

**REACTIVATING THE EXTENDED FAMILY:
FROM BIBLICAL NORMS
TO PUBLIC POLICY IN BRITAIN**

by

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Foreword

by

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Cambridge

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Roy Clements

FOREWORD

Our rapidly rising crime rate is one sign of the pace of disintegration of our social structure. Another is the widening gulf between the haves and havenots, between those with regular annual increases in real wages and those with no jobs and no prospects. A third sign is the rapid increase in the divorce rate and the increase in one-parent families. A fourth is the contrast between the frenetic level of financial activity - exchange speculation and take-over bids - and the rapid decline of our industrial base. A fifth is the crisis of the inner city.

Most of us feel that if our society is to recover, these crises must be resolved. But we are disillusioned with the collectivism which took people out of the friendly little streets and put them into high-rise flats, disillusioned with big business and big unions. And yet few people believe that the individualism of consumer choice is the answer to all moral and social problems.

It is time to go back to the drawing board and this book is a first attempt to do so. A theologian and an economist, both influenced by their time in Africa, have looked at the moral values embodied in the Mosaic law and its regulation of the family life and economic activity of early Israel. We do not have to agree with all their conclusions to admit that we have a lot to learn from the close kinship system of the Mosaic law. Nor do we have to limit their lessons to the agricultural system of the twelve tribes.

Our lonely atomised society will have to rediscover the objectives not only of the nuclear family, but also of the extended family. Our industry will have to learn to operate on a human scale, and our footloose and alienated society will have to learn again what it means to belong to, and to be committed to, the place and people where we belong.

Schluter and Clements have started the debate. We should see that it continues until public opinion is changed and we live again in a stable society.

Sir Frederick Catherwood

SUMMARY

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the importance and feasibility of applying Old Testament teaching on socio-economic issues to contemporary western societies. The paper falls into three parts. The first looks at Old Testament Israel's social structure and in particular the structure and role of the family. The second examines whether and how to apply Israel's institutions and values to society in the twentieth century. In the third we illustrate the way this can be done for several areas of British economic and social policy in the 1980s.

In Chapter 2, the various social institutions in Old Testament Israel are analysed, starting with the tribe, then clan, sub-clan or village, and 3-generation (3-G) family. People were seldom regarded simply as individuals in Old Testament Israel, but always as part of a larger social group. For example, when an individual sinned the whole kinship group suffered as well. The layout of the land system, as well as laws relating to extended family responsibilities, show clearly that these familial institutions were regarded as normative, and that God intended they should persist over time.

The political and economic system was designed in such a way as to maintain and strengthen these family relationships in the course of the development process. The Jubilee laws ensured that land could never be sold, but would always revert to its original family owners. The local judicial and administrative systems guaranteed that every family was involved in the local decision-making. The military system was organised around the family and clan. The restrictions on interest and debt accumulation were designed to maintain the extended family as the major source of capital and welfare for the individual, and the bonds within the family. The New Testament endorses Old Testament teaching that individual responsibility stretches out to the extended family, and Paul uses the extended family model to teach what relationships in the church should be like.

In Chapter 4, the case is made for teaching Old Testament social institutions and values as normative for all societies. Jesus and the apostles clearly regarded the Old Testament as having a vital role in teaching ethics and justice. Therefore, it must be possible to bridge the cultural gap between Old Testament society and our own day. The key is to distinguish those aspects of culture which God specified for all societies through the Law, and those aspects which are unspecified, or fulfilled in the New Testament.

Treating the Old Testament Law as a model for how God wants to organise a society avoids the dangers of selective choice of principles from the Law. While many of the laws cannot and should not be applied literally today, the intention of the Law is still binding on the Christian as a rule for life. To determine correctly the intention behind any specific law, it is essential to understand how the system as a whole fitted together. Only in this way is it possible to see how apparently conflicting principles - such as those of stewardship and justice - can be married in practice.

There is still the question of which parts of the Law to apply to social, political and economic issues. This paper argues that the reformers' moral, civil and ceremonial distinctions are useful as long as it is realised that a single law may fall into several or all of the categories simultaneously. While the moral dimension can be obeyed by the individual, the civil dimension requires a collective or national response. Alone among the three dimensions, the ceremonial one is no longer a requirement after Christ, although it still remains useful to show Israel's cultural distinctiveness and the formal procedures by which to approach God.

Chapters 5 to 8 examine the application of the Old Testament teaching to four areas of British social and economic policy in the 1980s. The aim of these chapters is not to provide definitive solutions to

the problems being faced in these areas, but to illustrate how teaching from the Old Testament social model can be used to provide goals for policy today. The procedure is first to identify the key characteristics of the biblical model, and then analyse ways in which the presuppositions or values underlying contemporary policy differ from biblical norms. On this basis, it is then possible to identify goals, or limited objectives, for a programme of reform. The final step is to identify policies to move society in the direction of the goals that have been identified.

Specific 'limited objectives' are identified. For family policy, greater financial incentives are required for the family to take care of its own. Universal home ownership, and creating identifiable neighbourhood communities, should be two of the major goals of housing policy. To encourage a viable neighbourhood government system on the biblical model will require more decentralization of decision-making in government, and less residential mobility. A greater emphasis on small and family business in economic policy would further these goals of social policy.

In summary, the Law provides a total socio-economic framework which differs radically from both Capitalism and Marxism. Because its goals are defined in terms of the quality of relationships rather than the economies of development, and the key social group is defined not as the State or corporate business, but as kin relations, the system is probably best described by the term 'Relationism'.

Part 1

Biblical Teaching on Family and Kinship

1. INTRODUCTION

Family policy is a subject of growing interest, not just in the West but throughout the world, as evidenced by the growing number of political statements on the family and the rapidly expanding literature.¹ There is now even an International Union of Family Organisations based in Paris. Interest in the West may arise from the suffering which lies behind the breakdown of the conjugal family. Evidence accumulated by the Study Commission on the Family points to 1.5 million children in one-parent families in Britain in 1978,² and the relationship isolation of old people and divorcees who do not remarry.³ More cynically, Government concern may arise from pressure on the welfare services, as more and more isolated conjugal families are unable or unwilling to shoulder the care of the rapidly growing number of over-75s. Awareness of the value of family relationships, in an increasingly impersonal society, is also making political interest in the family a vote-rewarding pursuit.⁴

Has the Bible anything to say on family policy, beyond the moral exhortation to the population to eschew adultery and divorce? Christians are obviously concerned about the current debates centring on family role segregation, and power relations within the conjugal family. However, changing sex roles offer little prospect of stemming the tide of either divorce, or neglect of the old, the young, the maladjusted and the disabled. In what ways, and with what sort of solutions, does biblical revelation approach the question of how to strengthen and develop the conjugal family? And should the conjugal family or the extended family be the primary focus of concern?

This paper adopts a controversial stance. We will attempt to argue that in the Old Testament (OT) Law God provides a normative model for the organisation of society, and specifically for the organisation and functions of the family. The task of the Christian, then, is to seek to influence the social order, as far as he is able, so that it conforms to God's social design. The paper is organised so as to address three major questions:

- 1 How was the family defined as an institution in OT Israel, and what impact did the political and economic structures have on the family?
2. What principles of interpretation should be used to bridge the gap between OT Israel and contemporary societies?
3. What lessons can Christians learn from the OT model for family policy in Britain today?

The goal of this paper is not to provide comprehensive solutions to the problems of family disintegration in the West. Rather, it is to identify the basis for a biblical critique of the contemporary malaise, so as to indicate the direction in which solutions might be found. The aim is to stimulate further research based on the methodology developed here, and to challenge Christian social scientists

¹ For example, see Sheila B. Kamerman, and Alfred J. Kahn (eds), *Family v Policy: Government and Families in Fourteen Countries*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978.

² Study Commission on the Family, *Families in the Future*, A Policy Agenda for the '80s, London, 1983.

³ Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, *The Symmetrical Family*, Penguin, 1973, p. 279.

⁴ For evidence of a growing awareness of the value of the family in industrial society, see Young and Wilmott, *ibid.*, ch.10.

to look for guidance from biblical teaching at a more specific and detailed level than has been normal in the past.

2. KINSHIP INSTITUTIONS IN OLD TESTAMENT ISRAEL

Name and Family

Although "family" in early Israel was a very broad concept, there was no special term for the nuclear or conjugal family. The smallest family unit recognised in the language was the 3 or 4 generation site-resident family (Hebrew *bayith*) living in neighbouring houses on a single site. We shall refer to this unit throughout the rest of this paper as the 3-generational (3-G) family, even though it may contain only 2-generations or as many as 5-generations, as there is no English word-equivalent for this institution. Larger kinship units were the territorial clan (Hebrew *mishpachah*) and the tribe (Hebrew *shevet*). In fact, God regarded the whole nation of Israel as a family which came from a single ancestor, Jacob = Israel - or Jacob's grandfather, Abraham (Jn 8:31ff) and all Israelites would refer to each other as "brother" (e.g. Deut 15:7). As we shall see, Old Testament Israel could claim to have been the most family-centred society which has ever existed.

An individual's name referred to each of these three main levels of family-social organisation, as illustrated in Table 1. As Andersen summarizes:

"Such a name embodied the most important facts about a man's sociological relationships and obligations. It lists the basic groups to which he belonged in the socio-political ordering of society".⁵

TABLE 1 Names and Social Structure in Old Testament Israel

Level in Social Structure	Case 1 (1 Samuel 9)	Case 2 (Joshua 7)
Personal Name	Saul	Achan
Patronymic	Kish	Carmi
3-Generational Family	Abiel	Zabdi
Clan	Matrite	Zarhite
Tribe	Benjamin	Judah
Nation	Israel	Israel

Source: Adapted from Francis I. Andersen, "Israelite Kinship Terminology and Social Structure, The Bible Translator, 20:1, p.30, 1969

The individual's name not only reflected the individual's status and position in society, but in turn underlined to the individual the importance of family-related institutions as the foundation of his identity. Thus, the long lists of names in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 trace Jesus' identity to a tribe, a clan, and a 3-G family. It is significant that Jesus was not simply regarded as the son of Joseph, his conjugal family point of reference. In this section, we shall examine each of the main levels of the hierarchy of family organisation in turn, and the rights and obligations associated with each level as given in the Law.

⁵ Francis I. Andersen, "Israelite Kinship Terminology and Social Structure", The Bible Translator, 20:1 1969, pp. 32-33.

The Tribe

Israel had twelve tribes, named after their founding ancestors. When Levi was set apart from the other tribes, and scattered throughout the land of Israel at the point of entry into the promised land, the tribe of Joseph, as the largest tribe, was split into two - Ephraim and Manasseh - so that the '12' tribes could be retained. The size of the tribes depends on what interpretation is put on the various census lists, but it seems to have varied from a few thousand in the case of Dan at the time of the Judges to perhaps 100,000 in the case of Judah in the monarchic period.⁶

There is strong evidence that the tribes were territorial units in Israel. The narratives of Numbers and Joshua describe the division of the land into tribal units. However, even those like Gottwald who do not accept these narratives as historically accurate agree, on the basis of other evidence, that tribes were territorially based. Gottwald agrees that in Judges the tribes are represented as concentrated demographically. Also, settlements were identified by their location in a particular tribe:

"It was a standard practice in ancient Israel to identify settlements by their locations in a particular *shevet* e.g. Gibeah of Benjamin or Bethlehem of Judah, and when persons identified themselves under David's monarchy, they were asked, 'From what *city* are you?', to which they answered, 'Your servant is of such and such a *shevet* in Israel' (11 Sam 15:2-3). This is apparently an ellipsis for the full reply, of such and such a city of such and such a shevet e.g. from Kedesh of Naphtali or from Bethel of Ephraim, etc."⁷

The overlap of regional and ethnic identity was important in strengthening and maintaining that identity over long periods of time.

The tribes also played a major political role, so much so that early Israel is probably most accurately described as a federal state. When David first became king at Hebron, he was made king only of his tribe - the tribe of Judah (11 Sam 2:4 For over seven years the remaining tribes were ruled by Saul's son, Ishbosheth, and it was only after a protracted civil war that David became king of the Northern tribes (11 Sam 3: 1; 5:1-5). The power of the leaders of the Northern tribes is also clear at the end of Solomon's reign, when they still had sufficient power over against the monarchy to secede (1 Kings 12). The army was also organised along tribal lines. This was not only true in the period of the Judges (for example, see Judges 5), but as late as the reign of David (1 Chron 27:16-24). Therefore, although there is no record of formal meetings of tribal elders to determine policy within the tribe, it seems likely such meetings took place. Political function further reinforced kinship structure (Deut 16:18).

The Territorial Clan

The list of clans in Israel is shown in Table 2. In seven tribes, generally the clans were named after Jacob's grandson, and in the other five after his great-grandsons, but these latter are not included in our shortened Table 2.⁸ Based on the lists in Numbers, there were approximately 60 clans. Gottwald argues that the clan was a much smaller unit, i.e. there were many more of them; in his theory of a peasant rising in Canaan against the city states, as part of the origin of the nation of Israel, he denies that the clans bear any relation to the genealogical tree described so painstakingly in the Pentateuch and early histories.⁹ However, de Vaux believes the clan was based on kinship ties.

⁶ For a useful discussion of alternative hypotheses of the numbers in Numbers, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary, IVP*, Leicester, 1981, pp. 60-66.

⁷ Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Jahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250-1050 BC*, SCM, London, 1980 (first published Orbis Books, New York, 1979), p. 256.

⁸ For a detailed discussion of this point, see Francis I. Andersen, *ibid*.

⁹ Norman Gottwald, *ibid*

“The clan had common interests and duties, and its members were conscious of the blood-bond which united them: they called each other 'brothers' (1 Sam 20:29)”¹⁰

TABLE 2 Tribe and Clan Names in Early Israel

<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Clan</i>	<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Clan</i>
Reuben	Hanoch Pallu Hezron Carmi	Benjamin	Bela (Becher) Ashbel (Gera) Ahiram (Naaman) (Ehi) (Rosh) Shephupham/Muppirn Hupham/Huppim (Ard)
Simeon	Nemuel/Jemuel Jamin (Ohad) Jachin Zerah/Zohar Shaul	Dan	Shuham/Hushim
Gad	Zephon Haggi Shuni Ozni/Ezbon Eri Arod Arel	Asher	Imnah Ishva? Ishvi Beriah
Judah	(Er) } died without (Onan) } issue Shelah Perez Zerah	Naphtali	Jahzeel Guni Jezer Shillem
Issachar	Puvah Jashub/lob Shimron	Zebulum	Sered Elon Jahleel
Joseph	Ephraim	Tola Levi	Gershon Kohath Merari
		Manasseh	

Source: Based on, Francis I. Andersen "Israelite Kinship Terminology and Social Structure", The Bible Translator, 20:1 1969

If the total population of men in Israel at the time of entering Canaan was 600,000 as given in Numbers 26, this would give an average size of a clan as around 10,000 men. However, even many conservative commentators believe the numbers must have been considerably smaller than this,¹¹ Arguing that perhaps the word translated 'thousand' meant just 'armed unit' at an earlier period of

¹⁰ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1961, p. 21

¹¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *ibid.*

Israel's history. This would push down the size of a clan to perhaps 3,000 to 5,000 people, even at the time of the monarchy.¹²

Like the tribe, the clan in Israel was also a territorial unit, so that we have termed it a "territorial clan". In the literature of social anthropology, a clan usually has two distinguishing characteristics:

- (i) the blood-bond
- (ii) it is exogamous - that is, clan members must marry those of a different clan.

Generally, such clans are not territorial units. In much of Africa, sons as they grew up moved away from the family homestead to the edge of the tribal territory to find new land to settle.¹³ However, in Israel the particular historical circumstances led to a unique settlement pattern. Throughout the forty years in the wilderness, the people moved in a tight formation based on clan organisation (Numbers 2). When they reached the Promised Land, land was given out on a clan by clan basis (Joshua 13-19), and the land allocations were in direct proportion to the size of the tribe and clan (Num 33:54-56). With 60 clans in a total area of 540 square miles, the average geographical area occupied by each clan would have been about 9 square miles. So clan and a given geographical area were co-terminus. These areas might be called "kinzones". Those living in a kinzone had the double loyalty of kinship and neighbourhood. As a result, the town and the clan sometimes became interchangeable terms; thus it is not surprising to find among the list of the clans of Manasseh on the east of Jordan (settled first) seven names of towns (Num 26:28-34). Although territorial units, Gottwald is right in insisting that there is no evidence that they were exogamous: members of a clan could marry other members of the clan (Num 36:10-12).

