SEX AND THE SINGLE SAVIOR

Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation

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to imagine the sexuality of Jesus. And of course that has a great deal to do with what they find imaginable about sex. As is the case with so many instances in all interpretation, how people interpret the sexuality of Jesus tells us more about the meaning of sex *for them* than for some "real" Jesus freed from interpretation.

My other point, though, may be a bit more controversial. I refer to my insistence that there is nothing necessarily wrong with the fact that people interpret the Bible in many different ways and come up with widely varying Jesuses. It is part of the history of Christian interpretation—part of the way Christians have always made sense of their own sex and their very singular Savior. What makes my nonfoundationalist stance different from the foundationalism of modernism is my insistence that we can be no other way. We should learn from the facts of our contingency. If we need a hermeneutical theory (and perhaps we don't need one at all), we must come up with one that gives up on the search for security in interpretation in foundations outside the interpretive process itself. There is nothing "out there" to referee our varying and even conflicting interpretations. There is nothing "in the text" that can play the role of judge among us.

We have a right to think about the sex of Jesus, the sexuality of Jesus, the desires of Jesus, the singularity of Jesus. What none of us has a right to do, I am arguing, is to insist that he or she will supply *the* method of interpretation that will bring imagination to an end and silence the imaginations of others. For me, the sexuality and singularity of Jesus are significant issues. But the much more important issue is the question of interpretation itself in a nonfoundationalist world.

Chapter 8

Familiar Idolatry and the Christian Case against Marriage

Contemporary Christianity in the United States—whether Protestant or Catholic, liberal or conservative—has so closely aligned the basic message of Christianity with the family and "traditional family values" that it is currently in a state of idolatry.[1] Increasingly, whether they are religious or not, people in America tend to equate Christianity with the family and "family values." It is not just that gay and lesbian people have largely left their churches; single people in general often feel out of place in churches. And other people in non-"traditional" family structures—whether divorced, cohabiting, or in partial nuclear families—tend to be much less active in churches. The reason is that American churches have so identified themselves with the modern, heterosexual, nuclear family that people without such families feel less at home in most churches.[2] The religious term for the identification of anything but God at the center of Christian faith is idolatry. And the idolatry of contemporary American Christianity is the familiar idolatry of the church's current focus on the family.

Not only is contemporary Christianity idolatrous in its focus on the family and marriage; it is also hypocritical. It either explicitly states or assumes that its current values are the obvious expression of Christian Scripture and tradition. Though most Christians *assume* that the current centrality of marriage and family represents a

long tradition in Christianity, it is actually only about 150 years old. One could even make the argument that the current focus on the heterosexual *nuclear* family dates back only to the 1950s.[3] In this chapter, I pass over the long tradition of Christianity, though it also provides little support for the modern family. Rather, I here concentrate mainly on the New Testament and the writings of the early church. Contrary to most contemporary opinion—Christian as well as non-Christian—there are many more resources in Christian Scripture and tradition to *criticize* the modern family than to promote it.

THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Jesus of Nazareth was not a family man. Though we could debate the construction of the historical Jesus—and all "historical Jesuses" are in fact hypothetical constructions based on the flimsiest of evidence—according to all our available evidence, Jesus never married. This *could* have been an accident of history. It wasn't unusual for men in the ancient world to put off marriage, if they married at all, until their thirties. If Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his ministry, as suggested by some traditions (deriving from Luke 3:23), he could have been unmarried just because he hadn't gotten around to it. But there are other indications that he rejected marriage and family ties and taught his disciples to do likewise. Whatever the historical Jesus taught about sex, about which we have no real evidence, his message apparently included a severe critique of the traditional family, including marriage.

One of the sayings of the Gospels that must be historical is Jesus' response when told that his mother and brothers (and sisters according to one source [a textual variant at Mark 3:32]) wanted to see him. Jesus answers, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers? . . . Whoever does the will of God, that one is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:33–35; cf. Matt. 12:46–50; Luke 8:19–21). Jesus refused to identify with his traditional family and instead substituted for it the eschatological community that shared his vision of a new, divinely constituted family.

Indeed, all our Gospels present Jesus as creating and living within an alternative to the household: an itinerant group of men and women unrelated to one another by blood or marriage, most of whom had also apparently separated from their families. Jesus called his disciples away from their households. Although perhaps teaching that the commandment to honor one's parents should still be obeyed (the evidence is either nonexistent or inconclusive), he told one man not even to bury his father—a teaching that would have been perceived as an incredible and offensive affront to family values in ancient Palestine (Luke 9:59–60; Matt. 8:21–22).[4] In another saying, as passed on by Luke, Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me and does not despise [or hate: *miseô*] his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and yes his own life, he is not able to be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Most modern Christians prefer to remember the saying in its Matthean version, where in place of "despise" or "hate," the author has Jesus say merely that one must not "love more" one's family than Jesus (Matt. 10:37). But the Lukan use of "hate" has support from the *Gospel of Thomas* 55, which may well be an independent witness to an early tradition. And it is more likely, many scholars believe, that the Lukan form better reflects an earlier, Aramaic source.[5] Moreover, Matthew would more likely have altered a "Q" saying to the less offensive "love more" in order to make Jesus' teaching fit his own high regard for the law of Moses.[6] Thus, the more radical version passed on by Luke and *Thomas* has the stronger claim to authenticity. A clearer indication that the historical Jesus taught the rejection of the traditional family can scarcely be demanded.

But doesn't Jesus' teaching about divorce, as contained mainly in Mark 10:6–12 and Matthew 19:4–9, imply the support of marriage? Here Jesus forbids divorce even though the law of Moses had allowed it. Wouldn't this imply that Jesus, if the saying is historical, supported marriage and the traditional family at least to the extent that the law did? Not really. After all, Matthew includes Jesus' forbidding of divorce but then follows it up with his saying about those who have "made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:12). The saying is admittedly difficult to interpret and may not be historical—it is found only in Matthew, after all—but its most likely meaning is that the avoidance of procreation and marriage is preferable. The combination of the sayings is evidence that a writer could be opposed to divorce without advocating marriage and family. That possibility is upheld by almost all the church fathers, who almost without exception coupled a severe critique of marriage, in some cases all but forbidding it for truly pious Christians, with an even stronger prohibition of divorce.[7] Even if Jesus did forbid divorce, therefore, that cannot be taken as evidence that he advocated marriage.

What was the meaning, though, of Jesus' rejection of marriage and the family for himself and his disciples? One clue comes from his saying about the resurrection and marriage. Jesus says, "In the resurrection of the dead, people neither marry nor are married, but they are as angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25; Matt. 22:30). Or at least that is how the saying appears in Mark and Matthew. Luke, perhaps realizing that the saying was too cryptic, expands it, having Jesus explain it this way: "For they [that is, the resurrected dead] are no longer able to die, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36). Luke's version may be epexegetical, but it probably does correctly portray the basic meaning of the saying about angels. A common understanding among ancient Jews and Christians was that angels are androgynous, or perhaps completely male. They needn't, in any case, reproduce themselves the way human beings do because they are not subject to death. The understanding throughout much of the ancient world was that marriage was for the purposes of legitimate and controlled procreation, which was necessary only because of the fact of death. Marriage, therefore, was completely implicated in the dreaded cycle of sex, birth, death, and decay, followed by more sex, birth, death, and decay. As John Chrysostom put it many years later, "where there is death, there is marriage" (*On Virginity* 14.6). In the

resurrection, Jesus taught, that cycle will have been broken. Marriage will be obsolete and even offensive in the kingdom of God. Jesus' rejection of the traditional family and his creation of an alternative community signaled the imminent, or perhaps incipient, in-breaking of the kingdom of God.

All our evidence pointing to the historical Jesus, therefore, indicates that he not only avoided marriage and family himself but also taught people to forsake those institutions and enter into an alternative, eschatological society. The household was part of the world order he was challenging. It, along with other institutions of power, would be destroyed with the coming kingdom. The household, moreover, represented traditional authority, which he was challenging at every turn. The household was implicated in the cycle of death. Indeed, the household, as the site of procreation, birth, and burial, was the very technology of life *and death* in the ancient world. For the historical Jesus, the rejection of marriage and the family was as necessary as the proclamation of the resurrection and the eternal kingdom of God.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Different Christians in the early church took these early Jesus traditions in different directions. We've already seen that Matthew toned down Jesus' antifamilial teachings somewhat, apparently uncomfortable with having Jesus speak of "hating" one's family. As we will see, later Christians actually turned the gospel around so that it supported rather than challenged the traditional household. Still other Christians carried on the antifamilial tendencies of the historical Jesus. The author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles laces his entire narrative with the theme.

