

Pictures of the Family

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It may seem debatable whether one can speak of a profane iconography in the Middle Ages before the fourteenth century, seeing that the distinction between sacred and profane was so slight. However, among the profane contributions is one theme whose frequency and popularity are highly significant: the theme of trades and crafts (*métiers*). The archaeologists have shown us that the Gauls in the Roman era were fond of depicting scenes of their working life on their mortuary basreliefs.¹ This liking for the subject of trades and crafts is to be found nowhere else. The archaeologists have been struck by the rarity, if not the complete absence, of such scenes in the mortuary iconography of Roman Africa.² The theme consequently dates back far into the past. It continued and even developed in the Middle Ages. To use an anachronistic expression, one may say, broadly speaking, but without deforming the truth, that the 'profane' iconography of the Middle Ages consists above all of this subject of crafts. It is significant that it was their craft or trade which for a long time struck people as their foremost activity; this was a point of view that was linked with the mortuary cult of the Gallo-Roman epoch, and with the social and learned concept of the world in the Middle Ages, in the cathedral calendars. No doubt this seems perfectly natural to modern historians. But have they asked themselves how many people today would prefer to forget their trade and would choose to leave some other image of themselves? People have tried in vain to inject a little lyricism into the functional aspects of contemporary life; the result is a sort of academic art without any

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roots in everyday life. The man of today would not choose his trade, even if he liked it, to propose as a subject for artists, even if the latter could accept it. The importance accorded to the trade or craft in medieval iconography is a sign of the sentimental value that was put on it. It is as if a man's private life were first of all and above all his trade.

One of the most popular representations of trades and crafts linked them with that other theme, the seasons, whose importance we have had occasion to recognise in connection with the 'ages of life'.³ We know that the Middle Ages in the West were fond of linking by means of symbols, ideas whose secret connections, hidden behind external appearances, they wished to emphasise. They linked the various crafts to the seasons, as they did the ages of life or the elements. This is the significance of the calendars in stone and glass, the calendars of the cathedrals and the books of hours.

The traditional iconography of the twelve months of the year was established in the twelfth century, very much as we can find it at Saint-Denis, in Paris, at Senlis, at Chartres, at Amiens, at Reims, etc.—works and days. On the one hand, the great tasks of the countryman: hay, corn, wine and the vineyards, and pigs. On the other, the period of rest, that of the winter and the spring. It is the peasants who are shown working, but the pictures of leisure moments vary between peasant and noble. January (Twelfth Night) belongs to the noble, seen sitting at a groaning board. February belongs to the villein who is shown coming in from gathering wood and hurriedly sitting down by the fire. May is either a peasant resting in the midst of flowers or a young noble setting off for the chase and getting his falcon ready. In any case it is an evocation of youth taking part in the Maytime festivities. In these scenes the man is always alone, except that sometimes a young valet (as at Saint-Denis) is shown standing behind his master who is eating at table. The person depicted is always a man, never a woman....

We see this iconography evolving in the books of hours until the sixteenth century, revealing significant tendencies as it develops.

First of all we see women appear, the lady of courtly love or the mistress of the house. In the Hours of the Duc de Berry, in the month of February, the peasant is no longer, as on the walls of Senlis, Paris or Amiens, the only person warming himself. Three women of the house are already sitting round the fire, while the peasant is still shivering outside in the snow-covered yard. Elsewhere the scene

shows a winter evening at home: the man, sitting in front of the hearth, is warming his hands and feet, but beside him his wife is quietly working at her spinning-wheel (Charles d'Angoulême). In April appears the theme of the court of love: the lady and her lover in a walled garden (Charles d'Angoulême). She is also shown accompanying the knights in the chase. But even the noble lady does not remain the idle and somewhat imaginary heroine of the April gardens of the horsewoman of the Maytime festivities: she also superintends the work in the April garden (Turin). The peasant woman recurs more frequently. She works in the fields with the men (Berry, Angoulême). She takes drinks to the harvesters as they rest on a hot summer's day (Hennessy, Grimani). Her husband brings her back in a wheelbarrow with the wine-flask she has brought him. The knights and ladies are no longer isolated in the noble pleasures of April or May. Just as the lady of the Turin Book of Hours busied herself with her garden, the nobles mingle with the peasants and wine-harvesters (as in the cherry-picking scene in the Turin Hours). The further one goes in time, especially in the sixteenth century, the more often one finds the lord's family among the peasants, supervising their work and joining in their games. There are a great many sixteenth-century tapestries showing these rustic scenes in which the masters and their children are picking grapes or supervising the corn-harvest. The man is no longer alone, and the couple is no longer simply the imaginary couple of courtly love. Wife and family join in the man's work and live beside him, indoors or out in the fields. These are not, strictly speaking, family scenes: the children are still missing in the fifteenth century. But the artist feels the need to depict the collaboration of the married couple, of the men and women of the house, in the day's work, with a hitherto unknown attention to homely details.

At the same time the street appears in the calendars. The street was already a familiar theme in medieval iconography: it takes on a particularly expressive animation in the admirable views of the bridges of Paris in the thirteenth-century manuscript of the life of Saint-Denis. As in modern Arab towns, the street was the setting for commercial and professional activity, as also for gossiping, conversation, entertainments and games. Outside private life, which for a long time was ignored by artists, everything happened in the street. However, the calendar scenes, being of rustic inspiration, neglected it for a long time. In the fifteenth century, the street took its

place in the calendars. True, the months of November and December in the Turin Hours are illustrated by the traditional sacrifice of the pig. But here it is taking place in the street, and the neighbours have come to their doors to watch. Elsewhere (the calendar of the Hours of Adélaïde de Savoie) we are at the market: some little street-arabs are cutting the purse-strings of busy, absent-minded housewives: here we recognise the theme of the little pickpockets which was to recur all the way through picaresque genre-painting in the seventeenth century.⁴ Another scene in the same calendar shows the return from the market: a woman has stopped to talk to her neighbour who is looking out of the window; some men are sitting resting on a bench, protected by a screen, and watching the boys of the village wrestling and playing tennis. This medieval street, like the Arab street today, was not opposed to the intimacy of private life; it was an extension of that private life, the familiar setting of work and social relations. The artists, in their comparatively tardy attempts at depicting private life, would begin by capturing it in the street, before pursuing it into the house. It may well be that this private life took place as much in the street as in the house, if not more.

