

Chapter 2

The Chronosystem: A Social History of Religion and the Family Orientation

This chapter is an accent on the construction of a social-historical theory of family change using the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 1. The theory will be illustrated by changes in the family in the Occident and how they are accounted for by using social-historical data. The first part will focus on theoretical construction that is to undergird what were the sources of family change through Western history.

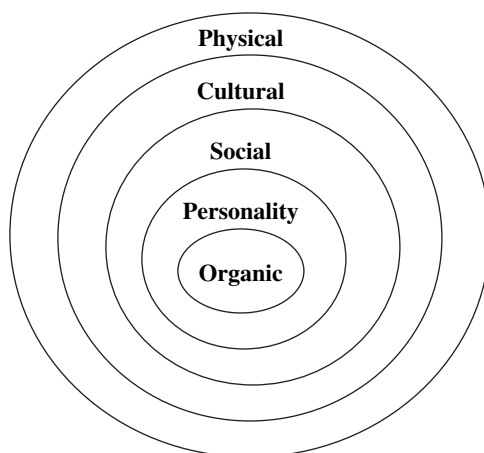
The second part will focus on five periods of the evolution of the family in the Occident: Roman, early Christianity, Early-Medieval, Central Medieval, and the Late Medieval family that is inspired, in part, by the Medieval scholar, McKitterick (2004). This will be followed by a social history of the family in England—from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Key scholars will be used to document patterns of the link between religion and the family in each era. They, and others, give us macro-sociological reasons for changes as families migrate from one era to another.

The Neo-Functionalist Theoretical Framework and Historical-Longitudinal Reflections

Equally important as the systems are, so also is central to the Neo-Functionalist framework the theme of history and time. Time is key to Parsons (1968) who argued that the most basic system is the unit act of what he terms an action system. Using the space-time categories of the philosopher Kant, he considers the unit action system (the space category) to be social and cultural objects, personalities, organisms and the physical environment (Parsons, 1991). In Neo-functionalist language, the action system and the five systems – organic, personality, social, cultural and physical—would be *space*. Figure 2.1 illustrates this. These systems would be contextualized in the *time* category that consists in history and in chronology.

Munch's (1981) reading of Parsons takes the scholar back to Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), through to Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), Max Weber (1964–1920), Georg Simmel (1858–1918), George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Parsons focused, among other things, Kant's notion of space and time. For Kant (1787/1965), space and time are at the very heart of human knowledge and form the basis of perception and reason. Both are a priori, intuitive,

Fig. 2.1 Neo-functionalism and the five various systems



and internal to the human person. Space has both an empirical and transcendental reality. By this he means space is an internal form that gave shape to the external experience of spatial objects. In a similar way is time. It is also a priori, intuitive and internal that is a form to which the experience of time is categorized. For the theoretical development of Neo-functionalism, Kant's insights inform us that at the very heart of the human experience of social life is both space and time.

The contribution that Luhmann (1982) makes is his reading of Parsons to assist us in accenting the time dimension – families move through time and, in so doing, change. Luhmann (1982:54) argues that the most basic problem of an action system is that of time and of the differentiation between a system and its environment. This covers both the systems elements of the framework as well as history and time.

Of more recent scholarship, the British sociologist, Anthony Giddens (1984), also considers space and time to be at the most basic element of social structure. Giddens attempts to bridge the contrast between the subjective experiences of the actor (as expressed in hermeneutics and interpretive sociology) and those theories which valorize structure more importantly than agency and social action (he mentions structural functionalism). He names his theory *structuration* and notes: "The basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across *space and time*" (1984:2 and italics added). Giddens avers that all social action involves structures and all structure involves social action – both agency and structure form a common reality that are contextualized in space and time. Ritzer (1996) adds that one of Giddens's most important achievements is social theory is his desire to centralize the issues of time and space.

Ritzer interprets Giddens's use of the term system (which he means a social system) that includes both agency and structure that not only constrain behaviour but also enable it. The most basic system (similar to the action system of Parsons) it the primordial condition of face-to-face interaction is which others are present at the same space and the same time.

More recent family scholars call for the need to include the dimension of space and time in understanding the family. Demo and Cox (2000) did a decade review of children and divorce and say that: “Few researchers, however, have employed more sophisticated person-process-context-time models to the study of family structure and well being” (2000:887). Bronfenbrenner (1986) adds another system (beyond the micro, meso, eco and macro systems) which he terms the *chronosystem*. This system pays special attention to the dimension of time wherein developmental changes are triggered by life events or experiences such as the birth of a child, entering school, marriage, divorce, a gain or a loss of employment, or the onset of menarche. Figure 2.2 illustrates this sixth system as part of the more inclusive Neo-Functionalist framework.

In a more recent piece, Bronfenbrenner (1995) attempts to link space (using the system concept) and time (both chronological and historical). He terms a new model “the bioecological paradigm” and utilizes the connections between process-person-context and time. It consists of the following elements: full integration of family phenomena; a covering of biology, sociology, cultural anthropology, history and economics; a link of beliefs and behaviours; and the vitality of the person as a free agent. His observation on the importance of history is telling: “developmental life is an effect of the historical period through which the person lives” (1995:641).

Belsky builds on the ecological systems theory of Bonfenbrenner and uses his link – the process-person-context-time model (1999:620). In Neo-Functionalist sociological language, this includes social action and social structure (implied by process), context (social, cultural, and physical) and time. The psychological compliment is the person who is considered to be an active agent who contributes to her or his own development.

A combined systems-time causal-path is illustrated by Fig. 2.3.

To extend the model include history as time, one may theorize that changes in family life are predicted to be a consequence of major macro events in the development of whole societies. Figure 2.4 depicts this.

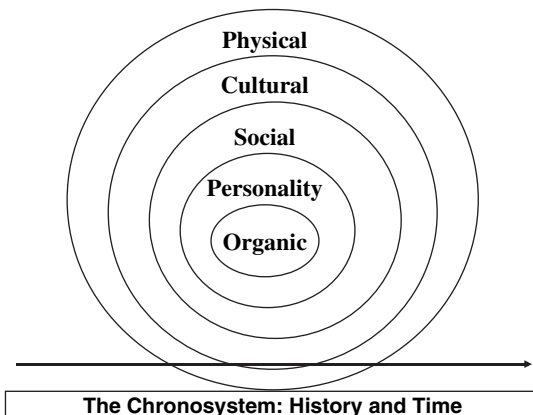


Fig. 2.2 Neo-functionalism and the additional chronosystem

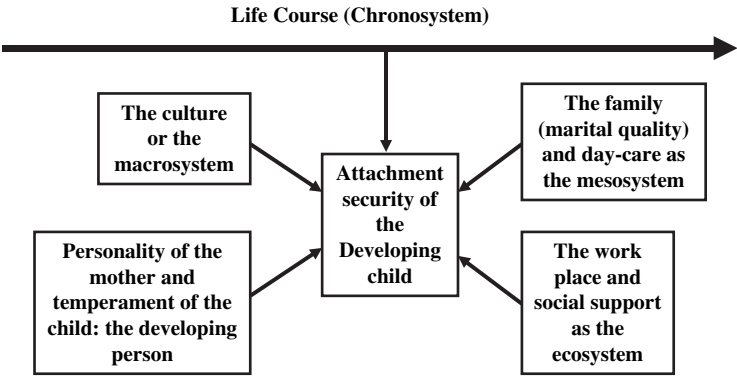


Fig. 2.3 An Neo-functional-ecological model

This extension of the time dimension of Neo-Functionalism can be applied to the family throughout a particular epoch or era of the development of the Western World. Parsons (1977) offers insights even into a longer perspective. It is theorized that macro factors in the cultural system (religious and philosophical), the organic (plagues), social (wars and political revolutions), and the physical system (economic transformations) have an effect or impact family change or transformations.

Part of the goal of constructing the Neo Functionalist framework was to integrate the majority of the extant theories of the family (see Swenson, 2004). The theory which seems best to fit with the time or history dimension discussed is *The Life Course Perspective*. The essential features of this perspective is provided by Bengston and Allen (1993). They initiate their article by contrasting it with “life span development” which is informed by psychology and is focussed on the **ontogenetic** development of the child. A summary of the critical themes of the perspective consist of the following.

Time is the central concept that is characterized by ontogenetic time, generational time, and historical time. Time that is ontogenetic is the personal biography of an individual that affect behavioural processes such as variation of infant, toddler, child, youth, adult or elderly responses to, for example, the exit of another person from the nucleus of a family. Generational time are family events or transitions

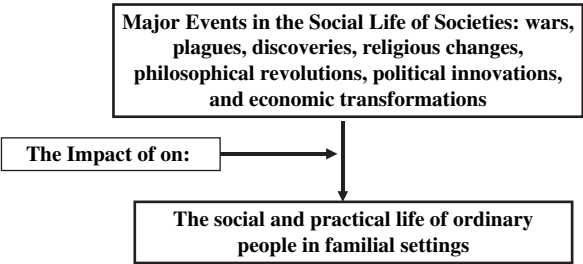


Fig. 2.4 An historical perspective on changes in the family

that affect the self. Time that is historical is focussed on the effect that macro social/cultural factors have on individuals and families. The kind of time that is most applicable to the subsequent statistical analysis is generational time.

The second theme is the social/cultural context or ecology. Bengtson and Allen (1993) mention four points:

1. The location of the individual within the larger social structure has an impact on the same individual.
2. The individual is viewed as an active agent in interaction with the familial and social/cultural environment. In other words, this person is not a passive agent in the face of macro structures.
3. The social and cultural structures are in constant flux and can ameliorate or attenuate individual outcomes throughout the development of the person.
4. Both micro and macro levels of influence affect individual actors.

