

Bookshops are filled with volumes on human relationships, marriage and its relationships, the family and its relationships—and so on. Doubtless many of these will be valuable, adding to the knowledge we already have.

This present book *Comprehending the Family of God and Man* will be seen to be a book somewhat different to others. It speaks about Divine relationships, those that are operating within the Triune God. They are the relationships of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The author insists that human relationships derive from Divine relationships and are the same.

This means that out of the Divine relationships come the human ones, and since God is Father, Christ is the Son and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Divine Family, then it is possible—indeed desirable—for human relationships to flow from the Divine Source.

There is nothing in this book which does not accord with the biblical doctrine of God, Man and Creation. Indeed everything rings true, no matter how new and radical it may seem at first sight. The writer, who has himself counselled innumerable persons for much of his eighty years, sees the wisdom of the Scriptures is invaluable in directing us to proper relationships. Certainly new material will be seen to alter many cases. All readers should derive benefit from it.

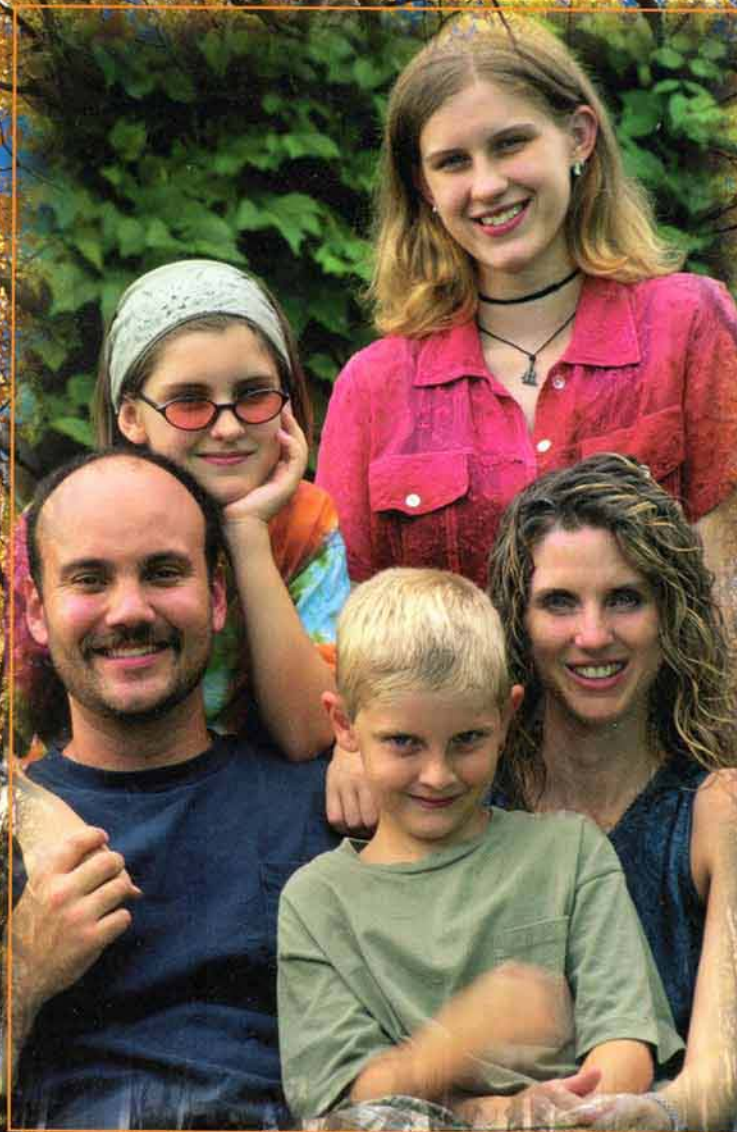
**The Rev. Geoffrey Bingham**, an Anglican clergyman, a teacher of interstate and international experience, has been a missionary with the Church Missionary Society, Principal of the Pakistan Bible Institute and of the Bible College of South Australia, and is currently Executive Director of New Creation Ministries.



New Creation Publications Inc

# Comprehending

the Family of God and Man



Geoffrey C Bingham

Other Books in This Series

*Comprehending the Covenant*  
*Comprehending the Family of God and Man*  
*Comprehending the Kingdom of God*  
*Comprehending the Resurrection*  
*Comprehending Justification*

# Comprehending the Family of God and Man

Geoffrey Bingham

NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.  
PO Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051  
1999

Published by  
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.  
PO Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051

© Geoffrey C. Bingham 1999

National Library of Australia cataloguing-in-publication data

Bingham, Geoffrey C.  
Comprehending the family of God and man

ISBN 0 86408 229 0

1. God—Love. 2. Love. 3. Family—Religious aspects.  
I. Title. (Series: The Comprehending books; no. 2.)

212.7

This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Wholly produced and set up in Adelaide, South Australia

Typesetting: *Pam Webb*  
Cover Design: *Openbook Publishers*  
Printer: *Openbook Publishers, Adelaide*

## Foreword to the 'Comprehending Books'

For over twenty-five years New Creation Teaching Ministry (NCTM) has been developing Christian Resources, and by means of its Publishing Unit—New Creation Publications Incorporated (NCPI)—has brought these to the general public and is making them further available on the Internet. NCPI distributes books, booklets, other printed study materials, audio and video cassettes, some music CDs and is forming CD-ROMs. All of these are for use by pastors, theologians and other persons. NCPI also has an Imprint named Troubadour Press. By means of NCPI and Troubadour Press, we seek to cover Bible teaching, Bible commentaries, theology, history, personal counselling and certain devotional materials. It also publishes useful fiction and non-fiction volumes, including poetry and hymn books. In addition, it seeks out valuable out-of-print theological books and republishes them.

Many of our NCPI publications are quite substantial and deal with a wide variety of subjects. In some cases certain readers find they cannot take on board books designed to deal thoughtfully and in detail with their subjects or topics. These readers would like smaller books or booklets

which would give them the essence of the subjects they are seeking to understand. It is obvious that often a reader may find a substantial book too much to take in, and may even lose the essence of its subject. It is a pleasant fact that many of our booklets are in demand and are sufficient to inform their readers on a particular subject. One consideration, of course, is that our booklets are less expensive than those which deal in detail with their particular theme, though none of our books is really expensive.

Here, at NCTM–NCPI, we pondered the whole matter and came up with the idea that we would develop what we have called ‘The Comprehending Series’. These booklets would be in a format easy to handle, to read and to comprehend. By ‘comprehend’ we mean each title would deal with its subject so that it would be easy to understand. We decided that it should still have to have substance, and would not be designed for laziness in reading, or be superficial in its material. We had hoped the general public and those with minds for biblical truth would enjoy the Series and not find the books difficult to comprehend. We also hoped that thoughtful students and scholars would find them quite useful. We decided that the subjects should be those which constantly come up in conversation, confront us often in life, and would be helpful in gaining knowledge and wisdom.

We thought it would be good to have a regular format and a cover by which we could quickly recognise the Series. Of course, we send out these slim volumes with a certain heart-trepidation.

Doubtless some of them will be thought to be too simple, and others to be too difficult, but on the whole we feel they will fulfil a felt need and with a prayer and a tremor or two we send them out to the public. It could be that you might come to welcome and appreciate them. We hope so.

*Geoffrey Bingham*  
*General Editor*  
*NCPI, 1999*

# Foreword

Having written often on the matter of the human family and its relationships, I suppose I thought I had covered most material. Of course, I hadn't. As time has progressed I have discovered the illusion under which many of us have lived; namely that we have loved sufficiently. Many of us would admit there have been big holes in much of our loving, but on the whole we have tried to do our best, and probably we have done that.

For me the discovery that human love—which in this book I call *eros*—though often of a high quality, is nevertheless, at core, not good enough for true human relationships. How this is so is explained in the book. Here I just want to say that *eros* was the highest quality of love the Greeks knew. The word was not particularly used for sexual relationships, though it may have contained these. It was used for what we easily call selfless love. In human relationships there can be selfless love. Even so, when tested to the extreme, this love is shown not to be wholly selfless. Initially it is given with enthusiasm, with devotion and even with intensity. Such loving can be exciting, stimulating. Should the person who is loving discover his—or her—love is not fully appreciated, and when returns for that love are denied, then *eros* breaks down. Sometimes it can have dreadful results. With millions of divorces on our scoreboard

and resultant family suffering we see the failure of much *eros*.