Together with the street, games invaded the calendar scenes: knightly games such as tournaments (Turin, Hennessy), games common to all, and festival pastimes such as dancing round the maypole. The calendar of the Hours of Adélaïde de Savoie consists chiefly of a description of a wide variety of games, parlour games, of skill, traditional games: the bean-game on Twelfth Night, dancing on May Day, wrestling, hockey, football, water-jousting, snowballing. In other manuscripts we are shown a cross-bow contest (Hennessy), a musical boating party (Hennessy), and swimming (Grimani). We know that in those days games were not simply pastimes but a form of participation in the community or the group: games were played between members of a family, between neighbours, between age groups, between parishes.⁵

Finally, as from the sixteenth century, a new character came on the scene in the calendars: the child. He was already frequently depicted in the iconography of the sixteenth century, especially in the *Miracles de Notre-Dame*. But he had remained absent from the calendars, as if that ancient form of iconography had been reluctant to accept this latecomer. In the fields, there are no children to be seen with the women. Only a few are shown waiting at table during the January banquets. They can also be caught sight of at the market in the Hours

of Adélaïde de Savoie; in the same manuscript they are depicted snowballing one another, heckling the preacher in church and being thrown out. In the last Flemish manuscripts of the sixteenth century, they are having their fling: one can sense the artist's liking for them. The calendars of Hennessy's and Grimani's Hours have imitated fairly closely the snow-covered village in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, in the January scene which I have described above, with the peasant hurrying home to join his womenfolk by the fire. However, they have added another figure: the child. And the child is in the same position as the Manneken-Pis, which had become a common subject in the iconography of the time: the child piddling through the open door. This theme of the Manneken-Pis was to be found everywhere—witness the picture of St. John the Baptist in the Musée des Augustins at Toulouse (a picture which used to hang in the chapel of the High Court of the town), or a certain *putto* of Titian's.⁶

In these Hours of Hennessy and Grimani, the children are shown skating and aping the grown-ups' tournaments (one of the children is supposed to be the young Charles the Fifth). In the Munich Hours they are having a snowball fight. In the *Hortulus animae*, they are playing at courts of love and also at tournaments—riding a barrel instead of a horse—and skating.⁷

These successive pictures of the months of the year therefore introduced new characters: the woman, the neighbours and friends, and finally the child. And the child was associated with a hitherto unknown desire for homeliness, for familiar if not yet precisely 'family' life.

In the course of the sixteenth century, this iconography of the months underwent a final transformation of great significance for our subject: it took on a family character. This it did by merging with the symbolism of another traditional allegory: the ages of life. There were several ways of representing the ages of life, but two of them took the lead: one, the more popular of the two, survived in the form of engravings and showed the ages on the steps of a pyramid rising from birth to maturity, and then going down to old age and death. The great painters scorned to copy this naive composition. On the other hand they frequently adopted the representation of the three ages of life in the form of a child, some adolescents—often a couple—and an old man. A Titian painting exemplifies this type: it shows two sleeping *putti*, and in the foreground a naked man and a fully-dressed peasant girl playing the flute, and in the background a bent

old man who sits with a death's-head in his hands.⁸ The same subject would be treated by Van Dyck in the seventeenth century.⁹ In these compositions, the three or four ages of life are depicted separately, in accordance with the iconographic tradition. Nobody thought of bringing them together within a single family whose different generations would symbolise the ages of life. The artists, and the public opinion which they expressed, remained faithful to an individualistic concept of the ages: the same individual was depicted at the various stages of his destiny.

However, in the course of the sixteenth century, a new idea had appeared which symbolised the duration of life by the hierarchy of the family. We have already had occasion to quote *Le Grand Propriétaire de toutes choses*, the old medieval text translated into French and printed in 1556.¹⁰ The sixth book deals with the ages. It is illustrated by a woodcut depicting neither the steps of the ages nor the three or four ages shown separately, but simply a family gathering. The father is sitting with a little child on his knees. His wife is standing on his right; one of his sons is standing on his left, and another is kneeling to take something his father is giving to him. This is at once a family portrait, of a kind of which thousands were painted in this period in the Netherlands, Italy, England, France and Germany, and a family subject such as painters and engravers would produce in large numbers in the seventeenth century. This theme was destined to achieve the most extraordinary popularity.

It was not entirely unknown in the late Middle Ages. It is treated in a remarkable fashion on a capital, known as the marriage capital, in the loggias of the ducal palace in Venice. Venturi dates it about 1424;¹¹ Toesca puts it at the end of the fourteenth century, which seems more probable in view of the style and dress, but more surprising in view of the precocity of the subject.¹² The eight sides of this capital tell a story illustrating the fragility of life—a familiar theme in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but here in the context of a family, which is something new. First we have the engagement. Then the young woman is dressed in a formal dress on which little metal discs have been sewn: ornaments perhaps, or possibly coins, for coins played a part in the marital and baptismal customs. The third face shows the wedding ceremony at the moment when one of the two holds a crown over the other's head—a rite which has survived in the Oriental liturgy. Then the couple are entitled to kiss. On the fourth face, they are lying naked in the

marriage bed. A child is born whom the father and mother hold between them, wrapped in swaddling-clothes. Their own clothes look simpler than at the time of their engagement and wedding: they have become serious people, who dress severely or in an old-fashioned style. The seventh face brings together the whole family, who pose for their portrait. Each parent is holding the child by a shoulder and a hand. This is already the family portrait such as that in *Le Grand Propriétaire*. But with the eighth face, the story takes a dramatic turn: the family is in mourning, for the child has died; he is stretched out on his bed with his hands folded. The mother is wiping away her tears with one hand and touching the child's arm with the other; the father is praying. Other capitals near this one are adorned with naked putti playing with fruit, birds and balls: more commonplace themes, but themes which enable us to place the marriage capital in its iconographic context.

The story of the marriage begins as the story of a family but ends with a different theme, that of premature death.

At the Musée Saint-Raimond at Toulouse, one can see the fragments of a calendar which the costumes enable us to place in the second half of the sixteenth century. In the picture for July we see the family gathered together as in the contemporary engraving of *Le Grand Propriétaire*, with one additional detail which is not without importance: the presence of the servants beside the parents. The father and mother are in the middle. The father is holding his son by the hand and the mother her daughter. The valet is standing on the men's side, the maid-servant on the women's, for the sexes are separated as in the portraits of donors—the men, fathers and sons, on one side, the women, mothers and daughters, on the other.

August remains the month of the harvest, but the painter has chosen to depict not the actual harvesting but the delivery of the harvest to the master, who has some money in his hand and is about to give it to the peasants. This scene is connected with an iconography which was very common in the sixteenth century, especially in the tapestries of the period, where country gentlemen are shown supervising their peasants or joining in their games.

October: the family meal. The parents and their children are at table. The smallest child is perched on a high chair which brings him up to the level of the table: a chair specially made for children of his age, of a type still to be found today. A boy with a napkin is serving the meal: possibly a valet, possibly a relative given the task of waiting

at table, a task which he would not in any way consider humiliating.

