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Rights, Duties, and Relations: Toward a Pro-Woman Feminism for the 21st Century

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Feminism, understood as the peculiar modern ideology of the 20th century, has reached its self-destroying zenith in the erasure of woman in gender ideology and in the putative "right" to intentionally end the life of one's developing unborn child. But this form of feminism is not worthy of the name. To fight the cultural and legal disintegration wrought by the now-hegemonic "feminism" of the 20th century, a new feminism is necessary for the 21st century: a movement that advocates for women as women, and that understands (as did the original 19th-century women's rights movement) that rights are intrinsically linked with responsibilities.

Across the globe, conservative political parties are attracting greater number of young men than ever before but are losing among young and unmarried women. For those who view progressive ideologies as inimical to women's flourishing, who worry that political polarization of the sexes will disrupt family formation even further, and who believe the American experiment in ordered liberty is worth fighting for, it should be clear that the Right must make a better case to women.

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advocacy for women. To effectively fight the cultural and legal disintegration wrought by the now-hegemonic ideological "feminism" of the 20th century, it is time for a new feminism for the 21st century: a movement that advocates for women as women and that understands that rights are intrinsically linked with responsibilities, just as the original 19th-century movement for women's rights did.

Two distinct uses of the single term—"feminism" (as modern ideology) and feminism (as advocacy for women's interests and rights)—are readily conflated in our day, and not only by progressives. In conservatives' rightful quest to combat "feminism" as modern ideology, they have too readily accepted progressives' narrative of the historic cause of women's rights. As a result, conservatives have inadvertently ceded to progressives feminism as advocacy for women's true interests. But much like liberalism and conservativism— widely contested terms whose meanings have grown well beyond their discrete historic origins—the term feminism casts a far wider net now than when the term first gained prominence in the early 20th century.[1]

In fact, the term feminism is now so broadly defined as to be applied retrospectively by both scholars and lay people alike to include the women's rights movement of the mid-19th century (and even earlier thinkers), all of whom lived before the word "feminism" was even coined. For better or worse, feminism thus includes this early period as its "first wave." But unlike core aspects of 1970s feminism, the antebellum movement in the United States ennobled women—and their defining capacity for motherhood—and understood rights as correlative with responsibilities. Indeed, part of modern "feminist" ideology's hegemonic success has been to read its own ideological commitments back into that earliest movement that advocated for women's rights—and then to ahistorically equate "women's rights" with sexual license, radical autonomy, and abortion rights.[2] In doing so, "feminism" as a modern ideology has recklessly undermined the true interests of women and the very purpose of rights.

For too long, conservatives have assumed the veracity of this account of history and have thereby allowed progressives to control the narrative. But, as we will see, even early 20th-century "feminism" was definitionally a contest over how to define women's interests and how to philosophically ground, and give content to, women's rights.[3] Without an alternative women's movement that explicitly advocates for the distinctive needs and true interests of women, young women too often assume that progressives are the authentic advocates of women, even as the Left has emptied the words "woman" and "rights" of any objective, substantive meaning. Lost from both history and contemporary debates is the original pro-woman,

pro-life, pro-family, quintessentially American account of women's rights as knit together with *responsibilities*, the one beautifully articulated in the United States in the mid-19th century.[4]

The Antebellum Women's Movement Memory-Holed

When schoolchildren read about "feminism's first wave," they are taught about the first public convention at Seneca Falls in 1848, as well as the names of the movement's most radical figures, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton. They are also given the strong impression that winning the right to vote was the movement's chief goal. The outspoken anti-abortion, pro-motherhood views of even the most radical first wave figures (such as, for example, Victoria Woodhull) are mentioned only by pro-life advocates and organizations.[5] The early movement's strong religious character—and the leaders who were more representative of its mainstream—are almost entirely lost from collective memory.

Yet the early women's movement in the United States—in speeches at national conventions and in other public writings—made strong appeals to Scripture and the divinely ordained natural law; the virtues of men and of marriage; the inherent dignity of children (born and unborn); a single standard of chaste sexual norms; and the distinctive goods and shared responsibilities of motherhood and fatherhood. Even as this early movement leaned on the natural rights tradition of the American Founding, it owed its chief arguments to Christianity. Accordingly, its leaders often grounded their claims explicitly in women's equal status as bearers of the image of God. They spoke in one voice about women's expansive familial and social responsibilities and the God-given, natural rights that enabled their fulfilment.[6] For such reasons, modern woman-erasing "feminist" ideology is *not* the early movement's legitimate heir.

A deep religious sensibility—with God-given rights and responsibilities ever corollaries—is exemplified in works well known to early advocates but too little known today. These include noted abolitionist Sarah Grimké's early and heralded *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*;[7] "Discourse on Woman" by Lucretia Mott, the beloved and well-known leader of the antebellum movement;[8] and the speeches from, and letters to, the first national conventions in the early 1850s.[9] Some of these were collected by Paulina Davis, the president of the first national convention on Woman's Rights, Duties, and Relations at Worcester in 1850 in the aptly named 1853 publication, *Woman's Rights Commensurate with Her Capacities and Obligations: A Series of Tracts*.[10]

The sole study of Seneca Falls—to the exclusion of far more well-attended national conventions and of the writings of more mainstream and much-admired advocates—mistakenly places Stanton and suffrage at the center of early claims for women's rights.[11] But it was actually the Bible-believing Quaker Mott, not the radical liberal Stanton, who held pride of place in the antebellum movement. Mott, not Stanton, was specially called out in reference to the first local meeting at Seneca Falls in the preface to the proceedings of the second national convention.[12] To the extent that conservatives disregard these more central figures and sources, they risk misinterpreting even Seneca Falls itself.[13]

A deep dive into these lesser-known documents of American history reveals that the philosophical concept of "woman's rights"—like the concept of "rights" itself—is largely of Christian origin. Properly understood, rights are not mythical abstractions that can be defined however the sovereign will pleases, as moderns following Thomas Hobbes would have it.[14] As the American Founders and antebellum women's rights advocates generally appreciated, civil and political rights are concrete liberties to carry out concrete responsibilities, sensibly derived from the natural law and oriented toward the common good. For the good of men, women, and children, their families, and the nation, now is the time to rescue the historic cause of "woman's rights, duties, and relations" from the progressive Left's woman-erasing ideology. But first it is necessary to understand the historic reasons for, and noble ideals that animated, that original cause.

The Antebellum Movement's Biblically Inspired Claims

Industrialization, Coverture, and Their Discontents. The mid-19th century women's movement rose up in response to the Industrial Revolution's impact on America's largely agrarian society, as factories drew men (and then poorer women) out of family farms and shops to earn wages.[15] As paid labor left the home, and with it, men, too, wage-earning husbands became newly dependent upon industrial capitalists, making homemaking women dependent upon the wages of their husbands as they had not been before. The existential interdependency and common interests of husband and wife as they labored together in the productive agrarian household had begun to fray in the new economy, even as much traditional household work began to be displaced by these same developments.[16]

Under the extant common law of coverture, a married woman lost the right she had as a single woman to own or transfer property or execute contracts or a will. Her "very being" was placed under the assumed beneficence

(or "cover") of her husband who, with the dawn of liberalism, now held *individual* title to family property. This pre-industrial legal arrangement, already risky for the wife of a vicious husband, was particularly ill-suited to the new economy, in which women often needed to supplement their husbands' income and to manage how it was spent. Because women lacked the educational, economic, and legal means to independently earn a living for themselves, they were also too often thrust into marriages (and the full dependency coverture marriage entailed) out of sheer economic need. In cases of neglect, abandonment, or abuse, not uncommon given the alienating stresses facing men together with the rise of the new cities' bars and brothels, married women had to find the means to fully provide for themselves and their children, or to take custody of them. But coverture assumed the children were their fathers'. A wife's supplemental earnings, meager though they may be—as well as any personal or real property she brought into the marriage—belonged to her husband alone.[17]

More still, the not-insignificant number of non-married women who had long labored as integral parts of large agrarian households were now thrown into low-wage factory work in urban settings, or, if all else failed, prostitution. Meanwhile, to shore up a vision of the home as a loving haven from a dog-eat-dog world, women were increasingly depicted culturally (and by means of their education) as fragile and weak—a recurring trope in Western thought that has never quite described actual women or their significant economic contribution to the household in every age.[18]

Christian Women's Advocacy Rebuked. On the heels of the Second Great Awakening, middle-class Christian women in the United States were inspired to spearhead local (and eventually national) charitable organizations. They sought to fight against not only the ongoing moral outrage of slavery, but also the social upheaval and economic precarity industrialization had inflicted upon women and children on the margins of society. As they began to organize themselves and speak out publicly against slavery, child labor, illiteracy, domestic abuse, intemperance, marital rape, and the legal and societal factors (e.g., the sexual double standard) that contributed to growing rates of prostitution and infanticide, some Christian denominations began to denounce these women's public advocacy as "unnatural" and "unwomanly."[19]

In 1837, for instance, the Congregationalist Church of Massachusetts issued a letter to be read in every congregation to warn against such advocacy on the part of women. In so doing, the ministers gave voice to the view of "woman" as necessarily dependent upon and naturally subordinate to man, one that had animated dominant strains of pagan, Christian, and

modern thought, and to which notable women throughout history had cogently (but only individually) responded.[20] According to the mid-19th-century Congregationalists:

> The power of woman is in her dependence, flowing from the consciousness of that weakness which God has given her for her protection and which keeps her in those departments of life that form the character of individuals and of the nation.... When she assumes the place and tone of man as a public reformer, our care and protection of her seems unnecessary, we put ourself in self-defense against her; she yields the power which God has given her for protection, and her character becomes unnatural.[21]

