

◆ NOTES ON MORAL THEOLOGY ◆

FAMILY ETHICS: BEYOND SEX AND CONTROVERSY

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Contemporary moral theologians address a wider scope of ethical issues pertaining to families than did theologians of previous generations. In addition to attending to questions about sexual morality, divorce, and remarriage, many are arguing for intentional family practices, asking what can be done to decrease domestic violence, treating children as moral actors in their own right, discerning the responsibilities of parental and domestic caregivers, and encouraging a new generation to embrace the challenge and beauty of marriage.

MORAL THEOLOGIANs have traditionally viewed sexual ethics and divorce as matters of serious moral concern, but only rarely have they considered the myriad of other ethical issues that emerge in families. “Sexual ethics” was the name we gave to ethical reflection in the personal realm. The majority of Christians who are married are arguably more concerned with how to live ethically in their homes and neighborhoods, yet Catholic moral theology mostly has given them reflection on what goes on in their bedrooms and on whether or not their marriages can end. The ordinary concerns of married people were most often left to pastoral theologians, and only rarely considered serious enough for academic moral theology.

Protestant theologian Don Browning (1934–2010), who started the Religion, Culture, and the Family Project in 1990 with a Lily Foundation grant, was instrumental in gaining legitimacy for the broader academic study of family, ethics, and religion. Browning insisted on rigorous, interdisciplinary conversation covering a wide range of issues. Though he will be remembered

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primarily for his influence in Protestant ethics, he also reached out to Catholic theologians, and those who work in the field of family ethics today owe him a great debt.

Catholic contributions to the discipline of family ethics today are diverse and include ethical consideration of marriage as a lived reality, family practices, the moral lives of children, family care, and domestic violence. In this emerging discipline, moral theology overlaps with practical theology, social ethics, sexual ethics, bioethics, and social science. Articles and books treating controversial issues have not disappeared. Still, especially when we survey moral theology throughout the world, we find a growing number of theologians (especially, but not only, married ones) writing less about sex and associated controversies and more on issues that are central to ordinary family life.

MARRIAGE, COHABITATION, AND DIVORCE

Marriage

What is marriage? Where does it begin? What happens when it ends? What strengthens it? What harms it? How can Christians better live into its sacramental reality? In the midst of great debate about these fundamental questions, two major types of responses are discernible, though the two overlap. The first is to defend marriage in its traditional form and explore its theological meaning in greater depth, beginning with systematic theology. The second is to work from the ground up, thinking theologically about the experience of marriage and relating it to Catholic social teaching.

The recently released edited collection, *Marriage* (Readings in Moral Theology 15), exemplifies this trend.¹ Essays by John Grabowski and Angelo Scola follow Pope John Paul II in describing marriage as a nuptial mystery.² Scola argues that it is not necessary for theology to be transformed by experience, but rather “what we need today is a conversion ‘to the real.’ Only then will it be possible to grasp the mystery of which reality is itself always the *sign*.”³ For him, marriage, when viewed in the light of Christ, is trinitarian in that “the two spouses are moreover led, in a certain

¹ Charles E. Curran and Julie Hanlon Rubio, eds., *Marriage* (New York: Paulist, 2009).

² John S. Grabowski, “Pope John Paul II on the Theology of the Body,” foreword to *Pope John Paul II, The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (1997), reprinted in *Marriage* 72–77; Angelo Scola, “The Nuptial Mystery at the Heart of the Church,” *Communio* 25 (1988) 634–62, reprinted as “The Nuptial Mystery” in *Marriage* 135–56.

³ Scola, “Nuptial Mystery” 136.

sense, to transcend themselves as a unity-of-two (a dual unity) so as to welcome a third person, the child. This reveals that, in the reality of the very love that unites the two, there is an inherent moment of ascent towards a mysterious ‘Quid.’”⁴ Florence Caffrey Bourg and David Matzko McCarthy, on the other hand, draw from their own experiences of family and make use of social science to give a theological account of actually existing marriages and call families to greater intimacy, communion, and mission.⁵ It is not that the second group is uninterested in conversion, but that they tend to view it differently. Bourg hopes that Christian families will embrace a more expansive solidarity.⁶ McCarthy celebrates the “open home” that allows for interdependence and gratuity over the “closed home” where isolation and reliance on the market are more common.⁷ The authors in the second group write from experience of the difficulties of living out Catholic teaching on marriage, even as they challenge readers to embrace the fullness of that teaching.

This recognition of the challenges of marriage in our times is precisely what Michael Lawler and Todd Salzman believe is missing in the recent pastoral letter of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*.⁸ Lawler and Salzman note that the committee charged with developing the pastoral originally consulted with married couples, social scientists, and theologians, but the bishops rejected the first draft and asked for a pastoral letter that would clarify Catholic doctrine. “Abstractly theological and doctrinal the Letter most certainly is; pastoral, we fear, in agreement with many of the bishops who voted against it, it most certainly is not,” say Lawler and Salzman.⁹ They offer a critique of the letter’s analysis of the four greatest threats to marriage—cohabitation,

⁴ Ibid. 144–45. See also Brent Waters, “Is There a Normative Christian Family?,” *INTAMS Review* 18 (2012) 53–63; Giraldo Botero and José Silvio, “La teología del matrimonio cristiano en el pensamiento de Benedicto XVI: Nuevas perspectivas,” *Studia moralia* 46 (2008) 115–47.

⁵ Florence Caffrey Bourg, “The Family as Domestic Church and the Romantic Model of Love,” in *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Churches* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2004), reprinted in *Marriage* 157–77; and David Matzko McCarthy, “Two Households,” in *Sex and Love in the Home: A Theology of the Household* (London: SCM, 2004), reprinted in *Marriage* 211–37. See also Philippe Bordeyne, “Redécouvrir le mariage comme partie intégrante de l’enseignement social de l’église,” *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 109 (2008) 203–22.

⁶ Bourg, “Family as Domestic Church” 173.

⁷ McCarthy, “Two Households” 223–27.

⁸ USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan* (Washington: USCCB, 2009); Michael G. Lawler and Todd S. Salzman, “A Pastoral Letter of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on Marriage: A Commentary,” *INTAMS Review* 15 (2009) 214–28.

⁹ Lawler and Salzman, “A Pastoral Letter” 214.

divorce, contraception, and same sex marriage—and its use of a “procreative” rather than “personalist” understanding of marriage, but its “bland” presentation of sacramentality of marriage most concerns them, for this section “most betrays the lack of any input by married believers.”¹⁰

Not all theologians have as negative a response to the bishops’ pastoral initiative on marriage. As director of the Church and the 21st Century Center at Boston College, Timothy Muldoon convened a National Marriage Symposium in 2007 that led to a volume of essays by theologians and family-life ministers who sought to contribute to the bishops’ project.¹¹ As Muldoon puts it, the challenge for Catholics today is “to articulate a theology for married people that invites them to see marriage as a particular kind of invitation to a life that is holy—and by this I mean a life that is fully free precisely because it is lived in faithfulness to the will of God.”¹² Muldoon, like most others in the group, does not criticize the bishops, but he does attempt to write a theology not *of* but *for* families, and he is deeply conscious of the need to acknowledge the challenges of married life while inviting couples “to the hard work of seeing the world, the other, and the self in the fullness of reality; of admitting sin, undertaking reconciliation, and discovering that our most authentic desires are often buried underneath the more fleeting ones.”¹³ The volume is notable for its practical focus, the fruit of conversation between academics and those with long years of experience working with married couples.

