



A Lost Paradise The Decline of Men, Women and Family

Comedians, playwrights and pundits have had a field day with the institution of marriage. For generations, it has served as fertile ground for sitcoms, the stage and cinema from the *Bickersons*, *the Honeymooners* and Hennie Youngman to *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf* and *Gods of Carnage*. The *battle of the sexes* has historically pitted the reasoned stubbornness and intractability of the male against the nurturing extravagance and volatility of the female. For the last half century this battle has evolved into a full-fledged culture war.

In the Garden

The starting point for this conflict dates back to the *fall of man* in the Garden of Eden. According to *Genesis*, God created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness and forbade them to eat the fruit from the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*. The serpent enticed Eve to break God's only rule and seduce Adam as well. After they had sinned they immediately become ashamed of their nakedness. Since then men and women have been suffering from the after effects of that lost paradise both as partners and rivals.

In an attempt to combat the forces of evil unleashed in the Garden, men and women joined their bodies and lives together in matrimony in a common attempt to build the family. According to Sociology101 the human family is the essential building block of human civilization. Because of its vital importance to moral and political freedom, the institutions of marriage and the family have been under assault by the autocratic forces of the left since the end of the 18th century.

The last half of the 20th century and the early 21st century witnessed the harvesting of the poisonous fruit of anti-family behavior. Author Mitch Pearlstein underscored the importance of the social and moral fragmentation of the family in his book, *From Family Collapse to America's Economic Decline*. According to his extensive research, America's *damaged children* have perpetuated a seemingly endless cycle of divorce, illegitimacy, school truancy, joblessness, and poverty that threatens, not only the future of traditional marriage but also the pillars of Western Civilization.

Pearlstein also connected the dots from family fragmentation and social failure in school, the growing social cleavage of class warfare and a loss of America's competitive advantages, to America's decline as the world's leading super power. The only

thing he failed to do was connect this decline to the *grand dot* of the Marxist conspiracy of Antonio Gramsci and the Frankfurt School and their sinister war on the family.

The End of Man

The Marxist attack on women, their marriages and families has been devastating. Behind the scenes, *Modern Feminism* has been the driving engine of the *Women's Movement* since the early 1960s. It had supplanted the early 19th century movement that was more interested in political and economic equality and suffrage rights.

In stark contrast to its more radical successors, the early feminists such as Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were all pro-family and pro-life. The radical feminists marched to Marxist drummer of the Frankfurt School's acolytes, Betty Friedan and later Gloria Steinem.

It was Friedan, a follower of Marxist Herbert Marcuse, who launched the feminist movement with her book *The Feminine Mystique*. Masquerading as an ordinary housewife, Friedan lampooned the traditional stay-at-home mother, who chose family over the workplace. Steinem provided these new feminists with a surrealistic battle cry of *a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle*. The movement swiftly became populated with misandrists who literally hated all men and everything they do.

In recent years the radical feminism has even hinted at a strong penchant for violence against men, flavored by a measurable lesbian influence. Some feminists in Sweden have pushed the envelope to include a virtual *snuff film*, currently making the rounds on the Internet where cute, bubbly girls pretend to murder a man, execution style.

Their concluding message contains an unambiguous message to other like-minded women to *Do Your Part*, which seems to encourage them to indulge in assault, mutilation, and murder on other male targets. Some feminists have gleefully proclaimed the *End of Men*.

Feminine Ascendancy

One of the most devastating concerns for the relationship between the sexes has been the ascendancy of women in the workplace. The stereotype of *Rosie the Riveter* has

been replaced by the massive influx of women into virtually all the professions. In the 1970s and '80s, the federal government embraced an industrial revolution and encouraged women to enter the labor force.

Since the 1980s women have flooded colleges while male enrollment has stagnated. Women hold a numerical edge on many campuses that used to be dominated by men. As women rapidly advanced from industrial and clerical jobs into the major professions, the traditional business culture collapsed. Women now compete with men in everything from the courtroom, the boardroom and the ivy-covered walls of academia, the broadcast field with men at all levels and even the clerical pulpit.