Thus, before the early women's movement could even begin to make claims for their rights as correlative with their responsibilities, its earliest leaders found it necessary to offer an account of woman as a responsible being, accountable first and foremost to God. As Christine de Pizan in the early 15th century, Mary Astell in the late 17th century, and Mary Wollstonecraft had but a half-century before, they turned, in large part, to the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures to help them.[22]

Notably, in the late 20th century, in apostolic letters both to the faithful and to women throughout the world, Pope John Paul II interpreted Scripture much as these mid-19th century Christian women did, but within the context of the Catholic ecclesial and sacramental structure. Though men and women are equal in dignity because both are made in the image of God, only men can be biological, spiritual, and sacramental fathers, and women, mothers. John Paul II's own call in 1995 for a "new feminism" then did not envision a false egalitarianism, but rather upheld paternal and maternal authority, as richly distinctive, both in the Church and in the home.[23]

Woman as Accountable to God, Responsible to Others, and a Fitting Companion to Man. Devoutly Christian abolitionist Sarah Grimké, who had crafted pamphlets and spoken publicly against slavery—and been condemned for doing so—issued a series of letters in 1838 in which she herself translates the Book of Genesis from the original Hebrew and defends "the equality of the sexes." Noticing that in the first Creation account, "man" is a generic term that includes both man and woman, she maintains that the two sexes were created in perfect equality and entrusted by God to rule together in harmony and love. "Dominion was given to both over every other creature, but not over each other," she writes.[24]

In the second Creation account, Grimké observes that when God creates woman as a "helpmate" to the man, she is sent (unlike the lower animals)

as a suitable companion for him: "in all respects his equal, one who was like himself a free agent, gifted with intellect and endowed with immortality... able to enter into all his feelings as a moral and responsible being." The pair's fall from "innocence" and "happiness," she writes, was not a fall from equal dignity or mutual responsibility, nor is the image of God lost in them.[25] More still, God does not command man to rule over woman. Rather, perverted translations of Genesis 3:16 ("he will rule over you") falsely "converted a prediction to Eve into a command to Adam." Addressed to the woman, not the man, the passage predicts the peculiar "lust for dominion" that would bear down on her and thereby threaten the original "oneness" and unity of the sexes.[26]

The lesson Grimké draws from her translation of Genesis is that, just as the man is individually responsible to God for his talents, so, too, is the woman. Christ alone is her master, and "the glory of God [i]s the end of her creation."[27] In order for women, then, to "answer the purpose of our being"—for women to fulfill their duties with the talents God has given them—women must work first to understand their divine purpose. But lack of education and coverture marriage (which made husbands responsible for the bad acts of their wives) had kept women absolutely dependent, answerable not primarily to God but to man.

Submission to One Another—Not Domination and Degradation. Grimké's interpretation of Genesis would be echoed throughout the antebellum movement and beyond. Women speaking at, or writing to, the first national women's conventions in the early 1850s likewise grounded women's equal status in the *imago Dei*, declaring that man and woman were made for "equal companionship"[28] and that "every mature soul is responsible directly to God."[29] The women speaking at the conventions also followed Grimké's view of the Fall.

Paulina Davis, who served as president of the first national conventions in 1850 and 1851, a vice president of the 1852 convention, and editor of *Woman's Rights Commensurate* (collecting speeches from both) stated in 1852 that the Fall had "inverted the order of human things: woman became the victim of suffering and bondage—man became her master, and swallowed up her existence in his." Calling upon the "Messiah, the Prince of Peace, [who] took the form of a servant," Davis bemoaned how "[p]ower which is properly only the servant of Goodness, is every where its master." She continued: "womanhood, which is chosen to characterize the Church made perfect, as the 'bride of the lamb,' follows this rule, is every where in a state of degradation corresponding inversely to the glory which is yet to be revealed in her."[30]

Echoing Grimké's argument that Genesis 3 included a descriptive prophesy addressed to woman and not a command to man, Antoinette Blackwell (whose maiden name at the time was Brown) turned to the interpretation of various texts in the New Testament.[31] Blackwell argued that "the submission enjoined upon the wife, in the New Testament, is not the unrighteous rule predicted in the Old." She said that it was a Christian submission "due from man toward man, and from man toward woman," quoting several Scriptural passages, including "Yea, all of you be subject to one another (Eph 5:21)." Regarding the Scriptural injunction that in marriage man is the "head" of the woman, she responds: "True, but only in the sense in which Christ is represented as head of His body, the Church.... The mystical Head and Body, or Christ and His Church, symbolizes oneness, union. Christ so loved the Church he gave himself up for it.... So ought men to love their wives. Then the rule which grew out of sin, will cease with the sin."[32]

Two Versions of Womanhood. On the eve of the first national convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1850, Lucretia Mott similarly argued from the premise that women were made in the divine image in her "Discourse on Woman." A speech delivered in Philadelphia in late 1849, read at the convention, and then re-published widely, Mott's "Discourse" specially responded to the prevalent challenge that women's public advocacy was making them "unwomanly" and taking them "out of [their] appropriate sphere."[33]

In the speech, Mott writes insightfully of two versions of womanhood: one "true" because cultivated, mature, and refined, and the other, immature, childish, and thereby not fully realized. In response to the claim that the advocates wished to "act the man," Mott explicitly defends both sexual difference and woman's responsibility to develop her capacities. She writes, "We would admit all the difference, that our great and beneficent Creator has made, in relation of man and woman, nor would we seek to disturb this relation; but we deny that the present position of woman, is her true sphere of usefulness." Indeed, Mott happily points to woman's difference from man in "nature," "configuration," and "physical strength," concluding, "we are satisfied with nature."[34] But, she argues, women, like men, have a duty to develop their God-given powers and human capacities for the good.

Mott was worried, as so many female writers before and after her, that women's want of liberal education and mature responsibilities were leading some to "degenerate into a kind of effeminacy," a sentimentality "in which she is satisfied to be the mere plaything or toy of society, content with her outward adornings, and with tone of flattery." Mott argues that to become a "true woman" and "help meet, in the true sense of the word," she must

"understand her duties, physical, intellectual, and moral" and cultivate her powers as a moral and responsible being. An education aimed solely at domesticity, especially in the new industrial context, could not enable women to cultivate the maturity and intellectual virtue needed for true spousal companionship, the morally formative work of motherhood, or engaged republican citizenship, as a truly liberal education would.

Likewise, Paulina Davis's speech, "On the Education of Females," at the 1850 Worcester convention decried the widespread valorization of a certain kind of female effeminacy—which she took to be formed by slavish "dependency" and want of liberal education—that masqueraded as "woman's nature" per se. "Cultivated," Davis argues, "for the delights of her affectional nature, the heart is disproportionately developed, and she is made a creature of pure feeling and passionate impulse." She continues, "Intellectual culture of any kind which might abate or stead or balance feeling, is held unwomanly; and the sex is enslaved by the disproportionate activity of its own distinguishing traits." The "over-strength of her heart," Davis concludes, is "exaggerated by the weakness of her head."[35]

Women Specially Charged with the Care of Embryonic Life. The early advocates called upon women to resist the era's depiction of them as fragile and weak. To undertake responsibly the common demands of motherhood—a privilege that made them, in the words of Stanton, "second only to God"—women needed to be intellectually, morally, and physically strong, for their own sake, their husband's, their children's, and the larger society, too.

Like later feminists, then, the early movement campaigned tirelessly for women to enjoy full personal agency and governance over their own bodies, including the right to decline sex within marriage (which they called "voluntary motherhood"), against the traditional male prerogative which was violative in the hands of unchaste men.[36] But the early women's rights advocates also recognized, as today's "feminists" seem not to, that modern embryology (scientifically advanced enough even by that time) reveals that as soon as a woman is pregnant, and usually before she is even aware, her body has already begun providing abundant nurture and care for a developing human being. They recognized that when pregnant, women were, as the radical Victoria Woodhull put it in in an essay in 1870, "appointed to the holy position of motherhood [and thereby] are directly charged with the care of embryonic life."[37]

The country's earliest women's rights advocates—and the nation's first female doctors, too—spoke clearly about the moral evil of induced abortion, even as they pitied those women who, out of either ignorance or desperation,

found ways to procure one.[38] Woodhull wrote, for instance, "It is just as much a murder to destroy life in its embryonic condition, as it is to destroy it after the fully developed form is attained, for it is the self-same life that is taken."[39] And one of the nation's first female obstetrician/gynecologists, Alice Bunker Stockham, wrote in her wildly popular book, *Tokology*, "By what false reasoning does she convince herself that another life, still more dependent upon her for its existence, with equal rights and possibilities has no claim upon her for protection?"[40] Like pro-life doctors today, the country's earliest female doctors well recognized their responsibility to care for both mother and child, a care that sometimes meant the devastating loss of a child in an effort to provide care to the mother (or occasionally, the loss of both).[41]

But the early advocates were not just demanding of themselves and of society at large. The early American women's movement also made strong demands of caddish men: to stop treating women as playthings or objects for men's sexual appetites, or even as sentimental child-like spaniels designed only to please men and be admired by them. These women wished to be regarded as persons worthy not only of affection but also of dignity and respect.

Because the consequences of sex are so much more profound for women than men, these women argued, in keeping with Christian teaching, that men had a moral obligation to govern their sexual appetites (as social norms at the time expected of women) and to take up their duties as fathers. Both represented the surest means, they believed, of preventing abortions and creating happy homes—an insight that still holds true today.[42] These women thus sought for women to become responsible, moral agents of their lives, just as men were then expected to be, prepared by liberal education not for servile dependence or sentimental immaturity. They envisioned a new generation of mature, liberally educated women capable of companionship and partnership in the task of virtuously carrying out their shared duties to their families and beyond.

