

Chapter 14 – Juggernaut Juggling

“As a parent is drawn to his children, or vice versa, so the Juggernaut was juggled in trying to maintain meaningful relationships.”

I can recall a few jugglers in my lifetime. Visiting the circus when I was very young, attending a medieval festival when I was much older, and watching a few friends or acquaintances *try their hand at it*. The juggling of my parenting began with the first child and has continued in some form to this day. I think some form of juggling—no matter how many figurative balls in the air or dropped—will continue to the day I leave this earth.

I never had an interest in learning to juggle. Again, I had some social interaction with a few people that did and they seemed to take great satisfaction in mastering three balls. Among the professional ranks, The Zucchini Brothers could juggle fire, balls, fruit and quite possibly anvils—but I never saw them actually juggle the anvils. What I did see was some incredible stuff and a half hour of dazzling feats for my family among the other villagers of that's day festivities.

This particular day of stepping back to the *days of yore* was a rare occasion (at the time). For in the *dark time of no-fault divorce*, the king's men had taken many of the children from their rightful homes. The wicked court had wielded his power through a decree that enabled children to be stripped of from the parent's and indoctrinated into the royal priesthood of individual rights and wanted dissolution of a marriage—dismemberment of a family. And the children would learn the nature of a juggernaut so seemingly able to tear away at the moorings of man's life to the degree of removing his own family for reason save *the law of the land*. It was *dark time*, and though well into my adulthood, taught me a lesson or two about the mystic forces working behind the robes and gilded walls of our kingdom's most honorable courts.

Yet there remains in these *dark days* a glimmer of hope. For the natural and Godly desire of parent's and their children is conceivably a strong force too. Even the basic natural instinct of the parent-child bond has been portrayed in some truly incredible and sacrificial ways; and with such a history and enduring fortitude, can this bond be denied by even the juggernaut of today's family law?

Returning to a much respected source, *Fatherless America*, Kingsley Davis is quoted in the subtitle, “What happened to Marriage?”

The genius of [marriage] is that, through it, the society normally holds the biological parents responsible for each other and for their offspring. By identifying children with their parents, and by penalizing people who do not have stable relationships, the social system powerfully motivates individuals to settle into a sexual union and take care of the ensuing offspring.

And marriage long existed before the courts of our land; it was long an institution designed to strengthen the bonds of parents and children through a union that transcended that of any broad-based or national government. Yet, such a bond and institution have come under increasing pressure—even destruction—as described in previous content of this book. And at the center of this decline, the dad has gradually disappeared....

From the publication *Father Facts* of the National Fatherhood Initiative (fatherhood.org), the following of fathers:

Don't ever doubt the impact that fathers have on children. Children with strongly committed fathers learn about trust early on. They learn about trust with their hearts. They learn they're wanted; that they have value, that they can afford to be secure and confident and set their sights high. They get the encouragement they need to keep going through the rough spots in life.

Not that the above virtues of fathers should to have to be mentioned further, but it seems necessary in view of the dichotomy or deficit in the courts. The active role of the courts toward the dismantling of families cannot be overlooked; indeed, some sources make the proposal (or charge) that it is purposeful—or with full intent as an assault (or siege) on the American family. The state of marriage and family—or lack there of—is more than mere happenchance or the casual and convenient causes of a movement from convention; but it has some complexity and complicity made so by family law and the courts of our land...in this *dark time*.

Not that the value of fathers need be mentioned further, but it seems necessary...

The treatment of the role and responsibility of the fathers is most poignant in the television and film media. Criticism is rampant and exceptions to this treatment are rare. Comical though they are, the characterizations within these animated and actual episodes are pathetic too—but I guess they're supposed to be?

Not mentioning the actual characters or programs does **not** obviously add credibility to my claims (or the claims of others whom I've read); but I believe the conditions have long-existed and, sadly, have become the greater norm rather than exception. Are these characterizations representative of the mass of men who call themselves fathers? I don't think so.

Back to my sources, David Popenoe writes in his book *Fatherless America* that “men...and fathers...are increasingly viewed as superfluous to family life.” He continues:

Men, in general, and fathers in particular, are increasingly viewed as superfluous to family life: either expendable or as part of the problem. Masculinity itself...is typically treated with suspicion and even hostility in our cultural discourse.

The condition described above may lead to the immediate *chicken and egg*—with debate on whether the derelict dad was the cause or the effect of this “societal condition”. But whether cause or effect, the condition has created what some experts refer to as “the greatest social crisis of our day.”

To give some credence (or at least question) to the possible “effect” of this social crisis, consider the following content from *Divorced from Reality* by Stephen Baskerville.