Theme number three focuses on process and change that takes on a dynamic (**diachronic**) course rather than a static of **synchronic** approach. Closely related to this theme is: that the macro social structures are heterogeneous and that their effects on persons may produce changes that are not normal and thus these changes may have important features one could miss if the researcher only focussed on the modal or the average.

Theme number five addresses the question of multidisciplinary. The life course perspective integrates information from biology, psychology, sociology, history, economics, and demography.

In summary, the authors write: “The life course perspective, as applied to families, suggests the interlocking forces of individual, familial, generational, and social-historical structures and processes” (Bengtson and Allen, 1993:493). How would one place the life-course theory within a Neo-Functionalist framework? It would operate on three fronts: the basic social action theory of Parsons, differentiation, and the various systems.

Built into the action theory of Parsons and Neo-Functionalism is a dimension of time or the chronosystem. As an actor is orientated to a situation, not only in the context of space (measured by the situation), but also in the context of time (an actor positions him or herself towards an end according to several means to achieve that end). As families change through time they are differentiated by age, role position, gender, history, and generation. Besides the chronosystem, five systems are relevant to this perspective: the organic (ontogeneity), the personality system (how the actor changes through time and individual development), the cultural system (the changes in roles at each stage of the family life cycle that are specified by cultural norms), the social system (various immediate – micro – and distal social ecologies – macro) and the physical (variations in the economic basis of a society). This perspective gives relatively equal credence to multidimensionality (see Chapter 1); is a macro-micro framework, and includes a systems perspective.

In tracing the history of the family in the Occident, I trust that the major feature of this perspective becomes relevant in arguing for major macro factors affecting the family.

The Roman Family

This discussion lays the background or the starting point for the history of the family in the West. I begin with an introduction of the general history of the Roman Empire that will be followed by characteristics of the family, marriage, and children. Roberts (2005) will inform the first section and Dixon (1992) will instruct us about familial themes. I will not focus here on religion and the family but will base use the Roman family as the benchmark form of the family of the Occident. The rest of the development of the family in the West will include many references to how religion has affected the Western family.

A Concise History of the Roman Empire

A whole course and large tome would need to be used to explicate this history. I am to use several dates and indicate major epochs in the rise and the decline of this remarkable empire.

Religion was important to the Romans. Thus, it was believed that Rome was founded by mythical figures, Romulus and Remus. They were born twins (whose father was the god Mars) and exposed to death on the river Tiber. Miraculously, their basket came ashore near the Palatine and were nurtured by a she-wolf until they were found by a Faustulus who raised them to adulthood. The legend continues that they founded Rome (Roberts, 2005).

Much less prosaic was the actual history. Around 700 BC, according to Roberts, a Palatine settlement, near the river Tiber, was founded and it soon became a city-state. In 500 BC, an early republic was constructed with the emergence of two classes of people: the patricians (rulers) and the plebeians (the rest of the city). The plebeians suffered much until they took initiative to participate in the economic-political affairs of the city-state. From 367 BC to 326, the *Struggle of the Orders* was orchestrated until a new class of elites, the patricians and the plebeians was created.

Thereafter diplomatic and military expansions continued with out abatement until the whole of the peninsula of Italy was under Roman control by 275. From 264 to 146, the Romans broke beyond their shores to conquer the Carthaginian empire and then to Greece, Africa and Asia. During this time, the ideal of the republic eroded until 62 BC when the first triumvirate was created. This too eroded until in 27 BC when Augustus Caesar Octavian (63 BC–14 AD) became the supreme Emperor which marks the period of Imperial Rome.

Through many struggles (epidemics, continued assassination of emperors, a decline in fertility, and the employment of barbarian mercenaries), the empire came

to a fatal wound in 378 when the Goths defeated the Roman army in Adrianople. The population of the fifth century witnessed the invasions of the Goths, the Franks, the Suebi, the Vandals and the Avars. It was in 476 that the last emperor in the West, Romulus Augustus (emperor from 475 to 476) stood at the pinnacle of political power.

General Characteristics of the Family

Although the household (the *domus*) looked like a concertina, the actual family unit was a stable, relatively unchanged, and vital unit of the Roman society. The nuclear family was the standard and the pattern of familial configurations with a densely populated circle about it. The household, especially among the elite from which we know the most about the Roman family, was inhabited by nurses (some of whom wet-nursed infants), attendants, pedagogues and teachers, all from the class of slaves. Figure 2.5 illustrates this.

Dixon (1992) cautions us to realize that even though this was a pattern, the Roman Empire was extensive (covering 5 million km) with a population, in the first century AD, of 55 million people. Thus, there were myriad variations according to customs and values of various cultures.

During the Imperial period, there appeared many writings contrasting the contemporary family with the family form of the republican era. The family of the republican era was depicted as virtuous, without adultery or divorce, where children honoured their parents and parents were exemplary. Dixon notes these as

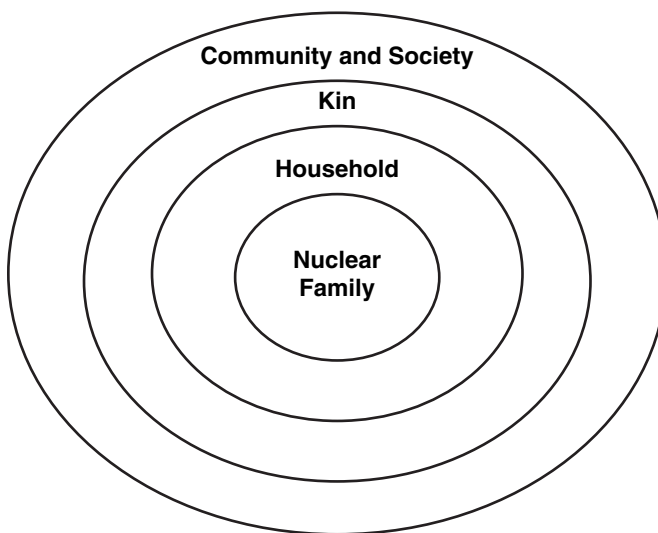


Fig. 2.5 The Roman family and household

exaggerations and were designed by ethical ideals of the Stoics to change familial moral practices of their contemporaries.

Unlike the Canadian family, the Roman family had a legal status constructed to ensure social status of the state's citizens and to guarantee proper inheritance practices were followed. A false image of the husband-father (*pater familias*) has been circulated that has considered him to be a tyrant with unlimited power over his wife, his children and his household. Legally he did have this but it was rarely implemented as it would destroy the internal mechanisms not only of the family but also the household. A truer image of the father was: that he was also governed by socially acceptable and less punitive customs; that he consulted with his wife on matters relating to the children; that he treated the children with kindness; and that he practiced mercy towards his household and familial relations.

Marriage

Marriage was seen to be central to the nature of the social fabric of ancient Rome. Dixon describes it:

If two Roman citizens with the legal capacity to marry one another and each had the consent of the *paterfamilias* and lived together with the intention of being married, that was recognized as a valid marriage and children born of the union were Roman citizens in the power of their father (1992:61).

In contrast to the modern Western view of marriage, two necessary elements surrounded it, the dowry and inheritance. The dowry was monies given to the groom from the family of the bride that was not to be used but put aside in case of the death of the husband or divorce. Inheritance not only referred to capital being given to the next generation but also the passage of the status of the family of orientation. If a dowry was not present or inheritances were to be given to non kin or not the next generation, a marriage was considered void. Figure 2.6 depicts this image.

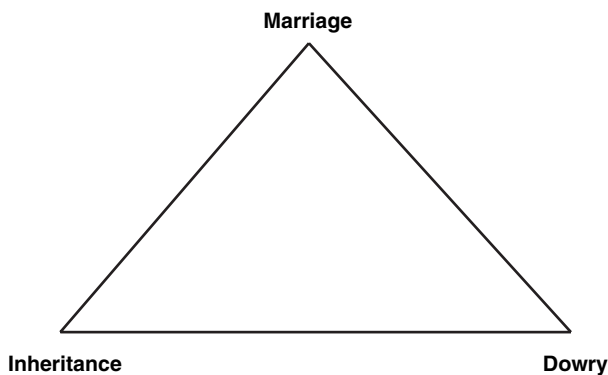


Fig. 2.6 The image of marriage

A further contrast to the modern family in the Occident is that marriage was clearly perceived as a family affair and not based on an individual-romantic decision. Although marriage was seen to be a private affair, a ceremony was celebrated. It consisted of these following elements: the bride was escorted to the home of the groom with fanfare and hilarity; at the home of the groom, the couple partook of a religious rite to mark the bride's entry into her new home; no state official was present but as long as the *paterfamilias* (of both the bride and the groom) approved of the marriage, a dowry was exchanged, and the two families were present, a marriage had occurred.¹

Religion played a role in the marriage. An ancient frieze depicts the presence of deities in the ceremony: From Fig. 2.7, one can see the bride in the bridal chamber with all the appropriate clothing who is comforted by a goddess. Another woman, veiled, makes a sacrifice on the domestic altar.

The image of the *paterfamilias* conjures up the woman as being totally under the control of her husband. Dixon offers another image. By law the father-husband was a patriarch but the local social customs modified this. For example, by the mid-Republic, women could make wills and in the early years of the Imperial era, women arranged marriages as well as maintain a legal link to their family of orientation. Yes, marriage was a social contract whose purpose was primarily to have children but it did not mean that there was no romantic love and sentiment. Dixon provides evidence that enjoyable sexuality and affection was common.