Advocating Equality in Difference. In her speech on the education of females at the 1850 Worcester convention, Davis clarifies what the young movement meant by "equality." These women did not advocate "identity or likeness, in general or in particulars, of the two sexes, but equivalence of dignity, necessity, and use; admitting all differences and modifications which shall not effect a just claim to equal liberty in development and action."[43] Or, as she put it in her opening address to that convention, "Nature does not teach that men and women are unequal, but only that they are unlike; an unlikeness so naturally related and dependent that their respective differences by their balance establish, instead of destroying, their equality."[44]

Because the distinctively human faculties—such as reason and the capacity for virtue and self-sacrifice—are the same in both sexes, they ought to be developed in both. This would lead, Davis argued, to the emergence of a diversity of characters, as "no individual is equal in fact and form to any other in the universe" as "[n]ature seems never to repeat herself."[45] If both women and men were properly educated, the natural differences between them would redound to the good of both, she thought, "adjust[ing] the sexes to each other, and establish[ing] mutuality" rather than antagonism.[46]

Harvard-educated minister (and uncle to Louisa May Alcott) Samuel May explored the same theme in a celebrated 1845 sermon that was included as the first entry in *Woman's Rights Commensurate*:

> I can think of no excellence, that would be becoming and beautiful in a true woman, that would not be equally becoming and beautiful in a true man. Jesus of Nazareth, the perfect man, exhibited as much of the feminine, as he did of the masculine character. And doubtless every individual, of either sex, will approach the perfection to which we are all called, just so far as he or she combines in one the virtues and graces of both. Patience, tenderness, and delicacy are as needful to complete the character of a man, as firmness, enterprise and moral courage are to complete the character of a woman.[47]

The nation was suffering, in the view of this early movement, from women's ill performance of their duties, duties that sprang from their relationships to God, family, and society. Their full rational and moral capacities were underdeveloped because they were under-utilized. The early movement worried far less than their adversaries about women being "unsexed": "That woman's nature was stamped and sealed by her Creator, and there was no danger of her unsexing herself, so long as He was on the Throne, or His eye watched her," Lucy Stone, secretary of the convention and emerging leader of the post-war movement, said.[48]

Human Capacities, Distinctive Duties, and the Law of Benevolence. A few years later, in an 1856 convention speech, Stone said that the movement grounded its claims on both nature and revelation. There, she explained the ends for which human capacities were given: "[W]hen God made the human soul and gave it certain capacities, he meant that those capacities should be exercised. The wing of the bird indicates its right to fly; and the fin of the fish the right to swim. So in human beings, the existence of a power presupposes the right to its use, subject to the law of benevolence." Explaining further, she said, "[T]he noblest, highest, and best thing that any one can accomplish, is what that person ought to do, and what God holds him or her accountable for doing."[49]

In similar fashion, Abby Price, a close friend of Walt Whitman, said at the 1850 convention that it was not necessary to maintain that the sexes are "adapted to the same positions and duties" in order to argue for women's and men's equal rights. Rather, the key truth that must be affirmed was that "they are absolutely equal in their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," by which Price meant "their rights to do, and to be, individually and socially, all they are capable of, and to attain the highest usefulness and happiness, obediently to the divine moral law."[50]

Though the more radical advocates, like Stanton, would decades later suggest the Bible itself was oppressive to women—a view common to many modern feminists—most of the antebellum advocates viewed Scripture as both authoritative and supportive of their cause.[51] As Samuel May said in the 1845 sermon that prefaced the convention speeches in *Woman's Rights Commensurate*:

> [W]herever Christianity has developed any of its power, it has elevated woman. It requires that she be treated not as the drudge, the slave of man, much less the creature of his lust; but as his nearest friend, his equal companion, his second self. Jesus and his apostles would have us look at woman as an intellectual and moral, not merely as a physical being. Nothing is worthy of her, any more than of man, that does not breathe the spirit of true goodness, active benevolence, stern integrity, moral courage. She, no less than he, is called to be like the Son of God.[52]

Most modern feminists, like the earliest women's advocates, recognize women's and men's shared human capacities. But whereas early women's rights advocates worked for women to be recognized as morally responsible agents, singularly accountable to God for the benevolent use of those capacities, modern feminism has instead elevated personal autonomy as the sexes' common goal, with no law higher than the will or determination of the self. Early feminism fought against women's tyrannical subjection under unbounded men. Today's "feminism" fights for the unbounded subjection of (each) self to its own (often tyrannical) desires. As both the American Founders and early American feminists understood, "freedom" without the channeling guide of virtue conformed to *the law of benevolence, obediently to the divine moral law,* is not proper freedom at all. It is a dangerous ideological abstraction for women, men, and the children in their care.

Woman's Rights Commensurate with Her Capacities and Obligations

Today, the very phrase "women's rights" is all too often taken as inclusive of or even synonymous with the "right" to intentionally end the life of one's dependent unborn child. In recent years, the term has expanded to include the "freedom" to exit or enter the legal category of "woman" as one wills. In this modern view, "rights" are a kind of license for personal and sexual autonomy: the abstract "freedom" to determine a future unhindered by—a "freedom from"—unchosen moral or bodily constraints.[53] "Feminism" *as modern ideology* has thereby swallowed *feminism as advocacy* for women's rights: Both *rights*, and now *woman*, are reckoned but a product of the will to power. Persons are increasingly understood to enjoy the license to autonomously engage in performing one's chosen gender as they see fit, but never to take up the responsibilities sex (and sexual intercourse) actually entail. Both words—"rights" and "woman"—have thus been rendered substantively meaningless today, with the consequences strewn before our eyes on a daily basis.

In sharp contrast, "rights," for the antebellum movement, as at the American Founding, were always correlated with concrete responsibilities, "freedom for" doing what one ought. Indeed, in some cases "rights" and "responsibilities" read not as opposites, as too often believed today, but rather as synonyms. For instance, in her *Discourse*, Mott employs the terms in a way that reads just that way, "an extended recognition of her rights, her important duties and responsibilities in life." Or as Paulina Davis declaimed in a 1852 resolution: "[T]hat woman may perform her duties, and fulfill her destiny, we demand for her moral, social, pecuniary, and political freedom."[54] One convention even defined women by their rights-as-duties: "Women are human beings whose rights correspond with their duties."[55] Lucy Stone makes the synonymity between the two even more explicit when she writes in 1892: "We are all getting to be women's rights advocates or rather investigators of women's duties."[56]

On the Responsibilities of Woman and the Means Necessary to Carry Them Out. Perhaps the most compelling statement of how the core of the antebellum women's movement thought about rights-as-correlative-with-responsibilities was through Vermont delegate and 1852 national convention vice president, Clarina Nichols' lengthy 1851 convention speech, "On the Responsibilities of Woman," collected in *Woman's Rights Commensurate*. Of the many convention speeches collected in that work, hers is the one that received "loud cheers" from the convention audience, which is itself a telling fact.

But before Nichols explains the integral relation between rights and responsibilities, and how the law of coverture, in particular, had strained her own life as a mother, she offers a characteristic introduction:

> I stand before you, a wife, a mother, a sister, a daughter—filling every relation that it is given to woman to fill. And by the token that I have a husband, a father, and brothers, whom I revere for their manliness, and love for their tenderness, I may speak to you with confidence and say—I respect manhood. I love it when it aspires to the high destiny which God has opened to it. And it is because I have confidence in manhood, that I am here to press upon it the claims of womanhood. What we want for woman is the means of education, that she may understand and be able to meet her responsibilities.[57]

She elaborates on the interaction between relations, responsibilities, powers, and rights:

> We all believe that the Creator of us all is both omniscient and omnipotent—wise and able to adapt means to the ends he had in view. We hold ourselves created to sustain certain relations as intelligent beings, and that God has endowed us with capacities equal to the discharge of the duties involved in those relations. Now let us survey woman's responsibilities within the narrowest sphere to which any common-sense man would limit her offices. As a mother, her powers mould and develope [sic] humanity, intellectual, moral, and physical. Next to God, woman is the creator of the race as it is, and as it shall be. I ask, then, has God created woman man's inferior? If so, He has been false to his wisdom, false to his power, in creating an inferior being for a superior work! But if it be true, as all admit, that woman's *responsibilities* are equal to man's, I claim that God has endowed her with *equal powers* for their discharge."[58]

For women to discharge their responsibilities and develop their powers, they require "the right to the means that will enable us to be the helpers of men, in the true sense of helpers." Here Nichols adds: "I do not understand that we are at liberty to help men to the devil," which is greeted with "loud cheering." She finishes the thought, saying she believes it is woman's mission to help man "heavenward," by which she means "to the full development and rightful enjoyment of his being."[59]

This view of the mutual dependence, reciprocal responsibilities, and shared interests of men and women runs throughout the early conventions. This is true, even as men who behave as tyrants, and extant coverture—which enabled such tyranny—are strongly condemned as both contrary to

Scripture and the republican doctrine of natural rights. Indeed, just as these women bemoan a degeneracy of femininity (e.g., slavish dependency) as distinctive from true, mature, responsible womanhood, they also bemoan faux (e.g., tyrannical) masculinity as distinct from true, mature, responsible manhood.[60] Neither degeneracy is from God. Both are products of the Fall. Both are to be resisted and transformed to uphold the equal dignity of all.

Two Great (Sex) Classes and Their Unity of Interest. The early women's movement thus wished to foster the conditions for mature men and women to work together for the good of families and the nation. As Antoinette Blackwell said at the 1852 convention, "God recognized at the creation the fact that two great classes of mind were needed to work together. They are both necessary in every department of human effort."[61] Indeed, Blackwell saw both in shared human nature and in sexual difference twin rationales for women to enjoy a voice and role in public life, a position characteristic of the movement as a whole.

