

Sloppy Mutuality: Just Love for Children and Adults

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Theologians have long debated the role of self-sacrifice in Christian love and, more recently, in family life and gender relationships. In recent years, many theologians have joined the general democratizing trends by challenging submission, obedience, and sacrifice as key Christian ideals and endorsing Christian mutuality as essential. Mutuality has become a common way for theologians from a variety of persuasions to talk about a more just love, a love that combines affection and justice.

In all this discussion, however, neither Christian nor secular scholars have given much thought to children.¹ Almost all those who argue for equality or mutuality in families are talking about mutuality between adults. But what does love look like when the participants are not adults alone but parents and children? Whereas traditional theology idealized sacrificial love for everyone but often exacted more from women and children in submission to the rule of husband and father, recent proponents of mutuality assume mutual love ought to apply to all relationships without distinction.

I initially found myself disturbed about what I have come to call "sloppy mutuality" while reading a highly controversial book by Episcopal priest and lesbian feminist theologian Carter Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*.² I begin the chapter by reviewing her claims and the controversy she sparked because her book raises serious questions about prevalent conceptions of mutuality. In her indiscriminate championing of mutuality, however, she is not alone. While I lift up some troubling oversights in her analysis, my intent is not to dismiss her work. Rather she deserves appreciation for daring to enrich the conversation by telling her own story, even if she

raises more questions than she herself can answer. Her book provides the impetus to move toward a richer understanding of mutuality more inclusive of children, parents, and other relationships of temporary inequality. Mutuality, I will argue, needs to be understood differently in situations of temporary "transitional hierarchies," especially those involving children and those who care for them. Families must maintain a balance and tension between self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment, autonomy and connection. My task in this chapter is to amplify this in terms of what it means for children.

A YEARNING FOR MUTUALITY

In *When Boundaries Betray Us*, Heyward takes the ideal of Christian love as mutuality to an extreme. Divided into three parts, the book tells the story of the cataclysmic fallout from Heyward's intense desire for a two-way friendship with Elizabeth Farro, the pseudonym for Heyward's former lesbian feminist psychiatrist, and Farro's refusal, silence, and rebuff. The first part chronicles the process of "wounding in therapy," divided into four periods between February 1987 and September 1988. During these eighteen months, Heyward moves from a sense of deep spiritual and erotic connection with Farro to growing tensions and finally to an abrupt severing of relations. Heyward desires more than the traditional therapist-client relationship; she wants mutual intimacy. Farro eventually makes clear that this will never happen. The more Farro refuses the more Heyward pursues her until the whole enterprise falls apart. Heyward terminates treatment and Farro denies further contact.

The final two sections interpret the falling out, first from Heyward's own perspective, and then by five "experts" and friends, including feminist and lesbian therapists, Heyward's partner, and a male priest. All of these respondents seem prepared to testify on Heyward's behalf. For the most part, they defend her criticism of therapeutic standards of distance between therapist and client. Their statements of support make it all the more difficult to suggest that Heyward may have overlooked certain aspects.

Heyward's overt agenda is an important one: to subject the values and rules of therapy to serious questioning. Is therapy genuinely healing when conducted in an atmosphere of detachment and objectivity that demands a strict separation of personal and professional agendas between client and therapist? Or do these very definitions establish a hierarchy of power that makes real healing impossible and even abusive?

In arguing for the latter, Heyward questions the entire assumptive world of therapy. Her critique actually extends the general criticism of the "power-relations in white western patriarchy" that prize a hierarchical "power-over" instead of a mutual "power-with." She challenges as "un-

ethical any so-called ethic that rules out the cultivation of genuinely mutual relation anywhere in our lives."³ Genuine Christian love, she believes, cannot occur within the constraints of hierarchy and artificial boundaries. There is something inherently untrustworthy and even abusive about healing and growth that is not shared mutually by both parties. For "abuse" is "not simply a matter of touching people wrongly." It is equally a matter of "withholding intimacy and authentic emotional connection from those who seek our help." Abuse takes place when therapists fail "to make right-relation" or refuse "to touch people rightly."⁴ Hence the therapeutic boundaries and hierarchies of nonmutual traditional therapy ultimately betray clients.