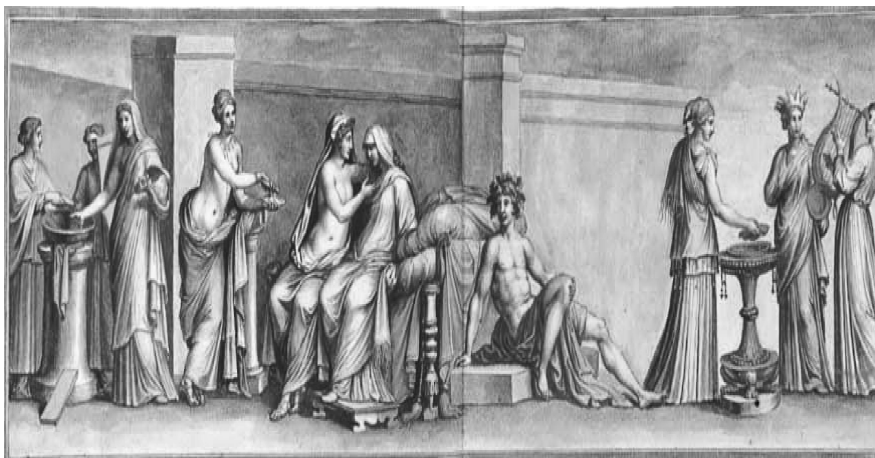


Fig. 2.7 The Roman Aldobrandini wedding, Roman fresco; Vatican Museum, Vatican City: Aldobrandini Wedding (1st century BC). Wikimedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, In

¹ The actual ceremony was not necessary for a valid marriage.

Augustus Caesar was not only first emperor, he was also a moral crusader for marriage and reproduction. He offered monies and status enhancement to the elite who did marry and have children. Caesar introduced laws as to require a legal document of divorce. All this crusading was done under the ideal of the early Republic which he deemed as being morally superior to his own time. His plans did not work and seemed not to have made difference in the familial (or lack thereof) lifestyle of the Roman elites.

Children

Children were of value to the Romans as they are of value to modern peoples. However, the reasons are different. The child of ancient Rome as valorized not because they were “cute,” “priceless,” or innocent but for their usefulness not only to the state but to the family itself. Table 2.1 illustrates this.

This does not mean, however, that children were not a source of joy, delight, and sentiment. Dixon documents many literary data to substantiate this image. It was further understood that parents played a v ital role in the development of the child and remained active in their lives as long as the parents lived.

Another contrast to the modern family was the fluidity of the household. As seen from Fig. 2.5, there were many other persons in the household – there to assist the parents in the management of the house and the socialization of children. The others included nurses (mothers frequently had slave wet nurses), attendants, pedagogues and teachers. Further, the paterfamilias often adopted others – male children and adults as well.

In regard to fertility, Augustus Caesar was correct. The elite of Rome were notorious in not reproducing themselves and the males held marriage in low esteem. The sociologist Stark (1996), using scholarly materials, estimates that not only was there a low fertility rate but also there was a chasm in the sex ratio: about 140 men to 100 women. Why the discrepancy? Stark gives two reasons: female infanticide and abortion. In the case of abortion, not only did the unborn child die, the woman’s life was frequently in jeopardy. This accounts for fewer women, but why the general low fertility rate? The Romans practiced various kinds of birth control: fluids from plants

Table 2.1 The functions of children

For the state	For the family
Necessary for new soldiers and tax revenues	Economic gain
Natural reproduction	Emotional support-especially in times of trouble and crisis
The reproduction of culture	they with the wife-mother offered a haven
For the production of property, honour, the family name and cult	the passage of capital and cultural inheritance
For the production of clothing, food and shelter	

and sexual variations that kept sperm out of the vagina. These variations consisted of: *coitus interruptus*, mutual masturbation, anal sex, bisexuality and homosexuality.

Could it be that this is one factor that led to the decline of the Roman Empire? Steyn (2006), in writing of Europe in the twenty-first century, considers that the reproductive rates of these countries is way below fertility and the typical French, Italian, Spaniard, or Greek is on the way to extinction.

Some Conclusions

The ideal family for the Romans, Dixon acknowledges, is that a free couple would marry, have children, live to a happy old age, and be cared for by their adult children. The reality was different but the ideal was never gone.

The patterns of the family include: arranged marriages, the frequent death of infants, slave children inducted into labour and being vulnerable to sexual abuse, strong sentiments between family members, an expansive household that included foster parents, servants, apprentices, nurses and pedagogues. There is also substantial evidence for kin parenting children, stepparents, and family disruption through death and divorce.

I offer a larger quote from Dixon on her observation not only on the Roman family but the family of all times and places:

The family is a very flexible institution, and change as it may, it seems to satisfy certain constant human needs, especially the need for material aid and the sense of belonging and mutual emotional support. It provides a moral and economic structure from which individuals can operate – not always happily – but the family also withstood constant and cyclic internal conflict.... The family is more than a summary of legal relations or moral obligations, more than the focus of constant conflict, more than an economic and reproductive unit and the basis of mutual support. Any picture of family relations needs to take all of these aspects into account to acknowledge the complexity, resilience, and endurance of this basic human institution (1992:162–163).

Early Christianity and the Family

According to Stark (1996), the central reason that families, communities and societies were revived with the coming of Christianity was that the central mythologies of the religion prompted and sustained attractive, liberating, and effective social relations and organizations. The core mythology of the faith is that “God is love” (I John 4:9)* that, in turn, led to subsequent beliefs such as:

- God so loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16).
- Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us by letting us be called God’s children (I John 3:1).

* All scripture quotes to *Bible* are from Jones (1966).

- God's love for us was revealed when God sent into the world his only Son so that we could have life through him; this is the love I mean: not our love for God but God's love for us when he sent his Son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away (I John 4:10).

As noted by Stark and other students of religion, sacrifice is a common feature in most sacred traditions. Sacrifice may include the giving of food, goods, or money to the deities. It may also involve the slaughter of the killing of animals. The Mayans of ancient Meso-America sacrificed humans as did the Sumerians of Mesopotamia (Cahill, 1998). What is so radical, new and unparallel among all other religions is that the deity is the sacrifice for humans. This becomes the master narrative which, in turn, emerges as a model for Christians.

This master narrative was to become the central ethos of Christianity. In relationships, it called the disciples of Jesus to love each other (I John 4:11); to serve each other as Jesus serves them (John 13:12–15); to support the weak (Luke 16:19–31); and to share with those who are in need (Acts 2:44–45). This self-giving love, however, was not to be restricted to fellow Christians. It was to be extended to the whole human race (I Thessalonians 3:12) and even to one's enemies. Jesus was reported as saying:

You have learnt how it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance.... Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away. You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike (Matthew 5:38–45).

Stark and other scholars have documented that this was not restricted to the ideal world but was practiced by the early Christians and samples of Christians throughout the centuries since the time of Jesus.

This ethos had a radical effect on familial life. Husbands were called to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands. Children were welcome and were to be cared for and honoured (Ephesians 5:25–33 and Colossians 3:19–21). This is evidenced from the contrasts in fertility among the Romans already mentioned by Dixon and the number of children being born to the early Christians.

The Role of Women

Many authors provide evidence for the vital place that women played in the early years of Christianity. I shall offer a sample of their observations.

Heine (1987), in her study of women and early Christianity, documents that the praxis of Jesus was in radical contrast both to the host Roman and Judaistic cultures in that he came to serve and not be served. Women were partners in his enterprise and many were his personal friends. His motif was "...inclusiveness and not exclusiveness as the criteria" (1987:63). Individuals were not judged by their ethnicity, political leanings, social status or gender but by how much they believed. In his

mythology, all people are equally in need of salvation, men no less or more than women. Indeed, it was women who first witnessed the resurrection epiphany and not the male disciples.

It has been suggested by some that women's roles and voices begin to be attenuated during the first century through the work of Paul the apostle. Reference is usually given to the first letter of Paul to Timothy wherein Paul counsels women to dress modestly, should be quiet and respectful, are not to teach, and are best suited for domestic responsibilities (I Timothy 2:9–15). According to Heine (1987), to use this text as the total mind of Paul on women is to use Paul as a scapegoat. She goes on to cite evidence that women, under his ministry, become the first converts, are active collaborators with him (she estimates that about 25% of them were women), serve as apostles, missionaries, and deacons.

The theologian Frend (1993) presents examples of two, courageous women, Blandina and Perpetua, who faced fear and hatred with prowess and strength in martyrdom. They dared to challenge the patriarchal ideology of *paterfamilia* and their lives were forfeited. Frend writes that "Christianity provided scope for the human need of achievement and daring for a cause" (1993:95) and the equality practised by the Christians offered fulfilment to many women. Further, women joined a society without social and gender distinction that the Greco-Roman society could not offer.

In a work on independent virgins, Salisbury (1991) comments that for women, because they renounced their sexuality, they no longer had to obey the Old Roman traditions of gender. Chastity allowed women to control their lives in the face of Roman expectations of what was appropriate women's behaviour and role. She tells of Constancia, the daughter of Constantine the Great, and a Mary of Egypt, a reformed prostitute, who renounced their social privilege to become ascetics. She further writes of women named Egeria and Melania the younger who travelled alone without male escort to the Holy Land. Pelagia, a beautiful prostitute, left her wealth and lived in cell on the Mount of Olives. Finally, Costissma, a daughter of a wealthy family of Alexandria, was trained to read the scriptures by her father, left the socially distinctive life-style and became known as a saintly and learned woman near the city.

