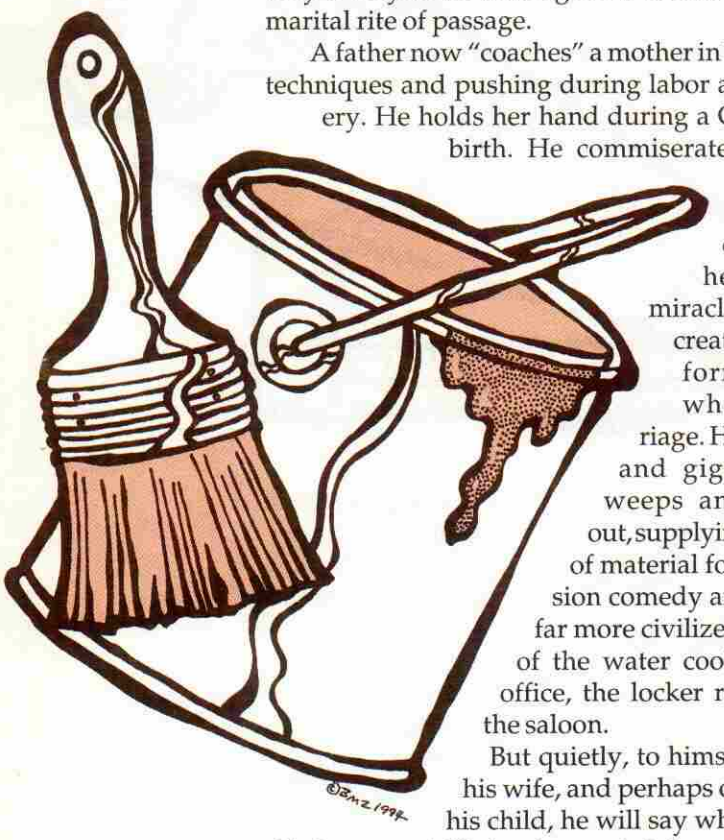
tion in the latter, couldn't have anything to do with the former.

In the movies, an anxious John Wayne fidgeted with his ten-gallon hat at the bedroom door while an officious midwife ordered him to boil water, or Fred MacMurray paced alone in a hospital lobby and stammered charmingly at preoccupied personnel. In real life, well, just ask any North American male born before the Korean War what a placenta is. If he knows, he's a doctor.

But nowadays, the father has been invited into the delivery room to accompany the mother, and most of those fathers who decline the invitation are, quite appropriately, regarded by men and women alike as wimps. What was unthinkable only a very short time ago has become a sort of marital rite of passage.



A father now "coaches" a mother in breathing techniques and pushing during labor and delivery. He holds her hand during a Caesarean birth. He commiserates, exults, quarrels, and wonders with her as the miracle of procreation transforms their whole marriage. He bellows and giggles and weeps and freaks out, supplying all sorts of material for a television comedy and for the far more civilized folklore of the water cooler at the office, the locker room, and the saloon.

But quietly, to himself and to his wife, and perhaps one day to his child, he will say what has really happened. He has been a helpless witness to the awesome power of Eve as it transfixed and transfigured the woman he loves, and he has seen firsthand the astonishing emergence of the body and soul that he and she and God have made together. He has seen grace at work, and no man or woman on earth will ever be less than an astonishment to him.

We should be grateful to feminism for such fathers.

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Who's minding the children?

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore

Are feminists anti-children? Do feminists hate men? Did feminists really burn bras? These odd questions belong in the same camp. They are all stereotypical but telling queries attached to feminism. Unfortunately while they capture a bit of the flavor of feminist struggles, they sorely miss the substance. Consequently these labels tend to falsify history and deter us from accurate understandings of difficult problems and more adequate solutions. It is time for feminists to speak a resounding "No" to questions about anti-children sentiments and to provide better explanations.

Feminism has served and continues to serve nicely as a lightening rod for problems that, at their heart, do not lie entirely on feminism's doorstep. The modern nuclear family with its rigid, narrow gender roles would have come under increasing stress with or without a feminist critique. With industrialization, men spent more time away from the home, and women lost to industry central economic and social roles. With post-industrialization, people in general spend less of their adult lives with children in the household, and ideals of democracy that long defined the American public domain are now radically challenging the private realm. Even women who do not actively demand equity at home or at work object to Saint Paul's imperatives to be submissive to their husbands.