It is *agape* or Divine love which is the true love. This love does not start with us but with God. The human race has to learn much about this love. It has to come to us from God and flow through us to others. In fact it begins with what we call God's covenantal Being which includes all human beings in His love. For many, God's covenant is but a contract, a set of conditions based on law which a person has to observe in order to win God's love and favour. This concept is utterly wrong. A contractual God would breed contractual people, and persons who think God is contractual will themselves be contractual in their relationships. Contractual relationships are a major disaster. If love is called for they will love in *eros* and this will determine marital and familial relationships of a difficult nature.

If God's covenant with His creation is seen as unconditional love, then it will evoke love for Him and love for others. We cannot here open up this vast subject, but it is what this book is about. Having written a number of books about contractual love and unconditional love and having seen much good response to these, I am confident that this small book may prove to be of value to persistent readers.

I trust so, and send it forth with the hope that it may lead many into a new type and world of relationships—true love relationships.

*Geoffrey Bingham*  
*March, 1999*

# Comprehending the Family of God and Man

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

All human beings have been linked with the idea of a family since their birth. Even an orphan knows what is the fact and principle of family. Perhaps the fact of being an orphan even more makes the idea of family stand out. I once read a book called—if I can recall the title correctly—*The Death of the Family*. I had the feeling that the author, brilliant as he was, and intelligent in his reasoning, was an angry man. He had the family in his murderous sights. Having said—and correctly I am sure—that all our ills and spills come from the family, he added a postscript in which he said he had come into a wonderful experience of family. I think it was a particular family which deeply moved him. He said he would have to rethink his whole book and its ideas. Even so, he made his point: our ills and spills do come from families. It is perfectly logical. Ills and spills would have to come from families, just as joys, delights and pleasures would also come from families. There really is no other place from which both sorrows

and joys can come. The human race we can say is a large family, and anyway, it is composed of innumerable families.

The idea of the family, when we think about it, is fascinating. It is the social unit into which we are all born, in which we grow and develop—either for good or otherwise—and relationships are really the substance of human living. It is poignantly moving to see adopted children seeking out their blood relatives, and they seem to have no peace until they know who they are. Whilst contemporary society does not seem to be overly concerned with the thirty million or so abortions per annum, it is very concerned if, in the history of a person, child abuse can be uncovered. This seems to amount to a terrible, unforgivable sin. It is as though there is a natural law written in us all which says the born child should have the opportunity to grow, unmolested, in order to take its place in society when it matures. The matter of 'lost generations' bulks largely in our thinking. We seem to be saying that a child should have the right to grow up in its natural family, even if the conditions under which that family lives are far from ideal.

The aim of this book is not to cover all elements of the family, for those could fill large volumes, but to get the spiritual idea of the family from the Christian point of view. By 'Christian' we do not mean 'religious'. Religion and faith can be two very different matters. Nor can this small book cover all the injunctions, stipulations and wisdom which go with family living, and are set out

in the entire Scriptures. By 'Christian', then, we mean the relational inheritance and wisdom which we have from the family as it is set out in the entire Scriptures, including family life in the patriarchal period, the period of Israel's being as a nation, and the Christian church's experience as in the New Testament and two thousand years of Christian history.

The reader will soon discover that I see God, the Trinity, as the Holy Family, and that God is in Himself covenantal, that He has intimate relationships as Father, Son and Spirit which are the relationships we should have in our human families. The reader will also realise that I think that humanity has been designed to live in the way that God lives. On the human level Man is designed to live as the Trinity does on the Divine level. God, as Father, has His intention of humanity being made to be His large Family, and knowing the ways in which to live as family. Thus what we call the personal family, which can be what we call 'nuclear' or 'extended', is the proper place for the birth, growth and development of its members. It is the one place which can be called 'home'.

The riches of family are often not recognised these days, and things outside the family are made to appeal to the senses of children, and even to older people. Yet, I believe, the richest living is that within the family. In good cultures no member of the family is rejected from it, even to old age and dying. If illness brings geographical removal of members, yet the true family gathers around the separated ones and gives to them the best of all things—family love and continuing relationships.

This book was originally a series of studies for a group of interested persons, and so, whereas I would normally let the book flow on without too many sections, I feel it will be good, in this case, to retain the divisions under their headings. The reader, if he or she wishes, can add to each section, filling out what has not been included.

I think there is one condition under which we should read, and that is that we realise we all know much less of the subject than we should, that it is perhaps the most fascinating theme on earth, and that not all the theologians and sociologists have exhausted the subject. Yes, the family is with us, for good or ill, and the many prophecies that it is disappearing or will ultimately come to an end, cannot, by nature of the case, be true analytical predictions. We need family, so let us explore it to the greatest depths possible.

## Part I: The Foundational Principles for Family Relationships

I have thought it useful to go to the aetiology—the causes and beginnings—of the family. What is a family? What are its function and its goals? What is the structure of the family? From what does it derive? What are the patterns of behaviour which are the true ways of action of the family? These are useful principles to discover when they come as answers to our questions. Of course the Jewish and Christian faiths derive from revelation rather than empirical research, but the principles of family are rooted in the very nature of humanity, and humanity which is in touch with God the Creator of the universe. Since we do not formulate the principles of the family, it is a legitimate exercise to enquire biblically what they are and how they operate. For this we have the Word of God and the revelation of the mystery of the family by the Holy Spirit. Given that our understanding of the mystery requires humility in listening and receiving the Spirit's revelation, and granting also that our own communication of it to others—as in this very book—may be to some degree deficient, yet we ought to try to communicate what we believe we have come to know, for 'family' is enormously important in the human scene and to true relational living.

## INTRODUCTION: THE DIVINE FAMILY

The aim of our book is to see what is the nature of the human family and its relationships. We must look at the Divine Family and, seeing it, recognise that the human family derives from the Divine. Its relationships will be as those of the Divine Family. The Divine Family is the Triune Godhead. The Father is Father to the Son and the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father. The Son is the Son of the Father and the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son. Every family has its own special character or *torah* or ethos. The Spirit is the Spirit of the Family. If we wish to know what fatherhood or sonship or family-spirit is, then we must look to the Godhead. All human fatherhood comes from the Divine; all human, filial being comes from the Divine Son, and all family being comes from the Divine Family-Spirit.

We can say that the Father is the Father archetype, the human father being its ectype. Likewise with the Son being the archetypal Son and the human son the ectypal son, the Spirit being the archetypal Family-Spirit of the human family-spirit which is ectypal. We must see these archetypes as being not only paradigms but as also the source of all the relationships we have stated.

## DIVINE AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

In order to understand the relationships which exist in Man—humanity as a whole—we must first

understand the Divine relationships. We must work down to the human from the Divine and not vice versa. The Father is love (I John 4:7–12), the Son is 'the Son of His love' (Col. 1:13) and the Spirit is the Spirit of love (Rom. 5:5; 15:30).

Next we must distinguish between *agape* and *eros*. *Agape* is Divine love, self-giving, not demanding returns, and by creation *eros* in origin was the same—love derived from God—but in the fall of Man *eros* changed and became giving with a view to returns. The first love—*agape*—is for others; the second—*eros*—is now for itself. Some have said that *eros* is 'fallen *agape*' or love that was selfless but has become selfish. All love was originally *agape*. There is nothing to suggest that *eros*, which is sexual, is necessarily wrong. It is the motivation which determines *eros*, making it other than true *agape*.

## THE MATTER OF THE COVENANTS OF GOD AND MAN

In the Godhead is covenantal life. The Three Persons coinhere one another, are *for* one another, and are perichoretic. That is, the Three Persons honour, serve, give to one another and receive from one another. All covenant is of love relationships, all relationships are of love (*agape*). All relationships are 'I-Thou' relationships. When 'I-Thou' relationships are mutual, then we have union and communion on the Divine level. This was how Man was created, for he was made in the image of God.