What of more official roles or ministries in the Church? According to Torjesen (1993) and Eisen (2000), there were many functions that women had a active role to play. Eisen's (2000) thesis its that in Early Christianity, women appear as independent subjects, demonstrably active in important Christian positions. Torjesen (1993) adds that they were preachers, pastors, priests, prophets and patrons. The documentation of the evidence for this does not come from official ecclesial sources but, rather are epigraphical (to do with inscriptions on stone, and building, a statue) and papyrological (to do with papyrus manuscripts) which were commonly used by the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans.

In a survey of churches in Philippi, Corinth, and Rome during New Testament times, Torjesen writes that women, such as Lydia, Priscilla, Phoebe, Jania, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Peris, served as leaders of house-churches, were prophetesses, and even apostles. An important ministry of widowhood was central to the life of the early church and these women were commissioned to the ministry of praying and of receiving revelations. Further, because early Christianity was a

private religion (it worked underground as it was a persecuted religion), women were authorized to teach, discipline, and administer material resources.

Eisen's (2000) work is more specific. She examines epigraphs (most of which were on tombs) from Anatolia, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. Her review reveals that women were active as apostles (Junia, Aegidius of Rome, Thelca, and Nino); prophets (Nanus and Anmia of Philadelphia); teachers of theology (Kyria, the desert mothers, Theodora and Synkletika, Hypatia, Theodora of Rome, Marcella of Rome, Proba, Melania the Elder, Melania the Younger, Theodora, the Didakalos, and Maciona); priests or presbyters (Ammion, the Presbyteria, Epikto, Artemidora, Kale, Leta, Flavia);² enrolled widows (Flavia Arcas and Regina); deaconesses (Sophia, Maria, Agalliasis, Theopropia, Dalmatia from Gaul, and evidence from many inscriptions from Colicia, Cappadocia, Galatia, Phrygia, Lyconia, Bithynia and Lycia); bishops (Episcopa Theodora, the mother of Pope Paschal I);³ and stewards (Irene of Asia Minor) whose roles were to manage the goods for the poor and were commissioned to do so.

Evidence from these authors revealed that women preached the gospel, spoke in tongues, went on mission, prayed, presided over Eucharist, baptized, taught, created theology, cared for the poor and the sick and administered burial places. They thus had many public roles outside of the home which blurred the private-public imagery usually associated with women and men.

The Early Medieval Family

Goody (2000), a social historian of the family, assists us in understanding how the many codes of marriage and the family changed with the coming of Christianity. The catalogue of changes is impressive. Christianity, in words of Stark, was revolutionary in that the new ethos came from the mythology of the new religion and not out of an evolution of previous cultural codes and behaviours. The changes included; the range of eligible marital partners, the introduction of Godparenthood, lineage connections, the rise of celibacy and images of sexuality, concubinage, divorce, remarriage, and inheritance codes.

Not mentioned above in the discussion on Ancient Rome, marriages between close kin was not forbidden. From the fourth century, edicts were presented from church authorities to prohibit marriages between: siblings, first cousins, relatives from marriage (affines), and god children or godparents. Goody's interpretation is that the church was consolidating ecclesial relationships in contrast to kin and clan ones. Godparenthood was constructed to supplement biological parents in

² Eisen writes: ... "on the basis of epigraphic evidence we can suppose that until the 4th century women were active presbyters in the communities of Asia Minor, Greece and Egypt" (2000:127)

³ Eisen (2000:200–202) uses this designation with some caution. The inscription appears as "Episcopa Theodora" on a mosaic dating from the time of Pope Paschal I (Pope from 817 to 824). This could mean that she was married to a bishop and not a bishop herself.

the spiritual care of their children. These people became essential for a Christian baptism and thereafter joined the circle of prohibited marriages.

Lineage became an important feature of the religion. Most of the host societies that were met by Christianity practised male lineage and the new bride was inducted into the agnatic grouping. The new form was the cognatic group that saw lineage through the mother.

Many theories try to account for the rise of celibacy as a model of being a Christian and why secular clergy (those clergy who were not in a monastery or a religious order) were required to be celibate (the law did not come into effect into the eleventh century). Gradual changes occurred with Christianity in regard to the views of sex. Cole (1959) writes that in the Christian Bible, sex is considered to be good, part of the divine creation, and people are expected to enjoy it. He further argues that a good marriage produces a positive sex life and that marriage itself is a combination of love, sex and procreation. Cole summarizes the apostle Paul in arguing that marriage is a mystery, monogamous, life long, holy, held in honour, and permanent. In conclusion, Cole writes:

Sex and love belong together – in life no less than in the Bible. Where one flows from the other, the experience is creative, releasing, and enlarging. It is even rooted in eternity, in God himself and his love for his covenanted people (1959:436).

Yet, changes did occur. There grew a vibrant monastic movement in the fourth century. Routinization of Christianity had occurred and many sought to escape the insipid mix between the world and Christianity. They sought refuge in the desert to replicate the ideals of Jesus such as poverty and obedience. They took for their models Jesus and Paul as examples of celibacy. Along with poverty and obedience, celibacy became the mark of a “high” call, a virtuoso in Weber’s (1978) and Sharot’s (2001) terms. Brown (1987) documents that both men and women sought a total dedication to seeking the face of God, of being single in heart, as focussed on heaven and not the earth, and living a life of undivided praise to God. In time, the monastic ideal began to be lived by clergy who lived and served in society. In the eleventh century, it became mandatory for the clergy to be celibate in the Western Church.

Sex and marriage never did lose their ideals but they gradually came to be seen as a less important vocation in the Christian church in contrast to celibacy. Brown (1987) accents Augustine (354–430 AD), the most significant Church Father of the Latin Church, taught a theology that not only influenced the continued valorization of celibacy within the monastery but also in the domestic family. It was Augustine who believed that if a man and woman had sex without the intention of procreation, they sinned. Brown writes:

Augustine’s views imposed an ascetic’s rigour and an ascetics’s awareness of human frailty on the humble householders in the world. He joined world and desert in the Catholic Church. In this he would be followed, in the silent rise of the Catholic Church in western Europe. The urban Catholic bishops of Gaul, Italy, and Spain, rather than the “men of the desert,” became the arbiters of the monastic paradigm as it had been subtly and irreversibly modified by Augustine to embrace even sexuality in the world (1987:310).

Goody relates several other changes that were in contrast to the Greco-Roman world. Forms of concubinage (mostly with a “second” wife to produce a child the first wife was unable to do), divorce were prohibited and remarriage after the death of a spouse was discouraged.

The notion of inheritance was also radicalized. In the Greco-Roman social order, inheritance was to be passed onto the second generation of legal children. The third party introduced after Christianity was the church itself as a major recipient of inheritances. Most other these monies, in the first centuries of Christianity, did not go to build churches but to establish monasteries and to provide livelihood for the poor.

Some Conclusions

The impact of Christianity upon Greco-Roman society is unquestionable. In many ways, this new religious movement introduced a revolutionary ethic of love, a model of the family depicting commitment, love and fidelity, it engendered changes in the role of women and gave the image of a man as a lover and not as a patriarch. On the other hand, these initial changes became routinized and new forms of patriarchy emerged along with changes in the image of sexuality.

The Central-Medieval Family

In the spirit of the systems approach of Neo-functionalism, it is well to provide the reader with a presentation of the religious context of the Central Medieval family (circa 1050–1300). To understand the micro system of the family (consisting, primarily, of the personality and social systems), one needs to see in the context

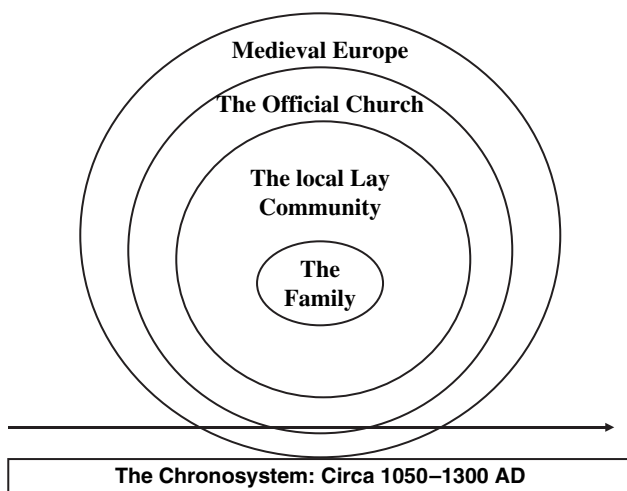


Fig. 2.8 Contexts of the Central Medieval family

of the wider systems, I have chosen to outline the physical and cultural systems. The latter, in this case, is the sacred system. Thus this section is divided into three: the physical-social systems consisting of the political and economic context of the Central Medieval society, the cultural-sacred system or environment and the central features of the family of the Central Medieval world of western Europe. Figure 2.8 offers a pictorial representation.

The Physical-Social Systems: Medieval Europe: 1050–1250

This wider context of the family is important because of either direct or indirect effects it had on familial phenomena. McKitterick (2004) provides us with the essential features of the political, economic, and ecclesial elements of this expansive territorial space. She divides the geographical area into the British Isles and France, the **Holy Roman Empire**, and Italy.