First, we should note how he himself may have edited the saying I've already quoted about "hating" one's family. Only Luke includes "wives and children" in the list of those a disciple is supposed to "despise." Although Thomas also uses the word "hate" or "despise," Thomas's account agrees with Matthew in *not* including wives in the list. It is possible, therefore, that Luke added "wives and children" to a list of family members he found in Q. This suggestion is supported by an analysis of the rest of the Gospel.

There occur a few small details special to Luke's Gospel that tip his hand about his stance on the traditional family. Only Luke contains Jesus' teaching that people should not invite their friends and family to a dinner they host, but that they should instead invite the poor, outcasts, those who cannot return the favor (14:12–14). A few sentences later, in the parable of the Great Banquet, only Luke has a character decline the invitation because he has just been married (14:20), an excuse not found in Matthew's version.[8]

Other details in the early portions of Luke's Gospel, details usually overlooked, can also suddenly appear significant when seen in a larger context of Luke's critical stance toward the traditional family. Luke portrays the birth of Jesus, for example, as a very "public" event, not at all a "family affair." And toward the close of that narrative, Luke ominously adds that Mary "pondered in her heart" all that had happened (2:19). The next ominous foreshadowing concerning Mary occurs just a few verses later, when Simeon prophesies that a sword will pierce Mary's soul (2:35). And then again only a few verses later things become more explicit. At the age of twelve, Jesus in the Temple, though "obedient" to his parents (2:51), clearly expresses his ultimate independence from his fleshly family. He names God as his "father" and his "business" as God's "business" (2:41–51). The Greek here—*en tois tou patros mou*—could refer to the "matters" or "business" of the father (so the KJV?), the "household" of the father (and thus the RSV?), or even the "people" of the father (if taken to be masculine).[9] In any case, the contrast between Jesus' traditional family and the household of God is here early highlighted. Mary's soul is already being pierced.

The author of Luke-Acts then constructs his narrative to emphasize this contrast between the community of Jesus and the traditional family. In Luke 8:1–3, we are informed about Jesus' entourage, which includes the twelve male disciples, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and "many other" women. Jesus' "household" now consists of twelve men and several women, none of whom is mentioned as traveling with a spouse or family. It is no surprise, therefore, when a few verses later Jesus gets explicit about his substitution of this new community for his traditional family (8:19–21). Those who travel with him, not the nuclear family of his birth, are his family. In the next chapter Jesus tells the young man to forget burying his father and to follow Jesus instead (9:59–62), which is followed a few verses later by a description of the intimacy of Jesus with his true father: "Everything has been given to me by my father. No one knows who the son is except the father, and who the father is except the son and whomever the son chooses to reveal it to" (10:22). The contrast is thus made between the disruption Jesus brings to "normal" father-son relations and the intimacy of Jesus' own relation to his heavenly father.

Even clearer contrasts occur in the narrative of Acts. At the beginning of the book, for instance, the communal life of the disciples in Jerusalem is described (Acts 2:42–47). They meet in the Temple and in different houses all together. They share belongings and common meals. They hold all things in common (*eichon apanta koina*, 2:44). To make sure we get the point, the author rehearses the account two chapters later. He says that the disciples were all happily united; no one claimed any private property, but they rather held all things in common; whoever owned land or houses (think "households") sold them and delivered the proceeds to the whole group, to be administered by the apostles, who gave to each according to need. Joseph, an apparently single man called "Barnabas" by the apostles, is cited as a particular example: he sold a field and gave the entire proceeds to the community (4:32–37).[10]

Immediately and in direct contrast to this description of communal life, the author introduces the negative countertype: the married couple Ananias and

Sapphira, to this point the only married couple mentioned in Acts.[11] In fact, they are the only married couple explicitly mentioned in Acts apart from Prisca and Aquila, who are themselves anything but the "normal," traditional married couple.[12] Note how the actions of Ananias and Sapphira are described (5:1–11). They are Christians with their own private possessions. But instead of doing as the others have done, they sell their possessions and bring only a portion of the proceeds to the church. Twice in the text, the author emphasizes that the two *conspire together* to deceive the church and avoid the communalism of the others (5:2, 9). As usual, the author of Acts presents Satan as the instigator of actions opposite those demanded in the kingdom of God, and also as usual, the actor on the side of the church is the Holy Spirit, to whom, Peter says, the couple has actually lied (5:3).[13] When Ananias and Sapphira die, we are told that they are carried out and buried by "young men," a detail repeated twice that is hard to explain but may represent the "new" thing happening in this eschatological community of the future (the Greek word for "young men" builds on the Greek word that may also be translated "new"; 5:6, 10; cf. 2:17). Finally, the text emphasizes that the couple is buried together, the wife "right by her husband" (*pros ton andra autês*; 5:10), together now in death as they were together in their conspiratorial marriage that sought its own interests before the communal interests of the spirit-led church.[14] Then, at the end of the story about the married couple, the narrative returns our vision once again to the (nonhousehold) community, telling us that "great fear fell on the whole church and on all those who heard about these events" (5:11).

I think it cannot be an accident that a married couple, one of only two named in the book of Acts, serves as the negative countertype to the nonhousehold, eschatological community of the first part of the book, a community clearly foreshadowing and representing the coming community of God that will replace the traditional family for good. The solidarity of the married couple represents the old, self-serving order of the traditional family and familial solidarity, with its concerns for economic stability, inheritance, and continuity, in contrast to the new, young, growing, communal, eschatological household, whose procreation is a miraculous gift of the spirit and whose survival is assured by common solidarity and the gifts of God, a household of brothers and sisters rather than husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. Or to use another early and fundamental social metaphor for the church, the traditional couple is opposed to the *ekklêsia*, the "town gathering," the new polity of the gathered people of God that outgrows, transcends, and ultimately rejects the traditional family.

More such examples of the Christian critique of marriage and the family from Luke and Acts could be given, but I will mention only one. It has not often been noted that there is no explicit condemnation of divorce in Luke, though there is in both Matthew and Mark. Luke, unlike Matthew, does not appropriate the material from Mark 10:2–12, in which Jesus explicitly prohibits divorce. The only place where the subject comes up explicitly in Luke is in his quotation of a Q saying, but its precise wording should be analyzed carefully. According to

Luke's wording, Jesus said, "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and any woman who has been divorced from her husband and marries another commits adultery" (Luke 16:18; compare Matt. 5:32; 19:9). According to most interpretations, this is read as a prohibition of *both* divorce *and* remarriage. But that, I argue, is to read the Lukan passage under the influence of the explicit prohibitions of divorce in Mark and Matthew. Luke's statement could easily be read as a prohibition only of the *combination of divorce with remarriage*. And that is the way I think it must be read. After all, we have already seen that Jesus in Luke, in contrast to the accounts in Matthew and Mark, *urges* his disciples to "hate" their wives. In Luke, Jesus demands that his disciples give up wives and children as well as their other family members in order to follow him. If Luke had Jesus forbid divorce or separation (and we must remember that for most people in the ancient world there was no real difference between divorce and separation)[15] while at the same time implying that his disciples must leave behind their wives, he would be caught in an obvious contradiction. But there is no contradiction if we assume that what Luke believed Jesus was prohibiting here was not divorce, but remarriage after divorce. This would also explain why he would *not* want to reproduce Mark 10:2–12 in his Gospel. Thus, Luke leaves out of his Gospel any prohibition of divorce; he has Jesus allow divorce but forbid remarriage. This fits perfectly with the other indications in Luke and Acts that the author took marriage and the traditional family to have been not just "relativized" but actually rejected by the gospel. Luke presents the church as replacing, not supporting, marriage and the family.[16]

THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Luke is not the only New Testament author who dreams of an eschatological community in which marriage and the traditional family are replaced by other social formations. The Revelation of John offers a similar vision, though it is also different in significant ways. The most obvious difference lies in the place assigned to women in the two different texts. Whereas the Christian community in Luke-Acts includes women, sometimes even in central roles, John imagines an exclusively male community, a kingdom of male priests and prophets who have "not been defiled by women" (14:4). There is no room in Revelation for actual, human women or for "normal" marriage and family.

John's world is ruled by God, the Pantocrator, the ruler of all, a designation for the Emperor appropriated by Christians for God. Jesus is also the "ruler of the kings of the earth" (1:5), another imperial title. John and his fellow Christians themselves constitute "the kingdom" (1:6). For John, Christians are priests serving God in the kingdom-empire ruled by God and Christ. John's universe is populated mainly by males. In his vision, he meets twenty-four male elders; four male beasts (4:4–7); two male prophets (11:3ff.); and Michael, a male angel who leads an army of apparently male angels (12:7–9). John and his fellow Christians

play several different roles in his universe: they are most often designated as fellow slaves with the angels and brothers of one another, but they are also priests, prophets, and even kings (see 20:6). This is an entirely male community: God is father and Jesus is the eldest son, who is also repeatedly portrayed as a huge, vicious, violent, bloody, horned Lamb. The other members of the household are all brothers and fellow slaves—an all-male household.

