BIBLICAL RELIGION AND FAMILY VALUES:
A Problem in the Philosophy of Culture

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PRAEGER

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To the memory of my mother, Kitty Newman

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Introduction

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POTENTIAL VALUE OF THIS INQUIRY

For some years now a rancorous debate has taken place in the United States, Canada, and other Western democracies concerning "family values."[1] It periodically subsides, only to flare up again as a result of a new development in social policy or some provocative media event. There are observers, including a number of social scientists, who believe that a full-blown "culture war" is occurring in their society and that the future of the family is the major battleground on which it is being fought.[2]

Conservative religious cultural critics—reactionary and moderate—are prominent in cultural skirmishes over social policies relating to the family, and many contend that the attack on the traditional family by liberals, feminists, secular humanists, and others is tied to efforts to subvert the Judeo-Christian moral and cultural foundations of the Western democracies. A recurrent theme in conservative religious cultural criticism is that even in a pluralistic democracy, Biblical moral teaching, particularly with respect to family concerns, is a bulwark against cultural anarchy.[3] Cultural observers who regard themselves as progressive, including liberal religionists, sometimes respond constructively to conservative religious "pro-family" polemics,[4] but deeper philosophical issues concerning cultural relations of Biblical religion and the family—and religion and the family in general—have received sparse attention.

Given the importance of religion, the family, and culture in just about every society, including ours, we may safely assume that practical and intellectual benefits can be derived from philosophical reflection on the cultural relations of the family and religion. Perspectives engendered by patient philosophical analysis may reveal the arbitrariness of simplistic agendas for social action and

reaction that are bandied about in the media. Self-righteous polemics tend to generate more heat than light, and threaten to intensify the misery they were supposed to assuage.

The most general aim of this inquiry is to contribute to philosophical understanding of basic relations between religion and the family as fundamental forms of culture. These two forms of culture have, individually and jointly, enormously influenced (and been influenced by) patterns of human reproduction, sexuality, security, health, language, education, economics, social control, technology, art, philosophy, and science; and it requires little historical, philosophical, or scientific imagination to realize that over the course of time they also must have substantially influenced each other in important ways. A fuller understanding of religion as a form of culture should enhance our understanding of other forms of culture, including the family; and a fuller understanding of the family as a form of culture should comparably enhance our understanding of other forms of culture, including religion. A more complete understanding of the cultural relations of religion and the family should shed light on both phenomena, and on culture itself.

Religion and the family remain, in diverse ways (presumably some of which we are unaware), highly influential forces in our own lives and in the lives of our fellows, and in the various communities to which we belong and with which we interact. Accordingly, refinement of these forces is a significant condition of the social advancement conducive to the happiness and self-realization of individuals, the advancement of civilization, and perhaps, as many believe, the glorification of God and the fulfillment of responsibilities to ancestors, loved ones, and descendants. Knowledge is desirable for its own sake, but those who seek a fuller understanding of culture are nearly always interested in what can be done to improve vital cultural processes in which they participate.

Philosophical examination of issues concerning religion, the family, and culture is apt to strike many cultural critics and reformers as excessively abstract and rarefied, in light of what they deem to be a pressing need for direct, uncomplicated, unambiguous strategies to thwart social forces subverting sound, culture-sustaining attitudes, institutions, and programs. Philosophical reflection, though still fostered to some extent in institutions of higher learning, is increasingly seen as a marginal cultural activity, partly because it is increasingly neglected by those with great power to shape public opinion. Critics of philosophy often contend that philosophers and other intellectuals are increasingly peripheral in their cultural influence because they do not make sufficient effort to communicate effectively with the general public or with practical-minded élites in government, business, and the media. These critics are especially skeptical about recondite forms of philosophical discussion that are easily dismissed as scholastic diversions from the concretely practical thinking needed to promote action necessary for minimizing the suffering of real human beings in the real world. There is force to much of their criticism, but as far back as the age of Socrates and Plato, those undertaking to promote philosophical reflection and

discussion have been aware of more basic factors leading to the marginality of the philosophical stargazer on the ship of state.[5] Yet anyone reading the words on this page represents living proof that even in the present age there are some who see potential value in approaching cultural issues in a broader and more theoretical way than that adopted by self-styled men and women of action.

Just about everyone inclined to serious reflection on culture allows that religion and the family are among the most important cultural phenomena, but few have closely examined the complex relations between these rudimentary forms of culture. Philosophical, theological, historical, and social-scientific students of religion frequently discuss in passing the subject of the family, and some theorize at length about relations between particular religious phenomena and particular forms of family life. Similarly, many scholars who study the family refer in places to how religious world-views and institutions influence and are influenced by attitudes, judgments, and dispositions arising from and conditioned by family experience; and some have considered in detail the relations between specific religious traditions and specific conceptions of the family. Even so, efforts to take a philosophical view of the most basic relations between religion and the family as fundamental forms of culture are rarer and generally less systematic than would seem to be warranted by the almost universally accepted importance of religion and the family in themselves. Perhaps more anomalously, few efforts have been made to take a philosophical view of the relations between Biblical religion and the family; for if most cultural critics and reformers in Western democracies may be excused for not knowing considerably more than they do about world cultures, they are more obviously irresponsible when they refuse to give serious thought to the primary cultural processes at work in the societies in which they live.

Some who reflect on culture may be uneasy confronting the extent to which their sophisticated world-views have been determined by unphilosophical and unscientific notions that they derived in their earliest years from parents and other relatives representing a long, inhibitive family tradition. Some individuals may also be averse to confronting the extent to which their advocacy of sophisticated ideas about reality, morality, the meaning of life, and the just society represents a repudiation of the faith and way of life of the families that brought them into the world, nurtured them, sacrificed for them, and looked to them to bear and carry forward an ancestral heritage.

Many reflective people appear convinced that adopting an authentically religious, spiritual, or existential world-view requires looking on the family as something rather less important than people are normally brought up by parents and kinsfolk to believe. Once a person comes to view things "under the form of eternity,"[6] or at least in the context of a very wide view, the family may well appear to be immeasurably less significant than God, being, truth, beauty, humanity, civilization, the soul, salvation, social justice, and other such lofty concerns with which sages and saints are habitually preoccupied. The family, after all, is so *familiar*—a fact that is etymologically as well as sociologically note-

worthy—whereas wisdom is customarily taken to involve ability to apprehend what is unfamiliar to the mass man and woman.

Yet humanistic and scientific scholars quite consistently acknowledge that religion and the family are among the general forms of culture that come closest to qualifying as universal. With respect to religion, one must be impressed by the assurance with which an accomplished anthropologist such as Annemarie de Waal Malefijt reports that religion is found in every known human society and significantly interacts with other cultural institutions, including systems of family organization and marriage.[7] Regarding the family, the leading sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson asserts categorically that it "remains one of the universals of human social organization."[8]

Most people in Western democracies who enter into debates over social policies relating to the family know little and care little about universal religion and the universal family, though for rhetorical purposes they may pretend otherwise. The religious values and family values that concern them are essentially those they see as having practical relevance to a culture in which they actively participate. These are values of some tradition to be defended, refined, or abandoned and new values that they can realistically conceive as being introduced into a community to which they belong. Even the most renowned philosophers of the West, despite their bold pronouncements about human nature and human destiny, generally had exceedingly limited knowledge of cultures markedly different from the few to which they had been exposed. Scholars studying religion and the family now have available to them detailed studies of world cultures provided by anthropologists and other fellow scholars, and for this reason among others, they are better positioned than past thinkers to talk sense about religion as such, the family as such, the universal vis-à-vis the particular, and human nature. Their views, however, will remain somewhat colored by their own cultural experiences and affiliations, even if they are more conscious than earlier inquirers of the dangers of ethnocentric bias.

Taking a philosophical view of a concrete cultural problem requires us, on one level, to think as generally as possible, and the most general aim of this inquiry is to contribute to philosophical understanding of basic relations between religion and the family as fundamental forms of culture. But if philosophical reflection is to be relevant to concrete cultural concerns of the present time, it must sometimes compromise by moving toward a less general subject matter. From ancient times, the major philosophers who have addressed cultural problems have appreciated the need to move back and forth, awkwardly if necessary, between more general and more specific subject matter. The primary focus of this inquiry is, accordingly, on the relations of forms of religious culture and family culture that ostensibly are relevant to practical concerns reflected in continuing debates over family-related values in the United States, Canada, and other Western democracies. A fuller understanding of the cultural relations of Biblical religion and the family should contribute to a fuller understanding of the more general cultural relations of universal religion and the family, though

sometimes we will have to step back and consider the importance of Biblical religion's being only a type within the more general category of religion. Moving back and forth between consideration of religion as such and Biblical religion will unavoidably be a source of difficulties, as similar movement has always been for those undertaking to think philosophically about cultural subjects.

If, then, we are to take a philosophical yet concretely applicable view of the cultural relations of Biblical religion and the family, and of religion itself and the family, what sort of issues should we be considering? Focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on considerations directly relevant to cultural processes in which we participate, we will want to consider issues such as these: what is beneficial and what is harmful for individuals, groups, and societies in prevailing (and alternative) relations between established forms of religious life and established forms of family life; how religious ideals and family ideals can be harmonized; and how the inevitable tensions between religious ideals and family ideals can be most satisfactorily managed.

These issues are clearly of practical import, but are they general enough to warrant being regarded as philosophical issues? Will reflecting on them give us a wide enough view of the subject matter we are addressing? The most celebrated figures of Western philosophical tradition have not been able to reach a consensus on precisely what philosophy is or what the key methodology is for pursuing it. Despite an obligatory (if sometimes grudging) respect for Plato, Aristotle, and other distinguished predecessors, most have explicitly distanced themselves from philosophical approaches they deem archaic. Thus, even someone encountering the Western philosophical tradition for the first time can appreciate the folly of defining *philosophy* in a crisp phrase, or outlining a universal philosophical method in a series of steps.

However, all historical figures now widely recognized as paradigms of the philosophical explorer have shared objectives worth noting. They have endeavored to extend a fairly well-defined body of literature and discussion in which certain manifestly basic issues about the real, good, true, beautiful, and divine are explored; and to be as rational and logical as possible without necessarily ignoring the value of mystical insight or of the determining influence and continuing cultural importance of some of their society's traditional conceptions, forms of expression and symbolism, beliefs, values, and practices. They have attempted also to draw on and integrate ideas and data from a broad range of intellectual disciplines; and to arrive at and communicate sound judgments about certain things that ought to be done, at least partly because it is reasonable that they be done. Philosophers can become overly attached to a specific methodological technique, but many philosophers now appreciate the value of regarding any single technique as one among many tools the philosophical tradition has developed for dealing with the foremost theoretical questions that consistently engage inquirers.[9] Several such tools will be applied in this study; and as nothing of great originality is to be said here about the tools themselves, it will be assumed that their utility should be apparent in their specific applications.

REFLECTING "PHILOSOPHICALLY" ON RELATIONS
BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE FAMILY

Although philosophy is often associated with its integrative function, philosophical inquirers necessarily find themselves working in specific fields within philosophy. Focusing on religion and the family, our vision is limited even by such general subject matter, and we are working in the established fields of philosophy of religion and social philosophy, and secondarily in such fields as philosophical theology, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. While many philosophers have written about the family, what may be characterized as "philosophy of the family" has not yet emerged as a major branch of philosophy; but to the extent that it can be conceived, we shall also be working in this field.

As we are to consider basic relations between religion and the family as fundamental forms of culture, we are also addressing topics in the philosophy of culture. These are, to my mind, the most important issues we shall be considering and the ones through which all the others can be integrated. "Cultural studies" and other forms of cultural theory currently have a high profile in academic discussion, yet many scholars who work in these areas, including philosophers, undervalue important work that has been done in the established field of philosophy of culture. In the course of this investigation, we shall consider the ideas of modern philosophers of culture such as Herbert Spencer, George Santayana, G. H. Mead, Walter Lippmann, Nicolas Berdyaev, R. G. Collingwood, and Ernst Cassirer; and we will consult the opinion of some of the greatest philosophers who have addressed basic questions about culture. Three who are of special help in this inquiry are Plato, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, and even when they are not explicitly mentioned, their concerns will often be in the background of the discussion.

The best-known philosophers of the Western philosophical tradition all have been interested in religion, including those usually regarded as antagonistic toward it. Nearly all have said something interesting about religion, though the expression "philosophy of religion" did not come into use until many centuries after other terms and expressions (such as *metaphysics* and *ethics*) that were used to designate branches of philosophy.

Philosophers' views on the family, though often interesting and instructive, are not so generally known.[10] In an overview of philosophical literature on the family, Jeffrey Blustein cites several key figures, including Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Rousseau, Locke, Fichte, Hegel, Marx, and Bertrand Russell.[11] These writers also had interesting things to say about religion and culture, and it is eventually apparent to the reader of their works that there are significant correlations between their views on religion, culture, and the family. We shall consider pertinent views of some of these thinkers, but as this inquiry is not a comprehensive historical survey, we shall not be examining the opinions of all of them.

That is, in part, because we shall have to devote substantial attention to pertinent observations and theories of thinkers ordinarily not regarded as philosophers. Philosophical inquirers always have an interest in relevant views of thinkers working in intellectual and artistic disciplines that lie beyond philosophy as normally conceived. With the growth of knowledge, reference to such views is all the more obligatory. In considering religion, the family, and culture, the philosophical inquirer has much to learn from theologians, social historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars in other disciplines. Some of these scholars are cognizant of their working at the edges of philosophy or in an area where philosophy overlaps their own specialized discipline. Since philosophical inquirers aspire to a wide view of the subject matter they are examining, they are more obliged than others to examine and make use of relevant literature from other humanistic, scientific, artistic, and technological disciplines. Ordinarily, they cannot attain the expertise in those disciplines acquired by full-time specialists, and inevitably, some specialists in those disciplines will regard them as dilettantes who are arbitrary in their appropriation of non-philosophical research and literature.

The philosophical explorer is, in fact, something of a dabbler in non-philosophical areas, but is entitled to a degree of license in drawing on non-philosophical and semi-philosophical ideas and data. Those approaching issues philosophically endeavor to take a more integrative and inclusive view of their subject matter than fellow inquirers; and some of them insist that they have been charged by history with that responsibility. Drawing on observations and ideas of thinkers from other fields, they also pay respect to the importance of those fields. Besides, not only were philosophers the forerunners of all systematic rational inquirers in all intellectual disciplines, but throughout the centuries they usually have been remarkably indulgent in their own right regarding the philosophical naiveté of most non-philosophical scholars.

Philosophical inquirers can hardly carry on with their enterprise if they are not granted certain privileges systematically denied to most scholars. A degree of dilettantism is one such privilege, but also important are the privileges of being more speculative than most other scholars, being exceptionally flexible in methodology, and bringing an existential dimension to the treatment of subject matter that is increasingly approached impersonally. Scholarly critics of philosophy rightly protest that these privileges are often abused, but without the distinctively wide views that, perhaps, philosophy alone can provide, there is a likelihood of the basic theoretical conceptions at the heart of personal and communal world-views becoming stagnant, or of destructive dogmas being reinforced and manipulated by people with little love of either wisdom or their fellows.

The major figures of the Western philosophical tradition were not superhuman beings, and usually went to some effort to draw attention to their own humanity, with its limitations as well as potentialities. In spite of their confidence in the power of reason, they also understood to some extent the power of determining

factors, and they were too intelligent to be altogether blind to the impact on them of the main forms of enculturation. They attempted, to varying degrees, to overcome irrational prejudices and the influence on them of early (and later) indoctrination and conditioning, but they remained, on one plane, the creatures of their time, place, and circumstances. They were brought up as children and young adults to hold particular religious (or para-religious) beliefs, attitudes, and values, and to reject others; and in much of their mature philosophical theorizing we can see, if we look closely enough, their highly personal efforts to come to terms rationally with their earliest religious (or para-religious) outlooks.

Their early views on matters of family life influenced and were influenced by their early views on religious matters, and both sets of views were determined largely by their enculturation into several communities, including an immediate family group. Most of them probably derived their earliest views on religious matters directly from members of their immediate families. For them, as for most human beings, formative religious conceptions were intimately and intricately intertwined with family attitudes, practices, and loyalties. Some in later life rebelled against a number of those formative conceptions; others went on to defend them vigorously; but almost all, to some extent, ended up with a refined and elevated version of some of those conceptions.

A case in point is the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, known for his avowed devotion to the promotion of reason. Arnulf Zweig has observed that despite Kant's eloquent advocacy of rigorous rational reflection, his views on matters related to the family stemmed largely from his traditional religious views;[12] his views on the relations of husbands and wives and of marriage and sex were "tradition bound."[13] "It is fascinating," Zweig observes, "to see a great philosopher struggling to weave together important moral insights and dubious rationalizations of the mores of his culture circle."[14] At the core of the various concentric circles making up this great thinker's general culture circle was the immediate family into which he was born and in which he grew up, a family that was part of, and interacted with, wider religious and political communities.

When examining an individual's philosophical perspective, it is normally proper to focus on the individual's ideas and arguments. Familiarity with biographical details may help in understanding aspects of the individual's position, but if we dwell on them we lose sight of what is philosophically germane. In spite of the liberating power of reason, the great philosophers, like lesser ones, could not completely leave behind the formative influences of their youth; generally, they did not intend to, and most probably could look with respect and gratitude to the parents, religious teachers, and other guides of their early years who provided them with much of the wherewithal by which they could emerge in maturity as creative thinkers. No matter how influential the determining factors on them were in their childhood, they all grew up to say things that would confound the revered guides of their earliest days. The genius of the great philosophers is associated with their ability to express insights that were not merely derived from earlier sources. The world-view of any philosophical explorer, no

matter how diffident or inexperienced, is inevitably transformed and personalized by the power of rational reflection.

When one reflects philosophically, and particularly on subjects such as religion and the family, which force one to confront attitudes closely related to the strongest influences on one's own intellectual and emotional formation, one is not a neutral observer engaged in objective examination and detached, utilitarian calculation. Philosophers, acclaimed or not, arrive at insights partly on the basis of impersonal logic and partly on the basis of inexplicable vision; but their insights are also derived in part from their life experiences, and among life experiences, those of one's earliest years are some of the most influential. On closely examining a major philosopher's approach to religion, one can usually detect signs of a personal struggle involving the thinker's efforts to reconcile a world-view inherited from parents, clans, ancestors, and other communal teachers—to whom the thinker desires to be loyal—with the demands of reason in both its analytical-impersonal and creative-existential forms. Philosophical approaches to religion manifest themselves in thinkers' commitments to intellectual rigor and the affirmation of individuality, but they also reveal to the astute observer the inherited religious (or para-religious) material that thinkers are trying to rescue, restore, refine, and transmit. Some thinkers see themselves as having to do radical reconstruction, while others believe a few subtle refinements will do the job; but most in their own way keep the faith. That faith—the legacy of parents, clans, ancestors, and other communal teachers who have been to various degrees loved, respected, feared, and resented—animates the reflection of even typical "converts" who make a show of distancing themselves from certain ways of the families that raised them.

There are diverse philosophical types, and philosophical world-views even reflect temperamental differences, as William James reminds us with his droll distinction between the philosophically "tender-minded" and "tough-minded."[15] Nevertheless, there is, in at least one sense, a predominant historical pattern with respect to philosophical approaches to religion. Most philosophers can be seen as having incrementally contributed to the rational liberalization of religion. Some philosophers regard themselves as religious conservatives, and in a way they are; and there is a sense in which the most radical philosophical reformers of religion have tried to "conserve" a pre-philosophical religious world-view— what they conceive as the essential humanistic core of the cultural world-view directly mediated to them by their families. However, avowed religiously conservative philosophers and atheistic, agnostic, and materialistic philosophers also have contributed substantially to philosophy's rational liberalization of religion, though normally it has not been their intention to do so.

The history of philosophy can be viewed from one perspective as a series of waves in which philosophical movements transformed established patterns of religious understanding in accordance with perceived demands of analytical and existential reason. From this perspective, as F. M. Cornford has observed, the work of philosophy can be seen from its beginnings as the "elucidation and

clarifying of religious, or even pre-religious, material."[16] We may consider here the rationalistic reinterpretation involved in the approaches to religious conceptions taken by, for example, the Sophists, Platonists, and medieval Scholastics; philosophers of the Renaissance, Age of Reason, and Enlightenment; nineteenth-century romanticists and advocates of critical-historical methods; and depth-psychological theorists, dialectical materialists, pragmatists, and existentialists.[17] Religious reactionaries commonly, and not altogether unjustifiably, see philosophers and kindred intellectuals as diluting the substance of religion as a form of experience and culture; but they almost always underestimate the extent to which these intellectuals incrementally refine and adapt religion so as to sustain and revitalize it.

Philosophers normally approach issues related to the family more obliquely and more sporadically. With a few notable exceptions, such as Augustine[18] and John Stuart Mill,[19] philosophers have not publicly discussed the intimate details of their private lives, and biographical material concerning the family circumstances of the great philosophers is scarce. Nevertheless, in their philosophical assertions they sometimes reveal much more about their significant life experiences than do the contemporary celebrities who prattle in "tell-all" books about the intimate details of their lives. What is actually known about the family situations of prominent philosophers may or may not give the student of "philosophy of the family" (or philosophy of religion and culture) something worth thinking about.

Perhaps, for example, something important about Spinoza's austere views on the need to subdue the emotions, or his liberal views on the relations of church and state, is revealed by the fact that some time after having been cut off from his family and his people, the excommunicated Jew sued his sisters in civil court to obtain his fair share of the inheritance left by his father; yet despite winning his case, he elected to take only his father's bed.

Maybe there is value in knowing that after Schopenhauer's mother pushed him down the stairs in a final quarrel, the notorious philosophical misogynist never saw her again. The grim circumstances of the death of Schopenhauer's prosperous but mentally unstable father also may have contributed to this great philosophical pessimist's turn to the East for spiritual enlightenment. The proclaimed egoist Nietzsche warned of the dangers to "higher men" of close relationships, yet remained extremely close to a doting mother and an adoring but often distressing sister throughout his life.

Plato, whose name is associated with a *platonic* love in which sexual desire is sublimated,[20] advocated a political system in which members of the leadership class do not know who their biological parents and children are.[21] Yet one can hardly fail to detect his affection for his brothers, portrayed in his writings as intelligent, agreeable, good-natured fellows. One of the world's chief religious reformers as well as its greatest philosopher, Plato opens the most influential work in the history of philosophy with a revealing image of his brother and teacher on their way to offer up prayers at, and satisfy intellectual curiosity concerning, a new religious festival in the Piraeus.[22] Plato's illustrious student

Aristotle was one of the few great figures of the Western philosophical tradition to marry. He declined to accept what he took to be his idealistic teacher's excessive devaluation of the things of this world, and although he did not share Plato's confidence in the leadership abilities of women, he was apparently a responsible family man. After his wife's death, he entered into a domestic relationship with a slave girl, and his greatest work on the human condition will forever be associated with the name of their son.[23] The efforts of Thomas Aquinas' family to keep him from adopting the life of a Dominican monk may seem almost farcical in retrospect, but will also have a poignant dimension to those who have had acrimonious disagreements with parents or children about matters of lifestyle and vocation. The family situations of such noted twentieth-century philosophers as Bertrand Russell, Max Scheler, and Jean-Paul Sartre were by their own acknowledgment sometimes far from healthy, yet at other times rather prosaic.

Depth-psychological analyses of the great philosophers and their work[24] never have been popular, in part because philosophers themselves generally[25] emphasize unwholesome aspects of ad hominem argumentation, and in part because philosophers themselves frequently point to the weaknesses inherent in one-dimensional forms of determinism. In having had somewhat distinctive family situations in their childhood or later years, eminent philosophers are not essentially different from less known philosophical inquirers, other humanists, natural and social scientists, and plain folk who have little patience for sustained intellectual reflection. Most germane to this analysis are the mundane rather than the special circumstances of their family lives. Like the rest of us, they had family joys and family sorrows, family loyalties and family conflicts. It cannot be mere coincidence that the overwhelming majority of renowned Western philosophers did not marry or bring children into the world and raise them; but that may be attributed in no small measure to the fact that they were individuals deeply committed to a demanding spiritual vocation,[26] much like certain great religious teachers, to whom we shall pay considerable attention later in the inquiry.

Like the great philosophers and their less known disciples and critics, we too, as philosophical inquirers, bring to our understanding of religion and the family a personal history of complex family experiences—some unexceptional, some unusual, some uplifting, and some disturbing. Among the most important family experiences are those related to our religious (or para-religious) formation and our mature reflections on religion. We should bear these facts in mind, but if we were to derive from them a rigidly deterministic attitude, there would be little point in attempting to take a wide philosophical view of religion, the family, and culture.

SPECIFIC CONCERNS OF THIS INQUIRY

It may help the reader to know something of the background to this inquiry and to be assured that there is no hidden agenda. In addition, since the reader will have opinions concerning how various issues considered here could be more

satisfactorily approached and resolved, knowing something of the development of the author's concerns may foster a more generous understanding of what might otherwise seem to be unduly eccentric themes. It is also useful to readers to be able to position themselves better in relation to an author whose concerns are necessarily somewhat different from their own.

Early in life I was deeply struck by the senselessness of despising people simply because their religious beliefs and practices differ from one's own, so it was perhaps inevitable that as a student of philosophy I should develop an interest in philosophical issues related to the problem of religious intolerance.[27] Major philosophers such as Spinoza and Locke had dealt with the problem, but early in my studies I felt that contemporary philosophers underestimated its continuing importance.

At one point in my investigations, while considering the relation of religious freedom to several forms of authority, I was impressed by certain similarities between attitudes toward religious authority and attitudes toward parental authority, but I confined myself to exploring this matter within the framework of my project at the time.[28] More recently, while examining religious cultural criticism of television[29] and other technologies,[30] I have been impressed by the frequency and determination with which conservative religious controversialists and their ideological allies condemn a broad range of secular cultural forces for undermining the wholesome family values—and the very institution of the family—that they see "Judeo-Christian" religion as having traditionally safeguarded.

I have also long been struck by the prevalence of competitiveness in religious life. Religious intolerance may manifest itself in the behavior of religionists toward both religious competitors and those perceived as secularist competitors.[31] Religion is a rich field for competition, and many religionists relentlessly enter into fair and unfair competition with those they regard as cultural rivals. This religious competition, which is generally underappreciated by students of religion, can be constructive or destructive, depending largely on the spirit in which it is conducted.[32]

Nowhere is the centrality of competitiveness to religious life more pronounced than in the heated debate carried on in the media and elsewhere by people with conflicting views on what social policies are required for the mutual optimization of individual, family, and social well-being. To my mind, thoughtful cultural observers have established that leading religious conservatives generally do not provide sufficiently strong arguments to justify their attacks on a bewilderingly wide range of individuals, groups, institutions, policies, views, values, and forms of culture. Yet partly because of the superficiality of the positions to which they are responding, these observers routinely remain close to the surface in their analysis of issues related to religion and the family. Many neither have nor profess a deep interest in religion or philosophy, and their cultural concerns are essentially practical and concrete.

Despite the call by leading conservatives for a return to family values and traditional family life, most religious cultural critics actually have little confi-

dence in the ability of ordinary parents to do an adequate job of civilizing their children.[33] This lack of confidence is nothing new. The impatience of religious leaders with parents who cannot do for civilization or their children what the best religious teachers can do has perhaps never been more poignantly expressed than in the extraordinary comments attributed to Jesus in Christianity's New Testament, at Matthew 10:35–37, where the nominally chief prophet of the Christian faith proclaims he has come to set family members at variance with one another.[34] Many students of the New Testament, Christian and non-Christian alike, sense the strangeness of these comments, but most, believers or otherwise, have settled on a way of interpreting them that is unthreatening to their personal world-view. However, if one takes the wider perspective of the philosophy of culture, which will then permit any number of more specific perspectives, the strangeness of the comments is not so easily interpreted away; and these comments attributed to Jesus represent the tip of an iceberg, for both Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament are permeated with strange conceptions of the relation of religious commitment to family life—or, as some might prefer to say, of religious values to family values.

When we venture to secure a philosophical grasp of the strangeness of those conceptions, we move beyond the superficial dogmas and rhetorical contrivances of media controversialists and the resentful and insecure mass men and women who parrot their slogans, and we appreciate the complexity of cultural phenomena that may once have seemed only slightly problematic. To recognize that what once appeared relatively uncomplicated calls for closer, more disciplined reflection is itself a major step toward wisdom; but if conscientious, we may be rewarded by the clearer vision denied to those who quarrel about shadows on the cave wall and struggle for power as if it were in itself a very good thing.[35] This clearer vision should enable us to contribute more effectively, as members of various communities, to fostering the tolerance needed to prevent all forms of cultural competition from becoming destructive.

The specific concerns indicated above have largely determined the structure of this inquiry. They are secondary to the most general aim of the inquiry, which is to contribute to philosophical understanding of religion, the family, and their cultural relations; so even the reader who has no interest in these specific concerns may find something of intellectual and practical value in the ensuing discussions. Like any other philosophical problem, the problem of the cultural relations of religion and the family does not spontaneously arise, but emerges within a specific context of experience and reflection. A reader's experiences and concerns necessarily differ somewhat from those of an author the reader has chosen to consult; and that reader's experiences and concerns necessarily differ somewhat from those of other readers. Even so, one can still derive benefit from considering the ideas of a fellow inquirer who shares some of one's own experiences and concerns and has concentrated on a subject which one regards, for whatever reason, as worthy of closer investigation.

OUTLINE OF THE INQUIRY

In modern Western democracies, the religious texts that have had by far the greatest cultural impact have been Biblical texts, so it is not surprising that in recent debates in the West about religion and the family, religious cultural critics and reformers have concentrated much of their attention on the values ostensibly imparted by Biblical texts. Questions thus arise concerning, for example, what family values the Bible actually imparts and in what way Biblical teaching should be taken into account in determining social policy in a pluralistic society. In Western democracies, there are many people who regard Biblical texts as far less instructive than other texts, including sacred texts of minority religious traditions, secular texts, and even later texts of Judaism and Christianity. However, these people recognize that the culture of the primary political community to which they belong has been substantially determined by conceptions, attitudes, and institutions that have resulted mainly from the professed commitment of untold generations of individuals and groups that have held, with varying degrees of conviction, that Biblical texts convey moral and social teachings of the highest possible import.

Three chapters of this study examine Biblical texts relating to family life. Philosophers consider Biblical texts for a number of reasons, but a common one is their desire to better understand the historical development and continuing cultural importance of various forms of commitment to a world-view and way of life ostensibly based on respect for the guidance of Biblical texts. This concern is evident in the writings of philosophers as diverse as Erasmus, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Hegel, and Nietzsche. The focus here reflects the author's limited competences and concerns as well as an estimation of the relevant interests of most readers, and it is directly related to the starting point of the inquiry, the awareness of recent debates in the media of certain Western democracies. It also recognizes the limited range of material that can be adequately treated in this space.

An approach to understanding relations between religion and the family as forms of culture would be more penetrating if it also gave close attention to non-Western cultures, and to religious communities that have originated in the West but not turned to Biblical texts for their basic inspiration. Even were I competent to provide sound analysis in these areas, I would be reluctant to undertake what might, of necessity, become an exercise in comparative social-scientific analysis.[36] Thus, the focus here will be on Bible-centered religion and the family. Still, in order to understand cultural relations between Biblical religion and the family, we shall have to give some attention to non-Western religious phenomena, particularly "primitive" religious phenomena. In addition, we need to remember that mainstream Western religious traditions and their primary sacred texts have their deepest roots not in the West but in the Middle East, and also that Judaism and Christianity are practiced throughout the world.

Consideration of Biblical texts and Biblical religion in general should cast considerable light on religion as such, though we must take care not to ignore pertinent differences between world religions.[37]

We will also in places consider, from the perspective of philosophy of culture, various ways in which Jewish and Christian thinkers have coped with constraints posed by Biblical texts, in their efforts to accommodate new attitudes toward religion, the family, and culture arising from advances in philosophical, humanistic, and scientific understanding, and from the need to solve concrete problems arising as a result of natural and cultural changes. As important as the timeless wisdom of sacred texts may be to those who identify themselves as adherents of Judaism and Christianity, those texts need to be interpreted; and for believers, interpretation involves, among other things, reconciling the themes of sacred texts with the latest rational insights and practical exigencies. Bibliolaters and others who profess to believe that such interpretation is improper—indeed, "heretical," "unorthodox," "irreverent," or whatever—suffer from a perverted form of commitment combining elements of fanaticism and hypocrisy.[38]

We shall then explore some general issues concerning the family, an institution that existed in sundry forms long before Biblical times. Considering these issues should clarify certain problems about the family in Bible-centered religion that emerged in the course of our textual and historical analyses. A full-blown "philosophy of the family" cannot be developed here, but we should be able to garner enough humanistic and scientific observations about the family to enable us to proceed to philosophical synthesis. In approaching the subject of the family, we will occupy much of our time in territory in which philosophy overlaps with social science and social history, but we will also give appropriate attention to practical concerns.

In the final two chapters, I shall offer a philosophical viewpoint for better understanding some basic cultural relations between Biblical religion and the family, and religion and the family in general. This viewpoint, based substantially on considerations that will have arisen in our earlier explorations, will concentrate on two related themes: the importance of cultural competition and cooperation between Biblical religion and the family, and the cultural and existential significance of some divided loyalties. The viewpoint that will be offered is not intended to be definitive in any sense, and, in fact, with its emphasis on personal aspects of devotion—a pivotal form of having "values"—it is intended in part to provide an alternative to perspectives that are advertised as definitive. I will also be drawing some additional conclusions, underscoring a few simple truths about the complexity of the matters under consideration; and I shall propose some themes for further reflection. At the end of the study, we may be left with more questions than answers, but the answers should be of some value, and the questions with which we are left may be more revealing in their own way.

SOME PROBLEMATIC TERMS AND CONCEPTS

It is often difficult to be clear when reflecting on abstract matters, and philosophers as far back as Socrates and Plato have noted the troubles that can ensue when people use words carelessly, arbitrarily, or manipulatively.[39] The longing for precise definitions is understandable, but we must accept that the most interesting disagreements about the meaning of key terms, in either ordinary or semi-technical language, cannot be resolved by a simple procedure and, on one level, cannot be resolved at all. Theorists who provide precise definitions of their key terms may remain open to criticism; their use of commonplace terms may now seem all the more arbitrary, or they may be employing a strange, semi-technical language that only they are able to understand or appreciate. Yet, in our own investigation, much hangs on how we understand the meaning of terms such as *family* and *value*; and issues about the proper understanding of key terms in specific contexts will recurrently arise throughout the investigation.

While reluctant to offer precise or even working definitions of such key terms, I believe it important that from the start we be aware of the subjectivity and ambiguity that constantly enter into the conceptualizing involved in abstract reflection on the subjects we are considering. We should consider, in this regard, some key terms or expressions that have already arisen in the study and that pose conceptual and theoretical problems.

Religion

The term *religion* is notoriously difficult to define, and religion itself is almost as difficult to conceptualize. Dictionaries dutifully provide definitions of *religion*, and philosophers, theologians, and social scientists regularly propose new definitions. Some are better than others, especially in being less manipulative; but I will not offer here even a working definition. I can say that I regard a particular religion as involving the acceptance of a spiritual world-view and behavior based on that commitment;[40] but this statement hardly constitutes a definition of *religion*, and the concepts of spirituality, world-view, and commitment are themselves complex and obscure.[41] Nearly everybody would agree that Judaism and Christianity are major paradigms of religion and religions, and these are the religions that will most concern us in this inquiry.[42] When we consider other religions, including "primitive" ones, we will be aware of some important features that they share with Judaism and Christianity, and it is probably mainly in virtue of those shared features that we regard them as religions; but in considering those religions, we need to be mindful of certain features shared by Judaism and Christianity that perhaps should not be regarded as necessary features of all religions.

Biblical Religion

Use here of the ambiguous and labored expression "Biblical religion" and certain related expressions is contrived, partly to convey dissatisfaction with customary ways of characterizing what may be taken to be roughly designated by these expressions. Bible-"oriented" people who regard themselves as committed to Biblical or Bible-"centered" religion are conceived here as those for whom the literature of the Bible is not merely extremely important but of paramount personal importance in a distinctive way. For such people, that literature has a spiritual and moral import that in some critical sense transcends the spiritual and moral import of any other literature or teaching. Many people profess to believe that the Bible uniquely represents the revealed Word of a Supreme Being, but there are others who regard themselves as believers who would more cautiously maintain something along these lines: the major texts of the literature collected in the Bible possess historical, literary, intellectual, and perhaps mystical marks of a singularly authoritative wisdom that renders them of incomparable spiritual and moral value—at least to those whose familial, ancestral, or other most important communal traditions, as our own, have embraced through faith the symbol-system and essential vision underlying those ancient texts.

The position just delineated is philosophically loaded, but nevertheless legitimately offered as a specimen of a type of understanding. There would be ample reason to regard a person holding such a view as committed to Biblical or Bible-centered religion even if the individual were dismissed by many Jews and Christians as an unbeliever.

Labored and contrived though it is, the expression "Biblical religion" has advantages over misleading alternatives in media discussion of religion and family values; in fact, it is helpful partly because it is easily recognized as labored and contrived. The designation "Western religion" covers too much ground. The label "Christianity" also poses problems. It excludes Judaism, to which we shall be giving much attention. Besides, many people who sincerely and not necessarily unreasonably consider themselves Christians do so because of their commitment to some broad metaphysical and moral conceptions, and some of these individuals may even hold that there are sources of spiritual and moral insight, both within and beyond the Christian tradition, that are comparable to or greater than Biblical texts. Such Christian commitment may sometimes be difficult to distinguish from commitment to a secular world-view or a non-Christian religious world-view; but it is in any case not Bible-centered. There is a comparable form of Jewish religious commitment; and there are also many people who consider themselves Jews—and are generally regarded as Jews—who would insist that though they do not embrace Judaism or the Jewish religion at all, they belong to the Jewish people and are respectful to some extent of certain features of Jewish culture that can be conceived in a non-religious way.

Furthermore, given our practical interest in continuing debates about religion and the family in the media of pluralistic Western democracies, we must be

sensitive to what it is that is being contrasted with secular and secularist cultural forces. In these debates, anti-secularist cultural critics sometimes speak ardently of the civilizing value of "religion," but most of them have little regard for Islam, African religions, Amerindian religions, Asian religions, and so forth, or for the forms of religion promoted by highly independent-minded philosophers or mystics, or the leaders of "cults" such as the Unification Church or the Church of Scientology. Most have almost as little regard for the religion of avowedly Christian and Jewish groups that they see as deviating too far from the mainstream of Christian and Jewish traditions. Of course, these anti-secularist cultural critics disagree significantly among themselves as to what is mainstream and how much is too far from it, but they routinely endeavor to bring some order to their anti-secularist position by focusing on Biblical wisdom.

A philosophical or social-scientific approach to understanding cultural relations between religion and the family necessarily is narrowly circumscribed if it follows leading Western anti-secularists in attaching so much importance to the Bible. Yet an accent on the Bible can provide us with a practicable entrée to broader theoretical and practical issues.

Many conservative Christian cultural critics regard Christianity as identical with Biblical religion and see no reason to employ a roundabout way to refer to Christianity. In their view, Jews, by refusing to acknowledge the New Testament as having an authority superior or comparable to that of Hebrew Scripture, do not accept the authority of the Bible—that is, of the whole Bible; and those avowed Christians who do not accept the authority of the Bible in a certain way and to a certain extent do not qualify as authentic Christians. Other conservative religious cultural critics are more impressed that two major world religions share an attachment to the larger part of Biblical literature, for Christianity made the sacred Scripture of Judaism and the Jewish people the "Old Testament" of its own Bible. The contrived expression "Biblical religion" may be seen by these critics as not contributing to sound understanding of the precise relations between Judaism and Christianity. Such critics may prefer to speak of the "Judeo-Christian" tradition; and talk about a Judeo-Christian tradition is favored by many liberal and moderate Christians, and also by some Jews.

Talk about a Judeo-Christian religious tradition can obscure the extent to which Judaism and Christianity differ in fundamental outlook and practice. Judaism and Christianity obviously have much in common, and Christianity's most important roots are Jewish; but Christianity also represents a reaction against much that is Jewish in spirit, and in some ways it has less in common with Judaism than, say, Islam and Confucianism do. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in its approach to certain matters related to the institution of the family. Differences between Judaism and Christianity, particularly in the realm of family matters, are exceedingly fundamental and important, and they are all the more interesting because Jews and Christians often seek guidance from the very same Biblical texts.

Talk about a Judeo-Christian religious tradition may in some contexts suggest

that Christianity represents the "fulfillment" of Judaism, the elevating of the essential world-view and way of life of the Jewish people to a consummate order of universal value. In these contexts significant differences between Judaism and Christianity are acknowledged, indeed emphasized, but perhaps uncritically, to the detriment of the older faith. Granted, one could employ the expression "Judeo-Christian tradition" even if one believed that Christianity represents a corrupted, adulterated, distorted form of Judaism; but there would not be much incentive for the typical Christian cultural observer to do so.

People who talk about a Judeo-Christian religious tradition are often involved in a public relations exercise. Jews, regularly conscious of the long history of persecution that their people have suffered at the hands of Christians, may recognize the prudence of periodically reminding Christian neighbors that Jews and Christians have much in common. To the extent that Jews are like Christians, they are harder for Christians to demonize. Correspondingly, many Christian cultural critics and reformers, including some reactionary ones, recognize that the interminable and frightful history of Christian anti-Semitism is usually one of the first evils cited by those seeking to disparage Christianity in the eyes of thoughtful, open-minded individuals and to reduce its cultural influence in a pluralistic society. There is thus some prudence in the endeavors of Christian cultural critics and reformers to emphasize both their theological closeness to Judaism and their ability to accommodate Jews in a pluralistic community. The primary motives behind such public relations maneuvers are not necessarily discreditable; but insofar as these maneuvers obscure certain important relations between Judaism and Christianity, they are philosophically unhelpful, if not also somewhat dishonest.

Little can be said on the positive side for the stilted and still equivocal expression "Biblical religion," which could be taken to refer to, among other things, the ancient forms of religion portrayed in the Bible itself. Yet by indirectly drawing attention to the inadequacy of alternative labels in media discussion of religion and family values, this intentionally forced expression reveals vital cultural tensions.

Family

Anyone who is acquainted with social-scientific literature on the family, or has reflected closely on recent debates on social policy related to the family, knows that the term *family* is profoundly ambiguous; but the term's ambiguity is even noticeable in everyday discourse. When someone in our society asks, "Do you have a family?" or, "Do you have any family?" we may perhaps normally understand the person to be asking whether we have a spouse and one or more children. However, we may also find ourselves hesitating before giving our initial answer, and we may also proceed to modify our answer in stages, indicating, for example, that, "I have two brothers and some distant relatives," and on further reflection, "I am divorced, and I have no contact with my ex-

wife. My parents are deceased, but I have two brothers. I also have an aunt, a few nephews and nieces, and some distant cousins. And I have a son whom I have never met. His mother married a man who subsequently adopted him, and it is my understanding that he does not know anything about me."

We shall later explore some major problems involved in conceptualizing family, but even at this stage it is useful to attend to some voices on the subject. Discussing what he characterizes as the "typical" family,[43] the philosopher R. G. Collingwood acknowledges that this typical family "may be complicated in various ways,"[44] yet he maintains that,

For scientific purposes we are safe from all criticism if we flourish our typical case beneath the reader's nose, and refer all questions about the rigid definition of the family, as such, to that. . . . In brief: a family consists of parents and children; whatever, over and above that, claims to be recognized as belonging to it has no scientific title to membership.[45]

Many conservative cultural critics of our own day would endorse the drift of Collingwood's remarks; and even scholars with no desire to promote a traditionalist agenda on controversial issues of social policy have expressed concerns about whether the term *family* may lose its meaning altogether if it is stretched in different directions by controversialists with competing ideologies.[46] Nevertheless, when a thinker like Collingwood goes beyond discussing how he will use the term *family* in a particular context and sticks his "rigid" and ostensibly "scientific" definition under our noses, something may well smell wrong, and so it is worthwhile to look at what some real scientists have to say. Two with exemplary research credentials and demonstrated respect for clear thinking and clear writing are anthropologist William N. Stephens and sociologist William J. Goode.

Stephens, after extensive study of diverse cultures, concludes that,

"Family" is really terribly hard to define properly. We all use this term. Doubtless, we all have the illusion that we know what we mean by it. But when one sets about trying to separate families from nonfamilies, he begins to realize how very hard it is to say just exactly what a "family" is.[47]

The earnest Stephens proposes his own definition of the term,[48] but then goes on to explain at length the shortcomings of that definition.[49] Still, despite these problems in conceptualization, Stephens is willing to pronounce that the family is, along with extended kinship and incest taboos, part of an almost universal pattern or custom-complex.[50]

Collingwood's concerns are quite different from Stephens'; he is chiefly interested in addressing sociopolitical problems of advanced Western societies. With his keen interest in the history of words,[51] he would also recognize that the English term *family* was introduced by people who had no acquaintance with

any of the exotic cultures that a cultural anthropologist like Stephens studies on a daily basis. Still, anthropologists serve us well by reminding us that cultural institutions that we might be tempted to regard as typical, simple, or natural are in fact none of these. Moreover, etymology does not help Collingwood's case, for the term *family* is derived from a Latin term for household, and ultimately from a Latin term for servant.[52]

The sociologist Goode, in his standard introductory text on the sociology of the family, maintains that it is clear from the study of ordinary language usage that the meaning of the term *family* cannot be "captured by a neat verbal formula."[53] He is prepared to speak, nevertheless, of a "traditional" type of family, while acknowledging that "many social units can be thought of as 'more or less' families, as they are more or less similar to the traditional type of family."[54] Still, when Goode outlines what he takes to be the basic features of the traditional type of family unit, his conception is markedly different from Collingwood's "scientific" conception of the typical family. Of particular interest is Goode's view of the traditional family unit as one that has *at least* two adult parents of the opposite sex.[55] Goode does not see much point in trying to lay down, as Collingwood does, a rigid definition of family. At the same time, recognizing the usefulness of a paradigm of the traditional type of family, he proposes that few people would deny that a unit is a family if it is characterized by these features: the presence of at least two adult parents of the opposite sex; division of labor; economic and social exchanges; sharing of many things (such as food, sex, residence, goods, and social activities); parental and filial relations (including some parental authority over children and some parental obligations for protection and nurturance); and sibling relations.[56] Goode, we should note, is not arguing here that traditional families are essentially better than "more or less" families. While allowing that it is not improper for a social scientist to do some evaluation along with descriptive work, he underscores that his analysis of particular family patterns does not imply approval of them.[57] Goode also points to recent research that confirms his long-held belief that "there is no such thing as a 'nuclear family system,' in which the only significant family relations occur within the social unit of husband, wife, and children."[58]

In this inquiry we shall be considering diverse kinds of family, including several to which a person can simultaneously belong. Following conventions in recent literature on the family, I shall use the expression "nuclear family" to refer to a certain kind of family; and being mindful that people use this somewhat imprecise expression in rather different ways, I shall try to use it in as uncontroversial a way as possible. It seems to me that just about everyone regards a relatively stable, effective, and intimate social unit constituted by a man, a woman, and their offspring as the principal paradigm of the nuclear family. However, people often disagree about how much and what kinds of stability, effectiveness, and intimacy must obtain in order for a nuclear family to exist. Most people are also prepared to count as a nuclear family a social unit that seems to them to be structurally and functionally very similar to the prin-

cipal paradigm, such as one established by a man, a woman, and their adopted children; but again there are significant disagreements as to how similar and in what ways. I cannot be any more specific here without being arbitrary, and I must trust that the reader's linguistic intuitions are close enough to mine that my use of the expression "nuclear family" will generally seem to be sufficiently clear and appropriate. I shall use the expression "conjugal family" more or less interchangeably with the expression "nuclear family," though I recognize that some people may regard a conjugal family as a particular kind of nuclear family, one that has at its core a relationship that either qualifies as a marriage or is at least something very close to being a marriage. In using the expressions "nuclear family" and "conjugal family" interchangeably, I make allowance for different perceptions of what constitutes marriage or a relationship very close to being a marriage. A reader who disagrees with what I have just said about conventional use of the expressions "nuclear family" and "conjugal family" should make appropriate conceptual adjustments in interpreting what I shall be saying about the social unit being considered. I trust that it will be clear enough to the reader that in many contexts in which I refer simply to "the family," the kind of family that I have in mind is the nuclear or conjugal family.

Values; Family Values

The expression "family values" is now used by cultural critics mainly for rhetorical purposes. More judicious cultural critics, especially those seeking to distance themselves from their reactionary counterparts, generally avoid using the expression, which, now widely recognized as ambiguous and manipulative, has outlived much of the rhetorical utility it once had. Nevertheless, the expression remains helpful in concisely indicating that there is an amorphous body of attitudes and institutions related to the family that indignant or troubled cultural critics believe must be protected from social forces that are corrupting, subverting, and marginalizing them. Although the expression "family values" is to some extent passé, the issues that avowed defenders of family values have raised are still with us; and it is hard to think of a handier expression than "family values" for indicating the tone and thrust of this continuing polemic.

The term *values* has itself fallen into some disfavor with scholars worried about its appropriation by pop psychotherapists, televangelists, politicians, and journalists. Nonetheless, value theory—*axiology*—properly remains a major field within philosophy, and though the philosophical study of value and valuation has a long history, much of the most important work in the field has been done in the last 125 years, especially in German-language and English-language scholarship. In the introduction to his standard survey in the field, *Historical Spectrum of Value Theories*, W. H. Werkmeister observed, over thirty years ago, that, "New insights and a better understanding of the basic issues involved in our valuations have been achieved"; but he immediately added that,

it has also become evident that the crucial problems are much more complex and much more far-reaching in their ramifications than they appear to be at first sight. The multitude of conflicting value theories is in itself evidence of this fact. Confusion still persists with respect to fundamental issues.[59]

Most people who talk about family values are altogether ignorant of the complex issues regarding values and valuation addressed by such conscientious thinkers as Brentano, Meinong, Rickert, Scheler, Urban, Dewey, Perry, and Hartman.[60] Given the scope of our inquiry, we cannot do justice here to such issues,[61] so some rudimentary observations will have to suffice for our purposes.

In ordinary language the term *values* is sometimes used mainly in a descriptive way and sometimes in a more evaluative way. When someone tells us that she is seeking a companion with "good values" or "high moral values," she is implying what is often acknowledged explicitly, that there are also individuals with "questionable values" who assign "too much value" to such things as material possessions, fame, and ephemeral pleasures. From this perspective, values in themselves are neither good nor bad, right nor wrong, high nor low. People's values, understood simply in terms of how much positive importance those people assign—relatively—to the things that are of fundamental concern to them, can themselves be appraised by a critical observer according to the observer's criteria, and these criteria may include the observer's own values (as well as more impersonal criteria, such as clarity and consistency). Viewed this way, family values are not *essentially* worth promoting; whether or not they should be promoted depends on the characteristics of the particular family values under consideration.

However, values can be seen as being of value in their own right. When we hear someone say, for example, "He is a corrupt person without any values," or, "I respect someone who is more concerned with values than with money and power," the speaker might grant that there is a sense in which a corrupt person has *bad* values such as excessive fascination with power. Yet there may also be a sense in which values as such are essentially valuable; that is the sense in which it is better to have values—on the basis of having reflected on what matters and should matter in one's own life and the lives of one's fellows—than to go through life behaving unreflectively, mechanically, thoughtlessly, impulsively, and so on. Although prepared to grant that a reflective person can end up with "bad values" or "unwholesome values," we may still believe that appreciating the moral and existential import of committing oneself to values and acting on the basis of those values is directly related to conceiving oneself as a free and responsible agent. A reflective awareness that one has specific values that are at the core of one's life—though they may regularly need to be reconceived, refined, or in some cases replaced—enables one to adopt a moral and existential understanding of one's personal situation that is unavailable to the individual who has hardly any insight into what her values are, or even what it means to have values.

It may help to consider an analogy with particular classes of cultural phenomena that are valued. Most of us acknowledge that corruption can enter into general forms of culture such as religion, technology, art, and politics; yet despite evils that have resulted from specific corruptions in these diverse areas of culture, we may still reasonably regard these general areas of meliorative productivity as representing the civilizing aspirations of the human spirit. Religion, technology, art, politics, and the like can all be sources of harm, but conceived as general forms of culture, they are essentially "of value." Extending this analogy, we may note that while people acknowledge that family life is often a source of considerable harm, most of them allow that the institution of the family, conceived as a form of culture in the most general possible way, is essentially of value in representing a fundamental effort to meliorate human existence. However, the value of the family per se must be distinguished from the value of particular forms of family and the value of particular families; and moreover, the relative value of the family must be determined by considering it, both generally and in specific contexts, in relation to other cultural phenomena, to the concerns and aspirations of individuals, and so forth.

When confronting a rhetorical defense of family values, an appropriate response is to determine what specific values are being defended, what arguments are being adduced to show that these are good or high values, what criteria are being applied in making such determinations, how sound the arguments and criteria are, and so on. If in fact it is the value of the family per se that is being defended, we need to know how the family is being conceived and why it is being conceived in precisely that way; and we need to know in relation to what—and under what circumstances—the family is being perceived as having higher value. Then we must assess the arguments being advanced in defense of these evaluations, in the process paying special attention to the criteria that are being applied in making the determinations.

Another ambiguity arises with respect to the matter of family values, and it reflects a larger problem concerning the relative specificity of values. Cultural critics and reformers frequently blur the distinction between the values that a well-functioning family inculcates and the values needed to produce or sustain a well-functioning family. In some of their arguments, it is assumed that the same values are involved. This view presents us with a circle: cultural promotion of sound family values leads to the development of sound families, development of sound families leads to inculcation of sound family values, promotion of those values leads to the development of sound families, and so on. These sound values are often loosely characterized as "religious," at other times as "moral," and at still other times interchangeably as religious and moral—as if there were no significant distinction between these two categories.

One problem here is that the type of values inculcated by a well-functioning family—regardless of how one conceives such a family—may, for practical purposes, be of a different order than the type of values needed to produce or sustain a well-functioning family. Talk here about religious values and moral

values is insufficiently precise. (Even a child who has been subjected to enormous indoctrination and conditioning can sometimes quickly figure out that people in a religious community may strongly disagree about what matters most and what most needs to be done.) Talk about such values as justice, wisdom, courage, self-control, faith, hope, and love is more specific and more focused, but when related directly to concerns about how to produce and sustain well-functioning families, it seems vaguer and less helpful than when related to concerns about what children should be taught. The more specific one gets in one's description of family values, the greater will be the conceptual and practical gaps between ostensibly family-sustaining values and more flexible, more widely applicable family-inculcated values—that is, the values "going in" and the values "coming out." Of course, the problem here is not merely with the expression "family values" or with the term *value*; it is much more basic, involving the various levels of specificity at which an individual or community can approach the question of what matters, of what is more or less of positive importance.

While recognizing the advantages of completely jettisoning the expression "family values" and employing less rhetorical and less misleading expressions, I shall retain the former because of its familiarity, and for the reasons indicated above. I shall occasionally substitute a more contrived expression as a reminder of problems surrounding use of the more familiar rhetorical expression.

Liberals, Progressivists, and Radicals; Conservatives, Traditionalists, and Reactionaries

A familiar feature of media debates about religion and the family has been the strategic labelling of rival positions, but similar labelling has characterized sociopolitical disputation since ancient times. Often, parties to the dispute are comfortable with a tag assigned to their position and do not object to being identified as advocates of "liberalism," "conservatism," or whatever; they may have at some point assigned the label themselves and may readily employ it to indicate roughly where they stand. At other times disputants are unhappy with a tag and see it as misrepresenting or disparaging their position; and they may see the very attempt to pigeonhole their position as unfair. Although not lacking in descriptive meaning, these labels often carry substantial emotive force. That force varies with cultural circumstances, so that some people who now feel marginalized when called "liberals" would once have found the label advantageous.

Classifying positions as "liberal," "conservative," and so forth can be helpful and in a sense is unavoidable, but we should not overlook ambiguities involved in such terminology. In researching the history of the concept of liberalism, I have found that liberalism has at one time or other been associated with at least thirty-two distinct values.[62] Some are very general, such as tolerance, individualism, and egalitarianism. Others are more specific and less likely to come to mind on initial reflection, such as belief in the moral unity of the human species,

respect for the utility of compromise, and belief in the corrigibility and improvability of social institutions.[63] The last of these values may be especially noteworthy, for though few if any individuals identified as liberals are committed to all thirty-two values, probably all would allow that they are broadly "progressivist" in outlook, though more moderately so than less patient, "radical" reformers. (Of course, to be a progressivist dedicated in principle to progress is not necessarily to be genuinely progressive—or to contribute to real progress—in one's specific cultural enterprises.)

The term *conservatism* poses comparable difficulties, and many who today proudly wear the label of "conservative" are committed to a position still characterized in some circles as "classical liberalism." Self-styled conservatives often profess to be dedicated to promoting values like freedom and individualism, which notably are among the more general values to which most avowed liberals claim to be committed. There is also talk in the media of "neoconservatives," "ultraconservatives," and other thinkers on the so-called "right" of the sociopolitical spectrum, so that it is frequently difficult to determine on which team a controversialist is playing. Nevertheless, I shall continue to refer to liberal, conservative, and related positions, for if I were to translate this popular terminology into semi-technical philosophical terminology, the relevance of this inquiry to issues currently being addressed in the public forum could be altogether obscured.

The term *reactionary* carries considerable emotive force, usually derogatory, but it seems to me to have important descriptive meaning, designating an extreme form of conservatism that involves not only the desire for a return to a previous condition of culture, but also a distinctive revulsion of feeling[64] derived from an intense resentment of efforts at cultural progress that, however misguided, are not manifestly evil from the perspective of the overwhelming majority of open-minded, reasonable, empathetic observers.[65] It may be hard to conceive how anyone authentically committed to a Bible-centered religion could be capable of such revulsion, as believers are enjoined to love their neighbors[66] and—in the New Testament—to love their enemies.[67] Yet revulsion, resentment, and vengefulness have been common among avowed believers, including some widely regarded as saintly. Hypocritical though these individuals may be, their contempt might well seem sanctioned by an array of Biblical texts.[68] It indeed was Nietzsche's insight into the *ressentiment* of certain Christian and Jewish character-types that inspired him to look to man's deliverance from revenge as the bridge to the highest hope.[69]

Nietzsche himself was conspicuously far from reaching that bridge. Revulsion, resentment, and vengefulness are not confined to reactionaries, religious or otherwise. The revulsion and resentment of reactionary religionists are intensified by the shrill rhetoric and devious political tactics of anti-religious and radical-religious extremists and the posturing of disdainful, inconstant liberals who, while insisting on "political correctness," have trouble remembering that the civil rights of religious traditionalists can be as deserving of protection as

those of anyone else. Religious conservatives justifiably contend that they themselves are continually targets of resentment. When they reflect further on the unreliability of opportunistic politicians, the manipulativeness of social engineers, the shortsightedness of enthusiasts devoted to social experimentation for its own sake, and the uncritical relativism of many woolly-headed educators, their resentment is more likely to be compounded by fear. But while recognizing their predicament, we must be heedful of the menace posed to civilization by people that history teaches us are greatly susceptible to falling into fanaticism, paranoia, hatred, and imperiousness. Moreover, religious reactionaries detract from the dignity of religion itself; and their predilection for *reaction* over *creativity* betrays a cynicism inconsistent with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love.

Reactionary religious cultural criticism has a high profile in media debates about family values and related issues. Venal leaders in the mass communications industries realize that sensationalism can be more lucrative than providing a forum for serious dialogue.[70] Also, liberal journalists and broadcasters sometimes try to make the paradigm of the conservative position appear as extreme and ridiculous as possible, just as their conservative counterparts regularly try to associate liberalism and other forms of progressivism with aggressive and unnerving demands for wholesale social reconstruction.[71] Thoughtful arguments of those who occupy a middle ground do surface at times in the public forum, but in discussions of sociocultural policy involving the future of the family, such arguments are too rarely at the center of the debate. Taking a wider view, we should be able to leave much of the coarser wrangling behind us.

Although the reactionary character of some conservative cultural criticism needs to be addressed, the term *reactionary* must be used cautiously, not only out of fairness to those to whom one is inclined to apply it, but because of the danger of diluting the force of a serviceable term. In many contexts, even the term *conservative* may be less appropriate than the term *traditionalist*. As in the case of progressivists in their relation to authentic progress, we need to distinguish traditionalists, who see themselves as attaching more importance than their cultural rivals to tradition per se, from those individuals who authentically conserve cultural traditions worth maintaining. It also helps to remember that just about everyone is liberal regarding some matters and conservative regarding others, and respectful of the need to simultaneously preserve certain traditions and allow for certain forms of progress. Indeed, in many cases avowed progressivists and traditionalists alike associate progress with the renewal of tradition.

Strangeness; Unfamiliarity

In outlining specific concerns of this inquiry, I proposed that both Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament are permeated with strange conceptions of the relation of religious commitment to family life, such as those involved in Jesus'

proclamation that he has come to set family members at variance with one another. I added that when we attempt to get a philosophical grasp of the strangeness of those conceptions, we move beyond the dogmas and contrivances of media controversialists, who oversimplify and distort issues related to religion and the family. This talk about the "strangeness" of certain Biblical conceptions calls for elaboration, for the term *strange* is equivocal in many contexts; and it is imperative that I make it clear that I am not being sardonic or disrespectful here.

For many professed believers, it is a matter of principle that any criticism of sacred texts is unacceptable. Other professed believers, viewing the transcendent import of Biblical literature and teaching rather differently, accept with comparative equanimity much philosophical, historical, sociopolitical, and scientific criticism of Biblical texts. Some are open to learning from the best of such criticism, and some believe that they themselves can in good faith practice one or another form of it. Those who regard themselves as non-believers feel under no obligation to avoid any form of criticism of Biblical texts, though prudence and courtesy usually lead them to exercise special restraint when critically examining these texts in the presence (broadly construed) of people who approach the texts reverently. In any case, if Biblical literature and teaching are to be of continuing cultural importance, they must be understood, and understanding involves interpretation. Being by temperament, circumstances, vocation, and conviction utterly averse to being a Bible debunker, and deeming Bible debunkers to be as spiritually and intellectually limited in their own way as bibliolaters and other Bible thumpers, I must make it plain that in drawing attention to the strangeness of certain Biblical conceptions, my intention is not to be dismissive. Rather, I want to point out serious concerns that I believe need to be addressed, not only by those who contend in the public forum that the Bible is a prime source of insight into sound family values, but by all who seek a better understanding of the historical and contemporary relations of Biblical religion and the family.

What strikes people as strange is often highly subjective; but the reader of Biblical literature who takes the trouble to reflect closely on certain Biblical conceptions relating to family life, and makes use of reason and experience to try to understand the continuing significance of those conceptions for individuals and cultures, will probably sooner or later sense that there is something *unfamiliar* about them. When one closely considers them in relation to ideas that one actually holds, and that are held by the most thoughtful of one's relatives, friends, and intimate acquaintances (including devout believers), they are apt eventually to strike one on some primal level as unfamiliar, foreign, alien, exotic, distant, and "not one's own."[72] Moreover, when one ventures in this spirit to discern what the core family values of Biblical literature actually are, one may well be struck by their strangeness as well. This awareness can itself be construed, by those disinclined to be derisive or dismissive, as an invitation to further interpretation. What once seemed rather strange can, through conscien-

tious and resourceful reflection, come to seem less strange; and the understanding attained through such reflection is likely to be far greater than any available to the individual who refuses to acknowledge any strangeness in the first place. That, to be sure, is the way of philosophy; and in this respect, the reactionary religious bigots who condemned Socrates as "impious" misunderstood his enterprise.

When we are specifically considering values—and particularly in their relation to contemporary disagreements bearing on determination of social policy—the strangeness of the conceptions under consideration is a matter that controversialists may be especially obliged to address. Strange values that trouble the moral consciousness of reflective individuals are practically as well as theoretically problematic, and call for conscientious clarification, particularly on the part of those aggressively striving to make these values the foundation of a pluralistic democracy's cultural policy. Reflective inquirers, of course, will not leave it to controversialists alone to address this matter. Meanwhile, at this stage of our investigation our interest has simply been in the problematic dimension of some key terms and concepts.

NOTES

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2. James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), esp. p. 176; John D. Woodbridge, "Culture War Casualties," *Christianity Today* 39, no. 3 (6 March 1995), 20–26.

3. See, for example, Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1982); David Neff, "American Babel" (editorial), *Christianity Today* 36, no. 9 (17 August 1992), 18–19; James Dobson, "Why I Use 'Fighting Words'," *Christianity Today* 39, no. 7 (19 June 1995), 27–30.

4. See, for example, Bob Frishman, *American Families: Responding to the Pro-Family Movement* (Washington, DC: People for the American Way, 1984), esp. pp. 43–49; James W. Skillen, "The Political Confusion of the Christian Coalition," *The Christian Century* 112, no. 25 (30 August–6 September 1995), 816–22.

5. Plato, *Republic* 487e–489d.

6. Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (1677), part 5, in Benedict de Spinoza, *Chief Works*, Vol. 2, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (1883) (New York: Dover, 1955).

7. Annemarie de Waal Malefijt, *Religion and Culture: An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 1.

8. Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 135.

9. Cf. Jay Newman, *The Journalist in Plato's Cave* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), pp. 71–72.

10. Jacob Joshua Ross, *The Virtues of the Family* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), p. vii.

11. Jeffrey Blustein, *Parents and Children: The Ethics of the Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 22–31.

12. Arnulf Zweig, "Kant and the Family," in Diana Tietjens Meyers, Kenneth Kipnis, and Cornelius F. Murphy, Jr., eds., *Kindred Matters: Rethinking the Philosophy of the Family* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 292.

13. Ibid., p. 298.

14. Ibid., p. 304.

15. William James, *Pragmatism* (1907), in William James, *Pragmatism and Other Essays* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), p. 9.

16. F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (1912) (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 126.

17. Cf. Jay Newman, *On Religious Freedom* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1991), pp. 160–69.

18. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* (397–98).

19. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (1873) (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957).

20. See, for example, Plato, *Symposium* 201d–212c; Plato, *Republic* 402c–403c.

21. Plato, *Republic* 457b–466d.

22. Ibid., 327a.

23. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

24. See, for example, Alexander Herzberg, *The Psychology of Philosophers*, trans. E.B.F. Wareing (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1929); Charles Hanly and Morris Lazerowitz, eds., *Psychoanalysis and Philosophy* (New York: International Universities Press, 1970). Cf. Jay Newman, "The Unconscious Origins of Philosophical Inquiry," *Philosophical Forum* (Boston) 9 (1978), 409–28.

25. Nietzsche is the most important exception to this rule.

26. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887), Essay 3, sec. 7, trans. Francis Golffing (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), p. 242.

27. See, for example, Jay Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Jay Newman, *Fanatics and Hypocrites* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1986).

28. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, pp. 188–96, 204–11.

29. Jay Newman, *Religion vs. Television: Competitors in Cultural Context* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996).

30. Jay Newman, *Religion and Technology: A Study in the Philosophy of Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

31. Jay Newman, *Competition in Religious Life* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), pp. 192–98.

32. Ibid., esp. pp. 48–52, 212–13.

33. Newman, *Religion vs. Television*, pp. 141–42.

34. Ibid., p. 142.

35. Plato, *Republic* 520c–520d.

36. See, for example, Harold Coward and Philip Cook, eds., *Religious Dimensions of*

Child and Family Life (Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria Centre for Studies in Religion and Society).

37. See, for example, Harold Coward, *Sacred Word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

38. Cf. Newman, *Fanatics and Hypocrites*, esp. ch. 1.

39. See, for example, Socrates' critique of Thrasymachus' definition of *justice* at Plato, *Republic* 336b–347e.

40. Cf. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, p. 6.

41. The concepts of world-view and commitment are discussed in Newman, *Fanatics and Hypocrites*, chs. 1 and 4.

42. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, p. 6. Cf. pp. 4–7.

43. R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), p. 160.

44. Ibid., pp. 163–64.

45. Ibid., p. 164. In the original text, this passage is divided into numbered propositions, 22.7–22.9.

46. Nanette M. Roberts, "American Women and Life-Style Change," in Judith L. Weidman, ed., *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 114.

47. William N. Stephens, *The Family in Cross-cultural Perspective* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 4.

48. Ibid., p. 8.

49. Ibid., pp. 18–29.

50. Ibid., pp. 29–30.

51. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan*, chs. 6, 34.

52. *Oxford English Dictionary* (1937).

53. William J. Goode, *The Family*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982 [1964]), pp. 8–9.

54. Ibid., p. 9.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., p. xviii.

58. Ibid., p. xv.

59. W. H. Werkmeister, *Historical Spectrum of Value Theories* (Lincoln, NE: Johnsen Publishing, 1970), I, xi.

60. Ibid., I, chs. 2, 3, 9, 11; II, chs. 1, 2, 6, 14.

61. Some introductions to the field besides Werkmeister's historical survey are John Laird, *The Idea of Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929); Nicholas Rescher, *Introduction to Value Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969); and J. N. Findlay, *Axiological Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

62. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, p. 150.

63. Ibid. Cf. pp. 144–50.

64. *Oxford English Dictionary* (1937).

65. For discussion of the concept of open-mindedness, see William Hare, *Open-mindedness and Education* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1979), chs. 1–2; William Hare, *In Defence of Open-mindedness* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1985), chs. 1, 3.

66. See, for example, Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39.

67. Matthew 5:44.

68. Cf. Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, pp. 55–79, 148–56.

69. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1884), trans. Walter Kaufmann (1954) (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 99.

70. Cf. Newman, *The Journalist in Plato's Cave*, pp. 99–100.

71. Ibid., pp. 60–61, 84–85.

72. *Oxford English Dictionary* (1937).

2

Strange Family Values of Hebrew Scripture: Problematic Models in Genesis

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DIFFICULTIES IN DETERMINING THE FAMILY VALUES OF HEBREW SCRIPTURE

Interpretation in this enterprise is essential, and all the Scriptural texts we will consider have elicited an imposing range of conscientiously conceived interpretations. The interpretations presented here are offered as perspectives that clarify, or at least stimulate further reflection on, theoretical and practical issues referred to in the introductory chapter. Whatever their limitations, these interpretations are useful in showing that the essential meaning and precise practical import of certain widely discussed Scriptural texts on family matters are not as transparent and one-dimensional as some avowed authorities on those texts would have us believe. On reflection, some of the texts may be seen to impart strange family values and thus to call for deeper reflection and more resourceful interpretation and application; and one may discern patterns in various Scriptural texts on family matters that reveal important cultural relations between Biblical religion and the family that have generally been overlooked or underestimated. The interpretations presented here are not intended as definitive in any sense; I myself sometimes take a different perspective on many of these texts. Never called to be prophet, preacher, or theologian, I do not consider it my mission to transmit Scriptural wisdom or explain what I regard as the most profound possible significance of Scriptural texts. My role here is that of a philosophical inquirer trying to share useful insights and perspectives with readers regarding specific cultural phenomena. Any "authority" a purely philosophical interpretation of a Scriptural text has is largely a matter of the value the interpretation has for those who reflect on it; and so it is, perhaps, with philosophical inquiry in general, regarding both the questions it raises and the ideas at which it arrives along the way.

Before examining texts, we should note some rudimentary hermeneutical problems that make it difficult to determine what family values Hebrew Scripture is actually imparting. The expression "Hebrew Scripture," though contrived and somewhat misleading, reminds us that what is often designated as the "Old Testament" of the Bible already existed substantially in its present form, prior to the advent of Christianity, as the primary sacred literature of the Jewish people,[1] many of whom (along with some non-Jews) have been disturbed that Christians have attached to this corpus of writings a dissimilar "new testament," and proceeded for two millennia to treat the combined product as a unified work and their own primary sacred literature. Regarding Hebrew Scripture as the first part of a sacred literature that in pivotal ways has been superseded by a second part is troubling to non-Christians who discern several kinds of distortion resulting from this act of cultural expropriation. Nietzsche, though holding the Jews partly accountable for the eventual advent of Christianity, puts the point with characteristic acerbity when he writes:

> [T]he taste for the Old Testament is a touchstone with respect to "great" and "small". . . . To have bound up this New Testament (a kind of *rococo* of taste in every respect) along with the Old Testament into one book, as the "Bible," as "The Book in Itself," is perhaps the greatest audacity and "sin against the Spirit" which literary Europe has upon its conscience.[2]

What is awkwardly designated in this inquiry as "Hebrew Scripture"—and in fact did not entirely enter the world in the Hebrew tongue—is referred to by many Jewish traditionalists as *Tenach,*[3] an acronym derived from the Hebrew letters for its three main parts: the Torah (Pentateuch),[4] Prophets, and Writings (Hagiographa).

Most people know Hebrew Scripture through translations, but even learned students of Scriptural Hebrew cannot be sure that they appreciate all nuances of meaning of some crucial ancient Hebrew terms. (It is hard enough to grasp the precise meaning of various terms in a seventeenth-century English translation of Hebrew Scripture.)[5] These considerations would suffice to induce conscientious exegetes to exercise great discretion in applying Hebrew-Scriptural texts in public debates on cultural issues, but still more important are the substantial differences in world-view between Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament—and on another level between different parts of Hebrew Scripture itself, for the moral vision expressed in certain key passages of, say, the Book of Exodus is in critical ways different from that expressed in key passages of the Book of Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Amos, Job, or Ecclesiastes, or in other key passages of the Book of Exodus. We must acknowledge that in view of the historical development of its cultural influence and its continuing cultural importance, Hebrew Scripture is not exclusively the cultural property of the Jewish people or of serious exegetes, but rather a body of inspirational literature and teaching that in many ways and to varying degrees is accessible and valuable

to all kinds of people, including simple Christians, casual observers from non-Western faiths, and skeptical secularists. Whatever harm its use and misuse have generated, it has also been in sundry ways a light to the world, as ancient Israel's more universalistic prophets had hoped it would be.

Moving on to the more specific matter of determining what basic family values the Hebrew prophets aspired to instill, we encounter further theoretical and methodological problems. A question arises as to why Hebrew Scripture says so little about family life in comparison with other subjects it addresses. Secularists who ridicule long passages of Hebrew Scripture that provide detailed genealogies, lists of unclean animals, and directives regarding lepers may fail to appreciate subtle lessons conveyed therein, but, cognizant of the importance of the family in all or most cultures and of the special importance that many see as assigned to family life in Jewish tradition, they may aptly wonder why subjects relating to concrete concerns of everyday domestic living receive so little in the way of concentrated attention. Hebrew Scripture has plenty to say about sexual matters, and if one studies it closely, one can also garner an intriguing collection of images of routine aspects of relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, siblings, and other near kinsfolk. Still, it would be interesting to know, for example, what a typical married couple in King David's time talked about after the children had fallen asleep; how often mothers hugged their children; or how the wives and children of prophets, priests, and warriors coped with their husbands' and fathers' long absences. William Graham Sumner proposed, in his 1908 presidential address to the American Sociological Society, that, "The Old Testament tells us hardly anything about the Jewish family," though he qualified this provocative assertion by adding, "In Proverbs we find some weighty statements of general truths, universally accepted, and some ideal descriptions of a good wife. . . . She is described as a good housekeeper, a good cook, and a diligent needlewoman. Such was the ideal Jewish woman."[6] An assertive cultural relativist,[7] Sumner may have been attempting here to score a point against self-satisfied, Bible-oriented religionists, but it may be said to his credit that he in fact knew a great deal about what people in many diverse cultures have believed about the family.

Carol Meyers submits that, "The lack of information about families is accompanied by the inherent biases of a normative document, for there is inevitably a disjunction between the official, public character of the canonical text and the daily lives of the community members represented in that text."[8] Yet, Meyers herself acknowledges that when attempting to understand family life in early Israel, we should remember that, "The affairs of a household . . . took on a public character, with the integration of private and public domains mediated by the socioreligious life of the village community."[9] Moreover, unlike modern legal codes, Hebrew Scripture is largely made up of narrative focusing on the affairs of individuals and groups.[10]

It is also important to remember that the materials at our disposal concerning the ancient Hebrews pertain to a number of significantly different stages of

cultural development.[11] Even if inspired by the same God, whatever family values are reflected in and reinforced by Scriptural texts on the lives of the patriarchs are plainly of a different moral-educational order, in several ways, from those imparted by Moses' discourses or the later reflections of a Hosea. Although there may be motifs that bring a significant measure of unity to Hebrew-Scriptural teaching on family values, we often must be mindful of which set of Hebrew-Scriptural family values is under consideration, and in which phase of moral and cultural progress it emerged.

A further question arises as to how these sets of values are to be reconciled, especially since most people remain as interested in the Pentateuch as in later parts of Hebrew Scripture. For Christians, an additional issue that must be addressed is how what Hebrew Scripture teaches about family values can be harmonized with a Christian moral teaching that Christians are obliged to see as in an important sense superseding Hebrew-Scriptural moral teaching. In the New Testament, Jesus sometimes represents himself as continuing the moral-educational tradition of his people's greatest teachers, but some of the most vital lessons attributed to him represent categorical repudiation of the spirit as well as the letter of much of Hebrew-Scriptural moral teaching—and particularly with respect to certain matters pertaining to family life.

The desire to find contemporary relevance in the legends, historical accounts, exhortations, and symbols of Hebrew Scripture comes readily to many people, and not only to those for whom it is a manifestation of piety. We generally appropriate cultural creations from the distant past not so much because we are fascinated by their strangeness as because we see them as potentially meaningful and useful to us. Exposure to classic works of various intellectual, artistic, and spiritual disciplines is a foundation of liberal education, but one does not require formal education to be capable of finding things concretely and practically relevant to one's own circumstances in the works of a Confucius, Vergil, Avicenna, Rembrandt, or Cervantes. Hebrew-Scriptural texts are, at very least, classic works of this order, but their influence has been immeasurably greater, pervading most of Middle Eastern and Western civilization and much of other cultures as well. To many people they are sacred texts of transcendent import, if not transcendent origin, and they figure in many obvious and obscure ways in communal institutions and the lives of those with whom we interact. When seeking out the contemporary relevance of these texts, we should take care to discriminate as much as possible between what is being derived from them and what is being read into them, and this discernment is especially important when there are people contending in the public forum that in resolving personal moral dilemmas and public controversies over moral and social issues, we should be following the guidance of the Bible.

When social scientist Stuart A. Queen and his colleagues inform us that the family system of the ancient Hebrews "displays both contrasts and similarities to our own,"[12] the observation may seem so trite as to be inconsequential, though they follow it up with the more specific point that in our own society, "we have

shifted our concern pretty largely from the extended to the nuclear family."[13] For all its blandness, the primary observation is a valuable caveat; and as Queen and his collaborators recognize, nowhere is it more pertinent than with respect to our understanding of what kinds of families we are considering.

Many religious traditionalists, Jewish and Christian, hold the sentimental view that there has been a culture-sustaining continuity of Jewish commitment—from Scriptural times to the present—to the cultural centrality of the family, and that this continuity, integral as it has been to Jewish survival and achievement, represents evidence of the soundness of an immutable core of Hebrew-Scriptural teachings on family matters. The pious Jewish traditionalist Maurice Lamm, proclaiming the family to be the primary source of blessing for humankind,[14] takes pride in the fact that, "The Jewish people was first a family. The influence of the family model is so great that it casts its shadow on all of Jewish history. . . . And the Jewish people are called after Jacob's family, the *children* of Israel."[15] As others have,[16] Lamm contrasts Scripture-grounded appreciation for the centrality of the family with the mistrust of the family harbored by rationalistic, utopian ideologists like Plato.[17] However, there is an irony here, since Plato believed ardently in the primacy of the extended family and counseled his fellows to regard the sociopolitical community as a vastly more important family than any nuclear family; and in this regard his views coincide with views implicit in much Hebrew-Scriptural reflection, and indeed, later Jewish reflection as well. We shall return to this philosophical theme later, but it may be noted here that whether merely sentimental or also manipulative, the association of any Hebrew-Scriptural respect for family with contemporary "pro-family" concerns may obscure crucial differences, not the least being conflicting ideas on what kind of family is of paramount cultural importance.

There are some who contend that Hebrew Scripture does not stress the cultural centrality of the family. For example, Charles and Carrie Thwing argued, in the late nineteenth century, that being highly patriarchal, the Semitic family traditionally has made the father rather than the family itself the basic cultural unit, and this emphasis is evidenced in the ancient Semitic practices of polygyny and subordination of women.[18] A notable implication of this position is that Hebrew Scripture promotes a distinctive type of individualism, inasmuch as it teaches that it is a particular individual—the father—who really matters, with the rest of the family group being merely instrumental in relation to his purposes.

However, in approaching Hebrew Scripture it is also prudent to consider the possibility that the ancient Hebrews had nothing entirely comparable to the ideals of individualism we customarily take for granted in modern Western democracies. The sociologist Benjamin Schlesinger agrees with Lamm when he maintains that, "the family has always occupied the central place in Judaism as the primary socio-religious unit" and, moreover, that the Jewish concept of family life has been the major factor contributing to Jewish survival.[19] But in another place, Schlesinger adds that, "Evidence would point to the fact that the family more than the individual was the unit of ancient society."[20] Any emphasis He-

brew Scripture places on the family, in any of its forms, necessarily corresponds to a de-emphasis of the individual—or more specifically, the ordinary individual—and this pattern was not in itself distinctively Hebrew but characteristic of ancient society in general.

The ancient Hebrews, like most of the peoples among whom they lived and with whom they interacted, were not wanting in a metaphysical conception of the individual. Some of their ideas about the soul were genuinely profound, and remain of great interest to reflective people in our own age.[21] For the most part, however, the ancient Hebrews, like the Egyptians, Babylonians, and other peoples of the ancient Near East, probably did not have a clearly defined existential conception of the ordinary individual. In communities accustomed to slavery and other extreme forms of repression, the cultural program generally revolved around the glorification of special individuals and the indulging of their closest relations, companions, and attendants. In modern Western democracies, which at least periodically entertain certain abstract ideals of existential autonomy, even the lowliest individual is recognized as having some sort of freedom, dignity, and importance. In the ancient world, the mass man and woman were more thoroughly assimilated into groups—from the immediate family to the empire—that effectively nullified much of their identity as individuals. But the dominant cultural figures—kings, pharaohs, chieftains, conquerors, lawgivers, prophets, priests, and the like—preserved their individuality and their distinction, and did so largely at the expense of drudges, who served and extolled them and perpetuated their memory. However, families at all levels, including nuclear ones, could partly mirror this power structure on a smaller scale, with even a paterfamilias playing the role of king in his household.

If the ancient Hebrews could, at critical moments in their moral and cultural development, attain a transformative glimpse of something more worthwhile than the pursuit and exercise of power and the attainment of glory, it may have been less because of any innovative approaches to family values than because these descendants of liberated slaves were able to appreciate the stress placed by their noblest leaders on justice, love, and cultural advancement, and because they had the recurrently present symbol of a just, loving, and merciful God to hearten and console them. Granted, the family itself ordinarily engenders various forms of love, and it may well be that there is no school in which one can learn love as well as in the family.[22] Hebrew Scripture certainly is replete with allusions to several forms of love to which the modern reader can relate; but even under some of the most repressive forms of communal and group organization in the ancient world, some forms of affection would not have seemed unnatural.

PROBLEMS RELATING TO ANCIENT HEBREW FAMILY PARADIGMS

A question remains as to whether major family paradigms encountered in Hebrew Scripture have enough in common with those of our own society to

lend plausibility to the notion that Hebrew-Scriptural texts can provide us with the most penetrating possible insights into contemporary problems relating to family values. The answer one gives will depend largely on one's own value judgments—and in many cases one's faith—but it is still useful for us to note important ways in which our society's primary family paradigms may differ from the primary family paradigms treated in Hebrew-Scriptural texts.[23]

The distinction between nuclear and extended families, imprecise though it is, should set a warning bell off in our heads; but we must go beyond it. First, we must remember that difficulties arise in determining what represents a major family paradigm—or a family as such—in our own society, and that some of the arguments that have emerged in recent cultural controversy about social policy relating to family values concern which groups our political institutions should treat as genuine families. But the pluralism regarding family types that is hailed by many progressivists and dreaded by many conservative cultural critics is not in itself a new phenomenon. As noted above, Queen and his collaborators, who approach the ancient Hebrew family system partly as typologists—contrasting the "patriarchal family of the ancient Hebrews" with, for example, the ancient Roman family, the polyandrous Toda family, and the matrilineal Hopi family[24]—assign great importance to the distinction between nuclear and extended families, and propose further that for the ancient Hebrews, "the conjugal family group was completely swallowed up in the household and had almost no independent existence."[25] They also observe that for the ancient Hebrews there were different levels of extended family, with the national family consisting of a group of tribes and the tribe itself consisting of related households or clans.[26] As important as the household or clan level was throughout most of their history, the ancient Hebrews routinely had to reckon with their obligations to these other major family groups.

As Hebrew Scripture makes clear, for the ancient Israelites, family concerns were far from being taken up by worries about one's spouse, children, aging parents, and a few favorite grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, and nieces. Rather, it was critical for most of the figures we encounter in the pages of Hebrew Scripture that they were members of the tribe of Reuben or Levi, or that they were associated with the monumental spiritual and cultural mission of a great people—the children of Israel, the Jewish people. Many conservative cultural critics of our own age are also convinced that loyalty to one's country and one's church—and perhaps one's race—are true virtues, but when they work at correlating these virtues with family values, they cannot strictly adhere to the pattern adopted by the ancient Hebrews. Another factor to be contemplated is the extent to which the ancient Hebrews were sometimes prepared to see the family as including slaves and "strangers within the gates."[27]

If one is prepared to engage in more adventurous theoretical speculation, drawing on data and insights from a number of humanistic and scientific disciplines, then the network of layered family paradigms of the ancient Hebrews is likely to seem even stranger—or less familiar, if you will—to the modern

Western mind. Although the biological basis of family life was established be-fore our ancestors could properly be called "human,"[28] it is evident that family paradigms varied significantly from human beginnings, and that by this criterion none can satisfactorily be determined to be the most natural.[29] Nevertheless, the family paradigms of advanced modern societies are to a significant extent the result of highly sophisticated forms of deliberate cultural development, while those encountered in Hebrew-Scriptural literature largely predate the rise of sys-tematic philosophical and scientific inquiry, critical history, and other disciplines that have enlarged the human-cultural dimension of family institutions.

Theodor Reik, a depth psychologist who, like Freud, was a Viennese Jew who turned atheist but continued to regard the Jews as his people,[30] sees the exceptional family solidarity of the ancient Hebrews, which has been maintained in large measure by modern Jews, as having ritualistic significance.[31] He believes that there are sufficient depth-psychological and anthropological grounds for believing that this remarkable family solidarity was not derived from respect for Scriptural laws, but rather was reflected in the shape of those laws.[32] Under-scoring how great the differences are between ancient Hebrew family groupings and contemporary Western family groupings, he suggests that the oldest Hebrew family group was probably the patriarchal clan, which may have, in extreme cases, included a few hundred people.[33]

However, Reik surmises that it was more likely the social organization of the later tribal form of family that engendered the distinctive family solidarity and loyalty historically associated with Jews.[34] As do many informed social-scientific students of family theory, Reik considers the exceedingly complex phenomenon of kinship—a subject routinely oversimplified in contemporary media debates about what qualifies as a family; but then, in a turn apt to seem extremely curious to intellectual naïfs in contemporary cultural skirmishes over family values, he talks about the importance of food. Influenced by ideas of the nineteenth-century scholar Robertson Smith,[35] as well as those of Freud, Reik stresses the connec-tion between ideas of kinship and family and the act of sharing a meal with other people. Although the family meal never became a fixed institution among Semites generally, the ancient Hebrews clearly gave enormous consideration to food—as is indicated by their well-known dietary laws, which still separate many modern Jews in concretely practical ways from other peoples—and shar-ing a meal was, in Reik's view, central to the ancient Hebrew conception of kinship itself. "Those who eat together are of the same blood, of the same substance."[36] It is hard to know what to make of such speculation, but Reik at least helps by reminding us at a key moment in his analysis that there is a discernible "flexibility" to the terms employed in Hebrew Scripture to designate family groupings, particularly the term *mishpachah*; and Reik provides us with Scriptural references to illustrate this less arcane point.[37]

Jacob Neusner, drawing on midrashic literature, provides a model for under-standing pertinent matters that most readers will find more accessible than Reik's. In a discussion of " 'Israel' as family,"[38] he begins with the familiar

point that the Hebrew-Scriptural expression "the children of Israel" refers to the extended family of *that man*—since the patriarch Jacob became Israel in a remarkable incident related in Genesis[39]—including that man's father (Isaac) and grandfather (Abraham).[40]

The lives of the patriarchs thus signaled the history of Israel,[41] the "Israel after the flesh" in contrast with Christianity's "Israel after the spirit."[42] Converts did not pose an insoluble difficulty since they could be conceived in the manner of certain souls made by Abraham and Sarah;[43] and ultimately, "The metaphor of Israel as family supplied an encompassing theory of society":

"Israel" as family bridged the gap between an account of the entirety of the social group, "Israel," and a picture of the components of that social group as they lived out their lives in their households and villages. An encompassing theory of society, covering all components from least to greatest, holding the whole together in correct order and proportion, derived from "Israel" viewed as an extended family.[44]

Neusner concisely furnishes us with an insight into the efficacy of the classical Hebrew conception of a nexus of parallel families, and this conception remains valuable—and not only to Jews. A Gentile might apply a modified version of it, for example, to an understanding of the need to balance one's obligations to one's nuclear family and one's obligations to a wider religious or political community.