God is Himself-in-communion. He is God in communion with Man, in the 'I-Thou' mode. Man, as created, was in communion with God, receiving the perichoretic flow of God and returning it with total love, that is, in worship, in serving, in receiving from God and giving to Him of what had been given from God. Total love had to do with total worship. Man's own relationships distributed in the whole body of humanity were *agape* relationships, 'I-Thou' relationships, perichoretic relationships *with* others, *for* others, being other-persons centred.<sup>1</sup> The relationships of God to Man and the bond of love, we call 'the everlasting covenant' and 'the covenant of creation'. God's covenant is non-contractual because it is *agape* love.

breached the covenant, losing the joy, peace and true communion. He came to see the covenant, then, as contractual, whereas before he would have been in the relationship of love. Any love he may have felt he, being human, ought to give would then be contractual and thus not love. *Eros* is contractual and so is calculated in its actions and not naturally spontaneous. *Agape*, by nature of the case, is non-contractual and is involuntary. The old theologians said 'disinterested', meaning not self-motivated.

### THE HUMAN FALL INTO SIN AND THE CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIPS

In receiving the word of the serpent in Eden, Man rejected the word of God. He thus came into the realm of death as he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This death was a covenantal one, for he broke the covenant relationship with God, though God did not break it with Man. Man

*Forenote:* The opposite to self-concerned living is seen in II Corinthians 5:14–15: 'For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.' It was to take the work of the Cross to renew man to his pristine state of relationships, covenantal and agapitic. Only because God has given His Son in true love do we —being forgiven in the New Covenant—come to love God and have true relationships with Him and others.

### *Agape, Eros, and the 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' Relationships*

When, then, it comes to the matter of all human relationships, we see and fully realise that the human scene is dominated by *eros* relationships, that is, by contractual relationships. A state of

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a great doctrine of the New Testament. To be the one who serves is to be great. Philippians 2:1–11 shows that we are to think on the things of others and consider others better than ourselves, which is to put them first, and to empty ourselves for them. The use of gifts *for* others is our way of being perichoretic, for to love is to give (John 3:16). To be *for* others is to be 'other-persons centred'. To live first to God is to live, then, *for* all others.

death is in all such relationships. When relationships are betrayed, denied or not requited, then anger is born, and the stage is set for violence, cruelty, rape and murder. Selfishness may not take these outward manifestations but it is certainly present. This wrong state generally begins within the human society—the corporate family—and within the nuclear and extended families of which we are members.

Fallen Man takes the 'I-It' relational attitude to God (cf. Cain, his sacrifice, murder and punishment), but where grace is operative and effective, Man takes the 'I-Thou' relationship with God and with his fellow creatures. We must not fail to see that from the beginning (cf. Gen. 3:15) part of the human race has lived in love (I John 3:10–11) and in faith (Heb. 11:4ff.), and so it has 'I-Thou' relationships with God and fellow man. That is why covenantal life and relationships have been possible for people under God's grace and have been lived in contrast to the other part of the human race which has lived outside the Divine covenantal order in contractual living which is 'I-It' in nature. This latter part of humanity has the illusion it is loving because of mistaking *eros* for *agape*. We may rightly say that all mankind has the moral law somehow in its inner being, but law is seen either in the light of *eros* or of *agape*. *Eros-law* is construed as contractual and carries a great legalistic weight and terror. *Agape-law* is understood as the law of love and inspires Man under grace to the acts of loveobedience. Indeed it is the way of God's love.

### **THE TRUE FAMILY OF GOD IS COVENANTAL: LIKEWISE THE FAMILY OF MAN IS COVENANTAL**

If our reasoning is biblical, and so correct, then the Holy Family—the Triune God—is the Divine Family, the Source and Paradigm of, and for, all true familyhood. It means that when God created humanity He created one human family. All humanity is one family (cf. Acts 17:26–31): 'for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring" '.

If all humanity had continued in its original righteousness and the natural *agape* love, then we would have had beautiful families then and today. As it is, we have had those human beings of love and faith (by grace), and those of self-centredness and contract (by sin). Cain and Abel set forth, in principle, the two streams. Since all human beings are sinful by birth, the danger of moving from *agape* to *eros* is always present, and families are confused when their families contain both. The confusion is enormous. Even so, this helps to explain much of the relational problems and difficulties of human living following the Fall.

### **The Families of the Human Race**

Biblically we see that (i) all humanity is the family of God (Acts 17:28); (ii) all who live by love and faith are true covenant-family under their Father, God; (iii) Israel was particularly the family

of God under special covenant; and (iv) all who are genuinely members of Christ are truly the Church, and the Church is the family of God in the New Covenant. Those who live against God are still His children (Acts 17:28), but they do not acknowledge Him as their Father, nor live the true filial way of relationships. It takes the regeneration of covenant-breakers to bring them back to true love relationships with God and fellow man. We would conclude that all who live in the family of God are motivated to have their own families live after the manner of the Divine Family. The whole family of the faithful is composed of faithful families, seeking to live after the nature of the Divine Family. Of course we keep taking into account the sinfulness of Man, even of Man living under grace and love. Also family living is subject to evil's opposition. Satan seeks to be the 'father' of the 'family' of covenant-breakers (cf. John 8:34–44). For him any image of the Holy Family in human relationships is anathema.

### **A STORY CONCERNING COVENANTAL FAMILY LIVING**

We can take any patriarchal family, or family, in Israel, and see the nature of it and the outworking of the Divine pattern in it. We note that much of the text of the Old and New Testaments is given over to the matter of family living. In trying to understand family life in Israel, we must almost completely forget the later, modern 'nuclear' family

as we know it, for it is so far away from the earlier style of the covenantal family of the Patriarchs and Israel.

The family of Israel—as also the families in Israel—lived covenantally. They would have been lost as to how to live otherwise. All pagan cultures lived covenantally by and with their gods. They had covenants with the gods which were contractual. Societal and familial life was based on such agreements. They may have had an 'I-It' approach to their deities, but living in *eros* they would probably see their worship as an 'I-Thou' matter. God's great complaint against Israel was when it forsook God as Father and made covenants with the gods and idols and idolatrous nations. This was covenant-breaking with a vengeance.

### **Family Covenant in Israel**

Israel had been taught by God that they had been chosen in love, that He was their Covenant-Father, they His covenant-children (cf. Deut. 7:6–11). They were to worship Him as both their Father and their Husband (cf. Jer. 31:32; Hosea 2:19; cf. Jer. 2:26–27; etc.). Worship was, then, both marital and familial. In marriage the man and the woman worship one another, and thus God as Husband and Israel as wife are the basis of true love, so that the family live together in the right order of things. When we see this principle we understand a lot of the Old Testament text.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> For the actual structure and working out of Israel's typical household-family in all its cultural elements, we require not only a study of the Old Testament but also of the family life of surrounding nations, as Israel did not practise family life out of theological perfection.

Without repeating all the teaching we have shared on covenant<sup>3</sup> let us go to the story of Malachi chapter 2. This chapter portrays Israel as the family of God.

The chapter has within it a number of references to covenant as a principle. Presupposed is the Sinaitic covenant which in Israel's thinking was always seen within the wider covenant of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (cf. 2:10). Specifically it refers to a covenant with Levi, to the 'covenant of our fathers', and the human marriage covenant. The covenant with Levi is described as 'a covenant of life and peace' (cf. Num. 3:45; 18:21f.; 25:12–13). Israel is not the family under the true Father because it violates the altar. Levitical priests walked in integrity and holiness, 'True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.' This principle was not adhered to at the time of

Malachi's prophecy (cf. Neh. 5:3–7). God's covenant always provides priestly ministry to its members, as also it has God's law which is the covenantal way of life.

Malachi 2:13–16 appears to do with the marital conduct of families where husbands are divorcing wives in favour of marrying daughters of a foreign god. This brings the whole principle of marriage in Israel to the fore. Because of this faithlessness to primary marriage, God will not respect or accept the altar offerings of Israel. The text of verses 14–16 explains why. 'You ask, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Has not the one God made and sustained for us the spirit of life? And what does he desire? Godly offspring.<sup>4</sup> So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth. "For I hate divorce, says the LORD the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless." ' With this text we should read Proverbs 2:16–19 where 'the loose woman' is a wife who 'forsakes the companion of her

---

<sup>3</sup> Here we mean teaching such as is given in my *Love's Most Glorious Covenant* (Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 1997), and W. J. Dumbrell's *Covenant and Creation* (Paternoster, Exeter, 1984), and other similar teaching on God's covenant. The bibliography should also be helpful.

