Family:
Heart of Humanity

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Edited by

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CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

To Our Parents
Joseph and Kathleen Haliburn
and Joseph and Virginia Shea

And to Drs. John and Evelyn Billings of Australia
They heroically lived the values of family life.

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PREFACE

This volume is a compilation of key papers presented at the Global Conference titled **"In Defence of the Family: Family, Children and Culture"** held at Bangkok in June 2011. The Conference was the culmination of several international deliberations held over the years. At this landmark gathering, eminent global and experienced professionals presented papers, offering insights, time-tested experiences and ideas that help to clarify concerns and strengthen the determination to move forward in the areas of Family, Children and Culture. The event marked the 25th anniversary of SERFAC – Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture – headquartered in Chennai, India. Over 180 delegates from around 30 countries as well as the United Nations, New York and ESCAP, Bangkok, attended the meet. SERFAC was established by Dr. Catherine Bernard, MBBS, MS, and collaborators from diverse backgrounds from India and the world, committed to ensuring the well-being of families so as to address the contemporary moral, spiritual, institutional and technological crises affecting families, children, communities, nations and the global society. An international registered non-governmental organization, SERFAC, which enjoys Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) of the UN, works towards creating awareness and sensitizing society to the fact that a healthy family life and its allied institution of marriage constitute the most important resource base and natural environment for the well-being of its members, particularly children. We at SERFAC believe that knowledge sharing will enrich each of us with the collective wisdom that will strengthen our belief that the Family holds the key to the future, and provide the rationale for defending it with determination, consistently, uncompromisingly and relentlessly. Hence this compilation. We see it as a vehicle to enable understanding, to voice our concerns, to discuss, to enlighten one another and to take an unambiguous and uncompromising stand for offering a new lifestyle and a new world order.

—Catherine Bernard

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The title of this book "Family: Heart of Humanity" is an effort to capture the vital role of the family in all of society and social institutions.

The papers that comprise this volume were presented by eminent professionals at the global conference **In Defence of the Family: Family, Children and Culture** held in Bangkok, Thailand, in June 2011. This conference also marked the silver jubilee of SERFAC in its relentless service to families.

This volume will, I hope, offer a perennial source of inspiration and a great resource manual.

I thank each member of the Programme Planning Core Committee: Dr. H. B. Danesh, Prof. Victoria Thoresen, Dr. John Shea and Dr. Caroline De Leon, for their commitment to the cause of the Family and exemplary team endeavour towards the preparation and smooth conduct of the conference.

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—Catherine Bernard

INTRODUCTION

CATHERINE BERNARD

"From an international perspective, focusing on families and children is particularly important if we are to achieve internationally agreed development goals that have shaped the development efforts of the United Nations"
—Ms. Renata Kaczmarska-Photakis, Family Focal Point, Division for Social Policy and Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Families and children across the world face a multitude of ever-changing challenges in an increasing international culture called globalization.

This era of globalization, which is directly linked with the media, communications and information technologies, has brought in its wake new economic systems that favour opening up new avenues for trade, free markets and flooding the world with consumer goods. It has also opened up new avenues of employment opportunities and the euphoria of a better lifestyle, with the demand for consequent – and perhaps necessary – cross-border migration.

This spurt in material growth is resulting not only in the exchange of goods but also of values, ideas and lifestyle. Such a new world order has created a new ethos in ways that affect every area of living – economic, political, ecological, military and cultural – which have profound paralysing effects on the health, development, emotional well-being and security of the Family and its members, particularly the poor, in countries of both the Southern and Northern Hemispheres. Such a paralysis has resulted in the dehumanization, depersonalization and commodification of individuals and families.

This systemic weakening of the moral, spiritual, institutional and social fabric of society has led to the present day crises being experienced around the world. These crises are manifested in increasing breakdown in marriage and family relationships, increasing feelings of meaninglessness, alienation, increasing violence and abuse of women and children, increasing incidence of mental illnesses, addiction and delinquency and increasing rates of suicide, especially among young people.

Humanity in the 21st century is at the crossroads of civilization and needs to work towards a recovery, or face the peril of decay and disintegration. The choice is with humanity itself. It must be recognized that we must defend the Family because fissures and fractures have developed into frank ruptures, breakdowns and collapses – not only of individuals, families and societies but also of nations.