However, before embracing it as an enduring lesson in how to deal with sociocultural problems relating to family values, we should consider whether this powerful metaphor can be reconciled with other metaphors to which we may have become devoted, such as "the universal brotherhood of man," or the metaphor implicit in the New Testament theme that, "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."[45] We also may need to judge whether the metaphor dilutes the practical value of the general concept of the family—particularly with respect to resolving social policy issues—any less than the new "non-traditionalist" conceptions of family that enrage conservative religious cultural critics and worry some progressivists.[46] Again, in dealing with a metaphor, we need to ensure that it is not taken for more (or less) than it is, and we must especially resist attempts to treat it as something that entails ordinary, factual propositions. For example, modern Jews may, sensibly or not, feel disgraced by the behavior of some Jew wholly unrelated to them, apart from his being a Jew, but they likely would be outraged if politicians or bureaucrats, after the manner of some anti-Semitic officials throughout history, compelled them to contribute toward paying off that individual's debts because of their "family" responsibility.

Yet perhaps Hebrew-Scriptural emphasis on the primacy of the national family may be viewed from a rather different perspective. Joseph Blenkinsopp suggests, with respect to Deuteronomy 12–26 in particular, that the text is "redirecting allegiance from the lineage to the state and to that extent under-

mining the kinship structure, especially at the level of the clan."[47] Here the text can be seen as intentionally promoting either nationalism or, on a more abstract level, universalism itself. The family value (or indeed anti–family value) that one regards as salient may depend largely on what one is disposed to perceive.

Whether we focus on similarities or differences between ancient Hebrew family paradigms and those of other ancient peoples, the matter of the origins and development of ancient Hebrew family systems itself warrants consideration as we set out to appraise the contemporary applicability of Hebrew-Scriptural teaching on family, values, and culture. There obviously are serious limits to what we can know about the origins and development of these patterns and the values underlying and engendered by them, but advances in critical history and the sciences, and perhaps especially in archaeology, have enabled inquirers in this field to speculate in greater light. There are a number of ways in which the ancient Israelites and their descendants of various kinds can be usefully regarded as constituting a unique people with a special role in the historical and continuing development of culture, but the ancient Israelites did not drop from the sky without antecedents, any more than did the metaphysical and moral visions revealed to them. Throughout their long history, the Jews, while intentionally distancing themselves from alien influences they perceived as contaminating, have astutely borrowed from, and have been fortuitously influenced by the outside world. The borrowings and influences account in part for the range of ideological options open to them and the diversity of customs they have sanctioned in such areas as education, ritual, and family practice.[48]

One may see Providence at work in the process by which specific factors came together to result in ancient Hebrew family systems, but of course if one is so inclined, one can see Providence at work everywhere. Whether or not one has confidence in such Providence, one stands to benefit from an enhanced understanding of phenomena; and understanding salient features of ancient Hebrew family systems in relation to their historical and cultural context enables us to appreciate better what purposes they were intended or destined to accomplish in their own world. It also helps us in gauging their historical effectiveness. Such appreciation allows us to estimate more judiciously how relevant they are to our contemporary purposes. Although somewhat disposed to finding them relevant, we need, in our practical judgments, to be cognizant of vital changes that have occurred between ancient times and our own time; and viewing the family systems of the ancient Hebrews in relation to changes and exigencies that these people themselves had to address should stimulate us to be more open to acknowledging the continuing need to respond resourcefully to new changes and exigencies. Although overstating his point in places, religious studies scholar Gerald Larue is closer to the mark than those he criticizes when he suggests:

We are a long distance from the biblical ideas about family. . . . This is not because Westerners are forsaking the Bible and biblical mores, nor, as the so-called Moral Majority and ultra-right Christians would have us believe, because of the insidious teaching

of humanism, but because of economic and social changes that are influencing family life.[49]

Hebrew Scripture continuously draws attention to the awesomeness and mysteriousness of divine power and grace, but it also in places draws attention to the importance of historical and cultural context. Abraham, "the first Jew," is depicted not as having been created in the manner of Adam, but as descending from many generations, taking himself a wife, and leaving Ur of the Chaldees, with his father and some other relatives, to dwell in other lands where he would associate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and, partly on the basis of his dealings with them, eventually take his unique place in history.[50]

Hebrew Scripture seldom promotes fatalism,[51] and differs significantly from certain other sacred literatures in this regard.[52] The importance of human judgment and responsibility is regularly stressed in Hebrew-Scriptural texts, and the human element in cultural innovation, even in matters of religious observance,[53] is frequently depicted. Still, the protagonists of Hebrew Scripture interact in diverse ways with exalted and lowly representatives of the peoples among whom they live, and whom they encounter under other circumstances; and cultural influence often operates in both directions. On this level the protagonists fittingly symbolize the ancient Hebrews in general. Modern scholars have sophisticated tools that enable them to speculate more reliably than their predecessors about influences from other cultures that shaped ancient Hebrew family patterns and other ancient Hebrew institutions. Many of these scholars feel a personal attachment to Scriptural texts, and this devotion is especially marked in the work of theologians who practice historical criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, and comparable methods.

There is no clear answer to the question of whether it should make a difference to participants in persistent skirmishes over Biblical religion, family values, and social policy that, as Max Weber has observed, there are striking affinities between the moral teaching of the Decalogue and that of Chapter 125 of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, particularly with respect to attitudes toward filial piety and adultery.[54] It is not clear how troubled these controversialists should be by Salomon Reinach's suggestion that passages in Hebrew Scripture that represent God as "walking in the cool of the evening, showing his back to Moses, ordering abominable massacres and punishing chiefs who had not killed enough people"[55] betray primitive forms of spirit-worship that the descendants of nomads and agriculturists probably derived from vanquished peoples and incorporated into Biblical religion, despite the resistance of sacerdotal elites.[56] We cannot know how impressed they ought to be by the anthropologist Frazer's categorical assertion that conceptions of the origin of humanity common to Egyptians, Babylonians, Hebrews, and Greeks "were handed down to the civilized peoples of antiquity by their savage or barbarous forefathers" and, moreover, correspond to stories of the same sort that "have been recorded among the savages and barbarians of to-day."[57] But regardless of what we make of the idea

of Providence, we might be wise to ponder the possibility that whatever family values Bible-centered religion imparts have extremely primitive roots and close connections to the moral and social teachings of peoples who, if we are not prepared to dismiss as utterly uncivilized, have been of hardly any interest to most of us. This reflection may be especially important—and perhaps obligatory—for those whose confidence in the absoluteness and objectivity of Biblical values leads them to believe that they are justified in interfering with the lives of their fellows, including many who have already been marginalized as a consequence of centuries of religious superstition and bigotry.

CONCEPTUAL DIFFICULTIES RELATING TO SCRIPTURE'S FIRST FAMILIES

In this next stage of our investigation we will rely in part on a simple interpretative or hermeneutical device, that of establishing an empathetic connection with the figures encountered in a narrative. In establishing that association, we obviously are being guided to some extent by the narrative's author; but our relationship to the figures in the narrative is not entirely determined by the author. Now, in some instances we can actually consider what we ourselves might do in a situation comparable to that in which Scriptural figures find themselves. In other instances that may not be feasible, but we can at least try to bring ourselves as close as possible to the circumstances evoking value judgment and decision making on their part. It may in fact be especially revealing if we can determine what some of the specific obstacles are to our establishing an empathetic connection with our counterparts in Scriptural texts, and it is partly on this basis that interpretation will now proceed. This device is one that readers of narratives regularly apply to their benefit, but in applying it here, we should be mindful of the need to discriminate as carefully as we can between what is being derived from texts and what is being read into them.

Given the philosophical orientation of our larger project, we may add another component in applying the device. When reasonable people in our society make major moral decisions involving family relationships or any other matter, they may act to some extent on the basis of habits and intuitions, but normally they also engage in moral reflection and weigh moral reasons for following one course of action rather than others. In doing so, they apply various criteria that have in fact been identified, described, and appraised by moral philosophers and other students of moral theory.

Contemporary ethicists refer to two of the most important of these tests as the "principle of utility" and the "categorical imperative," but more commonly they make use of a term or expression to designate a theoretical position that has been adopted either as a comprehensive moral point of view or as one among several instruments that might effectively be employed in moral decision making. Some well-known positions of this kind are utilitarianism, deontologism, and perfectionism; but we can avoid such terminology here and simply take note

of how people trying to do the right thing regularly weigh considerations such as whether following one course of action rather than others will promote general happiness, discharge one's duties, and enable one to be a better person.

In our society, most people routinely apply such criteria without conceiving them as moral-philosophical tests or even personal ethical principles; but some of these criteria were evidently applied by the ancients even before the rise of classical Greek philosophy, and can be discerned in the moral judgment of tribesmen far removed from any advanced industrial society.[58]

Thus, when we read well-known passages of Hebrew Scripture in which legendary figures find themselves making important decisions relating to family matters, it may not be out of order for us to pose fundamental questions about what they intended, why they thought they were doing the right thing, and whether it would have been more exemplary for them to deal with their moral dilemma in another way. This matter, however, will receive more attention in the course of our investigation.

Casting about for the family values of Hebrew Scripture, we can start at the "beginning," which is usually taken to be Genesis 1:1. Even most people actively occupied in critical-historical approaches to Biblical literature may accept the idea that Hebrew Scripture has become one book, because that is how it has been read and understood for over two thousand years.[59] However, many readers, including some who know nothing of Biblical-critical research and speculation, do not consistently read and understand Hebrew Scripture in that way, but sometimes fix their attention on how material to be found in Hebrew Scripture, or even in a major book of Hebrew Scripture such as Exodus, may (or must) have been derived from diverse sources, revised, collected, integrated, interpolated, and so on. (One could argue that the combining into "one book" of such variegated material represents almost as great a "sin against the Spirit" as that represented by binding up the New Testament with Hebrew Scripture into one book.) Also, while pious traditionalists may insist that the Bible is uniformly inspired, with every word of it being important, they normally exhibit the same proclivity as liberal religionists and secularists to find certain sections of Scripture considerably more memorable and more important than others.

Given the Book of Genesis' distinctive content, and in particular its concentration on the adventures of legendary figures seen as antedating the giving of the Torah at Sinai, one might conclude that whatever it has to say about family values has been displaced by more advanced moral lessons furnished in other books of Hebrew Scripture. However, most contemporary controversialists and general readers find many passages of Genesis to be far more impressive than most other sections of Hebrew Scripture, and they frequently refer to these passages when discoursing on what the Bible teaches us. The stories of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph normally remain more vivid and influential than those of Gideon, Elisha, and Nehemiah—or the eloquent wisdom of Hosea or Amos—though there are undoubtedly some who could agree with the comparatist Reinach that the Book of Genesis, along with most other Hebrew-Scriptural liter-

ature, is "disfigured by a good deal of Oriental bombast, incoherence, and absurdity," has a narrative that "lacks logic and precision," and recounts marvels that are often "ludicrous or grotesque."[60]

Erich Fromm, while declaring himself no theist, describes Hebrew Scripture as "an extraordinary book, expressing many norms and principles that have maintained their validity throughout thousands of years";[61] and this statement is itself remarkable in light of the noted Jewish refugee's emphasis throughout his work on the relatively modern origins of civilizing anti-authoritarian, individualist conceptions of freedom. Theodor H. Gaster, though confident that his comparative folklorist's approach to Scriptural texts helps us to recover the primitive stance and retrieve a lost dimension of experience,[62] also may reveal a touch of ethnic pride when he proposes that the "essential thing" about Hebrew-Scriptural myths and stories is that they are "paradigms of the continuing human situation" in which it is natural for us to be involved.[63]

However, it is a distinct possibility that the relevance to which these thinkers allude should be attributed mainly to universal conceptions and values embodied in the texts and to the unrivalled historical impact of a literature largely imposed throughout the West, in both subtle and oppressive ways, by cultural elites and enormous masses enlisted in their service.

The Book of Genesis is of special interest to us here. Not only have its narratives been exceedingly memorable and influential, but with its peculiar, speculative-anthropological emphasis, its expression of norms in a form more foundational than law, its family stories, and its distinctive juxtaposition of the strange with the familiar, it takes us to the heart of the matter at hand.

Problems Relating to the Divine-Human Family

Starting at the "beginning" of Hebrew Scripture, we encounter rudimentary conceptions pertaining to family and values that may cause a contemplative reader considerable anxiety. The sociologist Max Weber trenchantly describes the most basic:

The Jewish god is a patriarchal monarch. He proves to be the merciful "father" of the children, who were created in his image. The world is not evil but good, as the creation story indicates. Man is weak, as a child, and therefore inconsistent in his will and amenable to sins, that is to say, to disobedience against the fatherly creator. It is not only the individual—this is stressed—but precisely, also, the collectivity, the people. And thereby the individual as well as the people as a whole spurn his love and mercy for themselves and their descendants and often for long times, and in some respects, permanently.[64]

Traditionalist and progressivist religionists alike may find fault with Weber's observation, but many of them endorse it; and it draws our attention to a sense in which the first family we meet in the Bible is not the human family of

"Adam" (Man) but the family constituted by God and his human creation. Biblical literature is replete with images of God as a loving but demanding Father. In recent years, much has been made (by feminist theologians and others) of the inappropriateness of conceiving of the Supreme Being as a male, both with respect to interpretative issues and socioethical ones, and the very idea of God's having a personality has caused certain philosophers and mystics great consternation throughout the centuries. However, the specific image of God as parent—and a parent in whom "paternal" traits, though predominant, are not exclusive[65]—has evoked less in the way of focused controversy, even in recent years; and undoubtedly some of the most radical religious reformers find the image sufficiently comforting to be quietly condoned.

The image of the Supreme Being as supreme father figure is usually presumed to reflect the established patriarchal family systems of ancient Semitic peoples; but alternatively, according to a more controversial line of anthropological speculation associated with thinkers such as Johann Jakob Bachofen and Lewis Morgan,[66] it may be seen as a propaganda instrument in a struggle against earlier matriarchal and gynecocratic forms of culture, of which there are hints in Genesis and elsewhere in Hebrew Scripture.[67] Its implications for values related to family life can hardly be overestimated. On one hand, it has generated or reinforced savage and destructive institutional forms of sexism within and beyond the family; and on the other, it has contributed to bewilderment and disorientation within the family, inasmuch as children typically, and probably naturally, look to a nurturing mother with at least as much affection and respect as they do to a father, if in a substantially different manner.

If this was not so much the case in the time of the ancient Hebrews—which can easily be disputed, even on the basis of Genesis texts themselves—it is certainly the case in our culture. The spirit of a loving mother can pervade every life-affirming aspect of a person's being in ways with which no male authority figure, human or divine, can effectively compete. Countless millions across the globe have navigated their way through life without requiring faith in the God of prophetic monotheism—though they may not have succeeded in being "saved"—but individuals who have had to make their way through life without being able to rely on even vague intimations of maternal affection and orientation have more consistently and more predictably had stormy waters to cross. So something does not ring true here; and even in the Pentateuch itself, the dominant image of the patriarchal God has something strange if not exactly unnatural about it. Moreover, there is a recurrent tension between fathers and children exemplified in Hebrew-Scriptural depictions of conflicts between Noah and Ham,[68] Jacob and Reuben,[69] David and Absalom,[70] and so forth. These particular stories are, in fact, "paradigms of the continuing human situation," and sensitivity to this tension—poignantly evinced in Malachi's prophesy, in the very last lines of the Prophets, that God will send Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers[71]—may reflexively be integrated into the reader's understanding of a human being's

relation to a divine Father who, for all his loving-kindness, has allowed unfathomable human suffering. As stiff-necked as they may have been throughout their history, the Jewish people have had at least as much warrant as any other people to have an ambivalent attitude toward their God, one that mirrors the ambivalent attitude toward human fathers who are loving and loved but make rigorous demands, effect strict discipline, and deny intimate communication in ways that cause misery and resentment and can leave disabilities that never heal.

The Supreme Being is not invariably portrayed in Hebrew Scripture as a magnified father figure. God is sometimes imaged as a husband or mother.[72] Some qualities repeatedly attributed to God throughout Hebrew Scripture are normally associated with traditional maternal roles, and there are places in the Scriptural text in which God is not even represented anthropomorphically. Furthermore, some traditionalist Christians who have promoted a "Biblical model of parenting," based on the conception of God as a parental figure, insist that such a model allows for empowerment of all family members.[73]

It is noteworthy, however, that the cultural importance of the family is so fundamental that family relationships provide the primary means of forming basic religious conceptions. This point applies not only to the understanding of God but to other basic religious conceptions. "Throughout its history," Leo G. Perdue observes, "ancient Israel's major understandings of God, creation, the nation, the nations, and morality were forged in large part by the social character and experience of the family household. Many of the key metaphors for imaging God, Israel, the land, and the nations originated in the household."[74] Of course, Israel has not been alone in drawing on family experience for the formation of religious conceptions; given its importance across cultures, we can see that family experience has served all civilizations as a primary means for forming basic religious conceptions. Any distinctiveness of Hebrew-Scriptural religious conceptions undoubtedly reflects in great measure the distinctive features of family life among the ancient Hebrews, and complex though some of those features must have been, the dominance of the father figure must not be underestimated.

Problems Relating to the Primeval Human Family

These conceptual complications are exacerbated by the account in Genesis of the creation of humanity[75]—an account with well-known parallels in other cultures.[76] Setting aside, for the moment, its implications for historical approaches to family concerns, we should note its significance with respect to historical conceptions of value. Heavily symbolic, the passages of Genesis dealing with God's creation of the human person occasion philosophical and theological reflection on the nature of human spirituality, the possibility of existential autonomy, and the significance of human beings in a cosmic context.[77] The importance of unresolved issues arising in these passages does not recede in later Scriptural narratives, as thoughtful Bible-oriented religionists are well aware. How can human beings be expected to obey a divine plan that they

cannot grasp, even in its fundamentals? How can they be held responsible for their actions when they have been determined to be what they are? How can knowledge of good and evil be sinful for a being created in the divine image? Why would a being created in God's likeness defy God? Are human beings closer to being companions of God or playthings of God? We cannot reasonably expect the typical Bible-oriented religionist to be able to provide profound answers to such questions, but it may not be unfair to expect such a person to appreciate the gravity and complexity of the questions before proceeding to speak aggressively in the public forum of a pluralistic democracy about the continuing cultural importance of Biblical values.

With regard to the implications of the account for matters relating to family, values, and culture, the one receiving most attention in recent decades has been the devaluation of the dignity of women. As social theorist Jessie Bernard tersely observes, "Adam came first. Eve was created to supply him with companionship, not vice versa. And God himself had told her that Adam would rule over her; her wishes had to conform to his."[78] Many reactionary religious cultural critics approve of interpretations that take the relevant passages to entail that women are inferior to men and instrumental to the purposes of men, and they see this "Biblical teaching" as justifying the reinforcement of gender discrimination, not only against feminist agitators, single mothers on the public welfare rolls, and sundry "loose" women, but, presumably at some level of conscious or subconscious thought, against their (the critics') mothers, wives, and daughters.

Surveying the texts, we encounter themes and images that understandably upset many readers who are mindful of enormous indignities that have been systematically perpetrated against women throughout the centuries. The creation of woman is depicted as an afterthought on the Creator's part, as it occurs to him that it is not good that man should be alone; woman, conceived as a being who will help man, is taken out of man and will eventually draw man away from the parents who nurtured him[79] (as she draws man away from the Creator who nurtured him). It is woman rather than man who initially succumbs to temptation and proceeds to create conflict between man and God, thereby bringing endless afflictions into the life of man and all humanity. Although God has made procreation his creatures' primary imperative and greatest glory, woman is to find it painful, and deservedly so; a permanent enmity must exist between man and woman; and woman's behavior justifies God's cursing her, so that her desire shall be to her husband, who shall rule over her for all time.

Many insist that if we interpret these passages reverently or broad-mindedly, we can appreciate the beneficial family values they impart, including the need for the husband and father to fulfill his divinely ordained responsibilities as head of his household. Others consider these passages harmful vestiges of a way of thinking that must have long ago outlived any limited usefulness it once had. These people may also question whether a reactionary Bible-oriented religionist can truly expect a sensitive and honorable male in our society to be able to treat a woman as Abraham deals with Hagar, or Solomon deals with his numberless

concubines; and they will be mindful of passages of Hebrew Scripture that are permeated with misogyny.[80] Still, it is hard to imagine a Jacob holding a Rachel in low esteem or a Boaz holding a Ruth so; and we must not overlook such heroines of Israel as Deborah and Esther. Thus, it may be unwise to affirm with confidence that one knows what Hebrew Scripture really teaches about the status of women. Theologian Phyllis Bird proposes that women appear in Hebrew Scripture "more frequently than memory commonly allows—and in more diverse roles and estimations."[81] But she also makes the telling suggestion that, "For most of us the image of woman in the Old Testament is the image of Eve, augmented perhaps by a handful of 'heroines,' or villainesses, as the case may be."[82]

Another consequence of the account is confusion engendered by its problematic treatment of a tangle of issues pertaining to sexuality and reproduction. We read at Genesis 1:28 that God blessed man and woman, as he had earlier blessed other living creatures, and said to them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." Many conservative religious cultural critics see this well-known Scriptural verse as having distinctive significance for proper understanding of the fundamental purpose of marriage, the iniquity of sexual intimacy outside of marriage, the immorality of various birth control methods, the treatment of homosexuals, and other matters that figure prominently in debates about social policy. However, one may be perplexed as to why, in light of the importance God assigns to the fruitfulness of all the living creatures he created, woman appears in Genesis 2 as something of an afterthought, is introduced only as a helper, is made to find her role in procreation painful in a way that man's is not, and is to find her relationship with her marital partner perpetually marked by enmity. It is also hard to know what to make of the development that when man and woman eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and their eyes are opened, they are distressed by their nakedness. Regardless of which interpretation of these lines one resolves to accept, one can see why they have sent mixed messages to readers. David R. Mace, a Christian scholar interested in family issues and an admirer of what he regards as the healthy attitude toward sexuality historically promoted by Judaism, suggests that it is no wonder that family life was the central focus of Hebrew society, inasmuch as sex was conceived as the means to continue the work of creation on behalf of God.[83] But the supposed connections between sex, reproduction, family, and moral values are hazy in the key Scriptural texts. It would be useful to know more, for example, about how we should understand woman's comparative importance as companion-helper, reproductive partner, and object of enmity, as well as the relationship between these roles; why knowledge of good and evil, which makes man and woman more like God,[84] should lead them to be alarmed by their nakedness and sexuality; how multiplying and replenishing the earth in a manner comparable to that in which great whales and winged fowl do[85] is directly related to the complex human institution of the family; what the implications are for human sexuality and reproduction of men's having been divinely ordained both

to rule over women and to harbor an enmity toward them; why sexual attraction toward a potential marital partner should be associated with the inevitable family division involved in leaving one's father and mother; and why the remainder of Hebrew Scripture generally takes for granted that it is natural and thus in a sense divinely sanctioned for human beings to enjoy sexual intimacy for its own sake, and not only in connection with reproductive or family interests. People have provided interesting answers to these questions, but we may still regret that the sacred text, which is meticulously precise on many less important topics, does not give clearer direction here. It is apt to confuse issues further as new technologies arise and pose questions that our grandparents could not have conceived, much less the ancients, such as how to assess the value of human cloning when, "unnatural" as it may seem to most conservative religionists—and disengaged from sexuality and the family—it potentially represents humanity's most effective method for being fruitful, multiplying, and replenishing the earth.

The tale continues, and we read that Eve, cast out of Eden along with Adam, gave birth to two sons, Cain and Abel. The focus of the narrative then abruptly shifts to an examination of events related to Cain's murder of his younger brother, after which there is genealogical material to provide a bridge to the next part of Genesis. In our effort to determine what family values Hebrew Scripture is fostering, we would benefit greatly from any insight provided by these important passages, for we are considering what could be regarded as the primeval and archetypal human family, with Adam representing the first husband and father, Eve the first wife and mother, and Cain and Abel the first children and siblings. But given the brief and indistinct Scriptural characterization of this group of figures, we may wonder whether it qualifies as a "family" in a sense that has anything to do with values. For one thing, it is not clear that these simple beings can function as authentic moral agents capable of relating to one another and to God on the basis of value judgments and moral commitments. For another, we are told nothing of any family life shared by these four individuals. What we know about their relationships is that in some sense the father ruled over the mother while the elder son was so frustrated by God's unexplained favoritism toward the younger that he killed his own brother. We are not given much indication of how the husband and wife got along or any indication at all of how the parents and children related to one another; and thus it is implied that such details are of no particular value to us. We are given no idea of how much time these four archetypal figures would have spent together as a group, what kind of group (if any) they would have conceived themselves as constituting, what (if anything) the parents and children would have communicated about, or whether there would have been any love between them.

If one approaches the text from some strict and thoroughgoing critical-historical or social-scientific perspective, it may seem senseless to expect or even hope for such indications in an extremely ancient and primitive legend, with largely hidden roots, that likely meant something immeasurably different to those who first conceived and received it than anything it can possibly mean to

a modern reader trying to find contemporary relevance in it. Nevertheless, appropriate respect for rigorous critical-historical and social-scientific approaches does not oblige us to forswear any hope that we can find meaning in the text that is relevant to concrete personal and social concerns. Naive religionists and reactionary ones are wrong about many things, but they are not being unreasonable in seeking practical wisdom in Biblical literature. However, having granted that point, we must also recognize that a longing for relevant details may not be satisfied by the Scriptural passages under consideration, particularly if one has seriously entertained the possibility that the family, itself an extremely ancient cultural phenomenon, is as central to Biblical religion as has been so often contended. Disappointment is all the more in order in light of the fact that the passages we have been considering represent the closest Scripture ever comes to describing the foundation of this extremely old and very important institution.

The image of all humanity having descended from one couple brings with it the irenic image of humanity itself representing one family, but it also brings with it the disquieting implication that the world was constructed by incest, though we know that for the ancient Hebrews the prohibition of incest was a primary act of social organization.[86] Perhaps more disturbing to someone earnestly attempting to find relevant family values in these passages is the theme that the only noteworthy relationships in the archetypal family (or forerunner of the family) are domination, subordination, and hatred. Cain's unforgettable response to God's question about Abel's whereabouts—"I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"[87]—is almost universally assumed to be charged with the deepest moral significance, but serious questions can be raised about precisely what values—family values or otherwise—are being imparted by this image. Further complicating efforts to uncover relevant family values here is the haunting image of the enmity that disrupted the relationship between the archetypal brothers having been prompted by God's unexplained partiality, which might well appear to be inhibiting the spirit of brotherhood from the start. Whether comprising a genuine family or not, these four pitiful figures, their relationships weighed down by divinely inspired hostility, have not had the task of building a healthy family made easy for them.

Problems Relating to the Reconstructed Universal Family

The next major story in Genesis introduces us to the family of Noah, a righteous man who found grace in God's eyes.[88] Prior to destroying almost all life in a great flood, God informs Noah that he is sparing him, his wife, his three sons, and his sons' wives, along with specimens of every living creature, which Noah is to bring aboard his ark. In this way the earth, which had been corrupted by wickedness, will be replenished. Unlike Adam, Noah is clearly in some sense a moral agent—a just man—and God is able to establish an authentic covenant with him. Noah, product of generations of intellectual and cultural development,

and yet sufficiently independent-minded to be able to resist the corruptive influence of his fellows, can understand, as Adam could not, that he has a *relationship* with a benevolent and nurturing God who is not an arbitrary dictator demanding blind obedience, but a deliberative being committed to their mutual fulfillment. This relationship may be mirrored to some extent in Noah's relationship with his family members. God's covenant with Noah and his sons should in theory be of special interest to non-Jewish readers of Hebrew Scripture, for while most of Hebrew Scripture focuses on God's evolving covenant with Israel, the chapters on Noah refer to a divine covenant with a symbolic progenitor of all humanity, so that whatever values are being imparted here are to be taken as being of universal relevance.

Many non-Jews and virtually all traditionalist Christians believe that important moral lessons are to be learned by studying the details of God's covenant with the Jewish people; and traditionalist Jews themselves ordinarily believe that they represent, among other things, an instrument by which the One God will civilize all humanity. However, traditionalist Jews also generally believe that the values inculcated by Hebrew-Scriptural teaching are only secondarily being promoted among the Gentiles, and are not obligatory for Gentiles in the way that they are for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Most traditionalist Christians have a different view and see the principal values imparted throughout Hebrew Scripture as being of more direct concern to them and to humanity in general. Nevertheless, traditionalist Jews and traditionalist Christians generally agree that the divine covenant with Noah and his sons is equally binding on all human beings, and so it is in the story of Noah that one might expect Hebrew Scripture to be disclosing its most universal family values.

Again, one's longing for relevant details may not be satisfied. Writers in the Rabbinic tradition have elaborated on the content of the divine covenant with Noah and all humanity,[89] but the Scriptural text itself focuses exclusively on the obligations to be fruitful, refrain from eating "flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof," and not shed another man's blood.[90] There is no intimation here of the importance of the family, apart from any that one determines to associate with the obligation to procreate. Regarding such a determination, Hebrew Scripture as a whole again sends enough different messages to make it difficult for an open-minded exegete to see a distinct family value emerging. It clearly attaches immense importance in many places to the frequently associated institutions of marriage and legitimacy, as we read at Deuteronomy 23:2, for example, that, "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord."[91] Yet in its acceptance of diverse practices such as concubinage, polygyny, prostitution without reliable birth control methods, refusal (or avoidable inability) to look after or even know one's children, and—maybe most critically—a man's ability to shed a wife almost as easily as old garments, it hardly strengthens the conceptual and practical connections between bringing children into the world

and being committed to nurturing them in a stable, secure, and intimate group environment.

The account of Noah's family life is brief and enigmatic. Of Noah's relationship with his wife, and her relationship with other family members, the text says next to nothing; but the little we are told of Noah's relationship with his sons is intriguing. According to the story,[92] the usually dependable Noah imbibed too much wine and ended up naked in his tent. His son Ham, himself father of Canaan and progenitor of the Canaanites, "saw the nakedness of his father,"[93] but his other two sons, Shem and Japheth, made the sound decision to avoid looking upon their father in this condition and instead to restore his dignity by covering his nakedness. Having sobered up, Noah cursed Canaan and consigned him to be a servant to his brothers, to the God of Shem (forefather of Abraham and the Jewish people), and to Japheth.

This story can be understood on several levels. Inasmuch as the Scriptural text draws attention exclusively to this one episode in the family life of a symbolic progenitor through whom God entered into a covenant with all humanity, whatever family values are meant to be instilled by it must be extremely important. It does not take a great deal of moral imagination for a modern reader to see the story as fostering appreciation of a number of general dispositions that are still widely regarded as virtuous and classified as "values," including compassion, empathy, self-control, prudence, and respect for elders. It can also be seen as promoting appreciation of specific forms of these general dispositions relevant to family life, such as devotion to loved ones, commitment to domestic peace, and filial respect; and we are not distorting ordinary language if we assign to these particular dispositions the label of "family values." But whether or not one relies greatly in this case on the guidance provided by an established exegetical tradition, personal factors will play a significant role in determining which dispositions one will be able to discern clearly, the relative importance one will attach to each of those dispositions, and ultimately how one's behavior will be influenced by one's reading of the story. One individual will regard the story as essentially a lesson in the need for the family value of filial respect, while another—who may even profess to interpret the story in this very same way—will in actuality be moved by its poignant depiction of the nobility of a more universal compassion.

The story has long been understood on a rather different level. Over the centuries, there has been an extraordinary amount of speculation by pious exegetes about what Noah was doing while he had his clothes off and what Ham might have been doing to him. Where some interpreters have seen lessons concerning values like compassion and filial respect, others have seen symbolic references to the evils of sodomy and masturbation. The Scriptural text does not indicate what beyond seeing his drunken father naked the contemptible Ham did that was terrible enough to warrant a curse on him and all his progeny; and Scripture's silence in this regard may be a blessing to those who believe that nothing is more beneficial to young boys and girls than reading the Bible. Avoid-

ing the temptation to dabble in depth-psychological analysis, we may simply note some observations made from a comparative-folklorist perspective. After reminding humanistic scholars that the Ham myth parallels the classical Greek myth of the castration of Cronus by his sons, Robert Graves and Raphael Patai propose that the castration of Noah must have been deleted from an earlier version of the myth.[94] However, "The *Genesis* version of this myth has been carelessly edited. Ham could not be blamed, in justice, for noting his father's nakedness; and Noah could never have laid such a grave curse upon Ham's innocent son Canaan."[95] Understanding the story from this perspective, we find it more difficult to ascertain what, if any, family values the story is meant to convey.

The story can be understood, Graves and Patai point out, on yet another level: "The myth is told to justify Hebrew enslavement of Canaanites."[96] Understood on this level, the story is ultimately not about family values or even the family itself. It still has something to do with values—specifically, the inauthentic justification of a practice recognized on a deeper level of insight and feeling to be morally unjustifiable—but it is more concretely a utilitarian device serving the interests of greed, hunger for power, and self-justification. According to this interpretation, the story is still imbued with symbolism, but the domestic imagery itself is symbolic, standing for political and economic concerns, and "family values" themselves are employed partly to disclose and partly to conceal the primary values at stake, which are more egoistic, tribalistic, and materialistic.

One may see this process, using other forms of romantic and sentimental imagery in addition to family imagery, going on throughout Hebrew Scripture and ancient epic literature in general; and recognition of it has sometimes led overzealous ideologues committed to dialectical materialism, psychoanalytical theory, or some other "secular religion" to develop a reductionistic exegesis of Scriptural texts. Interpretations on this level, when not taken to speculative and dogmatic extremes, can be illuminating. In this specific instance, it is worth noting that what may seem to be at bottom a dedication to family values may be to some extent concealing more operative values, and this point is germane to our understanding of much current "pro-family" rhetoric. Still, from a philosophical standpoint, little is to be gained by concluding that only analyses of this type explain what texts or discourses "really mean."

AMBIGUOUS FAMILY VALUES OF THE FIRST JEWISH FAMILY MAN

The sequence of Scriptural narratives recounting episodes in the lives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob recurrently summons us to contemplate both family-related and general value-related subjects. Given the unsurpassed richness of the imagery of these narratives, we can easily understand why so much contemporary discussion of matters relating to family, values, and culture refers to moral teachings presumed implicit in these narratives, even though the

Torah itself clearly indicates that moral guidance imparted in the Genesis narratives is, in a crucial sense, superseded by the precise and detailed moral teaching transmitted at Sinai. The many memorable stories in this part of Hebrew Scripture, while now valued by many mainly for the access they provide to prehistorical myth, give us a great deal of information about how the ancient Hebrews and other ancient peoples lived during an extensive period of their history. Although some of what the narratives say about the family lives of the patriarchs is undoubtedly idealized, a well-read person cannot fail to be impressed by the extent to which these stories reveal, intentionally or otherwise, the moral limitations of legendary figures revered for three thousand years.

As fascinating as it is to most modern readers accustomed to manipulation by public relations specialists, this peculiar "realism"—if it may be called by that name—complicates conscientious efforts to glean from these narratives a clear idea of what family values are being conveyed. Thus, we can appreciate the bewilderment of Max Weber, if not his irony, when he writes:

> The narrators expect their audiences to take for granted that the patriarchs [Abraham and Isaac] would sooner pass off their beautiful wives as desirable sisters and surrender them to their respective protectors, leaving it to God to liberate them from the protector's harem by visiting plagues upon him, rather than defending the honor of their wives. . . . The tribal father of Israel [Jacob] gets out from under his master and father-in-law by stealth and makes his get-away. He carries off his house idols lest his route be betrayed. . . . [W]ith the mother's help, the hero betrays his brother for the paternal blessing.[97]

Weber is taking a narrow view, but underlying his remarks is a useful cautionary message; and the reader may be bewildered not only by certain accounts of the patriarchs' behavior, but by certain accounts of the judgments and actions of an inscrutable divine Father. It may be audacious to the point of irreverence to reflect that it would have been more conducive to the moral advancement of civilization had God been portrayed in these monumental texts somewhat differently than he is, but it may be as audacious not to strive for a clearer understanding of God than that available to our ancient cultural ancestors.[98]

Even if one cannot abide critical-historical approaches to these narratives, one should be able to recognize that the narratives are in some places convoluted and obscure, and that the latitude for interpretation is almost boundless. We shall concentrate at this stage on four episodes relating to the family life of Abraham, "the first Jew," who to this day is seen by people of several major world religions as having entered into a momentous covenant with God on behalf of posterity. All four episodes have troubled the moral sensibility of certain readers widely respected for their integrity. The objection might be raised that focusing on problematic episodes impedes our obtaining a wider and more balanced view than one like Weber's; and it is certainly the case that the Book of Genesis presents scenes of the domestic lives of the patriarchs that are touching and uplifting, and yet also pleasantly familiar and, in some cases, startlingly

reminiscent of poignant experiences in our own lives. However, the four epi-
sodes on which we shall focus bring a broad range of critical issues into bold
relief; they have recurrently drawn the attention of exegetes of many
persuasions; they facilitate application of our simple, interpretative "device"; and
they are more representative than might appear on the surface. First, however,
a word is in order about Abraham's status as a moral agent.

Some would object to treating Abraham as a "moral agent" rather than a
"man of faith." They would argue that to treat Abraham as an individual having
to make moral decisions in a way comparable to that in which ordinary people
now make them in everyday life (or even in times of crisis) is to miss one of
a number of points: Abraham is a divinely inspired prophet; he belongs to a
world existing long before the advent of philosophical and logical modes of
thinking; he would not have understood the category of the "moral" or "ethical"
apart from his more fundamental conceptions of being faithful to God, to the
terms of a covenant, and to specific groups of people; he would not have grasped
modern distinctions between the moral and the ritual; he did not regard himself
as an autonomous agent, but as an instrument of divine will; he had life expe-
riences that would have justified his faithful (though occasionally wavering)
expectation that God would continue to be directly involved in resolving his
problems; and so forth. These points are all worth considering, and some are
philosophically engaging. However, given the program of this inquiry, we could
not accomplish much if we adopted a perspective based on this dichotomy,
which in most contexts is misleading if not altogether arbitrary.

We have already, in several places, considered the danger of underestimating
differences between ancient and modern ways of thinking (or acting), but the
inference has never been drawn here that meaningful moral guidance cannot be
found in ancient texts. Although the specific points indicated above are worth
considering in relation to specific interpretative issues, the fact remains that we
can still relate in important ways to a figure like Abraham, who is portrayed in
Genesis not as a supernatural or subhuman being, but as a human person with
certain ideas, emotions, desires, dispositions, abilities, problems, and aspirations
that are unambiguously comparable to our own. Granted, he is depicted as re-
ceiving direct communication from God of a kind that few people receive. But
Scriptural texts repeatedly portray Abraham not as a man of blind faith, but as
a thoughtful, reflective, sensible person who weighs alternatives carefully, con-
siders the implications of various courses of action, demonstrates the ability to
solve problems in difficult situations, wrestles with his conscience, considers the
interests and needs of his fellows, displays compassion toward strangers, and
maybe most arrestingly, directly challenges his God's judgment by means of
rational moral argument. Indeed, this man of faith stands before his God, who
is about to destroy the city of Sodom, and asks, "Wilt thou also destroy the
righteous with the wicked? . . . Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"[99]
Abraham is both a moral agent and a man of faith. Without the capacity for
authentic moral commitment, he could not enter into his covenant with God or

fulfill all his obligations under its terms. He is simultaneously a very human figure and a very great one by the standards of any vital culture. Nonetheless, with respect to the specific matter of his family values, we ought to have some serious concerns, as some of the most circumspect and informed exegetes have acknowledged.

The Covenant and Family Values

With our interest in family values, we must not ignore the relation of Abraham's covenant with God to the value he places on family. The matter of "values" is on one level a matter of what we value, and more specifically, what things we value in life and in what order we value them. Abram,[100] like most people, wants a child. He specifically wants a biological heir. It is not sufficient for him to have a good wife, relatives, servants, health, wealth, a good reputation, and opportunities for personal growth. He longs for offspring to whom he can pass on things of material and spiritual value that he will have acquired in the course of a lifetime, through a combination of divine grace and hard labor. Apparently he hopes to have, through that biological child or through biological children, many generations of descendants. God's plan to make of Abram a great nation is first revealed to him when God directs him to leave his country.[101] But still having no heir, Abram appeals to God, and God answers him:

And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is my heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him: So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.[102]

Abram gets a son, Ishmael, but something goes terribly wrong, and the boy is eventually cast out of his father's house and his father's life; and we shall consider that episode in due course.

Although it may appear now that he has a suitable biological heir in Ishmael, 99-year-old Abram is informed by God that he will make a covenant with Abram. God will make him exceedingly fruitful and the father of many nations, and Abram will henceforth be known as Abraham. There will be kings among Abraham's descendants, and God's covenant will be everlasting, for he will be a God not only to Abraham but to Abraham's descendants throughout the generations. Furthermore, he will give to Abraham and his descendants all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.[103] Thus, Abraham is to have his profoundest desire fulfilled, and not only will he have his posterity, but his descendants will be numerous and in some cases exalted, have their own land,

and be under the special protection of their God—who is the one and only God. Abraham's obligations under the covenant are somewhat ambiguous. As a token of the covenant, Abraham and all his male descendants throughout the generations—and even his slaves—are to be circumcised.[104] Apart from that, Abraham and his descendants are, in some indeterminate sense, to serve God in a way and to a degree that other peoples are not required.

These passages have been analyzed from a plethora of perspectives, but our basic concern is with their implications for matters pertaining to family, values, and culture. A reading of the passages might well indicate to a modern interpreter that there is, in fact, an absolutely fundamental and essential family value imparted by Hebrew Scripture, and that this family value is, moreover, the foundational value of the entire Hebrew-Scriptural and Judaic world-view. There is nothing that Abraham values more than a biological heir; it is only by having offspring, he believes, that he will be able to achieve the highest fulfillment in life. What is most desirable to this otherwise successful individual is that he should have offspring to whom to pass on his considerable material and spiritual estate. The destiny of his descendants—unconsenting parties to the terms of his personal covenant—is determined by this man's desire for family of a particular kind. The history of a people, the Jews, is determined in large measure by diverse forms and degrees of commitment to a world-view associated with what this archetypal figure is seen as having valued most in life. The rise of world religions with millions upon millions of adherents is intimately connected to the value that this archetypal figure places on having a biological heir. Now, as we have seen from our consideration of Scriptural accounts of other "first" families, for God himself nothing a human being does is of higher value than to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. What Abraham values most is what God values most, if in a different key: human posterity.

How are we to understand Abraham's foundational family value, and is it, or should it be, foundational in our own culture? Inasmuch as people have begotten and raised children—and usually understood those biological children to be their heirs—not only in cultures influenced by Scriptural teaching but in all other cultures, including cultures without any exposure to or interest in the values of a remote Semitic people, the value would appear to qualify as "natural," or at least "normal," although many people would insist that they value other things more highly. But in the Hebrew-Scriptural accounts, the value carries with it authoritative moral significance, being associated with the highest obligation and fulfillment. Moreover, philosophical justifications can readily be provided for the importance an Abraham attaches to it. To conceive of the meaning of one's life in relation to posterity—and to what one can contribute to the advancement of future generations rather than merely to what one can accomplish for oneself and one's immediate circle in the limited span of mortal life—is to be committed to cultural creativity and the affirming of life.

Perhaps of greater importance, through one's progeny one attains a form of the immortality for which people separated by vast expanses of time and space

have evidenced a hunger;[105] and this would be more important for the ancient Hebrews than, say, Platonists and Christians, for whom a belief in personal immortality was from the start central to their world-view. Is this then not something plausibly worth regarding as a supreme family value, if not a supreme human value: to see one's life as rendered meaningful by what one is able to pass on to posterity? And is it not also reasonable to regard it as of paramount importance that we are able to see ourselves as faithfully extending the creative accomplishments of our ancestors as well as making possible the creative accomplishments of our descendants?

We should be cognizant, however, of two substantial and related moral reservations that have been expressed throughout the history of Western civilization, one individualist and the other universalist. The first is that individuals, including Abraham's own descendants, should not be obliged to desire above all else what Abraham did; for although it may be desirable that people generally bring children into the world, it may not be appropriate for all individuals to center their lives on begetting and rearing biological heirs. It may be that the advancement of posterity—if that is indeed to be valued highly—requires that some individuals take a different approach to rendering their lives meaningful. It may also be crucial for individuals to exercise the freedom to determine for themselves, by a commitment comparable to Abraham's, what to believe in and what to regard as of ultimate importance. The second reservation concerns the matter of "seed." Why, one may wonder, was Abraham so concerned about *biological* posterity? Was it because the ancient Hebrews and those from whom they learned were not sufficiently advanced, despite their elevated vision, to conceive clearly of posterity in wider and loftier senses? The cultural costs to be paid for such particularism are high, and if these two moral reservations have loomed so large in the Western consciousness, it is in large part because of the influence of teachings attributed to the founders of Christianity. One would not know that from the rhetoric of those conservative Christian cultural critics who, in commending the wisdom of the "Bible," forget at crucial moments that in critical ways the teachings attributed to Jesus and the apostle Paul represent the categorical repudiation of certain Hebrew-Scriptural ideals regarding the family paradigms that matter most.

There is nothing strange or unfamiliar about Abraham's desire as such for a biological heir. Most people in our society, as in virtually all societies throughout history, have wanted to beget and rear children. Few among us have not personally known couples that have echoed the lament of the childless Abram and Sarai. Rarely are the motives for wanting biological children completely selfish, and a society in which people generally did not want to beget and bring up children would be a life-denying and perhaps nihilistic society. Viewed from this perspective, the Scriptural texts we have been considering may fittingly be said to educate us with respect to the importance of a family value. On the other hand, in our society most thoughtful people take for granted that wanting to beget and rear offspring is largely a personal value rather than a universal ob-

ligation; some people are not suited to raise children; people who do not bring children into the world can make enormous contributions to humanity and indeed to the realization of Hebrew-Scriptural ideals such as love, justice, and commitment to the survival of the species, of all God's creatures, and of the earth. Adopting children can be as life-affirming as bearing them; it is often more constructive to leave one's material and spiritual estate to worthy "strangers" or the community itself than to "blood" relations who will waste it or put it to dishonorable use; and an unloved, miseducated, or abused child is one of life's greatest victims, and in some cases potentially one of society's greatest menaces. The legendary figure of Abraham could not comprehend some of these things; and in obscuring their significance, many traditionalist interpretations of the relevant Scriptural passages do not serve a civilized society well.

We must also bear in mind that throughout much of history, Scriptural emphasis on the primacy of reproduction has had some notably unwholesome ramifications for the understanding of sexuality and gender relations. Thus, the sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson is critical of Bible-centered religion for misinterpreting the biological significance of sex by stressing insemination and procreation rather than bonding;[106] and this distortion has, of course, had many negative implications (though also some positive ones) for sexual ethics. Regarding its implications for gender relations, theologian Carolyn Pressler, for example, submits that the Deuteronomic family laws—which we shall consider in the next chapter—"seek to maintain the integrity of the family by stringently reinforcing male control of women's sexuality. The laws seek to ensure the continuity of the family; this continuity is defined in terms of providing the father with a male heir."[107] Judith Romney Wegner has observed, in her careful study of Rabbinic teaching based on this Scriptural value, that the Mishnah treats a woman as man's chattel at precisely those times when some man has a proprietary interest in her sexual and reproductive function;[108] and Tikva Frymer-Kensky asserts bluntly that in Hebrew Scripture, men "own" women's sexuality.[109]

Implications of the Betrayal of Sarah

Weber takes Abraham's behavior in placing his wife in jeopardy by passing her off as his sister—first in dealing with Pharaoh[110] and later with Abimelech[111]—as a striking example of how the patriarchs "lack all traits of personal heroism."[112] This is an overstatement, for not only is Abraham portrayed as an intrepid warrior in rescuing his difficult nephew Lot and defeating mighty armies,[113] but he is recurrently depicted as stolidly accepting the obligation to take risks as part of his ordained mission; and as we have seen, he is even prepared to challenge the moral judgment of his God. Besides, a great deal of ambiguity, moral and otherwise, pervades the narratives, so that the theologian Gerhard von Rad sees the first wife-sister story as "an extreme example of how little suggestion most of the patriarchal stories give the reader for any authoritative ex-

planation and assessment of any occurrence."[114] Conceding that readers are most concerned about the betrayal of the matriarch, von Rad warns that the text can be trivially or profoundly interpreted;[115] and after reminding us that the human events must be considered in relation to the overriding importance of divine activity, he asks, in a tone seldom encountered in the work of so erudite a theological scholar, "Whoever said that everything here must or could be satisfactorily explained?"[116]

That Abraham should on two occasions put his wife in jeopardy, first as Abram but then later as the more inspired Abraham, should elicit serious reflection on the part of the exegete, for unless one is prepared to explain the textual emphasis on this behavior from the narrowest critical-historical or social-scientific perspective, one is obliged to see a pattern, and all the more since Abraham's son is subsequently portrayed putting his own wife in jeopardy in the same manner.[117] Although the two episodes differ in form, accent, and detail, in both cases points can be made in Abraham's defense, and as one would expect, midrashic embellishment goes some way toward rehabilitating the patriarch's image.[118] Nevertheless, in both cases this great "man of faith" ultimately puts his wife in jeopardy rather than acting in an unambiguously honorable way and relying directly and steadfastly on divine justice and protection. If Abraham could rely on God to look after his wife's welfare following her removal to the houses of Pharaoh and Abimelech, he could just as well have trusted God before involving himself in a scheme likely to result in her removal; and if he did not trust in God at either stage, which itself would be difficult to explain or justify in light of God's having already communicated with this great "man of faith," then in both situations he was essentially prepared to turn over his wife to the ruler (and a potentially gruesome fate) and continue to benefit from the ruler's largesse and avoid any risk to his own safety and mission.

One approach to understanding the cycle of Abraham-Sarah stories is to see them as conveying to the reader a sense of Abraham's moral development. Thus, Leon R. Kass, who considers both wife-sister accounts, proposes that, "Abraham's adventures constitute his education, right up to his final exam, the binding of Isaac."[119] Kass also sees the stories as having continuing relevance—"conveying something atemporal" and presenting a "universal anthropology."[120] Given our interest in family, values, and culture, the question would then be one of what moral lessons Abraham may have learned about family life from these experiences, for presumably, we are supposed to learn those very lessons from the narratives. However, while Kass and others have their own answers, to which they are entitled, the knowledgeable von Rad has warned us that we are dealing here with textual material from which it is extremely difficult to derive distinct lessons. In fact, it is not hard to see Abraham as having learned nothing at all from his first experience, since he is portrayed as ultimately following the same course of action in Gerar as he did in Egypt.[121] And in addition, he may have been a bad role model for his son Isaac, who follows this same course of action when faced with comparable circumstances. This may be, in

von Rad's or Kass' view, a "trivial" interpretation, but whether it is trivial or profound is a matter of judgment, and in any case, obscure texts appropriated by mass audiences inevitably induce many trivial but influential interpretations.

"Whoever said that everything here must or could be satisfactorily explained?" Whether or not anyone ever said such a thing, and I suspect that a whole lot of people have, the fact is that it has mattered immensely to numberless people throughout history how obscure Scriptural passages have been interpreted, particularly by rabbinical and ecclesiastical authorities who have shaped the most influential of the received traditions of interpretation. Countless people have died terrible deaths, suffered intensely, and been prevented from living meaningful lives and enriching the lives of others because obscure passages of Biblical literature have been interpreted by powerful individuals or groups in peculiar ways.

With respect to the wife-sister accounts, some trivial or profound lessons regarding family values that conceivably might be derived "from" the text are that a man ultimately must place his own interests ahead of his wife's, particularly when his life is at stake or he sees himself as on an important mission; that a woman should acquiesce to her husband's judgment, even when her welfare is imperiled by doing so; that when a wife's fate is at stake, one is not as obliged (or naturally inclined) to summon up the faith, confidence, and courage required (and naturally evoked) when what is at stake is posterity, land, wealth, one's major project, or the fate of a troublesome nephew involved in yet another of his misadventures; that as long as a man has reason to believe he can beget children, it does not matter much who the mother will be, since a wife is replaceable; and that no matter how badly one has treated a family member, if one is more or less a person of faith one may properly assume that God *ex machina* will sort everything out in the end. There are indeed people in our own society who believe such things, but it would be harder to derive such lessons from the narratives if the text indicated unequivocally that what Abraham has done is, at least on some level, sinful or morally wrong.[122]

It is conceivable that the narratives are meant primarily to convey a sense of the intricacy of the circumstances in which the patriarch finds himself, and the moral ambiguity that a situation of this type entails. After all, few of us are in a position to be absolutely certain that we would behave more honorably and more reasonably than Abraham if we were faced with a comparable situation. If the narratives are thus intentionally obscure, the basic "lesson" about family values and other matters that we are being taught is that there are no simple lessons to be learned. Such an interpretation is hardly likely to satisfy those conservative religious cultural critics who see the return to the timeless wisdom of Holy Scripture as the most effective antidote to the various forms of subjectivism, relativism, and perspectivism that have undermined our culture's life-sustaining convictions and values. Alternatively, maybe we have been looking for "meaning" in the wrong way. Maybe the wife-sister stories, regardless of how they initially developed from Egyptian sources, were eventually incorpo-

rated into Hebrew Scripture in the form we find them because they could ef-
fectively perform a political, economic, or other practical function.[123] Or
perhaps, despite our proficiency in the application of theological, philosophical,
critical-historical, and social-scientific methodologies, we are only now just be-
ginning to appreciate the "logic" of mythical thought, a logic as rigorous as that
of modern science, but applied to different things.[124]

Implications of the Treatment of Hagar and Ishmael

Determining the core family values of Hebrew Scripture is further compli-
cated when we consider Scriptural texts dealing with the birth of Abraham's
first son and the eventual casting out of the boy and his mother.[125] We are told
how the barren Sarai (later Sarah), troubled that her husband has not been able
to sire his heir, persuades him to have a child with her handmaid Hagar: "I pray
thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her."[126]
Abram (later Abraham) goes along with this scheme, while Hagar's interests in
the matter are of no consequence to the other parties, for she is a slave from a
foreign land and thus even more vulnerable than other women in an ancient
Middle Eastern society. There are purely historical and anthropological per-
spectives from which it is not difficult to accept the arrangement described in
the text, but we are not merely being ethnocentric when we find it strange, as
there are good reasons for its offending our moral and logical sensibility.

Slavery and the treatment of women as objects are among the most savage
and persistent forms of exploitation that the world has known, and Biblical
literature has been interpreted in ways that have contributed to reinforcing
them (as well as in other ways providing grounds for questioning them). The
arrangement urged by Sarai may be seen as combining both forms of exploi-
tation, with a vulnerable woman not only condoning but promoting the ex-
ploitation of a more vulnerable one. The texts do not conceal Sarai's own
vulnerability, which is evident from her recurrent apprehension; but the texts
do not suggest that a woman, barren or otherwise, should not have to live
with such anxiety. The situation of the infertile wife remained a precarious
one in the Judaic tradition; and in ancient Middle Eastern societies where po-
lygyny and concubinage were accepted, a childless Sarai would have been
blessed to have a sentimental old Abram who had developed a deep emotional
or practical attachment to her.

Conservative Bible-oriented cultural critics of our day, who routinely com-
plain about the sexual depravity resulting from disrespect for the chastity fos-
tered by the Bible, can hardly welcome their children reading about the first
matriarch of God's chosen people nervously encouraging her husband to have
sexual relations with her handmaid. Inasmuch as men generally have reasons
for engaging in sexual activity besides endeavoring to replenish the earth, it is
convenient for Abram that he has his wife's permission and indeed her encour-
agement to sleep with the maid. More importantly, unlike most married men in

our own society, he does not have to concern himself with answering to either his wife or the "other woman."

The question also arises as to what we are to make of the family values associated with Sarai's idea that she could "obtain" children "by" Hagar. Obtaining children in this way was apparently a regional custom in parts of the ancient Middle East and not some peculiar scheme invented on the spur of the moment by the desperate Sarai; and not only does Abram accept the good sense behind it, but its importance is subsequently underscored in its being adopted, with immense long-term consequences, by the fruitful Jacob. Surrogate parenting, under more civilized conditions, has experienced a revival in recent years, but conservative Bible-oriented religionists are usually among its most severe critics.[127] The Scriptural text gives us no indication of what kind of family relationships could have been expected to develop in a group comprised of a man, his wife, the wife's slave, and an heir obtained by the wife through her slave. This issue never arises, for the focus is subsequently on the wife's unhappiness with the handmaid's impudence as a result of her new status. Her enhanced status does not last long, as Abram reassures Sarai that she may do anything she wants to the mother of his heir.

A word is in order concerning the Hebrew-Scriptural approach to polygyny, concubinage, and related institutions and its consequences for family values. The Christian scholar Mace, who admires the Hebrew-Scriptural approach to sexual matters—both in general and in contrast with that frequently taken by Christians—asserts at one point that, "the Hebrews were from the beginning essentially monogamous, both in theory and in practice."[128] This is an extraordinary generalization on the part of someone who has done considerable historical and anthropological research. Adam and Noah are portrayed in Scripture as having one wife and sexual partner, but they represent simple men from the antediluvian world. With Abraham, matters have become more complicated. While retaining his long-time wife, he has an indeterminate relationship with a slave who has been his sexual partner and is the mother of his firstborn son. Then, at Genesis 25:1–6 we are told that though Abraham gave "all that he had" to Isaac, the sons of his concubines received gifts before being sent away from Isaac. We are not told in this passage what was left for the six sons of Abraham's wife Keturah, or given any idea of what relationship Abraham had with them, or with Keturah herself or the sons of the concubines, in the context of a family life. Jacob's children, ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel, are depicted as having four different mothers who live together simultaneously, and such exalted leaders of Israel (at the height of its worldly glory) as Gideon, David, and Solomon collected women as trophies and sired huge numbers of children.[129]

The sages of the Rabbinic tradition who descant at length in the Talmud about matters related to chastity—most notably, female virginity[130]—appear generally to take for granted the acceptability of polygyny, though polyandry must have been almost beyond their imagination. Polygyny undoubtedly was never the

norm among Jews, if perhaps more for socioeconomic than moral and senti-
mental reasons, but there was no effective formal prohibition of it until the
medieval period, and then only among Ashkenazic Jews and on the basis of a
rather arbitrary judgment by a bold religious leader. Hebrew Scripture does not
accord concubinage anything like the moral status of marriage, but neither does
it unambiguously characterize the practice as sinful. Hebrew Scripture's prohi-
bition of adultery is well-known, mainly because of its inclusion in the Deca-
logue, but its concept of adultery is markedly narrower than that prevailing in
our own society, inasmuch as Hebrew Scripture focuses on the sinfulness of a
man's having sexual relations with a married woman and a woman's having
sexual relations with a man other than her husband, whereas most people in our
society associate adultery with any form of sexual infidelity in marriage.

All in all, under the conditions defined by the sexual codes followed by most
of the revered figures encountered in the texts, the Hebrew-Scriptural ideal of
male chastity, including a married man's chastity, is rather slack by standards
most "decent" people now take for granted in Western democracies. When the
conservative "pro-family" cultural critic James Q. Wilson reminds us that, "Mar-
riage is in large measure a device for reining in the predatory sexuality of
males,"[131] we have to shake out of our consciousness the Scriptural image of
King Solomon's seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.[132]

From current perspectives the consequences the Hebrew-Scriptural approach
to certain sexual practices holds for family values may also seem largely neg-
ative, inasmuch as polygyny, concubinage, sexual freedom for the husband, and
ease in discarding an undesirable wife are institutions that tend to limit the main
forms of intimacy, stability, and security usually associated with a healthy fam-
ily. Mace, in indirectly defending Hebrew Scripture's acceptance of polygyny
and other practices that would be "otherwise obscure," urges us to remember
that according to the Hebrew-Scriptural outlook, male succession is the "key to
the whole structure of family life," so that once one grasps the "driving motive,"
one realizes that these practices are "natural and indeed inevitable."[133] However,
those who grant that there is a direct and inevitable connection between fixation
on male succession and these otherwise obscure practices may see the proper
inference to be drawn as being that the Hebrew-Scriptural model of family life
must be unsound at its very core. Polygyny, concubinage, and related practices
may deliver a childless man from a "terrible predicament"[134] at too high a cost
to others, and even himself. Alternatively, one may conclude that while key
passages in Hebrew Scripture represent a strong statement of support for the
family, what they are supporting is basically the family as conceived by the
husband and father, "who jealously guards what is essential to the fulfillment
of his role in the family."[135] Moreover, there is a fundamental tension in a model
of family life that attaches so much importance to procreation that it condemns
the spilling of seed and treats homosexuality as an abomination, yet condones
a man's recourse to prostitutes apart from those involved in alien religious
cults.[136] With respect to polygyny itself, the institution in effect removes poten-

tial wives from the pool available to ordinary men in order to enhance the glory and power of the already privileged, thereby making it more difficult for ordinary men to fulfill their obligation to be fruitful and multiply and to participate in whatever satisfaction family life has to offer.

After she miraculously gives birth to a son of her own, Sarah insists that Abraham cast out Hagar and Ishmael. She complains that Ishmael has been "mocking" but then reveals what is more plausibly her primary interest: "[T]he son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son." The text indicates that Abraham is disturbed on Ishmael's account, though there is no suggestion that the fate of Hagar is of any concern to him.[137] Abraham had intensely desired a biological heir and was promised that "he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." Ishmael is Abraham's firstborn son; and even were we unaware that Abraham had been possessed by a longing for a biological heir, we would ordinarily expect Abraham to regard Ishmael's welfare as one of his highest concerns in life. Pressed to specify what might qualify as an important family value in our society, we could do a good deal worse than propose the carrying out of one's special responsibilities toward the children one has brought into the world or otherwise made a parental commitment to. Perhaps Abraham would have ultimately rejected Sarah's request had it not been that, as the narrative relates, God intervened and directed Abraham to comply with the request. God tells Abraham that he will look after Hagar and Ishmael and make of the boy a nation, and the man of faith proceeds to cast them out. Hagar and Ishmael wander in the wilderness, and just as the boy is about to die, God intervenes and Hagar learns that Ishmael too will become a great nation.

Since this story treats both family and value issues, we might expect it to offer us guidance with respect to family values. The figures in the story are involved in an intricate network of relationships, several of which qualify as paradigmatic "family relationships." The story involves a husband and father, his long-time wife, sons (though Isaac is not in the foreground), and brothers. These people display in their diverse relationships forms of affection, concern, contempt, resentment, fear, and anger; and decisions have to be made in order to resolve serious tensions that have arisen within the group. We can relate to their situation on this level; in fact, situations of this kind constitute the substance of television soap opera. However, there are other relationships within this group of figures that make it quite different from the families whose problems are followed in soap operas. We find a slave and her mistress, who has the patriarch's authority to treat the slave as she wishes; a slave who is either a secondary wife or someone vaguely approximating that status; a slaveholder who has in some sense "obtained" a child by the bondwoman, though the boy's mother remains in the household; and the child "obtained" in this way. What family values does this story teach us? How do the characters deal with the crisis, and do they exercise wise judgment to be emulated or imprudent judgment to be avoided?

On one level, we learn absolutely nothing. In fact, on this level we have been prevented from learning anything. That is because at the key moment when the protagonist has to resolve the crisis—and his personal moral dilemma—by making a moral decision, God intervenes and takes over. Certain domestic problems in this Scriptural story are familiar, such as the mocking child, conflicts over estate matters, and an aging wife's insecurity and resentment of the other woman. When a family in our society, and especially a devout, Bible-oriented family, has a family crisis on its hands, it may want to turn to Scripture rather than to, say, a professional family counselor, in order to see how great figures in Scripture resolved comparable problems. But one may conceivably interpret the text under consideration as teaching that God intends that we should wait on his action rather than presume to make such a decision. In any case, Abraham neither receives nor even requests an explanation from God; this man who questioned God's judgment concerning the fate of Sodom now listens passively and carries out divine instruction. This might well seem to prevent both Abraham and the reader from deriving any moral lessons from the patriarch's and group's experiences, and it reminds the reader of how privileged a man of faith like Abraham is to have God communicate directly with him and bring order to his domestic troubles, while we moderns of wavering faith must somehow dig our own way out of domestic quagmires. Commenting on this episode in Scripture, von Rad, appreciating the typical reader's initial surprise at the turn of events, remarks: "But precisely this is what the patriarchal stories like to show, that God pursues his great historical purposes in, with, and under all headstrong acts of men."[138] To the extent that this is so, the stories not only avoid offering moral guidance but discourage readers from making moral decisions.

On another level, however, we can see Abraham the moral agent as having made a sound moral judgment, even though intuitively it may seem that it cannot possibly be right to treat one's son and a woman one has known intimately in the way Abraham does; for Abraham has acted rationally, making a sound utilitarian calculation. He has not simply acted on the basis of obedience to God, because God has told him that he will look after the interests of Hagar and Ishmael. God has enabled Abraham to act rationally and morally in this situation by supplying him with a key piece of information, and when Abraham puts it together with his recognition of the advantages of Sarah's being placated, Isaac's being freed from rivalry, and Ishmael's "mocking" being eliminated, he understands that casting out Hagar and Ishmael is not only a matter of obedience but also, if secondarily, a matter of good sense. Yet while God has given Abraham enough information to enable him to make a sound utilitarian calculation, neither Abraham nor the reader knows why God has arranged matters in such a way that Abraham should be obliged to cut off his firstborn son and a hapless woman.

On a third level, modern readers can speculate more freely and more knowledgeably than Abraham could as to the lessons to be derived from God's judgment. They may draw any number of trivial or profound conclusions about family values to be derived from the text, as for example, that one's obligations

to bad children are far more limited than those to good children; that religious commitments take precedence over family commitments; that the interests of an individual family member are insignificant in relation to those of long-term posterity, the "great nations" of the future; that a time comes when an established family tradition such as primogeniture should be left behind;[139] that exogamy is undesirable;[140] that in certain domestic matters, even some very important ones, a wife's judgment should prevail over the husband's; that biological and cultural endowment should both be regarded as being at least as much a matter of matrilineal descent as patrilineal; and that a mother's love is the most powerful force in human relations. One can pick and choose here. If one prefers, one can confine oneself to drawing on the wisdom of established rabbinical and ecclesiastical traditions of interpretation, or on the lively speculations contained in the latest humanistic, social-scientific, depth-psychological, and comparative-folklorist studies. One can draw on a wide range of sources or simply do a little imaginative exegesis of one's own. One may find in time that family values are uncontrollably pouring out of the text or that the text is gradually disappearing under the interpretation.[141]

Implications of the Great Test

The awesome account of the testing of Abraham, at Genesis 22, has evoked so profound an emotional response from Bible-oriented religionists that a mere inquirer might well be tempted to spare it the indignity of subjection to further interpretation. However, the account's awesomeness has not consistently deterred those most inclined to remind us of its awesomeness from making bold assertions about it; and if much has been written on it, that is chiefly because of the critical moral, philosophical, and theological issues it raises.[142] It is one of those poignant Scriptural narratives that is a touchstone by which the authenticity of a reader's existential commitment can be judged—and fittingly, since the protagonist's existential commitment is itself judged. The story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac is a great test for the reader, and the theologian W. G. Jordan has keenly observed that a personal resolution of some difficult issues may be required if one is to have the clear exegetical conscience necessary for determining how the story may be suitably applied in our own age.[143] Our basic concern here is with family values conveyed by the text—a subject usually treated by exegetes as peripheral—but we cannot entirely avoid more general issues when dealing with a story about a man extolled through the centuries for his willingness to carry out the ritual slaying of his son because he has been told to do so, and despite his not knowing why.

In the narrative, Abraham, after undergoing many ordeals in the course of his mission, is put to his greatest test and told by God, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee unto the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."[144] Abraham obeys and goes up to the designated place. On the way,

he is asked by Isaac where the lamb is for a burnt offering, and he replies that God will provide one. He builds an altar, binds Isaac to it, and stretches forth his hand to slay his son with a knife, at which point the angel of the Lord calls to him out of heaven and tells him, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."[145] After sacrificing a ram in Isaac's stead, Abraham then is told that because he has not withheld his son, God will bless him and multiply his seed as the stars and the sand and see to it that Abraham's seed will possess the gate of their enemies. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."[146]

These are the essential details given, and since we are not told anything else, it would appear that nothing important has been left out. It is hard to imagine that we would not have been told if Abraham had again asked, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" In this chapter of Genesis, unlike the previous one dealing with the casting out of Ishmael, we are not told, "And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son."[147] A protective mother does not figure in the episode. This time God does not provide Abraham with information allowing Abraham the moral agent to make a utilitarian calculation. There is no suggestion that Abraham has reflected at length on God's directive. Thus, the central theme of the story might well appear to be that Abraham's singular integrity lies in his unconditional obedience to God.

Drawing on philosophical, theological, midrashic, anthropological, depth-psychological, or other sources and methods, one may be able to explain to one's satisfaction and that of others the spiritual, moral, or practical insights underlying and communicated by this haunting imagery. We know, however, that if anyone in our own society had to be stopped at the last moment from killing a son in a religious ritual, we would regard that person not as a fitting role model for future generations, but either as a depraved monster deserving severe punishment or an extremely sick person requiring extended psychiatric care. We would not see his conduct as any more justified simply because he wholeheartedly believed that he had been commanded by God to carry out the act, though we would likely count this delusion as evidence of his insanity and need for psychiatric treatment rather than punishment. Most of us are not sufficiently committed to cultural-relativist notions to reflect indulgently that the practice of human sacrifice was morally sound for the ancient peoples who integrated it into their religious rituals. Of course, in the Scriptural account, Abraham is portrayed not only as believing that he is obeying God, but as actually obeying God, which to virtually all Bible-oriented religionists and some other people, too, makes a world of difference.

Kierkegaard maintains that the story of Abraham contains a "teleological suspension of the ethical" and that by his act, Abraham "overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher *telos* outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former."[148] Kierkegaard appreciates more than many other expositors

that family-related values may be of immense interest to the reader of the story, and he proposes that, "Abraham's relation to Isaac, ethically speaking, is quite simply expressed by saying that a father shall love his son more dearly than himself."[149] However, this elementary family value, this ethical relation, is "reduced to a relative position in contrast with the absolute relation to God."[150] We are thus, in Kierkegaard's view, confronted in the story by the "paradox" of faith; and Abraham's commitment and behavior, though recognizable as praiseworthy, must remain largely unintelligible.[151] If what Kierkegaard is saying is true,[152] then people hunting for universal values in the Bible confuse the religious with the ethical. To view Abraham's act in relation to universal values is to misunderstand the distinctiveness and individuality of an authentic existential faith that stands apart from ethical consciousness. While the early Hebrews may have, for the most part, lacked an existential conception of the ordinary individual, the extraordinary Abraham can be seen as symbolizing the ability of even pre-philosophical thinkers to arrive at a kind of personal religion and individual system of beliefs and values.[153]

Nevertheless, most Bible-oriented religionists, both traditionalist and progressivist, believe that Abraham's commitment and behavior are essentially intelligible, and that understanding them requires awareness of ethical values of universal import. Traditionalists generally emphasize the paramount importance of obedience to God, whereas progressivists, habitually trying to make a place for personal freedom and meliorative reason, are constantly searching for something that justifies obedience. To most traditionalists, Abraham represents a man who clearly grasps where ultimate authority lies and dutifully performs the role assigned by God to a mortal who cannot reasonably expect to understand God's larger designs. To most progressivists, the matter of Abraham's understanding of authority is more complex, and the obedience of an authentically autonomous and rational being created in God's own image would be worthless to God and his human creations if it were not intimately related to the agent's personal understanding, emotional involvement, and confidence in the meaningfulness of human experience and endeavor. Thus, traditionalists and progressivists ordinarily take substantially different positions on what foundational values are to be derived from the story of Abraham's great test.

A powerful example can be found in Samson Raphael Hirsch's scathing attack on Abraham Geiger's interpretation of the story. Hirsch and Geiger, nineteenth-century German rabbis, are two of the most influential figures in modern Jewish history, one being the champion of Judaic orthodoxy and the other of Judaic reform. Hirsch writes:

[O]ne who calls himself a "pathfinder of the science of Judaism," in raving madness has dared to raise his lying pen . . . and says that Abraham's greatness lay not in his being ready to obey the voice of His God, and sacrifice his son but his obeying the voice of the angel telling him not to do so, and his real greatness lay in his coming to his senses in time, and realising that God finds no pleasure in human sacrifices. . . . Only a twisted

mind could possibly work this out of the story recorded here. "Where is the lamb for the offering?" asks Isaac on the way, so that he was already quite used to the fact that his father was no pagan who offered human sacrifices to his fetich, and absolutely clear and impossible to explain away are the words [of verse 12]. So we have God's word for it that He recognised Abraham's greatness that he was ready to sacrifice even his only son for Him, but not that he desisted in time! . . . [Geiger,] with his twisted mind, finds no better name for this fear of God which uses the freedom of will and intelligence of human beings in submitting them to the insight and will of the Highest intelligence and Love than—doglike obedience.[154]

It is useful to consider what may be at stake in this disagreement over the interpretation of the text, particularly with respect to our understanding of the relation of Biblical religion to family values.

Hirsch denounces the "lying" Geiger's "twisted mind," but I submit that it is not Geiger's dishonesty or unreasonableness or even Geiger's departure from a literal interpretation of the Scriptural text that really offends Hirsch. No matter how sincerely, logically, or "literally" Geiger developed his exegesis, Hirsch would not be favorably impressed. The most meticulously developed etymological, critical-historical, social-scientific, and philosophical arguments would not impress Hirsch in this case, for Hirsch is unshakably committed to interpreting the text in the spirit in which he sees it as having been understood by his ancestors. For Hirsch, the only sound interpretation of the text is one that unambiguously conforms with the authentic faith of his ancestors, a spiritual legacy that he sees it as his role, as a religious and intellectual leader of his people, to transmit to future generations. While expression of that faith must be adapted to changing conditions in order for the faith to survive, there is a vital core of authoritative traditions that must be maintained. These traditions—conceptual, symbolic, ethical, ritual, legal, exegetical, institutional, and so forth—were in their essential substance revealed by God to Israel through the patriarchs and prophets, then clarified and enhanced by successive generations of loyal, informed heirs dedicated to preserving the integrity of a spiritual and cultural endowment that has sustained the Jewish people under the most trying circumtances, and enabled Israel to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Hirsch is, in fact, no simple-minded, anti-intellectual "literalist." He acknowledges the value of secular learning and the need to take into account advances in the various branches of culture; and more importantly, he is constantly mindful of the historical development of Judaic doctrine and practice, and he is devoted to the great figures of the Rabbinic tradition, such as Hillel and Shammai, and certain medieval and modern Jewish scholars, including Rashi and Maimonides. Hirsch would never think of reproaching the great figures of the Rabbinic tradition and their medieval and modern followers for their conspicuously routine departures from literal interpretation of Scriptural text. He piously accepts with equanimity the logical and illogical elaborations and "clarifications" of God's Word that pervade the Midrash and Talmud; and he would never think

of calling Maimonides a liar for serving up philosophical explanations that would have likely sent Hillel and Shammai into convulsions. In this respect, Hirsch's theological conservatism is akin to the Christian conservatism of John Henry Newman—who was almost his exact contemporary—rather than that of fundamentalist Protestants who believe or pretend to believe that the literal meaning of problematic Scriptural texts is transparent to any earnest reader.[155]

In Hirsch's view, Geiger and his circle of "reformers" are subverting the authentic faith of Israel. Lacking genuine respect for the authority of the divine Father, the patriarchs and prophets, the fathers of the Rabbinic tradition, and usually even the biological fathers who raised them to be faithful Jews, they undermine Israel's spiritual legacy. Meddling in matters of doctrine, practice, and exegesis that they do not understand, they are like "mocking," willful, rebellious children who, in drawing attention to themselves, wanting to have their own way, and scoffing at elders and ancestors, tear down rather than patiently build up what has been lovingly passed on to them. Contemptuous of the authentic authority of God and his Torah, worthy ancestors, and great traditions of theory and practice that have carried the people and their culture forward and evidenced God's faithfulness to his everlasting covenant for over three thousand years, they seek inspiration in the false wisdom of idols—alien "authorities" such as universal reason, scientific method, modernity, and the ideal of progress. These childish malcontents, wanting in respect for the authority of the fathers, are attempting to refashion Judaism into something not distinctively Jewish, and are contaminating the spiritual estate of their ancestors with alien ideas, values, and symbols. In Genesis 22 and elsewhere, Geiger and his ilk are endeavoring to remake God in their own image. Hirsch, seeing himself as both a loyal heir to his forefathers and a father-authority to his students and Jewish posterity, will not put up with this disobedience; and he would permanently cast the childish rebels out into the wilderness of Gentile insignificance, where their traitorous minds had already become infected by alien cultures.

The progressivist mind—religious or secularist—is likely to conceive things differently. A progressivist reader of Hirsch's diatribe will not need to know anything more about Geiger to be able to form a notion of what Geiger and his associates must have thought of Samson Raphael Hirsch and his pious disciples. Even in the distorted form presented by Hirsch, Geiger's interpretation of Genesis 22 will impress many progressivist thinkers, if not so much in its detail as in its spirit. The words with which Hirsch castigates Geiger may indeed enhance Geiger's stature in the eyes of those sensitive to the redolence of anything that smacks of bigotry, superstition, irrationalism, fideism, dogmatism, self-righteousness, tribalistic parochialism and ethnocentrism, fanatical overcommitment, hypocritical undercommitment, resistance to entering into genuine dialogue, and—last but assuredly not least—patriarchal authoritarianism.

When the father-authority Hirsch sternly reproaches the disobedient "reformers," some among them may well consider it their obligation to their truly worthy ancestors as well as to posterity to eliminate the cultural confusions and

corruptions that unfit father-authorities of the past have created, reinforced, and condoned. They may be wrong in believing that they are better positioned than traditionalists to conserve, restore, and pass on the essential cultural wisdom of Israel—family values and all. Yet the possibility can be seriously entertained that some thinkers in the tradition of Geiger are earnestly trying to figure out how ancient Hebrew-Scriptural texts can be sincerely and appreciatively appropriated and constructively applied in an advanced civilization that, for all its shortcomings, knows so much more about so many things—including religion, culture, the family, and values—than an Ezra, Hillel, or Rashi. The world of Hirsch and Geiger was the world of Comte, Darwin, Mill, Marx, and Wellhausen; and if most followers of Geiger were shallow assimilationists, some were high-minded individuals deeply troubled by the social, intellectual, and spiritual crises of their epoch. These people could hardly have seen any wisdom or responsibility in hiding under one's prayer shawl and waiting for the cultural storms of the nineteenth century to subside. Neither perhaps could they be justly reproached for expecting a more direct answer from their fathers to Isaac's question about the whereabouts of the lamb being prepared for the sacrifice.

Regarding this last point, we may note that Hirsch's traditional interpretation of Genesis 22, reaffirming that Abraham's integrity lies in his absolute and unquestioning obedience to the divine Father—and his willingness to sacrifice the son for the Father—mirrors paternalistic authoritarianism at other levels of Hirsch's orthodoxy. It is reflected in his uncritical filial devotion to figures in the Rabbinic tradition who, though wise and good men in all sorts of ways, were mortals of limited vision. Of more direct concern is Hirsch's endorsement and promotion of social and family systems in which the rights of children are too often ignored or systematically repressed.

The situation of Isaac in the story is itself noteworthy. Here is a son who trusts his father. Unlike Abraham, who has faith in a divine Father, Isaac has faith in a human father, one who has caused his mother deep insecurity, cast out his half-brother, committed him without his consent to permanent service to a demanding God, and bound him to an altar with the intention of killing him. Surely, the faith of such a child deserves more than an endnote in a piece of exegesis, especially when the issue of family values arises. Isaac indeed, in his own way, is being called upon to sacrifice at least as much as his father.

The chronicle of bewildered and victimized Jewish children continues after Ishmael and Isaac. What could Keturah's children have thought of Abraham's giving all that he had to Isaac, apart from gifts to the sons of the concubines? What could Esau and Jacob have thought of their father Isaac's chaotic handling of estate matters? How extreme must Jacob's favoritism have been to induce Joseph's brothers to get rid of him? And what are we to make of the family values of a social system that makes the children of a Hebrew servant his master's property and legislates with respect to whom a Hebrew child may and may not be sold,[156] or directs that a stubborn and rebellious son be stoned to death by the men of the city?[157] After surveying Hebrew-Scriptural texts and

considering them in the context of his detailed comparative studies, the philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer pronounces that among the ancient Hebrews, "injunctions respecting the treatment of children referred exclusively to their father's benefit. . . . Though some qualification of paternal absolutism arose during the later settled stage of the Hebrews, yet along with persistence of the militant type of government there continued extreme filial subordination."[158] Perhaps we should not even assume that ancient Hebrew culture was no worse in this respect than other ancient Middle Eastern cultures. Blenkinsopp, for example, submits that in significant ways, Hebrew Scripture is less enlightened in its treatment of the interests of children than the Code of Hammurabi.[159]

The sacrifice of the Jewish child throughout the ages is a subject that has received little attention from Judaic traditionalists and, indeed, scholars in general. (David Kraemer, doing research a few years ago on the much broader topic of the traditional Jewish attitude toward children, was able to discover only one book that addresses this topic at length.)[160] Traditionalist Jewish fathers through the centuries have habitually demanded enormous sacrifices of their children; and while Isaac was spared at Moriah, uncounted Jewish children have not been favored by the intercession of an angel of God. The male child, circumcised at infancy, is even now made party to a covenant without his consent. (Setting aside the matter of circumcision as such, we may note that weighty moral, theological, and existential issues arise here comparable to those raised by Christians opposed to child baptism.) Jewish boys and girls are still enculturated without their consent into a community that for all its cultural richness remains insecure and vulnerable. Even highly assimilated Jews are periodically sensitive to the distinctive burdens Jews have to bear, including peculiar forms of guilt. (As if things were not hard enough for them already, they are now expected by some fellow Jews to survive as Jews in order not to hand Hitler posthumous victories.)[161]

A traditionalist Jewish father's high expectations of a son with respect to secular as well as religious "obligations" can be overwhelming, while his daughter may remain relegated to a secondary and demeaning position in religious and communal life.[162] The sentimental image of happy Jewish children, thriving despite the adversity to which they and their nurturing parents have been subjected by a cruel world, is consoling and even inspiring, but not one that consistently corresponds to the information available to social historians. The historian Paula Hyman has observed that, "In modern times, Jews and Gentiles alike have constructed and perpetuated a romantically idealized image of the Jewish family as warm, supportive, and ever-nurturing," and she proposes that this image derived in part "from the nostalgia of Jews who had moved from the relatively insular communities of traditional Jewry into the anonymity and tension of modern Western society."[163] However, the image has also been derived in part from the propaganda of those seeking to sustain and justify a system often oppressive to children.

Traditionalist Jews need not be reluctant to impress upon their children what

the Book says: "Honour thy father and thy mother."[164] One may not be obliged to love one's parents as one is obliged to love God[165] and love one's neighbor,[166] but that one must "honor" them is set out in bold relief in the Decalogue. In Hebrew Scripture, parental obligations to children are not even this clear, but may appear to be mainly concerned with enculturation.[167] Of course, not only Jewish children have been victimized by fathers and communal elites exploiting patriarchal-authoritarian interpretations of Scriptural texts; so, too, have countless Christian children whose fathers, teachers, and community leaders have justified such domination by referring to the Word.

Fathers in most non-Western cultures, and secularist fathers in the West, also often demand great sacrifices of their children and impose their ideas, values, and practices on them; so, too, in various ways do mothers. Besides, there is no good reason to believe that traditionalist Jewish fathers and mothers have generally loved their children less than their liberal-religious or non-religious counterparts. The Scriptural text makes clear that Abraham loved Isaac. But Abraham still took Isaac up to Moriah, and it is not hard for an open-minded reader of Hebrew Scripture to discern a pattern therein of what Spencer has characterized as "extreme filial subordination." The Hebrew-Scriptural attitude toward children in general can be rather unsettling, especially in texts like that in which Moses issues a horrific edict on how to deal with the children of vanquished enemies: "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves."[168] The social historian John Cooper is undoubtedly right to observe that the patriarchal authoritarianism of the ancient Hebrew family cannot be fully understood without consideration of the harsh agricultural conditions facing the ancient Hebrews, and he may even be justified in maintaining that the ancient Hebrew family was marked by more egalitarianism than the families of surrounding nations.[169] However, such considerations do not support the position of those who contend that Scripture imparts timeless family values.

The communal father-authorities of the major prophetic, monotheistic religions are also frequently authoritarian in their dealings with their followers, whom, regardless of their age, are treated in sundry ways as children. It is conceivable that more people have died and suffered in the name of religion than any other form of culture, and often their death and suffering have been caused, at least indirectly, by people they trusted to look after their souls. Religious leaders sometimes impose arbitrary demands on their followers simply to affirm, reinforce, and demonstrate their own authority. They demand all manner of sacrifices and insist that in doing so they are acting as God's earthly agents. Patriarchal authoritarianism thus becomes the standard on one cultural plane after another, and it is hardly obvious, on conscientious moral reflection, that this is a good thing; so if patriarchal authoritarianism is what one regards as the decisive family value being inculcated in Genesis 22, maybe one should be more indulgent toward alternative interpretations of the text. If the text indeed

indicates that a true God cannot be conceived as expecting people to sacrifice their children to him, that is hardly a theme to be brushed aside as of only marginal significance.

Religion as a form of experience and culture requires recognition of authority; religion is in large measure a matter of looking to some higher authority, and one's faith is partly defined by whom and what one regards as authentically most authoritative on moral and spiritual matters. Does acknowledging a supreme authority entail accepting authoritarianism? The story of Abraham's great test can be seen as obliquely addressing this problem but not resolving it. In the Book of Deuteronomy, we read what is regarded by most Bible-oriented religionists as the chief commandment of Scripture: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."[170] However, only a few verses earlier the accent is on fear of God.[171] In Genesis 22, it may well appear that Abraham is being blessed for fear of God rather than love of God.[172]

Questions arise as to precisely what "loving" God can consist in, and how distinct it is from "fearing" God. Hebrew Scripture uses the same term for love to designate an ideal relationship with God that it uses to designate a natural relationship between certain human beings. Whatever love of God has in common with love of a child, spouse, friend, romantic companion, or human parent, it must be love of a different order. It may be love of a higher order, but we should take care not to be uncritically anachronistic in interpreting the text. The theologian William Graham Cole contends that in Hebrew Scripture, "The love of God meant obedience, not communion or identification."[173] "There was no desire to be one with God, to be absorbed into his divine Being, to lose one's individuality in his totality."[174] Later mystical and metaphysical writers could well conceive of love of God in this way, but such conception involves considerable interpretation on the part of the Bible-oriented believer.

Nevertheless, in the Scriptural account, God has developed a personal relationship with Abraham. He has entered into a covenant with Abraham, and a relationship of this kind has to be reciprocal in some way. Abraham's Creator and Sustainer has taken a special interest in him, made a commitment to him, cared for him, entered into a permanent understanding with him and his progeny, instructed him, endured his wavering confidence, and encouraged him; what God expects in return is essentially some form of devotion, a devotion marked by trust. The Almighty can get Abraham to do whatever he wants; God knows that, Abraham knows that, and the reader of the Scriptural text knows that. Yet at the same time, Abraham understands that there is a sense in which the divine Father waits on Abraham's response and that Abraham's God is immeasurably different from the gods of his ancestors and his non-Hebrew neighbors. God is testing Abraham not only to see what Abraham will do of his own free will, but to ascertain the spirit in which he will be doing it. In this sense what is being tested is not merely obedience as such; anyone with whom God had directly communicated would recognize the futility of disobeying the One God,

for God is omnipotent, and people cannot resist his authority. God is testing Abraham's relationship with him, but the text does not explain precisely how or why; neither does it indicate clearly or consistently what a mortal being can give to God that is of value to God. All this is largely left to the reader's imagination. It is conceivable, however, that God is reminding Abraham that devotion to God takes precedence over devotion to everything and everyone else, even a son, even family.

What, by analogy, can one give back to a good parent who, rather than simply making demands, has loved, nurtured, educated, consoled, and endured, thereby eliciting the devotion and trust that transcend fear? The answer we give to this question may help us to understand how Abraham passed his great test, and will almost surely help us to strengthen our family relationships. However, the answer is not clearly provided for us in Genesis 22, or anywhere else in Hebrew Scripture; and in any case, God's relationship with the creature made in his own image must continue to evolve, for even if God is immutable, human beings are not.[175]

The modern world might be exceedingly different if, in the Scriptural narrative, Abraham the man of faith had communicated to his God: "I love you and am devoted to you, Lord, but Isaac is my son, whom I also love deeply, and a son is extremely precious, as I and Thou have always agreed.[176] I pray that I will be enlightened, to whatever small extent my mortal mind can be enlightened, as to the meaning of these events." Such a response would be intelligible to many civilized people, and maybe it would have ultimately earned Abraham a higher mark on his great test. That we cannot know, but something we do know from the story is that Abraham was stopped from killing Isaac. (This would have been even more important to those who first received the story than it is to modern readers, since the ancients associated the value of actions more with consequences than with intentions, as is plain from many Hebrew-Scriptural texts.)[177] Why is it virtually inconceivable to us now that the story could have ended with Abraham not being stopped from killing Isaac? This question is itself a great test for one earnestly endeavoring to understand the relation of religion to values.

Kant proposes that even the Holy One "must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize him to be such."[178] One need not be a religious traditionalist to be troubled by this line of thinking. Ideals of moral perfection, though to some extent universal,[179] vary significantly from culture to culture as well as from individual to individual in advanced cultures. It may have been presumptuous of the ancient Hebrews to believe that their god is the One God of the universe, but they had the acumen to grasp that there cannot be order in a universe in which the creation of values is left to innumerable tribal deities. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, Kant saw "reason" as tracing a priori the idea of moral perfection and combining it with the concept of free will to give us our concept of God as the highest good.[180] However, as noted earlier, Kant's views on family-related values stemmed largely from the

religious views he inherited through family tradition. The dedication of a Kant, Geiger, or any religious progressivist to the ways of ancestors is not as obvious as the avowed traditionalist's, as it is both obscured and genuinely transformed by a commitment to forms of rational reflection that the avowed traditionalist often avoids or pretends to avoid. It is there nonetheless, and it does much to shape the individual's religious conceptions, values, and approach to relating religion to values.

