

**“THE NATURAL FAMILY IN AN
UNNATURAL WORLD”**

**A GENERAL LECTURE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON FAMILY AND SOCIETY**

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That the family system of Europe is in crisis seems clear. Historically low birth rates, the rapid spread of cohabitation, the legal dismantling of the institution of marriage, and climbing divorce are signs of a fundamental turning point in the social development of the West.

Certain voices within the European Union actually welcome these changes, as signs of liberation. They favor the Swedish model of social democracy, where the old socialist dream of dismantling the family finally comes true. They extol the leveling of the sexes, and the disappearance of potent labels such as “husband” and “wife,” “mother” and “father.” They celebrate the disappearance of marriage as a meaningful cultural and legal structure with claims of its own on society and individuals. They relish the elimination of autonomous homes, once rich in function and loyalties, to be

replaced by governmental structures and the sole bond of the individual to the state. They seek the essential collectivization of children.

As economic determinists of the closeted neo-Marxist sort, these same voices also claim to be in the vanguard of history. They believe that the material forces of industrial and/or post-industrial society require this evolution of a new form of living: a post-family model which reconciles the atomistic individual with the total state. In pursuing this ideology, they have willingly sacrificed the natural order, building an unnatural world in its place.

Those of us who defend the authentic family must now face a daunting truth. To create a Culture of the Family for the 21st Christian Century, it will not be enough simply to defend the old ways. The language of the 19th and 20th centuries – which talked of tradition and lauded inherited ways – will no longer work. The neo-socialist post-family vision easily triumphs over such old-fashioned language.

Instead, I believe that we need a new vocabulary that looks forward rather than backwards, that excites the young with positive ideals rather than lectures to them about the “good old days,” and that trumps the historical determinism of the socialists with an appeal to the truths found in nature and nature’s God.

I believe that this can be done by focusing on the phrase, “the natural family.” In May 1998, a Working Group of the World Congress of Families met in a Second Century B.C. room in the ancient city of Rome, to craft a definition of this term; namely:

The natural family is the fundamental social unit, inscribed in human nature, and centered around the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage for the purposes of satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love, welcoming and ensuring the full physical and emotional development of children, sharing a home that serves as the center for social, educational, economic, and spiritual life, building strong bonds among the generations to pass on a way of life that has transcendent meaning, and extending a hand of compassion to individuals and households whose circumstances fall short of these ideals.

In expanding on this phrase, I want to highlight recognition of the natural family in five ways: as part of the created order; as imprinted on our natures; as the source of bountiful joy; as the fountain of new life; and as the bulwark of liberty.

First, **PART OF THE NATURAL CREATED ORDER**

Modern debates about marriage and family frequently pit the partisans of Biblical revelation against the advocates of science and evolution. In fact, the story of Scripture and science’s evolutionary narrative actually wind up in surprising agreement over the origin and nature of the human creature.

People of biblical faith—Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike—find the origins of the family chronicled in Genesis 1 and 2. Here, God establishes marriage as an unchanging aspect of His creation, essential to the very foundation of the divine order:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth”.... Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh.¹

These passages affirm marriage as both sexual (“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”) and economic (the phrases regarding “fill the earth and subdue it” and “have dominion” over its creatures). In addition, they view marriage as monogamous, rather than polygamous. And, as theologian John Lierman has explained, these passages also underscore the incompleteness of the individual, as half a person, and the necessary unity of male and female:

A married couple does not fuse or transubstantiate. A married couple reconstitutes the single entity of adam, which subsists in male and female and is truly manifested only by male and female in concert. A married couple manifests the image of God.²

What does science teach? The founders of modern anthropology also held that marriage is an unchanging institution, universal in its basic elements and common to all humanity. As Edward Westermarck explained a century ago: “Among the lowest savages, as well as the most civilized races of men, we find the family consisting of parents and children, and the father as its protector.” Marriage bound this family system together, uniting “a regulated sexual relation” with “economic obligations.”³

Certainly there were differences in the marriage systems of distinct human cultures. However, the fundamental marriage bond did not change. As a later anthropologist, George Murdock, wrote in his great 1949 survey of human cultures: “The nuclear family is a universal human social grouping.” He added: “[a]ll known human societies have developed specialization and cooperation between the sexes roughly along this biologically determined line of cleavage.” Murdock emphasized that:

Marriage exists only when the economic and the sexual are united into one relationship, and this combination only occurs in marriage. Marriage, thus defined, is found in every known human society.⁴

In short, his work pointed to marriage as natural, necessary, and unchanging.

