

JOSHUA RAMOS  
University of Denver

DEMOGRAPHICS AS DESTINY:  
GLOBALIZATION AND THE RESURGENCE OF RELIGION THROUGH  
FERTILITY

The developed world, and increasingly the developing world, is beginning to experience an unprecedented demographic transition that can best be summarized as a *population recession* because of several decades of falling fertility rates that are well below replacement levels. The reasons for this demographic decline are primarily ideational—a result of the liberalization of values that arrived through the processes of modernization and secularization—which has led to an ethics of cultural individualism and self-realization that engenders low fertility. Through the mediascape this fertility behavior, originally a practice of the upper and middle class of Western countries, became globalized. However, the exception to this behavior comes from the religious, whose fertility rates remain either at or above replacement level. The religious are globally resisting the trend towards declining fertility rates, since they are shaped by an ethos that facilitates pronatalism, rooted in scriptural mandates such as ‘be fruitful and multiply’ and upon pre-modern traditions that support and encourage high fertility behavior. This fertility advantage among the religious will account for exponentially increasing amounts of their population share in the near future, and when taking this advantageous fertility in conjunction with increasing global migration, by no later than the end of this century there will be, in the shaping of things to come, cultural and political consequences particularly felt within the public sphere of the developed Western world, posing a challenge to progressive, liberal values and political identities.

*Globalization and Religious Demography*

Since the last four decades, we have witnessed an era of global resurgence in every major world religion, affecting a dramatic increase in the relative power and influence of religion within the dominant political structures and global civil society. The discursive reality of religion is becoming increasingly active and more assertive within the public sphere, and is obtaining a wider scale of influence that extends beyond the domestic and into the greater dimensions of the global. The rise of the transnational influence of religion is due to the modernization within technologies of communication and media, as well as the various

processes of globalization and the modern values of democracy.<sup>1</sup> Though these factors of hyper-rate global communication and universal expansion of democratic values were first thought to pose critical challenges to the growth and social cohesion of the religious communities, the response of the religious to globalization was largely accommodating toward these processes and thus effectively became assimilated, whether through its participation in global civil society as a force for peace within the 'ecumenism' of human rights, or in the reaction of anti-globalism religious networks who paradoxically use modern communicative technologies as a countervailing platform and vehicle for terrorism and violence.

The resurgence of religion must also be understood within the dynamics of human population, which if we follow Australian Professor of Global Studies Manfred Steger's definition of globalization as principally "shifting forms of human contact"<sup>2</sup>, central to any theory of religion and globalization would necessitate a demographic dimension. "Demography is destiny" – a phrase coined in the 1970's by Ben Wattenberg and Richard Scammons in *The Real Majority*, suggests the capable dynamic of changes in human population to powerfully and persuasively shape the political and cultural landscape of any given nation or state. One can criticize this by saying that to understand demography in terms of destiny is yet another reductionism that impinges on the freedom of human choice. But this is to largely miss the point, for as American political scientist Jack Goldstone points out, "to admit that demography is not destiny is not to deny its power."<sup>3</sup> Goldstone likens the force of demography to the weight of gravity: inasmuch as gravity is capable of being defied through human ingenuity, this feat has not been accomplished through ignoring or dismissing its force, but has occurred rather through our own measures of gravity's interactions and understanding of its nature; this similarly applies to demography. The transformative force of social and cultural processes that reside at the core of globalization – collaboration within global civil society, conflict between religious and political identities, and the current vast increase in migration that is challenging the identity and boundaries of the nation-state – can be relatively elucidated through an investigation of the magnitude, composition and distribution of human population. As British sociologist David Voas has written, "People enter, exit, and move within religion, just as they are born, will die, and migrate, in life."<sup>4</sup> Whether for war or peace, the demographic factor "must be considered as a major factor of politics alongside classic materialist, idealist and institutional

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<sup>1</sup> See Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Shah, *God's Century* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Manfred Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2009), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Jack Goldstone, "Politics and Demography" in Goldstone, Jack, Eric P. Kaufmann and Monica Duffy Toft, eds, *Political Demography* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 276.

<sup>4</sup> Skirbekk, Vegard, Eric Kaufmann and Anne Goujon, "Secularism, Fundamentalism or Catholicism? The religious composition of the United States to 2043", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49(2): 293-310 (June 2010), 293.

perspectives”<sup>5</sup>, and should be placed within the core of any investigation of globalization and the resurgence of religion.

