

THE TROUBLED DAWN OF FATHERHOOD

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The epochal changes occurring in the social fabric of western societies are profiled in a number of recent weighty books with titles like, *The Great Disruption*,¹ *From Dawn to Decadence*,² *The Decline of Males*.³ Most agree that at the heart of these changes is the weakening of the traditional family as a social institution. But there is less agreement it seems, about why these changes have occurred as swiftly as they have in our part of the world or about what our prospects and options are. The boldest thesis in this regard is that of anthropologist Lionel Tiger in *The Decline of Males*, who argues that the rapidity of these changes is largely due to the phenomenal shift in attitudes and responsibility toward procreation as a consequence of contraception, and the contraceptive pill in particular, which for the first time in history vests women with control and primary responsibility for the reproductive process. The result, he suggests, “is a profound and probably enduring alteration of family patterns.”⁴

As will become evident, I am in partial agreement with this analysis, but have felt for some time that our understanding of these changes is weakened by an inadequate view of the nature and origins of the specific family structures and values which have been ours in western societies until recently. Most people are vaguely aware, I think, that *our* legacy in this regard is unique and stretches back to a distant past. But, my sense is that too little attention has been paid to the details of exactly when, or where, or why,

or how in that distant past these ideals originated or how they were transmitted to western cultures.

It is important to realize that in *our* case that distant past is *not* among the primitive tribes of Australia or the islands of the South Pacific, where our academics have usually gone in search of family origins. Rather, the family values we have had until recently go back five thousand years to the great civilizations of the ancient Near East, in the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile river valleys. So it is the history of how these institutions and values that have been ours were emergent in *that* time and region and were then conveyed to western civilization that I am referring to in the title of my talk, “The Troubled Dawn of Fatherhood”—and it is this history that I would like to try to convey to you today.

In doing so, it is my hope that this will indeed afford a fuller perspective on the changes that have and are occurring, one that will be helpful in assessing these changes and weighing our options. The history (as I will be recounting it) has three sections: Section One, “before the dawn of fatherhood”; Section Two, “at the dawn of fatherhood”; and Section Three, “after the dawn of fatherhood.” I will conclude with a few thoughts about lessons to be learned.

Section One: Before the Dawn of Fatherhood

Father-like behaviors are evident in many animal species. Beaver males, for example, mate for life and help care for their kits; a male Emperor Penguin takes care of its partner’s egg on its shuffling feet while she forages for food. Bullfrogs fend off foes and dig channels to permit their tadpoles access to deep water.⁵ However, our *human*

animal ancestors are not these, but the higher primates, among whom fatherhood in the sense of a male caring for offspring he knows to be his is weak or non-existent.⁶

Chimpanzee males, for example, among our closest animal relatives, mate promiscuously and pay virtually no attention to their progeny. How then did fatherhood emerge as a trait among humans?

Many see glimmers of a dawning fatherhood in biological and anatomical changes that occurred in our species some three or four million years ago. These biological changes (such as the phasing out of the estrus cycle) facilitated an unprecedented sexual intimacy and bonding between primate males and females, and this bonding led to the formation of family-like groups where males were present and affectionate toward females and their children to a greater extent than before. But even then, fatherhood in the sense of a male caring for children he *knew* to be his was missing, the reason being that the precise function of the male in the procreation of children was as yet unknown.⁷

On the face of it the role of the human male in the creation of a child is ludicrously marginal. It is obvious that a child grows in the womb of the female and is born of her body—but just why this happens is not equally obvious, or that the male has anything to do with it. To establish the truth of the matter and to appropriate that truth culturally, something akin to the Copernican revolution in cosmology had to occur. First, the discovery had to be made that a woman's pregnancy and the birth of her child is in fact inaugurated by the discharge of the male effluent during sexual intercourse nine months prior to the birth. Once made, this discovery had to be verified and explained in a compelling manner, and appropriated generation after generation. The dawn of

fatherhood in the sense of a male caring for children he knew to be his could not take place until this had happened. Motherhood is rooted in nature—fatherhood in this sense begins with the awesome awareness of the male's role in procreation. Only as this knowledge is culturally appropriated and appreciated is it even possible for a society to begin the process of revolutionary change involved in fashioning the institution of fatherhood as we have come to know it.