November: the father is old and ill, so ill that the doctor has been called in. The doctor, with a commonplace gesture which belongs to a traditional iconography, is examining the urinal.

December: the whole family is gathered together in the bedroom around the bed in which the father is dying. The last sacraments have been brought to him. His wife is kneeling at the foot of the bed. Behind her, a young woman on her knees is weeping. A young man is standing with a taper in his hand. In the background we can see a little child: no doubt the grandson, the next generation which will continue the family.

Thus this calendar likens the succession of the months of the year to that of the ages of life, but it depicts the ages of life in the form of the story of a family: the youth of its founders, their maturity with their children, old age, sickness, and a death which is both the good death, the death of the good man, another traditional theme, and also that of the patriarch in the midst of his family.

The story on this calendar begins like that of the family on the marriage capital in the Palace of the Doges. But it is not the son, the beloved child, that death takes too soon. Things follow a more natural course: it is the father who dies at the end of a full life, surrounded by a united family and doubtless leaving them a well-managed estate. The calendar illustrates a new concept: the concept of the family.

The appearance of the theme of the family in the iconography of the months was not an isolated incident. A massive evolution was to carry the whole iconography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in this direction.

To begin with, scenes depicted by artists were set either in an indeterminate space, or in public places such as churches, or in the open air. In Gothic art, freed from Romano-Byzantine symbolism, open-air scenes became more common and more significant as a result of the invention of perspective and the fashion for landscape painting: a lady receives her knight in a walled garden; the chase passes through fields and forests; ladies meet to bathe in a garden pool; armies manoeuvre; knights meet in tournaments; the army is encamped round the tent in which the King is resting; armies lay siege to cities; princes enter and leave fortified towns to the acclamations of the people and burgesses. We go over bridges into

these towns, passing stalls at which goldsmiths are working. We see wafer-vendors passing by, and heavily laden boats sailing downstream. We see games being played, still in the open air. We accompany tumblers or pilgrims along the road. The profane iconography of the Middle Ages is an open-air iconography. When, in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, the artists set out to illustrate particular anecdotes and incidents, they hesitate, and their naivety turns into clumsiness: they never achieve anything like the virtuosity of the anecdotal painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Before the fifteenth century, interior scenes are therefore extremely rare. But from that century on, they become increasingly common. The gospel-writer, hitherto placed in a timeless setting, becomes a scribe at his desk, with a quill and an erasing-knife in his hand. At first he is placed in front of an ordinary ornamental curtain, but finally he is shown in a room where there are shelves lined with books: we have come from the gospel-writer to the author in his room, to Froissart writing a dedication in a book.¹³ In the illustrations to the text of Terence in the Palace of the Doges, there are women working and spinning in their rooms with their maidservants, or lying in bed, not always by themselves. We are shown kitchens and inn rooms. Love scenes and conversations are henceforth set in the enclosed space of a room.

The theme of child-birth makes its appearance, the birth of the Virgin providing the pretext. Maidservants, old women and midwives are shown bustling round St. Anne's bed. The theme of death appears too: death in the bedchamber, with the dying man fighting for his life.

The growing practice of depicting rooms corresponds to a new emotional tendency henceforth directed towards the intimacy of private life. Exterior scenes do not disappear—they develop into the landscape—but interior scenes become more common and more original, and they typify genre painting during the whole of its existence. Private life, thrust into the background in the Middle Ages, invades iconography, particularly in Western painting and engraving in the sixteenth and above all in the seventeenth century: Dutch and Flemish painting and French engraving show the extraordinary strength of this hitherto inconsistent or neglected concept.

This copious illustration of private life can be divided into two

categories: that of drinking and whoring on the fringe of society, in the shady world of the down-and-outs, in taverns and bivouacs, with gypsies and vagabonds—a category which does not concern us here—and its other face, that of family life. If we look through collections of prints and paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we cannot help being struck by the positive flood of pictures of families. This movement is at its height in painting in the first half of the seventeenth century in France, but during the whole century and beyond in Holland. In France it continues during the second half of the seventeenth century in engravings, gouaches and painted fans, reappears in the eighteenth century in painting, and lasts through the nineteenth century until the great aesthetic revolution which banishes the subject painting from art.

There is no counting the number of group-paintings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some are portraits of guilds and corporations. But most of them show a family gathered together. We can see these family portraits beginning in the course of the fifteenth century, with donors who have themselves depicted on the ground floor of some religious scene, as a sign of their piety. They are discreet at first, and alone. Soon, however, they bring along the whole of their family, the living and the dead: wives and children who have died are given a place in the picture. On the one side are the man and his sons, on the other the wife or wives, each with the daughters of her bed.

The storey occupied by the donors spreads at the same time as it fills with people, to the detriment of the religious scene which soon becomes an illustration and almost an *hors-d'oeuvre*. More often than not it is reduced to the patron saints of the parents, the male saint on the men's side, the female saint on the women's. It is worth noting the importance assumed by the devotion to patron saints, who appear as protectors of the family: here we can see a sign of a private devotion of a family character, like the cult of the guardian angel, although this latter devotion is of a more personal character more closely linked with childhood.

This phase of the portrait of donors and their families can be illustrated with countless examples from the sixteenth century: for instance, the stained-glass windows of the Montmorency family at Montfort-L'Amaury, Montmorency and Écouen, or the pictures hung as ex-votos on the pillars and walls of German churches (several are still in position in the churches of Nürnberg). Many other paintings,

often naive and clumsy, are now in the regimental museums of Germany and German-speaking Switzerland. Holbein's pictures of families are faithful to this style.¹⁴ It seems that the Germans remained attached longer than other nations to this form of religious family portrait intended for churches; it strikes us as a cheaper form of the donor's stained-glass window, an older type of gift; and it points the way to the more anecdotal and picturesque *ex-votos* of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which depict, not the family gathering of the living and the dead, but the miraculous event which has saved an individual or a member of a family from shipwreck, accident or illness. The family portrait is also a sort *ex-voto*.

