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## **The Little Commonwealth: The Family as Matrix of Markets and Morality in Early Protestantism**

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### **Abstract**

*Max Weber traced the rise of the modern economy back to the convergence of new Protestant teachings on vocation, predestination, and asceticism. It was especially the marital household, this Article argues, that served as an incubator of these Protestant teachings and a laboratory for their application to economic activity. The early modern Protestant family was structured and schooled to cultivate the critical habits of discipline and organization in the economic lives of its members. Early modern Protestant catechisms and household manuals set out in detail the moral and religious rules, rights, and responsibilities that husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants had to each other and to their neighbors in different stages of life. It is here, in the elementary ethics and intimate experiences of the Protestant household, that many of the basic norms and habits of modern economic life were slowly instilled and cultivated in each new generation. This chapter offers case studies of Heinrich Bullinger, Robert Cleaver, William Perkins, and Richard Baxter to illustrate how the early modern Protestant family was structured to support church, state, society, and economy alike.*

**Keywords:** Max Weber; Martin Luther; John Calvin; vocation; predestination; asceticism; work; iron cage; Richard Baxter; Heinrich Bullinger; Robert Cleaver; William Perkins; family; economics; household manuals; husband and wife; parent and child; master and servant; slavery; natural rights and duties

### **Introduction**

One of the hallmarks of early modern Protestantism was its view of the family as a “little commonwealth” – the most primal school of justice and mercy, morality and virtue, education and welfare in a Godly republic. Martin Luther called the marital household the “mother of all earthly laws”; John Calvin called it “the first covenant of a

covenant community”; Anglican divines called it “the seminary of the republic.”<sup>1</sup> All these metaphors were designed to underscore the early modern Protestant belief that a stable and well-functioning marital household (the “*oikos*”) was an essential foundation of a well-ordered church, state, society, and economy.

In his early work, Jon Gunnemann highlighted the foundational role of the family in the early modern Protestant world, including for the development of economic life. In *The Moral Meaning of Revolution* (1979), for example, he wrote: “What made the Puritan revolutionaries of the seventeenth century successful was the power of Calvinist theology with its special emphasis on discipline and organization. This discipline found its focus in the Puritan families and local churches.... Calvinism organized life around the family and voluntary religious organizations from which educational and political institutions evolved, as well as economics.”<sup>2</sup> In a later lecture, he said, memorably: “To understand the rise of modern capitalist economics, we need to understand the organic ties forged by Protestants between *oikos* and *oikonomiká*, between the household and the market, between the private ethics of the family and the public habits of the economic sphere.”<sup>3</sup>

In this brief chapter, dedicated to Professor Gunnemann in admiration, appreciation, and affection, we illustrate how the early modern Protestant family was structured and schooled to cultivate the critical habits of “discipline and organization” in the economic and moral lives of its members. We turn for evidence to early modern Protestant household manuals that set out in detail the moral and religious rules, rights, and responsibilities of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants to each other and to their neighbors in different stages of life. It is here, in the elementary ethics and experiences of the Protestant household, that so many of the basic norms and habits of modern economic life were slowly instilled and cultivated in each new generation.

Professor Gunnemann, among many others, has made clear that any analysis of the interactions of Protestantism and economic life must deal with Max Weber’s seminal work on the topic. We thus begin with a brief excursus on Weber’s theory on the Protestant spirit of capitalism, and then turn to the Protestant household manuals as an underexplored form and forum of economic “rationalization.” It was not just the mystical spirit of capitalism in Protestantism, as Weber posits, or the ironic convergence of new Protestant teachings on vocation, predestination, and asceticism that helped to ground and guide early modern economics. It was also the role that the Protestant household played as an important site of economic activity and an incubator of market morality.

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<sup>1</sup> See detailed references in John Witte, Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition*, 2d ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Jon P. Gunnemann, *The Moral Meaning of Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 168.

<sup>3</sup> This statement came in a seminar on “Calvinism and Politics,” taught by Professor Gunnemann in 1989 or 1990, during a session when John Witte participated.

## Max Weber and the Protestant Spirit of Capitalism

In a series of writings at the turn of the twentieth century, German social scientist Max Weber observed that the most highly-developed (or “rationalized”) economies in his day correlated with regions and cultures in which Protestant reform movements had developed most fully and forcefully; and that, within those contexts, the “business leaders and owners of capital, and even more the higher technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises” were “overwhelmingly Protestant.”<sup>4</sup> This seemed paradoxical since the “spirit” of modern capitalism – often characterized by unrepentant utilitarianism and relentless acquisitiveness – seemed to contradict traditional Christian values and virtues that Protestants so strongly emphasized. Yet, to Weber, the correlation between Protestantism and capitalism was no coincidence. It was precisely the ideas, anxieties, and institutional forms of Protestantism that had helped drive and direct the emergence of the modern capitalist order, and the displacement of traditional feudal economies and church-dominated monopolies that dominated medieval Catholic life.

Three Protestant teachings were particularly important, said Weber. First, Martin Luther’s conception of the Christian vocation (*Beruf*) levelled the professional and spiritual hierarchies of his day and catalyzed greater participation by all in hard work, professionalized labor, and a market economy. Medieval Catholics regarded the clergy as superior to the laity in virtue and spiritual attainment; the lowliest parson was thought to be closer to God than the highest emperor. Luther, by contrast, insisted that priests and monks were no more virtuous or near to God than soldiers or maidservants. All were equally slaves to sin, and equally dependent upon divine grace for their salvation. And all were equally entitled and equipped to pursue the Christian vocation that best suited their talents and stations in life. Christians were not called to leave their secular callings of the world for a cloistered life of self-sanctifying religious asceticism and discipline. They were faithfully and dutifully to serve God and neighbor in the ordinary vocations, firm in the knowledge that the work of the butcher, housewife, or soldier was just as spiritual and conducive to salvation as that of the bishop, abbot, or priest. The same devotion and discipline that a cleric directed to spiritual and ecclesiastical ends could be devoted to secular and material ends, with equal assurance of salvation by grace through faith. The broad effect of this teaching, Weber concluded, “as compared to the Catholic attitude” of the Middle Ages, was that “the moral emphasis on and the religious sanction of, organized worldly labor in a calling was mightily increased.”<sup>5</sup>

