

For copy-edited published version: “Practising What We Preach: The Case of Women in Ministry,” Practical Theology 2, no. 1 (2009): 45-62.

Practicing What We Preach: The Case of Women in Ministry

1

Abstract This essay celebrates the fortieth anniversary of women’s ordination in the Church of Scotland as an occasion to consider the tension between proclamation and practice. Starting with stories of women’s ministry as illustrative, it then explores a case within this case—self-sacrifice in women’s lives. This examination reveals how deeply embedded Christian theology is within common life. To make changes in the family (e.g., share care of children) or congregation (e.g., include women in leadership) involves one immediately in the thicket of Christian doctrine. The essay concludes by arguing that dealing with this slippage between preaching and practice or word and deed lies at the heart of practical theology.

Keywords Women, Ordination, Ministry, Self-Sacrifice, Mutuality, Practical Theology

¹ Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore is E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Pastoral Theology at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Widely known for scholarship in practical theology and in women and childhood studies, some of her publications include *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology* (Abingdon, 1999), *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective* (Jossey-Bass, 2003), and *Children and Childhood in American Religions* (Rutgers University Press, 2008).

Contact Information:
Vanderbilt University Divinity School
Nashville, Tennessee 37240
E-mail: bonnie.miller-mclemore@vanderbilt.edu
Telephone: 615-322-2776

Practice what you preach. Do as I say, not as I do. Easier said than done. And the latest: *Walk the talk.* The English language has invented many ways to talk about the trouble people have connecting proclamation and practice. And no wonder: When it comes to beliefs of any kind a gap almost inevitably opens up between confession and way of life. This is profoundly evident in gender relationships and women in the church.

In this time and this place, as we mark forty years of ordination of women to the ministry of word and sacrament in the Church of Scotland, *preaching* about unity in Christ *has come just a little bit closer to practice.* This is worth celebrating. Women serving as full partners and leaders in Christian ministry has come slowly, so slowly that it is sometimes hard not to despair and want to give up entirely on the church. My own denomination, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a nineteenth-century American-born movement of the Second Great Awakening that broke away from the Presbyterians partly over regulations excluding people from the communion table, joined several other traditions in ordaining women over a century ago.ⁱ Yet when it comes to inviting women to serve as senior ministers or electing women as elders to pray over bread and cup, many people still resist. Even the most theologically progressive congregations struggle to find satisfactory ways to reinterpret doctrinal statements and reshape hymns, prayers, and practice to include women fully. In a country where the “broad social movements” of first and second wave feminism greatly aided women’s ordination, most women still find ministry an “uphill calling,” as one major study subtitled its findings. “Only about half of U.S. denominations grant full clergy rights” to women.ⁱⁱ So it is good to stop and notice the transformation that has come in four decades of offering women status as ordained ministers in the Church of Scotland.

This anniversary offers a wonderful opportunity to consider the tension between proclamation and practice, using the case of women in ministry as illustrative. I want to start with some stories of women's ordination and then look at a case within this case—the ideal and reality of self-sacrifice in women's lives. This exercise of thinking about the slippage between preaching and practice has helped me see that practical theology, my own particular corner in the academy, is actually defined as a discipline and way of life around this tension. So I conclude by arguing briefly that dealing with the dissonance between word and deed lies at the heart of practical theology.

Evading and Inviting Ordination

I was twelve when the Church of Scotland began to ordain women. For almost as long, I have wondered about my place in the Christian tradition. My own ordination in 1984 did not come easily, not because my denomination prohibits it but because I had doubts. Around me whirled the storms sparked by growing awareness that Christian views of women's subordination had perpetuated violence in the home and exclusion in church and society. What did ordination mean in a context made ambiguous by my gender and my awakening to the harm Christianity had done? Was Christianity irredeemably oppressive? Or did it hold within it the capacity to liberate itself? What about the Good News that such oppression has been challenged in Christ and will be overturned in the hope of God, including the injustices that have most strapped women?

I hold fast to this second reading, the promise that grounds this celebration. It was ultimately the support of other women who made my ordination possible. One woman in particular, a small but strong spoken Irish Catholic woman, said words that tipped the

bucket that other women (my grandmother, my mother, and a few mentors and friends) had helped fill. She said, “I can’t be ordained in my tradition. You can. Accept the gift.”