Cohabitation

In the USCCB’s letter on marriage, cohabitation is opposed primarily because it does not include a public promise of fidelity, which indicates, according to the bishops, a lack of understanding of the meaning of marriage.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid. 218. Some Protestant theologians also lament an unwillingness to take seriously the experience of married Christians. See Adrian Thatcher, “Marriage and Pastoral Problems from an Anglican Perspective,” *INTAMS Review* 18 (2012) 26–32. Some Catholic theologians are more positive about the move toward personalism in current magisterial teaching, even if they seek further integration of experience. See L. J. McNamara, “Persons, Relationships, and Catholic Marriage: A Case of Reactive or Proactive Magisterial Teaching?,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 86 (2009) 131–44 and Thomas Knieps-Port Le Roi, “Innovation or Impasse? The Contribution of *Familiaris Consortio* to a Contemporary Theology of Marriage,” *Bijdragen* 70 (2009) 67–86.

¹¹ Tim Muldoon and Cynthia S. Dobrzynski, eds., *Love One Another: Catholic Reflections on How to Sustain Marriages Today* (New York: Crossroad, 2010).

¹² Tim Muldoon, “A Theology for Married People,” in *ibid.* 20–32, at 23. See also William P. Roberts, “A Spirituality for the Vocation to Marriage,” in *ibid.* 10–19.

¹³ Muldoon, “Theology for Married People” 30.

¹⁴ USCCB, *Marriage* 2–3.

Studies showing the strong association of cohabitation with divorce and the negative effects on children are also cited in support of traditional teaching.¹⁵ Though well aware that more than half of Catholic couples cohabit prior to marriage, the bishops show little interest in adapting to the new situation.¹⁶

Theologians, however, tend to approach the issue somewhat differently. Many are realizing that the most recent studies on cohabitation complicate an already complex pastoral situation.¹⁷ It is important to distinguish between different types of cohabitation, prenuptial and nonnuptial, since prenuptial cohabiters tend to look more similar to noncohabiting couples.¹⁸ Yet, the difficulty of placing couples in precise categories remains, and the potential for harm to children born into cohabiting unions is a serious concern, especially since 40% of children in the United States spend some time in cohabiting unions, more than the number that spend time in single parent homes.¹⁹ Recent studies in the United States suggest the development of two distinct marriage cultures, in which those with less education are more likely to cohabit and have children before marriage, and those with more education are more likely to wait and to marry, which reinforces their economic and social privilege, as well as that of their children.²⁰ In light of these data, it is not completely clear how to minister well.

Many theologians in the United States, Europe, and Africa argue for greater tolerance and pastoral inclusion of cohabiting couples. Henk Sanders of Belgium, building on the earlier work of Adrian Thatcher, Michael Lawler, and Todd Salzman, proposes a parental blessing for young cohabiting couples.²¹ From Africa, Jean-Désiré Kabwit argues for greater

¹⁵ For a summary of the literature, see, W. Bradford Wilcox, ed., *Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences*, 3rd ed. (New York: Institute for American Values, 2011).

¹⁶ Still, priests preparing couples for marriage are not obligated to turn away those who are living together, though they are encouraged to talk with couples about the situation (USCCB, *Marriage Preparation and Cohabiting Couples* [1999], <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/cohabiting.cfm>). All URLs cited herein were accessed on November 12, 2012.

¹⁷ Those disputing broad generalizations about the negative effects of cohabitation and stressing the differences among cohabiting couples include Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2008) 192–213.

¹⁸ Salzman and Lawler, *Sexual Person* 194–95.

¹⁹ W. Bradford Wilcox, ed., *When Marriage Disappears: The New Middle America* (Charlottesville, VA: The National Marriage Project, 2010) 76.

²⁰ See Andrew Cherlin, *The Marriage Go-Round: The State of Marriage and Family in America Today* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2009); and Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* (New York: Crown Forum, 2012).

²¹ Henk Sanders, “Parental Blessing at a ‘Marriage-in-Becoming’: A Pastoral Proposal,” *INTAMS Review* 16 (2010) 13–26.

respect for the traditional African practice of “dual consent” (i.e., of both the engaged couple and their families), which would allow for a priest to play a role in the predowry ceremony, making a church wedding optional.²² There is a broadly shared concern that without some adaptation, young adults will turn away from a church that calls evil something they understand to be good and even holy.²³

Some theologians worry, however, that excessive toleration of cohabitation will exacerbate an already diminishing understanding of the social and ecclesial aspects of marriage. In an essay criticizing cohabitation, David Matzko McCarthy takes both Lawler and Christopher West to task for embracing overly personalist conceptions of marriage that parallel the cultural romantic view.²⁴ Both locate the meaning of marriage in relationship, even though Lawler sees that relationship elevated to sacrament and West overlays personalist, relational language with appeals to marriage’s objective structure. McCarthy claims that though friendship and partnership are aspects of marriage, marriage is distinct because its “public structure of fidelity, permanence, and openness to children gives shape to the relationship day-to-day and over time.”²⁵ If it is to be sustained, he argues, we need to attend to marital practices. Vows to stay together for life give marriage a structure that relationships lack. It is not in keeping romance alive, but in knowing that “through the joy, dysfunction, and dissatisfaction, we carry on in hope that with honest repentance, forgiveness, grace, and reconciliation, we will find the depth of God’s love in our marriage.”²⁶ For McCarthy, “The institutional and communal foundation of marriage—the vows, expectations, and social relationships structured on the basis of family, the social tasks of sustaining productive households, and the common callings of raising children—give marriage purposes that an interpersonal relationship cannot sustain.”²⁷ Like the bishops, McCarthy is concerned about sustaining marriage and worried about how cohabitation might undermine it, but he is less invested in making absolute arguments about moral norms and more interested in upholding what it means to live

²² Jean-Désiré Kabwit, “La célébration du mariage dit ‘chrétien’ dans l’Église Catholique en Afrique,” *INTAMS Review* 16 (2010) 34–47.

²³ Kevin T. Kelly, “Cohabitation: Living in Sin or Occasion of Grace?,” *Furrow* 56 (2005) 552–58, reprinted in *Marriage* 337–44.

²⁴ David Matzko McCarthy, “Cohabitation and Marriage,” in *Leaving and Coming Home: New Wineskins for Sexual Ethics*, ed. David Cloutier (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010) 127–36.

²⁵ McCarthy, “Cohabitation and Marriage” 116.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 139.

²⁷ *Ibid.* For an alternative attempt to reach couples where they are, see Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman, “Soul Mates: A Theological Approach to Relationship,” *Furrow* 61 (2010) 425–32.

in a Christian marriage day by day as a way to highlight the inadequacy of cohabitation.

