

## P4 – Some Sick Social Policies Caused by the God-Idea

Dear: I doubt if you'd believe how many times, while trying to write these remaining "P-chapters" (all dealing with social policies), I've abandoned attempts, mumbling to myself "problems, problems, problems". I've had major problems even with starting this chapter. For reasons you might not appreciate, I didn't blame my own incompetence (Who, me?) but traced the root cause to a certain troublesome four-year old (Yah, you!).

She had asked me why I didn't believe in God. I was trying to explain the final phrase in my response: "Belief in god is bad science and even worse policy – in fact, pathetic policies: sad personal policies and *sick social policies*." In prior chapters, I had tried to demonstrate some of the "sad personal policies" that follow from belief in god rather than using one's brain as best one can. The task remaining was at least to indicate some of the "sick social policies" that follow from belief in the (childish, data-less, silly, stupid, idiotic!) god-idea.

The task was daunting. There's a mountain – even a mountain range – of potential illustrations. One way to proceed (tried and failed) was like trying to rent a helicopter, fly over the mountain range, point out some interesting features, and indicate trails where you might someday want to climb. Thus, I tried starting with:

Dear: If someday you want to learn more about the sick social policies resulting from the childish god-idea, you may want to take a few hundred courses at various universities and then get your Ph.D. in one or more relevant subject areas, such as anthropology (i.e., "the study of humans"), sociology ("the study of societies"), "political science" (but it's not really "science", because performing controlled experiments is essentially impossible), law, economics, government, history – and while you're at it, maybe also in psychology and even in religion! Alternatively (or in addition!), you may want to get your Ph.D. in mathematics, computer sciences, or electrical engineering, specializing in artificial intelligence and the new field of "complexity", because I expect that during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, substantial progress will be made understanding societies by developing computer-based models of how people interact.

The trouble with that approach, however, was that I then felt the need to illustrate the complexities – and unsurprisingly, not only did the illustrations become overwhelming complex, but I was totally perplexed about how to choose illustrations.

Now, Dear, you may think that my suggestion for you to obtain multiple Ph.D.s (in fields such as those listed above) is silly, and though I would agree that you couldn't do it (not only because you don't have the time but also because most universities won't award a person even a second Ph.D.), yet I would maintain that there is some "method in my madness". To see what I mean, let me quote from a great set of lectures written by W. Davis for his anthropology course offered at UC Davis.<sup>1</sup>

The term 'anthropology' literally means "the study of humanity" (from Greek *anthropos*, or 'human', plus *logos*, or 'study'). The first learned societies of anthropology were organized in France, England, and the United States around 1840, and their organizers took the all-inclusive term literally. That is, their intent was to create a kind of master science of humankind, one that considered how all aspects of human biology and behavior interacted systematically, rather than dividing aspects of humankind into a number of separate fields. It was evident at the time that human behavior was being subdivided for study by specialized disciplines: government was the subject matter of political science, economics had its own discipline, and so on. Early anthropologists took that grand intention of a systematic approach quite seriously; but of course the project quickly became so complicated that practitioners had to specialize in particular aspects of humanity, while maintaining an interest in systematic interactions.

My point is this: as knowledge has expanded, the knowledge has necessarily been subdivided into a great number of "disciplines", because a single person (or "disciple") can no longer learn all there is to know.

In contrast, Aristotle taught essentially "everything": logic, biology, meteorology, physics, metaphysics, ethics, politics... But at modern universities, typically there are at least two broad divisions (Science and Humanities), each with many subdivisions (e.g., in Science: physics, chemistry, biology, etc., and in Humanities: archeology, anthropology, art, history, etc.), as well as many "applied divisions" ("schools" of architecture, agriculture, business, economics, engineering, law, medicine, etc.). Thus, Dear, if you did set yourself the goal of "understanding humanity" you'd need to keep studying for many lifetimes!

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.anthro.ucdavis.edu/courses/w02/ant2/Syllabus021.htm>.

Faced with the difficult task before me, another approach I tried was basically to “beg off” the task! In this case, my introduction was as follows:

Dear: At the outset, I should admit that in this and subsequent **P**-chapters (all dealing with various aspects of politics), I must be superficial: the subject is huge, while my knowledge of it is relatively meager. I’ll show you a little more of the subject in the “excursions” **Qx** and **Yx**, which continue for more than 50 chapters – chapters, not pages!

My idea was this. One way to show you the sick social policies resulting from the silly god-idea was to review the social policies advocated in our culture’s “holy books”, but that approach was to be contained in the “excursion” **Qx** (dealing with “the Quagmires of ‘Revealed’ Religions”). Further, another way to show you the “sick social policies” resulting from the data-less god-idea was to provide at least an outline of the history of how humanity managed to get itself in such a god-awful mess; that undertaking, however, was to be the subject of the “excursion” **Yx** (dealing with “Your Indoctrination in the Mountainous God Lie”). So, then, what was the point in writing the stuff twice? A certain troublesome grandchild might question the wisdom of writing it even once (☹).

There was, moreover, another major problem. I didn’t want to leave you with the impression that I thought that all “sick social policies” are derived from the stupid god-idea. Many are, but even these are just a subset of one set of causes of social problems, namely, ‘ignorance’ (or even ‘stupidity’). Within this set of causes (besides religion) are a huge number of other causes of social problems (also derived from ignorance), including tribalism, racism, nationalism, intolerance, hate, and many others (which I’ll address especially in the **X**-chapters).

Moreover, the set of problems that can be traced to ignorance is one of a huge number of sets of causes of social problems, e.g., related to economics (with subsets such as resource constraints, inappropriate distributions of wealth, redistributions of production and consumption patterns, etc.), politics (with subsets such as under-representation, over-representation, corruption, power-mongering, etc.), criminal activity (subsets of which I won’t list), and many other sets, which I’ll not detail and just categorize with the nondescript title “other changes” (including changing demographics, modified aspirations, environmental degradation, etc.). Thus, even if religion were

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essentially eliminated from our society (as it is in China and was in the former Soviet Union), then it certainly wouldn't follow that social problems would disappear (as could be illustrated with the cases of China and the Soviet Union).

To illustrate what I'm trying to say, Dear, let me put it this way. It's asinine that public policy is defined by people who think that some giant Jabberwock in the sky (who managed to arrange for the first symmetry-breaking fluctuation in a total void) is watching over us, but many times the consequences are even worse when dictators and/or megalomaniacs (such as Moses, Muhammad, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Saddam Hussein) dictate social policies, primarily to promote their own perversions.

All of which then led me to question: Hey, why am I trying to do this? Given the huge number of serious social problems, why should I focus on only one cause, namely, religion? But I answered that question with: Because I'm "just" trying to respond to a certain troublesome grandchild (who asked "How come you don't believe in God?"), by showing some social problems caused by such a dumb idea.

But getting past that question didn't solve my problems, because it led to another major problem, namely, how to convey the idea (without getting "bogged down" in excruciating details) that the influence of religion on societies hasn't been all bad. That is, some data support the hypothesis that religions have been able to help relieve some social problems (e.g., estrangement, loneliness, inappropriate distribution of wealth, remnants of racism...) that have other causes. For example, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King used religion amazingly effectively to solve major social problems. Therefore, I felt I had to address the question: On balance, have religions helped or hindered societies?

That's a difficult question to answer: the answer depends on the time period, the people involved, the nature of the social problem, the details of the religion, and a host of other variables. As I'll show you, about the only way I've been able to glean some generalization from all such details is to say: it's a real pity that "good will" among people (as good as the good will among dolphins!) wasn't promoted without linking it to crazy ideas about some giant Jabberwock in the sky.

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But all the above illustrated just some of my “philosophical problems” and “work arounds”, not a solution to the practical problem of how to write these chapters. So next, I tried to let this chapter “write itself”, hoping that the rest would follow. I started as follows:

Dear: In the “good old days”, when the “law of the jungle” (might makes right) reigned supreme, although usually it was the mighty father of the tribe who defined morals, customs, and laws, yet old grandfathers (and grandmothers) at least defined traditions. So, the way I figure it, the least you could do is the following. Whenever you become really stuck on a problem, when there’s “no way” you can find how to solve it, when it won’t let you sleep and you can’t let it go, and still you can’t make progress, then the new tradition will be to say: “Damn! This is as difficult as when my old grandfather tried to write about sick social policies that follow from the idiotic god-idea!” And then, Dear, when your own children and grandchildren ask you how he finally did it, here is what you can tell them: “He didn’t. He let it write itself.” Of course, whereas kids probably will continue to be kids, they’ll probably ask what you mean, so let me provide you with some details.