The first time we encounter a female figure in Revelation is with the appearance of Jezebel, the false prophet who seduces Jesus' "slaves" in the church at Thyatira (2:20). She is depicted as an adulteress and is promised a violent end along with those who have had sex with her, that is, those led astray by her from the strict ascetic Christianity advocated by John. There are only two or three other female figures in Revelation, according to how one counts. The starring role is played by Babylon, the great Whore, Rome, who spreads her legs for any king who wants her (Rev. 18:3, 9). The other two female figures are the woman who gives birth to the male child in Revelation 12 and the Bride of the Lamb, who appears at the end of the book, but some have speculated that these two figures perhaps overlap in the confusing and fluid symbolism of the Apocalypse. At any rate, they are completely passive figures; they are acted upon but scarcely act. The woman of chapter 12 gives birth to a male child (apparently representing Jesus as the Messiah: 12:5), is persecuted by the dragon, and is eventually saved by being put out of the way in "her place" prepared by God for her in the desert (12:14). Unlike her male child, who is snatched up to sit with the male God on the heavenly throne, she apparently doesn't get to go to heaven but spends the rest of the book in "her place" in the desert.

The last female character of Revelation is, of course, the Bride. She is prepared by the father God to marry his son the Horned Lamb (19:7). She is clothed in pure, clean linen, in contrast to the filth and blood and gore of the Whore; in fact, her clothing is actually *composed of* the "righteous deeds of the saints," that is, John and his fellow brother-slaves (19:8). At the end of the vision, we discover that she is the New Jerusalem (21:2, 10), which is of course populated by the male, servile household of God, including the twelve male apostles of the Lamb (21:14) and the twelve tribes of the *sons* of Israel (21:12). Thus, although the Horned Lamb marries a female figure, her body and clothing are actually composed of male deeds and bodies, the population of the divine household, the eschatological city, the finally victorious kingdom and empire.

We see here that although actual sexual intercourse is *supposed* to be absent from the eschatological community, desire and the erotic, especially the erotic of the eye, is everywhere.[17] First, there is the voluptuous though gruesome seductiveness of Jezebel and the Whore—both of whom are depicted as promiscuous and dangerous. But John and his slave-brothers have resisted that seduction. And they have certainly resisted the seduction of normal marriage and family. They have, remember, "not been defiled, or polluted, by women" (14:1–5). The seduction they have apparently not been able to avoid is a certain erotic of homosocial male bonding that pervades the vision. We have the image more than once in

Revelation of God the father and Jesus the Horned Lamb both sitting on the heavenly throne. Jesus also makes this promise to John: "The one who is victorious I will give to sit with me on my throne, as I was victorious and sat with my father on his throne" (3:21; see also 12:5). It is hard to avoid the image, once we actually picture it, of a bunch of men scrambling all over one another and sitting on one another's laps on a huge throne in the sky; perhaps God the father is on bottom, then the Horned Lamb on his lap, and then John and all his slave brothers on their laps. Furthermore, it is curious that although there is a marriage in Revelation between a male and a female, the female's body and clothing are, as we saw, made up of male bodies. John and his brothers, in the person of the Bride herself, actually in the end *do* get to marry the Horned Lamb.

It is as if, for the author of the Apocalypse, there is no room for "normal" marriage and family in his world. The enemy, Rome, is not a "wife" but a whore who has slept around with every important man in the known world. Jesus is the bridegroom who is about to wed his bride. Christians are slave brothers who serve in the great household of God and have no contact with women. In fact, they must not do so since they constitute themselves the body of the bride of the Horned Lamb. They keep themselves pure (and John is obsessed with dirt, filth, and cleanliness, as well as with sex)[18] so they can be properly clean for their nuptial copulation with the Horned Lamb. How, in this universe, could Christians find a place for "normal" marriage and family?

In very different ways, therefore, Luke and John the Seer both envisioned Christian community as displacing marriage and family and replacing them with new eschatological social formations. And they may in fact have been inspired, as we have seen, by the teachings of Jesus himself. I now turn attention, though, to an obvious source for early Christian thinking about marriage and family: Paul and Paulinism.

THE APOSTLE PAUL

I have dealt at length with Paul's own position on sex and marriage elsewhere, so let me briefly summarize those findings here.[19] As we can see from 1 Corinthians 7, Paul was no proponent of marriage or the traditional family. He preferred that all Christians follow his example and remain unmarried. But he believed that some Christians, perhaps even most Christians, would be too weak to avoid the dangers of desire without sexual activity in marriage. So he allowed Christians to be married, in fact encouraged them to be married, if they were too weak to avoid desire otherwise. Note, however, that Paul never gives any indication that he believed marriage was the proper arena for the *expression* of sexual desire. Rather, his language makes it clear, I have argued, that he viewed marriage as the vehicle for the *avoidance* of desire. According to Paul, Christians do not *express* desire by means of marital sex; they *preclude* it. "It is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9). Since "burning" is a reference to sexual passion and desire, and Paul does not say

that it is permissible to "burn" just a little, to "simmer," Paul's statement means that he viewed sex within marriage as the technique that would allow Christians to avoid the experience of sexual desire—ironically, from our perspective, through sexual intercourse performed within marriage but devoid of desire.

This interpretation is borne out by a careful examination of what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8. Paul tells the newly converted brothers in the church in Thessalonica (for whatever reason, he addresses only men) that each of them should "possess" or "control" his "thing" or "vessel," probably referring either to their genitalia or their wives, "in holiness and honor, not in the passion of desire like the Gentiles who do not know God" (4:4–5). Sexual passion, for Paul, is something that these Christian men should no longer experience; it is part of the Gentile world they have left behind. Marriage is the arena in which they should be able to have sex but avoid desire.

Whether or not one accepts my admittedly controversial interpretations of these passages, it must be admitted that Paul clearly preferred celibacy to marriage for Christians. He had no interest in the "propagation of the species," making babies, or raising families. He cannot be enlisted as a supporter, certainly in the romantic, modern sense, of marriage and family.

THE "PRO-FAMILY" PAUL

But of course, he has been so enlisted, not least by his disciples and probably not long after his death. The letter to the Colossians, which I take to be pseudonymous, does not actively promote the family, but it does assume it in the so-called "household code" proposed to maintain hierarchy and order in the household (3:18–4:1). Wives are told to submit to their husbands "as is fitting in the Lord"; husbands are told to love their wives and not treat them bitterly. Children are told to obey their parents in everything "for this is pleasing in the Lord"; fathers are told not to provoke their children or render them despondent. In the only admonition that exceeds a couple of phrases, slaves are then addressed with a full paragraph. Basically, they are told to serve their masters as if they were serving Christ, and that any misbehavior on their part will be severely punished not only by their earthly masters but even, it is implied, by Christ himself. Then, in a return to the short phrase, masters are told to treat their slaves equitably, realizing that slave owners themselves have a heavenly master.

Here in the name of Paul, the hierarchy of the ancient patriarchal household is reinforced in a way it never was in the authentic letters of Paul. True, Paul never advocated the abolition of slavery or the true equality of women, but his letters contain nothing really like this.[20] The position of this writer is nonetheless understandable. In the ancient world, if you were going to encourage marriage and the traditional household at all, you did so by placing the household in the structure of the universe, in a descending hierarchy with God on top, then male heads-of-households, then wives, then children, then slaves. The disproportionate attention given here to keeping slaves obedient and submissive works to make their slavery even more secure by inscribing it into their hearts and minds, and into their relation even to God and Christ. When early Christian authors encourage marriage and family, without fail they do so by reinforcing the patriarchal ideology of their society.

The author of Ephesians, writing later and also in Paul's name, elaborates the household code from Colossians. The author of Ephesians, though, makes the male, patriarchal ideology even more insidious by conflating the superior male's role with that of God and Christ in relation to the church. As Christ is head of the church, so the man is head of the woman; as the church is submitted to Christ, so wives must submit to husbands and women to men in everything (5:21–24). Perhaps it should be noted that the Greek terms here for husband and wife are those also for man and woman. We in English have to decide how we will translate them, but we should not forget that the husband-wife hierarchy is but an instance of the universal male-female and man-woman hierarchy. The Greek ambiguity (are we talking about just husbands and wives or all men and women?) nicely preserves the universal ideological "truth" that enforces the household-gender hierarchy.

In the next few verses, the role of the husband is expanded, but significantly the comparison of the husband to Christ ends up allowing Christ and his activity to take over the context: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her, in order that he might make her holy, cleaning (her) by the washing of water of the utterance, in order that he may present to himself the glorified church, not having any stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but in order that she might be holy and blameless" (5:25–27). Note how the gendering of dirt is introduced. The gender duality makes the male the active agent: the male brings holiness, cleanness, blamelessness, glory, and spotlessness to the profane, dirty, stained, wrinkled, guilty, *female* principle.