A second agenda, more covert and difficult to arbitrate fairly, troubles the water. In publishing the book, Heyward still wants to reach her psychiatrist, even if Farro has refused further contact. She seems to want to say, "You must know how much you have hurt me and yet how much I have learned despite you." In essence, she still wants to know whether Farro experienced their relationship as "mutually empowering." Did Farro admire and need her as much as she admired and needed Farro?

This personal plea colors over and makes an impartial reading of her theoretical plea to challenge therapeutic boundaries almost impossible. In writing the book, Heyward herself crosses over conventional boundaries. She not only undercuts the premises on which therapy rests. She reveals the inner workings of Farro's so-called "private practice" and exposes her own psychological merger with Farro, her anger, wounds, and confusion of emotional, spiritual, and sexual needs, her more recent struggles with bulimia and alcoholism, and her disturbing memories of molestation in early childhood. Most peculiar, she ultimately recants these memories, attributing them instead to a "transpersonal" experiencing of the violence inflicted on other women, girls, boys, and marginalized men.⁵ Here and in general, the book projects an intense, at times almost unbearable, yearning for recognition in the face of an abyss of silence and pain.

DO BOUNDARIES ALWAYS BETRAY US?

It is no wonder therefore that Heyward did get a response, but not the one she may have wanted. With all the emotional catharsis going on, few groups or individuals can read the book without immediately choosing sides—pro or con boundaries and pro or con Heyward. The book sparked a minidebate, spread across two 1994 issues of *Christian Century*, between Heyward and Marie Fortune. Two other major review articles appeared each taking almost diametrically opposed positions. The discussion ultimately culminated in a book appropriately titled *Boundary Wars*.⁶

Fortune reviews the book from her perspective as someone well known for combating clergy sexual abuse. Proper boundaries do not betray clients, she argues, but instead preserve a safe space for therapeutic work in which the client need not think about taking care of the therapist. She worries in particular that the effort to level the therapeutic playing field will simply give license to those ministers and therapists already inclined to violate the vulnerability of those they help.⁷ In a subsequent issue, Heyward reasserts her main contention: professional codes ought not prevent a therapist from choosing friendship with a client.⁸ In the final retort, Fortune insists that boundaries can be flexible but should not be fluid, especially in relationships with power differences.⁹

Although the *Christian Century* exchange ended there, Heyward managed to get the last word. In 1995 she delivered a paper entitled "Fear Raging among Us: Boundaries, Vulnerabilities, and Psychotherapy" at a special session on the question of boundaries at the American Academy of Religion. She once again disputes the sacrosanct character of "professional boundaries" and suggests that they delude us in their promise of "safety" and lull us into a pretense of safety when in reality they divide and conquer. Heyward eventually incorporates this argument into a book of essays.¹⁰

As this summary demonstrates, the question of boundaries and abuse has dominated the discussion. The therapeutic issues are certainly worth identifying briefly, if only to lift up the complexity of the book. I believe, however, that this discussion of boundaries has seriously sidestepped a more troubling issue—the question about the nature of mutuality. I will return to this issue momentarily.

A review article in *The Journal of Pastoral Care* written by three psychologists, a clinical social worker, two clergywomen, a spiritual director, and a "wisewoman" is the most accusatory of Heyward herself. The authors suggest that she is a "deeply wounded person" in the grip of a powerful but almost wholly unrecognized transference.¹¹ She fails to realize just how little she knows about therapy and, more serious, how little genuine self-reflection she has done on the unconscious sources of her pain despite her obsessive personal rumination. Instead she "uses the book to punish the therapist" and displays the intense "addictive displacement patterns of early alcohol recovery."¹²

While this characterization unfairly pathologizes Heyward on points about which she herself is partly aware, Heyward does provide grounds for criticism. She seems so enmeshed in a powerful alterego or twinship transference that she collapses differences between herself and Farro and assumes that everything she feels is also shared by Farro.¹³ From the very first phone call, Heyward writes that she "sensed [Farro] felt the same way" as Heyward feels, that Farro "had experiences not unlike mine," and that they therefore were potential "soulmates" and "sister-sojourners."¹⁴

She seems to want not just mutuality but fusion. Moreover, in the very therapeutic language Heyward rejects, she dramatically "acts out" her needs outside the therapy by writing and publishing the book rather than exploring her needs for affirmation and companionship through the conversation of the therapy itself.