Following that plan, what I did was copy current “news items” from the internet and then comment on the sick social policies they revealed. Of course that procedure quickly generated a huge pile of examples, but I finally decided to abandon the approach, because the result was too “disjointed” to pass even my lowered standards!

In despair, I started reading what others had written, eventually returning to Aristotle, courtesy the wonderful internet site at <http://classics.mit.edu>. There, Dear, you can find his three books on personal and social policies: *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, and *Politics*. Someday, you may want to read these books, but be careful: 1) they’re long and complicated, 2) they’re quite tedious, and 3) they’re riddled with major (even outrageous) errors!

Two such errors are the following. First, a major error in his two books on ethics is that he failed to see what I tried to show you in an earlier chapter: “happiness is not a goal but only the score”. Consequently, his resulting views on “ethics” or “morality” are basically prescriptions for pursuing happiness and are therefore similar to suggestions for how to sail a rudderless ship. Second, a major error in his book on politics is his adoption

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of what I consider to be a horrible moral code, failing to recognize that “everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence” (and therefore, for example, he defends slavery and the subjugation of women).

Nonetheless, these three books by Aristotle do contain many gems, including the following from *Nichomachean Ethics* (Book or Chapter 1, Section 2), which is the main reason why I mention any of this now. I call your attention, especially, to what I’ve put in italics.

Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. Now fine and just actions, which political science investigates, admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion, so that they may be thought to exist only by convention, and not by nature... *We must be content, then, in speaking of such subjects and with such premisses to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true and with premisses of the same kind to reach conclusions that are no better.* In the same spirit, therefore, should each type of statement be received; for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits...

To me it’s amazing that, ~2400 years ago, Aristotle not only summarized the situation so well but also saw so clearly how to proceed (“roughly and in outline”), again suggesting to me that he must have been one of the most brilliant humans who ever lived.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, Dear, when you read Aristotle’s two books on ethics, then maybe you, too, will wonder why there are two and what the different titles mean. If so, probably you’ll encounter the speculation that the two books were assembled and perhaps edited by two of his “students”: one book by one of his most famous students (besides Alexander “the Great”), namely, the geometer Eudemus, and the other by his son, Nichomachus (which was also his father’s name) – and therefore the titles of the two books, *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nichomachean Ethics*. Maybe so, but if ever you learn some Greek (or get to know someone who knows Greek), then maybe you’d like to evaluate my own speculations, which are as follows.

First, whereas *eudaimonia* is the Greek word for ‘happiness’ (or ‘well-being’), I wonder if the adjective Eudemian (and his student’s name, Eudemus) means something similar to “made for happiness” or “bound for happiness”, which then might “explain” why what appears to be Aristotle’s first book on ethics, *Eudemian Ethics*, has more emphasis on “the pursuit of happiness” and why it ends with the conclusion: “Therefore, whatever mode of choosing and of acquiring things good by nature... will best promote the contemplation of God, that is the best mode, and that standard is the finest; and any mode of choice and acquisition that either through deficiency or excess hinders us from serving and from contemplating God – that is a bad one.” As you no doubt expect, I consider that to be a ludicrous conclusion, unless one replaces the otherwise undefined word ‘God’ with Spinoza’s “nature” (or “everything”); then, Aristotle’s statement becomes similar to what he quotes as the reply by Anaxagoras (~500–428 BCE, recognized by some as the first Greek scientist) to the question why one should choose to come into existence rather than not, namely: “For the sake of contemplating the heavens and the whole order of the universe” – which I suspect would be similar to the replies from such people as Galileo, Newton, Darwin, and Einstein.

Anyway, Dear, with still another failure behind me, I finally decided to stop trying to start (!) – and began just by plodding along, one step at a time, as if walking along my “southern trail near the river”, which maybe you remember.

Do you remember where I’d park the truck? From there, we’d walk along the fairly level dirt road, by the irrigation ditch – where some idiot dumped that dead horse. Do you still remember that odor? Do you still have a fairly strong opinion about the odor of dead horses?! I bet that essentially everyone in every society holds a similar opinion – and would agree that the idiot who dumped that dead horse should be punished. Too bad that there wasn’t a similar unanimous opinion about all our social problems! But there isn’t – and I’m sorry to conclude that there probably never will be. Recall Emerson’s statement to the effect: “One person’s opinion of social justice is another’s opinion of social injustice.”

But pushing aside evaluating Emerson’s assessment until later chapters, recall the analogy that I’ve been using for this Part 3 of this book. As if while walking along that level stretch near the irrigation ditch, first I tried to show you what is meant (or should be meant!) by ‘justice’. I tried to show you that:

- Natural justice is just Mother Nature’s principle of causality (every effect or “outcome” is “justified” by its causes),

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And second, whereas the city of Nicopolis (in which *polis* is the Greek word for ‘city’) meant “city of victory” and whereas “machean” may mean something similar to “made for”, I wonder if the adjective *Nichomachean* (and both his son’s and his own given name, Nichomachus) means something similar to “made for victory” or maybe even “made for virtue”. If so, this might “explain” why Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*, which presumably was written after his *Eudemian Ethics*, seems most appropriate for a warrior-statesman and why, near the beginning of this book, he writes: “Presumably, however, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is still desired. This might perhaps be given, if we could first ascertain the function of man...” He goes on to present his opinion about “the function of man”, the “virtues” that he considers appropriate for a citizen, and consistently, ends *Nichomachean Ethics* with an introduction to his *Politics*.

Thereby, if my interpretation of the titles is correct, then maybe a little of my criticism of his two books on ethics can be slightly tempered. In my opinion, Aristotle did badly miss the mark by focusing on happiness (the score) rather than the goal, but maybe he slightly compensated for this mistake by mentioning the goal at least in the titles – and then by letting the text lead him to the humanist’s goal of helping humanity, via 1) trying to understand nature, and 2) promoting honorable involvement in political activities.

- Personal justice is that, when you have the possibility of influencing an outcome, then generally you'll get what you deserve, and
- Interpersonal justice includes the concept (described by someone else) that in any relationship, generally you get out of it pretty much what you put into it.

In those earlier chapters, I didn't show you much about social justice, because without first showing you some ideas about morality, opinions, and purposes, the subject of social justice would seem even more complicated than it already is!

Therefore, next I tried to show you some general ideas about 'morality'. I tried to show you that, whereas moral value (as with any value) can be measured only with respect to some objectives and whereas the prime objective of all humans is to promote their trio of survival goals (survival of themselves, their extended families, and their values), then:

- For anyone in any circumstance, the morality of any action is simply a measure of its influence on one's trio of survival goals,
- The act of highest personal moral value, therefore, is to use one's brain as best one can (which includes relying on the best data available), and
- As applied to interpersonal relationships, using one's brain as best one can leads to the concepts (among others) of bartering, reciprocity, giving equal value for value received, trying to be kind to one another (with keenness), showing love (within limits), and in general, behaving at least as well as dolphins do!

Thereby, I tried to show you some ingredients of desirable "social interactions" – at least for people who desire to live in societies as "sociable" as those established by dolphins!

Then (as maybe you remember) after the fairly level stretch, the trail turns away from the irrigation ditch and goes up a fairly steep hill, at the top of which there's a spectacular view of the mountains. Similarly, after showing you some basic ideas about morality and justice, I started "climbing a hill", trying to show you at least a little of how priests and politicians have mangled perfectly understandable ideas about morality using their incredibly

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naïve ideas about gods. By mangling such “perfectly understandable ideas” (understandable even to dolphins!), the clerics successfully managed to manipulate “the masses”. Thereby, I tried to give you at least a glimpse of what I called “the Mountainous God Lie” – trying to show you how mistakes by various groups of clerics (or “priesthoods”) have polluted humanity with their dead-horse views of love, kindness, morality, and justice.