She was one among several women who I had come to know through a hospital chaplaincy internship and who were blocked from ordination in their own traditions. I equivocated; they encouraged me to proceed, almost for their sake. Sometimes my own efforts to preach, lecture, publish, and teach and to do this while caring for a family have been for the sake of girls and women who come after me, to pave the way as women before me have done, passing on to others what Christ has granted each of us—blessing, grace, love, and full inclusion in the Christian community.

Ordination stories of women are filled with strife and sisterly bonds of hope. When Disciples clergywoman Janet Riley describes the controversy in the 1890s over women’s ordination in my own tradition, she names the “power of sisterhood and solidarity” that reverberated from the Seneca Falls Convention on women’s rights in 1848 as a major factor.ⁱⁱⁱ The convention itself came about partly as a result of the camaraderie women reformers shared through their participation in the earlier movement to abolish slavery.

Advocacy for women in ministry caused conflict in the decades after the convention. Many in the “brotherhood” of my tradition, as it was called then, claimed that according to the “laws of nature” and the “universal law of God” women were subordinate, while others just as firmly declared women equal in creation and redemption.^{iv} These debates over scripture, natural law, and divine authority at the end of the nineteenth century sound all too familiar today, now sung in the new key of debates over sexual orientation. Which passages represent *the* gospel message—where Paul

names women as fellow workers or where he forbids them to speak? And what does confession of the gospel mean for daily life?

These questions remained unresolved for early adherents. But in a tradition where authority ultimately rests with local congregations and where practice can ultimately lead to fresh theology, women like Clara Celeste Babcock, the first woman pastor, continued to do ministry “sometimes with full recognition and sometimes without.”^v All these women—Babcock, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and others—abided with impressive strength and verve on the slippery fault line between the rhetoric of creation in God’s image and the complicated reality of its embodiment.

The academy of religion has not done much better than the church. In 1958 the World Council of Churches said the Disciples had “official equality for women in every aspect of ministry since the founding of the denomination.” But Riley protests. The same year the Council made this proclamation, she entered Yale Divinity School because the Disciples House at University of Chicago, one of the more liberal institutions supporting seminary education of Disciples, only supported men. Even at Yale, Riley was heckled and unwelcome in preaching classes.^{vi} She knows personally the “dissonance” between the “mythology” proclaimed by the Council and by the denomination and lived reality.

When I began graduate work at the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1978, I did not realize the full novelty of my presence. Between 1929 and 1973 women were denied the kind of funding from the Disciples House at Chicago that I gratefully received. Only three years before I arrived women were not allowed to reside in the denominationally-affiliated house where I lived. There are many of us with doctorates now teaching but at that time we did not realize how hard we would have to work “to

decipher,” in the words of Kris Culp, now Dean of the Disciples House in Chicago, “what it meant to become what no one else we knew had been before: a Disciple woman with a Ph.D. in religion.” What did it mean to learn “from texts and professors and institutions that were often ambivalent about us and our pursuit of knowledge”?^{vii} Until recent decades, women have been “outsiders in the sacred grove,” as the subtitle of a book on women in academe says.^{viii}

The celebration of this anniversary of the ordination of women in the Church of Scotland is an important reminder that questions about women’s place in Christianity and the church stretch from the local to the global. Senior women pastors now lead six out of eleven churches in Beijing, according to a report from a ten-women delegation from the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia to Chinese seminaries and churches. Fifty percent of seminary students in China are women and women’s ordination has been common since the 1980s. The percentage of ordained women clergy has grown between 2000 and 2007 from one-sixth to a third of all ordained ministers.^{ix} These are changes to celebrate.

At the same time, the very same report brings news of the slippage between proclamation about women’s ministerial status and enactment. “Even women pastors can be submissive,” concedes vice-president of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. The challenge is “how to practice gender equality in China especially in light of cultural traditions.” In parts of Indonesia, “where sixty-five percent of pastors are female, many women still suffer from domestic violence.” The Buddhist and Christian culture in Thailand perpetuates an inferior status for women and an acceptance of women’s necessary self-sacrifice. In Beijing, women leading churches of several thousands

struggle with the “double burden of being ‘mother’ and ‘pastor’” and with guilt over spending little time with their children. A Korean colleague in pastoral theology in the United States argues that Confucianism makes it hard for women in Korea to deepen the progress they have made in assuming greater church leadership.^x These struggles, *walking the talk*, are all too familiar to women in the United States and other countries.

