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Christians Caught in the Divorce Trap, Bruce Parmenter

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Book Reviews

Markus H. McDowell,
Eleanor Daniel,
Editors

Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997), 329 pages. Reviewed by Robert F. Hull Jr.

Families in the New Testament World is a contribution to the Family, Religion, and Culture series, edited by Don S. Browning and Ian S. Evison.

Part one of this work discusses the "material and social environment of the Greco-Roman household," in chapters devoted to archaeology, cultural anthropology, and the social world. Diagrams and photographs (from Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Ostia) help the reader to understand how houses in the first-century Mediterranean world distinguished private from semipublic space, as well as male

from female space.

The authors treat the cultural constructs of gender relations, honor and shame, and kinship and family. We learn that male honor in Mediterranean societies was enhanced by the accrual of status, power, and reputation. Women preserved family honor by keeping themselves sexually pure (virgin before, faithful during, marriage). Conversely, men were shamed by being bested in a contest or by having the purity of "their" women compromised.

The Roman-era social world involved complex legal and social stratification on a scale unparalleled by anything in modern American culture. The authors outline the social expectations of patrons and clients, elites and their bureaucratic retainers, slaves, masters, and freedpersons. The payoff for readers of the Bible

is a better appreciation of the role of hospitality in the early churches, the system of financial support for Paul and his coworkers, and the influence of wealthy women patrons (Phoebe, Rom 16:1-2) in early Christianity. We are reminded of the legal and social inequality of women with respect to men and the radical devaluation of children. The authors summarize the best work available on ancient slaveholding, its philosophical rationale, its ubiquity, and the complex status relations involved.

Part two devotes five chapters to early Christian families and house churches. The authors summarize and interpret research on the Greco-Roman social world as it relates to what the New Testament says about gender roles, marriage, and celibacy; education and learning; slaves; and family life, meals, and hospi-

tality. The conclusion succinctly shows how the various New Testament writings portray "family and household as image and proving ground for the church" (p. 215). The sixty-one pages of notes reflect interaction with an enormous range of both primary and secondary literature. These references often contain substantive discussions of issues raised in the body of the work.

The greatest weakness of the book is the lack of serious theological engagement with the New Testament. In its place the authors offer a familiar developmental paradigm:

1. In the early Pauline churches, women were active as coworkers, patrons, and evangelists.
2. The later Epistles and the Synoptics reflect a developing debate in Roman society about proper gender roles.
3. After Paul's death his students wrote letters in his name (Colossians, Ephesians) that forced the dominant, repressive household code on the church.
4. The (non-Pauline) 1, 2 Timothy and Titus enforce an even more patriarchal model on the church, as gifted ministries are subordinated to male officeholders.

This is a heavily value-laden reconstruction, which offers little help to those interested in the contemporary religious function of these texts. The authors, usually so careful about historical context, fall into anachronism when they say of the author of 1

Timothy (in reference to 2:15) that "his theology of salvation for women becomes heretical" (p. 122).

This weakness notwithstanding, Osiek and Balch have produced an impressive and useful synthesis of contemporary scholarship on the family in the world of the New Testament.

ROBERT F. HULL JR. is professor of New Testament at Emmanuel School of Religion, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Charles M. Sell, *Family Ministry*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). Reviewed by Clifford W. Berger.

There can be no doubt that family is a hot-button issue. Many factions want to weigh in on various aspects of family life, from politicians to judges to special interest groups. The confusion in our society over just what "family" means is evident in recent court cases that have extended child visitation rights even to former boyfriends of deceased parents. In the meantime, while the family serves as a pawn for political debate and social engineering, real-life families cry out for help. In what ways can the church respond to these cries? *Family Ministry*, by Charles M. Sell, is a valuable and practical resource for churches seeking answers to this question.

This review is of the second edition of Sell's book, a kind of contemporary classic first published in 1981. The author is professor of Christian education at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and he writes with a tone of confidence and experience. This updated version has many features not contained in the original, particularly in the areas of programming, administration, therapy, and support groups. Many of these modifications were made in response to feedback over the years. Sell organizes his book into eight parts, the first four of which establish a theological and philosophical basis for church-based family ministry.