Second, Weber argued, John Calvin’s doctrine of predestination engendered religious anxieties that fueled the development of an intense and systematic work ethic among subsequent generations of believers. Lacking the sacramental means of grace

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<sup>4</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, repr. ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003 [1958]), 35.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

that provided Catholics with a reassuring certitude of salvation, Calvinists were anxious to know whether they were among those whom God had elected for eternal salvation, rather than eternal damnation. Over time, Weber argued, Calvinists came to view diligent and productive labor and success in one's vocation as, on the one hand, a non-negotiable religious duty and, on the other hand, a reliable indicator of one's election. The "systematic self-control" and discipline that Calvinists consequently applied to their lives and work thus served "as the technical means, not of purchasing salvation, but of getting rid of the fear of damnation."<sup>6</sup> "The God of Calvinism demanded of his believers not single good works, but a life of good works combined into a unified system [and] subjected to a consistent method for conduct as a whole."<sup>7</sup> Soteriological anxieties, then, fostered a form of economic asceticism and organization that impacted broader economic structures.

Third, it was this progressively systematic rationalization of life and work, Weber contended, that drove Protestant societies away from late-medieval feudalism dominated by church monopolies and clergy-dominated guilds toward the highly rationalized and competitive capitalistic economies of Protestant lands in Western Europe and North America. Protestant individuals and communities, spurred on by a sense of vocation and a burning need to prove their state of grace, adopted a feverish and systematic work ethic that subsequently transformed the economic ethos and institutions around them. Even those who did not share the Protestant faith and zeal were forced to embrace the same ethic in order to compete. The institutional dynamics of Protestant sects in the American colonies further catalyzed this process by enforcing strict moral standards for membership and participation in sacramental rites, which allowed, in turn, for fuller participation in the economic life of the community.<sup>8</sup> Feudal traditions and small-scale guilds gave way to the breakneck pace of modern factories and finance. Even as its religious underpinnings and trappings faded from view, the Protestant ethic and the institutions it created remained in place as the basic socio-economic framework into which all were now born. Ironically, where early Protestant reformers sought to elevate the work of ordinary people, emerging economies made the so-called Protestant work ethic all-but-compulsory. The burgeoning "spirit of capitalism" – ultimately a denatured and perverted caricature of earlier forms of Protestant asceticism – was hollow and mundane: "The Puritan wanted to work in a calling," Weber concluded, whereas now

we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>8</sup> See Max Weber, "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," in H.H. Geertz and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 302-322.

individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt. In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.

Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history...Where the fulfilment of the calling cannot directly be related to the highest spiritual and cultural values, or when, on the other hand, it need not be felt simply as economic compulsion, the individual generally abandons any attempt to justify it at all. In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport...

For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: 'Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.'<sup>9</sup>

The "Baxter" whom Weber mentions in this famous "iron cage" passage is Richard Baxter (1615-1691), a distinguished English Puritan theologian who penned exhaustive practical guides for faithful living. If Baxter thought that care for external goods should rest but lightly on the shoulders of God's predestined believers, his writings suggest that the Christians' responsibility to order their daily lives, especially their households, constituted a much weightier responsibility. Baxter is a prime example of the rationalizing and systematizing impulses that Weber attributes to Protestantism generally, and especially to seventeenth-century Calvinism. Yet the title of the 504-page volume in which Baxter discusses most thoroughly the Christian's economic life offers an important clue about the real locus and focus of early Protestants' "economic" reform efforts. Baxter's volume was entitled *Christian Economics (or, Family Duties)*,<sup>10</sup> showing his straightforward equivalence of Christian economics and Christian family life.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 181-2.

<sup>10</sup> This was one volume in Baxter's much-read set of publications entitled: *A Christian Directory: or, A Summ of Practical Theologie, and Cases of Conscience: Directing Christians, How to Use their Knowledge and Faith; How to Improve all Helps and Means, and to Perform all Duties; How to Overcome Temptations, and to Escape or Mortifie Every Sin*, 2d ed., 4 parts in 5 vols. (London: Robert White for

Baxter's treatise is only one of scores of extant Protestant household manuals and family directories from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup> These understudied texts show that, insofar as Protestants did help to shape the "spirit" and institutions of early modern capitalism, they did so first of all by rationalizing the household (the *oikos*) and teaching its members the meanings and measures of vocation, discipline, and hard work. Indeed, the birth of capitalism rested not only on the reorganization of guilds and church monopolies into highly rationalized factories and competitive markets of supply and demand, but also and more basically on the radical rationalization of the home – an institution that many Protestants viewed as sociologically, politically, and theologically prior to all other social institutions, including the economy. Household manuals taught the Christian faithful how to manage the interlacing rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and servants. They offered guidelines for everything from table manners to clothing, diet, work habits, worship, and prayer. They instructed parents how to instill virtues and combat vices in their children and exhorted children to heed the word (or suffer the rod) of their elders and to tend to them in old age. And they exhorted parents and children, and masters and servants to develop mutual habits of order and discipline that allowed everyone to produce good work in their unique Christian vocations, knowing that hard work was a reflection and affirmation of divine favor.