A feature of the British-French interconnection was a balance of the powers of monarchs and **magnates**. One of the consequences of the Norseman and **Saracen** raids was the construction of fortresses known as **castles**. These massive structures were the mainstay of royal and seigneurial power that served as focal spaces that had a creative effect on the local environment: the recruitment of human capital, the cultivation of land and the creation of markets for exchange of goods.

In the aftermath of the unification of England by the Anglo-Saxons, there developed an administrative system that worked through a system of local divisions called shires and royal officers termed sheriffs. William the Conqueror (1027–1087) from Normandy, France, who in 1066 invaded and conquered England, did transform the culture and language of the land but it remained, essentially, an Anglo-Saxon culture. In the twelfth century, the English nobility offered a financial and justice system that was the most sophisticated in western Europe. It was in the thirteenth century (1215) that the precedent was set to share royal power among other nobles in the Magna Carta and to produce the first bill of rights for individuals.⁴

Links between England and France continued for many centuries. Henry II (1133–1189) was not only the king of England but also of one-half of France through his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204). From 1180 to 1223, the French monarchy expanded its power in a dramatic way.

The second major player was the Holy Roman Empire that commenced during the reign of Charles the Great or Charlemagne (747–814) and was reinforced through a dynasty called the Ottonians (919–1024). They embodied the **Caesarapist** paradigm and were heavily involved in not only electing bishops but also popes. The emperors were focussed on expanding power and acquiring lands beyond Germany and parts of France while the local lords had jurisdiction throughout the settled

⁴ The charter, in part, reads: “No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or the law of the land” (King John’s Charter of Liberties for the English, 1215, clause 39, quoted in McKitterick, 2004:124).

lands. A central theme arose in this period that became known as the lay investiture controversy which will be discussed in the next section.

The third player was Italy even though much of it was under the control of the Holy Roman Empire. The peninsula was divided into three large areas: the north, under the control of the Holy Roman Empire with the gradual emergence of merchant-city-states, the central area known as the Papal States and the south, the Kingdom of Sicily. It was the Norman Roger (1031–1101) who conquered the Muslims who had taken over the region at an earlier date (starting in 827).

It was around 1000 that the papacy was under the control of emperors and local factions. Popes were often appointed and deposed by the Emperor. It was in this century that a major shift occurred in the Western world – the transformation of imperial Caesaropapism to papal **hierocracy**. As indicated, this will be discussed in the subsequent section.

On the economic front, according to Gies and Gies (1987), there arose a great commercial revival that included the rapid growth of trade, manufacturing and the generation of a money based system of exchange. Muslim primacy on the Mediterranean was replaced by Italian fleets to allow for more freedom of commerce. Pack trains carried wool cloth from Flemish cities East while, in return, luxury goods came from Italy. With these movements, a new merchant class grew as well as craftsmen primarily associated with the cloth industry that was comprised of weavers, fullers, dyers, and finishers. These worked in family households and created the first proletarians of Europe. Agriculture evolved with the addition of horse traction, the wheeled plow, and a three-field system of crop production.

The Cultural-Sacred System: The Church

According to Cowdrey (2004), it was during the eleventh century that the features of Medieval Europe became well established. The image of heaven, in contrast to that of the early church, became one of a class hierarchy: God the Father as supreme head, Christ as his vice-regent, Mary as the feminine wisdom, and the saints. On earth, emperors, kings, popes, princes, bishops, priests and, then, laity formed the social structure. A threefold image emerged: (1), those who pray (the higher and lower clergy as well as monks and nuns), (2) those who fought and lead (the nobles and the military), and, (3), those who worked (all the rest of the laity). The general movement, established in the genesis of the Medieval world about 800, was the *puissance* of the noble laity and the attenuation of the lower laity. A model arose in the whole of the Medieval world that, effectively, excluded lower laity participation in the life of the church.

Bishops were seen as “sacred princes” who had sacramental, administrative, and magisterial responsibilities. They were overseers of the lower clergy (deacons and priests) and, the clerics, in turn, led the laity. Parallel to these structures were the monasteries which housed women and men of dedicated prayer and labour. Their numbers were impressive. Brook (2006) notes that hundreds of monasteries

pocketed Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, Germany, Italy and, later, Spain. Their heritage was one of focussed prayer, meditation and labour.

Several major patterns emerge during this period: the competition between bishops in urban centres who vied for power, the creation of a diocesan-parochial administrative system, and precedence and the lay investiture controversy. Bishops sought to construct a world view of their cathedral churches (churches which were connected to the bishopric), named after a saint, was more important than another church because the saint of whom the church is named after is higher in the heavenly hierarchy than another saint. Building on a pattern developed in the first centuries of Christianity, the kingdoms and regions were divided into dioceses whose head quarters were near a noble centre. Each diocese had its own bishop (the more important cathedrals as in Rome, Paris or London were called metropolitan sees) who ordered the life of parish priests who, in turn, cared for the laity. Around these centres a administrative group of clerics emerged to care for all the functions in the diocese. Cowdrey writes:

Through the zeal of Pope Gregory VII (1020–1085), an indomitable purpose to assert and secure the prerogative of the apostolic see was already at work. In the 12th century its exercise would converge with the developments which, throughout the 11th century, worked from below, with a high degree of similarity in most parts of Latin Christendom to form territorial parishes, to consolidate an internal hierarchy within dioceses involving archdeacons, and archpriests who had areas accredited to them in which they were the bishops' "eyes", and to foster collective action through councils and synods at all levels to order and reform the church (2004:266).

One effect of the clerics surrounding a metropolitan was a sense that the bishop was a cardinal. It is from the construction of a college of cardinals that was to have a major impact subsequent to the lay investiture conflict.

Some Medieval scholars consider the lay investiture controversy to be the central drama of the eleventh century. The precedent to the controversy was a long established tradition of the relationship between the pope and bishops and the emperors, kings and princes wherein the latter had a significant impact on the life and the politics of the church. The model is Caesaropapism, introduced earlier.

An author (unknown), in 1047, made public a document of how to meet the problem. He was to argue strongly that the Pope and the bishops are to be elected, deposed and have authority over the secular kings and nobles. This author drew heavily on the **Pseudo-Isidore Decretals** which summarized laws, papal letters, and decrees of councils – some genuine but many, including the famous **Donation of Constantine**, were forgeries. The controversy reached a culmination in 1077 in Canossa, Italy, when Henry IV and Gregory VII met for reconciliation. Gregory had forbade the emperor to elect his own bishops and excommunicated him. The reconciliation was short lived as Henry attacked Rome with his armies and Gregory was exiled.

The shift had been made, however. Within a few generations, only clerics could elect bishops and the newly founded college of cardinals were the only ones who could elect a pope. The relationship between king and cleric gradually changed to a hierocracy model that had significant effects on the family of this period.

Under the aura of this model, the laity were increasingly marginalized. With this, marriage and the meaning of family had become peripheral. But there were many other reasons that led further and further to the control of family life. There can be identified, through the scholarship of Hamilton (2004), four factors that challenged the Biblical view of marriage/family/human sexuality and valorized celibacy and asceticism and attenuated familial issues. They consist of the monastic movement, the church's teaching on spiritual perfection being more likely through celibacy and asceticism, the emerging of Marian devotion, and the rise of **enocratictic** dissenting sects.

Monasticism had a long history, both in Latin and Greek Christianity, going back to the third century. In the eleventh century, there continued an image that the most holy of Christians were those who became monks. The monasteries were thought to be centres of Christian excellence and perfection consisted of the renunciation of the world – sex, wealth and power. There grew a theology that holiness was equated with self-denial and the **eremitic** monks were venerated as the Christian elite or virtuoso. Some kings (the Holy Roman emperor Henry II [from 1002 to 1024] and Edward the Confessor of England [king from 1042 to 1066]) were both credited with monastic virtues and practised chastity even though they were married.

For centuries, a focal teaching of the Latin Church has been spiritual perfection that consisted on going on pilgrimages, penance, renunciation of sex, wealth and power. This model emerged in the third century when desert ascetics sought Christian perfection in the desert. St. Benedict of Nursia (480–547) brought this ideal to the West in the form of the famous Benedictine's which were very common in all regions of the West. Part of this was a common movement in the last years of the first millennium to require parish priests to be like monks in that they should be celibate. From 1046, Hamilton notes, the papacy moved to enforce clerical celibacy. According to Robinson (2004) Gregory VII knew that clerical marriages were valid in law but were not true marriages. The Second Lateran Council (1139) judged that these unions were concubinages. Another council in Rheims in 1049 said the same thing. Yet, it took several centuries before the custom took hold. The message was clear, though. Celibacy is to be the preferred state of clerics both legally and in custom.

Another factor that attenuated the importance of family life is the rise of Marian devotions. Theologians had already made it plain that Mary had a special place in the life of a Christian. In the twelfth century, Mary not only was the Mother of God but she became Our Lady, the perfect example of womanhood. She was regarded as the chief intercessor for the whole human race. Chapels were created in her honour, statutes were constructed and paintings drawn. Further, many shrines were created throughout the West with a special accent given to her shrines in the Holy Land. She was mother and that gave credibility to the mother but, more so, she was a virgin, and celibate.

The final factor was the rise of **enocratictic** dissenting sects. Several different groups arose from the tenth to the early years of the fourteenth century. During the first decades of the eleventh century, an ascetic group of dissidents called the

Bogomils emerged. They believed that there was only one God who had two sons, Lucifer and Christ. The world was created by Lucifer and Jesus came with a spiritual (not real) body to redeem the human race. They lived austere, abstaining from sexual intercourse, meat and wine, and lived humbly in the society. Several other groups grew who advocated celibacy, ate sparingly, held property in common, if married, did not have sex, lived like monks by devoting themselves to perpetual prayer, and denied baptism, the cross and other major Christian beliefs.