Within this context of globalization, demographics and the resurgence of religion, there are possible challenges to secularism within one of the basic parameters of demography, that of fertility rates. In short, in every major world religion there is a strong pro-natalist trend, and it is demographically projected that the religious are set to outbirth the non-religious at such a prodigious rate, that there will occur a stalling and possible modest reversal of secularization within the United States and Europe around 2050.<sup>6</sup> This is because dynamic changes within the religious composition of any given society – whether its relative growth or decline – entails social and political implications that alter the balance between liberalism and conservatism, as well as the values and attitudes of secularists, moderates and fundamentalists. In our case, the present transformation to take into serious consideration is the current global recession in fertility rates that finds its sharply delineated exception within the religious communities.

There is a strong connection between religiosity and fertility, and this is largely due to the force that religion plays within the social cohesion and moral tradition of these communities that are oriented towards transcendent goals. The fact is that on average “conservative religious values tend to be associated with higher fertility, while liberal secular values predict lower birthrates.”<sup>7</sup> Values stand above socioeconomics when it comes to determining the rate and amount of fertility. While most modern, secularized developed countries and many developing countries are well under the total fertility rate (TFR) of 2.1 – the ‘magic’ or ‘golden’ number for a society to reproductively replace itself – those of conservative, religious communities resist this general direction in fertility rates, choosing to remain at or above the golden number. In 2011, political scientist Eric Kaufmann along with Austrian demographers Anne Goujon and Vegard Skirbekk released the article “The End of Secularization in Europe? A Socio-Demographic Perspective” in which they argue that “a combination of higher religious fertility, immigration, and slowing rates of religious apostasy will eventually produce a reversal in the decline of the religious population in Western Europe.”<sup>8</sup> Religiosity, migration and fertility play a strong role in the United States as well, where secular Americans have an average total fertility rate of 1.66, as opposed to Catholics who average at 2.3, Protestants at 2.21, and Muslims at 2.84, and where the birthrate of those with religious conservative views in regard to abortion is two-thirds higher on average than those who hold to “pro-choice” views.<sup>9</sup> In 2010, Kaufmann, Goujon and Vegard released the first

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Monica Duffy Toft “Introduction”, *Political Demography*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Political Demography*, 209.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Political Demography*, 200.

<sup>8</sup> Kaufmann, Eric, Anne Goujon and Vegard Skirbekk, “The End of Secularization in Europe? A Socio-Demographic Perspective” *Sociology of Religion*, 73 (1): 69-91 (Spring 2012). emphasis theirs.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Political Demography*, 204.

cohort-component based projection of the main religions of the United States in *Secularism, Fundamentalism or Catholicism? The Religious Composition of the United States to 2043*, whose results showed that “the low fertility of secular Americans and the religiosity of immigrants provide a countervailing force to secularization...”<sup>10</sup> The largest immigrant cohort, Hispanic Catholics, will experience the strongest growth of any ethno-religious group, possibly expanding up to 18 percent of the American population by 2043.<sup>11</sup>

With this sort of differential fertility gap between the religious and the nonreligious, and between those with conservative and liberal values and beliefs, Kaufmann and Skirbekk project the possibility that “American religious conservatism will most likely strengthen in years to come unless liberals close the fertility gap.”<sup>12</sup> And if religious conservatism rises through an increase of its stock and an expansion of its culture, what challenges will this bring to the values and identities within the quarters of liberalism?<sup>13</sup> Certainly it stands to offset the effect of liberalism within the United States and Europe, however modest or however grand. Yet, a further question to be raised is: does modern, secular, political/cultural liberalism contain the necessary resources of tradition, social cohesion and *civitas* – “the spontaneous willingness to make sacrifices for some public good”<sup>14</sup> – necessary to close this fertility gap between those conservative religious communities who value high fertility in their doctrine (to be fruitful and multiply) and ethos (eschatological sacrifice for the world to come). Eric Kaufman is skeptical of liberalism’s pro-natalist capability, for as social theorist Daniel Bell has pointed out in his *Contradiction of Capitalism*, there is located within modern, liberal society a fundamental contradiction, which is “the relation between self-interest and the public interest, between personal impulses and community requirements.”<sup>15</sup> The present cultural condition is characterized by a sense of individual *entitlements*, an argot that often masks under the pretensions of human flourishing, which at its core resembles more ‘unrestrained appetite’ and unfettered individualistic impulse than the realization of the public good. In the modern realm of human reproduction and childbearing—where self-interest and individualistic aesthetic impulse, to say the least, is not necessarily a virtue towards achieving high fertility—we may perhaps find here the vulnerability of liberalism and secularization. As Kaufmann put it, “liberalism’s demographic contradiction—individualism leading to the choice not to reproduce—may

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<sup>10</sup> Skirbekk, Vegard, Eric Kaufmann and Anne Goujon, “Secularism, Fundamentalism or Catholicism? The religious composition of the United States to 2043 *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49(2): 293-310 (June 2010), 293.