Furthermore, the superior male agent is the *only* active agent. Besides "cleaning up" their wives, husbands also feed them, warm them, and nourish them, as they do their own bodies. Women, on the other hand, don't do much of anything for their husbands except obey and fear them (5:33). Likewise next with the relationship of children to parents. Children are told simply to obey and honor their parents, but fathers (not the parents in general, note) are to nourish, educate, and admonish their children (6:1–4). Women and children are not told to "love" their husbands and fathers, just to obey, honor, and fear them. And they provide nothing for their men, but are themselves provided for. As in all ancient patronal ideology, the superior is the benefactor, the one who supplies the lack experienced by the inferior, whether of cleanliness, holiness, or nourishment. The patriarchal ideology of the ancient world becomes more pronounced and explicit the more the traditional household is encouraged.

This trajectory becomes simply more explicit and pronounced in the later Paulinism of the Pastoral Epistles. The author of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (not Paul, but a Christian writing in his name many years later) goes to greater lengths

to reinforce and encourage the presence of the ancient family in the church and the structuring of the ancient church itself to resemble the hierarchical household and state. Early in 1 Timothy, for instance, the readers are instructed to pray for "kings and all in authority" (1 Tim. 2:2). (It is hard to imagine John making any such statement in his Apocalypse, just as it is hard to imagine him encouraging marriage and household economy as this author does.) In the Pastorals, women are not even allowed to pray or speak; they must learn "in silence and all submission" (2:11). They may teach younger women, but they are to have no authority over men whatsoever (2:12). This is justified because of their implication in the deception and sin of Eve. Their main role is as childbearers, through which they may be saved if they behave themselves properly (2:15).

Not only is the patriarchal household strengthened within the church; the church itself—no longer a "town meeting"—is forced into the mold of the patriarchal household (3:5). Thus women without husbands become a particular problem for this author. The author, anxious to allow neither young nor old women to escape the confines of the household, urges that the younger women be encouraged to find themselves husbands. For the older women, for whom that would not usually be a practicable solution in the ancient world, the author must figure out some way to insert them into the household of the church. They cannot be allowed to be independent or outside patriarchal authority. They therefore are inscribed in roles within the church family under the authority of its male leaders (5:3–16). It goes without saying that slaves in these letters are similarly dealt with: they are told not to expect any relief from Christianity for their servitude (6:1–2).

The familial highjacking of the apostle Paul, therefore, began early in Christianity. Paul was made to support marriage and the traditional family. But not surprisingly, that meant that Paul became a stronger proponent of social, cosmic, and ecclesiastical patriarchy and hierarchy than he had been in his authentic letters. In the ancient world, to promote marriage and the family necessarily meant to promote patriarchal ideology. And Paul was put to service to that end.

THE "ANTIFAMILY" PAUL

If the canonical disciples of Paul worked to enlist the apostle in their pro-family agenda, other followers of Paul in the ancient church made him their spokesman for an antifamilial Christian message, a message that eventually proved to be more powerful and dominant in the Christianity of late antiquity than the pro-family version. One of the most popular of ancient ascetic tracts was a short document known to modern scholars as *The Acts of Paul and Thecla.*

The story of Thecla recounted in the document is fascinating for the way it appropriates many of the elements of the Greek romantic novel in order to promote a Christian ascetic message. Ancient Greek novels are highly eroticized and romanticized narratives in which two young people struggle throughout the long narrative to consummate their love. The characters are usually separated at the beginning of the story and seek to be reunited. They are placed in all sorts of tragic and traumatic situations of love and danger. They cry about their fate, weep, and mourn. Though their virtue is continually assaulted, they are usually able to remain loyal to one another, and they are eventually reunited and married. The ancient novels actually worked to teach quite conservative notions about the value and eternity of marriage and the traditional, elite Greek household.[21]

The Acts of Paul and Thecla plays on these themes and disrupts them at the same time. The heroine, Thecla, is an upper-class woman who becomes enamored by the ascetic message of the apostle Paul, which teaches young people and women to keep themselves absolute virgins, to avoid sex entirely, to reject marriage, and to devote themselves to complete and pure celibacy. According to Paul in this text, the only way to keep the flesh pure and experience the resurrection and eternal life is to remain virginal and celibate. Thecla's attraction to Paul and his message is narrated in the tones of the desire and passion of the novels: her desire for Paul is provoked simply by hearing his voice or seeing him teaching (§7); like a love-struck heroine, she wastes away when apart from him and is "taken captive" by him (§§8–9); she experiences her love for Paul like a disease (§10). When she is finally allowed to come into his presence, she kisses his fetters and rolls herself around in the dust where he had earlier been sitting (§§18, 20). Throughout the narrative, moreover, the exceptional beauty of Thecla is emphasized; she is even repeatedly portrayed as naked and exposed to the voyeuristic public and authorities (§§33, 34). The emphasis throughout the narrative on the absolute necessity of celibacy is surpassed only by the story's highly charged eroticism. Thus, though the Christianity presented by the text is one of complete sexual renunciation, it is scantily clothed in the obviously erotic rhetoric of the ancient romantic novel.

The ultimate "enemy" of the narrative is the household. Over and over again, the story sets up a conflict between the male heads-of-households—*patres familiae*—along with the male political authorities, on the one hand, and the vast majority of the women, on the other. When Thecla is arrested or condemned to torture, it is the women of the city who pray for her, beg for her release, and bemoan her fate. But interestingly, the wives are not the only ones who side with Thecla against their own husbands. They are joined by the "young men and women" of the towns and cities. And in one scene of torture, a lioness, meant to attack Thecla, ends up siding with her. The lioness attacks the male lion and eventually gives her own life in battle against the *male* beasts in order to save Thecla. Conflict in the story pits male heads-of-households against all other potential members of households—women, girls, and young men—on the other side with Thecla. The men understand perfectly what is at issue: they themselves insist that if Christianity and Thecla succeed, that will mean the destruction of their households (§§10, 15–16).[22]

In the end, Thecla triumphs. She baptizes herself (in a huge vat of killer seals, which are all miraculously killed by a lightning bolt before they can eat Thecla);

she promises to cut her hair like a man's; she dresses herself like a man. At the end of the story, she is given a fortune by a rich widow so that she (and her mother!) can become independent and self-supporting. Thecla no longer needs a man even for financial support. Totally freed from the family and household, financially and spiritually independent, she leaves even Paul, becomes an apostle *like* Paul, and goes off to spread the Christian message of the destruction of the ancient household and to establish alternative communities of erotic Christian ascetics. Traditional marriage is rejected in favor of erotic asceticism.

The Acts of Paul and Thecla appropriates the authority of the apostle Paul to promote a woman-centered, though admittedly androgynous, form of ascetic Christianity set up in direct opposition to the male-dominated, traditional hierarchical household as promoted by other early Christian documents such as the Pastoral Epistles. Though it must be admitted that Thecla plays the really starring role in the narrative, Paul also becomes here a radical opponent of the family. The story seems to recognize what we had surmised when reading the pseudepigraphical Pauline texts: if you want to challenge the male-dominated authority structures of ancient culture, you must reject marriage and the family.

THE JOVINIAN CONTROVERSY

Though there were some early voices, such as the author of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus examined above, who promoted ancient "family values," the opposite point of view, which valued celibacy over marriage, gradually became the more dominant position in late ancient Christianity, at least among the church's leaders and as portrayed in its writings. As J. N. D. Kelly has put it,

> from the second century onwards a widening stream of such [ascetic] essays [he is here referring first to Jerome's Letter 22, really a treatise denigrating marriage and advising celibacy] had been published by Christian writers. . . . They all draw on a common fund of ideas and expound, though with widely differing nuances, what is essentially the same doctrine. This is that marriage is, on the most favorable interpretation, a poor second best; virginity is the original state willed by God, and sexual intercourse came in only after the Fall. The underlying presuppositions are that the sexual act is intrinsically defiling, and that indulgence in it creates a barrier between the soul and God. If one is married, it is better to abstain from intercourse; a second marriage betokens regrettable carnal weakness.[23]

By the late fourth century, it was difficult to find a church leader with a different opinion.[24]

Difficult, but not impossible. In fact, the issue came to a head in a controversy centered around a Roman Christian named Jovinian, who, sometime around 390, began teaching not the *superiority* of the married state but that those who married and had sex were no worse in the eyes of God than virgins or celibates. Jovinian based his argument on a "high" view of baptism. He taught that all baptized Christians were and would continue to be of equal spiritual and moral status whether they were married, widowed, or virgin. Christians who fast are not superior to those who eat with thankfulness. And at the last judgment, all Christians who have preserved their baptism faithfully will receive equal reward regardless of whether they have been ascetics or not.[25]