It must be recognized that it is vital for society to respect the autonomy, integrity, solemnity and sacredness of every unborn child, of every person, every individual and family, and for every nation to work towards a meeting at different levels. A dialogue must occur to enrich the diversity and celebration of this diversity of family, children and cultures to make the world a more humane and civilized place in which to live. In this way, we can ensure a promising future for humanity.

Small and insignificant though it is, the Service and Research Institute on Family and Children (SERFAC) has made a start in this reversal process by identifying and working with the smallest, at the same time, most potent social unit – the Family.

My three decades of experience ranges from grassroots work in rural areas, to urban settings. I have worked in many countries across Asia (including affluent ones) as well as in the West. These experiences led me to switch professions. Although a qualified medical doctor, I decided to shift focus to social and behavioural issues, especially in the areas of relationships within the family context. This decision was the result of my exposure to and interest in natural family planning, in particular the Billings Ovulation Method that was developed in Australia by the late Dr. John Billings and his wife Dr. Evelyn Billings. I was introduced to the method some 33 years ago when I was offered a scholarship to study it in Australia with a view to undertaking research projects for the Indian Council of Medical Research. This led to further research studies when I collaborated with the US, African and Asian countries on intercultural and cross-cultural research to demonstrate the effectiveness and success rates of the method in various social conditions, particularly poverty.

My experiences stimulated my interest in the dynamics of human relationships in the context of sexuality, and beckoned me to move into the domain that I ultimately chose to work in. I learnt to place great value on the basic ingredients of human relationships – love, trust and understanding – which are taught and learnt essentially in the family.

As the years passed, I became conscious of the changes taking place in society, with particular reference to relationships in the Family – the most basic social institution.

At this crucial juncture of human history, SERFAC, which has over three decades of experience of working with families, takes an uncompromising and unambiguous stand defending life, defending the human person, defending marriage and defending the Family at all levels and in different socities.

SERFAC has, since 1976, championed the cause of the Family at various levels, one of which is through its international/global level events, and continues to prove to society and social systems that no civilization can endure without a strong family base as there is simply no religious or social institution that can adequately carry out the critical functions that belong to the family, including the collective transfer of wisdom and culture to the next generation.

Since the first international conference organized by SERFAC in India titled "The Family at the Service of Human Life in Contemporary Society" in 1983, subsequent conferences were held to deal with relevant and contemporary issues that affect families around the world. These conferences were aimed at creating a platform for various stakeholders and endeavoured to build local and global awareness on the needs of the Family. **In Defence of the Family: Family, Children and Culture** was the natural apex of these conferences.

International events such as this conference, on which this book is based, play a change-driving role in valuing the institution of Family. They are important because they bring together people from diverse backgrounds from different parts of the globe to meet, share experiences and offer valuable insights. The conference focused on a variety of issues of importance to families all around the world, such as cultural transitions, social responsibility, education, gender equality and social policy. Difficult issues of families such as poverty and social exclusion, violence within families with its causes and consequences, children in institutional care, and refugee and migrant families were also discussed. Some participants offered family- and community-based solutions to problems.

The key papers presented at the conference, which are compiled in this book, were articulate about specific areas and issues and offer scientific evidence of the increasing human causalities and tragedies taking place around the world due to family fragmentation and breakdown, which in turn affect the process of sustainable human development. They are of intrinsic value in facilitating the synergy needed to take the movement forward.

In conclusion, it would be apt to quote Ms. Kaczmarska-Photakis again: "Let me emphasize that families will continue to be essential building blocks of societies and guarantors of their children's well-being but they need sustained support from all of us."

CHAPTER ONE

IN DEFENCE OF THE FAMILY:
MICROCOSM OF THE WORLD

CATHERINE BERNARD

We live in an era of unprecedented technological, scientific and social progress, characterized by the conquest of space and time, social mobility, instant communication and liberalization of trade and commerce. In brief, we live in an era of new and more dramatic inventions and discoveries. At the same time, we need to admit that the world has never experienced such unprecedented violence, unrest, a state of continuous war, trafficking of women and children, racial conflicts, nuclear threat, sale of armaments, unabated crime and rampant corruption of unimaginable proportions and social disparity and injustice. This era can be characterized as an era of invasion of personal, social, national and global freedom, the decline of humane and spiritual values, leading to a loss of human warmth, concern, empathy and connectedness. Humanity is indeed going through a perilous time in history – we need to realize that we are in this together as a human community; and together we will perish or rise.