When did this revolution in consciousness occur and what were the consequences? As to *when*, it is important to recognize that there are degrees in the quality and intensity of an awareness of this kind and that the potency of a culturally transmitted idea like this can wax and wane from culture to culture and from time to time. Also of significance, I think, is the fact that there are a few reported instances of still extant human societies in which this idea that the male has a role in procreation is not there at all. In a book published in 1935, *The Father in Primitive Psychology*, anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski reported on studies he and others had carried out of tribes living on the Trobriand Islands of the South Pacific who had no word for father and no concept of fatherhood, the reason being, they were still unaware that males played any role in procreation, but thought women become pregnant by means of the entry into their bodies of departed spirits.⁸

Life in this tribe may reflect what human existence was like just prior to the dawn of fatherhood. Sexual relations among the Trobriand young people, it was learned, were permissive and promiscuous from an early age, with few restrictions (sex between brothers and sisters being one of them). Affectionate sexual bonds of a more enduring nature were formed by the young people themselves, through trial and error, and with

minimal assistance from their elders. A form of marriage existed when a couple started living together in their own dwelling, and together cared for the children born to the female. At the time a new household of this kind was created, the woman's brother played a key role in supporting it through gifts of produce, for his sister's children were regarded as belonging to his family by virtue of their descent from his mother. The man living with a woman was affectionate toward her children (and the children toward him) and he assisted in their care, but this man was not regarded as their father but as a companion and friend of their mother. This relationship between a mother and her male companion could be terminated as it began, simply by one or the other deciding to leave. As her children grew to adulthood the role of their mother's male companion gradually diminished as they were incorporated into the family of their mother's brother and mother. Community legends related how a primeval mother-deity was the point of origins for all that exists. Socially, culturally and religiously this was (and perhaps still is) a matri-centric, matri-lineal world.

Section Two: At the Dawn of Fatherhood

Today, almost everywhere else we turn we see societies that are aware, to one degree or another, of the male role in procreation and which are in process of coming to terms with this reality. There are variations in how this is done from culture to culture, but also striking similarities. In every tribe, in every country, in every society, what we see is an effort of some kind (whether strong or weak, whether benign or unjust) to create and maintain a social structure or unit that will enable males not just to assist in the care of children, but to know and care for children that are verifiably their own offspring.

That this is the case is itself a reality worth pondering. It suggests, does it not, that the human struggle to create this novel institution (which we are calling fatherhood) is not only unique to our species (among primates), but a key factor in its emergence and survival. In any case, human societies that have not taken this step have all but disappeared—and one might add, those that take this step too tentatively, or too inadequately, or in ways that are too unjust or cruel, are demonstrably weak and marginal.

Support for the point I am making, I suggest, can be garnered by looking at those ancient cultures that are widely recognized as the historical antecedents of our own. I am referring (as mentioned) to the peoples living in the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile river valleys in the fourth and third millennia BCE. It is now commonplace among historians to view this region and period as the place and time when human civilization began. It was here in these river valleys (in the third millennium BCE) that writing was first invented, the first literature was born, the first law codes and instructional manuals were fashioned, and the first great technologies and social units we call kingdoms were founded.

A neglected aspect in the study of these inaugural civilizations is that it was here as well, for the first time in human history, so far as we know, that the awareness dawned that males play a role in the creation of a child—and more importantly, here too, that the first steps were taken toward deliberately creating the institution of fatherhood as previously defined (that is, a social unit or family in which a male is able to know who his children are and join in their care). As might be expected, the available records from this region do not inform us of all that must have transpired for this revolution to have

occurred in this time and place. However, by extrapolating from what *is* known a picture emerges of tremendous accomplishments, including the already mentioned discovery of the male role in procreation, which is totally taken for granted in this region's oldest literature.

The form this discovery took must have been shocking at the time, for what was concluded was that a child's origins were almost the opposite of what had been thought.⁹ It is not the body of the female that is the point of origin of a child, but the body of the male through the deposit of his semen in the womb of a woman, where it grows into a child (so it was imagined), like seed planted in soil. This idea, which by the dawn of the third millennium was regarded as a scientific fact in both Egypt and Mesopotamia, is foundational to the cultural revolutions that subsequently occurred in both regions. In its wake matri-social and matri-lineal religions, traditions and institutions weakened and faded, amidst sweeping societal changes that made it possible now for males to know and care for their own children.