Unlike anti-religious existentialists, Jewish and Christian existentialists have realized that a reflective human being does not "create" a God or fundamental values ex nihilo; the most one normally can do is form new understandings of them. The legendary figure of Abraham symbolizes a monumental transition to higher forms of religious and moral consciousness, as he has to some extent transcended his forefathers' commitment to tribal deities and tribal customs and dedicated himself to a God and to values that are in a critical sense *universal*. Nevertheless, his debt to his ancestors, readily apparent from the Scriptural texts to anyone not afraid to face it, remains enormous.

Monumental though it was, the transition to higher forms of religious and moral consciousness symbolized by Abraham was most certainly not the last of its kind. With the advent of classical Greek philosophy, and the emergence of forms of *logos* that tremendously reduced the reflective mind's dependency on *mythos*, new understandings of divinity and of values were possible. Some of the most influential remain accessible in the writings of medieval philosophers still widely respected by traditionalist Bible-oriented religionists. The rise of modern Western philosophy that began with the Renaissance and continued through the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment made many more new understandings possible, and also brought with it new abilities to assess critically and restore resourcefully the intellectual, spiritual, and moral vision of the ancient prophets and their followers.

Central to this extended period of transition were Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and *Ethics*. In the former work, the excommunicated Jew who pioneered innovative methods of critical-philosophical and critical-historical analysis of Scriptural literature boldly submitted that "the prophets were endowed with unusually vivid imaginations, and not with unusually perfect minds."[181] In both the *Tractatus* and the more systematic and abstract *Ethics*, Spinoza offered new understandings of God, Biblical religion, and values that remain edifying in spite of their own considerable limitations. An important theme of Spinoza's two major works is that a mature, rational mind must get beyond the superstitious fear that induces slavish obedience to an image of God associated with arbitrary laws, and strive for an intellectual love of God through which authentic freedom and blessedness can be attained.[182]

Our own capacity for new understandings increases daily, and some of our future understandings will allow those of us able to believe in a God to know and love God in ways the ancients could not. But new understandings would not be possible were there not established understandings on which to build,

and cultural traditionalists serve us well when they remind us that a cultural inheritance is to be conserved and used wisely and not cast aside, squandered, or exploited for low purposes. New understandings normally require appreciation of vital insights embedded in traditional ones; and it is wise for the cultural observer not to underestimate the influence that traditional understandings will continue to have.[183]

Regarding specifically the relation of Biblical religion to the family, Spencer speculates that not only did the ancient Hebrews practice ancestor worship prior to the establishment of monotheism by a cultural elite, but many common Hebrews must have continued to practice it, as is indicated, for example, by various Scriptural references to the backsliding of the people. Ancestor worship is now widely believed to have been pervasive throughout pre-monotheistic civilizations, and any account of the origins of ancient Hebrew religion ought to take this fact into account.[184] Spencer is, in fact, convinced that ancestor worship is the root of every religion, and that there is no reason to regard the religion of the Hebrews as an exception.[185] The importance of cultic practices related to veneration and propitiation of dead ancestors can be inferred from key verses of the Pentateuch.[186] Theodor Reik, to whom it also is evident that traces of ancestor worship and devotion to the dead can be found in Hebrew Scripture (along with telling records of their subsequent prohibition and repression), proposes that the old beliefs "did not vanish, but continued to live subterraneously and developed some activity in the darkness."[187] Reik emphasizes the development of the mourner's kaddish, one of the most prominent features of traditional Jewish liturgy.[188] The object of the scholar in such cases should not be to debunk the rites but to understand more fully their significance.[189]

It is doubtful that most traditionalist Jews, who daily pray to the God of their fathers, give much thought to the possibility that distinctive forms of Judaic worship have been shaped partly by ways in which their forefathers worshipped their own forefathers. The droll comparatist Reinach, a non-Jew who derides Jews who convert to Christianity and proposes that their children are generally anti-Semites,[190] offers a kernel of wisdom in his ironic overstatement that, "Among the educated Jews of all countries, rationalism predominates, with a certain reverence for their ancestors which stands in place of faith."[191]

PROBLEMS CONCERNING MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS

For those interested in the contemporary relevance of Biblical family values, critical problems relating to marriage arrangements arise in later chapters of the Book of Genesis. The narratives not only require us to confront some unfamiliar values, but are strangely unedifying with respect to some contemporary questions.

We read in Genesis 24 of the aged Abraham's sending his eldest servant off to the old country to "take a wife" for Isaac from among Abraham's kindred. Abraham sends the servant off with ten camels, but will not let Isaac go along.

The servant meets, by Providence, the fair virgin Rebekah, a near relation of Abraham and Isaac. He accompanies her home, explains his assignment to her relatives, gives her and the relatives precious gifts, and secures the consent of the relatives for Rebekah to go off to be married to Isaac and live with him. The relatives, including her crafty brother Laban, then solicit Rebekah's consent, and when she agrees to go, they bestow the blessing that she may have many descendants who will possess the gate of their enemies. When she arrives, Isaac takes her into his late mother's tent, marries her, loves her, and is comforted. There are charming romantic images in this account, but a modern reader may want to ruminate on a number of issues. We must remember, of course, that in the story, Providence is to be understood as at work here in a way or to a degree that it is not at work in the social lives of ordinary people. Besides, this account involves particular individuals acting under specific circumstances. However, we also know that certain practices and values encountered in the episode recur throughout much of Hebrew Scripture, and that some have been institutionalized among Jews and other peoples for at least a long period of their history.

1. How much influence should parents, guardians, and other relatives have in determining whether, when, and whom one should marry? In modern Western democracies most people believe that individuals basically should decide for themselves on these matters. They also usually believe that it is quite proper to date people one has come to know at work, on campus, at a vacation resort, or in the course of doing volunteer work. People normally consider the advice of loved ones and friends before marrying, and sometimes they let parents or other relations introduce them to a prospective marriage partner. There are also people in pluralistic Western democracies who, following a distinctive cultural tradition, agree to go along with marriage arrangements made by their relatives and the relatives of their prospective mates. Yet most people in our society believe that, except under extraordinary circumstances, it is essentially one's right to decide for oneself whether, when, and whom to marry, as well as how one should go about meeting a prospective marriage partner. While recognizing that many people in our society choose marriage partners unwisely, most of us would regard it as a violation of our dignity, autonomy, and practical interests if our marriage partner were procured for us under conditions determined mainly by our relatives and the relatives of our future spouse.

2. To what extent should marriage be treated as a business transaction? The precious gifts that the servant gives Rebekah and her kinsfolk are not token trinkets from the market. The servant gives them, among other things, jewels of gold and silver. The history of payments involved in marriage "transactions" is a long and complex one involving innumerable cultures throughout the world; and there are many people in the world today who still see such payments as obligatory. But most people in a modern Western democracy, while perhaps granting that there is necessarily a financial dimension to "contracting" all or most marriages—which involve financial as well as other commitments—would be perplexed if not outright offended if their future spouse or the relatives of

their future spouse expected to be given money or precious gifts before the marriage could take place.

3. How important is love in a marriage? Isaac marries a woman he hardly knows, and Genesis 24:67 tells us that he took her, married her, and loved her. His son Jacob eventually marries the woman he loves but only after marrying a woman he does not love; and though already married, he has children with two other women as well.[192] Is this a good thing? Many people today believe that, except under extraordinary circumstances, it is unwise and maybe even immoral to marry someone that one does not love. Other people, however, believe that love is overrated as a component of a sound marriage.

4. How are we to view exogamy—marriage with someone who is not of one's own "kind"? Abraham sends his servant to find Isaac a wife from among Abraham's own kindred. Although he and Isaac live among the Canaanites, he does not want Isaac to have a Canaanite wife; indeed, he does not want Isaac to marry anyone who is not of their own "kind." Disapproval of exogamy has long been a widespread phenomenon, and the ancient Hebrews certainly did not initiate it. In a modern society, fear and resentment of exogamy may be easier to understand in the case of Jews than in the case of most other peoples and groups; Jews constitute a small and vulnerable cultural minority, and even apart from strictly theological considerations, many Jews understandably want to preserve certain monumental cultural traditions. Many figures in Hebrew Scripture notably do marry outsiders, including Judah, Joseph, Moses, Solomon, Esther, and the husbands of Ruth; and Hebrew Scripture clearly allows in various places for the acceptance of converts to the faith of Israel. Scholars have noted the ambiguity of traditional Jewish attitudes toward exogamy and shown how diverse developments have influenced judgments in this domain.[193] Most Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, freethinkers, social democrats, Americans, and country music fans probably would strongly prefer, all other things being equal, that their children marry someone of their own "kind"; but in Hebrew Scripture, culture and kinship are more closely associated. The importance that Hebrew Scripture attaches to the dangers of exogamy is in places substantial, at least with respect to intermarriage with particular peoples or under specific circumstances,[194] and it has undoubtedly had a major influence on many Bible-oriented religionists. Now, the dangers posed by fear and resentment of exogamy are serious indeed. Conceived specifically with regard to kinship, excessive inbreeding is hazardous to physical and mental health; conceived more broadly, it is hazardous to spiritual and cultural vitality. Disapproval of exogamy can easily degenerate into destructive ethnocentrism, tribalism, and racism. The Russian Orthodox philosopher Berdyaev wrote, at the time of the Holocaust:

Racialism is a purely Hebrew ideology. . . . It was the Jewish race which strove for racial purity, opposed mixed marriages and all sorts of mingling with others, strove to remain a world closed to others. . . . Thus the anti-Semite may well be accused of Jewish practice

and spirit. It is just we non-Jews who should be far from all racialism, exclusive nation-
alism, all Messianism.[195]

Although having taken Berdyaev to task for these ill-advised and misleading
statements,[196] I cite them because they put into extremely bold relief a number
of critical issues regarding the clarity and integrity of certain Hebrew-Scriptural
family values. We shall return to some of these issues in due course.

5. How much importance should be assigned to a prospective wife's good
looks and virginity? Genesis 24:16 makes clear that Rebekah is not only fair
but a virgin who has not been "known" by any man. Many people today, how-
ever, believe that physical beauty is only skin deep, that a woman who is not a
virgin may still make a fine wife, and that there are many things which the
Scriptural text does not mention that should count for more, such as a prospec-
tive wife's patience, intelligence, ability to communicate well, and sense of
humor. To focus on a woman's outward appearance and her virginity may be
treating her more as a commodity than a person. Maybe Abraham should have
given the servant more detailed instructions and made clear to him that nothing
is more important in a marital relationship than honesty. We shall return to that
matter momentarily. It should first be noted, however, that marriage is the foun-
dation of the kind of family that ostensibly most concerns contemporary con-
servative, Bible-oriented cultural critics, and that if marriage is established on
an unstable foundation, that kind of family is greatly jeopardized. So the issues
that have been raised here should not be taken lightly by those concerned with
preserving, protecting, and defending such a family.

Regarding the last point, and the previous one about the importance of hon-
esty, we may turn to the account, in Genesis 27, of the conspiracy by which
Rebekah and her son Jacob deceive the patriarch Isaac and procure Isaac's bless-
ing for Jacob instead of the firstborn Esau, on whom Isaac had wished to bestow
it. Many people today believe that honesty between family members is abso-
lutely essential to the health of a family. Yet in the Scriptural episode we find
a woman conspiring with her younger son against her frail husband and her
older son regarding a matter of extreme importance to all parties involved and
to posterity. What are the family values being imparted here?[197] The theologian
von Rad recognizes that this episode and an earlier episode about Jacob's de-
ceiving Esau[198] pose difficult questions for the expositor; and he submits that,
"It is clear that the modern reader must suppress all instinctive judgments in the
case of such an ancient narrative, which stems from strange cultural conditions
and a different moral atmosphere."[199] Yet a great deal hangs on this legendary
event, for Hebrew Scripture indicates that Esau was unfit to succeed Isaac and
carry on Abraham's lofty mission.[200] The ancients often regarded wiliness as
something of a virtue, but scholars of the Rabbinic period felt a need to elevate
the story to a loftier moral level.[201] In every generation there is a need for
conscientious and intelligent interpretation; and if we are to elicit from Scriptural

texts practical insights into familial and other values, we must be prepared to face the kind of complexities to which von Rad refers.

NOTES

1. Useful distinctions can be drawn in specific contexts between "Israelites," "Hebrews," and "Jews," but it is sufficient to recognize here that most people who now consider themselves Jews and prefer to be known as such rather than as "Israelites" and "Hebrews" regard themselves appropriately as direct descendants, at least in spiritual terms, of the people on whose experiences Hebrew-Scriptural literature focuses, the ancient Israelites or Hebrews.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), sec. 52, trans. Helen Zimmern (1907) (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1923), p. 71.

3. There are several methods of transliterating Hebrew into English, but they are of no great consequence in this investigation, and a uniform method is not adopted here. Probably the most notable differences are in the alternative transliteration of one sound as *ch, h, kh*, or *k* and another as *e* or *'*.

4. Considerations that lead some exegetes to focus on the "tetrateuch," "hexateuch," or other combinations of Scriptural books lie beyond our concern here.

5. Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Biblical texts are from the "Authorized" ("King James") version of the Bible, which, though limited in several ways, is agreeably familiar, readily accessible, adequately reliable for the purposes of this study, and an extremely elegant and influential work in its own right, in the language in which we are communicating.

6. William G. Sumner, "The Family and Social Change," in *The Family: Papers and Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society* (1909) (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1972), pp. 7–8.

7. Cf. William Graham Sumner, *Folkways* (Boston: Ginn, 1906).

8. Carol Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," in Leo G. Perdue et al., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 4.

9. Ibid., p. 40.

10. Cf. Stanley Hauerwas and Gregory L. Jones, eds., *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989).

11. Stuart A. Queen, Robert W. Habenstein, and John B. Adams, *The Family in Various Cultures*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1961 [1951]), p. 139.

12. Ibid., p. 14.

13. Ibid., p. 15.

14. Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 128.

15. Ibid., p. 12.

16. Bryce J. Christensen, *Utopia Against the Family: The Problems and Politics of the American Family* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 4. Cf. p. 49.

17. Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage*, p. 128.

18. Charles Frederick Thwing and Carrie F. Butler Thwing, *The Family: An Historical and Social Study* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1886).

19. Benjamin Schlesinger, "Preface," in Benjamin Schlesinger, ed., *The Jewish Family: A Survey and Annotated Bibliography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971),

p. xi. Cf. the revised edition, *Jewish Family Issues: A Resource Guide* (New York: Garland, 1987).

20. Benjamin Schlesinger, "The Jewish Family in Retrospect," in Benjamin Schlesinger, ed., *The Jewish Family: A Survey and Annotated Bibliography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 5. Cf. William Graham Cole, *Sex and Love in the Bible* (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 245.

21. Moreover, contrary to a widespread belief, traditionalist Judaism as such is not opposed to belief in life after death.

22. Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage*, p. 128.

23. Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," in Leo G. Perdue et al., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 49–51.

24. Queen, *The Family in Various Cultures*, chs. 2, 3, 7, 8.

25. Ibid. Cf. Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," p. 18.

26. Ibid.

27. Schlesinger, "The Jewish Family in Retrospect," p. 4.

28. Queen, *The Family in Various Cultures*, p. 5. Cf. H. S. Jennings, *The Biological Basis of Human Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1930), ch. 11.

29. Ibid., p. 3.

30. Theodor Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1964), p. 160.

31. Ibid., ch. 12. But concerning erosion in recent decades, see p. 162.

32. Ibid., p. 171.

33. Ibid., pp. 172–73.

34. Ibid., p. 176.

35. Cf. Annemarie de Waal Malefijt, *Religion and Culture: An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 57.

36. Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism*, p. 175.

37. Jeremiah 8:3; Amos 3:1; Micah 2:3.

38. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Its Social Metaphors: Israel in the History of Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch. 7. Neusner's principal source is Midrash Rabbah to Genesis.

39. Genesis 32:24–32. Cf., for example, Genesis 34:7.

40. Neusner, *Judaism and Its Social Metaphors*, p. 112.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., p. 113.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Romans 10:12. Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28.

46. Cf. Christensen, *Utopia Against the Family*, ch. 3; Nanette M. Roberts, "American Women and Life-Style Change," in Judith L. Weidman, ed., *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 114.

47. Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," p. 88. Cf. pp. 88–92.

48. Cf. Frank Alvarez-Pereyre and Florence Heymann, "The Desire for Transcendence: The Hebrew Family Model and Jewish Family Practices," in André Burguière et al., eds., *A History of the Family*, trans. Sarah Hanbury Tenison et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 155–56. The volume was originally published in French in 1986.

49. Gerald Larue, *Sex and the Bible* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1983), p. 17.

50. Genesis 11:10–31.

51. Jay Newman, *On Religious Freedom* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1991), pp. 66–70. But cf. pp. 36–46.

52. Cf. Abba Hillel Silver, *Where Judaism Differed* (1956) (New York: Macmillan, 1972), ch. 13.

53. Cf., for example, Genesis 4:26.

54. Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952). Weber's original essays were published in the period 1917–1919, shortly before his death.

55. Salomon Reinach, *Orpheus: A History of Religions* (1909), trans. Florence Simmonds (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1931), p. 185.

56. Ibid., p. 181.

57. James George Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend, and Law* (1918) (New York: Hart, 1975), p. 4.

58. Cf. Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (1955 [1927]) (New York: Dover, 1957), chs. 6–7.

59. Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 8.

60. Reinach, *Orpheus*, p. 186.

61. Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods*, p. 7.

62. Theodor H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. xxxv.

63. Ibid., p. xxxiv.

64. Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, p. 401.

65. See, for example, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Imagery of God as Female* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

66. Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (Stuttgart: Kreis and Hoffman, 1861); Lewis Morgan, *Ancient Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1877).

67. Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (London: Cassell, 1964), pp. 13–14.

68. Genesis 9:18–27.

69. Genesis 49:1–4.

70. 2 Samuel 13–18.

71. Malachi 4:5–6.

72. Leo G. Perdue, "The Household, Old Testament Theology, and Contemporary Hermeneutics," in Leo G. Perdue et al., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 228–34. Cf. Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine*, and, for example, Numbers 11:12; Deuteronomy 32:18.

73. Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), pp. 234–44.

74. Ibid., p. 225.

75. Genesis 1:26–31, 2:4–25.

76. Cf. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, pp. 5–6; Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament*, pp. 21–22.

77. Cf. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, pp. 36–38, 66.

78. Jessie Bernard, *The Future of Marriage* (New York: World Publishing, 1972), p. 10.

79. Genesis 2:24.

80. See, for example, Leviticus 12:1–5, 15:19–33; Ecclesiastes 7:25–29.

81. Phyllis Bird, "Images of Women in the Old Testament," in Rosemary R. Ruether, ed., *Religion and Sexism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 42.

82. Ibid., p. 41.

83. David R. Mace, *The Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1970), p. 19.

84. Genesis 3:22.

85. Genesis 1:21–22.

86. Alvarez-Pereyre and Heymann, "The Desire for Transcendence," p. 160.

87. Genesis 4:9.

88. Genesis 6:5–9:29.

89. There is a sense in which the covenant is with all living creatures; but only human beings are capable of fulfilling moral obligations entailed by the covenant. Cf. Genesis 9:8–17.

90. 9:1–12.

91. Cf. Larue, *Sex and the Bible*, ch. 19.

92. Genesis 9:18–27.

93. Genesis 9:22.

94. Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths*, p. 15.

95. Ibid., p. 121.

96. Ibid., p. 122.

97. Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, p. 50.

98. Cf. Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*) (1670), chs. 1–15, in Benedict de Spinoza, *Chief Works*, Vol. 1, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (1883) (New York: Dover, 1955).

99. Genesis 18:23, 18:25.

100. He is subsequently given the name of Abraham, "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5), and his wife's name is changed from Sarai to Sarah, "princess" (Genesis 17:15).

101. Genesis 12:1–3.

102. Genesis 15:1–6.

103. Genesis 17:1–8.

104. Genesis 17:9–14.

105. Cf. Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life* (1913), trans. J. E. Crawford Flitch (1921) (New York: Dover, 1954), chs. 3, 4, 10.

106. Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 141–42.

107. Carolyn Pressler, *The View of Women Found in the Deuteronomic Family Laws* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), p. 114.

108. Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 19.

109. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Family in the Hebrew Bible," in Anne Carr and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, eds., *Religion, Feminism, and the Family* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), pp. 59–60.

110. Genesis 12:10–20.

111. Genesis 20.

112. Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, p. 50.

113. Genesis 14.

114. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (1956), trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 164.

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid., pp. 164–65.

117. Genesis 26:6–11.

118. Cf. Samuel Sandmel, *The Hebrew Scriptures: An Introduction to Their Literature and Religious Ideas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 342–44.

119. Leon R. Kass, "Educating Father Abraham: The Meaning of Wife," *First Things* 47 (November 1994), 16. This article is the first part of a two-part essay.

120. Ibid.

121. For someone applying critical-historical methods simply to say, for example, that the first account is from the Yahwist source and the second from the Elohist source would not resolve this kind of exegetical issue, since decisions made at the redaction stage would still need to be explained.

122. Cf. Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, "Sarai's Exile: A Gender-Motivated Reading of Genesis 12.10–13.2," in Athalya Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 222–34.

123. Cf. Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths*, p. 319.

124. Cf. Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 78, no. 270 (October–December 1955), 428–44.

125. Genesis 16, 21:9–21.

126. Genesis 16:2.

127. Cf. Larue, *Sex and the Bible*, p. 53.

128. David R. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage: A Sociological Study* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), p. 261.

129. See Judges 8:30; 1 Samuel 25; 2 Samuel 3:1–5, 5:13–16; 1 Kings 11:1–4.

130. Cf. Deuteronomy 22:13–29.

131. James Q. Wilson, "The Family-Values Debate," *Commentary* 95, no. 4 (April 1993), 30.

132. 1 Kings 11:1–4.

133. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage*, p. 55.

134. Mace, *The Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution*, p. 23.

135. Bird, "Images of Women in the Old Testament," p. 52.

136. Cf. Genesis 38; Joshua 2, 6:20–25; but see also Deuteronomy 32:17–18. Cf. Larue, *Sex and the Bible*, ch. 18.

137. However, God takes such a concern into account (Genesis 21:12).

138. von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 228.

139. A noteworthy pattern can be detected with respect to primogeniture, for Esau and Reuben are subsequently deemed unworthy of leadership, and even Cain's offering had been rejected. Cf., for example, Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, pp. 172–204; Alvarez-Pereyre and Heymann, "The Desire for Transcendence," pp. 161–62.

140. Cf. Alvarez-Pereyre and Heymann, "The Desire for Transcendence," pp. 167–71.

141. Cf. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 38.

142. An engaging introduction to the subject is Louis A. Berman, *The Akedah: The Binding of Isaac* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997).

143. W. G. Jordan, *Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1909), p. 265.

144. Genesis 22:2.

145. Genesis 22:12.

146. Genesis 22:18.

147. Genesis 21:11.

148. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (1843), trans., with *The Sickness Unto Death*, by Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968 [1941]), p. 69. Cf. pp. 64–77.

149. Ibid., p. 67.

150. Ibid., p. 81.

151. Ibid., pp. 78–91.

152. This matter is complicated by the fact that Kierkegaard himself associates truth here with subjectivity rather than objectivity.

153. Contrast Meyers, "The Family in Ancient Israel," p. 39.

154. Samson Raphael Hirsch, Commentary, in *The Pentateuch*, trans. (into German) and commentary by Samson Raphael Hirsch, trans. into English by Isaac Levy, Vol. 1: *Genesis*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Judaica Press, 1971), pp. 373–74.

155. John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1960), esp. pp. 21–55 (Newman's "Introduction").

156. Exodus 21:1–11.

157. Deuteronomy 21:18–21.

158. Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (1885 [1876]) (New York: D. Appleton, 1898), p. 752.

159. Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," p. 69.

160. David Kraemer, "Images of Childhood and Adolescence in Talmudic Literature," in David Kraemer, ed., *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 66. The book Kraemer discovered was W. M. Feldman's *The Jewish Child* (1918).

161. Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 84.

162. Cf. Wegner, *Chattel or Person?*, p. 18.

163. Paula E. Hyman, "Introduction: Perspectives on the Evolving Jewish Family," in Steven M. Cohen and Paula E. Hyman, eds., *The Jewish Family: Myths and Reality* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), p. 3.

164. Exodus 20:12.

165. Deuteronomy 6:5.

166. Leviticus 19:18.

167. Cf. Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, p. 424; Schlesinger, "The Jewish Family in Retrospect," pp. 6–8; Kraemer, "Images of Childhood and Adolescence," p. 69; Norman Linzer, *The Jewish Family: Authority and Tradition in Modern Perspective* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1984), p. 86.

168. Numbers 31:17–18. Cf. Deuteronomy 20:10–14.

169. John Cooper, *The Child in Jewish History* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), pp. 3–4.

170. Deuteronomy 6:5.

171. Genesis 6:2.

172. Genesis 22:12.

173. Cole, *Sex and Love in the Bible*, p. 59.

174. Ibid., pp. 58–59.

175. These issues have been addressed by philosophers associated with "process the-

ology." See, for example, Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948).

176. Cf. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), esp. pp. 75–79.

177. See, for example, Numbers 35:24–28. Cf. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 32.

178. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785), trans. H. J. Paton, 3rd. ed. (1956 [1948]) (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 76.

179. Cf. Jay Newman, *Inauthentic Culture and Its Philosophical Critics* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1997), ch. 3, esp. pp. 62–69.

180. Ibid.

181. Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*), p. 27.

182. Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (1677), esp. Appendix to Part 1, Part 5, in Benedict de Spinoza, *Chief Works*, Vol. 2, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (1883) (New York: Dover, 1955). Cf. Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*), chs. 4–5, 12–15.

183. Cf. Newman, *Inauthentic Culture and Its Philosophical Critics*, pp. 177–90.

184. Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Vol. 1, pp. 296–98. See also pp. 285–305, 409–11, 421–22, 826–29.

185. Ibid., p. 422.

186. See, for example, Deuteronomy 14:1, 18:11, 26:14. Cf. Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," pp. 81–82, 89.

187. Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism*, p. 37.

188. Ibid., pp. 35–39.

189. Cf. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), esp. pp. 235–40.

190. Reinach, *Orpheus*, p. 225.

191. Ibid., p. 224.

192. Genesis 29–30.

193. Alvarez-Pereyre and Heymann, "The Desire for Transcendence," pp. 167–71.

194. Deuteronomy 7:1–4; 1 Kings 11:1–8; Ezra 10:10–11.

195. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World* (1935), trans. Donald A. Lowrie (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), p. 100.

196. Jay Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 112–18.

197. Cf. Lori Hope Lefkowitz, "Eavesdropping on Angels and Laughing at God: Theorizing a Subversive Matriarchy," in T. M. Rudavsky, ed., *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 157–67.

198. Genesis 25:28–34.

199. von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 262.

200. Cf. Neusner, *Judaism and Its Social Metaphors*, pp. 125–26.

201. Graves and Patai, *Hebrew Myths*, p. 200.

3

Strange Family Values of Hebrew Scripture: Problematic Precepts of the Law

❧

THE PEOPLE, THE CHIEF PROPHET, AND THE LAW

When we move from the Book of Genesis to the remaining books of the Pentateuch, family issues generally arise in a somewhat different context. Three basic considerations may be noted in this respect, and the first concerns the changing family paradigms. In Genesis there is regular reference to great nations of the future, and the destiny of all Israel looms large in the reader's consciousness; but the immediate focus of the narratives is on domestic situations in the lives of legendary ancestors. However, from the opening lines of Exodus it is apparent that the long chronicle to follow will concentrate on the children of Israel as a people or nation, rather than on smaller families. In the books following Genesis, we still encounter narratives that explore family relationships on a microcosmic scale, but they now necessarily seem more peripheral than in Genesis, as we more directly follow the experiences of a national family. Even in Genesis it is indicated that a future national family—a people—is the family that ultimately matters; the microcosmic family stories in Genesis serve to illuminate the unique character and circumstances of a macrocosmic family of the future. Still, in the Genesis stories, Israel as a people does not yet exist, and so the domestic situations of the characters are more often in the foreground. In the closing chapters of Genesis, the children of Israel are the children of a particular human being who, in striving with God, became Israel.[1] These brothers, individuals with distinctive personalities, have been brought up in the same household. At the beginning of Exodus, they are remembered as distant progenitors of great tribes constituting a people so large that it is perceived as a threat by the leaders of mighty Egypt. Even so, we are periodically reminded in the later books of the Pentateuch of the permanent importance of the micro-

cosmic, conjugal family, as at Numbers 27, where those persistently bothersome estate and inheritance problems again arise.[2]

In Genesis, even the most important human figures are given only a few chapters for the delineation of their character and circumstances, but Moses, greatest of the Hebrew prophets, is the dominant human presence—apart from Israel itself—in the next four books and in all of Hebrew Scripture. He is the incomparable human father-authority, the living instrument through whom the Supreme Being communicates his Law to his chosen people and all humanity. He is foremost among the Hebrew prophets, and whatever values are conveyed in the divinely inspired teaching attributed to him make a uniquely compelling claim on our attention here. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."[3] Moses is such a noble figure in so many ways that the reader may occasionally need to be reminded that he is a human being and not a supernatural one; and yet in his most poignant personal encounters with God, his very accentuating of his own humanity radiates an existential pathos beside which divine perfection is almost in danger of paling. His association with Pentateuchal law provides symbolic unity to what otherwise would be far more difficult to grasp as a coherent body of moral teaching.

Moses teaches by example as well as by word, but the images of his intimate family life that Scripture affords usually tend to conceal rather than illuminate the values actuating his personal family relationships. In addition, images are withheld, so that it is hardly surprising that many people who are familiar with the family stories of Genesis have no idea who Zipporah and Gershom are.[4] It is noteworthy that Moses' own father is practically excluded from the account of his life;[5] his mother, to save his life, abandons him a few months after his birth;[6] he is raised and enculturated not by a Hebrew family, but by alien Egyptian nobles.[7] His most well-known relatives, his sister Miriam and brother Aaron, are morally ambiguous figures, and at one point conspire against him because of his Ethiopian wife;[8] and though his fellow tribesmen, the Levites, are endowed with enormous authority in matters of religious observance, his leadership does not pass to a near kinsman. One may detect a pattern here: though Moses is, of course, no celibate, his intimate family relationships are in one way or other devalued, possibly to remind us that for Moses, and in a corresponding sense for all of us, the family that really matters is the people or nation. (On a more abstract level, our attention is drawn to the importance of the human family itself, for before learning directly from God, Moses is educated by the leadership class of the world's most advanced civilization, the very coterie that is cruelly oppressing his blood relations. But Moses takes up the cause of his ancestral people.)[9] So although Moses teaches many things by example as well as by word, we do not learn much from his personal circumstances about the positive importance of the nuclear family. The focus of our attention must thus be on the family law conveyed by Moses, who, unlike other moral and spiritual teachers in Hebrew Scripture, is distinguished as the Lawgiver.

The only major injunctions directly stipulated in the Book of Genesis are the fundamental commandments to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth,[10] and to have male children circumcised on the eighth day in accordance with God's covenant with Israel.[11] In subsequent books the Pentateuch may seem to be as devoted to code as to didactic narrative. Many people actually think of the Torah as "the Law" even though the Torah is essentially narrative in structure, includes poetry and other kinds of literary material, and teaches in diverse ways. From Exodus on through Deuteronomy, the reader is gradually introduced to hundreds of laws or commandments that God intends the children of Israel to obey in accordance with both their commitment to serving him and their own good. In attempting to derive family values from didactic narratives of the kind making up the larger part of Genesis, we often find ourselves dealing with obscure symbolism and imagery that complicate our task; but when we are dealing directly with laws or commandments, we may expect the values implicit in or established by those injunctions to be clearer.

Laws also require conscientious interpretation if they are to be properly applied in accordance with the spirit in which they were conceived, and with the concrete needs and rights of those who stand to be affected by them; and the duties of those working in a secular or religious judicial system can be as complicated as those of a literary scholar, historian, or theologian trying to make sense of an ancient narrative. Nevertheless, given the primary functions of law, the lawgiver has an incentive to be as precise as possible and to resist the inclination of the writer of didactive narrative to instruct in more subtle ways. Hence, we have reason to hope that the family values widely presumed to be fostered by Hebrew Scripture will be more obvious in the codes than in the didactive narratives.

However, any number of issues may arise when we set out to determine the content and contemporary relevance of family values imparted by Pentateuchal laws. For a philosophical inquirer, basic questions may arise regarding who gave the laws to whom and why.[12] If one understands Hebrew Scripture as a cultural document (or collection of cultural documents), created by human beings "inspired" in some sense of the word, one may plausibly regard the Pentateuchal laws as creations of cultural leaders who, while presumably regarding themselves as inspired in some way, were responding mainly, though not entirely, to concrete needs of a particular community. Although they drew on earlier and current conceptions from their own culture and other cultures, they may well have seen the codes as expressing profound truths about what is good and right, and they undoubtedly believed—correctly, as it were—that the laws being framed would be of value to many future generations.

Some Pentateuchal laws, such as those fostering respect for the value of human life (as at Exodus 20:13) and the value of impartiality in rendering judgment (as at Leviticus 19:15), generally seem to be of universal relevance, and their soundness is regularly confirmed by rational methods. Other Pentateuchal laws appear to have always been concerned with what most people now regard as

essentially ritual rather than broadly ethical and practical matters. These can be conceived as having profound symbolic significance; and for this reason among others, the distinction between the essentially ritual and the broadly ethical and practical, which gradually became more important in ancient Hebrew reflection, and indeed in moral reflection throughout the world, can still pose conceptual problems for the believer, especially with respect to certain precepts. Some of the laws, though not seen by most people as having universal relevance, can still be appreciated on rational grounds for their ethical and practical import. Others, which may once have had significant ethical and practical import, now generally appear to be obsolete, though the traditionalist Bible-oriented believer may insist on observing them as closely as possible as matters of ritual.

In any case, even the typical religious traditionalist is aware that it does not make sense for people in a modern democratic and industrialized society to concern themselves as much as the ancient Hebrews did with matters relating to animal sacrifice, the ritual cleansing of lepers, the obligations of slaves, dealings with Moabites and Amalekites, and leviratic marriage. (A separate but related issue is that Christian traditionalists cannot afford to ignore the centrality to New Testament teaching of the theme that Christ, contemptuous of the legalism of hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, has in a decisive way done away with the larger part of Pentateuchal law and freed his followers from its burden.)[13]

Although important affinities should not be overlooked, a modern Western democracy is very different from ancient Hebrew societies; it has certain needs and capabilities that those societies did not have, and it does not have certain needs and capabilities that those societies had. Thus, the contemporary relevance of the laws contained in the Pentateuch, and of whatever values are implicit in or established by them, must be determined, at least in part, by reconciling them with current needs and capabilities and with modern laws and values that have emerged largely as the result of many centuries of conscientious philosophical, humanistic, theological, scientific, and legal discussion by thoughtful, high-minded individuals and groups that in some instances have drawn on a broad range of cultural perspectives. Making such determinations, modern readers may end up reading more into the Scriptural text than they are reading out of it, or they may fail to muster sufficient imagination or understanding to recognize the highest possible applicability of a Scriptural precept. But it is also possible to see in a Scriptural law an ethical or practical insight deserving of respectful reconsideration not merely because it is "in the Book," but because it can be seen on reflection to point to ways in which prevailing laws and values can be refined, enhanced, or beneficially replaced. Those traditionalist Bible-oriented religionists who profess, with varying degrees of sincerity and conceptual clarity, to regard Pentateuchal law as having been more directly revealed by God, will approach its injunctions differently; but one way or another, they also must reconcile Pentateuchal laws and values with the needs and capabilities of modern societies significantly different from ancient Hebrew societies.

The Pentateuch as a whole is in the form of narrative,[14] and Pentateuchal injunctions are presented in the context of a chronicle recounting experiences of the ancient Hebrews in terms of their special relationship with God. As narrative, it did not directly instruct those who first received it to obey certain laws or live by certain values, but those who first received it could understand that the laws and values indicated in Scripture were being communicated to them in basically the same spirit as they were conveyed to the ancestors described in the Scriptural narratives. The Scriptural text indicates that the Pentateuchal injunctions are of enduring importance to the children of Israel, who, through their ancestors, have entered—if without their direct consent—into an everlasting covenant with God.

As time passed, and intellectual, socioeconomic, technological, and other cultural conditions changed, and as Jews found themselves almost continually influenced by sophisticated cultural products of other advanced civilizations, reflective believers could see that many laws in the Pentateuch, and the values implicit in or established by them, were in danger of becoming regarded as antiquities and thus in need of restorative reconception; and by means of resourceful interpretation and other devices, they were largely able to preserve their own respect—and to some extent communal respect—for the general legal-axiological framework of the laws. Still, having had, for one reason or another, to abandon practices explicitly mandated in the codes, they realized early on, and ever more acutely as the centuries passed, that they simply could not comply with many of the commandments set out in the Torah, and that they and their descendants would have to make astute judgments in determining how to respect the spirit of the laws while no longer being able to follow all of them in detail. Thus, for example, animal sacrifice gave way to new forms of prayer. Moreover, it was apparent early on, and subsequently evident in every generation, that resourceful means would have to be taken to apply Pentateuchal law to important matters with which it did not deal, especially those arising as a consequence of discoveries and innovations.

For these reasons and others, much of the selectivity with which individual believers, religious leaders, and religious communities stress some Pentateuchal laws rather than others is not hard to comprehend; and in places, the Pentateuch itself at least implicitly invites such selectivity by highlighting certain laws. However, the arbitrariness of much of this selectivity has constantly concerned both believers and skeptics. Long before the New Testament condemned Pharisaic legalism and ritualism, Hebrew prophets such as Amos and Isaiah decried the devaluation of the broadly ethical laws; yet the emphasis on certain ritual laws at the expense of other ritual laws may seem almost as anomalous. This concern properly hangs over contemporary disagreements about the relevance of Biblical teaching to social policy. For example, it is not insignificant that many traditionalist Bible-oriented religionists who point to Pentateuchal law to justify their outrage at civil laws acknowledging that gays and lesbians are entitled to certain rights[15] are patently careless regarding injunctions on ritual pu-

rity, leviratic marriage, care of one's beard, not eating certain foods, not wearing garments made of both linen and wool, and carrying out trial by ordeal for women suspected of adultery. More importantly, many of them are patently careless regarding Pentateuchal injunctions on not misleading people in business transactions, not coveting anything that is a neighbor's, not bearing grudges, and loving a neighbor.

Even pious people who pretend otherwise in their public pronouncements indicate in sundry ways that they regard some Pentateuchal injunctions as much more important than others; and every individual, regardless of his or her respect for some received interpretative tradition, subjectively ranks many of the injunctions. Abstaining from murder is almost universally regarded by Bible-oriented religionists as more important than abstaining from the eating of pork; abstaining from Sabbath desecration, from coveting, or from bearing grudges appears to most of them to lie somewhere along a spectrum between these two laws; performing animal sacrifices in a Temple is something that most must think we are better off living without; and the obligation to subject wives suspected of adultery to a grotesque trial by ordeal is something that most probably prefer not to think about. But regarding other Pentateuchal laws, and even these to some extent, the lack of consensus among believers is as conspicuous as the arbitrariness of much of their selectivity.

Hebrew Scripture recurrently indicates that Pentateuchal laws were conveyed by God to his chosen people, Israel. Although the laws may be of enormous value to all the peoples of the world, the Almighty—who could have simultaneously communicated them directly to all the peoples of the world—determined, for reasons not clearly indicated in the Scriptural text, to transmit them directly to one people. If it was his design that Israel immediately go out and share the codes with its neighbors, that for some reason is not suggested in the text. There is nothing in Hebrew Scripture precisely comparable to Jesus' explicit direction to his disciples to "teach all nations."[16] Throughout most of their history the Jewish people have been conspicuously reluctant to actively seek proselytes. God did not transmit Pentateuchal laws directly to the Egyptians, Moabites, or Chinese; and in recent years, despite upheavals threatening the survival of all humanity and the planet, God has not again made his presence known as at Sinai.

Still, innumerable Christians and other non-Jews have believed that Pentateuchal injunctions are in some sense and to some extent binding on them as well as on the children of Israel, and many of them believe further that the codes ought to be binding on the civil society in which they live, even if theirs is an advanced, pluralistic democracy. Most people who regard themselves as Christians see Hebrew Scripture as the first part of their Bible and normally consider themselves to have a special spiritual connection with the Jewish people, even when subjecting Jews to vilification and persecution.[17] Nevertheless, Christians are notorious for their inability to agree among themselves on even extremely

fundamental religious issues,[18] and it was inevitable that they would quarrel among themselves concerning what if anything is important in Pentateuchal law.

Exacerbating their disputes is a fundamental tension in the New Testament, where Christ is portrayed as having come to fulfill the Law[19] as well as do away with it. It is no wonder, then, that while two deeply committed Christians may agree that one must abstain from murder but need not worry much about eating pork, they may also take diametrically opposed positions on what to make of the Old Testament's patriarchal authoritarianism or prohibition of homosexuality. Of course, Jews themselves fiercely disagree concerning the contemporary relevance of specific Pentateuchal laws, and apparently always have disagreed.[20]

Some basic philosophical problems considered earlier are again pertinent. These concern the nature of values and the justification of obedience. First, what kind of values are related to the types of laws we encounter in the Pentateuch? If one holds that the laws themselves *establish* the familial and other values to which we should be attending, then those values are in a sense unjustified; they are accepted on the basis of what open-minded people may fairly regard as blind, irrational faith and "doglike obedience." Again, one will be hard-pressed to explain why some of the most important of these values are almost universally held, even by people wholly unfamiliar with the Bible and Biblical religion. Moreover, values can be conceived relatively broadly or relatively narrowly, and once one's interest is transferred from the specific practical meaning of an injunction to the "value" that one infers it to be imparting, the insight that one derives "from" the text may be too abstract, too narrow, or entirely inharmonious with the spirit in which the law was initially conceived.

One may alternatively hold the philosophically more subtle position that the values to which we should be attending are already *implicit* in the laws and thus in a sense the immediate inspiration and justification of the laws. While one then may no longer be open to the criticism that one is accepting the laws on the basis of irrational faith and irrational obedience, one is still vulnerable to the criticism that one's inference from the specific practical content of an injunction to the "value" one presumes to underlie the injunction is too broad, too narrow, or perhaps wholly arbitrary. In addition, by assigning the value a priority over the law as such, one effectively undermines to some extent the authority of the law itself, for it can now be reasonably argued that there may be better ways to promote the value than by following the law, and that one is faithful to the spirit of the law when one simply attends to the underlying value. But whether one sees values as established by or implicit in the family laws of the Pentateuch, the values one derives "from" the Scriptural text are necessarily exceedingly different in character as well as scope from legal prescriptions with a precise linguistic form and a more specific and more directly practical function. Although values can be more or less specific, they are capable of being far more general than laws, as is evidenced by the fact that they can be expressed in terms of a single word like *justice* or *compassion*.

Additional problems arise with respect to laws in the Pentateuch that would

appear to be primarily or even entirely of ritual, ceremonial, or sacramental importance rather than of broader ethical or practical importance. As noted above, such laws may have some ethical import in terms of their symbolic significance, and there are laws in the Pentateuch that it is difficult to classify as primarily ceremonial or more broadly ethical. However, there are also clear paradigms, so that the commandment to abstain from murder or from bearing false witness is obviously primarily ethical, directly related to easily specifiable values, and parallel to corresponding injunctions in many world civilizations,[21] whereas other laws in the Pentateuch, being less directly ethical and more ceremonial in import, will be harder to relate directly to a value, or at least to the kind of universal or near-universal interest that an outsider could unambiguously recognize as a value. Therefore, for a variety of reasons, we may ultimately be disappointed if we assume that the kinds of family values of interest to contemporary cultural critics, reformers, and observers can be more easily derived from the four later books of the Pentateuch than from the Book of Genesis.

FAMILY ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED IN THE PENTATEUCH

Although it has been long and widely assumed that Hebrew Scripture puts the home at the center of community life[22] and that microcosmic family life is the "miracle" by which the beleaguered Jewish community has survived and maintained its distinctive nature and culture,[23] a case can be made for the antithetical position that Hebrew Scripture does not assign great importance to family life at the household level. We require some standard by which to do our appraisal. Sociologist William J. Goode, who has studied families in many cultures, grants that the cultural importance of the family is stressed in Hebrew Scripture, and notes specifically that passages in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and the Hagiographa emphasize the importance of obeying family rules.[24] Yet he immediately observes that a corresponding emphasis on the family is encountered in the writings of Confucius, the Rig-Veda, and ancient epic poems of war.[25] (The references to Confucius and the Rig-Veda remind us that the Chinese and Indians have more effectively replenished the earth than the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.) Thus, if one conscientiously applies a standard derived from comparative social-scientific analysis, one may have mixed feelings about the distinctiveness of Hebrew Scripture's commitment to the cultural centrality of domestic family life.

In addition, as repeatedly observed, Hebrew Scripture's emphasis on the nation, tribe, and other extended families diminishes the importance of the nuclear family. Applying another standard of appraisal, we see how little the Pentateuch says about domestic family matters in relation to other matters. While the Pentateuch sets out hundreds of precepts, those related to domestic family life can be outlined in a few paragraphs. Pentateuchal law provides less direction concerning domestic matters than concerning avoidance of idolatry, Temple worship, ritual purity, permissible and proscribed foods, and agriculture. It gives

little if any more attention to family relationships than to the sabbatical year, observance of festivals, and duties of the hereditary priestly caste. Moreover, as Joseph Blenkinsopp observes, the Hebrew-Scriptural conception of childhood is "rather vague and ill-focused."[26] Perhaps most importantly, the range of topics relating to domestic family life that Pentateuchal law addresses may impress most contemporary students of family problems as narrow and idiosyncratic.

The Pentateuch directly addresses few of the family issues that figure prominently in contemporary cultural skirmishes between conservative and liberal cultural critics. This may come as a surprise to those on both the "right" and the "left" who have not compared Pentateuchal family law to the cultural prescriptions of leading controversialists who claim to be following Biblical teaching. Pentateuchal law does not explicitly—or in most cases even implicitly—enjoin that men and women are to enter into long-term monogamous relationships; that a man is not to have any sexual relationships outside of marriage; that a man is to be prohibited or discouraged from divorcing his wife except under extraordinary circumstances; that marriage is to be conceived of as a sacrament rather than a contract; that teenage girls are not to be encouraged to marry and have children; that a man is to be prohibited or discouraged from assaulting his wife sexually or physically; that tax relief is to be given to men with children;[27] that educating children in the home environment is primarily the responsibility of the mother; that sex education is to be provided primarily by parents; that parents and children are obliged to love one another or at least make an effort to love one another; that family members are to spend a great deal of time together and work at communicating with one another; that children are to look after aged parents; or that parents are to bring up children in an atmosphere of security and confidence that will enable them to develop a sense of self-worth. In general, Pentateuchal law has little to say about a husband's specific obligations to a wife, a wife's specific obligations to a husband, a child's specific obligations to parents, and a parent's specific obligations to children. Moreover, the family laws in the Pentateuch are not allocated a demarcated portion of the text but are, for the most part, scattered almost randomly throughout the last four books.

FUNDAMENTAL FAMILY-RELATED INJUNCTIONS IN THE PENTATEUCH

What issues, then, does Pentateuchal family law address, and what family values are implicit in or established by the family-related injunctions to be gleaned from the texts by an attentive reader? We noted three prominent injunctions in Chapter 2: the commandment to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth;[28] the commandment to have male children circumcised on the eighth day in accordance with God's covenant with Israel; and the Decalogue commandment to honor one's father and one's mother.[29] Regarding the first—which is directed to Man and all of humanity prior to the establishment of God's

covenant with Abraham and his descendants—we noted theoretical problems related to the vague and tenuous association of reproduction and family life. Reproduction does not require family life, and family arrangements (particularly to the extent that they induce men to be sexually more responsible) may limit reproduction more than promote it; at the same time, marriage and family life are valuable for reasons that go beyond the desire to reproduce, and a family arrangement can be beneficial for its members and for society, even if it does not result in reproduction. Furthermore, the nurturing of offspring does not require a nuclear family, and in our society there are numerous instances in which it is advisable to remove children from situations in which they are receiving inadequate care from biological or adoptive parents. Therefore, the specifically familial values involved here are vague and problematic.

Those who believe that replenishing the earth is of paramount importance cannot be certain that the family is the institution that will most effectively promote it; and one may wonder about the plausibility or prudence of regarding reproduction as the essential or even primary justification of marriage and family life. Indeed, no law in the Pentateuch *directly* enjoins an individual to get married and raise a family, though numerous laws imply that such an injunction has been given. The vagueness of Pentateuchal teaching in this respect is remarkable in light of the widespread assumption that Hebrew Scripture places marriage and the conjugal family at the center of its cultural, legal, and value systems.

Concerning the commandment to have male children circumcised on the eighth day, in Chapter 2 we focused on the ethical issue posed by making a minor (and in this case an infant) a party to the terms of a covenant (and in this case an extremely demanding one) without his consent (and in this case without even his minimal understanding). One may see here a positive family value in the commitment to share with one's offspring a rich spiritual legacy, but the motivation for performing the ritual is rarely this alone, and perhaps often this consideration is not taken into account. From another perspective, the law and practice can be seen as placing value on paternal authority and filial subordination of several kinds and degrees.

With respect to the Decalogue commandment to honor one's father and mother, the problem of vagueness again arises, and one complication is that we may be receiving direction that we are merely obliged to honor (and fear)[30] parents rather than love them in a way comparable to that in which we are to love God and our neighbor. In Chapter 2 we also considered problems related to paternal absolutism and extreme filial subordination; the Decalogue commandment not only may be exploited to promote these ends, but noticeably has no counterpart in Pentateuchal family law indicating the basic attitude that parents are obliged to take toward children, although parents are explicitly enjoined to acculturate their children by teaching them (or at least the males among them) about their covenantal obligations.[31] (They are also prohibited from sacrificing their children to Molech,[32] but they are permitted to sell their daughters.)[33] Var-

ious Hebrew-Scriptural texts imply that love toward children is more "natural" than love toward parents, but we cannot be certain what to make of this suggestion, particularly in relation to family values. Moreover, in both places in the Torah where the commandment to honor one's parents is indicated, it may appear to be justified by prudence; yet the familial or more general value implicit in the law is obscure in both cases. In Exodus, the children of the covenant are commanded to honor their parents, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," and in Deuteronomy, "that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." There is ample room for imaginative interpretation here, but even the vague emphasis on prudence may trouble the modern reader who senses something of greater "value" in sound parent-child relations.

Finally, problems arise concerning the "honor" due to a parent who is a dissolute human being or a generally good person but an exceedingly bad parent. The "logic" of Scripture has always been understood by the most widely received interpretative traditions as entailing that honor due to God overrides honor due to a parent,[34] but apart from that, the latitude for interpretation is enormous, especially insofar as respect for the interests of other parties and of the community as a whole must be factored into one's calculations. Smiting and cursing a parent are designated as capital crimes,[35] and a stubborn, rebellious, and disobedient son—a glutton and drunkard—is to be stoned to death by the men of the city.[36] These are, by most contemporary standards, excessively severe responses, and extraordinary reliance is placed on the judgment and veracity of parents whose patience with and affection for a child may fall short of what most of us have come to expect.

In the Decalogue itself, with its distinctive prominence among the Pentateuchal codes, three other commandments have some relation to family matters. One enjoins that an individual's children are not to be permitted to work on the sabbath,[37] thereby assuming parental control over the children's religious observances; adultery is prohibited;[38] and wives are included along with houses, servants, and animals as examples of things of one's neighbor that one is prohibited from coveting.[39] In considering the prohibition of adultery in Chapter 2, we noted that the Hebrew-Scriptural concept of adultery is on one level markedly narrower than that generally prevailing in modern Western democracies, and we should now observe in this regard that, whereas disapproval of adultery in our society is largely a matter of the general value placed on fidelity, in the Torah it seems to be associated more with respect for another individual's property. Louis M. Epstein acknowledges that the ancient Semites "considered adultery an outrage of a person's private and exclusive right to the woman, a thievery of something he owned and guarded with fierce jealousy."[40] Oddly, Epstein virtually condones this ancient Semitic view that adultery represents a "violation of the husband's property rights" by favorably contrasting it with that of promiscuous moderns.[41]

A similar problem arises regarding the prohibition of coveting, which appears

to be directed toward men, inasmuch as women are not being enjoined to avoid coveting their neighbor's husband. The phrasing of this commandment, as indeed of others in Pentateuchal law, is such that it may be interpreted as implying that the Law is essentially or primarily the concern of men, who are ultimately responsible for ensuring that provisions relating to the behavior of women are enforced. Moreover, wives may well appear to be regarded here as possessions and objects—"things" that are one's neighbor's. We may not regard as strange the proscription of covetousness itself—in whatever sense we are to understand the Scriptural text's reference to something plainly more serious than commonplace envy—but the specifically familial value related to this commandment is more troubling, involving as it does the inferior status of the wife.

MARRIAGE-RELATED INJUNCTIONS IN THE PENTATEUCH

A large part of Pentateuchal family law concerns the establishment of marriage, and this emphasis corresponds to the Pentateuch's recurrent focus on the contractual dimension of marriage. Foremost are the incest prohibitions,[42] as one is forbidden to marry anyone with whom one is prohibited from having sexual relations. Although incest prohibitions are still customarily treated as semi-mystical taboos, most of the incest prohibitions specified in Leviticus may be seen—depending on the specific relationship in question—to be rooted in some combination of sociobiological, sociological, and psychological "values." Incest between a parent and child involves more serious factors than sexual relations with a paternal uncle's wife or a daughter-in-law,[43] and while we may almost instinctively accept the reasonableness of most of these prohibitions—even while not regarding all of these relations as "incestuous" in our own sense of the term—we may find it difficult to specify precisely what combination of family values is involved in each instance and what the relative importance is of each value in the set. Of course, prohibition of incestuous relationships is not a distinguishing feature of Pentateuchal family law. More primitive and more advanced societies than those of ancient Israel have had simpler and more complex systems of incest prohibition. In addition, philosophical questions may be raised concerning the reason for—or the reasonableness of—regarding as immoral a certain form of incest specified in Leviticus.[44]

This is an appropriate place to deal with the fundamental philosophical problem of how to resolve moral dilemmas in the context of an ethical system that emphasizes categorical duties. The Scriptural prohibition of, for example, sexual relations with a daughter-in-law, either as incestuous or adulterous, allows for no exceptions. However, perhaps we can conceive of circumstances under which an intimate, sexual relationship between a man and his daughter-in-law would have extraordinarily positive consequences. Although they may have to pile one utilitarian consideration on top of another before being convinced that they have found a legitimate exception to a general rule, even some Bible-oriented reli-

gionists may concede that it is morally acceptable for this relationship to take place if the man and his daughter-in-law are uncommonly exhilarated by their involvement, enabled as a consequence to carry on with enterprises that will enhance the quality of life of countless people, and convinced on the basis of compelling evidence that the corrupt, abusive, and unfaithful husband could not care less about the illicit relationship.

If one insists on being exceedingly rigorous in not allowing for exceptions to Scriptural rules, one leaves oneself open to the challenge that one is so sancti-monious and inflexible as to be prepared to countenance the enormous suffering of others in order to display the depth of one's own piety. Even if one insists on being as uncompromising as possible, one may inevitably face moral dilem-mas in which Scriptural laws themselves conflict, and one will have to make a utilitarian calculation or apply some other method to determine which of the two duties takes precedence, generally or in the specific instance. One must make a decision, and in doing so one will in effect be ranking the values one sees as implicit in or established by the Scriptural precepts incompatible in the situation. Conservative religious cultural critics frequently contend that one of the estimable features of a Bible-based code is that the absoluteness of its in-junctions and corresponding values saves us from the relativism, indecisiveness, and lack of conviction that follow upon willingness to allow for exceptions to one's most basic moral principles. This argument, however, is itself a utilitarian argument; and in any case, we have to resolve moral dilemmas one way or another, and none of the family laws of the Pentateuch appears to be broad enough to represent the supreme moral principle by reference to which all pos-sible moral dilemmas could be resolved.

A code in Deuteronomy specifies various marriage prohibitions that have disturbed many readers. It in effect prohibits marriage to certain individuals excluded from entering the congregation of the Lord, including a man suffering from injuries to his private parts and someone born out of wedlock.[45] These laws may strike modern readers as strange and perplexing in themselves, and also in their relation to diverse types of individuals one is not explicitly prohib-ited from marrying, such as, say, the mass murderer, child molester, or rapist. Indeed, a virgin is expected to marry the man who raped her; her father is to receive fifty silver shekels, and her husband, having humbled her, can never divorce her.[46] Two other marriage prohibitions likely to strike many modern readers as strange involve a divorced man and woman not being permitted to remarry if the woman has been married to somebody else in the interim,[47] and a woman whose husband died without offspring not being permitted, prior to being released from her obligation, to marry anyone but the late husband's brother.[48] Imaginative interpretation may enable one to discern beneficial family values in these ordinances, but it is doubtful that even most reactionary religious cultural critics in a modern democratic society would deem it desirable that these ordinances be incorporated into civil law. Regarding the first law, we should recognize that what is at stake is not the general issue of the immorality of

divorce and remarriage, which figures so prominently in Christian ethics, but a peculiar exception to the Hebrew-Scriptural understanding that divorce and re-marriage are morally acceptable. The second law relates to the strange institution of the levirate.[49]

Viewed from an anthropological perspective, the levirate may not seem so strange. The institution is common in primitive societies and has been practiced by peoples as diverse as the Reindeer Chukchee of Siberia, the Arapesh of New Guinea, and the Lepcha of Sikkim.[50] And to those who agree with David R. Mace that male succession represents "the key to the whole structure" of family life among the ancient Hebrews and the "driving motive" for their "otherwise obscure" family laws, values, and institutions, the levirate may seem as "natural and indeed inevitable" as polygyny, easy divorce and sexual freedom for hus-bands, and cruel penalties on unchaste wives.[51]

If we are to be as tolerant as Enlightenment thinkers and most contemporary progressivists would like us to be, we have to get beyond the cruder forms of ethnocentrism and consider how an institution like the levirate can be seen, in the words of the leading cultural-relativist theorist Melville J. Herskovits, to "hold values that are not apparent from the outside."[52] However, the issue is not simply whether there are family values involved in Pentateuchal family law. People who believe, as Mace does, that Hebrew Scripture still provides us with incomparable guidance on family values do not appreciate Pentateuchal family law in the spirit that a radical relativist like Herskovits does. They indeed are bothered by contemporary relativism and look to the Bible for moral absolutes or something approximating them; and they are right, for practical and theoret-ical reasons, to be troubled by cultural relativism, along with other forms of relativism.[53] Thus, we need to consider further what the implications of the leviratic laws are for an understanding of the contemporary relevance of the Hebrew-Scriptural family value system.

The text is Deuteronomy 25:5–10:

If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

This passage crystallizes themes that have gradually emerged in our investiga-tion. One may see the institution of the levirate as resting on a family value of

great spiritual import, for the ancient Hebrews at some stage in their cultural development would presumably have regarded it as a matter of the highest devotion for the deceased's family members to ensure his continuing "name" (and thus presence) among future generations of Israel. But perhaps an underlying concern here is again estate matters, that old problem of the heirless Abraham; and complicating the situation is another old problem, institutionalized sexism. The childless widow appears to have no say in leviratic matters, and is in effect inherited by her brother-in-law. He, however, has the option of declining to do his duty, for though he will have to endure some contempt from his fellows, he ultimately is not obliged to ensure the survival of the deceased's "name." Now, a woman could act as her husband's agent but had extremely limited control over property; simultaneously, in certain ways she herself was practically regarded as property. If the childless widow returned to her father's family and subsequently married a "stranger," she would reduce the capacity of her late husband's family to build itself up. The institution of the levirate can be seen as one way of addressing such a problem. Thus, we see once again how a Scriptural family-related value which appears to have spiritual import may have much to do with worldlier concerns.

A separate but related issue is that while at some point the ancient Hebrews recognized the good sense of allowing daughters of fathers with no male heirs to receive the inheritance of their fathers,[54] even then the primary concern may have been to prevent capital assets from leaving the tribe,[55] and if there was a male heir the inheritance still passed to him. There was no way that women—wives or even daughters—were going to be given property and inheritance rights comparable to those of men. The Biblical scholar Carolyn Pressler, while allowing that Deuteronomic family laws genuinely focus on the family—and indeed on family relationships—contends that they "presuppose and undergird male headed and male defined hierarchical structures, in which women hold subordinate and dependent statuses."[56] Blenkinsopp, though less focused in his analysis, explicitly identifies as salient Hebrew-Scriptural family values not only submissiveness of women in particular, but control, hierarchy, and subordination to authority in general.[57]

THE TREATMENT OF DIVORCE IN THE PENTATEUCH

The Pentateuch says little about divorce, but both what it says and what it does not say are significant. The key text is Deuteronomy 24: 1–4, which ends with the aforementioned injunction that a divorced man and woman are not to remarry if the woman has been married to someone else in the interim. This injunction is so prominent in the passage that it may be construed as the primary precept being communicated, but the opening verses have been enormously influential:

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write

her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

In verse 24:3, consideration is then given to consequences of the woman's being divorced by another husband who "hates" her.

Many cultural critics and observers attribute the high or increasing divorce rate in Western democracies to a deterioration in family values resulting in part from the waning of traditional forms of religious commitment. This view is held by many who complain in the public forum that divorce has been made too easy. We all know that divorce can have devastating effects on a husband and wife, on their children, and on others as well, and that society also often pays a high price for the formal dissolution of a marriage. Divorce is a striking symbol of the breakdown of a family, and rampant divorce in society is a striking symbol of the breakdown of the conjugal family as an institution. Hence, when the subject of family values arises, divorce is normally high on the agenda of discussion topics; and divorce, unlike many other family problems, can be substantially regulated by social policy, so that the practical consequences of debate on the subject can be quite significant. Of course, many who have witnessed the devastating consequences of divorce remain convinced that divorce should not be made more difficult inasmuch as it is often the lesser of two evils. A bad marriage can also be disastrous for the husband and wife, the children, other parties, and society; and divorce is a social instrument that in many cases can significantly minimize suffering.

What is rather less obvious is why Hebrew Scripture, widely regarded as stressing the cultural centrality of the conjugal family, has little to say in its codes about this extremely important family concern. The subject receives far less attention than that of prohibited foods, the sabbatical year, or Temple donations, and is not in itself treated, as in the New Testament, as a matter of great moral significance. Aron Owen observes that divorce is not legislated in Deuteronomy 24 but simply presumed as existing;[58] and though some writers, including philo-Semitic Christian scholars like Mace, acknowledge that the Law makes divorce easy for men, Owen suggests that, "The very fact that an irksome marriage could be ended by mutual consent . . . served not to encourage divorce but to uphold the dignity and the strength of Jewish marriage."[59] Benjamin Schlesinger, a scholar well-informed about both Judaism and social work, believes that an astute understanding of the importance of family compatibility accounts for Judaism's having "classically provided" for divorce.[60] Despite the New Testament's ringing attack on divorce, foreshadowed by the prophet Malachi's fervid condemnation,[61] most avowed Christians have not supported the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in its latest efforts to underscore the immorality of divorce and to influence the social policy of various nations to prevent liberalization of divorce laws. Clearly, there is considerable disagreement and bewilderment among Christians about family values relating to divorce, and we find the theologian E. Clinton Gardner maintaining that while the

New Testament prohibition of divorce is "categorical,"[62] it is both "impractical" and "uncharitable" to force strict divorce laws even upon Christians.[63] Given that most citizens of Western democracies have expressed little sympathy for recent efforts to curtail significantly the accessibility of divorce, perhaps we may properly infer that despite persistent ethical and theological debates about the immorality of divorce (and political debates about the imprudence of permissive divorce laws), Hebrew Scripture's limited approach to the subject of divorce at least imparts a positive family value in drawing attention to the need to retain effective social mechanisms for dealing with intolerable family strife.

One may infer what one will in this regard, but the text of Deuteronomy 24: 1–2 also can be seen as imparting more problematic family values. The text focuses mainly on the interests of the disaffected husband and empowers him alone to take action. The wife is depicted as having been "taken" rather than having entered into a genuine partnership; the focus is exclusively on a husband's dissatisfaction, and the possibility that the husband will not have found favor in his wife's eyes is not deemed worth mentioning. It appears to be entirely up to the husband's judgment whether there is some "uncleanness" in his wife, and no importance is attached to the question of the reliability of the husband's judgment. There is no reference to the involvement of an independent party acting as counselor or judge; the concept of "uncleanness" is equivocal, leaving it flexible enough to be easily exploited (and this dubious translation of the Hebrew may make it sound less ambiguous than it is). The husband writes the bill of divorcement, and there is no indication that a wife participates directly in the process; there is no indication that a wife can write a bill of divorcement or otherwise initiate divorce. We are given no reason to believe that the husband has to do anything more than write a bill of divorcement; the wife is sent out of the house, which is the husband's house. We are not given any idea of what arrangements are to be made with regard to the children and their interests; no indication is given that a good wife's years of faithful service are to be taken into account; and there is no hint that women and children often have suffered extreme forms of abuse that would morally justify the community's providing for terms of divorce favorable to the wife. Of course, the text does not explicitly preclude conditions more favorable to women. However, if one guessed that throughout most of history the text has almost invariably been interpreted by religious authorities—the overwhelming majority of whom have been men—in a way prejudicial to the interests of women and minor children, one guessed right. With respect to traditionalist Judaism in particular, we may note that while some progress has been made in this area, women and minor children remain vulnerable to this day.[64]

Even politicians respected for their efforts to safeguard religious liberty have acknowledged that the civil state must not permit women and children to be victimized by exploitative divorce processes. The civil state cannot afford to ignore the consequences of such processes; many resultant problems end up on the politicians' doorstep. Thus, the civil state, often criticized by conservative

cultural critics for undermining culture-sustaining family values traditionally fostered by Biblical religion, finds itself promoting some widely esteemed family values not effectively inculcated by Pentateuchal law.[65] These may not be "values" in the conservative cultural critic's sense of the term, but they involve placing value on family matters not explicitly addressed by Deuteronomy 24: 1–2, such as the need for genuine partnership between husband and wife; the need for a wife's interests to be conscientiously taken into account by her husband and various communal authorities; the need for wise, independent counsel and judgment in resolving serious family conflicts; the need to consider closely the interests of children in critical family situations, and particularly when there is dissolution of a marriage; the need for deliberate and responsible judgment prior to determining that a spouse is not deserving of favor in one's eyes; the need to establish a sense of confidence among family members that the husband, the wife, and religious and civil communities will not permit formal dissolution of a marriage to take place haphazardly, too hastily, belatedly, or in a manner unjustly detrimental to any party that stands to be significantly affected by it; and the need for precise community standards as to when formal dissolution of a marriage is justifiable.

ADDITIONAL FAMILY ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE PENTATEUCH

In considering values imparted by the Pentateuch, we should remember that codes generally must give a great deal of consideration to interpersonal conflict. Deuteronomy 24:5 permits us to take a more optimistic view and directs the community itself to make sacrifices to ensure that a husband and wife can begin their marital relationship on a positive note: "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken." Several family values may be indicated here. One, of course, is the importance of "cheer" in family life, at least in the critical formative period. Another, as noted, is the community's responsibility to help make the marriage-based family work. Again, in implying that the vitality of the conjugal family is even more important in a sense than national security and business, Hebrew Scripture is, in this particular instance, clearly emphasizing the cultural centrality of the microcosmic family. Despite its agreeable acknowledgment of the importance of "cheer" in family life and of the community's obligation to help make individual marriages work, the injunction itself is apt to strike many modern readers as rather strange, if for no other reason than that rarely have even the most assertive contemporary Bible-oriented cultural critics taken it seriously.

Generally, Pentateuchal family law concentrates on more somber matters and imposes a number of tests, demands, and punishments that may strike a contemporary reader as alternately too severe, too lenient, or thoroughly incomprehensible.

1. A man may marry a beautiful captive woman, but if he tires of her he must simply let her go free rather than sell her, inasmuch as he has humbled her.[66] The evil inherent in slavery itself—sexual or otherwise—is not conveyed here; and as noted earlier, even the enslavement of Hebrews by fellow Hebrews is condoned in Hebrew Scripture,[67] despite God's recurrent emphasis on the importance of his having brought Israel out of the house of bondage.[68] The discarded captive obtains her "freedom" but at a higher price than that paid by the husband who tired of her; and if the husband does not tire of her, he entrusts the rearing of their children to an alien ex-slave.

2. A virgin betrothed to a husband, being "worth" immensely more in a sexist culture than other women whose interests are not even deemed worthy of consideration in this context, is to be stoned to death along with her violator if she was raped in the city, since she should have cried out for help. But if she was raped in the country, her violator is to be punished by having to marry her without the option of subsequently divorcing her. Justice is to be seen as done when her father receives fifty silver shekels.[69] Michael R. Cosby is not being irreverent when he asks, "Can you imagine a law such as this being implemented today in a court case involving rape?"[70] There is much in this arrangement to trouble someone concerned about family values and human dignity in general, including its dehumanization of women, its treatment of marriage as a form of punishment, and its perplexing assumption that a sound family life could be built on such a foundation.

3. If a man marries a woman he has been ensured is a virgin, and it turns out that she is not a virgin, she is to be stoned to death. However, if a man falsely accuses his bride of having had premarital sexual relations, her honor is to be restored by her father's receiving a hundred silver shekels and her husband not being allowed to divorce her.[71] One can discern abiding family values here, such as the importance of honesty in marriage, but they are overshadowed by some other, very strange values.

4. Adultery is to be punished by death,[72] which will seem to most contemporary readers to be extremely severe. It is sobering to reflect on how many great people, including some of our most beloved leaders in almost every cultural sphere, might have been lost to civilization had this law been consistently enforced.

5. If a man seduces a maiden not yet betrothed, he is to marry her, but if the father refuses to "give" her to the seducer, "he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins."[73] In our society many people are apt to be uncomfortable with the notions that the father should ultimately determine when to give and when not to give his daughter to be wed; that a bride can be won by seduction; that people who have had sexual relations should be obliged to wed; that financial arrangements resolve the most critical problems arising from premarital sexual relationships; and that significant moral issues only arise when the woman being seduced or sexually assaulted is another man's wife or a virgin for whom a substantial bride-price could have been claimed. With respect to family values

in particular, we need to ponder the kinds of family relationships likely to develop in homes where people are coerced to marry and raise children together under circumstances that fall substantially short of being tender or romantic.

6. A strange passage in Pentateuchal law authorizes trial by ordeal for wives suspected by their husbands of adultery.[74] This passage is troubling not only because of its broader moral and cultural implications, but because it requires the modern reader to confront ancient rituals that may appear to be too superstitious to be sincerely regarded as embodying profound symbolic meaning. A jealous husband may have his wife tested by the priest, who will give her a potion to drink that contains, among other things, dust from the tabernacle floor. If she becomes ill, there is evidence of her adulterousness, but if she is not cursed she will be "free" to return to her husband and give birth to children. Adultery is a grave matter, but so, too, is jealousy, which conceivably has undermined as many marriages as adultery has.

Most modern readers are apt to feel, however, that neither problem is effectively addressed by the procedure designated in the text. One may regard the trial by ordeal as a shrewd psychological artifice that enables the community to get closer to the facts; but having come to appreciate the limitations of the most sophisticated forms of evidence gathering, forensic testing, and lie detection itself, we surely have to wonder how reliable the priest's test could have been in this regard, and we cannot discount the possibility that some observers would have regarded this divinely sanctioned procedure as providing incontrovertible evidence. Furthermore, the double standard again rears its head, with the insecure wife having to fear an irrationally jealous or mean-spirited husband's putting her through a humiliating experience. With respect to family values, what would putting a wife through such an ordeal contribute to the well-being of her family and the raising of her children in a secure and stable environment? Something strange underlies Hebrew Scripture's entire approach to female adultery, and Gail Corrington Steele may correctly identify it when she writes:

Female adultery, from the perspective of the exilic and postexilic writers and editors of the Tanakh . . . represents a dangerous subversion of the hegemony of familial, ethnic, and religious male authorities and of the male God of Israel. Even when Israelite males are themselves charged with committing adultery, it is because they are seduced by powerfully alluring "strange" or "outsider" women. When they commit apostasy, the religious crime often spoken of as adultery, the same "foreign" or "strange women" are again responsible.[75]

Two more issues may be briefly and obliquely addressed here, because of their common association with recent cultural skirmishes about Biblical religion and family values. Issues concerning abortion receive continual attention, but these issues seem to many to be peripherally relevant to the family itself, insofar as the central disagreement in abortion debates is between "pro-life" and "pro-choice" advocates. However, family issues are at least indirectly involved. Abor-

tion may not only be taking the life of someone's child—indeed one's own—but may express an unwholesome attitude toward family life in general, through its devaluation of the importance of bringing children into the world. On the other hand, defenders of freer access to abortion have drawn attention to the distress often experienced by unwanted children and to the strain such children can place on an unstable family situation.

It must suffice here to observe that the subject of abortion is not explicitly addressed in the Pentateuch, though it is not hard to see how the "logic" of the codes can be interpreted as entailing the immorality of abortion. But while issues related to abortion can be seen as family issues, it may be prudent for all parties in debates about social policy on abortion to bear in mind that the major issues are only secondarily family issues. In this respect, they are similar to numerous other issues, such as economic ones, which are familial insofar as they may have significant repercussions for family life.

The practice of male homosexuality is explicitly prohibited at Leviticus 18: 22: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." (This is presumably enjoined only on men, as at Leviticus 20:13, for if enjoined on women, it would undermine the Torah's fundamental emphasis on procreation. That the female reader and listener are not even addressed here is itself problematic.) However, while homosexuality is routinely attacked by most reactionary Bible-oriented controversialists who complain in the public forum about the decline of family values, homosexuality again can be regarded as only marginally relevant to family concerns. The basic "logic" of Pentateuchal law can be seen as entailing that permissiveness toward homosexual behavior expresses disrespect for the importance of replenishing the earth; but all people who for one reason or other abstain from procreating, even for a short period of time, express such disrespect. Furthermore, gays and lesbians can participate constructively in family life in a number of ways, such as attending to the needs of parents, siblings, and members of the various extended families, and of course they can make substantial contributions to cultural domains from which they have not been ostracized. There are gays and lesbians who beget and raise children while many of their heterosexual associates do not. Most reflective people in our society understand homosexuality rather differently than the ancient Hebrews did, and even reactionary Bible-oriented critics of homosexuality sometimes concede that the relentless persecution of homosexuals, reinforced through the centuries by Bible-oriented extremists, has been disgraceful.

A traditionalist Jew or Christian may nevertheless regard the true believer's crusade against homosexual "influences" as founded on a deeply felt conviction. The Scriptural injunction prohibiting male homosexuality appears to be categorical, even if not highlighted in the way that the Decalogue injunctions and certain other injunctions of Hebrew Scripture are; and it takes exegetical boldness to interpret the verse as less decisive than verses prohibiting covetousness, bearing grudges, cursing parents, refusing to love God or one's neighbor, eating pork, or committing the capital offense of gathering sticks on the sabbath day[76]

(the seventh day, as clearly indicated to readers of Hebrew Scripture). New Testament attacks on the legalism of hypocritical scribes and Pharisees are sometimes accompanied by exegetical boldness, as when Jesus teaches that the entire Law and the Prophets hang on two commandments, to love God and to love thy neighbor as thyself,[77] but Jesus is a demanding role model for pious Christian traditionalists to follow.

There is, nevertheless, an aspect of the Pentateuchal prohibition of male homosexuality that I believe merits close attention from those interested in contemporary family values. While the proscription of homosexuality at Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 is apparently categorical, it follows two earlier injunctions prohibiting specific forms of homosexuality, both included among the incest prohibitions. These forbid uncovering the nakedness of one's father[78] and one's paternal uncle.[79] A reader concerned about the crisis of family values in our time may well find the focus in this passage very strange. The exegete may find it easy enough to explain why the Scriptural passage does not treat homosexual relations with a father or paternal uncle as situations that simply can be seen to be subsumed under the general injunction against homosexuality; but what may jar the sensibility of the contemporary reader is that the onus of avoiding such relations is placed on the son rather than the father or elder. After all, we live in a society that, advanced though it is, is recurrently reminded of the persistent and extremely grave evil of child abuse; and sexual abuse of children by parents, religious teachers, and other elders to whom vulnerable children look for affection, nurture, and guidance is almost universally regarded in our society as one of the foremost threats to the integrity of the family, as well as a singularly deplorable form of human behavior. Prominent cultural reformers, including Pat Schroeder, have maintained that the problem of child abuse has received proportionately little attention from leading conservative cultural critics and, until recent decades, has been largely a "taboo problem."[80] Given the obvious vulnerability of children—which, moreover, is likely to have been substantially greater in ancient cultures distinguished by patriarchal authoritarianism and extreme filial subordination—one may find it extremely disconcerting that Pentateuchal law does not stress the enormous evil of child sexual abuse and other forms of child abuse, and indeed, makes it appear that the true danger is of children sexually abusing their elders.

Those who worry about the recklessness with which reactionary Bible-oriented cultural critics invoke the Bible as a comprehensive guide to solving contemporary family problems and restoring eternal family values may be moved to speculate that the inversion of practical reality encountered in the Scriptural text's treatment of sexual relations between children and elders is further evidence of the "value" placed therein on paternal absolutism and extreme filial subordination, as well as of the deleterious influence of "Biblical teaching" which is conceivably responsible in large measure for child abuse having been a "taboo problem" throughout much of Western history. (We may also note in this regard that the Leviticus code enumerating incestuous relation-

ships does not specifically refer to sexual relations with a daughter.)[81] The re-
mote possibility must be acknowledged that sexual abuse of elders by children
was in fact a more serious problem in the ancient Middle East than abuse of
children by elders, but even were this the case, it would be hard to see the
relevance of the Scriptural passage's "values" to contemporary family life or to
domestic circumstances in post-Biblical times generally.

In concentrating on the strangeness of family laws and values in the Penta-
teuch, our essential aim here has not been to ridicule, lament, or condemn, but
to understand.[82] Desire for a purely intellectual understanding undoubtedly has
motivated some critical-philosophical and critical-historical approaches to He-
brew Scripture and other sacred literatures, but the practical importance of better
understanding the cultural phenomena we have been exploring should not be
underestimated,[83] especially given recent cultural skirmishes that have obfus-
cated more than illuminated issues related to Biblical religion and family values
that directly bear on critical questions of social policy. There is nothing irrev-
erent in seeking to enhance our understanding of what we and our fellows might
do to reconcile the world-view of a body of literature lying at the heart of much
of our contemporary culture with insights accumulated in the course of at least
twenty-five centuries of conscientious, rational reflection.

Whether divinely inspired or not, the Law was expressed in the specific form
it was at least partly because of the specific capacities and circumstances of
those to whom it was initially communicated. To believe that the Law should
be understood in precisely the way that the ancient Hebrews were meant to
understand it is to have faith not so much in the enduring relevance of the Law
as in the inability of human beings to attain a deeper understanding of it. To
believe that we are capable of understanding the Law in precisely the way that
the ancient Hebrews understood it is to be intellectually naive. Thus, reflecting
on the strangeness of family values that may well seem to be implicit in or
established by the Law is not necessarily a step toward repudiating the Law,
and may be an incentive to giving closer consideration to how the Law may be
relevant to contemporary concerns. In addition, with respect to Israel's pre-exilic
sexual morality in particular, it is worth considering the suggestion of Louis M.
Epstein, a sympathetic and respected commentator, that, "These prohibitions and
condemnations represent no systematic program of sex morality nor are they
based on any well defined theological principles. The people's aversion to cer-
tain forms of sex behavior seems to be the only basis for this earliest Hebrew
moral code."[84] However low their opinion may be of "theological principles,"
religionists and others who are genuinely concerned about values require a
stronger basis for moral judgment than the random aversions of an ancient peo-
ple.

Although we have focused on religious codes central to Western culture, some
issues that have arisen are relevant to understanding cultural relations between
religion as such and the family as such (or between a general type of religion
and a general type of family). It is not only in Western societies that one en-

counters tensions such as those between microcosmic and macrocosmic family loyalties, traditionalism and progressivism vis-à-vis religio-moral attitudes toward family practices, and paternal and non-paternal conceptions of the highest authority. Recognizing the importance of the particular does not preclude our recognizing the importance of the universal, and recognizing the importance of the distinctive does not preclude our recognizing the importance of the common.

IMPRESSIONS OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PROPHETS AND HAGIOGRAPHA

The second and third parts of *Tenach* could never carry for the Jews an authority comparable to that of the Torah. The Torah established the basic conceptual framework within which all Jews committed to Judaism—a distinctively Jewish world-view and way of life—were subsequently obliged to do their religious thinking (and inevitably much of their secular thinking), and it did so with respect to every major form of experience and culture. With its extended narrative of the experiences and teachings of the chief prophet, its distinctively powerful imagery, and its monumental, pre-philosophical integration and codification of a massive amount and enormous range of cultural material, it must be regarded as the main source of any values Hebrew Scripture has to impart; and it is readily recognized by an informed secularizing Jew or a knowledgeable Gentile as having established an enormous part of the basic conceptual framework of "Western civilization." No one could be recognized for long as prophet or sage in Israel without more than ritually affirming a unique respect for the Torah, and from the post-Mosaic prophets, hellenizing intellectuals, and pivotal schismatics to the scientifically emancipated Jewish thinkers of the modern world, some conscious or subconscious acceptance of the "essential" wisdom of Torah has been a necessary condition of being associated with Jewish culture.

In the books making up the two later parts of Hebrew Scripture we find many types of literary material. There are numerous narratives depicting episodes in the history of Israel after the death of Moses, diverse forms of religious and semi-religious poetry, extended moral exhortations, attempts to convey mystical and semi-mystical experiences, proverbs, and even occasional skeptical reflections. Household issues sometimes surface, and in a few books they are addressed at length. While on one level we are expected to view any family-related values being inculcated therein through the lens of Pentateuchal teaching, at times there is ample evidence that guidance is being provided to people who, with the passage of centuries, have attained an increased intellectual refinement enabling them to approach moral concerns more reflectively than their ancestors could. Nevertheless, the exegete should exercise great discretion before drawing the unqualified conclusion that the moral instruction of the Prophets and Hagiographa, representing as it does more mature phases of the intellectual and cultural development of the ancient Hebrews, is more applicable to contempo-

rary cultural problems than the earlier and more basic moral instruction to which it is essentially ancillary.

Christian expositors are often given to regarding the writings of ethical prophets such as Hosea and Isaiah as bridging the authoritarian exclusivism of the Pentateuch with the gentler universalism of the Gospels. Such a view is not only held by Christians obliged to regard Hebrew Scripture as preparatory to the New Testament. Erich Fromm sees Hebrew Scripture as characterized by a "remarkable evolution from primitive authoritarianism and clannishness to the idea of the radical freedom of man and the brotherhood of all men,"[85] and the philosopher of culture Ernst Cassirer, another refugee from Nazi persecution struggling to achieve a modus vivendi with his ancestral faith, wants to see the post-Mosaic prophets as forerunners of Enlightenment thinking:

If we look at the development of Judaism we feel how complete and how decisive this change of meaning was. In the prophetic books of the Old Testament we find an entirely new direction of thought and meaning. The ideal of purity means something quite different from all the formal mythical conceptions . . . and dignity is purity of heart.[86]

We cannot do justice in this short space to all the references to family matters in the Prophets and Hagiographa, but even a brief survey of some well-known texts should reveal that the treatment of these matters—and the values that emerge in the course of this treatment—are more problematic than many interpreters recognize.

Consider first the "household" situations of David and Solomon, two of the most imposing presences in the primarily narrative books following the Pentateuch. (Jewish scholars generally have, for a number of reasons, regarded these books as belonging to the Prophets, the middle part of Hebrew Scripture; and these books do, of course, offer accounts of the lives and times of prophets such as Deborah, Samuel, and Elijah.) The "domestic" problems of David and Solomon are highlighted in Scriptural narratives. In spite of the explicit injunction in a Pentateuchal code that a king shall not multiply horses, wives, silver, and gold,[87] these two legendary heroes of Israel do precisely these things and in the process get themselves and their people into all sorts of difficulties. The Scriptural text unsparingly traces the deterioration of the charismatic and accomplished young protagonist David into a tormented and sometimes debauched figure, surrounded by strange wives and concubines, arranging the death of an innocent man so that he can have the man's beautiful wife to add to his harem,[88] and engaged in a debilitating fight to the death with his son Absalom.[89] Condemned by the prophet Nathan[90] and punished sternly and unambiguously by God, David is a man whose personal household affairs are in almost complete disarray; he has no interest whatsoever in the virtues of the microcosmic family, and in his reckless disregard for the values of responsible domestic family life, he is an appalling role model for his people.

His son Solomon, Israel's preeminent capitalist-imperialist and personal sym-

bol of Israel at the height of its worldly glory, is involved in so many sexual intrigues with strange women, including the daughter of Pharaoh and women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites,[91] that the great Temple-builder, with whom God entered into a personal covenant,[92] ends up turning away his heart after the strange gods of his alien wives and concubines and importing into his kingdom all kinds of strange worship.[93]

The Scriptural accounts of the troubles that David and Solomon bring upon themselves and their people are morally didactic and underline the dangers of allowing one's domestic affairs to get out of control. Yet King David and King Solomon have remained throughout history deeply cherished figures, not only by Jews but by most readers of Hebrew Scripture. Michelangelo renders David along with Moses, and not a Nathan, Josiah, or Habakkuk. While the name of David may eventually bring to mind his lust for the beautiful Bathsheba or his troubles with his son Absalom, it normally first evokes affection and respect for one of Israel's greatest figures, a courageous young man who defeated Goliath and came to be identified with many of the Psalms, conceivably the greatest poetic creations of all time. His son Solomon is rarely associated with hundreds of strange amours and ensuing infidelity to God; rather, he has remained throughout the generations the embodiment of wisdom. It is not hard for the reader of Hebrew Scripture to see why: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. . . . For he was wiser than all men. . . . And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."[94] That this eminently wise mortal who built a Temple and led Israel on to its greatest earthly glory should not have had the good sense to sort out his household affairs, settle down with a good woman or two, patiently and lovingly bring up some upright children, and avoid being spiritually corrupted by the strange worship of his alien loves is, for most readers of Scripture, peripheral to the main narrative, and so, too, are any family values to be derived from the text. As for the ultimate judgment on David, God himself is depicted as telling Solomon:

And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and commandments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father.[95]

Given what has been related in the Book of 2 Samuel concerning King David's own family values, the reader may wonder how even such a wise son as Solomon could not have been confused about the cultural priority of domestic life; and as the reader perceives how little Israel's most beloved kings learned about family values (and idolatry) from the Law and from God himself—and how little this has been held against them—more bewilderment is apt to ensue.

When we move on to the passionate moral exhortations of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve "minor" prophets, we may reasonably expect to find

sound, culture-sustaining family values more distinctly indicated therein, for we repeatedly have been told by literary scholars and other people who know about such things that these moral exhortations are incomparable in their poetic power; and even without the help of literary scholars and exegetes we can see that these men, like Nathan, believed that justice and righteousness come before power and glory. However, at least four basic problems arise here. First, these great prophets rarely speak directly about family-related values. There are, to be sure, some poignant reflections on the corruption of domestic family life scattered throughout their exhortations, most notably in the verses from Malachi cited earlier. But the cultural centrality of the intimate family group is by no means a significant theme of their preaching, and even when Ezekiel and Hosea serve up their well-known romantic images of marital commitment, it is to illuminate God's relationship with Israel rather than to promote family reforms.[96] This brings us to a second problem, which is that the prophets were not typical "family men" according to either our customary contemporary paradigms or even the patriarchal paradigms of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As Max Weber observes,

As far as we know, the way of life of the prophets was that of peculiar men. Jeremiah, upon Yahwe's command, remained solitary, because disaster was anticipated. Hosea, upon Yahwe's command seems to have married a harlot. Isaiah, upon Yahwe's command (8:3) had intercourse with a prophetess whose child he then named as previously ordained.[97]

It is not easy to imagine these ethereal visionaries handling everyday domestic problems, and they are conspicuously different in this way from an Abraham or maybe even a Moses.

A third problem is that the poetic imagery of the prophets is usually exceedingly difficult for the modern reader to understand. Bible-oriented religionists and liberally educated people will now and then cite a verse or expression from an Amos, Isaiah, or Micah (though rather less often a Nahum or Haggai), and even a disaffected apostate can still be awestruck at the inexplicably thrilling imagery and imaginative use of language that mark the most celebrated exhortations of the prophets; but much of what the prophets say is utterly incomprehensible to the modern reader, even with the assistance of received interpretative traditions. (It is instructive in this regard to ask a simple believer to explain the meaning of even a familiar psalm that the individual has recited thousands of times; one may well be met with a look of astonishment for expecting the person to know what the words actually mean.) The problem lies as much with the oracular poet as with the reader and listener. Plato, who deemed religion to be of great cultural importance but mistrusted religious poets as much as other poets, underscores this point with his recurrent observation that while great poets may be inspired men who have the ability to inspire, they are rarely knowledgeable men who have the ability to edify.[98] Finally, though some of what the

ancient Hebrew prophets had to say is clearly of timeless importance, particularly in their emphasis on the primacy of the virtues, they were often dealing with specific social problems relating to the events of their day, and a large part of their mission was taken up with the condemnation of Israel's external enemies.