The best way to pass on this rich understanding to couples coming to the church to marry is unclear.²⁸ In the European context, where many couples have very little formal religious training, this question is especially important. From France, H el ene Bricout argues that if the marriage liturgy is to be celebrated as a sacrament that gives couples a missionary charge, faith formation should be an explicit part of marriage preparation.²⁹ From Germany, Ottmar Fuchs suggests that the marriage rite should be presented as less of a requirement with burdensome rules and more of a place of encounter with God's grace.³⁰

From the United States, liturgical theologian Paul Covino argues that both engaged couples and the church as a whole can learn from the new *Order for Celebrating Christian Marriage*. (He draws from the Latin edition because there is as yet no English translation, which means that the 1969 *Rite of Marriage* is still in use.) The ritual itself can teach, but only if it is followed. For example, the instruction for the entrance procession refers to the liturgical ministers, priest, and bride and groom, who may be accompanied at least by their parents as well as by two witnesses. This makes sense because "the faith of the church holds that the bride and groom enter marriage mutually and as equal, complementary partners."³¹ Covino makes a compelling case that liturgical ministers should use the rite to form engaged couples and challenge them to make their wedding "an opportunity for evangelization about Christian marriage, . . . resist the consumerism evident in much of the wedding industry," and "choose options for the wedding that encourage the participation of the entire assembly and that reflect an authentically Christian understanding of marriage."³² By contrast, from France Philip Bordeyne cautions against making too much of the lack of preparation of today's engaged couples, worries about excessive

²⁸ Of course, many couples no longer marry in the church at all; see "National Catholic Marriage Rate Plummetts," *Our Sunday Visitor* (June 26, 2011), <http://www.osv.com/tabid/7621/itemid/8053/Exclusive-analysis-National-Catholic-marriage-rat.aspx>.

²⁹ H el ene Bricout, "La c el ebration du mariage entre tradition et d evoloppement: R eflexions  a partir du rituel Francophone de 2005," *INTAMS Review* 16 (2010) 27–33.

³⁰ Ottmar Fuchs, "The Spiritual and Pastoral Meaning of the Marital Rite," *INTAMS Review* 15 (2009) 44–50.

³¹ Paul Covino, "Learning from the Liturgy," in *Love One Another* 106–20, at 116. See also James Healy, "Marriage among the Spiritual but Not Religious," and Joann Heaney-Hunter, "Layers of Marriage Preparation and the Family Life Cycle," in *Love One Another* 76–88 and 89–105 respectively.

³² Covino, "Learning from the Liturgy" 119.

emphasis on the need for deep understanding of the sacrament, and calls pastors to use the liturgy to invite rather than impose.³³

Despite all the worries about the difficulty of celebrating marriage liturgies and increasing cohabitation, it is worth remembering that according to recent studies, most people do eventually marry out of a “desire for transcendence and permanence,” sensing that new cultural norms are not adequate and even sometimes embracing marriage as “a sign of contradiction” with transformative power.³⁴ Even though fewer young adults find official Catholic teaching against cohabitation convincing, there is something about marriage as covenant and institution that continues to attract.

Divorce

Since the 1980s, most academic articles in moral theology have tended to argue for greater flexibility on divorce.³⁵ That trend continues with very few exceptions, but the emphasis today is more on pastoral care than doctrine. From Spain, Laura Arosia argues that divorce is a rite of passage deserving of a ritual ceremony.³⁶ From Ukraine, Maryna Hnyp calls for adapting the Eastern Orthodox tradition of *oikonomia* for better pastoral care of those who remarry.³⁷ Basilio Petrà, of Italy, suggests naming the divorced-and-remarried “a new state in the church,” and explores possibilities for greater acceptance of those who continue to attend church but feel alienated because of the ways they are excluded.³⁸ In Australia, Brendan Daly asks if the diversity of the scriptural witness on divorce might suggest the possibility of communion for divorced and remarried people.³⁹

³³ Phillippe Bordeyne, “The Fragility of Marriage as a Challenge to Methodology in Christian Ethics,” *INTAMS Review* 15 (2009) 159–64.

³⁴ Lisette Blancet Ball, “Why Do People Still Choose to Marry Instead of Just Living Together?” *INTAMS Review* 15 (2009) 30–36; and Keith Chappell, “Preparing for Marriage: Sign, Symbol, and Sacrament,” *ibid.* 23–29.

³⁵ Julie Hanlon Rubio, “Three in One Flesh: A Christian Reappraisal of Divorce in Light of Recent Studies,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23 (2003) 47–70.

³⁶ Laura Arosio, “A Ceremony for Divorce? Emerging Practices for a New Rite of Passage,” *INTAMS Review* 17 (2011) 14–24.

³⁷ Maryna Hnyp, “Re-Examining Second Marriage in Catholic Moral and Pastoral Theology: In Search of an Alternative Avenue through the Eastern Practice of *Oikonomia*,” *INTAMS Review* 17 (2011) 25–36.

³⁸ Basilio Petrà, “The Divorced and Remarried: A New State within the Church?,” *INTAMS Review* 16 (2010) 194–207.

³⁹ Brendan Daly, “Any Possibility of Communion for the Divorced and Remarried without Annulments or Dissolutions?,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 87 (2010) 307–22. See also James Coriden, “What’s a Remarried Catholic to Do?” *Commonweal* 139.2 (January 27, 2012), reprinted in *Furrow* 63 (2012) 205–11.

Of course, the argument about the viability of official Catholic teaching on divorce continues. In 2011, Peter Ryan and Germaine Grisez responded to the influential 2004 essay by Kenneth Himes and James Coriden on indissolubility.⁴⁰ Ryan and Grisez argue that consent to a covenantal, consummated marriage is irrevocable because Scripture supports magisterial teaching, and because this teaching “was proposed as divinely revealed by the ordinary and universal magisterium and held as such by the whole Church.”⁴¹ They conclude:

When one takes into account sound Scripture scholarship and reads evangelical and apostolic doctrine on marriage in the light of the covenantal character of marital communion, one cannot reasonably deny that Jesus and Paul taught the absolute indissolubility of covenantal, consummated marriage. When one also recognizes the mistakes that have obscured the witness of the Council of Trent and of the universal ordinary magisterium since Trent, one cannot reasonably deny that church teaching definitively conveys the divinely revealed truth about divorce and remarriage expressed in evangelical and apostolic doctrine. Substantive revision of the Catholic Church’s teaching on indissolubility is therefore now and forever impossible.⁴²

Lamentably, few scholars attempt to discern the moral responsibilities of those touched by divorce and remarriage. Given the reality that divorce will continue (even though the numbers in the United States have stabilized and are now at their lowest levels since the 1970s), one might ask why theologians have had so little to say about the responsibilities of divorced spouses to each other and their children.⁴³ Emerging data show that divorced adults and their children often leave Christianity, especially if they belong to churches with strict teachings on divorce.⁴⁴ Without appropriate pastoral care, these families, without the support they need

⁴⁰ See Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., and James A. Coriden, “The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Reconsider,” *Theological Studies* 65 (2004) 453–99; Peter F. Ryan, S.J., and Germaine Grisez, “Indissoluble Marriage: A Reply to Kenneth Himes and James Coriden,” *Theological Studies* 72 (2011) 369–416. See also Xavier Lacroix, “L’Indissolubilité du mariage, entre le mystère et la loi,” *Théophilyon* 16 (2011) 89–110.

⁴¹ Ryan and Grisez, “Indissoluble Marriage” 414.

