labor; it also cannot ignore the troubled waters of class and race across which it has so blithely sailed. Since many women who "want it all" have enjoyed the privileges of white society, they simply have not expected any resistance to their desires for equality. "Having it all" is a myth in a cultural and economic system that, as Rosemary Radford Ruether observes, "insists that women are equal, while at the same time structuring its economic and social life to make women economically dependent or marginal, as well as the primary parents."[11] And, I would add, in a racist society in which the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" continues to grow (with women becoming an increasing percentage of the "have nots"), the ideal of "having it all" simply perpetuates a destructive ethos. As long as the workplace still expects the waged worker to have a wife or servant(s), as long as men remain no more willing to pick up the broom than their fathers were, as long as an underclass of women take care of the homes and children of those in the upper classes, we must contend with what Hochschild calls a "stalled revolution."[12]

How then might the "stalled revolution" be reinvigorated? Can anyone—woman or man, black or white—really sustain a fulfilling family and work life? Many current books on work and family advocate similar solutions. Ruether's list of needed changes in her essay on "Politics and the Family" is a good example, although she waxes slightly romantic about the possibilities of social reconstruction:

> Working mothers not only need good inexpensive day care, they need a restructured social order that locates home, school, nursery and work in some more coherent relationship to each other. They need a society that is rebuilding the organic supports around these realities of daily life, instead of asking the working man and woman to hold together this fragmented life through some monumental effort of self-extensions. Most of all, women need a society that promotes support for women and children by making it possible for fathers to be equal participants in the rearing of children and the building of homes.[13]

Obviously, these kinds of changes will depend on political decisions, economic policies, and social legislation which support children, parents, and a variety of current family forms. Proposals for "family-friendly" workplaces, increased tax exemptions for children, heightened paternal responsibility, and so forth, are critical.

Such solutions, however, must not sidestep cultural, moral, and theological considerations that are equally important. In *Also a Mother*, I argue that behind the middle-class struggle over "having it all" lies a fundamental religious question about the nature of the generative life. To challenge a society that has divided the burdens and rewards of family and work along gender and other lines, we must challenge psychological, biblical, and theological traditions that have been used to uphold these divisions. Something more than a revision of household roles and the construction of a family-friendly work environment is required for mutuality in contemporary families. Complex psychological, moral, and theological shifts are necessary.

Maternal Desire and Contemporary Psychology

One of my favorite cartoons features Freud reclining on his notorious couch pondering his famous question, "What does woman want?" Behind him, Mrs. Freud pushes a broom, looking somewhat perturbed. Pictured in the balloon of her own thoughts is Freud himself—sweeping! But Freud's own response missed the point. He proposed instead his own peculiar rendition of the biblical edict, "your desire shall be for

your husband" (Gen. 3:16b). In his analysis, women's fulfillment lies in receiving from males what they lack by nature—a penis. Women who pursue their own creative desires, rather than experiencing them vicariously through fathers, husbands, or sons, simply have a "masculinity complex," an unnatural, unhealthy refusal to accept their castrated state. Fortunate women attain "normal femininity," a passive acceptance of biological fate and even masochistic, narcissistic resignation to a secondary role as dependents and spectators of male activity.[14]

Obviously, this view fails to deal with the realities of technology, industrialization, and democratization which have challenged the prized position of the penis and the sexual division of labor that was central to preindustrial and agrarian societies. In claiming scientific evidence for his theories about penis envy, however, Freud transformed a classic religious, symbolic depiction of female need and inferiority into an ontological fact. His theory captured the modern imagination for decades, and it has taken the work of women psychologists to begin to undermine its determinative power and to understand female desire.

This understanding has not come about easily. Analyst Karen Horney in fact suffered the neglect of academic and public attention precisely because she questioned orthodox psychoanalytic theory and Freud's view of female desire. While she acknowledges the existence of penis envy, she sees it as envy of social, not ontological or natural, superiority. Moreover, male attribution of penis envy to women is "not only a consequence of their fear of women; it is also a projection of their underlying envy" of the female capacity to bear children.[15]

Long before it became popular to do so, Horney tried to understand the pathology of wanting to "have it all" in women like herself—white, middle-class, and predominantly heterosexual women. She explored the contradictions of the "feminine type" of the 1920s, caught between the desire to please fathers and husbands and the desire to pursue her own ambitions:

> Women were permitted to pursue education but expected to become mothers. They were encouraged to be sexually emancipated but supposed to limit sexual desire to monogamous marriage combined with asexual motherhood. They were told that they could have careers but were expected to defer to men at work and at home. They were enticed by ambition but taught to find salvation in love.[16]

Horney's therapeutic goal—the "female hero"—directly opposes these stereotypical contradictions of "masculine civilization" with its presumed male superiority and female inferiority. The female hero

assumes self-responsibility in claiming that she herself is worthy of care and that the world is her domain. Free of compliance to external demands and the resulting, culturally imposed neuroses, she experiences the power of her ordinary real self. Unfortunately, as needed as it was at the time, Horney's work did little to alter the bias against women at the heart of modern psychotherapeutic practice and culture.

More recent feminist psychologists have pushed their way into the therapeutic mainstream. They provide new resources for understanding female and maternal desire that help shed light on the European-American quandary of "having it all." In *Understanding Women*, feminist therapists Louise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach construct a powerful psychoanalytical depiction of the demise of desire in female development. Many women (particularly European-American women—a distinction that neither Horney nor these authors make) inherit from their mothers a forceful interdiction against recognizing and enacting their desires, sexual and otherwise.

Drawing on the British Object Relations School, especially the work of Fairbairn, Winnicott, and Guntrip, Eichenbaum and Orbach's basic thesis is that the mother, having learned from her mother that her own desires are secondary to meeting the desires of others, systematically and often unwittingly teaches her daughter that "there is something wrong with her [and] her desires, something that needs to be kept at bay."[17] In so doing, the mother herself provides her daughter's first lesson in emotional deprivation and leaves her with a residual, repressed hunger for nurturance.

Their argument is based on years of therapy at the Women's Therapy Centre in New York, in which their women clients hesitantly reveal a part of themselves that is "needy and uncared for, undeserving, inadequate, and inarticulate."[18] On the one hand, women talk about their needs with contempt, humiliation, and shame. On the other hand, when inner needs are evoked, women are often flooded with anger, disappointment, depression, and feelings of rejection and isolation. For many women, it is less a question of struggling with distorted, deviant desires than identifying for themselves what they want at all.

Eichenbaum and Orbach identify three steps in a process that ensures the lost awareness of desire: (1) the mother identifies with her daughter because of their shared gender; (2) the mother projects onto the daughter her negative, fearful feelings about her own desires and aspirations; (3) the mother unconsciously acts toward her infant daughter as she acts internally toward the little-girl part of herself—with repugnance, fear, and disdain. On another level, the mother consciously knows that she must prepare the girl to live in a society that

expects girls and women to defer to others—to follow their lead, anticipate their needs, and articulate her own needs only in relation to theirs.

On a deeper level, this process leaves a woman with profound feelings of neediness. The infant daughter's fresh expression of her desires unconsciously reawakens lost parts of the mother that feel needy and want nurture, response, and encouragement. This reawakening leaves the mother subconsciously aware of her own deprivation—resentful, disapproving, and "annoyed with the child for displaying her needs and for not controlling them as she herself does."[19] A daughter's expression of needs and wants causes a restlessness and discomfort in the mother that the same expression on the part of a son does not.

The mother conveys and the daughter learns a double message: Don't be too emotionally dependent; don't be too independent. Don't expect others to meet your needs; don't expect to find avenues to meet your needs yourself. Consciously, the mother pushes the daughter to look to a man for emotional involvement. Unconsciously, she conveys the message that she must not expect a man to meet her needs or really understand them. On the one hand, a woman feels afraid of her emotional needs and dependencies. At the same time, she feels fearful and guilty about her aspirations for an independence and power that would allow her to meet her own needs. Female desire therefore is effectively confused, debunked, repressed, and nearly obliterated. The mandate to curb one's desires, to split off needs, and not to expect response to them, becomes endemic to the psyche of many females. And the "daughter, as she learns to hide her needy little-girl part, becomes extremely sensitive to neediness in others."[20] Such daughters, one might assume, make good, sensitive mothers.