Contemporary evolutionary scientists agree. Writing in the journal *Science*, for example, paleo-anthropologist C. Owen Lovejoy argues that

“the unique sexual and reproductive behavior of man”—not growth of the cortex or brain—“may be the sine qua non of human origin.” The evolutionary narrative indicates that the pairing-off of male and female “hominids” into something very much like traditional marriage reaches back between three and four million years ago, to the time when our purported ancestors left the trees on the African savannah and started walking on two legs. As Lovejoy concludes:

...both advances in material culture and the Pleistocene acceleration in brain development are sequelae to an already established hominid character system, which included intensified parenting and social relationships, monogamous pair bonding, specialized sexual-reproductive behavior, and bipedality. [This model] implies that the nuclear family and human sexual behavior may have their ultimate origin long before the dawn of the Pleistocene.⁵

In short, the invention of “marriage” was the vital step in human evolution.

Other new evidence supports this conclusion. Writing in *Evolutionary Psychology*, Ronald Immerman of Case Western Reserve University reports that from the very beginning, our distinctly human ancestors showed a unique reproductive strategy in which a female exchanged sexual exclusivity for special provisioning by a male. Immerman shows that “[t]his sharing of resources from man-to-woman is a universal.”

At the same time, the ethnographic “data suggest an independent man [to] child affiliative bond which is part of Homo [sapiens] bio-cultural heritage.” This invention of fatherhood, he notes, is not found anywhere in the animal kingdom. Besides looking for reliable providers, it appears, women “were simultaneously selecting for traits which would forge a social father: a man who would form attachments—bond—with his young and who would be psychologically willing to share resources with those young.”⁶

True, it would be going too far to say that modern evolutionary theory has converged with the Book of Genesis. Important differences remain over issues such as “when” and “how” humankind arrived on earth. All the same, it would be fair to conclude that research guided by evolutionary theory does agree with the author of Genesis that from our very origin as unique creatures on earth, we humans have been defined by heterosexual monogamy involving “marriage” and “fatherhood” and by the special linkage of the reproductive and the economic, a linkage in which two become one flesh. According to the scientists, the evolution of marriage occurred only once, at the beginning when “to be human” came to mean “to be marital.” Other cultural variations surrounding marriage are simply details. Any “change” is the mark of cultural strengthening or weakening around a constant human model.

Second, the natural family is **IMPRINTED ON OUR NATURE AS HUMANS**

While the main current of Western philosophy and social science rushed toward Marxist forms of understanding and meaning in the late 19th and 20th centuries, a dissenting school of sociology offered an alternate analysis. The first of these dissenters was the French academic, Frederic Le Play, active in the 1870's and 1880's.⁷

Le Play argued that human behavior did not follow the theoretical schemes of his liberal and socialist contemporaries. Rather, he identified and sought to explain the close relation between what he called la famille soudre—or the stem family—and historical examples of a stable, creative prosperity. This stem family, he insisted, was something more than the nuclear dyad of husband and wife, although this pair bond surely lay at its core. The stem family also embraced extended kin as meaningful, and often guiding, forces in human development. He argued that this family form, "by a remarkable favor of Providence has within its very structure the beneficent qualities of the individual and those of association." It rested on ownership of the homestead and of the essential tools for economic life,

solid habits of work, adherence to inherited mores, internal self-reliance in crisis, and fecundity through the welcoming of children.

Rather than an historical curiosity, Le Play showed that the stem family could be found in all creative periods of human history: among the Old Testament Jews, the ancient Greeks, the pre-Imperial Romans, and—until recently—most of the European peoples. The stem family, he argued, combined a sense of community with opportunity for individual expression, so avoiding the stifling operation of the rigid patriarchal family as well as the egoistic atomism of the modern liberal system. The family thus served as the true "cell of society," and the source of stability, progress, and authentic liberty.