⁴² Ibid. See also Giraldo Botero and José Silvio, “El matrimonio nace . . . el matrimonio muere . . . dos posiciones de cara al fracaso conyugal,” *Theologica xaveriana* 62 (2012) 31–60.

⁴³ See articles by nontheologians such as Owen O’Sullivan, O.F.M., and Paul Anderson, “Forever Fathers,” *Furrow* 60 (2009) 415–19; and Cathy Molloy, “Families in Exile,” *Furrow* 59 (2008) 206–14.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Marquardt, *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce* (New York: Crown, 2005). See also Marquardt and Amy Zietlow, eds., *Does the Shape of Families Shape Faith? Challenging the Churches to Confront the Impact of Family Change* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2013).

in a time of great suffering, will walk away. Theologians are just beginning to draw on the work of sociologists in order to underline the gravity of the problem and advocate for better pastoral care, but much more work needs to be done.⁴⁵

FAMILY PRACTICES

In a discussion of “Political Theology after Hauerwas,” Charles Pinches analyzes the contributions of Stanley Hauerwas’s students, and claims that while some (e.g., William Cavanaugh and D. Stephen Long) engage politics directly; others (e.g., Kelly Johnson and David Matzko McCarthy) are concerned to “open the time and space within genuine communities where truthful speech can survive.”⁴⁶ Whereas the first group gives most of its energy to critique of modernity, the second considers options for resistance or contributes to a discussion of what Pinches calls “embodiment spread out.”⁴⁷ Though Hauerwas wrote only a little about family, at least some of his students have found family a necessary space in which to develop his thinking. For “to argue for embodiment, for communion, is to find and name it in daily life.”⁴⁸ Resisting modernity means living a different way, refusing to give in to the false choices it provides, “refusing to concede the body, including the body of communion, to the vocabulary of our time.”⁴⁹ Johnson and McCarthy both offer grounded reflections on how Christians, in their homes and churches and on the street, can “be the church” via engaging in alternative practice.

Similarly, Hauerwas students Jana Bennett and David Cloutier attempt to make sense of their mentor’s grand project by attending to the ethics of everyday life, not as a replacement for political engagement but as a filling out of the Catholic tradition of social ethics.⁵⁰ Bennett writes for both married and single Christian households and argues that “undue focus

⁴⁵ Machteld Reynaert, “Somewhere in Between: Children with Divorced Parents as a Challenge for Pastoral Theological Thinking,” *INTAMS Review* 16 (2010) 208–15. See also Julie Hanlon Rubio “Divorce and the Faith of Children: A Challenge for the Church,” in *Family’s Many Faces*, ed. Karlijn Demasure (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming).

⁴⁶ Charles Pinches, “Hauerwas and Political Theology: The Next Generation,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 36 (2008) 511–42; Kelly S. Johnson, *The Fear of Beggars: Stewardship and Poverty in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); McCarthy, *Sex and Love in the Home*.

⁴⁷ Pinches, “Hauerwas and Political Theology” 538.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ See David Cloutier, *Love, Reason, and God’s Story: An Introduction to Catholic Sexual Ethics* (Winona, MN: Anselm, 2008); and Jana Marguerite Bennett, *Water Is Thicker than Blood: An Augustinian Theology of Marriage and Singlehood* (New York: Oxford, 2008).

on marriage and a problematic focus on singles as a deviant group distract from engagement with moral questions about how Christians ought to live life well.”⁵¹ She draws from Augustine an appreciation of “many states of life [including marriage, virginity, widowhood, and monasticism], all of which can be part of faithful Christian living.”⁵² Because all these states “have their end in Christ . . . there can be no instance of a separate ethics for the married and ‘everyone else.’”⁵³ Cloutier agrees that all Christians are called to holiness, but holds that families have a particular vocation to hospitality.⁵⁴ “This call,” he writes, “is not primarily political . . . , but it is a call to society with others and building a household that is open to society, rather than caved in on itself.”⁵⁵

Not only Hauerwas’s students but also many others in a new generation of moral theologians who have been inspired by his work are attentive to family spaces, practices, and rituals. Julie Hanlon Rubio’s *Family Ethics: Practices for Christians* outlines five practices of resistance: sex, eating, tithing, serving, and praying.⁵⁶ The focus on intentional practices flows out of a reading of Catholic theology of marriage as “inescapably social,” and a reading of the home as “the locus of most ordinary, yet personally and socially significant, practices of the Christian moral life.”⁵⁷ She argues that resistance to injustice necessarily involves families, for “social transformation proceeds from below and necessarily involves changes of the heart, ongoing conversion, and counter-cultural practices that can only begin in the home.”⁵⁸

In this context, consideration of sex not as a controversial issue but as a “practice oriented to specific goods” is not uncommon.⁵⁹ Several essays in David Cloutier’s edited collection *Leaving and Coming Home* could be placed in the category of “sexual ethics,” though they focus less on controversial issues than on consideration of how sex functions as a practice of unity in the ordinary lives of married men and women.⁶⁰ Today, even

⁵¹ Bennett, *Water Is Thicker than Blood* 87.

⁵² *Ibid.* 98.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 111.

⁵⁴ Cloutier, *Love, Reason, and God’s Story: An Introduction to Catholic Sexual Ethics* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2008) 262.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Julie Hanlon Rubio, *Family Ethics: Practices for Christians* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2010).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 31, 32.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 58.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 118.

⁶⁰ See Florence Caffrey Bourg, “Multi-Dimensional Marriage Vocations and Responsible Parenthood,” and Michel Therrien, “The Practice of Responsible Parenthood, NFP, and the Covenantal Unity of the Spouses,” in *Leaving and Coming Home* 147–72 and 173–205 respectively. See also Paulachan Kochappilly, “Sexuality as an Invitation to Intimacy and Integration,” *Journal of Dharma* 34 (2009) 19–35.

theologians who do revisit the dominant sexual ethics controversy of the post-Vatican II church very often do so within the framework of virtue ethics. William Murphy, for example, writes: “When sexuality is thus integrated under reason and will, the body is a subject of virtue and therefore a principle of moral acts, such that one can say it ‘speaks the language’ of procreative responsibility, inclining agents to acts consistent with it.”⁶¹ Most of these writers are appreciative of John Paul II’s contributions to theological thinking about how bodies speak and should speak truthfully, yet they tend to worry about the romantic personalism in the theology of body (especially as interpreted by Christopher West), and they are more committed to situating sex in the context of the reality of married life.⁶²

The controversy about condom use by married couples when one partner has HIV/AIDS is somewhat at odds with the new focus on sex as a practice. The context for discussion is a particular controversial issue: Is condom use morally evil, or can it be justified by double effect, the lesser of evils, compassion, or justice?⁶³ Still it seems that underneath this attempt to find an exception that will save lives is an affirmation of the important place of sex in marriage. Though many still ask whether couples should be required to sacrifice sexual pleasure in order to comply with the moral duty to be open to life, others must wonder whether the good of ongoing sexual practice in marriage must be forgone.

Some of the conversation around family practices continues to focus on the idea of domestic church. There is still considerable debate about whether the label “domestic church” should apply only to traditional families or to all families, including single-parent, remarried, childless,

⁶¹ William F. Murphy Jr., “Revisiting Contraception: An Integrated Approach in Light of the Renewal of Thomistic Virtue Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 72 (2011) 812–47. Murphy clearly distinguishes his own view from physicalist natural law views and “contralife will” arguments (847).

