

THE FAMILY

OF THE

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY



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RECENT methods of research have thrown so much new light upon the nature of ancient institutions, and have brought so many intimations of the early origin of those present customs and social forms which have been regarded as almost wholly modern, that the finality of our former conclusions on many of these subjects is greatly distrusted. We are coming to understand, to take a conspicuous example, that the most modern forms of political institutions as they are seen in our own country, are not altogether the new things we have imagined them to be. We have learned that they are the slow growth and the long-ripening fruit of a process that has been going on from the earliest periods of human society. The customary lines of history, it is now well known, cannot adequately explain American political institutions. For it has been found that the latest of political systems is largely the product of the very earliest of political ideas subjected to a constant social fermentation, change and recombination—all working towards more or less definite ends.

The Family affords another instance of the new subjects which are coming into prominence under present methods of study. Within twenty-five years two classes of students have given us the results of their investigations in a field that has much to do with the Family. Of the first class Sir Henry S. Maine is the most eminent representative. His application of the historical method to the study of legal institutions has already yielded much valuable knowledge in regard to the Family. The second class is represented by such names as Bachofen, Morgan, McLennan and Spencer, who have turned to the study of the origin and growth of social institutions the

methods of the evolutionary school. It is hardly too much to say that, within the period covered by the names in these two classes of writers, the entire problem concerning the origin, nature, development and final form of the Family in society has become a new one of momentous importance. And this fact is sure to lead to a repetition of the old story, in fresh and possibly more difficult form, of the conflict between the friends of science and those of the Christian religion which once raged over Astronomy and Geology. The Church will be called upon to give up or change its traditional opinions, or else find better supports for them than it has hitherto used.

Yet certain other perils are far more to be feared. Modern industrialism, which primarily seeks an individual laborer and subjects him to influences that either ignore or antagonize the Family; Mormon polygamy coming, be it remembered, with Bible in hand; that materialism that gravitates towards lust; the theories and methods of individualism which are pressing earnest and sincere men and women of the times—as they call themselves—to demand an interpretation of the idea and offices of the Family foreign to long-accepted views—these are some of the forces that will join in the attack upon the Family. They will make the most of the new scientific materials to which I have alluded and of any weak places in the Christian line of defence. For these reasons, therefore, and for others that need not be named here, the future work of the Church in behalf of the Family must inevitably be a grave task of great magnitude. It becomes the Church to study her own ground with the utmost care.

One of the subjects that I have long thought needs to be thoroughly understood in order that the Christian Church may be ready for its practical work is that concerning *the place of the Family in the history of Christianity*. And it is my chief regret on the present occasion that circumstances beyond my control have compelled me to give up my first plan of treatment and be content with a sketch of one or two points in the historical relation of the Family and Christianity, which may, it seems to me, need careful re-examination, adding thereto some considerations on the practical bearing of its results. I do not venture to teach you philosophy. I cannot claim to bring before you the

results of a scientific investigation. All I can do is to lay before you the things I have chanced to see, and to state the questions they have put into my own mind and, as I suspect, into the thought of others. Instead of a lecture, I try to make an interrogation point.

I. The first thing to which I would direct attention is that of the need of a reinvestigation of the actual relation of *early Christianity* and the *Family* to each other. The popular opinion on this subject is expressed in the common remark that the Family owes everything to the Christian religion—a remark in which the expression is generally taken almost literally. And even if we turn to the more familiar accounts we may chance to take up of the condition of the civilized world at the time of the introduction of Christianity, we shall find abundant illustrations of this fact. The contrast between the condition of morals in the Roman empire before Christianity affected them and the purer morality of the early Christians has been shown many times. Nor can any one doubt the immense service Christianity rendered society in the interests of a pure home life. Probably the civilized world has never seen before or since such deep and general depravity in domestic life as that was which confronted the Apostles and their followers. The researches of scholars have entirely justified the terrible indictment which the Apostle drew in the Epistle to the Romans. This and the other epistles of the New Testament, and the Christian literature of the first centuries of our era, also exhibit evidences of the marvellous reformation which Christianity wrought in the character of domestic morals. Perhaps no one thing in the entire range of primitive Christian achievement is more remarkable. All this, I find, is conceded by nearly every intelligent student of those times.

But this popular impression goes farther, and here it demands our special attention. It is based on the practical assumption or the direct assertion that not only the domestic character, but the domestic constitution itself underwent a complete change at the hands of early Christianity. According to this view, although Greece and Rome once had something like the Family of which the book of Genesis gives us glimpses in still earlier times, and which the Hebrew race partially preserved until the

coming of Christ, it is very commonly assumed that certain words of the New Testament were the seed out of which nearly the entire domestic growth of the Christian era sprang. It has been said repeatedly that the few words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels on the subject of marriage and divorce have wrought greater social changes than any other ever uttered; that He thus turned human thought and life back to the original constitution of the Family, which had been more or less faithfully preserved in the Mosiac system; and that an utterly corrupt society has in this way been recovered to the true idea and to that purer practice which, in spite of all imperfection, is the glory of Christendom.