Later, in **Yx**, I’ll offer you a multi-chapter “excursion” to at least glance at “Your Indoctrination in the Mountainous God Lie”, detailing at least some of “the pinnacles and precipices of power mongering by priests and politicians.” If you choose to go on that “excursion”, then maybe you’ll become convinced of how horrible has been the influence of clerics on both personal and public policy. Anyway, in the later **M**-chapters and in **N**, **O**, and prior **P**-chapters, as if walking along the relatively flat stretch at the top of the hill, I tried to show you some relatively simple ideas about objectives, philosophies, and both sad and happier personal policies.

So what now? Well, for the remainder of these **P**-chapters what I plan to do, in analogy with my strolling along my southern trail, is to take the easy route, down the other side of the hill and then along the rest of the irrigation ditch to the dam (at **Q**). On our walks, I’ve shown you other ways to get to the dam, but in what follows, I’m gonna take the easy route, along the access road. In fact, even on the easy road I’m gonna “take it easy” – because experience has taught me that going down the hill, even on the road, can be dangerous – if too much weight is put on a loose rock. So, without straining myself and watching where I step, let me now try to show you at least an overview of various premisses, purposes, principles, policies, plans, practices, procedures – and problems – of people within societies (and between and among various groupings of people) and how religious ideas have generally just added to the problems.

But if my analogy to my “southern trail” just “doesn’t do it” for you, Dear, then let me state that, in the **P**-chapters that follows, I want to begin to show you at least a little about some complex, complicated, and many times contentious concepts related to social justice, politics, and governments – and how the clerics of the world have managed to mangle so many of these concepts so badly. In the **X**-chapters, I’ll try to show you more – and try to suggest some solutions.

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And let me add, Dear, that if you had hoped that this “introduction” would have at least alerted you to some “dominant themes” in what follows, then let me try to improve my performance by adding the following three points.

1. When considering social problems, Dear, be alert not only to their complexities but also to the fact that most are derived “simply” from different opinions. To understand the problems, therefore, it’s necessary to understand the different opinions – and to productively seek solutions to the problems, it’s most useful to seek to ensure that all opinions are derived from reliable data (and not, for example, from silly ideas about various giant Jabberwocks in the sky).
2. My plan for the organization of the material in these remaining **P**-chapters is generally to proceed from smaller to larger groups: in the remainder of this chapter, I’ll focus on problems caused by religions and experienced by individuals within “the fundamental social unit”, i.e., the family. In the next chapter, I’ll move on to problems between individuals and their societies caused by religions. Then, in the final **P**-chapters, I’ll turn to some of the huge number of inter-group problems (or intra-national, where ‘intra’ means “within or inside”). After much debate with myself (debates that I always seem to lose – one way or another!), I decided to delay until **X**-chapters showing you international (where ‘inter’ means “between or among”) and even global problems caused by religions
3. And finally, Dear, in case you think that, by making references to problems caused by religions and therefore by the clerics of the world, I’m “beating a dead horse”, then let me express my opinion by paraphrasing a line from the book by John McCabe that I’ve referenced before and later will reference again: “No, I’m not beating a dead horse – it’s a live and sturdy ass!”

Now, to begin my examination of various social groupings and their problems, let me start where I trust you’d expect me to start, namely, by asking: What’s the objective?

Of course there are many reasons why people assemble into groups – but what perhaps is surprising is that many of these “reasons” are void of reasoning! For example, if you could have made “reasoned choices”, you might have chosen to be affiliated with a different family (e.g., one with a

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better grandfather!), a different religion (e.g., one in which laughing is encouraged!), or to be a citizen of a different city, state, or nation (e.g., one in which people were encouraged to put their trust in data rather than in some data-less idea about some giant Jabberwock in the sky). You might even have chosen a different world (e.g., one not so crowded!), a different “solar” system (e.g., one whose star wasn’t going to burn out relatively soon), a different galaxy (e.g., one not on a collision course with another galaxy!), or a different time during which to live (e.g., when ‘might’ will no longer mean ‘right’, when religions are relics of the past, and when Homer’s “peace and plenty” prevails). But should you become discouraged with the “justice” of the outcomes that have led to what you’re experiencing, Dear, please remember to distinguish between natural, personal, and interpersonal (or social) justice; try to distinguish between “justice” and what “just is”!

Given what “just is”, given that probably most social groupings are no more than a matter of birth, generally it’s more productive to inquire not why people are found in groups but 1) why people choose to continue (or discontinue) affiliations established by birth, and 2) why people choose to associate with (or disassociate from) other groups. Further, to both those inquiries should be added the obvious assessment that many people are reluctant to change affiliations because most people resist any change – many times with good reason. For example, if you were born as a mesmerized Muslim in Mozambique, it would probably be wise to continue your affiliation with Islam, for otherwise you probably would be ostracized (or murdered) for being an “infidel”. In contrast, if you choose to abandon Mormonism, you will find that you’ll be ostracized only by your former “friends” – and probably severely criticized (for being “immoral”!) by at least some members of your family (but not by others ☺).

In later chapters, I’ll address reasons why people are religious (e.g., in **X2**, entitled “EXcavating Reasons”). My general conclusion (of course) is that all religious people pursue their trio of survival goals (of themselves, their extended families, and their values), but upon digging into details, one finds a host of intertwined “root causes” (many of which are instinctive), including fear of death and desires for knowledge, companionship, security, and love, and if nothing else, then at least the impression that at least someone knows what in hell it’s all about! Maybe data are available to support the suggestions that women more than men predominantly seek more security, companionship, and love from their religions and that men

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predominantly seek more knowledge and authority, but I haven't investigated the matter sufficiently to reach a conclusion.

In other chapters (labeled with **Y** and dealing with **You**), I'll try to guide you to consider the reasons why you have been indoctrinated in your religion and how you may want to investigate your own reasons for continuing "to believe" (if you still do) that the universe is under the control of some giant Jabberwock in the sky. In later **P**- and **X**-chapters, I'll address some of the problems that religions cause communities, nations, and all humanity. In the excursion **Yx**, I'll show you some of the huge number of serious problems that religions have caused humanity during the past ~5,000 years. In the remainder of this chapter, though, let me focus on a relatively narrow topic: problems that religions cause families.

The family is obviously the fundamental "social unit". Equally obvious is that humans (and all animals – and maybe even plants!) create families primarily in response to "directives" of their DNA molecules, which through a billion-or-so years of experimentation have determined that forming families optimizes their chance of reproducing. It's also obvious that the majority of humans choose to continue to be affiliated with their families, because our families usually promote our trio of survival goals (of ourselves, our extended families, and our values). In complicated human cultures, however, in contrast to other "cultures" (of other animals and even plants), it's useful to use our brains as best we can (i.e., be "moral"), planning ahead before accepting our DNA molecule's directive to establish a family.

In your case, Dear, should you someday consider creating your own family, then among all the ideas that I hope you'll consider, please appropriately account for the following hypothesis: in many cases, more devastating to families than financial difficulties, infidelity, and even crimes – as crazy as this may seem! – are different opinions about religions (i.e., different "worldviews", meaning different assumed "models" of the universe and our place within it). If you doubt that hypothesis, Dear, then may I recommend that you look at some relevant data, available even from "experiments" conducted in your own (extended) family.

- What is causing [and now, years later, I need to change that wording to "what caused"] most difficulty between your mother and father? Isn't it that your father abandoned Mormonism while your mother wouldn't?

- Why is there so much trouble between your father and his mother-in-law (your “other grandmother”)? Isn’t it because, when your father decided to abandon Mormonism, she encouraged your mother to leave your father, because he was no longer any “good” for your mother and you kids?
- Why is there so much trouble in your “other grandmother’s” family? Isn’t it derived from at least two of her children abandoning Mormonism?
- And look to at our side of your family: 1) When your father first “went mystic on us” (and subsequently became involved in Mormonism), it caused his mother and me huge problems (which then impacted our other children), 2) One set of your great-grandparents (your father’s maternal grandmother and grandfather) had major problems because he was religious and she wasn’t, and 3) Another set of your great-grandparents (my mother and father) broke up when I was a kid, almost certainly because she was religious and he wasn’t.

And if you think that it’s absolutely crazy that “the fundamental social unit” can be “split asunder” by something as trivial as opinions about which model of the universe is “true” (e.g., the model constructed by prehistoric people plus the priests of Ancient Egypt versus the model that modern science suggests), then, kid, welcome to the world – full of religious craziness.