When one seeks out timeless family values in the Hagiographa, one may again find what one wants to find. Much has been made of the idealization of the good wife in the Book of Proverbs, particularly 31:10–31. We noted in Chapter 2 that the sociologist Sumner sees this text as the chief exception to the rule that Hebrew Scripture tells us hardly anything about the Jewish family. Sumner's interpretation, tinged with irony, is that though the passage makes "weighty statements of general truths, universally accepted," its ideal descriptions of a good wife are patronizing and antiquated.[99] The descriptions themselves may be primarily symbolic, as is suggested by their relation to earlier passages in Proverbs; but if contemporary readers take them as endeavoring to provide insight into the values to be associated with a good wife, they may be alternately charmed, enlightened, offended, and baffled. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."[100] She will do her husband "good and not evil."[101] Among other things, she works willingly with her hands; brings food ("like the merchants' ships"); plants a vineyard; lays her hands to the spindle; stretches out her hand to the poor and reaches out to the needy; makes herself coverings of tapestry; makes fine linen and sells it; opens her mouth with wisdom and kindness; looks well to the ways of her household and "eateth not the bread of idleness";[102] is called blessed by her children and praised by her husband, who is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land; and fears God. The accent throughout the passage is on the good wife's industriousness and utility, though other virtues are also indicated. Her role as mother, which is not at all defined, is mentioned in passing in only one of the twenty-one verses, 31:28. The stress is on her productivity: "Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."[103] And what of a bad wife? "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."[104] "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."[105] There is notably no comparable verse in Proverbs indicating what it is like for a woman to live with an abusive husband.

With respect to relationships with children, the fundamental instruction of Proverbs is almost too well-known: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."[106] The timeless family value of discipline may be instructively indicated here, but contemporary readers may worry about its receiving exclusive attention and about the sanction it may be seen as giving to what we now regard as major forms of child abuse. If one beats the child with the rod, the child may die after all, emotionally if not physically.

We conclude this part of our study by considering two books in the Hagi-

ographa bearing the names of Biblical heroines, Ruth and Esther. These appealing books may seem uncomplicated on the surface, but when we consider the family values they are meant to inculcate, we may have second thoughts. In the Book of Ruth, a nice Moabite woman whose Hebrew husband died without an heir is devoted to the deceased's mother and remains with her and her people; and in the course of time, she marries a prosperous kinsman of her late husband, accords a form of immortality to the deceased by keeping his name alive in future generations of Israel, and is herself rewarded not only with a happy life but by having as her descendant no less a personage than King David. One may take the simple view that this story essentially inculcates the family value of devotion; the kindly Ruth is faithful to her late husband, her mother-in-law, and their people—the children of the covenant—and as a result she does much good and is herself rewarded in ordinary and exceptional ways.

However, if we take into account critical-historical and critical-philosophical considerations, we may see more complicated family values involved. The story upholds and even idealizes the institution of the levirate and actually indicates an extension of the obligation indicated in the Pentateuchal injunction, insofar as Boaz is not the brother of the deceased but only a kinsman. Boaz proudly announces to the elders and "all the people" that he has bought from the deceased's mother all the property that belonged to her late husband and children and, "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day."[107] Ruth, rewarded for her devotion, gets to be purchased by the successful and honorable Boaz, her late husband achieves a form of immortality, and the elders are gratified. Is Ruth a good role model for contemporary women, and do her achievement and success illustrate that the family values underlying the leviratic system are good values?[108]

A notable feature of the account is that Ruth is not a Hebrew but a Moabite. Ruth accepts Israel as her people and Israel's God as her God,[109] but she is a Moabite, and the children of the covenant were explicitly prohibited by the Law from consorting with Moabites.[110] (King Solomon was later to be reminded that the Moabite women are strange women who practice strange worship.) Yet it appears that the Book of Ruth is encouraging acceptance of exogamy under certain conditions, and in underscoring this theme is depicting Israel's greatest king as descended from a woman who is not only not a Hebrew but a hated Moabite. The key family value that one discerns here may depend largely on the values that one brings to one's reading of the text. Is it possible that marrying "one's own kind" is not so important after all, and that spiritual qualities count for more than "seed"? Is it possible that love and devotion in family matters may sometimes take precedence over a hatred mandated by Pentateuchal law? Or is it simply the case that male succession is to be accomplished at virtually any cost? A related issue concerns what family value Ruth exemplifies when she cuts herself off from her own kindred. Even conceding that the Moabites

may have been dreadful people practicing barbarous worship, we have to be impressed by their ability to raise up a lovely woman like Ruth. In choosing to be loyal to her mother-in-law and late husband's kin, Ruth chooses to be disloyal to her own kin. So even the family value of devotion is not unambiguously imparted by the text.

Concerning the Book of Esther, Emil L. Fackenheim submits that, "By the standards of canonisers both Christian and Jewish, there are some 'strange books' in the Jewish Bible. Surely the strangest is Esther."[111] This remarkable book never mentions God, and its heroine saves Israel by marrying out of the faith[112] and essentially becoming assimilated into Persian life. A favorite of Jewish children of all ages, the book is associated with the merry holiday of Purim, which, in celebrating the Jewish people's having survived one of countless attempts by anti-Semites to destroy them, commemorates the perseverance of Israel, the ingenuity of its brightest minds, and—in the view of most traditionalist Jews, anyway—the faithfulness of its God. That what may be an adaptation of a harem tale about the Persian court should have found its way into the canon may be as interesting as the story itself,[113] and the book's connections with Babylonian mythology are interesting in their own right.[114]

These need not concern us here, but we should note that certain conditions represented in the tale symbolize the enduring situation of Diaspora Jewry. Although the Second Temple would survive into the Common Era, the Jews depicted in the Book of Esther are already far from the land promised to them as an everlasting possession in God's covenant with Abraham, and are embarked on Israel's remarkable adventure as the world's most cosmopolitan people, abundantly influencing and influenced by innumerable alien cultures. Although no longer slaves as they were in Egypt, the children of Israel are to remain throughout most of their subsequent history an extremely vulnerable and persecuted minority, but they now carry with them some of the most powerful cultural instruments the world has known. The Book of Esther gives us a sense of the continual difficulties facing Diaspora Jews simultaneously essaying to survive, conserve their culture, and benefit from and contribute to the cultures of the peoples among whom they live. On this level the reader more easily understands how an assimilated Jew has come to be acclaimed as one of Israel's greatest heroines.

In the story, King Ahasuerus (Xerxes), angry at his queen Vashti—an independent woman who refuses to jump at his command[115]—arranges a contest and selects as his new queen the beautiful Esther, who does not let him know she is a Jew until it is absolutely necessary to do so. Esther's counselor throughout the story is her kinsman Mordecai. Her family background is unusual, "for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter."[116] Mordecai, neither prophet nor priest nor sage, does not grieve at Esther's exogamy and in fact directs her not to "show" her people or her kindred.[117] We may presume then that Queen Esther adopts the ways of the Persian nobles

among whom she lives. In time, Esther exposes the wicked Haman and his coterie of Jew-haters, persuades the infatuated Ahasuerus to execute the anti-Semites instead of the Jews, and proceeds with her life at the Persian court as her "people" overcome yet another threat to their survival.

Our primary concern is with family values imparted by the book, but the absence of God from the narrative is of some relevance. Commenting on this feature, Biblical scholar George Foot Moore writes:

The Book of Esther, it was long ago observed, is singular among the books of the Bible in that there is no mention of God in it. It is Jewish with a sanguinary loyalty to race, but of Judaism as religion there is not a trace; it is in fact somewhat obtrusive by its absence. When Mordecai warns Esther that if she fails her people in their hour of need deliverance will come "from another place," the word God is ostentatiously avoided; before her great adventure she fasts three days, but there is no suggestion of prayer; in the celebrations of rescue and the annual commemoration of it there is feasting and gladness, but no thanksgiving to God.[118]

A discerning reader of Hebrew Scripture can trace the transformation of the understanding of God throughout the literature. Integral to ancient Hebrew monotheistic consciousness was awareness that God ultimately must be grasped conceptually rather than imaged visually; and the conceptualization became subtler with the passage of time. Abraham's enlightenment symbolizes transition from the fearful vision of arbitrary tribal deities to the more abstract, ethical conception of the One universal God, a Supreme Being concerned with a covenantal relationship and not merely being appeased. Moses is portrayed receiving the Law from a just and compassionate Lawgiver. Subsequent prophets preach that God is gratified by virtue more than ritual and by moral sacrifice more than animal sacrifice; and in certain distinctive books of the Prophets and Hagiographa—regardless of their actual date of conception—we see the ancient Hebrews intellectually laboring with the idea of God.

The Books of Jonah, Habbakuk, Psalms, Job, and Ecclesiastes are obvious instances, but the Book of Esther is also notable in this regard. In this book the divine Father, if presumed to be in the background, is an extremely abstract presence marginal to the events being depicted.[119] The Jews of Ahasuerus' realm are far removed from the promised land, do not make sacrifices in a Temple, and are subject to the alluring cultural influence of the mighty Persians and the subsidiary cultural influences of diverse minorities drawn in by a great empire. However ethnocentric they still may be, they cannot easily forget now that they represent one small people in the wide world and that their very survival as a people depends on the good will of alien potentates and populations and not only on the grace of a God who has declined to resolve their problems as directly and decisively as he resolved those of their distant ancestors. They also understand that they are simply not in a position to follow all of the commandments of the Pentateuchal law.

In this context it may be easier to appreciate the strange family values symbolized by the legendary figure of Esther. Here is a woman who clearly is not in the line of great Hebrew matriarchs; she will presumably build up the house of Ahasuerus and the generations of the Persians, not those of the Hebrews. She has had no father and mother to honor but trusts a guardian who sees her exogamy and assimilation as the key to the survival of the Jews of the Persian empire. She is neither devout nor industrious but beautiful, warmhearted, and canny, and her interest is not in preserving the spiritual purity of Israel, but in keeping her people alive. Her progeny will likely be lost to Israel, but she will perhaps have contributed more to the macrocosmic family than all the women who pass on the "seed" of the priests, prophets, and kings; and she does not directly serve God—who does not directly communicate with her as with her illustrious ancestors—but she directly serves the macrocosmic family, and because of her achievement a major branch of that family will be able to conserve, refine, and build on its cultural heritage and, when it deems it appropriate, to serve God. In succeeding generations of Diaspora Jewry, more and more Jews, assimilated like Esther but sharing her sense of solidarity with the people, would come to rely more on their own resourcefulness and that of their fellows than on the grace of God.

The books of the Prophets and Hagiographa rarely address ethical and value-related issues in *direct* relation to Pentateuchal law, and they do not add additional precepts to Pentateuchal law that have the authoritative force of the Pentateuchal injunctions. Although a large part of the Torah is devoted to an account of the communication of the Law—a Law ostensibly binding in some sense on all future generations of Israel—even the Torah itself is essentially narrative in structure. While the Rabbinic tradition and some other influential Jewish and Christian interpretative traditions have emphasized the legal import of Scriptural teaching, neither Hebrew Scripture as a whole nor any of its component books has the form of either a legal manual or a discourse of moral philosophy. In the books of the Prophets and Hagiographa, precepts are still assumed to be essential to righteous living, but ethical issues are normally addressed in relation to general ethical virtues or dispositions as well as concrete circumstances in which individual human beings and communities find themselves. Such considerations may lead one to agree with the secularist critic Joe Edward Barnhart that "so-called biblical ethics is situation ethics."[120] And from a secularist perspective, this is just one of many conceivable reasons for rejecting the claim of many Bible-oriented religionists that Scripture advances moral absolutes.[121] Yet even a believer may be prepared to endorse William Graham Cole's view that,

God speaks to individuals in the midst of their concrete situations and he speaks with a relevant precision. Each man is addressed where he lives and stands. [The Bible] is not a collection of abstract philosophical truths, eternally valid under all circumstances. It is

a book rooted in and related to history, not only the history of nations but the history of individual men and women.[122]

In any case, to cast light on the universal human condition, Scripture must take into account the universality of human individuality itself as well as any number of cultural and situational particularities. Scripture no more teaches relativism than it teaches determinism, but it can effectively impart an appreciation of the importance of both relativity and determining factors.

NOTES

1. Genesis 32:24–30.
2. Numbers 27:7–11. Cf. Stuart A. Queen, Robert W. Habenstein, and John B. Adams, *The Family in Various Cultures*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1961 [1951]), p. 142.
3. Deuteronomy 34:10.
4. Exodus 2:21–22.
5. Exodus 2:1.
6. Exodus 2:1–5.
7. Exodus 2:5–11.
8. Numbers 12:1–9.
9. Exodus 2:11–12.
10. Genesis 1:28.
11. Genesis 17:9–14. Cf. Leviticus 12:2–3.
12. These questions have perhaps received their most trenchant formulation and response in Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*) (1670), chs. 4–5, 12–13, 16–18, in Benedict de Spinoza, *Chief Works*, Vol. 1, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (1883) (New York: Dover, 1955).
13. See, for example, Galatians 2–4.
14. Cf. Stanley Hauerwas and Gregory L. Jones, ed., *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989).
15. Leviticus 18:22.
16. Matthew 28:19.
17. Cf. Jay Newman, *Competition in Religious Life* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), esp. pp. 60–64.
18. Ibid., esp. pp. 69–79, 92–93, 97–100, 150–73.
19. Matthew 5:17.
20. Cf. Reuven P. Bulka, *Jewish Marriage: A Halakhic Ethic* (New York: Ktav and Yeshiva University Press, 1986), p. 147.
21. Cf. Edward Westermarck, *Ethical Relativity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932), p. 197; Morris Ginsberg, *On the Diversity of Morals* (London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1953), p. 1.
22. David R. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage: A Sociological Study* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), p. 263.
23. Ibid., p. 265.
24. William J. Goode, *The Family*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982 [1964]), p. 2.

25. Ibid.

26. Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," in Leo Perdue et al., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 67. Cf. pp. 66–70.

27. See esp. Exodus 30:11–16, but also the numerous references throughout the Pentateuch to tithes and other Temple donations.

28. Genesis 1:28.

29. Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16.

30. Leviticus 19:3. Cf. William Graham Cole, *Sex and Love in the Bible* (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 78.

31. Deuteronomy 6, esp. Deuteronomy 6:1–2, 6:6–7, 6:20–25.

32. Leviticus 18:21.

33. Exodus 21:7–11.

34. Cf. Edward S. Conway, "The Family," in Peter Elman, ed., *Jewish Marriage* (London: Soncino Press, for The Jewish Marriage Education Council, 1967), p. 150; Gerald Blidstein, *Honor Thy Father and Mother: Filial Responsibility in Jewish Law and Ethics* (New York: Ktav, 1975), pp. 130–36.

35. Exodus 21:15, 21:17.

36. Deuteronomy 21:18–21.

37. Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14.

38. Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18.

39. Exodus 20:17. Cf. the less problematic formulation in Deuteronomy 5:21.

40. Louis M. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (New York: Ktav, 1948), p. 194.

41. Ibid.

42. Leviticus 18.

43. Leviticus 18:14–15.

44. Cf. Jerome Neu, "What Is Wrong with Incest," *Inquiry* 19 (1976), 27–39.

45. Deuteronomy 23:1–3.

46. Deuteronomy 22:25–29.

47. Deuteronomy 24:4.

48. Deuteronomy 25:5.

49. Cf. Raymond Westbrook, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), ch. 4.

50. William N. Stephens, *The Family in Cross-cultural Perspective* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 194.

51. David R. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage*, p. 263.

52. Melville J. Herskovits, *Man and His Works* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964 [1948]), p. 63.

53. Cf. Jay Newman, *Inauthentic Culture and Its Philosophical Critics* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1997), ch. 3.

54. Cf. Numbers 27:1–11.

55. Cf. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), p. 129; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (1956), trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 353.

56. Carolyn Pressler, *The View of Women Found in the Deuteronomic Family Laws* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), p. 5. Pressler contrasts her position with that of scholars who see the Deuteronomic family laws as embodying a basically humane attitude

toward women. Cf., for example, Anthony Phillips, *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law: A New Approach to the Decalogue* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), p. 180.

57. Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," pp. 83–84.

58. Aron Owen, "Legal Aspects of Marriage," in Peter Elman, ed., *Jewish Marriage* (London: Soncino Press, for The Jewish Marriage Education Council, 1967), p. 123.

59. Ibid., p. 126.

60. Benjamin Schlesinger, "The Jewish Family in Retrospect," in Benjamin Schlesinger, ed., *The Jewish Family: A Survey and Annotated Bibliography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 7. Cf. the revised edition, *Jewish Family Issues: A Resource Guide* (New York: Garland, 1987).

61. Malachi 2:14–16. Cf. Micah 2:9.

62. E. Clinton Gardner, *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 241.

63. Ibid., p. 243.

64. Cf. John T. Syrtash, *Religion and Culture in Canadian Family Law* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1992), ch. 3; Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York: Schocken, 1984), ch. 3.

65. See Malcolm C. Kronby, *Canadian Family Law* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1986), which includes as appendices An Act Respecting Divorce and Corollary Relief (Canada, 1985), The Family Law Act (Ontario, 1986), and The Support and Custody Orders Enforcement Act (Ontario, 1985).

66. Deuteronomy 21:10–14.

67. Cf. Exodus 21:1–11; Leviticus 25:39–55; Deuteronomy 15:12–18; 2 Kings 4:1.

68. Exodus 20:2; Leviticus 25:42–43; Leviticus 25:55.

69. Deuteronomy 22:23–29.

70. Michael R. Cosby, *Sex in the Bible* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984), p. 2.

71. Deuteronomy 22:13–21.

72. Leviticus 20:10.

73. Exodus 22:16–17.

74. Numbers 5:11–31.

75. Gail Corrington Steele, *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 8.

76. Numbers 15:32–36.

77. Matthew 22:34–40.

78. Leviticus 18:7.

79. Leviticus 18:14.

80. Pat Schroeder, with Andrea Camp and Robyn Lipner, *Champion of the Great American Family* (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 146.

81. Consider the poignant title of a heart-rending account of one Christian's efforts to cope with a sexually abusive father: Meridel Rawlings, with Jay Rawlings, as told by Judi, *Honor Thy Father? Exposing the Secret World of Incest* (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1986).

82. Benedict de Spinoza, *A Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Politicus*) (1677), ch. 1, sec. 4, in Benedict de Spinoza, *Chief Works*, Vol. 1, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (1883) (New York: Dover, 1955), p. 288. This later and unfinished work should not be confused with the *Theologico-Political Treatise* (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*).

83. Ibid.

84. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism*, p. 4.

85. Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 7.

86. Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (1944) (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 118. Cf. pp. 114–19.

87. Deuteronomy 17:15–17.

88. 2 Samuel 11–12.

89. 2 Samuel 13–19.

90. 2 Samuel 12. Cf. 2 Samuel 13–24.

91. 1 Kings 11:1–3.

92. 1 Kings 9:1–9.

93. 1 Kings 11:3–11.

94. 1 Kings 4:29–32.

95. 1 Kings 9:4–5.

96. Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1–3.

97. Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism* (1917–19), trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952), p. 286.

98. Cf., for example, Plato, *Apology* 22a–22c, *Ion, Protagoras* 347c–348a, *Republic* 595a–608b.

99. William G. Sumner, "The Family and Social Change," in *The Family: Papers and Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society* (1909) (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1972), pp. 7–8.

100. Proverbs 31:10.

101. Proverbs 31:12.

102. Proverbs 31:27.

103. Proverbs 31:31.

104. Proverbs 21:9. This instruction is deemed sufficiently important to be reiterated at 25:24.

105. Proverbs 21:19. Cf. Proverbs 27:15.

106. Proverbs 23:13–14. Cf. Proverbs 13:24, 19:18.

107. Ruth 3:9–10.

108. Cf. Steele, *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible*, pp. 67–72.

109. Ruth 1:16.

110. Deuteronomy 23:3–4.

111. Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Bible after the Holocaust* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 60.

112. Ibid.

113. Theodor H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. xxxi.

114. The connection between the names Mordecai and Esther and those of the Babylonian gods Marduk and Ishtar is the most obvious clue.

115. Esther 1. Cf. Mary Ann Glendon, *The Transformation of Family Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 16.

116. Esther 2:7.

117. Esther 2:10.

118. George Foot Moore, *The Literature of the Old Testament* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1913), p. 138.

119. This applies only to the Hebrew version in the Judaic canon and not the expanded Greek version.

120. Joe Edward Barnhart, "The Relativity of Biblical Ethics," in R. Joseph Hoffmann and Gerald A. Larue, eds., *Biblical v. Secular Ethics: The Conflict* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1988), p. 114.

121. Ibid.

122. Cole, *Sex and Love in the Bible*, p. 406.

4

Strange Family Values of the New Testament

❧

DIFFICULTIES IN DETERMINING THE FAMILY VALUES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Our effort to discern the family values of the New Testament is complicated by some of the same difficulties encountered in approaching family-related values of Hebrew Scripture. We are confronted, first and foremost, with hermeneutical issues; a thoughtful person can again see that the meaning and importance of widely discussed Scriptural texts are rarely as transparent as most avowed "literalists" contend. Again, most people know the New Testament through translations, but even the most advanced students of New Testament Greek and other ancient languages cannot know for sure that they appreciate all the nuances of meaning of some key terms and expressions in the New Testament.

The literature of the New Testament was established over a relatively short time compared to that of Hebrew Scripture, and so does not present us with views representing such diverse phases of historical cultural development. Yet important conceptual and cultural differences still can be seen as operative between (and within) the principal books of the New Testament that address family issues. Perhaps nowhere are these more evident than in the contrast between certain teachings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels and certain teachings attributed to the apostle Paul in his epistles.[1]

Christianity is, among other things, an outgrowth of ancient Judaism, and it arose partly as a radical response to what was widely perceived among Jews as an urgent need to reconcile the essential features of the world-view of Israel with certain insights of the Greeks and Romans. In its approach to family issues the New Testament regularly shows the influence of Greek and Roman conceptions and institutions about which much was written by classical historians,

philosophers, dramatic poets, and other writers. As Christianity remains after two millennia the dominant institutionalized faith of Western culture, even the most abstruse themes in the New Testament have a kind of familiarity to the typical modern reader in the West that many fundamental Hebrew-Scriptural conceptions which Christianity abandoned cannot reasonably be expected to have. However, this familiarity cuts two ways, for many New Testament expressions that little children can effortlessly recite are actually incomprehensible, so that we must regularly be on guard to ensure that we truly understand that which is familiar to us only because we are accustomed to hearing it repeated over and over again.

There are, nevertheless, distinctive difficulties in determining the family values of the New Testament that did not arise in our consideration of family-related subjects in Hebrew Scripture. One concerns the matter of how the earliest Christians could conceive of the family values and general world-view of the New Testament as sufficiently compatible with those of Hebrew Scripture to warrant regarding the combination of Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament as a unified work of revelation, the Bible. Most reflective Jews, secularists, and other non-Christians—and many reflective Christians, too—recognize that much New Testament teaching on family-related and other subjects represents a repudiation and in some cases an outright inversion of long-established Hebrew-Scriptural values and conceptions. The New Testament regularly depicts Jesus and Paul as Jews conversant with and to some extent respectful of the loftiest teachings of their people and ancestors. But however difficult it may be to determine what the chief family values of Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament are, it is manifestly evident on any but the most superficial reading of the Christian's Bible that Jesus and Paul are ardently and uncompromisingly repudiating much of the core of the traditional world-view of the ancient Hebrews.

Among the problems thus arising for the reflective Christian seeking guidance from the Bible on how to deal with family issues is how to interpret New Testament teaching so that it does not render wholly insignificant whatever Hebrew-Scriptural teaching it is meant to confirm, promote, extend, and refine. Many contemporary Christian cultural critics routinely insist that Hebrew-Scriptural teaching on family issues remains largely authoritative; but in substance and in spirit, the teachings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels portray the institution of the family itself in a very different light than do the Genesis narratives, Pentateuchal codes, and even the last established books of Hebrew Scripture. This matter is so critical that we shall consider it later in great depth, but we cannot treat it with much confidence until we have given close attention to some crucial New Testament texts.

A related problem is that unlike Hebrew Scripture, the New Testament offers nothing comparable to the detailed, explicit codes of the Pentateuch. This is no coincidence, for though the New Testament does not provide a manifestly consistent account of how Jesus and Paul view the Mosaic Law, these two central

figures of New Testament literature are undoubtedly fervent critics of the impersonal legalism that they associate with hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. In his epistles, Paul—or whatever group of Christian teachers he symbolizes—does offer specific guidance to Christian communities on family-related and other moral issues, and in doing so may be undermining the spirit of Jesus' moral teaching; but Paul generally is seen as mindful of Jesus' disapproval of rigid ethical legalism. This is especially apparent in Paul's recurrent diminution of the Law, as in the Book of Galatians.

Approaching the issue of what family values Hebrew Scripture is intended to inculcate, we touched on the enigma of why Hebrew Scripture says so little about domestic life in comparison with other subjects it addresses. The question again arises with respect to the New Testament, and in the view of the sociologist Sumner, "In the New Testament there is no doctrine of marriage, no description of the proper family, and no exposition of domestic virtues."[2] The most fruitful line of response to the question requires considering new difficulties as well as now familiar ones. We have seen that in Hebrew Scripture the microcosmic, conjugal family is recurrently and in places systematically subordinated to macrocosmic, extended families and most critically to the people or nation of Israel. On several planes the New Testament radically extends this process. It promotes a faith radically more universalistic than that of Israel in crucial ways, particularly in diminishing the importance of biological kinship in a universal church that effectively abolishes the spiritual distinction between Jew and Gentile and between any who believe.[3]

Although Hebrew Scripture in key passages compels us to focus on the destiny of all humanity and the moral imperatives following from the essential brotherhood of Adam's descendants, its universalistic humanitarian themes are developed in an intricate and often bewildering counterpoint with themes related to its account of the exceptional destiny of a unique people. On this level, Christianity is even farther removed from concern with the conjugal family than Judaism is. While its universalistic humanitarian themes are developed in a counterpoint with themes related to the situation of a clearly demarcated community of believers, the universal church is a "family" in a more attenuated sense of the term than is the people Israel. Yet ironically, the New Testament simultaneously distances itself from concern with the conjugal family by its radical individualism. Not only does Christianity promote its own forms of exclusivism,[4] but it recurrently emphasizes the primacy of the individual's attending to the matter of personal salvation. Related to this emphasis is the encouragement the New Testament gives to the most devoted believers to avoid the procreation and domestic living that Hebrew Scripture represents as intrinsically sound—naturally, morally, and theologically.

When reactionary Bible-oriented cultural critics complain about secularist-progressivist attacks on the institution of the traditional family, they quite consistently ignore Hebrew Scripture's de-emphasis of the conjugal family at the expense of various extended families, but even more noteworthy is their cus-

tomary evasiveness with respect to the more radical de-emphasis of the conjugal family promoted in teachings attributed to Jesus and Paul. Thus, in considering the strangeness of family values imparted by the New Testament, an appropriate point of entry is consideration of concerns that reflective inquirers have had about what may well appear to be the New Testament's integral anti-family position.

JESUS' DEVALUATION OF THE FAMILY

The contention that the radical countercultural program of the New Testament represents one of the most sustained and influential attacks ever made on the institution of the nuclear family, though frequently advanced by serious thinkers, is still apt to be regarded by many pious Christians as brazen to the point of irreverence. It is notable, nonetheless, that the position has been developed at length by expositors who can hardly be regarded as narrow-minded debunkers. As these expositors have had diverse concerns and conclusions, we do well to consider several versions of the position—beginning with the simple observations of an ingenuous Evangelical, proceeding to more sophisticated theological analyses, and concluding with theoretical sociological and philosophical perspectives.

Theological Anxieties

In an article in *Christianity Today* that poses the provocative question, "Is the 'Traditional' Family Biblical?", Evangelical contributor Rodney Clapp acknowledges uneasily that, "There is good reason to doubt the Gospels are as profamily as we often pretend they are."[5] Addressing an audience made up largely of conservative Protestants like himself, Clapp may be presumptuous to indict these co-religionists of pretense; but he plays by their rules when he encourages them to consider closely and without prejudice the spirit and content of the Word. He begins by observing that the Gospels not only present Jesus as unmarried but portray his twelve disciples as either single men or as married men who abandon their families.[6] He notes that even as a youngster Jesus exhibits "a startling detachment from his biological family."[7] The adult Jesus "proclaims a kingdom that will—he makes no bones about it—divide and destroy families. Brother will betray brother to death; parents and children will turn on one another."[8] In a powerful admonition, Jesus says:

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.[9]

This admonition is echoed in notable passages of the Book of Luke, as at 9: 58–62, where Jesus rebukes those who would delay their discipleship by burying

a father or bidding farewell to those at home, and at 14:18–20, where Jesus suggests that even recent marriage is a weak excuse for delaying discipleship. Moreover, in the concluding verses of Mark 3, Jesus "deems that his true mother, brothers, and sisters are not his biological kin, but those who do the will of God are."[10] Clapp proposes that,

As hard as these words are to hear today, they must have been even more difficult to their original audience. In Jesus' day the family was integrally linked to economic survival. More than that, the Hebrew tradition promised personal survival after death mainly through the memory of one's children. (This fact largely accounts for the anguish of Old Testament men and women who were unable to produce heirs.)[11]

Most people may be willing to concede that there are things to be valued more than family relationships, but in the famous passages to which Clapp refers, Jesus would certainly appear to be distancing himself as much as possible from those who insist on the cultural centrality of the conjugal family or any other kinship-based institution.

Clapp is not quite sure what to make of these difficult passages. He concludes his article with proposals that will sound thoroughly sensible to the typical conservative Christian cultural critic. He encourages married readers to try to avoid divorce, urges those with homosexual inclinations to remain celibate, commends chastity to teenagers, and so forth.[12] But on his way to serving up these familiar recommendations, he expresses heartfelt concerns about matters that he believes have received insufficient consideration from Evangelical cultural critics. He maintains that the prevailing understanding of the family among his fellow Evangelicals is a flawed, nineteenth-century bourgeois one rather than a Biblical one, and that it encourages "blithe individualism" at the expense of Christian social responsibility;[13] that the meaning and purposes of the family have changed throughout the ages;[14] that Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 7 are "strange" and "run hard against our modern grain";[15] and that the Christian must ever be mindful that the church and not the biological family is the "First Family."[16] Despite all his anxiety, however, Clapp appears to have little sympathy for the social agendas of liberal-progressivist Christian reformers.

The passages that interest Clapp have long concerned more probing theologians. In a well-known 1934 study titled *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, the New Testament scholar Ernest F. Scott notes passages later cited by Clapp along with others that pose difficulties for those who want to see Jesus as resolute defender of the conjugal family. Scott is not consistent in his approach to these difficulties. Insisting on the importance of historical perspective, he in one place declares that, "Jesus accepted the view of the family which obtained among his countrymen."[17] He also emphasizes that Jesus' teaching contains tender allusions to natural affections cultivated in domestic life.[18] However, he acknowledges that Jesus "appears, in several directions, to qualify the current estimate of the family": "In the excessive reverence which was commonly paid to it he sees a

danger to the higher religious interests, and is anxious, while maintaining all that is beautiful and helpful in it, to keep it in a subordinate place."[19] Scott observes that family divisions will be eliminated in the Kingdom of God, where people will live unmarried, "as the angels of God in heaven";[20] and he underscores what he takes to be the pivotal lesson for contemporary Christians—that domestic ties must be sacrificed when they distract the Christian from the supreme end of doing God's will.[21] Scott then puts forward for consideration a litany of germane texts in the Gospels. In addition to those we have already noted, Scott points to Matthew 8:21–22 (with Jesus' admonition to the procrastinating disciple who deems it important to bury his father), Matthew 12:46–50 and Luke 8:19–21 (where Jesus declares that his disciples rather than his blood relations constitute his true family), Matthew 19:29 and Mark 10:29–30 (where Jesus promises everlasting life to those who foresake their houses and their family members for his name's sake), and Luke 14:26 (where Jesus says: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.")[22]

Venturing to deal with the "apparent harshness" of these problematic teachings attributed to Jesus, Scott suggests that Jesus must have been deeply antipathetic toward the way in which the family had become an end in itself in "current Judaism":

Men were content to believe that their one duty was to their own little group of kinsfolk, and these groups were ranged in selfish opposition to each other. The aim of Jesus was to make men sensible of their larger brotherhood . . . for all the children of God would be equally dear to them.[23]

Scott's talk about "current Judaism" is evasive, for in these problematic teachings, Jesus is attacking what could well be regarded as some of the core conceptions of the Hebrew-Scriptural world-view. Scott insists that Jesus' words do not betray a callousness toward the most natural human affections, but merely establish that "loyalty to the family is wont to conflict with the larger loyalties."[24] He also stresses what he takes to be the "pro-family" impact of Jesus' "correction" of the Pentateuchal divorce law.[25] As formulated in the Book of Mark, Jesus' teaching in this regard is that, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. . . . Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."[26] Yet, in the final analysis, Scott, unlike Clapp, is convinced that the only effective way to deal with difficulties posed by problematic New Testament passages related to the family is to adopt a liberal approach to the matter of Scriptural interpretation, and to recognize that "the ethic of Jesus . . . does not take the form of statutory law" but is "concerned throughout with the inner principles of human action"; and that while the values of justice, mercy, and faithfulness do not change, they "may have a wider meaning for one age than another."[27]

The New Testament scholar L. H. Marshall faithfully undertakes to defend Jesus' teaching on the family, but in spite of his own evasiveness and inconsistency, he underscores the problematic aspects of that teaching. He begins with the soothing reflection that, "Jesus showed warm appreciation of the family,"[28] and points in this regard to the parable of the prodigal son[29] and Jesus' emphasis on the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of all human beings.[30] He also stresses the importance of Jesus' teaching on divorce, though he insists that this teaching can only be fully understood in terms of Jesus' antipathy to the "frivolous divorces which were so common amongst the Jews."[31] Marshall then acknowledges, however, that in other ways Jesus seems to have "depreciated" the family: Jesus did not establish a family of his own, regarded himself as a "eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of God,"[32] and broke off relations with his mother and siblings and publicly repudiated them.[33] (A pious Protestant, Marshall's disdain for the "Mariolatry" of Roman Catholicism is so great that he delights in observing that Jesus' mother "stood in opposition to her Son, and was, for a time at least, disowned by him.")[34] After surveying the now familiar passages of the Gospels,[35] Marshall concedes, though only in a preposterously oblique way, that some of Jesus' teaching on the family is so shocking that it simply cannot be taken literally:

In view of all this evidence, it is hardly surprising that in China and Japan people are said to be shocked by Christ's disparagement of family ties. And it is not only in China and Japan that that happens! True as it is that some of our Lord's language on this subject is hyperbolical, and is not to be taken literally, yet there is no gainsaying the fact that he issued a stern challenge.[36]

Jesus' essential lesson, in Marshall's view, is that family devotion must not be exaggerated and that there are claims much higher than those of the family. Marshall compares a faithful Christian to the soldier whose duty to family is subordinate to his duty to the state in time of war; and he reminds us of what a great loss it would have been to the world if a Florence Nightingale had not repudiated parental counsel and put service to God and humanity ahead of filial devotion.[37] But Marshall also regards the "subtle snare" of family affection as capable of producing "the gravest personal ethical defects,"[38] and in a memorable passage that is still likely to irritate many conservative Christian cultural critics, Marshall enthusiastically endorses the view that the teaching of Jesus and that of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* are identical in their emphasis on the danger of the family.[39]

Clapp, Scott, and Marshall all suggest that Jesus is to be seen in the Gospels as predominantly supportive of the conjugal family rather than indifferent or antipathetic toward it, and they all express confidence that Jesus' essential teaching concerning the institution can ultimately be reconciled with the respect that most modern Christians profess to have for it. Yet these three men of faith are undoubtedly aware that both in its account of the details of Jesus' peculiar life

and in many statements about the family that it attributes to Jesus, the New Testament promotes a conception of the value of the conjugal family—and biological kinship relationships in general—that is apt to seem exceedingly strange to any reflective person conditioned to regard the family as a culturally central institution. While stressing that Jesus' vital concern in the problematic passages is to warn against overvaluing family-related interests, they cannot entirely conceal a lingering anxiety about their devotion to a teacher who reserves much of his sternest criticism for those whose sense of family responsibility corresponds more or less to that which most civilized human beings— Christian and non-Christian—have come to expect of a moral agent. They are also undoubtedly aware that the Jesus of the Gospels is not merely teaching that he is more important than one's family but is proclaiming that compared to him and the Kingdom of God, natural family affections pale into insignificance and are noteworthy mainly to the extent that they represent obstacles to salvation.

Even with respect to what he himself regards as Jesus' key "pro-family" teaching,[40] the condemnation of divorce—especially when followed by remarriage—Scott distances himself from both the decisive tone of Jesus' pronouncement and the strict Roman Catholic interpretation of what Scott acknowledges to be "the one exception to the rule that Jesus did not lay down laws but only guiding principles."[41] This new rule, which effectively cancels that of the Mosaic code,[42] is "the one definite enactment of Jesus." Yet, Scott adds, "its lasting validity may fairly be questioned."[43] This comment would represent an even more remarkable concession on Scott's part than it does, were it not for the fact that it expresses a view probably held by most Protestant theologians—conservative as well as liberal—since the age of the Reformers. Indeed, Scott holds, as did the ancient Hebrews and do most progressive thinkers of our own day, that in many cases divorce, whether or not it is followed by remarriage, is the lesser of two evils in "saving" the remnants of a dysfunctional family. But then what core family value is actually imparted in the passages of the Gospels that we have considered? Resourceful or unrestricted interpretation of the texts may bring exegetes to positions with which they can feel comfortable, but one is not necessarily an irreverent debunker of the Christian faith if one concludes, upon surveying the texts, that they promote above all else an unconditional willingness to sacrifice narrower family interests for the sake of ecclesiastical ones.

Moreover, while it is sometimes expedient for contemporary Christian apologists to portray Jesus as essentially a humble teacher of elementary ethical attitudes who strives against the forces of exploitation, hypocrisy, and legalism in order to foster authentic love of God and neighbor, Jesus represents immensely more to the typical Christian than even the greatest of the prophets. Unlike a Moses or Hosea, Jesus Christ is to many who whole-heartedly call themselves by the name of "Christian" the Savior, the Son of God, and—to the extent that they can comprehend the awesome mystery of the Trinity—in some sense God himself. As conservative Christian theologians are given to reminding fuzzy-minded co-religionists, when the Jesus of the Gospels calls people to

discipleship, he is not merely a very kind man encouraging his fellows to be nice:

> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. . . . He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.[44]

However creatively they may be inclined to approach Jesus' teaching on the value of the conjugal family and kinship relationships, most authentic Christians who seek to be disciples and to be saved believe firmly that Jesus is more than a great moral teacher who wants them to consider the interests of people besides their family members. This fact is all the more important inasmuch as there is a tendency on the part of many scholars interested in Christian teaching on the family to attribute the strange family values of Christianity exclusively to some odd twist given to Jesus' "simple" ethical appeals by the apostle Paul, the Fathers of the church, medieval theologians, or other deluded or manipulative followers of the great teacher. But a decisive devaluation of the conjugal family and all biological kinship relationships is already pronounced in the words that the Gospels attribute to Jesus himself.

Theoretical Perspectives

When "outsiders" approach the problematic passages, they need not worry about their piety. Their interpretations may ultimately be no more objective or trustworthy, but they can offer food for thought to those among us prepared to take a wider perspective or wider range of perspectives. A provocative approach to the passages is offered by the social theorist Ferdinand Mount, a thinker struck by the fundamental cultural competition between religious and family institutions. Mount recognizes that some of the strangest anti-family values of Christianity arose after New Testament times,[45] but he is also mindful of the impact of the words of the Jesus of the Gospels. He tells us of the "shock of first coming across these texts,"[46] and proceeds to observe that he was able to see through the evasiveness of those who glibly explained the problems away:

> It was explained to me that Jesus was merely laying down the practical conditions of discipleship in forceful terms. . . . I found and find this interpretation unconvincing. For the New Testament uncompromisingly states that to be a disciple of Christ is a *higher* calling than to be a kind and loving member of a family.[47]

Mount sees Jesus as "something of a radical, perhaps even a sort of hippie,"[48] and hazards to compare the charismatic disrupter of families who issues the call, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me,"[49] to such modern cult leaders, vilified by Christians, as Sun Myung Moon and Jim Jones.[50] As

for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, it "is a wonderful, intoxicating sermon. But it is a sermon for bachelors."[51] Mount draws special attention to Ernst Troeltsch's emphasis on the historical conflict within Christianity between ideals of family and of asceticism and celibacy;[52] but unlike Troeltsch, Mount is primarily concerned with defending the family from its rivals.

The theologian Troeltsch, probably the preeminent social historian of Christianity, is not an "outsider" like Mount, and as Clapp, Scott, and Marshall do, he sees Jesus as basically committed to the family on some level.[53] Still, he is keenly aware of a markedly different dimension to Jesus' teaching. He begins by noting in this regard that,

Jesus reminds His hearers that sex will not exist at all in the Kingdom of Heaven; that situations may arise in which it may be necessary to renounce the joys of family life in response to some imperious spiritual demand, and that the missionary vocation may require men "to have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake."[54]

"Pro-family" Christians may not feel too threatened by these observations, which focus on the obligations of exceptional rather than ordinary Christians. But Troeltsch carries this point further, observing that Jesus' message is not a "programme of social reform" but "the summons to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God"; and the Kingdom of God is an order "which is not concerned with . . . the family at all."[55]

A quite different perspective is offered by the philosopher George Santayana, whose views on both religion and the family were undoubtedly colored by his unusual family relationships and his even more unusual interpretation of them.[56] Deeply disinclined to be a conventional family man himself, Santayana takes a positive view of Jesus' estimation of the family, but for a reason that is hardly likely to give comfort to Christian pro-family crusaders. In oft-quoted lines, Santayana proposes that, "The family is one of nature's masterpieces. It would be hard to conceive a system of instincts more nicely adjusted, where the constituents should represent or support one another better."[57] He also notes that religion recurrently depicts and employs the family as a model community. However, he proceeds to argue that the family is in many ways irrational and that we pay a high price for it in terms of sorrows, prejudices, enmities, restrictions, difficulties of access, ignorance, material confinement, narrow loyalties, and accidental social differences.[58] "There is indeed no more irrational ground for living together than that we have sprung from the same loins"; and indeed, "A common origin unites reasonable creatures only if it involves common thoughts and purposes."[59] Santayana knows that this theme has been sounded by classical philosophers, but he makes a point of invoking the teaching of Jesus: "It was a pure spokesman of the spirit who said that whosoever should do the will of his *Father who was in heaven*, the same was his brother and sister and mother."[60] While Santayana declines to propose a substitute for the biological family,[61] he expresses respect for what he considers the reasonableness and

spiritual loftiness of Jesus' devaluation of the institution. Unlike both Mount and the typical conservative Christian pro-family crusader, he sees Jesus as most penetrating in exposing the inherently irrational and unspiritual character of a culturally central community based on kinship.

Ludwig Feuerbach, one of the most influential critics of Christianity, takes a different view, though he too is acutely sensitive to the anti-family dimension of core Christian teachings. His nineteenth-century dissection of the Christian ideal of voluntary celibacy does not specifically focus on Jesus' words, but it may already be considered here in light of the Biblical passages we have surveyed. Feuerbach is impressed by the Christian eschatological message's extreme focus on the individual and proposes that this emphasis effectively undermines the importance of culture itself, including all concerns about family and posterity. Concentrating on salvation in the form of personal immortality, this fundamental Christian teaching endeavors to set the believer free from the "world," materiality, sexuality, and species-related concerns. In contrast with the Judaism of Hebrew Scripture, it idealizes negation of life and hope for heaven. This radically egoistic individualism of Christian eschatology is inherently incompatible with family responsibility.[62] Far from being more humanitarian in its outlook than Judaism or other faiths, Christianity teaches that "man has all in himself, all in his God, [and] consequently he has no need to supply his own deficiencies by others as representatives of the species."[63] The Christian may require fellowship, but this need is extremely subordinate inasmuch as personal salvation, which lies only in God, is his central concern. Activity for others is thus required only as a utilitarian condition for attaining salvation.[64]

Nowhere is this radically egoistic dimension of Christianity more apparent to Feuerbach than in its devaluation of family relationships. First,

The unworldly, supernatural life is essentially also an unmarried life. The celibate lies already, though not in the form of a law, in the inmost nature of Christianity. This is sufficiently declared in the supernatural origin of the Saviour—a doctrine in which unspotted virginity is hallowed as the saving principle, as the principle of the new, the Christian world.[65]

Although one who has once concluded a marriage must hold it sacred, marriage itself is intrinsically an indulgence to the flesh, and in this regard an evil which must be restricted as much as possible. In the sense of perfected Christianity, it is a sin.[66] Furthermore, the authentic Christian's love of God is not abstract or general but a subjective, personal love of a personal God; and on this level it is an exclusive and jealous one.[67] Accordingly, the devout adherent of Christ has no need of a natural love. "God supplies to him the want of culture, and in like manner God supplies to him the want of love, of a wife, of a family. The Christian immediately identifies the species with the individual; hence he strips off the difference of sex as a burdensome, accidental adjunct."[68] Pure Christian commitment thus idealizes renunciation of all forms of natural family love for

the sake of a perfected spiritual love. Whereas the ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans had for the most part seen the establishment and maintenance of nuclear and extended families as religious obligations of the highest order, the supernatural Christian ideal of spirituality necessitates that marriage, procreation, and family commitment be regarded as essentially unholy, though the weaker Christians who have entered into these relationships are under a distinct religious obligation to deal with them in certain ways.[69]

In this last consideration, Feuerbach touches on a crucial and troubling duality in the New Testament approach to the family that has been the source of recurring confusion in Christian moral theology. Although already prominent in Jesus' simultaneously encouraging his disciples to abandon their families yet rebuking as adulterers those who put away their wives, it becomes more pronounced in the endeavor of Christ's self-appointed successors to put his ethereal teaching into worldly practice. The critical tension is already apparent in the most influential of basic theological interpretations of Jesus' teaching on family values, those incorporated into the New Testament and attributed to his apostle Paul.

THE PAULINE DUALITY AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

The Jesus of the New Testament may well appear to be a mysterious, shadowy figure communicating in obscure parables, delivering cryptic asides, and behaving in exceedingly unconventional ways. As critic of exploitation, hypocrisy, and legalism, and promoter of love of God and neighbor, he is a lofty ethical teacher; but he recurrently leaves more than mere intimations that he is very much more than an ethical teacher and in a sense something entirely different altogether. Although he walks among mortals, he is more an otherworldly figure than a worldly one; and in time, learned and simple Christians would have to contend with impenetrable mysteries about how to conceive their Savior as coincidentally a tormented and crucified human being, the son of God, and God himself. In the New Testament's depiction of Jesus, there is no suggestion of moral imperfection in the Savior, who stands in contrast in this respect to Abraham, David, and even Moses. But that does not make it easier to derive from the pronouncements attributed to him a precise conception of what family values he is imparting. It is in fact largely from the explications and applications attributed to the apostle Paul that most pious students of the New Testament derive their main practical notions of what Jesus teaches about family values.

Paul's instructions in his letters to various Christian communities have such a prominent place in the New Testament that one may again be reminded of fundamental differences between Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament. Hebrew Scripture is a comprehensive and wide-ranging collection of numerous forms of religious literature. Although unified to a great extent by its morally edifying account of events in the history of a holy people, it includes cosmogonic speculation, legends about tribal ancestors, detailed legal codes, poetic

prophecies, psalms, proverbs, and so forth; and while indicating that Moses is Israel's chief prophet, it presents a procession of vivid and distinctive protagonists representing diverse aspects of human spirituality and various stages of the cultural development of their people. The core of the conspicuously smaller New Testament is the Gospels, which provide the reader with versions of the same basic story: the life, death, and resurrection of a unique figure so central to the Christian faith that the faith is known by his name. Several kinds of literary material are found in the remaining books of the New Testament, but after the Gospels, the New Testament is dominated by the instructional and hortatory epistles attributed to a second unique figure, Paul, who, though also depicted as a disaffected Jew, is more obviously a figure of this world—an apostle who constantly devalues the things of this world, yet is concerned with concretely practical matters confronting those who would be faithful to the Savior and his designs and procure their salvation.

It is widely believed that in the teachings attributed to Paul, the student of the New Testament witnesses the invention of Christianity as a distinct religion, but it is even plainer to the reflective student that questions inevitably arise as to how much of what Paul teaches is consistent with the spirit of Jesus' teaching. Still, Paul's voice is a commanding one for traditionalist Christians, and even progressivist Christians inclined to blame Paul for subsequent distortions of Jesus' message usually concede that, in what has come to be known as Christianity, the teaching attributed to Paul is often as important as that attributed directly to Christ.

The influence of Hellenism is commonly thought to be more pronounced in Paul's words than Jesus', but in any case the duality in Paul's teaching concerning the value of the family (and concerning family-related values) mirrors a broader duality in classical Greek philosophy that is familiar to most liberally educated readers, mainly through their acquaintance with the ideas of Plato. The ancient Hebrews distinguished the spiritual from the temporal in significant ways, but in Christian teaching—and perhaps rather more in Paul's than in Jesus'—one can discern the more direct and more programmatic impact of Platonic metaphysical theorizing about two distinct "worlds" as well as Platonic reflection on the practical implications of this metaphysical duality for the care of the soul.[70] Nietzsche writes:

In the great fatality of Christianity, Plato is that ambiguity and fascination called the "ideal" which made it possible for the nobler natures of antiquity to misunderstand themselves and to step on to the bridge which led to the "Cross". . . . And how much there still is of Plato in the concept "Church," in the structure, system, practice of the Church![71]

When a contemporary cultural critic such as Bryce J. Christensen contrives to expose a critical contrast between the utopian anti-family ideology of Plato and the pro-family vision of Christianity,[72] the informed historian of ideas may well be perplexed, not only because of the pronounced utopian anti-family el-

ements in New Testament teaching, but because of the pervasive influence throughout the New Testament of a quasi-Platonic dualism manifested in New Testament ideas regarding salvation, personal immortality, sexuality, celibacy, community, and the family itself. This dualism was transmitted to the first Christian theologians by way of a number of sources.

Some Christian theologians and cultural reformers—and particularly the more radical among them—hold that the duality in Paul's value system is partly a consequence of a lingering conservatism that prevented him from embracing Jesus' more consistent and more revolutionary teaching. Such conservatism may have been temperamental or calculatingly utilitarian, and it has been noted especially with respect to the contrasting attitudes of Jesus and Paul toward wives (and women in general). Theologian Millar Burrows maintains that, "Jesus treats men and women exactly alike. Paul cannot quite bring himself to this point,"[73] whereas feminist theologian Mary Daly, after noting that New Testament statements reflecting the anti-feminism of the era are never those of Jesus,[74] conveniently shifts responsibility for Christianity's retention of patriarchal authoritarianism to Jesus' prudent disciple: "Paul was concerned with protecting the new Church against scandal. Thus he repeatedly insisted upon 'correct' sexual behavior, including the subjection of wives at meetings."[75] Even if Paul were not concerned about offending most Jews or most Gentiles, he might have been recurrently mindful of the obstacle posed to his ambitious missionary agenda by an association of Christian discipleship with attitudes toward women and the family so thoroughly radical that they would alienate most potential proselytes. From such perspectives, the ambivalence of Paul's views on the conjugal family may be seen as more a result of cultural conservatism than of Hellenistic and other influences. Paul's teaching often concentrates on concretely practical, ecclesiastical concerns that are essentially peripheral to the more unworldly Jesus' abstract and highly personal ethical and eschatological teaching; yet Paul's teaching is in places as mystical and eschatological as Jesus', and his devaluation of the conjugal family and all kinship relationships, as we have noted, can be understood from one perspective as a development of ideas attributed to Jesus in the Gospels.

Themes in Colossians and Ephesians

Efforts to discern the family values being inculcated by the epistles traditionally attributed to Paul usually focus on a passage in the epistle to the Ephesians and some passages in the first epistle to the Corinthians, but we may begin by briefly considering the condensed counsel to the Christians of Colossae:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is wellpleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.[76]

This concise guidance might initially seem to indicate that each family member has a fundamental role that can be encapsulated in a simple instruction; but questions may well arise concerning what has been excluded as well as precisely what has been included. The author is not here encouraging the establishment of conjugal families; he accepts the existence of such families as a cultural given, declines to advocate their dissolution, and indicates what he takes to be as most necessary for a particular community of Christians to strengthen these families in accordance with the Lord's designs. (Paul is acutely aware of the need to adjust his missionary strategy to his particular audience.) The style and content of this exhortation would likely have seemed commonplace to most Hellenistic moral teachers—regularly purveyors of "household codes"—even with its references to the Lord; and Jewish traditionalists unaware of the author's peculiar conception of the Lord could endorse this guidance, which is consistent with the familiar patriarchal authoritarianism of Hebrew-Scriptural teaching, according to which wives are to be submissive and children obedient. The advice here to husbands may perhaps be seen as reflecting Jesus' teaching on divorce, but neither this advice nor the counsel offered to fathers to avoid provoking and discouraging their children need have struck the thoughtful Hellenist or Jew of the time as audacious or unwise.

Nevertheless, even the modern reader who does not find patriarchal authoritarianism itself to be strange has much to wonder about if the author's instruction is to be regarded as a definitive Christian statement on family values. For one thing, the instruction makes no reference to the role of the mother, whose central importance in family life is in fact routinely stressed by contemporary conservative religious cultural critics as well as others. Again, there is hardly a transparent parallelism between being submissive to a husband or father and being loving toward a wife, inasmuch as, among other things, the thoughtful contemporary reader is unlikely to believe that it is unimportant for a wife or child to be loving. There is, to be sure, plenty of room for resourceful interpretation here, and certainly a great deal is necessary, not the least because Paul is taken to be in some sense addressing a band of ancient Colossians with cultural circumstances rather different from those of most contemporary Christians or, for that matter, of most other people of their own age. Interpretation here will conform to, among other things, one's judgment on which teachings attributed to Paul are to be regarded as of authentically Pauline authorship—and indeed on whether one regards the major teachings attributed to Paul as the teachings of one person.

More complex and even more problematic for the reflective contemporary reader is the counsel concerning domestic life in the Book of Ephesians, the latter part of which is characterized by the reactionary Christian cultural critic Tim LaHaye as "the most important family instruction in the Bible."[77] In Chapter 5 of the epistle, people are advised to follow God "as dear children";[78] avoid fornication or whoremongering;[79] avert the wrath of God that comes upon disobedient children;[80] and submit themselves to one another in the fear of God.[81]

Submission as such, however, is specifically enjoined on wives and children; and it is enjoined on wives in a more elaborate manner than in Colossians:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.[82]

The parallel drawn here between the wife's subordination to the husband and the church's subordination to the Lord is one that reinforces patriarchal authoritarianism with impressive imagery. Husbands are in turn encouraged to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church,"[83] and—rather more ambiguously, in light of Pauline Christianity's marked ambivalence toward the body (from which the soul is to be freed)—to love their wives as they love their own bodies.[84] Then, referring back to the seminal Hebrew-Scriptural teaching at Genesis 2:24, the author may actually appear to be endorsing the institution of the conjugal family; but both his elaboration on that teaching and the context in which he presents it are of immense importance:

For we are members of [Christ's] body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.[85]

The last verse underscores that from a truly Christian perspective, marriage and the conjugal family, if they are to be seen as justifiable, must be theologically conceived in a manner fundamentally different from that in which they are understood by the Jew or pagan who on at least one plane of understanding regards them as plainly natural institutions. The parallel drawn here between sound conjugal family relationships and Jesus' relation to the church is apparently not merely employed for its forceful imagery; rather, the audience is presumably to understand that in some greatly mysterious way, marriage and the conjugal family exist as institutions precisely because they correspond to the relation of believers to Christ. A crucial implication of this theological reconception is that the reasons that Jews and pagans have had for entering into marriage, procreation, and domestic life have been revealed to be essentially insignificant. This understanding in turn facilitates Paul's teaching elsewhere that despite what Rabbinic interpretation of the seminal teaching of Genesis enjoins, the most devoted believers are not defying God's commandment when, cognizant of their special commitment to the Lord, they eschew marriage and domestic life and opt for the alternative of celibacy. The instruction concludes with the exhortation to children to obey and honor their parents[86] and the exhortation to fathers not to provoke their children to wrath.[87]

Christian exegetes ordinarily see this passage as elevating the dignity of marriage and the conjugal family by emphasizing their spiritual and supernatural

significance at the expense of any natural import. Nevertheless, unlike tradition-alist Jews, who regarded as unmistakably harmonious the manifestly natural quality of conjugal living and the Torah's injunctions and models regarding procreation and domestic life, the author of this passage in one sense reduces conjugal family relationships to the status of instruments for achieving spiritual ends that might conceivably be better served by less "natural" forms of disci-pleship. While citing relevant Hebrew-Scriptural texts, and even acknowledging the importance of the body, the author in effect strips away a layer of Hebrew-Scriptural naturalism and reconceives marriage and the conjugal family in a way that will ultimately enable the Christian to recognize that conjugal life, even when conceived in spiritual and supernatural terms, is in a sense less dignified than the life of one who has sacrificed conjugal relationships in order to serve Christ in a nobler way. Thus, ironically, the theological account here of the genuine value of marriage and conjugal life, being compatible with (if not ac-tually reflecting) the basic duality in Paul's teaching, indirectly detracts from the dignity that traditionalist Jews and most pagans had attached to these insti-tutions. This point becomes clearer when we consider views attributed to Paul in Chapter 7 of the first epistle to the Corinthians.

Themes in 1 Corinthians

The Book of 1 Corinthians, whose status as a work of authentic Pauline authorship is more generally accepted by Christian Biblical scholars, has attained considerable notoriety among progressivist Christians and critics of Christianity for the severity of its patriarchal-authoritarian rhetoric. In 11:1–16, the author, insisting that at public worship women should cover their heads whereas men should not, makes a number of pronouncements that may well strike the modern reader as invidiously sexist. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."[88] "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."[89] In Chapter 14, we read:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.[90]

If this is not, as feminist and other liberal critics have observed, the tone in which Jesus addresses the status of the wife, neither perhaps is it quite what one is accustomed to encounter in Hebrew Scripture or Rabbinic literature. The reader may be reminded in this regard that unlike the typical protagonist of Hebrew Scripture or the typical sage whose opinions are cited in the Talmud,

Paul is an unmarried man with an explicitly low opinion of the fulfillment afforded to a man by married life; and unlike either Jesus or the typical traditionalist Jew, Paul may seem to be temperamentally inclined to actual misogyny, despite the teaching at Galatians 3:28 that just as there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ, there is neither male nor female. In any case, Paul makes a point of drawing attention to his own celibacy when putting forward his momentous appraisal of the value of the conjugal family in 1 Corinthians 7.

Recognition that this extraordinary appraisal involves a problematic tension is not confined to progressivist exegetes and critics. For example, the conservative theologian F. W. Grosheide writes:

> Paul points out in this chapter that the result of sin is an antinomy as far as marriage questions are concerned. Man has received the mandate from God that he should marry. But God calls him to His service. The tension which arises from this can only be solved to a certain extent. Man must marry and he is only free from marrying if God gives him a special charism. The Christian is free to marry but he acts well if he, in special circumstances, does not marry.[91]

The tension, however, may be rather more problematic than Grosheide suggests. Consider these key verses in Chapter 7:

- Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.[92]
- For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.[93]
- Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.[94]
- But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.[95]

Grosheide's comments, while acknowledging the existence of a tension that "can only be solved to a certain extent," serve to make Paul's counsel seem less

strange than it might otherwise appear to the reader accustomed to assuming that New Testament ethical and social teachings consistently stress the cultural primacy of the institution of the stable conjugal family. Grosheide's observations may indeed give considerable comfort to conservative Christian cultural critics and reformers dedicated to promoting a pro-family cultural agenda. First, as Grosheide notes, the duality in Paul's appraisal of conjugal life is based at least in part on Paul's recognition of the need to address in practical terms certain complex conditions that he believes the Christian is to regard as consequences of human sin.

Furthermore, regardless of how strongly Paul has been influenced by Platonic and other ideas concerning the primacy of the soul and the comparative unimportance of the things of this world, and despite his frequent if inconstant antinomianism (in attacking not only legalism but the continuing relevance of the Law itself)[96] Paul cannot wholly ignore the enormous importance attached by Hebrew Scripture to procreation and the stable cultural institutions that promote it. Again, Paul allows that there is something "special" about the commitment of the celibate Christian who has been endowed by God with a capacity to do without conjugal family relationships so as to be able to serve God with undivided attention. Not only does Paul grant that celibacy is not for every Christian, but he can consistently hold that marriage is obligatory for those individuals who would not take advantage of their single status to devote themselves exclusively to caring for the things that belong to the Lord.

This emphasis on specialization within the church mirrors Plato's well-known emphasis on specialization in the *polis*, for Plato insists that while the life of the philosopher is superior to that of others in the community, few are gifted with the ability to live it.[97] Finally, Paul not only recognizes that the conjugal family is a cultural given among those to whom he has come to preach, but he faithfully follows Jesus in uncompromisingly insisting that in cases in which the institution exists, it is absolutely indissoluble and must be strengthened.

Yet Paul's appraisal of the ultimate value of conjugal life is vastly different from the secure and comparatively unambiguous pro-family judgment of the traditionalist Jews from whom he has become alienated, and of most Jews and Gentiles to whom he preaches. What, we may speculate, is a typical Jew or Gentile—or indeed a typical contemporary defender of family values—to make of the extraordinary pronouncements that it is good for a man not to touch a woman; that the foremost motive for marriage is to avoid fornication; that it is good for the unmarried and widowed to remain celibate; that marriage is suitable only for those who "cannot contain" and will otherwise "burn"; and that those who marry are necessarily deficient in their commitment to the things that belong to the Lord because they inevitably care too much for the things of this world? Certainly, there is much to admire in Paul's respect for the celibate life. His words lend a salutary legitimacy to a way of life toward which Jewish traditionalists and many others had shown visceral contempt, and he draws attention

to the possibilities celibacy offers for more focused commitment and for control over one's passions and appetites. But there are serious philosophical concerns here.

First, the theological conception of sexuality and marriage as inherently related to sin may itself seem exceedingly strange, not only to most non-Christians, but to many Christians who feel bound by faith to profess acceptance of it. A critic may fairly wonder whether the tension that has arisen is not the result of sin, but rather of a more fundamental duality in Paul's own thinking, with its incapacity to reconcile a Platonic spirituality with a core naturalistic element of the Hebrew-Scriptural world-view—or alternatively, to reconcile a mystical, eschatological vision focusing on personal salvation with the practical objective to promote Christian discipleship among the countless numbers who are not prepared to do without sexual and conjugal relations.

Paul's mixed concerns also pose problems. On one hand, he treats as the main concern here the purity of commitment and stresses the inevitability of conjugal life's distracting the Christian from undiluted discipleship. Yet he also gives what appears to be a rather different account in associating sexuality itself with profane passions and appetites. He grants that sexual relations within marriage are altogether preferable to fornication and "burning," but he barely conceals his more fundamental view that sexuality as such is spiritually unwholesome. Although Jesus had already blurred the distinction between sexual desire and adultery,[98] it is now widely held by Christian scholars, including some who regard themselves as traditionalists, that the church's often deleteriously negative attitude toward human sexuality is to be traced back largely to Paul's fascination with un-Judaic philosophical and occult conceptions of human sexuality derived largely from the Greeks.[99]

In any case, one may reasonably entertain the possibility that conjugal life is not necessarily an obstacle to religious or vocational commitment, and in fact may actually, in many instances, enhance the capacity for constructive commitment, as perhaps with a Moses or Aristotle. We have noted that Paul himself has been seen as holding that marriage can be conceived as an instrument for achieving spiritual ends; and both marriage and sexuality may manifest forms of spirituality that Paul is simply unable to appreciate. Moreover, while accepting the importance that Paul attaches here to every individual's "proper gift of God," many modern thinkers, including a good number of traditionalist Christians, are apt to be troubled by a determinism that undervalues the role that can be played by existential commitment in the decision whether to live a celibate or conjugal life. And what is probably most important in relation to our concerns in this inquiry is that given Paul's representation of conjugal life as a way of life that (though preferable to a life of fornication or "burning") is markedly spiritually deficient compared to that of the devout Christian celibate, we are hardly in a position to hold Paul up as a staunch defender of the ethical, social, and cultural primacy of the conjugal family. There is ample room here, as usual, for dexterous interpretation; but in spite of Paul's recognition of the importance

of special charisms and special circumstances, the expositor can hardly take lightly Paul's counsel to the unmarried not to seek a spouse—an exhortation capped with an egotism conceivably unparalleled in Biblical literature: "For I would that all men were even as I myself."

Paul and Jesus as Model Family Men

Whom indeed, other than himself, can Paul hold up as a role model here? The ascetic Paul cannot point to the Hebrew patriarchs, prophets, and sages as role models, for in addition to having various theological, practical, and temperamental motives for disengaging Christianity from Judaism, he is well aware that both the major protagonists and the traditionalist expositors of Hebrew Scripture generally regard celibacy as unnatural, ungodly, and unwholesome, and will have no part of it in their own lives or in the cultural formation of their people. Neither, for all their influence on his thought, can he hold up celibate Greek and Hellenistic philosophers as role models, for he is understandably apprehensive of their dangerous dedication to a kind of reflection that will not bend easily to the demands of the Christian faith. ("Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.")[100] And Paul does not hold up the celibate Jesus as a role model. The compassionate Jesus is a nonpareil role model in many ways, but to Paul's mind, Jesus was no ordinary man and, indeed, not just a man; and the canny proselytizer Paul may have recognized that little is to be gained by raising the thorny issue of Christ's sexuality.

The New Testament furnishes information about Paul's personal life in the Book of Acts, the Book of Galatians, and elsewhere, but details of Paul's family relationships and experiences are notably few and obscure,[101] particularly if we consider them in relation to details of the domestic lives of some of the most familiar figures of Hebrew Scripture. Given his views on the ultimate value of conjugal life, we can see why he and his colleagues and followers would regard his domestic experiences as essentially inconsequential. It is plain, however, that Paul is not an adequate role model by the standards of those contemporary cultural critics and reformers seeking to make available to their fellows well-defined images of an ideal family man in the conventional sense. Besides refusing to settle down with a wife and children, Paul rejects his ancestors and his people. His estrangement from his biological relations is even more distinct and decisive than Jesus', and his antipathy toward them is even more unequivocal. The imposing universalism he develops in tandem with his repudiation of Jewish "tribalism" has a dark side, for not only is the archetypal apostle also the archetypal apostate to his own people, but he is a primary architect of the unparalleled hatred that generations of his followers have visited on his people.

Paul reconstitutes "family" as the church—the community of believers, the mystical body of Christ—something that has nothing to do with biological kinship or anything as worldly and unspiritual as sexuality and procreation. With

this reconstitution of "family," the biological family becomes an institution that is not merely of ancillary spiritual and cultural value but a potential obstacle to the development of the reconstituted spiritual family. Paul takes his lead here from Jesus, but he goes further and makes antipathy toward the recalcitrant, unrepentant, extended biological family of the crucified Jesus—and his great apostle—central to the religion of the reconstituted spiritual family. Preaching to the Gentiles, he points to his own obsolete macrocosmic biological family—a family that betrayed the Savior in its midst—as the paradigm of the corrupt and corruptive community.

To whatever extent the celibate Paul is a suitable role model for unmarried priests, monks, nuns, and lay philosophers, craftsmen, and philanthropists, he is rather less suitable in this regard for the vast majority of Christians and non-Christians who, not having his "proper gift of God," are expected by their fellows to attend responsibly to the needs of insecure spouses, bewildered children, aging parents, and troubled siblings. Furthermore, while exhibiting various admirable qualities, Paul is for many people harder to like than the major protagonists of Hebrew Scripture, partly because he is harder for those who cherish their kinsfolk to relate to. He neither is gifted with nor has ventured to emulate the characteristic forbearance and gentleness of Jesus, so that one may consider whether he would have benefited from greater openness to the kinds of family experiences that serve to introduce so many of us to the capacity to be loving toward a neighbor. If the Jews of his day would have been offended by his lifestyle as well as his preaching, they still could not have fairly regarded this aggressive apostate as effeminate; but most would have surely felt that there is something terribly unwholesome about his family-related values.

This poses a conceptual problem for those contemporary conservative Christian cultural critics who, besides piously citing passages from Hebrew Scripture (including the Law that Paul recurrently treats as obsolete), propose that we look to the great apostle as an enduring guide to the urgent restoration of healthy family values that have been undermined by those who have insufficient respect for the conjugal family. Perhaps these critics would do better to attend to how the dignity of the celibate Paul's life of extraordinary discipleship provides a lesson with respect to the value of tolerance toward those whose personal way of dealing with matters of sexuality and marriage departs significantly from what the critics routinely take to represent the natural and normal.

Jesus himself, unlike the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, concretely represents the essential spiritual/worldly duality underlying Paul's thought. Religious believers of most faiths look to their deities as role models in one or another way; but the recondite idea of the Incarnation, whatever one is to make of it, entails unique concerns. If Jesus lived as a man among men, then risky though the enterprise may be, Christians may well feel especially obliged to look to the life of Jesus as their role model, even when addressing matters concerning the conjugal life that Jesus shunned. Although much is to be lost in raising certain delicate considerations about Jesus' life as a man, Christians can

hardly help feeling that in some profound sense they were meant to learn from that life and not merely to receive Jesus' words. Still, as noted earlier in this chapter, reflective Christians have had serious anxieties about family values that might be inculcated by Biblical accounts of Jesus' behavior. Certainly, the celibate Jesus is no more an ideal family man by conventional standards than is Paul. Furthermore, his relation to his own biological family—or families, nuclear and extended—is, in Clapp's words, one of "startling detachment."[102] It remains to be noted that there is something singularly strange in the dynamics of the entire Holy Family, which, by diverse criteria, including the rigid criteria of many reactionary pro-family cultural critics of our own day, is an extremely poor role model indeed.

A contemporary family counselor or family therapist might well regard Jesus' family as profoundly dysfunctional. The Gospels provide a portrait of a young man who seems at times to be extremely troubled, sensing that he carries the burdens of the whole world on his shoulders. He has high moral principles but offends his teachers and fellows in the vulnerable and insecure Jewish community. He does not fit in with most people in his peer group, who, along with his elders, are irritated by what they take to be his anti-social behavior: he often seems querulous and hypercritical, yet at times is overindulgent with respect to the failings of others; he unnerves most listeners with his cryptic comments and peculiar stories, many of which hold up to ridicule respected figures in the community. He does not seem to be looking for a prospective wife, and his choice of female company is sometimes questionable; he is the ringleader of a possibly subversive circle engaged in peculiar rituals; he makes a point of letting people know that he does not share their respect for the Law. He has an extraordinarily high opinion of his own importance, and he has been making a lot of enemies.

Where is his family in all this, and what kind of guidance and support are they providing? He loves his mother, and she loves him, but their relations have notably been strained at times; and she does not seem to have much control over his provocative behavior. He says some rather hurtful things concerning his relatives and at times appears to be publicly repudiating them. He declares that the only man to whom his mother has ever been married—and to whom she was married when he was born—is not his biological father, and that he owes obedience only to his real father, God. The family problems here may be revealing: this radiantly gifted, high-minded, idealistic young man is clearly headed for trouble, and his family members, whether they are trying hard enough or not, are not providing him with the direction, discipline, and security that a young man normally needs.

This analysis is entirely sociological, and the question remains whether theological considerations can resolve the salient difficulties. Maybe they can, but much depends here on what one sees, and most simple believers and weary scholars may not have the determination to look with fresh eyes as closely as they should at obscure conceptions that may entail some extraordinarily strange

consequences for our understanding of family-related ideals. In at least one momentous sense, Jesus' family situation could hardly be worse. The Gospel accounts of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion call to mind the circumstances of Abraham's great test. Abraham demonstrates his faith in God, Isaac demonstrates his faith in his father, and Jesus himself recurrently professes his trust in his divine Father. Such is their faith that Abraham, Isaac, and Jesus are prepared to accept, solemnly and unconditionally, the consequences of the patriarchal authoritarianism to which they are committed. But Isaac's question for Abraham—"Where is the lamb?"[103]—takes on horrific significance for Jesus and for those of every generation who follow, with grim awareness, the earthly and cosmic events unfolding in the New Testament accounts. Jesus is the lamb, not only in being one in a long line of Jewish children who have been called upon to make sacrifices because of the commitments and designs of their fathers, but because as the Son of God, he is called upon by God the Father to die on the cross for the redemption of humanity. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[104] "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."[105] It was of monumental importance for world civilization that Judaism taught that Isaac's life was spared at Moriah. To the minds of Christians, it was of monumental importance for humanity that Jesus' earthly life was not spared. The awesomely enigmatic doctrine of the Atonement, with its focus on the redemptive power of the "Lamb of God," has understandably been the subject of untold theological, critical-historical, social-scientific, and philosophical examinations.

However, for those who look in the New Testament for a richer understanding of culture-sustaining family values, it can hardly be neglected that the supreme Father's love of humanity entails the suffering and crucifixion of the preeminent Son; and yet in whatever sense this relationship between Father and Son is to be seen as archetypal or didactic, it does not shed light on how we are to address the practical problems confronting the imperiled conjugal family of our own culture. Of course, theologically the New Testament account comes to the happiest of conclusions, for not only is humanity redeemed, but Jesus is resurrected; and with yet another awesomely mysterious conception, that of the Trinity, the conception of Jesus ostensibly becomes merged in the minds of many Christians with that of God himself. Lamentably, in a world given to religious hatreds and religious conflicts, horror at the suffering and death of the Savior has been a persistent source of evil.

HISTORICAL PARADOXES IN CONCEIVING A CHRISTIAN FAMILY CULTURE

Christianity as Cultural and Anticultural

Bernard Häring, a Roman Catholic critic of destructive secularization, declares that, "The Christian faith transcends all the historical factors of culture and

civilization."[106] This theological assertion may be construed in ways that do not conform to the spirit of the conservative Häring's program. One of these we have seen put forward by Feuerbach, who contends that Christianity's eschatological focus undermines the importance of culture. From this perspective, Christianity's radical devaluation of the things of this world, including biological family relationships and posterity, is essentially anticultural. This view will not sit well with most contemporary conservative Christian cultural critics and reformers, who are far more likely to endorse the view of Christian cultural theorists such as Christopher Dawson and T. S. Eliot that Christianity is the integral historical foundation of Western culture and that the return to Christian values is necessary if Western culture is to be safeguarded from the deleterious influences of secularization.[107] The liberal Protestant theologian Paul Tillich advances a moderate position, criticizing Christian theologians who undervalue culture in its secular forms, but proposing that, "The Church judges culture, including the Church's own forms of life. For its forms are created by culture, as its religious substance makes culture possible. The Church and culture are within, not alongside each other. And the Kingdom of God includes both while transcending both."[108] The most astute observation in this area probably remains that of H. Richard Niebuhr, who, in his influential 1951 study *Christ and Culture*, established that the conscientious historian of Christianity encounters a variety of answers to the question of the relation of Christ to culture, including the Christ *of* culture, the Christ *against* culture, and perhaps most notably, Christ and culture *"in paradox."*[109]

Ironically, Feuerbach shares with many conservative Christian defenders of the ideal of a Christian culture the sense that Christianity's essential attitude toward culture is rigidly determined by the New Testament's most direct and most austere pronouncements on the comparative worthlessness of the things of this world. Yet the church's (or any religious community's) forms are created by culture, as indeed were its initial forms. Christianity, regardless of how transcendent one regards its origins to be, represents in part a radical response to a set of concrete cultural problems confronting particular communities—and most notably, Jewish communities—in a particular phase of their historical development.

Again, however much one may attribute Christianity's survival to transcendent factors, it has shown itself, as have all enduring faiths, to be impressively adaptable to cultural change, including unanticipated forms of change for which it is partly responsible. Feuerbach acknowledges that even with its emphasis on personal salvation, Christianity, from the start, required some form of fellowship and promoted the view that activity for others is a condition for attaining salvation. Moreover, as is evident from Paul's epistles, the founders of Christianity and their earliest followers, even if they were people "to whom the second coming of Christ and the final catastrophe were matters of daily hope and fear,"[110] recognized that they had to do something suitable while waiting around; and even from its beginnings, Christianity derived *mores* relating to conjugal

life and other cultural institutions from the peoples and classes in whom it took root.[111]

Although in its earliest centuries many adherents of Christianity lost interest in marriage and procreation—and there has remained a vital tradition of asceticism and celibacy in the evolving church—Christianity has been able to survive not only because of its adaptability to cultural change but because of the realism of fundamental culture-compatible *mores* that initially took root in the lowest free classes and were later given authority and extension.[112]

Troeltsch, in exploring the historical development of Christian social teaching, stresses the "dependence of the whole Christian world of thought and dogma on the fundamental sociological conditions, on the idea of fellowship which was dominant at any given time."[113] Accordingly, he sees philosophical and theological considerations—and indeed any conscious deliberation by individual religious social critics and reformers—as "quite secondary."[114] Yet despite holding to what might well appear to be an extreme cultural determinism, Troeltsch allows that individual Christian social critics and reformers have genuinely influenced the transformation of social institutions within Christendom, and he senses that most have been mindful of the capacity to address concrete social problems of their time within the context of New Testament teaching, which, owing partly to the Pauline duality itself, permits a range of approaches.[115] A salient example is Luther's rejection of the sexual ethic of Roman Catholicism. Catholicism and Lutheranism agree in recognizing that the conjugal family forms the starting-point of all social development—inasmuch as it represents the earliest form of social life[116]—but, "Luther's own marriage meant more than a very manifest and concrete attempt to overthrow the ideal of the celibacy of the priesthood; it was also the proclamation of a principle of sex ethics which regarded the sex-life as something normal."[117]

It is noteworthy that both devout Christians and critics of Christianity have been moved to ridicule ecclesiastical precepts and practices which they see as deviating from the authentic spirit of New Testament teaching.[118] For example, a Protestant evangelist and a scientific atheist may be equally scornful of Roman Catholic institutions pertaining to conjugal life that they perceive as incapable of being derived from New Testament teaching; and a Dominican priest and an atheistic existentialist may both be scornful of ideas regarding marriage and family life that certain Mormon leaders have maintained are consistent with the spirit of New Testament teaching. There are, in fact, a number of distinct concerns that could provoke such derision. One's derision may be a response to what one perceives as the flagrant mendacity of self-serving or manipulative ecclesiastical leaders who have simply pretended to derive family values from Biblical teaching. One may be contemptuous of what one regards as the hypocrisy of historically or currently influential ecclesiastical leaders.[119] One may be persuaded of the obtuseness of influential churchmen who, owing to too little or too much education of one or another kind—or to plain stupidity—have misunderstood or overlooked the applicable Biblical texts. Again, one may scoff

at the inability of powerful religious functionaries and their submissive followers to recognize the hidden determining factors—sociological, economic, depth-psychological, and so forth—that actually have given rise to the unbiblical precepts and practices to which they are committed. One may regard it as absurdly irresponsible for people holding positions of high influence in a church to regard New Testament teaching as less important than other factors bearing on the church's social values. Then again, one may be convinced of the folly of church leaders' ever having assumed that it is actually possible to reconcile the values of their own time and place with values relevant to the distant world of Jesus and Paul.

Those less inclined to derisiveness may be justified in maintaining a degree of indulgence. Tolerance and open-mindedness are important virtues, even when their absence does not have direct social consequences; and history teaches that in no domain has bigotry been more prominent and more maleficent than that of religious competition. Granted, one may be moved to deride certain ecclesiastical precepts and practices precisely because one sees them as embodying and promoting bigotry, and one may even be justified in one's judgment. Still, cynicism is itself a serious vice, and even if one does not believe that one should strive to love one's neighbor, one would do well to exercise conscientious judgment before assuming that one's fellows are scoundrels or fools.

Here, then, one should probably be prepared to entertain that if historically or currently influential leaders of some church have promoted ideas and practices that one takes to be transparently inconsistent with the essential spirit of New Testament conceptions and values, maybe they have done so thoughtfully and earnestly. Whether they have been justified in doing so is, of course, another matter. However, here, too, it may be appropriate to reflect on such considerations as the ambiguity of highly symbolic New Testament texts that have elicited a superabundance of interpretations; the danger of ad hominem argumentation that concentrates on the character or concealed motivation of the church leaders rather than their arguments and explanations; the role of subjective factors, including existential commitment, in the interpretation of texts and in all forms of religious understanding; and the risk of overemphasizing the role of sacred literature—or of a narrow or obsolete approach to that literature—in a vital and evolving religious culture. The Christian believer may be obliged to consider in this regard the derision with which traditionalist Jews met the approach to Hebrew Scripture taken by the founders of the Christian church.

Approaches to Divorce

We shall focus now on paradoxes arising in the ecclesiastical approach to two central themes in the New Testament relating to conjugal life, the sinfulness of divorce, especially when followed by remarriage, and the excellence of sexual abstinence. In both cases we shall pay special attention to fundamental disagreements between two broad classes of Christians, Roman Catholics and Prot-

estants. The subject of divorce is of enormous interest here for several reasons. First, problems related to divorce are of great contemporary concern, especially to cultural observers worried about the well-being of the conjugal family as a social institution. Furthermore, Jesus' denunciation of divorce, as depicted in the Gospels, may well be Jesus' key "pro-family" teaching. We noted earlier that the New Testament scholar Scott, while so troubled by it that he declares that "its lasting validity may fairly be questioned," is prepared to concede that it is "the one definite enactment of Jesus" and "the one exception to the rule that Jesus did not lay down laws but only guiding principles." Moreover, it represents a bold overriding of Pentateuchal family law, thereby constituting a crucial point of disagreement between traditionalist Jews and traditionalist Christians in historic and contemporary cultural competition. And while its significance has been heatedly debated within both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, it has generally constituted one of the primary points of disagreement between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Christian theological discussions of divorce, and of the appropriate interpretation and application of Jesus' teaching on divorce, are often highly complex, but we must confine ourselves here to rudimentary observations. The first are of historical interest. When we look at Christendom in our own time, we can hardly fail to be impressed by the division of the universal church—the community of believers still regarded by many as the mystical body of Christ—into numerous individual churches distinguishing themselves from the others as distinct denominations.[120] Values and attitudes regarding divorce and other institutions, even when ostensibly derived from or justified by New Testament teaching, normally reflect, to a great extent, particular Christians' respect for what they take to be the most trustworthy source of authoritative judgment within the specific church or denomination with which they are affiliated. In addition, there is frequently substantial disagreement within denominations, so that even respect for the authority of founding, historically important, and current leaders of one's denomination may not be strong enough to induce one to accept the values and attitudes commended by them.[121] The persistence of major disagreement and dissatisfaction within denominations accounts in large measure for the periodic formation of new denominations out of what were once subdenominational groups.[122]

The primary founders of the universal church were themselves disaffected Jews; and throughout the history of Christianity, there has been one division after another, resulting in innumerable churches, each with its own conceptions of ecclesiastical authority and its own family-related values. To be sure, the Church of Rome, which is known even to most of its critics as the Catholic Church,[123] now has more adherents than it has ever had before—over a billion—and ecumenically-minded leaders of many Christian denominations have had some success in bringing churches together in important working relationships, and occasionally even complete unification. However, the broad disagreements between Roman Catholics and Protestants concerning a family-related matter

such as divorce—and indeed comparable disagreements among Protestants and to a lesser extent within the Roman Catholic Church—are constant reminders to open-minded cultural observers of the subjective and cultural factors that enter into the "drawing out" of family values not only from Biblical texts themselves, but from the various interpretative traditions that particular groups of Christians have come to regard as authoritative throughout the course of the historical evolution of Christianity.

We noted earlier how hard it often has been for the comparatively small number of Jews to reach a consensus with respect to some of the most elementary ethical, cultural, and theological concerns; and Christianity, with its immeasurable number of professed adherents, has almost inevitably been a field for greater internal competition, even in spite of the remarkable forms of unity and power that marked the most influential churches in later antiquity and throughout much of the Middle Ages. Intradenominational competition among those calling themselves by the name of "Christian" was present from the start, as is plainly evident, even from Paul's epistles to various confused and divided communities. Long before Protestants embarked on their Reformation, there had been monumental schisms in the church; and long before the most prominent of these schisms, ecclesiastical leaders found themselves confronting any number of "heresies," including Montanism, Gnosticism, Arianism, and Pelagianism.[124] Many of these "heresies," almost all of which are quite fascinating and some of which are positively profound, had weighty practical implications for how a Christian is to understand conjugal life. It is worth remembering, in any event, that much of the unity that the universal church or leading churches have managed to maintain over the course of time has been made possible only through violent repression.

More directly relevant is the historical fact of the early church's slowness to regulate divorce. This point is duly noted by Stuart A. Queen and fellow social scientists in their comparative analysis of family dynamics in diverse cultures,[125] and it may be contributive to their unequivocal judgment that "the early Christians accorded to marriage and family life a lower status than was assigned by any other people we have studied."[126] The general attitude of the Church Fathers toward the importance of conjugal life can be contrasted not only with that of the Rabbinic teachers, but with that of the Roman authorities.[127] While the Fathers condemned abortion, infanticide, and the sale of offspring—the last of which was in fact allowed by the first Christian emperor of Rome, Constantine, and actually continued for many centuries[128]—they generally did not agonize over the specific problems confronting children, and indeed wrote notably little about children.[129] Their general indifference with respect to children contrasts sharply with the concern for heirs displayed by so many ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans;[130] but it also contrasts with the concern of those contemporary Christian cultural observers who are specifically troubled by the consequences for children of both unstable family life and divorce. Although taking a quite different perspective from that adopted by Queen and his fellow social

scientists, the legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon also notes that the church was slow to formalize law concerning the indissolubility of marriage. The post-Constantine legislation, she observes, only threatened to punish a husband who repudiated his wife without cause; and the emperor Justinian's effort in 542 to extend penalties to divorce was immediately repealed by his successor because of its extreme unpopularity. Moreover, it took centuries of effort for the church to get its own ecclesiastical courts jurisdiction in this domain.[131] And though in time marital behavior did become oriented to canon law norms, there was plenty of actual dissolution of marriage in the first centuries of Christendom.[132]

Glendon notes further that with the rise of Protestantism—and Gallicanism in France—the Catholic Church lost its jurisdiction over marriage in large parts of Europe, and even when rules that had been developed in the canon law continued to govern marriage, they often received new interpretations. In spite of their Christian zeal, the Protestant Reformers, somewhat after the manner of the Jews, were averse to regarding marriage as a sacrament in anything like the Roman Catholic sense; and they made much of their conviction that marriage is properly subjected to the control of civil rather than ecclesiastical law.[133]

It is widely recognized that in allowing for decrees of nullity, the Roman Catholic hierarchy has available to it a convenient device for dealing with some unhappy conjugal situations. Some critics of the Catholic hierarchy, including both those who admire the church's strong public stand against divorce and those who resent the role played by the church in preventing the liberalization of divorce laws, protest that the hierarchy's use of this device is arbitrary and even underhanded; but the Roman Catholic Church's basic stance with respect to divorce has generally come to be regarded as paradigmatically negative. In Protestantism, however, the situation is rather more confusing, partly because of the considerations that Glendon has cited. Generally, though one would hardly realize it if one focused on the diatribes of contemporary reactionary Evangelical cultural critics, classical Protestantism has important ties to influential liberalizing tendencies—religious, political, and cultural—of the sixteenth century. This is a complex historical phenomenon, and we must take care not to overemphasize the connections between the emergence of Protestantism and the emergence of liberalism, especially given the illiberal substance of much of classical Protestantism.[134] The most helpful general observation in this regard may be the historian Roland Bainton's suggestion that while "persecutors" rather than "liberals" initially determined the agenda of Protestantism, from the start Protestantism was in theory capable of toleration on more counts than Catholicism.[135]

Although Protestants customarily insist that they take the Word more seriously than Catholics do, many of them almost as routinely criticize Catholicism for its strict stance on divorce. The paradoxical consequences are indicated in the positions of Scott and Marshall considered earlier. Scott, as noted, acknowledges the singular decisiveness of Jesus' prohibition of divorce, yet holds that "its lasting validity may fairly be questioned"; and he openly distances himself from

both Jesus' decisiveness and the strict Roman Catholic application of Jesus' words. Marshall, who barely conceals his antipathy to Roman Catholicism, is, in fact, harshly critical of easy divorce; but he furnishes justification for Protestantism's historical flexibility regarding divorce by insisting that Jesus' teaching concerning divorce can only be "fully understood" in terms of Jesus' concrete historical circumstances, for Jesus was essentially reacting against the "frivolous divorces which were so common amongst the Jews."[136] Thus, in his own way, Marshall in effect endorses Scott's view that while the values imparted by Jesus are of enduring relevance, they "may have a wider meaning for one age than another."[137]

A somewhat different tension is discernible in the approach taken to divorce by Lyman Abbott, a preeminent voice of both American Protestantism and American social liberalism. Abbott maintains that classical Protestantism, in revolting against the Roman Catholic Church, was "inclined instinctively to deny every assumption of that church," including the beliefs that marriage is a sacrament, that the church's benediction is necessary to marriage, and that the church has a decisive role to play in determining who may marry and who may not.[138] Abbott specifically notes Luther's view that marriage is an affair of the state and not of the church.[139] Now, if Luther himself was able to live with such an interpretation of the Word—and the theologically flexible approach to divorce that almost inevitably follows from that interpretation—why should not an avowedly liberal Protestant like Abbott? Yet Abbott is of a divided mind here, for in spite of his own basic aversion to Roman Catholicism and its authoritarian inflexibility in sundry matters of social policy, Abbott also considers it significant that it was the French Revolution that carried out Luther's doctrine "to its logical conclusion" when it treated marriage "simply as a civil contract."[140] Furthermore, Abbott, while not hesitant to endorse interpretations of New Testament texts that would have enraged the comparatively illiberal Luther, was already greatly troubled in 1896 by how simple it was in the America of his day to procure a divorce.[141] Thus, while Abbott would have us understand and apply Jesus' social teaching in a manner compatible with the requirements of modern, scientific, practical rationality, he senses that there is a price to be paid for forms of theological flexibility promoted by both classical Protestantism and modern religious liberalism. The increased ease with which divorce can be attained testifies not only to enhanced freedom but to extended secularization.[142]

Further complicating the situation is the often immense gap between liberal and conservative Protestantism. Liberal and conservative Protestants can often agree to differ, and there is much in their theological inheritance that they can mutually value, not the least being an insight into certain grave failings of the Church of Rome. Nevertheless, there have frequently been issues of social and cultural policy on which Protestants have disagreed more with one another than with the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The resulting disagreements cannot always be usefully classified as setting liberals against conservatives; Protestant denominations sometimes disagree in more subtle, more arbitrary, or more obscure

ways, and there are also complex tensions *within* Protestant denominations. Again, there are important disagreements among Roman Catholics, some of which set those who regard themselves as liberal against those who regard themselves as conservative. But in Protestantism, which lacks the most prominent unifying institutions of Roman Catholicism (such as the papacy)—or in another sense, of Judaism (such as the sense of association with a distinct people)— disagreements between liberals and conservatives over a matter such as divorce take on especially bewildering forms. The Jewish social worker Albert Vorspan suggested some years ago that the strict divorce laws that then applied in New York and other American jurisdictions were primarily "hangovers from a stern Puritan tradition" that were only later enforced as a result of the "political strength of the Roman Catholic Church."[143] People often toss around the terms *puritanism* and *puritanical* rather loosely, without critical awareness of their historical and theological import, but it is wise to remember that long before the rise of fundamentalism, Protestants had established that they can be as rigidly austere, in their own way, as Roman Catholics in addressing matters related to family life, sexuality, and the appraisal of the value of the things of this world.