Now I do not question the substantial truth of this picture of the early Christian transformation of the character of the Family. The debt of the Family to Christianity is an immense one. But I do wish to say that the statement to which I refer tacitly conveys more than we have a right to make it without further proof. The particular defect of it is that it leaves the impression—on the popular mind at least—that the work of Christianity upon the Family was constitutional to the degree that it amounted to a creation *de novo*, and that therefore there is little to be drawn from other than Christian sources on the subject that is worthy our serious attention. And at this time I wish to call attention to the possibility, and even probability, that this theory may assume that there was a completeness in the early Christian conception of the Family, and in its early Christian development, which a more careful examination of the facts may not support.

Let us look a moment at the Family of the early Church. If there is any one thing true beyond a doubt in regard to the method of the founder of Christianity and of that of His immediate followers, it is that He did not propose to begin His work with the founding of political institutions or to enter directly and immediately upon the reconstruction of any of those social institutions that lay outside the religious societies that must necessarily be formed. But, on the other hand, it is clear enough at the present period in the Christian era that the kingdom of God means ultimately the organization of all society on Christian

principles, or, to put the same thing in another form, the ultimate recovery of society to its normal, that is, to its natural and divinely intended order. This is true unless those are in the right who think the ultimate triumph of Christianity will come about through an overthrow of the entire social order of the present. But that a new social system was not an object of immediate care with the first Christians is, as I have just said, an undoubted fact. The constant and most positive insistence that His kingdom was not of this world, the more than utter indifference to political affairs and methods which they exhibited, and their pressure of motives drawn from strictly spiritual sources and urged in simply moral ways, clearly show the attitude of the Christians of the first centuries. It is one of the singular features of early Christianity that a system which was intended to change existing institutions more radically and do more to bring new institutions into being and to mould all the forms of social life more than any other, if not all other systems put together, should have so little to do in its beginning with their constitutional forms. The recorded words of Christ say remarkably little concerning the forms of either the Church or the Family or the State. In each of these instances, a few comprehensive principles for use in questions of individual duty is about all we have. The nature of even the Family is only indirectly set forth. The form of it given in the Gospels seems little more than embryonic.

The moral necessity for this course has been universally perceived. Men have seen the wisdom of the method that took the early disciples away from all political and social entanglements, and fixed their attention on spiritual aims and spiritual methods. But what I may be allowed to call the sociological necessity for it has not been as widely understood. It has often wholly escaped notice. Yet just here lies an important truth and one that is of the utmost consequence to our subject. For those who are familiar with the manner in which the earlier groups of society were formed, tell us that the processes which we see going on to-day in India are probably good examples of the way in which the germs of political and other societies have been constantly formed from the very first. One man, to illustrate, possessed with

ambition or under a conviction of some sort, generally religious, separates from his community and gathers around him those he can pick off from other groups one by one; or occasionally, and in earlier times especially, he secures an entire household. Then in course of time follow the institutions and order of a new society, whose unique or common features depend much on the originality and power of their underlying principles. We see much the same thing going on in our own times and country in the formation of religious sects—Christian and unchristian. Mormonism may be noted as a striking illustration of the essential repetition of this process. Its resemblance to the general course of social development from its earliest beginnings in making its individual converts, down through its construction of a domestic system to serve its religion, to its ultimate presentation of all the essentials of a great political organism only waiting the opportunity of successful promise to become such in avowed form and fact, becomes very evident when we turn to its study with the comparative method. Some of the Christian sects of our own day are further illustrations of this method of social growth. In their earlier stages these have been—both from a moral and a social necessity—protesting and separating systems. Each one has at first turned from old institutions to some supposed or real elementary principle or principles, from organic or social relations with other men to the individual and to the individualistic conception of ethical relations. Differentiating principles have almost inevitably taken precedence, and co-ordinating ideas have waited upon them. So powerfully have the former of these operated that the adherents to the new ideas have generally been forced into the formation of new religious bodies in spite of their early intentions to the contrary. By as much as the new society, of whatever kind it chanced to be, has been widely and radically different from the old order, by so much have the protesting, the separating, the individualizing principles had the greater influence as a practical working force. And by so much also has it been difficult for those most deeply imbued with the spirit and traditions of the formative period in any social system or polity, to rise to the demands of the co-ordinating and constructive work of its later stages. Except in rare instances this

latter work has been left to the different minds of a more catholic type and period. Very rarely have the two types been found together in the men of the early stage.