Even when looking strictly at denominations in the United States, there is not a close correspondence between ordination policies and the “tasks and roles women actually perform” “on-the-ground,” according to sociologist Mark Chaves. In fact, he argues that a “loose coupling of rule and practice is a feature of women’s ordination.” So, for example, some evangelical denominations “assert that they are fully supportive of gender equality even as they formally deny women access to key leadership positions” because equality before God supposedly differs from equality of everyday roles. The Catholic Church forbids women as priests but women often run the “day-to-day work” of many of the three hundred “priestless” parishes in the United States. Other churches, such as my own, have long ordained women but then subtly relegate them to the “smallest congregations for the lowest pay.” Although as a sociologist Chaves is talking about policy and not theology, one cannot help but wonder if it is also true theologically that there is sometimes a “loose coupling” between theologies designed for “symbolic display” and for preservation of “public identity” and genuine change on the ground.^{xi}

The need to tell stories about the hard walk from rhetoric to reality continues. To tell stories is to recount the activity of lived faith as it emerges at the junction of proclamation and practice. How we tell these stories themselves matters. A standard historical text on the Disciples trivializes the ordination of women in my own church

tradition by saying that it happened largely as a financial matter. Churches simply wanted to extend to women who did ministry the discounted train fares offered male clergy.^{xii} This interpretation of women's ordination as simply expedient and economic cheapens the full reality of Babcock's call to pastor a struggling congregation and its remarkable transformation under her leadership.

A Case within a Case: Self-Sacrificial Love^{xiii}

We have talked about the case of women in ministry as illustrative of the challenge of practicing what we preach. Now I want to turn to a case within that case: self-sacrificial love. It is one of the many places where Christians struggle to make preaching and practice cohere.

Christian ideals of self-sacrifice have been a real “fishbone” in the throat of Christian theology—to borrow a clever image in a British title debating feminism and Christianity.^{xiv} The sheer number of women who have died from domestic violence, all too often compelled to remain in dangerous contexts by mandates to follow Christ, cannot help but make us sputter and choke.^{xv} That women should submit to their husbands unquestioningly or endlessly sacrifice themselves for family and church has come under increasing suspicion in the last several decades and caused many to question Christianity's core belief in God's saving action as primarily one of substitutionary atonement.^{xvi}

My own book, *Also a Mother*, written in the throes of early parenting, is actually the initial germination of my own extended debate over the idea of self-sacrifice. Many themes run through the book, but I can say now looking back that they flow from one

central cry, the cry of the woman and the mother—myself and others—caught between the cultures of self-sacrifice and self-promotion. The book is provoked by the “clash of commitments,” I say in the introduction, between my work as a white, middle-class Protestant professor and a wife and mother of three young sons. Caught between the sacrificial ideals of the “Father-Knows-Best” family of the 1950s and the more self-interested ideals of working women, I challenge values in both spheres. But I am most troubled by the virtue of undying sacrificial love that defines the “good woman” and “good mother.” As interpreted by church tradition and promoted in society at large, this ideal not only fails many people today, I argue, but also misrepresents “both the intent of God’s creation and the promise of the gospel message itself.”^{xvii}

This conviction reflects the impact of several classic publications. Over four decades ago, Valerie Saiving, a graduate student in religion at Chicago and single mother at the time, questioned whether striving to sacrifice oneself for others was a fitting Christian mandate for women already caught by socialization and natural inclination in self-debilitating patterns of giving too much of themselves. She argues that women are less tempted by the classic Christian problems of pride and self-love named by men and more tempted toward “triviality, distractibility, and diffuseness; lack of organizing center or focus; dependence on others for one’s own self-definition . . . in short, underdevelopment or negation of her self.”^{xviii}