English mortuary sculpture in the Elizabethan era offers another example of the family portrait intended as a form of devotion. But it should be added that this sculpture is an isolated phenomenon and is neither as frequent nor as commonplace in France, Germany or Italy. Many English tombs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries show the whole family in bas-relief or in the round, gathered around the deceased: the insistence on including all the children, living and dead, is extremely striking. Several of these tombs are still to be found in Westminster Abbey: for instance, that of Sir Richard Pecksall, who died in 1571 and is represented between his two wives, with four little figures—his daughters—sculpted on the base of the monument. On either side of the recumbent statue of Margaret Stuart, who died in 1578, are her sons and daughters. Over the tomb of another recumbent figure, that of Winifred, Marchioness of Winchester, who died in 1586, her husband watches; he is represented on a reduced scale, on his knees, with a tiny child's tomb beside him. Sir John and Lady Puckering, who died in 1596, are shown lying side by side, surrounded by their eight daughters. The Norrises (1601) are kneeling in the midst of their six sons. In 1634 the Duchess of Buckingham had a tomb erected for her husband, assassinated in 1628; husband and wife are represented as recumbent figures in the midst of their children.¹⁵

At Holkham, there are twenty-one little figures on the tomb of John Coke (1639), lined up as in the portraits of donors, with those who are dead holding a cross in their hands. On the tomb of Cope d'Ayley at Hambleton (1633), the four boys and three girls are standing in front of their kneeling parents; one boy and one girl are holding death's-heads.

These German and English monuments prolong what are still medieval aspects of the family portrait. But in the sixteenth century the family portrait rid itself of its religious function. It was as if the ground floor in the donors' pictures had invaded the entire canvas, banishing the religious picture, so that it either disappeared completely or lingered on in token form as a little pious picture hanging on the wall at the back of the painting. The ex-voto tradition is still present in a picture by Titian painted about 1560: the male members of the Cornaro family—an old man, a middle-aged man with a grey beard, a young man with a black beard (the beard, its shape and colour are indications of age)—and six children, of whom the youngest is playing with a dog, are grouped around an altar.¹⁶ At the Victoria and Albert Museum is a 1628 triptych showing a little boy and a little girl on the centre volet, and the parents on the two other volets.¹⁷ These pictures are no longer intended for churches: they are meant to adorn private homes, and this secularisation of the portrait is undoubtedly a most important phenomenon—the family contemplates itself in the home of one of its members. The need is felt to fix the present condition of that family, sometimes also recalling the memory of the dead by means of a picture or an inscription on the wall.

These family portraits are extremely common, and no useful purpose would be served by recording them all. They are to be found in Flanders as well as in Italy, with Titian, Pordenone and Veronese; in France with Le Nain, Lebrun and Tournier; in England and Holland with Van Dyck. From the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century they must have been as common as individual portraits. It has often been said that the portrait reveals the progress of individualism. Perhaps it does; but above all else it renders the immense progress made by the concept of the family.

To begin with, the members of the family are arranged rather stiffly, as in the donors' pictures or in the engravings of the ages of life in *Le Grand Propriétaire* or the miniature in the Musée Saint-Raimond. Even when they are rather more lifelike, they pose in a solemn attitude intended to underline the bond joining them together. In a painting by P. Pourbus the husband is resting his left hand on his wife's shoulder; at their feet, one of the two children is repeating the same gesture on his little sister's shoulder.¹⁸ Sebastian Leers has [painted himself] holding his wife by the hand.¹⁹ In a painting by Titian three bearded men are standing around a child—

who provides the only bright note in the midst of their black costumes—and one of them is pointing at the child, who is in the centre of the composition.²⁰ However, many of these portraits make little or no attempt to give life to their characters: the members of the family are juxtaposed, and sometimes linked together by gestures expressing their reciprocal feelings, but they do not join in any common action. This is the case with the Pordenone family in the Borghese gallery—the father, the mother and seven children²¹—and again with the Pembroke family as painted by Van Dyck:²² the Earl and Countess are seated, the other figures standing; on the right is a couple, probably one of the married children with husband or wife; on the left, two very stylish adolescents (stylishness is a sign of male adolescence: it disappears with age and gravity), a schoolboy with his book tucked under his arm, and two younger boys.

About the middle of the sixteenth century, artists began to depict the family around a table laden with fruit: the Van Berchaun family painted by Floris in 1561, or the Anselme family painted by Martin de Voos in 1577. Or the family may have stopped eating in order to make music: we know that this is no painter's trick, and that meals often ended with a concert or were interrupted by a song. The family posing for the artist, with varying degrees of affectation, remained in French art until the early eighteenth century at least, with Tournier and Largillière. But under the influence of the Dutch in particular, the family portrait was often treated as a subject painting: the concert after the meal is one of the favourite themes of Dutch painters. Henceforth the family was depicted as in a snapshot, at a moment in its everyday life: the men gathered round the fire, the woman taking a cauldron off the fire, a girl feeding her little brother.²³ Henceforth it is difficult to tell a family portrait from a subject painting depicting family life.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the old medieval allegories are also treated as illustrations of family life without regard for iconographic tradition. We have already seen what happened in the case of the calendars. The other classical allegories were altered in the same way. In the seventeenth century, the ages of life become pretexts for pictures of family life. In an Abraham Bosse engraving of the four ages of man, childhood is suggested by what we should call a nursery: a baby in a cradle, watched over by an attentive sister, a child in a robe who is kept on his feet by a sort of

playpen on wheels (a very common device between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries), a little girl with her doll, a boy with a paper windmill, and two bigger boys—one of whom has thrown his hat and cloak on the floor—getting ready to fight. Manhood is illustrated by a meal which has brought the whole family together around the table, a scene similar to that in a great many portraits and which was often repeated in both French engraving and Dutch painting. This is the spirit of the engraving of the ages in *Le Propriétaire* of the mid-sixteenth century, and of the miniature in the Musée Saint-Raimond at Toulouse.

Manhood is always family life. Humbelot-Huart has not gathered the family round the dining-table but in the office of the father, a rich merchant whose premises are piled with bales of merchandise. The father is doing his accounts, pen in hand, with the help of his son who is standing behind him; at his side his wife is attending to their little daughter; a young servant, who has probably been to their country house, is coming in with a basket of foodstuffs.²⁴ In the late seventeenth century an engraving by F. Guérard takes up the same theme. The father—a younger man than in the Humbelot-Huart engraving—is pointing out of the window at the port, the wharf and the ships, the source of his fortune. Inside the room, near the table on which he does his accounts and on which his purse, some counters and an abacus are to be seen, his wife is rocking a baby in swaddling-clothes and watching another child in a robe. The caption gives the tone and stresses the spirit of this iconography: 'Happy is he who obeys the laws of Heaven and devotes the best years of his life to serving God, his family and his King.'²⁵ Here the family is put on the same level as God and the King. This attitude does not surprise us in the twentieth century, but it was new at the time and its expression cannot but astonish us. Humbelot treats the same theme in another picture, where he depicts a young woman showing her breast to a child who has climbed up behind her: we must remember that in the seventeenth century children were weaned very late. Or else, this time in another Guérard engraving, we see the mistress of the house, with her keys and her children, giving orders to a maid-servant.²⁶

The other allegories are also depicted by family scenes. The sense of smell, in an early seventeenth-century Dutch treatment of the five senses, is represented by the henceforth commonplace scene of the mother wiping the naked child's bottom.²⁷

Abraham Bosse also symbolises one of the four elements by a picture of family life: in a garden, a nanny is holding a child in a robe; the child's parents, gazing at him tenderly from the door of the house, are playfully tossing fruit to him—the fruits of the earth.