Several laws served to ensure that clan territory remained intact over time. There was no freehold land market in Israel. The Jubilee provision required that rural land was returned free to its original owner every 50 years (Lev 25:8-17). Not only this, but each individual living away from his clan had to return to spend the Jubilee Year with his clan (Lev 25:10). God's ruling in a land case not only ensured land should be inherited by a member of the clan (Num 27:11), but made explicit the rule that if daughters inherited land, they had to marry within the clan or forfeit the land (Num 36). God appears to have valued territorial integrity of the clan above the unrestricted freedom of the individual woman to marry whom she chose under these circumstances. The continuing strength of tribal and clan loyalties throughout Israel's history is illustrated by the fact that Jeremiah repeatedly addresses the people by their clans, and even as late as the post-exilic period, the people returning from exile and living in Jerusalem are listed by tribe and clan (1 Chron 9:4-9; Neh 11:4-8). Wright also points to strong archaeological evidence to show that--theancient clan divisions had retained their identity and integrity into the late monarchy".¹⁴

There is also substantial evidence that the army was organised on a clan basis. It seems that each clan was expected to provide a contingent to the nationally conscripted army. This clan unit is called an '*eleph*', which is normally translated '1,000'; it seems that gradually this clan unit developed into a tactical fighting unit of 1,000 men under the monarchy so that the 'clan military unit' and '1,000' became interchangeable terms. In several instances, the '*eleph*' and territorial clan are interchangeable terms (Judges 6:14-15; 1 Sam 10:17-27). Even as late as the post-exilic period, Nehemiah is organising defence of the city walls on a clan by clan basis (Neh 4:13).

The clan also had a number of other functions. The fact that David's excuse of wanting to return home for an annual clan feast was credible to Saul indicates that such events were a familiar feature of the

¹² The size of Israel's population, and reconciliation of the various lists of names and numbers, is a subject which urgently requires additional research.

¹³ See, for example, D. J. Penwill, *Kamba Customary Law*, Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1979. First published 1950.

¹⁴ Christopher Wright, "Family, Land and Property in Ancient Israel: Some Aspects of Old Testament Social Ethics-", Cambridge University Ph.D. dissertation, 1976, p. 48.

gastronomic calendar in Israel in that period (1 Sam 20:28-29). The clans even played some part in celebration of the passover (Ex 12:3-4). There is also some possible evidence of clan-based economic activity; the linen workers at Beth-Ashbea are described as "clans" (1 Chron 4:21); and the head of such an organisation is referred to as the "Father of the Valley of the Smiths" (1 Chron 4:14). Either these are guilds which are organised in the structure of a clan, as de Vaux suggests,¹⁵ or they were in fact clans which had adopted a particular industrial skill. In either event, there is testimony to the centrality of clan organisation.

A further function of the clan was protection of the welfare of the 3-G family and the individual. The clan through its members had the function of caring for the poor and needy. This responsibility was individualised, by laying it on the nearest relative - the *goel* - *who* is defined by de Vaux as "a redeemer, a protector, a defender of the interests of the individual or the group".¹⁶ The "nearest relative" was defined by his relationship to the 3-G family; he was outside the 3-G family but within the clan (Lev 25:49). The order in which different relatives qualified for *goel* responsibilities and rights was brother, uncle, cousin, other (Lev 25:49; Num 27:9-11). No doubt in practice it would depend very much on the personalities and capacities of those involved. The story of Ruth is about how the clan welfare system operated in practice. Boaz is described as "a man of wealth, of the same clan as Elimelech" (Ruth 2: 1). Although of the same clan, he is not the closest relative. Clearly the obligations within the clan spread out a considerable relation-distance from the 3-G family. The main responsibilities of the "nearest relative" in a welfare context were:

- (i) To raise up an heir for the 3-G family if the head of a 3-G family died without children (Deut 25:8-9)
- (ii) To buy back property sold by a member of the clan (Lev 25:25)
- (iii) To buy back an individual who had sold himself into domestic service (Lev 25:49).

The "nearest relative" also had the right to inherit land in the absence of claim from members of the 3-G family (Num 27:11). In the story of Ruth, Boaz both accepted responsibility to raise up an heir for his dead relative's 3-G family, and at the same time received rights to that 3-G family's land.

The clan also had played a judicial role. In cases of murder, and doubtless in other lesser cases, it acted as the prosecution for the injured (or dead) members of the clan. This responsibility fell to the nearest relative -the *goel* (e.g. Deut 19:6). God provided certain safeguards against this system being abused, i.e. the Cities of Refuge, but seems to have regarded unrequited murder as a much greater risk to a nation than overrequited manslaughter (Deut 19:1-13).¹⁷

Subclan - Town or Village

In Deuteronomy especially, the village or town, which in most cases was made up of the members of a single clan, had an important position in the administrative and judicial system. The elders of a town had the following responsibilities:

- (i) To appoint judges and administrative officers (Deut 16:18)
- (ii) To act as a court to arbitrate in a wide range of intra-family and inter-family problems and disputes (Deut 21:18-21; 22:17)
- (iii) To negotiate with other subclans/towns on areas of mutual concern (e.g. Deut 21:1-9).

¹⁵ de Vaux, *ibid.*, p. 77

¹⁶ de Vaux, *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁷ As recently as 1800 in Britain, relatives of an injured individual played a similar role in the prosecution of cases against the accused.

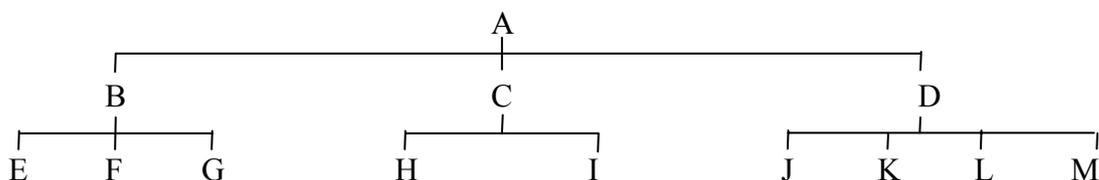
Several instances occur to illustrate the role of the town elders in Israel's history. In the story of Ruth, they adjudicate between two members of a clan regarding inheritance of property and levirate marriage obligations. In the story of Naboth's vineyard, Ahab writes not to a king-appointed governor at Jezreel, but to the town elders, to implement an administrative decision (1 Kings 21:8).

The 3-Generational Family

The 3-G family (*bayith*) in Israel was generally a three or four generational group, living in several households on the same plot of land. It would also often include non-kin members, as adoption seems to have been a relatively common practice as a means of absorbing the poor, the needy and foreigners into the kinship system in Israel. As shown in Table 3, when a man died, each of his sons would form a new 3-G family. This seems to be implied from the law of levirate marriage (Deut 25:9-10), and the explicitly fictitious story prepared for David (11 Sam 14:15-17); in both passages, the concern is expressed that a 3-G family will die out unless there is a son to continue the family name. Therefore we estimate a 3-G family normally would be a fairly large group, numbering between 10 and 30. When families were very small, they would sometimes combine, perhaps to become a more viable unit for agricultural production (1 Chron 23:11). Gottwald describes it as comprising "all the generations living at any one time in a given lineage".¹⁸ However, if each son belongs to a separate 3-G family at the death of his father, as the passages above imply, then it is difficult to agree with Gottwald that a 3-G family contained 50-100 persons. However large it was, clearly children would have been brought up among a large group of adult relatives, rather than relating only to their parents in the contemporary Western pattern.

TABLE 3 How Households Changed When a Man Died

A. Before death of grandfather: one 3-G family (*bayith*)



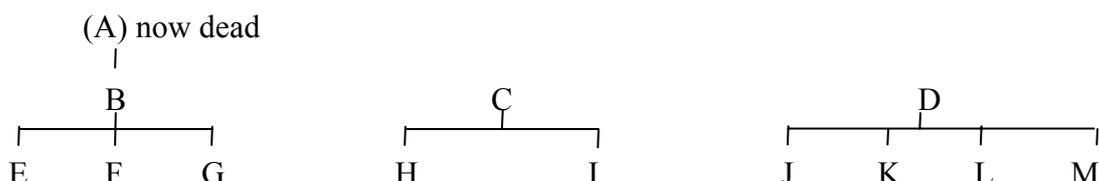
Note: B, C, D are all adult males. Adult female children of A are assumed to have married and left home.

B. After death of grandfather, three 3-G families (*bayith*)

3-G Family 1

3-G Family 2

3-G Family 3



¹⁸ Gottwald, *ibid.*, p. 285

The family is a patrilineal unit. Land ownership clearly is irrevocably associated with the 3-G family name (1 Kings 21:1-3; Num 27; Ruth 4). Descent is traced entirely through the male line (Num 27 and 36). Women at marriage left their father's 3-G family and joined their husband's 3-G family. It must be emphasised that there is no term for the "conjugal family". When Korah and Achan were found guilty of disobedience, their whole 3-G family was punished by God (Num 16 and Joshua 7). And when Jephthah was expelled by his kin, he still insisted that he belonged to his 3-G family (Judges 11:1-7). The 3-G family was the smallest unit in Israelite thinking; there was no separate conjugal family in Israelite vocabulary.

Evidence that each married couple lived in a separate house is sparse but seems to be implied in several instances. From a careful study of a passage in the book of Judges, Gottwald concludes:

"In a word, the representation of Judges 17-18 is of a small unwallled village in which Micah's *beth-'av* occupies several adjacent buildings, although not necessarily the entire village"¹⁹.

Although God insists that a man leaves his father and mother to cleave to his wife (Gen 2:24), this did not normally mean physical removal further than a neighbouring house. The 'leaving' God is referring to is a psychological and not a physical leaving. Understanding of the physical proximity of a man to his parents is also important in interpreting the fifth commandment to "honour father and mother".

The 3-G family seems to have been the most important source of provision for the poor and needy in Israel. The categories of those eligible for welfare in the OT Law, as stated repeatedly in the texts, are those characterized by absence of a 3-G family - namely, widows without children, the fatherless and foreigners (Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21, etc.). The same emphasis is found in the New Testament (NT). James urges special compassion for widows and orphans (Jas 1:27), and Paul says that those who do not care for their relatives, and especially for those of their own household, are worse than unbelievers (1 Tim 5:8).

The head of the 3-G family had an important position in society. As an "elder", he would sit in judgement on a wide range of local cases, probably appoint local officials, and participate in implementing decisions reached at higher administrative levels. As in most African tribes, the position of an elder in local councils was by virtue of seniority, defined both by age and generational status, rather than by formal procedure such as popular election (cf Prov 31:23). Generally "elders" would be men, but the position occupied by Deborah as a judge, and Athaliah as queen, illustrates that women were by no means excluded from positions of authority (Judges 4:4; 5:4; 11 Kings 11:3) The 3-G family, then, operated as a political unit in the sense that it was represented through its most senior member in local political and judicial councils. It also acted as an economic unit, for purposes of both production and consumption.

The family model of OT Israel differs sharply from contemporary Western and Eastern models. Although having a strong nucleus (conjugal family), the Israelite model was three-generational, rather than two-generational as in the West, involved several households; and was thus a much larger social unit. In addition, it recognized more explicitly obligations to larger kinship groups, through the *goel* responsibilities. However, it was also quite distinct from the traditional Indian or Chinese model. Emphasis on the man - wife relationship saved it from the cruel oppression²⁰ of women so typical of the Chinese family system, and both territorial integrity and equality of land distribution over the long-term prevented it becoming a kinshiprationalized class system as caste has become in India.

¹⁹ Gottwald, *ibid.*, p. 291

²⁰ C. K. Yang, *Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village*, The M. I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1959. Ch. 6.

3. ISRAEL'S POLITICAL ECONOMY AND KINSHIP

Land

The land-holding system which God gave Israel in the Law has as its objective that every 3-generational family and clan should own a piece of land in perpetuity. Although this goal is never stated explicitly, it is axiomatic to the legislation on the Jubilee Year; otherwise the Jubilee Year would not be a source of liberty to the whole population (Lev 25:10) but would merely perpetuate inequalities of wealth and income. The circumstantial evidence that every clan and 3-G family owned land in early Israel is strong. There is no mention anywhere of landless Israelites until late under the monarchy, nor is there any provision in the Law for land purchase by families without land. The narrative in Joshua strongly suggests that every family was allocated a piece of land at the time of the entry into Canaan. The constant repetition of the fact that the Levites did not receive any land, because they were to own only urban property, again points to the fact that everybody else did own some land. Indeed, it is hard to believe that some families did not receive land from what we know of the tribes when they entered Canaan, for it was not a society based on any elite except perhaps one of age. That every family would own a piece of land also seems to have been fundamental to Israelite thinking, for it recurs as a description of the social ideal at later points in Israel's history (Mic 4:4; Zech 3: 10).

The second point of importance on the landholding system is also implicit rather than explicit in the Law. It seems probable that there was a degree of equality between families in the distribution of land. Certainly God intended a degree of equality between tribes, as He says through Moses:

“Distribute the land by lot, according to your clans. To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one. Whatever falls to them by lot will be theirs. Distribute it according to your ancestral tribes”. (Num 33:54 NIV).

This equality is also suggested in the way that the Ephraimites, descendants of Joseph, ask for more land because they are such a large tribe; presumably they wanted each family to have a landholding more roughly comparable to those of the other tribes (Joshua 17:14). Equality in land allocation is also suggested by the use of "lots" to divide up the land. This is referred to in the Numbers passage above and in the distribution of land among the last seven tribes to receive an allocation (Joshua 18: 1-16). There would be little point in drawing lots if there was not some effort to achieve a degree of equality between the tribes. If equality between tribes was thought to be important, probably equality within tribes was as well. The carefully noted record that a few leaders were given a special allocation of land (Joshua 15:13-19; 19:49-50) again implies that special allocations were not made except in exceptional circumstances. This is not to suggest any exact equality in land distribution. The variability of land types in terms of soils, rainfall, access to water (cf. Joshua 15:19), proximity to cities, etc. makes it notoriously difficult to divide land equally; but some recognition of "fairness" seems to have been a factor in Israel's land distribution, and must be assumed to understand correctly the intention and impact of the legislation governing the long-term tenure of the land.

The most well-known aspect of Israel's landholding system was the Jubilee legislation, which was designed to ensure that families under no circumstances at any time in the future lost ownership of their landholding (Lev 25:8-17). To provide some flexibility, land could be leased out until the next Jubilee year, or "Year of Restoration- as we shall call it. This allowed people in grave financial distress some way out of their difficulty, but without permitting outright sale. History has shown that it is the distress sale of land which has made it possible for some to accumulate large landholdings while others have been made permanently landless. After limiting leases in this way, to be doubly certain, every forty-ninth year the land had to be restored to its original owner free of charge. If many families lost control of their land through leasing it out and had then moved away, a massive social movement would have been necessary for families to re-establish ownership of ancestral land.

Apparently such a massive periodic upheaval was envisaged (Lev 25:28). An example of the persistence of the clan-land association is the permanent association of a valley just outside Jerusalem with the name of a particular clan (Joshua 15:8; 18:16; 11 Kings 23:10; Jer 7:31-2).

Although there is no explicit record of the Jubilee Year being observed in Israel's history, the seriousness with which society later regarded the permanent ownership of land in Israel is well illustrated in the incident of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). A large degree of political coercion was required, at a time when power already had become highly centralised, before the king could buy out a man's ancestral property. The punishment God issued Ahab for this - the annihilation of his whole 3-G family and descendants - was surely related to the nature of the sin. For in killing the head of the household and seizing the ancestral land, Ahab had himself destroyed the basis of a strong 3-G family home in Israelite society. The grabbing of land by the rich is also a theme taken up by the prophets under the later kings, and identified specifically as a major point of social evil (Micah 2:2; Isaiah 5:8). Even after the exile, the leasing of land was a major political issue (Neh 5:3).

The other important provision relating to the landholding system can be derived from the decision, directly attributed to God, in the case of Zelophehad's daughters (Num 27:1-11; 36:1-9). Clearly the landholding succession was based on male inheritance, but it is not clear whether the first son's double share extended to land or not (Deut 21:15-17). However, a problem arose when no son was left to succeed a man who had died. The clan leaders were worried about land passing into the ownership of the males of another tribe when the sisters, who would inherit the land, married. If this were permitted, after the Jubilee the tribe would cease to hold a consolidated piece of land, and people from other tribes might disrupt the clan's effort to achieve political and economic goals. Moses ruled that women receiving such an inheritance must marry within the tribe and clan, and made explicit the requirement of consolidated land ownership for both the tribe and the clan (Num 36:1-12, esp v 9).