Part one has more recent information on demographic and societal changes that affect families. Given the 1995 publishing date, however, even this material may already be becoming dated, for statistical information can change swiftly. Perhaps the main thing to consider is not the statistical information as such, but rather the need, as Sell capably demonstrates, for all of us engaged in family ministry to stay on top of societal trends and changes that impact the nature of the families with whom we work. This is important for anyone engaged in local church ministry, but particularly for those of us in specialized ministry with families.

In parts three and four, Sell focuses on developing a theology of family ministry and explores ways that the church can foster a more family-like atmosphere. One of the important things he

does is to help clear up some of the fuzzy thinking about what in fact constitutes a family. Sell states:

One reason we call teams, schools, churches and other groups families is that the meaning of the term "family" has become vague in contemporary society. (p. 158)

Our cultural confusion over what exactly *is* a family makes it difficult for the church to minister effectively with real families. If every type of group can be defined as a family, then ultimately the word loses its meaning. Sell believes that the church as such is not and cannot be a family. It is necessary to recognize this truth in order to develop true family ministries. At the same time, Sell offers practical help on developing relationships within the church that are family-like. For some of our church members, alienated as they are from any true family connections, the church comes as close as anything to offering supportive and healthy family-like relationships. This should concern us and cause us to find effective ways to help these people belong within the church body. And yet this should not keep us from developing ministries with the actual family systems of which the church is constructed.

While parts one through four should not be passed over lightly, the second half of the book is likely to provide the solid, practical help that most readers seek. Here Sell develops the themes of marriage and parent education,

specialized ministries, and the administration of family ministry within the church. Keep in mind that these "practical" parts of the book flow from the theoretical and theological portions; take time to digest the earlier parts first.

These practical sections offer a wide variety of useful ideas for any ministry, large or small. While only very large churches, particularly those that offer specialized family ministries, could offer even close to all of these programs and resources, the ideas here are of real value to anyone. Sell even guides the reader step-by-step through the process of formulating an official family ministry in a local congregation, demonstrating how to put together a family ministry steering council and develop a theology of family ministry, and providing the basic elements for a useful family-needs survey. Other very practical material includes a schedule and process for constructing and hosting a local church family life conference, complete with suggestions for a full slate of workshops. A creative reader could find many ways to adapt and use these ideas. Chapters 19 and 20, on marriage education themes and programs, are intended to provide a basis and working outline for an effective in-house marriage preparation or marriage enrichment course or seminar.

This is a book for people who are engaged in ministry—for preachers, Christian educators, family life ministers, youth workers, elders, and Sunday

school teachers. It is easy to read and can function as a reference work for useful ideas in ministering with families today. Its value as a reference tool is strengthened by the other suggested resources and books at the end of each chapter. The back notes also provide a wealth of materials for further reference and research. Essentially, *Family Ministry* is a helpful blend of sound theory with practical and useable ideas that can be applied to a ministry of any size or shape. You will find yourself referring to it again and again.

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Diana Garland, *Family Ministry* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999), 627 pages. Reviewed by Eleanor Daniel.

As Garland states at the outset,

The family has become a powerful political and moral symbol in today's culture. Everyone is "profamily," even though there is sharp disagreement over what "the family" is and what being "for" it means. (p. 21)

She goes on to describe the diversity of "family" that we observe in today's culture. Later, she identifies the same definitional confusion in what we mean

when we use the term “family ministry.” She then provides a working definition:

Family ministry . . . consists of any activity of a church or church representative(s) that directly or indirectly (1) develops faith-filled families in the congregational community, (2) increases the Christlikeness of the family relationships of Christians, and/or (3) equips and supports Christians who use their families as a channel of ministry to others. (p. 374)

Diana Garland is an exiled faculty person from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who now teaches at Baylor University. She states, of her resources for this book:

In writing this book, I have drawn on my own experiences as a social work educator, an editor of the journal *Family Ministry: Empowering Through Faith*, a congregational member, and a member in both my childhood family and my adulthood family. These have shaped my understanding of families and congregations.