For this to happen female assent to a new and demanding set of cultural expectations was required, for it was a woman's willingness to devote her sexuality exclusively to a specific male that made it possible for that male to know that her children were his. Simultaneously, in this act she made herself vulnerable to radical changes in her own identity and role as woman and mother. She could no longer regard her children as solely hers, but had to think of herself now as a mother whose offspring were as much her male companion's as her own, yes, even more so, given the science of the time which was not yet aware of the way a mother's own body contributed to the creation of a child. Males as well had to face many new challenges, as male promiscuity was curtailed and

traditions were established for creating the new kind of men who would be able and willing, at maturity, to become caring husbands and fathers. The lives of infants and children were also transformed by these developments. Viewed now as their father's offspring, as well as their mother's, their lives were intertwined with his as never before. The legends, stories, traditions, laws and initiation rites coming down to us from these regions bear testimony to the social, cultural, emotional and symbolic upheavals that were associated with this first dawning of fatherhood.

In the light of the enormity of the challenges and changes involved, that a strong, and for the most part, just and benevolent fatherhood was emergent in both regions is all the more amazing. We come closest to the ideas and emotions of those at the forefront of this revolution in Mesopotamia in the words of Lipit-Ishtar, one of the region's earliest rulers and lawgivers. In the prologue to his law code, one of the oldest of its kind (dating to the beginning of the second millennium BCE), this ancient ruler proudly declares, "I made the father support his children (and) I made the children support their father; I made the father stand by his children and I made the children stand by their father . . ." ¹⁰ An example of what he meant is indicated in his 27th law, which cites the case of a married male whose wife bore him no children, but who had a child of his own through a harlot in the public square. The issue to be resolved was whether this married male was obligated to support the harlot and the child she bore him, as would be the case were she his wife, and whether this child of the harlot should be regarded as his heir. The answer given is that the harlot and the child she bore him shall indeed be provided with grain, oil, and clothing, just as were she his wife—and, yes, the law states, the child he had with the

harlot shall be regarded as his heir, with the proviso, that as long as his wife is alive, the harlot should not be permitted to reside in the house “with his first-ranking wife.”¹¹

The depth of conviction regarding male responsibility for their own offspring, so evident in this ancient code, is also, in my opinion, the driving force behind the birth of a new institution whose rules and regulations are spelled out with unstinting clarity and force in the law codes from this region and time. I speak of marriage as it was now just beginning to take shape and be established. In the Laws of Eshnunna (from a region east of Baghdad in the same time-period as the law code of Lipit-Ishtar) we read the following remarkable words: “If a man takes another man’s daughter without asking the permission of her father and her mother and concludes no formal marriage contract with her father and her mother, even though she [the daughter] may live in his house [that is the house of her suitor] for a year, she is not a . . . wife” (#27). Immediately following this law is another, which states: “*On the other hand*, if he [the suitor] concludes a formal contract with her father and her mother and cohabits with her [their daughter], she is a . . . wife”—and then this is added: “When she [the wife] is caught with another man, she shall die” (#28).¹²

These laws, I suggest, are evidence of the existence now in this ancient culture of an institutional option to an older form of sexual cohabitation in which couples on their own began living together—and evidence as well of a social revolution in progress. In the midst of a Mesopotamian society where women might still choose to become temple prostitutes, or, without approbation, serve as harlots in the public square, or simply begin living with a male suitor, there were also now social units of married mothers and fathers whose daughters remained at home as virgins until the time when a male would contract

with her and her parents in anticipation of a marriage in which she too one day would become a mother with a husband at her side helping care for their children. However, those who choose this institutional option are forewarned that a marriage of this kind, once contracted, incurs severe penalties if the contracts are broken. A wife's infidelity, which jeopardizes her husband's ability to identify her children as his, is punishable by death.

These same issues are addressed in great detail some two centuries later in a special section devoted to the institution of marriage in the Code of Hammurabi, one of the earliest and greatest codes of law in human history. The first law of this particular section of the code reads as follows: "If a citizen acquired a wife, but did not draw up the contracts for her, that woman is no wife" (#128). The next law states: "If the wife of a citizen has been caught while lying with another man, they shall bind them [both, that is, both the wife and the man who lay with her] and throw them into the water" (#129).¹³ This law amplifies the law of Lipit-Ishtar on the same subject by specifying that it is not just the woman who violates the marriage contract who shall be punished by death, but the man too. It also adds this proviso: "if the husband of the woman wishes to spare his wife, then the king in turn may spare his subject."