Consider yet another set of practical theological dilemmas. Some conscientious sociologists have observed that, "Contrary to expectations, the family deviants display a higher level of involvement [with their church] than those parishioners whose family situations reflect the normative life cycle."[144] Thus, for example, a divorced single mother may well have closer ties to her church than does the mother in a "traditional" nuclear family, for the church can function as a "family surrogate" for someone in her difficult circumstances.[145] This type of situation indicates a significant weakness in the view of conservative religious cultural critics who assume that there is a natural correspondence between stable nuclear family life and the active religious involvement of family members. There is an important sense in which a divorced person needs the ecclesiastical family more than a happily married person does. We may call to mind here the Pauline duality; divorced people do not have a spouse to draw them away from religious concerns, and in this regard they have something important in common with those who have never married. Jesus and Paul condemn divorce, yet they also acknowledge the spiritual superiority of the single life.

Another tension arises as a consequence of Jesus' recurrent emphasis on the primacy of love. Is the theologian to assume that Jesus is teaching that the community should not be greatly troubled by a loveless marriage—or indeed a violent one? Is the theologian even to assume that Jesus is teaching that the unfulfilled love of a man and a woman both stuck in loveless marriages is of no spiritual significance? The Catholic theologian who is deferential to ecclesiastical superiors and respectful of a long-established system of ecclesiastical family law has rather less latitude of interpretation here than the typical Protestant theologian (or at least the typical liberal Protestant theologian), who may choose to presume that Jesus' teaching about the primacy of love ultimately

overrides Jesus' teaching about divorce and remarriage. And of course, Protestant theologians may also determine to attach more importance to Hebrew-Scriptural teaching on divorce than their traditionalist Catholic counterparts do. The issue of social policy regarding divorce is, in fact, one of many social issues on which Protestants often find themselves more closely aligned with Jews than with Catholics.

Approaches to Sexual Abstinence

The ancient Hebrews generally took for granted that the institution of marriage is essentially related to a natural and divinely sanctioned human interest in procreation and effective child-raising. They also recognized that most people have natural sexual desires distinguishable from the desire to have and raise children, and they understood that marriage is an institution that, when functioning properly, effectively provides for fulfillment of those sexual desires. They appreciated that a sound marriage brings with it other benefits of intimate companionship; and they knew that even a childless marriage can serve many useful purposes for husband and wife as well as for the community at large. Still, they regarded a childless marriage as one of life's greatest afflictions. With their strong conviction in the importance of procreation and child-rearing and their appreciation of the institution of marriage, they made conspicuous if not entirely consistent efforts to curb what they regarded as irresponsible and unproductive sexual activity; and at the same time, they accepted that those who enter into marriage are obliged to accommodate the natural sexual needs of their spouse. From the start, this program was faced with a number of conceptual, moral, and practical difficulties. It generated further difficulties, and the difficulties multiplied with the passage of time. Nevertheless, while recognizing that the ancient Hebrews were often awkward, arbitrary, and unwise in their response to those difficulties, the modern cultural observer can appreciate the systematic endeavor of the ancient Hebrews to reconcile a naturalistic conception (of the practical need to facilitate the fulfillment of certain basic human desires) with an ethical and spiritual design (for rendering human existence richer and more meaningful).

While most modern Christian cultural observers—and not only avowed pro-family crusaders—can appreciate this endeavor, it remains that the most influential founders of Christianity repudiated the naturalism of mainstream Judaism and other world cultures from which they had become alienated. Most notably, when the apostle Paul commends the celibate life to fellow Christians, he not only stresses the dignity of the single person's concentrated devotion to the things that belong to the Lord, but he indicates that human sexuality in itself directly undermines Christian spirituality. Paul does not simply criticize the kinds of irresponsible sexual activity that offended Jewish teachers; rather, he counsels that, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." The radical duality in his thought induces him to make assertions likely to shock not only the Jews

of his day but most people in most cultures—modern as well as ancient—including a good many reflective Christians. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God."[146] "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."[147] "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."[148] "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."[149]

Paul and his cohorts did not invent the idea that sex is dirty; and even in the Jewish tradition, with its much praised "wholesome" attitude toward human sexuality, there was plenty on which Paul could draw to justify his aversion to carnality, not the least being the account in Genesis of the sexual relationship of Adam and Eve. The Essenes had already made known their conviction that their fellow Jews were oversexed.[150] However, Pauline asceticism, reinforced by strange ideas from Hermeticism, Gnosticism, and other un-Judaic sources, broke new ground; and in Troeltsch's well-known words, "The international ecclesiastical civilization was brought into being on a flood-tide of asceticism."[151] Troeltsch believes that Paul's asceticism may initially have been compatible with a deepening of the family ideal, but soon became a hindrance to that ideal[152] and led to the "grotesque exaltation of sexual restraint."[153] This is a matter that should be of serious concern to those interested in the relation of Biblical religion to family values, particularly if we may agree with Mount, who is impressed by Troeltsch's analysis,[154] that, "Fear and distrust of sexual relations have always pervaded and distorted the Church's view of everything to do with marriage."[155]

One may wonder how this "flood-tide of asceticism" was possible. Distinctive though historical conditions were, the best answer may ultimately be found in depth psychology, with its insights into the deep-rooted human inclination to guilt; but in any case, Paul and his ascetic followers—most notably, Tertullian—were critically aware that few potential proselytes were willing to give up sexual activity, and that if the church was to survive as more than an obscure and self-destructive cult, its leaders would have to accept its necessarily being divided between an ascetic minority and a weak-willed majority. In time these leaders accepted the situation graciously, for though both groups would continue to be tormented by guilts, the weak-willed majority could be brought to accept that it was destined to be subservient to the more spiritualized elite. The pious elite would guide them—and dutifully restrain them—in their sexual and conjugal activities; accordingly, they could believe that while they were doing something not quite right, they were not acting so badly that they would forfeit their chances for salvation.

An ascetic priest could demonstrate to his flock that he was even more temperate than one of Plato's Guardians, who, like Jewish leaders, and unlike the

ascetic Plato himself, were expected to produce offspring.[156] Another echo of Platonic dualism may be Christian monasticism, the underlying conception of which may have been transmitted from Plato and Paul by way of the enormously influential Christian appropriator of Platonic and Pauline ideas, Augustine. The ideal Christian monastery has much in common with Plato's Guardian community,[157] but the institution goes beyond anything Plato conceived; for whereas in Plato's ideal state the Guardians are expected to return to the world of ordinary human beings, in monasticism a small part of the ecclesiastical family radically separates itself from the more worldly majority, including even those comparatively ascetic prelates who allow themselves to be contaminated by associating with the weak-willed masses.

The early, fundamental, and substantially enduring Christian accent on the excellence of sexual abstinence suggests that "distraction" per se may not have been the main concern of the founders of Christianity who commended the celibate life. Even today, most of us would be left dumbfounded by the confidential disclosure of some Roman Catholic priests or nuns that they only engage in sexual relations once a month, or once a year, or once a decade so as not to be distracted from attending to the things of the Lord. If the early Church Fathers were generally not as hostile to marriage as some of the later ones, it remains that the idea of virginity as a condition of exceptional purity pleasing to Christ received encouragement early in the history of the church.[158] The ancient Hebrews, as noted, also displayed what is now effortlessly regarded as a strange obsession with virginity; but they basically esteemed virginity only as a temporary condition and within a very specific context. Institutional Christianity glorified virginity and commended sexual abstinence generally, even if the actual institutionalization of clerical celibacy only came after a long and intense struggle within the church.[159] However, sexual abstinence can be extremely difficult, especially for those who, while otherwise suited for a life of spiritual leadership, do not have the "proper gift of God"; and a glaring consequence has been a long, contemptible tradition of sexual misbehavior by Christian clerics and lay leaders rendered yet more intolerable by hypocrisy, deception, exploitation, and perversion. Even were there not such a tradition, there would be valid reason for us to speculate concerning how much of the irrationally severe sexual code prevailing throughout Christendom, throughout much of Western history, and surviving in important forms today, is to be traced to the sexual frustration of ecclesiastical leaders.[160] If this sexual code has done much good, it has also done considerable harm, and it has in sundry ways been a disruptive factor in family life.

These matters again should concern those interested in the relation of Biblical religion to family values, particularly if the anthropologist Stephens is correct in maintaining that from a comparative social-scientific perspective, Christianity's distinctive contribution to the conception of conjugal life was its promotion of an asceticism and sexual purity that rendered sexual relations even within marriage profoundly inferior to complete celibacy.[161] The subject becomes more

complex when we consider the Protestant turn; for again, though Protestants generally believe that they take the Word more seriously than most Catholics do, their most respected leaders have been known to pronounce some rather harsh judgments on Roman Catholicism's fascination with celibacy and virginity.

In declaring that the Reformation was at least in part a revolution against celibacy,[162] Mount again follows Troeltsch, who, as noted, underscores the monumental significance of Luther's own marriage. While stressing that Luther's concrete renunciation of the ideal of clerical celibacy symbolizes Protestantism's repudiation of the entire Roman Catholic sexual ethic, Troeltsch acknowledges that Luther's attitude toward sexuality was far from progressive. Luther still saw sexual desire as a sign of Original Sin; and the ideal of male domination accords with the very essence of Lutheranism.[163] Yet it was of vital importance that Luther regarded sexual activity as essentially normal and that he desired to hand over marriage legislation to the state.[164] From its onset, Protestantism was marked by strong theological and practical disagreements, and the Reformers did not entirely concur regarding matters of sexual ethics. Noteworthy in this regard is the contrast between the Lutheran approach and the Calvinist approach, the latter well-known for its rigorism.[165]

Without venturing into perilous theological or historical waters, we need to have some sense of how Luther and his followers, with their reverence for Paul, could have come to develop such an abhorrence for the Roman Catholic Church's promotion of celibacy, lifelong virginity, and complete sexual abstinence. Rudimentary insights are offered by the Protestant social ethicist E. Clinton Gardner, who proposes that the characteristic Hebrew-Scriptural conception of sex "underlies" New Testament thought on the subject.[166] (From its beginnings, mainstream Protestantism has regularly made a point of restoring Hebrew Scripture to a position of authority from which it believes misguided Romish theologians had wrenched it.) Although Jesus did not marry and spoke of forsaking domestic ties for the sake of the Kingdom, he "clearly implied" (at Matthew 19:6) that marriage was ordained by God;[167] and as for Paul, though he commended celibacy and abstinence, we must bear in mind that he was convinced of Christ's imminent return.[168] Sexual asceticism made inroads into the teachings of the church as a result of a number of cultural factors having no direct relation to the Word, including the impact of Greek and Oriental notions; but the Fathers did not arrive at a clear consensus regarding the matter.[169] Even the Roman Catholic hierarchy's position on clerical celibacy remained somewhat indefinite until the post-Reformation Council of Trent.[170] In any case, as Gardner observes, "The leaders of the Protestant Reformation rejected [the] disparagement of marriage. Wedlock was for them of equal worth with celibacy, and indeed Luther on occasion exalted it above virginity, which he looked upon as an evasion of social responsibility."[171]

Troeltsch, as noted, holds that Luther proclaimed a principle of sexual ethics that "regarded the sex-life as something normal." But what precisely is the "Protestant" view of "normal" sexuality, and what is the "Protestant" view of

normal conjugal life that corresponds to it? It was inevitable that the Reformation would result in the emergence of a number of competing Protestant denominations, though perhaps few of those eager to disengage themselves from Rome could have predicted the breadth of disagreement and intensity of competition that would permanently divide the forces of Reform.[172] And few things have consistently been more absorbing for theologians to disagree about than sexual and family-related issues. The rise of Protestantism in itself furnishes a powerful insight into the arbitrariness of much contemporary talk of "Christian family values"; but the disagreements among Protestants are as interesting in their own way as the disagreements between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Even some of the agreements are fascinating. In his comprehensive history of marriage, the anthropologist Westermarck notes that the Anabaptists at Munster in 1531 were among the Christian sects that have advocated polygyny with much fervor.[173] The Lutherans generally regarded the Anabaptists as reckless radicals, but Westermarck reminds us that Luther himself not only condoned the bigamy of Philip of Hesse, but on various occasions spoke of polygyny with considerable toleration.[174] The criterion of "normality" becomes somewhat hazy in this context.

A Protestant acquaintance remarked to me some years ago that there can hardly be more incontrovertible evidence of the unwholesomeness of the authoritative Roman Catholic stance on sexual and family-related matters than the frequent media reports of sexual abuse of children by the celibate clergy at Roman Catholic orphanages and educational institutions. This cultural observer was not around to offer me his opinion on media coverage of the sexual misbehavior of some of America's most prominent Protestant televangelists. Many a worldly Frenchman and Italian educated in Catholic schools has been moved to sneer at the absurd "puritanism" of "the Protestant countries"—though it can hardly be Sweden that is being referred to.

In a Christendom inhabited by liberals and conservatives, Catholics and Protestants, Anglicans and Pentacostalists, Orthodox Christians and Mormons, sexually active individuals and people uncomfortable with their sexuality, and happily married, unhappily married, and unmarried people, it is highly unlikely that there will ever be a unified Christian conception of sexuality on which to build a unified Christian family culture. Nobody is to blame for this, not even the founders of Christianity, who left their followers a legacy marked in great measure by paradox and ambiguity. Ecumenical endeavors have sometimes been fruitful, but there are limits to what they can accomplish, and these limits are determined mainly by the human condition.[175]

TOWARD A CHRISTIAN CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR VIEWING THE FAMILY

Our effort to determine the principal family values imparted by New Testament teaching has yielded paradoxes and ambiguities more than clear-cut results. That may not be a bad thing, especially if one is committed to an investigation

that assigns at least as much importance to intellectual pursuit as the actual attainment of wisdom; and there may be wisdom enough in a heightened appreciation of factors contributing to our difficulty in obtaining clear-cut results. But philosophical critics can be as hard to please as cultural critics, and philosophical cultural critics can be impatient on two scores. An unphilosophical critic—or a critic suspicious of philosophy, and particularly of philosophical incursions into the controversial subject-matter we are examining—may raise the customary objections to all philosophy. The effort made thus far, insofar as it is a typical philosophical exercise, may be too subjective, needlessly skeptical in places, insufficiently scientific, overly theoretical, and so on. In addition, the whole enterprise may be misconceived, inasmuch as it disregards or undervalues the definitive source of knowledge in this area. Some will insist that there is no need for independent philosophical investigation when an established religious authority has already provided a clear normative Christian conceptual framework for viewing the family. Others will argue that there is no need for loose philosophical speculation when reliable social scientists have systematically set out for us the assumptions and values that as a matter of fact constitute the Christian conceptual framework.

Simply pointing to the authority of "the Bible" may raise more difficulties than it resolves, for even if we could all agree that the Bible, whatever it may be, offers authoritative insight into family values, we would still have to make determinations, on the basis of faith as well as reason, on how to derive insights and values from the Bible. Most Bible-oriented religionists look largely to some contemporary religious leader or elite for authoritative judgment.

If any church in the modern world is practically positioned to assume ecclesiastical leadership in a unified Christendom, it is surely the Roman Catholic Church, with its exceedingly long history, imposing scholarly tradition, highly developed institutions, and many millions of adherents in most parts of the world. When someone widely regarded as Vicar of Jesus Christ and successor of St. Peter pronounces on family matters, anyone seriously concerned with the practical promotion of Christian family values in an increasingly materialistic world should be paying some attention. Indeed, when such an individual speaks, anyone in the West seriously concerned with family values should be paying some attention, if not necessarily respectful attention. It is not solely a consequence of the mass media's characteristic obsession with celebrities, spectacles, and controversies that an enormous part of media coverage of "religion" is devoted to papal pronouncements on complicated ethical, social, and cultural issues.

As imposing a figure as a pope is, the highest order of decision making in the Roman Catholic Church is in reality an elaborate process involving the judgment of many people. The modern church's position on the most vital issues of the day is rarely determined by a pope's solitary vision. We see that popes are sometimes deeply troubled by conflicts within the church which they are unable to resolve. Still, while their power is circumscribed by ecclesiastical

institutions and other determining factors, popes can effect considerable change in the church and in the world. Popes differ in temperament, focus, and style of leadership, and their judgments and actions elicit a broad range of responses from both Roman Catholics and those outside the church.

That papal judgment in family-related matters can be exceedingly perverse is vividly illustrated by what historian José Sánchez has fittingly described as "one of the most celebrated clerical episodes in the entire history of the Church."[176] Although he does not bear complete responsibility for what occurred, the reactionary Pope Pius IX (Giovanni Ferretti) stands at the center of this illuminating 1858 debacle. Sánchez concisely conveys the main details of the episode:

A Roman Jewish family, the Mortaras, employed a Catholic girl as a servant. When Edgardo, one of the Mortara children, took ill, the girl secretly baptized the child. After the child recovered, she reported what she had done to her pastor, who then informed the Holy Office. Its officials, with the concurrence of the Pope, took Edgardo from his family and placed him in a Catholic foundling home. The principle applied was that the child, now a Catholic, would not learn his faith in a Jewish household. Even Napoleon III's intercession proved useless, and the Mortara child grew up permanently separated from his family.[177]

Possibly no incident reveals more effectively than the Mortara case the inherently unstable and paradoxical infrastructure of whatever might be conceived as a system of Christian family values.

Modern popes have put out a number of highly influential encyclical letters concerning sexual, conjugal, and family-related matters. The 1930 encyclical *Casti Connubii* by Pope Pius XI (Achille Ratti), remains one of the most impressive efforts by the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church to provide a comprehensive normative Christian conceptual framework for approaching conjugal life. Although much has transpired in the seven decades following the initial dissemination of this teaching, a document of this kind is never entirely superseded by subsequent Roman Catholic teaching. Contemplative yet practical, comprehensive but also concise, solemn yet in places compassionate, reflecting the influence of almost two thousand years of ecclesiastical tradition, and magisterial in tone, *Casti Connubii* remains as good a place as any to look for an important modern statement of integral Christian family values.

In its first part, the encyclical emphasizes the dignity of human marriage, notably in relation to the Pentateuchal injunction to be fruitful and multiply. It proceeds to stress that marriage is a sacred partnership, in spite of Jesus' counsel of virginity.[178] Reaffirming earlier Christian teaching, it condemns polygamy—successive as well as simultaneous[179]—and the sin of adultery.[180] It underscores that the husband is the visible head of the family and that marriage is a sacrament and thus indissoluble.[181]

In its second part, the encyclical begins by condemning the general false principle that marriage is a human and not a divine institution.[182] It proceeds to

condemn a number of false principles in detail. The first group of these includes the alleged acceptability of birth prevention[183] and abortion[184]—along with the belief that it is not the duty of the state to act against these evils[185]—and the alleged acceptability of eugenics[186] and adultery.[187] There follows a denunciation of commitment to the false emancipation of women.[188] A final group of false principles that are condemned includes beliefs in the acceptability of treating marriage as a purely civil or secular institution,[189] of mixed marriage between Catholics and non-Catholics "without recourse to ecclesiastical authorities,"[190] and of divorce.[191]

In its third part, the encyclical outlines remedies for the evils.[192] The main focus is understandably on faith and obedience, but the encyclical also stresses that the state should ordain good laws[193] and establish harmony with the church.[194] Attention is given to the necessity of the "family wage"; the state should guarantee that families are economically feasible. Following Pope Leo XIII—and ultimately Jesus himself—the encyclical maintains that spiritual power is "distinct" from the civil, so that each is to be free and unhampered in doing its own work.[195] What is required, however, is genuine "harmony" between the two powers. The encyclical then concludes by condemning the institution of the "absolute" separation of the civil power from the church.

Surveying the content of *Casti Connubii*, of which I have provided here only the broadest of outlines, one may be inclined to respond in any of a number of ways. One may reflect that it represents, more or less, what a pope could reasonably be expected to say about marriage and the family, perhaps especially in 1930. Alternatively, one may be surprised by some of the document's content; one may well have anticipated papal denunciation of abortion, divorce, and adultery yet not expected condemnation of, say, "false emancipation" of women and "absolute" separation of church and state. One may spontaneously respond affirmatively to what one regards as an articulate, high-minded, and generally salutary agenda for pro-family cultural reform; or one may be irritated or enraged by what one sees as in large part a mass of dogmatic, superstitious, poisonous propaganda. One may be struck by the fact that there are roughly equal proportions of the document with which one agrees and with which one disagrees.

Believing Jews or Protestants may be impressed, above all else, by differences between some of the salient values imparted in *Casti Connubii* and quite different values that they associate with teachings of their own Bible-oriented cultural tradition. They may find their attention focused, for example, on the encyclical's insistence that marriage is a sacrament and thus indissoluble. Alternatively, a traditionalist Jew or Protestant may be surprised by how much of the teaching of the encyclical he or she can endorse.

Some readers may be taken aback by how far the austere and rigid tone of much of the document deviates from the moral tone of Jesus, who is portrayed in the Gospels as rejecting authoritarianism and legalism and fostering empathy, compassion, and forgiveness. (Jesus' proposed remedies for evil do not include

convoluted alliances with civil powers; he emphasizes purity of heart and love of God and neighbor.) An intellectual reader may be troubled by the document's evasion of historical theological problems and paradoxes, while a practical-minded reader may be disturbed by the document's limited concern with "real" conjugal problems, such as what precisely to do when a marriage has plainly fallen apart as a result of the misbehavior of an abusive husband and father who employs ecclesiastical teaching as an instrument for further exploiting his victims.

Two themes of particular interest to me are the encyclical's repudiation of the belief that marriage is a human institution, and its emphasis on the vital role of civil power and the state's obligation to develop laws that are in harmony with the moral vision of the Roman Catholic Church. In the next chapter we shall consider at some length the significance of the family as a "human" institution. We need only to note at this point that the institution of the conjugal family existed long before the church, has often functioned admirably without the church, and indeed is something that the founders of Christianity and the leaders who have succeeded them have always had to reckon with. The Roman Catholic moralist J. Elliot Ross, a dedicated student of Scholasticism, goes so far as to propose that the conjugal family, and not the church, is "the most important social institution in the world."[196]

Regarding the second matter, I believe that we are not being mean-spirited when we note that the Roman Catholic Church's historic association with some of the most repressive forms of theocracy is understandably troubling to most thoughtful people of goodwill, including a number of great Catholic moralists. Mount may be right to suggest that throughout much of its history the church has been "absorbed in a double task: to elaborate a conception of Christian marriage which could survive in the lay world without sacrificing too much of the Christian regard for chastity, and to gain control of the legal and social institutions governing marriage."[197]

Of more general philosophical and practical interest is the very range of responses that *Casti Connubii* could well elicit—perhaps almost as much because of what it does not say as because of what it actually says. High ecclesiastical pronouncements on concerns of real life are routinely met with a broad range of reactions from church members as well as outsiders. Roman Catholicism in every generation has had a considerable number of adherents who disagree about substantial matters with popes, bishops, and priests. In our own time, one frequently encounters individuals who, while sincerely regarding themselves as faithful Roman Catholics, do not see themselves as wicked sinners for having obtained a divorce, married outside the church, avoided patriarchal authoritarianism in their family life, or voted for a political candidate who supports more liberal access to methods of birth control condemned by the hierarchy. Periodically, sometimes at key turning points in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, the laity en masse has indicated that for the time being it has had enough of the clergy's imperiousness, callousness, ineptitude, or corruption.[198]

Social scientists do not speak in the commanding voice of a pope, but they, too, are seen by many as having considerable authority; they give lectures to large classes of impressionable students of many faiths and backgrounds, receive grants from research councils, have the results of their research publicized in the mass media, and so on. They do not profess to be infallible, but they claim to be applying scientific methods and to be obtaining hard data. Whatever they may lack in the way of authentic spirituality, social scientists can compensate for in some measure by a conscientious striving for objectivity in an effort to meliorate the lives of their fellows.

A multidisciplinary 1966 volume on "conceptual frameworks in family analysis" offers its readers descriptions of eleven different approaches to the study of the family, including anthropological, psychoanalytical, social-psychological, developmental, economic, and legal approaches.[199] The editors, Nye and Berardo, inform us that a conceptual framework has had to meet three criteria in order to be included among the approaches considered in the survey. Each of the eleven approaches is committed to understanding "family roles, the family as a group, family relationships and/or their impact on the socialization and functioning of the child"; each has established a substantial body of concepts for use in its investigations; and each has "a distinctive set of assumptions concerning the individual, society, and/or family relationships."[200] A "philosophical" approach to family analysis is not considered in the volume, but the last of the eleven approaches that is examined is a religious one—specifically, something designated as the "Western Christian conceptual framework for viewing the family."[201] The author of this chapter, Stanley R. Reiber, does not pretend to be describing a "religious" conceptual framework as such, as he understands that there are any number of religious conceptual frameworks for family analysis, and that most are probably significantly different from the particular one that he is examining. Yet Reiber apparently is not especially worried about underestimating critical differences between, say, Roman Catholic and Protestant frameworks, liberal Protestant and conservative Protestant frameworks, Baptist and Methodist and Mennonite frameworks, competing intra-denominational Lutheran frameworks, and so on. Whatever this indicates about Reiber's social-scientific methodology, it might well give the student of philosophy, theology, or history cause for concern, particularly in light of considerations that have been raised thus far in this inquiry.

Just as the family can, religion and social science can themselves be studied in diverse ways. Reiber's study of the religious approach to the family is ostensibly not religious as such, but social-scientific (largely sociological), and the consideration of Reiber's discussion that follows below is basically a philosophical approach to Reiber's sociological approach to a particular religious approach to family analysis. Most philosophers realize that their analyses are permeated by subjectivity, and when they forget, social scientists (along with religious preachers impressed by the limits of reason) are among the swiftest observers to remind them. But social science too, even at its most "scientific"

in its conscientious pursuit of the hard data that are ostensibly the reward of objectivity, is highly theory-laden—as most social scientists will acknowledge at their convenience and as philosophers in turn are among the quickest observers to remind them. We are actually reminded of the theoretical dimension of social science, and of sociology in particular, when we consider some of the eleven approaches to the family included in the Nye-Berardo volume: structure-functional, institutional, interactional, situational, social-psychological, and so on.[202] As conscientious a scholar as Reiber may be, his methodology reflects a certain theoretical commitment on his part, and this commitment is in a sense philosophical. Furthermore, when someone writes about religion, even a conscientious social scientist, personal religious commitment, or the absence of one, has a way of influencing the analysis. These considerations are relevant not only to Reiber's approach but to all sociological approaches, of which we may take Reiber's to be representative, at least for our limited purposes in this inquiry.

Reiber's study is of interest here partly because Reiber is not hesitant about indicating for us what he takes to be in fact the essential "values" associated with the "Western Christian" approach to the family.[203] "Christianity, like all religions, operates primarily within a particular value matrix. It is an organized value system."[204] Reiber may be rather less sophisticated than other sociologists of religion and the family, but he is to be admired, in a way, for his willingness to be as clear, concrete, and practical as possible. Reiber not only is willing to identify specific "values," but in accordance with the third criterion cited by Nye and Berardo, he is prepared to specify what he has determined to be Western Christianity's "distinctive set of assumptions concerning the individual, society, and/or family relationships." However, even without scrutinizing Reiber's scientific methodology, we have reason, on the basis of our earlier philosophical, theological, and historical reflections, to be somewhat concerned by Reiber's list of specific assumptions of Western Christianity regarding the family.[205]

Reiber says that Christianity—that is, Western Christianity—assumes that the family is ordained by God; but if this is universally assumed in some sense by Christians, the fact remains, as noted, that many people have been impressed by the comparatively low status that Christianity (as they understand it) assigns to the conjugal family, particularly in relation to the celibate life of devotion to the things of the Lord, the sexually pure life, the spiritual community of believers, and the matter of personal salvation. (Reiber himself contrasts the ancient Hebrews' focus on the family with Christianity's more "person-centered" interest.)[206] Reiber says that Christianity assumes that the family is the basic democracy; but as noted, many Christians apparently believe that the properly functioning family is not a democracy but an institution of which the husband and father is the authoritative head. (Reiber, in fact, proceeds to state that Christianity's fundamental assumption regarding parent–child relationships is that, "Children owe unquestioning obedience and loyalty to their parents.") Reiber states that Christianity assumes that monogamy is a divine institution; but this claim, too, is questionable on theological and historical grounds. Reiber says

that Christianity assumes the sacredness of the individual, but while this state-
ment is in a sense virtually tautological, it does not do justice to mainstream
Christianity's understanding—which is notably different from that of, say, Rab-
binic Judaism—that human beings who do not embrace the true faith, including
one's immediate family members, will not be saved and indeed are in a profound
sense spiritually dead. (Religious disagreements often result in the breakup of
families.) Reiber says that Christianity assumes family relations to be symbols
of relationships to God; yet he also states that Christianity assumes the unique-
ness of family relationships, and he does not appreciate the tension here. One
might actually see Christianity as teaching that the conjugal family, being akin
to the spiritual family of believers—the church—is not so unique (while si-
multaneously being less important than the community of believers). Reiber says
that Christianity assumes the importance of loyalty of spouses to each other; yet
as we have seen, many Christians see divorce as morally and theologically
acceptable. Reiber sees Christianity as assuming in some distinctive way the
need for limitation of sexual intercourse; but Christians disagree strongly re-
garding what the proper limitation is, while almost everyone, including the typ-
ical libertine, believes that there needs to be *some* limitation to sexual
intercourse. Finally, Reiber maintains that Christianity assumes the sacredness
of the family; but while this statement again is virtually tautological in a sense,
it does not entirely do justice to the insistence of many Christians that marriage
is not a sacrament, and more importantly, it obscures the fact that in concrete
ways Christianity can reasonably be seen as assigning a comparatively low status
to conjugal life.

Further problems arise when Reiber proceeds to discuss the principal Western
Christian values related to conjugal life. While assigning great importance to
these values, Reiber provides hardly any insight into what a value is, and he
speaks vaguely about Western Christian attitudes toward the brotherhood of all
men, the normalcy of sex, the sanctity of human life, divorce, the purpose of
intercourse, intermarriage, and family worship.[207] Reiber undoubtedly presumes
that there is a direct connection between such values and what he has already
indicated to be the most important "assumptions" of Western Christianity re-
garding the family; and as noted above, we have good reason to challenge every
item on his list of those assumptions. However, Reiber goes further and declares
that the Western Christian framework for viewing the family "stands or falls
upon the ability of the individual to accept the truth of the Christian religious
teachings."[208] Thus, Reiber may hold that Christian family values are directly
related not only to what Christian believers think they have been taught to
believe is *of value*, but to all basic teachings that Christians think they have
been taught to accept.

Now, any presumption that Christian value-commitments relating to the fam-
ily directly correspond to the acceptance of teachings that Christians regard as
true—or indeed to the "acceptance" of propositions in any sense of the word—is

itself significantly ambiguous, for while it is conceivable that Christian family values *follow from* relevant propositional beliefs, it is also possible that relevant propositional beliefs ultimately are *based on* value-commitments. Such a presumption is all the more problematic if the propositional beliefs that Reiber has in mind are not simply beliefs about what is of value but are also metaphysical beliefs and beliefs about historical events. Some philosophers, including Kant, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and William James, have drawn attention to the extent to which metaphysical and other religious beliefs may have their foundation in values (and ultimately in the "will" itself). Hence, Reiber's approach here to values is questionable on several grounds.

Regarding the specific attitudes that Reiber cites, we may again note difficulties that have arisen with respect to determining what precisely Christianity as such teaches concerning the normalcy of sex, divorce, intermarriage, and even the purpose of intercourse. An additional word is in order about the value Christianity ostensibly assigns to the brotherhood of all men and the sanctity of human life. Stated bluntly, the germane point is that despite the universalism reflected in its rejection of various forms of ethnic particularism, Christianity also promotes exceedingly important forms of exclusivism.[209] It emphasizes the brotherhood of *Christians* and the sanctity of *Christian* life. It decisively distinguishes and separates true believers from intractable unbelievers (including biological brothers) who are spiritually dead and will not be saved.[210] Moreover, as a highly competitive missionary faith, it almost inevitably leads fanatical believers to regard obstinate unbelievers as people who, in impeding the mission of the church, are appropriate objects of persecution and even annihilation.

It may well be that Reiber has done an especially careless job of disclosing or describing the assumptions and values that as a matter of fact constitute Western Christianity's conceptual framework for viewing the family. However, the critical problem here may be an inadequately conceived enterprise rather than an inadequately managed one. Unlike a pope or other religious leader who is expected to make authoritative normative pronouncements, the social scientist's task is essentially descriptive. But the family-related assumptions and values of Christians differ significantly—partly because New Testament teaching on sexuality, marriage, and family relationships is, in key places, obscure and paradoxical—and even if the social scientist could establish incontrovertibly, by some flawless methodology, that *most* Christians hold certain basic and vitally distinctive family values, it would still be inappropriate to infer that those values are the ones that Christianity as such actually imparts. Furthermore, religion, which even at its most superficial may involve some degree of personal, existential commitment, does not lend itself as well as most other forms of experience and culture to useful descriptive generalization. That is one reason why social-scientific explanations of religious phenomena will never completely replace humanistic efforts to enhance our understanding of those phenomena.

A CORE THEOLOGICAL PARADOX IN CONCEIVING A CHRISTIAN FAMILY CULTURE

The effort here to determine the integral family values imparted by the New Testament has led to consideration of historical theological paradoxes and ambiguities with momentous practical implications. Yet perhaps the core historical theological paradox in conceiving a Christian family culture is the fundamental, ineradicable tension between Hebrew-Scriptural and New Testament ideas. This general paradox, with its profound consequences for an understanding and appraisal of the conjugal family and certain competing forms of family (notably the extended family, the nation, and the church), can be treated as a group of specific paradoxes related in significant ways. We have recurrently noted how in various ways Hebrew-Scriptural and New Testament conceptions do not fit together comfortably to provide a unified world-view or even a unified view of conjugal life. Christianity appears to have originated as the faith of a Jewish sect, but it promptly developed in a way that necessitated its being reconceived as a religion wholly distinct from Judaism. The founders of Christianity built largely on a Judaic groundwork, but they also disavowed major aspects of the Judaic world-view—partly because of the influence on them of un-Judaic sources—and after an initial period of disorientation and controversy, both mainstream Jews and adherents of the new faith could see that their theological disagreements with each other were at least as profound as their shared heritage. Christianity appropriated Hebrew Scripture and made a version of it part of its own revelation, but it interpreted Hebrew Scripture in a radical new way, and much of the new interpretation was necessitated by the grafting onto the old Scripture of a new Scripture, to be seen by the Christian as superseding the old Scripture in critical ways but more generally restoring it. This program, leaving the authoritativeness of Hebrew Scripture highly indeterminate, allowed the early Christian proselytizers considerable flexibility, which contributed greatly to their ability to promote the new religion. Judaism, already established as one of the world's oldest and most highly developed religions, provided them with extremely rich cultural resources; but their new ideas enabled them to free themselves from the constraints of a religion regarded by the children of Israel as, in a certain sense, their own cultural property, and to reach out to the Gentile masses likely to be intimidated by the detailed demands of the Law and bewildered by the pronounced ethnic particularism underlying all of Hebrew Scripture.

Christian leaders have obviously been extremely successful in applying this program so as to attract countless adherents to Christianity and render Christianity one of the world's most important religions; and their success in this regard has been compounded by their vigorous and often aggressive approach to attracting new converts and reinforcing the cultural establishment of the church. However, the initial program also contained the seeds of some of Christianity's

most spectacular failures, and particularly its remarkable internal divisions; and nowhere is this more evident than in the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, with the latter so often making a point of returning to Hebrew Scripture for its inspiration.

The basic historical connections between Judaism and its daughter religion are largely obvious, and certain themes in Christian teaching on conjugal life can easily be traced back to Christianity's Judaic roots. From one perspective, Christianity, like Rabbinic Judaism, represents a continuation of earlier Judaism; and the New Testament sometimes represents Jesus and Paul as referring respectfully, if not altogether reverently, to familiar teachings of the Torah. The founders of Christianity were probably especially influenced by ideas and practices of the Essene order; but as Max Weber observes, there are fundamental connections between the Essene ethic and the Pharisaic ethic, so much so that one might conceivably regard the Essene ethic—and possibly even the early Christian ethic itself—as the "Pharisaic ethic intensified."[211]

The patriarchal authoritarianism we have noted in Paul's teaching accords in spirit with ancient Judaic teaching,[212] and when Paul summons up the will to say something positive about the institution of marriage, he conspicuously makes reference to the seminal Hebrew-Scriptural teaching in the Book of Genesis. Again, it is noteworthy that when Jesus condemns divorce, and in doing so distances himself from Pentateuchal family law, he specifically attacks any remarriage that follows divorce as a form of adultery; and moreover, at Matthew 5:32, Jesus is seen acknowledging the legitimacy of divorcing an adulterous wife (and there is no comparable judgment with respect to an adulterous husband).[213]

Some scholars have suggested that even when Christianity adopts a markedly un-Judaic position, as in its stance regarding virginity or its treatment of sexuality in general, it reveals in its very preoccupation with such subject matter the impact of Judaic values, or at very least Judaic concerns.[214] And as we have noted, some Christian scholars have even maintained that what is best in Christian teaching on conjugal life is directly derived from the ancient Hebrews, and that as a general rule the un-Judaic elements that have crept into that teaching should be eliminated.[215]

There are, nevertheless, at least four broad areas in which tensions between Hebrew-Scriptural and New Testament ideas—tensions mirrored within New Testament teaching and within Christian theology generally—are of philosophical and practical import with respect to matters relating to conjugal family life. These involve the attitude toward Pentateuchal law (and religious law in general), the balancing of naturalistic and spiritualistic concerns, the hierarchy of families, and the idea of immortality. The critical issues, all of which in some way involve the comparative "value" of things, are crucially interrelated, sometimes in obvious ways and sometimes in rather more subtle ways.

The Attitude toward Pentateuchal Law (and Religious Law in General)

The Law is integral to Hebrew Scripture, and while the post-Mosaic prophets, and even Moses himself, often underscore the need for commitment to the spirit of the Law, and the importance of love of God and neighbor, the Rabbinic tradition has never challenged the notion that a Jew is duty-bound to obey the Law transmitted at Sinai, a significant part of which deals with family-related concerns. At Matthew 5:17, Jesus declares, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Paul, however, may appear to suggest something quite different when he declares, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us";[216] "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."[217] Paul proclaims that with the coming of Christ, the Law no longer has the primacy that the Jews assigned to it; and though Paul's understanding is profoundly theological, he sees it as related to Jesus' anti-legalism, for Paul teaches, "[O]ur sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."[218] On this score Paul takes his lead from the Jesus who teaches that on two commandments—to love God and love one's neighbor— "hang all the law and the prophets."[219] Few passages in the New Testament are as vivid as those in which Jesus excoriates the combination of legalism and hypocrisy that has lamentably come to be known to many as "pharisaism" (as if the rich spiritual legacy of Pharisaism could be distilled into something so marginal to it).

Throughout history, Christian ethicists have typically made much of New Testament rejection of legalism, and modern Christian ethicists have perhaps done so even more than their predecessors. For example, Paul Ramsey writes:

Jewish ethics was a legalism modified by humanitarianism, which meant also a human-itarianism modified by legalism. Jesus' humanitarianism was not at all fettered by respect for long-established custom or the preconception of legal definition. Love led him to be downright unconcerned about laws he had been trained to cherish.[220]

This view obviously has profound implications for how a Christian understands Pentateuchal law regarding family matters. It even has been seen as extending to Jesus' own direct injunctions in this area. Gardner, dealing with the matter of divorce, writes:

The question inevitably arises, therefore, whether divorce is ever permissible for the Christian. On the face of the matter, Jesus seems to be giving an absolute law here, but to interpret his teaching on this subject as a piece of legislation that is binding in its literal form upon all of his followers is to interpret it in a manner that is foreign to his

usual method of teaching. His primary criticism of the Pharisees, it will be recalled, was directed against their legalism.[221]

Gardner goes on to maintain that to try to impose strict divorce laws, even on Christians, is not only impractical but "uncharitable."[222] Even Mace, ordinarily insistent on the need to restore the Christian sexual ethic to its ancient Hebraic roots, acknowledges that Jesus admirably and significantly rejected the ancient Hebrew emphasis on marriage as a universal duty, as well as the ancient Hebrew exaggeration of the importance of sexual misdemeanors in relation to more basic ethical shortcomings.[223]

The application of the New Testament rejection of legalism offers wide-ranging possibilities for the contemporary reconception of family-related matters. For example, the institution of same-sex *marriage*, so alien conceptually to traditionalist Judaism, has been increasingly accepted in civil jurisdictions in the West, despite the protests of conservative religious cultural critics. Paul makes clear, at Romans 1:27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9, that he shares with Jewish moral teachers an abhorrence of homosexuality; but if Jesus' explicit injunctions regarding divorce can be reinterpreted in a less "uncharitable" way, then, perhaps, so too can many other Biblical injunctions. It is noteworthy in this regard that the church's attitude toward homosexuality has in fact fluctuated greatly[224] throughout its history.

In general, the latitude for interpretation here is remarkably wide, as is strikingly indicated by the "amoralist" Nietzsche's ironic endorsement of the spirit of Jesus' "moral" teaching; for Nietzsche observes that Jesus can be regarded as a prototype of the "higher man," saying to the Jews that the Law and even morals as such are for mere servants and not for sons of God.[225] Jesus' attack on legalism may be an attack not only on hypocrisy, mechanical ritualism, and kindred vices, but on any precept-based ethical system. Yet few contemporary religious cultural critics, conservative Christian or otherwise, are prepared to endorse a thoroughgoing ethical intuitionism or any other form of radically subjectivistic ethical cognitivism. Most Christians accept not only the need for civil law but the need for believers to respect some form of religious law; indeed the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church is as intricate in its own right as anything that the Rabbinic tradition has developed, and the church's punishments for deviation from canon law have generally been as severe as any that the Jews have established. Christian moralists have a difficult balancing act to perform in reconciling the need for precepts with Jesus' devaluation of them. In this regard, and several others, Christianity is far from being, as the Jewish scholar Reuven P. Bulka arbitrarily contends, a "less demanding" religion than Judaism.[226]

The Balancing of Spiritualistic and Naturalistic Concerns

We have noted in several places that Hebrew-Scriptural treatment of sexual and family matters tends to be markedly more naturalistic than New Testament

treatment of those matters. Both Judaism and Christianity have a complicated balancing act to perform with respect to competing spiritualistic and naturalistic concerns, but New Testament teaching in this area is, on the whole, substantially more anti-naturalistic than Hebrew-Scriptural teaching. Among the noteworthy consequences of its focus on personal salvation of the immaterial soul is a corresponding devaluation of sexuality, marriage, and conjugal life. To be sure, as Christian pro-family controversialists rightly insist, the New Testament teaches that marriage and conjugal life, when entered into, are to be taken very seriously, and that those committing themselves to marriage and child-raising have great responsibilities. Jesus' condemnation of divorce and ensuing remarriage affirms the seriousness of marriage, and those Christians who regard marriage as a sacrament can be seen as taking the institution of marriage more seriously in a sense than those Christians and non-Christians who do not. Still, on a more fundamental level, Judaism, with its basis in Hebrew Scripture, values marriage and conjugal life more highly than Christianity, mainly because of the special importance it assigns to biological kinship and, more specifically, to the attainment of immortality through one's descendants as well as through the achievements of an enduring holy people to which one belongs.

Of course, Hebrew Scripture unambiguously manifests and highlights spiritualistic concerns of a kind appropriately contrasted with naturalistic ones. The basic ontology of Hebrew Scripture is supernaturalistic, and the reader of the Pentateuch is expected to take for granted rudimentary, pre-philosophical ideas of soul and spirit. Since the ancient Greek philosophers themselves had to work with pre-philosophical, animistic-religious ideas of soul and spirit,[227] it should not be surprising that Jewish thinkers in the Rabbinic period and after could find a modus vivendi of sorts between the basic Hebrew-Scriptural ontology and Judaized versions of classical philosophical conceptions of soul and spirit. But unlike their Christian counterparts, Judaism's foremost intellectuals have consistently considered it their duty to reckon with and ultimately accommodate the Pentateuch's naturalistic attitude toward biological families—conjugal, extended, and national—when addressing eschatological as well as cultural issues.

Viewed positively, the devotion of untold generations of Jewish thinkers to conserving the naturalistic element in the Judaic world-view can be seen as a courageous effort to affirm that death is not better than life;[228] but many thoughtful non-Jews, and some contemplative Jews, too, have concluded that Judaism's eschatology is not sufficiently clear, consistent, compelling, inspiring, or consoling. Jews faithful to Rabbinic tradition speak confidently about a "world to come" and about God's "reviving the dead," but most of them sense that, unlike Christians and Muslims, they were destined not to dwell for long on matters of personal eschatology. We shall return to some of these considerations shortly.

The practical implications for contemporary Judaism of the naturalistic element in Hebrew Scripture's approach to sexual and family matters are varied, but we may briefly recall some that relate directly to our consideration of historical paradoxes in conceiving a Christian family culture. Vorspan observes

that, "when the moral and sanctifying elements are no longer present in marriage, Judaism recognizes that divorce may be wise and necessary, and traditionally it has made provision for the dissolution of such marriages under religious auspices."[229] Vorspan further notes that, "The Jewish tradition [has] had no room for the veneration of celibacy, for guilt complexes about sex, for monastic orders."[230]

The Hierarchy of Families

Whatever importance Hebrew Scripture and Judaism assign to marriage and the conjugal family, the fact remains that in a pivotal sense, they assign far greater importance to more inclusive forms of family, and most notably to the family of all Israel. In long-institutionalized liturgies, modern Jews recite prayers for the well-being of their closest relations, living and departed, but they spend considerably more time invoking God's blessing on his special people, the children of Israel. (It is noteworthy that one of Judaism's most prominent prayers, the mourner's kaddish that one recites to honor the memory of a deceased relative, makes no direct reference to the individual being remembered but does invoke God's blessing on all Israel.) All Israel is truly an extraordinary family and an extraordinary community. It has much to do with kinship and genetic inheritance, yet it has always admitted proselytes of many races. It is a nation even when its nationals are dispersed among the Gentiles. And it is a religio-cultural community even when most of its members cannot agree on some of the most rudimentary metaphysical notions. It is not exactly a community of believers—and, in fact, includes many professed unbelievers—yet virtually all who regard themselves as Jews can see themselves as members of a community that is unified on a cultural level by at least some abstract form of commitment to the world-view of generations of ancestors.

Judaism and Christianity share an understanding that there is a form of family that is ultimately more important in a crucial sense than one's immediate family. Hebrew Scripture exhorts Jews to avoid becoming so focused on the interests of their immediate family, or even of their long-term progeny, that they lose sight of the interests of the higher family of all Israel. Judaism also has a universalistic dimension, teaching that the God of Israel is the One God who is the Creator and Sustainer of all humanity (the descendants of Adam and Eve), a being who is concerned with the welfare of non-Jews as well as Jews. However, while Judaism encourages certain familiar forms of universal brotherhood, it never ranks the universal human family higher than the family of all Israel. Indeed, the idea that the Jewish people constitute a family and community with a unique and eternal role of utmost importance may be even more central to Judaism than the idea of God. Christianity, while decidedly exclusivistic in contrasting the spiritual family of the church, a distinctive community of believers, with all other families and communities—and also in teaching that only Christian faith can procure salvation—is more universalistic than Judaism not

only in rejecting various forms of ethnic particularism, but in emphasizing that all human beings are potential if not actual members of the reconstituted spiritual family that is the mystical body of Christ. Christianity, in effect, both extends and repudiates Hebrew-Scriptural teaching on the ranking of families. It follows Hebrew Scripture in exhorting its adherents to avoid becoming so focused on the interests of their immediate family and long-term progeny that they lose sight of the interests of higher families; but it emphasizes that those higher families are, first, the universal family rather than one people among the world's many peoples, and second, a spiritual family defined by faith rather than a family in which biological kinship somehow remains of central importance.[231]

While sharing with Judaism the belief that there is a form of family that is ultimately more important in a vital sense than the conjugal family, Christianity goes further than Judaism in devaluing the conjugal family because it more directly devalues biological kinship as such. This represents a genuine problem for conservative Christian cultural critics who contend that the Bible stresses the importance of the traditional nuclear family. Not only does Hebrew Scripture itself underscore the limited importance of the nuclear family, but the New Testament teaches that the importance of the nuclear family is substantially more limited than Hebrew Scripture allows. The relevant anxieties of astute Christian theologians that were noted earlier in this chapter are certainly warranted.[232]

One practical implication of this New Testament reorientation is economic. Considering that many contemporary conservative Christian cultural critics are also economic conservatives, we may find it especially ironic that the Social Gospel theologian Rauschenbusch, who sees Christianity as inconsistent with capitalism, industrialism, and commercialism,[233] associates the Christianization of the institution of the family[234] with the New Testament's repudiation of the Hebrew-Scriptural view of the conjugal family and other kinship families as useful instruments for the passing on of material wealth.[235] From a New Testament perspective, the patriarch Abraham's foundational obsession with having biological heirs to whom to pass on his material wealth is as immoral as it is absurd. Jesus' striking contempt for the money-changers[236] and the wealthy in general[237] may be seen in this respect as neatly complementing his devaluation of biological families. Hebrew Scripture's frequent emphasis on pecuniary concerns is conspicuously absent in the New Testament, where we read that "the love of money is the root of all evil."[238]

Rauschenbusch's theme, however, may be transposed into a key that renders it rather less sympathetic to Christianity, as the Christian church may be viewed as a rival with the biological family for an individual's inheritance.[239] Also noteworthy in this respect is the connection in Christian anti-Semitism between the image of the Jew as obsessed with money and the image of the Jew as thoroughly insensitive regarding the interests of the Gentile; but though these images are easily associated, the latter has been more instrumental in Christianity's transformation of a holy people into Christendom's most accessible and most useful scapegoat.

The Idea of Immortality

It may seem curious that our consideration of relations between Biblical religion and the family should require us to pay so much attention to the subject of immortality, but we are, after all, concerned with religion, which is commonly associated with the subject; and when one considers the matter closely, one can see that the family may also have a great deal to do with the subject. Contemplating disharmony between Hebrew-Scriptural and New Testament attitudes toward conjugal and other families, we inevitably confront conflicting ideas of how immortality is to be attained. It is not unreasonable to speculate that a primary purpose of both religion and the family is to allow people to hope for immortality. The existentialist philosopher Miguel de Unamuno argues that the "hunger of immortality"[240] is at the heart of authentic philosophical and religious reflection.[241] Unamuno posits that it is not a cult of death but rather a cult of immortality that originates and preserves religions.[242] In understanding Christian values, it is sometimes wise to remember that, "Christianity sprang from the confluence of two mighty spiritual streams—the one Judaic, the other Hellenic—each of which had already influenced the other";[243] and possibly nowhere is Christianity's debt to Hellenic conceptions more prominent than in its approach to the hunger for immortality.

The personal eschatology of Hebrew Scripture is nebulous, and an exegete may well wonder whether Hebrew Scripture offers any soteriology at all. In the Book of Genesis, as we have observed, much is made of the immortality that Abraham and his descendants are to attain through their progeny; God's covenant with Abraham and all Israel involves the promise that there will be a biological posterity that will in some vital way preserve in this world the essence of those who have departed it. Hebrew Scripture and mainstream Judaism both ascribe momentous importance to an individual's being remembered by a biological posterity; and they imply that even if one is not remembered, one's spirit in some indefinite way still survives in that posterity.[244] These conceptions also render life more meaningful to a believer by enhancing the value of what the believer will be leaving to posterity. According to this understanding, all biological families, including the conjugal family, are of immense spiritual importance to an individual. The immortality they make possible can be regarded as "personal" immortality in some sense of the word, but it is quite different from the immortality of the soul on which Plato and numerous other philosophers concentrate. As for the messianic element in the Hebrew-Scriptural world-view, it is definitely eschatological, but its focus is mainly on the destiny of the macrocosmic family of all Israel, and not on the destiny of the individual.

Religious and intellectual leaders of the Jewish people subsequently promoted additional eschatological notions; and the Rabbinic tradition, as noted, endorsed belief in both resurrection of the dead and a "world to come." Some Jewish thinkers have been attracted to a Platonic conception of personal immortality, or a similar philosophical conception, even while suspecting that it is not alto-

gether consistent with the core Hebrew-Scriptural world-view. Jewish philosophers throughout the centuries, and especially in the Middle Ages, have advanced a fairly broad range of ideas about immortality,[245] and the Kabbalist mystics even entertained exotic ideas about reincarnation. Moreover, even a cursory reading of Hebrew Scripture enables us to see that the early Hebrews must have had a number of obscure, primitive, pre-Scriptural notions about soul, spirit, and the afterlife which were comparable to, and perhaps largely derived from, the notions of other Middle Eastern cultures. However, the fact remains that there is nothing in Hebrew Scripture—Christianity's Old Testament—quite comparable to the eschatology and soteriology that permeate New Testament teaching, which has clearly been strongly influenced by eschatological and soteriological reflections of the Greeks. The Russian Orthodox philosopher Berdyaev submits:

It was not until the Hellenistic era, just before the rise of Christ, that the spiritual element in the Jewish religion came to be to some extent disentangled from the naturalistic, or, in other words, that personality was liberated and no longer dissolved in the collective, racial life. But the idea of immortality was truly revealed in the Greek and not in the Jewish thought.[246]

Although there is some historical overstatement in this analysis, Berdyaev has expressed with characteristic energy the critical point: the founders of Christianity derived their preoccupation with personal immortality mainly from the Greeks and Hellenists and not from traditionalist Jews.

   Christian eschatological and soteriological notions are nebulous in their own right, and only partly because of confusions arising with respect to how to reconcile the New Testament's personal eschatology and soteriology with its general eschatological notions about such matters as the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, and the last judgment. Christian philosophers and theologians have conceived personal salvation and eternal life in manifold ways, and what they have said about life after death usually contrasts sharply with what simple Christians believe about it, which is typically even more indeterminate—sometimes to the point of not constituting genuine "belief" at all—and in many cases utterly preposterous. Many contemplative Christian thinkers speak opaquely about a disembodied soul's mysterious union with God, while some of their less reflective counterparts seem to imagine that they will be going to an endless party in heaven at which they will look more or less the way they look now, and their life will be an uninterrupted succession of episodes resembling the happiest experiences of their existence in this world. It may also be noted here that though the founders of Christianity were greatly influenced by Hellenic notions, what the New Testament teaches about the true means of attaining personal immortality would have been as shocking to a classical Greek philosopher as a Hebrew prophet. For example, at John 6:54, we read of Jesus' telling some Jews that, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath

eternal life." Whatever this may mean, it has almost as little to do with Plato's ideas on immortality as with God's covenant with Abraham. What mainly concerns us here, however, is the focus that New Testament eschatology and soteriology put on the individual. In emphasizing a certain kind of personal immortality, the New Testament fosters a vision greatly different from any provided by Hebrew Scripture.

We noted earlier in the chapter that the philosopher Feuerbach sees Christian eschatology's extreme focus on the individual as radically devaluing culture, including concerns about family and posterity; in Feuerbach's view, the egoistic individualism of Christian eschatology in this regard is inherently incompatible with family responsibility.[247] Feuerbach acknowledges, however, that the Christian may require fellowship and activity for others as a utilitarian condition for attaining salvation.[248] Feuerbach may be understating this last point. Although Jesus sometimes is represented in the Gospels as emphasizing that belief is the key to salvation, as at Mark 16:16 ("He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"), he also is often depicted instructing his followers to serve their fellows, as in the previous verse, Mark 16:15 ("Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"). Jesus exhorts people to love God and love their neighbor; and at times he offers more specific practical instruction, as in his injunction to avoid divorce. Also, he indicates that there is a spiritual family that not only takes precedence over biological families but is of intrinsic value, and at Matthew 16:18 he tells Simon Peter, "thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." The church emerges as an institutionalized spiritual family through which personal salvation is to be attained; and under the leadership of men like Jesus' apostles, the church is to endeavor to promote security and virtue in the conjugal family and other social institutions. Furthermore, the church is not merely a utilitarian instrument of personal salvation but the mystical body of Christ; and from a certain theological perspective, even the conjugal family may be, if nothing else, an institution affording one opportunities to behave in a way contributive to one's chances of being saved. On this level, the New Testament is hardly promoting egoistic individualism. Still, according to New Testament eschatology and soteriology, what ultimately matters in some sense is not what one has left to posterity, but whether one has attained personal salvation in the form of eternal life; and on this level, as Feuerbach observes, New Testament teaching departs from the spirit of the Judaism of Hebrew Scripture in radically devaluing the things of this world.

Many modern rationalistic thinkers regard Biblical ideas concerning immortality as primitive superstitions. Yet Plato himself was a great rationalist; and Spinoza, another great rationalist and a preeminent Bible critic, serenely pronounced in the last part of his *Ethics* that, "The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but there remains of it something which is eternal."[249] Most people, including aggressively anti-religious rationalists, seem to want to leave something to posterity. Most have children and try to raise their

children responsibly, though if one asks them why they have done so, they may well insist that such matters have nothing to do with any hunger for immortality—not even a desire to be remembered; and, of course, there are many reasons for having and raising children, including recognition of the compelling power of the natural instincts of creatures to procreate and nurture. Perhaps more revealing, then, are people's efforts to make a recognized contribution to culture, which may reflect in part what Unamuno characterizes as an "anxiety to perpetuate our name and fame, to grasp at least a shadow of immortality."[250] The "shadow" of immortality attained through recognized cultural contributions is, as Unamuno observes, substantially different from the immortality promised by New Testament Christianity; but it is not quite as different from the immortality promised to Abraham and his descendants.

In the spirit of Hebrew-Scriptural teaching, many modern Jews remain committed to the remembrance of departed kin. Most are not at all clear about what they can do for departed kin, but they try to "honor" them, as indeed Hebrew Scripture enjoins them to do. If the early Hebrews actually worshipped their ancestors, this cult was strictly forbidden by prophetic monotheism; and perhaps painful memories, long repressed, of the fierce abolition of ancestor worship bear some relation to Judaism's uneasiness with personal eschatology. Most modern Jews wish to be remembered by posterity, and even that in itself provides them with a utilitarian motive to set an example by honoring publicly their departed kin.

A great many people who regard themselves as Christians still seek, above all else, to be saved—or at least affirm that they do. Many who regard themselves as Christians appear to take the matter of personal salvation rather less seriously. Still, virtually all the Christians with whom I am closely acquainted attempt to remember and in other ways honor their deceased kin, aspire to be remembered by posterity, and strive to leave something to posterity—and all in spite of any devaluation by the New Testament of biological families, culture, and the things of this world. In addition, most Christians I know seem to relate to their immediate family members in comparable ways to most Jews I know, as well as most Muslims, Hindus, and secularists I know. I am acquainted with many Christians who appear to be devoted parents and grandparents, loving children and grandchildren, supportive sisters and brothers, and affectionate aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins. I also have heard some earnest Christians say that they hope to get to heaven so that they can be reunited with their departed family members. What does all this tell us about the family values imparted by the Bible?

The notion of a family value is somewhat vague, which is just one of the reasons why it has been difficult here to determine precisely what basic family values Scripture is meant to impart. Nevertheless, we have considered a good number of things that may, perhaps, reasonably be regarded as qualifying in some sense as Scriptural family values. We have seen that many if not most of them are fairly strange, problematic, and obscure; and we have also noted certain

tensions, paradoxes, and incongruities arising from the way in which some of them have been associated, combined, or juxtaposed. We have observed that many of them are exceedingly broad and general and if not universal, then at least promoted in widely diverse societies through cultural products whose creators did not derive them from Scriptural literature or anything directly associated with it. Moreover, some of them appear to conflict with important values whose soundness is now normally taken for granted when thoughtful people in our society deal with familial and other social issues. That such important values may not be derivable from—or even compatible with—the Scriptural teaching that we might well have expected to impart them is, itself, a matter of some concern. We have also seen that certain expositors might, in fact, argue that some of the values we have examined cannot reasonably be regarded as qualifying as Scriptural family values in any sense. Their arguments might be difficult to counter, but mainly because the latitude for interpretation here is practically boundless. It would be pointless to deny that Scripture has had an enormous influence on Western ethics and culture, and we may be wise to acknowledge that Scripture will always be relevant to discussion of concrete ethical and cultural issues in Western democracies. But Scripture's importance may now lie less in any values and insights it was initially meant to impart than in its status as a familiar and accessible framework within which many people in the West consciously or unconsciously carry on constructive dialogue.

The Bible is properly associated with religion, and religion is properly associated with faith. *Faith*, in a primary sense, signifies commitment. Thus, we contrast faith with faithlessness, disloyalty, infidelity, insincerity, distrust, and lack of conviction. All other things being equal, we generally admire a man or woman "of faith" and an individual who is "faithful." However, we also sometimes contrast faith with reason and knowledge, indicating that we regard one who has faith as non-rational or irrational and believing without knowing. We recognize that faith may be necessitated by reason's inability in a particular context to provide us with knowledge or even a reasonable conclusion; but we disapprove of blind faith, a commitment made without due regard for reason and knowledge. To characterize something as a matter of faith is to suggest that we have reached the limits not only of reason but of objectivity. When existential and subjective factors are involved, we need to be especially vigilant regarding the danger of intolerance, fanaticism, and related vices. Appealing to the authority of Scripture does not in itself resolve ethical or cultural disagreements; and in drawing us too hastily into the realm of faith, in which existential and subjective factors play so important a role, it may indirectly suggest the need for further dialogue and a striving for constructive consensus or compromise.

Appealing to the authority of Scripture only resolves cultural disagreements when those disagreeing have already resolved more fundamental philosophical and theological disagreements; since these more fundamental disagreements are generally not easily resolved, those given to appealing to the authority of Scripture may well become impatient and presume that force or manipulation is

warranted. We can admire people for their steadfastness and conviction without forgetting that sometimes it is better to be humble, flexible, open-minded, conciliatory, and even skeptical.

It is also useful to remember that even if sound values can be derived from Scripture, they may also be derivable from other sources that are, in their own way, more authoritative in a pluralistic society intent on getting real problems solved while avoiding unnecessary, fruitless, and destructive divisiveness.

NOTES

1. Cf. David R. Mace, *The Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1970), p. 37; Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 38.

2. William G. Sumner, "The Family and Social Change," in *The Family: Papers and Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society* (1909) (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1972), p. 8.

3. Romans 10:12; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11.

4. Cf. Jay Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), ch. 6.

5. Rodney Clapp, "Is the 'Traditional' Family Biblical?" *Christianity Today* 36, no. 13 (16 September 1988), 24.

6. Cf. Mark 10:28.

7. Clapp, "Is the 'Traditional' Family Biblical?", p. 24. Cf. Luke 2:41–51.

8. Ibid. Cf. Matthew 10:21.

9. Matthew 10:35–37. Cf. Luke 12:51–53.

10. Clapp, "Is the 'Traditional' Family Biblical?", p. 24. Cf. Mark 3:31–35, also Matthew 12:46–50.

11. Clapp, "Is the 'Traditional' Family Biblical?", p. 25.

12. Ibid., pp. 27–28.

13. Ibid., pp. 25–26.

14. Ibid., p. 26.

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16. Ibid.

17. Ernest F. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 95.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p. 96.

20. Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35–36.

21. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 97.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., p. 98.

25. Ibid., pp. 98–99. Cf. Matthew 5:32; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18.

26. Mark 10:9–12. But it is instructive to contrast this formulation with those to be found at Luke 16:18 and Matthew 5:31–32 and 19:3–9.

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28. L. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 136.

29. Luke 15:11–32.

30. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics*, p. 137. Cf. p. 145.

31. Ibid., p. 143.

32. Matthew 19:10–12.

33. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics*, p. 137.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., pp. 137–39.

36. Ibid., p. 139.

37. Ibid., pp. 139–40.

38. Ibid., pp. 141–42.

39. Ibid., p. 142.

40. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 33.

41. Ibid., p. 98.

42. Ibid., pp. 98–99.

43. Ibid., p. 101.

44. John 3:16, 18.

45. Ferdinand Mount, *The Subversive Family: An Alternative History of Love and Marriage* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982), pp. 15–28.

46. Ibid., p. 15.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., p. 2.

49. Matthew 19:14.

50. Mount, *The Subversive Family*, p. 16.

51. Ibid., p. 28.

52. Ibid., p. 20.

53. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1911), trans. Olive Wyon (1931), 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), I, 61.

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56. Cf. Bruce Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), ch. 19, esp. pp. 351–53.

57. George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (one-volume edition) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 104.

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68. Ibid., p. 167.

69. Ibid., pp. 168–69.

70. See, for example, Plato, *Republic*, esp. 475e–480a, 504d–521b.

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72. Bryce J. Christensen, *Utopia Against the Family: The Problems and Politics of the American Family* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 4.

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75. Ibid., p. 38.

76. Colossians 3:18–21.

77. Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Family* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1982), p. 210.

78. Ephesians 5:1.

79. Ephesians 5:3, 5.

80. Ephesians 5:6.

81. Ephesians 5:21.

82. Ephesians 5:22–24.

83. Ephesians 5:25.

84. Ephesians 5:28–30.

85. Ephesians 5:30–32.

86. Ephesians 6:1–3.

87. Ephesians 6:4.

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92. 1 Corinthians 7:1–2.

93. 1 Corinthians 7:7–11.

94. 1 Corinthians 7:27.

95. 1 Corinthians 7:32–35.

96. Cf., for example, Romans 6:14; Galatians 2:19.

97. Cf., for example, Plato, *Republic* 427c–434d.

98. Matthew 5:27–28.

99. Mace, *The Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 13–14, 37–38.

100. Colossians 2:8. Cf. Acts 17:18.

101. Cf. Acts 23:16; Romans 16:7.

102. Clapp, "Is the 'Traditional' Family Biblical?", p. 24.

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105. Romans 5:8.

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113. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, II, 994.

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115. Ibid., II, 81–82.

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128. Ibid., p. 190.

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131. Mary Ann Glendon, *The Transformation of Family Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 17.

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134. Cf. Jay Newman, *On Religious Freedom* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1981), pp. 107–10.

135. Roland H. Bainton, *The Travail of Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 15, 21, 29. Cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of Freedom of Thought* (New York: Henry Holt; London: Thornton Butterworth, 1913), p. 77; John F. Hayward, *Existentialism and Religious Liberalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 4.

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141. Ibid., p. 155.

142. Cf. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, pp. 169–76.

143. Albert Vorspan, *Jewish Values and Social Crisis: A Casebook for Social Action* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1969 [1968]), p. 212.

144. Charles Y. Glock, Benjamin B. Ringer, and Earl R. Babbie, *To Comfort and to Challenge: A Dilemma of the Contemporary Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 60.

145. Ibid., p. 73. Cf. ch. 3.

146. Romans 8:5–7.

147. Romans 8:13.

148. Romans 13:14.

149. Galatians 5:16–17.

150. Cf. Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, 5th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1921), I, 400.

151. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, I, 237.

152. Ibid., I, 81–82.

153. Ibid., I, 131.

154. Mount, *The Subversive Family*, p. 20.

155. Ibid., p. 22.

156. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 457b–466d.

157. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, I, 244.

158. Cf. Willystine Goodsell, *A History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), pp. 154–56.

159. It is noteworthy that the Eastern churches' discipline on celibacy has differed greatly from the Roman church's.

160. Cf. William N. Stephens, *The Family in Cross-cultural Perspective* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), pp. 258–59.

161. Ibid., p. 258.

162. Mount, *The Subversive Family*, p. 19.

163. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, II, 546.

164. Ibid., II, 547.

165. Ibid., II, 608.

166. Gardner, *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics*, p. 215.

167. Ibid.

168. Ibid.

169. Ibid.

170. Ibid., p. 216.

171. Ibid.

172. See, for example, Henry Kamen, *The Rise of Toleration* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

173. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, III, 51.

174. Ibid., III, 50–51.

175. Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, pp. 118–30.

176. José Sánchez, *Anticlericalism: A Brief History* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), p. 150.

177. Ibid., pp. 150–51.

178. Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (1930), with a commentary by Vincent McNabb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933), pp. 3–7.

179. Ibid., p. 11.

180. Ibid., p. 12.

181. Ibid., pp. 15–19.

182. Ibid., pp. 23–24.

183. Ibid., pp. 25–28.

184. Ibid., pp. 28–30.

185. Ibid., pp. 30–31.

186. Ibid., pp. 31–32.

187. Ibid., pp. 32–33.

188. Ibid., pp. 33–35.

189. Ibid., p. 36.

190. Ibid., pp. 36–37.

191. Ibid., p. 37.

192. Ibid., pp. 44–61.

193. Ibid., p. 58.

194. Ibid., pp. 59–60.

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196. J. Elliot Ross, *Ethics: From the Standpoint of Scholastic Philosophy* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1919), p. 312.

197. Mount, *The Subversive Family*, p. 19.

198. Cf. Sánchez, *Anticlericalism*.

199. F. Ivan Nye and Felix M. Berardo, eds., *Emerging Conceptual Frameworks in Family Analysis* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).

200. Ibid., p. 7.

201. Stanley R. Reiber, "Western Christian Conceptual Framework for Viewing the Family," in F. Ivan Nye and Felix M. Berardo, eds., *Emerging Conceptual Frameworks in Family Analysis* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 293–315.

202. Nye and Berardo, *Emerging Conceptual Frameworks in Family Analysis*, p. 7. Cf. Nicholas C. Mullins, *Theories and Theory Groups in Contemporary American Sociology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

203. Reiber, "Western Christian Conceptual Framework for Viewing the Family," pp. 308–10.

204. Ibid., p. 294.

205. Ibid., pp. 303–4.

206. Ibid., p. 295.

207. Ibid., pp. 303–4.

208. Ibid., p. 311.

209. Cf. Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance*, ch. 6.

210. Ibid., pp. 118–26.

211. Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism* (1917–19), trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952), p. 410.

212. Cf., for example, Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, pp. 33–38; Jessie Bernard, *The Future of Marriage* (New York: World Publishing, 1972), p. 86; Gerald Larue, *Sex and the Bible* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1983), pp. 16–17.

213. Queen, Habenstein, and Adams, *The Family in Various Cultures*, p. 197.

214. Cf., for example, Larue, *Sex in the Bible*, ch. 11, esp. p. 71.

215. Mace, *The Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 13–14; David R. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage: A Sociological Study* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), pp. vi, 262, 265.

216. Galatians 3:13.

217. Romans 6:14. Cf. Acts 15:24; 2 Corinthians 3:7–14; Galatians 2:19; Ephesians 2:15.

218. 2 Corinthians 3:5–6.

219. Matthew 22:34–40. Cf. Mark 12:28–31.

220. Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 56–57. Cf. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 120–21.

221. Gardner, *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics*, p. 240. Cf. pp. 241–43. Cf. also Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 101.

222. Ibid., p. 243.

223. Mace, *The Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 33, 35.

224. Larue, *Sex and the Bible*, p. 129. Cf. ch. 22.

225. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 164.

226. Reuven P. Bulka, *Jewish Marriage: A Halakhic Ethic* (New York: Ktav and Yeshiva University Press, 1986), p. 147.

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228. Abba Hillel Silver, *Where Judaism Differed* (1956) (New York: Macmillan, 1972), ch. 15.

229. Vorspan, *Jewish Values and Social Crisis*, p. 213.

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231. Cf. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Its Social Metaphors: Israel in the History of Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 113, 119.

232. Cf., for example, Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 96.

233. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), p. 136.

234. Ibid., pp. 133–34.

235. Ibid., p. 302.

236. Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; John 2:14–15.

237. Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25.

238. 1 Timothy 6:10.

239. James Casey, *The History of the Family* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 69.

240. Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life* (1913), trans. J. E. Crawford Flitch (1921) (New York: Dover, 1954), ch. 3.

241. Ibid., p. 37.

242. Ibid., p. 41.

243. Ibid., p. 58.

244. There is a universalistic dimension to this design inasmuch as Abraham, related through Adam and Eve to all other human beings, is specifically told by God that all the families and nations of the earth shall be blessed in him and his seed.

245. Cf. Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism* (1933), trans. David W. Silverman (1964) (New York: Schocken, 1973), pp. 37, 80–83, 135, 200–203, 208, 226, 248, 252–53, 268–69, 316–19.

246. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (1931), trans. Natalie Duddington (1955) (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 256.

247. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, ch. 17.

248. Ibid.

249. Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (1677), part 5, prop. 23, in Benedict de Spinoza, *Chief Works*, Vol. 2, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (1883) (New York: Dover, 1955), p. 259.

250. Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, p. 52.

5

The Family as an Unbiblical Institution

❧

PROBLEMS IN CONCEPTUALIZING THE FAMILY

We noted early in our study that for serious inquirers, difficulties may arise in determining precisely what a family is. Noteworthy were the comments of the anthropologist Stephens, who after lengthy investigation concluded that the term *family* is "terribly hard to define properly," even though "we all use the term" and "we all have the illusion that we know what we mean by it."[1] One problem here is that the images that the term *family* evokes depend largely on one's personal experiences: experiences related to what one regards as the families (nuclear, extended, spiritual, and so on) to which one has belonged; secondarily, direct personal experiences with social units that one has not belonged to but can still conceive as families; and to some extent, learning experiences whereby one is exposed through books, classes, media discussions, and conversations to social units that one can conceive as families. The more inclusive one's experiences on these three levels, the likelier it is that one will be suspicious when confronted with arbitrarily or manipulatively narrow definitions of family.

The conservative Christian pro-family cultural critic Bryce J. Christensen has expressed concern about the dangers posed by contemporary ideologists bent on "redefining" family.[2] He is particularly bothered by those who encourage extending the term to allow it to be "applied indiscriminately to cohabiting couples, unwed mothers, or the federal government,"[3] and he proposes that, "Christians and Jews have a particular stake in avoiding a change in language which would make Scripture appear irrelevant."[4] He cites the reliability of definitions in the "authoritative *Oxford English Dictionary*" and other such sources[5] but proceeds to argue that, "A normative definition of family must be vigorously affirmed to avert the coercion and sterility of utopia."[6] However, a critical problem here is

that a normative definition is something quite different from the lexical definitions that dictionaries attempt to provide.

Nanette M. Roberts, a Christian missionary and scholar who has little sympathy for conservative polemics like Christensen's, nevertheless is also troubled by how the term *family* is increasingly being "stretched in so many directions":[7]

[B]oth men and women are challenging the traditional meaning of *family*. Few would deny that the word refers to those related by blood, marriage, or adoption, but many now use the term to describe virtually any life-style, from singleness to communal living. To use the word in such contradictory senses testifies to its power, its ability to suggest the safe haven that family, often more as an ideal than a reality, is supposed to give. . . . What is to be feared is that this usage will obscure the reasons for our new life-styles, reasons often resulting from a justified critique of traditional family life. This expanded usage may indicate a sentimental unwillingness to face reality, so that the "magic word" provides a protective coloration behind which necessary change and challenge may pass unnoticed.[8]

Neither Christensen nor Roberts appears to be much concerned about the broader issues that concern an anthropologist like Stephens; but as Christian cultural observers, they should at least be concerned with the complexity, ambiguity, and variety of Biblical and theological approaches to the idea of family (monogamous, polygynous, extended, spiritual, and so forth) that we have considered in previous chapters. Another Christian cultural observer, Robert V. Thompson, has aptly ridiculed a U.S. Census Bureau definition of a family as "two or more people related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing under the same roof," and aptly added that "families are made up of living people, not statistics."[9] Not only anthropologists but those sympathetically concerned with the concrete interests of human beings in their own society need to be wary regarding narrow, one-dimensional definitions of family.[10]

William J. Goode, the sociologist whose working definition of the "traditional type of family" was considered in the introductory chapter, proposes nevertheless that the idea of family cannot be "captured by a neat verbal formula" and moreover, that many social units can usefully be regarded as "more or less" families insofar as they are more or less similar to the traditional type of family.[11] Goode remarks at one point that, "If we accept everyone as kin who is related by blood, through however distant a tie, clearly everyone in any society would be considered a relative of everyone else in the whole world. The network of kinship is indefinitely extensible."[12] Scripture itself makes this point; long before the New Testament attacked "tribalism," the Book of Genesis taught that all human beings are descended from Adam, Noah, and their wives. Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament both teach, in effect, that there are times when we need to conceptualize family in one way and other times when we need to conceptualize family in a substantially different way. As obscure as its family

values may often be, Biblical literature is quite instructive on this rudimentary conceptual matter.

Religionists sometimes insist that marriage and the families related to it are divine rather than human institutions. However, when dealing with people who do not regard those institutions as divine, or who regard them as divine in a rather different way, it helps to remember that the institutions are human in an important sense, one that enables people in a pluralistic society to resolve disagreements and mutual problems in a civilized manner and with minimal resort to force and manipulation. Furthermore, one is arbitrary or outright ignorant if one assumes, for example, that the institution of the family was first conceived by ancient Hebrews or Christians, or that the effectively functioning families of most people in the world have been founded on specifically Biblical conceptions, or that all people are obliged to understand family relationships within parameters established by Scripture. In these respects as in sundry others, the family as such—in contrast with certain kinds of family—can be regarded as an unbiblical institution, even if it is normally proper for Bible-oriented religionists to conceive of it in relation to Biblical teaching with regard to their personal family affairs or the affairs of a community of believers to which they belong.

One may wish to go further and argue that the family as such is essentially both a secular and a natural institution that takes on religious significance for the believer in particular contexts; but conceptual issues arise here. Some families—specifically, those defined even partly by their religious aspect, such as Jesus' spiritual family—are clearly not essentially secular. In addition, to characterize even the nuclear family as an essentially secular institution may be to imply that a religionist should regard it as only secondarily something divine or spiritual, and that may be too much to demand. It is probably more reasonable to regard the nuclear family as an institution that can be viewed from secular and religious perpectives. (Even a spiritual family, a community of believers, can be viewed from a secular perspective as a purely cultural phenomenon.) If religionists insist that such perspectivism or compartmentalization is not possible for them and that they can no longer conceive of the family as anything other than a divine or spiritual institution, we can remind them that most religionists routinely distinguish the sacred from the profane, the holy from the temporal, the sacramental from the worldly.

A related concern is posed by those social theorists, including Emile Durkheim (possibly the greatest figure in the history of modern sociology),[13] who maintain that in its initial forms the institution of the family emerged within the context of religious culture.[14] However, even if the family is not, as many assume, an absolutely pre-religious institution—and views like Durkheim's are speculative and controversial—and even if it may be held that modern secularists along with modern religionists bring to their family relationships values of affection, loyalty, and solidarity that were initially inspired and still are to some extent activated by underlying (if often unrecognized) religious attitudes, the fact remains that from some perspectives the family can usefully be regarded as

a pre-religious institution. If the family is not an altogether "natural" institution, it nevertheless has recognizable counterparts in the non-human world. And even if one cannot accept the view from an evolutionary standpoint that the family is probably something that Homo sapiens inherited from pre-human ancestors,[15] one should be able to see human family relations as corresponding in significant ways to the relations of all organisms which maintain a nurturing or other intimate connection with mates and offspring that carries on after procreative activity. These non-human relations may perhaps be regarded as "religious" in a metaphorical sense, but only in an extremely attenuated one. Furthermore, in their teaching with respect to family, both Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament accept various forms and practices of family life that were already established prior to the revelation of that teaching to the earliest believers. That said, we must also recognize that some anthropologists maintain that there have been primitive societies in which the family has been unknown[16] and that religion is probably as close to being a cultural universal as is the family.[17]

If it is easier to regard family behavior as natural than it is religious behavior, that is probably chiefly because the biological foundations of family behavior[18] are much better understood than those of religious behavior. There is nothing to prevent sociobiologists and other natural and social scientists from speculating about the biological functions of religion, but these scientists find it considerably easier to relate human family behavior to reproduction, bonding, and nurturing in other species. Bible-oriented religionists themselves often draw attention to the natural character of the microcosmic family, even while simultaneously affirming that this family is a divine, spiritual, or in effect *supernatural* rather than human institution. Many Jewish and Christian thinkers, including contemporary pro-family advocates, regularly underscore the natural biological significance of sexuality apart from the Genesis mandate to be fruitful and multiply; though as Edward O. Wilson has observed, they may well be misinterpreting the biological significance of sexuality by emphasizing insemination and procreation rather than bonding itself.[19] These religious thinkers then typically go on to imply (if not explicitly maintain) that the nuclear family is in a sense a "natural" response to a group of related natural desires or "instincts." When they argue along these lines, they draw attention to the human and biological dimensions of the institution of the nuclear family rather than the divine, spiritual, or supernatural dimension of the institution. Specifically, they draw attention to the human-biological and comparative-biological aspects of the nuclear family. The earliest Bible-oriented religionists were well aware that their own ancestors and other people's ancestors routinely had sexual relations, often emotionally bonded with mates, had lots of children, and frequently did a conscientious and effective job of protecting and raising up those children. They also realized that many non-human species not only procreate but nurture their young and even form permanent relationships of one sort or other. Modern Jews and Christians know that many millions of people have had a stable family life without any encouragement or direction from Biblical literature, and they can know consid-

erably more than their forefathers did about the complexity of bonding among non-human species.

It may seem odd that Bible-oriented pro-family cultural observers should so often attach enormous importance to the natural character of the conjugal family when Scripture's emphasis on procreation and child-raising is largely normative rather than descriptive. Scripture itself combines naturalistic and supernatural-istic approaches to the conjugal family in a rather obscure way; but perhaps equally noteworthy is how contemporary Jewish and Christian pro-family ad-vocates unintentionally suggest that Scriptural teaching about the value of the conjugal family is largely redundant inasmuch as to the extent that the institution is natural, one hardly needs to look to Scripture to be cognizant of the institu-tion's value. (To the extent that family values are directly rooted in biology, they are not directly rooted in religion.)

However, most contemporary Bible-oriented religionists are often aware, as their distant ancestors often were, that the conjugal family is not simply a natural institution any more than it is simply a divine, spiritual, or supernatural one. It is a human institution not only because of its human-biological and comparative-biological aspects, but because of its cultural dimension. However natural or divine it may be, the conjugal family is—as in fact is every other kind of human family—a cultural institution. If human beings were created in God's image, they nevertheless remain animals; but though human beings are animals, they are not beasts. They not only can conceive of the supernatural and transcendent but are capable of rational and mystical contemplation, existential commitment and moral vision, and humanistic, scientific, and technological inquiry and ed-ucation. They have a capacity for culture which profoundly influences their approach to sexuality, procreation, bonding, and nurturing. In a sense the cultural is a category that can be subsumed under the natural; human beings can produce, transform, and appropriate cultural creations because of human-biological fac-tors that allow for cultural activity. Yet we often designate phenomena as "cul-tural" expressly in order to contrast them with other phenomena that are simply natural.

It is not hard to imagine the kinds of considerations that have reminded re-flective Bible-oriented religionists, ancient and modern, of the folly of assigning too much importance to the natural character of the conjugal family. It is not simply the need to leave a significant place for the normative (and supernatu-ralistic) family ethic of Scripture that restrains them from embracing an exces-sively naturalistic view of the family; it is far more often a recognition of facts that Scripture itself calls to mind. Some people have no interest in sexual activ-ity. Some who have a great interest in sexual activity have no interest in mar-riage and procreation. Some who have an interest in procreation have little if any interest in marriage and nurturing. Some who have a great interest in mar-riage or nurturing have an exceedingly limited understanding of how to go about the job. Some who have even the best intentions cannot get along with their family members. And all families, microcosmic and macrocosmic, must contend

with rival institutions, some perhaps as natural as the conjugal family and others manifestly less so. Even at its most naturalistic, the Scriptural approach to family values takes such matters into account; and people who take Scripture seriously as a guide in this domain should keep them in mind.

Many Christian cultural critics who insist on emphasizing the importance of the family as a natural phenomenon are endeavoring to be faithful to long-established ecclesiastical moral and social teaching, which particularly in Roman Catholicism has been greatly influenced by medieval philosophical conceptions, and especially the ideas of Thomas Aquinas, the *doctor communis* who endowed the church with an imposing system of Christianized Aristotelianism. Injecting systematic Aristotelianism into what was already a volatile blend of cultural elements was a risky business, and the Catholic hierarchy's often aggressive promotion of Scholasticism has been regularly criticized by independent-minded Christian intellectuals and reformers since the Renaissance. Neither Aquinas nor his most thoughtful followers would fail to recognize the danger of assigning too much importance to the natural character of the conjugal family. Aquinas was, among other things, always mindful that Aristotle did not have to make a place in his own system for Scriptural teaching. But this does not dissuade certain pious Christian cultural critics from wielding the ambiguous Scholastic conception of "natural law" as a rhetorical device in discussions of family values, despite the notion's limited relevance to the biological considerations we have been considering.

To conceive of the nuclear or any other family as a cultural institution is not necessarily to conceive of it as a secular institution or even an unbiblical one. Religion is a fundamental form of culture, and when we conceive of the family as a cultural phenomenon we allow for ample opportunity to consider close connections between the family and religion. To consider the family as a cultural phenomenon is also not necessarily to deny that it can be appropriately regarded as a divine or spiritual phenomenon, for a cultural creation's having been the product of human resourcefulness does not preclude its having been divinely inspired. However, when we consider the family as a cultural institution, we also allow for ample opportunity to consider those aspects of the family per se that are not directly related to either biology or religion. Moreover, while a cultural explanation of family values and other family-related phenomena can be as deterministic—or nearly as deterministic—as a biological one (or some austere theological ones), it may also leave room open for the human freedom and human reason so dear to the hearts of humanists, both secularist and religious. I propose that a sound cultural explanation not only leaves that room open but recognizes that the freedom and reason of individuals are necessary conditions of authentic culture.[20]

The sociobiologist Wilson stresses, in his examination of the institution of the family, that evolutionary history is inevitably a key factor both as influence and consequence, yet he acknowledges the role that rational design can play in family culture.[21] Commenting specifically on recent efforts to transform family

culture, he warns that unknown costs await societies that undertake such reforms;[22] but of course, these reforms may turn out to be beneficial, as have so many past efforts to meliorate family life and to meliorate the lives of individuals and the general quality of culture through modifications to the institution of the family. Those committed to promoting healthy family life, the happiness and self-realization of individuals, and the general advancement of culture through modifications to the institution of the family—or through other cultural changes that will eventually have significant consequences for family life—must attend to many of the same biological concerns that confronted their distant ancestors. Mothers still carry fetuses for nine months and are subsequently encumbered by young children who require various forms of nurture.[23] It is still advantageous to these mothers to have men to provide them with necessities and share child-raising responsibilities.

These rudimentary considerations in themselves may account in large part for what Wilson describes as the "near universality of the pair bond and the prevalence of extended families with men and their wives forming the nucleus."[24] One may also be willing to follow Wilson in conjecturing that sexual love and the emotional satisfaction of family life have their basis in enabling mechanisms in brain physiology that have in effect come to be "programmed."[25] Acknowledgment of the importance of such considerations need not, in any case, preclude appreciation of the major role played by culture—and ultimately by the freedom and reason of individuals that are themselves conditions of culture—in the determination of family values.