In other words, she is qualified for the task she undertakes in this book.

This is a large and comprehensive book, including almost everything you might want or need to know about family ministry. The book is divided into two parts, each with two or more sections, each section with two or more chapters. It is a book easily read, and it is intensely practical. Each chapter, though covering

most adequately the theological and theoretical material applicable to its topic, ends with a section that suggests implications for the church.

Part one is entitled “The Context for Family Ministry.” The first section examines families today: a definition of family, issues confronting families, and cultural influences. The second section then looks at processes of family life: stages and phases of life, family development, power, identity, and characteristics of strong families. The third section traces the history of families, providing a socioeconomic history and an examination of the church’s influence on families. The final section carefully develops the biblical foundations for family: biblical definition, biblical roles, and biblical words for family. Chapter 5, which deals with family communication, anger, and problem solving, is worth the price of the book.

Part two is entitled “Leading Family Ministry.” The first section examines the requisite elements of planning and leading family ministry. Perhaps the best chapter in this section, one of the best in the entire book, is chapter 17, “Congregational Life as Family Ministry,” in which Garland emphasizes how congregational life can strengthen or weaken family life. The final section examines specific family relationships—excellent chapters on singles as they fit into faith-families, marriage and divorce, parents and children, and families facing crisis and catastrophe.

The book concludes with two appendixes—a list of social justice and advocacy organizations, and resources for family ministry—and a twenty-page list of references.

The reader may be initially surprised, as I was, that Garland begins with social and cultural dimensions of family rather than with biblical foundations. She explains that she began to conceptualize the book in the way I had expected. But she adds that she chose the route she did because the Bible must speak to social and cultural realities, which, she determined, were better identified at the beginning and then examined in light of the biblical material. After reading the book, I affirm her approach.

Garland is careful to state that no church can meet all the needs for educational services and counseling within its own membership, much less in the larger community. (p. 11)

Yet she urges the reader to think outside the box to determine ways that the congregation as a whole, and the services it provides, can contribute to both family health and outreach to families who are not already attached to the church. Her research is meticulous, and she dispels some of the myths about families that seem to penetrate our churches. Her discussion of the current “family values” political debate is most insightful.

Where was this book when I needed it most? In the making, of course, but I do wish it had been available when I taught a recent

D.Min. class on family life ministry. I know that I will certainly use it in the future. Every minister and Christian educator should thoroughly digest this book and use it as a guide for assessing congregations and communities to determine an effective approach to family ministry.

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Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 288 pages. Reviewed by Krystin D. Higgins.

Judith Romney Wegner's *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah* is a thorough and well-organized evaluation of the mishnaic understanding of women. The book is divided into eight chapters, followed by an appendix. The first chapter provides assumptions, definitions, and essential background information. The next three chapters discuss dependent women, followed by chapters on the autonomous woman, the woman in the public domain, the anomaly of woman in the Mishnah, and the mishnaic woman and feminist theory.

The first chapter, entitled "Chattel or Person?" explains personhood as "the legal status defined by the complex of an

individual's powers, rights, and duties in society" (p. 10). Chattels lack these powers, rights, and duties. Wegner then gives an overview of her discoveries, stating that

indeed, it is only in matters involving her biological function, and in no other context that we find the Mishnah treating the wife as her husband's chattel. (p. 16)

Chapter 2 commences the investigation with those women considered to be dependent. The author begins with the minor daughter—a girl under the age of twelve—living in her father's house. She was the citizen of lowest status, "little more than her father's marketable asset" (p. 21), with her value determined by the condition of her virginity. The minor daughter was, however, a *potential* person. Therefore, for example, a father could not offer his daughter to the Temple, for she was not his permanent property, and her future personhood was protected.

Chapter 3 explores the personhood of the wife. Although a girl gained more personhood through becoming a wife, the husband's vested interest in the wife's biological function [took] precedence over any competing interest, including the rights of the wife herself. (p. 40)

For example, a woman was treated as a person able to understand the implications of a vow and to uphold it. But if her vow were to impede her husband's *sexual* relations with her, he could

revoke it. Thus we see that "in nonsexual contexts the sages endow the wife with a high degree of personhood" (p. 96).