Jovinian was quickly and firmly condemned. In probably 393, the bishop of Rome, Pope Siricius, called a synod that promptly rejected Jovinian's views and excommunicated Jovinian and eight of his associates. Siricius announced the excommunication in a letter to Italian bishops, in which he called Jovinian and his friends "the authors of a new heresy and blasphemy." They were, he says, "wounding Catholics, perverting the continence of the Old and New Testaments, interpreting it in a diabolical sense; by their seductive and deceitful speech they have begun to destroy no small number of Christians and to make them allies of their own insanity."[26] David Hunter has noted the historical significance of the letter: "Siricius's letter marked the first time in the history of Christianity that the superiority of celibacy over marriage was officially defined as doctrine, and conversely, that its denial was labeled as 'heresy.'" Though the sentiment had long been held by at least the vocal leadership of Christianity, it had not before been explicitly affirmed as the only permissible Christian view. "Siricius's letter, therefore, marked a distinctive hardening of boundaries in the later fourth century, the moment at which a previously implicit Christian consensus about marriage and celibacy reached a consequential degree of explicitness"—by means, that is, of an explicit statement declaring the inferiority of marriage as doctrine.[27]

In the wake of the condemnation, Jovinian and his friends betook themselves to Milan, but the famous and powerful bishop there, Saint Ambrose, also convened a synod of his own and confirmed both the condemnation of Jovinian's views and the excommunication. Both the pope and one of the most respected of the church fathers had condemned as "heresy" the opinion that the married state could be held to be of equal virtue with celibacy.

The most vocal opponent of Jovinian, however, was Jerome, one of the most prolific and famous of early church fathers and biblical interpreters, who wrote a fairly long treatise refuting Jovinian's claims point by point and besmirching his reputation. Never one to rise above personal invective and misrepresentation, Jerome exaggerates Jovinian's arguments and claims that Jovinian had disparaged celibacy, for which there is absolutely no evidence. Jovinian had simply argued that celibacy was not a *superior* state when compared to marriage.[28] Jerome's main concern is to maintain hierarchy of virtue and reward. He ranks virginity highest, followed by marriage, with fornication ranking below both. Elsewhere, he ranks virginity highest, followed by widowhood, and then marriage. Or he can combine widows and those who avoid sex even though married, and place them above sexually active wives, but below virgins.[29]

Jerome *claims* that he is not condemning marriage or sex completely (e.g., *Against Jovinian* 1.3). When he is careful, he writes that "the Church does not condemn marriage but make it subordinate."[30] But Jerome gets carried away in his

disgust for sex and marriage, and many of his readers, ancient and modern, have felt that Jerome does in fact come very close to condemning marriage. Jerome argues that sex is permissible *only* for procreation (*Against Jovinian* 1.20). He argues that since abstaining from sex with one's wife "honors" her, having sex with her is equivalent to "shaming" her (1.7). Throughout, he portrays any kind of sexual activity, even that in marriage, as impure and polluting to the participants: *all* sexual intercourse is "unclean" (1.20). Finally, Jerome also (though he had apparently not by this time heard about the official condemnations of Siricius and Ambrose) calls Jovinian's view of the equality of marriage and virginity "heresy" (2.37).

Saint Augustine somewhat later also came out with publications against Jovinian's view of the "equality" of marriage. Augustine felt Jerome had gone too far, making sex and marriage sound not only "second best" but even sinful. Augustine seems to have altered his views about sex and marriage at different stages of his life. Generally, at any rate, Augustine ended up advocating that marriage was indeed a "good" and that sexual intercourse within marriage should not be condemned if done under the right conditions and with proper attitudes. The main purpose of sex is to produce children, and so sex within marriage should be indulged only for purposes of procreation. Thus, couples should not indulge if the woman is already pregnant.[31] Yet against Jovinian, Augustine affirms the superiority of celibacy: "For this reason it is a good to marry, since it is a good to beget children, to be the mother of a family; but it is better not to marry, since it is better for human society itself not to have need of marriage."[32] Augustine's position would be the one to become *the* view of the church until the Reformation and the beginnings of modernity.

This debate should not be simply ignored as "ancient history." Jovinian's view—and remember that he was advocating simply the *equality* of marriage, not its superiority—was declared heretical by a pope and three of the most honored church "fathers" and saints: Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. Whereas Jovinian seems to have been motivated by notions of equality that remarkably resemble modern Christian sensibilities, the "orthodox" Christian leaders were all concerned to maintain strict hierarchies both in this life and in the life to come, hierarchies of virtue and reward in which perpetual virginity occupied the highest position, with celibacy, then abstinence in marriage, then sexual activity in marriage occupying positions of virtue in a descending grade. That was the view that was considered the Christian view for most of Christian history. It is highly ironic that promoters of modern Christian "family values" and the centrality of marriage and family for Christianity portray themselves as the supporters of Christian tradition. In fact, they would be considered heretics by the "orthodox" church fathers.

THE PURITAN REVOLUTION

The long history of the "orthodox" position on marriage and family came under challenge beginning in the sixteenth century and reached a new height with the writings of Anglicans and especially Puritans in the seventeenth century. Some

precursors to the Protestant Reformation had already challenged the critical view of marriage and sex of the previous centuries. "Humanist" scholars began proclaiming the superiority of the married state to celibacy. Erasmus may have been influenced by his contact with English humanists in his writing of *Encomium Matrimonii*, in which he praised the married state in comparison to celibacy. The Council of Trent, however, condemned Erasmus's views, and *Encomium Matrimonii* was placed on the index of prohibited books in 1547.[33]

Though the movement was encouraged by the Reformers Luther and Calvin, it was in England, no doubt due to the English Reformation and the abolition there of monasteries and the allowance of clerical marriage, that a change of doctrine became increasingly popular. As Lawrence Stone explains, "the medieval Catholic ideal of chastity, as a legal obligation for priests, monks and nuns and as an ideal for all members of the community to aspire to, was replaced by the ideal of conjugal affection. The married state now became the ethical norm for the virtuous Christian. . . ."[34] The very notion of what constituted a proper Christian churchman changed. In the words of Christopher Hill, "the monasteries, nunneries, friaries and chantries disappeared, and the priest, set apart by his celibacy and mediating the sacraments of the universal Church, yielded place to the parson as good family man."[35]

We must recognize that this was not simply a "reform" of previous corrupt practices or a "purifying" of the church along the lines of acknowledged orthodoxy. It was, rather, a radical *reversal* or *overturning* of previous Christian teaching about the superiority of celibacy over sex and the family.[36] And it was happening among Puritans and Anglicans alike. The theme of "holy matrimony" pervaded Protestant sermons throughout the sixteenth century.[37] Puritans increasingly took the concept further, and it is not difficult to see why: especially after the Restoration of the monarchy and the re-"Establishment" of the Church of England in 1660, Puritans were forced to rely on "separated" churches, and these were constructed as voluntary associations of "pure" and "holy" households. For the Puritans, the separated church made up of pious households replaced the "parish" as the true locus for religious observation.[38]

The seventeenth century saw the publication of many books of advice for the householder, informing him how to arrange and manage his family in a productive and pious manner. But they also sounded the new note of approval for marriage and sex, and explicitly valued marriage over celibacy. William Perkins, at the beginning of the 1600s, provided readers with his sage recommendations on the subject "Of Christian Oeconomie, or Household Government," and though he sounds reserved about marriage compared to the unrestrained encomia of our own day, he insists that it is the superior state: "Mariage of it selfe is a thing indifferent, and the kingdome of God stands no more in it then [sic] in meates and drinkes; and yet it is a state in it selfe, farre more excellent, then the condition of single life."[39] Puritans in the New World read these manuals and wrote their own. They repeatedly insist that God had ordained marriage for everyone, and that sex in marriage was essential.[40]

As we have seen, a few early Christian writers, most notably the author of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, offered the household as model for the structure of the church. Puritan authors, in a sense, reversed the direction of influence: in work after work of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they admonish their readers to make their home into "a little church." It is as if the household comes to replace the church as the primary locus of religious activity, certainly as the primary ideological model for piety and observance. The male head of the household assumes the role of priest or pastor. In a commentary on the conversion of the jailor's household in Acts 16:34, Thomas Taylor preached, "Let every Master of Family see to what he is called; namely, to make his house a little Church, to instruct every one of his Family in the feare of God, to containe every one of them under holy discipline, to pray with them, and for them: that there may be a draught or Modell of a Church in his House."[41] In a regularly recurring theme of the entire period, authors told their readers, here in the words of William Gouge in the early seventeenth century, "A family is a little Church, and a little commonwealth."[42] It is not surprising, therefore, that the period, according to Levin Schücking, saw the development of home Bible study as a Protestant invention emphasized even more by Puritans. In fact, the era saw the rise of the "Family Bible" in homes.[43]