Even the Beatitudes give rise to evocations of family life: with Bonnart-Sandrart the Fifth Beatitude has become a mother's forgiveness of her children, a forgiveness which she confirms by offering them sweets:²⁸ this is already the sentimental family spirit of the nineteenth century.

Broadly speaking, the modern subject painting began with the illustration of traditional medieval allegories. But the distance is too great between the old theme and its new expression. We forget the allegory of the seasons and of winter when we look at Stella's picture of an evening by the fire, with the men having supper on the one side of the big room, and on the other, around the hearth, the women spinning and plaiting rushes, the children playing or being washed. Instead of winter, we have an evening by the fire; instead of manhood or the third age of life, we have a family gathering. An original iconography has been born. The concept of the family is its basic inspiration, an inspiration very different from that of the old allegories. It would be a simple matter to draw up a list of the subjects repeated ad nauseam: the mother watching over the child in the cradle²⁹ or feeding it at her breast;³⁰ the woman washing the child; the mother picking the lice out of her child's hair (an extremely commonplace operation and moreover one which was not confined to children: Samuel Pepys submitted to it);³¹ the child in the cradle, with his little brother or his little sister standing on tiptoe in order to see him; the child in the kitchen or the store-room with a valet or a maid-servant;³² or the child going shopping. This last subject, a common one in Dutch painting,³³ was also treated by French engravers—in the middle of the century by Abraham Bosse (at the pastrycook's), and at the end of the century by Le Camus (at the wine merchant's). A painting by Le Nain depicts a tired peasant who has fallen asleep. His wife is hushing the two children, showing them their father, who is resting and must not be awakened: this is already a Greuze, not in its painting or style of course, but in its sentimental inspiration. The action is centred on the child. In a picture by Peter de Hooch³⁴ the family is gathered together for breakfast, and the father is sitting drinking. A little child of about two is standing on a chair; he is wearing the round,

padded hat which was normally worn at that time at the age when a child was not too steady on his feet, to protect him if he fell. A woman (the maid-servant?) is holding him up with one hand and with the other is offering a glass of wine to another woman (the mother?) who is dipping a biscuit in it. She is going to give the sodden biscuit to the parrot to amuse the child, and the entertainment of the child in the midst of the family whose unity he thereby ensures is the painter's real subject, the meaning of his anecdote.

The concept of the family, which thus emerges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is inseparable from the concept of childhood. The interest taken in childhood, which we have analysed at the beginning of this book, is only one form, one particular expression of this more general concept—that of the family.

An analysis of iconography leads us to conclude that the concept of the family was unknown in the Middle Ages, that it originated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and that it reached its full expression in the seventeenth century. It is tempting to compare this hypothesis with the observations of the historians of medieval society.

The basic idea of the historians of law and society is that the ties of blood composed not one but two groups, distinct though concentric: the family or *mesnie* which can be compared with our modern conjugal family, and the line which extended its solidarity to all the descendants of a single ancestor. In their opinion, there was not so much a distinction as an opposition between the family and the line, the progress of the one resulting in a weakening of the other, at least in the nobility. The family or *mesnie*, though it never embraced a whole line, contained, among the members who lived together, several elements, and sometimes several households: these lived on an estate which they had been reluctant to divide, in accordance with a method of possession known as *frereche* or *fraternitas*. The *frereche* grouped around the parents those of their children who had no property of their own, together with nephews and bachelor cousins. This tendency to joint possession in the family, a tendency which scarcely ever lasted more than a couple of generations, gave rise to the traditional nineteenth-century theories on the great patriarchal family.

The modern conjugal family is thus considered to be the consequence of an evolution which, at the end of the Middle Ages, is supposed to have weakened the line and the tendency to joint possession.

In reality, the story of the relations between line and family is more complicated than that. It has been traced by Georges Duby in the Mâcon country, from the ninth century to the thirteenth century inclusive.³⁵

In the Frank state, writes Duby, 'the family in the tenth century was to all appearances a community reduced to its simplest expression, the conjugal cell, whose cohesion was sometimes prolonged for a little while after the death of the parents, in the *frereches*. But the ties were very loose. This is because they were useless: the peaceful organs of the old Frank state were still strong enough to allow a freeman to live an independent life and to prefer, if he so wished, the company of his friends and neighbours to that of his relatives.'

However, lineal solidarity and joint possession developed as the result of the dissolution of the State: 'After the year 1000, the new division of powers obliged men to group themselves together more closely.' The tightening of the ties of blood which took place then satisfied a desire for protection, like those other forms of human relationship and subjection: the vassal homage, the seigniory, the village community. 'Too independent, and ill protected against certain dangers, the knights sought refuge in lineal solidarity.'

At the same time, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the Mâcon country, we can note an advance made by joint ownership. It was this period which saw the institution of joint ownership of the goods of husband and wife; in the tenth century, husband and wife had managed their own property, buying and selling separately without the other being able to interfere.

Joint ownership was also extended more often than not to the children, who were prevented from obtaining any advance on their inheritance: 'There was a prolonged integration into the family home, and under the ancestor's authority, of descendants destitute of all personal wealth and of all economic independence.' Joint ownership often continued after the death of the parents: 'It is necessary to try to imagine what a knight's house was like in those days, gathering together on a single domain, in a single "court", ten

or twenty masters, two or three couples with the children, the brothers and the unmarried sisters, and the canon uncle who dropped in now and then and who was looking after the career of some nephew.' The *frereche* rarely lasted beyond the second generation, but even after the *divisio* of the estate, the line retained a collective right over the divided estate: the *laudatio parentum*, the lineal redemption.

This description applies above all to the knightly family, which could already be called the noble family. Duby assumes that the peasant family did not experience this tightening of the ties of blood to the same extent because the peasants had filled in a different way from the nobles the vacuum left by the dissolution of the Frank state: the seignior's tutelage had immediately taken the place of that of the public authorities, and the village community had soon provided the peasants with a framework of organisation and defence superior to the family. The village community was to the peasants what the line was to the nobles.

