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DEMOGRAPHICS AND DECULTURATION:  
OLIVIER ROY AND THE CONTROVRERSY OVER  
RELIGIOUS NATALISM

Demography, the return of religion and secularization are linked together within the paradigm of globalization. Is there a return of religion within Western societies through the high fertility rates of religious cohorts versus the low fertility of secular cohorts? Certain demographers and political scientists have argued in favor for the scenario of the reversal of secularization through the abundant fecundity of the religious. The religious shall inherit the earth, as argued by Eric Kaufmann, through the sheer force of reproduction, because high religiosity correlates strongly with high fertility. The religious tend on average to have more children than the non-religious.

However, Olivier Roy's thesis of deculturation contradicts this possibility of the religious inheriting the earth through the overabundance of child bearing, because deculturated religion lacks the inherit ability to transmit religion and religious identity to the next generation. Deculturated religion is one that consists of personal conversion and is fundamentally a 'born-again' experience that requires an individual faith commitment towards the norms and codes of that religion. Such an individuated faith cannot be passed down within a smooth transition within secularized societies, as this kind of born-again faith requires each individual to decide for himself. Deculturated religion is the loss of nominal religion, which means the loss of religion as a cultural identity.

The demographic thesis of the reversal of religion through fertility rates is thereby contested, as the children of religious parents will be thrown into pluralized western societies where the tendency is to disaffiliate or liberalize within the secular milieu. Secularization, which correlates with low fertility rates, creates the reaction of the religious who attempt a re-sacralization through high fertility rates. Such a reaction is a characteristic of deculturated fundamentalist religion.

Furthermore, both attitudes of the secular and the religious towards childbearing are centered around *choice*, which is a byproduct of individualized autonomy. As globalization is the driving force that transforms religion into a reaction against the secularized immanent frame, this plays out in the will to reproduce and in the choice of retaining the faith. Deculturated

religion ensures that each generational cohort must make the *choice* of whether or not to retain the faith of his or her parents. For Olivier Roy, this is not likely.

### *Globalization and Religious Demography*

The resurgence of religion can be understood within the dynamics of the human population, which if we follow Manfred Steger's definition of globalization as principally "shifting forms of human contact"<sup>1</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.<sup>2</sup> One can criticize this by saying that to understand demography in terms of destiny is yet another reductionism.

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, the 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 perspectives", and should be placed within the core of any

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<sup>1</sup> Manfred Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press: 2009), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Wattenberg and Richard Scammons, *The Real Majority: An Extraordinary Examination of the American Electorate*, (Coward, McCann, and Geogohan, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> Jack Goldstone, "Politics and Demography" in Goldstone, Jack, Eric P. Kaufmann and Monica Duffy Toft, eds, *Political Demography* (Boulder, Colorado: 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.

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 birthrates. In short, in every major world religion, there is a strong pronatalist trend, and it is demographically projected that the religious are set to outbirth the non-religious at such a prodigious rate, that it is argued that there will occur a stalling and possible modest reversal of secularization within the United States and Europe around 2050.<sup>5</sup>

For 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>6</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>7</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>8</sup>

In 2010, Kaufmann, Goujon and Vegard released the first cohort-component based projection of the main religions of the United States in *Secularism, Fundamentalism or Catholicism? The*

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Political Demography*, 209.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Political Demography*, 200.

<sup>7</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>8</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Polical Demography*, 204.

*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>9</sup> The largest immigrant cohort, Hispanic Catholics, will experience the strongest growth of any ethno-religious group, expanding to 18 percent of the American population by 2043.<sup>10</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>11</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>12</sup> This shift 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>13</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).

Political scientist Eric Kaufman is skeptical of liberalism’s pronatalist 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>14</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 –

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<sup>9</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>10</sup> *Ibid.* 304.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk, “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Political Demography*, 202.

<sup>12</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>13</sup> Daniel Bell, *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1976), 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

where self-interest and individualistic aesthetic impulse, to say the least, is not necessarily a virtue toward 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 well be the agent that destroys it.”<sup>15</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.

The triumph of religious fertility has 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>16</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>17</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 of 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>18</sup>

Monica Duffy Toft traces this growth to Mormonism’s “strongly pronatalist theology, history, and subculture...”<sup>19</sup> that presently continues to have a strong influence on Mormon fertility. And Mormonism has grown into a more visible

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<sup>15</sup> Eric Kaufman, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth?* (London: Profile Books, 2010), xx.