Lest this portrait sound too much like the "family" of our own day, we should emphasize that we are speaking here not of the modern, private, nuclear family but of the "household." Though the nuclear family certainly became more visible in this period, perhaps sociologically as well as ideologically, and it may even be true that most Puritans experienced household as predominantly nuclear (that is, it may be that many households *did* include only husband, wife, and immediate children), the kind of household that we see in literary remains of the period, including legal records and the like, was not *presented* mostly as the nuclear family. These advice books, for instance, always have large sections on how to deal with one's servants, sounding as if they *assumed* their presence in any "normal" household. The ideal Puritan household in New England included apprentices and servants, who would live with the family, and sometimes children from other homes who had been "sent out" to live with another family for any number of reasons. Moreover, New England colonies and communities were officially and legally constructed as collections of households, not individuals. Therefore, the authorities made repeated attempts in some locales to keep single adults from living alone or together outside a "normal" household. Single adults, even males, were forced to live within other existing family units. There were, therefore, all sorts of experiments attempting to incorporate "all stray bachelors and maids under the discipline of a real family governor."[44]

Furthermore, there was no expectation in New England communities that the family was "private" or immune from governmental interference or "social engineering." Modern conservatives might argue that "it doesn't take a village to raise a child; it takes a *family*." But their Puritan forefathers were ready to interfere when they felt that a householder was not fulfilling his role properly. The "state," therefore, was in control over who would be a householder and who not, and over

their behavior. In the early and mid-1600s, if a householder was not behaving as the governing authorities felt he should, they could disband his household, take away his children and servants, parcel them out to other households, and force him to become a member of another household himself.[45] The Puritan household was a far cry from the nuclear family free from governmental interference so central to modern conservative romance.

The Puritan family was also firmly patriarchal. New England communities did have laws limiting the rights of husbands and providing protection for wives and children. Communities, according to recent studies, did sometimes side with women against their husbands. Some scholars have argued that Puritan women experienced better situations than women of previous eras in Europe. Yet the Puritan household was staunchly hierarchical, with the "master" firmly in charge, at least ideologically.[46] No modern notion of egalitarianism in marriage made its way into the Puritan family. Rather, it is as if what we saw to be the case in early Christianity was true also in Puritanism: the more the family is emphasized, the more patriarchy and hierarchy are strengthened.[47]

Modern Christians, if they paused long enough to look at the actual history rather than their American romanticizing of it, should think twice before calling on their Puritan "forefathers" to support their own ideology of the family. First, they must admit that the Puritan revolution was, by the standards of earlier Christianity, "heresy." When modern gay and lesbian Christians urge the recognition of same-sex marriages in churches, they are actually asking for a change much less radical than that already accomplished by the Reformers and the Puritans, who completely reversed doctrines and ethics of 1,500 years of Christian tradition and made the married state not only equal to singleness but superior to it. In comparison, simply evaluating gay and lesbian relationships on a par with those of their heterosexual neighbors is a modest innovation. Second, modern advocates of "traditional family values" should admit that their notion of the (usually) egalitarian, private, nuclear family is not a true continuation of the Reformation or Puritan household after all. The irony, or rather hypocrisy, of modern appeals to "tradition" or the "religious heritage" of American "forefathers" to support the modern notion of family should be obvious.

THE CHRISTIAN LEGACY OF THE FAMILY

There were certainly voices in ancient Christianity, as throughout its history, that have interpreted the gospel to support and promote traditional family values—of the *ancient household.* But I would argue that the vast majority of the resources of Scripture and Christian tradition until the modern period lend themselves much more readily to a critique of marriage and the family than to advocacy of them. Though the Christianity of the vast sweep of history from the church fathers until the Reformation did not go so far as to condemn marriage outright, it consistently assigned an inferior position to marriage and to those Christians

who married. The "higher calling" was most often understood to be the avoidance of marriage, certainly in much of the New Testament and for almost all of late ancient Christianity.

It is thus ironic, though not really surprising, that American Christianity, especially Protestantism, has reversed the traditional valuations of Christianity. Coupled with the obscene emphasis on patriotism and nationalism, the emphasis on the family in American Christianity and popular culture approaches idolatry. "Family values" are practically the only values, along with perhaps nationalism, that seem universally recognized as "Christian values" in American popular culture, including most churches.

One of this chapter's goals is to highlight how wrong modern Christians are when they claim that their own ideology, and idolatry, of the family is simply "the biblical" or "the traditional" position. If they were true to the historical meaning of the texts and the tradition, they would have to admit that their high valuation of marriage and the family runs *counter* to the teachings of Jesus, authors of the Gospels, Paul, other biblical writers, as well as most of the church "fathers," popes, and saints. Furthermore, their own promotion of marriage and their adoration of the family run counter to the longer tradition of Christianity, at least of "orthodox" Christianity, and represent a rather radical and recent innovation in Christian doctrine and ethics. It is simply misleading, perhaps hypocritical, to say that modern family values are simply "the biblical" or "the Christian" view. In fact, there are more resources in Scripture and tradition to *critique* marriage and the family than to support it.

Another goal of this chapter, therefore, is to point out the many texts available to queer Christians that may be used to criticize the modern idolatry of marriage and family. Though I support to some extent the extension of state recognition of same-sex unions on a par with heterosexual marriage—gay and lesbian couples should have all the rights and privileges recognized by the state for heterosexuals—I am deeply ambivalent about pursuing same-sex marriage as a solution to the injustices of homophobia. I believe that both the state and the church should get out of the marriage business.

There are many excellent reasons why people in general and Christians in particular should *not* want to give the state the power to recognize and regulate marriage. When we give the state the right to legitimize one kind of sexual relationship or social formation, we automatically give it the right to render all other relations illegitimate.[48] Surely, the church should never cede its own prerogatives to the state—especially a state as bloodstained and beholden to the interests of the powerful as ours is. But *all* people should realize this: when you marry, you give power to the state over your sexual relations, your person, the most intimate details of your life and body. To agree to marriage is to agree that the modern, violent, bureaucratic state has the right to control your life in its most intimate realms, public and private, personal and sexual, individual and collective. Not to put too fine a point on it, marriage cedes your genitals to the government.

The modern emphasis on marriage and the nuclear family, moreover, fools people into thinking that the modern family can do what it cannot do. The modern family simply cannot bear the weight placed on it; it cannot deliver all the goods demanded of it, whether social, economic, emotional, or psychological. Conservatives and liberals who focus on the family, therefore, are allowing the state to shirk its own responsibilities.[49] They are attempting to push off onto the fragile modern family the responsibilities that only the state in the modern world can really bear: for universal child care and education, health care, care for the elderly and disadvantaged. The state should get out of the marriage business and get to the tasks that are its true responsibilities: caring for its citizens.

But I believe the church should also get out of the marriage business. Marriage is an exclusive and exclusionary technology for control.[50] Modern churches legitimate one kind of social and intimate bonding and therefore declare illegitimate all others. *This* relationship is good—in fact, "divine." All others are bad or at best inferior.

This exclusionary technique can be seen also in the connection of marriage to procreation. Though the stigma and shame associated with births "out of wedlock" have gradually diminished, they are still present—as is proven by the fact that cohabiting couples so often decide to marry when they become or decide to become expectant parents. Marriage legitimates childbirth. But it necessarily therefore declares other births illegitimate. Why should the church want to allow *any* of its children to be thought "illegitimate"? *Our* cry, rather, should be "No bastard children!" Bastard children are not created by the absence of marriage, but by marriage itself. Marriage makes bastards by making the category possible. For these and many other reasons we could give, both the state and the church should get out of the marriage business.

Yet queer Christians need not stop with the simply negative task of critiquing marriage and the family. Another goal of this chapter is to provoke contemporary Christians into thinking about different ways of reading Christian Scripture and tradition. Queer Christians (whose queerness may manifest itself in all sorts of unexpected ways) should use their imaginations to allow Scripture and tradition to inspire new visions of Christian community free from the constraints of the modern, heterosexual, nuclear family. We could imagine traveling bands of erotic followers of Jesus, or spirit-filled "town meetings" sharing things in common, or lively communities of men or women living together, or lively communities of men *and* women living together. We could imagine "households" of new construction, representing in their own adventuresome lives together hopes for new communities of the future. Eschatological communities. Communities in which single people are not second-class citizens, in which there are no "bastards," in which sexual orientation does not in itself stigmatize, in which varieties of households are nurtured. Alternative models to the traditional family are ready-to-hand in rich Christian Scripture and tradition.

The texts of Scripture and tradition I have analyzed bring both problems and possibilities. Some of them offer alternative visions of human community but at

the price of an asceticism that renders desire and sex shameful or even sinful, a course we must also reject. Others are built on ideologies that despise the body or women. There will be no resource in Christianity or any other tradition, however, that is not to some extent problematic. All human models are tainted. There are no clean words. But these resources may also be used for retraining our imaginations both to see the inherent evils in the modern idolatry of marriage and family and to develop visions of alternative, eschatological, forward-looking communities. Rather than looking to Scripture and tradition to justify the recognition of same-sex unions and marriage, we should attempt to recover and revise resources from a forgotten Christianity vouchsafed to us in Scripture and premodern traditions: the long and valuable history of the Christian case against marriage.