It would seem, however, to be one of the great characteristics of the founder of Christianity that He held both principles in firm proportion in His own thought. That marvellous conception of the kingdom of God, or of a universal society of absolute completeness, was matched with the equally wonderful apprehension of the true means of bringing it to pass through the withdrawal of its early members from all attempts at its immediate formal establishment. The permeation of society with the constructive principles of the Gospel is not less remarkable than the means taken to accomplish the object for which they were put there. And it is here that the force of the suggestion of the need of a careful re-examination concerning the place of the Family in early Christianity will be felt. For the peculiar form of reverence which Christians have been taught to cherish for the teachings of the New Testament, may be found to have urged on a natural disposition to assume that Christ gave more at the time, in the way of exact precept and definite form, than a better understanding of His language and method will permit us to believe to have been the case. If the early Christians generally took it for granted that Christ gave them nothing in regard to political institutions, modern scholarship sees in the Gospels the essentials of all that is fundamental and best in them. The profound attention recently given to the early sources of modern political institutions and the influence of their practical development have made the attitude of the Bible towards them far clearer. We now know something more than we did of what the Bible aims, and what it does not aim, to teach on the subject. But in respect of the Family the case differs at some important points. Political status and political duties were made for the early Christians by circumstances with which they had little to do. Public affairs could be readily avoided. It was the rule to conform as far as possible to existing laws. But with domestic life things were in several respects different, though in some similar. Especially were they different in that the domestic constitution was more within their own control. Though they might not at-

tempt to fashion the political institutions about them, they could and did do much to shape their own domestic life. Marriage and divorce, chastity and similar concerns of the Family, were far more within their own control and under their own authoritative rules. And this privilege was exercised in practical ways. But at precisely this point they show the influence of the great Christian methods which I have noted. The early Christians did not assume to build social institutions, but gave themselves to the work of winning individuals from their old allegiances, though it often involved separation from their former social environment, to an allegiance to God that was personal and which should first of all instill Christian principles into the minds of individual men and women.

Accordingly, the early disciples of the new faith did not trouble themselves much about the idea of the state and citizenship as a political theory, but were chiefly anxious to meet specific duties under existing governments. The government *de facto* was always with them the government *de jure*. And although, as I have said, they felt far more liberty in respect to the Family, yet the true constitution of it did not occupy their thought so much as the question how to live in its relations as they found them. The specific relations of marriage, of divorce, of chastity, and of parents and children were uppermost in their minds. For these were their practical, every-day questions. Consequently, where the early converts had been first Jews or Jewish proselytes, the Family of the Mosaic law and of Jewish tradition was the principal material of their domestic framework. And the words of Christ seemed to sanction this course. But if their origin had been directly Gentile, then the Family of the Roman world did more to supply the material form which was to be moulded towards the Christian ideal. And then here, where the idea of contract as the formula of marriage—a form which had come into wide use in the empire—prevailed, the great stress of the Christian instruction would be naturally laid on the sacredness and permanency of this contract, and in teaching fidelity and purity within the relation without much attention to its peculiar nature, just as we see it done at the present time in similar circumstances. But wherever the older ideas of a *status*

still held their ground, as they undoubtedly did among some people and in some regions, especially in the country districts that lay remote from large cities and the great highways, Christianity must have eagerly held the higher vantage ground and gladly lodged its principles in the better soil.

Now, if these explanations be sustained, then we can see that we miss the mark if we look to the Scriptures and other early Christian documents for a full and completely wrought out Christian form of the Family. The development of such an idea and its formulation in a positive institution were foreign to the main trend of early Christian thought. And we are also now prepared to perceive the serious limitation to the statement that the Family owes everything to Christianity. We may freely acknowledge a great debt while we question the accuracy of the common statement of its amount and form. For in order to complete its representation, we must take into the account the profound and extensive work which the Family itself did for Christianity. As sin did not obliterate the human soul nor extinguish the faculties it corrupted, so it was with the Family. The main work of the Gospel was not properly creative, but regenerative. In other words, it was a work of recovery in the restoration of the essential Family that lay buried under the hideous corruption of the times. Or to use another comparison, just as the philosophic thought of Greece has in one form or another supplied the warp, or something like it, of Christian theology and philosophy, from which the Christian thinking of the West has always been unable to rid itself, so it has been in good degree with the Family in the Christendom of the Western world. The great social elements of the Aryans entered into the work which the early Church did in behalf of the Family. They made up a large part of its warp. It could hardly have been otherwise. For the first institution in the order of social development, and the last wholly to give way in the decline of society from a high civilization, is the Family. I say the last *wholly* to give way. Because, though decay of the Family precedes and compels political decline, yet probably long after political institutions are generally corrupt, and even after their overthrow and after the Family itself is widely decayed and frequently entirely rotten,