Three 20th Century American sociologists based their efforts on the legacy of Le Play: Carle Zimmerman; Pitirim Sorokin; and Robert Nisbet.

Carle Zimmerman, Professor of Sociology at Harvard University, wrote *Family and Civilization* in 1947. It traced the course of family structures throughout the globe and across the millennia. In describing the prospects for family reconstruction, Zimmerman embraced Le Play's concept of the stem family, relabelling it the domestic family.

Importantly, Zimmerman insisted that this domestic family model was not an expression of a dying or transitional past. Rather, the whole body of

his work sought to show that it was a pattern of life recurring throughout time and across the globe. Indeed, he insisted that the domestic-type family was, in practice, a viable option for any age, since it provided a true harmony with the realities of human nature. A domestic-family system develops, Zimmerman said, "among all people who combine the benefits of agriculture, industry, and settled life with the commonsense idea of defending their private life from the domination of legislators, from the invasion of bureaucrats, and from the exaggerations of the manufacturing regime." Progress and harmony would only be won, he concluded, by recognizing and reinforcing the domestic-type family as the cell of society.⁸

Zimmerman's colleague in Harvard's sociology department during the 1930's and 1940's was Pitirim Sorokin, born and educated in Russia and expelled by the Bolsheviks in 1921. Like Zimmerman, Sorokin was not content with examining certain small facets of human social behavior. Rather, he sought to synthesize grand changes over time. He described the evolution of human civilizations from what he called "ideational," "idealistic," and "integral" forms to the "sensate" phase, each shift or "transmutation of values" accompanied by great and sometimes terrible crises.

Sorokin also shared with Zimmerman a common debt to Frederic Le Play, accepting his concept of the stem family as the most stable, creative, and natural social form. In his book, *The Crisis of Our Age*, Sorokin emphasized the linkage of mounting social turmoil to the shrinkage of family size and the atrophy of family functions, most notably education. He added that the family is also:

less and less a religious agency, where...its place is taken either by nothing or by Sunday schools and similar institutions. Formerly the family supplied most of the means of subsistence for its members. At the present time this function, too, is enormously reduced....So it is also with recreational functions....Formerly the family was the principal agency for mitigating one's psycho-social isolation and loneliness. Now families are small, and their members are soon scattered....The result is that the family home turns into a mere 'overnight parking place.'

Sorokin was fully aware, though, that the resulting structure could not stand. The family's loss of meaningful tasks—the move from a "domestic family" structure toward an atomized "sensate" structure—would result in social decay, mounting crime, declining fertility, and growing state coercion merely to hold the crumbling social edifice together. The only feasible course was to replace "the withered [and sterile] root of sensate culture" by a new cultural order. As he put it:

A transformation of the forms of social relationship, by replacing the present compulsory and contractual

relationships with purer and more godly familistic relationships, is the order of the day....Not only are they the noblest of all relationships, but under the circumstances there is no way out of the present triumph of barbarian force but through the realm of familistic relationships.

The remedy would be difficult, he acknowledged, but it was the only hope for salvaging life from the darkness.⁹

The third great American sociologist in this tradition was Robert Nisbet, best known as the author of *The Quest for Community* and *The Twilight of Authority*.¹⁰ In the latter volume, published in 1975, Nisbet affirms Le Play's emphasis on the strength of the kinship principle as the key determinant of "every great age, and every great people." "We can," Nisbet says, "use the family as an almost infallible touchstone of the material and cultural prosperity of a people. When it is strong, closely linked with private property, treated as the essential context of education in society, and its sanctity recognized by law and custom, the probability is extremely high that we shall find the rest of the social order characterized by that subtle but puissant fusion of stability and individual mobility which is the hallmark of great ages."¹¹

Speaking for the whole intellectual tradition founded by Le Play, Nisbet concludes with a passage of profound importance. "It should be obvious," he says, "that family, not the individual, is the real molecule of

society, the key link of the social chain of being. It is inconceivable to me that either intellectual growth or social order or the roots of liberty can possibly be maintained among a people unless the kinship tie is strong and has both functional significance and symbolic authority."¹²

Here, Nisbet is altogether correct. The family, when functioning as the cell of society, delivers that which is good, precious, and necessary to life as human beings. Through the appropriately labelled "conjugal act," the family is the source of new biological life, children springing up within the matrix of responsible love and care, as part of a kinship community, and able to grow into stable and productive participants in community life.