Chapter 9

The Hermeneutics of Divorce

Less and less do Christians today actually debate the ethics of divorce and remarriage. Most of the time, both seem to be expected, if not accepted, as part of life. This is not to say that the topic is completely uncontroversial. Every once in a while, some Catholic bishop or spokesperson will make headlines by declaring that politicians who are divorced and remarried should be refused communion.[1] But even in those situations, one suspects that the motivating issue is less divorce itself than an attempt by conservative-leaning Roman Catholics to call into question the moral standing of some politician with whom they disagree politically.[2] On the Protestant side, publications address the pastoral issues of divorce and remarriage. But one gets the feeling that the vast majority of Christians, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant, though agreeing that divorce is regrettable and to be avoided if possible, has come to accept for the most part the reality of divorce and remarriage in contemporary society, religious as well as secular.[3]

Yet books and articles are still published on the ethics of divorce and remarriage from a Christian perspective. And when the topic of the ethics surrounding divorce and remarriage comes up among Christians—again including Roman Catholics as well as Protestants—the Bible is almost always taken to play a leading role. Indeed, the rhetoric of "biblical foundationalism" regularly recurs in

24. See, e.g., Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage* 21(26).
25. It sometimes does happen. Tertullian, for example, cites both Christ and Paul, though briefly, as examples to demonstrate the "preference for continence"(*On Monogamy* 3). Gregory of Nazianzus speaks of both Christ and Basil as personal examples of virginity as well as promoters of it (*Panegyric on Basil* 62). But even though Jesus is used (rather oddly, sometimes) as a model, he seldom occurs as a model for Christian celibacy among the "orthodox" fathers.
26. *Lecture* 13.23; 4.24. Jesus is also offered as an example that Christians should follow the proper "order of things": 3.14.
27. *On the Spirit (De spiritu sancto)* 15.35.
28. Tertullian, *On Fasting* 8.
29. See Augustine, *De sancta virginitate.*
30. See, for example, Susanna Elm, *"Virgins of God": The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 118–20.
31. Tertullian, *On Monogamy* 5.
32. See Brother Casimir, "Saint Gregory of Nyssa: PERI TELEIOTHTOS—On Perfection," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29 (1984): 349–79; esp. 354–55, 376.
33. For just one example, see Tertullian, *De sancta virginitate.* Interestingly in this document, given our attention to the way Christ's celibacy is used or not used as a model for Christian behavior, Tertullian treats Christ's virginity as basically the *only* one of his traits that all Christians do *not* imitate! Tertullian makes an important exception to a general *imitatio Christi* with regard to celibacy: see 27–28. For Origen, see references in John Ernest Leonard Oulton and Henry Chadwick, eds., *Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origen, with Introduction and Notes*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 34–35.
34. In Mark he is just a man; in Matthew 19:20, he is said to be young; in Luke 18:18, he is said to be a ruler; only Mark has the part about Jesus loving him. The "rich young ruler" is a conflation of all of them.
35. And thus, as pointed out above, the remarkable popularity of Brown's *Da Vinci Code.*
36. The Hebrew word for "feet" was also a euphemism for "genitals."
37. For a clear and brief introduction to "nonfoundationalism" and its relation to theology, see John E. Thiel, *Nonfoundationalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994) and the introduction in this volume.

Chapter 8

1. Rodney Clapp notes that the church may be called "the last great stronghold of family idolatry"; see *Families at the Crossroads: Beyond Traditional and Modern Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 12; see also Janet Fishburn, *Confronting the Idolatry of Family: A New Vision for the Household of God* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), esp. 107. The idolatry of the family can be seen by a careful analysis of one study that argues that "the healthy family as we know it today would not exist but for the profound influence of religion, especially Christianity, through the ages" (Anthony J. Guerra, *Family Matters: The Role of Christianity in the Formation of the Western Family* [St. Paul: Paragon House, 2002], xi). Guerra states that the most important factor promoting the "healthy family" is religion (xxi–xxiii). He also insists that no one religion "has a monopoly" on the value he attributes to religion in general to promote and protect "family values" (xii–xiii). Since there is no belief or doctrine that *all* "religions" hold in common (not even monotheism or the belief in "God" at all), the *only* thing all "religions" must hold in common (in Guerra's construction) is the promotion of the family. But that is what Guerra is highlighting as the fundamental value of Christianity. Unwittingly perhaps, Guerra has substituted "family values" for all other doctrines, beliefs, and practices as *the* central aspect of Christianity of any importance. The theological word for that is "idolatry." (Incidentally, the "healthy family" for Guerra is only the modern, nuclear family consisting of a heterosexual couple, only once married, and their immediate children; see xii–xiii, xiv, xvi, xvii.)

2. See Kathy Rudy, *Sex and the Church: Gender, Homosexuality, and the Transformation of Christian Ethics* (Boston: Beacon, 1997), 119.
3. On the novelty and *aberration* of the 1950s ideal family when compared to most of human history and most cultures, see Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 25–29.
4. Byron R. McCane, "'Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead': Secondary Burial and Matt. 8:21–22," *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 31–43.
5. T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 131; François Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc (9,51–14,35)* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 471.
6. "Q," from the German word *Quelle,* which means "source," is the designation given to a hypothetical document many scholars believe was used by both Matthew and Luke in the writing of their own Gospels. If they both used it, it obviously would represent a source earlier than their own texts.
7. Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 242–50.
8. Or that of Thomas in the precise sense. Thomas has a man excuse himself in order to arrange the wedding of someone else (*Gospel of Thomas* 64).
9. François Bovon, *Luke: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 1:114.
10. I take it that Barnabas is not married because no wife or family is ever mentioned for him; he travels around with Paul, likewise unmarried, without a family; and he is mentioned in this capacity by Paul in 1 Cor. 9:6. Though the precise verse in which Barnabas is mentioned refers to working for a living rather than living off contributions from the churches, the context also includes "traveling around with a sister-wife" as had Peter and other apostles. I take it that Paul then includes Barnabas with himself as someone who has not taken advantage of that "right."
11. Commentators generally note that Barnabas serves as a positive example and Ananias and Sapphira as negative examples of the communalism expected of early Christians in Acts. See, e.g., C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 2:257–271; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 315.
12. They aren't "normal" for several reasons. They have no children, nor a "stable" household, but rather are themselves fairly itinerant; Prisca (or Priscilla, as in Acts) is often mentioned first, implying higher status for her, at least for the author, than her husband; their "household" is permeable enough to include Paul in it at times. Paul moves in with them, works with them, and relocates with them. Their relationship, in any case, cannot be made into a "nuclear family," and neither does it look like the traditional extended family of antiquity.
13. For the activities of Satan in Luke-Acts, see Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).
14. The "togetherness" of Ananias and Sapphira "violated the togetherness of the Christian community" (Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998], 218). Ananias and Sapphira

represent a "counter-community . . . over against the spirit-community that shares its possessions" (Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 5 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992], 87, see also 89).

15. For most people in the Greco-Roman world, separation *meant* divorce, even legally. According to Roman family law, which may not have even applied to non-Roman Christians and Jews, divorce was effected simply by one of the partners "willing" to be no longer married. Abandonment was almost always sufficient for divorce. Moreover, without marriage laws to regulate the daily lives of most inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world (Roman family law applied only to Roman citizens), "divorce" would have most normally been effected simply by "separation."
16. I take the language of "relativization" mainly from Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), passim. Though Barton is dealing with Mark and Matthew rather than Luke, I believe he, even for those contexts, is too eager to downplay any possible "anti-familial" message in the texts. Referring to Mark 10:1–31, for instance, he claims, "Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that this material reflects no animosity to family and household *per se*, something we had cause to observe in relation to earlier pericopae, as well. Instead, their significance is made relative to cross-bearing discipleship for the sake of Jesus and the gospel" (107; see also 122). It is hard to evaluate such a claim, which is repeated several times in one form or another in Barton's study, because Barton never really explains what "animosity" means or what "*per se*" covers. Certainly it would be stretching the evidence to say that it shows that Jesus had some *personal, psychological hatred* ("animosity") to the family *in the abstract* ("*per se*"). But it is just as unlikely that the texts make *only* the point—similar to modern Christian piety—that Jesus and the gospel are to demand "relatively" more loyalty than one's household. Rather, the statements teach the replacement of the traditional household by the eschatological community of God initiated by Jesus. There is nothing "psychological" or "abstract" going on here; it is rather a radical challenge of the "normal family" by the kingdom of God.
17. Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 57–86.
18. References to pollution: 14:1–5; filth or dirt: 22:11; "abomination" (*bdelygma* = *bdelyssô*, meaning "rot" or "stink"; 21:8, 27); see also 7:14; 16:13; 17:4; 18:2; 19:2. One can also discern the obsession by noting the many references to fire and sulphur, i.e,, "purifying" substances.
19. See Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); and "Paul without Passion" in this volume.
20. I have elsewhere shown that modern attempts to read Paul as a "gender egalitarian" do not stand up to scrutiny, though such claims do continue to be made, presumably by those wishing to "save" Paul from his fairly obvious, and natural for his time, hierarchical view of gender. See, e.g., Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 230–33; and chap. 6, "The Queer History of Galatians 3:28: 'No Male and Female,'" in this volume. Contrast James D. G. Dunn, "The Household Rules in the New Testament," in *The Family in Theological Perspective*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 55.
21. See R. P. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995), 44–76.
22. See Andrew S. Jacobs, "A Family Affair: Marriage, Class, and Ethics in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999): 105–38.