<sup>11</sup> “Secularism, Fundamenalism, or Catholicism?”, 304.

<sup>12</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk, “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Political Demography*, 202.

<sup>13</sup> By liberalism I mean the continuous development of individual rights and civil liberties that favor and procure behaviors and progressive social conditions that figure away from traditional norms.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Bell, *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 25.

<sup>15</sup> Bell, 250.

well be the agent that destroys it.”<sup>16</sup> In short, religious growth via high fertility rates, in direct opposition to the low fertility rates of the nonreligious, will become a major impetus of social, cultural and political change within the context of globalization and the resurgence of religion in the ensuing decades.

This triumph of religious fertility has its precedence in Western history. Just take American sociologist Rodney Stark’s *The Rise of Christianity* for example, who argues that, “superior fertility played a significant role in the rise of Christianity.”<sup>17</sup> Christian fertility had far surpassed that of the Greco-Roman empire – which was already well below 2.1 replacement levels at the inception of Christianity – through its refusal of “the attitudes and practices that caused pagans to have low fertility”<sup>18</sup> Christianity rejected the common Greco-Roman pagan cultural patterns of fertility: abortion, infanticide of females and deformed males, birth control devices, divorce, cohabitation, and any other social factors which lead to a natural decrease in fertility rates. The ethos and habits of fertility within Christianity, which was a result from Judaism’s scriptural injunction to ‘be fruitful and multiply’, encouraged pronatalism through the cultural pattern of marital fidelity and the moral reinforcement of the marital conjugal act as bearing a natural connection to reproduction. These values and practices of pronatalism that characterized the spirit of Christianity crucially aided its growth within the Greco-Roman empire, and among other important social factors, Christianity saw its rise from a population of about 1,000 Christians from the year 40 C.E. to a robust estimate of around 33 million by 350 C.E. This pattern of growth, which Rodney Stark averages to about 40 percent per decade, mimics the growth of 20<sup>th</sup> century Mormonism, which averaged at 43 percent per decade.<sup>19</sup> Monica Duffy Toft traces this growth to Mormonism’s “strongly pro-natalist theology, history and subculture...”<sup>20</sup> that presently continues to have a strong influence on Mormon fertility.

Mormonism has grown into a more visible contender in the public square. In 2004, the GOP received 97 percent of the Mormon vote, which is “the most partisan voting record of any ethnic or religious group in the United States.”<sup>21</sup> They have recently pervaded the television, Internet, and billboards with the cultural campaign “I am a Mormon”, and were also instrumental in placing one of their own as the 2012 Republican Party presidential nominee. This influential growth of a religious group that solidly identifies with a particular set of values is the visible effect of a pro-natalist theology and an ethos of high fertility. Much like the rise of Christianity in the Greco-Roman era, what happens in the private sphere of reproductive choice does not remain silent in the public square.

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<sup>16</sup> Eric Kaufman, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth?* (London: Profile Books, 2010), xx.

<sup>17</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 112.

<sup>18</sup> Stark, 122.

<sup>19</sup> Stark, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, “Wombfare”, *Political Demography*, 221-223.

<sup>21</sup> Duffy, 223.

*Fertility Decline in a Global Context*

Political theologies of pronatalism must be set within the greater global context of our present demographic situation. The world is on the cusp of a demographic transition that can reasonably be described in the terms of an upheaval or revolution. The 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the age of 'greying' or hyperaging cohorts within the world's developed countries, which will shrink their labor forces and direct economic strength to the world's developing countries.<sup>22</sup> In conjunction with the age 'greying' will also come the global plummet of fertility rates. The world's population as a whole has initialized a reversal in its momentum towards growth and is set on a trajectory towards decline. There is a common perception, due in part to the effects of human overcrowding taking place in urbanization and the all too apparent wastefulness in our age of hyper consumption, that we are overpopulating and possibly headed towards an ecological disaster of cataclysmic proportions. This is a hangover from the force of mortality decline that took place with the onset of industrialization and modern advancements in technologies and medicine. This first demographic transition, which took place roughly around the onset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, initiated a mixed condition of high fertility in conjunction with low mortality, and thus created a watershed population boom. This vast increase in population drew attention and speculation from people such as the English cleric Thomas Malthus, who's famous *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, set the demographic trend for the next two centuries by essentially arguing that prodigious population growth makes possible the condition for national poverty. Malthus reasoned that human population should be understood in terms of total population vs. total resources, and that the overwhelming demands of population through proliferation of human fertility without any set limitations would inevitably outweigh the supply of resources. Over a century later the Malthusian thesis developed into its most sensational expression, when during the mid 1960's Paul Ehrlich's released *The Population Bomb*, a best seller that predicted mass starvations and other forms of cataclysm due to overpopulation. This landmark work fueled the common public perception of an imminent population disaster to come. Ehrlich's cautionary tales along with others of its ilk influenced opinions to limit the growth of human population, advocating that considerable change and policy measures in the area of reproductive rights should begin to take place in order to allay the consequences and fears of wide spread famine, global ecological catastrophe and wide scale energy resource depletion.