Such a tightly controlled landholding system, in every sense unique among the peoples of the ancient Near East, would have had multiple implications for the political and economic system, and provided a strong framework within which social and economic change would occur. This issue goes far beyond the confines of our subject but some of the major implications can be noted.

(i) *Migration and Mobility.* The controls over land selling and leasing in Israel must have contributed greatly to an absence of residential mobility in Israel. Although all male Israelites were required to visit the capital city three times a year (Deut 16), and the City of Refuge provision required attention to road building (Deut 19:3), the population did not gather in large urban settlements. Positively, the protection of property within the family prevented the poor becoming landless and being driven from the land into the cities, as has occurred so often in history. Negatively, towns could not grow easily when land on the perimeter was so closely guarded by the 3-G family (e.g. 1 Kings 21). Migration was also discouraged by the kinship system in that a migrant had no political status when he moved into an area outside his kinzone; he is described as a *ger*, normally translated "resident alien", although he is still within his own country.²¹

(ii) *Size of Town.* For the reasons above, settlements in Israel remained small and attached to the particular clans over long periods in Israel. Archaeological evidence also confirms there were no large settlements in Israel until relatively late.²² This only began to break down when Solomon overruled traditional tribe and clan boundaries in his administrative reorganisation for tax purposes (I Kings 4), either in the interests of bureaucratic efficiency or perhaps deliberately to weaken the power base of tribal elders who would have provided the major source of opposition to the accumulation of power of the state. Jerusalem was always a multi-tribal city, in true federal tradition; as the capital city it was not built on the land allocated to any of the tribes.²³

²¹ See W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, Fortress Press, 1977, p. 7.

²² Frank Frick, *The City in Ancient Israel*, Scholars Press, 1977.

²³ Jerusalem was captured relatively late in Israel's history by David who then made it the capital (11 Sam 5:6-10).

(iii) *Social Stratification*. The landholding system would have been a powerful factor limiting the development of class-based social stratification in Israel. Land, and the property built on it, in any society is the major form in which wealth is held, and is also significant for the distribution of income in providing an income-stream to its owners. As Gottwald in particular has recognised, Israel was unique among societies in the ancient Near East in its abhorrence of class distinctions and the centralised state.²⁴ As well as discouraging class development, the Jubilee Year provisions would have actively encouraged persistence of kinship loyalty. Maintaining co-residence of the clan and 3-G family would be perpetuating clan and kin as the major reference point of the individual over long periods of time (cf. Matt 1:3; 2:6). So if Israelite society is thought of as a cake, God intended it to be divided, not in economic layers, but into regional slices.

(iv) *Economic Activity and Welfare*. The effect of the landholding system in ensuring long-term site residence of the 3-G family and the clan would have encouraged the persistence of kin-based forms of economic activity, both for production and welfare for the needy. There is little evidence for the former, except the reference noted above to "clans" of clothmakers and other craftsmen in the period of the early monarchy (1 Chron 4). However, there is strong evidence of clan and 3-G family centred welfare arrangements right through Israel's history in the Old Testament. An interesting exception to the "kincare" rule is the welfare provided by David for Jonathan's descendants (11 Sam 9: 1); but even this can be understood within the kin-care framework as David and Jonathan appear to make some kind of kin-pact (1 Sam 20:42) and David refers to Jonathan as a "brother" in his lament for him (II Sam 1:26).

Interest and Debt Control

The unique feature about the Israelite Law with respect to deployment of capital was the ban on interest. The word "usury" in the Authorised Version carries the connotation of exorbitant interest. The complaint in the Old Testament (OT) is not that interest is excessive, but that it is charged at all. Interest was an established practice in the code of Hammurabi and earlier Babylonian laws, which makes the ban on interest in biblical law all the more striking. In the first references to the ban on interest, it is put in the context of not exploiting the poor (Ex 22:25; Lev 25:35-37):

"If you lend money to any of my people who are poor, do not act like a moneylender and require him to pay interest- (Ex 22:25 GNB).

However, in the Deuteronomic code, the law is stated more generally and is associated with God's blessing on society as a whole:

"When you lend money or food or anything else to a fellow-Israelite, do not charge him interest. You may charge interest on what you lend to a foreigner, but not on what you lend to a fellow- Israelite. Obey this rule and the Lord your God will bless all you do in the land you are going to occupy" (Deut 23:19-20 GNB).

Interest is banned on loans in kind as well as loans in cash. No exceptions are allowed except that relating to foreigners which we consider below. The ban on interest was a feature of teaching and comment throughout the OT period. "The just man does not tend at interest" says Ps 15:5, but the wicked does so (Pr 28:8; cf Ez 18:8, 13, 17). The charging of interest is one of the sins for which Jerusalem is condemned under the last kings (Ez 22:12).

The New Testament (NT) does nothing to change this rule. The common interpretation of Jesus' parable of the talents suggests that Jesus legitimised interest in the context of commercial loans, which

²⁴ Gottwald, *ibid*.

are in some way qualitatively different from the agricultural loans of a primitive community. For in the story of the talents, the servant who hid his one talent is told by his Master - who is thought to represent the Lord - that he should at least have given his Master's money to the bankers so it could have earned interest (Matt 25:27; Lk 19:23). However, such an interpretation hardly does justice to the detail of the parable. What the Master in fact says to his servant is:

"You knew, did you, that I reap harvests where I did not sow, and gather crops where I did not scatter seed? Well then, you should have deposited my money in the bank and I would have received it all back with interest when I returned" (Matt 25:26-27 GNB).

This suggests that to seek interest is an activity appropriate to one who wishes to reap where he has not sown. It implies that an economic return is only earned legitimately where entrepreneurial activity (such as the trading engaged in by the other two servants) or active labour is involved. In Jesus' mind, to take interest is to reap where you have not sown.

The ban on interest is closely related to the requirement that all debts should be cancelled every seven years (Deut 15:11). Not only are the interest ban and Year of Debt Remission given in the same legal form - apodictic rather than casuistic (see below) - but both allow the same striking exception, which is that loans to the immigrant/refugee are not subject to these provisions. The interest ban and Year of Debt Remission only apply to loans between Israelites. The exception points to the underlying rationale of these laws, which we understand in terms of the impact of lending on the social structure. The effect of both an interest ban and the Year of Debt Remission is to discourage those with surplus resources from lending outside the circle of those with whom they already have close relationships. There is no economic motivation for lending without a return on the capital, and with the risk of losing the capital completely every seventh year. Therefore, the individual with surplus resources is likely to turn to his kin to find ways to use those resources productively. Even if the resources do not yield a direct financial return, they create a network of obligations which ensures a return of some sort at a later date. By the same token, absence of sources of capital outside the kin-group prevents the financial interdependence of the kin-group from being undermined by non-kin capital. Those in need, or requiring capital for production, have little alternative but to seek the resources within the kinship system, as nobody else would be willing to lend.

The attempts to restrain lending in Israel were also important as a mechanism to protect the 3-G family from the downward spiral of debt. The classic way in which a peasant family or kin-group is broken up and loses its identity is:

- (i) Debt is incurred - either out of need as in a period of drought, or more often through heavy drinking or other excessive expenditure
- (ii) Following a bad harvest or some other catastrophe, the land is sold to pay off the debt
- (iii) The 2-G family, now landless, migrates to the city in search of work and becomes physically separated from the wider kinship group.

Provisions for periodic debt remission and the ban on interest both aim to stop this process at its root by discouraging *lenders* from lending. This suggests that it is often the desire of those with extra resources to increase their wealth, through lending at interest outside the kinship structure, which results in the destruction of the families of others. In OT days, there were no intermediaries. Today, banks and other financial institutions stand between borrower and lender, but the process by which such families sink into debt, although less easily perceived, is often the same.

Political, Judicial and Military Organisation

The political and military system in Israel was designed to protect the family from another potentially disruptive factor - the centralised state. Israelite law very explicitly curtails the military, political and economic functions of the Head of State (Deut 17:14-20). So when the elders of the nation ask for a king "like all the nations round about", Samuel warns them of the inevitable impact of centralised state power on their traditional kinship system of social organisation (1 Sam 8). He warns them of three areas over which the king will demand control:

(i) *The 3-G family's human resources.* The family will be physically separated as the younger members, the "sons and daughters", on which the family and the rural areas depend for future development, are taken away to serve in the centralised military establishment, or state-organised economic production (1 Sam 8:11-13). This was fulfilled in the reign of Solomon who established a standing army and state-owned industry (1 Kings 9:22; 11:28).

(ii) *The 3-G family land (1 Sam 8:14).* In the legislation regarding land, the text underlines that the land in the last analysis belongs to God (Lev 25:23). In a period of history when land could be seized at will by the rulers in most, if not all, surrounding states, the emphasis on Jehovah's ultimate right to dispose of land is surely a guarantee to the kin-group -whether clan or 3-G family - that because their land was received by direct grant from God, the state had no right to take it under any circumstances. Thus, when Ahab offers to buy Naboth's land for cash, or in return for another equivalent site, Naboth replies that it would be a sin for him to even consider selling his ancestral land (1 Kings 21:1-3). However, Jezebel, born and bred under Tyre's ideology, clearly believed that the king could seize any land he wanted by right (1 Kings 21:7) and promptly arranges to take it by force. Nothing could illustrate more clearly the contrast between Israel's unique kincentred ideology and the state-centred ideology of surrounding nations.

(iii) *The 3-G family's financial resources (1 Sam 8:15-16).* Tax probably started to become a major problem to the peasant household from the period of Solomon onwards, although much of the tax was levied by indirect means (1 Kings 10:14-15; 1 Kings 12:4). State levies could often reduce peasant families to such deprivation that they could no longer sustain themselves as self-sufficient economic entities. Testimony to the frequency with which this occurred can be seen in the efforts by Nehemiah to demonstrate that his meals as governor were not financed by a levy on the peasants (Neh 5:18).

If centralised political authority threatened the preservation of the family, decentralised political and judicial structures contributed positively to providing functions for the 3-G family and clan groups. The functions of the 3-G family and clan elders have already been enumerated; they included judicial responsibilities in criminal and civil cases, administrative oversight and maintenance of law and order. The elders were also responsible to resolve certain intra-3-G family and inter-3G family disputes. The clan also had responsibility to provide, maintain and equip a military unit for the army when national conditions so required. The many positive functions doubtless served to reinforce the authority of clan and 3-G family elders, and to increase the rationale for, and cohesion of, the kinship group.

The Dynamic underlying the Structure

What is the goal and unifying feature of OT Israel's social, political and economic system? The relationship of Israel as a nation with Yahweh dominates the thinking of the writers of the OT. But can any more be said about the goals and coherence of the human institutions?

Norman Gottwald wants to identify the central feature of Israel's political economy as its anti-statist bias. This arises from his search for the origins of Israel as a nation in an amalgamation of a slave

people coming from Egypt and poor classes who threw off their rulers in the Canaanite city states.²⁵ Brueggemann believes land is "a central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith" (his emphasis), and he sets this over against the existentialist or "mighty deeds of God in history" formulations of the dominant categories of biblical theology.²⁶

Jesus himself summarises the Law and the prophets in the two commands to love God and love neighbour (Matt 22:34-40). In biblical thinking, the primary goal of the political, economic and social system is to foster a certain quality in human relationships. Material welfare is secondary. This arises from its view of the origins and nature of the universe, and its developing view of eschatology. Love means justice, mercy, faithfulness and kindness in biblical thinking (Matt 23:23; Mic 6:8; Hos 4:1). Love, defined in these terms, is the dynamic which lies beneath the structures of society laid out in the Law.

The key problem addressed by the OT Law is how to institutionalise love in human social structures, when Man is recognised as a fallen creature (Gen chs 2-3). The world has seen many solutions proposed, in Capitalism and Socialism, by Mao, Marx: and Milton Friedman. The God-given solution in the Old Testament, however, lies in the institutions of family and kinship. The imperfections of family and kinship relationships may be many, for Man is fallen, but biblical emphasis on the role of kinship and family suggests no more "loving" institutional form will be found. Contemporary support for this proposition from non-biblical thinkers is striking, from both sociology²⁷ and sociobiology.²⁸

Looking at the OT Law from the perspective of quality of relationships as its primary goal, and family and kinship as its central institutions, provides many apparently disparate laws with a centre of gravity, a unifying theme. From this perspective, the Old Testament Law can be seen to have a high degree of internal consistency. Thus, if Capitalism is a system organised in the interests of capital, and Socialism in the interests of society, then OT Israel's ideology might best be described as "*Relationism*" as this word points towards both the underlying goal of the quality of human relationships, and the institutions of kinship, as blood-relatives are often referred to as "relations".

The New Testament Perspective

The NT emphasis on the conjugal family has been well documented elsewhere.²⁹ Here we want to examine specifically teaching in the NT about the extended family or wider kinship bonds. Jesus' own life was moulded substantially by the OT model. The long genealogies in Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3 place Jesus' own life and ministry firmly within the historical roots and family-centred traditions of OT Israel. The extended family system defined who Jesus was on the human plane, of the tribe of Judah and the clan-city of Bethlehem (Mic 5:2; Matt 2:6) The extended family also played an important part in Jesus' early life. Mary, Jesus' mother, goes to stay with her relative, Elizabeth, (Lk 1:36) from about the third to sixth month of her pregnancy, and important prophecies are made as the two women meet. Jesus and John the Baptist were probably cousins. There is also some evidence that James and John were also cousins of Jesus, as their mother Salome seems to have been a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Cleopas an uncle on his human father's side.³⁰ As he grew up, Jesus worked in the family business - a carpenter's shop in Nazareth - and was identified with a large family and kin network (Mk 6:3-5).

²⁵ Gottwald, *ibid.*

²⁶ Brueggemann, *ibid.*, p. 3

²⁷ For example, see Young and Wilmott, *ibid.*

²⁸ See E. D. Wilson, *Socio-biology*, Harvard U. P. 1975.

²⁹ O. R. Johnston, *Who Needs the Family?*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1979, p. 36f

³⁰ John Wenham, "*Easter Engima*", Paternoster, 1984.

In his ministry also, Jesus endorsed a wider definition of the family than the nuclear or conjugal family. Specifically, he denounced the Pharisees for finding an institutional means for adults to avoid the financial responsibility they have towards their, presumably ageing, parents (Mk 7:9-13). Similarly, he insists that the rich young ruler - not a child - has a responsibility to "honour" his father and his mother, and shows great concern for his mother's welfare at the time of his own death (Jn 19:27). Although Jesus demanded that allegiance to Him should be loyalty which supersedes loyalty to blood-relatives (e.g. Matt 10:34-37), He used the image of blood relatives repeatedly to describe the relationship of the disciples with God himself (e.g. Lk 11:2). It seems most unlikely the image refers back to young children playing in a nursery; rather, it refers to the bonds that exist in adulthood in the extended family rather than the nuclear family. Surely, Jesus would not have used the extended family as a model for Church community, if he had no regard for its importance or value in society as a whole.

In Paul's writings there is a similar emphasis on the extended family. Like Jesus, Paul and the other apostles use the imagery of the extended family repeatedly in their references to the Church. "The term 'adelphoi', 'brethren', in paragraph after paragraph of letters is far and away Paul's favourite way of referring to the members of the communities to whom he is writing³¹. Again this is not the picture of a nuclear family with young children. God's relations with His people are like those between adult children and their father, "where they are able to relate to him, not only in the most intimate, but also in the most mature, fashion (Gal 4:1ff; Eph 4:13ff)³². Paul also refers to fellow Christians as "children" (Gal. 4:19), "son" (Phil 2:22; Titus 1:4), "sister" (Philemon 2; Rom 16:1) and "mother" (Rom 16:13). In addition Paul calls the Church "the household of faith" (Gal 6:10), which at the time of his writing was a social unit of greater size than the nuclear family. So Banks is led to conclude,

"The comparison of the Christian community with a 'family' must be regarded as the most significant metaphorical usage of all".³³

There are also some references in the epistles to the extended family explicitly as a normative model. Like Jesus, Paul repeatedly includes within godless behaviour the maltreatment of parents by their adult children (Rom 1:30; 1 Tim 1:9; 11 Tim 3:2), and Paul refers to those who neglect financial responsibilities to their extended family as "worse than unbelievers" (1 Tim 5:8). Such obligations are so fundamental to Christian living that if they are ignored an individual's very salvation is brought into question. This is also implicit in James' concern for orphans and widows (Jas 1:27); he seems to assume that other needy individuals will be cared for by the extended family network of his day.

³¹ Robert Banks, *Paul's-Idea of Community*, Paternoster, Exeter, 1980, p. 55.