But, surely you wonder: how could it be so? People couldn’t be that stupid! Sorry, Dear, but data strongly suggest they can be – and are! Further, Dear, think of some of the “reasons” (or opinions) behind schisms in families “caused” by religion. For example, your mother is probably distressed [and now, has divorced your father] because, if he didn’t return to Mormonism, then he wouldn’t be available to whisper her “secret name” to her, so she can join him for all eternity in an imagined “celestial paradise”. Similarly in the family of your “other grandmother”: at least two of her children (or is it now three) concluded that her (Egyptian, Chaldean, Christian, Mormon) model of the universe was “stupid”, and so, in her opinion, they were “lost”. And in the case of my mother, she gave all of her love to Jesus, she repeatedly described my father as “the devil”, and her worst criticism of us when we were kids was: “You’re just like your father!” [I should hope so!]

Meanwhile, strong opinions can similarly be found on “the other side”. Once your father became convinced that the Book of Abraham and the Book of Mormon were fraudulent, he could no longer tolerate either the “intellectual dishonesty” of continuing “to believe” or continuing to pay the Mormon clerics 10% of his income to perpetuate their con game. In my case, although I tried for years (even decades!) to convince your father that his ideas about god were just flights of unconstrained imagination, I finally gave up on him: abandoning him – if not emotionally and financially, then at least intellectually. And in the case of my father, he totally gave up on my mother – totally abandoning both her and us kids. From all of which, Dear (and much, much, more similar data!), I hope that you’ll at least consider some potentially important points.

First, Dear, please reconsider a point that I’ve repeatedly tried to make in earlier chapters: constrain your imagination! Be careful, especially, not to let someone capture your imagination: whoever controls your imagination controls you. Think about the Muslim extremists who tie explosives around their waists and blow themselves up (killing others in the vicinity): some cleric gained control of their imaginations – and thereby, gained control over their lives.

Second, Dear, please don’t underestimate the importance people place on their values. To your mother, more important than peace and happiness in her own home is the value she perceives in the promised happiness for her “immortal soul” in her imagined “celestial paradise”. To her mother, more important than cohesion in your family (and in her own) is the value she perceives in her religion. To your father, more important than peace in both his parent’s family and his own is the value he places on what he considers to be his “intellectual honesty”. To me, more important than your father’s “intellectual honesty” (viz., his reasoning) is that he learn to apply the scientific method in his daily life. To my mother, more important than love in her family was her love of Jesus. And so on. And thus, Dear, see that differing opinions (even about such a seemingly-esoteric concept as how the universe “fits together”, i.e., different “worldviews”) can be wedges that drive families apart!

But, Dear, of course it’s not just differing religious ideas that can damage and even destroy “societies”: whatever the source of people’s values, if their values differ, people can become estranged. In families during this country’s civil war, for example, brothers who had different opinions about

slavery went to fight on opposite sides in the war – and ended up shooting at each other. In modern times, different opinions about political and social issues [such as abortion, adultery, alcohol, animal rights, bankruptcy, bigotry, blasphemy, bribery, consumerism, communism, debauchery, decadence, decency, the death penalty, euthanasia, environmental issues... (just to list a few from “a” through “e”!)] can (and do) destroy cohesion even in families. Different opinions, of course, but one should probably then add what Voltaire said: “It’s clear that the individual who persecutes a man, his brother, because he is not of the same opinion, is a monster.”

And of course it’s not just differing opinions that can destroy families. The list of potential and real causes is enormous: abuse, adultery, betrayal, cheating, drugs, egotism, finances, gambling, humiliation, incest, jealousy... But, Dear, my purpose, here, is not to focus on the many real and potential problems in families. If you want to study them (and potentially learn how to solve some of them), then start by taking appropriate courses at university. Here, I’m trying to explain “just” what I mean by “sick social policies” that have resulted “simply” from the god-idea. Therefore, in spite of the many other obvious potential and realized causes of troubles in families, please permit me to focus on some of the problems that the damnable clerics of the world have caused – even in the simplest and most fundamental social unit.

One of the craziest ideas I’ve ever had the misfortune of hearing (over and over and over again!) is the one preached throughout this country (by priests and politicians of all persuasions) that the “Judeo-Christian tradition” (as conveyed in the Bible) is this country’s guide to “family values”. If you would like to sample some of this stupidity, Dear, then type “family values” into Google: you’ll get more than a third of a million hits! To cut the number down to something more manageable, add words such as “Judeo-Christian”, “Pope”, “Mormon”, or similar. Here, let me give you just four examples.

- In March 1985, in a letter to young Catholics throughout the world, Pope John Paul II wrote:

Only God is the ultimate basis of all values; only He gives the definitive meaning to our human existence... In Him and Him alone all values have their first source and final completion... Without Him – without the reference to God – the whole world of created values remains as it were suspended in an absolute vacuum.

- Echoing Pope Paul, in his 21 September 1997 “Liss Lecture” at the University of Notre Dame entitled “The Values Vacuum in American Life”, the Jewish Senator Joe Lieberman stated (as I quoted before):

Sadly, we have too often dislodged our morality from its religious foundations, and come to treat the Judeo-Christian ethic as just the work of another group of dinosaurs. Without this grounding, we have opened the door to the values vacuum. Without a connection to a higher law, we have made it more and more difficult for people to answer the question why it is wrong to steal, to cheat to lie, to settle conflicts with violence, or treat women abusively... For too many, the Ten Commandments have become little more than another “do and don’t” list that people feel free to argue with, negotiate, or ignore outright. There are too few constants, too few fixed points, too little clarity about what is right and what is wrong.

- In May 1987, in the Mormon magazine *Ensign* in an article “Will I Be Happy?”, “Elder” James E. Faust (of “the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles” of the Mormon Church) wrote:

Without turning back to the word of our Creator, no one is wise enough to sort out what ethical, spiritual, and moral values should be taught to the next generation, and to their children, and to their children’s children.

- In his 9 February 1999 “devotional address” entitled “Weightier Matters” given at Brigham Young University, “Elder” Dallin Oaks (of the “Quorum of the Twelve Apostles” of the Mormon Church) stated:

The purpose of mortal families is to bring children into the world, to teach them what is right, and to prepare all family members for exaltation in eternal family relationships. The gospel plan contemplates the kind of family government, discipline, solidarity, and love that serve those ultimate goals. But even the love of family members is subject to the overriding first commandment, which is love of God (see *Matthew 22: 37-38*), and the Savior’s directive, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (*John 14: 15*). As Jesus taught, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (*Matthew 10: 37*).

Maybe what bothers me most about such stupidity as the above is the possibility that such “leaders” might think that they’re actually “telling the truth”. I would prefer to think that they realize that they’re promoting a pack of lies – but doing so to promote what they consider to be some “higher good”. If so, of course I would still consider their actions immoral, but then at least I could consider them to be intelligent, rather than a bunch of damnable fools. In any event, let me now respond to their stupid statements.

Pope Paul wrote: “Only God is the ultimate basis of all values... Without Him... the whole world of created values remains as it were suspended in an absolute vacuum.” If that were true (and of course it’s not!), it would be a truly scary concept! The unknown, the unknowable, and the undefined is the only source of values?! Fortunately, however, it’s pure balderdash, for only the other day, when I conveyed this idea to a bunny rabbit that I met on the trail, he responded: “Personally, I rather ‘value’ nibbling on fresh, green clover – maybe the Pope otta try it; he might find it valuable!”

Senator Lieberman stated: “Sadly, we have too often dislodged our morality from its religious foundations, and come to treat the Judeo-Christian ethic as just the work of another group of dinosaurs.” “Elder” Faust wrote: “Without turning back to the word of our Creator, no one is wise enough to sort out what ethical, spiritual, and moral values should be taught to the next generation, and to their children, and to their children’s children.” What astounding stupidity! Dear, if you choose to take the “excursion” Qx, I’ll go through the “holy books” of our culture, line by line, to show you just how astoundingly stupid the above suggestions are. Here, let me list just a few examples from the Bible, without yet giving you the references.