Third, we need to see **THE NATURAL FAMILY AS THE SOURCE OF BOUNTIFUL JOY**

The most remarkable, and perhaps the most desired, human emotion is joy. While happiness can in certain circumstances be something of a steady state and where ecstasy is the nearly painful passion of a moment, joy delivers an intense and exultant experience that can last for hours, or days, before it settles into an inner peace.

The English author C.S. Lewis offers deep insight into the nature of joy. In *The Screwtape Letters*, he provides a fictional set of missives from

an experienced devil to his nephew, an apprentice tempter named Wormwood. In letter #11, Screwtape divides the causes of human laughter into Joy, Fun, the Joke Proper, and Flippancy. “Fun,” the senior devil notes, “is closely related to Joy—a sort of emotional froth arising from the play instinct.” He acknowledges that Fun can sometimes be used to divert humans from certain tasks which “The Enemy” [God] would like them to perform. But in general, Screwtape sighs, Fun is of “very little use to us....[I]n itself it has wholly undesirable tendencies; it promotes charity, courage, contentment, and many other evils.”

Turning to Joy, Screwtape confesses that analysts in Hell have not yet determined its nature or cause, and adds:

Something like [Joy] is expressed in much of that detestable art which the humans call Music, and something like it occurs in Heaven—a meaningless acceleration in the rhythm of celestial experience, quite opaque to us. Laughter of this kind does us no good and should always be discouraged. Besides, the phenomenon [of Joy] is of itself disgusting and a direct insult to the realism, dignity, and austerity of Hell.¹³

Understood as an “acceleration in the rhythm of celestial experience,” Joy is indeed the way in which living humans can experience the feel, the taste, and the glow of Heaven.

In this world, joy cannot be perpetual. However, it is possible for joy to return, over and over again. Thus, an essential human project becomes the creation of a culture and social structures that encourage such bountiful renewal. Such ways of living must give freely and generously. They must be plentiful and marked by abundance; they must be fruitful and multiply.

The Natural Family is the truest source of this bountiful joy, both in the marital attachment of woman and man and in the gift of marital fertility. Referring to Eden before the Fall, the 16th Century Christian reformer Martin Luther praised each conception of a new child as an act of “wonderment...wholly beyond our understanding,” a miracle bearing the “lovely music of nature.” He added: “This living together of husband and wife—that they occupy the same home, that they take care of the household, that together they produce and bring up children—is a kind of faint image and a remnant, as it were, of that blessed living together [in Eden].”¹⁴

While finding joy a difficult thing to quantify, social science has long affirmed that the bonds of family, the interconnectedness of marriage and children, serve as the surest predictors of life, health, and happiness. Perhaps this is the meaning of Leo Tolstoy’s famous phrase in the novel *Anna Karenina*, “happy families are all alike.” In his classic 1897 study *Le Suicide*, sociologist Emile Durkheim tied the “social integration” promoted

by marriage and the presence of children to low suicide rates.¹⁵ The relationship remains strong, to this day. Recent study of “the very happiest people” shows them to be “enmeshed” with others as members of strong social groups. Even among youth, “[t]he very happy people spend the least time alone and the most time socializing.” More notably, “Marriage is robustly related to happiness”¹⁶ as is the presence of children.¹⁷

The possibility of happiness and joy rests, of course, within a larger matrix of sacrifices, sorrows, foregone opportunities, and trials that also mark family life. Living together in families requires that persons confront and overcome their own selfishness. All the same, it is only through this task that the possibility of joy opens on the far side.

Fourth, the natural family is also **THE FOUNTAIN OF NEW LIFE**

Here, on this statement’s obverse side, we meet the essential family crisis. In terms of population, Europe may be dying. The same goes with the once dynamic “Asian Tigers.” America is not far behind.