In the years since then, others have added their own voices, exploring not just daily life but drawing powerful connections between these distorted views of Christian love and bad Christology. Problems with self-sacrifice result not just from misunderstanding women but also from misunderstanding Jesus. Christians have taken

the crucifixion “out of its lived-world context,” Protestant ethicist Beverly Harrison argues, and turned “sacrifice into an abstract norm.” Jesus did not seek sacrifice or death by crucifixion as an end in itself. He faced it because he refused “to abandon the radical activity of love” defined not as sacrifice but as “solidarity and reciprocity with the excluded ones in his community.”^{xxix} Moments of self-sacrifice, even the moment of sacrifice on the cross, are “just that,” Christine Gudorf says, “moments in a process designed to end in mutual love.”^{xxx}

Concern about Christology and the costs born by women because of Christian idealization of self-sacrifice is not simply a white middle class issue. “There is nothing divine,” womanist theologian Delores Williams agrees, “in the blood of the cross.”^{xxxi} To prize the substitution of one person’s suffering for another’s radically misunderstands the heart of Jesus’ life and death—his redemptive witness to abundant life on earth. In a pivotal essay on “The Sin of Servanthood,” Jacquelyn Grant insists that theologians and church folk who throw around mandates about Christ-like service must take note of its ambiguous history and reality in the United States where “some people are more servant than others.” The idea of Christian servanthood has a place only when it refers to “joining in the struggle of the redeemer against oppression” and not to traditional notions of destructive subjugation.^{xxii} In the end, discipleship is a far better term to describe the Christian life, particular for the politically disenfranchised and oppressed.

Bad Christology has an impact on family life. Long-standing ideals of unconditional love exaggerate the amount of energy that a single person can or should bestow on household and children, misjudge the needed contributions of other adults, deprive men of opportunities to learn the labor of attentive love, and deny the ambiguity

of maternal love (that a mother can both love and detest caregiving). Myths about maternal devotion convey the message that women are innately gifted and men somehow ill-equipped to share child rearing and housekeeping. Parents do better to admit and even affirm the needs they harbor for pleasure and gratification. When such needs are disguised as loving gifts for which others should feel grateful, such so-called sacrificial love can harm both the giver and the recipient as well.

Yet if sacrificial love is not the right Christian ideal to hang over the heads of women already over-programmed to give and give, leaving them ashamed of the self-interest that accompanies their love, then what is? I offer a generic list at the beginning of *Also a Mother* —“self-respect, mutuality, shared responsibility, interdependence, justice” —and a thick description of practices not easily reduced to simple ideals in later chapters. But the commonly used term of *just love* comes closest to what I advocate.^{xxiii} Intimate relationships, ordinarily viewed as a matter of love, must be culturally reconceived as also a matter of justice.^{xxiv} Well-known theologians, such as Reinhold Niebuhr, have subtly degraded just love, calling it “mere mutuality” not to be confused with the supposedly more authentic Christian love of sacrifice. But those such as Harrison have been quick to protest. The “experience of truly being cared for” while “actively caring for another” is love in its “deepest radicality,” she argues. “It is so radical that many of us have not yet learned to bear it.”^{xxv}

I am still largely satisfied and compelled by this vision. But two concerns linger that warrant reconsideration of the role of sacrificial love. First, Christian theology has changed dramatically for some of us on the matter of sacrifice but worship, steeped in centuries of tradition, has not. “Virtually every time a Christian attends church,” New

Testament scholar Joanna Dewey notes, the “understanding of Christ’s death as blood sacrifice and the corollary understanding that what is demanded of Christians is self-sacrifice are reinforced.”^{xxvi} The word *sacrifice* “figures prominently in virtually all Eucharistic liturgies and recurs again and again in the familiar hymns that have been so important in shaping popular faith.”^{xxvii} It is built into the annual liturgical rhythm and peaks each Lent, often called the season for self-sacrifice.

Second, questions about the role of sacrifice emerge in daily life. Doesn’t the sheer routine of home and work, the call of the common good, and human finitude itself still require one to postpone, if not forfeit and, yes, sacrifice, one’s own desires for the good of the other, whether the individual or the corporate body of family and community? Children in particular require certain kinds of sacrifice, however one might redefine it. Regardless of the many contexts and kinds of families (e.g., conventional breadwinner-homemaker, two-career heterosexual, gay and lesbian, single, and blended) most parents are propelled to extend themselves for their children at greater cost and to a greater extent than they might once have thought possible. In fact, this is precisely the impulse that many religions, including Christianity, command people to extend to neighbors. Doesn’t this kind of sacrifice still have some bearing in everyday life, despite the justifiable skepticism about how it harms women and children?