Next, Wegner investigates the personhood of the levirate widow. This woman was an anomaly, for a traditional widow enjoyed the most autonomy a woman could hope to achieve, while the levirate widow became sexual chattel inherited by the *levir* with whom she was to breed to produce an heir for her dead husband. He had all the rights and privileges of control his brother had owned and, as a possible breeder, she could do almost nothing to resist the levirate marriage. A surprising turn is the levirate widow's right to reject a repulsive *levir* (with repulsiveness defined by the sages).

In chapter 4, the author turns to the autonomous woman, namely, the emancipated daughter (an unmarried and unbetrothed girl over the age of twelve), the divorcée, and the widow. Each of these women had the ability to select her own husband if she chose to marry at all. That which allowed these women their autonomy was the paradigm of biblical vows: no one was permitted to revoke the vows of an autonomous woman. A woman also exhibited her autonomy in her own collection for damages caused by rape (but not seduction); her permission to "do as she pleases in all matters concerning her personal status or private business" (p. 116); and her ability to engage in litigation, to testify in court (though for lim-

ited reasons), and to swear an oath supporting or rebutting a legal claim. The divorcée possessed the highest level of personhood available to a woman in the mishnaic system. Neither her husband nor his family had any control over her life, and if she were divorced for reasons other than adultery, she had ultimate control over her dowry as well. As a likely individual of wealth, the widow enjoyed a high legal, though incorrespondent, socioeconomic status.

Chapter 6 of Wegner's book explores the woman in the public domain. In general, she was entirely kept from it, except as a prostitute.

The mishnaic system denies women access to precisely those aspects of Israelite culture—in the world outside the home—that constitute the life of mind and spirit, and it likewise excludes them from leadership roles in communal life. (p. 146)

Ironically, a woman could "never aspire to full personhood in the sight of God or man" (p. 167), for she was not permitted to be a part of the spiritual domain of the mishnaic community. Not participating in this aspect decreased her worth as a citizen, causing the man to be more sanctified and thus allowing his life to take precedence over the less spiritual and less knowledgeable woman.

Wegner next explores the anomaly of the woman in the Mishnah, in chapter 7. She explains that even the dependent woman held personhood; however, "in the cases affecting a

man's ownership of a woman's biological function, the law ignored her personhood and treated her as his chattel" (p. 170).

Wegner concludes that

it was above all the sense of women's Otherness, rooted in gender difference and aggravated by the menstrual taboo and the fear of sexual distraction, that made women unfit to be men's companions or partners in cultural creation as opposed to natural procreation. (p. 179)

Finally, chapter 8 discusses the mishnaic woman and feminist theory. Whereas Christian feminists struggle with the *theological* implications behind the status of women, Jewish feminists tend to consider it a *sociological* struggle through which one works to improve Jewish women's position in religious law. Wegner delineates the major arguments of those who argue Jewish feminism from a theological standpoint and those who argue from a sociological standpoint. Wegner's book is very well organized, proving each case with a plethora of examples and drawing her conclusions logically. A major downfall of her study is noted in the introduction: we do not know if the constructs posed by the sages in the Mishnah were actually enforced. Therefore, Wegner speaks of a society that may or may not have existed in reality.

Although the majority of her conclusions appear reasonable, one is forced to question some of Wegner's reasons behind the exemption of women from public duty. For instance, she speaks of a

woman's exemption or exclusion from pilgrimages (p. 157), mentioning only that it was a rite of public domain in which women as chattel were given no place. However, she does not consider that the exemption could have arisen based on a woman's being late in her last term of pregnancy at the appropriate time for the pilgrimage and thus physically incapable of making the journey. The mishnaic exemption would in this case have been a necessity to ensure the health of the woman and unborn child.

Overall, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah* is a very informative and readable book. One who seeks to learn the history of the status of women in religion in general, Judaism in particular, or Christianity as a correlate, would certainly benefit from Wegner's work.

