CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PRO-FAMILY ARGUMENT IN NON-RELIGIOUS TERMS

Introduction

In my experience, pro-"gay" atheists are, ironically, some of the most aggressive and militant moralists in our society.   In literally hundreds of public and private debates, I've found that they tend to be absolutely convinced of their moral superiority in defense of homosexuality and seemingly unpersuadable by pro-family arguments. Then one day as I was speaking to a group of mostly high-school students in Santa Rosa, California, I was suddenly inspired to try something new. I analogized the pro-family position to environmentalism to show that both philosophies rest on "natural law" presuppositions, and I defined the natural family as the human eco-system. Before my eyes I saw purple-haired and tattoo-covered teens literally scratching their heads, visibly pondering the ideas I had introduced to them for the very first time. It was a major breakthrough. A couple of years later at a debate on same-sex marriage at U. C. Berkeley, I used the same arguments, somewhat more refined, and saw the same effect on these "elite" Leftists.

What I learned from these experiences is that pro-"gay" atheists automatically reject any line of reasoning that is rooted in Christianity or the Bible, no matter how thoughtfully you present it. However, if you can explain pro-family reasoning in non-religious terms, they will consider it. This chapter, therefore, is written to show how to restate pro-family arguments in non-religious terms and how this approach benefits the pro-family movement in multiple ways.

For example, to the extent that pro-family conclusions are assumed to be exclusively religious, they can be (and are routinely) rejected as a basis for public policy. Like it or not the U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment to require government neutrality toward religions – prohibiting favoritism toward the one that is actually true and sensible.

However, differentiated from its religious parallel, the pro-family philosophy articulated in this chapter cannot be excluded on legal grounds. This means that teachers, school officials and all other government agents can openly and vigorously promote the pro-family viewpoint stated here-

in – and base public policy upon it -- without violating the law or being silenced by liberal opponents.

It is neither necessary nor desirable to silence anti-family voices, so long as the pro-family ones are allowed to compete equally in the marketplace of ideas. We believe that pro-family ideas, reasonably and clearly expressed, will win the day.

What follows is a reasoned argument for the pro-family position in entirely nonreligious terms to help you explain the logic of pro-family thinking to non-believers.

Religious or Secular?

Too often the "conservative" or pro-family position on issues such as homosexuality and abortion is assumed to be entirely religious in nature, while the "liberal" or pro-choice position is assumed to be non-religious. This misunderstanding leads some to believe that the pro-family viewpoint cannot be advocated by school teachers and other public officials without violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment (the so-called "separation of church and state"). This is a false conclusion.

While it is true that most world religions are doctrinally pro-family, and that many of the most vocal advocates of the pro-family position are strongly religious people, the belief in the natural family, marriage and family values is not inherently religious. Indeed, the "father" of pro-family argumentation is the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, an entirely secular figure in world history.

The essence of the pro-family perspective is a belief in empirical observation and logical deduction. Aristotle gave the name "teleology" to this approach to understanding the world. Teleology assumes that all things have a purpose and that the purpose of each thing can be discerned from its design and function.

For example, we can determine that the purpose of the eye is to see, since it is obviously designed to do so and that is how it functions.

Another name for Aristotle's philosophy is natural law, although his definition of this term is different from that of some later philosophers. One group of natural law thinkers of whom Aristotle would likely have approved is America's founding fathers. Their Declaration of Independence from British rule claims its authority from "inalienable rights" deduced from "self-evident truths" emanating from "Nature and Nature's God."

Another important natural law document is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations 1948. Its reaffirmation of "the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" is the legal and moral inspiration for nearly every human rights treaty provision in international law.

The common denominator in these examples of natural law thinking is an adherence to the belief that observations about what is can guide us as to what ought to be.

In like manner, activists in today's pro-family movement believe that the optimal approach to dealing with social problems, particularly those associated with sexual behavior, can be deduced from observations of and respect for the self-evident nature of things. Simply, we choose to assume that following the design of things will produce good results while ignoring the design will produce

bad results.

Surprisingly, the other American interest group most closely associated with this way of thinking is the environmentalist movement. Environmentalist concepts such as bio-diversity, inter-dependence of species, and the science of eco-systems are essentially expressions of Aristotelian natural law philosophy. Environmentalists draw conclusions about what is best for wildlife and natural systems based upon empirical observations about existing designs.