The alarmist overpopulation thesis is now largely if not entirely discredited. First, consider that the United Nations Population Division projects that the terminus to our global population growth is around 2050, which all things being equal, will balance at around 9.15 billion people.<sup>23</sup> This terminus to global population growth must also take into account

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<sup>22</sup> See Jack A. Goldstone "The New Population Bomb", *Foreign Affairs* January/February 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Jack Goldstone, "The New Population Bomb", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2010, 31.

coextensive global fertility recession. The world's total fertility rate was at 6.0 when Ehrlich released his sensational book, yet since then, within the course of three to four decades the global TFR sunk to an average of 2.52.<sup>24</sup> Ben Wattenberg was in the 1980's pointing out in his *The Birth Dearth* that fertility rates all over the nations of the developed world had already dipped well below the TFR magic number 2.1 children. Then around 2004, Wattenberg was still able to maintain his earlier depopulation thesis, writing bluntly in his book *Fewer* that "never have birth and fertility rates fallen so far, so fast, so low, for so long, in so many places, so surprisingly".<sup>25</sup> This precipitous drop in fertility rates that he saw in the late 80's had not yet abated—as predicted or hoped for by some pundits—and simply continued in its unprecedented global free fall. Wolfgang Lutz and his associates in the World Population Program at IIASA in Austria maintain that: "Over the last three decades birth rates have been on the decline in virtually all countries of the world, and it is estimated that already more than half of the world's population has below replacement level fertility...An increasing number of countries have birth rates that are not just somewhat below replacement fertility, but far below that level."<sup>26</sup> Additionally, this fertility decline, insofar as is known, has no prominent reason for a probable reversal without the implementation of pro-natalist policy measures. The presumption of a naturally occurring permanent equilibrium within human fertility rates is at best hopeful, and at worst naïve. In other words, there is a threshold of human fertility decline that is able to be traversed, a supposed bottom line 'safety net' that is possible to collapse under the burden of the will to not reproduce. What now characterizes modernity is the force of fertility's uninterrupted descent.

There is at current offered a vast constellation of reasons and interdependent connections for the global decline in fertility: those that are institutional, issues of gender equality, our present economic crisis, our present economic growth, increasing access towards education, the population density of urbanization, the loss of ruralization, and matters as mundane as infant car seats or the ongoing battle between bobo dog owners and bobo parents over claims to common territory in our city parks. The most prominent reason offered, however, is a feature of Second Demographic Transition Theory, which argues that there was an ideational shift from a concern for the well being of the family to the concern for the well being of the individual. Developed by the Belgian demographer Ron Lesthaeghe and Dutch demographer Dirk van de Kaa, Second Demographic Transition theorizes that *individual preference* determines fertility rate, disputing the common and classical notion that

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<sup>24</sup> Jonathan V. Last, *What to Expect When No One's Expecting: America's Coming Demographic Disaster* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2013), 27. See also United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, 2011. <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Excel-Data/fertility.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Ben Wattenberg, *Fewer* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), 5. Emphasis his.

<sup>26</sup> Wolfgang Lutz, Vegard Skirbekk and Maria Rita Testa, *The Low Fertility Trap Hypothesis: Forces that may lead to further postponement and fewer births in Europe*, 3. [http://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/download/edrp\\_4\\_05.pdf](http://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/download/edrp_4_05.pdf)

socioeconomic development is the all-encompassing framework for fertility decline. In observing the population trends of fertility decline that took place in the mid 1960's, which according to American demographer John Caldwell was the historical moment when the world experienced "almost certainly the first major global decline in history,"<sup>27</sup> Lesthaeghe and van de Kaa perceived that when it comes to conceiving children, the individual's concern exceeds a simple bottom line of economic well-being, income and available resources. What is preoccupying the popular imagination is a sense of self-fulfillment, which can be described as personal ambitions of a post-materialist nature that regards individual freedom towards self-expression and self-realization as the penultimate consummation of livelihood. These European demographers borrowed their definition of 'post-materialism' from the American political scientist Ronald Inglehart, who defines post-materialists as those who "place more emphasis on self-fulfillment through careers, rather than through ensuring the survival of the species", and whose telos of life is aimed "out of the family toward broader social and leisure activities" which foster cultural individualism.<sup>28</sup>