Those who have espoused radical mutuality have often done so in an adult-centric, chronological void, assuming equal adults and ignoring children, the aging, and those at different stages of non-equal dependency. Failure to include the routine of raising children has resulted in a failure to understand the necessity of “transitional sacrifice” or the temporary restriction of one’s desires for the sake of one’s children.^{xxviii} On a fairly

regular basis, care of children calls for a kind of “self-denial and sacrifice of ego gratification” that is not often found outside the family, observes pastoral theologian Brita Gill-Austern, also a mother of three boys.^{xxix} One may get a great deal back, but the return is seldom instantaneous or in kind. Understanding the need for self-sacrifice makes particular sense for men who hope to share domestic responsibility but have seldom been socialized to give up their own interests for the sake of childcare and housework.

Sacrifice is also relevant in the wider context of work, community, and global society. Even though liberal feminism viewed the home as a site of sacrifice and the workplace as a site of self-fulfillment, this is not always the case, particularly for the working class where work does not guarantee personal satisfaction and for women forced to work to sustain families. Even in more rewarding professions like ministry or teaching, individual aspirations must sometimes take a back seat to institutional goods.^{xxx} The notion of sacrifice seems especially important in the current cultural and political context where a fair redistribution of goods between developing and more developed countries would require those in developed countries to relinquish control over a portion of the world’s overall wealth. Finally, there is still a place in our worship and spiritual lives for imagery of self-sacrifice and liturgical acts that embody it. People have deep-seated emotional and spiritual needs for reprieve from frailty, for compensation, and even for cleansing that accomplishes that which one cannot do for oneself. Emphasis on God’s sacrificial action in Christ speaks to this desire for relief, unmerited love, and grace.

How then does one embody proclamations about Christ’s love in daily life? Any attempt to salvage self-sacrifice must begin by contesting the ways it has oppressed and harmed rather than saved and empowered. If self-sacrifice has a role to play in sustaining

family, spiritual, and political life, a key question becomes how to distinguish “life-giving” from “unhealthy, life-denying” forms.^{xxxii} Ultimately, to discern the difference we must ask a series of complex questions about the motivation and aim of sacrifice and the nature of the person’s selfhood and agency. Is the self-surrender chosen and invited rather than forced or demanded? Is it motivated by fear or genuine love and faithfulness? Does the person remain a subject or is she turned into a means to someone else’s end? Does the sacrificial loss actually count as gain in some deeper way and enrich rather than destroy life?^{xxxiii} Does sacrifice, in essence, remain subordinate to and in the service of a more abundant life? Does it lead to more just and loving relationships?

In the end, the term *sacrifice* itself must be used with greater care in worship and from the pulpit. Contrary to common understanding, the cross has never had a singular meaning but rather a whole host of meanings, all of which have some bearing on the celebration of the Eucharist. The view of Christ’s death as a sacrifice is not even the dominant New Testament explanation. In fact, the idea that Christ died for our sins is “significantly absent” from early Christian sources.^{xxxiii} Sacrificial theories of the atonement were not “fully articulated until the eleventh century” and never made mandatory by any major church tradition. This is one of the “odd features of the Christian tradition,” according to systematic theologian William Placher. “While the notion *that* Christ saves lies at its heart, the church has never developed an official position on just *how* that salvation is accomplished.”^{xxxiv} We have doctrines about Christ’s nature and the trinity, but we have no such doctrine about the cross. Salvation has many meanings, not just the one that has dominated Western Christianity of Christ’s death as a vicarious sacrifice for our sins. This must be more adequately explained and represented in prayers,

hymns, and sermons than has been the case. In other words, there is still a place for sacrifice but not without serious awareness of the damage it has wrought and not as the sole understanding of the cross at communion.