This common paradigm shared by environmentalists and pro-family advocates is the key to explaining the pro-family perspective to students.

Most young people today, especially public school students, are thoroughly familiar with environmentalist theories. It is a simple matter to open a discussion about the observable design of nature in eco-systems and then expand the scope of the discussion to consider the place of humanity in that design.

The core concept to introduce is that we human beings have our own "eco-system," the natural family – one man and one woman and their children by birth or adoption, or the surviving remnant thereof.

Importantly, the human eco-system is no less fragile than that of the rain forest or tide pool. If you cut down half the trees in the rain forest, bad things will happen. Wildlife will suffer and the entire eco-system will be adversely affected. Similarly, breaking apart the natural family, as when a father or mother abandons spouse and children, has predictable negative effects on the survivors and on the surrounding "ecology" (the society they live in).

Pouring toxins into a tide pool can seriously upset its ecological balance. Poisoning the family environment through the influence of such things as drug use or pornography produces similarly destructive results.

Central to this lesson is the process of logical deduction that leads from observation about the design of our human eco-system to conclusions about how we should act and what policies are best for ourselves and society (i.e. deciding *what ought to be* based on *what is*).

The most important observations in this process are simple enough for virtually anyone to interpret, beginning with the self-evident reality that all humans are either male or female and designed to be complementary to the opposite sex. (The only exceptions to this rule are hermaph-rodites, whose dual genitalia results from genetic aberrations or problems during gestation, rather than from the standard genetic design).

Starting from this observation, pro-family people conclude that human beings are heterosex-ual by nature, and that same-gender sexual conduct is dysfunctional. In other words, to quote Dr. C.D. King, they believe that normality is "that which functions according to its design."

In support of this conclusion they point out that sexual desire in humans is primarily a function of their heterosexual reproductive systems. If homosexuality were normal in the sense that heterosexuality is normal, "gays" and lesbians would display a distinctly homosexual physiology. Instead, their sexuality originates like everyone else's in heterosexually procreative chemical and hormonal processes, but in their case it is inappropriately oriented toward a reproductively incom-patible partner.

This is not to suggest that all sex must produce babies to be socially acceptable, but that sexuality has a self-evident norm against which all "deviance" is measured.

If conformity to the observable purpose of a design produces the best results, it stands to

reason that greater deviance from the sexual norm causes greater problems for people and society.

The concept of deviance is readily understood in the context of manufacturing. Any given product has been manufactured according to a design, yet no individual product item perfectly exemplifies the design. All items are flawed to some degree. Those only slightly flawed are acceptable for service, while at some point the degree of deviance from the design makes an item unacceptable.

Applying similar logic, pro-family people make decisions about the acceptability of various types of sexual behavior. For example, they conclude that sexual conduct that departs only slightly from the procreative purpose of sexuality, such as the use of contraception by married persons who wish to delay pregnancy or limit family size, is acceptable.

Opinions differ widely among pro-family people as to the point at which deviance from the sexual norm becomes unacceptable, and religious beliefs factor heavily in the public debate on this question. For example, devout Catholics reject all artificial methods of birth control, while Protestants generally allow birth control of various types prior to the point of actual conception. (Some birth control methods such as "the pill" are not true "preventive" contraceptives but in some percentage of cases act as post-conception abortifacients.)

On the other hand, genuinely pro-family people universally reject abortion, because it artificially ends the life of an unborn human being, who, left unmolested, would continue to mature through all the stages of human life: birth, infancy, childhood, etc. Terminating the development of a healthy fetus deviates so radically from the sexual norm that no rational person could conclude that an abortion respects the design of life.

The nemesis of both environmental and pro-family advocates is the human tendency toward contrivance or artificiality: the attempt to redesign the world without regard for the natural order. Environmentalists bemoan mankind's failure to preserve wildlife habitats in the face of continually expanding human settlement. Pro-family advocates criticize the increasing dehumanization of reproductive practices, such as the popularization of artificial insemination and the creation of embryos for scientific research. The interests of both environmentalists and pro-family advocates merge in their general opposition to genetic manipulation of living things.

In summary, the way to make the pro-family viewpoint understandable to students who do not have a religious background is to first explain natural law principles as they were taught by Aristotle and to then analogize pro-family reasoning to the logic of environmentalism.