---

<sup>4</sup> We need to see here that marriage is always with a view to fruitfulness and other elements of the vocational mandate of Genesis 1:28f. 'Be fruitful and multiply' was the order. Jesus taught fruitfulness to his disciples in John chapter 15. In Romans 7:4 Paul makes the point that believers have been married to Christ 'that we may bear fruit for God'.

youth and forgets the covenant of her God'. She forgets the covenant God has made with Israel and the covenant which she has made in marriage.

We gather, then, that within the covenant of Israel all relationships are covenantal. Marriage is a covenant before God and witnessed to by God under peril of judgment if a spouse or spouses revoke the covenant of marriage; that is, 'I hate divorce'<sup>5</sup> is what God says, as also He hates 'covering one's garment with violence', which means there is violence in the marriage in respect to going through to divorce. If we ask why God should be so vehement about the matter, we must realise that God is married to Israel. He is her Husband by covenant (Jer. 31:32). The first two chapters of Hosea, the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel and Isaiah chapter 54—amongst other passages—attest to this marital bond or covenant. It is at the heart of all covenant. Covenant-breaking is looked upon as a dreadful violation of the relationship God has with His people.

---

<sup>5</sup> This is probably the only place in the Old Testament which says explicitly that God hates divorce. This does not mean that its statement cannot stand for the whole of the Old Testament text, which seems to say 'I love marriage'. That God loves marriage cannot be debated. Some scholars point to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as God's permission to divorce and even to remarry. This is a tall claim and can scarcely be verified by the text itself. I suggest a reading of my little book *The Profound Mystery: Marriage Love, Divine and Human* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1995) for some commentary on this present text as well as God's love of marriage. The bibliography in this book can be most useful.

### **Family Covenant in the New Testament: The People of the Church**

Without doubt, and beyond all argument, the early church was an evident family. Relationships and family action are clearly the way of life of the new community which sprang up on the day of Pentecost. Israel had always been known as the *edah* or *qahal*. These terms in Hebrew roughly approximate with the term *ecclesia* (church) in the New Testament. They have to do with (i) the community as a whole being the people of God, and (ii) the people coming together for what we might call 'gathered worship' in the great festivals which celebrated God's deeds amongst them in their history. This included the sanctification of the tabernacle and the first and second temples. Thus Stephen talks about Israel as 'the congregation [*ecclesia*] in the wilderness' (Acts 7:38).

The physical reality on the day of Pentecost was that the new community showed its immediate love in extraordinary relationships, caring for the widows and the poor, selling possessions in order to have a daily distribution of food and necessities. Most touching was the wonderful unity and the family-nature of the community's living. In history, Christians reading these events have been moved to develop communities; but the first community (*ecclesia; koinonia*) lived in the society of their days and were not monastic or separated from their fellow human beings. Families constituted that one community and were strengthened by being in the community as

the community was also strengthened by its constituent families.

## Part II: The Functional Members Created for Family Relationships

### CONCLUSION TO THE MATTER OF COVENANT AND THE RELATIONSHIPS OF GOD AND MAN

What we have said up to this point is necessary for us to understand all matters of Divine and human relationships. It is the foundation for all human activities of vocation, marriage and the Sabbath rest of God, that rest into which we enter daily in our need for serenity, peace and strength for operations.

### INTRODUCTION: THE FAMILY ACTION—ITS MATTER AND ITS BUSINESS

In any study on ‘covenant’ we would need to note that the three primary elements of the everlasting covenant are, (i) *the vocational command* (Gen. 1:28f.); (ii) *the principle of marriage* (Gen. 2:24; cf. Eph. 5:31–32); and (iii) *the Sabbath rest of God* (Gen. 2:13; Exod. 20:11).<sup>6</sup> The early chapters of Genesis show us that Man is under the everlasting covenant, and so these three elements are at the heart of it for true observing and living in the everlasting covenant. All of these three elements and matters linked with them are what family is for. In his vocational action, Man is covenant-partner with God in His plan. This plan is for His creation in history, bringing it to its designed goal (*telos*).

If a family does not see God’s mandate as its true vocation to and in creation, but utilises vocation for itself, then it misses the joy and intention of vocation, and limits its relationships with both God and Man. Likewise if a family is turned in on itself and sees itself as its own proper end, then it is no longer serving God and others. If it sees

---

<sup>6</sup> See my *Love’s Most Glorious Covenant* for expanded material on this theme.

marriage as a thing apart from God's plan for all humanity, and it turns in on marriage as a thing in itself, then the outgoing love of marital relationships will be deadened and unfruitful. If it ignores God's Sabbath rest as something purely to do with God and not itself, then it is neglecting the one resource which can give it tranquillity and renewal in life and action.<sup>7</sup> History has seen the perversion of Sabbath-keeping in rigid Sabbatarianism of the legalistic kind, but that does not mean humanity does not essentially need the Sabbath rest of God. God's Sabbath rest is shown in Matthew 11:28–30 (cf. Heb. 3:7 – 4:11) where Jesus offers this rest to the heavy-laden. Sabbatarianism is of *eros* and not of *agape*; at most it becomes contractual, at worst self-centred. This goes also for legalism in vocation and in marriage.

The way we must look at things is that the family of Mankind and several families within that family are here for a purpose. The vocational mandate of Genesis 1:28f. tells what the family is created for in history: Adam was to be the father of all living, and Eve the mother of all living. When we say 'father' and 'mother', then we mean withal that we are taught is true fatherhood and motherhood. Abraham was covenanted to be 'father of a multitude of nations' (Gen. 17:1–6), and Sarah was to be 'mother of many nations' (Gen. 17:16). Israel

was covenanted to be the priest nation among all nations (Exod. 19:5–6). The church of Christ was to be Christ's helpmeet to gather in all the nations of the earth into one so that the Family of the Father might be completed.

What we have seen is that if the family ever becomes the goal of the family, then it will atrophy because it will be selfish, *eros* will be its mode of love and will have the 'Us-They' or the 'I-It' relationship with God and the world. Innate in 'the family for itself' are the old Greek and Chinese singular views that their nations had different origins, that they were not of the same source as other nations. Kipling spoke sardonically of the arrogant British view of 'the lesser breeds without the law'. We see this arrogant nationalism where nations clash today for territory and name. Likewise we saw the same haughty principle in Hitler's 'pure Aryan race' heresy. It was this iron-bound nationalism keeping the nations—the families—apart that Christ came to destroy. The New Testament speaks of the reconciliation of all people through the breaking down of the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, so that the true Family is 'all one in Christ Jesus'. This is a powerful and persistent theme in the New Testament.<sup>8</sup>

In passing we should note that to come back into covenantal relationship with God is to have restored to us the beauty and the joy of authentic

---

<sup>7</sup> This book is not the place to expound the biblical view of Sabbath-keeping. This has been done in my *Love's Most Glorious Covenant* (pp. 47–52). Vocation and Marriage are also dealt with regarding their working principles and their culmination in the eschaton, the final age.

---

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, I Corinthians 12:13–14; Galatians 3:28–29; Colossians 3:11; cf. John 17:11, 21. Most important is Ephesians 2:11–15.

relationships. We cannot compute the relief we have from the guilt that is innate in us all when we are 'for ourselves' and against 'the others'. My name for it is 'ontological guilt' because it goes against what is essentially the nature of God, Man and the creation. Now, in Christ, Divine relationships can be—and are—worked out by the renewed human family on the level of this world. Of course, they are not perfect, but the day of their perfection is coming.

### **ICONS, ARCHETYPES AND ECTYPES OF FAMILIAL MEMBERS**

We should first establish the principle that because all creation is under the eternal covenant, then all relationships are covenantal. That is, they stem from the God Who is Covenant within Himself, the members living in *agape* love; coinhering one another; being *for* all others; Other-Persons centred within the Trinity and thus in all creation. When we speak about icons, we mean images, the way we image (imagine) other persons and things. Archetypes are the essential (ontological) types from which derive ectypes, that is, the copies of the archetype. Thus God is the archetypal Father, and human fathers are the ectypes. In another sense Adam, Abraham and Christ are human archetypes from which other humans derive their ectypal nature.

Many of us will know that the icons we have, often come from the system in which we have

been enculturated. They are more of culture than they are of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit of the true Word of God. Also they are strongly entrenched. We may not think consciously in terms of 'archetypes' and 'ectypes', yet the truth is they are there. As I have said elsewhere, we should be humbled under the Almighty hand of God and let the Spirit enlighten us as to them and their eternal reality.