In the course of the thirteenth century, the situation changed again. The new forms of monetary economy, the extension of personality, the frequency of financial transactions, and at the same time the increase in the authority of the prince (whether he was a Capetian king or the head of a large principality) and in public security, brought about a tightening of lineal solidarity and the abandonment of joint ownership. The conjugal family became independent once more. However, in the nobility, there was no return to the loose links of the tenth-century family. The father maintained and even increased the authority which he had been given in the eleventh and twelfth centuries by the need to maintain the integrity of the undivided estate. We know too that from the end of the Middle Ages on, the power of the wife steadily diminished. It was also in the thirteenth century, in the Mâcon country, that the law of primogeniture spread among the families of the nobility. It took the place of joint ownership, which became much rarer, as a means of safeguarding the inheritance and its integrity. The substitution of the law of primogeniture for joint ownership and the joint estate of husband and wife can be seen as a sign of the recognition of the importance both of paternal authority and of the place assumed in everyday life by the group of the father and children.

Duby concludes: 'In fact, the family is the first refuge in which the threatened individual takes shelter when the authority of the State weakens. But as soon as political institutions afford him adequate guarantees, he shakes off the constraint of the family and the ties of blood are loosened. The history of lineage is a succession of contractions and relaxations whose rhythm follows the modifications of the political order.'

The contrast between the family and the line is less marked in Duby's writing than in that of other legal historians. It is not so much a question of a progressive substitution of the family for the line—this would seem indeed to be a purely theoretical view—as of the loosening or tightening of the ties of blood, now extended to the whole line or to the members of the *frereche*, now restricted to the couple. One has the impression that only the line was capable of exciting the forces of feeling and imagination. That is why so many romances of chivalry treat of it. The restricted family community, on the other hand, had an obscure life which has escaped the attention of the historians. But this obscurity is understandable. In the domain of feeling, the family did not count as much as the line. One might say that the concept of the line was the only concept of a family character known to the Middle Ages. It was very different from the concept of the family such as we have seen it in the iconography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It extended to the ties of blood without regard to the emotions engendered by cohabitation and intimacy. The line was never gathered together within a small space, around a single courtyard. It was not to be compared with the Serbian *Zadrouga*. The legal historians recognise that there are no traces of any great peaceful communities in France before the fifteenth century.

But from the fourteenth century on, we see the modern family taking shape. The process, the history of which is well known, has been clearly summarised by M. Petiot:³⁶ 'Starting in the fourteenth century, we see a slow and steady deterioration of the wife's position in the household. She loses the right to take the place of the husband in his absence or insanity.... Finally, in the sixteenth century, the married woman is placed under a disability so that any acts she performs without the authority of her husband or the law are null and void. This development strengthens the powers of the husband, who is finally established as a sort of domestic monarch.'

'Royal legislation from the sixteenth century on took care to strengthen the father's power with regard to the marriage of his children.' While lineal ties weakened, the husband's authority in the home became stronger, and his wife and children were more rigorously subject to it. This dual movement, in so far as it was the unconscious and spontaneous work of custom, undoubtedly reveals a change in social manners and conditions....' Henceforth a value was attributed to the family which had previously been attributed to the line. It became the social cell, the basis of the State, the foundation of the monarchy. We shall now see what importance the Church attributed to it.

The medieval glorification of the line, its honour, and the solidarity between its members, was a specifically lay attitude which the Church distrusted or ignored. The pagan naturalism of the ties of blood may well have been repugnant to it. In France, where it accepted the heredity of the kings, it is significant that it made no mention of that heredity in the coronation liturgy.

Moreover the Middle Ages did not know the modern principle of the sanctification of lay life, or rather it recognised it only in exceptional cases: the holy king (but the king was consecrated), the good knight (but the knight had been initiated after what had become a religious ceremony). The sacrament of marriage could have ennobled the conjugal union and given it a spiritual value, as also to the family. In fact it simply made the union legitimate. For a long time marriage remained simply a contract. The ceremony, if we are to go by the sculptured representations of it, did not take place inside the church, but in front of the porch. Whatever the theological point of view, most priests, considering their flocks, must have shared the opinion of Chaucer's priest that marriage was a concession to the weakness of the flesh.³⁷ It did not cleanse sexuality of its essential impurity. Admittedly the priests did not go to the lengths of condemning marriage and the family after the fashion of the Cathars of the south of France, but they showed suspicion and distrust of anything to do with the flesh. It was not in lay life that man could attain to holiness; sexual union, when blessed by marriage, ceased to be a sin, but that was all. What is more, the other great sin of the laity, the sin of usury, threatened a man in his temporal activities. The only way by which the layman could make sure of salvation was to leave the world completely and

enter religious life. In the quiet of the cloister, he could atone for the faults of his profane past.

It was not until the end of the sixteenth century, the time of St. François de Sales's *Philothée*, or the seventeenth century, with the example of the gentlemen of Port-Royal—and more generally of all the laymen engaged in religious, theological, spiritual and mystical activities—that the Church recognised the possibility of sanctification outside the religious vocation, in the practice of one's profession.

For a natural institution so closely linked with the flesh as the family was to become the object of a cult, this rehabilitation of the lay condition was necessary. The progress of the concept of the family and of the religious rehabilitation of the layman followed parallel paths. For the modern concept of the family, unlike the medieval concept of the line, became an object of common piety. The first sign of this piety, as yet very discreet, is to be seen in practice begun by donors of religious pictures or stained-glass windows—the donors grouped their families around them. Piety may also be discerned in the later custom of associating the family with the cult of the patron saint. In the sixteenth century, it was a common practice to offer as an ex-voto a picture of the patron saints of husband and wife, surrounded by the parents themselves and their children. The cult of the patron saints became a family cult.

The influence of the concept of the family is also to be seen, especially in the seventeenth century, in the new way of depicting a marriage or a christening. At the end of the Middle Ages, the miniaturists used to depict the religious ceremony itself, as it took place at the church door. Take for instance the marriage of King Cosius and Queen Sabineda in the life of St. Catherine, where the priest is shown folding his stole round the hands of the newly-married couple; or the marriage of Philip of Macedonia depicted by the same Guillaume Vrelant in the story of King Alexander, where behind the priest, on the tympanum of the church door, one can see a sculpted representation of a husband beating his wife!³⁸ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the marriage ceremony was no longer depicted, except in the case of kings and princes. Instead, artists chose to treat the incidental, family aspects of the wedding, with relatives, friends and neighbours gathered round the bride and groom. With Gérard David (*The Wedding at Cana* in the Louvre) we have the wedding feast. Elsewhere we have the wedding procession:

thus Stella shows us the bride on her father's arm, followed by a group of children, on her way to the church outside which the groom is waiting.³⁹ In a picture by Molinier the ceremony is over and the procession is leaving the church: on the left is the groom with his groomsmen, on the right is the bride wearing a wreath (but not yet in white: the colour of love was still red, as for the priest's vestments), in the midst of her bridesmaids, with a bagpipe playing and a little girl throwing coins in front of the bride.⁴⁰ Albums of engravings of clothes of the late sixteenth or the early seventeenth century often show the bride or bridegroom with bridesmaids or groomsmen: at that time the wedding-dress became more specific (though it was not yet the white uniform worn from the nineteenth century to the present day), at least in certain details. Care was taken to present these details as characteristic of the manners of a certain region. Finally, all the licentious little scenes of folklore entered iconography—e.g. the first night of the newly-married pair.