there must still remain in such communities many families which, though scattered and isolated from each other, and thereby put beyond the power of effective political co-ordination, are still available for those religious uses which precede the reconstruction of society. And we are to remember still another thing. It is that even when the Family had lost its positive character and its constitution was sadly broken or deranged, it was still frequently capable of response to the call of the Christian faith, and under this new appeal of religion many a member, like the bones in the vision of the prophet, moved towards its old mate.

While, then, early Christianity undoubtedly brought the spirit and principles of the Gospel, and even its underlying law, to act powerfully in the task of restoring the true domestic order, Aryan institutions probably supplied a good part of the material and form of the restored household of the early centuries. Christ gave the disciples the elements of truth concerning it and the leading principles of reorganization, but they and their successors were left to work out the perfected Family by an historical process. Both the environment of Judaic society and of the Græco-Roman world entered effectively into the result. In this way the debt of the Family and Christianity became mutual. Only a careful re-study of this field in the light of modern research and in use of the methods applied to the study of social institutions can disclose the amount due to each. And when this study is made, I should not be surprised if we learned that the preparation for the Gospel that was made by the domestic institutions of the Roman world should take high place in our regard as we estimate the preparatory mission of ancient civilization.

This brings us to another part of the field where a re-study of the historic relations of the Family and Christianity may do good. It is,

II. *The development of the Family from the times of the Apostles and Fathers to the present.* The sketch here may be made more briefly, for some of the considerations already set forth apply to the latter period with corresponding force.

To recur to an influence already noted—the disposition of early Christianity to make its work individual at the expense of the social—and trace it farther down. The tendency thereby

formed perpetuated itself. It naturally grew and external conditions helped on its growth. The way of looking at their work as the plucking of brands, one by one, from the general burning, increased among Christians until it became a fixed habit, and was easily carried over from morals to institutions. Marriage was often regarded as an evil to be avoided, or at the best a necessary form of domestic life in a world of sin whose relations were entanglements to be escaped, or, when this was impossible, to be reduced to the least amount. Celibacy became common. Even the married refrained from the marital duties of sex, and entire abstinence from them was frequently taught. Some words of Milman are very significant on this point: "It is remarkable," he says, "how rarely if ever (I cannot call to mind a single instance) in the discussions of the comparative merits of marriage and celibacy, the social advantages appear to have occurred to the mind. . . . *It is always argued with relation to the interests and perfection of the individual soul.*" Although this method may not have prevailed so completely as Milman asserts, yet it apparently extended through the whole range of things connected with the Family. It was powerfully instrumental in building the great monastic systems of the centuries that followed. Its one-sided effect contributed to the terrible reaction in morals that made the corruption of some of the Christian centuries scarcely less disgraceful than that of the heathenism of former times.

The influence of the later Roman law contributed much to the same end. We should not overlook the particular stage of social development in the Græco-Roman world at the time of the introduction of Christianity and of the triumph of the latter over the civil power, three or four centuries afterwards. The very early Family had pretty generally disappeared, especially from the cities. So had the tribal, and in good degree the gentile domestic forms which stood next to the simple Family of earlier times. The early city or municipality had passed from its tribal basis of kinship through religion and ties of blood into a political form resting far more on the theory of a collection of individuals. Above all, the absorption of the individual by his Family was pretty much done away. Status had loosened its grip upon

him and contract was put in its place. By the aid of conquest and commerce, property had almost ceased to be in the main the corporate possession of the household and was largely held in individual ownership. The office of the House Father was no longer a sacred trust. Woman had acquired great personal independence, both in respect of property and marriage. And these radical changes in society had found their natural incorporation into law. When, therefore, Christianity came into a position where it could practically influence the laws of the empire, these were in a shape that gave pretty loose rein to individualism in the Family. Its own history made it comparatively easy for Christianity to yield to the current that flowed around it on all sides. If it did much to mould law, it is also true that existing laws had a good deal to do with the Christian rules of the domestic relations. There was a great deal that kept Christianity from helping raise the popular thought above the individual to the Family as the point of view. In this way the state of the civil law and of most social institutions gave a peculiar set to the course which the Christianity of this period took with the Family.