⁶² A particularly strong critique of West is David Cloutier and William C. Mattison III, “Bodies Poured Out in Christ: Marriage beyond the Theology of the Body,” in *Leaving and Coming Home* 206–25. See also Vincent MacNamara “Introduction to Volume II,” *An Irish Reader in Moral Theology Volume II: Sex, Marriage, and the Family* (Dublin: Columba, 2011) 17–23, reprinted in *Furrow* 62 (2011) 266–74.

⁶³ Margaret A. Ogola speaks to the realities, especially in Kenya, of “married women who are socialized to give in to sexual demands,” in “Looking Back and Looking Forward at HIV/AIDS in Africa: Serodiscordant Couples, Re-infection, the Role of Women, and the Condom,” in *Catholic Theological Ethics: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James F. Keenan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011) 201–6, at 204. See also Stephen Muoki Joshua, “The Dowling Controversy, the ‘Message of Hope’ and the Principle of *Oikonomia*: A Historical-Critical Reflection on the South Africa Catholic Church’s Stance on the Use of Condoms in HIV Prevention between 2000 and 2005,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 137 (2010) 4–27.

and interreligious families, etc.⁶⁴ However, more common are specific treatments of practices. Rubio calls for a renewal of the practice of tithing, with a percentage of income dedicated to the poor as well as to the church.⁶⁵ Cloutier, reminding us that in the Christian tradition luxury is associated with vice, analyzes the connection between luxury and exploitation, and asks readers “to buy differently, to take pleasure not in mocha lattes but in the human connections of a just economy.”⁶⁶ Recent discussion on “just eating” can also be understood as reflection on practices central to family ethics.⁶⁷

Finally, theologians are reflecting on how families can pray together or engage in other spiritual practices.⁶⁸ Particularly notable are attempts to look beyond traditional piety and teach spouses to read family life theologically or engage in ordinary actions that contribute to family spirituality.⁶⁹ The contemporary discussion is much less about what counts as a domestic church and much more about how families practice their faith together. In the words of John Paul II, “Families, become what you are.”⁷⁰ To this end, Bourg writes about how churches might support families through the lifecycle, not by promoting marriage-enrichment programs or family camps, but by taking advantage of times when families gather (e.g., at baptisms and weddings) and Sunday mass to recognize the holiness in the

⁶⁴ For a defense of the traditional view, see Ennio Mastroianni, “Domestic Church as Sacramental Model,” *INTAMS Review* 18 (2012) 42–52; and Waters, “Is There a Normative Christian Family?” 53–63. Calling for a more expansive view are Stephanie Klein, “Kirche und Familien auf Distanz: Wie kann die Kirche eine Kirche der Familien sein?,” *INTAMS Review* 16 (2010) 164–73; and Gregory A. Obanado, “African Domestic Church beyond Religious Division: A Diocesan Example from Nigeria,” *INTAMS Review* 17 (2011) 84–95.

⁶⁵ Rubio, “How Much Is Enough? The Practice of Tithing,” *Family Ethics* 164–89.

⁶⁶ David Cloutier, “The Problem of Luxury in Christian Life,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 32 (2012) 3–20, at 16. Cloutier makes the connection between family and economics explicit in *Love, Reason, and God’s Story* 233–37.

⁶⁷ See Julie Hanlon Rubio, “Toward a Just Way of Eating,” in *Green Discipleship: Catholic Theological Ethics and the Environment*, ed. Tobias Winright (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011) 360–78; L. Shannon Jung, *Hunger and Happiness: Feeding the Hungry, Nourishing Our Souls* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2009).

⁶⁸ See Francis Appiah-Kubi, “La figure l’Église-famille de Dieu: Sa pertinence et des enjeux pastoraux,” *INTAMS Review* 16 (2010) 146–53; Bairbre Cahill, “Family Spirituality,” *Furrow* 62 (2011) 676–81.

⁶⁹ See Andrea Grillo, “Riti familiari e riti ecclesiali: Prospettive antropologiche e teologiche di relazione,” *INTAMS Review* 16 (2010) 174–83, Andrzej Danczak, “Dialogue as a Means of Building the Spirituality of a Married Couple: An Experience of the Domestic Church Movement in Poland,” *INTAMS Review* 17 (2011) 61–68.

⁷⁰ John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio* (Washington: USCCB, 1981) no. 17.

ordinary and provide opportunities for married couples to give voice to the ways in which they see God working in their lives.⁷¹

A focus on families as communities of practice can also be found in official Catholic statements, as evidenced in references to the crucial role of families in the new evangelization. Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2011 address to the Pontifical Council for the Family, said, “The new evangelization depends largely on the Domestic Church,” and called the family “the way of the Church because it is the ‘human space’ of our encounter with Christ.”⁷² The *Lineamenta* for the recent synod of bishops on the new evangelization recognizes the family’s important role in passing on the faith:

Sustaining and nourishing the faith necessarily begins in the family, the basic unit of society and the prime place for learning to pray. Teaching the faith essentially takes place in the family in the form of teaching children how to pray. In praying together with their children, parents accustom them to be conscious of the loving presence of the Lord and, at the same time, they themselves become credible witnesses to their children.⁷³

The *Instrumentum laboris* for the synod recognizes the difficulties families face. Within a section of the document entitled “The Family, The Model-Place for Evangelization,” the *Instrumentum* notes “the difficulties and needs facing many families today, including Christian families, namely, the need for support which is increasingly evident in the many situations of pain and failure in faith-formation, especially in children.”⁷⁴ In the United States, where 20% of all Americans and 30% of young adults now consider themselves unaffiliated with any religion, and 60% of those raised Catholic are no longer practicing, this realistic view of the challenge of passing on the faith is welcome.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Florence Caffrey Bourg, “Spirituality and the Family Life Cycle,” in *Love One Another* 57–75. On the spirituality of the ordinary in family life, see also Claire Wolfstiech, “It’s About Time: Rethinking Spirituality and the Domestic Church,” in *The Household of God and Local Households*, ed. Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, Gerard Mannion, and Peter De Mey (Leuven: Peeters, 2012) 127–44.

⁷² Benedict XVI, “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Participants at the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family,” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111201_pc-family_en.html.

⁷³ Synod of Bishops, XIII General Assembly (2012), *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Christian Faith: Lineamenta* no. 22, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20110202_lineamenta-xiii-assembly_en.html.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* no. 112, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html.

⁷⁵ The Pew Forum has the latest statistics on religious affiliation, <http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx>. The 60% figure comes from

THE MORAL LIVES OF CHILDREN

Like the bishops, moral theologians who write about children have been concerned with good parenting and the religious education of children. Early work on children fell into three main categories: the reclaiming of resources from Scripture and tradition, discussions of parental responsibilities, and analysis of religious education.⁷⁶ More recently, many theologians have turned to considering children on their own terms. John Wall makes perhaps the most decisive case for a reconsideration of ethics “in light of childhood.”⁷⁷ He writes provocatively about how we can reimagine what it is to be human (to participate in “the ongoing formation of meaningful worlds”), the nature of human fulfillment (“creating one’s own passive-active story with increasing narrative fullness”), morality (“to open [oneself] up to the irreducibility of the other”), and human rights (“social responsibilities to the human diversity of otherness”).⁷⁸ Viewing ethics from a “childist” perspective also leads to a new understanding not only of parenting but also of family ethics in general. From a consideration of children’s experience, adults can learn that all human beings are interdependent and have to be welcomed and nurtured into greater and greater capability. Defining generativity not just as a stage of adult life devoted to caretaking but as the responsibility of all family members—including children—to support, form, and relate to others, Wall suggests that families exist not simply to hand on traditions and morals but to allow all members to “experience the fullness of life lived with others.”⁷⁹

So what would it mean for Christian ethics to take the child seriously? Building on the work of Wall and others, Cristina Traina argues that children are moral agents even though they are dependent on adults,

Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010) 140–41.