- According to the Bible, the first two children of the first two people (Adam and Eve) were two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain murdered his brother and subsequently, with God’s permission, Cain (the murderer) went off and started his own family. How he managed to find another human to be his wife wasn’t explained, but what I wish the clerics and politicians of this country would explain is why murdering one’s brother is a “family value” that they “think” should be promoted.
- According to the Bible, after Noah survived the flood (and he was allegedly saved because God identified him as the only “righteous man”), he got drunk and lay down in his tent, naked. His son, Ham, saw him naked, and when Noah woke up from his drunken stupor and learned that his son had seen him naked, he didn’t say “So, what’s the big deal”; instead, he “cursed” – and he cursed not Ham but Ham’s son, Canaan: “Cursed be Canaan, slave of slaves shall he be...” One of the “family values” promoted by this country’s clerics and politicians is for fathers to get falling-down drunk? There’s something wrong with seeing your father naked? And if someone does something that you consider wrong, then you should put a curse on that person’s totally innocent son. A grandfather would condemn his grandson to slavery? Slavery is

condoned? These are examples of Judeo-Christian-Mormon “family values” from the “words of our Creator”? Riiiiight.

- The Babylonians built an impressive tower (the Tower of Babel or Babylon). “Then the LORD came down to see the city and tower which mortal men had built [apparently, he couldn’t see it well from where he was!] and he said, ‘Here they are, one people with a single language, and now they have started to do this [i.e., build a tower]; henceforward nothing they have a mind to do will be beyond their reach. Come, let us go down there and confuse their speech, so that they will not understand what they say to one another.’” God doesn’t want people to accomplish what they set their minds to? God doesn’t want people to understand each other? These are more Judeo-Christian-Mormon “family values”? Really?
- Abram (later known as Abraham) set out from Mesopotamia with his wife Sarai (later known as Sarah), his nephew, Lot, and others, to journey to the land where the Canaanites lived (now Israel). “There the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘I give this land to your descendants’.” A “family value” preached by clerics and politicians is that if some voice tells you that something is yours, then even if it belongs to someone else, it’s yours? Do tell!
- When a famine struck Canaan, Abram set out for Egypt, saying to his wife (and half-sister) Sarai: “I know very well that you are a beautiful woman, and that when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘She is his wife’; then they will kill me but let you live. Tell them that you are my sister, so that all may go well with me because of you ...” Subsequently, so the story goes, the Pharaoh married Sarai and “treated Abram well, because of her, and Abram came to possess sheep and cattle and asses, male and female slaves, she-asses, and camels.” A “family value” is to marry your half sister and then pimp her off as a prostitute? A “family values” is to have male and female slaves? Are you really quite sure?!
- Upon returning to Canaan, “Abram’s wife Sarai had borne him no children. Now she had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and she [Sarai] said to Abram, ‘you see that the LORD has not allowed me to bear a child. Take my slave-girl; perhaps I shall found a family through her’.” A Judeo-Christian “family value” is for wives to supply their husbands with sex slaves to rape at will? Gosh, I didn’t know that.

- When the poor Egyptian slave girl, Hagar, “knew she was with child” (after her mistress, Sarai, had arranged for her husband, Abram, to rape her), “she despised her mistress. Sarai said to Abram, ‘I have been wronged [She, Sarai, said that SHE had been wronged!] and you [Abram] must answer for it. It was I who gave my slave-girl into your arms, but since she has known that she is with child, she has despised me. May the LORD see justice done’ ...” And so then, what do we learn about the LORD’s justice? He reportedly sent down an angel to inform Hagar: “You are with child and will bear a son. You shall name him Ishmael... He shall be a man like the wild ass, his hand against every man and every man’s hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kinsmen.” It’s God’s justice that the innocent child of a poor, raped, slave-girl “shall live at odds with all his kinsmen.” Oh what wonderful justice and family values the Lord God doth promote!
- But then, one would hope, surely the Lord punished Abram and Sarai! Nope. First he changed their names to Abraham and Sarah (apparently giving them a new “lease of life”), then he promised Abraham “the land in which you now are aliens” (the land belonging to the Canaanites – without as much as a “by your leave” to the owners), and then he promised that Sarah would give birth to a Son (to be called Isaac). But surely, you might ask, surely Abraham was to be punished in some manner? Well, God demanded that Abraham cut some foreskin off his penis (i.e., that Abraham be circumcised) – and similarly for all his male descendants, forever. Some suggest that castration of Abraham would have been a more fitting. And as for circumcising his descendants, many quarrel with God’s propensity to punish the innocent for the sins of the guilty, concluding that it’s not a “family value” that should be promoted.
- In the previous chapter I already mentioned the story about Lot and the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. The “family values” thereby promoted include the following: to protect visitors, fathers should send their daughters outside to be raped by townsmen; wives are to do exactly as they’re told by their husbands (or they’ll be transformed into pillars of salt); and if daughters can’t find another man, they should get their father drunk and engage in incest. Oh, and of course there’s the other “family value” promoted: that homosexuality is worse than all those evils – although the Bible doesn’t explain why!

Well, Dear, perhaps you get both my and the Bible's "drift" – and so far, I've gone through only the Bible's first 20 pages!! If you want to investigate more of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic-Mormon "family values" promoted in their "holy books", then take the "excursion" **Qx**.

Here, let me just assure you that the horror-of-it-all continues (throughout the additional ~2,000 pages of the Bible!) including stealing a brother's inheritance, selling a brother into slavery, innumerable cases of polygamy, faking peace to promote murder, murdering people who disagree with you, killing those who profess different religions, slaughtering men, women and children (but keeping virgins, so that they could be raped by the troops), stoning to death sons who misbehave, beating slaves to death, selling daughters into slavery, and so on, on and on. As Thomas Paine (one of the principal founders of this country) wrote:

Any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system... There are matters in the Bible, said to be done by the express commandment of God, that are shocking to humanity and to every idea we have of moral justice... Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the word of God. It... has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind...

As Noam Chomsky recently wrote, "The Bible is one of the most genocidal books in history", and as Steve Allan recently summarized:

No actual tyrant known to history has ever been guilty of one-hundredth of the crimes, massacres, and other atrocities attributed to the Deity in the Bible.

From all of which, Dear, I would have you seriously consider if you agree with Senator Lieberman and "Elder" Faust that these are "family values" that should be "taught to the next generation". In my opinion, far better would be to adopt the family values practiced by dolphins!

And now, Dear, in case you think that I've inadequately indicted "family values" promoted in the "revealed" religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Mormonism (and as I'll show you in **Qx**, a similar indictment is appropriate for Islam), then let me turn to the final of the four idiotic statement quoted above, i.e., the one from "Elder" Oaks [repeated below and to which I've added some "running comments", in square brackets].

The purpose of mortal families is to bring children into the world [I thought that such a purpose was to be decided by the mother and father. Are families to vote on it? “Resolved that, tonight, Mom and Dad are to have sex without using contraception. All those in favor...” Talk about a democratic family!], to teach them what is right [Well, sure, provided that parents teach their children that what’s “right” is to use their brains as best they can], and to prepare all family members for exaltation in eternal family relationships. [The purpose of parents is to teach their children that the prehistoric-Egyptian-Chaldean model of the universe is correct, that science is wrong, and that the children should pay 10% of their income to the clerics to continue preaching such foolishness? Amazing! I would have thought that only a cleric would preach such stupidity. Oh – now I see.]

The gospel plan contemplates the kind of family government [amazingly democratic!], discipline [“Don’t evaluate, obey!”], solidarity [“Never mind what’s learned in science; stick to what the clerics say!”], and love that serve those ultimate goals. [What balderdash! Dear, as I’ll show you (some below and more in Qx and Yx), the Gospel primarily promotes the idea to “forget about rearing a family, because the world is about to end”, e.g., “Saint” Paul encourages people not to marry:

“Those who marry will have pain and grief in this bodily life, and my aim is to spare you. What I mean, my friends is this. The time we live in will not last long... For the whole frame of this world is passing away.”]

[In fact, you can see a part of the failure of “the gospel plan” to promote “family values” already in the rest of what “Elder” Oaks writes, about “love”:] But even the love of family members is subject to the overriding first commandment, which is love of God (see *Matthew 22: 37-38*), and the Savior’s directive, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (*John 14: 15*). [Again: don’t think for yourself, obey!]. As Jesus taught, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (*Matthew 10: 37*).