The shift towards the invested wellbeing and happiness of the individual has its origins with the invested wellbeing and happiness of the family. This was first theorized by the French historian Philippe Aries, who when noticing the onset of childlessness that was becoming increasingly endemic to his native France and surrounding Europe in the mid 1960's, theorized that a transition was taking place within the organization of family life. Philippe Aries writes:

"The ways people look at life usually are determined by more mysterious, more indirect causes, I feel that a profound, hidden, but intense relationship exists between the long term pattern of the birth rate and attitudes toward the child. The decline in the birth rate that began at the end of the eighteenth century and continued until the 1930's was unleashed by an enormous sentimental and financial investment in the child. I see the current decrease in the birth rate as being, on the contrary, provoked by exactly the same attitude. The days of the child-king are over. The under-forty generation is leading us into a new epoch, *one in which the child, to say the least, occupies a smaller place.*"<sup>29</sup>

Aries argues that during the days of the 'child-king' there was a 'bourgeois model' of the family characterized by 'altruistic ends' in the reproduction and rearing of children. This

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<sup>27</sup> John C. Caldwell, "The Globalization of Fertility Behavior" in Bulatao, Rudolfo and John B. Casterline ed. *Global Fertility Transition* (New York: The Population Council, 2001), 93.

<sup>28</sup> Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Dirk van der Kaa, *The Idea of Second-Demographic Transition in Industrialized Countries*, 4-5. Paper presented by van de Kaa at the Sixth Welfare Policy Seminar of the National Institute of Population and Social Security, Tokyo, Japan, 29 January 2002, [http://www.ipss.go.jp/webj-ad/webjournal.files/population/2003\\_4/kaa.pdf](http://www.ipss.go.jp/webj-ad/webjournal.files/population/2003_4/kaa.pdf)

'altruism' entailed investing in the quality of the children's education and future, which thereby required limiting the quantity of children that the parents would conceive in order to procure the social and economic resources necessary for their progeny's success and security. However, this same 'sentimental and financial investment' shifted to what Aries calls the 'individualistic model', in which the emphasis was no longer placed on the flourishing of the children but rather on the flourishing and self-interests of the parents. The parents were to then interpret children in terms of how they would possibly benefit the happiness and self-fulfillment of the parents themselves. This model of cultural individualism and self-realization of the parents became the new reasoning behind their desire in conceiving children, and affected the parent's decision when choosing how many children to bear, which became fewer and fewer.

An additional social factor to consider that was crucial in achieving low fertility was the widespread use of efficient, modern contraception since the mid twentieth century. Dirk van de Kaa notes that, "the availability of new, highly effective means of contraception had created a sort of 'second contraceptive revolution' as it was later called".<sup>30</sup> This revolution that made contraception convenient and morally acceptable to the general public weakened the male's total control of fertility by the traditional contraceptive methods of *coitus interruptus* and condoms, and empowered the female in her control over sexual activity and fertility with the efficiency encapsulated in the pill and other modern methods. Wolfgang Lutz lays out the problem clearly: "...through the introduction of modern contraception, the evolutionary link between the drive for sex and procreation has been broken and now reproduction is merely a function of individual preferences and culturally determined norms."<sup>31</sup> Post-materialist cultural individualism coupled with modern contraception proved a wrecking ball to maintaining replacement level fertility.

Further, this ideational shift towards low fertility was a "marginal behavior" that developed into the "potentially universal," as put by French demographer Jean-Claude Chesnais, fellow of the Institute for Demographic Studies in Paris.<sup>32</sup> What was once the practice of the bourgeois middle and upper class within developed countries became the endemic practice of the mass culture. This globalized expansion of cultural liberalism took place through the mediascape, initiating imitation of these particular cultural representations of human fertility and reproductive behavior. Daniel Bell theorized in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* that, "The life style once practiced by a small cénacle, is now copied by many.... [and] this change of scale gave the culture of the 1960's its special surge, coupled with the fact that a bohemian life-style once limited to a tiny elite is now acted out on the giant screen of the

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<sup>30</sup> Van der Kaa, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Eric Kaufman, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 51.

<sup>32</sup> Jean-Claude Chesnais, "Comment: A March Towards Population Recession", in Bulatao, Rudolfo and John B. Casterline, *Global Fertility Transition*, 255.

mass media.”<sup>33</sup> Needless to say, mass media since the 60’s has come a long way, and what is ‘acted out on the giant screen’ is directed through the global system of the Internet and the marketing of Hollywood culture to widen its scale and scope of reach. This engineering of human desire through the mediascape produces what Vegard Skirbekk calls a ‘low-fertility trap’, where “low fertility begets lower desired fertility, which in turn drives fertility even lower, and so on...”<sup>34</sup> As the ‘golden’ or ‘magic’ replacement number of 2.1 children begins to seem as one too many, family size increasingly diminishes to smaller amounts, and each successive generation becomes acclimated and accustomed to further small families. This sub-par amount becomes a cultural pattern, normalizing just how many children one may desire to conceive. This downward spiral in which modern, secularized culture hastens, a cultural lifestyle of unfettered enjoyment and self-interest that removes the impediments to its own realization—which is in this case turns out to be children—is resisted, however, by the fecund communities of the religious.

