During the Catholic and Protestant Reformations, most communities intensified their prosecution of extramarital sexual relations. As a result, single mothers were publicly humiliated, flogged, and sometimes banished from their hometowns. But there is another side to this story. During the sixteenth century, new initiatives to provide financial support for the poor and expand orphanages also created a new civic space for single mothers and their offspring. In Reformation Geneva, single mothers often succeeded, for example, in suing the married fathers of their children for paternity support. This paper examines how the Reformations changed society in ways that continue to shape how Canadians both judge and support single mothers today.