The next 65 laws in this section of Hammurabi's code (about a fourth of the total) take up one by one a host of problems and challenges posed by this still novel institution. I will mention just a few examples of the kinds of problems addressed. What should be done if the wife a man marries is barren and bears no children? What responsibilities does a man have for a wife who becomes chronically ill? What should a man do if his wife becomes overly involved in business and neglects house and husband? What if over

time a wife begins to hate her husband? What if a father, instead of loving his son, comes to hate him and wishes to disinherit him? What if a father has sexual relations with a daughter? What if a man has children by his wife, but another set of children with a household slave—should the children of the slave inherit equally with the children of the wife?

That these and numerous other issues of this kind are not only addressed, but addressed thoughtfully with great specificity, is testimony to the importance accorded this new institution. Here are a few of the legal opinions pertaining to the problems just mentioned. A barren wife, we read, may be dismissed, but not without ample provisions for her future. A father who hates his son may not disinherit him if, upon investigation, it turns out the son did nothing to merit such a drastic action. The children of a household slave shall inherit equally with the children of a wife. A wife who becomes ill must be supported for as long as she lives. A father who has sexual relations with his daughter shall be banished from his city. The values reflected in these laws have their counterpart in the legends and myths of this region, which tell of a primitive cosmic mother and father whose descendents through many struggles, matured to the point where they had the wisdom and strength to create a habitable universe.¹⁴

Similar societal and cultural developments occurred even earlier among the peoples living in the Nile river valley. In an Egyptian instruction manual that is half a millennium older than the law code of Lipit-Ishtar (dating to the middle of the third millennium BCE), an aged royal servant named Ptah-Hotep writes of how the king approved his request to record for posterity “the ideas of the ancestors.”¹⁵ Prominent among the themes Ptah-Hotep wrote about is the conduct required of a youth who would

become “a man of standing.”—“If thou art a man of standing,” he writes, “and foundest a household and producest a son who is pleasing to god, if he is correct and inclines toward thy ways and listens to thy instruction, while his manners in thy house are fitting . . . seek out for him every useful action. He is thy son, whom thy *ka* engendered for thee. Thou shouldst not cut thy heart off from him.”

Corresponding advice is given regarding what should be done in the case of a rebellious son, and then, a few lines later, Ptah-Hotep has this to say about how “a man of standing” should relate to his wife. “If thou art a man of standing, thou shouldst found thy household and love thy wife at home as is fitting. Fill her belly; clothe her back. Ointment is the prescription for her body. Make her heart glad as long as thou livest. . . . Let her heart be soothed through what may accrue to thee; it means keeping her long in thy house.” Elsewhere in his manual Ptah-hotep writes of how “a man of standing” should conduct himself in relation to women other than his wife. “If thou desirest to make friendship last in a home to which thou hast access as master, as a brother, or as a friend, into any place where thou mightest enter, beware of approaching the women. It does not go well with the place where that is done. . . . A thousand men *may be distracted from* their own advantage. One is made a fool by limbs of fayence, as she stands (there) A mere trifle, the likeness of a dream—and one attains death through knowing her Do not do it—it is really an abomination—and thou shalt be free from sickness of heart every day.”

Instruction manuals of this kind became authoritative in Egyptian culture through their use as textbooks in the scribal schools. On the subject at hand, the impression conveyed is of a fatherhood in this region that was energized not just by the emotion of

fatherhood per se (that is, a male's affection and sense of responsibility for his own children), but even more, perhaps, by the values inherent in the devoted, loving bond between a man and a wife who gladly supports him in his fatherhood role. This aspect of the fatherhood revolution in Egypt is most tangibly evident in the family portraits in stone that are characteristic icons of the most ancient periods of Egyptian history. These are full-sized stone statues of husband and wife standing lovingly side-by-side—in some cases, with their children.