The last part of the above quote from “Elder” Oaks introduces a “family value” that’s absolutely horrible: just as for any “religious cult” that “brainwashes” its members, Christianity and Mormonism (and similarly Judaism and Islam) exhort “followers” to love some “god” more than they love either their parents or their children. This indoctrination has caused a huge number of problems in a huge number of families (including yours) for multiple generations. Your first reaction to Oaks’ statement may be: “Surely it ain’t so. Surely it’s a misprint or a misunderstanding. Surely no one could be that stupid. Surely no one could be that evil!” Sorry, Dear: it’s no misprint or misunderstanding – at least, not on your part.

Below, let me show you some quotations (those attributed to the cleric's Jesus are from the New English Bible), so you can see that the message is unmistakable.

Jesus said, "I tell you this: there is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents, or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this age, and in the age to come have eternal life." (*Luke 18, 29*)

Once when great crowds were accompanying him, he [Jesus] turned to them and said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine. No one who does not carry his cross and come with me can be a disciple of mine." (*Luke 14, 25*)

Actually – and rather remarkably – the above "hate statement" attributed to "the cleric's Jesus" is almost identical to a similar "hate statement" attributed to "the Gnostic's Jesus" in the *Gospel of Thomas* (which, as I mentioned before and will describe more completely in **Yx**, was found in 1947 buried in the Egyptian desert near the town of Nag Hammadi):

Jesus said, "Whoever does not hate father and mother cannot be my disciple, and whoever does not hate brothers and sisters, and carry the cross as I do, will not be worthy of me." (*Thomas 55*)

Why I wrote that this is "rather remarkable" is because (as far as I know) no other historical figure ever made such a (hideous) statement, which then suggests that maybe there was an "historical Jesus" – although, as I'll be showing you in **Yx**, there's absolutely zero reliable data to support the silliness that he was god (or the son of any god), whereas there's substantial evidence to suggest that, if he existed, he was merely a mystic whose mind had gone berserk.

In addition, the following two quotations (from "the cleric's Jesus" and "the Gnostics' Jesus") suggest that "the historical Jesus" did practice what he preached, i.e., he put his religion before his family:

His mother and his brothers arrived but could not get to him for the crowd. He was told, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, and they want to see you." He replied, "My mother and my brothers – they are those who hear the word of God and act upon it." (*Luke 8, 19*)

The disciples said to him, "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside." He said to them, "Those here who do what my Father wants are my brothers and my mother. They are the ones who will enter my Father's kingdom." (*Thomas 99*)

And let me add, Dear, that I'm not alone in suggesting that, if he existed, Jesus was mentally unbalanced. My assessment is based on statements (such as those above) that are attributed to him. Meanwhile, though, the clerics who wrote the New Testament suggest that many who knew him came to the same conclusion. Thus, starting at *Mark 3*, 21 there is the following:

When his family heard of this, they set out to take charge of him; for people were saying that he was out of his mind. The doctors of the law, too, who had come down from Jerusalem, said, "he is possessed by Beelzebub."

But the assessment of Jesus' mental state is not nearly so significant, in my opinion, as the assessment (also made by many people) that what he promoted was evil. It will take me quite a while to show you sufficient evidence to justify that conclusion, Dear (I'll show you some in **Qx** and more in **Yx**), but to give you a first glimpse of the evidence against him, consider the following.

To begin, let me acknowledge that Christianity (and therefore Mormonism) aren't the only religions that damage family cohesion. Yet, because of your experiences, let me show you that both the clerics' Jesus and the Gnostics' Jesus saw that what he was promoting would cause families great harm. Thus, at *Matthew 10*, 34 the Christian clerics have their Jesus state:

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a son's wife against her mother-in-law...

Similarly, in the Gnostics' *Gospel of Thomas* (16) there is:

Jesus said, "Perhaps people think that I have come to cast peace upon the world. They do not know that I have come to cast conflicts upon the earth: fire, sword, war. For there will be five in a house: there'll be three against two and two against three, father against son and son against father, and they will stand alone."

From the above two quotations, I hope, Dear, that you'll notice two relatively unimportant points and a third, relatively important point.

As for the two relatively unimportant points, one is that the above "prophecy" is (as far as I know) the only "prophecy" made by Jesus that ever came true! That is, he certainly didn't bring peace to families. In fact,

he could have added something about the trouble he would cause even between grandparents and their grandchildren! The second relatively unimportant point is that (again as far as I know), no “primitive philosopher” other than Jesus made a similar statement, and whereas both the Christian clerics and the Gnostics attribute essentially the same quotation to a single person, then (as I’ll show you in some detail in **Yx**) this appears to be another one of the few cases of a reliable report of what the historical Jesus (possibly Jesus ben Pandera) actually said. And then there’s the more important point, which I’ll summarize with the exclamation: What astounding evil this Jesus preached and practiced!

To see what I mean, Dear, please consider a modern illustration, with ingredients from a case that actually occurred. Suppose that you were working as an aide to some politician who promoted a new social policy, the essence of which was this: the politician wanted to provide welfare to all mothers whose income was below the “official poverty level”, with the amount to be given to each mother to be proportional to the number of children she had. Meanwhile, suppose that other politicians were opposed to such a plan, arguing that its consequence would be to break up poor families. They asked: if mothers (rather than mothers and fathers) were helped financially, and if the payment to the mother was proportional to the number of her children, they how would this promote family cohesion? They argued, further: why wouldn’t this proposed policy, instead, promote more poor women to have more children (out of wedlock) so they could collect more welfare? [Which, Dear, in case you didn’t know it, actually occurred in this country during the 1970s and 80s.]

Now, Dear, suppose that you were involved in deliberations about the plan outlined above and that you had a tendency to be a “modern-day messiah” (or “social planner”) – but that you were much more moral than Jesus! You considered the competing ideas and you reached the conclusion that the critics were right: that the plan promoted by your boss would contribute to the disintegration of poor families – that fathers would have no incentive to stay to help rear their kids and that mothers would have an incentive to have more children, regardless of who the fathers were. Then, what would you do? Sorry not to wait for your response, Dear, but I’m essentially certain what your conclusion would be: you’d conclude that it was “immoral” to contribute to the breakup of the fundamental social unit, and I’m sure that you would then work in whatever moral way you could to defeat your boss’s (or your former boss’s) plan.

\* Go to other chapters *via*

But for contrast, look what Jesus did. As I'll show you in Yx, he found himself in the midst of competing models of the universe: the old Jewish model of a universe ruled by an omnipotent, vengeful, father figure (Yahweh) who “appropriately” rewarded (and punished) people while they were still alive for believing (or not believing) in him, *versus* a newer model (with various wrinkles from the Persians, Chaldeans, Sadducees, Essenes, Egyptian and Greek Gnostics, and others), which in the version Jesus (ben Pandera?) seems to have eventually adopted, apparently considered Yahweh to be the “bad god” who created matter (or mass) whereas his own god was the “good god” who created light. But all of that (nonsense!) aside, Dear, the main point is this: apparently Jesus saw that, by promoting his new ideas, he would damage families – and yet he persisted!

Dear: please think about it. It's evil! I (and others, such as the poet Blake) call this behavior of Jesus “evil”, because clearly seeing that the consequences of his actions would be to damage families (the fundamental social unit), yet his ego drove him to promote his (stupid) opinions. In essence, he said to himself:

“Oh sure I'm gonna end up driving a wedge between family member, but my ideas about this universe are more important than love among family members. It's better, by far, that my worldview be adopted than that family members stay together to help one another. The imagined fruits of my [crazy] model of the universe are more important than the real fruits of family membership that people enjoy daily. It's far more important that some family members follow me and start loving my imagined god than that family members love one another.”

To all of which I would say to Jesus, if I could: “Blow it out your ear, ya crazy little twirp!” And to all his hanger-on [servile, sycophant] followers, especially the clerics, I say: “If your idea of ‘family values’ is to destroy family cohesion for not buying into your crazy worldview, then may the lot of you be consigned to your concocted Hell.”