³² Banks, *ibid.*, p. 54

³³ Banks, *ibid.*, p. 53

Part II

How to Derive Norms from Old Testament Teaching and Apply them in the 20th Century

4. HOW TO APPLY THE OLD TESTAMENT MODEL TO CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

Can and Should the Old Testament Model be Applied Today?

Many today believe that the distance between Old Testament (OT) times and our own is so great that we can learn little, if anything, useful from a careful study of OT Law and history; the details of situations recorded in Scripture are fundamentally different from those faced today. John Goldingay summarizes Barth's position like this:

"To try to apply the specific commands of God to a situation or to people other than those to which they were addressed is not merely difficult or impossible in practice. It is methodologically misguided. They are either so specific that they do not apply to us, or so general (as in the case of the decalogue) that they only mark the boundaries of 'the area ... in which concrete divine commandment and prohibition take place'"³⁴.

Those of liberal theological persuasion are not the only ones to adopt this stance. Many Evangelicals, perhaps concerned to save the Bible from unfair exposure, want to reduce the OT Law to a few general principles. However, these are at such a high level of abstraction as to be inadequately defined for specific application in contemporary situations. Either approach ultimately results in the OT word being made "void" (cf. Mk 7:13), and OT ethics being ignored by scholars relative to emphasis on New Testament (NT) studies.³⁵

To answer this objection that the Law cannot, and perhaps should not, be applied today, we must turn to the attitude of Jesus and the apostles. In contrast to modern scepticism, Jesus himself puts the highest possible value on study and application of the OT Law:

"Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever practises and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven". (Matt 5:19 NIV)

Notice also that the context of this statement is the role of the disciples in society as a whole (Matt 5:11-19). Nor is this an isolated reference. Repeatedly in his ministry, Jesus lays emphasis on the teaching of the Torah, and regards the Law as binding, even if he interprets it with a greater concern for the intention lying behind the Law, and less concern for its concessions, than the Pharisees (e.g. Mk 7:9-13; Matt 23:23; Mk 10: 17-22; etc.). In Jesus' words, quoting Deuteronomy, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4). The apostles are no less insistent on its importance. Paul regards all OT scriptures as:

³⁴ John Goldingay, *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation*, W, Leicester, 1981, pp. 52-53.

³⁵ As an illustration, consider how few are pursuing Ph.D.s in Old Testament studies compared with those in New Testament studies, especially among evangelicals.

“God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”. (1 Tim 3:16-17).

Clearly Jesus and the apostles believed that the hurdle of cultural relativism, already substantial in their own day, was not insuperable. The task of transferring teaching from one culture to another may be difficult, and doubtless should be handled with care, but is not impossible. If the Law is not to be taken as a socio-political model of some kind, it is hard to see how most of the OT is to be found "useful". A few passages dealing with personal guidance may be helpful, and there are many allusions to the future work of Christ. But what about Leviticus chapter 25 with all its details of how land may or may not be held, or the passage in 1 Kings 4 about how exactly Solomon reorganised regional administration? The alternatives to careful analysis of the passage as a God-given model for how land should be owned, or a critique of political structures, appear to be wholesale reductionism, or consignment to the incinerator of theological anachronism. Only when there is belief that the OT model has vital contemporary relevance will there be the serious study of every "jot and tittle" (including genealogies!) which Christ argued would be so rewarding.

A second objection to using the Law for contemporary societies is the lack of reference to "civil law" in the NT. There is nothing in the NT to inhibit an application of the civil aspects of the Law to contemporary societies; the problem is only that the NT nowhere tackles directly the issue of how this might be done. In looking at civil aspects of the Law, one has to look at the NT approach to the Law as a whole. This is always in terms of what the Law is to be used for. Paul emphasises that "the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just out for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners. . ." (1 Tim 1:8-9). Goldingay is again worth quoting at length on this point:

“The NT is centrally concerned with the question, in what way does the OT cast light on the significance of Jesus and his achievement? It is not concerned with the interpretation of the OT in itself, but with how it applies to Christ. Now it seems an arbitrary restriction to make that the only valid question a Christian can ask regarding the OT, and it is difficult to reconcile with the NT's own belief that the OT is meant to be 'profitable' in as many ways as possible (II Tim 3:15-16). It seems more appropriate to let the OT set some of the agenda for our interpretation of it; and its concern with living in society is an obvious item for this agenda”.³⁶

A third objection to using the OT Law today is that it provides a very imperfect code of ethics relative to those found in the NT. Many believe in progressive evolution of ideas, which makes OT ethics of interest only as a museum-piece. Permission of polygamy, slavery and violence in the OT, they argue, must be understood in the light of the "higher" ethical standards of the NT. However, the difference in ethical standards can alternatively be understood in terms of the difference in the audience being addressed. Ethics in the NT are addressed to individual disciples. They represent the full standard that God requires of the individual and by which he or she will be judged (Matt 5:22-48). But the OT Law is law for society as a whole, for the unregenerate as well as the regenerate, in the main to be enforced by society. Thus, Jesus in his teaching on divorce says that Moses allowed divorce "for the hardness of your hearts- (Matt 19:8). The Law of Moses takes into account Man's evil; it is therefore a compromise, a second-best solution, which seeks to constrain or minimise evil rather than eradicate it. Jesus speaks of the immense evil in men's hearts (Mk 7:21-23). John Wenham is able to understand the use of force in the OT Law in this framework:

³⁶ Goldingay, *ibid.*, p. 57-58

"It is for a world like this that the laws of the OT are framed. It is a world where force, both physical and psychological, plays a tremendous part, whether for good or ill, and one of the primary purposes of OT law is to defend the weak in this world of force".³⁷

This points to the broader underlying assumption that Israel as a nation is a model not just for God's dealings with the Church, but also for God's dealings with society. A number of pointers lead us to this conclusion. In the OT, God's relationship with his people is at once that of a King with his subjects, and that of Father to his children. Law is an appropriate category to mediate the relationship of king and subject, but inappropriate between a father and his children. In the OT there seems to be a double-filter, which is separated out in the NT. On the one hand, Israel finds its fulfilment in the Church. Israel was special and in looking at Israel's history we learn much of God's dealings with the Church (e.g. 1 Cor 10). However, Israel's law is also presented as a model for the nations, by which man shall live (Deut 8:3; Ezek 20:11-12), and through Israel all the nations are to be blessed (Gen 12:3). In the NT, the nations are spoken of as being in a new way under God's command to repent, just as the Israelites were commanded to repent in the OT (Acts 17:30).³⁸

A fourth objection is that the OT Law was given in a particular historical context. Goldingay states the problem in this way.

"One complex of problems involved in applying OT commands today relates to their specificness or particularity. They are not so much universal absolutes, designed to be applicable in any circumstances, as specific enactments made in particular historical, social, and cultural situations, and designed to function in those particular situations".³⁹

Thus, the Law is said to have been of restricted application, as God had "limited options" in the range of possible structures which he could expect Israel to accept. Modern democratic principles, or co-operative work organisation, it is argued, were simply not feasible. So even if the system was perfect for that period, it would not necessarily be perfect for technologically advanced and politically sophisticated societies today. In particular, greater access to information, and the whole range of modern technological advance, radically alters the nature of an optimal social structure.

Scripture itself, however, does not seem to allow this view. The law itself states that it was given "for all time" (Deut 42; Deut ch 30; cf Matt 15:17-19), and therefore presumably would be unaffected by technological change. Certainly, the substantial technological changes between Moses and the later prophets, such as introduction of iron-age technology, did not prevent the later prophets from appealing to the Law as the source of their social norms. Jesus regarded it as a uniquely important statement of God's will, as did the apostles. The many ways in which Israel's laws differ radically from those of her neighbours, including the total ban on interest among citizens, the Year of Debt Remission, the curtailment of state power and the land laws, suggest Israel's laws were not greatly conditioned by those of neighbouring societies. In addition, Israel was confronted with the historically unique position of *carte blanche* in terms of land which she occupied; annihilation of the existing tribes on account of their extreme evil gave Israel the opportunity to set up any kind of social structure, restricted only by the flexibility of its own pre-existent culture, which was itself the product of specific intervention by God in numerous ways over a long period.

Some believe that no single perfect solution to the question of optimal social structure can possibly exist. The solution to the problem of social structure is indeterminate; many optimal solutions are possible, even at a single time and place, so the OT Law is only one of a number of possible satisfactory solutions. However resolving just two tensions – between incentives and equality and

³⁷ John Wenham, *The Goodness of God*, IVP, London, 1974, p. 98

³⁸ For a discussion of Israel's role as a model for the State, see Michael Schluter "*Israel - a model for Church and State?*" Jubilee Centre Paper No 4

³⁹ Goldingay, *ibid.*, p. 51.

between authority and freedom - are of almost infinite complexity and have proved intractable to the human mind. The Law resolves these tensions in such a remarkable way that it seems improbable, if not impossible, that any solution as satisfying as that conceived for early Israel will be discovered by human reason.

This, then, leads on to the question of how the Law should be interpreted. Even if its authority is accepted, many problems arise in its application. John Frame criticises Rushdoony regarding his book, "The Institutes of Biblical Law", on the grounds that he "expects too much of the arguments against antinomianism and says too little on the precise question at issue within the Reformed camp, namely, what laws are now binding".⁴⁰ So we now consider which of the laws should be regarded as binding today.

Is the Law a Normative Culture?

Niebuhr in this book, "Christ and Culture", offers the following tentative definition of culture:

"Culture is the 'artificial, secondary environment' which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values".⁴¹

If the Law is given such a high place in Jesus' own thinking, and regarded as permanently relevant and binding, can it be regarded as a normative culture?

At least one major problem in this regard is that the Law only covers a limited part of those areas included in Niebuhr's definition of culture. If the Law is to be regarded as normative for those aspects of culture in which it makes apparent God's requirements, what about the other areas in which it is silent? We believe culture can be divided into three distinct categories:

(i) *Specified Culture*: Certain aspects of the social, political and economic system, which are subsumed under the heading "culture", are not the subject of direct commands in the Law, but are essential presuppositions of the Law, and are axiomatic if the Law is to fulfil its object of justice or mercy. These are generally near the surface, as in the obvious necessity for an initially just distribution of land to every family in the nation. Without this initial equitable distribution of land, the Jubilee Year would result in injustice rather than justice. The just distribution of land is never stated as a law; it is assumed. It is axiomatic to the Jubilee Year. Similarly, the OT Law nowhere prescribes the 3-G family and clan as normative social institutions; but they are the cultural setting of the Law, and when the Jubilee Law states that "every man shall return to his clan", the Law would have little meaning if clans did not exist. We would include these underlying cultural presuppositions about society as part of the OT's normative culture.

In many cases the OT Law does not specify precisely how the economic and political system should operate. For example, while the power of the head of state is strictly proscribed, and some functions are allocated to town councils, there is little indication given of which other functions should be handled at which intermediate level of government. Charging interest is banned on loans among citizens but what kind of financial institutions might be appropriate within that framework is not discussed. Thus, those areas of -specified culture- may be tightly defined, as in the case of family relationships, or may be no more than a set of landmarks to indicate the bounds within which institutions and policies are to develop.

⁴⁰ John M. Frame, "The Institutes of Biblical Law: A Review Article", Westminster Theological Journal, Fall 1975-Spring 1976, p. 195.

⁴¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, Harper and Row, New York, 1951, p. 32.

(ii) *Fulfilled Culture*: Some aspects of culture in the OT are specified in order to set Israel apart from the nations. This seems the correct understanding of the food laws, for example in Acts 10, and specification about types of dress, etc. The NT makes clear that these exclusivity aspects of the Law are no longer binding on the Christian (see discussion on categories of law below). In addition, the "ceremonial" aspects of the OT Law have been fulfilled in Christ, so that these aspects of the Law have been replaced by other cultural norms, derived now from the NT rather than the OT. Some are loosely defined in the NT (e.g. Church organisation) and some tightly defined (the form of Communion celebration). The point is that for certain aspects of culture specified in the OT, the point of reference today is no longer the OT but the NT. Parts of fulfilled culture, then, return in the NT to the unspecified category (such as food law - Mk 7:19), and parts make up a component of normative NT Christian culture.

(iii) *Unspecified Culture*: Many areas of culture are not explicitly mentioned in the OT Law. These include literature, music and the arts, many aspects of dress, national customs, etc. One of the few points in which Francis Schaeffer agrees with Karl Marx is that ideological beliefs have a powerful downstream influence on the arts. But the possibility of legitimate diversity in areas of art and culture, albeit within bounds created by the belief system, puts these areas of culture into a different category than those required to fulfil OT laws.

Another area of unspecified culture is "technology", although it is mentioned in certain laws; e.g. Deut 17:16 speaks about restraints on the king increasing his number of horses for military purposes, Deut 22:1 talks about obligations when a brother's ox or sheep goes astray, and Ex 21:33 refers to obligations when a man digs a pit. These objects, either of the natural world or human artifacts, may be included under the term "culture", as their design, in the case of artifacts, and their use, in the case of animals, are influenced by the form of social organisation. They must be distinguished from the presuppositions discussed above in that they are accidental to the general thrust of the Law; they are not necessary to make the Law work.

Principles versus "Model Characteristics"

A popular method of trying to bridge the cultural gap from the OT to contemporary societies has been to derive principles, or "middle axioms"⁴², from the OT Law, and then seek to apply those principles to contemporary issues. William Temple used this approach in the 1930s, taking his principles to a high level of generality. For example, he gives principles such as the dignity of Man and the importance of social fellowship.⁴³ More recently, in arguing against cut-price hermeneutics, Chris Wright has argued the need to extract principles from the Law rather than seeking direct application.⁴⁴ Brian Griffiths is the latest to follow this route in his book "Morality in the Market Place", where he stresses principles such as that property should be privately held, that each family should have a stake in economic life and that economic injustice should be remedied.⁴⁵

There are, however, a number of serious objections to using "principles" in this way. Both Clines⁴⁶ and Goldingay⁴⁷ point to the inherent dangers in this approach. We list four specific problems:

(i) Different interpreters may derive different principles from the same law. By what criteria can we determine which of them is correct?

⁴² See Goldingay, *ibid.*, p. 55 for a list of reference to those wanting to use "middle axioms" and a critique of their position.

⁴³ William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*, Penguin Books, 1942; republished SPCK 1976.

⁴⁴ Christopher Wright, *Ethics and the Old Testament: Cut Price Hermeneutics?*, *Third Way*, May 1977.

⁴⁵ Brian Griffiths, *Morality and the Market Place*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1982.

⁴⁶ David J. A. Clines, *Social Responsibility in the Old Testament*, Shaftesbury Project paper, n.d., p. 2.

⁴⁷ Goldingay, *ibid.*, p. 55.

(ii) In the jargon of jurisprudence, deriving principles involves going up a "ladder of abstraction".⁴⁸ For example, in the case of the Jubilee, interpreters generalise the application from land to all forms of wealth, or from land to "economic life". By what criteria can one evaluate how far up the ladder of abstraction it is legitimate to go?

(iii) When two principles conflict, such as "private property" and „economic injustice should be remedied", how is the resolution of the conflict to be carried out, or who should decide which principle should take priority? At a more general level, we may ask how different principles fit together: what is the general framework of which they are presumably a part?

(iv) Who can or should decide which principles have been left out? The procedure of deriving principles becomes a subjective exercise, too easily reflecting the bias of the interpreter. They can too easily be limited by our prejudices, and be used as a means of evading the message of the text. So the three major problems with the principles approach may be summarized as those of completeness, legitimacy and consistency.

As is already clear, we wish to regard the OT Law as a normative "*model*" of political economy, and the history of Israel as the record of the implementation of that model in a particular historical context. The idea of a model (defined as a person or thing displayed for imitation) stresses a holistic approach to the material, rather than looking at various aspects of the Law in isolation from one another. There are good biblical precedents for such a holistic approach. When Jesus was asked by his disciples to teach them to pray, he provided a model prayer, rather than a set of abstract principles of how to pray. Jesus' whole message was conveyed by the model of his life, rather than by a set of abstract principles given by direct revelation from heaven. Paul in speaking to Christians at Rome urges them to be 'conformed to the image' of Christ (Rom 8:29) and Peter also uses Christ's life as a model in his letters (1 Pet 2:18-24). Paul in writing to Timothy also refers to "the pattern" of his teaching (1 Tim 1: 13). God frequently used models rather than principles in revealing his will to Man.