Insofar as their natures were the same—as of a common humanity—Blackwell claimed that as grounding for a kind of natural (or human) right. Insofar as men and women are different, she said, "one sex cannot represent the other, and injustice must be done to the unrepresented class."[62] The absence of women's voices had given way to a "wholly masculine" law, created and executed, she said, by "type or class of the [male] nature."[63] Samuel May made a similar point in a letter to the 1850 convention, "The State now is in the condition of *half orphanage*. There are fathers of the public, but no mothers."[64]

Indeed, the antebellum insistence for collaboration and mutuality between the two sexes—"an absolute unity of interest and destiny which nature has established between them"—was memorialized in the signed statement of nearly 90 women (and men) from several state delegations of the very first national convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1850:

> Men and Women, in their reciprocities of love and duty, are one flesh and one blood—mother, wife, sister and daughter come so near the heart and mind of every man, that they must be either his blessing or his bane. Where there is such mutuality of interests, such an interlinking of life, there can be no real antagonism of position and action. The sexes should not, for any reason, or by any chance, take hostile attitudes toward each other, either in the apprehension of wrongs which exists in their necessary relations; but they should harmonize in opinion and co-operate in effort, for the reason that they must unite in the ultimate achievement of the desired reformation.[65]

In her opening speech at that first convention, Paulina Davis rightly observed that the women's rights movement was without example in history, because "it has no purpose of arming the oppressed against the oppressor, or of separating the parties, or of setting up independence, or of severing the relations of either." Rather, she said their reformation was to be brought "without violence, or any form of antagonism": "It seeks to replace the worn out with the living and the beautiful, so as to reconstruct without overturning, and to regenerate without destroying."[66]

Laws Modeled on the Highest Laws of Nature, Not the Lowest Instincts. Greater civilizational development would come, Davis insisted, as societies relied less on barbaric "dominion of force" and the "lower instincts of our nature," and more as human institutions were "modeled after the highest laws of our nature." The law "of heaven" and "Divine Providence," she said, was that the "elder shall serve the younger." Maintaining that "[l]ong suffering [sic] is a quality of the highest wisdom, and charity beareth all things for it hopeth all things," Davis urged the participants of the first national convention for Woman's Rights, Duties, and Relations to rest their claims on God's natural and revealed justice.[67]

The antebellum movement therefore philosophically grounded claims for natural, civil, and political rights on the following varied bases: (1) as the corollaries of their responsibilities as rational creatures accountable to God; (2) as needed to preserve themselves due to being equally vulnerable human beings and co-laborers in an industrializing era, "liable as man to all the vicissitudes of life";[68] (3) as mothers specially responsible for their children; and (4) as citizens in a republic that based its own existence on an appeal to God-given natural rights.

In addition to the primary goal of a co-equal liberal education to facilitate their own maturation as women, the early movement sought:

- **Property and contract rights**, to justly recognize and remunerate their contributions inside and outside the household;

- **Custody rights**, so they would not be forced to abandon their children to escape domestic abuse;

- **Rights of access to the trades and professions**, so they could continue to make economic contributions to the household in the new industrial economy and not be forced into an ill-suited marriage or prostitution just to survive;

- **The right to voluntary motherhood**, to wit, the right to decline unwanted sex against the legally sanctioned prerogative of their husbands;

- **The right to not be taxed or otherwise governed without political representation**; and, as time wore on,

- **Just workplace laws and protection**.

Modern "Feminism" and Its Ideological Hegemony Today

In sharp contrast to the early women's movement, whose first national convention in 1850 began with a tribute to the "mutuality of interests" between the sexes and "their reciprocities of love and duty," the group of American women who first called themselves "feminists" in the early years of the 20th century wished for full economic independence from men and sexual liberation imitative of the worst males.[69] Influenced by socialist ideologies and encapsulated by the thought and work of Planned Parenthood founder, Margaret Sanger, the "feminists" were the first to publicly advocate for artificial birth control, the technological lynchpin of modern feminism both then and now.

As noted-historian Nancy F. Cott writes in *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, the new modern ideology that took "feminism" as its name "severed the ties" the 19th-century women's movement had to Christianity, as it jettisoned its emphasis on duties and its approach to sexuality. Concerning the last, Cott writes:

> Unlike a long line of Anglo-American evangelical women [in the 19th century], who insisted men adhere to the same canon of sexual respectability that governed women—and unlike Christabel Pankhurst, whose demand for a single standard of morality was epitomized in her notorious slogan 'Votes for Women and Chastity for Men'—[the feminists] urged a single standard balanced in the direction of heterosexual freedom for women.[70]

But even as the sex radicals sought to wholly own the term, the meaning and content of feminism in the 1910s and 1920s was immediately contested—and from all sides. So, for instance, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who in 1898 had famously advocated for women's economic independence, still held onto two key aspects of the 19th-century movement, extolling motherhood ("the common duty and common glory of womanhood"), as

well as the virtue of chastity.[71] Against the sex radicals, she denounced "women's new 'licentiousness' as an imitation of the vices of men 'precisely in the manner of that of any servile class suddenly set free.'"[72] Meanwhile, against Gilman's own school of strict equality feminists (which would eventually organize around the Equal Rights Amendment), labor advocates like Florence Kelley and Mary Anderson understood their own efforts to pass protective legislation on behalf of poor and working-class mothers as a kind of feminism, too.[73]

Feminism as Contest, Basic Rights Achieved. In this way, early 20th-century feminism was definitionally a robust contest between competing visions of women's advancement in the late industrial era amidst sexual difference and individual variability. "Feminisms," then, competed in how best to advocate for women as a distinctive class of individuals with a range of needs. As Cott aptly puts it, women are "alike [with men] as human beings, and yet categorically different... samenesses and differences derive[d] from nature *and* culture, how inextricably entwined we can hardly know."[74]

It is no surprise, then, that when *The Oxford English Dictionary Supplement* defined the new term in 1933, feminism did not describe the particular views of the sex radicals who had first used the term. Instead, the word had already taken the much more general meaning it still has today: "the opinions and principles of the advocates of the extended recognition of the achievements and claims of women; advocacy of women's rights."[75] Cogent both then and now, feminism, thus defined, involves advocacy of women's interests and "women's rights"—the true nature of which having been contested since the word feminism was first coined. Unfortunately, Cott observes, "By the end of the 1920s women outside the [strict equality organization] rarely made efforts to reclaim the term *feminist* for themselves, and the meaning of the term was depleted."[76]

By the middle of the 20th century, there was broad public support for the claims championed by the 19th-century women's advocates, from property, contract, and marital rights to equal opportunities in education and employment. As a result, most highly educated and professionally accomplished women—women with public influence and voice—no longer felt the need to contest the term, nor specially to work on issues related to women's equal dignity or advancement. Indeed, once the Title VII and IX amendments to the Civil Rights Act were passed and successfully litigated in the early 1970s—protecting women's equal opportunities in the workplace and education, respectively—the original political cause for women's civil and political rights, extending from at least the mid-19th century, had largely been achieved.

The Meaning of Woman and the Purpose of Rights. But in the meantime, and of great consequence to this day, the sex radicals still gladly identified as "feminists." Mid-century theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett, and Shulamith Firestone gave theoretical shape to the modern movement, and there were very few prominent women's advocates of the older dispensation left to contest the content of the term from within feminism's orbit.[77] Since that time, the most trenchant critiques of "feminism" as an ideology have been from the outside, and therefore often rhetorically in opposition to feminism as such. Thus did *feminism as ideology* begin its hegemonic reign, with the ever-expanding sexual revolution its crown jewel.[78]

The trouble is that today the term feminism also enjoys its broader meaning: The term is still synonymous with advocacy for women's rights.[79] This remains the case even as the modern ideology that takes its name no longer advocates for either *women* as a sex that is distinctive from men, or *rights* as properly correlative with responsibilities. In this altogether new context, then, to denounce feminism *tout court* has been to cede the ground and content of "women's rights" to the Left, even as pro-woman lawyers work to save landmarks such as Titles VII and IX from their ideologically driven expansion at the hands of powerful "feminist" organizations. (Indeed, legal protection for girls' and women's sports, and against transgender surgeries on youth, is a good example of a new feminism of women's advocacy fighting against "feminism" as ideology.)

In such a context, inherently more vulnerable women and girls—made more vulnerable by the attempted erasure of sex differences basic to ideological "feminism" and the sexual revolution—need a new pro-woman movement, *grounded in reality*, to contest the claims of modern "feminism" and advocate for women's interests today. Against the early movement's appreciation of men's distinctive strengths and responsibilities, men and boys have been harmed by the attempted erasure of sex and sex differences, too.

Toward a Pro-Woman Feminism for the 21st Century

The early American women's movement took for granted that a woman was female—one whose human body was organized around the awesome capacity to bear and nurse children, and the serious responsibility (and privilege) to carry out maternal duties of care if and when she became a mother. But in the view of the early advocates, women ought to engage voluntarily and responsibly in that act that might make one a mother, as should men, because of their reciprocal responsibilities as fathers. Both sexes also ought

to enjoy access to liberal education and other necessary means to fulfill their myriad responsibilities as men and women excellently.

The early women's rights advocates thereby worked, in an industrializing America, to see women recognized as fully human: rational and mutually responsible creatures equal in dignity to men and personally accountable to God. Theirs is a vision of the integral collaboration of women and men, and their rights as responsibilities, that extends the quintessentially American experiment in ordered liberty—itself one with distinctively Judeo-Christian origins—to include women as full republican citizens. It is an early, ennobling vision that is all but forgotten today, even by conservatives.

Retrieving the Nobility of Being Male and Female in the Image of God. Today, modern ideologies—ideological "feminism" foremost among them—have upended the West's dignified account of what it is to be human. The loss of this Judeo-Christian inheritance has degraded both women and men. No longer viewed as having been made in the image and likeness of God, neither women nor men are cherished as uniquely rational creatures, accountable to the God who loved them first, and thereby responsible to others.