Or do they? Not really, contends psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin, another feminist object-relations theorist and clinician. In fact, because mothers continue to hide their desires from others and from themselves, the complex system of domination and submission between women and men is perpetuated. Her book, *The Bonds of Love*, investigates both the inner and social workings of domination. Is domination inevitable? Or is a relationship in which "both participants are subjects—both empowered and mutually respectful" possible?[21]

Benjamin's case for the latter is based most centrally on reclaiming female, maternal desire and what she calls a lost "subjectivity." She follows some of the same lines of thought as Eichenbaum and Orbach but goes further in developing a constructive, normative social agenda. She not only analyzes the demise of female desire; she makes mutuality her normative center and follows this ideal into society at large to challenge its gender inequities in spite of its stated commitment to equality. In

this agenda, she is less concerned with the child's and the daughter's development and more focused on the mother's—an unusual stance for any therapeutic theory thus far.

Benjamin traces the structure of domination and the demise of mutuality back to the tension between dependence and independence in infant life. The ideal balance between the human need for self-assertion (or the desire to be recognized) and the need to recognize the other all too easily collapses into the familiar polarities of destructive rulership and self-annihilating sacrifice. When reinforced by gendered differences in parenting styles—the exciting, assertive "father of liberation" versus the holding, nurturing "mother of dependency"—the child quickly associates masculinity and femininity with these two different postures. Thus the tension between dependence and independence that actually lies *within* the person gets recast as a conflict *between* women and men.

While this is a highly technical analysis, the important point is this: According to Benjamin, domination will end and mutuality begin when the "other makes a difference."[22] In a word, mothers must claim their subjectivity. Balancing the recognition of the child's needs with the assertion of the mother's needs—thus far "scarcely put forward as an ideal"—is exactly what is required. In other words, in order for the child to receive the recognition that the child seeks, the mother must have an "independent center . . . outside her child."[23]

> Only a mother who feels entitled to be a person in her own right can be seen as such by her child, and only such a mother can . . . permit full differentiation. This fact has been remarkably elusive. It seems intolerable to the narcissism of adults and children alike that the limits a mother sets should not merely be an occasional dose of medicine corresponding to the child's needs, but might actually proceed from the mother's assertion of her own separate selfhood.[24]

Just as it is necessary to put the ideal of maternal pursuit of desire and selfhood forward, it is equally essential according to Benjamin to restore the missing father as a nurturer, as someone with whom sons and daughters can identify, and as a person who models respect for the mother's subjectivity. Fathers and mothers must both become models of separation *and* attachment for their children. These changes, Benjamin claims, would realign the process of development, mitigate the hazardous polarization of gender roles, and in particular avoid the creation of destructive systems of domination.

It is hard to believe that Benjamin could take up the problem of domination without even mentioning racial and ethnic domination (her

chapter on "Master and Slave" is simply a case-study analysis of Pauline Réage's *Story of O*) or without a sense that the familial relationships she describes are primarily based on European-American experiences. She is also oblivious to some of the practical impossibilities of her recommendations in the actual lives of mothers and children, to the limits of her attempted social analysis, and to the complex ethical and religious assumptions and implications of her work. Mutuality is not only an emotional construct that refers to emotional attunement; it is also an ethical and religious concept that requires both self-giving love and social justice. Without an analysis of human evil, vulnerability, and fallibility in the realization of these ideals, and without an analysis of other forms of domination, Benjamin's optimistic visions for eliminating domination are naive, and at times almost eschatological.

Nonetheless, while Eichenbaum and Orbach help us understand the psychic and social destruction of female desire, Benjamin justifies the importance of maternal desire to "have it all" in the best sense of the phrase. Her analysis captures the dangers of parental inequality and provides a much-needed developmental theory for genuine mutuality—showing both how it has been thwarted in distorted gender relations between mother and father and how it might evolve in a changed psychological and social context. She makes a strong psychological case that parents must be equal; each parent must sustain the tension between "sexual cross-identification" and provide an example of integration rather than complementarity.[25]

In this context, the cultural shame directed toward those women who dare to "want it all" (prodded along by media headlines such as "'90s Choices: Balanced Life Preferred to 'Supersuccess' ") is particularly cruel.[26] It plays facilely and harshly on the heartstrings of young women who are already prone to sacrificing internal inclinations about themselves, their abilities, their loves, and their desires to social and marital conventions. Daughters quickly learn to blame themselves for the failure to balance work and family, and to pull back from wanting so much when, in actuality, they want so little and the problems are far from theirs alone.