Rather than speaking of "principles", we wish to refer to "characteristics of the model". Think of the OT Law as a car. It is possible to speak of individual parts of a car in isolation from each other - such as a tyre or a wheel. Looking at those parts in isolation, it is possible to make more general statements about them, which may or may not be true about them in relation to the car under consideration. For example, "tyres are generally made of rubber" (correct), or "tyres can be made of solid rubber" (true but irrelevant in the case of the car under consideration). Alternatively, generalizing from the tyre to the car may be simply wrong for example, to conclude on the basis that the tyre is circular, that the car itself is circular. These dangers do not occur in statements describing characteristics of the car. These are more general statements than those describing any particular part of the car, but are still statements about the car. Examples might include statements about its overall design, the way the tyre fits on to the wheel, and the mechanism used to power the car which is not visible to the naked eye.

The key points about statements which describe characteristics of the model are:

- (i) They must be internally consistent, since they describe one object
- (ii) They can be checked for their legitimacy by reference directly to the model
- (iii) A complete system is being offered as a means to check any partial or particular statement being made.

Obviously the position of the interpreter still determines much about what is observed. The characteristics he will emphasise may reflect the contemporary situation he is in, and also his own personal concern. This is as true in examining the OT as it is the NT. But there are grounds for evaluating and correcting the individual statement, which are not there in the case of isolated principles.

⁴⁸ William Twining and David Miers, "How to do things with rules", Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1976, p. 40-47.

To some extent the above discussion is no more than semantics. There is no harm in using the term 'principle' in analysing the meaning of an OT law, as to derive a principle is simply to generalise the application of the Law. What matters is that the major rules in deriving principles are adhered to. These may be summarized as:

- (a) Check the principle is consistent with the rest of the model in the OT Law.
- (b) Go no further up the 'ladder of abstraction' than necessary, to avoid becoming reductionist.
- (c) Check the principle in the light of the rest of biblical teaching.

It is particularly the first two rules which have been neglected in recent writing which has attempted to use 'principles' from the Law to derive a Christian position on social policy.

Perhaps the main reason why those accepting the Bible's authority have been reluctant to see the OT Law as a normative model is that it contains a number of laws which appear contrary to contemporary social norms, and inconsistent with its own ethical standards. These include those relating to slavery, punishments for homosexuality and extreme child disobedience, and the annihilation of the Canaanites. These issues have been examined by a number of conservative scholars, including John Wenham⁴⁹ and Derek Kidner.⁵⁰ However, in addition to their excellent comments must be added a number of important insights which come from a study of the social structure. For example, Chris Wright has argued how an understanding of the role of the 3-G family in Israelite society helps the interpreter to see the death penalty for open disrespect of parental authority in a more positive perspective.⁵¹ A study of slavery by the authors makes them feel it would be better translated as "domestic service contract". It is quite unlike Roman slavery, as the "slave" has the right to run away if he wants to, and cannot be returned (Deut 23:15-16); he is to live and work in a family context and is to be released every seventh year (Deut 15:12). In addition, slavery was probably an alternative to prison initially, as poverty occurred when a person was fined for some crime and could not pay his debts (Ex 22:3) Slavery in many ways seems a more humane punishment for an offender than prison life today. Thus, the meaning and implication of each apparently harsh law has to be examined in its historical context, to understand why the God of love gave the law in that form.

Categories of Law

Two main categories of law may be distinguished:

(i) *Public Law = Constitutional Law*. This deals with government and administration structures and the moral code of the nation. In the legal profession, these laws generally are called statutes. In the OT Law they are expressed in "apodictic" form as:

- (a) Do this (e.g. Lev 25:8-17; Deut 5:12; Deut 17:5; etc.)
- (b) Do not do this (e.g. Deut 19:14; Deut 23:19; etc.)

There are some constitutional laws which are presented in the casuistic form (e.g. Deut 17:14 ff, and Deut 20:1) but this is only in cases when the institution is to be established in the future, or is a periodic rather than permanent institution, so that the institution is in some sense conditional.

(ii) *Private Law*. This is law for the protection of one person against another. It protects the right of one individual or family against the action of another with respect to property, contract, torts, etc. In

⁴⁹ John Wenham, *ibid*.

⁵⁰ Derek Kidner, *Hard Sayings*, IVP, 1976.

⁵¹ Christopher Wright, "Family, Land and Property in Ancient Israel: Some Aspects of Old Testament Social Ethics", Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1976, p. 75.

English law these are handled through case law. Judges consider how similar cases were decided in the past and base their decision in the current case on "precedents". A particularly important precedent is sometimes referred to as a "binding precedent" as it has consistently carried weight in other cases. In the OT, private laws are expressed in "casuistic- form as: if this happens, do this (e.g. Ex 21:2; Deut 21:22; Deut 24:1; etc.) In one sense, they could be called a set of binding precedents. Just as in English law, the Israelite courts would decide a case using these principles or precedents in making their judgement.

Casuistic law may have application to public life as well as to private life. Principles derived from the casuistic law may be equally as useful to sort out problems between tribes as between individuals, and therefore does not constitute private law. Similarly the apodictic law affects the lives of individuals as much as the lives of society as a whole. On this view, the key distinction is between moral absolutes and situational ethics, as reflected in the different ways in which the laws are expressed.

This paper focusses on interpretation of apodictic law because we are interested in what norms God gives for political, economic and social systems. Whereas in most countries today criminal law is public law (the state prosecutes), in biblical law it is private law (the family prosecutes). As an example, see what happens in a case of murder (Deut 19:1-13). Also note that the Levites and not the political leaders had primary responsibility for courts dealing with cases involving violence (Deut 21:5), and courts of appeal (Deut 17:9).

The Law was divided into three main categories by the Reformers, although these categories were originally used much earlier:

(i) *Moral Law* governs an individual's relationship with God and his neighbour. It can be kept by the individual regardless of the attitudes and actions of the society in which he lives. The classic examples of the moral law are the Ten Commandments. They provide the individual Christian with an understanding of what God requires in his personal life.

(ii) *Civil Law* also governs Man's relationship with his neighbour but requires society's collective action for its implementation. These must be embodied in legislation or the constitution and cannot be kept by an individual in isolation (e.g. the Jubilee Law). This suggests there is not only individual sin from breaking the moral law, but also social sin from breaking the civil law. The civil law shows society what God requires in its national and corporate life. This corresponds to what the Reformers called "the political use of the law".⁵²

(iii) *Ceremonial Law* includes two major aspects:

- the sacrificial law which governs Man's formal approach to God, including sacrifices, festivals, disease control, etc.
- the exclusivity laws, which made Israel separate from neighbouring countries. Examples include food laws, forms of dress, etc.

What has often not been appreciated is that a single law may fall into more than one of these categories -e.g. it may fulfil more than one function. There are three main types of law: Moral = A; Civil = B; and Ceremonial and Exclusivity = C. These laws may occur in seven different ways, thus:

- (i) only Moral, A
- (ii) only Civil, B
- (iii) only Ceremonial (or Exclusivity), C
- (iv) Moral and Civil, A & B
- (v) Moral and Ceremonial, A & C

⁵² Donald MacLeod, "Luther and Calvin on the Place of the Law", in *Living the Christian Life*, papers given at Westminster Conference, London, 1974, p. 5.

(vi) Civil and Ceremonial, B & C

(vii) Moral and Civil and Ceremonial, A & B & C

This means that while one category or function of a law may no longer be binding on the Christian, another category or function may still be binding. Some examples might include "You shall not steal" (A&B), Levitical functions (B&C) and national festivals (A&B&C). Levitical functions may not help us define how to approach God today (C), but may still provide principles for the organization of political and social life (B).

Some may be unhappy with dividing up the Law, in this or any other way, despite the tradition of the Reformers for doing so. However, few would disagree that the NT writers are either positive or negative towards the Law according to the use to which it is being put. When the Law "is being used as it should be used", it is upheld as good (1 Tim 1:8; Rom 7:12). When it is being used as a way of salvation, it is referred to as "brought to an end" and "abolished" (Rom 10:4; Eph 2:15). Also, Paul himself seems to distinguish between aspects of the Law when he writes, "For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor 7:19). As Ladd comments:

"Although circumcision is a command of God and a part of the Law, Paul sets circumcision in contrast to the commandments, and in so doing separates the ethical from the ceremonial - the permanent from the temporal".⁵³

Although the ethical parts of law - moral and civil - seem inseparable in many respects, they differ in one crucial respect - the meaning of the obedience which they demand. Moral law by definition is an individual responsibility; it lies within an individual's personal competence to keep the command, so that he may be personally accountable if he fails to keep it. The civil law, in contrast, requires a national or social response. Obedience often must be written into the law of the land. Thus, the individual is held accountable as part of the wider social group of which he is a member. Obedience to the civil law, then, requires that the Christian influences the social order by teaching God's word and through reform of the law and customs in his society (Matt 5:11-19).

In the case of the moral law, obedience is required both to the law itself, as in the case of the command not to commit adultery, and to the principle behind the law. A good example is the law against "having differing weights in your bag" (Deut 25:13), which can be generalized to all unjust business dealing. Some want to describe these laws as 'guidelines', but this seems inappropriate because obedience is hardly optional, even for the Christian. However, nor can they rightly be described for the Christian as 'law' in the OT sense, as the law carried with it a curse, and this curse has been borne by Christ (Gal 3:13). So 'rules' is perhaps a good compromise term. The emphasis must always be on the intention behind the law, rather than the letter of the law.

For civil law, such as the Jubilee land law or the interest rate law, there is a further major problem in obedience. Society has generally disregarded God's commands for hundreds of years so that institutional structures have developed in disobedience to God's word which cannot be unravelled overnight. To attempt instant reform would result in disobedience to the higher law, the law of 'love'. An example would be to attempt to impose overnight a total ban on interest in a Western economy. The entire industrial system would be paralysed, so that unemployment would escalate. The old would lose their pensions, and so on. To be obedient to God's law, Christians should generally seek gradual reform in the direction indicated by God's word. For these civil laws of Israel, the term 'norm' may be most appropriate as it is defined as a 'standard, pattern or type', and thus describes the standard to which God wants society gradually to conform. Social reform in the direction indicated by the law may not always be obedience to the letter, but it is surely to live 'according to' the word of God.

⁵³ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, U.S.A., 1975, p. 495.

The rules used in modern judicial interpretation, appropriately modified, suggest several questions to ask of the OT text in seeking the meaning and relevance of a particular law. These are:

- (i) What did the law mean in its original historical setting, what are the precise meanings of the words, etc? (modified literal rule). This constrains the interpreter to “distance himself” from the text.
- (ii) What evil was this law designed to prevent, or what good was it designed to promote? (mischief rule). This strikes at the *intention* of the law.
- (iii) How does this law fit into the model of the OT Law, and into the teaching of the rest of Scripture (modified golden rule).

As in statutory interpretation, certain "presumptions" may also be called into play in interpreting a specific law. These may be defined as principles which are assumed to hold at any point of interpretation unless the text suggests any reason why they may not hold. Without discussion, we present seven such presumptions:

- (i) The law reflects God's love (Deut 10:18)
- (ii) The law reflects what it is to love your neighbour (Matt 22:39)
- (iii) The law reflects God's justice, mercy and honesty (Matt 23:23)
- (iv) The law takes into account man's sinfulness (Matt 19:8)
- (v) The secondary meaning should be taken into account (Matt 22:31-32)
- (vi) One goal of the law is the welfare of the family (Mk 7:9-13)
- (vii) The law is for all time (Matt 5:18; Deut 4:40; Deut 6:24)

Implementing the Civil Law in Contemporary Societies

To implement the Law is generally a process of reform. Many famous OT characters were confronted with the situation we face in Britain today. Their nation had known God's demands but departed from them. How could they bring the nation back to obedience. We can learn much from their approach, whether they are prophets like Elijah Jeremiah, Amos or Hosea, or leading political figures such as Josiah or Nehemiah. We may note several points briefly:

- (i) *Methods*. The two methods used generally were preaching and legislative change. Confrontation with the State, as in the case of Elijah, was unusual except in the form of the spoken word.
- (ii) *Priorities*. None of the prophets or reformers tried to tackle the whole range of social evils. Under God's direction, generally they were led to focus on a relatively narrow range of issues.
- (ii) *God-centred Reform*. Reform always had as its goal God's glory. God's name and His requirements were always made the centre of the controversy.
- (iv) *Pragmatism*. The prophets often sought means to communicate their message effectively, and took advantage of circumstances and situations to convey their message. Political leaders also were concerned about timing, sources of opposition and sources of support.

For Christians today to apply the OT Law to society effectively will require a careful study of how the prophets and OT political leaders selected the issues and set about reform. Total and instantaneous national obedience to the civil law is not possible. Therefore, reformers must identify *limited objectives* as the goal of their political and social action.

In approaching reform of the social structure in Britain today, we shall ask ourselves in each case five main questions:

- (i) What was the OT model for this policy area?
- (ii) Could today's institutional structures have developed in the framework of the OT model?
- (iii) On the basis of the OT model, in what ways is our society departing from biblical norms?
- (iv) What "limited objectives" could be formulated to bring us back towards the OT model, and how do these goals compare with those of contemporary policy in this area?
- (v) What policies and methods would help to achieve these limited objectives?

In each case, the view of the person trying to reform society to conform to biblical norms is subjective. Others may identify different key policy objectives for the Christian to achieve reform, and might argue for different methods. Time horizons will vary between those of more radical and conservative disposition. It is only in the area of social norms themselves that we should expect a high degree of consensus among Christians who accept the authority of Scripture. However, if we could all agree on the social norms, that would provide a solid basis for Christian political and social action.

In the next section, we examine the change in perspective brought about in four main areas of contemporary policy by our study of family policy in OT Israel. These four areas are Family Policy, Housing Policy, Neighbourhood Policy, and Industrial and Regional Policy.

Part III

Some Lessons for Reform of British Social Policy in the 1980s

5. FAMILY POLICY

Biblical versus Contemporary Norms for the Family

Although in Old Testament (OT) Israel great stress was laid on relationships within the conjugal family, the smallest recognised institutional form was the 3-generational (3-G) family. This was made up probably of a housing cluster, as conjugal families lived in separate houses but on the same site. The clan played a vital and explicit support-role for the 3-G family. A specific member of the clan close to the 3-G family was responsible to carry out the clan obligations towards the 3-G family. This 3-G family group, together with those who would be part of the 4-G family if the father of the head of the 3-G family was still living, could perhaps be thought of as an "extended family", although the Hebrew language distinguishes only 3-G family and clan levels of the kinship hierarchy. Larger units of social organisation were also founded on ethnic identity, at the regional and national levels. A key role of the clan, and extended family, was the support of the conjugal family. The centrality of the family in the political, economic and social system led to support for a high view of marriage and emphasis on the honour due to parents, even in old age, as required by the decalogue.

This perspective on the definition and functions of the family contrasts sharply with the presuppositions of Western family policy. The family is defined in Britain, and in most other Western countries, not as an ever-expanding network of kin, but in terms of the smallest conceivable unit which will distinguish it from the individual, and that is the oneparent family. It seems a child plus one parent is the minimum criterion for the family; except in France, even the married couple without children do not constitute a family from the perspective of formulating family policy.⁵⁴

Although relatives beyond the conjugal family play no part in explicit family policy, implicit family policy (i.e. policies not primarily targetted at the family but which have indirect consequences for the family) do take account of a broader definition of the family. To cite just two examples:

- (i) In New Towns, although not elsewhere it seems, in some cases priority in allocation of residual housing has been given to workingage parents of those already resident, and even to other relatives.⁵⁵
- (ii) There is miserably low tax relief available to the taxpayer who is supporting a dependant relative, generally in some situation of need (see below).

The definition of the family in Western family policy is a reflection of its goals. Kamerman and Kahn define four main goals of family policy in the fourteen Western countries they studied:⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Sheila B. Kamerman and Alfred J. Kahn (eds), *Family Policy: Government and Families in Fourteen Countries*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Meryl Aldridge, *The British New Towns: A Programme Without a Policy*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979, p. 112.

⁵⁶ Kamerman and Kahn, *ibid.*, pp. 476-482.

- (i) As part of population policy, and especially to maintain the size and age balance of the population over the long-term.
- (ii) As part of labour-force policy, with special regard to women's participation in the labour force.
- (iii) To assist in making the income transfers to the needy, required to ensure a minimum living standard. To achieve changes in the internal family structure, e.g. equality of the sexes.

The dominance of economic considerations often follows from a lack of willingness to lay down social norms in such critical areas as divorce, or obligation towards ageing parents. Without such norms, as Kamerman and Kahn observe, we cannot go far - "brief consideration will disclose that any deliberately unified family policy has a strong normative foundation".⁵⁷ As a result, social policy is often rationalised under the rubric of economic growth or income distribution.