This appears in what is known as the canon law. The canon law may be regarded, if I may so express the thought, as having a sort of mongrel origin. Certainly at the outset, it was the result of that kind of a union which a weak and partially corrupt Christian faith would naturally make with the peculiar civil legal system of the times. Coming in its ethical view of the family from debased stock on either side, it could hardly rise to the dignity of those great organic principles on which the vigorous domestic institutions of early Rome and Greece rested, or which a purer faith might have drawn from a direct and more exclusive contact with the Sacred Scriptures as its supreme authority. But perhaps nothing has done more to determine the doctrine of the Family in the modern Church than the canon law. For it has crystalized and transmitted those principles and rules which have been dominant in the Latin Church, and which have powerfully impressed themselves upon all Protestant peoples as well. Even England and other countries which have never adopted the canon law, have not escaped its strong influence.

Now one has only to have his attention turned to the subject in order to see that the canon law does not make its way through the domestic relations on the line of the Family as its clear and controlling idea, but that the individualistic point of view is oftentimes taken. The title of the latest and probably best digest of the canon law on this subject makes the book treat of the laws of marriage and its dissolution, and this phrase without doubt correctly describes its task. Most of the Christian and legal discussions of the subject have similar titles, indicative of an inherited method of the same general character. And this method shows the usual point of observation taken by the canon law. It is true that the idea of unity is by no means wanting. But like Blackstone's unity of the common law, which he declared made two one, and that one the husband, the oneness of the Family in the canon law is still very nearly individual; and it is measured chiefly by the single being in which the wife is swallowed up. Rarely does the conception rise to the idea of a corporate unity larger than either of its members and something more than all of them.

The influence of Protestantism is too recent and too apparent to need many words here. Its very beginning in the protesting movement that gave to it its name, tended to make it at first individualistic and divisive, whatever may have been true of it later. The egoistic starting-point in treating all social relations is its easy assumption. The principle of the self-determination of all other duties and relations is readily carried over into the Family. Its return to primitive sources of authority and its disposition to a reaction from catholic methods have also helped towards the general drift now under consideration. In the form of evangelicalism and its ultra-sectarianism, the movement away from the conceptions represented by the Family and towards those taking their rise in the Individual has been very marked. For, however much we may say in behalf of those evangelical principles and forms of Protestantism which have been the strength of American Christianity, it seems impossible for any one who reflects carefully upon their social operation to escape the conviction that they have unconsciously had great influence on the popular mind in its solution of practical questions con-

cerning the Family. A Christianity that has taught individual responsibility with untiring persistence, and that has concentrated its force upon the individual as almost the entire beginning, middle and end of its efforts, has had small inducement to look upon the affairs and relations within the household from any other than its accustomed point of view. The modern Church makes a great deal of the congregation and its separate members, but relatively it suppresses the Family as a factor in religious work. A study of the social causes that gave the early churches their peculiar bent in this use of the congregation and of the means by which this inclination has been repeated and carried down in the work of American churches will, I am confident, throw much light upon the peculiar weakness of the Family in their work, but I cannot do more than refer to it now.* Recent methods in Sunday-schools, Christian Associations, Women's societies, and other rapidly multiplying devices for doing Christian work, are further instances of the tendencies of this kind. The principle underlying them is that of substituting more or less artificial collections of individuals in place of the natural Family; and their incidental, if not their direct, effect has been to turn thought and effort away from this great natural instrument of religion. But it is aside from the proper course of this lecture to do more than make allusion to them.

III. Let us now turn to *some practical bearings of this study*, which I have tried to show is necessary to a better understanding of the historic relations of the Family and Christianity to one another. We shall thus feel more deeply its importance. For it concerns practical issues far more than we may at first be disposed to think.

In the first place, the ascertainment of the true historical relation of Christianity and the Family to each other will prepare us to meet certain scientific difficulties successfully. All intelligent readers are aware that there are serious objections made to the commonly accepted scriptural account of the Family on the ground that recent studies of social institutions have compelled many to entirely new conclusions about them. Whatever

* I have, however, attempted this study in an article printed in the *Andover Review* for September, 1885.

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may be our caution in respect to these claims in behalf of evolutionary theories of society, we must all admit that the subject is fairly before us and demands candid attention. And if it should become evident from this class of studies—and I do not, let it be understood, mean to say here that it will or will not—but if it should become evident that the Bible does not contain an infallible history and doctrine of social institutions, but only comes to us making use of them as it found them and giving us received accounts of their origin, yet dropping into them—especially in the New Testament—its great principles and allowing these to germinate and develop in the soil where they fell and under the climate where they were sown, the course of Christian apology will be very different from what it otherwise would be. If the Sacred Scriptures simply contain the history of a partial revelation of the Divine thought in domestic or other social institutions, together with such authoritative principles as the exigencies of that revelation require, no prudent man will throw away his Bible because it falls below his scientific knowledge on this subject, and no Christian need distrust social science because it asks him to accept more than his Bible has revealed on it.