The longest lasting group was concentrated in southern France and were known as the *Cathars* or the *Albigensians*. They had a significant following and were active from the latter part of the twelfth century to the beginning of the fourteenth. They were highly critical of the Catholic church, rejected infant baptism and the Eucharist. Their virtuosos condemned marriage and procreation, and abstained from eating meat as they thought it to be the product of coition. In addition, they believed in God the Father of Jesus and Lucifer, the creator of the world that included anything to do with the human body – especially sex. Jesus came to the world as spiritual being but did not die on the cross. He came to free humans from perpetual reincarnation.

The Catholic church was considered to be a counterfeit church and an instrument of evil focussed in Lucifer or Satan. There were, essentially, two groups of believers: the perfect who renounced sex and were very ascetic (abstaining from all animal products, flesh, fowl, cheese, eggs and animal fats) and the laity, who married, had children, owned property, hunted, fought, and even worshipped in Catholic churches. In time, the great tragedy of these people is that they were severely persecuted, tried by the **Inquisition**, executed, and finally eliminated.

Several laws and customs of the family were to meet changes in this period. Marriage was not a legal, public or religious event – it was celebrated in familial contexts surrounded by extended kin and neighbours. Further, laws against marriage were extreme. One could not marry a godparent (or godson-goddaughter) or a kin to the sixth degree of consanguinity. This means that a marriage was invalid if one shared the same great-grandparent. Gies and Gies (1987) add the following general characteristics:

- Marriage was under the control of parents and was rationally planned.
- The larger kin group (the *sippe*) continued to play an important role with a gradual increase of the salience of the nuclear household.
- As nearly everyone lived on the land, inheritance was important and in Europe, the inheritance was divided among the sons and in Anglo-Saxon England, daughters were also recipients.

These are some of the customs and laws as well the precedents to the family of the Central Middle ages. The family was to meet, in many ways, these challenges. A major challenge, however, was how can one live a Christian life while being married and have children in a spiritual climate that gave little credibility to the institution?

The Personality-Social System: The Central Medieval Family

Gies and Gies (1987) provide us with an abundance of material describing the various kinds of families during this period. An important general impression is that there was no such type of the family that covered all familial phenomena – families varied according to class, region and religion.

The eleventh century begins with a strong sense of **hierocracy** – the Catholic church had the puissance to threaten and command. Even though there was a wide variation of familial life, there were common characteristics: the larger kin played an important role, marriages were rationally planned and not linked to romance or sentiment, nearly 90% of all peoples lived on and off the land, and children experienced harsh environment from hard discipline from parents, tutors or monks, were consigned to work or study outside of the nuclear family, and suffered from high rates of mortality.

According to Gies and Gies, a family revolution occurred in the eleventh century. **Allods** continued to be divided as inheritance passed from generation to generation to an ever increasing number of conjugal families as well as given to the church. This led to the decline of the lower aristocracy. A shift was deemed imperative. Land began to move from a partible to an impartible inheritance – the genesis of primogeniture. The custom assumed the power of a law under the leadership of the **Capetian dynasty**. Along with the rise of primogeniture, lineage moved from the **distaff** to the **agnate** or the emergence of patrilineage as well as the social construction of the **patronymic** custom. Quoting Duby (1977), Gies and Gies write: “The significance of a family has become the significance of its heir” (1987:129).

Gies and Gies present a case that the twelfth century also faced a major familial problem-divorce. Nobles frequently disowned a wife for various reasons and then married another woman. Kings and the nobility were committed to manipulate marriage to accomplish their own ends – be they material, familial or sexual. The church objected to these practices and challenged informal, clandestine marriages among both the nobility and the peasants which were without witnesses.

The question of divorce had already had a long history of debate. According to Phillips (1988), some of the early Church Fathers, Jerome, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Augustine taught that once a valid marriage had been conducted, divorce and remarriage was not possible. However, several church councils (Council of Vannes in 465, the Council of Trullo in 692 and the Council of Berberie in 752) as well as several authorities (the church father Origen, Pope Clement in the eighth century, and the Penitential of Theodore, the seventh century) did allow for divorce in some circumstances such as adultery, when a partner is captured by an enemy, when a husband leaves a wife for 5 years, and voluntary abortion. However, by the ninth century, from the time of the pontificate of Pope Nicholas I (858–867), the indissolubility of a valid marriage was upheld. But the question of what constituted a valid marriage was the issue. The church began to ask poignant questions and given by Gies and Gies: “Sex or no sex, what constituted a marriage contract? When could a woman, or for that matter, a man, be confident that a marriage had taken place?” (1987:136).

The lawyers of the church (called Canon lawyers) began to search for and combine the teachings of the first millennium to define what constituted a valid marriage. The issue was defined in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, under the leadership of Innocent III (1160–1216). A valid marriage consisted of: (1), marrying one who is less than the fourth degree of consanguinity (3rd cousins), (2), the endowment given to the bride; (3), the wedding ceremony in a church via a priest, (4), the active declaration of both the man and the woman, and, (5), a publication of banns several months before the ceremony.

Primogeniture brought on its own problems. Many single men and women, deprived of inheritances, were left adrift. The young men engaged in vagabondage, became knights in the crusades, engaged in war, tournaments and adventures. The women suffered more. The marriage age of women dropped while those of the grooms rose, dowries inflated while the number of spinsters increased dramatically.

Other forms of familial configurations were emerging in the merchant cities, among the settlers of Spain, and the familial life of peasants. A consequence of the Muslim corsairs (pirates), who continually sent raids upon Italian coastal settlements, was the creation of defensive mechanisms about the littoral cities of Venice, Amalfi, Genoa, and Pisa. The military success of these new city establishments resulted in the construction of the cities becoming “merchant cities” that resulted in a new bourgeoisie class of merchants along with a wide range of craftsmen. The family type was an extended unit wherein close kin lived close to the main house that was led by a strong patriarch. New capital into these families had the effect of these families being identified not by lineage but by wealth.

During the **Reconquista** of Spain, many peoples from the north immigrated to the south. Some the effects on the family consisted of: women having an elevated status and authority because her husband was away fighting, the re-introduction of the Roman **dower** (a custom established by the **Visigoths** prior to the Muslim invasion), the paying of the wedding by the groom’s father, and an elaborate wedding. Sex before marriage was actually encouraged but if there was break of an engagement promise, the guilty party had to pay. The downside was that wife-beating was common and approved of the both the secular and the ecclesial law.

There were various kinds of peasants during the Central Middle ages. Some were **villeins** and others were not free and subject to a lord. The villeins lived in villages that were surrounded by an “an open field system” wherein each family had a strip of land that was theirs to use. The subjected peasants had to pay a range of fees in regard to marriage. If a peasant had his child marry another outside of the lord’s holding, he had to pay a *merchet* or a fee to him. Further, the bride’s father had to supply a dowry.

In general, the peasants followed the pattern of primogeniture which left many single men and women outside of the family domain. The men became day labourers, soldiers, or entered the church as monks. The women had to choose working for the inherited brother, be a servant of another peasant family, and work in casual labour. Many of the men became involved in crime and the women gave birth outside of marriage.

In time, major problems occurred because of the custom of primogeniture for the noble families. Gies and Gies document one study that showed only 16 of the 136 noble families of 1325 were still around by 1500. What happened? More than many first born sons died because of a variety of reasons: infant mortality, disease, war, accidents, and wounds from tournaments. Several couples failed to produce a male heir. Another reason why primogeniture did not work is that many of the noble families wanted to share the inheritance with all their other children. Some men, who had mistresses, gave to their illegitimate children as well.

The final image that Gies and Gies present to us is that of children. The portrayal of the child as a “mini” adult through the work of Aries (1962) is not accurate. The Gies account that children played children’s games, parents were given advice from medical documents, were nursed by their mothers if they were of the peasant or merchant class, and were treated with affection and sentiment. On the other hand, however, the children of the noble class received unwarranted punishment by tutors or monks, and were sent away to other families to be raised as apprentices. There continued to be infanticide and many were victims of a number of hazards such as wells, ponds, ditches, boiling pots, knives, pitchforks and the like. Accidents would happen when the children were left alone to care for themselves or to care for a younger sibling. Adulthood arrived early. When a girl or boy reached puberty, they were considered able to take on adult responsibilities.

Much of the discussion of the Central Medieval family has been descriptive. However, two events/process can be partially explained by the theory established in the introduction to the chapter: the rise of primogeniture in the twelfth century and the new laws and customs of marriage in the thirteenth century (see Fig. 2.4). Primogeniture was enforced by the Capetians which gives evidence that the macro political action of the nobility impacted not only the elite but also the peasant families. In regard to changes in marriage, the macro factor was sacred – the action of the Ecclesial elite in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 under the auspices of the powerful, hierocratic leader, Innocent III.

Thus we have an image of the lives of families during the Central Medieval Age. There were many variations yet these people continued to do what families have done for centuries before them and centuries after: to bond to others in marriage, to reproduce and socialize children, and to earn a living.