Goals for Family Policy Today

In contrast to these contemporary goals of British family policy, and in line with what we understand of biblical teaching, we would suggest two limited objectives for Christians in the area of family policy:

- (i) To strengthen, and where necessary reactivate, the extended family and wider kinship networks so as to provide care for the old, the young and the weak.
- (ii) By providing training facilities and, where necessary, financial resources, to encourage and help the extended family to provide the care these target groups require.

In addition, housing policy, industrial policy and local government structures will need to play a vital role in facilitating the physical regrouping of the extended family, as discussed in the next three sections.

To some, these objectives may seem extremely limited in view of the huge changes required to make British society conform to the biblical social model. For example, to aim to reactivate the "extended family" is a far cry from reconstructing the far more extensive kinship ties of clan and tribe of OT Israel. However, we do not believe it is possible to change the results of hundreds of years of development overnight. It will be sufficient if we can take the first definite steps in the direction of re-establishing biblical social norms.

The chief dilemma of the Christian in confronting social policy today is how to help the poor without undermining the family. State expenditure on welfare services is the only obvious way to help the poor in the short-term, but in the long-term this undermines the willingness and ability of the family to provide those services. The growth of social provision in the welfare state has removed a vital function of the extended family network, and thus has contributed to its demise. Similarly, the question has been raised as to "whether support for one-parent families actually encourages individuals to take on that status",⁵⁸ and thereby contributes to undermining the marriage relationship. Where the state has resolutely refused to provide a certain social service, as with day care centres in West Germany, the 3-G or extended family has filled the gap to enable mothers still to go out to work.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Kamerman and Kahn, *ibid.*, p. 482

⁵⁸ Kamerman and Kahn, *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Friedhelm Neidhardt, "Family Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany", in Kamerman and Kahn, *ibid.*, p. 235. Grandparents and other relatives (except brothers and sisters) provided over 50% of daytime care for children under the age of 3 of working mothers in 1975.

All is not yet lost in Britain. In many areas of welfare, such as care for the old, the family still is the major source for care. As the Study Commission on the Family states regarding care for the elderly,

"Contrary to some beliefs, it is the family that provides the great bulk of personal care and family members are far more important in this area of provision than the social services".⁶⁰

While there now seems to be no alternative to some State care for the needy, at least for the foreseeable future, we believe the Christian must be concerned to see that care is channelled by the State as much as possible through the extended family network, and every effort is made to reactivate the extended family so that in the long-term it can take back from the State the responsibility to care for its own members.

Policies to Strengthen the Family

How exactly the extended family could become the focus of social policy, rather than the individual or parent + child as at present, is a priority for Christian research. The following are a few areas that might be explored within the framework of family policy (as opposed to housing policy, etc.):

(i) *Financial incentives to the family to care:* Greater financial incentives could be provided to the extended family to take on welfare of the old, the young, the disabled, and the mentally sick, etc. The Study Commission on the Family accepts that the old much prefer to be cared for in the home than in State-run institutions.⁶¹ The costs of care for the old by the extended family are only a small fraction of the costs of State aid.

"It has been estimated that in 1979/80, the average costs involved in providing a place in a geriatric hospital were £147 per week and £385 in an acute hospital. Maintaining an elderly person in a local authority residential home cost around £63 in England and £70 in Scotland. The cost to the State of home based care was given as £9 per week, for a home help. Similarly, a recent DHSS publication on care in the community for the mentally ill currently in hospitals suggested an annual cost of £7,000 for caring for a mentally ill person and £6,000 for the mentally handicapped in hospital".⁶²

However, as recently as 1978 the tax relief for looking after a dependant relative at home, who must be incapacitated either by old age or infirmity (unless a mother or mother-in-law widowed, divorced or legally separated) was only £100 per year.⁶³ Although not all those in public care could be looked after in the homes of relatives as they require specialist medical equipment, there are cases where the financial burden is a key factor in a family's decision to put a person into care. A substantial increase in tax relief might be offset significantly by savings in the costs of maintenance of geriatric homes and hospital wards.

(ii) *Financial disincentives for those unwilling to care:* In cases of divorce or children born outside marriage, although part of the cost of caring for the child sometimes is borne by the father, other members of the extended family bear no costs, and most of the cost is often borne by the State. This includes housing subsidies for one-parent families, supplementary benefits payments, etc. For example, the number of one-parent families dependent on supplementary benefits increased from

⁶⁰ Study Commission on the Family, *Families in the Future*, London, 1983, p. 29.

⁶¹ Chris Rossiter and Malcolm Wicks, *Crisis or Challenge: Family Care, Elderly People and Social Policy*, Study Commission on the Family, London 1982, p. 51.

⁶² Rossiter and Wicks, *ibid.*, p. 82. Citing an answer to House of Commons question in 1980 and DHSS, *Care in the Community: A Consultative Document*, London, 1981, p. 3.

⁶³ Hilary Land and Roy Parker, "Family Policy in the United Kingdom", in Kamerman and Kahn, *ibid.*, p. 343.

78,000 in 1961 to 325,000 in 1980.⁶⁴ No responsibility is attributed to the wider circle of relatives in cases of divorce or children born outside marriage, despite the suffering to the children under these circumstances and the difficulties of those involved. So, too, in the case of the old, the State often accepts total responsibility to pay for the costs of geriatric homes and care. The principle of requiring the conjugal family to pay certain costs is accepted, both for the old and for children in cases of divorce. By redefining responsibility to the extended family, and including the costs of children born outside marriage, it will increase the financial interdependence of a wider kinship network and increase economic incentives for the extended family to live near to one another and take care of their own. However, as the extended family of the one-parent family is itself often in a low income category, to increase family financial responsibility will also increase the urgency of broader economic measures to help low income groups.

(iii) *Training to care*: The rapid increase in the over-75 age group⁶⁵ poses special demands on the ability of the extended family to provide care. Not only does it involve substantial financial outlay in terms of special equipment, and the enormous sacrifice of time - generally by a middle-aged or elderly woman - but also skill. Training for family members able and willing to care for the old is still hardly available, nor even information of State services available to help them to care at home. These are vital if the family is to have the human resources required to provide care for its own as required by Scripture (cf 1 Tim 5:8).

(iv) *Positive media coverage* A fourth area of family concern is connected with proper coverage by the media of the benefits of family life, and the personal and financial costs of its disintegration for those involved. So often divorce and remarriage are presented as normal, or even exciting and invigorating, in feature films and other parts of the media. The hard realities of heartache and isolation for the individuals involved, and the immense problems brought upon children caught between warring parents or in one-parent families, are not popular media material. In addition, there is growing evidence of loneliness among divorcees in old age, especially among the substantial number who do not remarry.⁶⁶ This again urgently needs greater media exposure. There should be compulsory "divorce consequences" education and "one-parent family lifestyle education" in schools, in addition to "sex education", if there is to be adequate marriage and parenting preparation for children.

6. HOUSING POLICY

Characteristics of the OT model

The OT model had a number of special features with respect to housing (see chapter 2). Some of these may be briefly summarized as follows:

- (i) Every 3-G family and clan owned a piece of land, on which presumably was built the 3-G family's long-term permanent housing. Thus, patri-lineal 3-G families lived on the same site, usually in several houses.
- (ii) There was a substantial element of equality in the initial distribution of land between clans, and thus between 3-G families.
- (iii) Ownership of land, and the property on it, was permanent and inviolable by the State.

⁶⁴ Study Commission on the Family, *Families in the Future*, *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁶⁵ While there is little expected increase in the number of over 65s in the U.K. (currently around 8m) by the year 2000, between 1981 and 2000 the number of over 75s is expected to increase from 3.1 m to 3.8m. Rossiter and Wicks, *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Rossiter and Wicks, *ibid.*, p. 46.

- (iv) Land distribution was carried out on a kinship basis, so that kinship units lived in the same geographical area.
- (v) The landholding system acted as a major barrier to increase in the size human settlement over time.

One derived characteristic of this social pattern is that "multiplex" relationships are promoted. People came into direct contact with one another in a large number of different roles. For example, relationships would be said to be multiplex today if the person you meet at the shops is also a member of your church, and also a fellow-parent at the local school. The overlap of locality and kin group increases the degree to which relationships are multiplex, as a person's neighbour is also his relative. As de Woolf points out in the context of Kenyan traditional societies, this has not just the effect of creating community, but makes it easy to find out the reputation of anyone among those people with whom he interacts regularly. As a consequence it brings about social pressure towards moral behaviour.⁶⁷

What could be priorities for Britain?

Not all of the above features of the OT model can be achieved simultaneously in the UK in the 1980s! However, a movement in the direction of some can be attempted. We believe that three main priorities can be identified as goals:

- (i) To ensure every family owns a piece of property as a right. The OT Law ideally requires that each family (clan and 3-G family) owns *land so* to ensure each family owns 'a piece of property', which might be just a flat as an initial goal. Also, the Law requires some equality of land ownership, but this may be regarded as a further, second-phase goal. The initial priority is to ensure each conjugal family unit owns property of some kind. Policy discussion in Britain has come close to this ideal at some points, but still differs in important ways. Many agree:
 - a. That owner-occupation is the goal of the vast majority of the population.⁶⁸ However, this is a description of what people want, rather than a prescription of what they ought to have.
 - b. That an adequate and secure home should be a 'basic right of citizenship' if people are prepared to pay it.⁶⁹ However, biblical norms suggest that the basic right of citizenship is not just "to live in an adequate and secure home", but to own it.

To reduce the cost, the goal initially could be restricted to those below a certain age limit, say 65 or 70, as often the old have special needs which are best provided by rented accommodation in sheltered housing schemes rather than by owner-occupation.

- (ii) To bring together members of the extended family gradually into one location. This is not an attempt to recreate the whole clan network which total fulfilment of the Law requires, but a more limited objective that is, in particular, to bring adult children to live close to their ageing parents. There is strong evidence that ageing parents wish they could see more of their children, and that physical distance is a major barrier to such contact.⁷⁰ Land and Parker comment,

⁶⁷ Jan J. de Woolf, *Disintegration and Integration in Western Kenya, A Study of Religious Innovation and Social Change Among the Bukusu*, Mouton & Co. B.V., The Hague, 1977, p. 67.

⁶⁸ J. B. Cullingworth, *Essays on Housing Policy: The British Scene*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1979, p. 99. He cites a large number of studies and surveys in support of this point.

⁶⁹ David Donnison and Clare Ungerson, *Housing Policy*, Penguin, London, 1982, p. 204.

⁷⁰ Cited in Rossiter and Wicks, *ibid.*, P. 46.

"Because of our preoccupation with nuclear families, our housing policies have not in fact helped the old to stay close to their adult children, and yet the family is blamed for failing to care for elderly kin".⁷¹

While Christians might reverse this emphasis, and hope adult children might stay close to their old parents, clearly recognition exists outside specifically Christian circles of the need for housing policy to define the family more broadly. However, Christians probably should aim for an even broader definition of the extended family than merely adults with their parents and children. This might perhaps include having brothers and unmarried sisters, as well as ageing parents, resident in the same neighbourhood, if not actually next-door neighbours. To have several siblings in one neighbourhood greatly alleviates the strain on any one of them of caring for the old or the handicapped. Such neighbourhood-co-residence of the extended family would also help to make a start to increasing the degree to which relationships are multiplex, by reducing the number of different people-spheres in which the individual is forced to operate.

- (iii) To limit the size of the neighbourhood or community in terms of the spatial distribution of housing. Peter Hall cites some evidence to support the idea that people's primary sense of identification is to a very small local area,⁷² and Michael Young's surveys in the early 1970s confirmed this neighbourhood identity,⁷³ despite the fact that no discreet physical boundaries separate neighbourhoods in the major cities. Neighbourhood definition and policy is explored more fully in the next section, but perhaps new housing, which runs annually at around 2% of the total housing stock, should aim to assist not just in the proximity of the extended family by creating "housing clusters- for this purpose, as Michael Young notes existed in the past,⁷⁴ but in creating physically identifiable neighbourhoods to assist in community identity; there is some evidence to suggest such physical boundaries do matter in this regard.⁷⁵ The neighbourhood concept also raises the issue of permanency of residence, which we shall consider under neighbourhood policy in the next section.

These three goals outlined above go beyond most statements on the goals of housing policy in Britain, which tend to focus on optimal use of housing resources and provision of a minimum standard of housing without reference to type of ownership.⁷⁶ The proposals which follow below again are tentative, and offered as indicative of what might be possible. Research is required to make a more definitive statement on how contemporary housing policy might be structured to achieve these goals.

Some Policy Proposals

To achieve the goal of every family owning a home permanently, the first step would be to sell as many council houses as possible. This has been Conservative Government policy since 1979. The objections to this, that it will mean an increase in rents to remaining tenants unable to buy, and reduce options to those not in public housing, would be to some extent overcome if arrangements are made to give all families owner-occupation, in a specified period. To achieve such universal owner-occupation would require either compulsory purchase of much currently rented accommodation, or a building programme specifically to assist those without owneroccupancy. One problem of compulsory

⁷¹ Land and Parker, *ibid.*, p. 363.

⁷² Peter Hall, *Urban and Regional Planning*, Penguin, 1975, pp. 58-59.

⁷³ John Baker and Michael Young, *The Hornsey Plan*, Fourth Edition, The Association of Neighbourhood Councils, Halstead, Essex, 1973.

⁷⁴ Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, *The Symmetrical Family*, Penguin, 1973, p. 93.

⁷⁵ An article in the *New Statesman* (May 21st 1977) shows how walls around a new housing estate in Newcastle seem to have contributed to neighbourhood identity.

⁷⁶ Donnison, *ibid.*, p. 227.

purchase is that it violates the third characteristic we noted of the OT model, that the State has no right to interfere with family-owned property. However, as in the case of Israel, there appears to be no way to obtain the initial equitable distribution of property without strong central direction.

Building needs and compulsory purchase possibilities would differ markedly between regions as the proportion in owner-occupation varies between 35% (Scotland) and 63% (South-West). After the sale of all public housing, the total proportion of owner-occupied would be 87%, with the areas of highest need being surprisingly the South-East (16.3% now privately rented), and East Anglia and the South-West (each 15%)⁷⁷ If further building in New Towns is to assist in meeting the goal of universal owner-occupancy, a major policy change will be required in defining their objectives; early in their development (1949), a choice was made to provide accommodation on the basis of employment situation rather than housing need.⁷⁸ Such a change of strategy would only be possible with a simultaneous change in industrial policy so as to provide employment opportunities of the type required, as most of those who would qualify on the basis of housing need are also relatively unskilled.

Several factors might help to meet the costs of trying to achieve universal owner-occupancy. The capital recovered from sale of council houses, and the prospect of ending DHSS housing subsidies (although these might have to be replaced in part by house maintenance subsidies for the lowest income groups) might both contribute to the cost. The period over which it was sought to achieve the goal would also be a major determinant of the cost. To give an order of magnitude estimate for buying out 75% of private accommodation, even if this represented 10% of the total value of the housing stock of £137bn in 1975 prices⁷⁹ and it was bought out over 10 years, the annual cost of £1bn would represent less than 2% of the Government's 1975 annual budget at constant prices. Extension of various financing schemes, such as Government guarantees for 100% mortgages from building societies, and the previously operating "option mortgage scheme", could be used to help in the transition.

To ensure that there was no reversion from 100% owner-occupation, some restrictions would have to be placed on housing sales. Those selling houses could be required to show to the Local Authority or some other agency that they were using the funds obtained towards the purchase of another dwelling. This would represent a major new departure in the sense of limiting the freedom of the individual in the disposal of his personal assets. However, such limitation clearly applied in the OT model, and could be argued in society as a whole as necessary to limit future state expenditure by preventing recurrence of the need for housing subsidies. We are aware of the many problems associated with owner-occupation in the inner cities, and difficulties of moving people from inner cities to alternative locations, but space forbids further discussion of the issues here.

To try and bring together the extended family, would require another set of policies. Various tax measures could be used to provide incentives for people to move near their ageing parents, or even near brothers and unmarried sisters. For example, increased allowances could be provided for caring for a dependant relative at home, as discussed in the previous section. In addition, those living in the same neighbourhood as ageing parents might be allowed to file a joint tax return with them, with tax advantages attached to such joint returns. New house construction, although achieving change only slowly, could be used to develop housing "clusters", suitable for extended family groups. In particular, the provision of a "granny annex" could be provided with a much higher proportion of public housing, and grants extended towards the cost of such provision in private housing. Incentives for the small

⁷⁷ Office of Population, Census and Surveys, cited in "Aspects of the Housing Market" *Barclays Review*, November 1982.