These household manuals both confirm and qualify some of Weber's key insights into the relationship of markets and morality in the early Protestant world. Weber's and later Weberian accounts of economic rationalization were focused on the "public" economy – the productive activities of tradesmen and merchants, buyers and sellers, and others (mostly men) who made, exchanged, sold, and purchased goods and services in the marketplace. Early modern Protestants who engaged in such activities may well have been guided, to varying degrees, by the religious motives and beliefs that Weber highlighted, including the idea of the Christian vocation and the good works and moral discipline that it fostered. Yet early modern Protestant conceptions of vocation were, emphatically, not limited to a person's public work or career. Fatherhood, motherhood, and childhood were regarded as important vocations for early Protestants no less than the vocations of blacksmiths or bakers, bankers or barristers. Moreover, a great deal of economic activity in early modern Europe and North America occurred within the household, which often included servants, apprentices, and students along with blood relatives, and which provided a great deal of the nurture, education, social welfare, and moral discipline, historically furnished by the medieval Catholic Church and later provided by the modern welfare state. The norms and habits each household member learned in this carefully structured domestic sphere formed an important part of their preparation for public economic life. And the rationalization of the early modern

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Nevil Simons, 1678). The first two parts were on *Christian Ethics (or Private Duties)*; the third on *Christian Economics (or Family Duties)*; the fourth on *Christian Ecclesiastics (or, Church Duties)*; and the fifth on *Christian Politics (or, Duties to Our Rulers and Neighbors)*. Each volume was 500-700 pages long.

<sup>11</sup> On household manuals, which also had earlier Catholic and later liberal forms, see John Witte, Jr. and Heather M. Good, "The Duties of Love: The Vocation of the Child in the Household Manual Tradition," in Patrick M. Brennan, ed., *The Vocation of the Child* (Grand Rapids, Mich. and Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 266-294.

Protestant household was an important step in the gradual rationalization of early modern economies in the later institutionally differentiated societies on both sides of the Atlantic.

### Illustrations from the Protestant Household Manuals

We could, and ideally would, duplicate examples to drive home this thesis. But in the small space available here, let us take three Protestant household manualists as illustrations: Heinrich Bullinger, Robert Cleaver, and William Perkins. All three of these writers built their manuals on biblical, classical, patristic and humanist learning. All three wrote in highly accessible terms for all pious persons to understand either by reading or hearing their instruction. All three were highly influential writers throughout Great Britain, the European Continent, and colonial North America; their works were reprinted often, and in multiple languages. Finally, all three of these manualists anticipated many of the formulations of Richard Baxter's *Family Directory* that Max Weber would later hold up to illustrate his theory of the Protestant spirit of capitalism.

**Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575).** A good example of an early Protestant household manual comes from the pen of Zurich Reformer Heinrich Bullinger, whose work on the family bridged Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican worlds. Bullinger wrote extensively on the theology and law of marriage and family life, but his most popular writing was *The Golde Boke of Christen Matrimonye* (1540), written in German but translated into English by the famous Bible translator Miles Coverdale.<sup>12</sup> Here, Bullinger set out a covenantal model of marriage and family life at the foundation of the covenant community of church, state, and workplace. "Wedlock," he wrote, "is a covenant, a coupling or yoking together" of one man and one woman "by the good consent of the both."<sup>13</sup> "Holy wedlock was ordained of God himself in Paradise."<sup>14</sup> It is thus an "honorable and holy" estate, enjoyed by the "holiest, and most virtuous, the wisest and most noble men" in the Bible, and commended to all persons today—clerical and lay, young and old, single and widowed, rich and poor. For Bullinger, the single adult man or woman living outside a marital household was an aberration.<sup>15</sup>

God created marriage so that a man and a woman "may live together honestly and friendly the one with the other, that they may avoid uncleanness, that they may bring up children in the fear of God, that the one may help and comfort the other."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, *Der christlich Eestand* (Zurich: Christoffel Froschouer, 1540), translated as *The Christen State of Matrimonye* (London: n.p., 1541) (STC 4045) and then as *The Golde Boke of Christen Matrimonye* (London: loh[a]n Mayler for loh[a]n Gough, 1542) (STC 1723) under Thomas Becon's pseudonym, Theodore Basille. Throughout this chapter, we have retained the archaic spelling of the book titles, but modernized the spelling and punctuation in all quotations.

<sup>13</sup> Bullinger, *The Golde Boke*, folio v.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, folios i.b–ii, iii.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, folios xxi.b, xxiii, xxxvi.b, lxxvii.b–lxxviii.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, folios bv–v.b.

Bullinger followed conventional Protestant arguments regarding the marital purposes of protection from lust and procreation of children, arguing that marriage is God's "remedy and medicine unto our feeble and weak flesh" and that children are "the greatest treasure" of a marriage.<sup>17</sup> But he placed special emphasis on marital love and friendship, returning to this theme several times.<sup>18</sup> At creation, he insisted, God planted in Adam and Eve "the love, the heart, the inclination and natural affection that it beseems the one to have toward the other." The "mouth of God thereby declares the duty knot and covenant of married folks, namely that the highest love, bond, and unite among them should be this, that no man separate them asunder, but only death.... The love therefore in marriage ought to be (next unto God) above all loves," with couples rendering to each other "the most excellent and unpainful service, diligence and earnest labor,... one doing for another, one longing, depending, helping and forbearing another, suffering, also like joy and like pain one with another."<sup>19</sup> Thus, for Bullinger, the marital household was the principal social welfare institution for adults, the nerve center for kinship networks that were of vital importance to human flourishing.

Such an ideal state of matrimony, Bullinger insisted, could be achieved only if the covenant of marriage were "framed right according to the word and will of God."<sup>20</sup> Bullinger recognized the conventional steps of betrothal, wedding, and consummation, and glossed each step with ample pastoral advice and biblical texts. The first few months of cohabitation are a "most dangerous" time, he believed, and he thus devoted a third of his tract to describing the interlocking "duties of domesticity" required by the marital covenant between husband, wife, and God.<sup>21</sup> Bullinger went on for several pages advising couples about sex, food, dress, and other details of domestic economy, warning against excess in any of these. He then set out the couple's respective duties of "ordinate obedience and conjugal love mutual," following New Testament leads, and holding up the relationship of Yahweh and ancient Israel, and Christ and his Church as a "mirror to the state of wedlock and conjugal covenantal love."<sup>22</sup>

The wife owes her husband the duties of obedience, service, respect, devotion, modesty, courtesy, support, faithfulness, and honesty.<sup>23</sup> The husband is the head of the wife, "her defender, teacher, and comforter" called to exhibit the selfless sacrificial love of Christ himself and the virtues of clemency, wisdom, integrity, and faithfulness.<sup>24</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., folios xix, xxi.b.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. See e.g., *The Decades of Henry Bullinger: The First and Second Decades*, ed. Thomas Harding for the Parker Society (Cambridge: University Press, 1849), Second Decade, Tenth Sermon, 397–398.

