Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore

Ideals and Realities of Motherhood:
A Theological Perspective

Recently I heard a telling story of the lie mothers find themselves living. Faced with an important meeting and no child care, a friend of mine took her young child with her. Strategically armed with a bag of M&Ms, she placed the child on the floor at her knee. After several minutes of surreptitiously dishing out candies under the table, she raised her hands only to discover that, in her words, "They lied! M&Ms do melt in your hands." The milk chocolate mess was not the only lie she encountered in that moment. Current myths suggest a mother ought to be able to have a life alongside motherhood. Yet combining children and adult work seldom happens without some minor or major fiasco.

At the beginning of this century Sigmund Freud argued that the unconscious mind refuses to acknowledge human mortality; on one level, people truly do not believe that they will some day die. Similarly, with mothering, no one really wants to admit that there are no easy answers. Indeed, some of the most powerful lies have been told about mothering, whether the lie of the happy stay-at-home mother of the 1950s or the lie about the ease of breast-feeding while returning to paid work of the 1990s. Mothers would often rather lie, it seems, than openly admit what they endure. More accurately, mothers lie about the pain of childbirth or the complexities of parenting to protect themselves and others or out of fear that we have not lived up to the incessant stream of images of the perfect mother. We lie without meaning to because the realities of mothering seem impossible to depict

within the limits of modern language and the confines of a still incumbent patriarchy.

Religion has had a lot to do with bolstering lies about motherhood. However, in the name of religion people have also doggedly pursued truth, even within a postmodern context that radically undermines such an enterprise. During different historical periods, religion has served to moderate and even unveil the lies people tell and put prophetic visions of abundant life in their place. More than other areas of cultural reflection, theology has attempted to comprehend this lying *and* truth-seeking dynamic of human behavior. Psychology is a close second in its analogous focus on the tension between ideals and realities and in its practice of therapeutic intervention.

Since religion has had a lot to do with both bolstering old lies about motherhood and creating new standards, attempts to critique and reconstruct ideals of motherhood require an understanding of religious theory, even for secular publics. Unfortunately, more often than not, religion is bracketed, ignored, or misunderstood. In the first section of this essay I explore this problem in both the secular and liberal religious discussion. Participants in current debates over motherhood, I observe, now seem all too ready to assert that there are no answers, perhaps more than we realize falling under the influence of Freud's reality principle and his advice about stoic resignation to death. But debunking lies about the traditional family and motherhood, including those inspired by religion, does not resolve dilemmas of mothering, I argue, and leaves some difficult questions. People need ideals and myths by which to live, even if these often degenerate into untruths and fabrications. In the second section, I briefly consider recent work in psychoanalytic psychology that provides a way to understand the longing for answers. This leads nicely into a discussion of the contributions of religion to ideals of motherhood as understood primarily through the work of feminists in religion. Theology and psychology, especially under the influence of feminist theory, can help us understand some of the reasons people lie and perhaps correct simplistic answers. They also suggest that people are sustained by the hope of answers. And theology, attempting to go still further, circles around what good answers look like, even if it can no longer pretend to define exhaustively their content.

The nature of the contributions of religion to matters of mothering and the need to understand these contributions are at least twofold—historical and normative. First, current dilemmas cannot be understood without comprehension of the historical impact of religious practices and beliefs. Although public education in the United States has conventionally omitted the

study of religion as a result of the separation of church and state, one cannot grasp, for example, either the settlement of this country or the development of our constitution without some knowledge of religion. Similarly, as I will develop below, one cannot grasp ideals of mothering without some knowledge of the effects of religion on their formulation. Second, religious beliefs and practices will continue to have complex normative consequences for human ideals of fulfillment. While many of these ideals are particular to the faithful, public arguments for such values as justice, equal rights, responsibility, democracy, and so forth will gain clarity, viability, and endurance from the study of religion. Public dismissal of religion as a field of study is unfortunate because it leaves an entire spectrum of human behavior and history untouched and misunderstood. This is even more troubling when rather limited views of "Christian" values, such as those proposed by the Christian Coalition, are those most equated with Christianity or even religion. The media's tendency to portray religion in sound bites is partly responsible for such misperceptions. In contrast to subjects like geometry and sociology, religion is one subject about which many feel free to claim expertise and yet most are strikingly ignorant. Beyond my specific theses about myths and realities, sharpening sensitivity to the contributions of religion is an additional agenda for this essay.

I should clarify at this point that while my central subject is mothers I do not separate sharply reflection on mothers from reflection on families and disagree with some literature on mothers that tends to do so. My desire to reconnect the two results from a philosophically influenced nonseparative or connective definition of the self and reality and a theologically influenced conviction that motherhood is fundamentally social and relational, involving women in family constellations, minimally of child and mother and, in some shape and form, a male partner (even if only as a source of sperm). Adequate mothering can hardly happen without several concentric circles of supporting relationships, extending from mother and child outward to the wider social context.

Oversight of Religion

Secularization theories and Enlightenment belief in scientific rationalization have encouraged widespread ignorance about the influence of religion on mothers and families in contemporary American culture. While I am not attempting to provide extended evidence of the disregard for religion here, I do want to identify a few interesting books as examples of the questions

and distortions that arise when religion is simplified and dismissed or simply overlooked. My first two examples are books specifically on the myths of motherhood and would be the most likely place to expect attention to religion. I have chosen two other examples of research on the more general subject of the family primarily because their authors are influential in discussions of mothers, gender, sexuality, and families. Their inattention to religion and the consequences of this inattention are typical of much of the literature on issues that, as I will attempt to argue, can never be entirely separated from religious ideas.

The cover of a book contesting the myths of motherhood, *Representations of Motherhood*, edited by Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey, and Meryle Mahrer Kaplan, is designed to provoke an immediate reaction from the reader. It portrays a miniature 1940s mother strapped in an infant swing, gazing up at an imposing, cherubic toddler twice her size. In an attempt to rescue the "hostage mother from her swing" and return her to her rightful proportions, the collection of essays examines sentimentalized and distorted images of motherhood in art, film, literature, the social sciences, and history. Mothers, it argues, must be viewed as subjects in their own right.