An Anomaly to the Central Medieval Family: The Chivalric Ideal

An interesting and fascinating feature of the Central Medieval Period breaks the patterns of this era—the introduction of chivalry. According to Cantor (2004), the genesis of this code of conduct had its origins in Spain that, by the last decades of the twelfth century, became part of the sub-culture of the noble and the knights of France, Italy, Germany and England (Stacey, 1999). Its arrival came from Spain to France, then to England through the persons of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204) and Henry II (1135–1189), king of England, who married in 1154. Their court in Poitiers became a model of courtly love.

Keen, (2000), Dean (1999), Stacey (1999) and Cantor (2004) provide us with central elements of what is known as the chivalric code. The core of the code consists of service to God (involving crusades against Muslims), to the noble (the king or duke), and to the honour of women. The institution which provided a carapace to the code was the royal or aristocratic household wherein courtly love was celebrated. Romantic love was part of marriage as was marriage for diplomatic and financial reasons. However, this kind of romance spilled over that permitted promiscuity, homoerotic relationships, and resulted in many illegitimate births. Ditchburn, MacLean and Mackay (2007) claim that by 1400, nearly one-third of the children born during the Central and Late Medieval period were of illegitimate standing.⁵

Cantor (2004) avers that the most salient dimension of the code was romance. Respect and honour was to be given to aristocratic women and that they were not to be raped or abused but could be sexually seduced with no major repercussions. This was accompanied by literary developments of young women's physical attributes, stories of romantic love that included all the passions and problems of such affection.

Chivalry, by the fourteenth century had evolved to the creation of New Societies by the elite nobles and knights. To be a member, one had to be of noble birth (or be "knighted" because of living out the code), without reproach, and practice the chivalric ideal. One such society was the *Garter of England* established in 1349 by King Edward III (1312–1377). An example of a member was John Gaunt (1340–1399), the duke of Lancaster and son of Edward III, who was seen by Cantor (2004) as a model of chivalric code. As we shall see in Chapter Three, the romantic dimension of the art of chivalry is an example of the *love-sex narrative* that precedes modern times by eight centuries.

The Late Medieval Family and the Great Plague

Cantor, a Medieval scholar, writes: "The Black Death of 1348–1349 was the greatest biomedical disaster in European and possibly in world history" (2002:6). It was major event-process that occurred in Western Occidental history which had monumental effects on the lives of countless men and women, social institutions, and the Latin Church – the Black Death. Using an empirical model (Fig. 2.9), I shall organize this discussion into three categories: the descriptives of the plague, its factors and effects – especially on the family.

⁵ The estimate is based upon ecclesial records from Rome because many of these illegitimate children were legally barred from any career in the church. The papal court granted dispensations to allow them to enter the folds of the clergy. The records attest to the fact that from 1449–1533, these dispensations amounted to 39, 716.

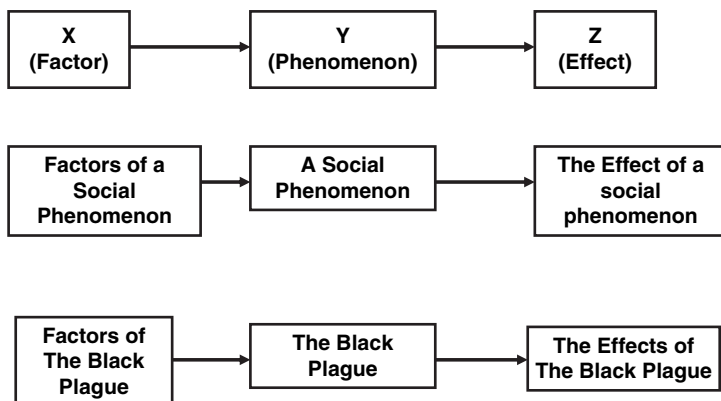


Fig. 2.9 The black plague of the fourteenth century

The Organic System: The Description of the Black Plague

Cantor (2002) documents medical evidence that the Black Plague was, in part, an infection caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. The first stage of the infection is marked by flu-like symptoms followed by the second stage when buboes (black welts and bulges – thus the name given, black) appear under the armpits and in the groin. They then grow on the skin of a human which precedes respiratory failure. It is very deadly and will prove fatal to four out of five people who get initially affected. Cantor provides other evidence that the plague was also an effect of *anthrax murrain* (cattle disease) which, other than the buboes, had similar symptoms.

What ever it was, it was very deadly. During the key period of 1347–1351, Klapisch-Zuber (2000) estimates that at various parts of the Western Europe, about one-fifth to one-half of the people died. It was higher in some regions more than others – mortality rates were high in Florence, Italy and England. Cantor estimates that about 25% of the aristocrats, 40% of peasants (including 40–50% of priests and monks) died as a result of the plague in England.

I categorize this process as of the organic system as it is, essentially, a biological phenomenon. One could consider this to be a major macro factor that has a direct effect on the family.

Various Systems as Factors of the Black Plague

This section can be divided into two main categories: socially constructed reasons for the plague and empirically based ones. Most of the former emerged during the period and the wake of the plague that people presented as reasons.

The King of France appointed a commission of the University of Paris to account for the disease. Their response was astrological: the place of the planet Saturn in relationship to Jupiter. Clergy claimed that it was God's punishment for the sin of the people. This was combined with a belief in God as an "awful deity" and the popular image of the end of the world as predicted by *Joachimism*, founded by a apocalyptic Benedictine monk named Joachim of Flora (1135–1200). These factors belong to the sacred-cultural system.

The personality-social systems account for a socially constructed reason that had a devastating effect on the Jews of Europe was the thought that the plague was the result of a Jewish conspiracy – that they poisoned drinking wells throughout Europe. Much of the attack was from the people – they gathered as mobs near Jewish homes and establishments. Many of the royalty and clerical elites tried to protect them but to no avail. Soon, both secular and ecclesial authorities succumbed to mob pressure and either expelled or burned hundreds of thousands. There is some evidence that the royalty and bishops used the depredations as excuses to be freed on debts owned to Jewish bankers or, in the case of the bishops, to acquire land and holdings.

The more empirically based reasons, substantially organic, for the outbreak of the plague consist of the following. Many insalubrious customs abounded in the Medieval period that could have acted as precedents: little care given to waste disposal, the folk belief that frequent bathing is unhealthy, and mass graves wherein infected bodies were not buried deeply enough. Another natural event occurred before the pandemic that may have made the non-elite classes more vulnerable. Western Europe, especially in rural England, had prospered with abundant rainfall and warm summers to produce crop and cattle surpluses. Lucrative wool entrepreneurs sold the product to manufactures in Flanders and Italy. Populations grew significantly along with increases of wealth, the importation of luxury goods from other parts of Europe (wine from Bordeaux France was a favourite) and achieved status among the peasants. However, beginning around 1315, a terrible famine, according to Klapisch-Zuber (2000), preceded by bad weather (Cantor accounts that major volcanic eruptions in Indonesia spread dust throughout the world and "shut out" the sun or, in effect, a "global cooling"), ravaged Germany, the Low countries, England and one half of France. People suffering from malnutrition were more likely to fall to illness.

The other theories are more specific. One narrative is that in the middle of the fourteenth century, European navigators and raiders were attacking the people of Crimea. It is said that a disease was in the besieged city that had killed some inhabitants. These corpses were catapulted onto the ships that infected the sailors. These same sailors carried the infection to the eastern doors of Europe. Cantor, using infectious disease scholars, discounted the theory. The most likely immediate cause was that the fleas from Eastern Europe carried the *Yersinia pestis* bacterium on the black rat. Because these rats were international travellers on ships and were about human dwellings and places, allowed the fleas to be passed onto humans. Further, saliva contact between persons could also carry the bacterium.

Various Systems as Effects of the Black Plague

The effects were ponderous. I shall divide this section into wide ranging sacred, social, economic, and political consequences and the effects on the family. The “master effect” was the demographic crash that elicited many offshoots. The primary political effects were the decline in the number of men who could be recruited to fight for the English monarchy against the French in the **Hundred Years War**. The legitimacy of the king (as having special divine grace or a unique charisma) was challenged that may have laid the ground for the Great English Rebellion of 1640–1650.

As a result of the demographic decline, fewer men and women were available as serfs to work the lands of the elite and the church. Those alive after the plague demanded higher wages and many peasants arose to wealthy positions due to the acquiring of the **demesne** from the lord and their becoming **yeomen** in the later part of the fifteenth century. The Peasants Revolt of 1381 in England became so powerful that it came close to overthrowing the crown and the elite. The Catholic clergy were also very badly hit. Their numbers were reduced by 40% that resulted in significant vacancies in parishes. The higher clergy responded by ordaining young, inexperienced men to be sacred leaders. They did not fair well. The Lollards, a reformist group in the fourteenth century, pointed to the uneducated and poor leadership skills of these men. This could have had a long term effect on why the Reformation of the sixteenth century was so successful.

Of all the institutions affected most, it was the family. Klapisch-Zuber (2000) notes that with a decline of legitimate heirs in the elite and royal strata, there was a major threat to the legitimate order for old familial solidarities and ties were shaken. Internal tensions within the family emerged due to the problem of inheritance among which person was to inherit the capital. Among the peasants, population growth was halted due to later marriages and a full 25% of them never did marry.

Klapisch-Zuber offers her reflections of the problem of generalizations. She suggests there were two major family types of the Late Medieval family that were affected by the plague. The “North-West European” family involved later marriages, a high proportion of celibates, and, eventually, more children. The plague did not change this pattern but reinforced it. The other system she calls the “Mediterranean system” involved lower ages at marriage, extended households (because parents were likely alive), patrilocal marriage, genealogical depth, the co-existence of several couples from different generations, and the tendency to prefer relatives rather than servants. The plague did significant damage to this model and reduced the number of those in the household.