It is in such a global scenario that the basic ingredients of human relationships – love, trust, understanding and connectedness leading to a transformation of human nature – need to be fostered. Failure to do so will lead to further chaos, combat, defeat and the imminent threat of disaster and destruction of all social institutions, including the family – the smallest and simultaneously the most potent social unit – the world in microcosm.

The World in Microcosm

Often referred to as the foundation of society, "the family has the indispensable role of providing to its members the fundamental human environment needed for their physical, moral, psychological, social and

spiritual development" (Paul, 2001). Because of these unique characteristics, the Family is not only able to meet the needs of its members but is also able to provide society with individuals who are integrated, mature and responsible and who in turn contribute to society's healthy and stable development.

Such an environment offers a "civilization to the next generation wherein humanity becomes connected and knowledgeable about ways of life, personal growth, enlightenment, communication, social engagement, development and spiritual transformation – all of which are fundamental values for the creation, sustenance and ongoing development of society" (Dawson, 1983).

The family has its own, natural, unique, essential and foundational tasks of nurturing and caring, which distinguish it from all other social institutions. It is because of these innate elements and characteristics that the family alone is capable of carrying out its essential functions: "Social institutions, however good they may be, cannot respond to or adequately fulfil these tasks; nor can they replace them, for the family performs a plethora of functions that no other institution can do or does" (UN Occasional Paper Series, 1993).

Furthermore, it needs to be recognized that there are various forces at work in the present scenario that are crippling and disenabling the family from carrying out its essential functions. Such developments incapacitate its members in particular and society in general from carrying out their responsibilities and providing an ambience of security, protection and well-being to its members. In other words, society today is losing its basic and most important safety net, and reaping the consequences. It is imperative that we and all leadership groups come to terms with the need to defend the Family and protect it from forces that seek to minimize its importance or destroy it.

At this juncture, a few questions need to be raised: Why is the Family so important? Why does it need attention? Why should it be a priority at levels of governance? Why should the Family be seen and experienced as the bedrock of civilization? Why is the family considered as the source of, as well as the solution to, the many ills facing humanity?

The Importance of the Family

On the basis of the experience gained over three decades, ranging from grassroots work in rural areas to work in urban settings, covering both the poor and the affluent, and spread across many countries in Asia and the West, I will attempt to define the Family, its role, functions and

responsibility towards itself and society and later reflect on some of the processes of change that have taken place in the past and in the present and perhaps attempt to predict the future. I will also reflect on the influence the Family has and can have in shaping culture, values, lifestyles and ethos in present times.

Over the years people have tried to define "Family", often describing its functions rather than the institution itself. Defining "Family" is neither easy nor is it a purely scientific definition or a romantic experience. However, I will try to capture what constitutes "Family" from my experience of working with families. I would also like to add here the codicil that one cannot either talk of, or define "Family" while ignoring the institution at its foundation – marriage. Marriage is a legal, life-long commitment between two responsible adults – a man and a woman – who decide to live in a committed relationship as husband and wife and to give life to children whom they can love, care for and nurture. "Through this experience and responsibility they create a home where stability, security and 'belongingness' are ensured for themselves and their children until these children grow into adulthood capable of making decisions for themselves and starting families of their own" (Bernard, 1997).

This definition, as accurate as I can manage, excludes marriages and families that are formed for other reasons and are/or may not be conducive to the healthy development of children or the future of society.

I am also cognizant that this definition does not fit into many traditional definitions where there is gender disparity, such as in the Chinese or Indian cultures, much less the modern definitions that forsake adult and responsible commitment. However, I do wish to draw attention to the need for "mutual relating of adults" (Shea, 2006). This covenantal commitment calls for responsible parenthood that cannot be minimized, disputed or taken for granted. There is indeed empirical evidence from around the world which continues to demonstrate this fact that "marriage is the very foundation of family life, on which its future depends" (Klaus, 1997).

I have thus far tried to capture and synthesize the basic elements that constitute a family and to situate it in a context to enable a clearer understanding and appreciation of why "healthy family life" is indispensable in the contemporary world and why we need to defend it at all costs.

What Ails the Family?

I will now take a look at what ails the Family and what has happened in the process of change.