But secondly, and more to our practical need. The study for which this paper is a plea would seem necessary *to put Christianity in a true attitude towards some practical questions intimately connected with the Family.* The apologetic difficulties are, after all, of less concern than the problems which actual life presents. And it would be well for us if we could bring Christians to a perception of the place the Family really holds in the solution of some of the most important questions of the day. For these are too serious to permit Christianity to approach them while loaded down with needless burdens—or restrained from her greatest freedom of action. Let me, then, enforce my general position by referring to some of them. For convenience, they may be divided into two classes.

The first includes several practical problems now before our country awaiting solution, and which, when pushed to their ultimate supports, will turn on the answer we give to the question: What is the essential constitution of the Family? Take the subject of Divorce, or as it is commonly thought of, the dissolution

of the marriage relation, for one cause or another, prior to the death of one of the parties to it. Now all good thinking on this subject soon comes to the inquiry into the nature of what is before us which we propose to dissolve. That inquiry leads us to ask—What is marriage that brought about the original condition with which Divorce is to deal? Is marriage a contract and nothing more? Is it simply a contract of a peculiar kind and order? Is it a *status*? And if so, what sort of a *status*? Who control its origin and being, and how far? Has it unity? If so, what is this unity? Does this unity absorb one of the parties to it in the person of the other, so that the personality of the latter stands for the old personalities of the two? And further, is there an organic unity at all? And if this be admitted, does it or does it not constitute a something more than either one of the two parties—something more than the sum of the two? And once more, may this unity growing out of marriage be regarded as a moral person and treated politically as such, having duties and rights to be discovered and maintained and becoming the subject of rewards and penalties which shall be bestowed according as it shall be true or false to its own being and its own moral consciousness? No one thinks long on the subject of Divorce without perceiving that it is inseparably connected with that of marriage; and no one long continues reflection upon the two without coming to see that the fundamental inquiry of all is into the nature of the Family. The most serious part also of the hotly disputed English question of marriage with a deceased wife's sister derives its chief importance from its bearing upon the problem of the Family.*

Mormon Polygamy is another example. For when we go beyond the popular statements on this subject, which have been made as if they were mere truisms, and try to show just wherein the polygamous family is constitutionally wrong and claim that monogamy only is to be tolerated in a free Republic based on natural institutions and rights, we shall find ourselves confronting this one great question concerning the real nature of the

* The able and suggestive little book of the Rev. Dr. Geo. Z. Gray, Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., entitled "Husband and Wife," illustrates what I have said above.

Family. And, indeed, this essential question meets us all the way from Maine to California; and, I may add, from the Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. We must have a doctrine of the Family that will stand in both Utah and Connecticut; in New Hampshire and Indiana; in Salt Lake City, Chicago and Boston. It will prove a blessing in the end if we shall discover that our doctrine of the Family formulated for use in Utah cuts under the loose divorce laws of the States and Territories. And I sometimes think that the jugglery which the Mormons practise with the biblical doctrine of the Family may have closer relations with the cramped ideas of some of the Christian theories of it than we suspect. The Mormon method of interpretation of Scripture is a familiar one. These are of the class of questions that raise directly the theory of the Family.

The other class of problems which I have in mind demands a true Family and a clear consciousness of it in the popular mind for their best solution. In the former class the idea of theory is directly raised as fundamental to the very question at issue. But in the latter, it is only implied that we have a sound theory somewhere ready for practical use, though it lie far back of the actual problem before us at any given time. But here the range of subjects is so large that I must simply point to a few of the leading ones and then take up a single one of them for illustration. Among them may be named that of the extension of the suffrage to woman, of her absolute equality with man in respect to the ownership and disposition of property, of the more strictly industrial problems—such as affect the employment of women and children, and the influence of the competitive system on the home—of the objects, methods and ends of education, of the view that we take of chastity and the evils of licentiousness and our methods in their reform and, most fundamental and far-reaching of all, of the place to be given to the Family in the practical work of the Christian religion. In every one of these directions we need back of all our work, the most thorough and comprehensive understanding of the Family, both in respect of its nature and resources. I will select, however, for our present purpose a single subject, and that shall be the problem of modern property. It can be touched here very lightly.