Practical Theology: Mediating Preaching and Practice

Examination of women in ministry and sacrificial love reveals how much Christian theology emerges out of and remains embedded within the dynamics of common life, especially family and worship life. The dynamics of family—who loves whom and in what way—has had a powerful influence on formal Christian dogma and devotional life. The dynamics of worship—who stands where and holds what—are the sites where convictions of Christian life get woven into the blood and bones of practice. To make changes in family life (e.g., share care of children) or congregational life (e.g., include women in leadership) involves one immediately in the thicket of Christian doctrine.

Many people describe practical theology as a science of action. I would go further and say that the desire to understand the disconnection between word and deed lies at its heart. If there is a common theme that works its way through my own work as a practical theologian on a number of issues—adulthood, care, work, women, children, family, health, illness, dying, and the nature of pastoral theology itself—it is a curiosity about the slippage between what we say and what we do and a desire to help Christian theology address it. Each of the English idioms with which I began—*practice what you preach; do as I say, not as I do; easier said than done; walk the talk*—is a colloquial abbreviation for

the complicated reality of living out convictions. Practical theology is shorthand for that area of theology most interested in such tensions.

Over three decades ago, Catholic theologian Karl Rahner offered a similar definition. Practical theology's subject matter, he says, is the "Church's self-actualization here and now—both what *is* and what *ought to be*." It has at least two tasks—"overcoming the Church's . . . deficient self-realisation" and "questioning" biblical theology, exegetics, systematic theology, church history, and the study of liturgy as to "whether they are adequately making the particular local contribution required of them (and of which they are capable) towards the Church's self-realisation." In my own words, practical theology is a gadfly, the thorn in the side of religious conviction and academic disciplines. It speaks on behalf of the "whole" of which each discipline is "one part" and asks them to make themselves "useful" to those who believe.^{xxxv}

People in church and academy typically assign practical theology a more circumscribed role. When the popular U. S. magazine *The Christian Century* reports on research in various fields, books under the heading *practical theology* simply concern the study of congregational ministry. The typical organization of most theological schools and curriculums in the United States still enacts the old definition of practical theology as the application of biblical, historical, and doctrinal truths to concrete situations. Despite arguments to the contrary, it is easy to misperceive other areas as the "real work" of the school and practical theology as peripheral.

Practical theology, however, has the descriptive and normative task of standing at the juncture of belief and practice, sustaining a faith in practice that coheres with the faith confessed. Attending to slippage between word and deed is not easy because, as

sociologist Pierre Bourdieu observes, the mistaking of theory for reality “has every chance of passing unnoticed.” Since the “logic” of practice is “fuzzy,” sociologists and Christians too are prone to mistake the “model of reality” (e.g., theological doctrine) for the “reality of the model” (e.g., the concreteness of Christian life) and forget the distance between our “maps” and the “beaten tracks” on which people of faith tread, the “practical space of journeys actually made.”^{xxxvi} Since beliefs, such as Christ’s sacrifice, have the capacity to both oppress and emancipate, the practice of discernment, this “testing of the spirits” in Rahner’s words, becomes even more essential.^{xxxvii}

Practical theologians experiment with a variety of methods of discernment—the hermeneutical circle of German and liberationist theology, theories of practice in sociology, quantitative and qualitative research of congregational studies, and ethnographic attention to “folk religion” or “everyday theology” in local contexts. These theories and methods attempt to get at the embodied social and historical character of thought and action and the knowledge of people sometimes excluded from its production. In all cases, practical theology focuses on the “dynamics” of faith in time and space—a word used by a founder of modern pastoral theology, Seward Hiltner, borrowed from psychotherapeutic theory and the Greek philosophical tradition to talk about what he described as the “energy dimensions, the tensions and counterbalances among forces, and the variety of equilibriums” in thought and action.^{xxxviii}

In the end, however, practice always escapes what we say about it, especially our ultimate religious claims. As with Paul in his Letter to the Romans, we “do not do the good [we] want, but the evil [we] do not want is what [we] do” (7:19, NRSV).

Theological tradition has obsessed over the category Paul assigns this slippage. “Now if I

do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me” (Romans 7:20). But the unavoidable excess of practice also leaves place for the grace of God to enter beyond our failures and limitations.

