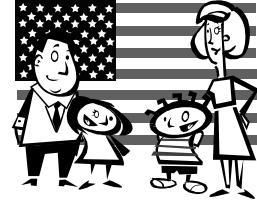


FAMILY

In the same vein as an earlier letter, entitled “Culture”, the traditional family is fast approaching the endangered species.



Many citizens would agree that the family is a vital component or building-block of our society. By some measure, the health of the family may well be an indicator of the health of the community, state and nation. If many families are unhealthy or divided, so too is the large populous for which the families comprise.

Families, whether organized by natural relations or not, provide a sense of foundation, belonging, and bonding or kinship. Ideally, the family should be a support group for each member through love, nurturing, and training; but I realize that such benefits or opportunities may be limited if non-existent in unhealthy or divided families. As much as the family can be a pillar of support, an unhealthy family relationship can be a ruthless source of problems. But I do not believe that divorce is the failsafe solution for the unhealthy family.

Regarding marriage and the traditional family, William Bennett, former Secretary of Education, has argued

...a married couple living with their children is vital to the success of civilization and that today's trends towards people living together in unprecedented numbers and having a record number of children out of wedlock is dangerous. Children suffer without the benefit of two committed parents, and society itself is threatened by turning its back on what he believes is a precious and hard-won historical achievement that safeguards the interests of men, women and children better than any other yet devised.

Social influences of our culture are pressing for a redefinition or broadening of the definition of the family through the mainstream media, television and movie productions, and political forums. A concern could be that as the acceptance and recognition of the family continues to expand or broaden, the influence and role of the family will continue to recede.

A final comment is directed at the television and movie-making industry in particular. Considering the influence of these media on the young populous, due to their maturity and viewing hours, children or young people have little opportunity to examine a healthy family in realistic circumstances. I am not suggesting that children must be educated through entertainment but, in fact, they are being influenced to the degree of emulating what they see.

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