The fact that pro-family conclusions about sexual behavior are virtually identical to those of many religions does not make them religious. This is an important fact, since by law government (and its agents such as teachers) may not base public policies on religion; however, nothing in the Constitution prohibits government from basing policy on nonreligious pro-family logic.

The close parallels between religious and nonreligious pro-family arguments remain relatively consistent as we look beyond personal conduct to society as a whole.

We will now reexamine some of the material presented in the prior chapter in the light of this approach, restating the Biblical perspective of family in non-religious terms, and augmenting it with additional helpful information.

The Natural Family, Marriage and Family Values

The natural family is nearly as obvious an example of design as that of the heterosexual physiology of the human body. As stated above, the natural family is one man and one woman and their children, by birth or adoption, or the surviving remnant thereof. The following is an explanation of the natural family and its importance.

WHAT IS THE NATURAL FAMILY?

It all starts with…

The Core Relationship
one man + one woman

This relationship is "natural" because it is based on the *natural design* of human beings.

Men and women are physically different.

This difference is inborn and clearly seen in their genetic makeup and physiology.

The physical difference is obviously connected to reproducing the species.

In addition to the external sexual difference, a woman's internal organs and systems are specially designed for pregnancy, birth and nursing.

While not directly related to reproduction, the physical strength and size of the man allow him to provide the needed life support and protection for the members of his family while the woman undergoes pregnancy and birth, and later while she nurses and physically cares for babies and small children.

Men and women are psychologically different

The psychological differences between men and women are (and always have been) generally acknowledged by people of all cultures.

These differences tend to be *complementary*, that is, they allow a man and a woman to contribute, equally but differently, to the accomplishment of family tasks such as child training.

Parent/Child: The Natural Extension of the Core Relationship

**one man + one woman+
their children by birth or adoption**

This grouping is "natural" because:

Children are the natural result of the social/sexual joining of a man and a woman (marriage).

The ability to produce and care for children is part of the physical/psychological design of the man and the woman.

Human babies are born very helpless compared to other species: it takes a minimum of three years for the human child to become mature enough to be at all independent of their parents. Thus human parents have a long time to train and influence their children.

Many social and survival skills must be learned by a dependent child if he/she is to function as a member of a human community. The child is taught by parents, but even more importantly, learns by watching *two very different* parents interact in complex ways.

What Happens When the Natural Family Loses Its Place in a Society

In this section, we return to the list of behaviors and character qualities promoted in the natural family, this time with a view to the social consequences of *not* promoting them.

> Task sharing
> Reliance on each other
> Unselfishness
> Resource sharing
> Responsibility
> Commitment
> Self-control
> Nurturing

Historically, a few human societies have lost their sense of the importance of the natural family. These societies have suffered grave consequences in the form of social problems such as crime, addictive behaviors, economic woes, and increasing disorganization. In some modern societies where the natural family has been de-valued, we are now seeing rapidly decreasing population, accompanied by all of the problems above, with the addition of government ineffectiveness and political chaos and strife.

In the United States, where 75% of all children still live with both parents, the natural family enjoys continued favor. Yet there are many attacks on the idea of natural family, and the statistics which show that it is in peril have not changed in many years: the high rates of divorce, of illegitimate

births, of single-parent households, and of never-married couples living with their respective children, have all remained high or increased over the last 3 or 4 decades.

If, then, the natural family does lose its important value to Americans (as many have urged that it should), what changes can we expect for our society's future?

Task sharing

Task sharing is called "division of labor" in a large group. Complex economies are built on this function, which can easily be seen in any small or large business, government bureau, educational institution, etc. It is a function which any child can observe in a mother and father, who, simply by their physical differences, tend to break the work into parts best suited to their bodies and life cycles. The ability to break down work and parcel it out is passed on to children in the form of assigned chores, and acted out by them in playing house. Without early and constant exposure to task sharing, children do not function well in a society that has a complex division of labor. In practically every walk of life, people must have the skill of dividing work among themselves fairly and efficiently, or large tasks cannot get done. In a society where task sharing skills are on the decline, we would expect to find a low level of cooperation and initiative among employees, fewer and less effective community organizations and more of a "survivalist" mentality, in which people separate themselves from the group rather than pooling their skills.