<sup>16</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1997), 112.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, “Wombfare”, *Political Demography*, 221-223.

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>20</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 pronatalist 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.

### *Globalization of Fertility Decline*

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 upheaval or revolution. The 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the age of ‘greying’ or hyper-aging cohorts within the world’s developed countries, which will shrink their labor forces and direct economic strength to the world’s developing countries.<sup>21</sup> In conjunction with the age of the ‘greying’ cohorts there will also come the global plummet of fertility rates. The world’s population as a whole has initialized a reversal in its momentum toward growth and is set on a trajectory toward 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 an watershed population boom. This vast increase in population drew attention and speculation from people such as the English cleric Thomas Malthus, whose 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.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>21</sup> Jack Goldstone, “Politics and Demography” in Goldstone, Jack, Eric P. Kaufmann and Monica Duffy Toft, eds, *Political Demography* (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 276.

Malthus reasoned that human population should be understood in terms of total population vs. total resources and that the overwhelming demands of the population through the 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 starvation 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 widespread 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>22</sup> This terminus to global population growth must also take into account the 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>23</sup>

Ben Wattenberg was in the 1980s 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 of 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>24</sup> This precipitous drop in fertility rates that he saw in the late '80s 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:

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<sup>22</sup> Jack Goldstone, “The New Population Bomb”, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2010, 31.

<sup>23</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>24</sup> Ben Wattenberg, *Fewer* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), 5. Emphasis his.

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>25</sup>

Additionally, this fertility decline, insofar as is known, has no prominent reason for a probable reversal without the implementation of pronatalist 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 currently on offer 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 to education, the population density of urbanization, and matters as mundane as infant car seats or the ongoing battle between the so-called Bohemian bourgeois dog owners and Bohemian bourgeois parents over claims to common territory in 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 a 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 socioeconomic development is the all-encompassing framework for fertility decline. In observing the population trends of fertility decline that took place in the mid-1960s, which according to demographer John Caldwell was the historical moment when the world experienced "almost certainly, the first major global decline in history,"<sup>26</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

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<sup>25</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)

<sup>26</sup> John C. Caldwell, "The Globalization of Fertility Behavior" in Bulatao, Rudolfo and John B. Casterline ed. *Global Fertility Transition* (New York, NY: The Population Council, 2001), 93.



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>27</sup>

The shift towards the invested well-being and happiness of the individual has its origins in the invested well-being 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-1960s, 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 1930s 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>28</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 '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

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<sup>27</sup> Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 55.

<sup>28</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).

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, "the availability of new, highly effective means of contraception had created a sort of 'second contraceptive revolution' as it was later called"<sup>29</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. Post-materialist cultural individualism coupled with modern contraception proved a wrecking ball to maintaining replacement-level fertility.<sup>30</sup>

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, a fellow at the Institute for Demographic Studies in Paris.<sup>31</sup> What was once the practice of the bourgeois middle and upper class within developed countries became the endemic practice of mass culture. This globalized expansion of cultural liberalism took place through the mediascape, initiating

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>30</sup> Eric Kaufman, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Jean-Claude Chesnais, "Comment: A March Towards Population Recession", in Bulatao, Rudolfo and John B. Casterline, *Global Fertility Transition*, 255.

imitation of these particular cultural representations of human fertility and reproductive behavior. Daniel Bell theorized in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* that “the lifestyle once practiced by a small cénacle, is now copied by many.... [and] this change of scale gave the culture of the 1960s its special surge, coupled with the fact that a bohemian lifestyle once limited to a tiny elite is now acted out on the giant screen of the mass media.”<sup>32</sup>

Needless to say, mass media since the 60s 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 globalized 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>33</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 in this case turns out to be children – is resisted, however, by the fecund communities of the religious.

#### *The Resulting 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, considers how might those with conservative tendencies may truly resist and rebel against the widespread libertine culture that has become in 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>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Erick Kaufman, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 53.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>34</sup> David Bentley Hart, “Freedom and Decency,” *First Things*, June/July 2004.