#### *Global Wombfare*

Political regimes subsequently follow demographic regimes. Eastern Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart, writing of the cultural wars that are antagonizing the United States, considered how those with conservative tendencies may truly resist and rebel against the widespread libertine culture that has become by his estimation, dissolute. After considering a range of options, Hart playfully yet provocatively concludes that: “Probably the most subversive and effective strategy we might undertake would be one of militant fecundity: abundant, relentless, exuberant and defiant childbearing. Given the reluctance of modern men and women to be fruitful and multiply, it would not be difficult, surely, for the devout to accomplish—in no more than a generation or two—a demographic revolution.”<sup>35</sup> Though Hart, as he later made clear in another article to his outraged detractors, was writing more to amuse than actually obliging the faithful towards ‘militant fecundity’, his kind of rhetoric is authentically mobilized in other religious communities, such as in the protestant ‘Quiverfull’ movement in the United States, or in Yaser Arafat’s notion of a ‘biological time bomb’ of Palestinian high fertility set to explode and disrupt Israel within several generations. This language and assertive ideology of active and militant and childbearing is what Harvard Professor of Public Policy Monica Duffy Toft labels ‘wombfare’, a tactic that is employed in the long term battle between the cultures of the left and right.

The political theology of wombfare is particularly acute in Israel, providing the starkest contrast of a fertility gap between the religious and nonreligious. In a society founded by secular Zionists, the demographic rise of the Haredim through pronatalism will have a significant influence on the future of the political and economic security of Israel. From 1980

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<sup>33</sup> Erick Kaufman, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 50.

<sup>35</sup> David Bentley Hart, “Freedom and Decency,” *First Things*, June/July 2004.

to 1996, the Ultra-Orthodox Jews or Haredim fertility rates grew from 6.49 to 7.61, while other Israeli Jews, seculars among them, saw a drop from 2.61 to 2.27.<sup>36</sup> Israeli economist Dan ben David, who poses this fertility gap as an ‘existential problem’, writes in the *Haaretz*, “It is difficult to overstate the pace at which Israeli society is changing...If we don’t find a way to integrate these populations into a shared Israeli narrative, and immediately, then in another generation or two—at most—the demographic balance within Israel will change the country beyond recognition.”<sup>37</sup> The high fertility within the communities of the Haredim is supported by a religious ethos that also reinforces the allegiance of the Haredim towards their religious community, and at the same time fortifies their resistance towards any possible conversion to secular beliefs. In his *Mediterranean Identity*, Professor David Ohana of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev states that “The outstanding contemporary characteristic of Israeli society is the fragmentation of the Israeli identity into secondary elements that overshadow the specific quality of Israeliness.”<sup>38</sup> For Ohana, ‘Israeliness’ represents a region of religious cross-fertilization that bridges the various cultures of the Mediterranean basin of Greece, Italy, Egypt, and Turkey into a cultural theory of Levantism, which is a humanism with a distinctive Israeli cosmopolitanism. However, the continuous growth of what Ohana calls fragmentary ‘secondary elements’ will within decades demographically eclipse the primary political and cultural whole, and through a political theology of revelation and pronatalism the values of the Haredim stand to challenge that definitive quality of ‘Israeliness’ or secular humanism to which Ohana is allied to.

As for Europe, dread was the popular symptom of the alarmist reactions towards the viral YouTube video “Muslim Demographics”, which gained more than 10 million hits within a space of two months since its inception in 2009.<sup>39</sup> This sensational phenomenon set the high fertility rates of Muslim immigrants in opposition to the low fertility rates of native Western Europeans, claiming the French Muslim TFR at 8.1 in contrast to the native French TFR at 1.8.<sup>40</sup> Though the below replacement level of the French native TFR was correct, the French Muslim TFR of the video was excessively exaggerated. Despite the inflated projections of the “Muslim Demographics” TFR, the anxiety and unease in which the video was received by the general public lays out the problem clearly: Europe’s conscience suffers disquiet from its own sense of demographic decline, its own sense of loss of identity through a challenge to the core of its culture through religious immigrants and high fertility.