<sup>19</sup> Bullinger, *The Golde Boke*, folios iii.b–iii; xxii–xxiii; xxxvi.b–xxxviii. Contemporaneous Tudor divines sometimes offered similar sentiments on the purposes of marriage, with an emphasis on marital affection, love, and companionship. See, e.g., Edmund Tilney, *A Brief and Pleasant Discourse of Duties in Marriage, Called the Flower of Friendship* (London, 1571), folios Biiiv–Biiic, Biiia.

<sup>20</sup> Bullinger, *The Golde Booke*, folios vi, vii.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., folio i.b.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., folios liii, lv.b.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., folios liii–lv, lxii–lxiii.b.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., folios lv–lvi.

wife must give proper care to the home, exhibiting cleanliness, industry, thrift, and judiciousness in her treatment of servants and neighbors. The husband must “labor for the common weal” of his family, exhibiting industry, honesty, integrity, and charity.<sup>25</sup>

Marital couples blessed with children could find ample instruction in Bullinger’s *Golde Boke* on the parental duties of breast-feeding, nurture, protection, discipline, education, and dress of children, and, later, their courtship and contracting of marriage with a suitable partner. Bullinger’s comments on discipline and training were typical of the sixteenth-century household manuals. He encouraged parents from the start to engage their children with “godly, honest, grave and fruitful” instruction and example. Parents should teach their children by word and example all the cardinal virtues, lead them in memorizing and reciting the Ten Commandments, Apostle’s Creed, and other apt texts from the Gospels and Epistles. They should teach their children to “spend all the time in virtuous uses and never be idle,” nor steal, fight, gossip, or harm others or themselves. When children did stray, parents should “correct them duly and discretely for their faults, so that they stand in great fear and awe of them, and if words will not reclaim them, then take the rod or whip of correction discretely used. For the rod of correction ministers wisdom.”<sup>26</sup>

Bullinger also encouraged parents to instill industriousness in their children, by helping each child “learn that science or handicraft ... whereunto the child is naturally inclined and unto that occupation let him be put to.” It was not good enough just to teach the child literacy and numbers, said Bullinger, or set them up in their own home and marriage in due course, important as all those steps were. A child also needed the preparation, encouragement, and means to thrive in his or her own vocation. Parents who fail to provide and emphasize proper education and vocational training, are, in fact, “ungodly destroyers of themselves, their children, and of all commonwealths and congregations” who need well trained leaders and members to function, conversant not only with “God’s Law, Prophets, and Gospel” but also the methods and means to succeed in their occupations. “What is the cause of all this dissension, cruel persecution, tyranny, evil laws making unjust acts, false religion, wicked ordinances and ungodly decrees and institutions, but only the blind ignorance of unlearned rulers” and undereducated citizens unable to fend properly for themselves or stand up for each other when buffeted by tyrants or ill-served by incompetent officials.<sup>27</sup>

Bullinger connected this new understanding of vocations to broader economic reforms, calling for a system of universal education and vocational training to replace the medieval system of church-based education for principal service in the church’s bureaucracy. “In times past, when men saw so many spiritual promotions unto rich bishoprics, benefices, deaneries, abbeys, priories, chancellorships, etc., then they did set fast their children to schools to make them popish priests, idly to live by other men’s sweat.” But with the Reformation, this clerical exploitation of the laity is over, Bullinger

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., folios lxvr–lxvii.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., folio lxxii.b.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., folio lxxii.b.

argued. Now “the common labor, godliness, and the public profit of all commonwealths and congregations depend upon” all citizens and subjects being trained in proper schools in all manner of vocations, including but going well beyond work within the church. “Now, therefore, O ye Christian parents: seeing that your youth is now by the favor of God endowed with so good wits and inclined unto good letters, let not the graces and gifts of God be offered you in vain, but exercise them” in such a way that your children can “come to be profitable unto the commonwealth, whereunto they be born.” Indeed, train them at home and let them be further trained by teachers and masters in “all just and true occupations justly exercised and used” knowing that “God’s blessing maketh them to prosper” if they remain “true doers and laborers in their calling.”<sup>28</sup>

Thomas Becon, Thomas Cranmer’s chaplain, published an edition of Bullinger’s tract in 1542, and it was regularly reprinted and used thereafter.<sup>29</sup> Becon added his own long foreword to the 1542 edition in which he extolled marriage not only for the spiritual good of the couple and their children, but also for the civil good of the commonwealth and church. With a proper functioning marital household, Becon wrote with ample bombast, “many noble treasures chance unto us, virtue is maintained, vice is eschewed, houses are replenished, cities are inhabited, the ground is tilled, sciences are practiced, kingdoms flourish, amity is preserved, the public weal is defended, natural succession remaineth, good arts are taught, honest order is kept, Christendom is enlarged, God’s word promoted, and the glory of God highly advanced and set further.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed on the strength and stability of “this household’s common weal” hangs the security and success of the whole commonwealth of England.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., folios lxxiii-lxxiii.b.