⁷⁶ Key resources in each of the three areas include: Marcia J. Bunge and John Wall, “Christianity,” in *Children and Children in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts*, ed. Don S. Browning and Marcia J. Bunge (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 2009) 83–149; Bonnie J. Miller McLemore, *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007); and Jennifer Beste, “The Status of Children within the Roman Catholic Church,” in *Children and Childhood in American Religions*, ed. Don S. Browning and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2009) 56–70.

⁷⁷ John Wall, *Ethics in Light of Childhood* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2010).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 57, 86, 110, 138. On human rights and moral agency, see also John Wall, “Ain’t I a Person?: Reimagining Human Rights in Response to Children,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 30 (2010) 39–57.

⁷⁹ Wall, *Ethics in Light of Childhood* 165. See also Patrick McKinley Brennan, ed., *The Vocation of the Child* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

for “we never stop being dependent and vulnerable, never stop relying on others, and never stop being affected by them at the very center of our moral character.”⁸⁰ Thus we can see, for example, the sexually abused child who, in cooperating as a moral agent, is “preserving life within a system that provides no reliable life-giving alternatives.”⁸¹ Children may also claim “a situated right to work” rooted in their need for sustenance, their right to participation, and their desire to cultivate skills and virtues that are central to flourishing.⁸²

In a wonderful new book, Mary Doyle Roche offers similarly nuanced support for children as workers, as well as consumers. Her analysis deftly juxtaposes “the child as producer and as future dutiful worker” with the child as valuable consumer who is encouraged to buy but not to contribute to society.⁸³ To tell the story of today’s children is to tell a dual story of exploitation and agency. Roche employs a common-good framework to talk about rights and duties in communities. This framework recognizes the “radically socially nature of the human person,” which provides a foundation for discussion of communal responsibility for ensuring children’s well-being and children’s duty to serve the common good.⁸⁴ Similarly, Christine Firer Hinze sees children’s participation in the civil rights movement as a challenge to contemporary Christian families in that, “despite real danger, movement families acted; in doing so, they bore witness to their hope in America’s civic possibilities and to a courage nourished by Christian faith.”⁸⁵ Disagreeing with Hannah Arendt’s criticism of children’s role in the movement, Hinze affirms children’s “risk-taking for justice.”⁸⁶

Listening to children’s voices and taking them seriously as spiritual beings was the theme of an experts seminar at the Katholieke University

⁸⁰ Cristina L. H. Traina, “Children and Moral Agency,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29 (2009) 19–37, at 30.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 25.

⁸² Cristina L. H. Traina, “Children’s Situated Right to Work,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 31 (2011) 151–67, at 158. Traina notes that in the early 20th century, Catholics opposed the Child Labor Amendment out of a respect for the right of fathers to require children to help provide for the family (*ibid.* 164–65 n. 14). More recently, Catholic social teaching has, by opposing child labor, supported children’s right not to be exploited, but Traina makes a strong case for reconsidering this view.

⁸³ Mary M. Doyle Roche, *Children, Consumerism, and the Common Good* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009) 42.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 92.

⁸⁵ Christine Firer Hinze, “Reconsidering Little Rock: Hannah Arendt, Martin Luther King Jr., and Catholic Social Thought on Children and Families in the Struggle for Justice,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29 (2009) 25–50, at 35.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 43.

of Leuven in January 2007,⁸⁷ with participating professors from the United States and Europe in the fields of ethics, philosophy, literature, pastoral theology, and education. Many of the papers focused on children's spirituality and challenged traditional notions of faith development. German theologian Gerhard Büttner analyzed conversations with children about faith and concluded that "children can interpret their world religiously and tend to do so . . . [yet] nourishment and support are also necessary. . . . What the adult environment gives to the children are building bricks with which they play and they enjoy it. . . . [They] get theology from adults and create their own."⁸⁸

In the same volume, Elaine Champagne writes with obvious delight of children's spirituality, urging that adults reconsider a view of spirituality as "meaning-making," and instead consider "connectedness" as "the most essential characteristic of spirituality from an existential point of view," and see that children "invite us to continue our own quest to [find] 'what we are looking for.'"⁸⁹ Champagne then engages in "theology with children," posing questions about the nature of childhood, relationships with parents, God, and moral responsibility, and reporting children's answers. She concludes:

Children's voices can remind adults of their shared origins and their sameness with every human being. Children's voices can also remind adults that their strangeness can be a sign of a neverending road: the search is never fulfilled; the identity never fully accomplished; the mystery never unveiled. Children can remind adults that chaos is a place where the goodness of creation can emerge.⁹⁰

FAMILY CARE

Feminist thought has always held in tension two important insights about family care: (1) Women, who have most often been burdened with the majority of family care, have the right to pursue careers outside the home and/or forgo motherhood altogether; and (2) the work of family care that women have always done is valuable and should be appreciated, shared with men, and socially supported. Christian feminist thought has wrestled with this same tension, though it modifies the first insight by speaking not

⁸⁷ The edited papers appear in Annemie Dillen and Didier Pollefeyt, eds., *Children's Voices: Children's Perspectives in Ethics, Theology, and Religious Education* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010).

⁸⁸ Gerhard Büttner, "Where Do Children Get Their Theology From?," in *ibid.* 357–72, at 372.

⁸⁹ Elaine Champagne, "Children's Inner Voice: Exploring Children's Contribution to Spirituality," in *ibid.* 373–96, at 377–78.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 393. See also Bonnie J. Miller McLemore, "Children's Voices, Religious Experience, and Mature Faith," in *ibid.* 17–48.

only of a right to work but also of a duty to contribute to the common good through a public vocation, and qualifies the second by insisting that the sacrificial work of care should aim at mutuality.⁹¹

The concern that women are unfairly burdened continues to be articulated, particularly by theologians in the developing world. From South Africa, scholars draw attention to the interrelation of poverty, HIV/AIDS, and gender inequity, and call churches to intervene by aiding families and challenging the gendered division of labor in the home.⁹² From the United States, Barbara Andolsen calls for justice for AIDS widows in Africa, recognizing that sexist expectations about household work impact these women in unique ways.⁹³

In the developed world, some reconsideration of the value of caretaking is evident. Irene Oh's subtle work on motherhood exemplifies the new trend. She takes seriously the arguments of feminist theorists who understand motherhood as "performative" rather than merely biological, and worry that women are still viewed as primarily "biologically equipped" and therefore destined for lives dominated by dependent care.⁹⁴ Yet, listening to women from multiple cultural and religious contexts leads Oh to affirm the idea that women can express agency and resist oppression by challenging caring roles as well as by embracing them.⁹⁵ The body cannot be ignored, and traditional caring roles cannot be easily dismissed, for "the experience of motherhood, as a performative category, requires the recognition of the biological female body and . . . this recognition blurs the distinction between acts of oppression and resistance."⁹⁶

Whereas Oh is in sympathetic dialogue with feminist authors who raise questions about traditional gender categories, some theologians seek to

⁹¹ See Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar, "Christian Love, Material Needs, and Dependent Care: A Feminist Critique of the Debate on Agape and 'Special Relations,'" *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29 (2009) 39–59, esp. 39–41.