### **The Archetypal Members of the Trinity**

God is the first Member of the Trinity because He is Father of the Son, and He is this in creation because He created all as His offspring (Acts 17:28). The Son is the archetypal Son under and with the Father because he is eternally generated from Him. He then becomes the archetypal Son from which humanity becomes ectypally filial. The Holy Spirit is the archetypal Spirit of Family, by which families are ectypally formed. Ectypes cannot form themselves; they are derived from the archetypes. They are dynamically created. Whilst living in covenant, and thus in *agape*, they are effective. When they live apart from covenant, and so in *eros*, they are not properly effective. Ectypes derive their living, operative beings and power from the archetype. It is not that human members of God's covenant simply imitate Him, but that the power of these true relationships flows into them from God so that they be true husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, parents and children, families and nations living together as members of the

Father's true Family. All of this constitutes true human living.

The kind of statement we have just made above may seem lofty and detached from our everyday living. This is not so. At the heart of creation these archetypes are personal and Divine, and their ectypes human and functional. We need to hear them, come to know them, and then heed them.

### **Transforming All Icons: The Dynamics, Tyranny and Transformation of the Icons**

In time we come to see that we live life and work its actions by the icons we have within us—our ways of seeing God, persons and things. Whenever we think and act it is by our perception of these icons: they determine our choices, unless we can stand even against such icons. Were we born wholly Edenic, then we would have exactly the icons that our first parents, in innocence, possessed. That is, we would see God as He really is, as love. All actions of God would be seen in love. The Fall changed that. Henceforth humanity could only see God through the eyes of their guilt, through the ruling of their consciences. That, we assume, was how Cain and his ilk saw God thereafter. Abel saw Him through the eyes of faith and had a different icon of God. Cain's self-icon would have been vastly different from Abel's. Cain had no confidence in God and henceforth none in himself. So all who are born into this world appear to arrive with an icon more or less firmly settled. The icon of God and one's self-icon determine one's

approach to God, humanity and creation. It seems that nothing can radically change these icons. *Only God's revelation of Himself can do that!* That revelation has to come through Christ, 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known'. In I John 4:9–10 the apostle says that God reveals Himself as love: 'In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation [propitiation] for our sins.' Only when we see, by the power of the Spirit working in us, the enormous and high cost of love as it works through the propitiation of Man's sins by Christ's death on the Cross, is our view of God radically changed. Our icon—of a distant, perfectionist and demanding Deity Who judges all and consigns the failures to terrible punishment—is suddenly and radically changed. We now see Him as love, as the loving One, as our Father, as the One who cares for us intimately and liberates us from all bondages by His lavish grace. We ourselves are warmed within ourselves and we find that our own self-icon changes as radically as the God-icon has changed.

Then it is that all icons change—icons of parents, of husband and wife, of children, of brothers and sisters, of human beings, of creation. This is because we have become new creations ourselves. Our thinking has changed because icons are no longer fixed after the old mode, and they no longer determine our attitudes as formerly, for a

transformation has taken place. If this transformation has not taken place, then there will be little joy in what we are about to see under the heading just below, 'The Relational Members of the Human Family and Families'.

## **THE RELATIONAL MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN FAMILY AND FAMILIES**

### **The Father, Divine and Human**

All that is said of God—that He is Covenant-Father, all families in heaven and earth get their name (derive) from Him, He is above all things, through all things and in all things—provides for the human fatherhood what is required for its substantial office and task. Adam the primal and primary father was given Eve to be mother of all living. She was not created parallel with him but from him, and so is the helpmeet as the wife of her husband and the mother of their children. Christ is the Son who brings human beings—male and female—to the Father, and they become sons of God, as humans, and have filial relationship with Him and the goal of being fully formed sons of God. Every father derives his character and life-power from the Eternal Father. Every son likewise has his being in the Father.

### **The Son, Divine and Human**

What we have said above tells us that the Son is generated eternally from the Father. He is the true

archetypal Son. Only he truly knows the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; 14:6). He comes into the world to show the Father. Knowing him and the Father means life eternal (John 17:3). Thus we become sons of the Father in the Son (Gal. 4:1–7; John 1:12–13). We are also aided by the Holy Spirit who is called 'the Spirit of His Son'. He brings the sense and assurance that we are truly sons of God. This is a most dynamic reality for it means communion with God as Father. Being sons means being in God's Family and helps us to be more sons of our parents. We take our place in our human families. Christ told stories about sons and fathers which are powerful in describing the relational dynamics that exist—sometimes for good, sometimes for sorrow—between fathers and sons (Luke 15:11–32; Matt. 21:28–32).

### **The Son is the Archetypal Brother**

Not until he was ascending did Jesus speak of others as his brethren, 'I am ascending to your God and to my God, to your Father and to my Father'. He told Mary Magdalene to tell this to his brethren (John 20:17; Matt. 28:10). Hebrews 2:10–17 shows that through the Cross many sons were drawn into glory, and that he was the brother of all that were glorified for he and they were 'all of one origin'— 'of one Father' (Heb. 2:11–12; cf. Ps. 22:22). Note the word spoken about the Son in Isaiah 9:6–8, 'a Son . . . the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father'. The Son is the one who carries the nature of the Father in both his Sonship and his Brotherhood.

Brotherhood in a family was a serious matter. Being the elder brother meant that one was next to the father, had responsibility to watch over the family in the absence of the father and care for the family. Because he was the first-born he received a double portion of the family inheritance. Christ's brotherhood is of far-reaching power and value. A lack-lustre brother is not the true guardian of his brothers and sisters and does not aid in their growing to maturity.

Again, the matter of 'brotherly love' is a strong theme of the Old and New Testaments. To hate a brother is a matter of spiritual and personal darkness in living. It is to be as a murderer. To love the brother and care for him is to be a true lover of the father of the family.

### **The Woman—Mother, Wife, Sister**

As Adam was first the husband of Eve, she was the human archetype of all wives. As Adam was the father of all living, so Eve was the mother of all living. She was to be fruitful in accordance with the creational mandate of Genesis 1:28f. and she was also to bring forth the seed which would crush Satan (Gen. 3:15). The figure of the woman is a strong one in every way, as is seen in Eve, and in Sarah, and has become in Israel the figure of the wife of God. In the New Testament she is the Church, the wife of Christ, and the Woman of Revelation 12 who brings forth the male son (Christ), who is the Seed that destroys the ancient serpent of Eden, Satan the red dragon. She is the

true Jerusalem above, the mother of us all. She is the true Woman as against the false (imitation) woman, Babylon, the mother of harlots. The true Bride of Christ is pure, 'the mother of true women'. So all women are of this ilk and ethos, and show their femininity in the family as mothers, wives, sisters, aunties, and so on. The Woman as helpmeet aids Christ in his ministry as Lord over all. Like Eve in the original intention of God, she is the Queen of creation to God's new Adam, Christ, the King of all creation.

### **The Spirit of the Family—the Holy Spirit**

The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son. He is the Spirit of love (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; *agape*). He is the Spirit of covenant. He glorifies the Father and the Son (John 16:14, 15). He is the Spirit of unity, fellowship, worship and prayer and so is the Spirit of Family. No one comes to the Son except the Father draw him. No one knows the Father except through the Son. No one knows the Son and the Father except through revelation by the Spirit. Thus the Spirit brings the Family together in unity as at Pentecost, Samaria, Caesarea and Ephesus. The human 'spirit of the family' which is required for all families is the ectype of the archetypal Spirit.

The day of Pentecost shows the Spirit at work generating this new family, the Church. The unity and love of this family is unique in human annals. The ministry of the Spirit is spread across the family in the use of ministries, workings and gifts

(I Cor. 12:4–13). This is why the Holy Spirit needs to fill out human families and members of those families.

### **The Family Together**

Some of us used to sing a song:

We are heirs of the Father,  
We are joint-heirs with the Son,  
We are children of the Kingdom,  
We are family: we are one.