<sup>29</sup> The work is summarized in Bullinger, *The Second Decade*, 393–435. In the 1586 Convocation, Archbishop Whitgift directed the lower clergy to study Bullinger’s *Decades* as part of their theological training. Alec R. Vidler, *Christ’s Strange Work: An Exposition of the Three Uses of God’s Law*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1963), 34.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Becon, Preface to *The Golde Boke*, folio Aiiii.b.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. See also Thomas Becon, *The Booke of Matrimonie both Profitable and Comfortable for all Them that Entende Quietly and Godly to lyue in the Holy State of Honorable Wedlocke* (c. 1560), folio DCxlix: “For being that a city standeth of houses, and the common weal of private things, and of ruling of a household and family, the discipline to govern a common weal is ordained: how shall he rule a citye that hath not learned to rule a house: how shall he govern a common weal that never knew his private and familiar business ... For truly matrimony giveth a great exercise to moral philosophy. For it has a certain households commonwealth annexed, in ruling that which a man may soon learn and have experience of wisdom, temperance, love to god and his kin, and all other virtues.” See also Ibid., folios CCClxcvii–CCCLxcvix: “The order of wedlock ... maketh kingdoms populace great .... [It] bringeth forth children, sons and daughters, to the commonwealth ... which at all times are not only ready to do good to the commonwealth but also to do for the conservation of the same.... [T]hey refuse no labor, no pain, to show their obedience toward their superiors,. . . to do good to all men, . . . to do God’s good will & pleasure, in laboring, in calling upon God, in thanking God for his benefits, in mortifying the filthy lusts of the flesh, in wearing such apparel, as becometh godliness, in relieving the poor and the needy, in visiting the sick, in dying unto sin and living unto righteousness.” The text is included in *The First Part of the Bokes, Which Thomas Becon Made* (London: J. Day, 1560–1564), vol. 1, item 12,

**Robert Cleaver (b. ca. 1561).** This emphasis on the public utility of the private marital household was a central theme in Robert Cleaver's hefty tome on *A Godly Form of Householde Gouernment* (1598). Cleaver was a Puritan preacher in Drayton, Oxfordshire, who wrote popular tracts on the Ten Commandments, Sabbath Day observance, and other aspects of Christian piety. In *A Godly Form of Householde Gouernment*, Cleaver worked hard to systematize and rationalize domestic life, expanding on the themes illustrated by Bullinger. "All government of a family must be directed to two principal ends," Cleaver wrote: "First Christian holiness, and secondly the things of this life." "Religion must be stirring in Christian families, and that good government looketh to bring godly behavior into families, as well as thrift and good husbandry."<sup>32</sup>

The paterfamilias must play the leading role in the "good government" of the family, Cleaver believed. As a husband, he must "live with his wife discreetly." He must "cherish and nourish" her as Christ loves and supports His Church. He must work with her "in all due benevolence, honestly, soberly, and chastely." And he must "govern her in all duties, that properly concern the state of marriage, in knowledge, in wisdom, judgment, and justice." A husband must not be "bitter, fierce, and cruel" to his wife and must "never beat her" even if he, as her head, must reproach and admonish her. Instead, "as a man of knowledge," he must "edify her, both by a good example, and also, by good instructions."<sup>33</sup> As a father, the married man must lead his household in private devotions, daily prayer, catechization, and Bible reading. He must ensure that children and servants are faithful in public worship and Sabbath observance. He must be vigilant in offering his children instruction and admonition with wisdom, and punishment and rebuke with patience.<sup>34</sup>

If husbands were to govern the household, the duty of the married woman was to be "faithful and loving" to her husband, "wise and prudent" to her family. She must "reverence her husband" and "submit herself unto him," as the Bible enjoins. She must dress and deport herself and her children in accordance with the family's means and station in life. She must avoid sloth and not keep idle, lazy, or untoward company. She must be thrifty, just, charitable, and prudent in her choice of friends. She must keep order and help maintain "the exercise of religion within the household." She must tend especially to the care of her daughters and maidens, teaching them and exemplifying for them the norms and habits of Christian womanhood.<sup>35</sup>

Husband and wife also have mutual duties to each other and to their children. They "must love one another with a pure heart fervently." They must be "faithful" to each

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Cleaver, *A Godly Form of Householde Gouernment* (London: Thomas Creede, 1598), 6–7. See further John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Plaine and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments, with a Methodicall Short Catechisme, Containing Briefly all the Principall Grounds of Christian Religion* (London: Thomas Man, 1604), 181 (STC 6968).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 92, 114, 159ff., 202ff.; Dod and Cleaver, *Plaine and Familiar Exposition*, 24, 226–228.

<sup>34</sup> Cleaver, *Householde Gouernment*, 9–42.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–91, 203–222; Dod and Cleaver, *Plaine and Familiar Exposition*, 221–222.

other, constantly “bending their wits, and all their endeavors, to the help each of other, and to the common good of the family.” They must pray together, “admonish one another,” and serve as “mutual helps to each other in matters concerning their own salvation, and the service of God.” Together, they must “instruct and bring up their children even from their cradle, in the fear and nurture of the Lord, ... in shame fastness, hatred of vice, and love of all virtue.” Such virtues were to be carried out of the home and into the extended economic sphere. As children mature, parents must “bring them up in some profitable and lawful calling, by which they may live honestly and Christianly, and not be fruitless burdens of the earth ... or commonwealth.” They must also “provide for the disposing of them in marriage,” counseling them in their courtship and consenting to their marriage when they come of age and have chosen wisely among available spouses.<sup>36</sup> In response to this, “the duties of the natural child” are very simple: “reverence, obedience, and thankfulness”—exemplified notably in seeking their parents’ consent to their own marriage, and in caring for their parents when they become elderly or disabled.<sup>37</sup>

In many households, the man and woman are also the “masters and mistresses” of servants and apprentices, who work and sometimes live within in the home or are a daily part of the family business.<sup>38</sup> Cleaver saw the master-servant relationship as a natural and necessary extension of the parent-child relationship. Masters and mistresses must teach their servants diligence and discipline, and keep them from idleness and sloth. They must bring up their servants “in honesty, and in comely manners, and in all virtues.” They must “instruct their servants and apprentices in the knowledge of their occupations and trades, even as parents would teach their own children, without all guile, fraud, delaying, or concealing.” And they must discipline them with “such discretion, pity, and desire of their amendment, as loving parents use to deal with their own dear children.” They must maintain order, courtesy, respect and diligence, and peace among children and servants, and work “to banish sin and corrupt religion out of their dwellings.”<sup>39</sup>