An earlier evolutionary theorist, Spencer, sounds a somewhat more deterministic note when he writes:

Whatever conduces to the highest welfare of offspring must more and more establish itself; since children of inferior parents reared in inferior ways, will ever be replaced by children of better parents reared in better ways. As lower creatures at large have been preserved and advanced through the instrumentality of parental instincts; and as in the course of human evolution the domestic relations originating from the need for prolonged care of offspring have been assuming higher forms; and as the care taken of offspring has been becoming greater and more enduring; we need not doubt that in the future, along with the more altruistic nature accompanying a higher social type, there will come relations of parents and children needing no external control to ensure their well-working.[26]

Spencer actually takes satisfaction in reflecting that nature will, in the long run, resolve the controversies over family values that arise in any generation;[27] but Spencer himself, addicted to moralizing, could not completely refrain from joining the cacophonous chorus of those with something to say about what to do in the short run.[28] His preferred answer, which runs throughout his copious writings, was sensible if not particularly original: education.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Social-scientific study of the family can be traced back at least as far as Aristotle, who, in spite of having had a version of his systematic philosophy embraced by the medieval church, stands out as one of the greatest champions of empirical-scientific methods in dealing with social issues. In emphasizing these methods, Aristotle distances himself from his teacher Plato, who while greatly influencing Aristotle's moral vision, mistrusted the evidence of the senses and accordingly had comparatively little use for empirical-scientific investigation. Aristotle's writing on family issues is more obviously permeated by personal and cultural prejudices than that of most contemporary social scientists, but he makes an effort to employ scientific methodology[29] and avoid pious moralizing and ideological propagandizing. The importance that Aristotle assigns to the microcosmic family is indicated not only by his critique of Plato's radical views on family reform,[30] but by his identification of the household as the basic form of human association;[31] and though agreeing with Plato that the *polis*, the political community, is the highest and most important form of human association, he maintains that the household is naturally the elemental social unit of the *polis* and as such an irreplaceable institution.[32]

Five themes stand out when we consider the relation of Aristotle's analysis to Scriptural teaching on family-related matters. (1) Aristotle holds that male and female are driven by natural impulse (rather than deliberate intention) to unite for the purpose of reproduction. Aristotle's position here is straightforwardly naturalistic, and it is to be expected that this great biologist should stress the comparative-biological aspect of the nuclear family. Although there is ostensibly no supernaturalistic or even normative dimension to this position, Aristotle's emphasis on reproduction and his undervaluation of both the role of choice and the potential dignity of the single life clearly parallel Hebrew-Scriptural themes. (Aristotle was one of the few "great" philosophers to marry and have children.) Especially notable is Aristotle's emphasis on the natural desire of those who procreate to leave behind something of the same nature as themselves.[33] (2) A modern reader is apt to be surprised by the large proportion of Aristotle's discussion of the household devoted to considering the status and circumstances of household slaves.[34] Here again, however, Aristotle's detached acceptance of the institution of slavery and treatment of issues relating to slaves as family-related issues parallel Hebrew-Scriptural attitudes. (3) Another conspicuously large part of Aristotle's discussion of the household deals with the acquisition and use of property.[35] This lengthy focus on the economic aspect of conjugal life, which again will seem strange to most people in our own society concerned with core family values, also parallels the Hebrew-Scriptural focus on the economic aspect of conjugal life. (4) The section of Aristotle's discussion on marriage, parenting, and general household management is noticeably smaller and focuses on the issue of authority.[36] As one may have surmised, the section is taken up largely by an account of how the husband and father is naturally

suited to rule over the wife and children. Aristotle's analysis, though permeated by personal and cultural prejudices, is ostensibly more descriptive than normative; still, it clearly mirrors the patriarchal authoritarianism reinforced by Hebrew Scripture. (5) Aristotle introduces his comments on authority in the household with some interesting remarks at *Politics* 1259b on the moral significance of the family. Extending the self-realization model of morality developed in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle proposes that the art of managing the household ultimately aims at the moral goodness of every member of the household, with different classes of members in the household having different qualities of goodness. Here there is less similarity between Aristotle's family values and Hebrew-Scriptural family values; nevertheless, Hebrew-Scriptural and New Testament approaches to the family do emphasize that different members of the family have different obligations to fulfill, and Scripture in effect treats the handling of household affairs as a matter of moral capability and responsibility—if not quite moral art—by considering major aspects of family life within the context of a general normative framework.

Those in our society who advocate looking to the Bible for guidance on matters of family value may see the marked similarity between core Hebrew-Scriptural family values and the purportedly natural family values described by Aristotle as strengthening their argument that the Bible has useful instruction to provide in this area. Aristotle, after all, is one of the most respected and influential figures in the history of philosophy and science; his work is appreciated by secularists as well as religionists; his approach to family values has not been influenced by Scriptural teaching, and is essentially rational and empirical-scientific in spirit if not in its precise methodology. Thus, Aristotle's descriptive analysis may conceivably be thought to provide independent confirmation of the soundness of core Biblical family values. However, there is a flip side to this argument. The problem is not just that advocates of Biblical family values detract from the dignity of Scripture by seeing its teachings as benefiting from (or perhaps even requiring) secular confirmation; for true believers realize that they are promoting Biblical family values in a pluralistic community that includes many people who do not share their belief in the authority of Scriptural teaching. The larger part of the problem is that Aristotle's analysis, which, though imbued with prejudices, strives to be rational, naturalistic, and descriptive, may suggest that there is nothing significantly distinctive about core Scriptural family values, which may simply reflect how the ancient mind in relatively advanced cultures generally approached familial concerns. If what Aristotle says concerning core family values is essentially the same as what Biblical literature does—and yet is expressed less obscurely and less dogmatically—then one might do better to commend the study of classical philosophy rather than the Bible for an appreciation of family values that are actually not specifically "Biblical," but stressed in other important sources, too. On the other hand, finding these values in what Aristotle intended to be a descriptive analysis may remind some readers that what appeared to be natural to the ancient mind—Greek or Hebrew—was a

consequence of cultural factors as well as limited vision, understanding, and knowledge.

Aristotle had firsthand knowledge of a number of ancient cultures, but he can hardly be regarded as having employed a methodology for sociological and anthropological fieldwork; and though he sometimes made effective use of other sources of information (of varying degrees of reliability) in making judgments about what is and what is not universal in social arrangements, the information available to him was minuscule in comparison with that available to students of our own day. Moreover, though he distinguished politics from ethics, biology, physics, metaphysics, and other sciences, he did not have anything like our contemporary classification of the social sciences, and he did not recognize sociology and anthropology as distinct disciplines. Thinking back to the eleven approaches to the study of the family surveyed in Nye and Berardo's *Emerging Conceptual Frameworks in Family Analysis,*[37] we are reminded that most of these did not actually "emerge" until modern times. In fact, the "classical" period in both sociology and anthropology is usually seen as having commenced in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Many theories about family culture that arose in this classical period have transformed the academic understanding of family-related values, in part by demonstrating that Biblical family values can, to some extent, be scientifically examined and assessed in the same way as any other institutionalized family values, or indeed any cultural product that arose at a particular time and developed in certain ways as a consequence of cultural factors. Some traditionalist Bible-oriented believers are irritated by these theories, which they see as detracting from the authoritative status of Biblical teaching on the family and generally minimizing the continuing relevance of traditional forms of religion. Occasionally, such believers receive support from accomplished social scientists skeptical about the motives and cultural influence of leading lights in their field.

The noted anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, a committed Christian disturbed by what he takes to be the anti-religious prejudice of influential figures in his field, such as Tylor, Frazer, Durkheim, and Lévy-Bruhl, complains that, "Religious belief was to these anthropologists absurd, and it is so to most anthropologists of yesterday and today. But some explanation of the absurdity seemed to be required, and it was offered in psychological or sociological terms."[38] Besides criticizing the various psychological and sociological explanations provided by anthropologists of the classical period (and their followers) to buttress their theories of the origin and development of religion,[39] Evans-Pritchard submits that it is astounding that the theories themselves could ever have been propounded by scholars of such great learning and ability.[40] Yet most contemporary social scientists, while granting that the major sociologists and anthropologists of the classical period were highly speculative thinkers with little if any field research experience,[41] are convinced of the revolutionary importance of their work in opening up illuminating new perspectives on religion, the family, and culture.

Furthermore, while contemporary sociologists and anthropologists generally know much more about religion and the family than their predecessors in the classical period did—in part because of the increased respect in their disciplines for field research, exact methodology, and the need to avoid sundry prejudices—most remain as convinced as their predecessors that Biblical family values can, to some extent, be scientifically examined and assessed in the same way as any other institutionalized family values or any cultural product. The views on religion and the family at which these social scientists arrive may have the effect of detracting from the authoritative status of Biblical teaching on the family; but it is not justified to infer that these scholars are anti-religious or that they regard religious belief as absurd. It is also notable that advocates of Biblical family values who sweepingly dismiss classical sociological and anthropological perspectives on the family as "speculative" and of little practical value sometimes draw on such theories for their own polemical purposes.[42]

For our purposes in this inquiry, it will suffice to note that some of the interesting possibilities that anthropologists have raised regarding the early development of family values indicate the naiveté of much recent discussion in the mass media of family values and their relation to religion. That these theories are highly speculative does not in itself render them deserving of neglect; all theory is inherently speculative to some degree, but intricate practical affairs cannot be managed without theory. Anthropological theories are in any case inherently less speculative than even the most intellectually sophisticated theological accounts of the primary development of family values, inasmuch as the latter have a supernaturalistic element built into them.

In a series of introductory articles on anthropology of the family first published in 1929 and 1930, Bronislaw Malinowski, looking back on influential theories of anthropology's classical period, declares that the discoveries of Johann Jakob Bachofen, Lewis Morgan, and John Ferguson McLennan were of revolutionary social-scientific import in overthrowing the unsophisticated but universally held view that "primitive kinship based on the family is essentially similar to our own," or more specifically, that "mankind lived from the beginning in the typical patriarchal family."[43] According to Malinowski, "This was the view we inherited from classical antiquity and took over with the Bible from Semitic mythology. It was prevalent during the Middle Ages and right up to the second half of the last century. It dominated Christian theology—was in fact part of it."[44] The view was even retained by the Encyclopedists[45] and other figures of the Enlightenment now often blamed by religious pro-family cultural critics for initiating the modern attack on the traditional conjugal family. Bachofen, Morgan, and McLennan overthrew this view when they "disclosed remarkable and unsuspected aspects of primitive kinship; mother-right, avunculate, the clan system and exogamy, the importance of the levirate, polyandry and cross-cousin marriage, and above all the classificatory nomenclature."[46] In time, however, there developed among anthropologists two competing schools of thought. One considered monogamy to be the original form of marriage, patri-

archy to be the dominant principle of early kinship, and the family to be the basic social unit, whereas the other believed that there was initially promiscuity or communistic marriage, the clan or some other wider group functioning as the basic domestic institution, and classificatory kinship operating as the principle of original parenthood.[47] Malinowski argues that both schools took extreme positions and overemphasized one aspect of human kinship at the expense of another.[48] "The question is not whether kinship is individual or communal—it evidently is both—but what is the relation between its two aspects?"[49]

Malinowski acknowledges fundamental comparative-biological considerations and observes that in both human and animal societies, birth and nurture establish bonds between family members.[50] He also states categorically that, "The mother is the physiologically and morally indispensable parent in all societies."[51] Nevertheless, he quickly draws attention to the cultural dimension of human kinship and emphasizes that with human beings we find physiological kinship "deeply modified."[52] Of special interest here is that Malinowski immediately makes a point of contrasting the kinship system reflected in Western Bible-centered religion with kinship systems reflected in the religions of other societies. In Biblical religion, he observes, we find an emphasis on, for example, the Creator as Father; but in other societies, we find, for example, the cult of a Mother Goddess or ancestor worship giving the dominant tone to the culture. Although all cultures are built on some system of kinship—on special bonds derived from procreation and family life—the specific systems differ greatly, and these differences account in no small measure for the other major cultural differences between societies.[53]

Malinowski intentionally steps back from the classical anthropological disagreement and endeavors to avoid the bold, speculative generalizations of his influential predecessors in the classical period. Evans-Pritchard, while associating Malinowski with other anthropologists who fail to make an earnest effort to appreciate the enduring value of religion,[54] acknowledges Malinowski's commitment and contribution to fieldwork.[55] Malinowski is not merely being "speculative" when he observes, for example, that in many societies one applies terms such as *father* and *sister* to people besides those in one's nuclear family.[56] Anthropology, like all social sciences, is not merely concerned with theory; it is concerned with the accumulation of empirical data, for its own sake, for what it can contribute to theory, and for what it can directly contribute to the resolution of practical social problems. Those who see anthropological studies as detracting from the authoritative status of Biblical teaching on the family and other matters cannot afford to be as dismissive of anthropological data as they are of anthropological speculations, at least if they expect to be taken seriously by reasonable people in a pluralistic society.

Now, much has transpired in anthropology of the family since 1930, though the discipline is still marked by disagreements on even the most rudimentary philosophical and methodological issues.[57] It is noteworthy, however, that Malinowski, while working toward the development of a more scientific, more dis-

ciplined, and less speculative anthropology of the family, was able to look back appreciatively to his predecessors in anthropology's classical period for having "overthrown" an unsophisticated ancient view about kinship and the family that was passed on to the modern world mainly through Biblical theology. Furthermore, while observing that the school of thought that built on the speculations of Bachofen, Morgan, and McLennan took an extreme position and undervalued imporant aspects of human kinship, Malinowski also acknowledges that field research indicates that the critics of that school took an extreme position in undervaluing the remarkable aspects of primitive kinship that the founders of that school had disclosed.

The classical anthropological issues that we have touched on are exceedingly complex, and we cannot do justice to them here, but their very existence should confirm our suspicion that most of the cultural critics who have placed themselves at the center of current debates about Biblical religion and family values are largely operating in an intellectual vacuum. Consider these philosophical possibilities—and for our purposes, it is enough that they are even possibilities: (1) problematic Biblical family values may not be so "strange" after all, but if they are not, that is mainly because we are now in a position to recognize that they correspond to aspects of primitive kinship that modern Western culture has largely if not entirely left behind; (2) when we appreciate the diversity of kinship systems, we can see that Biblical literature does not present a single, unified system of family values, but rather reveals tensions between competing kinship systems that our Biblical ancestors were struggling to work out; (3) the recurrent Scriptural emphasis on the need to look beyond the interests of one's immediate family to the interests of wider groups such as the clan, tribe, people, nation, and human race is not simply or even primarily a matter of ethical vision, but more a response to a universal primal awareness that the nuclear family, at least in a crucial sense, is not the essential social unit; (4) some of the core Biblical family values that are frequently taken to be in some sense "natural" are in fact cultural, and numerous societies, both prior to and subsequent to the advent of Biblical teaching, have been able to survive and thrive without them.

The practical implications of these possibilities may be far-reaching. Consider the views of Durkheim, who, as noted earlier, proposes that in its initial forms the institution of the family emerged within the context of religious culture. Inasmuch as Durkheim stresses that religion is the fundamental form of human culture, with religious life being "the concentrated expression of the whole collective life" and religion having "given birth to all that is essential in society,"[58] contemporary religious cultural critics may surmise that Durkheim provides support for their view that contemporary issues relating to family values must be considered in a religious context. Durkheim, in fact, emphasizes that even the fundamental notions of science are of a religious origin;[59] and regarding religion as an objective social fact, Durkheim criticizes rationalist explanations of religion for concentrating on ideas rather than actions.[60] However, ultimately there is little in Durkheim's perspective to encourage the contemporary religious cul-

tural critic troubled by the secularization of family values. Durkheim is basically aligned with the anthropologists of the classical period who emphasize the differences between primitive kinship systems and the kinship system that most modern Bible-oriented religionists associate with the Scriptural world-view. The family that Durkheim sees as having emerged from religious culture is not the nuclear family but the totemic clan:

[T]otemism is at the same time of interest for the question of religion and that of the family, for the clan is a family. In the lower societies, these two problems are very closely connected. . . . Also, the primitive family organization cannot be understood before the primitive religious beliefs are known; for the latter serve as the basis of the former. This is why it is necessary to study totemism as a religion before studying the totemic clan as a family group.[61]

One should not be misled by Durkheim's references here to "lower societies," "primitive family organization," and "primitive religious beliefs" into believing that Durkheim is not at all thinking about Biblical religion. On the contrary, Durkheim is one of the major thinkers—along with, for example, the early Frazer and Freud—to accept the speculative view that all religion has its roots in totemism; and with respect to the religion of Hebrew Scripture in particular, he was clearly impressed by Robertson Smith's efforts to establish the totemic origins of major Jewish rites and conceptions.

While Durkheim assigns much importance to religion's being a social fact, and stresses its influence on family organization and other major aspects of culture, he sometimes expresses himself in ways that confirm Evans-Pritchard's characterization of him as someone who basically regards religious belief as absurd; and for Durkheim, modern religion is, in a sense, more absurd than primitive religion, inasmuch as it endeavors to rationalize what is inherently irrational. Thus, he submits, for example, that,

The first article in every creed is the belief in salvation by faith. But it is hard to see how a mere idea could have this efficacy. An idea is in reality only a part of ourselves; then how could it confer upon us powers superior to those which we have of our own nature?[62]

The "respect" for religion and its unique relation to family life that Durkheim is fostering is very different from that promoted by contemporary religious cultural critics; these critics see Scripture as providing us with practical wisdom, while Durkheim sees Scripture as providing us with evidence of the continuing influence of determining factors which are the product of social causes that bear only the obscurest relation to contemporary social concerns.[63] Moreover, in assigning to religion cultural priority over the family and over "all that is essential in society," Durkheim is ultimately acknowledging the importance of socialization as such, for "the idea of society is the soul of religion."[64]

Anthropological approaches to the family—and to religion and to culture in general—disturb some religious pro-family advocates and others who perceive them as assuming and fostering a dangerous form of relativism. People who believe strongly in moral absolutes tend to be suspicious of anything remotely smacking of relativism, and leading anthropologists have been among the most prominent exponents of cultural relativism. The philosopher Jacob Joshua Ross, who sees himself as a defender of the traditional family, identifies the anthropologist Margaret Mead as a principal culprit in promoting moral-relativistic attitudes toward family matters;[65] and several of Mead's books have in fact found an enormous audience among people not habitually given to studying anthropology in their spare time. However, cultural-relativist views have been more vigorously and more systematically defended by other anthropologists, most notably Melville J. Herskovits,[66] and have surfaced at least occasionally in the writings of a great many others. The connection between anthropology and cultural relativism is not nearly as close as many detractors of anthropology presume, and anthropologists have produced some of the most philosophically sophisticated and thoughtfully balanced studies of the phenomenon of cultural relativity.[67] I suspect that many contemporary anthropologists are not entirely clear as to whether their recognition of the importance of cultural relativity commits them to a cultural-relativist position; and that is regrettable inasmuch as the philosophical theory of cultural relativism is unsatisfactory for all sorts of reasons.[68] But in any case, we must not allow legitimate concerns about the inadequacies and dangers of cultural relativism to blind us to the importance of cultural relativity or the value of anthropological studies.

Bible-oriented cultural critics in our society who defend traditional family values are usually well enough aware that they are promoting what they take to be the values of a particular "tradition"—even if they are not entirely clear in their own minds as to precisely what that tradition is (Biblical, Western, Judeo-Christian, Christian, Evangelical Christian, or whatever)—so that they realize that it is not enough for them to insist on the compelling need for our society to restore "natural" family values. Most are at least vaguely aware of the great variability that marks human behavior in family culture and other major areas of culture; and they also may be prepared to grant that there is a sense in which the family values of primitive peoples are closer to being natural than those of most Bible-oriented religionists in industrialized Western democracies. Acknowledging the great diversity of systems of family values does not compel one to conclude that all such systems are equally sound—or even that there is no one system that is substantially better than all others—but it may require one to concede that one's unwavering conviction that the value-system of one's own tradition is *necessarily* the best is essentially a matter of faith. If one is reasonably to hold that the value-system of one's own tradition is better than the value-systems of all other traditions, one needs to know a great deal about those other value-systems and to apply appropriate criteria in assessing their family values in relation to those of one's own value-system. The missionaries

who for twenty centuries have endeavored to convert the peoples of the world to Christianity have not embarked on their proselytizing ventures with the understanding that they might possibly discover a system of family values superior to that which they have been bringing to those in need of salvation. They have assumed, as have most Christian cultural critics in our own society, that the system of family values inculcated by their own tradition—whatever it may be—is essentially better than any other value-system that will ever have been available or even conceivable. This is a matter of faith, but if they allow that one system of family values can be better than another, then they are in effect allowing that reasonable people have a right if not an obligation to evaluate by rational methods alternative systems of family values, including that which religious traditionalists accept largely on the basis of faith.

When anthropologists draw attention to the resourcefulness and effectiveness of alien systems of family values, or even just examine those systems "objectively" and without reflecting on their inferiority to those associated with our own society's traditions, they give open-minded cultural observers ample food for thought. They reveal or confirm the unreasonableness of excessive ethnocentrism; they indirectly draw attention to ways in which certain family values of our own traditions may be less satisfactory (or at least no better) than corresponding values of the traditions being studied; and they ultimately suggest that there are things to be learned from other cultures, even the most primitive cultures, about how to improve the "traditional" system of family values of our own society. Conservative Bible-oriented cultural critics may well feel threatened by what anthropologists accomplish in this regard; but when anthropologists do these particular things, they are neither necessarily assuming nor necessarily promoting cultural relativism as such. In fact, our ability to learn from other cultures about how to improve our own systems of family values, traditional or otherwise, is itself powerful evidence of the unsoundness of the cultural-relativist position as well as of the cultural determinism that usually underlies it.[69]

Anthropologists engaged in cross-cultural study of the family do not always focus on cultural variability. Even radical cultural relativists such as Herskovits acknowledge the importance of cultural universals.[70] Stephens, who observes that the family itself is, if not universal, then almost universal, notes that there are a number of "near-universals" in family life, including the mother living in the same house with young children; incest taboos; mothers expected to be married; personal name not used when addressing a father, uncle, or grandfather; feasting at the marriage ceremony; pregnant women observing food taboos; division of labor; and deference to older male kin of a kind rarely given to female kin or juniors.[71] These near-universals are interesting for several reasons, but even they do not necessarily represent the most *basic* family values of most cultures or of any particular culture, and it is within the natural power of human beings not to abide by them. Individuals can refuse to abide by them, as can social groups and entire societies. The same freedom and reason that make

human culture possible and ultimately account for the stunning variability in family culture and other forms of culture allow reflective judgment to be made with respect to all cultural phenomena, including some so nearly universal that they are ordinarily taken to be "natural." If there are, in fact, any truly *basic* family values that qualify as cultural near-universals, they are most likely the perceived *needs* to which specific family institutions are largely a response. Such needs are those for sexual and emotional intimacy and for the protection of children.

It is mainly because human beings have a clear understanding of these trans-cultural needs that they are both individually and in concert with their fellows capable of appraising family institutions in their society that were at least partly conceived to respond to these needs. They sometimes can imaginatively conceive of alternative responses, and they sometimes can learn from other societies about alternative responses. Primitive societies that for some reason remain resistant to cultural change, if they are somehow able to survive, continue to be more or less primitive; those open to refining their institutions have an opportunity to become increasingly advanced. Bible-oriented religionists may be right to maintain that the system of family values they see as imparted by Biblical teaching is generally better than other systems of family values with which they are familiar, and they would certainly be right to observe that many of the most advanced civilizations ever known have sought guidance on family and other cultural matters more from Biblical literature than any other widely accessible moral-educational source. But wise Bible-oriented religionists have, over the centuries, constantly refined their family values and family institutions in resourceful and beneficial ways, as by creatively reinterpreting Scriptural texts in such a way as to accommodate insights obtained through new methods of inquiry and contact with other cultures. Scripture itself provides the astute humanistic or social-scientific student with one monumental example after another of the cultural genius of a cosmopolitan people receptive to taking what is best from the peoples around them and refining their basic conceptions and their chief cultural institutions, including every order of "family." Were contemporary Bible-oriented religionists actually to revert in exact detail to the comparatively primitive ways of thinking and acting of their ancestors in Biblical times, their rejection of the achievements of many centuries of cultural advancement—and of the process of civilization itself—would be barbarous.[72]

Some anthropologists, including Herskovits,[73] have observed that the contrast drawn between "primitive" and "civilized" societies is often an arbitrary expression of naive ethnocentrism. We must be cautious in applying these terms, but we all know that in some important ways certain societies are considerably more civilized or advanced than others. It should also be clear that even the most civilized societies can become considerably more civilized, and one way they can move higher on the scale of civilization is by learning from other societies, including less advanced societies, about how to refine particular cultural institutions. An advanced civilization cannot afford to be satisfied with a

fixed system of family values or values in general; even its highest, absolute ideals are in constant need of clarification and refinement. Anthropology does not simply disclose a plethora of unrelated value-systems; it draws attention to alternative ways of addressing practical, transcultural concerns. These alternatives may be weighed with respect to a specific, practical issue or within the broad context of a theory of civilization.

This is no place for a comprehensive theory of civilization, but some examples are in order.[74] The anthropologist Westermarck, a preeminent student of cultural relativity, speaks of a crucial difference between primitive peoples and peoples more advanced in civilization. He concludes from extensive research that while the moral rules of different peoples are very similar, morality among primitive peoples has, "broadly speaking, only reference to members of the same community or tribe," so that "a stranger is in early society devoid of all rights." However, "When we pass from the lower races to peoples more advanced in civilization we find that the social unit has grown larger, that the nation has taken the place of the tribe, and that the circle within which the infliction of injuries is prohibited has been extended accordingly."[75] Here we confront not only different orders of value but familiar religious concerns about different orders of "family." A second example concerns the ideal of freedom, which hardly seems to require defense but is significantly a value given almost unparalleled attention in both Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament.[76] On the basis of comparative analysis, Stephens speculates that, "When the kingdom, the autocratic agrarian state, evolves into a democratic state, . . . family customs seem to gradually liberalize: family relationships become less deferential and more 'democratic' and sex restrictions loosen."[77]

One may be able to argue intelligently that increased commitment in our society to the chief family values and other major values that one associates (or many people associate) with Scriptural teaching is likely to contribute to the further *civilizing* of our society as well as the self-realization of its individual members. (Civilization, as the suffix of the term indicates, is in a fundamental sense a *process*.)[78] There may be a good case to be made here, but it has to be made. Merely to *affirm*, no matter how earnestly, that one believes that an authentically sacred literature is imparting certain values is not by itself to *establish* that commitment to the values one has identified will contribute in the future—if it has indeed contributed in the past—to the advancement of civilization.

Again, to demonstrate rationally that societies in which there has been a marked respect for Biblical values tend to be more advanced than all other societies (and not just primitive societies), one has to appeal to evaluative criteria that are of cross-cultural relevance and can be grasped without a faith-commitment. But when one appeals to such criteria, such as utilitarian criteria, the fact that Scripture can impart the values one is commending becomes of secondary importance; Scripture is now being conceived as one among any number of possible instruments capable of promoting values that reason itself can recognize are contributive to the realization of universal or near-universal

ideals and aspirations. Moreover, anyone with even a rudimentary historical or anthropological sensibility will be mindful of the cultural imperfections of certain Bible-centered cultures, such as those of the Dark Ages, as well as the momentous achievements of cultures generally uninfluenced by Biblical literature. One also may be moved to reflect that there is much good and much bad in nearly all cultures.

Another group of pertinent anthropological speculations concerns the significance for family life in Western culture of monotheism's having prevailed over rival religious world-views. Probably most people in the West take for granted what they were taught as children, that the transition from "lower" forms of religion to the prophetic monotheism embodied in and promoted by Biblical literature was itself a signal development in the advancement of the moral consciousness of the human race. This is more than just ethnocentric propaganda, and a strong case can be made—and recurrently has been made—in its defense.[79] Yet it is far less evident that the triumph of monotheism in the West had among its direct consequences the aggrandizement of the family. The anthropologist Malefijt observes that primitive societies in which religious worship is essentially a "family affair"[80] involve "strong interrelationships between family organization and religious structure"; and, "In these societies the household religion is generally of the nature of ancestor worship." Specifically, "Ancestral deities are lineage gods. When a person dies, he does not lose contact with the lineage, but remains an important link between the living and the older lineage ancestors. Ancestors are usually considered to require continuous attention; neglect of the ancestors means misfortune for the family."[81] Of particular interest is Malefijt's observation that the corresponding form of family interaction "exercises a strong integrating influence upon the family."[82] A comparable point can be made to some extent with respect to the household forms of classical Greek and Roman religion, which also had a powerful, integrating influence on the family. One may consider in this regard the importance of the simple family worship of the spirit or goddess of the hearth or of the reverence in Roman homes for the household gods.[83] It may be of some relevance that while the Fathers of the church were praising those who avoided matrimony, the Roman emperors were penalizing men and women who failed to establish families.[84]

Prophetic monotheism represents a repudiation not only of polytheism as such but of the belief in those special ties between the family and the divine that had resulted in the family interaction which exercised this integrating influence on the family. A sensitivity to the potentially dangerous, disintegrative influence on the family of the radical transition to monotheism can perhaps be discerned in some distinctive Hebrew-Scriptural themes. The God of Israel is the One God of all humanity and the Creator, Sustainer, and King of the universe; yet he remains from an equally valid perspective the God of the patriarchs, and his everlasting relationship with the children of Israel, mediated through their ancestors, remains unique. For Jews, though God is in critical ways a highly abstract deity not to be conceived in visual imagery, he is not only Lord of the

universe but "our God and God of our fathers" and the true King of Israel, the macrocosmic family to which he retains an intimate bond distinguishable from that which ties him to other creatures. Thus, the family interaction corresponding to Judaic worship is still able to exercise a substantial integrating effect on all levels of family; but the transition to monotheism, with its universalistic implications, necessarily represents an attenuation of the sense in which religion is a "family affair."

Christianity, with its more radical attack on "tribalism" and its pronounced anti-family elements, addresses the problem differently. On one level, it welcomes monotheism's disintegrative influence on the family; but on another level, it reconstructs the primary family in the form of a spiritual family, the community of believers, and it even reconceives the deity in such a way that individuals can believe that they have a "personal relationship" with God *through* Jesus, a being profoundly less abstract than the God of Hebrew Scripture. That relationship is still mediated in a sense by the community of believers and its priests or other leaders. Even so, here the sense in which religion is a family affair is yet further attenuated.

In his comprehensive comparative analysis of primitive religious beliefs, the anthropologist Guy E. Swanson finds some form of monotheism—at least in terms of belief in a "high god"—among no fewer than nineteen societies, including the Aztec, Bemba, Nuer, and Yahgan.[85] While not underestimating distinctive features of the monotheism of Bible-centered religion, we may properly note that the monotheistic world-view is not necessarily rooted in ancient Hebraic conceptions or even conceptions that influenced the ancient Hebrews. Swanson does not address the issue of how monotheism per se affects family unity, but he is skeptical regarding the view that the deities of monotheistic societies are necessarily projections from men's experiences with their fathers, and he is particularly impressed by the fact that the high gods are often seen as oblivious to human concerns.[86] Especially significant is his observation that even in the highly developed monotheism of Judaism and Christianity, God shares the supernatural world not only with demons, angels, and Satan but with such honored dead as the saints. "True, He created this cloud of beings, but they have an existence of their own and exhibit distinctive purposes."[87]

SOCIAL-HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

We turn now to some speculations of social historians, whose views have sometimes been as irksome to pro-family advocates as those of social scientists. Christopher Lasch sees the disruptive speculations of both groups as closely associated:

The "new social history," which has monopolized historical writing on the family, has derived its organizing ideas from the social sciences, whose academic prestige it envies and whose supposed rigor it tries to emulate. In doing so it perpetuates the misunder-

standings about the family that have long flourished among sociologists, anthropologists, and psychiatrists.[88]

Although their views are sometimes highly speculative, these recent historians of the family have focused on developments in advanced Western societies, so that their work is marked by documentation of kinds that cannot be expected from an anthropologist reflecting on matters such as primitive kinship systems. Pro-family cultural critics are understandably most troubled by the work of social historians who challenge their cherished assumptions about the modern forces that have contributed to the "decline" of the family, and conservative religious pro-family advocates are especially irritated by the speculations of social historians who argue that contemporary problems of family life cannot reasonably be blamed on progressivist tendencies stimulated by the Enlightenment's comprehensive attack on religious, political, social, and cultural authoritarianism. At the heart of this controversy is the work of the "demographic historian" Philippe Ariès; but before turning to Ariès' major opus, we need to consider the broad historical interpretation that he challenges, which is neatly encapsulated in the following remarks by the sociologists and pro-family advocates Brigitte Berger and Peter L. Berger:

[O]n the level of ideas, a plausible time to take as the start of the currently operative problematization of the family is the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The central goal of the Enlightenment was to free human beings from the shackles of tradition. Not surprisingly, the family was perceived as a problem for the realization of this project—it is undoubtedly, one of the most traditional of institutions.[89]

The Bergers are careful social-scientific scholars and not anti-intellectual demagogues; but they do not conceal their deep personal conviction in "the basic legitimacy of the bourgeois family, historically as well as today, both in terms of morality and in terms of the requirements of a free polity."[90] And though they are social scientists rather than philosophers or historians of ideas, they do not feel that they are dabbling in intellectual matters beyond their ken when they categorically affirm that, "The family, and no other conceivable structure, is the basic institution of society. . . . The prestige of the family must therefore be restored."[91]

The Bergers are estimable writers and have admirably presented in condensed form a cluster of historical assumptions dear to the hearts of many contemporary conservative pro-family cultural critics interested in considering family issues "on the level of ideas." These are some of the key assumptions: (1) There is a single "currently operative problematization" of the family. If we are to understand why the prestige of the family is in need of restoration, we must look mainly in one particular direction rather than at any number of unrelated historical factors; (2) The problematization can helpfully be traced back to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The movements of intellectual, reli-

gious, and cultural reform that arose prior to the Enlightenment—Biblical monotheism, classical Greek philosophy, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the rationalism of the Age of Reason, and so on—are of secondary relevance at best. For pertinent practical purposes, we may see the Enlightenment as having had no significant antecedents, or at very least as not representing in a significant way the extension of earlier progressivist movements. Of secondary relevance, too, are the movements of intellectual, religious, and cultural reform that have arisen since the Enlightenment: romanticism, historicism, evolutionism, dialectical materialism, existentialism, and so forth; (3) The Enlightenment was basically committed to promoting a certain form of "freedom," but it arbitrarily associated the promotion of freedom with anti-traditionalism. (This anti-traditionalism is routinely seen by conservative cultural critics as having led Enlightenment thinkers and their followers to uncritically associate the promotion of freedom with extreme forms of liberalism, individualism, and rationalism, and to encourage religious skepticism and moral permissiveness [in the name of "tolerance"]); (4) The Enlightenment largely initiated modern skepticism regarding the family as such, which it viewed negatively because of the family's significance as a traditional institution impeding personal development and cultural progress; (5) The traditional family is the bourgeois family, which has generally been protected and fostered by many other traditional cultural institutions of which the Enlightenment disapproved, most notably traditional religious institutions; (6) The traditional, bourgeois family generally had great prestige prior to the Enlightenment, and that prestige must be restored for moral as well as more narrowly utilitarian reasons.

The Bergers, while not specifically identifying themselves as Christian or religious pro-family cultural critics, are greatly impressed by the vast and currently undervalued "capacity of churches to perform societally important services."[92] The Bergers undoubtedly believe what conservative Christian pro-family cultural critics frequently state explicitly: society needs to be more respectful of the pivotal cultural role of traditional religious institutions if it wants to restore the prestige of the traditional family; traditional religion is generally a major pro-family force, has done little of consequence to undermine the family, and has regularly helped to check the excessive liberalism, individualism, rationalism, and permissiveness fostered by Enlightenment thinking.

Pro-family criticism of the historical influence of Enlightenment thinking can be quite nuanced, and the critics do not entirely agree as to precisely what the main problem is, even though they typically refer to inordinate liberalism, individualism, secularism, and related intellectual tendencies. Indeed, their own accounts may well seem somewhat inconsistent. James Q. Wilson, for example, sees the liberal political theory stemming from the Enlightenment as celebrating the individual mainly at the expense of the state but being "silent about the family." Yet he still maintains that, "Since the Enlightenment, the dominant tendency in legal and philosophical thought has been to emancipate the individual from all forms of tutelage—the state, revealed religion, ancient custom—

including tutelage of kin. This emancipation has proceeded episodically and unevenly, but relentlessly."[93]

More moderate yet equally inconsistent is the historical analysis of the legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon. She proposes that the past few decades have seen "the movement from undercurrent to mainstream in family law of individualistic, egalitarian, and secularizing trends that have been gaining power in Western legal systems since the late eighteenth century."[94] She also submits along these lines that the independence of individuals from "types of family and group ties that characterized pre-modern society" has been gradual.[95] In places, however, she suggests that significant change did not begin until the turn of the century[96] or even the 1960s;[97] and unlike Wilson and some other pro-family critics, she stresses Enlightenment thinking's elevation of the role of the state.[98] The problem, it must be conceded, lies partly with Enlightenment philosophy itself, which is not the monolithic program that it has often been taken to be by proponents as well as critics.

Ariès sees historical matters rather differently than the Bergers, Wilson, and Glendon. In his unusual and widely discussed study *Centuries of Childhood,*[99] Ariès tells us that he is actually more interested in the family as an idea than the family as reality. Nevertheless, he focuses on a "demographic revolution" beginning in the eighteenth century that reveals to us "considerable possibilities of change in structures hitherto believed to be invariable because they are biological":[100]

For a long time it was believed that the family constituted the ancient basis of our society, and that, starting in the eighteenth century, the progress of liberal individualism had shaken and weakened it. The history of the family in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was supposed to be that of a decadence: the frequency of divorces and the weakening of marital and paternal authority were seen as so many signs of its decline. The study of modern demographic phenomena led me to a completely contrary conclusion. It seemed to me . . . that on the contrary the family occupied a tremendous place in our industrial societies, and that it had perhaps never before exercised so much influence over the human condition.[101]

Ariès sees the "idea of the family" as having "been born rather recently, at a time when the family had freed itself from both biology and law to become a value, a theme of expression, an occasion of emotion."[102]

In examining medieval culture—a culture as Bible-centered as Western culture has ever been—Ariès finds that "not much value was placed on the family," which "existed in silence."[103] As far as he can tell from his research, there was hardly any place for childhood in medieval culture;[104] and it was probably Erasmus of Rotterdam, the foremost Renaissance Humanist critic of medieval corruption,[105] who first conceived the "very modern idea that children united the family."[106] In the Middle Ages, Ariès suggests, most people had little time for private life, and people neither remembered the *paideia* of the ancient Greeks

nor knew anything as yet of modern education. In the early modern period, the rise of rationalism brought with it a renewed interest in education for children, and this in turn brought about a renewed interest in the family.[107] Only then did the family cease to be "simply an institution for the transmission of a name and an estate" and assume a "moral and spiritual function."[108] Thus, modernity not only restored the conjugal family to a cultural importance it had enjoyed in pre-Christian antiquity, but proceeded in later centuries to enhance that importance.

If the views to which Ariès claims to have been led by his study of modern demographic phenomena are accurate, then pro-family advocates critical of the cultural influence of Enlightenment thinking are way off the mark in their diagnosis of the modern transformation of Western family values; and religious pro-family cultural critics are particularly off the mark in maintaining that there has been a deterioration in Western family values that is causally connected in some crucial way to the liberalizing, rationalizing, and secularizing influences of Enlightenment thinking on Western attitudes toward traditional forms of Bible-centered religion. If Ariès is right, then the actual historical facts are as follows: (1) The liberal individualism fostered by Enlightenment thinking and progressivist thinking in general did not result in the weakening of the institution of the conjugal family; (2) The institution of the conjugal family has not declined since the eighteenth century. On the contrary, beginning in the eighteenth century the conjugal family took on a cultural importance in the West that it had lacked in previous centuries when cultural life in the West was substantially under the control of ecclesiastical authorities. It is indeed possible that the family has had more cultural importance in recent centuries than it has ever had before; (3) Any weakening of marital and paternal authority in recent centuries has not resulted in the decline of the conjugal family; (4) In an important sense the very "idea" of the family is a modern one. Although the conjugal family obviously had long existed as a biological and legal phenomenon, it did not, prior to modern times, have the kind of cultural significance in the West that is now generally taken for granted. More specifically, not much *value* was placed on the institution in pre-modern, medieval Western culture; (5) At the heart of the modern transformation of the conjugal family into something of great *value* lay a radical new vision of children, who were now no longer perceived, after the manner of the Scriptural patriarchs, as primarily instruments by which one's name and estate could be perpetuated (or after the manner of the New Testament celibates, as obstacles to spiritual self-realization). With the rise of liberalizing, rationalizing, and secularizing tendencies, parents increasingly saw their relationship with their children as a genuinely *cultural* one: a new *value* was given to their relationship to their children—and to their lives in general—by their perception that there was something exceedingly meaningful and ennobling about their fulfilling their obligation to contribute to the educational nurturing of their offspring; (6) The individualism promoted by the Enlightenment had the effect of unifying the family by leading parents to view their children as individuals with a distinctive personality capable of being meliorated through re-

sponsible, intelligent, and creative parenting. It also unified the family by leading parents to reflect on their own individual strengths and weaknesses as people entrusted with this uniquely powerful cultural role; (7) As modernity had from Renaissance Humanism onward endeavored to restore the loftiest ideals of pre-Christian classical antiquity in general, it inevitably restored the classical Greek ideal of *paideia* and made it central to conjugal family life; (8) The economic transformation of European society that came with modernity made a rich family life more precious as well as generally more viable.

Having explicated Ariès' position in a way that emphasizes its relevance to the issues we have been considering, I have not touched on some of Ariès' most interesting themes in *Centuries of Childhood*; and we have not considered Ariès' detailed historical defense of his views. Obviously, one's assessment of his position should take into account his documentation. Still, the pro-family advocate convinced of the deleterious effects on the conjugal family of Enlightenment and progressivist thinking will be skeptical about many of Ariès' arguments and much of his documentation, while Ariès' work will appeal to progressivists antipathetic to the agenda of traditionalist pro-family cultural critics, perhaps especially of reactionary religious ones. As for Ariès, he regards himself as a social and demographic historian and does not profess to be a philosopher, ideologist, or theologian; though more a humanist than social scientist, he sees his project as largely descriptive rather than normative. Yet there is reason to suspect that Ariès' vision is rather less objective than that of most historians. Ariès has his own axe to grind, and that is apparent even to some who respect his scholarship and moral earnestness. David Hunt, who admires Ariès' conceptual boldness[109] and regards *Centuries of Childhood* as very persuasive,[110] is nevertheless cognizant of the book's "dubious and reckless passages";[111] and Hunt senses that Ariès' entire project is permeated by a world-view shaped largely by temperamental factors. Ariès declares that he has been "led" to his principal conclusion by his study of modern demographic phenomena; but he may have been "led" to the kind of conclusion that appeals to someone with what Hunt has bluntly characterized as an "anticlerical and antiabsolutist stance."[112]

Ariès is offended by traditional conservative views of the history of the family. Although himself conservative in a distinctive way, perhaps even in maintaining that the family has triumphed over individualism,[113] his visceral contempt for intolerance is evident in his attitude toward the family as much as his attitude toward reactionary religious authoritarianism. In a key passage of *Centuries of Childhood*, he submits that in an important sense the modern magnification of the value of the family was itself rooted in intolerance, specifically in the desire of people for a form of private life that would enable them to distance their children from children of the poorer classes.[114] Historical interpretation offers greater opportunity for objectivity than Biblical interpretation, but the truth that historians seek and find can be as personal as that which readers

of sacred literature seek and find; and the "text" they are studying may be vastly more complex.

Like Ariès, whose work has influenced him, the social historian Edward Shorter sees the late eighteenth century as marking a turning point in the development of the family very different from that which pro-family critics of Enlightenment influences have conceived. Shorter emphasizes the emergence of market capitalism, which he sees as having precipitated a transition from the traditional family to the nuclear family.[115] Shorter virtually ignores religion, but religious pro-family cultural critics may be relieved by this neglect when confronted with the contrast Shorter sees between the traditional family and the modern family:

> [T]he traditional family was much more a productive unit and reproductive unit than an emotional unit. It was a mechanism for transmitting property and position from generation to generation.
>
>   Then these priorities were reversed. Ties to the outside were weakened, and ties binding members of the family to one another reinforced. . . . Thus sentiment flowed into a number of family relationships. Affection and inclination, love and sympathy, came to take the place of "instrumental" considerations in regulating the dealings of family members with one another.[116]

On these assumptions, strange Biblical family values will be easier to understand, as will the anachronistic historical interpretations of traditionalist cultural critics, but neither of these will be any more acceptable. Shorter is relentless in developing these speculations—to the point of challenging the mother's traditional bonding with her infant child: "Good mothering is an invention of modernization. In traditional society, mothers viewed the development and happiness of infants younger than two with indifference. In modern society they place the welfare of their small children above all else."[117] Even if this is true, do we really need to know it? Can people be blamed for not wanting to hear it?

If we need to listen to such speculations, it is because arbitrary assumptions about the family continue to be, as they have always been, sources of injustice, inhibition, and misery. Social-historical speculations offer us perspectives that can liberate us from puerile and destructive dogmatism, though they can themselves lead to unproductive dogmatism, as observers like Lasch are wont to reminding us. Defending such studies, Mark Poster proposed, over twenty years ago, that,

> The study of the family is one place where the neglected areas of age and sex domination can become incorporated into the historical picture. The patterns of age and sex domination have been as brutal as those of the other great historical questions. Generational and sexual conflict must be captured and understood in the same way as conflicts of class, race and religion. There is a rich and important history that has not yet been written of the domination of women and children which can be illuminated to a considerable extent within the history of the family.[118]

Since Poster wrote these lines, the enterprise of establishing this rich and important history has increasingly engaged a growing section of the academy.

The sociologist Goode, probably unaware of the social-historical minefield he has entered, writes that, "Every fundamental political upheaval since the French Revolution has offered a program that included profound changes in family relations."[119] Political? Since the French Revolution? Probably every truly fundamental cultural upheaval in history has offered such a program, as most certainly have those associated with the major stages in the development of Judaism and Christianity. A wide view helps here, but at least Goode usefully reminds us that "programs" can count for as much as obscure determining factors; and still more useful is the observation of Ruth Benedict, an anthropologist sometimes remembered for her cultural-deterministic pronouncements, that "no civilization has in it any element which in the last analysis is not the contribution of an individual."[120]

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most contemporary cultural critics and reformers, especially those with a high profile in the media, regularly insist that in considering the current condition of the institution of the family we must keep focused on the need to solve concrete, practical problems and not get sidetracked into pursuing theoretical considerations for their own sake. Those of us who become engrossed with theory for its own sake can appreciate that philosophical reflection, while offering a wider vision, does not address concrete exigencies with the directness or immediacy that is often required. Nevertheless, those contemporary cultural critics and reformers who insist on the primacy of practice over theory often themselves lose sight of the concrete circumstances of real-life individuals, and become lost in a haze of speculative generalizations; and when they are impatient with the theorizing and philosophizing of others, it is partly because they feel that their own theoretical vision is too sensible and too important to be subjected to questioning. A major part of the "practical" activity of cultural critics and reformers is devoted to the articulation and promotion of programs. Their practical efforts are not confined to dealing with the urgent problems of this or that unhappily married spouse or this or that abused child; indeed, they often seem to be quite content leaving such practical matters to others. It is entirely proper for us to draw a conceptual contrast between theory and practice, but they are not opposed; theoretical considerations of various kinds, including the most abstract, are needed in guiding us to sound practice.

Most people who consider matters related to family values are concerned with practical action on the level of concrete problem solving. Even when concentrating on theoretical issues regarding the idea of the family and the nature of the family, they are hopeful that insight into these subjects will contribute to understanding the sources of family problems and the best means of addressing them. Those who maintain that we would do well to turn to the Bible or tra-

ditional forms of Bible-centered religion for guidance on family values see the insight provided in this way as helping people to solve their concrete family problems, or helping "society" or people in key vocations to solve the family problems of many individuals and intimate family groups. Nevertheless, unless they are monomaniacal fanatics, these believers can see that there are, in fact, alternative methods of going about solving concrete family problems, and in this respect they can see that, in a certain sense, the problems can usefully be regarded as secular problems (or at least problems with a secular aspect) that can be treated in ways that are not specifically religious. In addition, they can acknowledge that dealing with the problems in these ways may call for a professional expertise that is not found only among their fellow believers. They may know from personal experience that often fellow believers with the requisite professional competence are not readily accessible, and that the best practitioners in a particular field happen to be people who do not share their religious convictions. They can certainly appreciate that those who do not share their religious convictions may have even less reason than they do to be concerned with a certain practitioner's religious opinions.

In examining Scriptural texts, we regularly encounter major figures in the narratives who find themselves faced with urgent problems relating to close family relationships—problems that, despite their extraordinary closeness to God, they do not conceive in a purely religious way. We may recall in this regard the family problems of Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Noah and his sons; Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael; Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau; Jacob and his oldest sons; Joseph and his brothers; Moses and his siblings; David and Absalom; Hosea and his wife; and Jesus and his kinsfolk, most notably an anxious mother moved to ask, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."[121] In Biblical literature, God usually steps in, sooner or later, to solve the most trying family problems, while dispensing divine justice in the process, though he often gives the figures in the narratives ample opportunity to manage their problems on their own.

Contemporary believers, by virtue of their faith, still look to God for help in resolving their family crises, but most have come to recognize that God generally "moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform,"[122] helps those who help themselves, and expects his human creatures to help and be helped by their fellows. It would be a boon beyond measure if Scripture could be used as an all-purpose handbook for solving any family problem that arises, but it does not specifically address many of the most taxing contemporary family predicaments, does not address others to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, and is interpreted in very different ways by competing authorities with markedly different opinions on what it means and how it should be applied. Even when there appears to be a commanding consensus on its proper interpretation and application, as was the case in the High Middle Ages, we may have good reason to believe that such apparent consensus has resulted largely from the systematic repression and discouragement of alternative voices. Hence, even devoutly com-

mitted believers in a modern, pluralistic democracy can appreciate the need for people to devise ways of solving pressing family problems that require looking at the family from unbiblical perspectives, including some that require intensive professional training. Such training involves not only practical skills, but theoretical vision and empirical knowledge. If clerics themselves have become better at helping people with their family problems, that is in no small measure because they have become increasingly sensitive to their need to add to their knowledge of sacred and theological literature a knowledge of pertinent secular literature.

Professional family counselors and therapists—including the psychiatrists that Lasch sweepingly dismisses as promoting "misunderstandings" about the family—cannot perform miracles with greater consistency than clerics. Still, conscientious health care professionals and social workers know useful things about family problems that they did not learn from reading Scripture or theology books or listening to sermons. They understand, for example, that family systems can be closed or open in relation to the wider communities in which they reside;[123] and they have considerable understanding, based partly on case studies, of such crippling family relationships as dehumanizing, sham, and rigid role relationships.[124] They have benefited from the results of research into pathogenic relational patterns in severely disturbed family systems, including the combination of overprotective mother and inadequate father, the perverse triangle in which a child is drawn into an unwholesomely close relationship with one parent, and the family with a scapegoat.[125] They have gained valuable experience from their own earlier efforts to help troubled families and individuals victimized by crippling family relationships.

It is unwise for cultural critics and reformers concerned about family values to underestimate the actual and potential contributions of conscientious health care professionals and social workers; and those who would strengthen family values in their culture do well to communicate respectfully with these people—learning from them as well as advising them. Health care professionals and social workers sometimes disagree with religious leaders concerning how to deal with a specific type of family problem; when they do, they are generally trying to carry out their professional responsibilities effectively. Many of them are religious people themselves, and few appear to have much interest in assuming the additional responsibilities of the cleric or religious teacher. Of course, the Scriptural prophets did not regard themselves as health care professionals or social workers, and they had no idea of what a professional family counselor, family therapist, or psychiatrist is, even if they were able to offer wise counsel on certain family matters.

In the 1960s, a decade remembered in Western democracies for cultural unrest that stimulated cultural transformation in many domains (including that of social policy on the family),[126] the Canadian Association of Social Workers issued a modest little report on what its members had learned about sources of stress for Canadian families.[127] The report considered two broad categories: stresses originating outside the family and stresses originating inside. Those originating out-

side included unemployment, lack of maximum employment opportunity, discriminatory attitudes and practices, insufficient income, inadequate income, inadequate housing, demands from the kinship group, and pressures related to acculturation.[128] Those originating inside included changes in the family structure (such as arrival of new members, departure of members, and incapacitation of members), stresses relating to family interaction, and stresses relating to family goals and family values.[129] Cultural critics and others concerned with the well-being of the institution of the conjugal family are provided here with useful information from workers in the field who had directly confronted concrete problems of real-life families and individual family members. The acceleration in cultural transformation of family values that occurred in the 1960s was not simply the result of ideological adventurism, but in large part the response to age-old problems that received more focused attention as a consequence of the intensified cultural probing and consciousness-raising of the time.

The broad range of stresses cited in the Canadian social workers' report is noteworthy, as is the contrast between two general categories of stress. Family problems remain diverse and complex, and call for different kinds of solutions that need to be achieved by different people on different levels of the social structure, sometimes working on their own and sometimes working together with others. Biblical values—and religious values generally—can be seen as relevant in various ways; but much will depend on one's perception of Scriptural priorities. Questions arise, for example, respecting what a Bible-oriented religionist ought to regard as the state's responsibility to provide opportunities for adequate employment, income, and housing; as the state's role in restricting discriminatory practices; as the extended family's obligation to free the conjugal family from traditional demands; as the church's role in providing counseling on family planning and contraception; and as the married person's obligation to ensure that the spouse has a strong voice in family decision making. Such questions can be complicated from both theological and purely utilitarian perspectives, and in recent years have elicited an imposing range of responses.

The Canadian social workers' report makes direct reference to "family values." It concludes that many families reported on were subject to "stress arising from lack of agreement about family goals and values," and that some appeared to have been subject to stress because of "conflict between the family's goals and values and those of the wider community."[130] Especially germane here is the social workers' perception that the general problem in these cases was not the absence of values or even the commitment to unsound values, but rather the disagreement about values. Perhaps most striking is the emphasis that the report places on what the social workers deemed to be the primary source of stress in family life: "The largest single source of stress for the 3,455 Canadian families reported on appears to be lack of agreement between Husband and Wife about the part each should play in the family."[131] The report points to the importance of both psychological and cultural factors in this regard; and we have noted repeatedly in this inquiry that with respect to few if any areas of family life is

Biblical teaching more problematic. Who in society has primary responsibility for addressing what likely remains the largest single source of stress in family life, and who shares that responsibility with them? To what extent is Bible-centered religion a potential solution to this real-life family problem; to what extent is it a continuing cause of the problem, and to what extent has it become irrelevant to the problem? These are hard questions for an overworked and underappreciated social worker facing the problems of a particular family in crisis; so we can hardly expect the questions to be any simpler for those endeavoring to solve a critical problem facing society as a whole.

The concrete problems of specific families and family members need to be addressed on an individual basis, but those arising internally as well as externally are substantially the result of general social conditions that must also be addressed; and while social workers and health care professionals can provide useful insight, they cannot fairly be expected to bear the primary responsibility for meeting the pertinent social policy needs. Families and family members themselves have responsibilities to be fulfilled, but family problems can often be traced back, at least in part, to general social conditions. Cultural critics and reformers across the political spectrum acknowledge that society and major social institutions (including religious ones) should work conscientiously to help families and family members; and society and various social institutions have an interest in this respect, along with an obligation. The interests of society as a whole can, in an important sense, be seen as taking precedence over the interests of particular families and family members. The dysfunctional or troubled family poses a threat to outsiders on several levels; among other things, society cannot afford to allow children to be brought up in ways that will result in their being burdens to society. Religious and other major cultural institutions can be helpful by mediating between the state and the individual and between the state and the family,[132] but in a pluralistic democracy a special responsibility falls on the state, which, when it functions properly, is both the ultimate mediator and the ultimate keeper of order. The state has diverse means of addressing family problems, from educational to economic ones, but the most obvious are legal ones.

The state's legal machinery performs a number of distinct but related functions in this area. It addresses the concrete, pressing difficulties of specific families in crisis and of individual members of those families; it works to protect legitimate interests of those outside the family; it establishes, reinforces, and promotes certain social standards, thereby providing a general model for families and family members to follow when determining what their most basic responsibilities are in family life; and it settles, if only provisionally, fundamental disagreements regarding family life that have arisen between competing cultural constituencies, such as religionists and secularists, liberals and conservatives, and majorities and minorities.

The family law of a modern Western society can be seen as sanctioning certain family "values" of rather specific kinds as well as a more general kind.

Its legal norms sometimes express ideas about family life that are religious in origin, but its legal norms can in turn acquire the force of tradition[133] and induce contemporary religious leaders to modify their views on family-related issues. Legislators and jurists are probably not, as a general rule, wiser than religious leaders, which is one of many good reasons for our being vigilant to ensure that the state does not arbitrarily interfere in religious matters;[134] but they can perform specific cultural roles that even the wisest religious leaders cannot, partly because a religious faith that liberates in some ways constrains in others. The values underlying and promoted by the family law of a modern Western society are derived from secular as well as religious sources. That is not simply because of obscure determining factors—though undoubtedly some of these are operative—or because power-hungry legislators and jurists get satisfaction from exhibiting and extending their dominance over other traditional authority figures (though assuredly some do), but also because competent legislators and jurists recognize that it is wise and prudent to learn from many sources. In a pluralistic democracy, they are compelled to handle disagreements between powerful competing constituencies; and thoughtful political leaders can see that there are all sorts of people, from secular intellectuals and psychotherapists to bureaucrats and law enforcement officers, who understand pertinent matters that religious moralists as such do not.

It is neither coincidental nor the result of wholesale disrespect for culture-sustaining religious traditions that the family law of a modern, pluralistic Western democracy looks rather different from Biblical teaching on the family or from complex systems of religious family law that have ostensibly been built on that teaching. If one considers, say, current Canadian family law, one finds it dealing with the most general family-related subjects with which Bible-centered religion does, most notably marriage[135] and divorce,[136] and also with more specific matters addressed in traditional Jewish and Christian teaching, such as incest,[137] rights and obligations of marriage (including financial support, cohabitation, property rights, and expectation of sexual relationship),[138] and adultery.[139] But it also deals at length with matters that receive comparatively little if any attention in Bible-centered religious family law, such as legal separation[140] and custody and support of children.[141] Moreover, its norms differ greatly from the explicit norms of traditional Bible-based teaching with respect to such matters as age of consent,[142] grounds of divorce,[143] and specific rights and obligations of marriage.[144] Especially noteworthy are current Canadian family law's pronounced restrictions on patriarchal authoritarianism and its comparative disinterest regarding filial obedience.

Some religious traditionalists may feel that in these ways Canadian family law is interfering in religious matters, inculcating contempt for proper religious authority, or possibly promoting its own unbiblical religion or ideology. However, Canadian legislators and jurists have to some extent responded here to the general will of a democratic society, while also demonstrating significant understanding of and respect for powerful moral and practical arguments put for-

ward by certain informed and thoughtful members of society, including many regarding themselves as steadfastly committed to the faith of their Christian or Jewish ancestors. Of course, there are plenty of legislators and jurists in Western democracies who make unwise judgments on familial and other matters. Political and legal authorities of varying degrees of ability and integrity find themselves persuaded or otherwise influenced by dubious positions put forward by sundry powerful constituencies, some high-minded and others less so; and the general will itself, no matter how conceived, can be as arbitrary as the will of an individual, as critics of democracy from Plato onward have observed.[145] Even Locke, Spinoza, and other political philosophers of the Age of Reason who contributed greatly to the rise of democracy in the West—and looked to the state to curb the social disorder created by belligerent, overbearing churches in a period of tremendous religious and cultural discord—recognized the dangers posed by putting extensive cultural powers into the hands of politicians more likely than resolute men and women of faith to be swayed by the whims of the mob.[146] This was one of several reasons why they encouraged a form of "separation" of church and state, even while arguing for a certain ascendancy of the sovereign civil state over churches and other religious communities. It was their conviction, however, that a mature and stable democracy would allow for the opinions of thoughtful religionists to receive the attention that they merit. I grant that often the opinions of the most thoughtful religious cultural critics do not receive adequate attention from legislators and jurists in contemporary Western democracies. Like their fellows, these people should keep working to make their voices heard, while simultaneously remaining committed to promoting respect for the rational public dialogue needed to sustain democratic systems that, despite their frailty, are apt in the long run to serve the interests of civilization better than authoritarian systems.

It must also be recognized that some family laws established by legislators and jurists in modern Western democracies have, in fact, been far ahead of general public opinion.[147] This is rarely simply because legislators and jurists have lapses in their commitment to democratic process; rather, modern democratic theory generally recognizes that democracy is not simply a system in which "the majority rules." In mature and stable representative democracies all citizens have an "equal" voice in fundamental ways, but it is generally recognized that one of the voter's obligations is to make careful judgments about who is best able to provide sound leadership in the state—not only in being prepared to make unpopular decisions but in protecting minority rights and, more generally, by drawing on and applying specialized knowledge not accessible to the average citizen.

The decline of patriarchal authoritarianism apparent in contemporary systems of family law in Western democracies actually corresponds to several major global trends in family patterns.[148] These include a decrease in the prevalence of the dowry or bride price; the narrowing of the age difference between husbands and wives; an increase in the number of women holding jobs indepen-

dently; an increase in women's rights; less control by parents over the courtship and mate choices of their children; increasing age at marriage for women; and a decline in the birth rate.[149] It is worth considering what in the broadest sense has been "causing" these global trends. Undoubtedly, numerous factors can be identified through social-scientific and historical research, including factors directly related to industrialization.[150] However, if one considers this matter from a broader philosophical perspective, one may wonder how much of this global cultural transformation has been the consequence of factors of which people have been largely unaware, and how much of it has been the consequence of deliberate judgment on the part of people who have become increasingly wiser as a result of new cognitive abilities and access to new information obtained by means of those abilities. Here again familiar issues about freedom and determinism rise to the surface.

We have noted in several places how certain cultural theorists who are highly sensitive to the power of various determining factors nevertheless feel a need to make allowance for the importance of rational judgment and design. The views of Edward O. Wilson, Spencer, and Benedict come to mind in this respect. Now, rational judgment and design can be seen, in a way, as themselves part of the process by which family values are "determined." The family values that prevail in a particular culture or subculture have come to prevail as a result not only of physical, biological, depth-psychological, sociological, and other such determinants, but also of ideas that, though perhaps at some time conceived with a significant degree of autonomy, rationality, and creativity, have subsequently come to be largely unrecognized by later generations or, alternatively, accepted by them as intuitively obvious. In addition, as noted earlier, the cultural can be understood in a sense as an aspect of the natural; and ideas themselves can actually be seen from one perspective as being derived from sources other than "free" and "rational" reflection. Thus, it might be naive to assume that what we regard as cultural "progress" is essentially or primarily the result of free, rational deliberation.[151]

When one adopts a Biblical-religious perspective on cultural transformation, an additional theological factor must be taken into account, though believers disagree greatly about its precise importance. Virtually all Bible-oriented religionists see the "hand" of God as evident in nature, inasmuch as God is the Designer, Creator, and Sustainer of all things; and moreover, they see Providence at work in human affairs on all levels—individual, cultural, and universal. Some believers see Scripture as emphasizing existential freedom and responsibility, but others are extremely deterministic; and in fact, theological determinism appears to be the prototypical form of determinism, predating and having influenced the development of metaphysical, physical, cultural, psychological, and other forms of philosophical and scientific determinism. People appear to have contemplated the irresistible influence on them of higher powers long before they were able to conceive the abstract idea of causation.[152] The task of reconciling human freedom and responsibility with divine omnipotence, omni-

science, and design has been no less formidable than comparable efforts to explain how freedom and responsibility are possible in spite of sundry other determining factors.

Thus, when modern religionists seriously consider the origin of family values currently prevailing in their society, they may be obliged to consider a number of philosophical questions, including these: Is God ultimately to be regarded as "responsible" for prevailing family values? Is it the will of God that these values have prevailed? Is it possible that God cannot be clearly conceived to have granted human beings sufficient autonomy to justify one's regarding human beings as authentically responsible for prevailing family values—including values that many religious cultural critics deem to be incompatible with divine design? And are the biological, depth-psychological, sociological, and other determinants of family values to be understood as representing God's Providential design?

Reflecting on such questions, one may possibly arrive at the conclusion that much contemporary religious cultural criticism of unbiblical family values is misplaced. Furthermore, as even the radical secularist will allow, the influence of Biblical teaching on virtually all major Western cultural institutions, including the nuclear family, is already so pervasive and so entrenched that intentional human endeavor cannot entirely eradicate it; and in this peculiar, attenuated sense, Western family values are destined to remain to some extent "Biblical."

Then again, Scripture can itself be seen as the consequence of any number of determining factors, regardless of whether one elects to perceive those factors as themselves determined by God's Providential design. Thus, even while rejecting purely secular explanations of the formation of Biblical literature, Bible-oriented religionists can appreciate that this literature has the form it does because it was in some sense *necessary* for God to reveal his Word to particular people in particular cultures who understood certain languages, who were accustomed to certain patterns of family life, who had attained a certain degree of intellectual and moral development, and so forth. Of course, one may assume that God, being omnipotent, could have, for example, chosen to speak to the ancient Hebrews in Latin or English and seen to it that they understood what he was saying, or he could have chosen to reveal his Word to all the peoples of the world at one time or a thousand times; but we learn from both historical study and Scripture itself that it was not the case that God did such things. In any case, one may opt to believe instead, as Spinoza does, that references to divine "will" are altogether unhelpful to the modern mind, insofar as God acts solely by the necessity of his own nature.[153]

Returning to more concretely practical considerations, we may observe that on the level of social policy, astute cultural leaders in all fields—including religion, science, and social work as well as politics—will want to keep a close eye on developing global trends in family patterns. Conservatives among them who are troubled by the direction or pace of those trends may well feel that they have a responsibility to do the best they can to reverse or curb prevailing

trends, at least in those societies in which they can expect their voice to be heard. Some progressivists, too, will be troubled by the direction of the trends, inasmuch as a progressivist thinker rarely identifies progress with change per se, and normally sees it as involving movement toward the realization of specific ideals.[154]

Progressivists who see current global trends as not moving toward the realization of any ideals, or as moving toward the realization of inappropriate ideals, or as moving with precarious speed toward the realization of appropriate ideals, may also see themselves as having a responsibility to work toward restraining or redirecting those trends in their own society. Nevertheless, while cultural leaders could not act intelligently, responsibly, or effectively if they adopted the extreme, deterministic position that social policy can do little more than reflect major global trends, they would be unwise to underestimate the importance of those trends and of determining factors generally—and perhaps technological developments especially.[155]

In addition, a substantial part of their effort should be devoted to acquiring from conscientious and reliable social forecasters with specialized knowledge the kinds of information that will enable them to make sensible judgments about institutional adjustments that can realistically be envisioned in the light of anticipated cultural changes. "Futurologists" do not speak in the commanding voice of prophets; they can often be vague, excessively speculative, or timid,[156] and some exploit their position as forecasters to promote their own pet ideology. But the possibilities that the most conscientious among them raise are of great practical importance to those cultural critics and reformers genuinely striving to prepare their fellows to cope with real-life family problems that will be arising in the future.

Many who have studied the family closely would agree with Sumner's judgment, expressed almost a century ago, that the family "shows more fluctuation and uncertainty than any other of our great institutions."[157] But even most of these have been impressed that despite recurrent perceptions that the conjugal family is disintegrating, it can be seen to be a tough and resilient institution[158] with a remarkable capacity to endure over time, in large measure because of its ability to assume new forms, weather great historical changes, and adapt to new conditions.[159] Not only do the vast majority of people in contemporary Western democracies still marry, but most of them have children; and most of their children marry and have children of their own. While divorce has been on the rise in recent decades, a great many who divorce remarry. Goode was able to observe, long after the cultural unrest of the 1960s, that, "Indeed, the total number of years spent within marriage by the average person is higher now than at any previous time in the history of the world."[160] If there will probably always be family problems, it is mainly because there will probably always be families. That the family has endured for so very long in so many different places under such different circumstances is surely evidence of many things, but

not least importantly that people have believed with a remarkable consistency that the institution, in spite of all its failings, essentially "works."

The regularity of changes in family culture also undoubtedly indicates many things, but not least importantly that people have often believed that the family can be made to "work better" than it does. Variation, adaptation, transformation, and diversity in family culture should not in themselves be taken as evidence of the disintegration of basic institutions that clearly have been judged by most people to be worth preserving, renovating, and meliorating; and when human beings have lacked the ingenuity and determination required to make needed adjustments, other evolutionary factors have played their role.

Offering guidance to fellow conservative Christians, the practical-minded family counselor W. Douglas Cole makes the sensible observation that, "There is no one way of parenting that works best for every family."[161] Cole may be presumed to believe that in some sense the "Biblical" way is the right way, but he also recognizes, as will most of his readers, that on a practical level traditionalist Christians, like all other people, need to weigh carefully a range of specific options relating to their concrete circumstances. Thus, Cole and his readers should be able to have some insight into the practical motivation of those people who, not sharing the particular religious convictions of Cole and his readers, are prepared to entertain a wider range of specific options with respect to a wider range of concrete circumstances. Of course, the institution of the family has been greatly modified as a consequence of other cultural changes, including the religious changes to which we have given so much attention in this inquiry; but Santayana shrewdly observes that the institution of the family has itself been a vital locus of broader cultural experimentation:

Life is experimental, and whatever performs some necessary function, and cannot be discarded, is a safe nucleus for many a parasite, a starting-point for many new experiments. So the family, in serving to keep the race alive, become [*sic*] a point of departure for many institutions. It assumes offices which might have been allotted to some other agency, had not the family pre-empted them, profiting by its established authority and annexing them to its domain.[162]

Santayana, it may be recalled, in spite of his well-known description of the family as "one of nature's masterpieces,"[163] was remarkably unsentimental in his philosophical analysis of the family, an institution he regarded as in many ways irrational,[164] as perpetuating accidental social differences and a caste system,[165] and as "largely responsible for the fierce prejudices that prevail about women, about religion, about seemly occupations, about war, death, and honour."[166]

When appraising the practical importance of Biblical teaching and ostensibly Bible-based teaching as instruments for restoring (or restraining) family life, we can apply Santayana's point about the family itself as a locus of broader cultural experimentation. Religion is in no small measure responsible for some of our

fiercest prejudices about the family, kinship, and related phenomena; and that is partly because life being experimental, Bible-centered religion, not easily discarded, is itself "a starting-point for many new experiments . . . [and] a point of departure for many institutions [which] assumes offices which might have been allotted to some other agency, had not [it] pre-empted them, profiting by its established authority and annexing them to its domain." Much already noted about the family in this regard applies equally to religion—generally and in its Bible-centered forms. Religion and the family are markedly cross-cultural phenomena; and again the variation, adaptation, transformation, and diversity that mark family culture are also conspicuous in religious culture, including its Bible-centered forms. Given these conditions we have yet another reason to be skeptical regarding sundry broad generalizations about the practical importance of Bible-centered religion for family life.

Questions concerning the *value* of religion and of the family may seem rather peculiar, even to those accustomed to contemplating philosophical questions; for if religion and the family are in fact not so "natural" that we cannot conceive of human existence without them, they may still seem so close to being natural aspects of human affairs that it is difficult to assume their value to be essentially instrumental rather than instrinsic. Philosophers and other cultural theorists may speculate freely about the primary function of religion or the family, but their speculations are all after the fact, and this is a basic reason why such speculations leave many people unimpressed. The fact that these cultural theorists cannot reach a consensus is another major reason. The anthropologist Malefijt properly observes that, "No agreement has been reached . . . about the *raison d'être* of religion and the role it plays in the functioning of human societies."[167] Furthermore, even to consider religion as an essentially practical phenomenon may be to misconceive what is actually not only of intrinsic value but of "transcendent" value; awareness of what is authentically of "ultimate concern"[168] necessarily evanesces when conceived in a purely utilitarian way. Regarding the family, one may see it as benefiting individuals and societies in all sorts of ways, but perhaps from equally valid perspectives it can be seen as having an importance which exceeds that of individuals, societies, and even the transcendent; and as Santayana observes, in a sense it defies utilitarian justification.

As noted earlier, it is not clear whether generally religious culture is mainly rooted in family culture, family culture is mainly rooted in religious culture, or religion and the family—despite their complex relations—originated altogether separately. It is not hard to conceive of justifications of each that make no reference to the other. Moreover, if religion has often been valuable to families and the institution of the family has often been valuable to religionists, that may be largely because families and religionists have been compelled to work toward reconciling these two nearly universal cultural forms. When Charles Y. Glock and his fellow sociologists declare that, "From an historical perspective, the relatively close ties between the church and the family have been amply docu-

mented,"[169] we should bear in mind that these "ties" are not necessarily essential, constructive, or permanent.

Most of us can cite examples of how Bible-centered and other forms of religion have been used to mediate helpfully between the individual and the state, the family and the state, and individual members of a family. We can also recognize that Bible-centered religion and the literature on which it is based continue to exert enormous influence, in intentional and obscure ways, on some of the most important Western cultural institutions, including the family, and that Bible-centered religion and approaches taken to Biblical literature are themselves greatly influenced by secular cultural developments. Inevitably, judgments on the value of religion, Scripture, and the family—and judgments on religious values, Scriptural values, and family values—are subject to forms of variation, adaptation, transformation, and diversity comparable to those that mark family culture and religious culture themselves. Individuals obsessed with knowing the "truth" about these matters may fail to appreciate that the distinctive form of truth that appertains here is one substantially influenced by both existential commitment and determining factors.

It does not follow from what has been observed above that Biblical religion is, for all practical purposes, irrelevant to questions of family value. However, it can be relevant in so many ways and on so many levels—some inconsistent with the others and most of which involve subjective and cultural perceptions and commitments—that we are obliged in an advanced society to regard as indiscreet any effort to establish in the public forum that there is only one practically important sense in which it is relevant. One may well regret that the relevance of Biblical religion to contemporary social and cultural problems does not receive closer attention than it does in the public forum in contemporary Western democracies. Much of the neglect is probably in large part a response to exasperation with simplistic preaching about the contemporary relevance of Biblical religion. Thoughtful people have good reason to believe that religion and the family are exceedingly complex phenomena. Those who are earnestly concerned with solving real-life family problems may find that considerable understanding of the family and culture may follow upon an examination of Biblical-religious teaching; but the insight that follows may take any number of forms. There are, in any case, many sources from which insight into the family can be derived, and it is regrettable when any of them is consistently underestimated.

Bible-centered faith has sometimes inspired people to the noblest acts, and it has also at times led people to commit the most contemptible acts. In the realms of religious faith and family love—both realms of devotion—we are to some extent free to believe what we choose to believe, but in an important sense we believe what we can. Fanaticism and hypocrisy are perversions of faith that corrode character and generally cause grief for one's fellows.[170] It is obviously of immense practical importance what individuals and communities believe clearly, believe indistinctly, and merely pretend to believe with respect to reli-

gion, the family, and other high matters. In the realms of faith and family love, it is often unrealistic and perhaps unreasonable to demand the clarity and even the honesty that we have a right to expect in other domains. Religious freedom and the freedom to conduct one's family affairs without unwarranted interference from outsiders are fundamental to a civilized society, but these freedoms call for great responsibility and even greater humility. In the long run, they are more likely to be secured than jeopardized when people in different religious and family situations are open to resolving intelligently, patiently, and sympathetically their practical disagreements over matters of personal and communal value.

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6

Competition and Cooperation between Biblical Religion and the Family

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THE ESSENTIAL COMPETITION

Religion is a rich field for competition, and religionists regularly enter into competition with those they regard as cultural rivals—both religious rivals and secular ones.[1] This religious competition can be constructive or destructive; and possibly nowhere is it more significant than in the interaction between religious and family institutions. Of course, relations between religious and family institutions are not consistently competitive. Often the relations are indifferent, particularly when they do not involve matters of substantial concern to both religionists and family members. And often the relations are cooperative.

Religious leaders and religious activists often see the institution of the family as an effective instrument for promoting religious interests such as winning over proselytes or increasing their religious community's power vis-à-vis the state's. At times they may pretend to be more interested in the well-being of the family than they really are because they deem it expedient to win the confidence and support of family members who are also actual or potential members of their religious community. Sometimes they forthrightly acknowledge that they must work with family members if they are to accomplish their spiritual, vocational, and worldly objectives. Sometimes they sincerely believe it to be their religious obligation to strengthen the institution of the family and help individual families to survive and flourish. And at times they regard the family as a full-fledged partner in striving to realize mutual ideals. In turn, many family members see religion as a device for strengthening their own family, their position in their own family, or the general quality of communal life. Furthermore, most religionists are family members, and countless family members are religionists; and it is clearly in the interest of these people to reconcile substantially their personal

religious and family commitments. Hence, there is ample incentive for devoted religionists and devoted family members both to cooperate with each other and to harmonize the religious and family dimensions of their own lives.

When there is tangible tension between religious interests and family interests, it may be prudent for the competitors to minimize or conceal that tension. This is likely a major reason why actual and potential competition between Biblical religion and the family receive less attention than actual and potential cooperation between Biblical religion and the family. Moreover, the term *cooperation* normally carries with it more positive associations than the term *competition*, though most people recognize on reflection that some forms of competition are beneficial and culture-enhancing while some forms of cooperation involve ignominious compromise. Contrast, for example, robust competition in the marketplace or in sports with traitorous cooperation with foreign invaders. Sentimental associations with religion, or the family, may incline one to believe that the term *competition* is not quite appropriate in connection with the institution. However, the term applies here in its most familiar sense and not merely in a metaphorical one; and in employing it here, I am cognizant of its distinctive implications.[2]

Since religion is largely a cultural phenomenon—in spite of the importance of direct relationships that individual believers perceive themselves as having with the divine or transcendent—it may reasonably be expected to be marked by the competition that characterizes less exalted cultural institutions,[3] a competition that has been the source of both good and evil.[4] Historical study of religion discloses myriad instances of interdenominational competition,[5] intradenominational competition,[6] competition between religious and secularist (and other secular) cultural forces,[7] and even competition between human beings and their gods.[8] Consider, for example, the competition obtaining between Christians and Muslims; Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians; liberal Christians and conservative Christians; Protestant denominations; clerics and lay people; Roman Catholic religious orders; socioeconomic classes within a denomination; theists and atheists; the church and the state; promoters of religion and media broadcasters indifferent toward religion; and God and his "stiff-necked" people Israel. Most forms of religious competition can be beneficial to the competitors and broadly culture-enhancing under certain conditions, but they must be carefully regulated by the competitors themselves or by impartial third parties so that they do not deteriorate into repression, violence, exploitation, and other forms and manifestations of corruption. Most forms of religious competition are not inherently destructive, but they need to be channeled and harnessed in constructive ways.[9]

The family is also a fertile field for competition. We may think back to Scripture's vivid characterization of relationships in the primeval and prototypical human family, as it draws attention both to fundamental tensions between husband and wife and to sibling rivalry. Competitiveness is treated in these passages as basic to family relationships; and this theme recurs throughout Scrip-

ture. If Scripture perhaps exaggerates the influence of competitiveness in family life—possibly as a tactic in Biblical religion's own competition with the institution of the family—the fact remains that unrestrained competitiveness is still often evident in relational patterns in seriously disturbed families, including some noted in the previous chapter, such as the perverse triangle. Still, competition within families can be as beneficial as fair and healthy competition in the marketplace, on the playing field, or in the arts and sciences.

Given that they are nearly universal forms of culture, we can see that religion and the family are potentially as close to being natural competitors as any two forms of culture could be. If they had nothing in common—and more specifically, no common interests and concerns—then there would be no field on which they could compete; but as we have seen again and again in the course of our investigation, they have a great deal in common, particularly with respect to matters of value. Thus, though Ferdinand Mount greatly overstates his point, especially in undervaluing authentic and important forms of cooperation between religion and the family, he effectively counters the widely accepted assumption that religion and the family are natural allies when he bluntly states that the family and the church are enduring permanent enemies involved in a perpetual struggle for power.[10]

The teleological tendency of cultural institutions, as of individuals, appears for the most part to be in the direction of increasing rather than relinquishing power; but tensions inevitably arise because any authority that one cultural institution or institutional leader enjoys is at the expense of others'. Notable in this regard is the symbolic application of the title of "father" to religious leaders (and sometimes other institutional leaders, such as the nation's "founding fathers"), which indicates among other things that the leader of the patriarchal, conjugal family is obliged to share his power and authority over other members of his conjugal family with leaders of larger communities to which they belong. Insofar as God is to be conceived as the supreme Father—our "Father in heaven"—the power and authority of biological fathers is comparably limited. Again, insofar as the Roman Catholic pontiff is to be regarded as the "holy father," the power and authority of biological fathers is further limited. And as the parish priest is to be known as "father," the power of biological fathers is yet further circumscribed. It is striking that at Luke 2:49, when Jesus declares that he must be about his "Father's business," he is directly responding to the questioning of his behavior by Mary and Joseph, and in effect disavowing any obligation to be accountable to them.

The division of power and authority among various cultural institutions and institutional leaders is undoubtedly beneficial in a number of ways for both the individuals who themselves belong to several communities—to a nuclear family, extended families, a religious community, political communities, vocational communities, socioeconomic classes, and so forth—and to some extent to the communities themselves. Under an effectively working cultural system of "checks and balances," there are cultural mechanisms operative in curbing

abuses of power and authority by any one cultural institution or its leader—abuses that endanger and harm vulnerable individuals, vulnerable communities (including particular families and particular churches), and vulnerable cultural institutions (such as the institution of the conjugal family and the institution of the community of believers). One may agree with the sociologist Georg Simmel, who follows Plato in this respect, that such a cultural "division of labor" is actually the corrective to competition rather than the consequence of competition insofar as it permits a "mutual yielding and simultaneous supplementing" in which each cultural institution or institutional leader "chooses a field and settles an area which has not yet been occupied by others."[11] However, as Plato observed, division of labor in the real world consistently falls short of this ideal, and power and authority, which are constantly pursued in highly competitive striving, are generally distributed in ways not contributive to the perfection of the *polis* or its individual members.[12] Furthermore, as Plato observes, the distribution of power and authority in the ideal community is still necessarily hierarchical; some institutions and leaders in the ideal community must have forms of power and authority that are in a crucial sense higher than those delegated to others.[13]

Viewed from a comparatively neutral cultural perspective—which admittedly is difficult to adopt given our personal situation and personal experiences with respect to the particular communities to which each of us has belonged—the nuclear family, patriarchal or otherwise, might well appear to be in need of having its power and authority checked by that of other cultural institutions, including religious ones. When, for example, a church intervenes in the affairs of a particular conjugal family or establishes norms that all conjugal families and family members are obliged to respect, it often is not merely manifesting or extending its own power and authority, but is also genuinely protecting the interests of individual family members, particular conjugal families, and the institution of the conjugal family. In doing so, it may also be serving the interests of other communities, such as the state, which have a direct practical interest as well as perhaps a benevolent one in promoting conjugal family life that fosters the moral development of individual family members. Therefore, a religious institution or any cultural institution, in checking the power and authority of some other institution, may be significantly serving not only its own interests but also those of the institution whose power and authority it is restraining, and those of other institutions in whose interest it is that the power and authority of that specific institution be checked.

The conjugal family, patriarchal or otherwise, is a rich field for abuse as well as for competition. Much of this abuse represents abuse of power and authority, particularly mistreatment of wives by husbands and mistreatment of children by parents, though mistreatment of fellow family members is obviously not always directly related to the delegation of power and authority within the family. In any event, regardless of how reluctant one normally may be to see external forces intercede in a conjugal family's affairs, one is apt to be relieved to see someone in institutional authority step in to protect individuals from serious

mistreatment by their fellow family members. Even many fervent advocates of patriarchal authoritarianism in our society do not condone the battering of wives and the violent abuse of children, and they may consider it the obligation of certain external powers to bring order to seriously dysfunctional families and, when necessary, to remove victims from those families and provide independently for their basic needs.

It is not solely because of mistreatment that can arise in conjugal families that external forces properly deem it necessary to limit the power and authority of the institution of the conjugal family and its dominant members. Even the conjugal family that functions so as to maximize the happiness and self-realization of all its members can pose a threat to other cultural institutions and the wider communities or "families" that those institutions represent. (Institutions like the state and the church are in a sense not "external" to the conjugal family, which, along with its members, belongs to these wider communities. However, those outside the conjugal family who act on a wider community's behalf, and all those in a wider community who do not belong to the conjugal family, can be regarded as external in another sense.)

A recurrent theme of both Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament is that interests of members of one's immediate family do not ultimately have priority over interests of wider communities such as the extended family, the nation, the community of believers, and humanity. On a cosmic level, preoccupation with the interests of immediate family members may also be seen as preventing one from fulfilling obligations to one's God. Even if one regards Hebrew Scripture as promoting excessive "tribalistic" or nationalistic particularism—or sees Hebrew Scripture as still assigning too much importance to the conjugal family itself—it remains that the Hebrew-Scriptural world-view regularly emphasizes that the long-term interests of several wider communities properly take precedence over the interests of the conjugal family as well as those of the individual. The New Testament, radically devaluing all biological kinship relations, carries this theme further and promotes a form of universalism (in tandem with a form of individualism) that in effect requires regarding devotion to members of one's conjugal family as (in a certain sense) spiritually subversive as well as socially dangerous. Scripture does not only teach that one is obliged to look beyond the interests of the conjugal family to the interests of cultural institutions representing wider communities; it also indicates that one is obliged to pay some degree of sympathetic attention to the interests of individuals in those wider communities. In this respect, Biblical-religious teaching is compatible not just with the teaching of other world religions, but with that of most secular ideologies, some of which are aggressively anti-religious.

COMPETITION IN THE EDUCATION AND FORMATION OF CHILDREN

External forces such as the church and the state act in various ways to contain the conjugal family for their own good, the family's good, the good of individual

family members, and the good of wider communities (including society as a whole). The methods they employ involve varying degrees of coercion, manipulation, and persuasion, depending largely on the specific forms of power and authority they have available to them at a given time. But their most effective means of control, at least in the longer term, is generally assumed to be a highly structured form of education; and formal education, not coincidentally, is frequently assumed to be that area in which the typical conjugal family's inadequacies are of greatest consequence. Cultural conservatives and liberals can agree that the rudimentary moral insights acquired in family life are of crucial importance, yet in spite of their loud disagreements about family values, they usually also agree that the typical conjugal family cannot be altogether relied upon to provide a thorough moral education. The field of education—and particularly moral education, or (as some would have it) education relating to values—is thus in a way the most decisive field of cultural competition between religion and the family (and between religion, the family, and other major cultural institutions, notably the state). Education is the most effective long-term means that external powers have available to them for fostering respect for their norms (and their authority), and simultaneously it is the aspect of family life that they deem it most important to influence. They may attempt to influence family life in many areas, including the regulation of marriage and divorce, the prohibition of untraditional sexual behavior, and the clarification of financial responsibilities; but education is unique in that the power they obtain over it is pivotal in fostering acquiescence to their influence in all other areas.

External powers educate family members in diverse ways—by means of literature, speeches, sermons, counseling, discussions, assignments, activities, and so forth; and, to some extent, different forms of education are appropriate for different family members. However, the institution in which the great majority of children receive their most influential formal education, the school, has always been recognized to be of particular cultural importance; and religious leaders, political leaders, and parents have usually been highly sensitive to their own need to ensure that their own concerns are respected as much as possible in the schooling process. While it may be beneficial to religious leaders, political leaders, and parents (and to the children) that they cooperate in various ways, these cultural forces are almost always at least vaguely aware that the other two forces with which they are cooperating are to some extent their rivals and have the potential to diminish the specific authority over children to which they believe they are properly entitled.

"To train character and mind," Santayana remarks, "would seem to be a father's natural office, but as a matter of fact he commonly delegates that task to society."[14] In delegating what is only part of that task to an external cultural institution—the school (which is, we should note, something rather different from society per se and may be, among other things, a religious institution or a secular one)—parents are rarely just being capricious, irresponsible, or submissive. They can appreciate that a school has much to offer their children that

they cannot provide; and they are understandably grateful to have been freed from some onerous and time-consuming obligations. In addition, they realize that their children will probably eventually leave home and have to find their way in the wider communities to which they belong and for which the school can prepare them in ways that family life cannot. Furthermore, Santayana suggests, the school in subtle ways can reinforce parental authority.[15] So here we might seem to have before us an example of perfect cooperation and division of labor between the institution of the conjugal family and the institution that administers the school.

However, parents can sense that their interests are of relatively limited concern to those who administer the school, who are considerably more concerned with their own institutional interests, the interests of the children, and the interests of wider communities such as a specific community of believers and society as a whole. Parents also realize that wider communities do not trust them to provide adequate socialization and enculturation for their children. They understand that it is widely assumed, as the psychologist Alfred Adler has explicitly maintained, that, "the school can guide the current of sociability in the individual child more easily than the family," and moreover, that, "the family is not always permeated with the social ideal."[16] Again, it is generally difficult for parents to educate their children for society because they "prefer to educate the children for their own sakes, and thereby they create a tendency which will conflict with the situation of the child in later life."[17] Adler concludes that, "To remedy this situation it is of course necessary to educate the parents," but "we cannot always lay our hands on the elders as we do on the children," and so, "The best point of attack is our schools."[18]

Religious leaders, of course, already held such views thousands of years before Adler expressed them in this way, and the historical ties between institutionalized religion and institutionalized schooling are clearly of momentous cultural importance. Biblical literature says little about the actual process of education, but the Bible has always been the chief "textbook" of most of the countless schools in the West operated under religious auspices—and even to some extent of most of the smaller number of schools operated under secular auspices—and Bible-centered religion has devoted much of its attention to pedagogy. Adler himself, who sees the school as "standing midway" between the family and wider communities,[19] has a great respect for the cultural value of religion. In sharp contrast to Sigmund Freud, from whom he dissociated himself, Adler holds that,

The best conception hitherto gained for the elevation of humanity is the idea of God. . . . The primal energy which was so effective in establishing regulative religious goals was none other than that of social feeling. This was meant to bind human beings more closely to one another. It must be regarded as the heritage of evolution, as the result of the upward struggle in the evolutionary urge.[20]

Interestingly, this man who has greatly influenced modern school psychology, though for many years an unbelieving Jew like Freud, became a Protestant in his mid-thirties. Freud himself, despite his low opinion of religion, was even more sensitive than Adler to the "conflict between the family and the larger community to which the individual belongs."[21] Indeed, Freud sees the family as an obstacle to civilization:

[O]ne of the main endeavours of civilization is to bring people together into large unities. But the family will not give the individual up. The more closely the members of a family are attached to one another, the more often do they tend to cut themselves off from others, and the more difficult it is for them to enter into the wider circle of life. The mode of life in common which is phylogenetically the older, and which is the only one that exists in childhood, will not let itself be superseded by the cultural mode of life which has been acquired later. Detaching himself from his family becomes a task that faces every young person, and society often helps him in the solution of it by means of puberty and initiation rites.[22]

The rites by which "society" helps the young person in this regard are, in fact, ordinarily associated with religious life and school life.