This brings us to the fact that God created all humans beings to be His sons (Acts 17:28). This was under His eternal covenant, hence 'You are sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers' (Acts 3:25). This principle is born out in Isaiah 43:1–7. All the children were to be as His only Son, whom we call Jesus (Rom. 8:28–30). Before time He predestined His elect into this family (Eph. 1:5). Because He is essentially Father, He will have His Family. He will have the Bride for His Son, the same community as the Family. The sons will be conquerors and inherit the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21:7). The 'liberty of the glory of the children of God' tells us what it will be to be in the ultimate Family of God. Here that experience can at least be reflected in godly families. 'This liberty of the glory' is spoken of by John as the Family going to the many mansions of their Heavenly and Eternal Father, or is spoken of by Paul as the things 'which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man'. Jesus told the dying and repentant thief, 'This day shalt thou be with me

in Paradise', that is, 'in a Garden'. Back to the Garden, and on to the Garden God has prepared for those who love Him—the true Family.

### **THE PRESENT FAMILY ON EARTH**

Having mustered up all the icons, archetypes and ectypes we can, and having seen the paradigms and sources of each member of a family such as father, mother, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents, uncles and aunts, we are faced with the fact of the family in its contemporary setting. We think, continually, of the way we should be going about 'family'. Much that is valuable has been said in the Scriptures, in the Old and New Testaments. All of this we cannot include in this small book.

In the time of the Patriarchs we see the ways of families. Small nuclear families scarcely existed. Most families were what we know as 'extended', taking in all relations, often living together, and being a good context in which children were born, grew and matured. Reverence for ancestors was instilled in the child, and the older categories of great-grandparents, and grandparents gave wisdom to the family-community. 'Honour your father and your mother' meant that conflicts with parents were not normal practice. An incorrigibly rebellious child, as a menace to that society, could be stoned by the community. Honouring of parents both in the Old and New Testaments has its own inbuilt reward of longer, more healthy life.

The Wisdom books enjoined familial obedience in ways of healthy commonsense. There were roles for the various members of the family which ensured the discipline and development of members was shared by all. It also ensured that all had vocation by which to live.

The matter of chastity in children and the young unmarried was enjoined and guarded. The primal marriage was a paradigm. There was no 'leasehold marriage', no *de facto* marital relationships. All was *de jure* since marriage was a societal matter. This ensured a good 'cleaving' was accomplished because chastity was preserved, and this was an excellent foundation for long married life. Israel had its many protective injunctions for the sexual and social life of the community. The Ten Commandments were—and are—peerless in respect to these, and the Holiness Code was unique amongst all tribes and communities. Each aspect of community life is preserved and strengthened by all other factors which have been enjoined. This principle seems common to both Old and New Testaments. From the day of Pentecost, the Christian community had its societal and ethical practices because it drew upon the way of life of Israel. Whilst it was not a matter of regulations, the new community lived by the dynamics of *agape* and covenant, with the law of God—the law of love—written on the inner being.

As we have seen, true marriage was covenantal and was the figure of God and His people, Christ and his Church. All relationships in marriage and families were covenantal from the oldest to the

youngest; that is, love relationships based on faith and trust.

The husband was to take the role of leadership<sup>9</sup> in the vocation of the married couple, and the wife was to be the helpmeet, so that only as being one together would the marriage proceed. The husband was to be the father in the family with his role recognised, the mother's role also recognised and the children while being subject to the parents lived in security. Young women, and even young men did not leave the family to do for themselves. The present 'liberty' of young people was unknown, and yet it is doubtful how much genuine freedom has come from the present changes. At the point of marriage the new husband would leave his parents and cling to his wife. All children had graded responsibility within the family-community. One interesting window—one among many others—into the life of the Christian community can be seen in I Timothy 5:1–22, part of which we include here (vv. 1–8):

Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity. Honour widows who are real widows. If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some return to

---

<sup>9</sup> We recognise that when we speak of roles it would seem that all members of a family were locked into a responsibility which hindered the personal freedom of those members. This was not how it was supposed to be or seen to be. Modern ideas of personal liberty have yet to be vindicated, and the rejection of roles—as such—has not improved the lot of families. The so-called 'sexual freedom' is sowing an horrific tornado for modern society.

their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. She who is a real widow, and is left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day; whereas she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command this, so that they may be without reproach. If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

We have only given the merest sketch of family life, but it is enough to show that even in a world which has its sin and tragedy, godly family life can be an environment in which it is pleasing to live. We have not sketched the family situation as it is given in Romans 1:28–32 and which is a dreadful travesty of true family life. Families are not perfect, but the resources are there to use, and the persistence of members of the family can accomplish remarkable results, no matter what the society. We remind ourselves that the use of the icons, paradigms and godly resources is imperative if the family is to live, secure itself and produce genuine fruit in any society in which we live.

### **ESCHATOLOGICAL AND HEAVENLY FAMILY**

We have seen in Isaiah 43:1–7 and many other places that the prophet speaks of God creating the world and creating His children for His own glory, but this means, too, that He has created them for their glory. Their glory glorifies Him. Obviously their glory is that they are children of the living God, children of the Father. When we speak of ‘the eschatological and heavenly Father’, we are

speaking of the family God is presently forming which is the family of the last days in contradistinction to the family of former times—the times of the Patriarchs and Israel. It is bound to be different, or extended from what it was because of the Incarnation, that is, the person and work of Christ, which includes his Incarnation, Ministry, Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Reigning and the movement in history towards his coming again. Just as there is no true family without the Father, so there is none without the Son and the Elder Brother; none without the Husband, for whom is created the Bride by the Father. All that is Christ makes the family after Pentecost so much more family than before it. Because this process of maturity is enhanced and accelerated in the last times—Christ giving all that he has all the time to his Bride—so the prospect of the completed church—the heavenly one—gives the great dynamic of hope to strengthen the church amidst its battle with secularity, the opposition of evil, and the attempts to obtain human righteousness apart from Christ, apart from the Church.

Another mark of the Church in the eschaton is its understanding of its own frailty and the relational contradictions it experiences within its community. Seen from a world-wide perspective the members of the church are counted in increasing millions. We are warned against trying to assess the faith, or otherwise, of all those within its visibility. Any endeavour to purify the Church which does not stem from Christ himself who is Lord of the Church must be resisted and abandoned. At

the same time the visible reality of the millions may give us a false sense of security. The Church only exists and lives by continuous grace.

It is the fallibility of the members of the church which often troubles us. This is partly because the power of Christ is working discontent at that which is less than perfect, but sometimes it is a perfectionism which dogs us like a dark shadow. Instead of glorying in the grace which keeps us, we want a family without flaws. It is then we are in danger of idolatry. The very nearness of the time of climax and completion gives us sensitivity to the Church's responsibility in the world to bring all into the wonderful Family of God. We want all to share the being of Christ and the relationships of the Holy Family of the Trinity in which we are immersed. Humility will keep us as does nothing else.

Forenotes, foreviews and foretastes of the heavenly Church are given to us in the sacred text all the way from Eden to the final and most beautiful form of the Holy City, the Holy Paradise prepared for the Church as God's lovely mansions for His beloved Family. In Revelation chapter 7 we find this multitude such as no man can number, and it is formed out of every tribe and people and nation and tongue, and it is adoring the God and Father of us all along with the Lamb who was slain for it. The Lamb is then shown as the Good Shepherd who leads his sheep in good pastures and to the springs of living water where nothing shall harm or hurt them. We see them also alive with joy because they have been called to the Marriage Supper of the Bride and the Lamb. They share in

the thundering of the Hallelujah Chorus, but then the Chorus grows into the New Song, firstly sung by the 144,000 on Mount Sion, but then by all, by the whole Family of God in heaven and on earth, because they stand before the Father and His Son, the Lamb, and it is all music; it is all singing and it is all glory.

This Family is at one with the Father and the Lamb for their Names are inscribed on the foreheads of the Family members. In delight we ask, 'Where is there any other family like unto this Family, any father like unto its Father, any son and elder brother like unto its Son and Elder Brother? This is the unique Family to which God has ever been drawing His elect children. This is what is 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God' and it is greatly to be prized and sought, and it is that which strengthens and enlarges hope, and expands our experience of the Divine love. Faulty our present experience of family may be seen to be, but it is but for a moment, and will be more than swallowed up and forgotten in the reality of the heavenly Family which will dwell on earth and reign in it, for ever.