This is great as far as it goes. But it does not go far enough. Implicit ethical and quasi-religious questions drive the book: One of its aims is to challenge the "predominant image of the mother in white Western society . . . the ever-bountiful, ever-giving, self-sacrificing mother."[1] However, if the intent encompasses disputing the institutionalization of unconditional love, the study of religion and theology is sorely missing.

The authors of *Representations of Motherhood* establish that mothering is indeed a complex experience. Is this enough? The editors "want a mother who is a real person." But what is a real person? What and who defines personhood, much less motherhood? And if this question cannot be answered, from what vantage point does one hope to question cultural notions of the mother? Feminists have often seen religion as parochial and patriarchal, and often enough this is the case. The omission of religion in *Representations of Motherhood* is also partly related to the editors' identities as psychologists who are by discipline less mindful of the import of normative discourse. But if feminists hope to move beyond analysis and critique and, as Bassin, Honey, and Kaplan themselves desire, to "push forward a *vision* of the maternal place as generative for women's psychological development as well as for cultural and political change," some kind of ethical, religious, theological, and philosophical discourse becomes almost inevitable.[2] To dismiss religion heedlessly is to miss its continued influence and to fail to recognize feminist

scholars in religion as important partners in the U.S. debate about mothers and families.

A single-authored volume, *The Myths of Motherhood*, is a nice exception to the rule. Also a psychologist, Shari L. Thurer does include religion alongside the arts, history, and psychology in her attempt to restore the mother to her right proportions and reveal the "useless and ephemeral" character of many of our cherished ideals of parental excellence. She intends to establish that "there are no easy answers, no magical solutions, no absolutes" and to encourage "decent people . . . to mother in their own decent way."[3] Nonetheless, despite her thorough analysis, two questions surface that also characterize my other examples. First, how might we understand the human need for answers, solutions, and absolutes? Second, having exposed cultural myths, from where will we get adequate normative ideals and stories to determine and convey the parameters of human decency?

Shere Hite's survey on female sexuality in the mid-1970s attracted a lot of attention. More recently her turn to the family, in *The Hite Report on the Family: Growing-Up Under Patriarchy*, promises to hold similar public interest. In contrast to other critics, I am more troubled by her inaccurate assumptions about religion than her controversial survey methods. On the first page she blames the problems of current families on our sad attempts to model ourselves after the " 'holy family.' " If this "archetype" is so powerful, and I partly agree that religious ideology pervades our thinking more than we acknowledge or understand, then one might expect further investigation of "the icons of Jesus, Mary and Joseph." However, beyond criticizing fundamentalist views of families and beyond using religious imagery as a straw horse, Hite pays religion little further attention. Had Hite considered religion more closely, she might have discovered that the processes of democratization that she admires and certain religious beliefs are not polar opposites. She portrays them as mutually exclusive because she sees religion only as a fundamentalist reactionary force. Ignoring the plurality of religious traditions in the United States, she claims that the religious tradition of "the Church" "has as its basic principle, at its heart, the political will of men to dominate women."[4] Yet, as I argue below, religious feminists are themselves working from within a variety of religious traditions toward new family models of equality and justice that Hite herself seeks. The very ideals of democracy she applauds are found within selected religious traditions.

Thoughtlessness about actual religious traditions does not mean that Hite refrains from moral and quasi-religious reflection of her own. In her projection of new normative ideals of love and family, she exemplifies re-

markable naivete. She concludes the family is not struggling; it is simply changing. Pluralism in family relationships "should be valued and encouraged; far from being a sign of the breakdown of society, it is a sign of a new, more open and tolerant society springing up."[5] Hite's conclusion is partially appropriate and grows out of a justified fear of conservative alliances. But it is also precariously unenlightened about, first, the growing trend among previously "liberal" social scientists and politicians alike toward documenting the negative consequences of family disruption for children,[6] and second, the complexity and everyday influence of conservative Christian alliances.[7] Angry, unreflective dismissal of both phenomena as backlash leaves Hite unable to counter conservative arguments with any comparable or substantive contrasting religious and social interpretations. She ignores the potential deleterious effects of family disruptions on children and overlooks the possible positive role of liberal religion in family democratization or in reinterpreting biblical traditions.

Definitions of motherhood and family are hotly debated because they are not just functional or descriptive. In her history of the family, Stephanie Coontz declares that the family is foremost an ideological conception, "an *idea*, a 'socially necessary illusion'" that justifies particular social, economic arrangements.[8] The family is a battlefield located at the crossroads of biology and culture, involved in the formation of persons and values. Debate over motherhood, and more recently, fatherhood, is often at the center of the conflict. In two sequels to her first book on the history of families, *The Way We Never Were* and *The Way We Really Are*, Coontz herself changes hats from historian to social prophet under the pressure of the family debate. Myths about the duration of marriage or the high incidence of teen pregnancy have many harmful consequences: They erode solidarity, foster guilt and nostalgia, and diminish the confidence of those already beleaguered. When "memories" of traditional family life "never existed or existed in a totally different context," she points out, ideals become rigid and onerous.[9] As historical prophet, Coontz banishes many cherished illusions about the "Leave It to Beaver" ideal and shatters dominant myths about the self-reliance of American families, the links between feminism and family disruption, and so forth.