Another review article by pastoral theologian Roy Herndon Steinhoff-Smith, however, takes almost exactly the opposite stance. Not only does he defend Heyward and indict Farro, he comes close to ridiculing his own colleagues—those "pastoral professionals" who have, in his opinion, missed Heyward's point entirely. The psychiatrist *does* abuse Heyward, he insists, through a failure to respect her "agency" and by inflicting pain. The ultimate culprits then are those pastoral theologians who have "interpreted *When Boundaries Betray Us* as an act of war and responded to her with all the weapons at their disposal. They diagnosed Heyward as nothing but a sick client [and] ignored anything Heyward wrote that did not support their characterization of her as a demonic enemy."¹⁵ Unfortunately, this extreme characterization of his own only serves to further intensify and stereotype the "boundary wars" rather than clarify them.

Steinhoff-Smith is right, however, about problems on Farro's side. The psychiatrist does seem "fumblingly ambivalent and inconsistent," as one reviewer puts it.¹⁶ It is not clear that the conversations between them, as retold by Heyward, were "therapy" to begin with. Good psychoanalytic therapy is not based on the gratification of desires and wishes but on their analysis and understanding. A transference relationship is powerful precisely on this score: It evokes formative emotional experiences from pivotal early encounters but within the space of the "holding environment" of therapy where ideally the trauma, failures, disappointments, and frustrations become food for thought rather than simply being reenacted. One cannot help but wonder how such an intense transference went unanalyzed. Even if this account merely reflects Heyward's own biased representation, Farro did have the greater responsibility to salvage the conflictual relationship rather than to act out the conflicts in real life herself. Sadly, for many reasons, she did not do this.

Nonetheless, while these therapeutic problems need to be recognized, the argument over boundaries and abuse has also misled us. I believe there are more substantive cultural, moral, and theological issues at stake here. I am inclined to agree with pastoral theologian Joretta Marshall who says that to dismiss Heyward as therapeutically inept or personally overinvolved "does an injustice" to Heyward's analysis.¹⁷ And, I would add, simply to blame the therapist or those "pastoral professionals" who responded leaves other important questions lurking in the margins. The entrapment of Heyward and Farro (and everyone else) in this debate suggests that another problem—muddled understandings of mutuality—may

be part of the difficulty. The use of the term mutuality is unquestionably, as one review puts it, the "most central confusion in the book"¹⁸ or the "core of the controversy" as another says.¹⁹

DO SLOPPY CONCEPTIONS OF MUTUALITY BETRAY US?

In earlier publications Heyward pioneered theological efforts to redefine Christian love in terms of mutuality.²⁰ Yet in her diatribe against therapeutic boundaries and throughout the responses, mutuality seems ill defined and sloppily understood. Genuine love, she says, should not rule out mutuality "anywhere in our lives."²¹ The need to qualify and nuance this view becomes most apparent when the participants under consideration include children.

Here and in discussions of just love in families at large, it is interesting to note how seldom children are mentioned. Children simply do not figure into the equation. Yet their presence is often precisely what makes just love between spouses and partners especially difficult. Moreover, the relationship between parent and child is commonly transposed on all sorts of hierarchical relationships, such as the one that causes Heyward so much turmoil, and on other relationships, such as teacher-student and minister-parishioner. That Heyward and so few respondents mention children and mutuality therefore is especially curious. It seems exceptionally important that this question receive attention.