Mutual reliance

The best school of mutual reliance is the ability to watch people of opposite genders and different physical abilities count on each other and combine their efforts to get routine work done or meet special needs, or simply to "be there" for each other. From this early school, a child learns to be prepared to expect reliable help from others and to be available to give help on both a regular and a temporary basis. Without the practice of mutual reliance, schedules cannot be kept, personal or group crises are not easily dealt with, and as with task sharing, large complex tasks and organization are out of the question. People go without the sense of personal security that comes from being able to place their confidence in others. In such a society, we would expect a low level of trust and a high level of personal stress arising from not being able to count on others for necessary help.

Unselfishness

The natural family provides the very best opportunity to learn to put aside your own desires in favor of someone else's needs, or in deference to a valued relationship. When a man turns off the game on TV to listen to his wife's story of the day's events, he models unselfishness to his children, just as he also requires it of them when he asks them to share their toys with friends or siblings. In this way, children learn that they should not expect to always be "Number One," and that many things in life are better and more enjoyable when you put someone else first. In a society where many people grow up without this important understanding, we would find widespread rudeness, much theft, unnecessary competition and conflict, poor relationship skills, and high levels of domestic

violence, especially child abuse and neglect. Personal unhappiness would increase as the ability to unselfishly care about others decreased.

Resource sharing

The model of marriage as a *shared life* entered into by two distinctly different individuals with different needs is the first and most important one that prepares a child to share resources (things that are also needed by others). Life in a democracy requires the sharing of many resources from material things like water to non-material things like the power to choose representatives and policies in our government. In any society, the absence of the ingrained habit of sharing necessary things would cause many conflicts over needed resources, and the weaker claimants would usually lose; hoarding, monopolizing and power-grabbing would be the norm. Power would tend to fall into the hands of strong but unscrupulous people who would hang on to it at the expense of others.

Responsibility

Once again, the notion of responsibility is both observed and practiced by the child living in a natural family. Parents who demonstrate responsibility towards each other and their children give a child a sense that responsibility is a natural and essential part of daily life. This enables the child to go on to accept responsibilities in school, or on committees or sports teams. A society with large numbers of people who have not become used to taking responsibility would obviously be a difficult place to live in. People would not be able to delegate tasks, find reliable people to care for their children, trust the professionals who provide necessary, specialized services like medical care, or find dependable employees. There would be increased neglect of children, non-payment of debts, reckless behavior, and the breakdown of virtually every institution which depends on the responsible behavior of the people who run it.

Commitment

Commitment is the "glue" of a successful long-term relationship, and is perfectly illustrated by the relationship between husband and wife. In a stable family, children have the opportunity to see the evolution of this committed relationship over the duration of their parents' lives. They can see the level of commitment remaining fairly constant through a number of life stages and many life challenges. It is easy to see what happens to a child's sense of security when the commitment between parents is shattered by divorce: the child is forced to question whether the parents' commitment to him/her is permanent. Furthermore, the model of commitment (which, by definition, must be practiced over a long period of time), is cut off, and the child often observes, in its place, scenes of distrust, conflict and animosity. In a society with low levels of commitment, we would naturally see high levels of divorce and infidelity, difficulty in making and maintaining friendships, and widespread anxiety and loneliness. We would expect the degraded levels of mental and physical health that accompany lack of supportive relationships and unconditional affection. Most people would choose sequential or multiple non-committed relationships rather than marriage, and

children born from these relationships would fail to acquire the other social skills taught in a stable natural family.

Self-control

Physical self-control is a mandate in a successful marriage relationship, simply because of the usually unequal size and strength of the husband and wife. Emotional self-control is a skill which is continually learned by husbands and wives, but one which rewards their efforts with peace and safety in their home. It is a sad fact that parents who have poor self-control virtually ensure that their children will lack it as well. Lack of self-control in other social contexts encourages a war-zone mentality where people expect fights and intimidation and develop self-protection skills rather than cooperative ones. A society in which self-control is absent is one which cannot even support the institution of family, let alone the other institutions which are built on family-taught skills and attitudes. Such a society would soon crumble, torn apart by violence, crime and personal and group conflict.