Coontz's efforts to debunk family myths are enlightening. But, once again, are they sufficient? She is highly critical of definitions that turn to biological or religious dimensions to give the term *family* an absolutistic quality that keeps people from questioning its social construction and renegotiating

its demands. She demonstrates effectively the extent to which the prescriptive role of the term makes its definition both a political and religious venture, for good and for ill. But she focuses almost solely on the negative consequences of religion and in her latest two books barely mentions religious traditions except when they cast a destructive light on a case. In the end she fails to comprehend either the power of myths to lure and enrich life or the appropriateness of the human appetite for myth making. Her kind of prophetic history provides sobering but limited resources when it comes to constructing new ideals and solutions to parental struggles. Ultimately, she wants some kinds of myth—"we need to invent new family traditions," she notes.[10] But how, beyond discarding romanticized ideals? Can history and sociology alone provide sufficient help to today's families? In her eyes, traditions and communities which endorse religious traditions have little, if any, positive or constructive role. But do traditions only "hold families back," as one of her chapter titles asserts?

The oversight of religion, I readily acknowledge, should be partly laid at the doorstep of liberal religion and theology itself. Until recently, feminist religion scholars themselves have tended to neglect families and the mother-as-subject. Other crucial tasks, whether addressing violence or reconstructing doctrines of God, Christ, and human nature, have absorbed a great deal of attention. The ground swell of protest over powerful, reverberating ideals of the all-giving mother, it is worth noting, has occurred primarily outside the study of religion. The increased interest in a variety of disciplines in mothers as subjects in the 1980s has only slowly appeared in the study of religion in the 1990s. Many theologians are mothers and many advocate maternal god imagery and language, but few have investigated actual mothering and what is learned about theology from this vantage point. Fortunately, this is changing. And there have been some important, even if neglected, exceptions to this charge in the work of Kathryn Rabuzzi, Margaret Hebblethwaite, and a few other individual essays and collections.[11]

Oversight of religion can also be explained by the silence, hesitancy, and ambiguity about change within the less conservative, mainline congregations and those on the religious left. As vexing as the presumptuousness of the Christian right that they speak for all Christians on family matters is the vacuous discussions of families and parenting among the Christian left.[12] This leaves secular society and the media to assume that any discussion on the family, mothers, fathers, and religion necessarily entails the conservative values of Pat Robertson, James Dobson's Focus on the Family, or the Promise

Keepers. This is a sad misrepresentation of the richness of religious traditions for which those in the mainline and on the religious left are also responsible.

Attempts to set the agenda for families in Coontz and Hite, and attempts to counter myths of mothering in *Representations of Motherhood* and Thurer raise some tough questions about the ideals and realities of mothering. What do children need, and mothers need in relation to them? To what extent do parents have a moral responsibility as adults to recognize that their decisions shape the lives of their children for better and for worse and, through them, the wider community? To what extent should they alter their actions on their children's and society's behalf? And what is the father's role in all this?

Beyond questions of parental practice are riskier theoretical questions. One of the key problems that those who identify themselves as feminist must face, as well as those who wish to promote an adequate family theory in general, is how to preserve what is good in the institutions of family, marriage, and parenthood without preserving patriarchy?[13] Are all forms of heterosexual monogamy oppressive and, if not, what forms are not and how might they be sustained? Can we after all devise alternatives to the patriarchal family which find an appropriate place for the institutions of male–female sexual intimacy, commitment, and responsible parenting without merely reinforcing heterosexism, gender stereotypes, and sexist exploitation? Are proposals supporting the nontraditional approach of egalitarian parenting possible if one also wants to support diversity in family form?

These kinds of questions can be answered, of course, without recourse to religion. But, I believe, more adequate answers will evolve if feminist scholars in religion participate in the discussion. Practically, answers are more likely to have an impact on human behavior if supported by religious narratives and practices. Theoretically, if feminists intend to reconstitute motherhood as a more complex reality, their task should include an understanding of the evolution of ideals. Moreover, feminists, including feminist scholars in religion, should continue to define not only the ambiguities of good mothering but new constructive ideals and future possibilities. Of course, the construction of ideals is a questionable task in a postmodern context deeply suspicious of truths of any kind, much less religious truths.

The Need for Truth and Ideals in a Postmodern Context

In *Escape from Paradise*, religion scholar Kathleen Sands outlines a powerful critique of wishful thinking in theology. Escaping paradise, according to

Sands, means admitting the tragic dimension of all experience to an extent precluded by conventional theology, including feminist theology. In a postmodern context, we can no longer expect to "encounter truth and goodness unaccompanied by the most profound questions of violence, conflict, and loss."[14] As she remarks, "no single feature has marked the theology of this century so deeply as the encounter with the radical evils washed up by the receding tide of modernity."[15] No ontological truth can define the good since social interests construct truth rather than the other way around.

Mainstream and feminist Christian theology hide the evil, ambiguity, and inevitable tragedy of human experience behind one of two kinds of religious solutions: Christian rationalism and its shadow, Christian dualism. Either one hopes monistically that being is good and evil is the privation of good, or nonbeing. Simply put, one refuses to acknowledge evil's real existence and beings are ranked hierarchically according to their degree of goodness, with women and children below men. Or reality is construed as a battle between two relatively equal forces of good and evil in which good eventually triumphs and evil is blamed on the Other. Lest the nonreligious think they have escaped unscathed, the categories cover modern variations. The Enlightenment progress-oriented view of evil as "bias"—that is, an accident to be remedied by objectivity and universal imperatives—is simply a version of Christian rationalism. And certain forms of feminism have dualistically aligned the bad with the "White Male System" and the good with "Women's Reality."[16]

Philosophically, Sands has put to rest the dream of truly knowing the good and seeking moral perfection. The good, she writes, is an "entirely human, entirely fragile creation,"[17] and therefore theology involves the interrogative mode of a "tragic heuristic." A tragic heuristic requires asking questions more than suggesting answers and coming face to face in the stories of our lives with irredeemable loss and irresolvable conflict rather than denying them. It requires people to relinquish ideals and create what right and wrong they can in radically plural contexts. Moral judgments then become "strategic, contextual judgments about how the diverse goods of life might best be integrated and unnecessary suffering minimized in a particular place and moment."[18]

In all this, Sands strikes a responsive chord in the postmodern heart. While her analysis is disturbing, it is not unusual or atypical of much of postmodern conversation in liberal religion. And in some ways it fits well with the arguments against myths of motherhood discussed above. The secular discussion of mothering would find in Sands much confirmation of

their suspicion of theological ideals and religious myths. She lends religious support to Coontz's decisive conclusion in *The Way We Really Are:* "The biggest lesson of the past is that there are no solutions there."