In Germany and Italy, for example, more persons are buried each year than are born: populations are shrinking; and those left are—on average—getting older, much older. The birth crisis is particularly acute here in Spain.

The United Nations itself—long a center of near-hysteria about overpopulation--issued a report in 2000 entitled "Replacement Migration: Is

It a Solution to Declining and Aging Populations?" The document warned that all of the European countries and Japan face "declining and aging populations" over the next fifty years.

Indeed, in all parts of the world, human fertility is declining sharply. Overall, human numbers continue to grow—the world reached six billion in 1999—but not because of high birth rates. Rather, growth comes because of better diets and longer life spans: what demographer Nick Eberstadt calls a "health explosion."¹⁸ Counting our six billionth soul should have been a time for celebrating a great human achievement, not for a new round of grim journalistic sermons on the tragedy of overpopulation. But such growth is a legacy from a more fertile past, and will not continue much longer. The world's total population should start shrinking by mid-century, with the Western nations far in the lead.¹⁹

I would offer up four ways to understand this change:

The first is that of successful conspiracy. Donald Critchlow's fine 1999 book for Oxford University Press, *Intended Consequences*, shows how "a small group of men and women, numbering only a few hundred," caused a revolution in American policy toward fertility, with repercussions around the globe. This group of wealthy Americans—with names including Gamble, Pillsbury, Moore, and Rockefeller—believed that war and poverty

were the result of unrestrained population growth. And they looked with horror on the "baby booms" of the 1950's in the USA, Australia, and parts of Europe, where the new suburbs filled up with three- and four-child families.

Critchlow shows how the money and influence of this group twisted popular views of population growth and large families from being "blessings" into being "dangers." They funded the research that developed the "birth control" pill. This wealthy cabal turned US foreign aid into a global population control project. Their pressure and money spawned domestic U.S. birth control programs, and the shift in public attitudes toward abortion. Hugh Moore, Rockefeller, and Ford Foundation grants also proved instrumental in launching the new feminist movement in the 1960's and the homosexual rights campaign of the 1970's; all carried out in the name of reducing fertility.²⁰

Second, contemporary fertility decline is a consequence of a new set of antinatalist economic incentives, inherent in the transition from a one-income to a two-income family norm.

In her article, "Will U.S. Fertility Decline Toward Zero?" sociologist Joan Huber answers yes: "The most probable long-run fertility trend is continued decline, not just to ZPG but toward zero."²¹ Huber argues that it was the new demand for female labor during the mid-20th Century that

undermined prevailing cultural assumptions about a woman's responsibility to care for children at home. The rapid expansion of government bureaucracies increased demand for clerical workers, traditionally a female job. More broadly, the very construction of the welfare state rested primarily on hiring women to do tasks (such as child care and education) that had formally been done in the home. These changes coalesced into a kind of revolution, a curious form of feminist socialism: the shriveling of the private home and a massive expansion of the state sector.

Huber concludes that the primary long-term effect of women's rising employment has been "to increase the perception that parenting couples are disadvantaged in comparison to non-parenting ones." The consequent "squabble" over jobs and income is not between men and women; rather it is a zero-sum contest between parents and non-parents, with non-parents holding the economic advantage. Barring dramatic changes, she says, American children will eventually disappear.

Third, demographer John Caldwell emphasizes the role of mass state education in generating fertility decline. Based on research in Africa and Australia, he argues that state mandated schooling serves as the driving force behind the turn in preference from a large to a small family and the re-engineering of the family into an entity limited in its claims. Public

education authorities actively subvert parental rights and authority, substituting a state morality. Children learn that their futures lie with the modern State rather than the pre-modern family. As Caldwell summarizes, “it...has yet to be [shown]...that any society can sustain stable high fertility beyond two generations of mass [state] schooling.”²²

The fourth way to view depopulation is through the value-revolution which swept the Western world after 1965, marked by a retreat from religious faith. As Belgian demographer Ron Lesthaghe has shown, recent negative changes in family formation and fertility reflect a "long-term shift in the Western ideational system" away from the values affirmed by Christian teaching (specifically "responsibility, sacrifice, altruism, and sanctity of long-term commitments") and toward a militant "secular individualism" focused on the desires of the self. Put another way, secularization or the retreat from religion emerges as a cause of contemporary fertility decline.²³