⁷⁸ Meryl Aldridge, *ibid.*, p. 108.

⁷⁹ The estimate of £137bn is based on the estimated value of dwellings in gross personal wealth as £82bn in 1975 (Royal Commission on Distribution of Income and Wealth, Cmnd 6999, 1977). Assuming no difference in unit value between average privately owned and publicly owned accommodation, and given the privately owned proportion as approx. 60% (52% was owner-occupied already by 1971 and part of the rented accommodation is privately owned), this gives a total value of the housing stock as £137bn in 1975.

family business sector might also be a means to encourage siblings to continue to live near their parents after reaching adulthood.

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

No contemporary field of government or private activity is known by the term "neighbourhood policy". Issues of neighbourhood or community arise in discussion of local government definition and responsibilities, and to a lesser degree under the rubric of family policy, as the old are so much affected by the cohesion of the community.⁸⁰ It is the biblical concern for the local community which, we believe, should make Christians seek to establish this as a major new field for policy in its own right.

Characteristics of the Biblical Model

As we noted in Chapters 2 and 3, one key passage in the OT is Leviticus chapter 25. The Jubilee and related land legislation provided "roots" for every kinship group by ensuring long-term, permanent links for each individual and family group with a specific piece of land. So Brueggemann writes,

"Land (in the Bible) is never simply physical dirt but is always physical dirt freighted with social meanings derived from historical experience There are no meanings apart from roots. And such rootage is a primary concern of Israel and a central promise of God to his people".⁸¹

A second feature of the OT model is the small size of settlements. The land legislation would have discouraged urban growth both by helping to maintain roots against the pressures of debt and land sales, and inhibiting urban growth which relies heavily on property markets. Absence of political centralization also works against urban growth.⁸²

Several other characteristics of the OT model stand out. The village or small town unit was given a wide range of functions, from organising administration to specific judicial responsibilities. These responsibilities were exercised by elders, who held the position by right either due to age-seniority or as head of a 3-G family. Their role stands in contrast to the king-appointed town governors of neighbouring states. In addition, the village or town community found context in the loyalty, identity and relative autonomy of the district and region in which it found itself. The important functions given to small-town elders is a further argument for keeping neighbourhoods small today. Large conurbations do not readily spawn community government.

Goals for British policy

The following might be some possible goals for British policy in the 1980s:

- (i) To increase the permanence of the local community. Brueggemann has stated succinctly how the failure of the urban promise has reopened discussion of the role of community:

"(The urban) promise concerned human persons who could lead detached, unrooted lives of endless choice and no commitment. It was glamorized around the virtues of mobility and anonymity which seemed so full of promise for freedom and

⁸⁰ Rossiter and Wicks, *ibid.*, p. 48f.

⁸¹ Brueggemann, *ibid.*, pp. 2 and 4.

⁸² Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*, 1961. Republished Penguin, 1966

self-actualisation. But it has failed, as chronicled in distinctive ways by Vance Packard and Peter Berger among others. It is now clear that a *sense of place* is a human hunger which the urban promise has not met. And a fresh look at the Bible suggests that a sense of place is a primary category of faith' ".⁸³

High mobility and anonymity have contributed to growth of psychiatric disorders as well as the breakdown of the conjugal family. There is also growing recognition of the importance of community in care for the old⁸⁴, and even some recognition that---theexternal diseconomies of mass urbanization at some point outweigh the internal economies of specialization (in the firm)".⁸⁵ There is no doubt that occupational mobility is a major factor in reducing contacts between kin. Robertson found,

"These wives found that mobility was isolating because it both severed established ties with relatives, friends and neighbours and placed them in new and unfamiliar situations. When moves were frequent, feelings of non-belongness were ongoing ... building up new relationships was usually a lengthy process".⁸⁶

The role of industrial policy in reducing population mobility will be discussed in the next section.

An emphasis on *immobility* of population will run counter to the contemporary goal of housing policy, which aims to ensure "the minimum disincentives to mobility between dwellings which may or may not be in the same geographical area"⁸⁷. Present policy is founded on the rights of the individual to act as he chooses, and also on national economic growth objectives, which are seen to depend on people being free to move to where the labour market offers them the highest wage. This maximizes efficiency of manpower allocation. The social costs of such mobility have not been generally recognized, in terms of either the welfare of the individual and his family, or in terms of the ability and willingness of family and the community to care for its old and needy with social and health services. With pensions now requiring over 50% of the national welfare budget (1982 - 83), and increasing their share of the budget by about one per cent each year, the social cost of population mobility urgently needs to be addressed. The OT model has no hesitancy in restricting individual freedom with respect to mobility in the interests of the welfare of old and needy. Jesus also sought to defend the old against the institutional arrangements by which people tried to circumvent their responsibility (Mk 7:9-13).

In Britain, mobility rates in recent decades have been about one in eight of the population per annum. Between 1966 and 1971, 17.5m people are recorded to have moved at least once.⁸⁸ Although part of this movement is within the same neighbourhood, much of it crosses neighbourhood boundaries. Change of employment is an important reason for moving; to remove this cause of mobility requires changes in industrial policy considered below. However, perhaps as much as half of even long-distance moves are not made for work reasons.⁸⁹ Thus, there appears to be some potential to reduce mobility, or to encourage people to move closer to their relatives - and especially ageing parents - even without changes in industrial location. Clearly, Christians cannot hope to eradicate mobility in society; not even the OT model expected to achieve perfect stability (Lev 25:10b). However, a substantial reduction in the degree of mobility could be one objective of neighbourhood policy.

⁸³ Brueggemann, *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Rossiter and Wicks, *ibid.*, pp. 48-50.

⁸⁵ Hazel Evans (ed), *New Towns: The British Experience*, Charles Knight & Co., London, 1972, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Robertson, Faith Elliot, "Mobility and the Family in Hospital Medicine", *Health Trends*, Vol. 13, 1981, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁷ Donnison and Ungerson, *ibid.*, p. 227.

⁸⁸ Hall (ed), *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸⁹ Hall (ed), *ibid.*, p. 23.

(i) *To give function to the neighbourhood unit*: A characteristic of the OT model is that it lays heavy responsibilities on neighbourhood government. If the neighbourhood is to become a cohesive social unit, so that it can provide a support group both to the needy and to the conjugal family, it is probably essential that it have function. There must be the opportunity for people to work together towards common goals. Without such functions, there is little chance that social interaction will be any higher within the neighbourhood than otherwise; it was lack of observed increase in social interaction within the neighbourhood that led to the neighbourhood concept being rejected in the second round of the New Towns programme.⁹⁰

Much debate centred around developing a neighbourhood level of local government at the time of the Redcliffe-Maud Commission and the subsequent reform of the local government structure in 1974. Research done for the Maud Commission showed that more than three quarters of a national sample of electors were conscious of living in a small local community, a "home area", which was much smaller than the area of most local authorities.⁹¹ Subsequent research by the Institute of Community Studies confirmed that in a part of London most people identified themselves with a neighbourhood of 6,000 to 13,000.⁹² However, the Maud Commission backed away from the findings, and little has been done to encourage development of this level of government, so that there is still no urban equivalent to the traditional rural Parish Councils. Some urban neighbourhood councils already exist, but the aim of the Association of Neighbourhood Councils was to give statutory status to these voluntary councils and also to give them greater financial resources and responsibility. However, they were still to be voluntary, with much flexibility of form, and not to become mandatory.

The range of issues currently discussed by parish councils and the existing neighbourhood councils includes housing, slum clearance and redevelopment, street cleaning and refuse collection, traffic, parking and road crossing, social work and welfare, recreation and leisure activities.⁹³ If the neighbourhood is to exercise the kind of role envisaged by the OT model, it would have to extend this list to include a significant role in judicial matters, as occurs now in East Germany.⁹⁴ Also, it would have to play a much larger decision-making role than is now contemplated. This, in turn, would probably require some independent financial base, just as the rural parish councils are allowed already to raise a limited rate. Alternatives to domestic rates as the basis of local government revenues has recently been the subject of a Government green paper, which spells out a number of alternatives;⁹⁵ similar research would be needed for the funding of urban neighbourhood councils. The idea of having a strong neighbourhood level of local government is likely to be opposed mainly by existing Local Authorities, whose job may be greatly complicated by having these additional local pressure groups, and by existing members of community councils, who might fear having their role politicized if neighbourhood councils had greater function and financial muscle.⁹⁶

Some might argue that the extreme poverty and near anarchy of some neighbourhoods, as vividly portrayed in an article about an area near King's Cross in London,⁹⁷ makes such local political responsibility a utopian dream. Also, the inner city areas have not just a high level of poverty, but also high concentrations of one-parent families, of unemployed workers, and of unskilled manual workers. However, Townsend concludes overall that,

⁹⁰ Evans (ed), *ibid.*, p. 104

⁹¹ Michael Young, "Parish Councils for Cities?", *New Society*.

⁹² Young, *ibid*

⁹³ For example, see Jim Jackson's article in *Municipal Review*, April 1977.

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the community courts in East Germany, see Kurt Sontheimer and Wilhelm Bleek, *The Government and Politics of East Germany*, Hutchinson University Library, London, 1975, pp. 100ff

⁹⁵ HMSO, *Alternatives to Domestic Rates*, Cmnd 8449, December 1981.

⁹⁶ Jackson, *ibid*

⁹⁷ Eileen Fairweather, "The Law of the Jungle in King's Cross," *New Society*, December 2nd 1982, p. 375.

"There are areas with about twice as many poor or marginally poor as in the nation as a whole. These areas also have a disproportionately high prevalence of other types of deprivation. But there are two major reservations: (a) the majority of poor are not to be found in areas which even account for 20 per cent of the poor; and (b) there are substantial minorities of relatively prosperous people even in the poorest districts of the country".⁹⁸

Although low income inner city areas would require considerable help to establish neighbourhood government, few would argue the task is impossible over an extended period.

A final point to mention on neighbourhood councils is the opportunity they provide for participation by, and providing a role for, the retired. A feature of the OT model is that it enhances the position and prestige of the elderly in society by giving them the key role in local government, and this is an important aspect of power relations within the family. We believe that in Britain the lack of function of the elderly robs them of respect. A sample survey of nearly 4,000 councillors undertaken for the Maud Committee in 1964 indicated that as many as 54% were over 55 years of age.⁹⁹ A larger number of local councils, and wider powers for them, could well provide an opportunity to use the greatly under-utilised resource of retired people's experience in organising community affairs.

(iii) *To create identifiable local communities:* There are two main reasons for being concerned with the physical planning of local communities so as to make them identifiable social units:

(a) Physical boundaries help to create a sense of community identity. This accords strongly with common sense but is difficult to demonstrate. In an urban context, there is evidence that walls around an estate in Newcastle encouraged a sense of community identity.¹⁰⁰ However, generally such evidence is sparse.

(b) Neighbourhood facilities should help to ensure a greater degree of overlap in human relationships, so as to achieve a greater degree of physical contact between those living in the same neighbourhood. In Crawley, New Town policy was specifically aimed to establish neighbourhoods separated by large areas of open space so as to encourage the formation of social grouping. Sociologists later questioned the policy on the grounds of the observed patterns of human interaction in Crawley,¹⁰¹ but it is probably still safe to conclude that physical neighbourhoods are a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for social cohesion. We believe that to create social cohesion, communities must also have purpose, or function, as discussed above. One possible reason for the failure of physical planning to create community, or social interaction, in Crawley may be a lack of common purpose and function in that case. More recent New Towns policy rejects neighbourhood unit so as to maximise "individual opportunity and freedom of choice", and plans so as to "provide for people to exercise choice between alternative schools, shops, work locations and services of every kind".¹⁰² This surely can never promote the social cohesion of an identifiable local community. As often happens, the "individual opportunity" referred to is the opportunity of those young and fit, and it acts to restrict the 'individual opportunity and freedom' of choice of the old and needy.

A further line of argument against the social engineering implicit in trying to create identifiable local communities again stems from the problems encountered in previous attempts. Thorns lists three major reasons for the failure to create new communities.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ P. Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standard of Living*, Penguin, 1979, p. 548. Cited in Hall (ed), *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹⁹ Lord Redcliffe-Maud and Bruce Wood, *English Local Government Reformed*, OUP, 1974, p. 64.

¹⁰⁰ Article in *New Statesman*, May 21st 1977.

¹⁰¹ Evans (ed), *ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁰² Evans (ed), *ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁰³ D. C. Thorns, *The Quest for Community: Social Aspects of Residential Growth*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1976, pp. 62-63.

- a) Preoccupation with housing rather than the wider social environment.
- b) The population of new towns and estates have been stratified by age and stage in the life cycle. They do not have the strength of tradition and kinship ties of the older rural communities.
- c) The demand for privacy, consequent especially on high population mobility.

Clearly, building new physical environments, where people move not as a social unit but for specific employment opportunities, and remain highly mobile, is not a recipe to produce community. However, the obvious weaknesses of such an approach also should not lead us to underestimate the role of physical planning as a foundation for local community.

Policies to Achieve Neighbourhood Solidarity

To try and achieve greater permanence of community in a neighbourhood, the two major policy tools are probably personal taxation and industrial location policy. To rationalise these policies, it will be necessary to try and quantify more accurately the costs of population mobility, both in terms of new infrastructure requirements and in terms of the costs to the social services of family breakdown. Tax changes which could slow down mobility might include structuring tax rates to length of stay in a community, and raising stamp duty on house sales when it involves a move outside the neighbourhood, unless it is a move into the neighbourhood of other relatives. Industrial location policy is already an established part of government policy, but the range and size of incentives to locate in areas of high unemployment, and thus discourage mobility, have fluctuated considerably. A determined effort to create permanence of community will require that locational investment incentives in this area are greatly increased, above even the highest levels reached in the past.

To give function to community, we believe the Church should throw its weight fully behind the Association for Neighbourhood Councils in its efforts to take the first steps towards neighbourhood government. However, biblical policy goals should aim in the long-term at much more extensive functions than those proposed by the Association. They should aim to see a judicial role given to the community, and also support efforts to create greater financial independence for all levels of local government. Further research would be important to identify ways in which retired members of the community could be utilized as fully as possible in neighbourhood government, and ways in which greater age-balance could be achieved in new communities, especially in the South coast areas dominated by retired people.

Policies to achieve greater physical identity for the neighbourhood might include tougher planning control over location of housing and other services, and a reversal of New Towns policy to the earlier emphasis on neighbourhoods separated by wide open spaces. Also the possibilities of gradually creating mini green belts between neighbourhoods in the conurbations, through house and land acquisition as occurs when new roads are constructed in urban areas, could be explored.

8. INDUSTRIAL AND REGIONAL POLICY

Characteristics of the Old Testament Model

In our earlier discussion, we examined only those aspects of the economic system that had a direct influence on the family. Other aspects of the system, such as the role of the State and other national institutions in the economy of OT Israel, are outside the scope of this paper. The two major factors which we considered were the two restrictions on the "factor" markets, that is the markets for land and capital. As the modern economy involves many institutional forms not explicitly considered in the Law, we have to ask whether those institutions could have emerged in Israel if Israel had remained obedient to God's Law, or whether the laws individually or as a system would have made it

impossible. Using this methodology, we can consider what the characteristics of the OT Law were in the area of the family, neighbourhood and the economy, and in what ways institutions and policies in Britain today fall outside the dynamic framework given by the Law.

In OT Israel, we believe the dominant institutional form for organisation was the extended family firm or clan firm, although from the time of Solomon onwards State organised economic activity emerged (1 Chron 4:23; 11 Chron 2:17-18). There is some evidence of family or clan economic organisations (1 Chron 4:21), but it is open to various interpretations.¹⁰⁴ However, the kin-based organisation of society as a whole makes kinbased economic organisation a natural, and probably inevitable, outcome given that whole geographical areas were occupied by a single clan. This is reinforced by the interest-rate ban, which encourages financial flows to occur between kin, and neighbours who are also kin, rather than outside the kin network.

Kin-based business of the kind in Israel defies the normal categories of economic description. It is neither a Capitalist firm nor a Socialist collective. It comes close to the labour-managed firm of Yugoslavia, but is again different. It does not exist to maximise returns to capital nor returns to labour as labour. In its pure form, it operates to maximise welfare of the family members - almost always the extended family - engaged in the enterprise.¹⁰⁵ When the family becomes smaller, and the number of non-family employed grows, it operates more like a Capitalist firm, but still with distinctively family-level objectives.¹⁰⁶ The reader is left to ponder whether the public corporation of the Western economies is a legitimate institutional form or not within the norms laid down in the OT model. Insurance and pension funds' institutions, the commercial banks and building societies, also need to be examined in the light of biblical norms, but this again goes beyond the scope of this paper.