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Bruce Parmenter, *Christians Caught in the Divorce Trap* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1995). Reviewed by Bob Laver.

Divorce. The mere mention of the word launches us on a roller coaster of fear. For the married, it is the fear that a troubled marriage will end up as a mere statistic. For the never married, the fear of divorce can be a stumbling block to getting married. Divorced people themselves

are in the worst situation. They are often shut off from family and friends. Where do they turn for help, encouragement, and strength?

Many turn to the church. But sadly, that is not always helpful. I say sadly because historically, the church has failed miserably in its ministry to the divorced. Part of this is because Christians have not developed a working theology of divorce and remarriage. Traditionally, our views of this complex crisis have fallen at one of two extremes. The first is that divorce is a reprehensible sin and is wrong for any reason except adultery. And even in that case, the church often abandons both parties and imprints a scarlet *D* on their chests. The other extreme is hardly an improvement. Divorce is looked upon as a part of an enlightened society in which we have the freedom to choose and dissolve commitments at will. The church, then, is to give unquestioning love and support to the divorced.

I wish I had had access to Parmenter's book twenty years ago, when I first started in ministry. Divorce and remarriage are two of the touchiest topics in pastoral care. As pastors, we grapple with questions about those for whom we should and should not perform weddings. A divorced person wonders if he or she can remarry. How will the children survive the divorce? What should a church do?

Parmenter writes a thorough, biblical, and extremely compassionate treatise on these and other questions. His book traces a case study of a couple going through divorce. In subsequent chapters he deals thoughtfully with the Bible passages on the subject. In

his discussion on the teachings of Jesus, Parmenter covers the traditional arguments about Shammah and Hillel, which we would expect. But, as he does with the rest of the book, he puts the passages in a broader, richer context and then presents other passages that give us the big picture. Thus in addition to the view of divorce as a sin, we find the broader topics of Jesus' forgiveness, grace, and love. Parmenter even looks at those curious passages about the eunuchs, which, according to him, play heavily into proper interpretation.

He then moves to the Pauline writings. He goes deeper than just the Corinthian letter. He brings in Romans, especially 8:1. Again, law is balanced by grace, judgment by mercy. Parmenter's study of the scriptures is complete not only from a scholarly standpoint but also from a pastoral perspective. He gives us the hopeful conclusion of scripture: divorce is not an unforgivable sin, and redemption and reconciliation are available even during divorce and remarriage.

Parmenter then goes into uncharted territory. How can we minister to divorced people? How can we communicate with them and teach them and offer them forgiveness? How can we prevent divorce in our churches? He concludes his work with the idea that it is difficult for anyone to present a theology of divorce that all Christians can accept, especially a theology that is founded on the basis of grace. Personally, however, I found his theology to be refreshing and hopeful.

Who will benefit from this book? Any pastor, Sunday school

teacher, or small-group leader who wants to deal with this topic owes it to himself or herself to read this work. People who know someone who is divorced or who are going through divorce themselves should read this work and hear the good news of scripture that they may not hear anywhere else. This is a book that is long overdue; hopefully, it will bring about change in our churches as they deal with this most difficult topic. Divorce is not an act at which we should point fingers; it is a tragedy around which we should put our loving arms.

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Judith K. Balswick and Jack O. Balswick, *Authentic Human Sexuality: An Integrated Christian Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999), 306 pages. Reviewed by Jack B. Holland.

C. S. Lewis provided an illustration cited by the Balswicks in which the reader is asked to imagine

a place in which people pay good money to enter a room to view a covered platter sitting on a table. Then at the assigned time and to the beat of the drums, someone slowly lifts the cover of the platter to expose what's underneath. There, before the lustful and expectant eyes of the many spectators, is a luscious pork chop? . . . One would begin to wonder what was so desper-

ately wrong with the eating habits of such a society.