One never knows the power of God when we make our way back and forth between preaching and practice. The early women reformers in the United States were inspired to organize a convention on women’s rights at Seneca Falls not only because of the solidarity they witnessed in the anti-slavery movement but also ironically because of their exclusion from the shared aims of the abolition movement. When they raised questions about their own equality, it sparked heated controversy. At the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, conservatives prevailed and all the female delegates from the United States were sent to the balcony. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott met in the loft, above recognized forms of male political power, and formed a lifelong friendship that led eight years later to the convention on women’s rights.^{xxxix}

So God takes what is evil and turns it to good. “Even though you intended to do harm to me,” Joseph says to his brothers in Genesis, “God intended it for good . . . So have no fear” (50:20). I say the same to you today: Though many people have not wished women well, be of good courage. God is doing good among us.

ⁱ Disciples are by no means “trailblazers in this regard,” according to David A. Jones, “The Ordination of Women in the Christian Church,” *Encounter* 5, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 200. See also <http://www.religioustolerance.org/femclrg13.htm>

ⁱⁱ Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 182, 185; Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis and Patricia M. Y. Chang, *Clergy Woman: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998). Women still face a range of challenges from

lower salaries, conflicts between work and family, lack of wider institutional support for advancement, and so forth.

ⁱⁱⁱ Janet Riley, "The Ordination of Disciple Women: A Matter of Economy or Theology?" *Encounter* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 222.

^{iv} M. P. Hayden, "Reply to G. T. Smith," *Christian Standard*, XXIX (July 1893), p. 591, cited by Riley, "The Ordination of Disciple Women," pp. 230. See also Riley, p. 227 and Jones, "The Ordination of Women," p. 207.

^v Riley, "The Ordination of Disciple Women," p. 230. See also Jones, "The Ordination of Women," p. 209.

^{vi} Riley, "The Ordination of Disciple Women," p. 199.

^{vii} Kris Culp, "Disciples Women Scholars," *The Disciple* 131, no. 4 (April 1993): 16-17.

^{viii} Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington, *Women of Academe: Outsiders in the Sacred Grove* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

^{ix} <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=1878>

^x Angella Son, "Confucianism and the Lack of Development of the Self Among Korean American Women," *Pastoral Psychology* 54, no. 4 (March 2006): 325-336.

^{xi} Chaves, *Ordaining Women*, pp. 2, 5-6.

^{xii} Lester F. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1975), p. 263. I thank Mark Miller-McLemore for drawing my attention to this historical misconception.

^{xiii} This section draws on previous work in *Also a Mother; In the Midst of Chaos: Care of Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006); "Generativity, Self-Sacrifice, and the Ethics of Family Life," in John Witte, Jr., M. Christian Green, and Amy Wheeler, eds., *The Equal Regard Family and its Friendly Critics: Don Browning and the Practical Theological Ethics of the Family* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007); and Herbert Anderson and , *Faith's Wisdom for Daily Living* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008).

^{xiv} Daphne Hampson, ed., *Swallowing a Fishbone: Feminist Theologians Debate Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1996).

^{xv} See Mary D. Pellauer, Barbara Chester, and Jane A. Boyajiam, eds., *Sexual Assault and Abuse: A Handbook for Clergy and Religious Professionals* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds., *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (New York: Pilgrim, 1989); Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune, eds., *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Handbook* (New York: Continuum, 1995); and Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response* (Chicago: Fortress Press, 1995).

^{xvi} Studies of slavery and civil rights also point to the historic misuse of Christological images of suffering and servanthood in the exploitation of people of color. See JoAnne Marie Terrell, *Power in the Blood? The Cross in the African American Experience* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1998); William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist?* (New York: Anchor Books, 1973) and Anthony Pinn, *Why Lord? Suffering and Evil in Black Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

^{xvii} Miller-McLemore, *Also a Mother*, pp. 20, 30.

^{xviii} Valerie Saiving Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *Journal of Religion* (April 1960): 108.

^{xix} According to Beverly Wildung Harrison, Jesus "accepted sacrifice" but only "for the cause of radical love, to make relationship and to sustain it, and, above all, to righting wrong relationship" ("The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers," in *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, ed. Carol S. Robb [Boston: Beacon, 1985], pp. 18-19, emphasis in the text; reprinted from *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36 [1981]: 41-57).