Similarly, when it came to depicting a christening, artists preferred the traditional gatherings at home: the guests having a drink on their return from the church, with a boy playing the flute, or neighbours calling on the young mother. Or else they depicted traditional customs which are harder to identify, as in the picture by Molenaer of a woman holding a child in the midst of great ribaldry, with all the ladies present covering their heads with their dresses.⁴¹

It would be wrong to interpret this taste for social or traditional festivities, from which licentiousness was not absent any more than it was from the language of respectable people, as a sign of religious indifference: the stress was simply laid on the family, social character of the occasion rather than its sacramental character. In the northern countries where the family themes were extremely widespread, a highly significant painting by Steen shows us the new family interpretation of folklore or traditional piety.⁴² We have already had occasion to stress the importance, in life under the Ancien Régime, of the great collective festivities: we have shown the part played in them by children, mingling with adults; the whole of a heterogeneous society was gathered together on these occasions, and happy to be together. But the festival pictured by Steen is no longer one of those festivals of youth, in which the children behaved rather like slaves on the day of the Saturnalia, in which they played a part fixed by tradition in the company of adults. Here, on the

contrary, the grown-ups have organised the occasion to entertain the children: it is the feast of St. Nicholas, the ancestor of 'Santa Claus'. Steen catches the moment when the parents are helping the children to find the toys which they have hidden all over the house for them. Some of the children have already found their toys. Some little girls are holding dolls. Others are carrying buckets full of toys. There are some shoes lying about: perhaps it was already customary to hide toys in shoes, those shoes which children of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in some countries, put in front of the fire on Christmas Eve? This is no longer a great collective festival, but a quiet family celebration; and consequently this concentration on the family is continued by a concentration of the family around the children. Family feasts became children's feasts. Nowadays, Christmas has become the biggest, one might almost say the only, feast in the year, common to believers and unbelievers alike. It was not as important as this under the Ancien Régime, when it suffered from the competition of Twelfth Night, following shortly after it. But the extraordinary success enjoyed by Christmas in contemporary industrial societies, which feel an increasing dislike for the great collective festivals, is due to the family character which its association with the feast of St. Nicholas has won it: Steen's painting shows us that in seventeenth-century Holland the feast of St. Nicholas was already celebrated as the feast of 'Santa Claus' or 'Father Christmas' is celebrated in Western countries today, with the same modern feeling for childhood and the family, for childhood in the family.

A new theme illustrates in even more significant fashion the religious constituent of the concept of the family: the theme of grace. For a long time past, 'courtesy' had demanded that in the absence of a priest, a young boy should bless the table at the beginning of a meal. Some manuscript texts of the fifteenth century, published by F.J. Furnivall in a collection called *The Babees Book*,⁴³ lay down very strict rules for behaviour at table—'the conventions of the table', 'the way to behave at table'—and instruct the child to say grace without any hesitation if given authority to do so by a priest or lord. The manuals of etiquette of the sixteenth century allot the task of saying grace, not to any of the children at table, but to the youngest. Mathurin Cordier's manual establishes this rule, which is maintained in later, revised editions; thus a mid-eighteenth century edition still stipulates that the duty of blessing the table 'falls to the

ecclesiastics, if there are any, or, in their absence, to the youngest of the company'.⁴⁴ 'Once he has finished serving the meal,' we read in *La civilité nouvelle* of 1671, 'it is a true and excellent courtesy to bow to the company and then say grace'.⁴⁵ And in *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* of St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle: 'When there is a child present, he is often instructed to perform this function' (that of saying grace).⁴⁶ Vivès in his dialogues describes a big meal: 'The master of the house, as was his right, allotted the places. The prayer was said by a little child, briefly, quaintly, and in verse'.⁴⁷

Thus it was no longer a young boy in the company but the smallest child in the house who was given the honour of saying grace. We can see here a sign of the added attention given to childhood in the sixteenth century, but what is really important is that the child should be associated with the principal family prayer, for a long time the only prayer recited in common by the whole family gathered together. In this respect extracts from manuals of etiquette are less revealing than iconography. From the end of the sixteenth century on, the saying of grace becomes one of the most common themes of the new iconography which we have tried to distinguish. Take the engraving by Mérian for example.⁴⁸ It is a portrait of a family at table, faithful to what is already an old convention: the father and mother sitting in two armchairs, their five children around them. A maidservant is bringing in a dish, and an open door reveals the kitchen beyond. But the engraver has caught the moment when a little boy in a robe, resting his arms on his mother's knees, his hands folded in prayer, is saying grace: the rest of the family are listening to the prayer with their heads uncovered and their hands folded.

An engraving by Abraham Bosse shows the same scene in a Protestant family.⁴⁹ Antoine Le Nain depicts a woman and three children at table: one of the boys is standing saying grace.⁵⁰ Lebrun treats the subject in the old-fashioned style, with a Holy Family. The table is laid; the father, a bearded man with a traveller's staff in his hand, is standing. The mother, who is seated, is looking affectionately at the child who, his hands folded, is reciting the prayer. This picture obtained wide circulation as a devotional image.⁵¹

It is only to be expected that we should find this theme in seventeenth-century Dutch painting. In a picture by Steen, the father is the only person seated: an old country custom, which had

long since been dropped by the French middle class. The mother is serving him, and also the two children who are remaining standing: the smaller, aged between two and three, has folded his hands, and is saying grace.⁵² In a similar picture by Heemskerck, two old men, who are seated, and a younger man, who is standing, are all at table, as well as a woman who is sitting with her hands folded: next to her a little girl is repeating the prayer which she is reading on her mother's lips.⁵³ It is the same theme again that we meet in the eighteenth century, in Chardin's famous *Bénédicité*.