One such ancient stone portrait has justifiably been described as among the greatest works of art ever produced. It depicts Pharaoh Menkaure, builder of the third pyramid at Giza in 2500 BCE, with his wife at his side. Both are standing, life-size and in full view, both are strong and handsome, both are human beings in their own right, each radiating a sense of purpose and joy—but one senses the wife's strength is bonded to that of her husband's, for with her right arm she embraces his waist, and the fingers of her left arm rest gently on his biceps, while *his* arms are at his side, not listlessly, but poised for action, with his left foot slightly forward.¹⁶ That a Pharaoh of the third millennium, a builder of the pyramids, wanted to memorialize himself in this way, is a notable event not just in the history of art but in the history of human civilization. It announces the dawn of fatherhood in a manner that draws our attention to the marital love within which ideally children are born and nurtured.

An even earlier portrait in stone of this kind from this region and time is equally impressive. The male in this case is not a Pharaoh, but a civil servant of King Khufu. His name is Sonb, and as we learn from his portrait, he is a dwarf. Out of deference to his handicap, he and his wife are portrayed, not standing, but sitting on a stone bench, so

that Sonb's torso (which is approximately the height of his wife's) can be parallel to hers and they can be portrayed together in the affectionate manner shown in the stone portrait of Pharaoh Menkaure and his wife—that is, with her right arm around him and the fingers of her left hand resting gently on his biceps. Sonb sits cross-legged on the stone bench, his dwarf legs tucked beneath him, and underneath, where his legs would be were he not a dwarf, are replicas of the couple's two children, a boy and a girl.¹⁷

The family values reflected in these magnificent stone portraits are evident as well in ancient Egyptian mythologies, which tell the story of a wise husband and father named Osiris, and his devoted wife, Isis, and their beloved son, Horus. It was the God-man Osiris, the mythologies inform us, who issued the first laws that made it possible for Egypt to become a great civilization.¹⁸ Each Egyptian pharaoh considered himself an incarnation of Horus, devoted son of Osiris.

Section Three: After the Dawn of Fatherhood

The fatherhood institutions and values of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia were gradually transmitted westward through the people of Israel. Israel's own scriptures relate how its ancestors were from these two regions—Abraham and Sarah from Mesopotamia, Moses from Egypt—and how its early history was intertwined with theirs. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the fatherhood institutions and values of this region are more or less taken for granted in Israel's sacred writings. What *is* surprising and *not* to be taken for granted is the intensity with which the best of these values were eventually embraced and universalized in Israelite tradition as the expressed will of the spiritual Father Israel believed to be the creator of the universe—and then, as well, the boldness

with which these ideals were promulgated by Israelite prophets and sages as a key to an understanding of human history in its totality.

In a vast, literary epic created in the aftermath of Israel's nearly fatal encounter with the decadent values of Canaan, Israelite sages sought to articulate for themselves and others what they had learned through this hard experience.¹⁹ In this epic's opening chapters in the book of Genesis world history is envisioned as beginning when the creator of the universe fashioned a marital couple: Adam and Eve, a man and a woman, each in the image and likeness of God, united through the bond of their sexual love as "one flesh." In other words (this narrative implies), a truly human existence on earth did not begin until just such a two-parent family as this was existent, and the fate of humanity ever since, the epic goes on to suggest, has been inextricably linked to the fate of this divinely willed family unit. When this two-parent family is weakened or destroyed through mindless, uncontrolled sexual promiscuity, as the epic implies it once was prior to a great flood, humanity veers toward anarchy and self-destruction. When this two-parent family is honored (along with the spiritual Father who fashioned it), societies are "blessed" and live long in their lands.

These values (and this world vision) were fully embraced in the teachings of Jesus and his followers, so that when Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, and then of Europe and elsewhere (including North America), these too were the ideals and ideas that became normative in these regions of the world.²⁰ And so it was, more or less, until recently.

A Few Concluding Thoughts about Lessons to be Learned

Seen in the light of the narrative just recounted, we appear at this moment in our history to be reverting to conditions that existed prior to, or at the dawn of fatherhood five thousand years ago. Armed with an array of contraceptive technologies and bombarded with the notion that sexual intercourse is primarily a pleasure to be enjoyed, promiscuity among our youth is beginning to approximate that of the natives of the Trobriand Islands, and the institution of marriage is again optional, as in ancient Mesopotamia in the days of Lipit-Ishtar and Hammurabi.²¹ As a consequence, we too now are being forced to consider the plight of children, unknown, neglected or abandoned by their fathers. The sexual revolution of the 1960's was not meant to end this way. We thought and were taught that contraceptive technology would liberate sex from procreation, prevent unwanted pregnancies and increase our happiness.