⁹² See Johannes C. Erasmus, Amanda Gouws, and Willie van der Merwe, "Changing Landscapes of Welfare, Religion, and Gender: The Impact on the Role of Churches," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 133 (2009) 8–25; and Amanda Gouws, "A Gender Perspective on Social Welfare and Religion in Paarl through the Lens of a Feminist Ethics of Care," *ibid.* 59–73.

⁹³ Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, "Essential Goods for AIDS Widows: Property, Including Intellectual Property, in Catholic Social Teachings," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 28 (2008) 67–86.

⁹⁴ Irene Oh, "The Performativity of Motherhood: Embodying Theology and Political Agency," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29 (2009) 3–17, at 4. See also Irene Oh, "Motherhood in Christianity and Islam: Critiques, Realities, and Possibilities," *Journal Of Religious Ethics* 38 (2010) 638–53.

⁹⁵ Oh, "Performativity of Motherhood" 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 14.

reassert the significance of more traditional theological views of gender for an ethic of care. Some retrieve the concept of a (gendered) “family wage” from early Catholic social teaching and wonder why it seems absent in modern documents such as *Caritas in veritate*.⁹⁷ Others speak to the necessary role of fathers in the family. Massimo Camisasca, for example, observes: “Every form of fatherhood, if it is to remain faithful to its task, must lead to the unique and true, heavenly fatherhood, that of God the Father. Every form of fatherhood has the task of introducing the child to the mystery of Being, of accompanying him into the depths of existence, all the way to the origin of all things.”⁹⁸ Given the significant social science literature on fatherhood, it is surprising that there continues to be so little theological reflection in this area.⁹⁹

One factor complicating contemporary ethical reflection on family care is concern for domestic workers. From Austria, Christa Schnabl exposes the challenge domestic workers present for an ethic of care.¹⁰⁰ She highlights the “asymmetric arrangement of power between the ‘dependency worker’ position and the ‘breadwinner’ position,” which “can easily turn into domination and subordination.”¹⁰¹ Dependency itself is not the problem. Like many contemporary family ethicists, Schnabl views dependency as a normal part of the human condition, but she distinguishes negative dependency (such as work situations that do not allow for autonomy) from positive forms (such as caring work that is “a source of meaningful relations between people”).¹⁰² Like Oh, Schnabl uses ethical valuing of care to question liberal theories of justice that privilege autonomy, while also challenging injustices inherent in structures of caregiving.

From the United States Gemma Cruz, a native of the Philippines, takes a more concrete approach, describing the low status of Filipina domestic workers, the guilt many feel at being absentee mothers, their exposure to domestic violence and sexual exploitation by employers, their suffering when they or their husbands back home have affairs and marriages are ruined, as well as the poor accommodations and long hours many are

⁹⁷ Allan Carlson, “Family, Economy, and Distributism,” *Communio* 37 (2010) 634–42.

⁹⁸ Massimo Camisasca, “The Father, a Source of Communion: Fatherhood as the Generation of Life, Freedom, and Love,” *Communio* 37 (2010) 539–47. See also Tony Anatrella and Michelle K. Borrás, “Disappearing Fathers, Destabilized Families,” *Communio* 36 (2009) 309–28.

⁹⁹ For an overview, see W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ Christa Schnabl, “Vulnerability, Reciprocity, and Familial-Care Relations: A Socioethical Contribution,” in *Catholic Theological Ethics* 224–34.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 228.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 229.

forced to accept.¹⁰³ In a provocative essay, Catherine Osborne argues that an adequate response to this reality will be difficult within the Catholic tradition, for

in order to respect both genuine bonds of affection and the [migrant domestic worker's] right to her own family identity outside the employers', along with her basic human right to adequate working conditions and compensation, Catholic social thought needs a complex social model that can live with the ambiguous location of the careworker between private and public and between (at least) two families. . . . Part of learning to "see" is to prioritize their lived experiences of routinely crossing these boundaries, much as in the twentieth century Catholic social teaching began to prioritize the real experience of exploited peasant farmers over a vision of their necessary role in an idealized hierarchical social structure.¹⁰⁴

Also blurring the lines between public and private in a discussion of family care is Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar, in a fresh contribution to the ongoing debate about agape and "special relations," that is, the tension between commitment to kin and the duty to love one's neighbors, especially those in great need.¹⁰⁵ In Gene Outka's classic work, special relations are worrisome because we are prone to value our own families more than the other, whereas agape is the ideal precisely because it requires disinterested love. However, Sullivan-Dunbar claims that this dualistic framework is inadequate, because (1) in reality many obligations to kin are given rather than chosen; (2) issues of preference versus nonpreference are less salient in real life than are issues of domination and marginalization that stem from our embeddedness in sinful social structures; and (3) most of us can do very little for the vast multitudes of strangers who need our disinterested love.¹⁰⁶ Rather than viewing Christian life as a struggle to balance conflicting duties to kin and stranger, Sullivan-Dunbar advocates a priority on meeting the needs of those closest to us, and on helping others (primarily through supporting just social structures) to do the same.¹⁰⁷ In her reclaiming of caring work, affirmation of dependency, grounding in real-life experiences of caregiving, and concern for just treatment of caregivers, she exemplifies the new conversation on family care.

¹⁰³ Gemma Tulud Cruz, "Em-body-ing Theology: Theological Reflections on the Experience of Filipina Domestic Workers in Hong-Kong," *Body and Sexuality: Theological-Pastoral Perspectives of Women In Asia*, ed. Agnes M. Brazal and Andrea Lizares Si (Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 2007) 60–70.

¹⁰⁴ Catherine R. Osborne, "Migrant Domestic Careworkers: Between the Public and the Private in Catholic Social Teaching," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 40 (2012) 1–25, at 17–18.

¹⁰⁵ Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar, "Christian Love, Material Needs, and Dependent Care: A Feminist Critique of the Debate on Agape and 'Special Relations,'" *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29 (2009) 39–60.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 47–51.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 51–55.