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 non-religious. 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. Just between 1980-1996, 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>35</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>36</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>37</sup> For Ohana, ‘Israeliness’ represents a region of religious cross-fertilization that bridges the various

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<sup>35</sup> Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth*, 226

<sup>36</sup> Dan ben David, “The Moment of Truth”, *Haaretz*, Feb. 6, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> David Ohana, *Israel and it’s Mediterranean Identity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 150.

cultures of the Mediterranean basin of Greece, Italy, Egypt and Turkey into a cultural theory of Levantism, which is 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.

And 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. 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>38</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 lay 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 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, 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>39</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

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<sup>38</sup> "Muslim Demographics", <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-3X5hIFXYU>

<sup>39</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford University Press: 2000), 30.

Christian spiritual and religious traditions. French philosopher Remi Brague writes that Europe “no longer believes that what it has to offer is likely to interest those who chanced to be born outside its frontiers.”<sup>40</sup> 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>41</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 of unity, it must first recognize that “‘the EC lacks a heart and soul’.”<sup>42</sup> Delors understood that identifying a center or ‘heart and soul’ of Europe that unites its cultural and spiritual identity is a necessary condition for justice, reconciliation, and unity. Yet if Europe continues to deny this and refuses 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, will it 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,” as Phillip Jenkins points out in *God’s Continent?*<sup>43</sup> The problem lies with deculturation which breaks the bond of religion as a chain of memory. Europe has entered the age of *Holy Ignorance*.

### *The Criticism of Religious Transmission*

An analysis of the discussion from the perspective of Olivier Roy would raise certain issues and several critiques. The first is to point out that the thesis of post-material individualization that is driving the decline of the secular birth rate is a case in point of what Roy calls “formatting” or the standardization of religiosity, in that the secularizing conditions

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<sup>40</sup> Remi Brague, *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization* (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustine’s Press, 2002), 185.

<sup>41</sup> Lucian N. Leustan. “Does God matter in the European Union” in Leustan, Leustan, ed., *Representing Religion in the European Union*, (New York, NY, Routledge, 2013), 1.

<sup>42</sup> Phillip Jenkins, *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10.

<sup>43</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Vegard Skirbekk, “Go Forth and Multiply”, *Political Demography*, 202.

that are determining the decline of the birth rates of secular cohorts is at the same time engendering the strict religiosity that creates an uptick in the religious cohorts birth rates. Modernity is the wheel that spins culture both ways, either towards liberalization or towards fundamentalism, thus the post-material values of post-industrial societies determine the behavior of not just secular cohorts but also religious cohorts. As Roy writes, “the achievements of the Sixties have become mainstream”, and we see the *Sex and the City* ethos that contributes to the bourgeois bohemian lifestyle of low fertility rates diffused through the globalized technology of the media.<sup>44</sup>

It is a case in point of Rene Girard’s notion of *mimesis*. On the other hand, we also see the religious use of the media as well to encourage higher fertility rates and mobilize the faithful towards the choice to reproduce, such as seen with James Dobson *Focus on the Family*, or the Quiverfull Movement. Roy writes, “The family is no longer sacrosanct; opting for a family life is presented as an individual choice, a desire for self-realization and not as a compliance with some natural law.”<sup>45</sup> Globalization is the secularizing force that drives both the decline of the TFR of the secular cohorts as well as the increase of the TFR for religious cohorts.

The fact that the religious see themselves as embattled against the surrounding, hostile secular culture, and are using birth rates or “wombfare” as a form of combat, support Roy’s thesis of religion and culture parting ways. The encroaching secular culture forces the religious to reconstruct childbearing as a sacred duty to re-sacralize the godless societies through the force of re-population. The liberalized sexual mores of post-1960s secular culture puts the religious on the defensive, and therefore they stand as *reactionary*, which according to Martin Marty is the defining sole characteristic of religious fundamentalism.

The next issue is that of transmission or the passing of religious identity to the children. Roy writes,

But they all face the question: how does one transmit the faith? Particularly when the parents are converts or born-again since transmission is no longer guaranteed by the social or cultural visibility of religion....How is the experience of a breakaway to be transmitted? How can one be born from a born-again?<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Roy, *Holy Ignorance*, 217.

<sup>45</sup> Roy, *Holy Ignorance*, 217.

<sup>46</sup> Roy, *Holy Ignorance*, 215-216.