This is true largely to the delicious irony inherent in a long legacy of affirmative action that was legislated to benefit minority students but became useful for the women's movement. As a result the professional world is no longer the sole domain of men and they are having a difficult time coping with it.

The working class, which has long defined masculinity, is slowly turning into a matriarchy. As women gradually occupy jobs including managerial roles that were once the province of the male head of household, men now find themselves banished from their comfort zones. Under the banner of male oppression, social mores and radical feminists have knocked the male from his preferred status as breadwinner and protector of the American family.

By early 2011 the nation witnessed the first time in American history that women held a majority of the nation's jobs. This scenario predictably reaped its negative impact on men, their marriages and their families. The tragic irony is that in seeking total equality with men, many have become just like them, adopting all the sordid behaviors that their female forbears despised and fought to prevent.

Shattered Glass

The success of women in breaking the proverbial *glass ceiling* of corporate America has shattered more than glass. Women's health has seriously declined as they succumb to heart attacks and stress diseases, nearly equal to those of their male counterparts. Those women who try to be *supermoms*, holding down home and career simultaneously, are *swimming upstream*.

Feminist advances may also be associated with the decline of marriage. The traditional marriage of a man and a woman is a complex institution that throughout history has been used to forge alliances and create family loyalties. For thousands of years, marriage had been a primarily economic and political contract between two people, negotiated and policed by their families, church, laws and community.

With the advent of the 20th century, the romantic and peaceful vision of the married couple as they nurtured the iconically healthy, moral, and sedate family saturated American culture. Television portrayed happily married couples such as the

Cleavers, the Nelsons and the Bradys as the representation of the American family.

But these appearances were deceiving. The subtle signs of *trouble in paradise* were ubiquitous. Divorce rates rose exponentially. By 1973 with the Roe v. Wade decision, the radical left made the womb a battlefield in the battle of the sexes. This critically altered the playing field. Near the end of the century, the left also tried to undermine the nature of the institution with the contradictory notion of *gay marriage*.

Thanks to the Sexual Revolution of the mid 1960s, the proportionate numbers of married women in their early 30s is lower than any other time in statistical history. In 1960, the median age of first marriage in the U.S. was 23 for men and 20 for women. Those numbers have risen to age 29 for men and 27 for women today. The marriage rate for American couples is rapidly approaching that of the Great Depression. As many as 40% couples, now choose to cohabitate instead of making their marriage vows. American society has readily accepted this as a legitimate part of its social mores.

Their future brought with it reproductive technologies, such as *in vitro* fertilization that have virtually eliminated men from any direct role in pregnancy and the family. Many women have radically altered their notion of biological motherhood as having little or no bearing on their self-image as women. Single motherhood has also lost its stigma. Today 40 % of children are born to single mothers. Since 1976, the percentage of women in their early 40s who have never given birth has nearly doubled.

Handicapped Husbands

The relative decline of men, women and the institution of marriage has been a societal disaster for the nation at large. Sexual role models have been so skewed that the society tends to accept the erroneous idea that men and women are fungible, that is, they can easily replace one another in all roles that family and society necessitate.

The ascendancy of women has been accelerated by the decline of men. In the Marxist fusillade that has gravely impacted women and their families, men have been more than just collateral damage. Men have been the dominant sex since the dawn of human history. For the first time in human history, that is no longer the case.

As women have moved into every realm that used to be dominated by men, *this has brought a lot of tension in their relationships*. It has also led to an epidemic of divorce, more single mother families and grave social fragmentation. Men are more distant from their families and their children than ever before. In 1960, only 11% of children in the U.S. lived apart from their fathers. In 2010, that had risen to 27%. Fewer men turn to God in their identity crisis.