Applying the illustration as Lewis intended, the authors go on to ask, "What are we to make of a society that has such a preoccupation with sex?" They note that in many modern societies sex has even been taken a step further. Now the platter is no longer covered! In many ways we have become saturated with sex. (p. 22)

To accept the daunting task of defining "authentic sexuality" in a sexually saturated, postmodern, and increasingly pluralistic world is admirable if not impracticable. The accomplishment of this book is that it provides an intelligent and balanced context from which the contemporary church can reasonably discuss the topic of sexuality. Its strength in accomplishing such a formidable task lies in two characteristics. First, the authors present a very thorough and balanced review of literature from the social sciences, as well as religious studies, in discussing their topics. Their discussion of the social science literature is comprehensive, current, and scholarly. Homosexuality, singleness, premarital cohabitation, marital sexuality, extramarital affairs, sexual harassment, abuse, violence, pornography, and sexual addiction are each addressed. This thorough review of literature allows the reader to intelligently consider these issues and to better understand the confusing and demoralizing grip that "inauthen-

tic sexuality" holds on our sexually saturated culture.

A second strength of this work is that the authors avoid telling the reader what to believe. With their interest in authentic sexuality, they function as facilitators of a conversation that is focused not primarily on arguing certain positions on specific issues but rather on considering numerous sides of the issues from a theologically centered perspective. The extensive literature review makes this informed conversation possible. While they do not compromise Christian views of morality, they avoid moralizing and are courageous in their attempt to present the various sides of the issues they discuss.

Dividing their book into four sections, Balswick and Balswick begin with an overview, "The Origin and Formation of Sexuality." Part two addresses authentic sexuality; part three, inauthentic sexuality. The fourth section concludes the book with "The Sexually Authentic Society."

This book is a unique gift to the contemporary church and its perspectives on sexuality. Rather than simply assuming the now familiar evangelical battle cry that the postmodern world is assaulting our Christian values, and then condemning those evil intentions, Balswick and Balswick seek a deeper understanding of the postmodern culture. Their discussions of inauthentic sexuality and their attention to all sides of the various issues are informative and thought provoking. After reading this book, there are some

issues on which I am now less sure of where I stand, and I appreciate being challenged to reconsider those positions. However, while I may be less sure of my position on a particular behavior, I am more convinced of the need to love and respect the person who may practice it. I am more certain of a call to introduce the power of the gospel into the lives of people who are oppressed by the dysfunctional patterns that possess their lives.

Authentic Human Sexuality is an important book for ministers, who will discover in it excellent resources for finding ways to talk about a subject that blares its presence in every corner of our world except the pulpit. The book is important as well for youth ministers, who will be introduced to material that will be useful in caring for families and teenagers. Parents will benefit from this book, because talking to their children about sex involves more than teaching biology. More than a list of do's and don'ts, it involves a lifelong education, helping them to understand God's intentions for one of his most precious gifts. Most of all, the church will benefit:

[S]exual authenticity will develop in a social environment that supports and hold members accountable at the familial, congregational and societal levels. (p. 281)

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1954). Reviewed by John Richter.

The inspirational story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is well known. His devotion to the cross of Christ and his subsequent martyrdom in a Nazi concentration camp have provided one of the most inspiring examples of radical Christian obedience in the twentieth century. Indeed, Bonhoeffer's story of faith and courage gives credence to his powerful theological writings. Perhaps best known for his work *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer writes in an engaging manner, challenging the reader to take up the cross and follow Christ. Among his many impressive works, *Life Together* is Bonhoeffer's attempt to accentuate the notion and importance of Christian fellowship.

Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* is a theological treatise on the Christian community and its various functions and elements. It stresses both our need for the community and our contribution to it. Bonhoeffer's style can be difficult on occasion but is generally accessible and direct.

Bonhoeffer divides the work into five sections, the first of which deals with the community itself. He reminds the reader that the fellowship of the community comes only from the grace of God and is not to be taken for granted. That is not to say that Christians are to withdraw from the world and live in solitude with those of like mind; rather, involvement in the world is necessary, for even Christ lived in the world and

among his enemies. The Christian community exists through and in Jesus Christ, with one purpose being the encouragement of those who are his followers. Finally, Bonhoeffer argues two fundamental points. First, this fellowship is not an ideal, for the imagination, but a divine reality. Christian fellowship is not perfect, because humans are not perfect, but it matures when hearts are submissive and full of thanksgiving. Second, the Christian community is a spiritual, rather than human, reality. This, he says, is based on the fact that it is grounded in truth itself and not human desire.