Change is inevitable in human existence and we have all experienced the rapidity of change, particularly over the past two decades. We have undergone changes in our culture, outlook on life, the world, our ways of living, the food we eat, the clothes we wear; in short, our life and ways of living have been impacted by change. In this process, the links of connectedness have either weakened or been lost, which in turn has brought about fragmentation at the levels of the individual, the family and the larger society. It can be stated that these changes, instead of linking the past with the present and future at family, community, regional, and national and international levels have, in fact, contributed to disconnection, fragmentation and alienation of peoples, striking at the roots of community, culture, and the history of what it means to be human.

These rapid and acute changes have displaced the legitimacy of the influence of the Family over its members, oftentimes leaving them in a state of confusion, uncertainty, instability, with a lack of identity and skewed values. These changes continue to enforce the low value placed on women and children, encouraging people to exploit them. Emerging from this state of confusion and uncertainty is the call in several societies to "abolish the family and its constituent institution – Marriage" (Danesh, 2006).

We will take a look at some of the major factors where change has had a tremendous impact on the Family and its relationships. Simultaneously, we need to take a look at the interconnections between the social, economic and political domains and the impact they have on the family as a unit and a collective of families called community/society.

Available socio-economic-political statistics reveal a picture of global conditions that are profoundly disturbing. Further, the speed with which change invested in the process of globalization is progressing offers a grim picture of the path this trend will take, a trend that is not yet decided nor can be measured" (Lazlo, 1997). The growing economic disparity between the rich and poor in and among nations, between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, or, as is often referred to, between the "North and South", cannot escape attention. It "is indeed a glaring fact that exposes how political and social mechanisms impact and maintain the power structures that manipulate social and economic systems to maintain their privileged positions and enjoy the benefits of economic progress at the cost of the majority of the world's nations/populations" (Stephen, 2006).

In such "takeovers" and "usurping of global space, families are commercially exploited, their rights violated, especially those of women, youth and children, and they are manipulated towards self-centred, profit making motives. It needs to be noted that such global disparity and injustice leads to imbalance and are morally unacceptable and politically unstable" (Hurley, 1983).

Other aspects that intensify these forms of degradation are highly misplaced investments by nations in militarization, commodification and marketization, unsustainable productive distribution and consumption systems that leave an exploited and degraded environment to future generations. This degradation is also being felt now, in that more developed societies are also affected by this divide, between advertisement-led aspirations and desires and the ability to fulfil them. These growing instabilities, linked with weakening parental influence, affect the aspirations and actual fulfilment in young people who additionally have unmet emotional needs reasons such as neglect or abuse that can lead to extreme behavioural patterns, including suicides.

It needs to be recognized that the power of the marketplace today has aggressively pushed products beyond tolerable limits on young people and children. The audience wants these products, but often cannot afford to buy the commodity and thus they break loose from parents, particularly if they are emotionally deprived or unstable, and find other ways and means of substituting the commodity they cannot purchase. The increasing prostitution and abortions among girls and young women, and the rampant spread of HIV-AIDS contribute to and cause family breakdowns, leaving children abandoned and/or orphaned.

The last word cannot be said on these scores – there is more to it than what is seen, heard, reported or experienced. "It is beyond doubt that contemporary social systems and lifestyles are highly influenced by the media which often makes a mockery of continuity of families and the community" (Nataraja, 2001).

Technology also has a major impact on families It has greatly influenced lifestyle and cultures, not only of families and communities but also of populations within nations and nations as a whole. Families have experienced the transitions from being agrarian-type families to the industrial era where the nuclear family began to emerge, often in forms that can be referred to as the *modified extended family*. In contemporary society, we have families that are highly technologically connected and can be referred to as the "networked family" (George, 2006). It needs to be recognized that "too often the criteria for evaluating the influence of technology is to evaluate it in isolation for its benefits to a community or

society, with little reference to its impact on individuals and family"
(Nataraja, 2001). This raises some questions: Who or what forces
encourage the development of technology? Whose need is really being
met? Who determines need areas when introducing technology, and what
are the social risks to community and family?

   "At this juncture two critical questions need to be asked. How does
technology enter the home? And, what does it do to the family?"
(Nataraja, 2001). The use and influence of technology in the most
developed countries seem also to be felt in the least developed countries.
Reproductive technologies such as contraceptives and abortion methods,
communication modes such as computers, telephones, mobile phones,
answering machines and the like, and domestic appliances such as
washing machines, microwave ovens, television, music systems and
maybe a community or home theatre, combine to produce what I like to
call the "technology affected family" (George, 2006), for telemarketing
and home banking are all part of the middle income family.