One of the few references to children appears when Fortune uses them as an example to argue that every relationship need not be mutual to be authentic, intimate, or meaningful. Adults, she asserts, "should not be asking children to meet their emotional and sexual needs in the same way that they ask their adult partners to do so."²² This position makes sense. Heyward counters by insisting simply that "parent-child relationships need to be mutually empowering."²³ This also makes sense. Part of the problem here is that mutuality takes on different meanings in different contexts. Fortune, Heyward, and others banter around the term but it is not entirely clear that everyone is talking about the same thing or even using the term in the same way all the time. Fortune means sexual and emotional intimacy. Heyward refers to shared power and agency. Others use the term to talk about equal regard or respect; and still others mean shared responsibility. Does mutuality mean mutual intimacy, equal power, agency, or regard, or shared responsibility and just love? Or isn't it more accurate to say that it means all of these in different times and places?

Consideration of children forces us to recognize that Christian conceptions of mutuality must be multivalent and responsive to constantly changing circumstances and personal development and that we must articulate

more clearly what we mean when we use the term. To deal with mutuality's many meanings, we must pay better attention to several commonly overlooked dimensions: the reality of temporary inequality and "transitional hierarchies"; the role of duty, responsibility, authority, and even sacrifice on the part of the adult and qualified self-centeredness on the part of the child; and finally the inevitability of failure, harm, and reconciliation.

Transitional Hierarchy

Most advocates of mutuality fail to note that it cannot be applied across the board to all relationships without qualification. Hierarchy in and of itself has become a bad word; it is often narrowly equated with authoritarianism and sometimes with patriarchy. Yet the conflict surrounding Heyward's book makes clear that we need to recognize the reality of "transitional hierarchies," a temporary inequity between persons, whether of power, authority, expertise, responsibility, or maturity, that is moving toward but has not yet arrived at genuine mutuality. She herself seems to have this in mind when she writes, "If a healing relationship is *not moving in a more fully mutual direction*, it becomes abusive, just as any other significant human connection does."²⁴ Power-over relationships then are not destructive in and of themselves; they are harmful when they are "unchanging."²⁵ Transitional hierarchies then need not be inevitably either authoritarian or patriarchal.

Unfortunately, the question of what love looks like in the midst of life's temporality, where people grow, change, and die, has not received much attention from moral theologians and philosophers. The few attempts in practical and moral theology to address this in the past several years, therefore, represent important contributions.

In *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*, I along with my coauthors argue that the meaning of just love in families must be "determined in the concreteness of specific contexts within the human life cycle." Christian love as mutuality "means different things for different family members at different points in family and individual life cycles."²⁶ When pastoral theologian Herbert Anderson traces the ebb and flow of pastoral care over the life cycle in his five-book series on families, he also points to the changing dynamics of just love.²⁷

In an earlier pivotal essay, theological ethicist Christine Gudorf stands alone in 1985 in attempting to understand the nature of Christian love and justice in the midst of the unfolding developments of parenting. While rearing one biological child and two adopted medically handicapped children, she finds common Christian views of love and childrearing inadequate. In particular, she lifts up the evolving nature of mutuality. Apparent initial sacrifices on her and her husband's part are always undertaken

with "expectations that the giving would become more mutual." Even her definition of love is itself cast developmentally: "love both involves sacrifice and aims at mutuality."²⁸

In other words, the measure of mutuality is partly determined by *where it is moving*. Elsewhere Gudorf argues that parents cannot presume they have a timeless right to a relationship with a child. Parenthood as a mutual relationship is always in "process."²⁹ More recently she has recognized the two-way nature of this process. The parents' continued development, including resolving leftover issues with their own parents, has a tremendous impact on children. Gudorf discovers, for example, that her need to control her first son during his teens simply continued her struggle for freedom from her own overly controlling parents. Recognizing this allowed her to quit working out her problems through her son.³⁰

In short, mutuality is an ideal in process and a term that resists essentialist definitions. The fact that Christian love as mutuality cannot be fully realized in every relationship at every moment does not *ipso facto* rule that particular relationship abusive or wrong-headed. Marshall and Fortune go one step further. Marshall is "leery of mutuality as the normative base for every relationship."³¹ They both argue that not all relationships need be mutual or move toward mutuality. As Fortune comments, "there just aren't enough hours in the day."³² While this could not be more true, I would prefer, in contrast to Marshall, to keep mutuality as a generic way to talk about the norm of Christian love while more carefully differentiating among its many forms both within the family and in its more public dimensions.