The household was to be not only an incubator of Christian morality, but also a model of a good Christian business, said Cleaver. In taking on servants and apprentices, for example, the master must be as sure of “their honest, godly conversation and how they have profited in the knowledge of God” as he is of their skills and strengths and how they have excelled in their craft or profited in their work. For the two are “closely tied”: “such servants that take in hand the Lord will much better prosper and give success unto him than otherwise.” Once he hired his servants, the master thus was obliged to tend to his servants’ souls as much as their bodies. Indeed, he was

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<sup>36</sup> Cleaver, *Householde Gouvernment*, 188–191, 243ff.; Dod and Cleaver, *Plaine and Familiar Exposition*, 174–222.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>38</sup> For this section on masters and servants see the expanded edition *A Godlie Forme of Hovseholde Government: For the Ordering of Private Families According to the Direction of God’s Word* (London: Felix Kingston, 1600), 363–383.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 364–372.

called to discharge the three-fold office of Christ at home and in business: “rule like a King, teach like a Prophet, and pray like a Priest to show how a godly man should behave himself” at home and at work. Alongside this spiritual leadership, the master must set rules and create conditions of labor that provided servants with adequate food and shelter, rewarded hard work, paid fair wages, maintained reasonable hours, and granted weekly Sabbath rest to all. He must strike a balance between lawful acquisition and proper accumulation of wealth, on the one hand, and “profligacy” and “niggardliness” on the other hand. He must promote collaboration among the workers, and throw himself into the work “so that their necessary affairs and business are dispatched well.”<sup>40</sup> Servants, laborers, and apprentices, in turn, must “cheerfully and willingly from their hearts perform the labors and works” they are assigned. Calling to mind Weber’s observation that prosperous work eased spiritual anxieties, Cleaver urged workers to “be faithful in all things committed to them” knowing that ultimately “they are serving the Lord, not men; and not only have respect of the earthly reward, but because they know, and are assured, that of the Lord they shall receive the reward of inheritance, in as much as they serve the Lord Christ.”<sup>41</sup>

Faithful maintenance of all these household duties and offices was the best guarantee of productive order within the broader commonwealths of church and state, Cleaver insisted, echoing early manualists like Thomas Becon. Indeed, properly functioning households were indispensable to civic flourishing. “[I]f masters of families do not practice at home catechizing, and discipline in their houses and join their helping hands to magistrates and ministers,” social order and stability will soon give way to chaos and anarchy.<sup>42</sup> “[I]t is impossible for a man to understand to govern the commonwealth, that doth not know to rule his own house, or order his own person, so that he that knoweth not to govern, deserveth not to reign.”<sup>43</sup>

This was common lore among Cleaver's fellow English divines. “There was never any disorder and outrage, in any family, church, or commonwealth” when domestic offices were respected and domestic duties discharged, Robert Pricke insisted. For domestic duty and discipline allow persons “to rise up to the knowledge of the sovereign Lord, and to give unto him the reverence and honor due to his divine majesty.” It also teaches them the personal virtues and civic habits that “upholdeth, and continueth all these estates, degrees, and orders” of the broader commonwealth.<sup>44</sup> Daniel Rogers wrote further that a stable household served as “the right hand of providence, supporter of laws, states, orders, offices, gifts, and services, the glory of peace, ... the foundation of countries, cities, universities ... crowns, and kingdoms.”<sup>45</sup> “A

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 372-373.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 378-383.

<sup>42</sup> Cleaver, *Householde Gouvernment*, Preface, A4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Pricke, *The Doctrine of Superioritie, and of Subjection, contained in the Fifth Commandment of the Holy Law of Almighty God* (London: Ephraim Dawson & T. Downe, 1609), B2.

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Rogers, *Matrimoniall Honour or, The Mutuall Crowne and Comfort of Godly, Loyall, and Chaste Marriage* (London: Th. Harper for Philip Nevelm 1642), 17.

conscionable performance of household duties ... may be accounted a public work,” Puritan divine, William Gouge wrote in his massive 800-page, 8-book treatise *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622). For “good members of a family are likely to make good members of church and commonwealth.”<sup>46</sup>

Gouge zeroed in on the master-servant relationship, devoting more than 100 pages to describing their respective duties. Like Cleaver, Gouge called masters to serve as “prophets, priests, and kings” within their households, and to cater to the soul, mind, and body of their servants and apprentices:

Masters themselves reap great benefit by a faithful discharge of this duty ... by bringing their servants to do more faithful service to them. For there is no such means to stir up servants to do all good duty, as the fear of God planted in their hearts. That servant that shall find true grace either first wrought, or further increased in him by his master’s means, will think himself so beholding to such a master, as he has never been able to make any sufficient recompense, and therefore will endeavor to do what good service he can in way of thankfulness: he will not only be faithful and diligent in his business, but he will call upon God to prosper his services for his master’s good.... Servants well instructed in piety are likeliest to prove most profitable not only to the family, but also to the Church and the Commonwealth where they live.<sup>47</sup>

Servants so trained will also be able to find their own “true calling” or “vocation,” Gouge continued. “God by his providence so ordereth men’s affairs, that masters who from time to time train up and send forth many [ap]prentices well exercised and skillful in their trade, do hold on and yea increase their own dealing and gain which they get thereby; and yet withal their apprentices also come well forward.... This is an especial means to make everyone the more diligent and faithful. For when everyone hath his peculiar work, they know, that they in particular have to give an account thereof” to themselves, to their fellow servants, to their master and family, and ultimately to God himself who has called them to this vocation.<sup>48</sup>

**William Perkins** (1558-1602). This concern for the “Christian vocation” was a special focus of another Anglo-Puritan, William Perkins, Fellow of Christ College, Cambridge, and rector of St. Andrew’s Church in Cambridge. Perkins wrote a famous *Treatise of the Vocations*, published posthumously in 1605, as well as books on other themes that Weber would later highlight – *Damnation or Salvation; How to Live Well; A*

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<sup>46</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises* (London: John Haviland, c. 1622) (STC 12119), 17, 27.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 8, 21, using modern printing, William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, ed. Greg Fox (Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, 2006), p. 484.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 8. 37-37, pp. 495-496.