The story just told may help to identify some of the reasons why instead major new problems have surfaced, and what the options and challenges are now facing us. First and foremost, it teaches us, I suggest, that we have been far too sanguine about fatherhood. Fatherhood in the sense of a male caring for children known to be his is not a natural condition. It cannot be taken for granted. It is not an inevitable force of nature. True, males and females fall in love, form bonds, and can and do experience great waves of affection for each other and for their children. But recent experience is also showing us again that they can also be promiscuous and cruel, with little regard for their offspring, and males especially so.

A second thing this story highlights is that the *foundation* of a high culture of fathering is an *awareness* ignited by an *intuition*—an “awareness” that males too are

progenitors of children, an “intuition” that males should care for the children they procreate for the good of everyone, males, females, their children and the society of which they are a part. Without this awareness and intuition the first steps toward creating the institution of fatherhood would never have been taken. Without this awareness and conviction the conditions necessary for the continuance of a high culture of fathering will wither and die.

A third thing this story highlights is the degree to which a high culture of fathering is dependent on the construction of a novel social unit that enables a male to know and care for his own children. This social unit was once referred to quite simply as the family. Today we must be more specific. It is the father-involved family—it is a social unit in which a male and female pledge fidelity to one another, so that the children born to them can be known to be children of both parents, and both can participate in caring for them.

A fourth thing this story highlights is that this institution is deceptively simple. Like good government, once created, a father-involved family seems as natural as the air we breathe, but its creation and maintenance was difficult, and, once weakened or destroyed, is equally hard to repair or reestablish. Reading the ancient law codes of Lipit-Ishtar and Hammurabi remind of this. They suggest that reestablishing the foundations of the father-involved family in our time may be harder than is generally thought.

A fifth and final truth highlighted by this story is the degree to which fatherhood values as we have known them were conveyed to western civilization within a framework of faith—faith in the God of Israel, known and believed in as spiritual father and creator

of the universe. Will it be possible to restore respect for fatherhood in our culture apart from this faith, or apart from some sense of fatherhood as a divine calling, or apart from the recognition of this calling through symbol and ritual?

With recent developments in both contraceptive and reproductive technology, the choices confronting us in this sphere of our lives have increased exponentially. Men and women are now viewed as vested with the freedom to seek sexual pleasure as an end in itself, and reproduce and nurture the next generation as they choose, whether heterosexually or homosexually or individually, or in or out of marriage—and this is now widely regarded as a human right which cannot be challenged or curtailed in any way. In his book, *On the Decline of Males*, Lionel Tiger describes our present situation as “a genuinely unprecedented biological novelty . . .” and adds, that to date, “No one has convincingly announced the obligations of the sexually renovated citizenry.”²²

To take action for fatherhood in a time and culture such as ours, *informed, strongly held* convictions will be required—fatherhood (and the conditions that make fatherhood possible) will need to be valued for plausible and persuasive reasons and these reasons must be vigorously disseminated. In this light, steps will need to be taken (many steps, large and small) to replenish the depleted stock of values, laws, symbols, rituals and traditions so essential to a culture of fatherhood. That convictions of this kind are on the rise, and endeavors of this kind are in fact being energetically undertaken through initiatives like the one that has gathered us here today, is for me a sign of hope—hope that “the troubled dawn of fatherhood” that broke over the horizon five thousand years ago is *still* dawning.²³

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¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption, Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* (New York: The Free Press, 1999).

² Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000).

³ Lionel Tiger, *The Decline of Males* (New York: Golden Books, 1999).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵ For additional examples, see Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *The Emperor's Embrace, Reflections on Animal Families and Fatherhood* (New York: Pocket Books, 1999).

⁶ On the complex issues involved in this assessment, see Peter J. Wilson, *Man the Promising Primate, The Conditions of Human Evolution*, Second Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 49-54. He concludes as follows: "We can find the model of the human nuclear family among the gibbon, but no model of the group or kinship. We can find a model of the group, and even of something resembling kinship, among chimpanzees, but nothing resembling the family. We can say that the human species is a 'social' species, in that its individual members show definite preference, if not a need, for living in company. This tendency places man more with baboons and chimpanzees than with gibbons and orangutans. But this alignment does not provide a basis for concluding that human sociality represents an evolutionary progression from baboons and chimpanzees. We need to search for that which will account for the totality of similarities and differences with respect to social organization and will at the same time explain how the range and variation of man's social organization is possible" (p. 54). Wilson finds this (as do I) in the emerging capacity of male and female to make promises with respect to their progeny (hence the title of his book).