More still, females are no longer culturally honored, or even recognized, for their singular capacity to bear, nurse, and mother children, even as this capacity was too often viewed, especially before early feminism, as the rationale behind their legal subordination. Now, the healthy bodies of girls (and boys) are rendered infertile through transgender treatments and surgeries, and are bought, sold, and otherwise violated through rampant pornography, surrogacy, sex trafficking, prostitution, and, in some places in the world, forced marriage. Ideological "feminism" often cheers much of this dehumanization.

Political theorist Jean Bethke Elshtain once noted the kind of horseshoe effect that animates traditional anti-feminism and modern "feminist" ideology: "One version of Feminist equality, that articulated by a radical Feminist like Shulamith Firestone, begins from the same presumption as many anti-Feminists, namely, that the biological differences between the sexes are *necessary* factors in women's continued subordination; sex inequality is lodged *in nature*."[80] This horseshoe effect continues today when prominent anti-feminists like Andrew Tate and trans-identified writer Andrea Long Chu both agree that to be feminine is to be submissive to dominating masculine power (or in Firestone's view, reproductive technologies) to manage women's asymmetrical vulnerability.[81] But this is the view that the early women's advocates sought to dislodge from interpretations of Scripture and the social and legal norms those interpretations informed.

A new feminism for the 21st century can help the West reclaim its own humanizing heritage by recalling the edifying principles that animated the antebellum woman's advocates. In this view, sex equality exists amidst sexual difference—and ennobles both sexes.

Serving Women's True Interests in the Family, in the Law, and in Education. To serve women's true interests, a new women's movement should focus on three of the original movement's chief goals: (1) encourage the reciprocal duties of both mothers and fathers; (2) promote rights for responsibilities; and (3) liberally educate women and men for moral maturity.

Family: Unique Relations of Care, Not Interchangeable Caregivers. The educational and professional landscape today is strikingly different from that of the 19th century. Women now attain college degrees at higher rates than men, not to mention the great numbers of women in professional schools like law and medicine. Scholars like American Institute for Boys and Men Founder Richard Reeves, Manhattan Institute's Kay Hymowitz, and the American Enterprise Institute's Christina Hoff Sommers and Nick Eberstadt, among others, are right to try to shift the nation's attention to improving the educational and professional attainment of boys and men, without denigrating the achievements of girls and women. Indeed, a new pro-woman feminism would recognize that men and women are two "great"—and distinct—classes, as Paulina Davis put it, often with distinctive interests and needs that merit distinct attention. As the antebellum advocates insisted, men and women rise or fall together.

Against the view that women are naturally subordinate to men, antebellum advocates strongly advanced the fundamental equality of the sexes, but the movement did not deny sexual difference. Maternity was what made women "second only to God," a special privilege and superpower that only women could experience, even if they never physically bore a child. A pro-woman feminism for the 21st century would likewise recognize the unifying solidarity at the heart of being a woman and so at the heart of any authentic women's movement: the shared potential for (and great gift of) motherhood.

Such a solidarity should in no way undermine those women who are not called to physical motherhood. As history has proven in spades, women are capable of excelling—and offering the gift of themselves—in much else besides. But most women still become mothers, and every person alive today was born of a woman. Decades of ideological "feminism" have tended to regard motherhood as but an opportunity cost in the labor market, not a superpower that deserves far greater cultural praise and warrants a seat at the table. But today, society lacks not only the voice of mature mothers in our public conversations, but it also often lacks the voice of mature fathers, too.

Indeed, the earliest women's rights advocates knew that if women were to take their places as full citizens, the nation would have to become far more hospitable to women *as women*, those who definitionally enjoy the asymmetrical privilege of bearing (and raising) the next generation. Instead, society got a "feminism" that privileges abortion-on-demand as a means of "equalizing" the reproductive asymmetry between the sexes. After a half-century of "abortion-as-freedom"—a message that has kicked into high gear since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*—sexual intercourse still encumbers women more than men. But now the distinctive privilege of being a mother is increasingly hard to discern as being worthy of praise in today's culture, while the distinctive burdens are hardly more easily born.

The irony, as the author has long argued, is that modern "feminism" capitulated to a male-normativity concerning sex, parenting, and work that thereby undermined the early feminist vision of a society that was truly hospitable to women in the fullness of their dignity. Indeed, society has yet to experience a nation of strong, *liberally educated* women who enjoy the full panoply of civil and political rights, properly understood. No wonder young women are so afraid of pregnancy and the prospect of bearing (and raising) children today. To find their place in the hyper-sexualized, woman-degrading culture into which they have been born—reflected most egregiously in the porn-saturated internet—they learn early and often how to escape from the beautiful gift of female fertility and its potential for the extraordinary experience of motherhood.

But early feminism did more than praise the gift of motherhood as women's distinctive superpower. It also called men to their responsibilities as fathers, not only for the good of women and children, but also for the good of men themselves. As Sarah Fish of Rochester noted in a letter to the 1852 women's convention: "When we shall have the bright sunlight of truth beaming in our pathway, we shall hear no more about its being exclusively the mother's business to train her children—thus lulling to rest the mental and spiritual energies of the father—but there will be a mutual responsibility."[82]

As Fish's letter rightly implies, fathers not only ideally protect and support the work of care and nurture in the home through high expectations and stable paychecks, though those are surely great goods: A father also enjoys a specific and unique relation of paternal authority, responsibility, and care with each of his children that the mother does not, one that is both different and equally needed.[83] Indeed, the essential and distinctive relationships that mothers and fathers enjoy with their children have important policy implications that decades of ideological "feminism" have ignored—to the detriment of all involved.[84]

Law: Rights as Oriented Toward Responsibilities, Not Radical Autonomy. As demonstrated, this country's earliest advocates for women did not view "women's rights" as encompassing the freedom to intentionally end the lives of their unborn children, even as they knew women were sometimes desperate enough to do so. After all, the reason they fought for their natural (and civil) rights, in large measure, was to carry out the natural duties they had to their children.

This fact is not merely a point of esoteric historical interest. Even as advocates for the protection of the inherent dignity of vulnerable unborn human beings struggle in the post-*Dobbs* era to make their case in the public square, state courts (and voters via referenda) are hearing arguments that such protections illicitly discriminate against women. Rather than honestly present the views of the earliest women's rights advocates—and their noble vision of "reproductive justice" (i.e., care due both mother and child)—a plethora of law reviews, both before and after *Dobbs*, argue that 19th-century protections of prenatal human beings relied on the misogynist views of male doctors; just so, they claim that fetal protective laws rely on derogatory views of women today.

These historical arguments, brought to bear on today's debates, simply erase the views of the early movement for women. They are erased even as those women, both as advocates and doctors, were making their appeals *for mother and child* at the very same time the 14th Amendment's protections for due process "life" and "liberty" and "equal protection of the law" were being ratified.[85]

Both at their origins, and even today, sex discrimination law in the form of Title VII (employment), Title IX (education), and other statutory and constitutional guarantees only makes sense as protections for women *as women*. The Constitution, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court, does not forbid the acknowledgement of sex differences, even as it protects equal opportunity for both sexes.[86] That is, what is legally impermissible is not discrimination *between* the sexes—much less maintaining that there are only two sexes—but *arbitrarily* discriminating *against* one sex or the other. Such legally protected opportunities enable women and men to be accountable to God for the proper employment of their capacities and to be responsible for providing for themselves and their families.[87]

Indeed, one important responsibility that falls asymmetrically upon men and women (by nature, not merely by convention or positive law) are the consequences of sex and the begetting of children. Although the American public has been ill-informed of these matters, a prohibition on elective abortion implicitly maintains that an expectant mother—like

an expectant father—owes duties of care to the unborn child, such that neither she, nor he, can intentionally end the child's life.[88] Just so, the law should justly enforce the paternal duties of care and provision that men owe their children—and encourage good marriages, the stable institution in which, as the first-wave advocates well knew, paternal responsibilities are most often responsibly and lovingly discharged.

Education: Authentic Liberal Education, Not Technocratic Progressive Indoctrination. A coherent philosophical and legal understanding of women's rights is hardly the only arena of American life to be abandoned to progressive ideologies in the mid-to-late 20th century. Indeed, at the very same time women's civil and political rights were being fully (and properly) recognized—and modern feminism-cum-sexual-revolution was beginning to take hold—progressive educational theories started to change the face of American education at every level.

No longer was the formation of girls and boys at home and at school understood to be a profoundly moral and inescapably religious enterprise. It was now primarily for building the technical and interpersonal skills needed for the global market economy. Where liberal education was not traded in altogether for the honing of new technical skills, liberal arts programs were themselves inundated by progressive educational theories and political ideology. Certainly the opportunity to acquire technical and professional training is important, and it was important to the antebellum advocates, too. But the seismic loss of the morally formative integrative enterprise of an authentic liberal education—the kind of education the early advocates wanted for women—has negatively impacted both men and women alike and has made both less morally prepared for today's technological revolution.[89]

Recall the view of Lucretia Mott, Paulina Davis, and prominent women thinkers before them: Without robust intellectual and moral formation, both women and men will degenerate into the worst forms of themselves. Tyrannical or abusive men (who misuse their hormone-mediated physical strength and capacity to dominate and oppress the weak) are a degeneration of what men ought to be. Just so, hyper-emotional or sentimental women (who misuse their hormone-mediated concern for persons to manipulate others or undermine what is true) are a degeneration of what women ought to be.

As the Catholic philosopher Edith Stein observed—echoing those earlier thinkers—each sex can be liberated from its own degenerate tendencies by cultivating in itself the virtues, especially those more naturally acquired by the opposite sex.[90] As fully integrated persons, then, virtuous men can

attend with tender strength to the needs of the vulnerable; virtuous women can attend with courageous care to that which is objective and true. Rigorous liberal education works to achieve this liberating integration of mind, heart, and character—a liberation from self for the sake of God and others.