In feminism's role as midwife rather than instigator of these massive social changes, there are problems that it did not anticipate. Few issues are of graver concern to many young women of diverse class, race, and educational backgrounds than the dilemma of how to mediate the demands of work and the desire to be a nurturing parent. Few anticipated the deep emotional and cultural resistance to genuine equality in the home and changes in the workplace that would allow for greater domestic equity. The front-page news continues to report that the "new man" is no more willing to pick up a broom than his father, that many women work a double shift, and that national statutory parental benefits are next to nothing. Even more troubling, very few foresaw that the "success" of some women, usually white and

upper class, in meeting work and family responsibilities would often be built on the backs of other women, often of a different color and socioeconomic class—baby-sitters, housekeepers, cleaning help, day-care staff, and teachers.

In a society driven by the marketplace that devalues the taking care of children, elevates material productivity, places in jeopardy those in significant care-taking roles, and forbids men serious concern over friends, children, family, and domicile, we should not be surprised that mothers and children have neither been factored in nor fared well. Nor should we be surprised that when women sought liberation, the first order of business was not to secure the needs of mothers and children.

Feminists have had good reason to feel reluctant about speaking up for the values of rearing children. For too long men left the relentlessly repetitive chores of cleaning up after men and children to women. Women have paid, and continue to pay dearly, for nurturing children.

From a faith perspective, the problems lie in the general failure to reconstruct more adequate models of human fulfillment. And the solutions will have to involve further theological reflection. Many people today lament that our children are in trouble. However, I would argue, the family predicament today is not centered so much in the declining well-being of children and the rising individualism of adults, although these are related concerns, but in the internal struggles to democratize the family and the external struggles to create social and economic policies that support democratic families and the care of dependents—not just children but all those with special needs.

At the center of family turmoil are not problems with families per se—divorce, single mothers, pregnant teens, neglected or problem children—as difficult as such phenomenon are. At the heart of family turmoil is the very difficult problem of establishing, much less maintaining, genuinely democratic family forms and dynamics.

Despite the sexual subordination in both New Testament and Hebrew scriptures, despite the patriarchal character of the ancient Israel and the Roman and Hellenistic cultures in which Christianity arose, and despite the ways in which the Christian tradition has perpetuated ideals of male dominance in the centuries since, current scholarship continues to confirm important streams of thought at variance with these assumptions. Just, democratic, egalitarian relationships of radical mutuality in families and elsewhere are not only the intent of human creation but also the promise of the Christian gospel itself.

Over against social convention Jesus kept egalitarian premises at the core of the breaking in of the kingdom. To work and to love and to have an integrated vocation and family life are grace-filled gifts equally due both women and men.

Just, democratic, egalitarian relationships of radical mutuality in families and elsewhere are not only the intent of human creation but also the promise of the Christian gospel itself.

Jesus also reminds those who would hurry along elsewhere in search of something deemed more important that something revelatory lies within the child. Many men who teach and write in theology and ethics seldom live according to the pace of children. Yet the voices of children and of mothers are central to this work. Theological and moral reflection cannot offer realistic standards of human fulfillment without making way for the young and for those who truly care for them.

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We are all created in the image of God

Juli Loesch Wiley

If an adult female were a brick chimney and a human embryo an infestation of insects, nobody would have a problem with abortion. Bring in the exterminator, scrub it out, and have done with it.

But what everyone knows (although not everyone will acknowledge) is that adult females and human embryos, together with toddling daughters and half-grown boys, vivid young women and fading old men, are a living part of US—"us" meaning the human race.

And as such, our stock rises or falls together. If woman and man are somehow sacred, then so, automatically, will be the fruit of woman and man uniting. On the other hand, if a man is but a naked ape, then apish are his mate and his hairless whelp as well.

I am arguing that the human race is, in this sense, indivisible. It is quite impossible to say, for instance, that women are nice, and men are lice,