   It needs to be noted that technologies and contraceptives have had very
adverse effects on society. "Cyberspace has shrunk our planet; it has often
replaced the warmth and closeness of physical presence. It is the principal
driving force connecting all parts of the world with a two-way flow of
communication and interaction, but at the same time it is also creating a
new medium for crime, the spread of a culture of intolerance, religious
fundamentalism, pornography, information warfare and organized crime.
Its globe-spanning activities include – fraud, financial corruption, money
laundering, sex addiction, chemical addictions, trafficking of women and
children, sale of arms, drugs and human organs" (Hurley, 1983). It needs
to be recognized that while cyberspace, armaments and newer forms of
destructive weapons have taken centre stage and contribute immensely to
the spread of violence, questions need to be raised on how uninformed
choice and/or imposed contraception and abortion contribute to or even
perhaps initiate the process of violence in different settings, especially in
families around the world.

   In my opinion, very little or no work has been done in this area. After
having listened to the stories of thousands of women in various countries
and social settings, I am led to believe that the most fundamental, insidious
forms of violence against the integrity of the human being and Family are
uninformed choice and/or imposed contraception, unethical field trials of
contraceptive technologies on the poor, and the easy availability of
abortion facilities. These are in many ways cowardly forms of what I
would call terrorism on a selective population – women and the unborn
child. Nations that promote reproductive rights out of the context of the

individual and Family and legalize abortion without considering the well-being of society are continuing to ignite, contribute to and feed terrorist activity. Such investments in legalizing abortion and legalizing euthanasia (which is being deliberated in several parliaments around the world) is to sanctify crime, canonize abortion and deify violence, all offering a tryst with darkness, delusion and death.

While defending the Family in the face of population control, unprecedented technological progress, consumer and market-driven lifestyles that demean humanity, especially women and children, as well as ridicule the institutions of marriage and family, we need to recognize that there are also initiatives and trends to build awareness, arrive at a consensus, and influence positive policy taking place in these areas around the world. The work of SERFAC counts among these initiatives and efforts.

Culture, Change and the Family

While important changes are under way on the socioeconomic, sociopolitical and technological dimensions of the globalization process, "Serious questions remain as to the political will, rapidity and effectiveness of these changes in regard to the ways governments design such policies and programmes to implement them" (Amalorpavadass, 1986).

"Today, the paradox that has come to stay is that governments place national prestige, wealth, political collusion and power consideration above family life and long-term sustainability. Businesses place quantitative growth higher than concern for the development of their stakeholders" (Paul, 2001).

In this process, social and political space has been taken over by corporations and multinationals that seek to erode the cultures of a given people, imposing a globalization that is imbalanced, favouring the uncontrolled promotion of Western lifestyles on areas of the world that have distinctive cultural, social and traditional ways of living, of lifestyles that respect religious sentiments and values, with mandates for a respect for elders, whoever they may be – grandparents, teachers, and so on. Such an imposition creates a static way of life that does not respect variety, creates a culture of displacement, and does not offer either the richness and celebration of the diversity of cultures or the affection that satisfies the human heart.

Such unilateral cultural imposition and forced migration for survival or a better life remove people from the soil they have been rooted in and transplant them in soil that is both alien and contaminated. In such a

cultural reflux brought on by a market economy, how can the Family survive? Are families strong and stable enough or equipped to meet such challenges without falling apart?

At this time, culture has been affected in many ways and in many countries by what is referred to as *liberalization* and/or *modernization*, where the media keep invading the nooks and corners of the globe as well as the privacy of the home. Such an invasion creates and continues to create new forms of thought, ideology, values and relationships and new forms of art, music, fashion and language, often contributing to the fragmentation of the individual consciousness of the contemporary family and alienating it from its core allegiances. Unfortunately, such cultural products seem to flow mainly in one direction – from the developed countries to the developing ones.

What we do not see is a dialogue between cultures or celebration of the diversity of cultures. On the contrary, it is a Westernization of cultures – a spread of images, lifestyles and ideologies that increasingly threatens the diversity of cultures, values, identities and relations around the world and fosters the building of a monolithic and materialistic culture that is both Western and capitalist. Such distortion, eclipsing and manipulation of cultures are resulting in cultural confusion, commercialization and a values-vacuum. It continues to erode and displace the traditional values of various cultures while projecting materialism and accumulation of money and things as the main goals of life. It marginalizes the time-honoured spiritual and ethical values passed down in the family from one generation to the next. Modern society is led in many ways by illusion and not reality.

