

Brooks and others have acknowledged the Nation as Family metaphor, and have acknowledged that the strict father model is behind conservative Republican politics. However, their characterization of a “mommy party” is based on “mommy” in their own conservative, strict father model. What they mean by “mommy party” is that although Democrats may care and be loving people, they just aren’t tough and realistic enough to do the job.

This is, of course, completely inaccurate from the Democrats’ own progressive perspective. In a nurturant family, both parents are not just caring but also responsible and strong enough to carry out those responsibilities. This is far from *mommy* in the way the conservatives scornfully use the term. Democrats have been able to successfully provide both protection for and prosperity to the nation.

Conservatives seem not to understand what nurturant morality is about, both in the family and in the nation. They find any view that is not strict to be “permissive.” Nurturant parenting is, of course, anything but permissive, with its stress on teaching children to be responsible for themselves and empathetic and responsible toward others, and raising them to be strong and well-educated enough to carry out their responsibilities. The conservatives parody liberals as permissive, as supporting a feel-good morality—doing whatever feels good. The conservatives just don’t get it. They seem ignorant of the vast difference between responsibility and permissiveness.

How old are the ideas of strictness and nurturance?

They seem to go back very, very far in history. We know, for example, that in England before the British came over to colonize America there were religious groups like the Quakers, who had a nurturant view of God, and groups like the Puritans, who had a strict father view of God. The New England colonies were mainly Puritan, though John Winthrop had a nurturant view of the colony he was establishing, and the nurturant view of God has existed side by side with the strict one in this country ever since. In the nineteenth century, Horace Bushnell wrote about “Christian nurture.” From the period of the abolitionists through the 1920s there was a lively discussion of the nurturant view of God. Moreover, students of religion have shown that