The new "tolerance" of alternate lifestyles comes close to excluding parenthood even as an option. Dutch Demographer Kirk Van de Kaa notes the paradox that it was the arrival of "perfect" contraception—the birth control pill—in 1964 which, instead of bringing "wanted" children within marriage, produced couples who could live outside of marriage "without fear

of unwanted pregnancy and forced marriage"²⁴ and perhaps subsequently make a "self-fulfilling choice" to bear only one child. The great French historian of childhood Philippe Aries has described "a new epoch, one in which the child occupies a smaller place, to say the least." Between 1450 and 1900, he writes, the Europeans had expanded the place of the child in their civilization. Levels of care improved noticeably, and the period of childhood became something precious. But at the 20th Century's end, Aries saw the emergence of a civilization with almost universal pre-marital sex, ubiquitous contraception, legal abortion, and record-low fertility. Aries further concludes that the child's role is likewise "changing today, before our very eyes. It is diminishing."²⁵

These observations so highlight the developments needed to reverse fertility decline, namely: building an intellectual and organizational infrastructure that is forthrightly pro-natalist; developing public policies that would support the mothers of young children full time in their homes; restoring effective family control over the education of their children; and – most importantly – launching of a counter-revolution in values under the natural family banner.

Finally, the natural family is **THE BULWARK OF LIBERTY**

The terrible campaigns against marriage mounted by the Nazis and the Communists, just as the assaults on marriage launched by left liberals and socialists, reveal a common truth: The first targets of any oppressive, totalitarian regime are marriage and family. Why? G.K. Chesterton explains the reason in his powerful 1920 pamphlet *The Superstition of Divorce*:

The ideal for which [the family] stands in the state is liberty. It stands for liberty for the very simple reason...[that] it is the only...institution that is at once necessary and voluntary. It is the only check on the state that is bound to renew itself as eternally as the state, and more naturally than the state....This is the only way in which truth can ever find refuge from public persecution, and the good man survive the bad government.²⁶

Or, as the English journalist argued in *What's Wrong with the World*:

It may be said that this institution of the home is the one anarchist institution. That is to say, it is older than law, and stands outside the State.²⁷

Even in its most benign forms, the modern state requires the surrender of household liberty to government. As scholars in both Sweden and America have documented, a “post family” politics evident since 1965 and focused on pure gender equality, universal adult employment, day care, and comprehensive health and education benefits has achieved something “truly revolutionary”: the near disappearance of private life and a massive

expansion of the state sector. Indeed, in both Western Europe and America, the dramatic growth in female employment over the last four decades has been confined to only a few work categories: child care; health care; public education; welfare services; and other government employment. The end result is that women as a group are now doing the same tasks as before, but now they are working instead for the state rather than in their own homes. With a certain accuracy, some feminists have labelled this change as the triumph of “public patriarchy” over “private patriarchy.” This new arrangement, based on massive state funding, has also allowed new household forms—which could never survive on their own—to thrive, notably the “sole-mother family” formed by a woman effectively married to the state.²⁸

Even under the worst of governments, however, families have found ways to survive. During Nazi rule in Germany, for instance, the regime’s propagandists made much of the fact that the nation’s marriage rate was rising. In fact, there is good evidence suggesting that marriage had actually become an anti-Nazi act. As historian Claudia Koontz explains: “Germans who drove the marriage rates upward may well have sought an escape from participation in the Nazified public square.”²⁹

The Communist experience provides a similar example. In a recent article on Uzbekistan during the period of Soviet Communist rule, the author writes: “[O]nly traditional relationships enabled the people to survive the particularly difficult conditions which prevailed throughout the Soviet period....[W]hile the sovietization of Central Asian society rocked the religious and cultural foundations of the family, its basic...features were preserved.” This work of sheltering private society commonly fell to women.³⁰

Moreover, Dutch scholars have documented that the imposition of Communism on Poland after 1945 did not weaken the family system there. Instead, the oppressive Communist system actually increased family solidarity:

We [found] that the importance of the family increased [under Communist rule], and that—as in Hungary after World War II,...the family increased its role as the cornerstone of society. Political and social suppression can have unexpected positive effects, like the strengthening of the family.³¹

As Chesterton had predicted, the natural family—“the one anarchist institution”—survived, and even triumphed over totalitarian Communism, one of its great 20th Century foes.