Conclusion

As liberal arts schools and classical educators around the country work to recover the cultural patrimony of the West and thus save that ennobling civilizational project—and it is needed more now than ever—Americans ought not forget the great but lesser-known female thinkers that have been lost, too. A noble and robust tradition of women writing and working for the interests of women, their families, and other vulnerable populations predates feminism's ideological dalliance with the sexual revolution.

A new women's movement—a pro-woman feminism for the 21st century—could serve women and girls' true interests again, and thereby uplift men and boys, too, and so inspire, once more, an embattled, divided nation.[91]

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Endnotes

1. This linguistic ambiguity is the reason it is necessary to properly employ adjectives to describe each of these increasingly ambiguous terms: e.g., classical liberal, fiscal conservative, and radical feminist.
2. Women's studies programs of the 1970s self-consciously understood themselves as the academic arm of the second wave of the women's movement. See Alice Ginsberg, *The Evolution of American Women's Studies: Reflections on Triumphs, Controversies, and Change* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).
3. Erika Bachiochi, "The Contested Meaning of Women's Equality," *National Affairs*, Winter 2021, https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/the-contested-meaning-of-womens-equality (accessed October 24, 2024).
4. The author's book, *The Rights of Woman: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2021), seeks to recover this older American tradition, but takes its bearings from the moral vision of the 18th-century English philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft—wrongly assumed to be a radical Enlightenment liberal. The book traces the influence of her virtue-, duty-, and family-centered account of rights on the early movement up and against the liberal account of John Stuart Mill and the radicals he influenced, e.g., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whose own liberalism provided the theoretical framework for modern liberal feminism.
5. See, for instance, "Victoria Claflin Woodhall," Feminists for Life, http://www.feministsforlife.org/herstory/victoriawoodhull/ (accessed October 25, 2024), and Erika Bachiochi, "The Troubling Ideals at the Heart of Abortion Rights," *The Atlantic*, January 24, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/01/equality-autonomy-abortion/605356/ (accessed October 25, 2024).
6. As the late historian Elizabeth Clark similarly observes: "The content of their rights thinking was informed by a deeply religious sensibility which stressed the interconnections between rights and responsibilities, between civil and domestic relations, and between the workings of the state and of the home.... Further, rights consciousness was originally rooted in domestic concerns for many women, who saw them as a means of achieving protection for themselves and their families." Elizabeth B. Clark, "Religion, Rights, and Difference in the Early Women's Rights Movement," *Wisconsin Women's Law Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 29 (1987), p. 30.
7. Sarah Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* (Isaac Knapp, 1838).
8. Lucretia Mott, "Discourse on Women, Dec. 17, 1849," https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/03/21/discourse-on-women-dec-17-1849/ (accessed October 25, 2024) (speech given in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania).
9. *The Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention Held at Syracuse, September 8th, 9th, and 10th, 1852*, text available at https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.rslfbl&seq=100 (accessed October 25, 2024) (hereinafter *Syracuse*).
10. *Woman's Rights Commensurate with Her Capacities and Obligations: A Series of Tracts* (1853) (hereinafter *Woman's Rights Commensurate*).
11. Similarly, Clark observes: "Historians have overstated both the secular identity of antebellum feminism and the centrality of suffrage to the movement, emphasizing the roles of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony to the exclusion of scores of other activists more representative of the movement's mainstream." Clark, "Religion, Rights, and Difference," p. 29.
12. *Syracuse*, p. iii ("[The convention at Seneca Falls and Rochester, NY. in 1848] based their claims on the Declaration of Independence; demanded equal rights; published their sentiments over their own names; at the head of the list stood the name of Lucretia Mott.") Notably, as a Garrisonian abolitionist, Mott was not initially in favor of efforts to secure women the franchise; such efforts, most controversial even at the Seneca Falls convention itself, remained unpopular among women for decades. Historian Lisa Tetrault writes in *The Myth of Seneca Falls* that when the "saintly" Mott urged young women, at the Eleventh National Convention in 1866, to make themselves acquainted with the history of the women's movement "from the days of Mary Wollstoncraft [sic]," the elder stateswoman treated Seneca Falls as a mere footnote in the decades-long history of the movement—despite having herself co-authored with Stanton its Declaration. See Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), p. 3. Tetrault argues that it was Stanton herself who first remembered Seneca Falls as the movement's origin story, with herself cast as the central figure, when she wrote her *History of Woman Suffrage* after the Civil War. This—in addition to racializing the movement, which contributed to splitting it in two; rewriting the Bible, undermining the view of those who believed Scripture as revealed grounded their cause; and defending the radical acts of the controversial Victoria Woodhull—caused her to be alienated, her Woman's Bible, disavowed. For the author's view of Stanton as a proto-liberal feminist, see Bachiochi, *The Rights of Women*, pp. 116–124.
13. For the author's interpretation of Seneca Falls in light of the early movement as a whole, see Erika Bachiochi, "The Rights of Women: A Natural Law Approach," Ethics & Public Policy Center, January 2, 2024, https://eppc.org/publication/the-rights-of-women-a-natural-law-approach/ (accessed October 25, 2024).
14. Erika Bachiochi, "Rights, Duties and the Common Good: How the Finnis–Fortin Debate Helps Us Think More Clearly About Abortion Today," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (December 2022), pp. 143–171, https://doi.org/10.1093/ajj/auac013 (accessed October 25, 2024).
15. See also Erika Bachiochi, "Sex-Realist Feminism," *First Things*, April 2023, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2023/04/sex-realist-feminism (accessed October 25, 2024) ("Though the early movement for women's rights in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was coincident with—and so is usually regarded as an aspect of—the rise of liberalism, it was also a reaction against liberalism, which cleaved home from work, public from private, and man from woman.").

16. Erika Bachiochi, "The Duty of the Moment: Retooling the Agrarian Model of Home-Work Integration," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics and Public Policy*, May 8, 2024, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4821336 (accessed October 25, 2024), and Bachiochi, *The Rights of Women*, pp. 81–91, 125–150. See also Edith Stein, *Essays on Woman* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1987), p. 105 ("The nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution revolutionized average domestic life so that it ceased to be a realm sufficient to engage all of woman's potentialities."). Gordon Wood notes that 90 percent of total textile production in 1810 came from family households. Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), pp. 314.
17. Bachiochi, *The Rights of Women*, p. 54, and Hendrik Hartog, *Man & Wife in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 24–25 ("From an early time, from a time before the creation of the United States, local governments had intruded whenever a husband refused to support his wife and children on the theory that he was thereby making his dependents into public charges. Likewise, a husband (and theoretically, a wife) who abused a spouse or children could be forced by the local sessions court to secure a bond guaranteeing his good behavior in the future. But, so long as the marital unit did not become a burden on public welfare and so long as moral failures within the family did not come to public consciousness, for so long as the family would remain private, untouched (but not untouchable) by public power. Anything more was an abuse of public power."). For a picture of how coverture marriage impacted one 19th-century woman, see Mary Harrington, "Mary Gove Nichols: Feminist Pre-History's Most Avant-Garde Reactionary," Fairer Disputations, August 2, 2024, https://fairerdisputations.org/mary-gove-nichols/ (accessed October 25, 2024).
18. See, for instance, The Bible, Book of Proverbs, Ch. 31; Eileen Power, *Medieval Women* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); Frances Gies and Joseph Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages* (1978); and Bachiochi, "The Duty of the Moment" ("As the industrial workplace was predominately (though never exclusively) "masculine," the domestic sphere became increasingly coded "feminine." Even the décor of the home became "feminine," liberated as it now was from the messy business of household production.").
19. It was not only men who so argued. Though women like Catharine Beecher and Lucretia Mott agreed on the elevation of women through education (e.g., Mott quotes Beecher positively in "Discourse on Woman"), they disagreed on the nature of women and the necessity of civil rights. For instance, in response to the Grimké sisters' abolitionist advocacy, Beecher wrote: "In this arrangement of the duties of life, Heaven has appointed to one sex the superior, and to the other the subordinate station, and this without any reference to the character or conduct of either. It is therefore as much for the dignity as it is for the interest of females, in all respects to conform to the duties of this relation. And it is as much a duty as it is for the child to fulfil [sic] similar relations to parents, or subjects to rulers. But while woman holds a subordinate relation in society to the other sex, it is not because it was designed that her duties or her influence should be any the less important, or all-pervading. But it was designed that the mode of gaining influence and of exercising power should be altogether different and peculiar.... Woman is to win every thing by peace and love; by making herself so much respected, esteemed and loved, that to yield to her opinions and to gratify her wishes will be the free-will offering of the heart." Catharine Beecher, "An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, in Reference to the Duty of American Females," 1837, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/26123/pg26123-images.html (accessed October 25, 2024).
20. In the early 15th century, Italian-born French Catholic Christine de Pizan instigated the centuries-long *querelle de femmes* when she argued against the way in which both Aristotle and the Bible (two sources she viewed as authoritative) were employed to undermine women's equal dignity. See, e.g., Christine de Pizan, *The Book of The City of Ladies* (1405). English Tory Mary Astell argued against the same in her book, A *Serious Proposal for the Ladies* (1694). In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft continued in this tradition but focused her fire even more directly at Jean Jacques Rousseau and other authors of works treating women's education in her time. See Erika Bachiochi, "How to Be a Virtuous Woman," Intercollegiate Studies Institute, May 31, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoz3Q6PoWFw (accessed October 25, 2024).
21. "Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Massachusetts to the Congregational Churches Under Their Care," June 28, 1837, The Voice, http://www.crivoice.org/WT-massletter.html (accessed October 25, 2024).
22. See note 20.
23. Pope John Paul II, "Evangelium Vitae, or On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life," Papal Encyclical, March 25, 1995, No. 99, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html (accessed October 25, 2024) ("It depends on them to promote a 'new feminism' which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination,' in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation.") For his Scriptural interpretation, see intra-document footnotes 24–32.
24. Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*. See Pope John Paul II, "Mulerius Dignitatem, or On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," Apostolic Letter, August 15, 1988, Nos. 6–7, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html (accessed October 25, 2024): "*[B]oth man and woman are human beings to an equal degree,* both are created *in God's image*.... The Creator entrusts dominion over the earth to the human race, to all persons, to all men and women, who derive their dignity and vocation from the common 'beginning'.... What makes man like God is the fact that—unlike the whole world of other living creatures, including those endowed with senses *(animalia)*—man is also a rational being *(animal rationale*). Thanks to this property, man and woman are able to 'dominate' the other creatures of the visible world (cf. *Gen* 1:28).... For every individual is made in the image of God, insofar as he or she is a rational and free creature capable of knowing God and loving him" (emphasis in original).
25. Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*. See also Pope John Paul II, "Mulerius Dignitatem," No. 9 ("[The passages in Genesis 3] do not mean that *the image and the likeness of God in the human being,* whether woman or man, has been destroyed by sin; they mean rather that it has been '*obscured*' and in a sense 'diminished.'") (emphasis in original).

26. Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*. She reasons: "Our translators…translated it *shall* instead of *will*, and thus converted a prediction to Eve into a command to Adam: for observe, it is addressed to the woman and not the man. The consequence of the fall was an immediate struggle for dominion, and Jehovah foretold which would gain the ascendancy; but as he created them in his image, as that image was not lost by the fall…there is no reason to suppose that sin produced any distinction between them as moral, intellectual and responsible beings" (emphasis in original). She suggests that if Adam had "tenderly reproved his wife, and endeavored to lead her to repentance instead of sharing in her guilt," the long-held claim of natural male superiority would make more sense. See also Pope John Paul II, "Mulerius Dignitatem," Nos. 7 and 10 ("The fact that man 'created as man and woman' is the image of God means not only that each of them individually is like God, as a rational and free being. It also means that man and woman, created as a 'unity of the two' in their common humanity, are called to live in a communion of love.... [At the fall] 'domination' indicates the disturbance and *loss of the stability* of that *fundamental equality* which the man and the woman possess in the 'unity of the two': and this is especially to the disadvantage of the woman…[and] at the same time it also diminishes the true dignity of the man.... *The woman cannot become the 'object' of 'domination' and male 'possession.'* But the words of the biblical text directly concern original sin and its lasting consequences in man and woman.... *These words of Genesis* refer directly to marriage, but indirectly *they concern the different spheres of social life:* the situations in which the woman remains disadvantaged or discriminated against by the fact of being a woman.... The overcoming of this evil inheritance is, generation after generation, the task of every human being, whether woman or man. For whenever man is responsible for offending a woman's personal dignity and vocation, he acts contrary to his own personal dignity and his own vocation.") (emphasis in original).
27. See also Stein, *Essays on Woman*, p. 134 ("When [woman] has realized that no one other than God is capable of receiving her completely for Himself and that it is sinful theft toward God to give oneself completely to one other than Him, then the surrender is no longer difficult and she becomes free of herself.").
28. *The Proceedings of the Women's Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October 23rd and 24th, 1850*, p. 20, text at https://www.loc.gov/item/93838286/ (accessed October 25, 2024) (address read by Mrs. Abby H. Price, of Hopedale, Massachusetts) (hereinafter *Worcester*).
29. *Syracuse*, p. 47 (letter to Mrs. Paulina W. Davis from A. D. Mayo, August 24, 1852).
30. Ibid., pp. 58–59 (extracts from Mrs. Paulina W. Davis' address to the convention).
31. Ibid., pp. 66–67 (speech of Antoinette L. Brown).
32. Ibid. See also Pope John Paul II, "Mulieris Dignitatem," No. 24 ("'Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife' ([*Eph.*] 5:22–23). The author knows that this way of speaking, so profoundly rooted in the customs and religious tradition of the time, is to be understood and carried out in a new way: as a '*mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ*' (cf. *Eph* 5:21). This is especially true because the husband is called the 'head' of the wife *as* Christ is the head of the Church; he is so in order to give 'himself up for her' *(Eph.* 5:25), and giving himself up for her means giving up even his own life.") (emphasis in original).
33. Mott, "Discourse on Women."
34. Ibid.
35. Paulina W. Davis, "On the Education of Females," in *Woman's Rights Commensurate*, p. 10 (hereinafter "Education"). See also Stein, *Essays on Woman*, pp. 96–97: "[T]he one-sidedness, to which by nature [the woman] inclines, is particularly dangerous: unilateral emotional development.... Where discipline of mind and will are lacking, emotional life becomes a compulsion without secure direction."
36. In 1850, Sarah Grimké wrote another essay that articulated a core view of the antebellum movement. The essay "Marriage," was a response to accusations that the early movement was one and the same as the movement for "free love." In the essay, she writes: "The Doctrine that human beings are to follow their attractions, which lies at the base of that miscalled 'free love' system, is fraught with infinite danger. We are too low down to listen for one moment to its syren [sic] voice.... Let me then exculpate 'the woman's rights movement,' from the charge of 'tending directly and rapidly to the Free Love system, and nullifying the very idea of Marriage as anything more than a partnership at will.' On the contrary our great desire is to purify and exalt the marriage relation and destroy all licentiousness.... In marriage is the origin of life." Grimké, "Marriage," 1850, published in Gerda Lerner, *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, revised edition, 2004). In the essay, Grimké employs the term "voluntary motherhood" (hers is the earliest instance of the term that that author has found) for the core women's rights position that a woman could determine when to engage in that act that might make her a mother (i.e., she could not be forced into sex, even in marriage). To wit: "In a pure, true relation between the sexes, no difficulties can ever arise, but a willing recognition of each other's rights and mutual wants, naturally and spontaneously resulting in voluntary motherhood, a joyful appreciation of the blessedness of parentage, the birth of healthy, comely children and a beautiful home."
37. Victoria Woodhull, "Children—Their Rights, Privileges and True Relation to Society," *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, December 24, 1870, p. 4.
38. See, generally, Monica Klem and Madeleine McDowell, *Pity for Evil: Suffrage, Abortion, and Women's Empowerment in Reconstruction America* (New York: Encounter Books, 2023).
39. Victoria Woodhull, "When Is It Not Murder to Take a Life?" *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, October 8, 1870, p. 11. See also Bachiochi, *The Rights of Woman: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*, pp. 111–116 and accompanying notes.
40. Alice Bunker Stockham, *Tokology* (1889) (London: Forgotten Books, 2012), p. 246.

41. See Klem and McDowell, *Pity for Evil*. See also "Protecting the Unborn: A Scholars' Statement of Pro-Life Principle and Political Prudence," Ethics and Public Policy Center, https://eppc.org/pro-life-principle-and-political-prudence/ (accessed October 25, 2024).
42. "Many Victorian men did regard sexual self-control as one indication of middle-class social status; accordingly, some historians believe that men's actual self-restraint can be deduced from the steady decline in the fertility rate of married women in the nineteenth century." Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 36. According to Stockham, "When girls are given the proper instruction upon the relation of the sexes and understand how to govern and guard themselves; when young men are taught that virtue has as high a meaning for one sex as another, that the protective chivalry of which they boast does not imply that they shall force the woman with whom they associate to the defensive; and that the *paternal* interest in, and responsibilities for the a child are equal to the *maternal*, then the temptation to produce abortion for the purpose of shielding one's character will not exist." Stockham, *Tokology*, pp. 248–249 (emphasis in original).
43. Davis, "Education," p. 2.
44. *Worcester*, p. 9. There she continues, "I will not accept the concession of any equality which means identity or resemblance of faculty and function. I do not base her claims upon any such parallelism of constitution or attainment. I ask only freedom for the natural unfolding of her powers, the conditions most favorable for her possibilities of growth, and the full play of all those incentives which have made man her master, and then, with all her natural impulses and the whole heaven of hope to invite, I ask that she shall fill the place that she can attain to." *Worcester*, p. 11. See also Clark, "Religion, Rights, and Difference," p. 34 ("Many who agreed that they were 'essentially human' did not consider themselves to be 'only incidentally female,' and entertained strong beliefs in equality, difference, and a womanly mission, simultaneously.").
45. Davis, "Education," p. 2.
46. Ibid. At the 1852 convention at Syracuse, Davis spoke at length about marriage: "Not once has [woman] dreamed that there must be mutual dependence, and separate fountains of reciprocal life. It may be that neither of them has looked upon marriage as a holy sacrament, into which no worldly motive or root of bitterness should enter.... Make marriage what it should be, a union of soul with soul, a blending of two in one, without masterdom or helpless dependence, and it is then what God designed it to be.... In as much the Family is the central and supreme institution among human societies, so that all other organizations, whether of Church or State, depend upon it for their character and action, its evils being the source of all evil, and its good the fountain of all good, involved in the destiny of the race and inasmuch as *marriage*, the bond of this primary and principal of human associations, was the only institution given by the Creator in the innocence of Eden.... [T]he correction of its abuses is the starting point of all the reforms which the world needs." *Syracuse*, pp. 59–63 (emphasis added).
47. Samuel May, "The Rights and Conditions of Women: A Sermon Preached in Syracuse, November 1845," published in *Woman's Rights Commensurate*, p. 7 (hereinafter "May Sermon").
48. *Syracuse*, p. 36. Ernestine Rose, a secular Jew, offered the secular version of the argument: "In his ignorance of the true nature of woman, he assumed, that if she has her equal rights equal with man, she would cease to be woman—forsake the partner of her existence, the child of her bosom, dry up her sympathies, stifle her affections, turn recreant to her own nature. [It is ironic, she suggests, that some believe] equality of rights, the only sure means to enlighten and elevate man, would degrade and corrupt woman." Ibid., p. 72.
49. Lucy Stone, speech delivered at the National Woman's Rights Convention in New York City, November 25, 1856.
50. *Worcester*, p. 21 (address of Mrs. Abby H. Price). She continues: "Human beings cannot attain true dignity or happiness except by true usefulness. This is true of women as of men. It is their duty, privilege, honor, and bliss to be useful. Therefore give them the opportunity and encouragement. If there are positions, duties, occupations, really unsuitable to females, as such, let these be left to males. If there are others unsuitable to men, let these be left to women. Let all the rest be equally open to both sexes. And let the compensation be graduated justly, to the real worth of the services rendered, irrespective of sex."
51. At the 1852 Syracuse convention, Ernestine Rose successfully persuaded the convention to pass on a resolution that would have explicitly stated that the Bible was authoritative for the movement. Mott defended Rose based on the fact that many still used Scripture to defend both slavery and women's natural subordination.
52. "May Sermon," p. 9. See also Nadya Williams, *Mothers, Children, and the Body Politic: Ancient Christianity and the Recovery of Human Dignity* (Lisle, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2024).
53. See Bachiochi, "Rights, Duties and the Common Good."
54. *Syracuse*, p. 63.
55. The Woman's Rights Convention Held in Albany, "The Una: A Paper Devoted to the Elevation of Woman," March 1854.
56. Letter from Lucy Stone to Antoinette Brown Blackwell, May 5, 1892, quoted in Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in American's Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: Onohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 132.
57. Clarina Nichols, "On the Responsibilities of Woman: A Speech by Mrs. C.I.H. Nichols, Worcester, Oct. 15, 1851," published in *Woman's Rights Commensurate*, p. 2.
58. Ibid., p. 14.
59. Ibid., p. 3. As another speech at the convention ends: "Do not go home to complain of the men, but go and make greater exertions than ever to discharge your every-day duties." "Speech of Abby Kelly Foster," published in *Woman's Rights Commensurate*, p. 24.