On one very important account, however, the approach to ideals that Sands' work exemplifies is limited. She offers little in the way of reconstructed alternative religious traditions and beliefs. While she hopes to illuminate ethical discourse and enhance the vitality of religious feminism, her contemporary version of a situation ethic is minimalist. One is overwhelmed with a sense of the inescapable nature of evil in the world and left with little account of the motivation to combat it. To return to our central subject, how are families and mothers in particular to live between recognition of the radical nature of evil and the yearning to eradicate its presence? Building moral commitments in the ruins of postmodernity involves not just intellectual finesse but psychological insight and awareness. If one is to practice compassion—the closest Sands comes to resurrecting a religious ideal—how does one know compassion when one sees it, much less how to exercise it? Neither the recognition of tragedy nor the respect for diversity relieves people of the responsibility of making ethical distinctions between delightful and destructive actions. In fact, recognition of and guidance for the many, many ways to be a good mother and the many ways in which mothering goes wrong calls for an even more than usually dogged, sophisticated, complicated pursuit of adequate truths and ideals.[19]

Psychoanalytic Reflections

The postmodern rejection of ideals in secular feminism and Sands' theology is not entirely psychologically tenable. Freud, of course, relegates ideals and religious hopes about love and work, including motherhood, to the terrain of the superego, the pathological, and the delusional.[20] By contrast, psychoanalytic self-psychologist Heinz Kohut suggests that people need answers by which to live, even answers that wax over into lies.[21] Whereas Freud saw ideals as defenses against drives and sought to penetrate the unconscious by overcoming defenses and resistance, Kohut seeks to establish "self structure" by comprehending defense and resistance and reclaiming the significance of ideals. The self yearns for structure for its very survival, and ideals are an important element in this process of creating structure. In this view, some lies may actually be a necessary defense against self-demise rather than a regressive behavior in need of exposure.

According to Kohut, human pathology results not from repressed in-

stincts and oppressive superego constructs, but from an insufficiently structured self or from a defect in the establishment of a coherent self at the preoedipal level. Healthy narcissism is crucial to the development of the coherence of the self. Narcissism, defined in classical psychoanalytic theory as the libidinal cathexis or investment in the self, or in nontechnical terms as self-love, is not something that must be outgrown or replaced by object-love or love for others. Rather, Kohut argues, narcissism has its own independent line of development, distinct from ego development.

Kohut distinguishes three primary narcissistic needs: mirroring, or the need for admiration; twinship, or the need for those like us; and, most important for my purposes, idealization. These needs are neither defensive maneuvers to escape aggressive and sexual drive-wishes in psychoanalytic terms nor, in religious terms, destructive signs of selfishness or fallacious tyrannical assertions of absolutes. On the contrary, a child begins to develop a cohesive self only as significant others respond empathically to her developing narcissistic needs.

Alongside the need for mirroring and twinship, "a person needs something general to respect."[22] When an infant meets the inevitable shortcomings of parental care, one way she compensates is through the idealization of a perfect, admired omnipotent "self-object," a person who is experienced as part of her self, often a parent. The central experience of the child is "You are perfect, but I am a part of you."[23] Over time, with empathy that includes in-tune understanding and discipline as much as sympathy and positive regard, and with necessary but not traumatic failures in empathy, the infant incorporates the function of the idealized object into the structure of the self in transmuted form. This is not a simple one-time phenomenon. Under adequate conditions, dependence on progressively more mature and expansive idealizable self-objects continues throughout life. From this idealization comes the capacity for sustained commitment and value-oriented behavior.

Almost anything can serve as an idealized self-object and psychology itself creates such ideals. The idea of the "good enough" mother illustrates an attempt in psychoanalysis to name that range of behavior that is less than ideal but adequate. Like other ideals, even this benevolent ideal is capable of its own degeneration: D. W. Winnicott himself sometimes uses the term to describe a mother who is uncannily perfect in her responses.[24] Yet both Winnicott and Kohut emphasize an intriguing twist: Failure is a requisite dimension to ideals and to ideal parenting. Failures in parenting, like empathic "breaks" in therapy, are actually primary sites for the creation and internalization of healthy self-structure, but only when they are nontraumatic and

part of a larger context of understanding and explanation. The dynamic interplay of illusion and disillusionment, seen most clearly in the use of transitional objects, is essential for mature development.[25]

In short, people tend to create ideals, even in a postmodern context of ambiguity and pluralism, as one means to soothe, comfort, and sustain the self and its relationships. People may create ideals that fade into lies to protect themselves and survive, to retain a semblance of control over life and self, or, in more troubling cases of family violence, addictions, racism, and class arrogance, to maintain power over others as well as control over themselves. While religion and morality still can operate in illusional or delusional ways, they also serve as sources of self and social cohesion. A villain in many cases, religious discourse is also, as Martha Nussbaum remarks, "in multiple and powerful ways, a major source of hope for women's futures."[26] Many people will worship and deny gods; the important question is what kind.

Religious and Theological Reflections on Ideals of Motherhood

Representations of self-sacrificing motherhood in Western society are not just a result of nineteenth-century Victorian values. They are intertwined with older historical and religious notions—Christian edicts of suffering servanthood, Jewish ideals of maternal self-sacrifice, Aristotelian and Christian codes defining the relationship between subordinate and superior family members, and other powerful motifs. Furthermore, ideals of motherhood are not only intertwined with religious teachings. They are embedded in the formative religious practices of men as elders and priests, in prayers, doxologies, and creeds imaging a male deity, in the exclusion of women and mothers from leadership in sacred rituals, and in continued resistance to change in all of these areas.