Duty, Responsibility, Authority, and Sacrifice

The presence of transitional hierarchy points to another important consideration: what one reviewer describes as the "complexity of finding mutuality in a relationship where one party has more responsibility and, presumably, more experience than the other." Heyward at least raises this seldom-addressed issue but "offers little useful guidance."³³ Making finer distinctions in the application of mutuality in quite different kinds of relationships is one small step toward rendering theological discussions of mutuality less sloppy. Moral agents are not always like-minded adults but women, men, and children in various stages of development. They are not the static, independent, and mature people often presumed in many discussions about just love but rather children who have needs and cannot fully reciprocate and adults who in their care for children need the support of others and appropriate means to meet their own needs.

Lest we forget, children are different from adults. Immediately after Heyward says that parent-child relationships should be mutually em-

powering, she equates this relationship with "friendships, spousal and lover relationships, and professional healing relationships."³⁴ This quick slide from child-adult to adult-adult relationships collapses some important distinctions. Mutuality, it is assumed, applies just as well to the relationship between teacher-student, therapist-client, and parent-child as it does to adults on more equal footing. Many efforts, not just those of Heyward, to spell out the meaning of just love ignore the temporary inequalities and differences between actors in transitional hierarchies, especially those between parent and child.

At the very least, children are physically and cognitively less developed. And depending on one's perspective—with grace, luck, or hard work—most adults hope to reach greater moral and spiritual maturity than children. Physically and cognitively, children may not even be capable of the kind of inverse thinking required for genuine mutuality in which one can think and feel oneself into the other's skin. Morally and spiritually, children, like adults, certainly have and deserve the kind of moral agency that SteinhoffSmith adamantly believes Farro and "pastoral professionals" deny their clients. But rich resources in the Christian tradition would argue that children should not be held as morally responsible or as morally culpable as adults who have far greater means and opportunity to perfect their abilities to do good or evil.³⁵ Understanding these differences may help us understand the dynamics of other transitional hierarchies in which one person temporarily has more expertise or authority and bears greater moral and spiritual responsibility and liability until the relationship shifts to one of more complete mutuality.

Recognition of differences heretofore overlooked or denied between children and adults leads to several insights. In transitional hierarchies, the child must be allowed greater latitude in self-indulgence. One cannot demand mutuality of a child (or of anyone unable or unwilling, for that matter). Developmentally, children and adolescents need to experiment with a wide range of roles and desires, exercising what psychologist David Gutman has described as the "omnipotentiality" of youth.³⁶ Self-assertion, self-aggrandizement, and outright selfishness are necessary as part of the gradual evolution toward a life that brings together self-fulfillment and self-giving as mutually critical components of equal regard. Although parents must make difficult, discerning choices about when to indulge and when to override desires, for the most part this discrepancy between adults and children warrants a gracious leniency on the part of the adult toward the child's neediness and wants. Children, in other words, deserve to be heard and seen in ways that previous history and social mores have denied them. This also applies to therapy. One might even suppose that Farro could have indulged Heyward's requests just a bit more without risking the overall purpose of therapy to understand rather than enact desires.

Upon having children, parents enter a period of "transitional renunciation" which puts at least an initial check on the kind of self-absorption and self-indulgence allowed children and youth.³⁷ Especially during the first few years of a child's life, parents must restrict their own needs to meet the more acute and pervasive needs of a vulnerable child. A certain kind of temporary self-giving becomes requisite. From her vantage point as a parent of three boys, pastoral theologian Brita Gill-Austern argues that we need to "resist the increasingly wide-spread tendency to condemn all forms of self-giving. Christian self-sacrifice is not pernicious by definition." Indeed, persons who strive for just love in families must reckon with the reality that the "care of children requires self-denial and sacrifice of the kinds of ego gratification" often found outside the family.³⁸ Self-giving has an essential role to play in sustaining those in dire need. The key question then becomes how to distinguish life-giving from life-denying sacrifice. One determines this by asking whether it remains subordinate to and in the service of a greater mutuality and abundant life. Does the sacrifice, in essence, lead to more just and loving relationship?