A recent article,* based on the returns of the census, shows that in the ten years between 1870 and 1880, the number of children receiving wages in the United States had "increased 66 *per cent.*, and that in face of an admittedly defective enumeration." The writer of it says, "In mechanical and manufacturing industries alone the increase was 59 *per cent.*, while the labor of males over 16 years made an advance of only 43 *per cent.*; and that of females over 15 years, 64 *per cent.*" Those of us who are accustomed to regard the wide opening of employments to women as of so great good as to be everywhere and always encouraged do not, it seems to me, reflect sufficiently on its remote causes and their effects. This remarkable increase of labor for wages among women and young children, and that steady movement which, at Lowell and other centres of manufacture, has supplanted the intelligent women of the old New England stock—first with the Irish and then with the French Canadian, and which would, if it could do so to advantage, put the Chinese in the places of the latter, have causes which appear to me to be quite as powerful as those moral agencies which we usually, and sometimes rather boastfully set forth in behalf of the industrial rights of women. The operation of the demands of capital upon industry is powerfully individualistic as respects the Family. Capital wants a laborer at smallest cost to itself where cost is compared simply with the work done. The individual without a family competes with the head of a large family, crowding the latter to the wall. For the tendency is to compel the head of a household to make an industrial unit of each member of his family, or else suffer in the competition; and, indeed, he must often suffer even after this expedient. Mr. Crowell, the writer whom I have just quoted, clearly perceives the character of the evil he sets forth when he calls this "the play of silently working forces which are daily resolving the adverse interests of industrial life more and more into a treacherous struggle of the factory *versus* the Family." For I would say with all the emphasis of long settled conviction that it is the Family that feels the heaviest grinding of the industrial movements of the times. What is called

* In the *Andover Review* for July, 1885.

the socialistic problem is, I am compelled to believe, linked with the domestic problem far more closely than either of the parties to the former have generally acknowledged. The right of the Family to its integrity, both in its being and labor, and to its freest development amid the largest opportunities, must be asserted against all industrial tendencies to the contrary, or society is imperilled at its foundation and labor and capital lose the truest, the most nearly universal and most powerful incentives they have—the motives of the home. Looking, then, at the industrial problem in its present practical aspects simply, a good understanding of the nature of the Family and its rights, respecting both the ends of personality and property, is indispensable to its solution.

But there is another point of view which should be taken before we can claim to fairly understand this economic question. Most accounts of socialism begin with it as a practical fact and make little account of the historic forces that are far behind its expression in concrete form. But on reflection this, I am sure, will seem to many as unsatisfactory as would be the attempt to get at the inner working and true significance of our political institutions without carefully investigating their English, Germanic and Græco-Roman sources—in short, without discovering something of the contributions of both the Aryan and Semitic races to them. For American economic problems are in part an heritage from the earliest times; and nothing short of a study of the mutual relations of Property and the Family from the dawn of history, and of the effect of these relations in bringing about the conditions underlying socialism, and which have done much to make socialism possible, can adequately furnish us for the work its presence brings. The process by which property has passed from being largely the corporate possession of the household to the exclusive ownership of the individual members of it and under which the control of the Father has been transformed from a trust to a personal right, should be understood. The origin and rise of market price and its steady growth into the place custom once held in fixing the basis of exchanges, the growth and social significance of competition historically treated, the rise and early function of the Will and the laws of Inheritance,

and that whole range of influences in the realms of economics and law by which the Family has been changed from a corporate institution, comprehending within itself nearly all the interests of its members, to what seems almost a new association for those ends which are limited by the demands of physical sex alone, and thus to the merest fragments of its early uses and of the life once concentrated within it—these are all to be taken into any complete understanding of modern socialism. Historic socialism is the thin end of the wedge. The long butt of this wedge, the impelling force it communicates and the causes that have opened the seam into which the edge is set, must be counted among the elements of the problem socialism presents to us. Socialism, in other words, is simply one expression in a particular concrete form of the vast question which modern wealth has brought to the surface. And with the larger question it involves immense changes in the mutual relations of Property and the Family which cannot be neglected by the student of modern economic subjects.

Now, two things make the speedy and diligent investigation of the Christian treatment and doctrine of the Family necessary to the solution of this question. One is that we must have a Christian theory of the Family that will meet every scientific and practical test that may be applied to the Family as a working factor in the solution of the economic difficulties that meet us on every hand. The other is the fact that neither economic science nor the practical operation of the forces it treats, nor of socialism in its ordinary methods, have the disposition or the ability to give us that true Family which is the postulate of a successful solution of their problems. For it is only when economic science and the truths that underlie the theories of socialism have learned their own place and have been taught to serve in the ranks of the sciences and arts of living where they have been frequently disposed to rule, that they really come to know anything of the Family and its functions in industrial affairs. The uncontrolled tendency of strict political economy, in the familiar acceptance of the narrowest idea of it, is divisive in respect to the unity of the Family; for it is individualistic both in concept and method. The purely economic corporation of mod-