This problem is exacerbated in that Europe has trouble in defining just what constitutes and unifies the cultural identity of ‘Europe’. In its pursuit of multiculturalism through the framework of secularism it seems to forget that all dialogue requires a presupposed identity,

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<sup>36</sup> *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 226.

<sup>37</sup> Dan ben David, “The Moment of Truth”, *Haaretz*, Feb. 6, 2007.

<sup>38</sup> David Ohana, *Israel and its Mediterranean Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 150.

<sup>39</sup> *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 169.

<sup>40</sup> “Muslim Demographics”, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-3X5hIFXYU>

and an assertive secularism largely fails when it comes to cultural unity and social cohesion. Europe cannot be simply identified by geographical boundaries, as it requires a social bond that is necessarily civilizational and developed from within a particular moral and cultural tradition. Yet Europe has in effect become constituted by what French sociologist Danielle Hervieu-Leger calls “amnesic societies”, which are incapable of “maintaining the memory which lies at the heart of their religious existence.”<sup>41</sup> This amnesia of Europe’s Christian religious memory and erosion of its Christian moral tradition is in part due to Europe’s own will to forget its universalizing past of violence. Europe’s recollection of its expansionist history has brought a sense of shame towards its civilizational heritage, and this shame has brought along with it a loss of self-confidence in Europe’s own Christian spiritual and religious traditions. Europe “no longer believes that what it has to offer is likely to interest those who chanced to be born outside its frontiers,”<sup>42</sup> to quote French philosopher Remi Brague. Because of this loss of memory through the violent trauma of its past, Europe has adopted an attitude of what former president of the European Commission Jacques Delors called the ‘motor’ of ‘Never Again’, which was “translated into a movement of reconciliation... [that]...was now a matter of uniting peoples and bringing nations together, without however making the nation state disappear.”<sup>43</sup> Delors believed that the ‘will towards reconciliation’ steadily marching under the banner of ‘Never Again’ needed a necessary cultural or spiritual bond that was absent in the discourse of constructing a European Union. Delors had attempted to bring Christian churches into the discussion of constructing a European identity, arguing that in order for Europe to achieve its goal towards unity, it must first recognize that “‘the EC lacks a heart and soul’.”<sup>44</sup> Delors understood that identifying a center or ‘heart and soul’ of Europe that unites its cultural and spiritual identity is a necessary condition towards justice, reconciliation, and unity. Yet as long as Europe continues to deny this necessity and refuse to recognize its own particular Christian heritage and moral tradition out of an unfounded fear of a return to a theocratic Medieval past or out of its debilitating remorse over its history of violent, universal expansion, it will continue to suffer from a loss of cultural, social cohesion that will leave the identity of Europe naked and “open to the expansion of newer peoples who still care for bonds of family and religion,”<sup>45</sup> as Phillip Jenkins points out in *God’s Continent*.

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<sup>41</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2000), 30.

<sup>42</sup> Remi Brague, *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization* (South Bend, IN: St Augustine’s Press, 2002), 185.

<sup>43</sup> Lucian N. Leustan, “Does God matter in the European Union” in Leustan, Leustan, ed., *Representing Religion in the European Union*, (New York, Routledge, 2013), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Leustan., 2.

<sup>45</sup> Phillip Jenkins, *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10.

### Conclusion

Liberalism does not in of itself necessarily entail the values of post-materialism and an ethics of self-fulfillment that leads one to loosen the bonds of tradition and family in order to pursue a life of unrestricted leisure and pleasure. It is possible to uphold within the values and practices of liberalism a life that regards altruism, traditions and the wellbeing of family. This possible practice of liberalism requires a substantial measure of self-restraint, and would indeed negate the demographic contradiction of the choice not to reproduce. However, what is increasingly encroaching upon and intertwining within liberalism's comprehensive doctrine is a different variant of a libertine attitude of individualism that can rightly be called 'the cult of self', which erodes any discipline, self-restraint and contradicts the cohesion of tradition and the community requirements necessary to engender an ethos of high fertility and procure the will to reproduce. Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Chris Hedges writes that "the cult of self dominates our cultural landscape...It is the ethic of unfettered capitalism. It is the misguided belief that personal style and personal advancement, mistaken for individualism, are the same as democratic equality...We have a right, in the cult of the self, to get whatever we desire."<sup>46</sup> The modern cult of self-realization is naturally incompatible with producing large families and will continue to reduce fertility rates and reproduce the cultural imitations that globalize the 'low fertility trap'.