The impact of religion in the United States has not declined nearly as much as popular opinion has led people to believe. These practices continue to have a hidden yet persuasive influence because they are embodied physically in word and in deed and repeated weekly in ritualized ceremonies of conviction and proclamation in settings that are unique in their cross-generational participation of children, youth, adults, and the elderly. For many people, worship is *the* primary encounter with particular family and gender ideals and, at the very same time, the last place for critical reflection on these ideals. Genuine worship requires an immersion in participation

that often forbids a more distanced evaluation. So young and old alike absorb a great deal in ritual practices that remains unnoticed, hidden, unanalyzed.

The impact of religion extends beyond religious beliefs and practices internal to faith communities. The influence of Christianity on the national scene is hardly more apparent and yet more overlooked by the general public than in marriage and family law. As law and ethics professor John Witte observes, "Much of what we call the traditional family and the classic law of the family was forged by Roman Catholic theologians and canon lawyers in the first half of this millennium, then reforged by Protestant theologians and jurists in the middle of this millennium and transmitted with periodic reforms into the 20th century."[27] The Roman church played a key role in shifting control over marriage from the clan to the couple and in privileging monogamy over polygamy, divorce, and adultery. Sacramental interpretations elevated the status of the bond between woman and man above ties to parent, other family members, government, or parish. As a sacrament, marriage could only be received voluntarily by the consent of the individual. Others argue that this Western Christian principle of consent "created an assumption that individuals have a right to accept or reject the conditions of their lives, an assumption that was very different from that which prevailed among cultures committed to clan-controlled marriages."[28]

The need for a proclamation of consent to validate marriage is only one example of a church action that sparked more extensive social reform, including the gradual weakening of the control of fathers over wives and children. As fundamental to the current status of marriage was the Protestant Reformers' move to put a social model of marriage in place of the sacramental model, making marriage a public and civic estate and the family a social unit as important as church and state. Each of these historical examples suggests a more general observation. Current contractual law can adjudicate the specific rights of parties involved in families, marriages, and partnerships, but a broader moral vision is necessary to inspire and shape the large range of obligations that surround mothers, fathers, children, marriage, family, and community. Moreover, if people used religion to construct visions of family life, it will take an understanding of religion to undo and redo them.

Assuming that religion continues to have an impact on lives through religious practices and edicts and through its historic influence over social and legal arrangements, what does reflection on religion offer specifically to our discussion of the myths of motherhood and the longing for ideals by which to live? I will limit my comments to four topics. First, theologians

themselves have long debated the complex relationship between ideals and reality. The present and the not-yet quality of grace is a core constituent of Christian faith as is the Reformed premise that all human answers are partial. I will merely allude to some of this discussion. Second, radical mutuality in parenting, even as helpfully reconceived by feminist theologians, is easier said than achieved. The nature of mutuality in nonequal relationships of parents and children and other dependencies and transitional hierarchies must be more clearly understood by religious and secular feminists alike. Third, with discussion of mutuality in mind, I believe we should reconsider, as one illustration of the importance of reinterpreting Christian ideals, a major roadblock to genuine mutuality in Christian marriage—the disturbing and much maligned "household codes," or New Testament passages that spell out the rules for relationships within the family. Finally, feminist theory has emphasized new understandings of the experience as distinct from the patriarchal institutionalization of motherhood. Yet the opposition between experience and institution has not proven adequate to the complex reality of motherhood. In religious circles the family and motherhood are still considered crucial social institutions. These institutions must somehow come to contain the rich diversities and ambiguities of families within structures that enhance the common good without repudiating the experiences of mothers.

First then, the relation between ideals and reality. In our work together on *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*, Pamela Couture shed light on the use and misuse of religious ideals in the U.S. history of marriage and families. The purpose of an ideal, she states, "is to point us beyond the immediacy of our concrete existence toward a vision for which we can hope."[29] However, few people approximate ideals and the way we do depends heavily upon the actual circumstances of our lives. Even the separate gender spheres of the Victorian ideal were in actuality less distinct than the ideal and appeared in many variations across the United States. Based on a historical study of U.S. families and religion—Puritan ideals of the northeast, Anglican and Calvinist patterns of the Southeast, Wesleyan and revivalistic values of Western movements as well as the imposition and moderation of these ideals among Native Americans and African Americans—Couture contends:

> It is important to distinguish between cultural ideals and their concrete variants which arise when people shape ideals in tension with their contexts. The danger in formulating ideals is that their concrete versions will be invested with ultimate status. Sometimes, concrete variations of family

life identified with Christianity have been imposed on new situations as if they had the status of an ideal, even when, in the new context, the model actually violates the ideal of Christian love and justice. . . .

The most oppressive form of the use of ideals occurs when norms derived from concrete realities are applied by people in power, as if they were ideals, to judge situations in which people cannot possibly attain the ideal because their situation is so different. Frequently, this abuse of an ideal occurs across race and class line.[30]

Ideals can be destructive when invested with ultimacy and absolutism. This does not in itself invalidate the premise of ideals such as justice or love. Ideals can also be used constructively and subversively by less powerful groups to challenge the status quo. Analogous to their healthy role in psychological development, ideals provide a vision by which new cohesive patterns and structures emerge and evolve.