23. J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 102.
24. David Hunter provides a collection of early church writings on marriage: David G. Hunter, ed., *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). It is telling that though Hunter clearly attempted to balance out the "negative" views with the few available "positive" views of marriage, the book is rather thin. There just aren't enough "positive" views in early Christianity to balance out the "negative" ones.
25. For brief introductions to the controversy, see Kelly, *Jerome*, 181–82; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), 359–62. For the original texts: Wilhelm Haller, ed., *Iovinianus: Die Fragmente seiner Schriften, die Quellen zu seiner Geschichte, sein Leben und seine Lehre* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1897). The best and most up-to-date research on the Jovinian controversy is contained in articles by David G. Hunter; see esp. "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 45–64; "Helvidius, Jovinian, and the Virginity of Mary in Late Fourth-Century Rome," *Journal for Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 47–71; and "Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy: Asceticism and Clerical Authority in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33 (2003): 453–70; reprinted in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, Dale B. Martin and Patricia Cox Miller, eds. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005). John Gavin Nolan's earlier study (see *Jerome and Jovinian* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1956], an abstract of his Catholic University dissertation) is too biased towards Jerome and against Jovinian to be reliable. Nolan often takes Jerome's obvious exaggeration and misrepresentation at face value—with regard, for instance, to Jovinian's alleged lack of education.
26. These translations are from Hunter, "Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy," 453; for the Latin, see Siricius, *Epistolae* 7.4–6 (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 82/3:301).
27. Hunter, "Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy," 453.
28. Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal."
29. Jerome, *Against Jovinian*, 1.7; 2.35; and 1.33, respectively; trans. W. H. Fremantle, with G. Lewis and W. G. Martley, *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2d ser. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), vol. 6.
30. Ibid., 1.40.
31. See, e.g., Augustine, *The Good of Marriage* 6. For the English of this as well as other excerpts from Augustine's relevant writings, and including an excellent introduction, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996). See also Elizabeth A. Clark, "'Adam's Only Companion': Augustine and the Early Christian Debate on Marriage," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 21 (1986): 139–62; Philip Lyndon Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage during the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 259.
32. Augustine, *The Good of Marriage* 9; trans. Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality*, 51.
33. Edmund Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 80–83.
34. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 135.

35. Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 453.
36. Guerra, *Family Matters*, 30.
37. Stone, *Family*, 136.
38. Ibid., 141.
39. William Perkins, *Works* (Cambridge: Cantrell Legge, 1618), 3:671. Perkins goes on to say that had the fall not occurred, the single life should have no place in the world at all, but because of the exigencies of existence after the fall, *some* people, no doubt only a few, may do better to remain single *if* they "have the gift of continence."
40. Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritans and Sex," in *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective*, 2d ed., ed. Michael Gordon (New York: St. Martin's, 1978), see esp. 364, 371.
41. Thomas Taylor, *Works* (London: Printed by T. R. & E. M. for J. Bartlet the elder and J. Bartlet the younger, 1653), 190.
42. William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises* (London: John Haviland, 1622), 18.
43. Levin L. Schücking, *The Puritan Family: A Social Study from the Literary Sources*, 2d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 65–66.
44. Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Essays on Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1944), 85.
45. Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 86–89; Guerra, *Family Matters*, 43.
46. Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 9–14; Schücking, *Puritan Family*, 67; Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 458–62.
47. For other Christian ethical critiques of the Puritan family model, see Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Family: A Christian Social Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 51.
48. Much of my point here is dependent on Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999).
49. The focus on the family is ultimately *antisocial*. It is politically quietistic, opposed to social reform, and "tolerant of economic injustice." The "private family" is therefore socially *irresponsible*. See Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 97–98. Or as Jessie Bernard has put it, "Marriage is a cheap way for society at large to take care of a lot of difficult people. We force individuals—a wife or a husband—to take care of them on a one-to-one basis" (*The Future of Marriage* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982], 161; quoted and affirmed by Brian W. Grant, *The Social Structure of Christian Families: A Historical Perspective* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 147.
50. Even an author intent on affirming the normativity of marriage for Christians (though she does suggest that it should be now balanced with "a favourable account of celibacy") admits that "the 'Christian family' makes plenty of people feel excluded, not strengthened" (Helen Oppenheimer, *Marriage* [London: Mowbray, 1990], 87, 110).

Chapter 9

1. See, for example, Julia Duin, "Politics Cloud Kerry's Easter Plans," *Washington Times*, April 5, 2004, http://www.washtimes.com/national/20040405-125311-9075r.htm; Daniel J. Wakin, "The Nation: Abortion to Annulment; Communion Becomes a Test of Faith and Politics," *The New York Times*, March 9, 2004, sec. 4, 3; Iver Peterson, "Bishop Installed Amid Dust-up Over Stand on Governor's Divorce," *New York Times*, May 1, 2004, sec. B, 1; Kenneth L. Woodward, "A Political Sacrament," *New York Times*, May 28, 2004, sec. A, 21; Ian Fisher, "Catholic Bishops Again Reject Married Priests," *New York Times*, October 23, 2005, sec. A, 12.
2. This suspicion is supported by the fact that it has been almost overwhelmingly those more "moderate" or "liberal" politicians, rather than those more conservative or Republican politicians, who have been targeted with such calls—and the issues have been overwhelmingly abortion and divorce. Moreover, few Catholic bishops, if any, have called on churches to refuse communion to politicians who support the death penalty or who voted to support the manifestly "unjust war" (using the term in its technical sense as recognized by the Roman Catholic Church) against Iraq. If the issue were really simply one of upholding the Roman Catholic Church's position on divorce as a moral issue, one would expect similar pronouncements on the equally important moral issues of capital punishment and war.
3. Many contemporary Christian studies of divorce and remarriage begin by admitting that the acceptance of both has become the norm among most Christians, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant. See, for example, Gerald D. Coleman, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist, 1988), 5; Robert H. Vasoli, *What God Has Joined Together: The Annulment Crisis in American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4, 201; Pierre Hegy and Joseph Martos, eds., *Catholic Divorce: The Deception of Annulments* (New York: Continuum, 2000); Timothy J. Buckley, *What Binds Marriage? Roman Catholic Theology in Practice* (London: Continuum, 2002), 3–16; Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and the Catholic Church: Disputed Questions* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2002), 92.
4. See Andrew Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practice* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993); the reference to "God's mind" is at 80. Biblical foundationalist statements are found throughout the book, but see especially 215, 217. See also the conservative but nonetheless harmonizing interpretation of the New Testament passages by Gordon J. Wenham and William E. Heth, *Jesus and Divorce*, updated ed. (Carlisle, Australia: Paternoster, 2002). Wenham and Heth are Protestant foundationalists: "Unless a practice or doctrine can be demonstrated from the Bible itself it should not bind the Christian conscience. This Protestants have always affirmed" (20).
5. This terminology comes from Craig S. Keener, *And Marries Another: Divorce and Remarriage in the Teaching of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), see ix–xii. I discuss Keener's book at more length below.
6. Alex R. G. Deasley, *Marriage and Divorce in the Bible and the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2000), 10–11.
7. A. L. Descamps, "The New Testament Doctrine on Marriage," in *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage: Propositions and Papers from the International Theological Commission*, ed. Richard Malone and John R. Connery (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1984), 217. Not only is this statement notable for sounding almost Protestant in its emphasis on biblical foundationalism, it is also, at least now, inaccurate. There is no such consensus about the "indissolubility of marriage" being the universal position in ancient Christianity nor that the notion goes back to the historical Jesus. In his defense, the situation may have been different in the early 1980s, when Descamps was writing, and he may have been thinking only of Roman Catholic scholars.
8. Theodore Mackin, *Divorce and Remarriage* (New York: Paulist, 1984), 1. Even more liberal Protestants, who advocate more leniency on divorce and remarriage, often sound like biblical foundationalists. Myrna Kysar and Robert Kysar, in a study published in 1978, when the issue was a bit more debated among "mainline" Protestant denominations than it is now, urged, "The Biblical teachings