Nurture

The lack of opportunity to learn nurture from a caring mother and father (who also nurture each other) seriously handicaps the child when she/he grows up to be a parent. Inadequate nurture is also similar to abuse in its effect on a person's psychology: depression, a feeling of un-fulfillment, lack of self-esteem, and relationship problems are some of the consequences. The society without nurturers would be unable to care for those who could not care for themselves. Relationship ties would be weak and the anxiety level would undoubtedly be high. Neighborhoods would lack cohesion and there would be many indigent people with unmet needs. The institution of family would be weakened over many generations, and would fail to perform its necessary functions in socializing children and stabilizing adults.

Marriage

From the pro-family perspective, marriage is not a mere legal contract invented by government as a means to create and regulate family units. Instead, marriage is recognized as a naturally emerging social institution designed to protect the natural family from forces (such as the lure of promiscuity) that would otherwise threaten it. Stated simply, marriage serves to help men and women resist the inclination to abandon each other and/or their children during times of trial or temptation. Marriage is thus seen as a logical extension and component of the natural family structure.

As American society has forgotten the purpose of marriage, it has adopted policies such as "no fault" divorce that have largely stripped marriage of its cohesive power. Nevertheless, marriage continues to serve its purpose for those who understand and respect it.

Some couples share the essence of marriage (enduring commitment) without social or

religious formalization (legal marriage). In the view of some pro-family thinkers, these couples have a place within the definition of a family-friendly society. But the statistics on cohabiting couples in general are gloomy – compared to married couples, cohabiting partners exhibit more unfaithfulness, more domestic violence, lower income, higher depression rates, and a higher rate of divorce when they do marry: children in cohabiting-couple households are more prone to emotional and behavioral problems, less involved in school activities, more at risk for physical and sexual abuse, and financially worse off than children in married two-parent households (See Section Four).

Even in the Bible, where no particular ceremony or certificate is prescribed, men and women who live together are recognized by each other and the community as married in every sense. Even in the creation scene in Genesis, Adam's first reference to Eve is as "wife."

Both the Biblical and the secular pro-family picture of marriage do, however, conflict with the notion of "gay" marriage, since such a union denies the premise of marriage. "Homosexual family" is an entirely artificial concept and a contradiction of terms. Homosexuality is itself a form of promiscuity; marriage, by contrast, exists to protect natural families from disintegration through promiscuous behavior.

Family Values

Family values is a broad term but is used here to describe those values which affirm the natural family and which are imparted by it: the heterosexual norm, faithful marriage, devotion to children, respect for the design of life. These are defined throughout this document. What remains is to contrast family values with their antithesis: the acceptance of promiscuity.

In the non-religious pro-family lexicon, promiscuity is the choice of sexual "freedom" over commitment to family, and includes every form of sexual deviance. Fornication (sexual relations among uncommitted sexual partners), adultery (sexual relations in violation of a committed union) and other types of sexual conduct, including but not limited to homosexuality, incest and pedophilia are all forms of promiscuity.

Promiscuity in any of its forms carries serious risk of harm to oneself and others, whereas in a faithful marriage the partners enjoy enhanced health and satisfaction, and greater security and happiness for themselves and their children. Once again, following the design produces good results, while violating the design produces bad results.

The cumulative effects of rampant promiscuity in a society include epidemic levels of sexually transmitted diseases, troubled serial relationships among adults, increased criminality, substance abuse and mental health problems among the youth, an ever-expanding yet ultimately ineffectual social welfare system, and many other problems.

Truly family-centered communities do not suffer these types of problems to the same degree. Family values are an antidote to the poison of promiscuity.

Conclusion

The preceding argument can be summarized as a set of five assertions.

1) Because the pro-family position is not inherently religious in nature, it may be taught in the classroom and adopted as a guiding philosophy by public officials without violating the constitution.

2) The heart of pro-family thinking is empirical observation and logical deduction in the tradition of Aristotle and of America's Founding Fathers.

3) The key to explaining pro-family logic to young people is to analogize pro-family reasoning to that of environmentalism and to define the natural family as the most important element in the human eco-system.

4) The self-evident heterosexual norm, together with the needs of the natural family which develops from the core of a heterosexual relationship, clarifies both the purpose of marriage and the danger of promiscuity.

5) The assumption that human social success or failure hinges on rational conformity to the design of life is vindicated by an honest appraisal of modern American culture.

Each of these assertions offers a departure point for discussion and extensive further study, yet the concepts articulated are simple and reasonable. It remains for the pro-family advocate to use these concepts and this material as tools to bring balance to the cultural debate.