Artists were fond of depicting the scene of a child saying grace because they recognised a new significance in this hitherto commonplace prayer. The iconographic theme evoked and associated in a synthesis three emotional forces: piety, the concept of childhood (the smallest child), and the concept of the family (the gathering at table). Grace had become the model for the family prayer. Formerly there had been no private religious worship. The etiquette manuals mention the morning prayer (in the colleges the boarders said it together after washing).⁵⁴ They already say less about the evening prayer. They lay greater stress on the children's duties to their parents (the oldest rules of courtesy of the fifteenth century did not speak of children's duties to their parents but to their masters). 'Children', says Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, 'must not go to bed before bidding their father and mother goodnight.' Courtin's manual of etiquette of 1671 brings the child's evening to a close in this way: 'He shall recite his lessons, bid his parents and masters goodnight, relieve himself, and finally, having undressed, lie down in bed to sleep'.⁵⁵

Worship conducted privately by each family developed to considerable proportions in Protestant circles: in France, especially after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, it took the place of public worship to such an extent that after the restoration of liberty, the pastors of the late eighteenth century found it difficult to bring back to public worship people who had become accustomed to make do with family prayers. Hogarth's famous caricature shows that in the eighteenth century the evening prayer said in common—a prayer which gathered together around the father of the family his relatives and servants—had become conventional and commonplace. It seems probable that Catholic families followed an almost parallel course, that they too felt the need for a piety which was neither public nor entirely individual: a family piety.

We described just now Lebrun's *Bénédicité*, popularised by Sarrabat's engraving: it was immediately recognised that this scene of the saying of grace was also a picture of the Holy Family, showing the prayer and meal of the Virgin, St. Joseph and the Infant Jesus. Lebrun's picture belongs to two series of pictures, both equally popular at the time because both glorified the same concept. As V.L. Tapié has pointed out: 'It was without a shadow of doubt the very principle of the family which was linked with this homage to the Holy Family.⁵⁶ Every family was urged to regard the Holy Family as its model. Thus the traditional iconography altered under the same influence that increased paternal authority: St. Joseph no longer plays the minor role in it which was still his in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. He appears in the foreground, as the head of the family, in another picture of the Holy Family at table, which was likewise given wide circulation by engraving. 'The Virgin, St. Joseph and the Infant Jesus', comments Émile Mâle, 'are having their evening meal: a candle on the table is creating a startling contrast between light and deep shadow, and lending the scene an appearance of mystery; St. Joseph is giving a drink to the Infant Jesus, who with a napkin round his neck looks as good as gold.'⁵⁷ Or there is the theme which Mâle calls *The Holy Family on the Road*, in which the Infant Jesus is between Mary and Joseph.

St. Joseph's authority is to be noted in many scenes: in a picture by a Neapolitan painter of the seventeenth century⁵⁸ he is carrying the Infant Jesus on his arms and thus occupies the centre of the picture; this scene was a common subject for Murillo and Guido Reni as well. Sometimes Joseph is shown working in his carpenter's workshop, helped by Jesus.⁵⁹

Head of the family at table during mealtimes, and in the workshop during working hours, St. Joseph is still head of the family at that other dramatic moment in family life, the moment when death strikes him down. St. Joseph, becoming the patron saint of the good death, keeps his wits about him: the picture of his death resembles that of the father's death so often used in illustrations of the good death; it belongs to the same iconography of the new family.

The other holy families inspire the same feeling. In the sixteenth century in particular, artists were fond of showing Christ's contemporaries as children all playing together. A German tapestry of great charm shows the three Marys surrounded by their children, who are frolicking about, bathing, and generally enjoying

themselves.⁶⁰ This group frequently recurs, notably in a fine wood-carving of the early seventeenth century at Notre-Dame La Grande at Poitiers.

The theme is obviously linked with the concept of childhood and the concept of the family. This link is heavily stressed in the baroque decoration of the Lady Chapel in the Franciscan church at Lucerne. This decoration is dated 1723. The ceiling is adorned with little angels, all very decently dressed, and each carrying one of the Virgin's symbols listed in her litanies (star of the sea, etc.). On the side walls, holy parents and children, all life-size, are holding hands; St. John the Evangelist and Mary Salome, St. James the Elder and Zebediah, and others.

Subjects from the Old Testament are also used to illustrate this devotion. The Venetian painter Carlo Loth treats the blessing of Joseph by Jacob like the scene, very common in the ages of life, of the old man waiting for death in the midst of his children.⁶¹ But it is Adam's family above all which has been treated on the pattern of a holy family. In a painting by Veronese, Adam and Eve are standing in the courtyard of their house, surrounded by their animals and their children Cain and Abel. One of the children is feeding at his mother's breast; the other, who is smaller, is crawling about on the ground. Adam, hiding behind a tree so as not to disturb these antics, is looking on. He is seen from behind. It is doubtless true that one can discover a theological intention in this family of the 'first Adam', who heralds the coming of the 'second Adam', Christ. But this learned intention is hidden behind a scene which evokes the now consecrated joys of family life.⁶²

We find the same theme in the convent of San Martino in Naples, on a ceiling of a later date, probably the early eighteenth century. Adam is digging (just as Joseph works wood). Eve is spinning (just as the Virgin sometimes sews), and their two children are with them.

Thus iconography enables us to follow the rise of a new concept: the concept of the family. The concept is new but not the family, although the latter doubtless did not play the primordial part in early times which Fustel de Coulanges and his contemporaries attributed to it. M. Jeanmaire has noted what are still important relics in Greece of non-family structures such as age groups. The ethnologists have shown the importance of age groups among the Africans, and of clan communities among the American natives. Are

not we ourselves unconsciously impressed by the part the family has played in our society for several centuries, and are we not tempted to exaggerate its scope and even to attribute to it an almost absolute sort of historical authority? Yet there is no doubt that the family was constantly maintained and reinforced by influences at once Semitic (and not simply Biblical, in my opinion) and Roman. It may be that the family was weakened at the time of the Germanic invasions, yet it would be vain to deny the existence of a family life in the Middle Ages. But the family existed in silence: it did not awaken feelings strong enough to inspire poet or artist. We must recognise the importance of this silence: not much value was placed on the family. Similarly we must admit the significance of the iconographic blossoming which after the fifteenth and especially the sixteenth century followed this long period of obscurity: the birth and development of the concept of the family.

This powerful concept was formed around the conjugal family, that of the parents and children. This concept is closely linked to that of childhood. It has less and less to do with problems such as the honour of a line, the integrity of an inheritance, or the age and permanence of a name: it springs simply from the unique relationship between the parents and their children. In the seventeenth century people thought that St. Joseph resembled his adopted son, thus stressing the importance of the family bond. Erasmus had already had the very modern idea that children united the family and that their physical resemblance produced this close union; his treatise on marriage was reissued in the eighteenth century—that work in which he had written: 'One cannot admire too greatly the astonishing pains taken by Nature in this respect; she depicts two persons in a single face and a single body; the husband recognises the portrait of his wife in his children, and the wife that of her husband. Sometimes one can also discover the likeness of a grandfather or a grandmother, a great-uncle or a great-aunt.'⁶³ What counted most of all was the emotion aroused by the child, the living image of his parents.

NOTES

1. P.M. Duval, *La Vie quotidienne en Gaule*, 1952.

2. G. Charles Picard, *Les Religions de l'Afrique antique*, 1954.