To the extent that they value the responsibilities and joys of personally educating their children, parents can scarcely avoid being somewhat uneasy about the critical limits that institutionalized religion and institutionalized schooling, often in tandem, necessarily place on the parents' role in the educational process. They may also be aware that these institutions have throughout history frequently attempted to minimize further the role of parents in the process. If Ariès' social-historical thesis is correct, then parents in the West have had greater cause to be concerned about this religio-educational competition since the eighteenth century, when the conjugal family took on new value in parents' eyes precisely because they were now struck by its significance as an educational institution. Even if Ariès greatly underestimates the degree to which parents prior to the eighteenth century had this understanding, as I think he does, the fact remains that at least since the eighteenth century, parents in the West have had ample motivation to be wary of the capacity of religio-educational institutions to usurp forms of educational influence which they believe properly belong to parents and other family members.

Moreover, in the eighteenth century, Biblical-religious leaders and functionaries had reason to be increasingly apprehensive about threats to their own educational influence, for they recognized that as a result of Enlightenment ideas and related ideas, the escalating liberalization of religion—which to some extent was accompanied by secularization—was resulting in increasing power of the secular state over the church in sundry cultural domains, including that of formal education. Thus, since the eighteenth century, religious leaders in the West have not just had to work harder to preserve their educational influence in the face of competition from parents, but have had to contend with increased competition

in this area from the state, which has benefited from the fact that many progressivist parents have come to place more trust in the state's administration of the schools than the church's administration of the schools, as is evidenced in the increasing importance of non-sectarian public schools.

Walter Lippmann, a student of Santayana who became a worldly-wise journalist, takes great interest in these matters. Mindful of the momentous cultural implications of the gradual "breakdown" of traditional forms of religious authority in modern Western societies,[23] Lippmann casts a discerning eye on modern cultural competition between Biblical religion and the family in the context of their complicated relations with technology, education, and politics. Biblical religion and the family do not compete in a vacuum; they are affected individually and in their relationship by developments in diverse cultural spheres. Recognizing the conjugal family as "the inner citadel of religious authority," the churches, "long after they had abandoned politics to Caesar and business to Mammon, . . . continued to insist upon their authority to fix the ideal of sexual relations."[24] In this area, however, the dissolution of their authority proceeded inexorably, not least because of the emergence of reliable methods of birth control that separated sexual life from parenthood and rendered it no longer subject to external regulation.[25] Hence, the churches have been required to concentrate on the influence they exert through their educational institutions:

[The churches] have kept the closest possible association with family life especially during the childhood of the offspring. . . . There presumably the very pattern of authority itself is implanted by habit, fitted to the model by the child's parents. . . . There the whole drift of experience is such as to make credible the idea that above the child there is the father, above the father a king and the wise men, above them all a heavenly Father and King.[26]

But in this area, the churches face competition not only from wary parents but from non-sectarian public education funded by the state with taxpayers' money. "Wherever churches are rich enough to establish their own schools, or powerful enough to control the public school, they make short work of the 'godless' school," for they understand that "the chief effect of the non-sectarian policy is to weaken sectarian attachment, to wean the child from the faith of his fathers."[27] Here churches and other religious institutions in pluralistic democracies find themselves increasingly disadvantaged. To maintain their power over families and their general cultural influence, they must persuade parents to support their religio-educational systems rather than attractive, non-sectarian alternatives; and since they want parents to cooperate with them in this decisive way, they must accordingly convince parents that they are prepared to cooperate with them, not merely in making a superior education available to the children but in curbing their own temptation to enhance their cultural influence at the parents' expense. Therefore, to compete successfully against rival institutions for cultural influ-

ence, institutionalized religion must enter into an awkward alliance with the conjugal family, conceivably its most powerful cultural rival.

COOPERATION AND COMPROMISE

The secular state is not necessarily a less formidable cultural rival of the family than institutionalized religion is; states can be as authoritarian as churches, and they have distinctive powers that churches do not. Nevertheless, even when modern parents have been wary regarding the state's power to meddle in family affairs, and even when they have endeavored to remain loyal to the religious faith of their ancestors, they have often maintained a judicious skepticism regarding unchecked ecclesiastical influence in education and other cultural spheres. It may not be competition per se when a church, state, or other external force, making use of educational and other powers, curbs the power and authority of family members "for the good of" the family members, the family itself, and wider communities; but the *paternalism* of these external forces—and this term is worth reflecting on—can be viewed less sympathetically. When churches and states ostensibly protect sundry individuals and groups from the dangers posed by families and family members, they normally do so according to their own standards, and even when those standards are respected or shared by other cultural institutions, they are not necessarily above reasonable criticism.

In addition, the motives that religious and political leaders have for intervening in family affairs may not be as pure and simple as they declare (or in some cases earnestly believe). Family values as perceived by a religious institution do not simply involve family interests, social interests, or moral interests; they necessarily involve religious interests, just as family values as perceived by a political institution necessarily involve political interests. Astute parents, religious or otherwise, realize these things. They may be willing to accept as legitimate the authority of external forces limiting their cultural influence, and they may feel that the cooperation given to them by those forces is authentic and beneficial enough to warrant their acquiescence. Yet an element of prudence is evident in continuing efforts to ensure that external forces like the church and the state can check the power and authority of each other as well as the power and authority of the conjugal family.

There is obviously no reason why religious leaders and functionaries should not be prepared to cooperate *on their own terms* with family members; but critical limits to their confidence in the institution of the family are evident in their alternately icy and heated responses to the behavior of parents, children, and families who refuse to accept the terms of cooperation that religious "authorities" have offered them. When parents, children, or families are openly disrespectful or even indifferent toward institutionalized religion—and particularly toward their society's most powerful religious institutions and certain values that, for any number of possible reasons, the leaders of those institutions

are striving to promote—religious activists routinely insist that it is the parents, children, or families that are being recalcitrant and uncooperative. They periodically encourage pious followers to take some form of constructive social action in dealing with parents who have shown themselves to be "unfit" and children who have shown themselves to be "unruly" by their rejection of institutional religion's terms of cooperation. In addition, they periodically run to such cultural rivals as the state and the media and attempt to induce them to use their own imposing cultural influence to prevent such unfit parents and unruly children from infecting other families with their "bad," "false," or "unsound" values. Politicians, journalists, and the like often resist attempts by religious activists to pressure and manipulate them; besides, they have their own interests, values, and agendas—personal and institutional—and they are frequently conscious of their own cultural competition with religious authorities whom they consider somewhat self-serving, self-righteous, and overbearing. Still, for diverse reasons they are sometimes prepared to cooperate in these matters with religious leaders and activists, who often can offer them attractive terms (and sometimes a "deal that they cannot refuse").

Religious activists are virtually dealing in platitudes when they stress society's obligation to protect innocent children from the corruptive influence of parents with unwholesome ideas and values, or they emphasize the prudence of society's strengthening the hand of decent parents in dealing with wild children who have no respect for sound values, or they observe that bad families can have a contaminating influence on good ones. However, these points do not establish that the terms of cooperation that institutionalized religion has, at a given time, offered family members are fair and reasonable ones. Parents, children, and families that show little if any respect for powerful religious authorities and certain values they are striving to promote may well be regarded as representing a significant challenge to religious institutions; but in many cases they can with equal justification be regarded as "good" or even "excellent" by sundry important criteria, including religious ones. Moreover, family members and society may have good reason to be concerned about the potentially corruptive influence of powerful religious leaders and functionaries on families, family members, and the institution of the family.

In a pluralistic democracy, parents, politicians, journalists, and others can often compete successfully with powerful religious leaders and functionaries because they enjoy a security that independent-minded people do not possess in a repressive theocracy. Knowing this, and desiring to prevent further erosion of their own cultural influence and the influence of the religious institution they represent, religious leaders and functionaries, especially those who realize that they are not particularly powerful, often calculatedly withdraw from direct cultural competition with parents and families—at least partly and temporarily—and enter into a more fruitful cooperation with parents and families than whatever kind had previously obtained. The more authentic cooperation that results is largely the consequence of the willingness of the clerical establishment to

negotiate or renegotiate the terms of its cooperation with parents and families. Such cooperation, normally involving compromises on both sides, is not "pure" cooperation based simply on recognition of the advantages of working together to accomplish a common goal. Rather, it is a kind of cooperation that reveals the more fundamental competition that preceded it. Religious officials are in fact capable of purer forms of cooperation with parents and families, including forms genuinely inspired by love of God and love of neighbor, but these forms of cooperation are not directly related to matters of power and authority. Those who enter into compromises are undoubtedly concerned in some sense with the "common good," but concern for the common good does not require neglect of one's own interests, including one's own power and authority. Again, even when religious leaders and functionaries are motivated by altruism in their dealings with conjugal families, they generally would prefer to be altruistic in their own preferred way and according to their own standards, without having to justify their actions to parents, politicians, and other interested parties.

In a pluralistic democracy in which there is substantial religious freedom, religious officials make all manner of "deals" with parents, children, and families. Some of these are simple, personal, and direct, but many are more complicated, involving, for example, tacit assumptions, political and legal tactics, and theological artifices. Generally, both sides have a broad idea of what they bring to the table and what they expect in return. Typically, the leaders and functionaries of a particular church (or comparable non-Christian religious institution) want families associated with the church to remain in the church (and want families not yet associated with the church either to join it or at least avoid interfering with its interests and objectives). They also want family members who remain in the church to conduct their lives as much as possible in accordance with long-established tenets and precepts of the faith, and they want them to show proper respect for ecclesiastical authority. They want them to be responsible and compassionate in their dealings with other people (if perhaps not *all* other people), and to bear in mind the special bonds involved in religious fellowship and family life and various special obligations that those bonds entail. They want children to trust and submit to the judgment of their elders in the church, particularly their parents and religious ministers and teachers; and they want parents to entrust to religious ministers and teachers a major role in the moral education and spiritual formation of the children. They want adult members of the family to support the church and its activities in various ways, including financially; and they want these people to promote the interests and objectives of the church outside the church as well as within it, in their dealings in the public realm as well as in their more personal affairs. They also want them to represent the church to outsiders in such a way as to enhance its dignity and appeal.

In exchange, family members who belong to the church want the clerical establishment to preserve and enhance the stability and effectiveness of a religious institution that potentially offers them distinctive forms of spiritual, emo-

tional, and intellectual satisfaction and fulfillment; affords them access to a distinctive and highly rewarding form of fellowship; reinforces their confidence that life is meaningful and worth living, particularly at times of personal and family crisis; furnishes them with ready access to reliable guidance concerning life's most important matters; offers moral education and spiritual formation, especially for the children; enriches the quality of their family life, particularly with respect to unity and harmony in the family; promotes their highest moral ideals in the public arena by saying and doing good things; brings them closer to the divine—possibly even enabling them to procure salvation—and sanctifies their lives and the lives of their loved ones, especially in the major events of the human life cycle, including death; and, for most people, enables them to express on a regular basis their affectionate devotion to their parents and ancestors, in whose faith they have chosen to live.

This sketch, rough though it is, draws attention to the germane point: the general expectations of both sides are typically extensive, enormously demanding, and enormously complicated, and they almost inevitably lead on a regular basis to concrete frustrations, disagreements, and resentments. The clerical establishment may well lament that most family members in the church do not work hard enough to keep up their end of the commitment. These family members often disregard or undervalue major precepts of the faith; exhibit insufficient respect for ecclesiastical authority; do not do enough to inculcate or reinforce in the children respect for the teachings and teachers of the church; subvert the influence of religious teachers on the children, particularly in leaving the children vulnerable to corruptive and distracting secular influences; do not give enough support to the church in terms of time, energy, or money; do not assign adequate importance to the church's interests and concerns when they participate in the political process; and so forth. Family members are often equally disillusioned. Children are frequently bored, perplexed, intimidated, and irritated by the religious demands being made of them, especially in light of the fact that these demands are often ancillary to more worldly demands being made of them; and they are further discouraged when they see that their parents and perhaps their religious ministers and teachers are not firm in their own faith— at least as the children themselves conceive the faith. Adult members of the church may be spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually dissatisfied. They may feel that many of their co-religionists do not offer them genuine comradeship, especially in times of personal crisis, and that religious leaders and functionaries are incompetent, insensitive, authoritarian, self-serving, unrealistic, naive, hypocritical, hypercritical, and judgmental. They may find that religious demands have been a disruptive influence in their family life, creating tensions between husband and wife, between parents and children, and between siblings.

More specifically, they may be uncomfortable with the church's injunctions concerning sexuality, birth control, and marital obligations; they may be disturbed by certain things that religious ministers and teachers are telling their children; and they may be troubled by irreconcilable disagreements within the

family over religious subjects. They may consider the church's financial demands and demands on their time and energy to be excessive. They may be embarrassed or angered by the church's public stand on certain political and social issues. And they may wonder whether their association with this particular church is really bringing them closer to the divine and sanctifying their life. Yet they may still be reluctant to break with the church, especially if it is the church of their parents and ancestors; and the clerical establishment is as reluctant to see them leave (unless they have been exceedingly disruptive influences), especially because it is likely that their children will follow them out of the church. So the two sides have ample motivation to make tangible efforts to accommodate each other's desires; and they have incentive to work together in changing the church so that it can accommodate the chief concerns of ecclesiastical authorities and family members in general.

Religious institutions must change to survive; accommodations of various kinds have to be made. Traditionalists can slow down the process of change and sometimes temporarily reverse it, occasionally even for long periods of time; but the general tendency in a society in which there is substantial freedom of thought and conscience is in the direction of liberal accommodation. Even powerful theocracies sooner or later have to allow for major accommodations.

Thus, in our own society we find religious officials making many kinds of concrete deals with family members—members of both nuclear families and the spiritual family of believers. The most prominent of these involve specific individuals with special circumstances that call for judicious flexibility on the part of the clerical establishment. One may call to mind, for example, dispensations that are granted—with attached conditions—to devout believers who want their marriage to an unbeliever to be sanctioned by their church; who desire release from an extraordinarily turbulent marriage; who have compelling reasons for wanting to have their children educated in schools administered under the auspices of another religious denomination or the secular state; or who long to communicate with children who have committed apostasy.

More important perhaps are the deals that have broader cultural implications, all of which involve the clerical establishment's looking away so as to "see no evil." These examples may be noted: (1) More and more religious leaders in the West accept and even encourage abandonment of rigid patriarchal authoritarianism in the home. They have had to deal in this area with frustrated wives and children and progressive-minded husbands. However, many of them have resisted a comparable extension of women's and children's rights in areas of religious service. Although their resistance disturbs many progressivist elements in their denomination, some progressivists are willing to look away and "see no evil," partly because they are grateful for the concessions that the clerical establishment has made respecting family life. (2) There has generally been decreasing pressure on parents to send their children to religious schools. Religious officials of mainstream Western denominations cannot fully accept the prevailing theory of the public school, which, as Lippmann observes, is inconsistent

with the teaching of those denominations.[28] Yet recognizing that there is a danger of their church's losing sincere believers who can do much good for the community of believers, and who may not warrant being denied salvation, many religious leaders, ministers, and teachers do not press this issue as much as they would once have. Instead, they impress upon parents that they have a compensatory duty in these cases to see to it that their children receive adequate religious instruction in other ways provided by the clerical establishment. (3) In response to criticism, mainly from the laity, that instruction in secular subjects is inadequate in church schools, some ecclesiastical officials have been amenable in recent years to raising the profile of those subjects in religious school curricula. There has been a corresponding effort to integrate secular knowledge into religious teaching, and the laity is not in a strategic position to protest. (4) Churches have generally been less vigorous in recent years in championing large conjugal families. Undoubtedly, this is partly a result of increased sensitivity to problems of overpopulation and partly a realistic response to recognition of the impact of the emergence of highly reliable birth control methods. Still, ecclesiastical leaders recognize that believers have varied reasons, some essentially prudential, for wanting fewer children than their ancestors did. Resourceful religious ministers find a way of reminding parents that some of the time, energy, and money saved by not raising a large family can be put to good use by their church.

In such cases, the clerical establishment may well seem to be doing the greater part of the compromising, and in the sense that this is true, it is probably what is normally to be expected in a pluralistic democracy, though periodically the laity itself is eager to give up some of its "gains." (Freedom may carry with it responsibilities that the typical member of the laity sometimes finds too difficult to bear.)[29] Nevertheless, we should not underestimate what ecclesiastical officials expect in return. Contented family members are invigorated in their commitment to their church, and they are more willing to summon up the patience and devotion needed for participating in ceremonial and other aspects of religious life that seem increasingly obscure to reflective people in an advanced society. To accept certain elements of religious life that earlier generations found it easier to accept is to make a concession that those earlier generations did not have to make. Many in the laity, I believe, are aware of this, and they also understand that if they undermine the authority of the clergy in these areas, the very survival of their church will be in jeopardy.

Similarly, they may be conceding more than earlier generations did in accepting clerical teachings on sundry sexual and family-related matters that they know are deemed by freethinkers and radical religionists to be austere or even masochistic. Radical religionists usually find, to their disappointment, that most of their co-religionists are reluctant to force too many compromises on the clerical establishment, for even when those co-religionists do not see religious leaders and functionaries as having the kind of authority that their ancestors believed, they still recognize that religious officials have a practical authority based on

the roles they perform in the religious community. It is also useful to remember that in their dealings with the conjugal family, religious officials are at least indirectly involved in interdenominational and intradenominational competition. What W. G. Sumner said almost a century ago still applies: "The churches and denominations are now trying to win something in their rivalry with each other by the position they adopt in regard to marriage and divorce and the family."[30] Hence, when religious officials enter into compromises with family members, they have this additional factor to consider in determining what and how much to concede. Most seem to understand that while the general tendency in a free society is in the direction of liberal accommodation, timing is crucial, and they have to weigh carefully the interests of actual and potential members of the church who have varying degrees of tolerance for change.

COMPETITION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN GOD AND THE FAMILY

Religious leaders and functionaries in the West generally see themselves as in some sense acting as God's terrestrial agents. It is hard to be humble under such circumstances; the great prophet Moses somehow managed to be humble,[31] but he was, after all, a remarkable man. When Bible-oriented religionists enter into competition in their capacity as "defenders of the faith," they may see themselves as God's champions, competing on the Deity's behalf. God, as Supreme Being, does not really need champions to defend him. Besides, even if it made sense to see oneself as competing in God's struggle against the heathens or the wicked, it would make less sense to regard oneself as competing in God's struggle against the state, pop culture, or the conjugal family. There are obviously different orders of competition involved here.

Still, Scriptural images of God's competitiveness are striking. God is not only Father and King but "Lord of hosts,"[32] and at a critical moment in revealing his will to Israel and humanity, he pronounces, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. . . . I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."[33] Most striking are the Scriptural images of God's competition with his human creatures, the creatures he made in his own image, after his likeness.[34] This imagery, with its weighty, existential implications, cannot be given here the attention it has received elsewhere,[35] but we may observe that by endowing human beings with freedom, God put himself in the position of having to compete with his own creations. Among important Scriptural passages in which God's competition with his human creatures is highlighted are the account of his relationship with Adam and Eve,[36] the passage relating how Jacob wrestles with an angel and earns the name of "Israel" (he who strives with God),[37] and the passage in which Moses is depicted as in effect explaining to God that if God were to annihilate his recalcitrant people Israel, he would be detracting from his own glory.[38] We may also be reminded by this last text of the many

passages in Scripture—perhaps most notably those in Genesis in which God is depicted explaining his covenant to Abraham—in which God, mindful of the autonomy that he has granted to human beings, enters into deals with them, offering them something that they want in exchange for something that he wants.

It is not easy for the modern reader to know precisely what to make of this anthropomorphism, whereby human beings have conceived God in their own image, after their own likeness. The highest reality, the Supreme "Being," is usually portrayed in Scripture as a personal being, albeit an extraordinarily and mysteriously spiritual one; and though there are places in Scripture where God is conceived as a more abstract spiritual presence or force, the God of Scripture is never conceived quite as abstractly as the highest reality is conceived in certain philosophical systems and Eastern religions. Insofar as he has, or is, a personality, the God of Biblical religion has much in common with the gods of religious mythologies that we now spontaneously assume to be exceedingly primitive. Of course, the God of Hebrew Scripture is the One God and for the most part an invisible God; and Scriptural characterizations of God are obviously highly symbolic, as indeed all characterizations of the divine or transcendent must necessarily be to some extent.

Whether one is a believer or not, one can see that the particular symbolism that Scripture employs to characterize God is profound in any number of ways and has certainly had profound consequences for Western civilization. However, the anthropomorphic symbolism that is inspiring and illuminating in some ways can be troubling in others. In earlier chapters we noted this in regard to the Scriptural image of God as Father, but it applies also to such images of God as King, Lord of hosts, a jealous god, one who competes with human beings, and one who negotiates with human beings.

In addition, philosophical and cultural problems arise not only because of particular interests and concerns that have been attributed to God, but because of the very attribution to him of interests and concerns. One can perhaps understand why Spinoza regards as primitive and irrational the idea that God, a perfect being, should need or want anything from his human creatures or any other source.[39] Other philosophers, including Charles Hartshorne, see the matter differently, regarding the essential attributes of God to be those which are abstract types of social relationship; according to this view, God's dependence on his human creatures is entirely consistent with his supremacy and absoluteness.[40]

While it would not make much sense to see oneself as God's champion in competing in God's struggle against the conjugal family, the Scriptural theme of competition between God and the family is significant, and reflecting on its powerful symbolism provides unique insight into competition between Biblical religion and the family. The competition between Biblical-religious functionaries and family members can be approached from a purely sociological standpoint, and indeed it has much in common with more familiar forms of religious competition, including interdenominational and intradenominational competition, as well as non-religious forms of competition, such as economic, athletic, and ro-

mantic competition. However, Scriptural symbolism provides theological insight into the phenomenon that both enhances our sociological understanding and is interesting in its own right.

In the New Testament, the theme is more explicit than in Hebrew Scripture. Although pious readers commonly overlook it, Jesus' devaluation of the conjugal family is central to the Gospels, and Paul is essentially just transposing it into another key when he expresses disdain for those who, by opting for family life, reveal that they care more for the things of the world than the things that belong to the Lord. Jesus himself is competitive not just in his dealings with hypocrites, money-changers, and their ilk, but with all who refuse to "believe" in him in spite of his offer to them of eternal life. The commitment he desires in exchange for this supreme gift is intimate, unconditional, and all-consuming. He condones family life only grudgingly and does not conceal his discontent with those who dilute their love of God and their devotion and commitment to God by concerning themselves with the interests and affections of their close relations. In the New Testament, Jesus is not merely an anthropomorphized god but has the concrete form of a human being. The people he encounters interact with a being who has human features and human emotions and can be related to in somewhat the way that they relate with other human beings. Unlike the God of Hebrew Scripture, Jesus suffers in a way with which readers find it relatively easy to empathize. On this level, it is easier to relate to his resentment and jealousy—and his competitiveness and his willingness to negotiate to realize his objectives—than to his heavenly Father's. Furthermore, the New Testament does not temper these attributes of the God of Hebrew Scripture; instead it goes on to portray the Father as, for some utterly mysterious reason, requiring the agony and death of his Son.

The Son, however, can be seen to be following a significant pattern established by his heavenly Father. When the Gospels depict Jesus' characteristic compassion as abruptly drying up in the presence of commonplace family affection, one may be inclined to explain this away as the result of esoteric Greek and Hellenistic influences contaminating Hebrew Scripture's naturalistic, profamily vision; but alternatively, one may discern here the reflected jealousy and competitiveness of the Father, who despite assigning immense value to procreation is noticeably deeply troubled by the existential preference of most of his human creatures to love each other more than they love him. Nowhere is Jesus more unequivocally faithful to the spirit of Hebrew-Scriptural teaching than when he draws attention to "the first and great commandment": "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."[41] "With *all* thy heart and *all* thy soul": in a pivotal sense, there is nothing left for others; one should love one's neighbor as oneself, but this precept, presented virtually as an afterthought in a Leviticus code and reiterated by Jesus in such a way as to emphasize its subordination to "the first and great commandment,"[42] is strikingly ambiguous with respect to how much self-love is appropriate. As for love of members of one's conjugal and other biological kinship families, it conspicuously is not

explicitly enjoined in the same way, though filial *obedience* and the "*honoring*" of parents are distinctly commanded. If one has to love anyone other than God and oneself, it is safer that it be a neighbor than a parent, child, sibling, or other near kinsman.

Scripture, to be sure, regularly assumes love between family members to be natural. Although it frequently draws notice to tensions, frustrations, and animosities within conjugal and extended families, it does not obscure the fact that family affections are generally strong and often the strongest that one human being can have for another, even when blended in complicated ways with other sentiments. Just as philosophers, social historians, social scientists, and sociobiologists must, Scripture has to acknowledge the vital importance of forms of bonding and nurture associated with conjugal family life. It should not be hard to see how parents can be God's rivals for a child's affection. Procreation is a form of creation.[43] When a man and a woman bring children into the world and nurture, sustain, and educate them and guide their moral, spiritual, and cultural formation, they may be seen as extending the work of the divine Creator and Sustainer; but the existence of parents is not a matter of faith as is the existence of a transcendent being. Human beings may come to believe that they have been created in God's own image, after his likeness; but believers and unbelievers alike understand that they have been created in their parents' image, after their parents' likeness. They look in the mirror and contrast their behavior with that of other people's children and realize that their parents have "created" them in more ways than one. If they forget, people will remind them: "You have your mother's eyes"; "You walk just like your father"; "You have your mother's warm personality"; "You have your father's bad temper"; "Your mother must have taught you that."

For most people, one of the first lessons learned in life, if not the first, is that nurture proceeds primarily from one's parents. Bonding, of course, works both ways, as parents normally feel a powerful affection for the creatures they have brought into the world, an affection that many of them see as directly corresponding to their affection for their own parents. In this regard, children are God's rivals for their parents' affection. Through one's parents, family affection spreads to siblings and other relations, and this affection can come in time to be greater in its own way than that between a particular parent and child. And of course, the affection between husband and wife can be extremely strong, involving distinctively intimate bonds related to sexual association, enduring companionship, procreation, shared parenting, and so on. Thus, God has yet more rivals for human affection. Even when family members have little affection for one another, they may have a concern for one another that diverts them from devotion to God.

Meanwhile, one may be told by family members and others whom one trusts of a heavenly Father, a loving Creator and Sustainer, but even if one believes in such a being, one realizes that one's belief is a matter of faith, whereas conjugal family members maintain a concrete presence in one's formative years

and usually long after. Of course, family relationships can be strained and some-
times horrific; but relationships between God and mortals are often strained, too,
and at times they also may well seem horrific. The problem of theodicy weighs
heavily on the mind of any thoughtful believer and is consistently one of the
strongest incentives to unbelief. The theodicy problem receives noticeable at-
tention in Scripture, particularly in the Book of Job, but it receives considerably
less attention in Scripture than does the justifiability of God's exasperation with
his human creations.

When Hebrew Scripture depicts God as pronouncing that he is a jealous god
who will not allow the Israelites to have other gods before him, he is not directly
competing with other gods or idols; for though God occasionally demonstrates
his superiority to the false gods and graven images *invoked* by foolish people,
Scripture generally assumes throughout that the supernatural forces that are in-
voked by the ignorant and wicked either do not exist apart from human con-
ception of them—being literally or figuratively "graven" and having been
created by human beings themselves—or are supernatural spirits over whom the
One God has complete and absolute control. (Dualistic, polytheistic, and heno-
theistic elements may be discernible in some passages of Biblical literature, but
the Hebrew-Scriptural world-view is essentially monotheistic.) A jealous God's
anger is directed not at such weak "rivals," existent or not, but at the "hatred"
of God manifested by human creatures who have not returned his love and
devotion. In keeping his promise to Abraham, in liberating the Israelites from
bondage in Egypt, and in innumerable other ways, he has shown his people
Israel that he merits not only their respect and gratitude but their devotion,
loyalty, commitment, and faithfulness; and in other ways, he has demonstrated
to all humanity that he merits devotion. But love of God on the part of most of
these people is inconstant. Their devotion is regularly divided between God and
other spirits, real or imagined; and God is thus required to compete indirectly
with those other spirits for the devotion of the human creatures he has endowed
with freedom. These spirits are not directly competing with God, whose power
is irresistible; but human creatures, of their own free will, allow themselves to
be drawn to them. And of all the spirits to whom human creatures are drawn,
none generally are more attractive than the spirits—living and dead—of one's
family relations. God's competitiveness is thus channelled into impressing upon
his children that he and he alone is deserving of their highest devotion; and he
is accordingly required to enter into competition with the spirits—living and
dead—of those to whom individuals tellingly refer in everyday discourse as
their "loved ones."

Scripture provides impressive accounts of God's triumphs over his enemies
and over the enemies of his people Israel—the enemies of God's intimate people
having themselves also come to be perceived as God's rivals—and these ac-
counts are cautionary as well as inspiring; for if Israel desires God to remain
devoted to his intimate people, it must in turn remain whole-heartedly devoted
to God. God is prepared to forgive and even overlook much of the faithlessness

and backsliding of his people, but only up to a point; beyond that point, indulgence toward Israel detracts from his glory and in a more personal way is simply too much for him to bear. Although God is seen as on occasion miraculously intervening in human affairs, the larger part of reinforcing Israel's and humanity's devotion to God falls to his terrestrial agents, first and foremost the prophets who communicate God's Word, and secondarily the innumerable leaders and functionaries in the monolithic religious institutions that have taken it on themselves to transmit, promote, explain, enforce, and apply divinely revealed beliefs, precepts, and values.

Depending on how observers broadly conceive the origin and ultimate import of Scripture, they will see this sacred literature as exhibiting to one or another degree a human contribution to its formation and cultural establishment. Now, whether or not the primary form of false worship that Scripture condemns is a primitive ancestor worship that (for reasons considered earlier) it is plausible to believe was prevalent among the ancient Hebrews prior to the advent of monotheism (and recalcitrantly asserted itself even after the cultural triumph of monotheism in Israel), it is clear that the prophets and their widely recognized institutional successors have been greatly sensitive to the disloyalty to God that is inevitably the consequence of people's preoccupation with pleasing, appeasing, and generally expressing and evidencing affection and concern for "familiar" spirits. The prophets and those widely accepted as their institutional successors have also understood that preoccupation with immediate family interests and certain extended family interests inhibits an individual's commitment to wider communities or "families," such as all Israel, humanity, or the spiritual-ecclesiastical community that represents the mystical body of Christ. These wider communities are, of course, the purportedly more important families in which God's earthly agents exercise their authority in God's name.

Disloyalty to God has thus been seen as mirroring disloyalty to one or another of God's intimate peoples, of which a conjugal or even a typical extended family is necessarily only a microcosmic component. Indeed, from a purely cultural perspective, the microcosmic family's disloyalty to God can be regarded as a symbol of its disloyalty to the wider communities or families in whose concerns increasingly advanced societies take growing interest.

Yet Hebrew Scripture itself recurrently emphasizes the importance of biological kinship relationships, including those with ancestors and future generations. It assigns great importance to the need to reverence ancestors in an appropriate way, one categorically different from that in which one reverences God, but vital nonetheless. It encourages those who would be faithful to the terms of the covenant to see beyond the interests of immediate relations and to look back with affection and respect to their ancestors and to look forward with a sense of responsibility to future generations. Mainstream Judaism, perpetually building on these rudimentary, ancient values, is essentially more pragmatic as well as more naturalistic than Christianity in this regard. Hebrew Scripture's devaluation of the conjugal family is more subtle than the New Testament's, and no au-

thoritative Hebrew prophet would dream of scoffing, as Jesus did, at those fulfilling their responsibilities to bury a father and bid farewell to loved ones at home.[44] The Hebrew prophets saw it as necessary to conceive of love of God in such a way that it could be strengthened rather than attenuated by family affection. They correspondingly realized that the family devotion which limits devotion to wider communities can also be used to reinforce devotion to these higher families.

Jews, like so many other peoples, have maintained through the centuries a deep reverence for ancestors, on at least an abstract level, and that reverence is evident in Judaic liturgies and a number of Judaic rites. This reverence, which we may presume to be directly related to affection for conjugal family members, particularly parents—either as an extension of that affection, an inspiration for that affection, or alternately both—is crucial to the survival of traditional Judaic beliefs, precepts, and rites and of Judaism as a world-view and way of life. One does not need to associate this reverence with the form of reverence connected with totemic and related practices in order to appreciate the delicacy of prophetic monotheism's task in establishing a modus vivendi between reverence for God and reverence for kinsfolk. However, as Ernst Cassirer has observed, when one considers religion in cultures as disparate as those of the ancient Romans, the Chinese, and American Indian tribes from Alaska to Patagonia, one may reasonably come to conjecture that close to the heart of religion itself is a profound sense, a "general sentiment of life," that there is an association of paramount personal, cultural, and cosmic importance between personal destiny, family intimacy, life after death, cosmic order, and the sacred.[45] If religion is in fact to be understood as to some extent a cult of immortality, as Unamuno has argued,[46] the life after death with which it is concerned is perhaps not just a personal, individual matter, but rather a phenomenon that can only be fully comprehended—and is indeed in various ways rendered possible—through one's relation to deceased relatives, whose unique spiritual world one is destined to enter in some way after one's own passing from this life.

Judaic eschatology involves a nebulous and confusing combination of diverse themes, all hazy in their own right, and the obscurity with which eschatological subjects are approached in mainstream Judaism is not entirely unintentional. Notwithstanding the emphasis that Hebrew Scripture recurrently places on the immortality of the "race" and a corresponding form of personal immortality related to being "remembered" by posterity, the Jews, both prior to the ascendance of prophetic monotheism and after the establishment of the Scriptural canon, speculated about souls and spirits; and some of their ideas in this area undoubtedly have figured significantly, if largely unsystematically, in their eschatology—some explicitly sanctioned by Rabbinic tradition and some operative in Scriptural literature itself.

In spite of any efforts to repress ancestor worship and to limit the effect of certain family bonds in attenuating devotion to God and wider communities, the prophets must have sensed at times that impressing on individuals the impor-

tance of their duties to God, the tribe, Israel, and humanity would require taking into account the unique concern of individuals with the destiny of their loved ones. It is widely accepted in modern Judaism that God can be seen as having entered into an arrangement with individual Jews whereby he will himself "remember" and look after the souls of departed loved ones of those who are authentically faithful to him. Under the terms of this special "covenant," worshipping departed loved ones is not only unacceptable but unnecessary, inasmuch as proper reverence is shown to the deceased by entrusting the care of their souls to the One God who is alone to be worshipped. It is entirely appropriate, and indeed obligatory, to remember and in some cases honor departed parents, children, siblings, and ancestors, and to display publicly in religious rites and elsewhere an abiding regard for their spiritual well-being and a respect for their contributions to one's own well-being and the well-being of wider communities and posterity. This is a divinely sanctioned and spiritually therapeutic means of expressing affection for them and compensating them for any ingratitude one may have shown them in this life. (One may perhaps additionally see the spirits of deceased ancestors as being *propitiated* by certain rites and prayers.) On this level it is necessary to have some vague conception of a personal immortality that involves more than simply being remembered by posterity; but our own immortality matters less in this regard than the immortality of our departed loved ones.

God can conceivably be seen as holding our departed loved ones hostage and demanding our faithfulness to him as a condition of their relative well-being; but one is hardly in a position to love God if one regards him as primarily an instrument for promoting the interests of loved ones, living or departed. Thus, viewed more positively, what is happening here is to be understood as family business on a cosmic scale. God provides us with an opportunity to remember and honor the departed not only by worshipping in their faith—the faith that they did much to inculcate in us—but by participating in rites that simultaneously express reverence for him and reverence for our departed loved ones. God himself, Father of fathers, cannot be appropriately regarded as an instrument, for his relationship with us and with our departed loved ones is ideally based on love rather than power; our love for God is ideally to mirror to some extent the love that we hope God will continue to have for us and for our loved ones— a love that in turn mirrors the love which obtains between close family relations, partly given freely and unconditionally, but also partly to have been earned.

Were Judaism not capable of affording this opportunity to modern Jews, it is possible that Judaism could not survive in a modern, pluralistic democracy, for secularists can be as convinced as religionists that they achieve a kind of personal immortality through their contributions to posterity. Jews predisposed by their distinctive culture not to dwell on the destiny of their own soul are equally predisposed to reverence their departed loved ones; what most consistently draws assimilated Jews back to synagogue life is not the promise of a purely personal salvation but the opportunity, psychotherapeutic if not otherwise effec-

tive, of ritually remembering their departed loved ones—as they themselves may hope, though only as a secondary consideration, to be remembered by posterity. Of course, God's covenantal arrangement offers the well-being of one's posterity as well as one's ancestors. In the Decalogue, a jealous God does not threaten to visit the iniquity of those who hate him upon their false gods and idols but upon their "children unto the third and fourth generation." The familiar corollary applies: if one wants God to love one's descendants, one had better make an effort to love God at least as much as one loves them.

In theory, Christianity, with its radical devaluation of biological kinship relations, directly challenges Judaism regarding these matters. The New Testament vividly depicts Jesus admonishing the would-be disciple who wishes to bury his father: "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."[47] Yet for all of the power of the New Testament's personal eschatology and soteriology, Paul's letters implicitly acknowledge in places that devotion to biological kinsfolk—those who still walk the earth and those who do not—is not just one more of many "things of the world" and that family relationships, though in a crucial sense attenuating concern for the things that belong to the Lord, must in another sense be regarded as sanctified if the kingdom of God is to be established. With his own canny pragmatism, Paul sanctions the necessary accommodations, and later Christianity not only draws attention to the value of faith as a means for revering departed loved ones, but stresses that it is the faith of the "fathers" living still. Unable to eliminate the family devotion that represents existential and cultural competition to devotion to God and religion, mainstream Christianity, like Judaism, ends up teaching that devotion to God and religion is the definitive means of attending to the interests of loved ones, and it reinforces this vision with an image of a long line of ancestors cooperating with God, his earthly agents, and the church.

However, again this is a kind of cooperation that reveals the more fundamental competition that preceded it. According to both Hebrew-Scriptural and New Testament understanding, God—both directly and through respect for his terrestrial agents and agencies—summons undiluted, unconditional devotion that is necessarily attenuated by resolute devotion to loved ones. Accommodations are made only because they have to be. Comparable accommodations must be made with regard to other cultural institutions, most notably the state: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."[48] Patriotism, love of country, is a powerful rival to both love of God and love of family. In the ancient Hebrew theocracy and its Christian counterpart in the High Middle Ages, harmonizing loyalty to the state with devotion to God and religion was a less complicated affair, but long before the emergence of Christianity, the challenge was already apparent; and in a modern, pluralistic democracy, reconciling divided loyalties is all the more difficult. Resourcefulness makes some degree of conciliation possible, but the conciliation is always a tenuous one.

What is involved here is not merely conflict but genuine competition, "the

striving of two or more for the same object."[49] One can be devoted to various things at the same time, and devotion to one thing can in some ways reinforce devotion to others; but having divided loyalties entails weighty existential and cultural implications. Biblical-religious faith can usefully be conceived as commitment to a world-view,[50] but in another sense it is a direct commitment to a personal God and the individuals whom one regards as directly entrusted by God with authority in spiritual matters. Regardless of what accommodations and compromises it is required to make, prophetic religion cannot surrender in theory (and thus ultimately not in practice either) its vision that love of God ultimately transcends love of family, love of country, and every other form of love. Religious "cults" such as the Unification Church are routinely condemned by mainstream Bible-oriented religionists and others for destroying family relationships,[51] but in undermining those relationships they are merely applying new methods—and some very old ones—in carrying out a strategy that was applied by ancient religious sects, and most notably Christianity.

From a utilitarian perspective, one of the most appealing features of religion is that, in providing individuals with the fellowship of a broad community of believers and with confidence in divine compassion, it enables them to cope with both unhappy family relationships and the death of loved ones. But religious leaders and their most dedicated followers cannot regard religion's role in this respect as purely instrumental or merely a matter of personal circumstances. Competition for the individual's devotion is competition for a limited resource; and for the authentic believer, trust in God is necessarily and perpetually paramount. As bewildering as God's design may be to them, particularly with respect to the theodicy problem, believers must somehow be able to conceive God as being perfect in a way that even the most loving parents cannot be, and the imperfections of parents are sometimes painfully transparent to those they brought into the world. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."[52]

NOTES

1. Cf. Jay Newman, *Competition in Religious Life* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989); *Religion vs. Television: Competitors in Cultural Context* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996); *Religion and Technology: A Study in the Philosophy of Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

2. Cf. Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, ch. 1.

3. Ibid., pp. 48–52.

4. Ibid., pp. 40–48.

5. Ibid., ch. 3.

6. Ibid., ch. 4.

7. Ibid., pp. 192–98.

8. Ibid., pp. 202–7.

9. Ibid., pp. 101–46, 174–80, 211–16.

10. Ferdinand Mount, *The Subversive Family: An Alternative History of Love and Marriage* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982), pp. 1–4.

11. Georg Simmel, *Sociology of Religion* (1905), trans. Curt Rosenthal (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 53.

12. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 543a–592b.

13. Plato, *Republic* 374d–376c, 427c–434d.

14. George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (one-volume edition) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 107.

15. Ibid.

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31. Numbers 12:3.

32. Isaiah 6:3.

33. Exodus 20:3, 5. Cf. Deuteronomy 5:7, 9.

34. Genesis 1:26–27.

35. Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, pp. 202–7.

36. Genesis 2:16–17, 3:1–23.

37. Genesis 32:24–30.

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42. Leviticus 19:18. Cf. Matthew 22:39.

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44. Luke 9:58–62.

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7

Cultural and Existential Significance of Some Divided Loyalties

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THE RELEVANCE OF INDIVIDUALITY

In the context of all this cultural and cosmic dynamics, the dignity and autonomy of the individual human being may seem of little consequence. Indeed, sundry cultural critics and reformers across the entire ideological spectrum, from far "left" to far "right," deem it fitting at times to denounce "individualism," which they often uncritically identify with egoism. Yet some of these very people at other times explicitly or implicitly defend a form of individualism, as when praising bold personal initiative or affirming the importance of civil liberties. The term *individualism* is highly ambiguous. People in Western democracies generally agree that individuals matter a lot, but those who give much thought to the subject disagree about how much individuals matter—relative to social units, in particular—and in what ways they matter. Meanwhile, most people who actually regard themselves as individualists acknowledge that in some ways certain social units matter more than individuals. These considerations about how much and in what ways certain things matter indicate that we are again in the domain of value theory.

In the forms of cultural competition and cooperation that we considered in the previous chapter, individuals matter a great deal. They can be seen as the elemental components of the communities striving for their devotion; and though communities can be conceived as having an existence apart from the individuals who constitute them, in a sense they cannot exist without individuals. Individuals sometimes can withdraw completely from social life, though they are normally social creatures; yet they enter the world as a result of a social union, and since their initial existence depends on procreation and nurture, there is a fundamental sense in which they cannot exist without social life.

Gods, religious leaders, political leaders, other cultural leaders, and parents and other relatives seeking implementation of their designs all must wait on the initial and continuing acceptance of their authority by individuals who can be relatively obedient or recalcitrant, ardent or indifferent, trusting or wary. In virtually all social units, including most religious communities and nuclear families, efforts are made by individuals to inspire or reinforce devotion to them (and to various other individuals), and to influence other individual members of the social unit to act in accordance with their ends; and even when individuals are being led to devotion to something comparatively abstract, such as a community, a spiritual ideal, or an invisible God, it is simultaneously the case that concrete individuals are influencing them to be devoted to concrete individuals. For example, when a church encourages a family to be faithful to divinely inspired ideals, what is typically involved is the endeavor of specific religious functionaries to induce individual family members to behave in particular ways in their dealings with certain other individuals, including the religious functionaries themselves.

While the personal interests and aspirations of concrete individuals are often treated as inconsequential relative to communal concerns, and people with effective authority in religious communities, states, and nuclear and extended families commonly succeed in inducing individual members of their community to make great personal sacrifices for what is ostensibly the good of the community as a whole (or that of several communities), it is normally the case, particularly in relatively free societies, that the personal interests and aspirations of individuals cannot be consistently overlooked or taken lightly. There may well be a moral imperative for communities and their leaders to address the concerns and aspirations of individuals. Even a social unit that can consistently effect, over time, immense sacrifices on the part of many of its members periodically must address strong moral arguments raised within (or outside) the social unit that draw attention to the community's obligation to meliorate the situation of certain disadvantaged individuals. Obviously, some communities and leaders are more appreciative of sound moral arguments than others. For example, while some ancient Bible-oriented religionists, on several levels of community or "family," must have realized that there is something wrong with fathers abusing their children, the acceptance of patriarchal authoritarianism in their various communal cultures was a critical obstacle to their dealing ethically with an individual child's needs. But Bible-oriented religionists in a modern pluralistic democracy, even when committed to a form of patriarchal authoritarianism, usually acknowledge that the interests of an abused child—and of abused children in general—demand direct, effective action on the part of one or more of the communities to which they and the children belong. They know that if their religious community cannot or will not take effective action, the civil state may do so; and many of them actually look primarily to the state to protect the individual on this level.

We are also reminded here that communities and their leaders may have a

prudential interest in addressing the concerns and aspirations of individuals. People not motivated by moral conviction or compassion may nevertheless deem it expedient for a community to which they belong to see to it that the problems of certain discontented individuals and groups are addressed. Such individuals and groups, after all, are potentially useful to the community. Furthermore, communal leaders who condone victimization may leave themselves vulnerable to potent criticism from their cultural rivals—both within and outside the community in which they exercise effective authority—and their callousness may provoke defections from the community's ranks and lead to institutional instability that jeopardizes their own leadership and the very survival of the community. Dissatisfied adults normally have much more power to respond effectively to their victimization than children do; but the persistence of exploitation and persecution has been a salient pattern in just about every known culture in world history, and the most resourceful adults may ultimately find themselves as vulnerable as children. Abusive spouses and parents and bigoted, self-serving, and callous political and religious despots and manipulators are obviously not consistently given to conscientious moral or prudential reflection, and even at their most earnest and most discerning, they often conspicuously fail to summon up the will and wisdom necessary for doing the right thing. And, when they see that their oppressive treatment of helpless individuals and groups is not being checked by other cultural forces in any of the several communities to which they belong, they are emboldened in their misuse of power.

Yet history provides myriad examples of the overcoming of oppressive forces by victimized individuals and groups and those taking a benevolent or prudential interest in their plight. Those who find a particular instance of persecution intolerable often find that there are other individuals and groups prepared to work together with them to check that persecution. In stable democracies and even some authoritarian systems of social organization, procedures for securing certain interests of individuals—including a substantial measure of personal autonomy—have become institutionalized and are periodically enhanced and extended. So despite the discouraging persistence of exploitation and persecution, it is plain that in a number of ways the dignity and autonomy of individual human beings remain important, even in communities in which systematic efforts have been made to suppress or minimize them. Of course, authoritarian leaders normally strive to protect and enhance their own personal autonomy as well as their communal influence, which they insist are essential to the community's achievement of proper objectives; and more generally, in spite of the influence of enculturation and other determining factors, there is a sense in which communal concerns are basically determined by individuals. In this sense, the "collective mind" of a community is rendered possible by the cultural contributions of individual minds.

Consequently, in considering the relations of Biblical religion and the family, it is not enough to consider the competitive, cooperative, and other relations that obtain between them as isolated cultural institutions or forms of culture, or

even to consider their relations to each other in a broader context involving their relations to other cultural institutions or forms of culture (such as the state, technology, or philosophy), or to consider all these multifarious cultural relations in a still broader context involving their relations to natural phenomena. Our view is exceedingly narrow, philosophically at least, if it does not also consider the relations of Biblical religion and the family with respect to the existential situation of the individual. We should not undervalue the impact of enculturation and other determining factors, but from an important perspective, practical as well as existential, what most directly concerns us here is not culture or community as such but the significance of cultural and communal matters for us as individuals participating actively in various forms of cultural and communal life.

Those participating vigorously in competitive, cooperative, and other relations between (and within) religious and family institutions—and between these and other cultural institutions—might well be regarded as hypocritical for decrying individualism while concurrently working to promote their own personal ideals in one or more communities, and working in effect to impose their personal will on more passive individuals. However, they may insist with some fairness that it is not purely personal ideals they are striving to promote, but rather the higher ideals of God, inspired leaders, ancestors, and more important communities on whose behalf they see themselves acting as agents. They may believe that they have tempered or even sacrificed their personal autonomy for the sake of higher causes with which they have come to associate central purposes of their life— that they have in effect given over their personal will to the service of a higher will or reconceived their personal will to render it conformable to a higher will. Nevertheless, they still substantially act as individuals, and no matter how abstractly they conceive the general causes they are championing, they simultaneously see themselves as furthering the interests of various individuals, typically including themselves, those they strive to influence, and those for whom they see themselves as acting as agents (such as God, ancestors, and leaders and fellow members of one or more communities). They are often aware that when they participate in cultural struggles within and between communities, the situation of many individuals may be at stake.

When these people make a point of criticizing some sort of individualism, they are not necessarily being hypocritical and demanding that others temper or sacrifice their individual autonomy in a way that they themselves are not prepared to do. They may be drawing attention to what they perceive as every individual's responsibility to avoid egocentric autonomy by assigning proper weight to specific obligations that can be understood as following from one's having important relations with other individuals who are fellow members of one or more communities to which one belongs (such as the nuclear family, the community of believers, the nation, humanity, and the divine-human family). They may also see specific obligations as following from the individual's direct relations with communities; and they may assign paramount importance to what they regard as obligations following from the individual's relationship with God.

In addition, they may be underscoring the obligation of communities themselves to consider the concerns and aspirations of other social units and not merely those of individuals. For example, they may be expressing their anxiety about what they regard as the state's obsession with safeguarding individual autonomy even at the expense of seriously weakening social units such as the nuclear family and religious communities.

The concerns and aspirations of all individuals, including avowed egoists, are consciously and unconsciously influenced by the concerns and aspirations of specific individuals and groups with which they have had close relations. Even the most self-willed, independent-minded agents, in addition to having been influenced by irresistible forms of enculturation, indoctrination, and conditioning, freely accept a personalized version of ideals that they have come to grasp through their association with individuals and groups for whom they reserve special affection or respect. Moreover, one ordinarily learns early in life that one relies on other individuals for diverse forms of support, including emotional support involving mutual affection; that there are numerous reasons why one is not free to do whatever one wants; that one is concerned about whether one is positively regarded by at least certain other individuals; that it is sometimes expedient to compete with other individuals and sometimes expedient to cooperate with them; that there are causes for which it is worth making great personal sacrifices; that what one is and what one can do have been determined to some extent by factors beyond one's control, including one's having been born into social and classificatory groups that it is extremely difficult (if not altogether impossible) to leave in the course of this earthly life; and that one can derive considerable satisfaction from being helpful to others.

EXISTENTIAL AUTONOMY AND PERSONAL DEVOTION

Strong-willed, independent-minded individuals normally disagree with those given to criticizing individualism about what cultural and communal considerations an individual is obliged to weigh when settling on personal concerns and aspirations, a personal value system, and a personal world-view. These individuals need not be egoistic and unmindful of responsibilities to others, nor need they refuse to acknowledge the impact on them of determining factors, including factors related to their association with specific individuals, groups, and communities. Their personal relationships and communal affiliations may have enormous value in their eyes, and they may deem it appropriate or desirable at times to act as agents on behalf of others, or to make sacrifices for others. Yet they characteristically have a strong self-awareness, recognizing through both introspection and comparison of themselves with other individuals that they have an individuality or personality that is distinctive, capable of development, and dependent largely on self-determining abilities that can be applied creatively, intelligently, and conscientiously. As important as family, religious, and other social bonds may be to them, they deeply sense that their identity as individuals

involves more than simply belonging to a distinctive set of specific social units. They assign great importance to their existential autonomy, their capacity to determine to a significant extent what they are, what they are to do with their life, and what "meaning" their life has for them. Obviously, individuals who assign great importance to their existential autonomy are apt to regard it as a fundamentally personal, existential matter to integrate into their personal value system any specific commitments related to the claims they find being made on their devotion by various competing and cooperating forces, including family members and families, religious leaders and religious communities, politicians and states, ancestors and tradition, posterity, and God.

Although people generally in everyday life do not seem to find the concept of an "individual" and the closely related concept of a "person" to be problematic, unusual circumstances may arise in which the complexity of the concepts becomes apparent, and in fact, the philosophical literature on these concepts (and related concepts such as "personal identity," "self," "soul," and "mind") is massive.[1] When considering "existential autonomy," we are more obviously in philosophical territory, but even concepts such as "freedom," "responsibility," and "authority" may be considerably more complex than they normally appear to be in everyday discourse.[2] This is not the place for exploring the metaphysical complexity of the concept of an "individual" or any of the other concepts just mentioned, but given our interest in the relations between the individual and certain specific social units (families and religious communities), we may recall that we noted in our examination of Hebrew-Scriptural texts that, while the ancient Hebrews and other ancient peoples with whom they came into contact had a metaphysical conception of the individual (or a number of metaphysical conceptions of the individual), they probably did not have an existential conception of the ordinary individual entirely comparable to that which most reflective people in modern Western democracies take for granted. While they may be seen as having been capable of commitment to individualism in several ways, it probably would have been considerably less apparent to them than it is to most people in modern Western democracies that the individual rather than some form of family is, in an important sense, the fundamental unit of society.

Yet we also noted ways in which something akin to a modern, existential understanding of the human situation can be seen as manifesting itself in various Scriptural texts, particularly in the importance attached in those texts to personal moral responsibility; spiritual commitment as a personal act; the ability, right, and obligation of individual human beings to communicate with the Divine and even question divine judgment; the nobility of personal achievements; the need to make vital choices and conscientiously live by them; and the creative intelligence, courage, and integrity of thoughtful, visionary, high-minded figures who are able to rise above the small-mindedness of the crowd and the herd.

Individuals are not born with intuitive awareness of their individuality or existential autonomy, and infants have no will at all. Yet individuals in the modern world, like their ancient ancestors, are born into families and other

communities that have immense influence on the development of their conceptions of individuality and existential autonomy. As the philosopher Collingwood observes, these are important facts for students of the human condition, particularly those interested in culture and community:

To be free is to have a will unhampered by external force, and a baby has none. To be in chains is to have a will hampered by something which prevents it from expressing itself in action; and a baby has none. A man is born a red and wrinkled lump of flesh having no will of its own at all, absolutely at the mercy of the parents by whose conspiracy he has been brought into existence. That is what no science of human community, social or non-social, must ever forget.[3]

A newborn may actually be at the mercy of people other than parents, and parents do not always exactly "conspire" to bring children into the world. The relevant consideration, however, is that in spite of whatever sense in which the individual has metaphysical or biological priority over social units constituted by individuals, individuals develop a sense of their individuality and existential autonomy only after being born into families and other communities. Infants could neither exist nor survive without other human beings, and we may reasonably speculate whether they could ever develop a sense of individuality and existential autonomy without some form of enculturation.

According to the philosopher George H. Mead, whose ideas have influenced several schools of contemporary social-psychological theory, the family is not only the fundamental unit and form of human social organization—of which all other units and forms of human social organization are "merely an extension and ramification"[4]—but a primary source of the concept of the self.[5] In Mead's view, the selves of individuals can only arise in terms of a social environment, and the social process of experience and behavior is logically prior to individuals and their individual experiencing.[6] The family is uniquely important in this regard, as it is likely that the attitudes of the family are conditions of the specific situations out of which selves arise.[7] Once selves have arisen, there is then the possibility of further development of society in terms of the complex phases of social organization to be found only among humans.[8] Neither the selves of individuals nor complex phases of social organization could emerge directly out of a herd or out of the family as it exists in forms lower than the human.[9]

Mead is not simply thinking here of the individual as an organism but as a being capable of self-consciousness and expression. The evolution of civilized human society from primitive human society has been based on the progressive liberation of the individual self, and with this evolutionary development, there is in turn greater scope for individuality—"for original, unique, or creative thinking and behavior on the part of the individual self within it or belonging to it."[10] However, even in the most highly evolved civilization, individuals reflect, in the structures of their selves or personalities, the general, organized pattern of experience and activity of the social life-process in which they are involved,

and the self or personality is essentially a creative expression or embodiment of that pattern.[11]

Mead's theory is highly speculative and somewhat arbitrary in its handling of key terms and concepts; and more importantly, as valuable as his perspective may be, it is only one perspective on phenomena that can usefully be viewed in other ways. For example, despite what Mead says, it is sometimes useful to recognize that social units cannot exist without "individuals." Mead's ideas are useful, however, in drawing attention to how complex the metaphysical and causal relations between individuals and social units may conceivably be; to how significant it may be that the self-awareness with which we associate existential autonomy arises only after one has been born into a family and other communities; to the special importance of the family in enabling one to develop that self-awareness and existential autonomy;[12] and to a certain priority of the family to more complex forms of human social organization such as religious and political communities.

Mead's ideas also indirectly draw attention to a significant paradox regarding cultural advancement. We have noted several times in this inquiry that the advancement of civilization associated with ground-breaking religious thinking appears to be directly related to the broadening of people's conceptions of which communities (and their members) are to be regarded as warranting sympathetic, respectful consideration. Thus, other things being equal, a community is to be regarded as more civilized than another if it sees individuals and groups beyond the immediate family as meriting sympathetic, respectful consideration. It is even more civilized if it sees those beyond extended families as meriting such consideration. It is still more civilized if it assigns great importance to the concerns and aspirations of all human beings, and so on. For example, Hebrew Scripture may be seen as having great moral import in stressing that one should look beyond narrower family interests to the interests of wider families such as all Israel or humanity itself; and the New Testament may be seen as having great moral import in undermining "tribalism." Yet ironically, the advancement of civilization also appears to be directly related to the progressive liberation of the individual self and the development of existential autonomy. Hence, the progressively civilized human being is one who simultaneously has a heightened and expanded awareness of commitment to others and an intensified awareness of the individuality and personal autonomy that set a cultivated person apart from all communities and all other human beings.

We can see on reflection that in addressing matters related to devotion, loyalty, and commitment, communities and existentially autonomous agents alike endeavor to resolve this tension in any number of ways, according to their circumstances, their understanding, and their interests. The issue, as we have seen, naturally arises with respect to tensions between loyalties to the various communities or "families" that an individual is being encouraged to perceive as "my own" to the point of regarding the concerns of those communities as "personal" concerns.

Consider in this respect the distinctive form of radical, egoistic individualism that Feuerbach and others associate with New Testament teaching—with its devaluation of traditional familial and communal relations and its recurrent emphasis on personal salvation. Admirers as well as detractors of Christianity emphasize this radical individualism, which has been of particular interest to modern Christian existentialists like Berdyaev (to whose views we shall return shortly). Christianity promotes a distinctive form of individualism; but while endeavoring to liberate its followers from various forms of familial and communal loyalty, it attempts on another level to foster broad concern for one's fellow human beings, and especially fellow members of a spiritual community of believers. The sociologist Simmel has noted the tension between Christian individualism and Christian communitarianism and humanitarianism. He sees the very individualism of the Christian conception of personal salvation as "misunderstood"—along with the New Testament theme that everyone is to make the most of his or her distinctive natural gifts—because institutionalized Christianity "has insisted on a homogeneous conduct for everybody, instead of letting each be himself. All conformity is contrary to personality."[13] But this has not been a mere misunderstanding, and indeed, this kind of tension does not arise within institutionalized Christianity alone. Rather, it is a general kind of tension that Christian culture, like every advanced form of culture, attempts to resolve in its own way.

Nietzsche, a radical individualist who has greatly influenced subsequent existentialist thinking, refuses to turn to Christian faith as do Pascal, Kierkegaard, and many twentieth-century existentialists; and he also rejects the ideal of individuality promoted by John Stuart Mill and other liberal thinkers who are prepared to accept some progressivist understanding of Christianity. Inveighing against Christianity for its promotion of herd-morality and slave-morality, he insists that authentic individualism cannot be reconciled with the communitarianism, humanitarianism, and conformism that institutionalized Christianity, deviating from Jesus' radical, individualistic vision,[14] recurrently emphasizes—thereby building on what is worst in Hebrew-Scriptural teaching while rejecting what is most profound in it. "Egoism belongs to the essence of a noble soul."[15] The authentic individualist—the authentic individual—must distance himself as much as possible from intimate relationships and communal affiliations: "Not to cleave to any person, be it even the dearest—every person is a prison and also a recess. Not to cleave to a fatherland, be it even the most suffering and necessitous. . . . Not to cleave to a sympathy, be it even for higher men."[16] In this view, the higher man, the authentically autonomous individual, has no place for devotion to communities and their leaders and members, no place for devotion to humanity, none even for devotion to loved ones, and certainly no place for devotion to a God. "*The noble soul has reverence for itself.*"[17]

All this is easier said than done. Nietzsche himself could not entirely suppress his devotion to his mother or even his troublesome sister. Despite his atheism, a peculiarly religious sensibility pervades his work, and in the final analysis he

is a prophet, exhorting autonomous readers to join him in striving to advance the human "type." Thus, he too endeavors to resolve the tension between individuality and devotion to something that transcends the self; and his resolution, as he recognizes, is no more definitive than Christianity's. Besides, his resolution is impractical, and not even a bold, visionary thinker like Nietzsche can do without intimate personal bonds—and in his case, for that matter, without readers with whom to share his conviction in the importance of immutable ideals worth sacrificing for. For Nietzsche, as for the rest of us, there is a fundamental existential problem of how to balance our devotions, of which devotion to the "self," important though it may be, is inevitably one among others.

The Christian existentialist Berdyaev offers a fresh perspective on these matters and gives special attention to the relations of the individual, the family, and the church. As an existentialist, Berdyaev assigns cardinal importance to the individual's existential freedom, but unlike Nietzsche, he sees authentic Christian faith as compatible with this freedom. Berdyaev, however, judges both the family and institutionalized Christianity in terms of their influence on existential freedom; and while acknowledging their utility to the individual, he is severe in his criticisms of both. At the heart of his stern critique of institutionalized Christianity's approach to sex, marriage, and love is his indignation at ecclesiastical interference with affairs involving the most intimate aspects of personality.[18] The blame ultimately does not lie specifically with religious community as such, but with conventional community:

In the life of the community what is personal and intimate becomes socially regulated and the individual has to answer to society for feelings and actions which have no reference to it and have a social bearing in their consequences only. The result is that no other sphere of life is so vitiated by hypocrisy and cowardice.[19]

Any third party that interferes in the erotic love between man and woman is intrusive,[20] and the ecclesiastical leadership's traditional approach to love, which has been shallow and ignorant, has sacrificed personality to the family and society. The "sacrament" of marriage is incomprehensible and a trap; the prohibition of divorce is one of the most cruel things that can be done to a human being; conventional Christianity has vitiated the life of sex and of the family with empty, legalistic formulae that have resulted in some of the worst miseries of human existence.[21] Berdyaev is as severe in his criticism of the institution of the family, which he sees as belonging to the realm of the herd-man. While the institution of the family has some degree of spiritual depth and meaning, and can certainly lighten the sufferings and burdens of life, it enslaves the individual as much as it liberates the individual, and inevitably comes into tragic conflict with the individual's vocation and spiritual life.[22] Monogamous marriage and the monogamous family are thoroughly unnatural, and the rules laid down by religious and other communities to impose them on human beings are dehumanizing. Especially detrimental to the dignity of spirit and personality has been

the propaganda that the essential moral purpose of the union between man and woman is procreation.[23]

Still, Berdyaev looks with admiration to what he regards as the authentic Christian morality that has been perverted by ecclesiastical tradition. In his view, true Christian ethics is personalistic;[24] central to Gospel teaching are the repudiation of conventionalism and legalism, the prioritizing of spiritual concerns over naturalistic and utilitarian ones, the focus on meliorating the suffering of individuals, and the emphasis on the priority of the individual to any form of community, including the church itself. The family as a social institution is bound up with the institution of private property,[25] and when the church enters too closely into cooperation with such institutions, it inevitably compromises its own integrity. Again, while sometimes an individual has to flee to the warmth and closeness of the family, "one ought sometimes, in accordance with the Gospel, to leave one's father and mother, husband and wife."[26] The individual needs communal life in its principal forms, including family, sociopolitical community, and religious community; but of these diverse communities, only religious community is essentially concerned with the spirituality directly related to individual personality, so that when religious communities enter into unholy alliances with their more utilitarian rivals, they impede their essential role of furthering the spiritual liberation of the individual.

Although marred by overgeneralization and overheated rhetoric, Berdyaev's critique raises interesting possibilities. Berdyaev sees conventional Christianity as traditionally cooperating with the family, and he even concedes that to some extent it has to cooperate with the family, which, while belonging to the realm of the herd-man, is a practically necessary institution and, moreover, one not entirely lacking in spiritual significance. However, when the church cooperates too closely with the family, it interferes with its own primary role to promote spiritual liberation. If it is to avoid becoming too much like other communities, it must to some extent compete with those communities by steadfastly maintaining its commitment to the priority of the spirit and of personality. An authentically spiritual community is not like other communities, and when it deals with them on their terms, it not only becomes like them but enters into conspiracy with them against the autonomous individual.

Notwithstanding his negative comments about the family and his Nietzschean association of it with herd-morality, Berdyaev tempers his position in a number of ways. He is enough of a realist to recognize that we must make some concessions to human nature, to the individual's natural history and utilitarian needs; and in this respect he is as pragmatic as the apostle Paul, and even the church Fathers whom he dismisses as shallow and ignorant. Furthermore, he is as much a Christian as an existentialist, and unlike Nietzsche, he refuses to see individualism as entailing egoism. Neither is he an aristocratic radical, concerned only with the projects of higher men and convinced that the ordinary person is to be regarded as a mere instrument for the higher man's achievement of noble purposes. Berdyaev will have none of Nietzsche's rhetoric about every person being

a "prison" and a "recess"; he recognizes that personal devotion is central to personal autonomy and that personal relationships are spiritually enriching as well as practically necessary. The warmth and closeness that the family can offer are not simply needs of the herd-man, but have spiritual significance. Berdyaev allows that intimate relationships which are not spoiled by "third parties" are authentically personal and free. As a Christian, he sees authentic freedom as directly related to love and devotion, and he regards erotic love between a man and a woman as of utmost importance, on a mystical level and not only a utilitarian one. He cannot fail to recognize that a personal relationship, no matter how intimate, is also social; and he can hardly ignore the fact that all affectionate relationships between family members are comparable in some ways to the loving relationship between a man and a woman, to which they are at least indirectly related.

Thus, he can see that the family is capable of being a locus of intimacy in a way that the herd cannot; so too can a spiritual community of believers. In addition, Berdyaev extends this understanding to his view of the personal, intimate, concrete, loving relationship between the individual and God, so much so that in his vision of that relationship,[27] God nearly ceases to be transcendent. Berdyaev realizes that he must make a place in his world-view for devotion and love as well as individuality and freedom, and must account somehow for their correlation. He is keenly aware, however, of the existential problems that arise for the individual concerning what kinds of devotion, to whom and to what one is and ought to be devoted, and in precisely what proportions. He further believes that while Christianity at its most profound has tried to help the individual to address these existential problems, and that while it may be seen to have solved them "in principle," nevertheless, "in practice the tragic conflict remains and can only be solved through experience and creative effort."[28]

The idealist philosopher Josiah Royce is also interested in the relations of individual autonomy and devotion, and like Berdyaev he assigns great importance to the role of higher forms of religion in providing a basic framework in which those relations can be ordered. His general view, however, is very different from that of Berdyaev and existential thinkers. Royce appears to believe that religious and other cultural devices have historically been largely effective in reconciling individuality with devotion, and he believes that modern problems have arisen only because of a confusion: "The loyalties of the past have lost their meaning for many people, simply because people have confounded loyalty with mere bondage to tradition, or with mere surrender of individual rights and preferences."[29] For Royce, loyalty is of the highest personal and cultural importance and is essentially a kind of devotion; his basic definition of *loyalty* actually characterizes it as "the willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause."[30] (For our purposes in this inquiry, the distinctions that one might usefully draw between devotion and loyalty—or attachment, allegiance, commitment, faithfulness, fidelity, and so on—are of no great importance.) Royce acknowledges the value of individuality but, unlike existential

thinkers, refuses to regard individuality per se as a paramount ethical and spiritual concern: "We want more individuals and more rational individualism; but the only possible use of an individual is to be loyal. He has no other destiny."[31] Perhaps for this reason, Royce is not as troubled by the institution of the family as Berdyaev is, and unlike Berdyaev, he sees it as crucial in the realization of the individual's "destiny," inasmuch as, "The first natural opportunity for loyalty is furnished by family ties."[32] Family ties begin as natural, but for the reflective individual they inevitably take on existential significance: "The family ties, so far as they are natural, are opportunities for loyalty; so far as they are deliberately chosen or recognized, are instances of the choice of a loyalty."[33]

Religion does not compete with the family on this level, but rather builds on the opportunities for loyalty that family ties offer. It provides the opportunity for the consummate form of loyalty, which is "the Will to Believe in something eternal, and to express that belief in [one's] practical life."[34] Religion in its highest forms can in fact be understood as "the interpretation both of the eternal and of the spirit of loyalty through emotion, and through a fitting activity of the imagination."[35]

Although Royce's ideas have been received with sympathetic interest by some Christian existentialist thinkers, notably Gabriel Marcel,[36] Royce is evidently oblivious to the historical and enduring tensions that concern Berdyaev. From Berdyaev's perspective, those who affirm the preeminence of individual autonomy are not simply confused; individuals are not to be conceived of, as mere instruments, in terms of their "possible use"; devotion is primarily to other personal beings, not abstract causes; the family enslaves individuals as much as it liberates them; and religion, even at its most enlightening, is unable to guide the truly autonomous individual to a definitive reconciliation of loyalties to self, family members, leaders and fellow members of other communities, and God.

Berdyaev would likely endorse George P. Fletcher's observation that, "Missing in Royce is the sense of tragedy that inheres in conflicts of loyalty, tragedies born of fissures in the historical self."[37] However, something that Royce and Berdyaev both appear to undervalue is the role that division of loyalties plays in enhancing existential autonomy. The critical point here is that the more aware one is of one's divided loyalties, the more appreciative one is likely to be of the potential efficacy of personal judgment and decision making in the determination of how loyalties are to be balanced in one's personal value system.

Moreover, the more numerous and more complex the competing loyalties one takes into account, the more extensive and more elaborate is the material one has available to be weighed as one periodically (or at critical moments) assesses and then confirms or rebalances one's various personal commitments. Granted, on one level, the more numerous and more complex one's personal loyalties, the more obligations one may feel required to take into account, and each of those obligations represents in a sense a constraint to autonomy; but on another level, the more extensive and more elaborate one's personal loyalties, the more

options one has available when constructing a personal value system, and thus the more individualistic one's judgments and decisions can be.

THE REBALANCING OF PERSONAL LOYALTIES

Even if the only social unit to which one belonged were a nuclear family, one could still have competing loyalties to weigh with respect to proportionately how devoted one is, or ought to be, to the various members of one's family, including the "self" (as narrowly conceived). Reflective people often find themselves having to make such judgments: how much one is prepared to sacrifice, under specific circumstances and with respect to one's narrower self-interest or the interests of other family members, for a volatile spouse, troublesome teenage child, or disabled elderly parent; how much one ought to sacrifice under those circumstances; which family member one's personal devotion disposes or obliges one to support in a critical family dispute; and so on. There is a "tragic" dimension to many conflicts of loyalty that elicit such judgments; and people sometimes are unable or unwilling to make those judgments. An authentically free and responsible individual will normally acknowledge the gravity of these conflicts and attempt to deal with them conscientiously.

The tragic dimension of the conflicts relates in part to an anxiety that recurrently accompanies the realization that one is, to a great extent, a self-determining being; and there can hardly be a much more critical form of self-determination than that involved in reflecting upon comparatively how much value one should assign to whomever and whatever one is inclined to be devoted. A personal value system involves more than an ordered set of loyalties, just as a personal world-view involves more than a value system (and a personal way of life involves more than a world-view); but an individual's ordered set of loyalties is a dependable index of what matters most to that person in life.

The nuclear family is not the only social unit to which one belongs, and in an advanced society, one belongs to many communities and groups, all making some claim on one's personal devotion. Within those communities and groups, various leaders and other individuals, often competing with each other, make further claims on one's personal devotion. In this study we have been concerned primarily with families and religious communities (and their leaders and other members), though we have considered other communities, mainly political ones. Yet an individual may be devoted in some measure, great or small, to a community or group defined by vocation, avocation, gender, sexual preference, language, race, ethnicity, and so on; and one may be devoted to another individual whom one does not identify with any relevant community or group. One may be devoted to a community or group to which one does not belong, but with which one empathizes or identifies. One may be devoted, perhaps above all else, to a deity or other spiritual force that one may or may not associate with a particular religious community; and despite Berdyaev's demurral, one may intelligibly be said to be devoted to a cause or a complete abstraction. And of

course, one may be devoted to any among countless permutations and combinations of these multifarious objects of devotion.

Individuals exercise and strengthen their existential autonomy when conscientiously making judgments and decisions regarding to whom and to what to be devoted and proportionately how much in each case; and when conflicts of loyalty arise, as they often do, they normally elicit judgments and decisions intended to contribute to their resolution. Some conflicts of loyalty have a tragic dimension, while others may seem routine. The weighing that people do to resolve them only rarely takes the form of precise, mathematical calculation, but under any circumstances it may as fittingly be regarded as a matter of values as anything else treated as such in familiar media controversies concerning values.

Devotion, we have observed, is not always entirely a matter of free choice; as other aspects of personality and behavior are, it is influenced by a broad range of determining factors, and it is sometimes wholly determined by such factors, as in the most direct forms of indoctrination and conditioning employed by authoritarian regimes, and the most subtle methods of indoctrination and conditioning employed by scientific public-relations specialists.[38] It may be that there are few situations in which devotion is wholly a matter of free choice, and in some situations in which it appears to be so, particularly in instances in which people find it exceedingly difficult to explain their devotion, it is likely that the determining factors at work have not been detected. The sociobiological, depth-psychological, and other determining factors only partly understood, even by scientists, are obscure enough in their own right, but those who attempt to manipulate the devotion of others have practical reasons for concealing some of the methods they employ.

Our loyalties are of great importance to us in satisfying diverse needs and desires and in helping us to organize our lives and find meaning and purpose in our lives, but our loyalties are also important to others, most obviously to those who receive or seek our devotion, but also to many who do not, including those third parties that Berdyaev takes to be intrusive. For example, one may have any number of moral and prudential reasons for inducing people to be more devoted to their spouses and children or to the leader of their religious community, even though one belongs to neither their family nor their religious community. People who attempt to mold the loyalties of others often believe, rightly or wrongly, that they are doing so partly, if not largely, for the good of those they are trying to influence.

In the case of children, such molding is routinely justified on the grounds that minors have not yet developed the cognitive and other abilities necessary for exercising genuine existential autonomy; children need to be educated with respect to loyalty as with respect to manifold other matters. Of course, the "education" that children receive concerning loyalty is often manipulative propaganda that to some extent exploits the children and hinders the development of their existential autonomy. The manipulation of the loyalties of adults, though usually less obvious, is often comparable to that done to children insofar

as it proceeds on the assumption that those unable to see this manipulation for what it is are incapable of exercising genuine existential autonomy. However, often those who seek to inspire or intensify a certain loyalty earnestly appeal to the reason of those they are attempting to influence, including sometimes children. When they decline on principle to resort to force, deception, propaganda, manipulation, and sophistry, they typically reveal their genuine confidence in what they are promoting, as well as a significant degree of respect for the dignity and autonomy of those they are trying to persuade.[39]

We are thus reminded that in spite of the power of heterogeneous factors in determining personal loyalties, existential autonomy is indeed possible in this area precisely because of the capacity most people have for certain kinds of reflection—prudential, moral, philosophical, spiritual, and so forth. These forms of reflection involve a wide range of abilities that are capable of sustained, disciplined development, including logic and rationality, introspection and self-understanding, concentration, objectivity, empathy, emotional self-control, and the ability to interpret and employ various types of symbolism, and generally to appropriate cultural creations. The knowledge that one attains by means of such abilities enhances both the content of reflection and the reflective processes themselves. At some point in childhood, most people become capable not only of making significantly individualized, personalized judgments and decisions about devotion and other matters of value, but of deliberately resisting inauthentic forms of "education" that are intended to indoctrinate and condition them at the expense of their dignity and autonomy. Nevertheless, many people make limited use of these capacities. Much of the "herd-man" remains in all of us; at times, we are all easily intimidated, not just by those who would exploit us, but by our own anxiety in taking on ourselves responsibilities that come with self-determination. Life can be easier when other people make judgments and decisions for us and hand us cultural "values" in neat little packages. Our emotions and appetites frequently overpower our reason; and we often judge that the price of being independent-minded is too high when it renders us displeasing to our fellows, particularly those we need to please—those who have great power over us and those to whom we remain devoted.

Still, the awareness of a conflict of personal loyalties that most people in advanced societies first experience in early childhood is a vital, and possibly indispensable, condition of the individuality and autonomy that throughout life enable reflective people to take significant control over their lives, not least by personally weighing and rebalancing loyalties to the individuals, communities, causes, and abstractions that they find making a claim on their personal devotion. This weighing can involve any number of considerations, many of which recurrently arise in some general form in prudential, moral, spiritual, philosophical, and other kinds of reflection. Such considerations are regularly indicated not only in the writings of philosophers, but in most great works of literature, and certainly in Scripture and other works of sacred and spiritual literature. Apart from any other authority they may have, these works are authoritative for

reflective readers because of the evident seriousness with which they address a subject matter of existential import; but in a sense they can no more "give" a set of "values" to a reflective reader than to an unreflective one. There is a sense in which authentic values can only be derived through reflection; the values in books are the values of the authors, and values that are taught are the values of the teachers, but even in earnestly endeavoring to appropriate those values, readers have to accommodate them to their own understanding, which is constantly developing as a result of their own experiences, circumstances, maturing capacities, and increasing knowledge. Those who do not permit their understanding to develop significantly are barely involved in the process of valuing. The values of a healthy, civilized culture are vital values because they are constantly being refined, clarified, and enhanced through the reflective processes of the individuals who contribute to culture. Respect for the values of our noblest ancestors and the noblest ancestors of our fellows can be a constructive personal and cultural force, because we can build on the insights of those who merit our devotion; but civilization is only possible if people have comparable respect for the vital values of the living, a respect which requires culture to be open to the contributions of those conscientiously involved in valuing in the world of the living. These contributions are only possible if individuals have confidence in their reflective powers, are committed to cultivating those powers, and are able to exchange their insights in authentic dialogue.

If some of the speculations we considered earlier are correct, then among the ways in which the ever-evolving institution of the family remains an institution of enduring worth (to those who have good reason to be devoted to it), some of the most important are in its contribution to the emergence of the self, and the patterns it establishes which make possible the development of higher forms of social organization in which its members can participate. Also important are the natural and cultural opportunities the family furnishes for the fundamental understanding and experience of the devotion or loyalty which, in its diverse forms, assists and perhaps enables the individual throughout life to find personal meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in human existence. In these ways, as in others, the family, when not thoroughly dysfunctional, is a genuinely educational institution, providing mental as well as physical nurture. However, a child is born into several social and classificatory groups, and in an advanced society, a child ordinarily is born into many such groups, which despite their interrelations are conceptually distinct; traditionally, among the most important of these are a religious community and one or more political communities.

Those who directly provide nurture in the child's earliest years are in effect the child's first gods. They are the supreme beings in the child's life—the sustainers, protectors, teachers, and authorities. Yet sooner or later the individual recognizes limitations of those who first provided nurture; and the child's first gods usually accept with relief the maturing child's insight into their limitations, for though they may want to remain sustainers, protectors, teachers, and authorities on some level, they know that they are not gods, and they understand

that for many reasons it is in their own interest as well as the child's that the child recognize some of their limitations.

Even at its most robust, the family is too frail an institution to bear the entire burden of culture, and its leaders are mortals who will inevitably decline and pass on; and so the child, who is expected to take on the responsibilities that come with maturation, must at some point recognize the importance of looking beyond its first nurturers for enriching relationships. The child is typically encouraged to be devoted to religious and political communities, to ancestors and posterity, to higher spiritual forces, to humanity, to ideals, and so on. The child comes to realize that those who first provided physical and mental nurture are cognizant of their own limitations and look to wider communities and higher authorities to sustain and guide them and acknowledge their accomplishments. The child also comes to see that the leaders of the immediate family are accountable to wider communities and higher authorities for many things, including the way they bring up their children. In time, a conflict of loyalties must arise, as the child inevitably is led to make critical judgments. No matter how devoted family members have been, and regardless of how intimidating wider communities and higher authorities can be, the child comes to realize more and more clearly that its first sustainers and guides are imperfect beings who, even at their most selfless, have imposed their somewhat arbitrary will on the child, and in any number of ways limited the child's autonomy and chances for fulfillment.

There is a cultural world beyond the immediate family, and the maturing child encounters individuals and groups within wider communities who plainly have some excellent qualities that even the noblest loved ones lack. Moreover, the cultural world beyond the family directly penetrates family life in many ways, and traditionally, most significantly through religion. In religious aspects of family life, the child sees family members looking to higher authorities and conceding how much they themselves fall short of being the ideal types represented and held up as models in sacred imagery. The cultural world beyond the family penetrates family life in its secular aspects as well. For example, the child comes to see that family members are expected to be loyal to the state, and that this loyalty requires them to limit their devotion to family members and even to religious authorities, ancestors, higher forces, and the "self" narrowly conceived. On this level, family life offers the child its first opportunities for disloyalty— or at least the moderation of an earlier loyalty—since the child recognizes that loyalty to one's loved ones and first nurturers cannot be absolute. In addition, the child almost inevitably at some point enters directly into forms of communal life beyond the immediate family, and develops personal relationships with new role models and objects of respect and affection, including professional teachers, religious ministers, other community leaders and functionaries, generous and impressive parents of classmates and friends, and of course, members of the peer group who inspire devotion and whose devotion it is desirable to elicit.

Under these conditions, the devotion to family members that was once purely

natural or determined becomes, as Royce says, a matter of choice; and having become a matter of choice, an expression of a developing existential autonomy, it is spiritually more meaningful to both the individual who chooses and those toward whom the individual's devotion is now to some extent freely directed. Although the child's devotion to family members is no longer absolute or even paramount, it is now based on more authentic forms of respect, gratitude, and obligation, involving as it does the child's keener discernment of qualities and actions of family members that merit devotion. This discernment does not arise in a void; and the devotion to one's first nurturers remains rooted in basic forms of affection and dependence related to bonding. Nevertheless, devotion to family members is now to some extent limited by discernment of qualities and actions that one regards as meriting disapproval; and reflection on these qualities and actions normally elicits a certain amount of resentment. Life experiences may lead one to a deeper appreciation of what one's family members have done to meliorate one's life; but even if one's first sustainers and guides were extraordinarily dedicated and competent, their shortcomings usually still become apparent. One may judge, rightly or wrongly, that those failings were very great and have resulted in impediments to one's personal fulfillment, with which one will have to struggle for the remainder of one's life; and, in fact, innumerable people have been irresponsible in carrying out their nurturing role.

Difficult though it may be to divest the institution of the family of sentimental associations that are frequently reinforced by cultural propaganda, discerning individuals cannot overlook the fact that family life is often miserable and at times horrific. Even at its best, it may well fall short of an ideal that the reflective individual is able to conceive, mainly on the basis of participation in other forms of cultural life. Membership in wider communities exposes one to various nuclear and extended families in relation to which one's own family and family members can be judged; and it brings to one's attention individuals, communities, causes, and abstractions that one may determine deserve greater devotion than one's earliest objects of devotion.

The weighing that the child does in addressing its earliest conflicts of loyalty is the prototype of the weighing that the individual will continue to do throughout life, endeavoring to resolve comparable conflicts by reconceiving specific loyalties and recalibrating the order of personal loyalties. The process is more complex for a reflective adult than for a child, but fundamental questions of value are always involved: who and what deserve devotion and proportionately how much. Considerations of who and what merit respect are almost invariably involved. Considerations of gratitude may or may not be independent of considerations of respect, as is also the case with considerations of duty. The factor that usually is most resistant to reflective judgment is that of affection, for while affection in many cases is regarded by the individual as rationally justified, affection is often a matter of the heart rather than the mind, in a way and to a degree that even other powerful emotions are not. We may note in this regard that it is not uncommon for individuals to overcome intense resentment

toward parents and other close family members, and while observers may reasonably be inclined to attribute the change of attitude in most of these cases to the individual's having matured—and specifically to such factors as the individual's increased experience, objectivity, and emotional self-control—it is sometimes simply the case that we forgive to the extent that we love.[40]

There is, however, an additional factor of a quite different order that enters into the judgment of many adults when they are balancing and rebalancing their loyalties. The child's earliest devotion to its first nurturers has a natural basis in the child's dependence, insofar as rudimentary forms of respect, gratitude, obligation, and affection may spontaneously arise in the child as it recognizes that its first nurturers are endeavoring to sustain it because it cannot sustain itself, to satisfy its needs and desires in a way that it is unable to do for itself, and to protect it from harm and discomfort to which its own incapacity leaves it altogether vulnerable. Although the young child in a sense can do comparatively little for its first nurturers, it usually comes to realize quite early in life that it is an object of their devotion and that they will respond positively and sometimes effusively to its modest accomplishments as well as any affection that it returns. For the child, it may be rather mysterious that the nurturers for whom it does so little are so devoted to it—prepared to respond promptly to its needs and desires and even willing to make great sacrifices for it.

Of course, the bonding that takes place between parent and child is somewhat mysterious to adults, too; but parents are also capable of understanding that their devotion to the child is itself based to some extent on their own dependence. That dependence may involve a number of factors, but one to which we have given considerable attention in this study is the perception that one attains a form of immortality through one's progeny. Not only may one's children and grandchildren be around to help when one has become infirm and dependent on them for a care comparable to that given to young children, but they may be capable of conveying something of one's essence to later generations, culturally as well as genetically. They make it possible for one's name to be remembered by future generations; and they make it possible for one's contributions to culture—those made through them and some of those directly made to others—to have an influence long after one has departed this life.

Yet as we have seen, the adult is not necessarily wholly dependent on progeny for immortality. The skilled adult can create cultural products that will be received directly by wider communities, perhaps even humanity; though one's essence is not thereby conveyed genetically, it is conveyed culturally, and one's name may even be remembered as a result. However, of greater interest to us in this respect have been kinds of religion that teach that God is capable of providing the individual with an immortality of a more concrete and personal form; and a God who can provide such salvation may well appear to be deserving of a higher devotion than one's progeny warrant. Moreover, the well-being of one's progeny and the ability of posterity to continue conveying something of one's essence to future generations may themselves depend on

one's higher devotion to God. So here the autonomous adult has crucial judgments to make regarding what kind of God, if any, to believe in; what kind of immortality that God is capable of providing to those who are devoted to him; how that immortality relates to the immortality obtained through posterity; what the relative value of different forms of immortality is; how devotion is consequently to be balanced; and so forth.

We have observed throughout this inquiry that though it is often maintained that there is an essential harmony between family values and religious values, the competing claims made by religion and the family on personal devotion are highly consequential. They are not just culturally consequential, but existentially consequential. That there has been significant cooperation between religion and the family is beyond doubt, but as we have seen, that cooperation is rather more complex than many would have us believe. Even something like Biblical religion's sanction of patriarchal authoritarianism is more complicated than it usually appears on the surface, for though it may effectively conceal tensions between religion and the family, in a number of ways it subverts family ties and promotes religious devotion at the expense of family devotion. Biblical religion, we have seen, often underscores family tensions, and though it may be seen to be generally endeavoring to alleviate those tensions and strengthen family units, it repeatedly draws the believer's attention to integral defects of the family and stresses the priority of religious commitment over family commitment. Insisting that sound family relationships are only possible within a religio-cultural framework, at all levels of communal and social life, it offers hope to those who seek to meliorate the tensions in their personal family relationships; but in doing so it affirms its own cultural preeminence.

Religion, of course, can in various ways help family members to deal with their difficulties, but it is often a disruptive force in family life, particularly when family members disagree irreconcilably regarding religious matters. A young woman recently described to me in affecting detail how her "apostasy" has resulted in her family severing relations with her for six years, but this is only a dramatic instance of a phenomenon that routinely occurs in less dramatic forms. Family members may quarrel over religion as much as anything else, and religious disagreements frequently exacerbate or even inspire disagreements about other matters such as sex and marriage, parental and filial obligations, education, vocation, and political involvement. Religious leaders and functionaries, we should remember, see all cultural matters as being, in a sense, religious concerns; and with their involvement in sundry human affairs, they offer many solutions, but may generate or intensify as many problems.

The burden of religion often falls most critically on the family's children. Children are often bewildered by religious ideas and practices, but it is constantly impressed on them that they are insufficiently mature to understand religious matters that will some day be much clearer to them. Children often sense that their parents and other adult relatives do not understand religious matters too well themselves; the answers they receive to exploratory questions are often

met with strange, unsatisfying explanations. However, devoted to the loved ones who nurture them—or at very least dependent on them or intimidated by them—children usually go along with the religious demands that are made of them. The sacrifices they are called upon to make can be very great indeed, but even the most liberal democratic societies allow adults enormous power over the spiritual formation of children. A child is born without existential autonomy, but as the child's individuality and existential autonomy develop, the powers that adults exercise over its most spiritual beliefs and values are increasingly oppressive. Even if the child does not regard those powers as oppressive, and feels content and fulfilled—religiously, spiritually, and in general—the outside observer may have cause to be troubled by parental restriction of the child's religious and spiritual freedom, especially inasmuch as the child will someday be participating actively in various wider communities, including the civil state.