Re-imagining Eve: A Theological Task

For women, desire of one's own has had a long history of being covertly yet strictly forbidden. Over the centuries of Christian interpretation, Eve has stood for wrong and misdirected desire. Ecclesiastical and theological traditions have upheld and solidified this tradition by

interpreting agapic love as unconditional self-sacrifice. Many women have taken these interpretations of love and of Eve's culpability to heart. In a penitent, compensatory, and committed manner, they give of themselves willingly, relentlessly, and sometimes fiendishly.

Elaine Pagels observes that the archaic creation narrative wields such "an extraordinary influence upon western culture" that she herself is "surprised to discover how complex and extensive its effect has been."[27] For generations, creation stories have shaped human hopes for procreation, work, marriage, and human striving. While I do not attempt the sort of exegesis better performed by biblical scholars, I do want to suggest some alternative ways of thinking about Eve as important to tackling the conundrums of "having it all."

How culpable is Eve? Does she want to "have it all?" The narrative in Genesis 3 is driven by two powerful, interrelated energies with Eve at their center: healthy, vital human desire and misguided, distorted desire. On the one hand, Augustine's classic reading of the narrative of the "Fall" has been used throughout Christian history to blame women for evil and suffering and to condemn sexual desire as unnatural, contrary to divine will, and the result of human sin. On the other hand, the distinction between misdirected and properly directed desire on which he based an entire theology is both important and helpful. Although Augustine gave women a subsidiary, less favored role within his theology, his acknowledgment of the power and the place of desire in religious life was psychologically and theologically insightful.

In the second creation account in Genesis 2—3, human desire itself is part of the goodness of creation, even if what humans desire and how they pursue their desires leads to ill and evil results. In this context, the act of the woman in taking and eating and offering the fruit of the tree to her husband is understandable. It is hard to see how the woman's response could have been otherwise. It is not the nature of her desire that is wrong, it is the degree and extent of it.

That Eve becomes carried away in her desire to "have it all" becomes clear in the three-part movement of the clause that describes the rationale behind her decision. She saw (1) "that the tree *was* good for food" and (2) "that it *was* a delight to the eye" (Gen. 3:6, emphasis added). Both are appropriate observations. They capture the appeal that fosters healthy desire. It is in the last clause that a deeper note of ambiguity creeps in and the moral scale tips. She wants the fruit for yet another purpose. Finally, the woman saw "that the tree was to be desired to make one wise"—or, as the serpent has implied, to make one "like God." She knows she is wise; she wants to be wiser still, like God, omnipotent and complete. And "she took of its fruit and ate."

Lurking in her thoughts is a dissatisfaction with divine creation. She is not what she might be or could be; she suspects she could be otherwise, made better or wiser somehow. In the goodness of the human capacity "to desire" lies the penchant not just to desire, but to doubt, worry, covet, crave, envy, and forever increase what is desired. Desire for the rich goodness of created life gives way to a disregard for divinely ordered limits on creation and a drive for invincibility.

Rather than being the temptress, the source of evil and suffering, or the point of weakness, here the woman is "quintessentially human." "To be the curious one, the seeker of knowledge, the tester of limits," observes biblical scholar Susan Niditch, is to be "quintessentially human—to evidence traits of many of the culture-bringing heroes and heroines of Genesis." On this score, the woman assumes the role of central protagonist in the narrative, deliberating along the fault lines of sensual, intellectual desire. She is, in Niditch's words, "no easy prey for a seducing demon," but a "conscious actor choosing knowledge" and bringing in culture.[28] Yet desire carries the passionate human beyond the reasonable limits of human need and order as divinely created.

Why this exegesis? In this moment of Eve's deliberation, we see an intersection of relevant theological themes ignored in most treatments of "having it all"—freedom, limitation, and the necessity for divine correction and redemption. Humans are created with a divine mandate to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). They are created to eat and to enjoy the delights of creation, to till the garden, to cleave to one another without restraint or fleshly shame. Yet in the midst of the garden of possibilities there are limits. These are not always obvious; they are sometimes arbitrary and even inherently tempting. In the narrative of Genesis 2, for example, Yahweh gives little explanation as to why the fruit of one tree rather than another must not be eaten.