Bonhoeffer next discusses the practical manifestations of this communion in regard to the times of the day spent in fellowship. Each day is indeed the Lord's and thus should be given to him. Bonhoeffer recommends a common devotion in the mornings—reading the Holy Scriptures (including the Psalms), singing hymns, and praying, all of which should be performed not merely for the individual but for the fellowship of all believers. The morning devotion is to be complemented with table fellowship, which is a reminder that God is the giver of all gifts, that these gifts are given for Christ's sake, and that Christ himself is present. Bonhoeffer suggests that the noonday break and the evenings should be times of prayerful reflection.

Having discussed time spent in the company of others, Bonhoeffer takes up in the third section the issue of being alone.

Although the community should not be taken for granted, Bonhoeffer reminds the reader that it should not be taken advantage of, either. He maintains that solitude and silence must complement one another, as time alone gives an appreciation of time spent together, and vice versa. Bonhoeffer offers three reasons for the necessity of being alone. First, solitude is a time to meditate on scripture, reading it as "God's word for us." Meditation, he rightly believes, leads us into a needed time of prayer. Prayer, of course, must become not only an expression of our own needs but a time of intercession for Christian brothers and sisters as well. He concludes the section with a helpful reminder that this time of personal meditation is a discipline and will not necessarily be uplifting. Bonhoeffer states that it is an obligation and a service to the whole body of believers.

The fourth section deals with the ministerial aspect of the community and addresses a number of ministries in which Christians must be involved. Bonhoeffer points to the unity and interdependency of the members of the body, for all are equal and play important roles in the tasks of the church. He goes on to describe several types of ministry: listening to others; helpfulness (which includes letting God manage our schedules so that we can help others when needed); burden bearing, or sharing others' troubles and difficulties; proclaiming the good news; and, finally, authority, which stems from servitude.

Bonhoeffer turns to the act of confession to complete his discussion of life together. Any believer can serve as confessor, he says, and the need for confessing is strong because it symbolizes our going to God for forgiveness. Confession, he claims, brings about a certainty of forgiveness because it reminds us that we are not alone in this journey, and it becomes a means of experiencing God in another as the confessor's

reassurance reflects the certainty of God's forgiveness. Ultimately, this confession prepares our hearts for the sacrament of Holy Communion, which signifies our union with God as well as the whole community of his saints.

Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* is an extremely useful reminder of our need for fellowship and a call to not take it for granted. But more than that, it is also a reminder of our responsibility and obligation

to the community of saints. The body benefits no one if no one is committed to its upbuilding and strengthening. The challenge Bonhoeffer leaves us, then, is to take up our crosses in the context of fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, whom we need and whom we must serve.

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Notes from "Who is Responsible. . ."

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13 Paulette Hines and Nancy Boyd-Franklin, "African American Families," in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, ed. Monica McGoldrick, J. Giordano, and J. K. Pearce, 2d ed. (New York: Guilford, 1996).

14 A. Etzioni, cited in Doherty and Beaton, 150.

15 Myers, 3-4.

16 Doherty and Beaton, 150.

17 Scripture quotations are from the Revised English Bible (REB).

18 R. Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Modern Society* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), 39.

19 Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997), 46-62.

20 The Old Testament, however, as the Bible of the early church, does contain considerable instruction for parents. For example, the law codes in Leviticus and

Deuteronomy, as well as the book of Proverbs, have much to say about the conduct of parents.

21 Household codes in the New Testament appear to be similar to existing contemporary codes, but their content is theological.

22 Although the New Testament does not directly refer to the church as family, frequent references to Christians as brethren (or brothers and sisters, as in the NRSV) and allusions to family relationships suggest that the metaphor is clearly intended.

23 Walter Surdacki, "Theology of Youth and Ministry" (1999), 2. Surdacki's paper will appear in a modified form in an upcoming issue of *Leaven*.