*Christian and Plain Treatise of the Manner and Order of Predestination; and Economy, or Household-Government: A Short Survey of the Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Family, According to the Scriptures.*

Perkins' description of the well-ordered household was very much like Cleaver's and Bullinger's. "[M]arriage was made and appointed by God himself to be the foundation and seminary of all sorts and kinds of life in the commonwealth and the church," Perkins declared. "[T]hose families wherein the service of God is performed are, as it were, little churches; yea, even a kind of paradise on earth."<sup>49</sup> In a well ordered Christian household, worship of God must come first and undergird all family relationships, duties, and activities: "Common reason and equity showeth it to be a necessary duty: for the happy and prosperous estate of the family, which consisteth in the mutual love and agreement of the man and wife, in the dutiful obedience of children to their parents, and in the faithful service of servants to their Masters, wholly dependeth upon the grace and blessings of God: and this blessing is annexed to his worship."<sup>50</sup> Like Cleaver, Perkins emphasized the parent's and master's responsibilities to children and servants were not only to love, nurture, feed, and clothe them, and protect them against hardship. They were also to "observe both the inclination and the natural gifts of body and mind, that are in the child, and accordingly to bestow it in some honest calling and course of life."<sup>51</sup>

In his 1605 *Treatise of the Vocations*, Perkins homed in on the need for an "honest calling" for all members of the community. "Every person of every degree, state, sex, or condition, without exception, must have some personal and particular calling to walk in," Perkins wrote. And he or she must discharge that calling with diligence and zeal, and to the glory and honor of God and neighbor, church and state, family and self. "Sloth and negligence in the duties of our callings, are a *disorder* against that good order which God set in the societies of mankind, in both church and commonwealth. And indeed, idleness and sloth are the causes of many damnable sins. The idle body, or the idle brain, is the workshop of the devil."<sup>52</sup> Each person must "shake off that spiritual drowsiness" and be constantly ready to answer the question "*What have I done? or How does it stand between God and me?*"<sup>53</sup>

Piling up biblical and classical verses that reflected this vocational ideal, Perkins took sharp aim at those who, in his view, betrayed it. The first were idle beggars and drunks, itinerant vagabonds and mendicants, and others who wrongly exploited the charity of others. These are the classic "undeserving poor," Perkins wrote. They should be put to hard work to restore the charitable and diaconal coffers they emptied so these

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<sup>49</sup> William Perkins, *Economy, or Household-Government: A Short Survey of the Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Family, According to the Scriptures*, in *The Workes of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins* (London: J. Haviland, 1631), 3:418–419.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:669

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:695.

<sup>52</sup> William Perkins, *A Treatise of the Vocations*, in *Workes*, 1:750-779, using modernized edition of William Gross (2015) (digitalpuritan.net), pp. 9, 13, 17-18.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

alms may properly serve the “deserving poor” – widows, orphans, the injured and disabled. The second were the “idle rich,” who had inherited or earned “great livings and revenues, [and now] spend their days in eating and drinking, in sports and pastimes, not employing themselves in service for church or commonwealth.” From those who have been given much, much is expected, Perkins argued, citing Scripture. And those with wealth or time to spare are obliged to “set it in motion” to provide opportunities for others and to enhance the common good. The third and most egregious betrayers of vocational ideals, are “monks and friars” and other “popish votaries” who “live apart from the societies of men in fasting and prayer.” “This monkish kind of living is damnable,” Perkins wrote, for it is sloth and idleness masquerading as a spiritual vocation. In fact, “all monks a[re] thieves and robbers” living on the tithes of others, rather than as “good and profitable member[s] of some society and body.”<sup>54</sup>

“Every man must judge that the particular calling in which God has placed him, is the best of all callings for him. I do not say simply *best*, but best *for him*.” At minimum this requires each Christian to “join the practice of his personal calling, with the practice of the general calling of Christianity.... [I]n his personal calling, he must show himself to be a Christian.”<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, a person has to pick a vocation that best suits his inclinations and gifts. Here, Christian parents and masters must play a key role, said Perkins. They must be attentive to their child’s inclinations: “some are affected with music more than others; some with merchandise; some with a more liberal kind of learning.” Their training must follow these inclinations. The parents must also discern the “natural gifts” of their children. “Those children who excel in the gifts of the body are to be brought up in callings performed by the labor of the body, as in mechanical arts. And those who excel in the gifts of the mind, are to be applied to those sciences that are performed by wit and learning.”<sup>56</sup> A parent’s failure to encourage and prepare the child for his or her proper vocation “is a great and common sin,” Perkins argued:

For the care of most is that their children may *live* — not regarding at all whether they live *well*, and do service to God in a fit calling or not. And the truth is, parents cannot do greater wrong to their children, and to the society of men, than to apply them to unfit callings — as when a child is fit for learning, to apply him to a trade, or other bodily service; or contrariwise, to apply him to learning when he is fittest for a trade. For this is like a man applying his toes to feeling, and not his fingers; and to go about on his hands and not his feet; and to set the members of the body out of their proper places.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 13, 16-17.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 17-19.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

Perkins used this metaphor of the body and its members to argue further that when a person has properly prepared and pursued a vocation most suitable to his talents, that person must “keep himself within the compass, limits, or precincts of it,” following the rules of his vocation. Much like a body needs each member to do its own function, or an army needs each soldier to follow his orders, so a properly running society and economy need workers in their places. If a man stays within his calling, he will be blessed, and all society with him. If he strays “outside the compass of his calling, he is out of the way, and by this means he bereaves himself of the protection of the Almighty; and he lies open and naked to all the punishments and plagues of God.”<sup>58</sup>

### Summary and Conclusions

Jon Gunnemann was quite right to stress “the organic ties forged by Protestants between *oikos* and *oikonomiká*, between the household and the market, between the private ethics of the family and the public habits of the economic sphere.” The Protestant household manuals that we have sampled mandated a form of rationalization and routinization of the home that would prove critical for the early modern economy. The Protestant home was to be a little church and state that provided much of the nurture, education, social welfare, and moral discipline, historically furnished by the medieval Catholic Church and later provided by the modern welfare state. The Protestant home was also to be a little business, with the family farm, shop, estate or service giving servants and laborers the space and time to learn their craft and earn their keep, ideally under the benign Christian rule of the master. And the Protestant home was to be a little school, where children and apprentices were first taught and disciplined to pursue that vocation that best suited their inclinations and gifts, and learned to excel in that vocation as a form of loving service to God, neighbor, and self.