The second major issue raised by the OT model concerns the location of economic activity. In the period of OT Israel, there is no evidence of concentration of economic activity in any region, or in large cities. However, we may ask whether the OT model would have allowed such concentration to occur, if the Law had been operative during a period of industrialization. Surely, restrictions on land markets would have made today's urban pattern, characterized by huge size and density, inadmissible. Also, the strong roots to town and region would have inhibited the large-scale and long-term migration of labour to certain regions. In addition, the absence of capital markets, and the presence of regional loyalties, would have probably resulted in a distribution of business activity to match the distribution of population. Clearly, changes in trade routes, location of mineral deposits and technological change can all influence the location of economic activity; but the initial distribution of population acts as an important anchor provided economic activity is so organised as to arise spontaneously from within the community, rather than being externally generated and introduced by technologically more advanced groups or institutions. Externally generated economic activity may well be regionally concentrated unless steered sufficiently strongly to achieve regional balance.

Goals for Contemporary Policy

From the preceding discussion we want to define two specific goals for economic policy in Britain today:

¹⁰⁴ De Vaux regards the linen workers as being organised as a quasi-family so that clan in this context really should be translated "guild". See de Vaux, *ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁵ The famous Marxist theorist of the peasant economy recognised the uniqueness of family economic enterprise and referred to it as "family self-exploitation". See A. V. Chayanov, *The Theory of the Peasant Economy*, (tr. B. Kerblay, ed. D. Thorner), Irwin, Homewood (Illinois) 1966.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Lipton, "Family, Fungability and Formality", Paper presented at the International Economist Association meetings, Mexico City, August 1980.

(a) *Promote the small family-business sector*: Great interest in the small (not necessarily family) business sector has developed in Britain in the last few years. Its role in generating employment, although perhaps not as great as first thought, is recognised universally as of great importance.¹⁰⁷ However, relatively little attention has been paid to the *family* small business sector, although there has been some discussion of helping family businesses to obtain additional equity finance without the family losing control.¹⁰⁸ Family businesses are important not just to encourage closer physical and financial relationships between members of the family, but also as a means of encouraging women to participate in employment and management, and in making business activity more personally accountable. With respect to accountability, Young and Wilmott in their survey of 10,000 London households, comment as follows:

"Two centuries after the domestic system of production began to decline, the concept of a family business was for many employees easier to understand and sympathize with than that of a public company owned by completely anonymous stockholders as well as directed by nearly anonymous managers".¹⁰⁹

Further research is needed to establish what proportion of business activity falls into the family business sector in Britain today, defined in terms of ownership or management, and what its objectives are in terms of employment, growth, etc. Also of major concern is what impact it has on the associated extended family unit, in terms of its physical and financial relationships, and its willingness and ability to care for its older and weaker members.

(b) *Minimize the mobility of labour*. The main arguments for minimizing labour mobility have already been discussed in the context of neighbourhood policy. Occupational mobility takes a high toll in terms of physical contact between members of the extended family¹¹⁰ the ability of adults to visit and look after their ageing parents,¹¹¹ and the ability of the community to care for the old. It can be argued that these social costs are essential to maintain the present structure and growth of the economy. However, we believe the social costs greatly increase government expenditure on health and social services, as well as expenditure on infrastructure consequent upon net migration between regions. This in turn, by increasing taxation, reduces company profits available for reinvestment to increase productivity and expand employment. Research is required to try and establish in crude terms whether this is in fact the case.

Some policy proposals

To encourage the small family business sector, as opposed to the small business sector in general, several very specific policies could be considered. Tax relief could be given to earnings from equity in firms belonging to members of a person's extended family. This would encourage savings to go into family-based business enterprise rather than be channelled to large-scale enterprise through financial intermediaries such as pension funds or the banking system. Another possibility would be to permit small family firms to sell redeemable shares, although there is seldom any easy way to determine their value objectively at the time of redemption. Other policies generally designed to benefit the small business sector as a whole could help small family business as a part of the overall small business sector. These include government guarantees on bank overdrafts to small firms, for which small firms pay banks an interest-rate premium, special export guarantee schemes, provision of floor space and overhead services, greater differentials on levels of corporate tax, exemptions from certain

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Department of Industry, Economics Division, *The Role of Small Firms in Employment Generation: A Review of Recent Work*, 1981.

¹⁰⁸ HMSO, *The Purchase by a Company of its Own Shares*, A Consultative Document, Cmnd 7944, June 1980.

¹⁰⁹ Young and Wilmott, *ibid.*, p. 161.

¹¹⁰ Robert P. Stuckert, "Occupational Mobility and Family Relationships", in Norman W. Bell and Ezra F. Vogel (eds), *A Modern Introduction to the Family*, the Free Press, New York, 1968.

¹¹¹ Rossiter and Wicks, *ibid.*, pp. 46-48.

bureaucratic requirements, etc.¹¹² Some of these schemes are already in place, but could be developed and expanded further.

A more difficult problem is to determine how to expand demand for small firm products and services. There is evidence of difficulties faced by small firms in entering markets dominated by large firms.¹¹³ In addition, one effect of vertical integration is to make it difficult for firms to compete downstream when one of their number gains important market leverage over raw material supplies.¹¹⁴ The importance of large firms in enabling small firms to start up in the manufacturing sector through subcontracting work out to them is well documented.¹¹⁵ Policies to alleviate "demand-side" constraints on small firms, and to encourage demand for their services through subcontracting and franchising, would be important if the family business sector is to gain the major market share again in most sectors of the economy. This may require an effort to de-merge some large companies, strengthening the conditions on which mergers are permitted and relaxing the Restrictive Trade Practices Act so that small firms can legally co-operate in marketing activities. De-merging very large companies is unlikely to affect efficiency negatively. As Sutherland concluded,

"Once companies are reasonably big, there is no evidence that a further rise in size in general confers any benefit via lower production costs or better research and development. The benefit which is certainly given to dominant companies by economies in marketing or finance may well not produce any benefit to the consumer".¹¹⁶

There have been a whole array of incentives to try and induce companies opening new plants to locate in regions of high unemployment, and thus reduce net migration out of the region. These have included special Regional Industrial Boards, Enterprise Zones, providing investment grants, labour subsidy schemes, tax relief in numerous forms etc.¹¹⁷ However, the level of assistance offered has fluctuated sharply in different periods of recent political history. We believe a policy based on the biblical model should give heavy weight to identifying a system of incentives to prevent capital outflows from depressed regions as part of a more general effort to stabilize the family unit in its neighbourhood.

Some recent research on reasons for regional growth differentials lays emphasis on firm size and town size rather than industrial sectors which predominate in the region.¹¹⁸ Small firms provide an ideal entrepreneurial training ground, which large firms do not. Thus, large firms do not spawn new small business. Large cities also are not a conducive environment for industrial expansion. As firms grow, they find it difficult to expand existing plant in the city, or locate new plant nearby, so they tend to expand by building a new plant right outside the city, and perhaps outside the region. As a consequence, the regions with fastest employment growth are those characterized by smaller firms and smaller towns. Thus, the issue goes far beyond efforts to steer new investment to the depressed regions. It points back to our earlier discussion of the small business sector and neighbourhood policy.

¹¹² For example, see HMSO, *The Financing of Small Firms: Interim Report of the Committee to Review the Functioning of Financial Institutions*, Cmnd 7503, London, March 1979, and Department of Industry, "Summary of Government Measures of Benefit to Small Firms-", February 1983.

¹¹³ HMSO, *A Review of Monopolies and Mergers Policy*, Cmnd 7198, London, 1978.

¹¹⁴ For example, see Mergers and Monopolies Commission, *Report on Ready Mixed Concrete*, HMSO, Cmnd 8354, September 1981, p. 34ff.

¹¹⁵ Stephen Fothergill and Graham Gudgin, *Unequal Growth: Urban and Regional Employment Change in the UK*, Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1982. They state, "among the firms we surveyed, about 60% of engineering firms and 35% of the others had begun with subcontract orders". (p. 127)

¹¹⁶ Alistair Sutherland, "The Management of Mergers Policy", in A. Cairncross (ed), *The Managed Economy*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1970.

¹¹⁷ These are well summarised in TUC, "Regional Development and Planning: a TUC Policy Statement", London, August 1982.

¹¹⁸ Fothergill and Gudgin, *ibid.*

Too often we pay no more than lip service to the fact that the political, social and economic systems are interlocking and mutually reinforcing.

9. CONCLUSIONS, AND WHERE NEXT?

In this paper we have tried to demonstrate that there is a normative pattern of social organisation in biblical revelation, and that this pattern provides insights into what goals Christians should strive for in contemporary issues of social policy. In fact, the OT model provides norms for the whole of the political, economic and social system, but this paper has focussed on just one aspect of those norms - the extended family or kinship network. The dynamic of the OT model is the pervasive underlying norm of "love", which is a characteristic of human relationships. The OT model seeks, as far as possible, to institutionalize love in a society which acknowledges only nominally the rule of God. The emphasis on kinship is perhaps in recognition that it provides the best hope of love being shown in a fallen world. The OT model, then, might be called "Relationism", as the word embodies both "relationships" and "relatives".

The emphasis of the OT model is not on the conjugal family, but on the broader kinship network. The nation, the tribe and the territorial clan are all kinship units. These wider kinship units are probably essential to provide a stable and secure environment for conjugal family relationships. Without the supporting framework of kin and community, the pressures on the conjugal family can easily develop to the point that it disintegrates, as we see often in Britain today. From a policy perspective, an emphasis on the conjugal family exclusively can too easily result in a focus on sexual ethics, and the factors which undermine the marriage relationship, such as pornography and access to contraceptives for teenagers. Extended family concerns introduce broader considerations about the political and economic system which determine whether members of the extended family live in close proximity, work together, and provide care for their needy and old members. The nature and stability of the neighbourhood community also become of concern as part of the sphere in which the extended family and conjugal family operate.

Jesus requires of Christians that they "obey" the Law (Matt 5:19). In terms of the OT model of society, we interpret this to mean that Christians should seek to move society in Britain today in the direction indicated by the model. As the extensive clan-tribe network of kinship is not a feasible goal in Britain today, Christians should set their sights on the more limited objective of *reactivating the extended family*. To bring this down to specific policy goals, we have examined four areas of British policy in the 1980s. To obey Jesus' command, we believe the next step should be more thorough research into the policy areas considered, to obtain a consensus from a number of Christians qualified on the subject as to what the goals should be, and what arguments can be used to be persuasive in society at large. Then, a concerted effort to change policy can be mounted by a Christian interest group. The history of Christian efforts at reform, from Nehemiah to Wilberforce and Shaftesbury, illustrate the value of concentrating on a small number of issues, which are easy to communicate and appeal to the conscience. One such issue today might be the situation of the 8 million over-65s in Britain, as neglected parents. This could be the jumping-off point for tackling issues such as occupational mobility, and extended family social care networks.

In Matthew 5 Jesus commands not just that Christians obey the Law but that they teach it. This highlights the role of communication. No doubt preaching in the Church has a central role, but it also points to the importance of the media to convey the Christian perspective on policy to society at large. There is no indication that Jesus wanted only Christians to be taught God's Law. God's Law is "not for the just but for the unjust" (1 Tim 1:9). To teach the Law is to be salt and light in the *world* (Matt 5:16). Films, TV programmes, videos, conferences and newspaper articles are needed to convince the public at large of the truth and value of the Christian position on policies under discussion.

It is the Lordship of Christ which gives Christians the right to seek to make society conform to the model God gives in His word. The Bible knows nothing of value-free social customs, as seems to be the basis of institutions like the Study Commission on the Family, and the educational system in Britain today. We believe every social policy or system of training can be shown to be based on a value-system, even if that system is not explicit. Through His death on the Cross, Christ has established his legitimate right to lay down this value-system, for all areas of life and experience. Christ does not appeal to men to repent; He *commands* men to repent (Acts 17:30). If OT Israel was a theocracy, the world since Christ's death is a Christocracy. As in the OT, the world today is not under the rule of Christ's representatives but under the rule of his word. This gives Christians the right to insist that society conforms to God's model to extend Christ's Kingdom, which is to bring those outside into his Kingdom through personal salvation, and requires that we challenge the political, economic and social system of the world with the norms of God's word. This means we have an obligation to indulge in the required social reconstruction, rather than leave the moulding of society to the markets or the Marxists.

APPENDIX: AN OUTLINE OF PRIORITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. The Description of the Old Testament Model: Old Testament Studies

- (i) A description of the OT political system in the contemporary categories of political scientists, examining linkages between levels of the political hierarchy, the extent to which the system could be described as "federal", etc. Also a detailed description of the ways by which power was gradually centralized under the monarchy.
- (ii) An estimation of the size of population of Israel as a whole, and of clans, cities and villages, between the Exodus and the late monarchy.
- (iii) Evidence of the forms of economic organisation from the Exodus to the late monarchy, and in particular the effect of the ban on interest in domestic lending, and the land-holding system on the economic structure.
- (iv) The Levites: The exact physical distribution of the Levites in the population, as far as this can be ascertained. Details of their social organisation and functions, and their relationship to, and interaction with, the political system.
- (v) The Judicial System: Evidence for the type and range of cases handled by different judicial institutions, and the implications for a contemporary biblical approach to the administration of justice.
- (vi) The issues selected for comment by the prophets, kings and other political leaders, in the light of the possible issues which could have been selected at the time.
- (vii) An attempt to reconstruct the tribal and clan network of relationships through Israel's history using primarily the information available in the OT genealogies and histories.
- (viii) The meaning and operation of "slavery" and the exact political and economic status of "foreigners" and "sojourners".

2. Hermeneutics

- (i) Separate more vigorously essential presuppositions in the Law from areas of culture which are not essential for the Law to work.
- (ii) Separate areas of definite prescription in the Law from those on which the Law allows a measure of flexibility.
- (iii) Examine evidence for the moral, civil, ceremonial and exclusivity aspects of laws in the OT books on Israel's history.

- (iv) Examine the forms of argument used in early Israel to understand the logical structure underlying the ways in which the laws are grouped.
- (v) Examine how the prophets and kings interpreted the Law in the changed cultural conditions of their own day, and the implications that has for interpretation of the Law in contemporary culture.
- (vi) OT and NT evidence for seeing Israel as a model for society as a whole as well as a model for the Church, and how these typologies are used.
- (vii) Implicit rules within biblical revelation for going up the ladder of abstraction in applying casuistic law to political, economic and social structures.

3. Application to Contemporary Britain

The Extended Family

- (i) What are the chief points of contact between parents and adult children, and adult siblings, in Britain today, and what are the chief barriers to increased contact?
- (ii) By what policies could extended family mutual financial support and care be revived?
- (iii) What policies could be used to bring the extended family back into residential proximity, and what arguments could be presented to a non-Christian audience to make the case for this?
- (iv) Under what conditions could State funds be channelled to the needy through his or her extended family group?

Housing

- (i) What policies could be followed to achieve universal owneroccupation within a reasonable time-frame? What would be the cost and how could it be financed?
- (ii) In what ways would it be possible to encourage architectural innovation to create extended family housing "clusters", from the self-sufficient "granny annex" to several adjacent houses?
- (iii) What is the evidence regarding optimum size for a "neighbourhood", and what arguments could be used to persuade sceptics-of the importance of grouping old and new housing in identifiable communities?
- (iv) What policies could be used to try and slow down housing mobility, so as to increase community stability?

The Neighbourhood

- (i) What might be the full range of functions (including judicial and social welfare functions) which could be given to neighbourhood and rural parish councils? In what ways could they be assisted to carry out those functions?
- (ii) What would be required to make neighbourhood councils viable in inner city areas?
- (iii) What alternative methods of financing could neighbourhood councils use to raise their own funds locally for their activities, and what proportion would have to come from outside the community? In what ways could the retired and elderly in particular be given a greater role in neighbourhood government?

Industrial and Regional Policy

- (i) What is the extent of the family business sector in Britain today, defined in terms of either ownership or management? What are its specific problems and how can it be developed and promoted?
- (ii) How can areas of high technology requiring close technical and managerial co-ordination on a large-scale be handled within a "family business" framework?
- (iii) In what ways can financial structures in Britain today be altered to take into account the need for greater extended family financial interdependence?
- (iv) In what ways can regional policy be used to the maximum extent possible to anchor the population and create jobs, in areas of high unemployment?

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