In modern society, the worth of an individual is measured in terms of the brands of products they possess and the money they get/earn. In this confusion, the young are increasingly finding themselves living with overlapping or dual identities that are not compatible with various areas of their inner selves as well as their social selves.

With these changes in cultural settings, inter-generational and familial conflicts increase, communication among family members diminishes, and many words do not mean the same to everyone. The new definitions that have emerged of "marriage", "friend", "love", "partner" and so on have nearly come to stay. "These concepts are creating and floating psychological barriers among members of the family, when the need of the family is to spend time together, listen to one another, demonstrate care and concern for one another – rather than leaving members of a family living in different worlds of their own. This is true in every social strata of society" (Hurley, 1983).

While every government wants to build a strong and powerful state, we find that in development plans it is a reality that the benefits are only for the top 20% of the affluent groups and the ruling classes. The basic needs of the poor, who form the vast majority of each country and the world, are neglected, and economies are geared to provide consumer goods for an affluent minority. However, there is a great awakening among many people, including the poor, who want to participate in the decision-making process and share equally in national wealth and the benefits of development.

In this scenario, socialism has thrown up almost a parallel culture along with a parallel economy. Much of this manipulation results from the criminalization of politics. Socialism and secularism are very important constitutive components of the cultures of the world that need to be protected and presented. Most modern states are secular. While religion has been the core of many Eastern cultures and civilizations, what remains of it today needs to be evaluated. "Secularism focuses on a concern for the individual, the secular, the temporal and the historical. In pluralistic societies, for example India, communal harmony and national integration are indispensable. However, this has to be worked out on the basis of the reality of the composite culture and the creed word of secularism" (Amalorpavadass, 1986).

 "It is therefore important to realize that democracy is first lived and learnt in the family" (Bernard, 1997). Unless its members learn the values and ethics that steer the three pillars of democracy, that is, culture, religion and secularism, an alternate culture of exploitation and manipulation takes over, resulting in alienation, where crime and corruption are sometimes built into the very fabric of political and public life.

Positive Steps

I would now like to touch upon the main characteristics of the Family that set it apart from other social institutions. They include committed relationships, a strong sense of bonding and belongingness among its members, mutual responsibilities and accountability, of caring and concern for one another, identification with family values, a spirituality and fundamental belief in family strengths.

Thus, for the Family to fulfil its tasks in relation to its members and in relation to society, it needs a climate wherein the members of the family have a sense of security and stability. This results from a stable means of livelihood and employment; adequate facilities to meet the needs of food, nutrition, housing, health and education; adequate leisure; support for the

emotional and spiritual development of the members; and social structures that will ensure equity and justice in the family's social relations. The Family needs a place in society to provide a sense of belonging, a sense of self-esteem and dignity. These needs can be met only from the social, cultural, economic, technological, political, psychological, religious and moral milieu in which the family is placed. When changes occur in these areas of life, they have a significant impact and profound influence on families and their capacity to perform their roles satisfactorily.

"The fact is that globalization today has created such drastic changes in all these aspects of life that families are reeling under the onslaught of changes that are controlled by forces too powerful for the family to be able to resist" (Bernard, 1997).

In reality, all these global changes have actual implications for an individual's understanding of self, as well as that of the members who constitute the family unit, the society and the world. Such an understanding of person and family in an interconnected world is leading to the formation of new identities and images of self and family.

From this perspective, questions need to be asked: Can anything be done to stem this avalanche of change that is more destructive than constructive, more negative than positive? Can the negative aspects of globalization be eliminated? Is total globalization a reality we must come to terms with? Do we need to adopt current models of globalization that measure development in terms of money, power and manipulation and not the quality of life for all human beings?

The answers are: We need not accept the built-in inequalities and injustices, exploitative structures and policies of the present form of globalization. We need not unquestioningly accept the unequal playing field between the developed and the developing. We need not passively accept the policies and protocols that make the rich richer and the poor poorer – which are again destructive to family life. However, we need to develop policies to identify and create opportunities that facilitate the following:

- Nurturing resistance, based on ethics and values, to negative and materialistic trends that demean the person, ethics and values;
- Civil societies, NGOs and not-for-profit organizations becoming the voices of poor families – for that matter, of all families, to provide informed advocacy at the global platforms of power as they have an important role to play in the future – especially regarding women and children;

- Appropriate use of technology and appropriate technology without negative impact on the individual, the family and environment.