The current discussion of falling fertility is permeated with intimations of anxiety about the fate of our common human future, and in particular the future of progressive liberalism. The main cohort of below replacement fertility comes directly from the stock of the non-religious, or from those whose religious values are moderated with liberalism and tempered with cultural individualism—in other words, the religious difference between the mainline and the conservative. With the pronatalism of conservatives and fundamentalists standing in direct opposition to the paltry fertility of the non-religious, parts of societies will grow increasingly puritanical in its mores, further engendering the various 'culture wars' and challenging liberal values in areas such as marriage and sexual normativity. In surveying the decline of global birthrates in modern, secularized societies, Phillip Longman—an American demographer and Schwartz Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation—bluntly asks: "Does the future belong to fundamentalism?"<sup>47</sup> He cautions that, "In a world of falling human population only fundamentalists would draw new strength. For the deep messages of the Bible and the Koran, and of all the world's ancient religions, are relentlessly pronatal..."<sup>48</sup> and that unless a solution is to be found, the future could possibly "belong to those who reject markets, reject learning, reject modernity, and reject freedom. This will be

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<sup>46</sup> Chris Hedges, *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (New York, NY: Perseus Books), 33.

<sup>47</sup> Phillip Longman, *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity [And What To Do About It]* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 171.

<sup>48</sup> Longman, 4.

the fundamentalist moment.”<sup>49</sup> What haunts the imagination of the modernized West is a return back to its pre-modern religious past through the modern processes of globalization: that of immigration, political theologies of ‘wombfare’, and the force of declining global fertility.

The rhetoric of assertive ‘wombfare’, however, must be balanced with a more nurturing picture of a ‘wombcare’. Despite the militant pro-natalist rhetoric within many communities of the religious, it must be remembered that an ethos of fertility and childrearing is an aspect of the virtues of faith, hope and charity. Take for instance Patriarch Ilia II of the Georgian Orthodox Church. After its release from the USSR and fallout of the civil war, Georgia was experiencing a fertility collapse, reaching a bottom low of 1.39 by 2003. Patriarch Ilia II, observing the crisis in fertility, responded by promising in 2007 that he would personally baptize any child born to parents who already had two or more children. Within a year Georgia’s birth rates increased by 20 percent, growing from 48,000 to 57,000 by 2008.<sup>50</sup> In this particular case it was Baptism, and not bonuses, bayonets or bombs that served as the primary lure to higher fertility. This push towards procreation was not strategized as an aggressive militant reprisal, but was rather a natural result of a religious community formed by its own traditional cultural and religious virtues, whose eschatological vision facilitates childbirth when called upon to do so as vocation. Children born within this community of faith are not understood as a threat to the present realities of unfettered desire and self-fulfillment, but rather as a source of hope towards building a future to come. This future is characterized by the bonds of charity that are horizontal and vertical in distribution – the horizontal bonds support and cohere the family and community in an ethos of fertility, and the vertical bonds strengthen and grant a greater vision that stands above the fulfillment of the *hic et nunc*.

Belgian demographer Dirk van de Kaa conceives the basic determinants towards child fertility within two different attitudes: “Decisive, so it would seem to me, is what people want out of life....Do they live life in order to gain an ever blissful and happy afterlife? Or do they only recognize the one life as it is to be lived here and now?”<sup>51</sup> The great global paradox is that those who look beyond the *hic et nunc* abundantly populate the present, while those who look only within the *hic et nunc* scarcely populate the present. In this rivalry of utopias, demography has in effect become eschatology, furnished with competing visions of a human future that will either encourage or discourage the will to reproduce. Whose future will be realized? The one who looks beyond and actively waits for a world to come? Or the one whose mortal coil contains the fullness of his or her existence, where today alone is sufficient enough for worries and pleasures? Shall the religious inherit the earth, as Kaufmann suggests? Or will liberalism find its way out of its current morass, and establish

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<sup>49</sup> Longman, 168-9.

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan V. Last, *What to Expect When No One is Expecting*, 157-8.

<sup>51</sup> Dirk van der Kaa, *The Idea of Second-Demographic Transition in Industrialized Countries*, 24.

its own ethos of high fertility, eschewing along the way nationalism, racism, eugenics, gender bias, and all other nasty ideologies that have crept into past pro-natalist policies in the quest for national or cultural revitalization? Heraclitus famously wrote that 'character is destiny'; over two millennia later Ben Wattenberg wrote that 'demography is destiny'. It seems that in the final analysis; when who you are and what you value determines how many you will reproduce, the two dictums are not so far off in meaning, after all.

*Joshua Ramos* is a doctoral candidate in Religious Studies in the Joint Ph.D. Program in Religious Studies at the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology, specializing in political theology and religion and global affairs. During the summer of 2013 he will be a fellow in residence for the Young Scientists Summer Program at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Vienna (IIASA), working on the theory of religion and demographics. He has published in *The Encyclopedia of Religions and Sciences* (Springer, 2013).

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