60. See also Stein, *Essays on Woman*, p. 190. "The specific degeneracy of man is seen in his brutal despotism over creatures—especially over woman, and in his enslavement to his work up to the point of the atrophy of his humanity. The specific degeneracy of woman is seen in her servile dependence on man and in the decline of her spiritual life into a predominantly sensual one."
61. *Syracuse*, p. 22.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., pp. 20–21.
64. Letter from Samuel J. May to the Woman's Rights Convention held at Worcester, Massachusetts, October 1850, published in *Woman's Rights Commensurate* (emphasis in original). Decades later, the Women Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), led by Frances Willard, would successfully make women's maternal authority more central to the cause of women's social advancement. By continuing the explicitly religious tradition of the antebellum advocates, one in which rights and duties were inextricably linked, the WCTU offered women at the turn of the century a moral rationale for extending the franchise.
65. *Worcester*, p. 4.
66. Ibid., p. 7.
67. Ibid., pp. 8–10.
68. *Syracuse*, p. 69.
69. Importantly, the early conventions did wish for what they called "pecuniary independence" by which they meant the educational and employment opportunities that would ensure single women did not enter into marriage merely to survive. Davis's statement at Syracuse is characteristic: "Our work, so true to humanity, re-creates hope from the dust, by elevating woman- by demanding for her education, equal in all respects to man, and by opening new avenues to independence of life, that when she marries, it may be from a true, high love. Man may secure the gratitude of woman by conferring favors upon her, by giving her food and shelter, but this is a weak band. It will not serve to make life harmonious at its center. The domestic hearth will not be the pivot about which all other movements can circle." *Syracuse*, p. 82.
70. Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 42. She continues: "They reformulated in terms of principle the loosening of sexual behavior that had preceded them not among purposive women reformers (except for a handful of late nineteenth-century 'free lovers') but among working-class adolescents, bohemians, and entertainers."
71. "Chastity is a virtue because it promotes the human welfare—not because men happen to prize it in women and ignore it in themselves. The underlying reason for the whole thing is the benefit of the child; and to that end a pure and noble fatherhood is requisite, as well as such a motherhood." Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Man-Made World* (Charlton Company, 1914), p. 134.
72. Quoted in Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, p. 4.
73. Cott reports that Mary Anderson, who rose from being a factory worker to becoming Director of the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau, "considered herself 'a good feminist' but objected that 'over-articulate theorists were attempting to solve the working women's problems on a purely feministic basis with the working women's own voice far less adequately heard." Florence Kelley is quoted in Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*: "So long as men can not be mothers, so long [as] legislation adequate for them can never be adequate for wage-earning women…the cry Equality, Equality, where Nature has created Inequality…[is] stupid." (p. 138). Also quoting Ethel Smith: "[E]ven to use the word feminist is to invite from the extremists a challenge to our authenticity." For the author's discussion of the contest between strict equality/ERA feminists and labor advocates, see Bachiochi, *The Rights of Women*, ch. 5, and Bachiochi, "The Contested Meaning of Women's Equality."
74. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, p. 5 (emphasis in original).
75. Quoted in Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, p. 4.
76. Ibid., p. 135 (emphasis in original).
77. Feminists for Life and other national and regional pro-life feminist organizations are the most obvious exception.
78. See, e.g., "Did Feminism Create Transgender Ideology: A Symposium" for an intelligent debate on the question among reactionary feminist Louise Perry, gender-critical feminist Holly Lawford Smith, and Catholic feminist Abigail Favale. This resource can be found at https://fairerdisputations.org/feminism-transgenderism-symposium/ (accessed October 25, 2024).
79. The foregoing should begin to make sense of why support for "women's rights" is very popular in polling, but "feminism" is not. While "conservative" men, young or old, tend to reject the term wholesale, more than 60 percent of Gen Z women now call themselves "feminists," as do majorities of nearly every other demographic of American women. Crucially, when the relatively unpopular word "feminism" is replaced in polling with "women's rights," those numbers rise to near unanimity across political persuasions. See Daniel A. Cox, "Why Young Men Are Turning Against Feminism," Survey Center on American Life, December 14, 2023, https://www.americansurveycenter.org/newsletter/why-young-men-are-turning-against-feminism/ (accessed October 25, 2024).
80. Jean Bethke Elshtain, "The Feminist Movement & the Question of Equality," *Polity*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Summer 1975), p. 459 (emphasis in original).
81. Angela Franks, "Andrea Long Chu Says You Are a Female, and He's Only Partly Wrong," Public Discourse, December 10, 2019, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/12/58719/ (accessed October 25, 2024).

82. *Syracuse*, p. 74.
83. See the statistics on the Father Absence Crisis in America at "Statistics Tell the Story: Fathers Matter," National Fatherhood Initiative," https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic (accessed October 25, 2024). As David Blankenhorn once put it: "My mother loves me unconditionally because I am her child. My father loves me, but he tends to make me work for it. Lucky is the child who receives both varieties of parental loves." See also David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), p. 219.
84. One key argument for child tax credits (and other ways of decreasing the economic costs of raising children) over institutional day care subsidies is to allow families to arrange themselves as they see fit rather than succumb to an ideological egalitarianism that discounts women's interests in caring for their own young children. See Bachiochi, *The Rights of Women*, and Bachiochi, "The Duty of the Moment." See also Timothy P. Carney, *Family Unfriendly: How Our Culture Made Raising Kids Much Harder Than It Needs to Be* (New York: Harper, 2024).
85. See Erika Bachiochi and Rachel Morrison, "The Contested Meaning of Women's Rights," *Texas Review of Law and Politics* (forthcoming, 2025). Find pre-publication article at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4632976 (accessed December 31, 2024).
86. As Ginsburg maintained in her 1996 opinion for the Court in *United States v. Virginia*, "'[I]nherent [physical] differences' between men and women, we have come to appreciate, remain cause for celebration." *Bostock v. Clayton County* does not undermine this fact, as it, too, notably relied on the reality of sex difference.
87. See Bachiochi, "Sex-Realist Feminism."
88. See EPPC statement on medically indicated treatments in which unborn children are lost while necessary medical care is provided to their mothers. "Protecting the Unborn: A Scholars' Statement of Pro-Life Principle and Political Prudence," Ethics & Public Policy Center, undated, https://eppc.org/pro-life-principle-and-political-prudence/ (accessed October 25, 2024).
89. In *The War Against Boys*, Christina Hoff Sommers suggests that progressive methods of education—which traded in memorization, structure, and competition for a more child-centered, cooperative learning approach—may be to blame for male students falling behind females. Whatever girls' preference may or may not be for a more cooperative method of learning, the decline in the rigorous *content* of traditional liberal arts education over the past 100 years has harmed, in the author's view, both girls' and boys' intellectual and moral formation, if in distinctive ways. See Christina Hoff Sommers, *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Policies Are Harming Our Young Men* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).
90. Stein, *Essays on Woman*, p. 258 ("Because objective work, which we view as a remedy for the faults of feminine singularity, is something to which the average man is naturally inclined, it can thus be said as well that an allowance of masculine nature is the antidote for the *hyper-feminine nature*.") (emphasis in original).
91. Understanding the Christian and natural law basis for the first claims to women's rights does not solve all the problems within feminism, of course. After all, there are all sorts of arguments *among* Christians and natural law thinkers that are also relevant to feminist questions. But the kinds of questions Christianity and the natural law tradition engage—concerning human nature, human goods, and human ends, etc.—provide a much richer way to debate and contest interests, rights, and responsibilities of women than a radical individualism that eats away at its own abstract foundations and provides little basis for women to join together in solidarity. This is a debate well worth having. Visit http://www.fairerdisputations.com to read thinkers engaging it.