Deculturation ensures that transmission of religious identity is disrupted, and deculturation creates the potential for religious identity to be hybridized. There is therefore no longer a seamless transition from parent to child when it comes to religious affiliation. A 'breakaway', that is a 'born-again' Christian or Muslim, one who is affected by an interior religious renewal towards a strict form of religiosity, cannot construct a stable transmission of identity towards his or her children, since the faith that is experienced is one of individual commitment and decision. To be born-again from a born-again is an impossibility for Olivier Roy, or as is often heard in Christian revivalist circles: "God has children, but no grandchildren." The children must come to his or her personal conviction and experience of the faith, and can no longer solely rely on ties of family, or ethnic/cultural identity. Born-again faith disrupts all nominalist religion, which is the religion of culture, and of therefore civilization, and of therefore empire.

To ensure the transmission of religious identity requires the strict commitment of an exclusive and closed faith community. These kinds of faith communities of the fundamentalist bent are, according to Roy, too difficult to maintain by the individual in the long run, especially in light of the enticements of the surrounding materialistic and indulgent character of the secular ethos. Roy points out, "Dogmatism finds it hard to hold out in the long term if it is not upheld within a closed community. Many pass through Tablighism, Salafism, or Pentecostalism, but eventually leave."<sup>47</sup> The problem, as Roy points out, is that "one of the characteristics of modern fundamentalisms is to replace spirituality with a system of norms and codes. Sin is no longer a part of the system: when it occurs, it breaks it."<sup>48</sup>

The problem of modern fundamentalism is that it is intolerant toward any ambiguity or grey area within the realm of morality and ethics, which exacerbates its tendency toward exclusivism against its opponents or within its own adherents. The issue of exclusivity within fundamentalist religious bodies is further highlighted within the secular culture of western societies, in which the dominant sentiment is toward the ethos of inclusivity, thereby creating a visibility of religion that does not line up with the dominant secularization that is, in fact, taking place. Religion is made strange, as it is situated on the rational stage of Weber's 'iron cage'.

The attempt of parents to stop the secularization of their children is a generational problem that each set of parents must attempt to overcome. When religion and culture were embedded within a civilizational whole, the transmission of

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<sup>47</sup> Roy, *Holy Ignorance*, 216.

<sup>48</sup> Roy, *Holy Ignorance*, 216.



religious identity was not a real problem. Because of deculturation, each successive generation must reconstitute itself as a 'born-again' generation. Roy discusses evangelical leader Thomas Rainer's book *The Bridger Generation*, which is an attempt to analyze the cultural issues of the generation into which the author's son was born into, in order to effectively evangelize them and offer an appropriate Christian response.<sup>49</sup>The children of the religious are born into a secularized, pluralized climate that contributes towards a prone tendency towards disaffiliation. Yet for Roy, this attempt to re-evangelize the next generation only "highlights the exteriority of religion in relation to cultural markers", whereby there is no integral or organic link between religion and culture because of secularization.<sup>50</sup>

Deculturation then puts a burden on the older generation to "pick from the floating cultural markers and pin them to religious markers: Christian rock, *eco-kosher*, *halal* fast-food", and they "put on Christian rock parties, use 'youth' language, adopting the codes of the 'tribe' to preach to its members".<sup>51</sup> The further problem lies in that as each generation attempts to adopt the cultural markers of the successive generation in order to retain their affiliation, the cultural markers are in a state of rapid flux, suspect to the rapid changes of the free-market inherent within the process of globalization. Roy points out that, "the cultures they are targeting are in fact sub-cultures, made up of codes and modes of consumption, they are transient...sub-cultures have always existed, but they can flourish today because it is possible to exist in a virtual space."<sup>52</sup>

The memes and the technology of the virtual spaces of the internet maintain and fashion sub-cultures of the religious and the secular – such as seen with ISIS, the Alt-Right, and or the atheistic community of the Ex-Muslims – and thereby reproduce the semiotics of deterritorialization and the secularization of deculturation. What we end up with is the dromology and flux of endless reproduction and repetition of virtual sub-cultures that construct religious and non-religious identities within the over-arching immanent frame. Deculturation ensures that *the sacred canopy* becomes and remains pluralized and individuated *sacred canopies* within the various markets of the globalized secular and religious economies. The transmission of religious identity within Western society is therefore rendered interminably problematic because of the deculturation process of globalization.

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<sup>49</sup> Thomas Rainer, *The Bridger Generation*, (Broadman and Holman, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> Roy, *Holy Ignorance*, 217.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 217.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 217.