Sorry, Dear: as you know, sometimes I get “carried away”. To try to calm myself, let me add five other points. First, maybe all of the above (and much of what follows) reflects a misunderstanding of what Jesus meant. I

don't think so, but in his online book *The Fallible Gospels*,<sup>3</sup> Graham Lawrence makes a fairly good case:

This all seems very distressing, and has been described as savage assaults on family values. But is this really what is going on? Notice... that the lines of division are not drawn between man and wife, or brother and sister, or brother and brother; is it significant that the divisions are not random, but are specifically between the generations?

It has in the past suited people in the Church to apply these words to their own experience, and to interpret these family conflicts as being all about faith in Jesus. The believer is divided from his unbelieving relatives. But this [i.e., the statement by Jesus, claims Lawrence] is about power, not about faith. *The family is the basic hierarchy in society, and division between the generations is about interfering with standard patterns of subordination to authority, and domination of one person by another.* [Italics added.] The family is the situation in which we learn about love and dependence, but also about power and authority. Where there is power, there is the potential for it to be abused.

Jesus was not “against” the family at all. He extended it outwards. One Father – all equal children. One source of authority – God. No one else with any power. You had to “hate” your blood relatives because everyone had to be your relative; you had to have love to give them all, not one small exclusive group. Consider the variation of wording in the following:

Whoever does not hate father and mother as I do cannot be a follower of me, and whoever does not love father and mother as I do cannot be a follower of me...  
(Thomas 101)

No, the family was not so much being destroyed as being put into perspective and transformed. It was power structures that were no longer relevant. Everyone in Galilee was to be regarded as your family and as a child of God...

Now, Dear, as I wrote, Lawrence makes a fairly good case, but I don't “buy it”, for at least the following three reasons.

1. If the above is what Jesus meant, then why didn't he say so? If he was a “teacher” and if his message was as Lawrence portrays, then he was an incompetent teacher – perhaps explaining why he received “failing grades” on his student evaluations! A teacher's job is not just to convey a message but also to convey it in a manner that students understand. Further (as I'll show you in a later chapter), the result of his teachings

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<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://freespace.virgin.net/graham.lawrence/gospelintro.htm>.

was to convert only ~200 (two hundred!) of the ~2 million Jews to his way of thinking – and if a response is that he now has ~2 billion followers, then I'd disagree: instead, a bunch of con-artist clerics have control of a vast “indoctrination machine”, and for the past ~2,000 years, no one else except Lawrence (as far as I know) has understood that this “hate message” was merely a comment by Jesus opposing the “power structure” of families!

2. If what Thomas gives us is truly what Jesus said, then Jesus certainly was an egotistical SOB! His alleged statement, “Whoever does not hate father and mother as I do cannot be a follower of me, and whoever does not love father and mother as I do cannot be a follower of me...” not only says “Follow me” but also says “My way or the highway”! Moreover, why didn't he explain what he meant by “whoever does not love father and mother as I do”? Without such an explanation (and even with an explanation!), we can follow only his actions (which always speak louder than words). And the actions reported are that he encouraged people not even to recognize their fathers (e.g., *John 8, 41*: “The only Father we have is God himself”) and when his mother asked him to come out of a meeting, he refused (as I already quoted).
  
3. Graham's case rests on his identification (which I italicized in the above) that “The family is the basic hierarchy in society, and division between the generations is about interfering with standard patterns of subordination to authority, and domination of one person by another.” But this description of “the family” uses the words ‘hierarchy’, ‘division’, ‘subordination’, ‘authority’, and ‘domination’ in an understandable attempt to lead the reader's mind in the direction desired by Graham, not to provide the reader with understanding of “the family”. Certainly I agree that “the family is the basic hierarchy in society”, but the basis of this “hierarchy” is not about “standard patterns of subordination to authority, and domination of one person by another”. If you want to understand the “basis” of some “organization”, Dear, seek to understand its objective. In the case of the family, the goal of this “hierarchy” is not domination by some power-hungry authority. Except in some pathological cases, parents aren't on some power kick; they're trying to help their children survive; their objective is the goal “programmed” by their DNA molecules: to live!

And the second of the five points that I want to make is that, if you wonder why anyone would follow the stupid clerics' advice and put love of some imaginary God above love of a real person, then perhaps you'd like to consider Robert Ingersoll's ideas:

Human love is better than any religion. It is better to love your wife than to love God. It is better to make a happy home than to sunder hearts with creeds... Human love is generous and noble. The love of God is selfish, because man does not love God for God's sake, but for his own.

But then, I'd suggest that you'd need to consider why people desire to love God, and as I'll try to show you in a later chapter (in **X2**, dealing with why people are religious), it's difficult to answer such questions, because so many "answers" seem "correct" for different people. Yet, some people choose to "love God" obviously because they want the "goodies", i.e., eternal life in some fanciful, fictitious paradise.

Third, Dear, let me admit that I'd diminish my criticism of Jesus if he had overwhelmingly solid data to support his "hypothesis" (which was actually just a "wild speculation", because he had absolutely zero data to support his idea). But even then I'd still criticize him, unless he could also convince me: 1) that no other interpretations of the data were available than to assume that some god had created the universe, and 2) that the values of promoting his model exceeded the values that people gain from family cohesion. In contrast – in absolutely horrible contrast – look what he did: he climbed up on some rock, somewhere, and started yelling (in effect):

"Hey, I got an idea. The universe didn't create itself through a symmetry-breaking quantum fluctuation in a total void leading to the Big Bang, but through the amazing finger-snapping power of a giant Jabberwock in sky. So, never mind what you families say, abandon them, even hate them – and follow me."

And so my response to Jesus: "Blow it out your ear, you idiot!"

Fourth, let me comment on the foolish claim by essentially all the clerics of the world that "families that pray together stay together." What that stupidity entirely misses is that: families that consider all praying to be worse than useless will also stay together! The point is: neither praying nor lack of praying is the cause of unity (either in a family or in larger social groups). Instead, what's critical for unity is a common sense of values – and

from my point of view, what's critical is common values based on common sense rather than based on wild-and-wooly, data-less imaginations promoted by childish, uninformed, idiotic, insane, damnable clerics!

And my fifth and final point is to respond to the potential criticism:

“Well, aren't you doing the same as Jesus? If you claim he was evil, then aren't you evil, too? If you say he was evil (because he saw that his ideas would split families apart, and yet he proceeded to promote them), then don't you see that your ideas, also, will hurt families (especially religious families, even the families of your own grandchildren) – and yet you promote them – and therefore, aren't you as guilty as you charge Jesus to be?”

Well, Dear, of course I'd argue “No” – for the following two reasons. First, notice that I waited until you finished high school to present my ideas to you, not only because it's not until now that I thought you'd be “old enough” (to understand) but also because you're now about to leave home, anyway – thereby, if not breaking then at least drastically modifying ties with your childhood family. And second, Dear, in fact I'll be advocating (especially in **Y**, dealing with **You**) that you seek to keep your own family together, working to accommodate different opinions. Let me try to summarize this second reason.

Dear: I doubt that your mother will ever change her worldview (i.e., her opinions about “the nature of this universe” and her place within it). That is, I'm sorry to expect that her indoctrination in the God idea has irreversibly captured her imagination. On the other hand, what your father's eventual opinion will be, I've given up trying to guess. But whatever their opinions about this universe, whatever the opinions of “the other kids”, and whatever your own opinion may be, I encourage you not to let differing worldviews distract you from promoting peace and unity in other aspects of your family life. Let me put it this way: if family members have different opinions about the odors of dead horses vs. roses, the tastes of spinach vs. strawberry milkshakes, the sounds of rock vs. classical music, the sight of trash on trails vs. the beauty of sunsets, and so on, I assume that you would still plan to promote family members helping one another. Similarly, then, I encourage you not to let different opinions (especially about something as “esoteric” as the nature of the universe!) distract you from family unity.

Of course, you may choose to modify some family relationships if some members adopt what you consider to be unacceptable “values”. For example, you may choose to discontinue a relationship even with “one of the kids” if one of them becomes a drug addict or a thief or whatever. But, Dear, to discontinue a relationship with a person because of his or her opinion about how the universe was created is crazy! If you’re “hooked on the God idea” but they’ve broken free from their indoctrination, if it’s your opinion that they’re headed for Hell because they don’t believe your opinions about how the universe fits together, then for cryin’ out loud, kid, use your head: after you get your Ph.D. in astrophysics, so that you learn what data support what opinions, then generally keep your opinions to yourself: it may be your opinion that you’d just be trying to help them, but they would have already “been there”, they would already known all they want to know about “the god idea” – and rejected it as silly and worse.