These endeavours, which have a bearing on the future, need to be used as effective mitigation of the relative impact of globalization.

At the family level, various institutions and agencies can be used to create a change in mind-set through effective family life education programmes, churches, educational institutions and NGOs. These groups can bring about a paradigm change for members of the family, helping them reflect on the lasting values that should govern family life and discover the futility of chasing materialism as a way of life. They can also highlight the danger of ignoring the emotional and spiritual dimensions of its members and family life as an integrated entity.

The challenge before us is "to smooth the path of the unfolding dimensions of the globalization process by constructive and timely education, leading to transformation in social dimensions" (Lazlo, 1997).[1] Only in this way can we have the assurance of moving towards a new world capable of preserving family values, and personal dignity while opening the resources necessary for improving the lives of millions of families who are currently left out of the process of globalization and development.

Hence, the institution of Family needs to be a priority on the agenda of humanity. With this challenge before us, we need to become advocates for the Family – for the Family is the most effective institution for promoting the concept of the oneness of humanity, the primary educator of each new generation, the transmitter of culture and inter-generational links. Parents and educators need to learn and promote values of peace and positive living, values of love, selflessness, affirmation, of generosity and understanding, of sharing, caring and connectedness so that as a human community we can be vibrant, dynamic and truly the heart of society.

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CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL TRANSITION AND THE FAMILY

THEODORE MASCARENHAS

"The family is a haven in a heartless world." Let me begin with this line from Christopher Lasch, an American historian, moralist and social critic, which is linked to the title of his book, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged*. A very strong point he makes in the book written way back in 1977 is that while modernity in different forms, including many developing social and human sciences, advances, the family as a "haven" needs to be preserved against the "progressive" forces of modern society.

Something similar was echoed by Pope Benedict XVI, during a trip to Croatia. In a homily during Mass on the occasion of the National Day of Croatian Catholic Families, the Holy Father warned about the dangers that the Family in the modern world faces: "Unfortunately, we are forced to acknowledge the spread of a secularization which leads to the exclusion of God from life and the increasing disintegration of the family, especially in Europe. Freedom without commitment to the truth is made into an absolute, and individual well-being through the consumption of material goods and transient experiences is cultivated as an ideal, obscuring the quality of interpersonal relations and deeper human values; love is reduced to sentimental emotion and to the gratification of instinctive impulses, without a commitment to build lasting bonds of reciprocal belonging and without openness to life. We are called to oppose such a mentality!"

I would like to take up three considerations here:

1. The dignity of the human Family and its divine origin;
2. Globalization and material development and cultural changes; and
3. How to reinforce the family today.

Obviously, as I represent a Dicastery of the Catholic Church, I will try to also include the opinion of the church in the matter.

The Dignity of the Human Family and its Divine Origin

The institution of marriage goes back to Biblical times. The very personal way in which God makes man and woman in the Bible not only bestows a specific and special dignity on the human being but even more, endows the first human family, the predecessor of all families to come, with a unique place in human life. While almost the whole of creation was accomplished by the power of simple words like "Let there be light, and there was light", the creation of Man was done by a special act wherein the Almighty himself "formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

If there was this personal divine intervention in the shaping of Man and bringing him to life with the Creator's own breath, the dignity and the nobility of the Family are also derived from the Author of life Himself. The Bible uses a beautiful metaphor to explain this reality. After He created man, God brought him into the midst of His wonderfully organized creation and "the man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man" (Genesis 2:20). Therefore, taking off a rib from the man himself, God created the woman so that the man considers the woman, "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh". So intimate and majestic is the relationship of the first couple that the Bible tells us that "the two of them become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

The birth of the first child is again attributed to the Lord Himself as, on his birth, Eve, calling him Cain, exclaims, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council would point out that Jesus, through his life and preaching, "sanctified those human ties, especially family ones, which are the source of social structures" (*Gaudium et spes*).

We are firmly of the view that the intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws. God Himself is the author of matrimony, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes. Therefore, a family is a relationship which by divine will and in the eyes of society too is a lasting one (Cfr. *Gaudium et spes*).

It is with this basic premise in mind that we look at the Family amidst cultural transition.