ern times tends of itself to loosen the bonds of all corporations in which the dominant force is personal rather than material. That commercial spirit which is steadily reducing the national control over a man and making every human being a cosmopolitan in spite of his own exertions to the contrary, is not sparing the Family, which is the embryo of the Nation and continues to make up the primary cells of every highly developed national organism. The truth is that its work on the Family began before a true Nation existed and went far towards making this Nation possible. For it is through the surrender of many of the economic and other functions of the Family to the larger social forms that these latter have grown into the modern State. And it is our great task now to determine the limitations of this movement and readjust relations within it. A social science that comprehends political economy, rightly understood as one of its departments, and which does not surrender to the claims of the latter to be the whole science of living, can and must do the work of giving the people of our country a true Family, which shall be conscious of its own being and duties and rights, and capable of an intelligent maintenance of its own high place in the work which the great coming contest over material wealth will have for a true Family to do. And a Christian philosophy which shall, like its master, be born of God into the Families of the country—itsself a Divine incarnation and so bound to grow into all the wisdom of Heaven and Earth, is the best inspiration and the safest guide to the science that shall successfully grapple with this single one of the social problems which I have used to enforce my point.

A similar exposition might be given concerning the other subjects to which reference has been made. But time forbids, and it is hardly necessary to do so. Any one who will distinctly raise in his own thinking the question as to the part the Family must perform in the solution of any one of them, especially if he will look into their historical relations with the Family, cannot fail to come to a conviction of the high place this institution must occupy in the tasks they set before us.

I have said, in substance, that for its great work in these directions Christianity should come forward with a true Family

that has been made conscious of its nature and calling; that it should press this Family into the field of its duties prepared to claim its rights in order that it may attain its highest usefulness; and that it should thereby work out its own freedom as well as the deliverance of man from the bondage of sheer individualism. This is one part of the alternative, and it is based on the assumption of the triumph of a Christian civilization. But the other part of the alternative must be recognized. And that part is found in the opinion that the drift of the times hitherto has been wholly in the right direction and needs no fundamental correction. But to accept this as true implies that the Family must yield more and more to the forces that work for its general disintegration. Some of its sincere friends already speak of the Family as being simply a *modus vivendi* in a way that carries with it evidence of their general satisfaction with things as they are. Shall capital and labor, commerce, the movement in the interests of woman, education, politics, practical religion, one and all go on in their present course until the Family shall not be even this for the many, but rather the accident of the few? Is that powerful, continuous movement by which the individual is being differentiated out from the Family in economics, law, ethics and politics and massed in the largest collections possible at the expense of all smaller social groups, entirely a right one? Or on the other hand, is this individuating process a part of, and preliminary to, a better, more harmonious reintegration which is already begun here and there, but which needs to be made general and powerfully increased? And has the time come which, by its very stress, points to the constructive work Society may do after its long encouragement of separative tendencies?

Thus, it seems to me, the most serious thought of the American people vibrates, though it may be more or less unconsciously, back and forth, waiting for more light and stronger assurances before it moves forward to its heartiest and best work. I have accomplished one part of my present purpose if I have done something to show that there is probability that from the earliest days of the Church down to the present time Christianity itself has experienced similar difficulties in its own more distinctive field, difficulties produced partly by its own exigencies and

in part due to the environment in which it has wrought. And the other part of my aim is secured if I have shown that there is presumptive evidence enough in this direction to call for a re-examination of the common account of the historic relations of the Family and Christianity to each other for the sake of learning just how much has been done for the Family and of getting a better idea of what remains to be done. It is the conviction that I have of the great part the Family must necessarily take in the future work of society, together with the equally strong conviction that Christianity must guide the Family to its best work, and the serious question as to whether or not Christianity has yet fully possessed itself of the historical facts concerning the Family and her own relation to it, that have led me to try in this way to raise the question of the need of reinvestigation. It has seemed to me possible that, by taking the Family for our working line and using the light that the historical and comparative methods have put into our hands in recent years, the old field of Christian history may still yield rich treasures. I raise the question. Other and competent minds must be depended upon to give the answer to it. The question undoubtedly has support in the methods of recent historical research, and it cannot long go unanswered.

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

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CHRISTIAN THOUGHT is the title of a Bi-Monthly Magazine, each number containing 32 pages, handsomely printed on good paper. It contains the lectures and papers read before the American Institute of Christian Philosophy, together with other articles the best thoughts of the best thinkers in America, and the shiest productions of writers abroad. Specially such as are of the permanent value and no easy access to American readers. Every Christian family should have it. Every Christian parent who has a child in college should send it. Every clergyman should read it. Every man who desires to escape the materialistic philosophy of the age should promote its circulation.

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