On the other hand, in the case that it’s you who has broken free from your indoctrination but they haven’t, then be prepared for possible changes (even “likely” changes) in your relationships with family members (even with your mother) if they continue in their intellectual cocoons. Depending on “the depth of their devotion” (that is, how well they’ve been brainwashed), they may conclude that you’ve contracted an infectious, mental virus – a virus that, as a minimum, precludes the infected from entering paradise and that can drag them to eternal torment in Hell. From their perspective, then, the least that they’ll try to do (for your own sake) is to try to “save you” (from a fate worse than death), and what they’ll likely try to do (e.g., for the sake of their own children) is to prevent you from infecting others. The result can then lie somewhere between your being harassed essentially every time you meet with them (leading to your desire to minimize interactions) to their desire to discontinue interactions with you (to “protect” their own children from being “infected” by your “Satan-inspired” views). Thereby, Dear, if you become a humanist or “free thinker”, be prepared for the possibility of disintegration of family relationships.

Actually, though, the possibility sketched in the previous paragraph is not so significant as it may seem. In Western culture (with our economic structure and mobility), experience has shown that (believe it or not) the importance to each of us of our childhood family (and our extended family) diminishes with time. For the same and additional reasons, though, if someday you should consider creating a family of your own, then your interactions with your chosen partner will become even more important. Consequently, if

\* Go to other chapters *via*

someday you do consider creating a family of your own, Dear, I strongly encourage you to first determine your proposed partner's worldview.

That recommendation may seem incongruous with my opinions expressed above, Dear, but you should appreciate some major differences in the two situations. For example, experience has shown that in contrast to diminishing importance of relationships with members of your childhood family, the importance of relationships with members of your own family will grow with time. Further, among members of your current family, obviously there are an enormous number of other bonds, regardless of opinions about religions, derived from living together for all this time. But when starting out with someone new, you'll have essentially zero bonds (except chemical!) – and probably the most important bond that can be built (before starting a family) is intellectual. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to avoid starting with an intellectual “disconnect”, between you and your partner, about your assumed place in the universe.

And maybe I should add that, if you decide to adopt the primitive ideas about this universe promoted by lame-brained clerics, then I'm afraid that you're probably headed for more trouble in your marriage than if you have already rejected all gobbledygook about some giant Jabberwock in the sky. My reason for that assessment is the following. All religions must continuously be “propped up” (with frequent prayers and religious gatherings), because history has shown that people have a tendency to return to the state into which they were born, not believing in any Jabberwocks in the sky. As some psychiatrist said, religion is a learned abnormality! Therefore, if you're not religious and you seek a mate who is similarly “liberated”, you probably needn't worry so much about your mate having a “change of heart” (provided your mate stays away from mind-warping drugs). On the other hand, if you are religious, then when you seek out a mate, you'll need to worry about the possibility that, sometime in the future, your mate will conclude that his (or, for other reader's, her) “avowed” religion is absurd (as did your father). Simultaneously, you should consider the possibility that you, too, will change your opinion about religion.

And actually, Dear, before you start a family of your own, I strongly recommend that you give the idea (about starting a family) some very serious thought – by yourself! The reason for my recommending that you stop listening to the opinions of others is because, ever since you were a baby, you've been inundated with other people's opinions about “the

importance of family”, “family values”, and so on. For example, one way or another, you’ve been polluted with such junk as the following, quoted here from “Elder” Oaks’ article [already referenced and to which I’ve added some “running comments” in “square brackets].

We know that the work of God cannot be done without unity and cooperative action.

[This “we know”? Why? Because it’s repeated so frequently? Even though we don’t know exactly what “work” the giant Jabberwock in the sky “wants” us to do?]

We also know that the children of God cannot be exalted as single individuals.

[Really? Doesn’t it depend on the meaning of “exalted”? You must be using in its third sense as given in my dictionary, “in very high spirits” – as in “drunk” or “drugged” or “mind warped”! Instead, if by “exalted” you were to mean “1. high in rank, position, or esteem,” or “2. grand or noble in character”, then in the opinion of humanists, being “exalted” has nothing to do with being married and everything to do with making some major contribution to humanity – such as ridding it of all the idiotic ideas about all gods!] Neither a man nor a woman can be exalted in the celestial kingdom unless both unite in the unselfishness of the everlasting covenant of marriage and unless both choose to keep the commandments and honor the covenants of that united state. [Well, with that at least I can agree: “Neither a man nor a woman can be exalted in the celestial kingdom”!]

Anyway, Dear (as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by the rubbish written by “Elder” Oaks), before you start a family of your own, I strongly recommend that you think about the matter by yourself, and then form your opinions on your own. Then, when you’ve reached your own conclusions, you may want to share them with others, because they may think of something that you overlooked. Let me list some ideas that I hope you’ll consider.

- If you decide to follow your DNA molecule’s “advice” to have children (and this “advice” is from your DNA molecule – not from some giant Jabberwock in the sky!), then realize that there are major “systemic problems” with the “nuclear family”. You can explore these problems by yourself, e.g., on the internet. Here, let me mention just that the “nuclear family” (as you, your parents, and we grandparents have experienced it, with a mother, father, and a few children) was not the product of either nature’s slow evolution or some giant Jabberwock’s “finger snapping” but a “cultural shock” that followed the industrial revolution, when families were forced to be mobile in search of jobs. During the hunter-gatherer-herder phase of human evolution, “family” would mean an entire “band” or “tribe”; during the agricultural phase, “family” would typically mean multiple generations and multiple relatives; but during the

industrial and now post-industrial phase, usually “family” has become a very isolated “unit”, with little local support from an “extended family” or one’s “tribe”. As a result, if you decide to have a family, then to develop some local support for the very difficult job of rearing children, there are potential advantages to joining even some “cultish” religious organization, such as the Mormons, because they do provide at least a “sense” of the presence of an “extended family”, locally. If you could join their organization just for the “social activities”, i.e., if they didn’t require (as a condition of membership) that you and your family abandon your freedom to express your thoughts, then they might be worth joining. Otherwise, Dear, you could search in your community for organizations that can provide similar social activities but don’t require your thoughts to conform to some “party line” (e.g., in some communities, the Universal Unitarian Church or some humanist organization). Failing finding such an organization, you could even consider creating your own “party”; maybe call it the FUN Party – which is my acronym for the “Family Utility and Nourishment” Party!

- If you do decide to have children, Dear, then similar to the considerations mentioned above, but sufficiently important to be considered separately, is an idea that I hope you can learn from the pains experienced by other parents. I didn’t realize this concept until one of my few good friends pointed it out to me, when he saw the problems that your grandmother and I were having with your father. He had learned the lesson from his own painful experiences. Subsequently, I’ve frequently repeated this message to your mother, to prepare her – just in case. What I’ve said to her and what I now say to you is this:

“Dear: Don’t forget that it’s not just parents who rear children. Communities are also involved. As a parent, you’ll deserve credit for the good job you’ve done, but realize that all your positive influences may be insufficient to compensate for negative influences from the community. Remember this: you get credit for the good; the blame for the bad belongs to others!”

Now, Dear, of course I realize that the above isn’t appropriate for some parents, but it is for your own, I hope it was for your grandmother and me, and I’m sure it would be for you.

- Finally, Dear, although you may contemplate staying unmarried, consider also the desirability of having a thoughtful, considerate, helping, loving partner with whom to go through life, both to share the good and to help you through the bad – assuming you can find such a person! Yet, if you do marry, consider the questionable value of having children of your own. Consider the very real possibility that almost the last thing that this poor old world needs is more children. Further, realize that already there are an uncountable number of children who could benefit from your help, both in your own community and throughout the world, and that, if you use your head as best you can (i.e., be moral), you can have an enormously beneficial influence on children, even if they're not your own – although none is related to you more distantly than as 50 cousin. That is, Dear, you belong to the same “human family”, and no matter your choices, you have now reached the age when you are responsible for helping the children.

But those are thoughts for later times; now it's time to think about getting some exercise!