Paula Cooey makes a similar point. "We cannot live without some pattern to social life in order to establish responsibility for child rearing and the care of the elderly," she observes, "but most family patterns, *when taken as absolute*, often wreak havoc on the lives of the people they are supposed to protect and nourish."[31] Codes have only a provisional nature and must be responsive to the particularities of context. Nonetheless, patterns and guides are necessary. This is an important step once removed from Sands' tragic ethic or Coontz's resignation to a history that ultimately yields no answers. The psychoanalytic code of the "good-enough family," as adapted by those in religion, defines an ideal family which "is less than its own ideal and yet competent enough to raise reasonably adequate children." Minimally, the norms of such a family include nurturing children into healthy adulthood and strengthening the personhood of the parents. From a Christian perspective, they include the ideals of hospitality, compassion, justice, and reconciliation.[32]

These claims rest in part on a long-standing tension in the history of Christian theology between vision and realism. Denominational differences as well as the differences between theologians surface around this tension. Lutherans, for example, tend to believe that "the finite is capable of receiving the infinite," or that ideals can become realities; and the Reformed tend to hold that "the finite is not capable of receiving the infinite!" or that humans are too limited and fallen to realize ideals.[33] A few theologians, like Reinhold Niebuhr with his understanding of the ironies of history, for example, or his definition of sin as inevitable but not necessary, bring together the two traditions in a jointly enriching way.[34]

Let me turn to my second point, the ideal of radical mutuality in parenting. In seeing mutuality as a relatively easy human achievement next to the impossibility of agapic or sacrificial love, Niebuhr himself grossly oversimplifies the significance of mutuality in Christian love. Radical mutuality is a transformative Christian ideal with potentially more dramatic consequences for families than sacrificial love. While feminist theologians have propounded this ideal in various forms for the last three decades,[35] only a few have attempted to modify it to fit the distinctiveness of family relationships. Christine Gudorf continues an early feminist theological challenge to doctrines of sin as prideful self-assertion by asserting the importance of self-fulfillment in the very act of giving to one's children. She recognizes the transitional sacrifices necessary for adequate mothering but holds mutuality as the goal rather than sacrifice. Here she argues for the relevance of Catholic ideas of charity that do not exclude the self over traditions shaped by Protestant views of self-interest as invalidating Christian love (in Luther, Kierkegaard, Niebuhr, Anders Nygren, for example).[36] The meaning of Jesus' death itself assumes a different interpretation under this view. Less a sacrifice and more an unavoidable consequence of the love of others, the cross calls people to renewed relations (that may require moments of sacrifice) but not to self-sacrifice in and of itself. This may sound like a slight distinction but it makes all the difference in the world in people's lives and in mothering. And this change in understanding is one of the hardest to implement in ritual practice and the interpretation of the cross that accompanies the act of the Eucharist or communion that stands at the center of most Christian worship.

Feminist theological discussion of mutuality has sometimes been sloppy. First, more often than not, the proclamation of mutuality assumes a relationship between two relatively equal adults. However, in the practice of parenting as well as many other practices, such as teaching, counseling, and so forth, equal relationships are rare. More difficult questions arise when one strives to maintain the ideal of mutuality within nonequal relationships. Second, with the free and easy use of the term "mutuality" these days, concrete pragmatic details of maintaining life are often dropped from the equation. The movement from rhetoric to reality in the practical equality between women and men and between mothers and fathers has to reckon with factors as diverse as the limits of time, the competing values of a capitalistic market economy, the economic disparity between the races, classes, and gender, and the demands for geographic mobility.[37] Both oversights lead to a neglect of the tricky question of how and where certain sacrifices become requisite, either in unequal relationships or in the midst of the practi-

cal demands of equal relationships, as a means to maintain mutuality and equality.

Nonetheless, Christian feminist theology has effectively established radical mutuality as more than a humanitarian interest. Mutuality has ontological or divine warrant in a Trinitarian, relational godhead where God is understood as three-persons-in-one and in need of human relationship.[38] In other words, at their core, images of the divine exemplify relationality rather than project an omnipotent, all-powerful but basically independent supreme being. Mutuality also has biblical warrant in the early Christian communities.[39] Despite the patriarchal character of the ancient societies in which Christianity arose and despite the ways in which the Christian tradition has perpetuated ideals of male dominance in the centuries since, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, for example, claims that in Mark's gospel women emerge as the "true Christian ministers and witnesses" and the most courageous of all his disciples.[40] Others join her in confirming the prominent role of women in early Christianity.[41] Still others explain the contradiction between Paul's insistence on the silence of women in the church in I Cor. 14:34–35 and the radical inclusivity of his message elsewhere as a concession to the prevailing values of his time or even as the imposition and addition of someone else's words. In other words, over against social convention certain kinds of egalitarian premises characterized the early Christian movement. I am not arguing, of course, that all mothers must believe and abide by these particular tenets of Christian faith to realize good mothering and mutuality. Rather, I am simply observing that to the extent that religious ideals shape mothering, then ample grounds exist for alternative ideals within Christianity to shape culture and families in new directions.

In the light of Christian ideas of mutuality, the hardest texts to contend with and the texts that have most influenced the ideals and institution of the family in the Western world are the household codes of the New Testament. Household codes is a term applied to scriptural passages that sought to order family relationships among early Christian converts in two Deutero-Pauline letters (letters attributed to but not authored by Paul) of the Christian New Testament, Colossians and Ephesians. Typically, in these letters, family members are exhorted to certain behaviors in relation to one another, most specifically, subordinates (e.g., wives, slaves, children) to their superiors (e.g., husbands, masters, fathers). The term sometimes alludes to similar or related codes in I Timothy, Titus, and I Peter, although these passages are less tightly structured and related to broader guidelines for congregations and communities.

These texts are particularly problematic for feminist interpretations of mutuality in sex, gender, and parenthood. From at least the Reformation, if not earlier, to the last century, they have given supernatural sanction to patriarchal family roles in which men lead and women follow. More recently, the household codes echo in the background of the handbook for the Promise Keepers' movement. Similarly, points no. 2, 3, and 6 of the "Danvers Statement" issued by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood formed in 1989 among the Christian right declare gender roles ordained by God, including Adam's headship in marriage, and redemption as consisting in loving leadership by husbands and willing submission by wives.