This question is critical because exaggerated ideals of sacrifice set up destructive dynamics between parent and child in which the pretense of sacrifice covers over the many ways in which the parent uses the child to meet his or her own needs. Parents do better to admit the desires and hopes they harbor in relationship to their children. Gudorf argues that her love for her children was never completely selfless, disinterested, and detached from self-affirmation and self-love. Her parenting efforts "re-bounded to our credit"; "failure to provide for them would have discredited us." Even more powerfully, from the beginning her children "gave to us," not only of themselves but also by making of the parents new and different people.³⁹

Theological ethicist Barbara Andolsen provides helpful criteria to ascertain when Christian sacrifice is "legitimate." There is place for sacrifice, she argues, when practiced by the privileged on behalf of the oppressed, when a party in greater need has a *prima facie* claim on others, and when occasions of sacrifice can be balanced out over the long run.⁴⁰ Behind all this lies an implicit Christian eschatological vision. The overall intent behind such qualifications in sacrifice is the intent and hope to create a world in which suffering is vanquished and sacrifice is not necessary.

Mutuality between parents and child is different from mutuality in adult relationships in yet another way. While children may initially get most of their needs met through the parents, parents cannot depend on children alone to meet their needs. As Gudorf asserts, "it is dangerous for adults to attempt to fill personal needs exclusively through parenting. We need to have other avenues for nurturing, for intimacy, for community involvement, for activity, outside parenting, if we are to avoid using a child

for our own ends." Moreover, under all circumstances, the parental role is "a constantly diminishing one in the life of a child."⁴¹

In my own explorations of maternal knowing, I also observe that parents must have ample space and time for self-absorption of their own, "uninterrupted by nagging thoughts and guilt about caring for others."⁴² A parent's ability to maintain this fine balance between self-giving and self-gratification depends upon wider systems of support, not just the other partner but schools, neighborhoods, churches, and so forth, that care for and support the caregivers. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the pursuit of just love in families a good deal of attention has gone to and must continue to be directed at political, economic, and practical strategies that secure these wider supports.

Affirmation of a nonexploitative, nonpatriarchal hierarchy suggests one final qualification in conceptions of mutuality. Maintaining mutuality does not always involve positive affirmation, affection, and friendship. It sometimes requires correction, judgment, tutoring, and accountability. Indeed, this coheres with those images in both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament of an acceptable, righteous anger on the part of God, Jesus, and the faithful. It also coheres with what Reformation theologians described as the importance of mutual consolation and mutual discipline. The person with more knowledge or experience—often but not always the parent—has a greater responsibility to challenge the perception or the action of the other person when it misses the mark. Even if parents lack knowledge and experience, parents by the sheer fact of adulthood itself still have an obligation to look after children for their own sake that is not and should not be entirely reciprocal. This does not, once again, rule out the importance of mutual empowerment between parent and child but it does cast the nature of equal regard between parent and child in different terms.

Failure, Harm, and Reconciliation

Many feminist theologians who have investigated psychological and religious dynamics of domestic violence and abuse have naturally refrained from moving too quickly to a policy of forgiveness and reconciliation.⁴³ However, mutuality over the long haul means repeated failure and injury and hence leads almost inevitably to questions of pardon and grace. Attending to the fallen nature of human existence is perhaps Christianity's most distinctive contribution.