Men are severely handicapped in American society. Too many have become *emotionally crippled* after growing up in single parent homes, or because their sense of self-worth was defined through the materialistic illusions fostered by video games and beer commercials. Young men without a job or a college

degree are mired in a prolonged adolescence that seriously undermines the nation's ability to defend itself and escape the traps of poverty. Millions of these uncommitted men suffer from a *maturity deficit* that shows few signs of abatement.

In his new book, *The Book of Man: Readings on the Path to Manhood*, former Education Secretary William J. Bennett opined that *for the first time in history, women are better educated, more ambitious and arguably more successful than men*. It is incumbent on the American people to return the family to its nuclear form. Bennett is just one voice of many social conservatives who have issued concern about the family meltdown and its devastating effects on the American culture.

Modern Knights

Author Brad Minor has a unique solution for returning men, not to their old way of dominance, but to a new relationship with women that might just turn the tide. Every man should strive to be *The Compleat Gentleman*. Anchoring his argument to the medieval traditions of knightly prowess and the Victorian ideal of gentlemanly decorum, Minor believes that it is time for men to reassert their love and respect for women who strive, not to compete, but to serve and complement, all in the name of the family.

Reviving a thousand-year tradition of chivalry, honor, and heroism. Minor contends that true manhood is an ancient ideal based on service to God, country, family, and friends. Minor's *modern knight* cultivates a martial spirit in defense of the true and the beautiful. As a lover and protector he must demonstrate that he treasures the woman in his life, by humbly giving her what she needs so she can free him from the tyranny of his own ego.

Minor's critics say he failed to heed the universal call to holiness that is superior to that of the mere gentleman. Cardinal John Newman believed a real man was someone who *discerns the end in every beginning*, which means he lives more fundamentally, less superficially and is patient and forbearing on philosophical principles that are not based on social expediency. Likewise the gentleman submits *to pain, because it is inevitable, to bereavement, because it is irreparable, and to death, because it is his destiny*.

A Death Rehearsal

In his brilliant encyclical letter *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*) Pope John Paul II countered the Gramscian strategy that has unsettled America's traditional family structure. The Pope believed *in transforming culture so that it supports life, and that women occupy a place in thought*

and action, which is unique and decisive. He impressed upon women to promote a *new feminism which rejects the temptation of imitating models of male domination*, in order to acknowledge and affirm *the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation*.

The Pope recognized that radical feminism was an agent of the *culture of death*. In attempting to expose the roots of the *culture of death*, Pope John Paul II focused on the ideas that engendered virulent moral problems such as sexual promiscuity, abortion and euthanasia, as well as bioethical problems such as embryo experimentation and surrogate motherhood. These ideas constitute the core of the Pope's lectures on the *Theology of the Body* (TOB) that he developed over the course of four years.

One can readily see the similitude of the Pope's TOB with Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's *Three to Get Married*. Sheen's classic explored the authentic meaning of married love which is so intimately connected with earthly happiness so that to misunderstand its purpose and direction was to miss the meaning of life itself. He contended that any love that *does not look to heaven... descends into hell*. Those who think they can be faithful in soul to one another, but unfaithful in body, forget that the two are inseparable.

Three to Get Married is textbook TOB. Those who separate sex and spirit are *rehearsing for death*. Human sexuality is not a push upwards from the beast, but rather a gift downwards from the Trinity. According to Sheen, *all love ends in an Incarnation, even God's*. Behind the urge to procreate is the hidden desire of every human to participate in the eternal. The more a marriage union is based on the Divine and the more the husband and wife are in harmony with God, the more they find in each other that eternal fascination and satisfaction which transcends earthly frailties and disappointments.

According to Pope John Paul II, there will be no renewal of the Church and the world without a renewal of marriage and the family. Conversely there will be no renewal for men and women without a full acceptance and return to the truth of God's plan for the body and human sexuality. Both Bishop Sheen and the Pope have provided the Church with a high-level approach that promises to restore mankind to its *lost paradise*.

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