⁷ Regarding these developments, see Helen E. Fisher, *The Sex Contract, The Evolution of Human Behavior* (New York: Quill, 1983), pp. 94-103. The dating of this phase is based on the discovery of skeletal remains of a family group along the Hadar River of the Afar Triangle of Ethiopia. Fisher believes this indicates that males were thus incorporated into the female group "as early as four million years ago." "Yet," she adds, "these males, lacking an awareness of paternity, had an ancient tendency to desert their mates. So youngsters still associated their heritage with mother" (p. 145).

⁸ Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Father in Primitive Psychology* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1927). For assessments of Malinowski's research, as well as subsequent studies of the Trobrianders, see Michael W. Young, ed., *The Ethnography of Malinowski, The Trobriand Islands 1915-18* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); Melford E. Spiro, *Oedipus in the Trobriands* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); Anette B. Weiner, *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988).

⁹ For evidence bearing on the procreative ideas of this time and region and their cultural impact, see John W. Miller, *Calling God "Father," Essays on the Bible, Fatherhood & Culture*, Second Edition, Ch. 3, "Male-Centered Reproductive Biology and the Dynamics of Biblical Patriarchy" (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), pp. 17-31.

¹⁰ Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), p. 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹² Albrecht Goetze, "The Laws of Eshnunna," in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts in Relation to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 162.

¹³ Theophile J. Meek, "The Code of Hammurabi," in *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁴ Further regarding these and other ancient Near Eastern epics and mythologies in the world of this time, see Miller, *Calling God "Father,"* Ch. 4, "God as Father in the Bible and the Father Image in Several Contemporary Ancient Near Eastern Myths: A Comparison."

¹⁵ For English translation, see John A. Wilson, "The Instruction of the Vizier Ptah-Hotep," in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 412-414.

¹⁶ This sculpture (along with others from this same period) was recently on display at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, where I had the opportunity to see it first hand. It was discovered by the Harvard University Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, March 2, 1911, and is on display at that museum. The curators of the Royal Ontario Museum characterized it as "One of the most important masterpieces of Egyptian art. . . . The simplicity of the forms and composition combined with exceptionally delicate modeling makes this statue one of the greatest works of art ever produced by humankind." For a full-page photograph of the sculpture, see Jean Yoyotte, *Treasures of the Pharaohs* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1968), p. 21.

¹⁷ For a full-page photograph, see Jaromir Malek, *In the Shadow of the Pyramids, Egypt during the Old Kingdom* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), p. 38.

¹⁸ We are indebted to the Greek historian Plutarch for the preservation of these myths; for an English translation, see *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride: Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (University of Wales Press, 1970).

¹⁹ Further to the origins, nature and purpose of this narrative, see John W. Miller, *The Origins of the Bible, Rethinking Canon History* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), Ch. 7, "The Birth of a Scripture Based Community: The Law and the Prophets."

²⁰ For an excellent overview of Christian marital teachings as these were shaped and transmitted in Catholic and Protestant theology and tradition, see Stephen G. Post, *More Lasting Unions, Christianity, the Family and society* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 66-83. Post's summary of "the classic sources" of Protestant teaching in this regard is as follows: "They hold in common the ideal of permanent monogamous marriage as following a divine pattern indicated in the first and second chapters of Genesis, the divine origin of human sexuality, the blessing of human propagation, the importance of true companionship between man and woman, and the possibilities of *agape* in overcoming inevitable degrees of insularity" (p. 83).

²¹ For a similar assessment, see Lionel Tiger, *The Decline of Males*. He observes that "Our species seems to be leaping back in time to the more basic mammalian system that was the core of our evolutionary history, one founded on the primacy of the unit of the mother and child" (p. 21).

²² Lionel Tiger, *The Decline of Males*, pp. 258f.

²³ On the emergent fatherhood movement in our time, see Wade F. Horn, David Blankenhorn, and Mitchell B. Pearlstein, *The Fatherhood Movement, A Call to Action* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999).