Like Max Weber’s famous thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the real impact of these household manuals is difficult to quantify with precision. Numerous scholars have challenged Weber’s claim that Protestant ideals and anxieties played a significant role in the emergence of modern economies.<sup>59</sup> If theology affected this transformation at all, they say, its effects were secondary to other innovations in technology, law, and politics. Similarly, sociologists after Weber have shown that the early modern household was one of many new institutions that cultivated the norms and habits of market morality, not least the new public schools that emerged out of the Renaissance and Reformation. And, it is doubtful that every Protestant

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Andreski Stanislov, *Max Weber’s Insights and Errors* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); Barbalet, J.M., *Weber, Passion and Profits: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism in Context* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jacques Delacroix and Francois Nielsen, “The Beloved Myth: Protestantism and the Rise of Industrial Capitalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe,” *Social Forces*, Vol. 80 Issue 2 (2001), 509-553; Sascha O. Becker and Ludger Woessmann, “Was Weber Wrong? A Human Capital Theory of Protestant Economic History” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 124, Issue 2 (2009), 531-596.

household lived up to the ideals put forth in these manuals. The sheer prevalence of the manuals may, for example, indicate how often Protestants fell short of these norms and thus required constant instruction from authors like Bullinger, Cleaver, Perkins, and Baxter. More research is needed to determine how widely and fully the teachings of these manuals were adopted in practice.

Despite these caveats, household manuals like the ones sampled above clearly illustrate the type of rationalizing impulse that Weber attributed to early Modern Protestantism, and they represent one of the means by which this impulse took institutional form. Protestants' elevation of ordinary jobs to divine "callings" transformed the social and religious status of important economic roles and relationships; importantly, this transformation required a thoroughgoing reinterpretation of how ordinary people could fulfill these roles and relationships in practice. Household manuals served this interpretive function. Written for a lay audience, they defined the metes and bounds of household economies. They provided a detailed, scalable model of organizational hierarchy. They furnished a work ethic and a corresponding moral argument for the wellbeing of the individual, the family, and the broader community: industry, discipline, frugality, and mutual care were sacred duties, while idleness and profligacy were unholy vices. Household manuals thus sought to structure domestic life and its constituent economies to the finest detail. To the extent that people implemented these instructions, households contributed more or less to the tide of economic transformation that washed over Protestant lands in the early Modern period. Protestant households alone do not explain the emergence of modern capitalism. But they are an important part of that story.

Are there lessons in this story for contemporary scholars and readers? How should we understand the roles in and of families in our own contexts, where we find vast disparities of wealth and income, new methods of mass production, growing levels of internet connectivity, dizzyingly dynamic global financial systems, unprecedented divorce rates, rising numbers of out-of-wedlock births, same-sex marriage, and much more?

We may start simply by observing the new depths of irony in Weber's observations about the "iron cage" of modern economic systems. Weber pointed out the paradox in Protestants' remaking of the economic order: new forms of economic insecurity replaced Protestants' spiritual insecurities, making a once-voluntary Protestant work ethic all-but-compulsory to survive in the new economic order. Once-meaningful work now took on the character of bald necessity or mere sport. An important corollary is the havoc that economic systems have waged on the institution that early Protestants viewed as prior to all others – the family household. We do not lament that the patriarchal authority prescribed in these manuals has been replaced with relatively benign and egalitarian gender norms, or dismiss the moral importance of other recent changes to the laws of marriage, divorce, and child-rearing. A simplistic return to the norms espoused in these manuals will not solve many challenges facing modern families, which now include a broader array of relationships and legal arrangements than our forbears could have imagined.

We do lament, however, that modern economies and cultural norms often impair the formation of strong and well-ordered households, as such. For all but the most affluent of families, the conscious formation of the household as a place of nurturance and care, of religious and secular education, of training in the virtues, practical wisdom and trades, and more, has become an unaffordable luxury. The household, for many, has become a mere way station between long shifts; a place where children receive more commercially mediated “screen time” than quality time with their parents and elders; where streams of short-term lovers stand decrepitly in the place of steady love from a lifelong spouse; where intergenerational ties are weak or non-existent; and where the relationships that matter most in life are afforded the least veneration, and the fewest public and private resources. Even in affluent homes, where resources are not scarce, parenting and household management are relegated to an army of professional staff while the nominal heads-of-house work long hours away from home.

Weber’s *Protestant Ethic* was, in part, a refutation of Marx’s claim that material institutions and interests, alone, are decisive factors in economic history. It was also a subtle and profound critique of the modern economic order and its ethos. If today we live amidst a complex of interlocking “iron cages” that demand vocational mania and foster familial atrophy, Weber reminds his readers that there was a time, at least, when ideas and ideal interests – theological ones, no less! – also mattered. “No one knows who will live in this cage in the future,” he pondered, “or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance.”<sup>60</sup> Is it conceivable that our households can be reincarnated as incubators of a new social transformation? Might modern households one day be reimagined as a basic and humane institution that reflects and instills our best values? Will communities, large and small, begin to invest more resources and implement better laws to support strong and stable families – especially on the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic ladder? We hope so. And, if this hope is naïve, the story of Protestant household manuals should at least remind us that we are not the first to try. It should also encourage researchers to investigate more fully the ties between religious worldviews and economic orders today. For the family is one significant place to look for the ways in which religion and economy come together and shape one another. *Oikos* and *oikonomiká* still matter for one another, and religion runs through them both.

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<sup>60</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, repr. ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003 [1958]), 182.