Cantor muses on increased status that women of the elite had after the plague. The dowry was well in place before the fourteenth century as we have already seen. It was an important custom of “life insurance” for a widow. Many men and their male inheritors died during the plague. This left a vacuum of inheritance and a rise in the importance of the dowry. The women who enjoyed the benefits of the dowry were called dowagers. These dowagers were significant – a widow was entitled to 33% of the income of her deceased husband. If she married several, she would

inherit the proportions from each husband – leaving sons to pine and be angry over their stepmother taking more and more of the capital. Further, due to long litigations frequently ushered in by potential heirs, lawyers had come across a “gold mine.”

Religion continued to play an important part of family life but due to the plague, a kind of macabre and melancholic kind. There was little optimism. The God believed in did not seem to love and care for them. Private devotions fed magical themes were created using statues, crosses, holy pictures and the ashes of saints. Privatization in spirituality were valorized. These do not seem to have effected the quality of marriage, parenting, or the family as a whole. They were more used for personal comfort rather than in the positive construction of relationships in familial settings.

Families of the Elite in England: 1550–1800

The primary source for this discussion is the emergence of the modern family in England among the gentry and the elite is Stone (1979). He divides his work into three parts: the open lineage family of 1450–1630, the restricted patriarchal nuclear family of 1550–1700, and the closed domesticated nuclear family of 1640–1800. Stone puts into a different form but patterns of the first era into what we have already discussed in the Central and Late Medieval Family. This part of the chapter will focus on the last two periods: the restricted patriarchal nuclear family and the closed domesticated nuclear family. The sources of change, to be documented later, were the physical (changes in the economy), the social (political) and cultural (both sacred and secular ideas).

The Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear Family

During this period, there were both changes and continuities from the Central and Late Medieval family. On balance, however, there were more changes than continuities. Families continued to perform similar functions, the contraction from large households to smaller familial units, started in the post plague years, continued even more. Patriarchy continued but even took on a more salient role with further sacred legitimations.

Changes were many. The major macro change that Stone avers to is the passage from a “lineage society” to a “civil society.” This is the master narrative of the time that had far reaching implications not only to the family but also to the whole English society. It has already been documented that in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, one of the major effects of the plague was the beginning of the disestablishment of lineage based on primogeniture. The rise of the civil society meant that more and more of functions of the family were gradually taken over by the state and the initial rise of capitalism-work and social positions less dependent

on familial links, contracts based on wage labour rather than on clientage, and social status founded not in lineage but rather in the new sacred image of Puritanism.

Under this master narrative the following changes occurred with the decline of:

- Lineage, kinship and clientage.
- Elaborate funerals and house parties.
- The vendetta.
- The household of many servants to the closed nuclear family.

Changes in the sacred ethos also occurred such as the salience of the Sunday service to family prayers, the parish priest being replaced by the new Protestant father/husband responsible for private, family prayers, and the new family being an inheritor of the many responsibilities of the parish.

Children during this period were not longer wet-nursed and they were both weaned and toilet trained late. Infant swaddling declined but girls and women were required to shape their bodies into what was considered feminine using bodices and corsets. What was so striking, however, was the severe training practices of the socialization of children both at home and in the school (girls were barred from schools). This was in a more modest form in the Late Medieval family. The narrative of socialization read as follows: the child is depraved from birth, his/her strong will had to be broken, this was accomplished by beatings on the buttocks, the face and the hand. Stone writes: "There can be no doubt, therefore, that more and more children were being beaten in the 16th and 17th centuries, over a longer age span, than ever before" (1979:117). This practice carried over into the school: "There can be no doubt whatever that severe flogging was a normal and daily occurrence in the 16th and 17th century grammar school, and some of the most famous headmasters of the most elitist school of their day" (1979:117). There is some documentation that this practice was very detrimental to the child. Again, Stone writes: "the child perfectly loathed the sight of his parents as the slave of his torture" (1979:121).

Even though the new Protestant/Puritan ethos accented the importance of conjugal love, the reality was quite different. Husbands/fathers gained in patriarchal status and women lost their status of wives and a attenuation of their legal rights (from higher statuses as recorded by Cantor) – especially the passing of the dower. Even wife beating was approved and several books and sermons were prepared to highlight women's subordination and aver to misogyny. There was, however, a small window of light for women from 1523 to 1538, elite women were encouraged to read classical literature, to learn French and to be an intellectual equal to their husband. But, after that time, the only education they received was to do with proper feminine manners, how to parent, and being household managers.

What was the master factor of these changes? Stone argues it was the rise of Puritanism. Haller (1938) provides the reader with an extensive outline of the rise of Puritanism in England from the time of Elizabeth I (1533–1603) to the eve of the English Great Rebellion (1640). There were two paths that Puritanism took: one to reform the official church of England and the other to separate from the same.

The historical background to its rise was the understanding that the monarch saw the church as an instrument of royal authority over the English people. The origins of the movement revolve about a preacher by the name of Thomas Cartwright, a reform prophet, who called forth the establishment of Calvinism not only in the church of England but in the state as well. He was expelled from his post as a preacher in Cambridge but his ideas of reform spread like a wave to countless other clerics and laity. These ideas became reflected in religious experience, a range of ethics (termed the Puritan Code), the attenuation of ritual, Calvinistic beliefs from Calvin and the social construction of a spiritual brotherhood and the sect.

Stone offers an excellent summary of the primary causes of these changes:

There was the pressure of state propaganda for the authoritarian state and therefore the authoritarian family; Puritanism's emphasis on the role of the household rather than the church as the agency for moral and religious control; Calvinist views about original sin and the need for severe measures towards children to defeat the Devil and punish wickedness; the spread of classical education which exposed more and more children to flogging in school. Legal changes in women's rights over property, and the capacity of the family head to dispose of his estates as he wished; and the critical need to be able to control the child's choice of marriage partner, education and career (1979:145).

From this summary, various systems are implicated. The primary system is the cultural-sacred one-Puritanism along with other cultural changes in the form of changes of inheritance laws and the dower.

The Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family

It is during this period of English history that Stone argues for the genesis of the modern family as we know it today with some nuances. The master narrative he uses here is "affective individualism" by which he means an accent on personal happiness and pleasure linked to affection with one's spouse (with attendant sexual overtures) and children. This master narrative corresponds to concomitant descriptors of this kind of family: greater freedom to choose their spouses and careers, equal partnership between spouses, a further contraction of the nuclear family, warmer affections between women and men, children becoming a status group distinct from adults, and the growth of individual autonomy.

Stone further avers that the source of affective individualism in the family was from new cultural motifs such as the demand for more individual autonomy, and the protection of personal and property rights of men of substance from intrusion from the state. In 1689, political censorship of newspapers and pamphlets lapsed, growing indifference to the clergy, and the challenge of the **Great Chain of Being** when humans become more isolated and the idea that science, not religion, could solve personal and social problems.

When applied to the family, affective individualism accents intimacy, proximity, the reduction of patriarchy, and the rise of love in the socialization of children. One is to covet personal happiness in marriage combined with sexual satisfaction for its own sake and the construction of the companionate marriage. Children should

not be beaten but loved and cared for by both the father and the mother. Family prayers are replaced by “family time” so that intimacy can be ameliorated. Along with this intimacy, privacy of persons emerged – in architecture, each bedroom is to have its own entrance. Further, the growth of personal self worth and awareness, the decline of Puritanism, the rejection of the teaching of original sin, and the child was innocent at birth became new sub-narratives.

Civility was also encouraged: food is to be eaten with utensils, one is not to “spit,” and bodies are to be cleansed with frequent bathing. Wet nursing of infants was seen to be insalubrious, social deference between spouses was reduced, and children no longer required to call their parents with such language as “Sir” or “Madame.”

Why the changes? The master narrative here is early modern secularization: the genesis of a new world view, the Enlightenment, or, alternatively, The Age of Reason. Historians of philosophy note that this involved a literary and philosophical movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth century which accented the superiority of reason as the guide to all knowledge and human concerns. It flowed from the idea of human progress on the political and economic fronts and challenged not only Puritanism but Christianity in general. This is then linked to the family with the reduction of a sacred ethos, the amelioration of affection in matters of relationships, and the rational-affectionate training of children minus coercion. It is to John Locke (1632–1704) that the notions of equality of spouses comes and to the socialization of children, Jean Rousseau (1712–1728).

The primary source of change here is also cultural. In this case, however, it was in the form of secular ideas and ethos. Thus, the long process of the creation of a society that attenuates religion began during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Religion will still matter but less so.

Conclusions

This chapter has been a journey from the structure and the social life of the families of the Romans, the early Christian family, Early-Medieval, Central-Medieval and Late Medieval family to the creation of the early features of the modern family in England. Much has remained the same: families have struggled over the millennium and one-half from the genesis of Imperial Rome to the dawn of the modern era. They have focussed on two primary functions: the reproduction and socialization of children and the maintenance of adult intimacy. These outcomes are seen within the framework of Neo-Functionalism (Swenson, 2004) and, especially Parsons and Bales (1955), are the primary functions of the family.

On these two fronts, there have been changes in compositions of households, of gender roles, of patterns of inheritance, of how to socialize children and how to combine all this with earning. We have seen how major macro factors of the social, cultural, organic and physical systems have affected families and persons on the micro level. Families will continue in the future—what will differ is how we compose households, how we construct gender, the way we raise children, the way we create intimacy and the myriad patterns we engage in earning.

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