The decline of the family has now reached critical and truly dangerous proportions. Family breakdown touches virtually every family and every American. It is not only the major source of social instability in the Western world today but also seriously threatens civic freedom and constitutional government.

So while the cause and effect may remain somewhat undetermined (at least by me), the consequences have been devastating to our society, our culture.

Continuing in *Divorced from Reality* with some words from the English writer, G. K. Chesterton, he writes:

G. K. Chesterton once observed that the family serves as the principal check on government power, and he suggested that someday the family and the state would confront one another. That day has arrived.

Chesterton was writing about divorce, and despite extensive public attention to almost every other threat to the family, divorce remains the most direct and serious. Michael McManus of Marriage Savers writes that “divorce is a far more grievous blow to marriage than today’s challenge by gays.”

Why more public attention is not on divorce—or is seemingly focused elsewhere—is obviously a question (and concern) that warrants more attention on my part. After all, divorce and the loss of my children are in terms of crisis in my life—at least thus far!

In my own limited discussion of the topic and its relations, I have come to realize that most people—and particularly those who have not experienced divorce—are not aware of (or concerned about) the magnitude of the crisis. But then, they are not aware that a person can lose his children through no-fault divorce having done nothing legally wrong or potentially wrong through marriage and family relations.

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Continuing in *Divorced from Reality*, Baskerville adds:

Most Americans would be deeply shocked if they knew what goes on today under the name of divorce. Indeed, many are devastated to discover that they can be forced into divorce by procedures entirely beyond their control. Divorce licenses unprecedented government intrusion into family life, including the power to sunder families, seize children, loot family wealth, and incarcerate parents without trial. Comprised of family courts and vast, federally funded social services bureaucracies that wield what amount to police powers, **the divorce machinery has become the most predatory and repressive sector of government ever created in the United States and is today’s greatest threat to constitutional freedom.**

Okay, what do you think now?

Within this social crisis is an enormous even—perhaps inestimable—cost that far outweighs the monies levied in attorney’s fees, court costs, and other *profit centers* of the divorce industry.

In April of 2008, MSNBC published an article, “Study: Divorce, unwed parenting costs billions”. From the article, the following:

Divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$112 billion a year, according to a study commissioned by four groups advocating more government action to bolster marriages.

...There have been previous attempts to calculate the cost of divorce in America. But the sponsors of the new study, being released Tuesday, said theirs is the first to gauge the broader cost of "family fragmentation" -- both divorce and unwed childbearing.

But the cost borne by the public is not just about unwed childbearing or the lower classes of society. Divorce has long made its way to the middle class too, as Stephen Baskerville writes in *The Failure of “Family Policy”*.

Over the years, child support has increasingly functioned less as a way to reduce or recover welfare costs and more as a forced subsidy on middle-class divorce. States are paid by federal taxpayers based on the amount they collect. **This encourages them to neglect welfare families, for whom the program was designed, because there is little money to be had.**

Wait a minute! Is he saying that states are subsidized by federal taxpayers to enforce child support collections? Is he saying further that states have turned divorce into an opportunity for increased taxations and support of state revenues? I think that is what he is saying....as he continues:

Instead, enforcement agencies have shifted their focus to middle-class families, for whom the program was never intended, because they can collect large sums and, with them, lucrative federal funds, which can then be spent for any purpose. **Using child support, state governments found they could raise revenue through the growth of single-parent homes.**

Surely the states—or more broadly a *free society*—would not exploit the weaknesses or vulnerabilities of families by encouraging and enabling divorce for gain. Well, I cannot say for sure, but it seems plausible considering the system so described in this article and in other sources of similar topic and subject.

A juggernaut is a powerful, irresistible force. This juggernaut seems to be largely unstoppable...as though the “storm of the century” or some similar climatic event or natural occurrence. For this *second to none* loss of my life and, more generally, the “greatest social crisis of our day”, the “encouraging and enabling” of divorce has been very real and vivid. As to the source or genesis of this indomitable force, Baskerville briefly explains:

Beginning in the 1970’s, America quietly embarked on the boldest social experiment in her history. With no public discussion of the possible consequences, laws were enacted in virtually every jurisdiction that ended marriage as a legal contract and precluded couples from creating binding agreements to rear children. Regardless of the terms on which a marriage is entered, government officials can now, at the request of one spouse, simply dissolve it over the objection of the other and with no penalty to the moving party. As far as the federal and state governments are concerned, all couples are cohabiting.

And what has been the consequence (or aftermath) of this path of destruction?

Stephen explains, again in brief:

The divorce revolution weakened marriage and fatherhood among members of the middle class in striking parallel to what welfare inflicted on the poor. In addition, the surge in divorce has expanded the welfare state itself to include the middle class, turning programs conceived to address the problems of low-income, single-parent homes into financial incentives for middle-class divorce.