^{xx} Christine E. Gudorf, "Parenting, Mutual Love, and Sacrifice," in *Women's Consciousness and Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, eds. Barbara Hilker Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Mary D. Pellauer (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 185-86.

^{xxi} Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993), pp. 167, 199-203. See also "Black Women's Surrogacy Experience and the Christian Notion of Redemption," in *After Patriarchy: Feminist Thransformations of the World Religions* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1991), pp. 1-14; "Humans Brutalizing Humans: Necessary Images in the Christian Religion?" *Women's Theological Center Quarterly Newsletter* (Boston) 9, no. 1 (March 1991); and "A Crucifixion Double Cross? The Violence of Our Images May Do More Harm than Good," *The Other Side* 29 (1993).

^{xxii} Jacquelyn Grant, "The Sin of Servanthood and the Deliverance of Discipleship," in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1993), 204, 213. See also Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

^{xxiii} Miller-McLemore, *Also a Mother*, p. 14.

^{xxiv} Pauline Kleingeld, "Just Love? Marriage and the Question of Justice" in *Mutuality Matters: Family, Faith, and Just Love*, eds. Herbert Anderson, Edward Foley, Bonnie Miller-McLemore, and Robert Scheiter (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), pp. 23-41 (reprinted from *Social Theory and Practice* 24, no. 2 [Summer 1998]: 261-81); Herbert Anderson, "Between Rhetoric and Reality: Women and Men as Equal Partners in Home, Church, and the Marketplace," in *Mutuality Matters: Family, Faith, and Just Love*, eds. Herbert Anderson, Edward Foley, Bonnie Miller-McLemore, and Robert Scheiter (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), pp. 67-82 (reprinted from *Word and World* XVII, no. 4 [Fall 1997]: 376-386).

^{xxv} Harrison, "The Power of Anger," p. 18.

^{xxvi} Joanna Dewey, "Sacrifice No More," in *Distant Voices Drawing Near: Essays in Honor of Antoinette Clark Wire*, ed. Holly E. Hearan (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), p. 160.

^{xxvii} Ian Bradley, "Sacrifice," in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, eds. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason and Hugh Pyper (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 637. He is quoting from the introduction from his book, *The Power of Sacrifice* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 1995), p. 1.

^{xxviii} See Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Sloppy Mutuality: Love and Justice for Children and Adults," in *Mutuality Matters: Faith, Family, and Just Love*, eds. Edward Foley,

Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Robert Schreiter, and Herbert Anderson (Sheed & Ward, 2004), pp. 127-128 and Don S. Browning, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Pamela D. Couture, K. Brynoff Lyon, and Robert M. Franklin, *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997), p. 273.

^{xxxix} Brita L. Gill-Austern, "Love Understood as Self-Sacrifice and Self-Denial: What Does It Do to Women?" *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1996), p. 318.

^{xxx} See Joan M. Martin, *More than Chains and Toil: A Christian Work Ethic of Enslaved Women* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

^{xxxix} Gill-Austern, "Love as Self-Sacrifice and Self-Denial," p. 315. For distinct criteria, see Barbara Hilbert Andolsen, "Apage in Feminist Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 9, no. 1 (1981): 80 (69-83).

^{xxxii} See Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, pp. 93-95 for helpful consideration of these points. She also cites Sally B. Purvis, *The Power of the Cross: Foundations for a Christian Feminist Ethic of Community* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

^{xxxiii} Sharon G. Thornton, *Broken yet Beloved: A Pastoral Theology of the Cross* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2002), p. 70. See also Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker's recent book, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* (Boston: Beacon, 2008).

^{xxxiv} William C. Placher, eds., *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), p. 188. He is partly summarizing the argument of Leanne Van Dyk in her essay in the same book, "How Does Jesus Make a Difference?" 205-220.

^{xxxv} Karl Rahner, "Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Disciplines," *Theological Investigations*, Volume IX, Trans. Graham Harrison (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 102, 104, 109.

^{xxxvi} Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 2, 29, 37-38, 120.

^{xxxvii} Rahner, "Practical Theology within the Totality," p. 103.

^{xxxviii} Seward Hiltner, *Theological Dynamics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), p. 14.

^{xxxix} See Christine Stansell, "The Road From Seneca Falls." *The New Republic* 219.6 (1998): 26-38.