Holly Taylor Coolman, in her recent analysis of adoption, makes another significant contribution to our understanding of parental care.¹⁰⁸ After reviewing significant ways theologians have approached adoption, Coolman, a parent of three adopted children, concludes that adoption is both “more and less” than biological parenting:

First, adoption should not be seen simply as standing in the place of biology. The soteriological analogy rightly suggests a unique way in which adoption enacts and witnesses to love. Insofar as they are seen as something more than simply substitutes for biological parents, then, adoptive parents and adoption itself have their own dignity. Second, adoption should not be seen as completely standing in the place of biology. The realities of birth that preceded adoption are not simply erased by it, and adoptive parents do not, even in extravagant and self-giving love, become biological parents. The “goods of adoption” are, in other words, both more than and less than the “goods of birth.”¹⁰⁹

So often in family ethics, analysis that reaches outside the perceived norm (e.g., adoption, singleness, relationships between domestic caregivers and children, serodiscordant couples, etc.) helps us better understand what is essential. Coolman’s experientially grounded and rigorous treatment of adoption brings forward both the riches of birth and the beauty of self-giving, parental love. In suggesting ways for birth families to be included in adoptive families, she points to the need for selflessness in parenting and to the rich and varied ways in which contemporary families are constructed across lines of birth, commitment, and love.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Once the concern only of feminist theologians, today domestic violence has emerged as an ethical issue that must be treated by any serious theologian writing about marriage. Rising awareness of the scope of the problem is a prominent feature of university life, and professors may be learning at least in part from their students of the need to address this issue.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Holly Taylor Coolman, “Adoption and the Goods of Birth,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 1 (2012) 96–114.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 109–10.

¹¹⁰ See Kate Blanchard, “Who’s Afraid of the Vagina Monologues?: Christian Responses and Responsibility to Women on Campus and in the Global Community,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 30 (2012) 99–122. The play is produced or canceled amid much controversy on many Catholic college campuses each year, but a new generation of students is also beginning to produce unique shows made up of monologues from male and female students, faculty, and alumni (see, e.g., SLUMonologues, <https://sites.google.com/site/unaslu/slu-monologues>).

Jason King addresses the problem of abuse in dating relationships.¹¹¹ Given the prevalence of abuse (e.g., 25% of dating relationships involve nonsexual violence, 40% of domestic violence is between nonmarried couples), King worries about the influence of “the consent script” that is central to contemporary dating (i.e., there are no official rules, and whatever happens is “my choice”) and the influence of pornography (which more often than not justifies violence even in the face of protest). King argues that we need both negative norms and positive practices to combat the problem. For him, a theology of dating as practice in loving relationship has the potential to school Christians in a different way of relating within which violence cannot fit.¹¹²

As moral theologians increasingly work in a global context, awareness of the scope of the problem, its connection to social justice, and the difficulty of intervention has increased.¹¹³ Jeevaraj Lourdhuram from India reports that nearly 37% of Indian women are subject to spousal abuse.¹¹⁴ Patriarchy and internalized oppression are part of the problem (50% of abused women think that spousal abuse is sometimes justified), but “poverty, illiteracy and unemployment” are more strongly associated with higher levels of abuse.¹¹⁵ Women are placed with the lowest caste (untouchables) in India because of menstruation, and this leads to economic exploitation and dependency.¹¹⁶ Lourdhuram celebrates the progress made in Catholic theology since Vatican II including celebration of women’s dignity and condemnation of domestic abuse. He also appreciates John Paul II’s affirmation of women’s right freely to choose a husband, embrace a religious state of life, or get an education, but he is critical of excessive complementarity language in *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988) that he fears will exacerbate the already problematic situation for women in India.¹¹⁷

How important are progressive views on gender to overcoming violence? Moral theologians are addressing the causes of domestic violence in more complex ways today, and the answers are less than clear. Traina writes that

¹¹¹ Jason King, “A Theology of Dating for a Culture of Abuse,” in *Leaving and Coming Home* 29–46.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 39–42.

¹¹³ See David Hollenbach, S.J., “Human Rights and Women’s Rights: Initiatives and Interventions in the Name of Universality,” and Serene Jones, “Transnational Feminism and the Rhetoric of Religion,” in *A Just and True Love: Feminism at the Frontiers of Theological Ethics: Essays in Honor of Margaret Farley*, ed. Maura A. Ryan and Brian F. Linnane, S.J., foreword Francine Cardman (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2007) 47–74, 75–108 respectively.

¹¹⁴ Jeevaraj Lourdhuram, “What Is a Catholic Response to Spousal Abuse in the Indian Family?,” *INTAMS Review* 15 (2009) 195–213, at 196.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 198–99.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 203.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 208–10.

though domestic violence is decreasing, egalitarianism does not guarantee an end to violence; it endures even in the most progressive communities.¹¹⁸ Even there, we find the persistence of sin, a need for control, and the anxiety of equality. Traina underlines the need for communities of support and accountability between family and the state to deal with violence without alienating the victim or perpetrator. She finds models in secular feminist communities, more so than in churches, where there is more silence and less tolerance of ambiguity.¹¹⁹

Other scholars are more hopeful about what churches might be able to do. Julie Hanlon Rubio draws on the literature of just peacemaking to suggest that Christian communities can advocate practices that will prevent violence in marriage.¹²⁰ With some evidence that evangelical churches with robust marriage cultures have lower than average levels of violence and emerging data showing that the growth of companionate marriage (marriage understood primarily as a loving relationship among equals) is associated with a decline in abuse, she advocates “marriage-building” practices of intimacy, forgiveness, and conflict resolution.¹²¹ Like Traina, she does not want to lose the key feminist insights about problematic advocacy of sacrifice and forgiveness. Yet, she argues that preventing violence in the home may require us to hold in tension the need for justice (i.e., separation and self-protection) and the duty to engage in practices that build up relationship.¹²² All theologians working on the problem of domestic violence are increasingly aware of the need for continuing attention to personal, communal, social, and political strategies.

CONCLUSION

This note marks the first appearance of a section on “family ethics” in the “Notes on Moral Theology.”¹²³ The scope of ethical issues pertaining to families is wide, hence we can justly celebrate the broadening of what used

¹¹⁸ Cristina L. H. Traina, “The Missing Link: Domestic Violence and Accountable Communities,” *INTAMS Review* 17 (2011) 129–37, at 130.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 136.

¹²⁰ Julie Hanlon Rubio, “Just Peacemaking in Christian Marriage,” *INTAMS Review* 17 (2011) 138–51.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 144–46.

¹²² *Ibid.* 50–51. See also Jeanne Hoeft, “Seeking Power: Pastoral Recognition and Response to Intimate Partner Abuse,” *INTAMS Review* 17 (2011) 152–61.

¹²³ However, see Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Marriage: Developments in Catholic Theology and Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 64 (2003) 78–105, which highlights: trends in biblical and historical studies, developments in magisterial teaching, debates on personalism, feminist critiques of marriage, contributions from Africa, and emerging scholarship on family.

to be called “sexual ethics” as well as the diversity of scholars who now give some attention to morality and family. However, the relatively small number of articles in academic journals devoted to family ethics should also be noted. In many cases, searches for anything related to family in the past five years yielded only a handful of articles. Many essays cited in this note were found in edited volumes or specialized journals. Given the intense cultural, ecclesial, and personal interest in these issues, and the serious consequences of neglecting them, this dearth is problematic, but there is hope that a younger generation of scholars, many more of whom are married with children,¹²⁴ will remedy this problem and give this discipline the attention it needs and deserves.

¹²⁴ In his remarks at the mass celebrated at the second meeting of Catholic theological ethicists in Trento, Italy, in 2010, Keenan asked the congregation to look around and notice all of the parents with babies. This, he said, is the new face of Catholic moral theology. James F. Keenan, S.J., “Notes on Moral Theology: What Happened at Trento 2010?,” *Theological Studies* 72 (2011) 131–49, at 145.