**CONCLUSION: WE HAVE ALL THE COVENANT,  
TRUE LOVE, MEMBERS, MATERIALS, ICONS FOR  
FULL HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

We cannot compute the immense work of the Triune God in human relationships, not only through

creation, but also through the regeneration which comes through redemption. God's Fatherhood is 'above all, and through all, and in all', and so families are brought into being and wholly Fathered by Him. Fathers are supplied with fatherhood. Likewise, we are sons through the Son, and we ever draw on his supplies to be sons in the face of those who hate fathers and have abandoned their families. The Spirit of sonship, brotherhood and familyhood is present to bring the sense of family where it has been deficient. Christ as Husband and Brother fills up these relationships, and the Church as mother and wife and sister fills up these equivalent relationships.

We may buy manuals on human relationships, but unless they have the biblical understanding of relationships they will not be of major benefit. We can share our experiences of Divine and human relationships and help one another. When we know God's covenant, and when we are flooded with His love, then we can go to those passages in Scripture—and there are many—which help us to know how to act. We have already suggested that God as Father, the Son as Son, the Spirit as Family-Spirit, the true Man as the Bridegroom, Christ, the true Eve as his Bride, can all help us in the particular relationships in which we are involved. The mystery of marriage, the true courtship and the bliss of union and communion, as also the practics of married life—being husband and wife, being parents, being children—all come from our union and communion with the Godhead. The Old and New Testaments are filled with guiding principles

and rules for all relational living, and we should try to learn these.

One thing we must keep in mind; namely that everything needful for human relationships is already in the Divine and *all this has been given to us*. We have been blessed with the whole of spiritual blessing and He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. We are not earners, fillers of ourselves as though each is an empty receptacle, but participators in what has been given to us—'All things are yours'. Thus we can go straight to covenantal, agapitic relationships, and these will be alive and well and active as we live in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Doubtless we will have many failures, but grace releases us from these, deals with all guilts and renews us in love. This is the love—God-sourced and God-given—which bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things. Good health, then, to Divine *agape* working in the family of God.

There can be no 'death of the family' for then it would mean the Trinity is really dead, and the human race is reserved for unspeakable horror. In fact it is set for unspeakable joy and glory.

## Appendix One: The Love of God and Man

In a small book such as this present one it is difficult to present a subject in simplified form. Make a subject overly simple and you may be doing it a disservice. In fact an important subject demands a clear and full presentation, and the reader should be prepared to allow the writer to deal fully with it. In *Comprehending the Family of God and Man* it is essential that we understand the difference between the two words we have used as being significant, namely 'eros' and 'agape'. All theologians would be aware of Anders Nygren's treatment of these two words under the title *Agape and Eros*.<sup>10</sup> C. S. Lewis wrote his little book *The Four Loves*<sup>11</sup> in which he deals with four Greek words, *storge*, *philia*, *eros* and *agape*. *Storge* and *eros* are never used in the New Testament. *Philia* as a noun is used only once (James 4:4) though its verb *phileo* is often used. *Philos* meaning 'a friend' is used twenty-nine times. *Agape* is the general word used for love along with its verb *agapao*.<sup>12</sup>

*Eros* is often linked in English with the ideas of erotic and erotica, that is, sexual passion, lust, and even sexual perversion. In the Greek this is not always the case, *eros* often standing for the highest form of human love known to the Greeks: the love of something worthy. Probably the simplest explanation is that it is human love, for the Christians took up the noun *agape* and the verb *agapao* to denote Divine love and loving. The verb *ahab* and the noun *ahabah* in the Hebrew are the words generally used for love in the Old Testament, and in the Greek Old Testament are generally translated by *agapao* and *agape*. We must recognise that the revelation of God as love through the person and work of Christ required a word with a meaning which up to the point of Christ's Incarnation had not existed in Greek thinking. The Christians, so to speak, had to fill the verb *agapao* and the noun *agape* with the new meaning of love. The idea was certainly present in the Hebrew words *ahab* and *ahabah*.

We seem to have taken up much time in explaining these words, but it was necessary. Whilst the verbs *phileo* and *agapao* are generally interchangeable, yet there can sometimes be other nuances. *Eros* was a word the early Christians rejected from their New Testament vocabulary, but we have to say that as is the mind in its understanding so even good words can be put to bad

<sup>10</sup> Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, SPCK, London, 1957.

<sup>11</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Collins, London, 1965.

<sup>12</sup> For stories which illustrate *eros* and *agape* see my *Twice Conquering Love* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1992), *Strong as the Sun* (Troubadour Press, Blackwood, 1994) and *Beyond Mortal Love* (Troubadour Press, Blackwood, 1996).

use, and bad words to good use. As we said, the Greeks used *eros* in both good and bad connotations. The problem we face is the principle which John sets out in his First Epistle. He says, 'We love, because he first loved us', and this is in the context of him twice saying. 'God is love'. He also says 'Love is of [from] God'. The whole passage of I John 4:7–21 should be read. What emerges is something like this, 'Let us love one another, for love comes from God. He has loved us—in Jesus Christ—and so we responsively love not only Him but all human creatures. God's love comes to us, and it is with His love (or, in His love) that we are constrained to love others.' There is more of course, but John is saying we will never know God is love, and God as love, until we have the revelation of that love. The revelation was made primarily at the Cross where the Father made the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Again, there is more in our passage than we have stated here, but enough to come to the conclusion that *agape* is Divine love and it is in contrast to human love. Human love, generally speaking, is *eros*, though it does not necessarily have a sexual connotation.

We now enquire, 'How is it that human love—and all humans love at one time or another—is not good enough, not as good as *agape*, Divine love?' The answer must be that the first couple in Eden would have known Divine love, but they rejected it. Created by nature to love, yet, fallen, they had to exercise a love which was not selfless but selfish. Such a love would appear to be that which Man exercised when unfallen, but in fact it would

not be that. *Eros* recognises what is worthy and loves it, as a young couple will love each other, or as people in blood relationships love one another, but *eros* desires to possess its object. It also desires to be rewarded for the outlay it puts into love. It can become angered and dangerous when it is not given returns for its loving. Bitterness and hatred can result, showing that its aim in loving was self-centred. *Eros* enjoys its giving, and will go to great extents in generosity and sacrifice, but its delight will disappear when its object is no longer desirable, or turns out to be faithless, giving no true returns. A simple example is that a young man can be entranced by the beauty of his wife, but when she shows signs of wear—perhaps through bearing children and working hard as a wife—then he will be repelled by the signs of wear and old age in her. The glorious creature has become an old crone to put it cruelly. *Eros* is offended and seeks out a new and younger 'beauty'.

In the text of the book we have tried to show that whereas at the beginning Man knew God and trusted Him, he shrugged off that love in the hour of temptation and found a new love—himself in his new ability to know good and evil. He saw freedom in being released from God and God's innate law of love. Being created in covenant-love he rejected that covenant as unnecessary and began the heady life of freedom from God. In this he was aided by the word of the serpent which he pitted against the word of God. Thus God's law became a contractual thing. God was still powerful and one had to satisfy Him, perhaps, but the

covenant was no matter of love but of contract. So began that tiring exercise of justifying oneself in one's own eyes, and in the eyes of one's fellow creatures and in the eyes of God by being righteous. The drive to be righteous was there because conscience is a tyrant where the heart has departed from God. It never shows itself to be satisfied with a person's self-righteous acts and endeavours.

One of the things that Man seems universally to know is that he must love. He believes he loves and loves appropriately. There may be cultures which do not have the rule to love incorporated into their culture, but when shown love they come to recognise it with amazement. Generally, when Man loves it is a selfish love, but he sets it out as altruistic. How close this sort of loving is to quickly turning into hatred. How universal is anger in humanity, and how short a fuse do people generally have.

The whole of the life of man is turned by *eros* into religion and religious endeavour which is motivated by *eros*. Many human beings have discovered the treachery of *eros* and have turned against *eros* love, preferring some kind of pagan honesty in their disillusionment. Romans 1:18–32 is a brilliant—though terrible—analysis of humanity as it rejects the nature of God and sets up its own idol-culture. First comes immorality and secondly—or perhaps in parallel—sexual perversity, and then all relationships begin to deteriorate into the frightful forms we see in our world. We do not have the time here to describe the hideous depravity to which Man comes when he rejects God

and substitutes his own forms of culture and religion.