More broadly, persecution, disaster, even the fall of nations and civilizations cannot destroy the familial character of humankind. “In the break-up of the modern world,” Chesterton observed, “the family will stand out stark and strong as it did before the beginning of history; the only thing that can really remain a loyalty, because it is also a liberty.”³²

A VISION

The future of our civilization lies in the hands of the young, those born over the last four decades. Particularly in Europe and America, they have been the children of a troubled age, a time of moral and social disorder. They were born into a culture dominated by self-indulgence, abortion, and cynicism. To re-make the world, they need to be inspired by a positive vision of the true natural order. In our book *The Natural Family*, Paul Mero and I offer one iteration of this vision.

We envision a culture that understands the marriage of a woman to a man to be the central aspiration of the young. This culture affirms marriage as the best path to health, security, and fulfillment. It affirms the home built on marriage to be the source of true political sovereignty. It also holds the household framed by marriage to be the first economic unit, a place rich in activity. This culture treasures private property in family hands as the

foundation of independence and liberty. It encourages young women to grow into wives, homemakers, and mothers. It encourages young men to grow into husbands, homebuilders, and fathers. This culture celebrates the marital sexual union as the unique source of human life. These homes are open to full quivers of children, the means of generational continuity and community renewal.

Joy is the product of persons enmeshed in vital bonds with spouses, children, parents, and kin. A familial culture features a landscape of family homes, lawns, and gardens busy with useful tasks and ringing with the laughter of many children. It regards parents as the primary educators of their children. It opens homes to extended family members who need special care due to age or infirmity. This culture views neighborhoods, villages, and townships as the second locus of political sovereignty. It requires a freedom of commerce that respects and serves family integrity, as well as a nation-state that regards protection of the natural family as its first responsibility.³³

In his message for the World Day of Peace, given this past January 1, Pope Benedict XVI offers a similar message. He writes: “The natural family, as an intimate communion of life and love, based on marriage between a man and a woman, constitutes ‘the primary place of

“humanization” for the person and society’ and a ‘cradle of life and love.’

The family is therefore rightly defined as the first natural society, ‘a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order.’”

There is strength and opportunity in the “natural family” ideal. Let us use them to build a better social order, a true culture of the family, one in harmony with our human nature, and one that will welcome and protect children.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Genesis 1: 27-28; 2: 24 (Revised Standard Version).
- ² John D. Lierman, "The Family and the Word," *The Religion & Society Report* 22 (June 2005): 9.
- ³ Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage: 5th Edition* (London: Macmillan, 1925): 26-37, 69-72.
- ⁴ George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1965 [1949]): 1-8.
- ⁵ C. Owen Lovejoy, "The Origin of Man," *Science* 211 (Jan. 23, 1981): 348. Emphasis added.
- ⁶ Ronald S. Immerman, "Perspectives on Human Attachment (Pair Bonding): Eve's Unique Legacy of a Canine Analogue," *Evolutionary Psychology* 1 (2003): 138-54.
- ⁷ For the seminal work, see: Pierre Guillaume and Frederic LePlay, *Le Reform Sociale*, Vol. 1, Book 3 (Tours: A Mameetfils, 1887): chapters 24-30.
- ⁸ Carle Zimmerman and Merle Frampton, *Family and Society: A Study of Sociological Reconstruction* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1935): 133, 221-37.
- ⁹ See: Pitirim Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1941); also Pitirim Sorokin, *The American Sex Revolution* (Boston: Porter Sargeant, 1956).
- ¹⁰ Robert Nisbet, *Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order & Freedom* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1990 [1953]); and Robert Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).
- ¹¹ Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority*, p. 254.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 260.
- ¹³ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1942): 53-54. Emphasis added.
- ¹⁴ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works. Vol. 5: Lectures on Genesis. Chapters 1-5* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958): 133.
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