The failure to recognize human limits is part of human sinfulness. And the failure to divide the responsibilities of creation and procreation justly among women and men is a consequence of this. When such limits are transgressed, the naturally given impulses for work and love become perverted, painful, beleaguered, and destructive. Inevitably, but not irredeemably, women who aspire in a positive sense to "have it all" go one step too far: Their acquisitiveness turns being into having, sharing into owning, growing into getting. For many women and men, today's danger is not the struggle to choose "generativity (procreativity, productivity, creativity) over self-absorption and stagnation," as identified by life-cycle theorist Erik Erikson.[29] The prime crisis and task of contemporary adulthood in the United States is more often "generativity versus fragmentation"—that is, excessive self-extension, and

exhaustion. In contrast to the problems of self-indulgence that Erikson postulates, the problem is self-loss and the inability to establish just and appropriate limits to human desire. A prominent challenge and temptation of the adult stage of the life cycle is the lure of over-scheduling, over-commitment, and over-extension. A consistent, sometimes boastful, complaint seems to cut across gender, class, race, and age: not having enough time, being so terribly busy.

Just as North American society has denied death, the penchant to "have it all" refuses to acknowledge finitude. In adulthood one must focus one's generativity on a limited number of areas. Freedom to choose, to decide—in Latin *decidere*—means "to cut off." The perennial temptation is to refuse to relinquish what cannot be, to step beyond creation's boundaries, to seek more than can be humanly cared for—to want to become "like God" by "having it all." In this sense, no one can or should "have it all." "Having it all" is at heart a theologically misleading modern premise. The economics of buying and having, in Dorothee Soelle's interpretation, have inappropriately replaced "religion as 'the ultimate concern'."[30] As a result, relationships are undermined, work is subverted, and desire is deadened.

Yet "Daughters of Eve" who have desired too much have also glimpsed the new heaven and the new earth. They have recognized that work versus family, creation versus procreation, self-love versus love of others, self-fulfillment versus self-sacrifice are sets of "false alternatives." In Adrienne Rich's experience, the choice has

> seemed to be between "love"—womanly, maternal love, altruistic love—a love defined and ruled by the weight of an entire culture; and egotism—a force directed by men into creation, achievement, ambition, often at the expense of others, but justifiably so.[31]

In these terms, "Daughters of Eve" refuse to choose. In seeking ways in which "the energy of creation and the energy of relation can be united" (as they have seldom been in the history of masculine civilization) they reach for what may be the unreachable, but redemptive, possibilities of human livelihood.[32]

Work and love are the essence and goal of human creation and Creation itself. All humans were created for good work and good love. Good work means "fruitful, enjoyable, rewarding work" not based on the commodification of the marketplace but on attaining full personhood, relating to others, nature, and the world.[33] Good love preserves the subjectivity of the other and the human potential for mutuality. It expresses the human project of liberation—its wholeness in solidarity with others—with erotic, bodily love a symbol of the call to communion, and children a God-given

blessing. Humans are gifted with freedom, with worth and value as human beings created to work and to love. Human failure to work and to love thus leads to the question of the nature of human salvation. To hope for the elimination of the "false alternative" is to hope for the "not yet," the coming of the kingdom in this world. Thus, in a way, even misplaced desire to "have it all" is attuned to the goodness of God.

In this sense, then, the desire to "have it all" is not wrong or evil in and of itself. The phrase has nipped at women's heels for decades, doggedly accusing "high-demand" women of wanting too much. "Daughters of Eve" have accordingly felt reprimanded, guilty, and shamed, like Eve, for their apparently inordinate desires. Economic and social structures have further made it seem that the possibility of some women "having it all" depends on the exploitation of other women to keep house, raise children, and service the elderly. Yet, while "having it all" is a cliché bogged down in racist, classist, sexist, and materialistic waters, the ideals of human worth, freedom, and fulfillment from which it sprung remain revolutionary.

A corrected interpretation of "having it all" must restore appropriate responsibility to men, local community institutions, the workplace, government, and public policymakers. Moreover, a corrected interpretation must grasp the nature of human desire in the best sense of God's intention, and will depend on God's intervening grace to guide and correct human distortions in work and families. "Daughters of Eve" have discerned a hope at the heart of God's grace that blesses love and work as endeavors to be celebrated, shared, and safeguarded as part of human creation and redemption for both men and women. Women should not be blamed for their unrealistic expectations or their failure to work it all out, nor seen as fools or guilty of wanting too much when their problems are quite relative to a particular moment in history that has forced both a false separation between paid work and family care, and an unnatural divorce between work and love, which belong together. "Daughters of Eve" and their supporting men discern and practice a truth about human fulfillment that has religious and moral roots: They have made democratic, egalitarian relationships of justice and mutuality in the family and in the workplace a priority.

NOTES

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