

The Politicization Of Motherhood (Part One)

by Mike Ford

Forerunner, "WorldWatch," November-December 2017

For decades in America and most of the Western world, the modern feminist movement has led an outright assault on the nuclear family, attempting to redefine the once-beloved and sacrosanct role of motherhood. With roots dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, radical feminist thought slowly wormed its way into contemporary political conversation. Slowly shedding their radical stigma, feminist leaders masterfully appealed to the emotions of Main Street, small-town America, convincing many that a life exclusively dedicated to raising children and running a home was a shameful waste of time and resources and beneath the dignity of any “intelligent” woman.

Diatribes from feminists and their slavish, media sycophants dominate American political conversation, focusing only on the importance of equality in the workplace. “We need women fighting fires, fighting wars, and commanding battleships,” they say. And if a woman does decide to have a child instead of an abortion, then the only enlightened way to proceed is for mom to drop that kid off at daycare and let someone else raise it! It is too important for the movement that “mom” returns to her “real” job outside of the home as soon as possible.

Amidst all this liberal absurdity, though, comes author Erica Komisar and her new book, *Being There: Why Prioritizing Motherhood in the First Three Years Matters*.

Journalist James Taranto interviewed Ms. Komisar about her new book in the October 28-29, 2017, weekend edition of the *Wall Street Journal*:

Motherhood used to be as American as apple pie. Nowadays it can be as antagonistic as American politics. Ask Erica Komisar.

Ms. Komisar, a political liberal, tells me she has become “a bit of a pariah” on the left. The premise of [her] book—backed by research in psychology, neuroscience, and epigenetics—is that “mothers are biologically necessary for babies,” and not only for the obvious reasons of pregnancy and birth. “Babies are much more neurologically fragile than we’ve ever understood,” Ms. Komisar says. She cites the view of one neuroscientist, Nim Tottenham of Columbia University, “that babies are born without a central nervous system” and “mothers are the central nervous system to babies” especially for the first nine months after birth.

What does that mean? “Every time a mother comforts a baby in distress, she’s actually regulating that baby’s emotions from the outside in. After three years, the baby internalizes that ability to regulate their emotions, but not until then.” For that reason, mothers “need to be there as much as possible, both physically and emotionally, for children in the first 1,000 days.”

The regulatory mechanism is oxytocin, a neurotransmitter popularly known as the “love hormone.” Oxytocin, Ms. Komisar explains, “is a buffer against stress.” Mothers produce it when they give birth, breastfeed or otherwise nurture their children. “The more oxytocin the mother produces, the more she produces it in the baby” by

communicating via eye contact, touch, and gentle talk. The baby's brain, in turn, develops oxytocin receptors, which allow for self-regulation at a later age.

Women produce more oxytocin than men do, which answers the obvious question of why fathers aren't as well-suited as mothers for this sort of "sensitive, empathetic nurturing." People "want to feel that men and women are fungible [mutually interchangeable]," observes Ms. Komisar—but they aren't, at least not when it comes to parental roles.

Ms. Komisar's research reflects the hope that some common sense can be injected back into the political discussion—long since abandoned by most conservative or religious politicians, corporate heads, or community leaders—that children and society are better served when mom is encouraged to stay home, raising and nurturing her young children just as our Creator designed. Immediately, the words of Solomon from Proverbs 29:15 come to mind: "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

Predictably, however, the liberal backlash has been considerable.

In the next issue, we will focus on this backlash and the trouble it portends for a civilization teetering on the edge of disaster in these troubled end times.