SteinhoffSmith criticizes what he sees as the altruistic "power over" ethic of the "pastoral professionals" by contending that humans cannot "exercise power over others without doing evil."⁴⁴ I would add, however, that humans cannot achieve mutuality or "power with" others in an entirely pure way either. In his essay on moving from rhetoric to genuine

equality, Anderson names some of the causes behind what religious types would simply call "sin": "occasional egoism," "misunderstanding," "the absence of empathy," "hostility and separation." Reckoning with the harsh realities of implementing mutuality in daily life ultimately requires clearing a way for the advent of forgiveness and the grace of reconciliation, whether this comes through the formal Christian rituals of religious confession or through the nonconfessional, nonreligious means of deliberate, respectful conversation. "In final analysis," Anderson observes, "justice in marriage is not something we achieve. It is something we discover. . . . [F]or those who follow Christ . . . it is something that is given rather than earned. For Christian persons in marriage, it is impossible to separate justice from gratitude."⁴⁵ Granted some social activists, liberationists, and feminists would hear this as an escapist, pie-in-the-sky pronouncement from someone with power and privilege. But it is, in truth, a statement of experienced Christian faith uttered by someone who has had to wait on justice and has learned to wait on grace.

This does not mean that hard work is not involved in just love. Couples must work to foster the kind of "peaceable environment" into which respect, acceptance, and grace can move.⁴⁶ Once again, mutuality is more a verb than a noun; it describes an always-evolving process rather than an object that people obtain. To offer a provocative example, some acts of lovemaking are closer to the ideal of mutuality than others.⁴⁷ Or on the more mundane level, moment by moment the just distribution of child and household labor almost always falls more heavily on one partner than the other. People need to measure just love over the long haul rather than minute by minute, act by act. In an early essay on anger in the work of love, Beverly Harrison herself, Heyward's partner and theological ethicist, asserts "we must learn what we are to know of love from immersion in the struggle for justice."⁴⁸

In *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*, we describe Christian mutuality as a "strenuous ethic," requiring respect for the selfhood and dignity of the other, which must be taken as seriously as one expects the other to respect or regard one's own selfhood. It also requires pursuing the welfare of the other as vigorously as one pursues one's own. Mutuality as equal regard does not appear overnight. It requires a complex process of "inter-subjective communication and mutual decision" about its concrete enactment in the lives of those involved.⁴⁹ It includes but subordinates moments of sacrifice, evolves as people change and develop in their relationships, and finally, its achievement is not fully within human power but always occurs within the realm of the common good or, from a Christian perspective, with the coming of God's influence.

Making finer distinctions in the many variations and forms of mutuality in different kinds of relationships and under the finitude and tumult of life's

daily circumstances is one small step toward rendering Christian discussions of mutuality less sloppy. Mutuality is a multivalent reality. Its subjects include children and the child in all of us.⁵⁰ When such complexities are acknowledged, Christian understandings might have the power to influence and reshape our culture into one more supportive of just love in families.

NOTES

1. I address this question at greater length in *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), upon which parts of this chapter are based.

2. Carter Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us: Beyond Illusions of What is Ethical in Therapy and Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

3. Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*, 10, her emphasis.

4. Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*, 10.

5. Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*, 157.

6. Katherine Hancock Ragsdale, ed., *Boundary Wars: Intimacy and Distance in Healing Relationships* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1996).

7. Marie M. Fortune, "Therapy and Intimacy: Confused about Boundaries" (a review article of Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*), *The Christian Century*, May 18–25, 1994, 524–26.

8. Carter Heyward, "Boundaries or Barriers: An Exchange" (a response to Fortune's review), *The Christian Century*, June 1–8, 1994, 579–80.

9. Marie M. Fortune, "Boundaries or Barriers: An Exchange" (a response to Heyward's response), *The Christian Century*, June 1–8, 1994, 580–82.

10. Carter Heyward, *Staying Power: Reflections on Gender, Justice, and Compassion* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1995). There is one final quasi-interchange between Fortune and Heyward in *Boundary Wars* where they both have articles (Fortune, "The Joy of Boundaries," 78–95 and Heyward and Beverly Harrison, "Boundaries: Protecting the Vulnerable or Perpetrating a Bad Idea," 111–28).