With such a force in full swing, where lies the hope for healing—or the possibility for any parental reconciliation of families torn asunder? This single question has been on my mind for many years and, even now, remains a fixation because of an opposing force called love. **Yes, love is a powerful force too.**

*With such a force...where lies the hope for healing?
Yes, love is a powerful force too.*

Mind you, I have had plenty of possibilities to lose hope—given the developing knowledge of the magnitude and might of this juggernaut. I have obviously read much on the matter and have posted much to my Website and elsewhere. Further, I have joined the ranks of the American Coalition of Fathers and Children (ACFC) and the National Fatherhood Initiative

(fathers.org) in engaging public policy and the general blight that has marked this national (and international) crisis. Yes, I have not always sat passively by or *thrown in the towel* or obliged this *law of the land* that has become a scourge; but have come about with oar in the water and face to the wind—a tempest though it be.

The subscribed organizations and other materials have been instrumental in helping me juggle the juggernaut—of understanding the madness behind *The Mess*, and of realizing the special interests that gave birth to the deceptively-ennobled rights to divorce, and the system that has encouraged and enabled divorce and its debt to society. Oh yes, I have seen what Milton Friedman describes as the “unholy war” of social causes where, behind the “do-gooders”, are the special interests (the divorce industry, feminism, etc.) with ulterior motives such as the .

As with the say, “the more you learn, the less you know”, my pursuit of knowledge and involvement has been mixed with the shear might of the force—or the more you learn, the less hope you have.... Clearly the force that has so radically reduced marriage from a covenant to a convenience deserves respect—if for no other reason then they have been able to “play upon the natural sympathy for women children”, as described by Baskerville once again.

These programs are virtually unassailable, not only because they balance state budgets, but because they play upon our natural sympathy for women and children. Anyone questioning child support incurs feminist charges of defending “deadbeat dads.” Further, by appealing to superficially conservative values, feminists have gained allies among centrist Democrats as well as the neoconservatives who dominate Republican family policy. Even family-values conservatives are reluctant to challenge policies they know to be driving single motherhood and criminalizing fatherhood.

The war rages on—as does the deep-seeded anger behind it! But to counter this magnanimous might of so-called social reform, what can the much maligned father do? How can anyone fight or face such policies or systems—composed of both “do-gooders” and special interests...backed by the vested interest of the state? Well, they surely cannot count on politics...or society at large.

Time may be an ally because, as our nation continues with unprecedented spending, the programs that have unwritten child enforcement— and its consequences—**may falter**. Such a statement might seem cruel to the general reader because children of divorce need financial help or assistance; but the tenor of the statement is not insensitivity to children's needs, but concerns the consequences that a taxed-based child enforcement system has rendered. If this system of child enforcement has encouraged and enabled divorce— perpetuating the problem—then it needs to see its end. Derailment of the *money train* may not happen real soon however, and so *the beat goes on* with policies in opposition to fathers, families and marriage.

Time may be an ally in another way for, as the circumstances unfold or become more adverse, perhaps politics and society at large will become more aware and active on behalf of the millions of children whose best interests have been heretofore been neglected. But while time passes, the fathers may patiently press-on by the basic, yet powerful, force called love. Yes, love is a power force too.

What a non-custodial parent must realize is that he does matter (to his children); and that he does matter to society. One of the consequences of divorce can be to devalue this parent—to make him believe that he is no more valuable than the sum of child support or his tax liability to the state. I make this statement with the admission that I have struggled with my own worth. Not having seen my children in eight years—though trying to do so—has left me with those feelings or disposition of worthlessness. One way to quash the myth of being worthless is to understand that deprivations for children that are (or have been) without a dad in their life. In *Fatherless America*, David Poponoe offers his observations:

Fatherless (America) contributes to a decline of character and competence in children. Today, a growing character (-based) deficit is widely evident in our society, affecting countless aspects of children's behavior and mental health...Children doing without a father's money is the easy part. Money influences what you have and what you can do.

The non-custodial can still make a positive contribution toward his children, their character. He can show them love in the midst of his losses and his longing to be so much more. The ACFC offers some encouraging words for the post-divorce parent. From *A Shared Parenting Tool-Kit*:

We can make positive improvements in our relationships no matter what the past history has been. Divorce often brings a who new set of problems...and challenges...and how one views the challenges is what gives the feelings of being peaceful, powerful or useful...we can work things out.

So, the non-custodial's job is not over as a parent—as a positive influence in his children's lives. Sure, he must do some portion of "Juggernaut Juggling", but he has the greatest force that any parent can have; he has love.