There are sufficient grounds for arguing, however, that the codes were not intended to bolster but to reverse ancient heroic models of male authority in families.[42] Historians have documented a genderized pattern of honor-shame throughout the Mediterranean world during the period of Roman Hellenism as a prominent backdrop for these texts. Male honor and reputation was gained through winning and through protecting the privacy and "shame" of women in their household. Male dishonor or shame occurred through losing and intrusion into the private realm.[43]

Taking the household codes in Ephesians as an example, we see that the author borrows and yet transforms the metaphors of the surrounding male culture of strength, dominance, and conflict to suggest new virtues of peace, humility, patience, and gentleness. The husband is called to the self-giving love of Christ and a sort of mutual subjection not found in similar Aristotelian codes. The logic of the Aristotelian household codes is changed, if not subverted. The code in Ephesians balances compliance with the patriarchal social mores of the times with new innovations about male submission and reciprocity introduced by the Christian proclamation. The very need for household codes in the Deutero-Pauline letters may itself testify to the disruptive reality of a new family ethic evolving in the early Christian house church movement.[44]

Over history, it is this accent on male subordination that has been most overlooked. Instead, women, more than men, have heard and absorbed the message of sacrifice and submission. Feminists in religion have tended to deride the codes as a reversal of the more inclusive message of equality within the early Christian community under the social and political pressures of the patriarchal society of that time. The passage in Ephesians itself only finally obtains a modified or benevolent patriarchy, failing to articulate new roles for women in leadership and charity. Nonetheless, the hierarchical patterns of the Greco-Roman world, if not completely challenged, were at

least mitigated in the household codes as well as in some important aspects of the Jesus movement and in some of the practices of the early church.

Finally, let me turn to my fourth observation on the contributions of religion to the discussion of myths and ideals of motherhood, an insistence upon the institutional dimensions of motherhood and families. In 1976, in *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich made a crucial distinction between motherhood as experience and motherhood as institution. In Rich's words, the institution is superimposed on the experience and aims at ensuring that the "*potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children . . . remain under male control."[45] She had historical and political reason to see the institution as evil and the experience as good. The institution of motherhood under patriarchy thwarts women's freedom, alienates them from their bodies, and corrupts fatherhood. It does so through three generic precepts: "All women are seen primarily as mothers; all mothers are expected to experience motherhood unambivalently and in accordance with patriarchal values; and the 'nonmothering' woman is seen as deviant." Yet, as Rich establishes so well, all mothers feel ambivalent, some women choose not to mother, and "a lesbian can be a mother and a mother a lesbian."[46] Through the courage and intensity of her prose, readers encounter the mother as a person with needs, desires, and thoughts of her own. To her credit and those who have followed, some of the patriarchal dimensions of the institution have less hold than they once did.

The ensuing years have shown, however, that the relationship between the institution and the experience of motherhood is more complex than Rich assumes in viewing the institution as the problem and women's experience as the grounds for fighting it. One never has, it seems, raw experience unshaped by institutions. Debunking the patriarchal myths of motherhood is, in the end, only one half of a job well done. As in the story of the melting chocolates, new myths and institutions rather quickly replace the old. The task is not simply breaking silences, although under a resilient but weakened patriarchy this remains crucial. The task also involves distinguishing poor institutions and ideals from more adequate ones and creating institutions of family, marriage, partnership, and motherhood that secure the good of mothers and the good of others.

The ways in which reproduction has been controlled by men and suffered by women is not adequately addressed, as theological ethicist Lisa Cahill points out, "by speaking as though sex and birth have no intrinsic social dimension at all."[47] From the perspective of Catholic ethics, the liberal emphasis on personal autonomous choice tends to disassociate sex from pa-

rental fulfillment and social responsibility. While sexual pleasure and intimacy between individuals and couples has an importance of its own, valuing them should not mean the neglect of the social meanings of the body realized through kinship and parenthood. A strength of the Catholic tradition is its strong social vision that connects sexual pleasure, intimacy, and parenthood. The personal sexual relationship is situated at the center of a series of concentric circles that emanate out from the joy of sexual exchange to the parental relationship to the family and finally to the family's critical contribution to the common good. In Cahill's words, parenthood is a "specifically sexual mode of social participation"; procreation is "the social side of sexual love."[48] Family choices are social and moral through and through.

In contrast to Rich, then, the choice is not between patriarchal institutions and nature or maternal experience but "between oppressive institutions and institutions that are life enhancing." In this regard, as Jewish theologian Judith Plaskow argues, feminist theology offers a viable path beyond the dichotomies that arise in feminist liberal and radical theory between rejection of women's body experience and exaltation of it.[49] Feminist theologians generally have not found either of these an attractive or sufficient option. In part this is because they have grappled with complex historical images of women, the valuable and ambiguous contributions of social institutions, and religious traditions in which intricate human relationship is mediated through the flesh.

This holistic or antidualistic understanding of flesh and spirit as inseparable is a particular reading of experience or nature and institution or culture shared by feminist readings of Jewish and Christian traditions. Maternal experience is neither a mechanical reflex of biology upon which family ideals rest nor solely a male or social construction with no biological referents. Childbirth and even childrearing are to some extent "bio-social" events. Roles and duties in parenting and sexuality are social and physical arrangements women and men must constantly renegotiate in face of both natural circumstance and historical, social contingency. Maternal stereotypes and perfectionist absolutes signal an onerous breakdown in this process with negative consequences for all involved.

There is much to be learned about the role of biblical and theological practices and beliefs in current dilemmas that surround mothers and families. Until we wrestle with the religious dreams and ideals deeply rooted in specific traditions and institutions that continue to shape North American culture and psyches, authentic change in the visions of mothering, sacrifice, compassion, and responsibility will remain fortuitous and superficial. Even

less appealing ideals may fill the vacuum left by the demise of conventional religious and social institutions. While a reconstructed religion alone and Christianity in particular will not give answers to the complex contemporary quandaries about mothering, one can hardly confront representations of motherhood in Western culture without confronting those that emerge from particular religious world views. Recent reflection among feminists in religion suggests that positive insights and visions for mothers and families will emerge from reinterpreted religious understandings.

1. Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey, and Meryle Mahrer Kaplan, eds., "Introduction," in *Representations of Motherhood* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

2. Ibid., 10 (emphasis added).

3. Shari L. Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), xii.

4. Shere Hite, *The Hite Report on the Family: Growing-Up Under Patriarchy* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 359.

5. Ibid., 2.

6. See, for example, Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Judith S. Wallerstein and Sandra Blankeslee, *Second Chances: Men, Women, and Children a Decade After Divorce* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990); Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *Atlantic Monthly* (April 1993): 47–84; William A. Galston, "Beyond the Murphy Brown Debate: Ideas for Family Policy" (New York: Institute for American Values, 1995); *Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation* (New York: Council on Families in America of the Institute for American Values, 1995).

7. See, for example, Bill Bright et al., *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Focus on the Family, 1994); Brian Paul Kaufman, "Promise Keepers Rallies Men to Commitment," *Christianity Today* (September 1992): 57; Douglas DeCelle, "Among the Promise Keepers: A Pastor's Reflections," *Christian Century* 113, no. 21 (July 3–10, 1996): 695–697.

8. Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600–1900* (New York: Verso, 1988), 12–14.

9. Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 5.

10. Ibid., 278.

11. Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, *Motherself. A Mythic Analysis of Motherhood* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, *Mother with Child: Transformations Through Childbirth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Motherhood and God* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984); Anne Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds., *Concilium: Motherhood: Experience, Institution, The-*

ology (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1989); Christine Gudorf, "Parenting, Mutual Love and Sacrifice," in *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, ed. Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Mary D. Pelauer (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 175–191; see also Margaret L. Hammer, *Giving-Birth: Reclaiming Biblical Metaphor for Pastoral Practice* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press/John Knox Press, 1995) and my own book, *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1994).

12. For further reflection on this see Paula Cooey, *Family, Freedom, and Faith: Building Community Today* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press/John Knox Press, 1996), 5–6.

13. Karen Green, *The Woman of Reason: Feminism, Humanism and Political Thought* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 5–6.

14. Kathleen Sands, *Escape from Paradise: Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 6.

15. Ibid., 25.

16. Anne Wilson Schaef, *Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

17. Sands, *Escape from Paradise*, 64.

18. Ibid., 15.

19. For a development of this argument, see Wendy Farley, *Eros for the Other: Retaining Truth in a Pluralistic World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

20. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, [1927] 1964), and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, [1930] 1962); see also Stephen Mitchell, *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), chapters 2, 3; James W. Jones, *Religion and Psychology: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Theology* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), chapter 1.

21. Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 64–66.

22. Lawrence Friedman, "Kohut: A Book Review Essay." *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 49 (1980): 400.

23. Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), 27. For a fruitful overview of Kohut's work from the perspective of religion, prior to the publication of *How Does Analysis Cure?*, see "Religion and the Self-Psychology of Heinz Kohut: A Memorial Symposium," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 5 (1982): 89–205.

24. D. W. Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965); see also Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

25. Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?*, 70; D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Tavistock, 1971), 10–13.

26. Martha Nussbaum, "Religion and Women's Human Rights," *Criterion* 36, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 11.

27. John Witte, Jr., "Consulting a Living Tradition: Christian Heritage of Marriage and Family," *Christian Century* (November 1996): 1108; see also his "The Transformation of Marriage Law in the Lutheran Reformation," in *The Weightier Matters of the Law: Essays on Law and Religion*, ed. J. Witte and Frank S. Alexander (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 57–97, and *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press/John Knox Press, 1997).

28. James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: Free Press, 1993). See also Robert W. Shaffern, "Christianity and the Rise of the Nuclear Family," *America* (May 1994): 13–15; David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, Mass.: University of Massachusetts, 1985).

29. Pamela Couture, "The Use and Misuse of Ideals of Marriage and Families," delivered at the Religion and the American Family Debate Conference, September 1996, Chicago, and partly incorporated into chapter 3 of *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press/John Knox Press, 1997).

30. Ibid.

31. Cooey, *Family, Freedom, and Faith*, 21 (emphasis added).

32. Herbert Anderson and Susan B. W. Johnson, *Regarding Children: A New Respect for Childhood and Families* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press/John Knox Press, 1994), 70–72.

33. Gabriel Fackre, "What the Lutherans and the Reformed Can Learn from One Another," *Christian Century* 114, no. 18 (June 4–11, 1997): 558–561.

34. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 251, 263, and *The Irony of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

35. See Valerie Saiving Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *Journal of Religion* (April 1960): 100–112; reprinted in *Woman Spirit Rising*, ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 25–42; Barabara Hilkert Andolsen, "Agape in Feminist Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 9 (Spring 1981): 69–83; and Beverly Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Woman and Strangers," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36 (1981): 41–57.

36. Gudorf, "Parenting, Mutual Love, and Sacrifice," 182. For a renowned statement of Christian love as complete self-giving, see Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Phillip S. Watson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

37. Herbert Anderson, "Between Rhetoric and Reality: Women and Men as Equal Partners in Home, Church and the Marketplace," in *Word and World* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 376–386.

38. See, for example, Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); and Catherine La Cugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper, 1991).

39. See, for example, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); see also Warren Carter, *Households and Discipleship: A Study of Matthew 19–20* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

40. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "In Search of Women's Heritage," in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 31.

41. See, for example, Elisabeth M. Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980); Ben Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Women, Men, and the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1977).

42. This argument draws on chapter 5, "Honor, Shame, and Equality in Early Christian Families," in *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*.

43. J. H. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke–Acts* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991); Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press/John Knox Press, 1993); David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

44. David Balsh, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981); see also Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 141–142, and "Church and Family 1: Church and Family in the Scriptures and Early Christianity," *New Blackfriars* (January 1984): 4–14.

45. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 13 (italics in text).

46. Adrienne Rich, "Motherhood in Bondage (1976)," in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966–1978* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 197.

47. Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 61.

48. Ibid., 206–207.

49. Judith Plaskow, "Woman as Body: Motherhood and Dualism," *Anima* 8 (1981): 57, 65.