11. Pamela Cooper-White, Marilyn Coffy, Jan Baltz, Jan Sollom-Brotherton, Marilyn Steele, Ida Thornton, and Nancy Ulmer, "Desperately Seeking Sophia's Shadow," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 48, no. 3 (1994): 287 (287–302).

12. Cooper-White et al., "Desperately Seeking Sophia's Shadow," 300, 301.

13. See Heinz Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* Arnold Goldberg, ed., with the collaboration of Paul Stepansky (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 193.

14. Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*, 24–25.

15. Roy Herndon SteinhoffSmith, "The Boundary Wars Mystery," *Religious Studies Review* 24, no. 2 (April 1998): 141 (131–42).

16. Sheila Bienefeld, "Look Back in Anger" (a review of Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*), *The Women's Review of Books* 11, no. 7 (April 1994), 7 (7–8).

17. Joretta Marshall, "Review of Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*," *Journal of the Society of Pastoral Theology* 4 (1994): 123 (121–23).

18. Cooper-White et al., "Desperately Seeking Sophia's Shadow," 288.

19. Christie Cozad Neuger, "Review of Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 16, no. 3 (1995): 382 (381–84).
20. See Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1982); *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).
21. Heyward, *When Boundaries Betray Us*, 10, my emphasis.
22. Fortune, "Therapy and Intimacy," 525.
23. Heyward, "Boundaries or Barriers: An Exchange," 579.
24. Heyward, "Boundaries or Barriers: An Exchange," 579.
25. Heyward, *Staying Power*, 9, cited by SteinhoffSmith, "The Boundary Wars Mystery," 138.
26. 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, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 154.
27. See the entire series coauthored by Herbert Anderson, "Family Living in Pastoral Perspective," all published by Westminster John Knox Press (1993–1996).
28. Christine E. Gudorf, "Parenting, Mutual Love, and Sacrifice," in *Women's Consciousness and Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, eds. Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Mary D. Pellauer (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 181–82 (175–91), my emphasis.
29. Christine E. Gudorf, "Dissecting Parenthood: Infertility, in Vitro, and Other Lessons in Why and How We Parent," *Conscience* XV, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 21 (15–22).
30. Christine E. Gudorf, "Sacrificial and Parental Spiritualities," in *Religion, Feminism, and the Family*, eds. Anne Carr and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 295–98 (294–309).
31. Marshall, "Review of Heyward," 122.
32. Fortune, "Therapy and Intimacy," 526.
33. Bienefeld, "Look Back in Anger," 8.
34. Heyward, "Boundaries or Barriers: An Exchange," 579.
35. See, for example, the chapters on Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and others in Marcia Bunge, ed., *The Child in Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).
36. David Gutman, *Reclaimed Powers: Toward a New Psychology of Men and Women in Later Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 194, cited by Browning et al., *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*, 293.
37. See Browning et al., *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*, 292–95.
38. 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 Press, 1996), 315, 318 (304–21).
39. Gudorf, "Parenting, Mutual Love, and Sacrifice," 177–78, 181.
40. Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, "Apage in Feminist Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 9, no. 1 (1981): 80 (69–83).
41. Gudorf, "Dissecting Parenthood," 22.
42. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Also A Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 164.

43. Herbert Anderson and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Pastoral Care and Gender" in *Pastoral Care and Social Conflict*, eds. Pamela D. Couture and Rodney Hunter (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995), 99-113.
44. SteinhoffSmith, "The Boundary Wars Mystery," 136.
45. Anderson, "Between Rhetoric and Reality," 385.
46. Anderson, "Between Rhetoric and Reality," 386.
47. For a powerful look at this question, see Mary D. Pellauer, "The Moral Significance of Female Orgasm: Toward Sexual Ethics That Celebrates Women's Sexuality," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 9, no. 1-2 (Spring/Fall 1993): 161-82.
48. Beverly Wildung Harrison, "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), 8 (3-21), first published in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36 (1981): 41-57.
49. Browning et al., *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*, 153; see also chapter 10 where these ideas are expanded.
50. Herbert Anderson and Susan B. W. Anderson, *Regarding Children: A New Respect for Childhood and Families* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 10-11.