By contrast the New Testament teaches that it is Christ who brings the love of God to Man, and it is the Holy Spirit by whom God pours His love into human hearts. When this has happened the community of true lovers is formed, called the Church. God is their Father, Christ is their Saviour and Lord, and the Holy Spirit the Spirit of loving community, the Spirit of the true Family of God. Covenant again becomes primary in understanding God's innate holy law, the law of love. Contract is spurned as unworthy and covenant relationship is the basis and stay of all true, relational living.

In one sense this Appendix has tried to be objective about the nature and differences of *eros* and *agape*. When it comes to the truth 'God is love', then the human spirit is faced with the most astonishing, most glorious and most transforming of all revelations. Many persons would agree that 'God is love' is a great saying, but how to bring the reality of that to the human heart is not a simple matter. Two problems confront us, (i) the human mind can easily understand the three words 'God is love', but the icon of love that is in the mind may be quite mediocre, because their will already be a concept of love in the hearer's mind. That concept will be formed by the persons experiences and concepts of love. That one will be thinking, 'I know what love is, and that does not greatly move me. If that is all that God is then I have heard nothing

very special'; and (ii) the hearer may equate God and love and say 'Love is God'. In this case the person would think that since love is (supposedly) known then he or she could arrive at a knowledge of the nature of God, when 'God is love' can never properly be translated 'Love is God'.

The way to know that God is love is by seeing that He sent His Son into the world that we might have life and that this was by making the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. When we understand the work of the Cross, not only in its physically painful elements but also in the immense suffering to bear the sins, guilts and pollutions of the sinner, then we truly see His love. That is the moment when the Holy Spirit floods God's personal love into our hearts and we become those who love God and Man genuinely with *agape*. Of course, then, we see and experience God's love in so many other areas of our lives. As we have already indicated, we have become members of that love community called the church.

## Appendix Two: The Family and the Families

*Explanatory Note:* After completing the text of our book, I realised how it needed an even wider background. Looking at the notes after this book was completed, I realised how skimpy they are. I thought, then, that it might be helpful if I added these notes which are below. They deal with the Family which has been, and is now, from the biblical point of view, and also with the Family which shall be, which we have called the Eschatological or Heavenly Family.

### THE EARTHLY FAMILY

This is a wide subject, for it would need to include families of all cultures, which we cannot possibly do, so we look very briefly at the family in the Old and New Testaments. We need to remember that Israel saw itself as one great Family—'the children of Israel' and the Covenant Family of God (Exod. 19:5–6)—and at the same time there were the tribal families which, in turn, narrowed down to the

family which was a household on its own, though linked with other such households.

### **Families in the Old Testament**

We have the stories of Shem's family and descendants (Gen. 11:10–26) which narrowed down to Abraham's family (Gen. 11:27–32). From Genesis chapters 12 to 25 we have the story of Abraham's family, followed by Isaac's and Jacob's to chapter 50. We gather much about family life by reading all this material. Chapter 49 is a revealing one because we see the good and bad elements of Jacob's family.

When God released Israel from Egypt, He gave the principles by which the family of God was to live, and in this are injunctions for the individual families. These injunctions are scattered throughout Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and cannot be brought together here. Readings of the Ten Commandments show us something of proper family life. Provisions are made for persons from birth to death, in all stages of living, and for all contingencies. The matters of parental authority and children's obedience are strongly emphasised. We should be careful of using the term 'patriarchal society' until we have understood its brilliant social meaning. Leviticus chapters 18 and 19 show provisions for family life. They have social injunctions which provide for the poor, for widows and for sojourners. Of course all human relational living was covenantal in the whole community and within individual families.

### **Families in the New Testament**

The early church in its beginnings derived from Israel and so would naturally follow its culture in family living. Ephesians 4:19ff. is a passage which makes a contrast between that kind of living and Gentile family living. Even so, something sprang up at Pentecost and in the days following, which was beyond even what Israel had experienced. It needed no instructions since it was spontaneous. This can be seen in Acts 2:42ff., and 4:31–37. The new community of Christ acted in full, social love.

To gather the materials for Christian family living we need to look at some of the following passages, keeping in mind that the whole of the New Testament makes up the full picture of community family living and individual family living. In fact it would be difficult to separate the two.

- (a) *Gospels*. The Synoptic Gospels provide us with plentiful materials. Jesus' stories and parables relate to families; to fathers, mothers, children and society. His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount begins with God as family and covers many societal and familial principles. His own example as the Son of His Father and the child of his own family tells us what familial humanity really is.
- (b) *The Acts*. Here we have the story of the Family of God, painted in strong colours. This is a universal Family paradigm. The societal love of the church is a new factor in human living.

- (c) *The Epistles*. The following passages are quoted as more specific materials about family life, but the whole of the Epistles gives us the big picture, so full they are regarding true human relationships (Rom. 12:3–21; I Cor. 12:4–28; I Cor. 13; Gal. 3:28–29; Eph. 3:14–19; 4:1–7; 5:18 – 6:9; Phil. 2:1–11; Col. 3:12–25; I Thess. 4:1–8; 5:12–22; II Thess. 3:6–13; I Tim. 5:1–20; Titus 2:1–10; Heb. 13:1–6; I Pet. 3:1–12; I John 3:11–18; 5:1–4).

### THE HEAVENLY AND ESCHATOLOGICAL FAMILY

Passages such as Isaiah 43:1–7, Ephesians 1:4–5, and 3:14–19 give us convictions that ‘Family’ is what the Father, the Son and the Spirit are about in history. It is Family planning before time. The story of Eden tells us that fruitfulness is part of true history, beginning with marriage as ‘the profound mystery’. The stories of Cain and Abel underline this. Patriarchal families train our minds to think in terms of Family. Biblical words such as ‘heir’ and ‘inheritance’ keep us in Family thinking. The materials outlined above do the same. From protological Eden to eschatological Eden (Paradise) the Family is in view. God will ultimately have all His children before Him and by this we will see the fullness of His Fatherhood.

This means that from Eden onwards the family has in one sense been eschatological. From Acts 2 onwards (cf. 2:17) it has been in ‘the last days’. The

family is not an end in itself but works towards the final climax. This is clear from our materials in the New Testament. When we read the Book of the Revelation closely, we see that there is the Family in heaven—those who have died in the faith of God. God is not the God of the dead but the living. That living part of the Family is alive with God, and the earthly part joins it as members are welcomed into it. In some prophetic passages we see the Family as it is now on earth, is now in heaven, then also the Family as it will finally be. Passages to show us something of this are 5:6–14; 7:1–17; 13:9–10; 14:1–5, 12–13; 19:1–8; and 21:1–7, 22–27. The eschatological Family is also mentioned in the Kingdom parables of the Synoptic Gospels (e.g. Matt. 13; Mark 13). John’s Gospel has lovely passages about that future in chapters 14 and 17.

It is clear that the Family of God—as earthly and heavenly; as past, present and future; as the Father’s whole Family and the constituent families of that Family—is powerfully set forth in Scripture. The truth that God is Father, and the Son is Lord over creation, that the people of God are God’s special concern and love, the fact that the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb figures largely in its significance for all creation—all these things tell us we must give much attention to the reality of Family in general and our own families in particular. In the best sense of the term, we are a domestic people.

## Bibliography

Bingham, Geoffrey C. *The Role and Purpose of Man and Woman*. NCPI, Blackwood, n.d.

—*Oh, Father! Our Father!* NCPI, Blackwood, 1983.

—*God's Glory, Man's Sexuality*. NCPI, Blackwood, 1988.

—*I Love the Father*. NCPI, Blackwood, 1990.

—*Twice-Conquering Love*. NCPI, Blackwood, 1992.

—*Strong as the Sun*. Troubadour Press, Blackwood, 1994

—*The Profound Mystery: Marriage Love, Divine and Human*. NCPI, Blackwood, 1995.

—*Love's Most Glorious Covenant*. Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 1997.

—*Beyond Mortal Love*. Troubadour Press, Blackwood, 1996.

Dumbrell, W. J. *Covenant and Creation*. Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1984.

Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves*. Collins, London, 1965.

Nygren, Anders. *Agape and Eros*. SPCK, London, 1961.

Shedd, Russell Philip. *Man in Community*. Epworth, London, 1958.

Warner, W. Lloyd. *The Family of God*. Yale University Press, Newhaven, 1961.