In liberal democracies, there is increasing concern with children's rights, and as the philosopher Jeffrey Blustein has observed, "much of our current perplexity about the family stems from the fact that we are committed to both kinds of autonomy, parents' and children's, and yet do not have any clear sense of how to reconcile them to one another."[41]

What is at stake here, however, is not simply the interests of the child, but also the interests of all those who will eventually be affected by the grown-up individual's behavior. For adult members of the family, religion is a means of controlling children; and as pure as their motives for exercising that control may be, it serves the interests of those adults at least as much as those of the children. It can be beneficial, but it can also be harmful; and in either case it represents a restriction of the existential autonomy of the child, even if it ultimately serves the interests of the child and wider communities as well as those of the adult family members.

Yet the child's existential autonomy may finally assert itself. When it does, the result may be religious disagreements in the family that end in the child's alienation from the family. Even when parents are successful in fixing the child's religious convictions, the consequences may ultimately be rather different than they anticipated. It is not uncommon for children to become more ardent in their religious devotion than their parents had intended. The child's religious devotion may thus in its own right be a source of tension and disagreement within the family. In asserting its own individuality—and reinforcing that individuality—the older child may manifest the priority it gives to religious devotion over family devotion in ways that perplex and disturb its earliest nurturers. I call to mind the self-conscious lament of a devout Roman Catholic acquaintance who was disheartened that his only child had decided to become a nun and would not be providing him and his wife with the grandchildren they had long coveted; and similarly, the exasperation of a traditionalist Jew whose son had become so pious that he questioned his parents' commitment to the halachic dietary laws and would not eat in their home or allow his own children to spend extended periods of time with them in his absence. Of course, religious affiliation can

serve the maturing child well in offering protection from parental and family domination. The maturing child can turn to religious authorities to intercede on its behalf in certain situations of parental abuse and exploitation, and even when a child has no great cause to resent or fear parental treatment, it can recognize the utility of religious devotion in allowing it to enhance its individuality in a way that would not be possible if it felt obliged to regard family devotion as paramount. Whether as cause or as effect, the rebalancing of loyalties in such circumstances may conform well with the child's individuality.

The reflective individual does not normally exchange one loyalty for another. The individual who abruptly and thoroughly abandons all previous loyalties in order to concentrate entirely on absolute devotion to a single object is fanatical, regardless of the nobility of the object.[42] The commitment of such an individual may be perceived even by critics as extraordinarily pure and possibly an instance of consummate integrity. However, such commitment is, in fact, perverted;[43] the fanatic is, as we say in everyday language, "unbalanced," and while considerable good for humanity may conceivably result from this individual's monomaniacal dedication, the fanatic cannot avoid doing a certain amount of harm inasmuch as absolute devotion to anyone or anything precludes authentic respect for other obligations. This problem is addressed in Scripture, which teaches in effect that while absolute devotion to the Lord is obligatory, this devotion involves subsidiary devotion to the things that belong to the Lord, who has all kinds of concerns, including the individual's family responsibilities. However, depending on one's perspective, family devotion as such may alternatively be perceived as subsidiary devotion to the things that belong to God or hypocritical attenuation of one's absolute devotion to God; and in the case of Pauline teaching, for example, we find both perspectives being awkwardly run together. In any case, rather than abruptly abandoning all previous loyalties and concentrating exclusively on one object of devotion, the reflective individual normally rebalances a set of personal loyalties, recalibrating specific loyalties and at times abandoning a particular loyalty or adding on an entirely new one. Even the individual who undergoes a radical conversion experience rarely becomes so absolutely committed to a single object of devotion that a sense of obligations to others is entirely precluded.[44]

Religion may well serve the individual (and those affected by the individual) in freeing the individual from domination by the family or any other object of devotion, but it itself often harmfully restricts individuality and existential autonomy, and, of course, religious fanaticism is the most widely recognized form of fanaticism. As it happens, family devotion has usually been the most effective restraint preventing religious overcommitment. Religious cults have always understood that to secure religious devotion to a religious leader or religious community it is necessary above all to weaken the individual's devotion to family members, with its distinctive natural and cultural foundations. Accordingly, in attempting to save the individual from sacrificing its individuality and autonomy through absolute devotion to the leadership of an authoritarian cult, one's pri-

mary tactic is normally to impress upon the individual the value of family relationships. This strategy is applicable not only to situations in which the individual has abandoned the family's traditional faith in favor of some bizarre cult-devotion, but to situations in which the individual's fanatical over-commitment to the traditional family faith or another major faith has had deleterious consequences for the individual, family members, and others. To be sure, respect for the individual's existential autonomy requires that the individual be allowed enormous freedom to assign as much importance as it earnestly desires to a particular form of religious devotion; but the crucial issue often appropriately arises in situations as to whether the individual has been allowed by religious leaders to make a basically free commitment or has been subject to morally unacceptable forms of indoctrination and conditioning.

In Bible-centered religion, religious leaders and functionaries normally maintain that they refrain from employing morally unacceptable forms of indoctrination and conditioning, and they offer as evidence of their responsible behavior the varied ways in which they have attempted to work together with the family in inculcating religious faith in the child. As we have seen, religious leaders may not be entirely sincere in this regard, for inasmuch as religious leaders regard religious devotion as having priority over family devotion, they understand that they are, to a certain extent, in competition with the family for the child's commitment. We have observed that one of the "strangest" aspects of traditional Biblical-religious teaching concerning family values is its systematic disregard for the autonomy of children, even adult children; there is a direct connection between Scripture's neglect and devaluation of children's rights and interests and its promotion of a patriarchal authoritarianism that, while ostensibly fostering family unity, leaves the child all the more vulnerable to domination by the religious leaders and functionaries, who are using parental authority as a device for imposing their own will on the child.

Nevertheless, again the individual's existential autonomy may ultimately assert itself. The reflective individual weighs religious devotion as well as family devotion and contemplates how much devotion religious leaders, communities, and ideals merit in a manner comparable to that in which it weighs family devotion. The reflective individual may ask, possibly on a continuing basis, what specific objects of religious devotion truly merit respect, gratitude, and affection. The reflective individual will ordinarily apply the same broad criteria in weighing personal devotion to the state, society, humanity, truth, beauty, art, and so forth. Even devotion to God is weighed in this respect, as is particularly apparent in the personal approach that every individual takes to the theodicy problem.

Regarding faith in God, and the devotion that corresponds to it, we commonly are told by people that they have "found" faith, "renewed" their faith, "experienced doubts" about their faith, or "lost" their faith. Conflicts of loyalty allow the individual a system of existential checks and balances, and since the individual will rarely if ever retreat to pure egoism, the practical question here is generally how much devotion to allocate to various objects of devotion, includ-

ing the "self" (as narrowly conceived). The existential strategy is to avoid being dominated by a single object of devotion. Granted, the individual may freely choose to surrender personal will to a single object of devotion, but if the result is the absolute abandonment of existential individuality or selfhood, then the resultant "devotion" is now an impersonal phenomenon, for the individual, self, or subject has ceased to exist and has become an object, something human only in the sense of being a human organism. Thus, as the existentialist theologian Paul Tillich has observed, while faith involves ultimate concern, it does not involve the surrender of personal autonomy, and indeed existential doubt is implicit in every act of authentic faith.[45]

I acknowledge that there appear to be some genuinely profound forms of mystical spiritual devotion, mainly in Eastern religions but also in the West, that involve striving for the annihilation of the self, generally through union with some higher force. I shall not pretend that I understand these forms of mystical devotion, nor am I prepared to assert that they have little to do with Biblical religion as such. However, as far as I can tell, they cannot assign significant importance to the promotion of family values.

Spencer, while not particularly sensitive to existential concerns, has some pertinent observations about relations between the individual, the family, and wider communities. Spencer's interpretation of anthropological data leads him to agree with Sir Henry Maine[46] that the unit of an ancient society was the family, while the unit of a modern society is the individual.[47] With his interest in evolutionary processes, Spencer raises the issue of how this transformation might have come about. In his view, the change in the structure of the social "organism" parallels that in the structure of the individual organism. Higher societies eventually evolved from well-developed, simple patriarchal families.[48] All larger groups in primitive societies in which the patriarchal family occurs can be seen to be compounded out of the patriarchal family and formed on its model.[49] (This form of family is familiar to us, of course, from our study of Hebrew Scripture, and according to Spencer it is normally characterized by features such as supremacy of the eldest male, a distinctive system of inheritance and set of property laws, joint worship of the common ancestor, a blood-feud, and subjection of women and children.)[50]

With the emergence of higher societies, the family tends to disintegrate, and the role of the individual gradually becomes more prominent. Rather than individuality being lost in the larger communities, the emergence of those communities allows the individual to take on an importance that would not have been possible had they not emerged; the individual's identification with those communities must be categorically distinguished from belonging unconsciously to a herd. The process of disintegration first separates compound family groups into simpler ones; and inevitably, individual family members increasingly acquire individual claims and responsibilities. In an advanced modern society, wider communities place a high value on the individual claims and responsibilities and at some point actually tend to usurp parental functions (and powers)

regarding children.[51] Spencer focuses on the state in this connection, but his point also applies to religious communities, and throughout much of Western history it has applied to religious communities more than political ones.

However, Spencer sees the institution of the nuclear family as poised for a recovery. Emphasizing the "essential contrast between the principle of family life and the principle of social life,"[52] he submits that the survival of every society depends on the maintenance of an absolute opposition between family life and the life of wider communities. A comparable opposition is, in fact, found in other species. Survival of a society requires two distinct regimes, one in which the individual must receive benefits in proportion to its *incapacity*, and a subsequent one in which the individual must receive benefits in proportion to its *capacity*.[53] The child must receive nurture because its immaturity prevents it from surviving and physically and mentally developing on its own; in contrast, the mature individual must be rewarded in accord with its merits. In advanced modern societies, the decline of the family relative to wider communities has gradually resulted in an untenable situation in which the distinctness between these two different regimes has been blurred. The disintegration of the family corresponds in this respect to the ascent not of liberalism, but of socialism.

However, neither societies nor their members can long survive if children are increasingly treated as adults and adults are increasingly treated as children. Failure to maintain the cardinal distinction between the ethics of the family and the ethics of society has been leading to an extreme socialism that undermines the individuality that, over the centuries, has evolved along with higher social systems. If unchecked, that extreme socialism will inevitably result in the decay of specific societies. Concluding that the disintegration of the family is already "in excess," Spencer predicts that there will, in due course, be a recoil and reintegration, with the family recapturing some of its lost importance. Spencer's analysis is pervaded by dogmatic Social-Darwinist speculations, notably the idea of the "survival of the fittest"; but it is helpful in spurring us to contemplate the intricacy of the delicate balance that has developed over the centuries—biologically, culturally, and existentially—between individuals, families, and wider communities, all of which are at any point in time at a particular stage of evolutionary development. There is also some consolation in Spencer's usual assurance that no matter how much our fellow human beings make a mess of things, "nature" will eventually see to it that humanity, or the species that succeeds it, gets things right.

CLASSICAL PLATONIC THEMES

Four centuries before the rise of Christianity, Plato had already eliminated the nuclear family from the leadership class of his ideal *polis*.[54] Reading Plato's works, we sometimes encounter values as strange as any to be found in Scripture; Plato, like the Hebrew prophets and the founders of Christianity, belonged to the ancient world. Yet not only Judaism and Christianity, but just about every

vital intellectual, cultural, and spiritual tradition in the West has been powerfully influenced by Platonic themes, ideas, and arguments. Even apart from Plato's striking discussions of "Forms" such as Justice and Beauty, the reader can see that Plato is a thinker greatly concerned with matters of value, and Plato's discussion in the *Republic* of the institution of the family leaves a deep impression on almost anyone encountering it for the first time. It is unquestionably the key philosophical text on the personal and cultural significance of family devotion.

Plato on Family Devotion

Plato argues in this section of the *Republic* that in the ideal state or society, there would be no intimate family groups in the leadership class. This position arises in the context of Plato's effort in the *Republic* to explain how individuals can achieve the best and happiest life they are capable of living, the capacity for which is greatly enhanced by their living in the best possible state or society. In the *Republic* Plato is primarily concerned with individuals and their personal self-realization. He has a clear idea of the individual or self, and he regards the individual as a being with a soul and not simply a physical organism. He does not regard individuals as mere instruments for the achievement of communal purposes, and he discusses the state mainly because it is a macrocosm in relation to which the moral and practical situation of the microcosmic individual is best understood. Nevertheless, he also assigns great importance to communal concerns, and he sees personal fulfillment and communal fulfillment as largely interdependent.

In the *Republic* Plato focuses on the individual, the *polis*, and their relations; and from this perspective, traditional family and religious institutions are essentially to be conceived as instruments of personal and social fulfillment. Plato acknowledges the psychic and cultural import of the family and religion, and he realizes that he must make an appropriate place for them in his account of the ideal personal life and the ideal communal life; and even had he been able to emancipate himself entirely from the influence of cultural ideals regarding the family and religion which were imparted to him in his youth, he would probably still have conscientiously undertaken to understand and explain how family and religious concerns can be most constructively integrated into personal and social life so as to allow for optimal personal and social development. Despite his fundamental concern with personal fulfillment—and with the destiny of the individual soul, which he regards as immortal—he differs from existentialist thinkers like Nietzsche and Berdyaev in seeing all individuals as attaining optimal fulfillment by realizing their natural potential as human beings. Nevertheless, he assigns considerable importance to individual differences. He realizes that as a consequence of their personal history and current cultural circumstances, different individuals are faced with concrete limits to what they can accomplish; and he also recognizes that even in the ideal society, different

individuals, having different natural capacities, could only attain a certain type and level of personal fulfillment.[55]

Plato believes that nothing is more important to the development of a just state than the establishment of a responsible and effective leadership class, composed entirely of special individuals suited by natural ability and proper education to work together to promote the optimal fulfillment of the *polis* and all its individual members. Members of this class of "Guardians" have incomparably important duties that call for unique abilities. It is crucial that they be especially wise, just, and incorruptible; and thus careful measures must be taken to ensure that their devotion to the state and all its members is not adulterated or attenuated in any way. Accordingly, despite his respect for the institution of the family and his own personal family devotion, both of which are evident throughout his writings, he proposes in this key text, at *Republic* 457b, that it would be best if Guardians were freed from any temptation to give priority to conventional family devotion over devotion to the higher "families" represented by the wider communities of the Guardian class and the *polis* as a whole. Sensitive to dangers posed by such a division of loyalties, Plato proposes that in the ideal state, optimal unity of the leadership class and the state itself would only be possible if private households were abolished along with private property in the leadership class.

Plato has related reasons for advocating elimination of the intimate family group in the leadership class, notably eugenic considerations (relating to the need to "breed" the best future leaders) and the desirability of freeing capable women from nurturing obligations so that they can participate actively in communal leadership. (Plato retreats substantially from the patriarchal authoritarianism of his own culture, not only because he is concerned with the personal fulfillment of all members of the *polis*, including women, but because he is convinced that a society cannot afford not to make use of the natural abilities of women capable of providing effective leadership. Here, as in other ways, Plato directly addresses concrete issues that surface in current discussions of "family values" and also arise in interpretation and application of Scriptural texts.)

Plato's primary concern here, however, is with the unity of both the leadership class and the state as a whole, and he outlines a system, patently problematic in its concrete details, whereby members of the leadership class will regard themselves and all other members of the class, including their offspring, as members of one big family. Adult Guardians will not be allowed to know which children are their biological offspring, and the offspring will not be allowed to know which particular Guardians are their biological parents. Moreover, the children will not be brought up by their biological parents or other close relatives but by specialized nurses and attendants; and so, like adults in the leadership class, they will not develop conventional family ties to which to give priority over nobler concerns relating to the well-being of the state and all its individual members.

Concerning the status of the intimate family group among those who are not Guardians, Plato is somewhat evasive but generally appears to accept the continuance of the institution. Plato apparently believes that on this level the unity of the leadership class will be sufficient to establish the unity of the state as a whole. Plato's specific practical recommendations regarding sex, marriage, procreation, and the physical and mental nurture of the Guardians' offspring are clearly unworkable, but his general vision remains of interest here for a variety of reasons.

Beginning with Plato's student, Aristotle,[56] a long line of astute critics has observed that Plato's views on the desirability and practical conceivability of replacing a community made up of intimate family groups with one big, unified communal family are open to powerful objections. For example, the price that Plato demands for unity may be too high, especially inasmuch as the one big "family" Plato envisions cannot satisfy all the needs that intimate family groups can satisfy. There are sundry reasons why conflicts of loyalty would still arise within and between the various classes; diversity is as important in its own way as unity, as indeed are creativity, novelty, and adaptability; the concrete practical details of Plato's scheme, particularly with respect to sex, marriage, procreation, and incest, are, to the extent that they have been made clear, not viable. Personal autonomy is difficult to maintain if the individual identifies too strongly with a single community, and individuality itself is jeopardized by a community's regression to the condition of a herd. These are important considerations, but if we are preoccupied with them we lose sight of Plato's broader philosophical concerns. There is much that is sensible and high-minded in Plato's vision, and he effectively draws attention to critical existential and cultural problems, several of which are relevant to issues that have emerged in our reflections on the relations of the individual, the family, and religious and other communities.

First, Plato recognizes the need for a clear, practical vision of how devotion to self can be most constructively reconciled with communal devotion. Plato understands that culture must address the concerns and aspirations of both individuals and communities. Some critics maintain that Plato radically devalues individuality for the sake of social order, and it is true that Plato's understanding of personal autonomy and some other forms of freedom differs significantly from that of most progressive modern thinkers. He has a low opinion of democracy, which he associates with anarchy and mobocracy, and he identifies self-realization with the ability to fulfill one's natural potential as a human being rather than a more creative form of self-determination. Still, besides acknowledging the importance of individual differences and personal responsibility, Plato leaves significant room for personal independence and creativity, though he is rarely clear enough in this regard. Richard Lewis Nettleship observes, in Plato's defense, that,

[T]he simple and inevitable result of the conception of a *community* in the real sense of the word seems to him to be that the individual should lead a completely common life;

but he certainly does not think that the individual would be sacrificing himself to the community in leading this life. On the contrary, when he demands that the best should be done for the community, it is not in order that the individual man may be nothing, but in order that he may be the most that he is capable of being. The highest life for each individual is that in which the greatest number of people share, and the lowest that in which the least number share.[57]

Plato is genuinely concerned with individual fulfillment—including personal salvation—and not only with the fulfillment of a few noble or pious individuals, but of all members of society. He is consistently critical of egoism—exclusive devotion to the "self" (as narrowly conceived)—which he regards as both imprudent for the individual and socially irresponsible, and he argues eloquently that personal fulfillment neither requires nor benefits from egoism. He is dedicated to establishing that the life of the socially responsible person is better and happier than that of the selfish, exploitative person; and he is convinced that personal autonomy is worthless or illusory if the individual fails to see that sympathetic concern for one's fellows is not only compatible with one's personal interests but actually *in* one's personal interest. He also insists that much that passes for personal freedom is self-destructive and socially harmful license, involving enslavement to passions and appetites. Persuaded that communal devotion is indispensable to healthy individuality, he stresses that there is a need for common as well as private feeling; and in turn, "the best-ordered State [is that] in which the greatest number of persons apply the terms 'mine' and 'not-mine' in the same way to the same thing."[58] Plato is referring here not to the subordination of the individual to the *polis*, but rather to genuine empathy, an empathy not just for those in one's intimate circle, but for all one's fellow citizens.

Neither does Plato undervalue the family per se. His respect for the institution of the family and his devotion to his own family members are both evident throughout his writings, and the value he places on the personal and cultural consequences of family devotion is so great that he wants to see the entire leadership class—and on another level, the entire state—reconceived as a kind of family:

But would any of your guardians think or speak of any other guardian as a stranger?
    Certainly he would not; for every one whom they meet will be regarded by them either as a brother or sister, or father or mother, or son or daughter, or as the child or parent of those who are thus connected with him.[59]

Plato knows that there are needs that intimate family groups address which would have to be met resourcefully if his scheme were to be put into effect. He appreciates the psychic and cultural import of family devotion and is convinced that such a devotion is the only secure foundation for a just society. He seems to accept that those who are not philosophical Guardians—and the society to

which they belong—will best be served if they remain firm in their conventional family devotion; but he is certain that there are superior individuals who are capable of experiencing a higher kind of family devotion to a higher kind of family.

There are obvious affinities between Plato's view and a New Testament view on which Plato's ideas have clearly had profound influence. The affinities, underscored in Augustine's *City of God,*[60] are perhaps most apparent in the theory underlying monasticism,[61] but the basic theme is already implicit in Jesus' teaching and explicit in Paul's; and as Nettleship observes, "[Plato's] perfect state is substantially the same in its conception as St. Paul's perfect Church or perfect spiritual community, and each represents his ideal under the figure of a perfect human body."[62] The insight was shared by certain pre-Christian Jews influenced by hellenization, and was facilitated in their case by Hebrew-Scriptural teaching on the priority of all Israel and other extended families over intimate family groups. A comparable insight figures in the consciousness of all moderns who sincerely believe in some form of "brotherhood."

In delegating primary influence in the nurturing process to specialized nurses and attendants, Plato applies his principle that social roles are best performed by specialists rather than amateurs. He realizes that the devotion between nurse and child is rarely as strong as that normally obtaining between parent and child in an intimate family group; but in addition to regarding this as advantageous to the state, he also recognizes that nurturing the young is too important a task to be a sideline carried out by even the most gifted, well-meaning amateurs. This issue is relevant to concerns about "day care" arising in current debates about family values, but long before day care came into fashion, it was widely recognized that even the wisest and most devoted parents are not positioned, in terms of time, competence, or objectivity, to perform adequately all required nurturing duties. Long before the advent of modernity, children were sent at an early age to be educated and enculturated by professional teachers in schools, where resources available to their nurturers were generally much greater than those available to an intimate family unit. It is also mainly in schools that wider communities have their best opportunity to determine whether children have been subject to mistreatment and miseducation in the home; to deal constructively with such mistreatment and miseducation; to establish communication between the wider community and individual parents concerning how the nurturing of the individual child at home can be improved; to liberate children from every form of excessive dependence on (and domination by) their initial nurturers and other close relations; and to enable children to cultivate relationships with peers.

Plato has been criticized for promoting a social class system that is inconsistent with the social unity he aims to foster; but Plato's version of the class system emphasizes responsibilities rather than material benefits of membership in the highest class, and is based on ability rather than happenstance. Plato deliberately rejects the traditional social class system, which he recognizes as

largely related to family connections. He receives support on this point from the sociologist Goode, who observes that, "The [traditional] class system, . . . including its restrictions on education and opportunity, its high and low social mobility rates, and its initial social placement by birth, is founded on the family."[63]

Plato astutely observes that the traditional social class system, a major obstacle to justice and to personal and social fulfillment, hinders many talented individuals with humble family backgrounds from achieving their natural potential and from constructively contributing to communal life. Simultaneously, it routinely leaves sociocultural power in the hands of well-connected but mediocre individuals incapable of properly exercising it. Despite the importance he assigns to eugenic methods, Plato acknowledges that some children "born into" the leadership class will be revealed in time to be incapable of developing into competent leaders, and that some children not born into the leadership class will eventually show themselves to be suitable for the training to be given to future Guardians. Plato was conscious of the impact on his life of his wealthy and powerful family connections;[64] he was equally aware that at a crucial point in his life he had made a personal decision to turn for his primary inspiration and guidance to Socrates, someone who was not his kinsman and was indeed a poor man having difficulties providing for the material needs of his own conjugal family.

Plato's devotion to Socrates is noteworthy on several scores. Although Plato became increasingly aware of the limitations of Socrates' approach to philosophy, he never ceased to see great significance in the state execution of Socrates—a thoughtful, virtuous, high-minded man passionately committed to the advancement of his society—and the impression left on Plato by the socially destructive injustice done to Socrates affected his thinking in sundry ways. Plato is often seen as advocating extreme authoritarianism in the *Republic*, but he argues there that despotism is even worse than democracy and that in the ideal state, social "control" would be exercised largely through education and rational persuasion, rather than legislation and law enforcement. More to the point, the vital importance that Plato assigns to a form of personal autonomy is evidenced by his continuing commitment to the basic Socratic enterprise, which involves the individual's thinking independently about the highest matters and asking questions and pursuing forms of inquiry that challenge accepted opinion and arbitrary authority. This form of personal autonomy qualifies as an integral element of existential autonomy. Plato was Socrates' disciple, not in accepting a particular world-view—which Socrates consistently refused to put forward—but in following Socrates in fostering a form of inquiry that both men deemed to be a primary condition of personal and cultural development.

Plato was one member of an intimate circle of "friends" that had gathered around Socrates, and this circle represented a kind of spiritual family of which Socrates was the leader. (Plato undoubtedly recognized that this circle had much in common with other spiritual brotherhoods, particularly the Pythagorean fel-

lowship.) In time, Plato founded his famous Academy, which represented an extension of the circle that had gathered around Socrates. Plato's devotion to this spiritual family, a community defined by its mission, likely became more important to him than his devotion to his kinsfolk, but he could not in clear conscience regard it as more important to him than his devotion to the *polis*, even though he saw the Athens of his day—the Athens that had martyred Socrates—as exceedingly corrupt. The belief of Socrates and Plato in the primacy of devotion to the *polis*—corrupt though the *polis* may be—caused conceptual problems for them,[65] particularly because they were concerned about moral and cultural problems arising as a result of conflicts of loyalty.

Plato's discussion of competing loyalties in the *Republic* is one stratagem in his effort to resolve these conceptual problems. His conception of the devotion of the Guardians is a projection of his conception of the devotion of Socrates' philosophical disciples. Members of both groups demonstrate their absolute devotion to the *polis* by their instrumental devotion to a spiritual community that, more than any other "family" in the *polis*, is committed to the well-being of the *polis* and all its members. Their dedication to the state or society as a whole justifies and in a sense requires their special devotion to one another, to their leader (living or martyred), and to their spiritual family. The authenticity of their loyalty to their spiritual family and ultimately to the higher family represented by the *polis* is further demonstrated by the sacrifices they are prepared to make, including their willingness to endure ridicule and vilification, their willingness to forego physical pleasures enjoyed by less devoted and less disciplined individuals, and most importantly, their willingness to loosen or relinquish entirely the traditional family bonds related to close biological kinship.

The affinities between this way of thinking and one that we considered earlier with respect to New Testament teaching should be obvious. These affinities are not coincidental; Platonic ideas were transmitted to the Essenes, Christians, and other sects by way of Stoic and other hellenizing influences. Of course, we also find some affinities between this way of thinking and views that could not have been influenced by Plato and the Greeks. For example, Hebrew Scripture's recurrent emphasis on the importance of devotion to the family of all Israel may be seen as corresponding to Plato's emphasis on the primacy of devotion to the *polis*.

However, there are significant differences between the Platonic view and related Scriptural views. Judaism and Christianity have a religious rather than a political focus. The chief community of concern to Christians, at least in theory, is not the state but the church, the community of believers; and for Jews, all Israel is not merely a state or society but a people—a people with a distinctive and to some extent defining religious culture, and a people that throughout most of its history has been stateless and dispersed among the nations of the world. Christianity repudiates Plato's "tribalism"; Plato can appreciate bonds binding a *polis* to other Greek states, but he basically regards non-Greeks as barbarians and appears to have no conception of, for example, a universal community of

philosophical idealists. Nothing even in Plato's view is entirely comparable to the main kinds of universalistic humanitarianism sometimes encountered in Hebrew Scripture. Again, nothing in Plato's view is precisely comparable to the emphasis Judaism and Christianity place on devotion to God, though Plato's religious ideas call for attention, and we shall return to them shortly. Perhaps most importantly, Plato's view is consciously philosophical, intended to be rationally appraised—especially with respect to the arguments that have been put forward in its defense—and to be utilized by the reader in accordance with the reader's personal, rational reflection.

Although occasionally given to preaching, Plato often goes to great effort to indicate that his ideas are not oracular pronouncements that are beyond human criticism, but contributions to a continuing dialogue. In his later works, he offers trenchant criticisms of some of his earlier views, and he fully expects other philosophers to critically assess his ideas in the same spirit as he criticizes the ideas of other thinkers. Granted, Plato sometimes insists that the philosopher is capable of attaining knowledge of the highest matters and is not limited to the mere opinions that guide ordinary people; but he still believes that if we are to accept his views on a particular subject, we must do so on the personal conviction that they are sufficiently reasonable to warrant our acceptance. He also remains aware that to the extent that his enterprise is Socratic, his primary objective is to bring to our attention issues worth thinking about.

Plato on Religious Devotion

From modern perspectives that assign great importance to existential autonomy, conceptual problems needlessly arise for Plato because of his insistence on the importance of an absolute devotion that radically devalues other forms of loyalty, if not by precluding them entirely, then by reducing them to the status of instrumental means to a higher end; and these problems, as we have seen, correspond to problems arising in Bible-centered religion. In both cases, the value placed on absolute devotion complicates attitudes toward the institution of the family. There are modern Jewish and Christian thinkers who believe that respect for existential autonomy—which includes personal balancing and rebalancing of loyalties—is consistent with religious conviction, and some believe that it is actually an integral condition of authentic religious faith. Readers sympathetic to Plato's position may also have these options available, but like Jews and Christians, they confront a world-view that regards values themselves as in some sense absolute, eternal, and transcendent.

Plato generally avoids theology; the term *theologia* first appears in Plato's *Republic*,[66] and it is clear that he does not have a high opinion of what he designates by the name. But Plato contends in some of his most important works that Goodness, Justice, Beauty, and the like are timeless and immutable essences that one is obliged to know before entering the highest order of social leadership. In making this claim, Plato deliberately counters the radical subjectivism and

relativism of the Sophists regarding truth, reality, and values; but while his main aim may be to affirm the importance of reason as an alternative to force and manipulation, he makes it harder to regard values as even partly a matter of personal or cultural determination.

Yet Plato himself had diverse loyalties which he periodically rebalanced during his lifetime; at any specific moment, his devotion to Athens may have been weaker than his devotion to the gods, God, philosophy, truth, the Form of the Good, kinsfolk, Socrates, or the "self" (as narrowly conceived). While remaining celibate, he apparently maintained intimate attachments to other individuals throughout his life; and he must have had concrete insight into the "platonic" love that has come to be known by his name and is hardly to be associated exclusively with devotion to the state. (Plato's ideal of "platonic" love, it can be noted, may be seen as representing a spiritualist devaluation of the sexual intimacy that is at the heart of the conjugal family.) What remains of chief interest to us, however, is what place Plato can make for religious devotion. He has a hard enough time dealing with conflicting loyalties to the self, the intimate family group, extended families, the spiritual community of philosophers within the state, and the state as a whole. Is there any room left for devotion to a religious community, religious leaders, or even higher beings themselves? With our specific interest in religion's claims on an individual's devotion, this is a matter worth considering.

Plato's views on religion are complex and have been the subject of competing interpretations, but Alvin Gouldner helpfully characterizes Plato as a "critical traditionalist,"[67] and this hybrid stance is certainly apparent in Plato's approach to religion.[68] On the traditionalist side, Plato is mainly pragmatic and sees popular, conventional religion as useful to the state. He regards such religion as a social anchor and believes that established religious practices help to promote unity in the state.[69] In this respect, Plato's indulgence toward traditional Athenian religion would appear to be consistent with his view that the individual's loyalty is ultimately to the state; and he is highly critical of religious skepticism and most forms of religious liberty, which he sees as culturally and thus politically dangerous. Karl Popper suggests that, "Wherever Plato considers religious matters in their relation to politics, his political opportunism sweeps all other feelings aside."[70] Plato cannot forget that Socrates himself was executed by the state following the accusation by religious reactionaries that Socrates was an impious man promoting impiety among the youth of Athens, but Plato appears to be convinced that the charges against Socrates were unjust; and he also seems to believe that he himself is pious enough for the good of the state.

The critical side, however, is as important as the traditionalist side. Plato is a bold religious reformer striving to eliminate a number of superstitions and corruptions from the common religion of his society.[71] Committed to reason and sociocultural reform, he tries, in Michel Despland's words, "to find a *modus vivendi* between philosophy and public religion."[72] In the process, he challenges the established authority of the theologian-poets (and hence of the religious

leaders and functionaries who focus on that authority); he expresses contempt for certain conventional religious practices; and most importantly, he promotes his own personal religious conceptions. As one would expect, those conceptions are highly philosophical, and they also have a mystical dimension. In criticizing and attempting to reform the common religion of his society, and in promoting his own philosophical and mystical religious ideas, Plato is, in fact, not merely concerned with the utility of religion to the state. He is actually religious by temperament and conviction, as is reflected in his spiritualist, anti-materialist world-view; and he aspires to lead the brightest of his fellows and readers—and ultimately future societies as well—to profound religious *truths*.

Moreover, he believes that contemplative, high-minded individuals like himself should be free to hold and disseminate their lofty religious ideas even when those ideas are clearly at odds with superficial notions and superstitious practices sanctioned by the established religious authorities of his society. But with these competing attitudes and competing motives, Plato inevitably runs into conceptual and practical problems; these problems are in effect the now familiar problems of divided loyalties, and they are prototypes of problems that have arisen over the centuries and remain with us in contemporary debates about religion and culture.

Plato boldly draws attention to conflicts between loyalty to intimate family members and loyalty to the state, but he appears to have no comparable qualms about religious devotion, which he accepts as compatible with and indeed contributive to devotion to the state. Yet authentic religion makes huge claims on an individual's loyalty on several levels. It calls for devotion to God, the gods, the Form of the Good, the Demiurge,[73] or whatever transcendent spiritual forces one believes in. It also calls for devotion to a spiritual community of believers; and even when that spiritual community can be conceived as coextensive with society as a whole—which is not as simple as Plato implies—it calls for devotion to individuals and groups within the community of believers that are of special religious importance, such as religious leaders, functionaries, and teachers. It may further call for devotion to sacred texts—including the unexpurgated works of the inspired poets Homer and Hesiod, of which Plato disapproves[74]—as well as to religious beliefs, religious ideals, ancestors, and so on; and it may conceivably call for devotion to humanity. Again, religious devotion may lead one to challenge leaders of the state—regardless of whether or not one is committed to the "state religion"—and it may also lead one to challenge meddlesome, intellectual gadflies like Socrates and Plato who brazenly take on themselves the role of determining what is really good and what is really bad in traditional religion. Furthermore, it may lead one to challenge the principal religious authorities in one's community, for one may see loyalty to God, a religious oracle, ancestors, sacred texts, or religious ideals as having priority over loyalty to such unworthy authorities.

Consequently, religious devotion is at least as much of a threat to the unity

of the state as family devotion is, even if religious devotion, unlike intimate family affection, can in theory be shared by all members of the state. Plato is, in fact, not oblivious of these matters, but he may have a number of reasons for not expressing his concerns more directly. Mindful of the fate of Socrates, he realizes that it is judicious not to make the powerful religious leaders of his society indignant or apprehensive. He also may be afraid to confront the possibility that he and Socrates have actually been impious after all. In addition, he may be reluctant to raise explicitly a pivotal problem that he is not entirely sure how to solve.

In the *Republic*, Plato is somewhat evasive regarding the problem of divided loyalties that is specifically engendered by religious devotion; but he does not completely ignore it, and the strategies he employs in dealing with it are still applied today. Plato believes that the highest power in the state is to be put into the hands of philosophical Guardians committed to reason. The leaders he has in mind are not traditional religious leaders but intellectuals capable of knowing, by means of reason, the "Forms" and high matters that are only obscurely reflected in common religious ideas and practices. He does see a place for state religion, and he frequently refers in passing to the importance of what is pleasing to God or the gods. Yet he regards traditional religious institutions as subordinate to reason and philosophy[75] in promoting personal and social development and the morality that procures for the individual soul the best possible life after death.[76] Plato's own religious spirituality is reflective, philosophical, and mystical and of a different order than the beliefs and practices of common religion; and while in his description of the ideal state Plato assures traditional religious leaders that they will retain their basic authority, he marginalizes them in relation to the reflective Guardians who recognize that rational considerations must ultimately take precedence over traditional religious culture.

Early in the *Republic*, Plato has the character Adeimantus[77] propose that conventional religion cannot be relied on to furnish individuals with the kind of rational understanding necessary for discerning the nature and value of personal and social justice. Recognizing that conventional religion involves faith more than reason, Adeimantus boldly reflects:

I hear a voice saying that the gods cannot be deceived, neither can they be compelled. But what if there are no gods? or, suppose them to have no care of human things—why in either case should we mind about concealment? And even if there are gods, and they do care about us, yet we know of them from tradition and the genealogies of the poets; and these are the very persons who say that they may be influenced and turned by "sacrifices and soothing entreaties and by offerings."[78]

Adeimantus' concerns foreshadow modern concerns about the limited ability of traditional forms of Bible-centered religion to provide adequate incentive to the authentically moral, values-based action that requires conscientious, rational re-

flection and understanding. Later in the *Republic*, Plato hastily outlines the powers that will be left in the ideal state to the traditional religious authorities:

[T]o Apollo, the god [whose oracle is at] Delphi, there remains the ordering of the greatest and noblest and chiefest things of all. . . . The institution of temples and sacrifices, and the entire service of gods, demigods, and heroes; also the ordering of the repositories of the dead, and the rites which have to be observed by him who would propitiate the inhabitants of the world below. These are matters of which we are ignorant ourselves, and as founders of a city we should be unwise in trusting them to any interpreter but our ancestral deity. He is the god who sits in the centre, on the navel of the earth, and he is the interpreter of religion to all mankind.[79]

Several themes in this passage prefigure issues that recurrently arise in modern debates concerning the cultural relations of religion and politics. Plato sanctions state religion and thereby substantially limits the religious freedom that, in pluralistic democracies, is usually regarded as an integral element of personal autonomy, and is deemed important for other reasons as well. However, for all his talk about the power that is to be left to traditional religious authorities over the ordering of the "greatest" things, Plato has delegated to those authorities only a specific set of powers, and he has not accorded them a voice in the general decision making to be carried out by properly philosophical Guardians. The Guardians are to respect the judgment of the religious establishment within its specific sphere of influence and expertise, but the Guardians will not brook interference by religious leaders and functionaries in secular matters that are to be governed by those who rely on reason rather than prophecy. Plato is awkwardly trying to "separate" religious and civil authority, but such separation is no simple matter,[80] and religious and civil leaders routinely disagree about what concerns properly fall within their jurisdiction. Plato gives no indication of how disagreements between religious authorities and philosophical Guardians might be resolved; nor does he speculate on how a citizen could address on a personal level the conflict of loyalties arising from awareness of disagreements between the religious authorities who enable the individual to propitiate the gods (and the "inhabitants of the world below") and the civil authorities who possess the cultivated reason and philosophical wisdom necessary for properly governing the state as a whole.

One area in which religious leaders and functionaries normally take special interest, of course, is that of family matters. Plato does not suggest what powers religious authorities might retain in this sphere, but his own comments on the institution of the family and on sex, marriage, procreation, incest, and child-raising might well strike religious leaders as audacious. Besides, though generations of Western religious leaders have made constructive use of Plato's insight into the dangers of intimate family devotion, it was apparent to many religious leaders long before Plato's time that while the microcosmic family is a rival of wider communities (religious as well as political), it is also an insti-

tution through which religious leaders, functionaries, and teachers can exert powerful influence on the individual.

In the *Republic*, Plato would have us believe that by rationally reconceiving the nature, function, and relations of the individual self, various forms of family, the intelligentsia, sociopolitical classes, established religious authorities, and the state as a whole, he has gone a long way toward explaining how all of them can best avoid the cultural conflicts and corresponding personal conflicts that impede their achieving their optimal fulfillment. Few readers, however, have found all of Plato's arguments compelling, and his reconceptions have proved especially unsatisfactory to those convinced that he undervalues something which they value highly. These people are generally not persuaded that Plato is closer to understanding timeless and immutable Forms than they are, and most do not believe that such Forms exist, though they may well share Plato's conviction that values like justice are not purely subjective or conventional.

Plato, later given to rigorous self-criticism, ends up with his own misgivings concerning these matters. In his final work, the *Laws*, a work in which Plato's reflection takes a reactionary turn, the elderly philosopher emphasizes the theological foundations of culture, and is more explicit and more consistent in his defense of religious authoritarianism.[81] He also gives sympathetic consideration to intimate family groups, describes some microcosmic family relationships in detail, and proposes a number of family laws.[82] In addition, he points to ways in which religious devotion and conventional family devotion are complementary. Noteworthy are Plato's powerful description of how the child's religious devotion is derived in large part from the religious devotion of parents,[83] and his equally moving account of how honor toward parents is pleasing to the gods.[84]

There is no conclusive evidence that Plato had any knowledge of Hebrew-Scriptural literature,[85] and he lived centuries before the rise of Christianity, on which his influence is discernible. We cannot know what he would have thought of Biblical teaching on the subjects we have been considering; and as the focus in the *Republic* is on the individual and the *polis*, Plato does not directly address conflicts between religious and family devotion. However, when we consider what he says about such subjects as the relation of the individual soul to a higher community, higher communities as families, the positive and negative consequences of different kinds of family devotion, and the value of different kinds of religion, we see that he utilizes reason to illuminate a number of value-related issues relevant to understanding cultural relations between religion and the family. And some of his ideas have directly influenced the cultural relations of Biblical religion and the family. Even if Plato has not gone far toward resolving the conceptual and practical problems he raises, he serves us well by acutely articulating vital problems and by stimulating us to formulate or refine our own views.

Plato respects the importance of traditions in religious and family life, but he sees self-realization and social responsibility as requiring that he rationally ex-

amine specific traditions and share his conclusions with his fellows. When reflecting in a modern, pluralistic democracy on the kinds of issues that Plato explores, we benefit from certain freedoms that Plato did not entirely understand and which, to the extent that he understood them, he did not completely sanction. Convinced, as Plato was not, of the importance of authentic existential autonomy and of the capacity of democracy to avoid deteriorating into mob rule and despotism, we have an even more fruitful and consistent insight than he had into the value of the enterprise in which he was engaged, and the value of the more fundamental enterprise for which Socrates was martyred. Fine enterprises they are, having done much to liberate us from superstition, emotionalism, and blind faith and from the influence of ignorant bigots who would impose their beliefs and values on us by force, manipulation, and propaganda.

SOME SIMPLE TRUTHS ABOUT SOME COMPLEX MATTERS

Having proposed a number of ideas on cultural competition and cooperation between Biblical religion and the family, and on the cultural and existential significance of some divided loyalties, I am reluctant to offer much more in the way of conclusions. I prefer to leave it mainly to the reader to draw further conclusions, as the subject matter of this study invites highly personal deliberation and judgment. For a reflective individual committed to exercising existential autonomy, family values and religious values—especially insofar as they figure in the balancing and rebalancing of personal loyalties—are to be settled as much as possible by personal decision and commitment. Of course, they are not purely personal matters. An autonomous individual's judgments on family and religious matters are influenced by cultural and other determining factors; they must be conformable to the basic form of rationality that is a condition of existential autonomy; and they have consequences for other beings that the individual may be obliged to weigh.

Assigning great importance to cultural tradition, I understand the exasperation that thoughtful traditionalists experience on encountering shallow, dogmatic forms of progressivism.[86] Still, regarding most issues arising in contemporary debates about Biblical religion, family values, and culture, my sympathies usually lie more with avowed progressivists than with avowed traditionalists. Undoubtedly, some of my own values are arbitrary; but even an unsympathetic reader will share some of my values, and shared values help to make useful communication possible.

Various discussions in this study will strike some readers as too abstract and convoluted. The problem may lie partly with philosophical analysis, which many people, and not only social activists, find somewhat wearisome. Even the most patient and open-minded reader may feel that some discussions in this study are simply on the wrong track, vitiated by questionable preconceptions, inadequately focused, superficially or obscurely developed, misinformed, and largely irrele-

vant to things that really matter. Exposure to such criticism comes with the territory. While believing that issues and ideas broached in this inquiry merit the time and effort the reader has been asked to invest, I realize that whether or not they do is itself a question of values.

Communities of various kinds need to devise and amend policies on many practical matters touched on in this inquiry. While stressing the complexity of the issues, I try not to forget that most are not simply theoretical, but are relevant to urgent problems facing real people. I lack the expertise needed for making informed judgments on precisely what various social units should be doing about such complicated matters as divorce, children's rights, spousal abuse, day care, new reproductive and birth-control technologies, taxation policies affecting parents of young children, and responsibilities to elderly parents. Intelligent policy formulation on such matters calls for respect for the contributions of a wide range of specialists—from jurists, psychotherapists, social scientists, and social workers to specialized ethicists and moral theologians. The voices of thoughtful non-specialists, particularly those directly affected, must also be heard, and in a properly functioning democracy they will be. Both avowed cultural conservatives and avowed cultural liberals have had useful things to say about family concerns, and what they say should be appraised on the basis not of their ideological posture, but of their ideas and arguments with respect to particular problems. Much has been said and written about the practical issues enumerated above, and about other pressing family concerns, and it has generally not been one of my objectives to enter into the discussion of family matters on this level.

Besides elucidating the importance of cultural competition and cooperation between Biblical religion and the family and the cultural and existential significance of some divided loyalties, I have tried to draw attention to some broad themes which I regard less as conclusions than as relatively simple truths that bear reaffirming, especially when there is a recurrence of overheated polemics that inhibit fruitful discussion of religious, family, and cultural subjects. In a sense, these simple truths hardly require defense, but it is useful to recall them periodically and to be able to reaffirm them with deeper conviction based on deeper understanding. They are not profound philosophical insights; but simple truths can take on deeper meaning when we contemplate them. The primary one underscored in this study is that relations between Bible-centered religion and the family—in the diverse forms of both—are complex, manifold, and sometimes of great consequence for individuals, sundry communities, and perhaps higher forces. Accordingly, it may well be consistent with our values to be wary of cultural critics and reformers whose explanation of these relations is simplistic, especially when these people are attempting to foist their values on our community without having responsibly considered the possible consequences for individuals and groups that stand to be victimized by widespread acceptance and institutionalization of those values.

Another simple truth is that values and valuation are themselves complex phenomena. In everyday life, when we talk about "values," we rarely attend to

any of the conceptual difficulties that perplex and divide philosophers and other scholars given to serious reflection on the nature of values and valuation. We are typically thinking about some very general things that "matter" or "ought to matter" to people; but as simple as having values may seem in everyday life, it takes little philosophical acumen to realize on reflection that valuation is a complicated process. When we describe things as values, we acknowledge that a relative degree of importance is assigned to them or ought to be assigned to them. In determining the relative importance of something in either of these senses, we must consider them in relation to other things. Although in certain contexts it may make sense to say that something is of value "in itself," even then it has value for us in relation to other things.

When issues arise with respect to family values, religious values, moral values, or any other values, it may be appropriate to consider any number of factors. Precisely which factors we deem or ought to deem appropriate is itself a matter of value. One is whether the thing in question is actually valued, or rather ought, in theory, to be valued. Another is by whom that thing is (or ought to be) valued. A third is for whom (or what) the thing is (or ought to be) of value. Still another is how much value is (or ought to be) assigned to the thing relative to other things—and specifically to what other things.

For example, if the institution of the family, in one or another of its forms, is (or ought to be) of value, in relation to what is it (or ought it to be) of value, and how much more—or less? Is it in fact valued more than other forms of family, including narrower or wider social units that may also be conceived as families in some sense? Ought it to be? And if so, how much? Is, say, the two-parent nuclear family of greater value, either in fact or in theory, than other forms of nuclear family, various extended families (including those that encompass past and future generations), a spiritual community of believers, the state, society, humanity, and the divine-human family? If so, how much more? Is it sometimes of greater value and sometimes of less value than these other social units? And if so, under what conditions? Again, what is its value, in fact or in theory, relative to that of the individual per se—either as an organism or an autonomous being—and to specific individuals, and to any number of ideals, causes, and abstractions, and to God or other higher forces? And *for* whom (or what) is or ought the thing to be of value? Are we exclusively concerned with its value for the individual or group doing the valuing? Or are we equally concerned, or more (or less) concerned, with its value for others, including other specific individuals, other social units, an abstract ideal or cause, or a higher being? For example, is a certain kind of relationship within a nuclear or extended kinship family (such as patriarchal authoritarianism or filial obedience) of value—in fact or in theory—in terms of the interests of certain family members, all family members, the family as a unit, narrower or wider kinship families, a religious community, society, humanity, God, and so forth? And comparatively, how much do the interests of each of these parties matter? Reasonable and responsible valuation may require considering as many of these factors as one

can, and doing so as conscientiously as possible; and there are plenty of other factors that might be considered. But of course, what is reasonable and responsible is at least to some extent a question of value.

Most people in a pluralistic democracy are aware at an early age that people disagree greatly about some of the most basic matters of value; even in non-democratic communities, disagreements about such matters routinely arise in family life and in the other social units in which people receive their initial enculturation and education. In time, most people in a pluralistic democracy come to see that even the most thoughtful and high-minded individuals and groups disagree about some very fundamental matters of value, and about the actual methods to be employed in determining what the right or best values are for the people whose values they are concerned with. Now, even many people who profess to believe that the principal source of "our" knowledge of the "right" values is a sacred literature such as that of the Bible or some other form of religious authority, regularly reveal, in their words and deeds, that they believe that the right or best values are largely to be apprehended by some form of reason or intuition, or by becoming familiar with cultural conventions that are ultimately rooted in biological needs. We even sometimes find religious fanatics endeavoring to persuade us, by utilitarian or other rational arguments, that something is or ought to be of value. In spite of age-old debates between professed absolutists and professed relativists, many people seem to sense that values are neither entirely absolute nor entirely relative; and moreover, that they are neither entirely objective nor entirely subjective, neither entirely natural nor entirely cultural nor entirely personal, and neither entirely discovered nor entirely created. When they profess otherwise, it may well be because they believe that a certain perspective on values and valuation has been underestimated.

Another simple truth is that the family is a complex phenomenon, and this truth can be analyzed in terms of any number of component truths. The term *family* is ambiguous, and people routinely use it to refer to different things. Even someone who insists, for example, that the "real" family is the two-parent nuclear family is apt to refer to an aunt or distant cousin when discussing some "family matter," or may pause to reflect on whether something, to qualify as such a family, must have at its core two adults who are married or live together. There are many kinds of family, and serious inquirers cannot agree on which form is the most natural, or in precisely what sense any form is natural. People who maintain that a certain kind of family is something "of value" normally acknowledge that many families of that kind are bad in various ways, and that many families of other kinds are good in various ways. Specialist scholars disagree about the origins of the earliest forms of family, the precise nature of family bonding, the historical development of familiar forms of family, the viability of hypothetical alternatives to familiar forms of family, the relation of the family to the individual or self, the relation of the family to forms of organization (such as the herd) that exist among other species, and so forth. Many serious inquirers take for granted that new forms of family are periodically

emerging and that old forms of family are constantly being transformed; some see such developments as largely matters of natural evolution.

Kinship and nurturing relationships tend to be rather more complex than they initially appear. Many people have little or no bonding with their biological parents or biological children. Some parents abuse or abandon their children; and some children abuse or abandon their parents. Even many families widely regarded as properly functioning families are troubled by unstable and unwholesome relationships. Some of the most revered moral and religious teachers insist that the most important forms of family have little if anything to do with close biological kinship or one's initial nurturing. Reflective people have been arguing since antiquity about how family units should be organized, what kinds of relationships should obtain within them, how they should be ranked in relation to one another, and what sorts of rules should govern them. Many people engaged in such arguments with one another have professed to be committed to the same basic values and to be devoted to the same religious authority. Of course, all such issues will be regarded by a thoughtful inquirer as exceedingly complex; but their complexity per se is a simple truth.

It is also a simple truth that religion is a complex phenomenon. Humanistic and social-scientific students of religion normally acknowledge that they cannot offer a thoroughly satisfactory definition of *religion*, or furnish a definitive explanation of how the phenomenon of religion originated. Scholars regularly disagree on what the continuing relevance of the phenomenon is; and some are persuaded that it has none. Less reflective religionists also often disagree with one another about what the continuing relevance of the phenomenon is; and some cannot even conceive of its having to be relevant to anything else. There are countless forms of religion, and thoughtful people regard as ignorant bigots those who insist that the form of religion they practice or profess to practice is the only phenomenon that properly qualifies as religion per se. Some very pious people grant that there are several "great" religions that have innumerable adherents who are nobler than most of their own co-religionists. Within the most prominent world religions there are numerous denominational, subdenominational, and other groups that disagree about basic matters of belief, value, practice, and authority.[87] Furthermore, perhaps in religion more than any other form of culture, we commonly find people professing to believe things which they do not believe, which they acknowledge they do not understand, and which in some cases would appear to be thoroughly incomprehensible. Religion indeed is the form of culture and experience that normally first comes to mind when either a religionist or a secularist hears the word *hypocrisy*.[88]

It is commonly believed that most of the noblest people in history have been deeply religious individuals and that religion has been central to all of the world's greatest civilizations; yet it is generally recognized that religion—or some perversion of it—has consistently been a prime source of irrationality, ignorance, malice, barbarism, and inhumanity. There are many varieties of religious experience,[89] from the mystical and sacramental to the philosophical and

ethical; and there are religious traditionalists and progressivists, non-denominational and anti-denominationalist believers,[90] and avowed secularists who may be significantly more religious than they realize. Scholars in the field of religious studies commonly disagree about the most general relations between religion and culture. Some see religion as the vital core of culture or even identical with culture, while others see religion as only one important form of culture. Some stress the ways in which religion transcends culture, while others emphasize variation in the relations between religion and culture.[91] Some regard religion as primarily a social phenomenon, whereas others are persuaded that it is essentially a matter of individual experience.

As a general type of religion, Bible-centered religion is complex for most of the reasons that religion per se is complex. It is difficult to define; its continuing relevance is debated by both believers and unbelievers; it has given rise to numerous denominational and intradenominational groups, most of which actively compete with other groups of ostensibly Bible-oriented believers. Its professed adherents disagree about some remarkably basic matters of belief, value, and practice, yet at times have even entered into fierce conflict over comparatively trivial matters. The nature, authenticity, and expression of religious commitment vary widely among individuals, even within some of the smallest subdenominational groups; and the relations between Biblical religion and culture and between Biblical religion and specific forms of culture, including the family, science, technology, politics, and philosophy, remain sources of confusion and disagreement.

Since Biblical religion is approximately three thousand years old and has had countless millions of adherents and professed adherents in many different times and places, the complexities it has engendered are exceptionally numerous. We have concentrated in this study on specific complexities, including difficulties associated with the fundamental disparity between Jewish and Christian views of Hebrew Scripture and with the relations between Judaism and Christianity; problems arising from other competing interpretations of Scripture and from the very need to interpret it, particularly with respect to contemporary cultural conditions immensely different from those of the ancients; and problems that arise in treating as subjects for philosophical and scientific explanation a sacred literature and related beliefs, values, and practices that not only untold people have professed to believe are divinely inspired (and thus in some ways beyond criticism or revision), but have shaped the attitudes and methods of philosophers and scientists in ways they are often reluctant to think about.

Biblical values are not exactly "discovered" in Biblical texts. Most simple believers are not entirely clear about what they are looking *for* or even what they are looking *at*, though they may speak confidently about "the Word of God"; and recognizing this, they customarily turn for guidance to professed authorities on the Bible. (In repressive societies, they have limited choice where to turn.) All sorts of people, including some who encourage simple believers to read the Word for themselves, are pleased to serve up such guidance in ample

helpings. The motives that professed authorities have for being so generous with their guidance are undoubtedly varied. Disagreements among these expositors are often striking and far-reaching, and one may well need to exercise even more careful judgment in turning to a Biblical expositor than in selecting a physician, accountant, or plumber. Sophisticated readers of Scripture accept that Scriptural texts can be understood from any number of useful perspectives, and that what an individual "finds" in the text at a particular point of time, particularly in the way of values, may depend on many personal and cultural factors. Thoughtful people also look to informed fellows for help when reflecting on difficult Scriptural texts, but they normally expect more from their guides than a simple, one-dimensional explanation.

In light of the complexity of values, the family, religion, and Biblical religion, it is conceivable that the relations of Biblical religion and family values are *exponentially* complex; but that they are in fact complex has plainly been established. There will perhaps always be those who maintain that the matters we have been considering are not really complex, and that intellectuals and others who obscure their simplicity are vain deceivers. They may recall the words of the apostle Paul: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."[92] "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit."[93] Yet the complexity of each of these phenomena is in itself a simple truth; and sensitivity to such complexity can be an incentive to humility rather than vanity, the humility commended by the prophets.[94]

It does not follow that Biblical religion is altogether irrelevant to family values. On the contrary, Biblical religion and family values have influenced each other in so many ways that this reason by itself would be sufficient to warrant a skeptical reaction to the claim that the relevance of Biblical religion to family values is transparently uncomplicated. Further complexities arise as a result of normative disagreements concerning how Biblical religion ought to be related to family matters. Unless they are exceedingly obtuse, people realize that many of those who disagree with them about the importance and meaning of Biblical texts—and about how best to conceive religion, the family, and values—are thoughtful, high-minded individuals who have given serious thought to these matters and have demonstrated in sundry ways that they are basically benevolent and responsible. It may well be that most of those who insist that the relations of Biblical religion and family values are transparently uncomplicated actually know better and are merely saying so for rhetorical purposes; and since some of these people can be thoughtful and beneficent in their own right, their perspectives on specific issues may still be worth considering.

In directly addressing the complexity of relations between Biblical religion and the family—in diverse forms of both—I have given what may seem to be inordinate attention to certain forms of cultural competition and their significance for individuals and communities. The philosophical viewpoint such consideration affords is not necessarily the most illuminating, but besides enabling me to deal with matters I deem important, it adequately serves as an example

of how perspective may enter into the understanding of relations usually conceived in some other way. However, many issues we have touched on in this inquiry are not directly relevant to this viewpoint.

ADDITIONAL CONCLUSIONS AND THEMES FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Despite the complexity of these phenomena, each of us may be obliged to formulate opinions on them and regularly review and revise those opinions. The autonomous individual, having confirmed or rebalanced personal loyalties—usually partly on the basis of insights derived from others—may periodically arrive at a personal view on Biblical religion and family values, and that view will influence the individual's judgment and behavior in relevant situations until the individual reconsiders it. Individuals cannot reasonably be expected to set aside such a view—or their personal world-view—when interacting with people who disagree with them or when participating in democratic processes. We are not acting autonomously or responsibly when we treat the complexity of value-related matters as an excuse for not thinking about them or not formulating opinions on them; and even those who take a simplistic view of these matters have a right and an obligation to participate in democratic processes.

Serious dialogue is generally agreed to be vital to a democracy. It is also widely accepted that to qualify as serious, dialogue in the public forum on matters of cultural value requires some degree of moral and intellectual conscientiousness on the part of its participants. Precisely what this conscientiousness entails is a matter of opinion, but people often say that they would like to see participants in this dialogue make a sincere effort to advance clear positions, provide reasonable arguments, furnish reliable data, listen with an open mind to alternative positions, respond directly to criticisms, strive for consensus, and avoid manipulative, rhetorical contrivances. While acknowledging that it is impossible to completely "separate" religious culture and political culture,[95] I deem it wise for those discussing family issues in the public forum of a pluralistic democracy to bear in mind the benefits of keeping religious dogma and political process as separate as possible.[96] There are many good reasons for working to secure religious liberty and related freedoms of thought and conscience, and these freedoms are generally undermined by public, political religion;[97] but a more rudimentary practical consideration is that broad disagreements about religion and theology almost inevitably divert attention from the specific family issues being addressed. Of course, many people who talk about "family values" in the public forum are far more interested in religion than in the family.

The study of Bible-centered religion and its core sacred literature can greatly enhance one's understanding of how the family in contemporary Western democracies came to take some of its most familiar forms. The manifold uses and abuses of Biblical literature have obviously exerted prodigious historical influence on the family, personal and cultural values, myriad cultural institutions,

and culture itself. Furthermore, both the believer and the unbeliever can learn any number of interesting things about the historical development of the family, values, and culture by reading Biblical texts themselves, and by studying scholarly literature on those texts. Scholars in at least a dozen intellectual disciplines claim to be furnishing new insights into Biblical literature on a regular basis. Yet there is tremendous disagreement among scholars about what to make of many of these alleged insights. What many scholars regard as incontrovertible truths others regard as fantastic speculations; and what it means to "understand" Biblical literature remains to a great extent a matter of personal perspective and personal conviction. This conviction is subsequently a factor determining one's judgment on what is to be learned about family values from reading Biblical texts.

Countless millions profess to believe that those texts provide not only historical and social-scientific understanding of family matters, but sound and authoritative practical guidance on family life. In whatever sense they regard those texts as inspired, they are genuinely or ostensibly convinced that proper attention to the texts, facilitated by guidance from trustworthy teachers, provides them with sound direction on how to deal with their family affairs—and on another level provides humanity with sound guidance on how all people should handle their family affairs. These people somehow have managed to remain unperturbed in the presence of an intricate and often enigmatic ancient literature that, as we have seen, can be perceived as embodying and imparting some remarkably strange family values. It may help to remember in this regard that insofar as Scriptural values are strange and unfamiliar because they are inconsistent with modern understanding, they are often inconsistent with aspects of modernity that believers find troubling and bewildering. There is a splendor, confidence, and vitality radiated by many passages of Scripture that is appealingly strange in its contrast with the drabness, discouragement, and dispiritedness of much of modern life—modern family life included. Even some resolute secularists faced with a family crisis or other taxing personal predicament can be heard to say that they have found certain passages of Scripture to be consoling, heartening, and enlightening.

Undoubtedly, the Bible appeals to many modern believers partly because they consciously or unconsciously crave knowledge of absolute values. There are presumably any number of factors that incline people to believe—or to want to believe, to try to believe, or to pretend to believe—that there are absolute values and that the Bible imparts the most important of these, both generally and with respect to specific cultural institutions such as the family. Belief and professed belief in absolute values are not confined to Bible-oriented traditionalists. As we have noted, Plato, the greatest of philosophers, waged a tireless campaign against the radical relativism of the Sophistic intellectuals whom he considered to be among the most dangerous subverters of Athenian culture. In positing that there is a realm of transcendent, immutable essences such as Justice and Beauty—wholly independent of human judgment and capped by a supreme es-

sence, the Form of the Good—Plato reminds us that it is not only Bible-oriented traditionalists who feel obliged to foster confidence among their fellows in the existence of knowable, absolute values which provide individuals and communities with authoritative guidance on how to conduct their affairs.

Many individuals with a heightened sense of their existential autonomy—for example, Nietzsche and Sartre—maintain that those who are driven to belief in absolute values are weak, shallow, and immature; and these individuals, many of whom are professed atheists, are particularly critical of those who look to Biblical literature and Biblical-religious tradition for insight into absolute values by which to organize their lives. Yet most of them realize that from Plato onward, some of the greatest minds have insisted that the good life requires a knowledge of absolute values that is directly accessible to the wisest individuals and capable of being transmitted by them in part to those who are less wise. And in their disdain for those who need to believe in absolute values, they not only indicate their own values but reveal that they regard those values as absolute; for they cannot conceive of existential freedom, creativity, independence, and kindred values as anything less than absolute. Their inconsistency in this regard, however, does not confirm that absolute values exist; and individuals who sense that values are neither entirely absolute nor entirely relative can still appreciate their powerful critique of extreme absolutism.

In spite of its appeal to those seeking authoritative insight into absolute values, the Bible has always generated conflicting perspectives on matters of value. Of course, its teachings have been interpreted and applied in many different ways; but moreover, it itself incorporates inconsistent perspectives. God, one may surmise, did not want his followers to be extreme absolutists, but preferred that they make resourceful use of the autonomy he had bestowed on them. The historic competitions between Bible-oriented religionists may be seen as representing extensions, at least in spirit, of competitions already evident in Biblical literature. When capable of exercising existential autonomy, people often "find" in the Bible a teaching that is harmonious with core elements of their worldview that have not been determined by what they have read in the Bible or been taught about the Bible. Some of these elements may have been derived in part from indirect forms of Biblical-religious influence, particularly those involved in early parental enculturation; but these core elements may be determined by many factors. They can change, of course, owing to self-determination—including rational understanding—as well as indoctrination, conditioning, and other determining factors. An individual's view of the Bible may itself change gradually or even radically; some individuals undergo a religious conversion, and others abruptly lose their faith.

That thoughtful modern readers can still obtain insight into matters of value from—or by—their reading of Scriptural texts may itself suggest that values are not entirely relative.[98] Reading Scripture, as indeed when reading most great works of classical literature,[99] one may be more impressed by how much we moderns have in common with the ancients than by how different we are from

them. Drawing our attention to cross-cultural values, Scripture can furnish us with deeper insight into how values are rooted in an essential human nature, though inasmuch as we normally find Biblical values more familiar than those embodied in, say, classical Asian literature, the unique cultural impact of Biblical-religious teaching on modern Western culture should not be underestimated. Furthermore, while the strangeness of certain Biblical values suggests that some Western values have progressed over the centuries—so that, for example, certain contemporary values regarding children's rights are immeasurably more advanced than comparable values imparted by Scripture—Biblical literature itself makes allowances for its own historicity, and for the evolutionary development of moral and religious conceptions.

Moral teaching in Scripture is generally presented within the framework of historical narrative,[100] and direction is given to specific people at a specific stage of intellectual and spiritual development. The values that Noah is capable of grasping are loftier than those that Adam can grasp; the values that Moses transmits are loftier than those comprehensible by the patriarchs; and later prophets, while avowing dedication to the Law, interpret or transform its values in increasingly subtle ways. The reader of Scripture is presumably meant to appreciate that while certain values may be in a sense eternal and immutable, those values—or human understandings of them—develop in accordance with human development. Here Scripture teaches on two levels that values are far from relative: the broad, cross-cultural values "revealed" in incrementally advanced ways to Adam, Noah, the patriarchs, the prophets, and successive generations of reflective believers up to our own day may be regarded as in a sense "absolute," whether they are to be thought of as mysteriously God-given or as somehow rooted in human nature (in the nature, if you will, of the being that God created in his ideal image). Yet we are to expect that in the future, as in the past, values—or human understanding of values—will continue to undergo cultivation in accordance with human intellectual and spiritual development. Such evolutionary development may be "natural," but it would be misleading to regard it solely as natural; and such evolutionary development may be "divinely ordained," but it would be misleading to regard it solely as divinely ordained. The contribution of free and responsible individuals—beings capable of wisdom, virtue, and creative vision—is a crucial element in the process. Even if humanity's moral progress is divinely inspired, God's design requires the cooperation of the agents he has endowed with intelligence and freedom.

Viewed in this way, what Scripture teaches about values and valuation is undeniably profound, and it may even satisfactorily address the needs of some of those who crave insight into absolute values. However, what Scripture may teach in this regard, profound though it is, is far removed from the kind of concretely practical guidance that many believers associate with Scriptural teaching. Almost boundless latitude for interpretation is left with respect to precisely which values Scripture is teaching are eternal and immutable, and which it is teaching can be discarded or radically reconceived, once human beings have

reached a particular stage of intellectual and spiritual development. Again, it is not clear whether the eternal and immutable values are to be understood as extremely abstract—for example, love and justice—or are to be regarded as more specific. And Scripture does not provide the reader with clear guidance on what procedures to follow when confronted with obscurities or apparent inconsistencies in the text, in determining who is competent to provide us with reliable clarification of the text, in deciding how much confidence to place in personal judgment (rational or otherwise) when determining what values the text is imparting, and so forth.

Of course, these are issues on which avowed traditionalists and avowed progressivists are constantly divided; and no believer is a pure traditionalist or a pure progressivist. Moreover, in the realm of religious faith perhaps more than any other area of belief, we must make allowances for the fact that people are often simply unable to believe that which they have become convinced they ought to believe. These are not simply modern problems; the ancients themselves wrestled with most of these issues, and even under the most repressive theocracies, independent-minded individuals and groups have let it be known that they have a low opinion of the "accepted" view of what Scripture teaches about certain values.

It is understandable that most discussion in the media about Biblical religion and family values focuses on specific social policy issues. These issues are often of pressing concern, and it is proper for the media to concentrate on them. However, given the media's limitations (many over which the media have no control), the result is inevitably an oversimplification of most aspects of the cultural context in which the issues have arisen. The complexities we have considered in this study receive little attention; but even elementary facts about religion, the family, values, and culture are sometimes distorted. In addition, media treatment of social policy issues involving religion and the family tends to foster polarization more than consensus. Even were journalists and broadcasters utterly scrupulous in avoiding sensationalism, they would still feel obliged to present two or three sharply defined "sides" on a particular social policy issue. Hence, media coverage of matters relating to religion and family values has generally made serious reflection on those matters seem even more impractical.

While some believe that religion itself has ceased to be of value in an advanced society, most unbelievers can find positive things to say about particular forms and aspects of religion. They acknowledge, for example, the outstanding cultural contributions made by many people who have been inspired by religious faith. Despite sundry kinds of secularization taking place in modern Western democracies, on many levels religion remains culturally pervasive in those societies. Most people who favor more radical secularization understand that in a pluralistic democracy, politicians and other social leaders must make concessions to Bible-oriented religionists when formulating social policy on family matters. These concessions are necessitated not only by demands and expecta-

tions of several constituencies to which the leaders are accountable, but sometimes by respect for freedom of religion, thought, and conscience. In a sense, religious progressivists occupy a middle ground between religious traditionalists and secularists, and it is frequently in the interest of both of the latter groups to enter into alliances with religious progressivists in public debates on social policy issues involving the family.

However, the political dynamics of such debates can be intricate. There are religious progressivists of many stripes, and there is also significant disagreement among religious traditionalists and among secularists; and even in the most stable democracy, the public mood oscillates, sometimes sharply, owing to effective rhetoric and other factors. Religious communities themselves are subject to internal strains and external pressures, as are many of the diverse professional and interest groups seeking to influence social policy on family issues. And sometimes clear thinking and genuine compassion manage to override narrower interests and concerns. Formulation and revision of social policy on family matters also is influenced, of course, by the need to respond to specific social changes, including many directly involving family relationships.

In practically addressing family problems, even at the broadest levels of communal life, we must eventually see beyond policy considerations. James Q. Wilson, a prominent policy specialist who has urged political and cultural leaders to stand up for "traditional family values,"[101] acknowledges at one point that, "The truth of the matter is that the most important features of family life are beyond the reach of policy."[102] The family, in any of its diverse forms, is not just an institution, but something vital and dynamic constituted by real individuals, and shaped and activated by real family relationships and real relationships between family members and individuals and groups outside the family. A major factor contributing to family unity or disunity is the balancing and rebalancing of loyalties by individual family members capable of some degree of self-determination. The relevance of freedom to family life is comparable to the relevance of freedom to religious life, which is not hard to understand, inasmuch as a religious community can itself be conceived as a family, and moreover, family life and religious life both ordinarily involve highly personal forms of devotion. Every family is in a sense sui generis, regardless of any institutional structure and function it shares with other groups conventionally classified together with it. In an advanced society, people belong to several families, but references to *family* now usually first call to mind one's relationships with immediate family members—parents, children, siblings, and spouses.

It may well be that with respect to procreation, the initial nurturing of offspring, and related matters, most people in Western democracies, including most progressive-minded individuals, believe at some level of consciousness that it would be best for all parties concerned (individuals, sundry social groups, society as a whole, and so forth) if, with a few exceptions involving individuals with a very special mission or disability, people entered into marriage, did so with only one person at a time, remained married to that person until the death

of one of the partners, brought children into the world with that person, and were conscientiously devoted above all else to the well-being of immediate family members. I strongly suspect that on deeper reflection, many of these people would acknowledge that this situation might not be the best possible situation after all. After giving the matter some thought, they might conceivably speculate that it could be better for all parties concerned if, say, far fewer people entered into marriage and brought children into the world; marital arrangements were more flexible for many or most people, particularly with respect to the number of marital partners and the permanence of marital relationships; people generally were less preoccupied with the interests of their nearest kin and simultaneously less dependent on their nearest kin for their well-being; and most importantly, there were generally more institutional flexibility and adaptability in this area, so that allowances could more easily be made for special needs and circumstances.

Now, it is far from clear that the program outlined above is advocated in Biblical literature, either in Hebrew Scripture or in the New Testament. While acknowledging that people are entitled or indeed required to exercise broad latitude in interpreting Scriptural texts and "finding" family values therein, we can see that a strong case can be made that this program is inconsistent with much Biblical teaching, which, as noted in earlier chapters, in some places says or implies rather strange things about the desirability of avoiding sex and marriage, the acceptability of polygyny and easy attainability of divorce by men, the prerogative of parents to show little concern for the interests of their children, and other germane subjects. Viewed from another perspective, Biblical literature's silence on any number of pertinent subjects, ambiguity on others, and apparent inconsistency on still others may be taken as an implicit acknowledgment of the need for communities to allow for considerable institutional flexibility and adaptability with respect to these matters.

Even prior to deeper reflection on the program, one can see that, in many cases, it has not been working well. Most of us regularly encounter individuals who are unhappily married; have unhappy relationships with parents or children (or both); are unhappy because they feel compelled to marry; are unhappy because they feel compelled to have children or because they feel disadvantaged by their inability to have children as most other people can; are involved in bitter rivalry with siblings; feel overwhelmed by responsibilities to immediate family members; are sick with guilt because they consider themselves irresponsible in their dealings with close family members; resent the sacrifices they feel obliged to make for close family members; and so on. We usually also realize that these people may be making other people unhappy, in their nuclear and extended families and in other communities, including their religious community and society as a whole. It may then occur to us that even if these people were happy, they might still be making other people unhappy in their nuclear family and wider communities, and also failing to fulfill their potential for greater personal happiness, a richer life, and constructive service to others. In time, we

may realize that these cases are not exceptional, and that despite any propaganda with which we have been indoctrinated, intimate family relationships are commonly a cause of anxiety, sorrow, frustration, resentment, and uselessness, even if in most cases they are sometimes accompanied by joy and security. Such contemplation almost inevitably leads one to examine critically one's own family relationships, whose complexity may quickly become apparent. It may then be curiously consoling to reflect that, "There is no such thing as a perfect family," and that, "All families have problems."

Such family problems are not new; they are not, as some would have us believe, a consequence of the corrosive influences of modernity. Few subjects have consistently received more attention in world literature than the travails of family life, and some of those hardships are graphically rendered in Scripture. There has always been ample incentive for leaders of religious, political, and other communities to establish "policy" to make microcosmic family groups happier, more secure, and more useful to their individual members and to the wider communities to which they belong. There has also often been recognition that at some point these matters are beyond the reach of policy.

Accordingly, there has been ample incentive for communal leaders to recognize the advantages of substantial institutional flexibility and adaptability in this area, of the need to provide personal counseling and encouragement and help, and of the need to condone and occasionally initiate bold experiments. In their dealings with nuclear families, political and religious and other cultural leaders and functionaries are often far less concerned with the interests of those families and their members than with their own interests or the interests of wider communities; but it is plain that sympathy sometimes plays a significant role in their endeavors. Constructive sympathetic concern for "traditional" families and their members is easy to commend, but it may not be generally more commendable than concern for non-traditional families and their members, single people, people whose circumstances it is hard to understand, or sundry other people and things that can reasonably be regarded as appropriate objects of devotion.

Cultural critics and reformers, especially traditionalists, worry a great deal about the frailty and vulnerability of institutional communities such as the nuclear family, the church (or its non-Christian religious counterparts), and the state. They frequently contend that one or more of these institutional communities should be buttressed, even, if required, at the expense of other institutional communities—or at the expense of individuals. Such value judgments, as we have seen, can be rather arbitrary. For one thing, it can be difficult to gauge how vulnerable an institutional community is, in general or in relation to other institutional communities. Leaders and functionaries of these communities also often worry about the frailty of their community, even when their community can be seen in retrospect to have been comparatively secure. These leaders and functionaries know that they can do things to reduce the vulnerability of their community or that of other communities. Self-interest and other motives may

lead institutional communities to compete with others; the church, for example, may act to prevent the state from undermining the church's power or from doing harm to the individual or the nuclear family.

Alternatively, self-interest and other motives—including sympathy—may lead institutional communities to cooperate with other communities or simply to offer them help. The church, for example, may cooperate with the state to further their mutual interests or those of the nuclear family. Independently of their worries about their vulnerability, institutional communities often seek to increase their power, though they may also see doing so as a matter of increasing their security or serving the interests of others. The motives in these situations can be very complex, so that it is not necessarily a matter of hypocritical manipulation when, for example, political leaders insist that they are restricting a powerful church's powers for the good of all citizens, including the members of that very church.

Comparable dynamics can be seen within the immediate family group and in its relations with wider communities. For example, parents may worry about the influence of certain intrusive religious teachers on their children, and may exercise their parental authority by subverting that influence. When the children protest, the parents may insist, not altogether unfairly, that they believe that they are acting in the children's interests, though the children may correctly suspect that the parents are even more concerned with their own interests than those of the children.

We are again reminded that there may be considerable utility, for individuals and for diverse social units, in a system of cultural checks and balances, whereby no social unit has absolute power. Cultural critics and reformers, and the leaders of the institutions on whose behalf they argue, are often right in maintaining at a given time that rebalancing of cultural power is necessary for the good of individuals and various social units, including perhaps a particular community they see as having become too powerful for its own good. The individual is not exempt from criticism; cultural critics and reformers are often critical of an "individualism" that they identify with the excessive transfer of power from communities to individuals. Communities indeed require a certain amount of power if they are to serve the needs of individuals; and communities have concerns and aspirations of their own, some perhaps higher than those of even the noblest individual.

Nevertheless, at the heart of cultural dynamics, especially in a comparatively free society, is the system of existential checks and balances made available to the individual by divided loyalties. Devotion can be largely irrational; as the old adages go, love can be (or make one) "blind." However, the autonomous individual, whose autonomy is founded largely on reflective judgment, can balance and rebalance loyalties on the basis of careful evaluation of whom and what is a deserving object of devotion, and comparatively how much. Here, as we have noted, respect, gratitude, obligation, and affection all may come into play. These same factors may figure in the judgments that institutional communities make

regarding their relations with other institutional communities. Nuclear families and religious communities need not look on each other as instruments for their own purposes or as objects of compassion, but may make a more profound estimate of how justified devotion is.

The devotion of individuals can sometimes be permanently imposed by indoctrination and conditioning, but the devotion of a truly autonomous individual must to some extent be earned, if not on a continuing basis then at some pivotal moment in the individual's life. The autonomous individual's loss of trust in an object of devotion (a loved one, a religious leader, a political leader, a cause, and so forth) is rarely the result of subversive, external forces alone (such as rivals for the individual's devotion, the media, popular culture, and meddlesome intellectuals), but normally determined in the end by the individual's reflective appraisal.

I believe that it has been established in this inquiry that Biblical religion and the nuclear family are not "natural" allies, in relation to either an individual's concerns or broader cultural ones. Even if their competing claims on the individual's devotion could be permanently reconciled to the satisfaction of all parties, such reconciliation might not be beneficial in the long term. Some kinds of tension and conflict that we have been considering can be useful both to communities (including society as a whole) and their individual members. The sociologist Lewis Coser observes that, "conflict within a group frequently helps to revitalize existent norms; or it contributes to the emergence of new norms . . . adequate to new conditions";[103] at the same time, "The multiple group affiliations of individuals [entail that they] participate in various group conflicts so that their total personalities are not involved in any single one of them."[104] The autonomous individual may be involved not only in the conflicts *within* various groups—such as a nuclear family and a religious community—but in the conflicts *between* those very same groups. One's personal autonomy can be exercised and strengthened in both cases, and one's involvement in each form of conflict may influence one's involvement in the other. As we have seen, the associated division of loyalties on the part of the individual should not *in itself* be deemed unusual or unhealthy. Of course, a specific division of loyalties can pose all sorts of problems, so that the individual must periodically or at critical moments find a way of resolving it enough to be able to avoid doing harm to the self and others.

Some vital consequences of these dynamics are symbolically reflected in the autonomous religious believer's complex devotion to God, which simultaneously parallels and competes with the individual's devotion to the primary nurturers in the immediate family group. In Biblical religion, divine authority is often conceived in terms of political authority—God being King—but is more poignantly conceived in terms of parental authority. Our relationships with parents can be so complicated that we may be moved to characterize them as "love–hate" relationships; respect, gratitude, obligation, and affection may become mingled with resentment. It may be senseless to hate God, as the faithful

Job reminds his wife,[105] but the Decalogue stresses God's own resentment at those who hate him,[106] and maybe nowhere more than in the Book of Job is the abiding problem of theodicy so haunting to the religious consciousness. The God of Biblical religion is perhaps the most powerful symbol of perfect love, nurture, and help ever conceived—a love, nurture, and help infinitely surpassing anything that could be provided by even the most capable and most loving parents. But believers continue to suffer and to be bewildered by how God countenances their suffering and that of loved ones and uncountable good souls. As God hides his face, believers may themselves be tempted to turn away from him, not in disloyalty, but so as not to have to regard him with resentment. Yet here, as in one's attitude toward a loving parent who one senses has done one harm in various ways, great or small, one may find that authentic devotion can deliver one from the utmost cynicism, and that even as one's respect, gratitude, and sense of obligation wane, one can forgive to the extent that one loves.[107]

But do believers really have much choice in the matter? People normally reach a stage in life when they do not require parents to look after them, and then they can afford to look on their first nurturers with resentment or forgiveness; but the believer's relation to God always involves dependence.[108] Believers need God in a way that God does not need them; and if they resent God, they can only exacerbate their situation. Their dependence on God is reflected to some degree in their dependence on their progeny; adult children and other capable kinsfolk may be depended upon to care for them in their old age, and perhaps more importantly, may provide them with an opportunity for immortality. But for the Bible-oriented believer, God can offer vastly more than offspring and long-term posterity can; and even if he will not directly grant personal salvation, he may protect and sustain the posterity through which one's immortality will be ensured. The God who demands love and devotion is an almighty God, and those who turn to him do so at least partly in recognition of his consummate power. Thus it is that even some secularists, in moments of grave personal or social crisis, may find themselves taking words[109] and praying for their loved ones and themselves and their posterity and all good souls—praying for the good that perhaps only divine intervention in human affairs can bring about.

Even so, it may still be that religious devotion, even on this level, cannot entirely transcend family devotion. This is at least obliquely acknowledged in various places in Scripture, as in some striking verses near the end of the Book of Isaiah in which God is shown bringing consolation.[110] In these verses, resentment toward God and a special loved one is rendered pointless; patriarchal authoritarianism disappears; any competition or conflict between religious devotion and family devotion becomes insignificant; and nature, culture, autonomy, the meaningfulness and dignity of life, and lofty communal ideals and aspirations all cease momentarily to be of concern. The receptive reader of the Scriptural text is transfixed by an image that is commanding in its simplicity and sensitivity, an image that simultaneously evokes one's deepest sense of the

essential pathos of human existence, one's nostalgia for a real or idealized intimacy unrivalled in its purity, one's most ardent hopes, and one's confidence in the redemptive power of love: "For thus saith the Lord, Behold. . . . As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."[111]

NOTES

1. An engaging introduction to the classical and contemporary metaphysical issues is Elmer Sprague, *Persons and Their Minds* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999).

2. Cf. Jay Newman, *On Religious Freedom* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1991), ch. 1.

3. R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), p. 176. In the original text, this passage is divided into numbered propositions, 23.94–23.97. Collingwood is responding directly to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's pronouncement at the beginning of *The Social Contract* (1762) that, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."

4. George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 229. This work is based on lecture notes taken by Mead's students, mainly in 1927 and 1930.

5. Ibid., pp. 214–26, 238–40. See also ch. 3.

6. Ibid., pp. 222–24.

7. Ibid., p. 239.

8. Ibid., pp. 238–40.

9. Ibid., p. 240.

10. Ibid., pp. 221–22.

11. Ibid., p. 222.

12. This point is emphasized by Hegel. See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (1821), trans. T. M. Knox (1942) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 175–77.

13. Georg Simmel, *Sociology of Religion* (1905), trans. Curt Rosenthal (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 60.

14. Cf., for example, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), sec. 164, trans. Helen Zimmern (1907) (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1923), p. 99.

15. Ibid., sec. 265, p. 240.

16. Ibid., sec. 41, p. 56.

17. Ibid., sec. 287, p. 256.

18. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (1931), trans. Natalie Duddington (1955) (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 232–42.

19. Ibid., p. 232.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., pp. 233–35.

22. Ibid., p. 238.

23. Ibid., pp. 239–40.

24. Ibid., p. 240.

25. Ibid., p. 234. Berdyaev, who for a time had been a Marxist, remained committed to some of Marxism's historical analyses.

26. Ibid., p. 238.

27. Ibid., pp. 187–95.

28. Ibid., p. 190.

29. Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), p. 223.

30. Ibid., pp. 16–17.

31. Ibid., p. 222.

32. Ibid., p. 221.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 357.

35. Ibid.

36. Gabriel Marcel, *La metaphysique de Royce* (Paris: Fernand Aubier, 1945).

37. George P. Fletcher, *Loyalty: An Essay on the Morality of Relationships* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 153.

38. Cf. Jay Newman, *Inauthentic Culture and Its Philosophical Critics* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 160–67.

39. Ibid., ch. 1.

40. François de la Rochefoucauld, *Maxims*, 5th ed. (1678), maxim 330, trans. Louis Kronenberger (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 95: "*On pardonne tant que l'on aime.*"

41. Jeffrey Blustein, *Parents and Children: The Ethics of the Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 5.

42. Jay Newman, *Fanatics and Hypocrites* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1986), ch. 2, esp. pp. 51–57.

43. Ibid., chs. 1, 4. Cf. Jay Newman, "Fanaticism and Integrity," *Synthesis Philosophica* (Zagreb, Croatia) 17 (1994), no. 1 (Special issue: "On Toleration"), 83–90.

44. Cf. Donald Evans, *Faith, Authenticity, and Morality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), esp. chs. 4, 6–7.

45. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 16–22.

46. Sir Henry S. Maine, *Early History of Institutions* (1875). New York: Holt, 1888.

47. Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (1885 [1876]) (New York: D. Appleton, 1898), p. 714.

48. Ibid., p. 716.

49. Ibid., p. 713.

50. Ibid., pp. 723–24.

51. Ibid., p. 724.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., pp. 719–20.

54. Plato, *Republic* 457b–466d. The *polis* of Plato's world was a city-state; Plato could hardly have conceived of the enormous states of our own day.

55. Plato, *Republic* 420b–421c.

56. Aristotle, *Politics* 1260b–1264b.

57. Richard Lewis Nettleship, *Lectures on the* Republic *of Plato*, 2nd ed. (1901 [1897]) (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 168.

58. Plato, *Republic* 462c, trans. B. Jowett, in B. Jowett, trans., *The Dialogues of Plato*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1892 [1871], Vol. 3, pp. 156–57.

59. Ibid., 463c, p. 158.

60. Cf. James Casey, *The History of the Family* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 69.

61. Nettleship, *Lectures on the* Republic *of Plato*, p. 170.

62. Ibid., p. 164.

63. William J. Goode, *The Family*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982 [1964]), p. 3.

64. Plato, *Seventh Letter* 324b–324c.

65. Cf. Plato, *Crito*.

66. Plato, *Republic* 379a.

67. Alvin Gouldner, *Enter Plato: Classical Greece and the Origins of Social Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 1965), p. 194.

68. Newman, *Inauthentic Culture and Its Philosophical Critics*, pp. 104–9, 177–82.

69. Cf. H. D. Rankin, *Sophists, Socratics and Cynics* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 144–45.

70. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 4th ed. rev. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969 [1944]), Vol. 1, p. 143.

71. Cf. Michel Despland, *The Education of Desire: Plato and the Philosophy of Religion* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 85, 98, 205–6.

72. Ibid., p. 221.

73. The Form of the Good and the Demiurge are Platonic religious conceptions.

74. Plato, *Republic* 376e–392c.

75. Cf. Plato, *Euthyphro*.

76. Cf. Plato, *Phaedo, Republic* X.

77. One of Plato's brothers.

78. Plato, *Republic* 365d–365e, trans. Jowett, p. 45.

79. Ibid., 427b–427c, p. 116.

80. Cf. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, pp. 113–23.

81. Plato, *Laws* X, esp. 886b–888a.

82. Ibid., 923c–932d.

83. Ibid., 886b–888a.

84. Ibid., 930e–931e.

85. The Septuagint was not begun until the following century.

86. Newman, *Inauthentic Culture and Its Philosophical Critics*, pp. 177–90.

87. Cf. Jay Newman, *Competition in Religious Life* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), esp. chs. 3, 5.

88. Cf. Newman, *Fanatics and Hypocrites*, pp. 86, 144–46.

89. Cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) (New York: Collier Books, 1961).

90. Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, pp. 198–202.

91. Newman, *Inauthentic Culture and Its Philosophical Critics*, pp. 69–76.

92. Romans 1:22.

93. Colossians 2:8.

94. See, for example, Micah 6:8; Psalms 37:11; 138:6; Proverbs 15:33; Matthew 5:5, 11:29. Cf. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, pp. 78–85.

95. Cf. Jay Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), ch. 7; Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, pp. 113–23.

96. Newman, *On Religious Freedom*, ch. 4.

97. Ibid., ch. 4, esp. pp. 123–41.

98. Cf. Newman, *Inauthentic Culture and Its Philosophical Critics*, pp. 62–69.

99. Cf. Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 1–2.

100. Cf. Stanley Hauerwas and Gregory L. Jones, eds., *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989).

101. James Q. Wilson, "The Family-Values Debate," *Commentary* 95, no. 4 (April 1993), 31.

102. Ibid., p. 30.

103. Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1956), p. 154.

104. Ibid., pp. 153–54. Cf. Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, pp. 45–48.

105. Job 2:9–10.

106. Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9.

107. La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims*, maxim 330, p. 95.

108. Cf. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (1821–1822), trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1948).

109. Cf. Hosea 14:2.

110. Isaiah 66:9–13.

111. Isaiah 66:12–13.

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