



THE FAMILY OF FAITH TODAY: SHAPING THE GLOBAL FUTURE

Remarks of Allan C. Carlson, Ph.D.
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A new, unexpected, and historically unprecedented cultural-political movement forms in our time, one born in defense of family-centered religious faith. If we look, the signs are all about us:

EXAMPLE ONE: In 1985, the British government issued *the Swann Report* on education and multi-cultural values. Behind the high-minded modernist rhetoric of multi-culturalism, the *Report* in fact was a direct attack on *all religiously-grounded cultures*, old and new. Relative to the Anglican Church of England, the report called for an end to the teaching of the Christian faith and the practice of Christian worship in the government schools. Toward ethnic and religious minorities, the *Swann Report* declared that they “may maintain their individual cultures only in so far as they are not in conflict with rationally-shared values.” In short, “multiculturalism” really meant aggressive *secularism*, the *denial* of *parental* choice, the *destruction* of the *historic* British religious culture, and the *disruption* of minority religious cultures in Britain, as well.

Yet something extraordinary happened: In the face of a new and very modern form of persecution, religious communities long at odds with each other discovered that they had more in common than they had assumed. Most dramatically, the Islamic Academy in Cambridge and the Islamic Cultural Centre in London issued a joint statement exposing the real philosophy and flawed arguments of the *Swann Report*. At the same time, these Muslim leaders argued that the existing provisions for *Christian worship* in the schools should *be retained*, as a symbol of the need for a school curriculum that respected the sacred. They asked only for the right of Muslim children to withdraw from such collective worship and assembly.

EXAMPLE TWO: The February 1999 issue of the American Roman Catholic journal *New Oxford Review* carries this letter-to-the-editor from Margaret Fox, of Latrobe, Pennsylvania:

I'm not Catholic, I'm of the Anabaptist persuasion....
Reading through the *New Oxford Review*, I've been amazed at how close various orthodox Christians are, so far as our core beliefs go. I thank the [magazine] for its articles on abortion, homosexuality, contraception, and other issues that I'm very concerned about. Actually, I feel much closer to conservative Catholics than I do to those liberal Mennonites with whom I go to church.

EXAMPLE THREE: During the 1997 United Nations Habitat conference in Nairobi, an unusual coalition of conservative Christians and orthodox Muslims

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took form, much to the consternation of the conference leaders. In the process, distrust and misunderstanding gave way to new light. As a report by NGO Family Voice, a group affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, related:

The interest of [Muslim] nations [in our work] in particular was often quite pointed. For example, during an informal 'hallway' discussion..., the Iranian Ambassador asked [one of us] several direct questions.... The Ambassador noted... that 'your group is different from the others' and inquired whether our position on the family was merely 'political posturing' or 'based on a deeper spiritual foundation.' He asked whether we thought that the family was getting stronger or decaying throughout the world... [and] suggested that his people would benefit immensely from meeting with Americans who believed in the importance of both the family and spirituality.

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR: FAMILIES

How might we account for this fresh awareness of a shared, religiously-grounded family culture? To begin with, it is important to note that this is not a new example of twentieth-century ecumenism. Those who have studied the ecumenical movement know that it has occurred largely among liberal churches and churchmen, leaders whose faith was already weak, who were willing to rewrite or even abandon long-standing doctrines in the interest of "unity." In sharp contrast, the contemporary "coming together" of religious people occurs only among the most orthodox of each group, people that are the least-likely to compromise on basic doctrine for the sake of other purposes.

All the same, there occurs with growing frequency the pleasant process of mutual discovery, as folks of deep religious conviction come to agreement and practical cooperation with persons of other faith communities once thought to be their foes. These epiphanies occur most frequently over matters of family life and sexual ethics. To understand better this coming together, we might also consider these statements from a broad array of religious faiths on the place of the family in the social order:

- (1) from the Muslim author, *Abdel Rahim Omran*, 1992: "The family is the basic social unit in Islamic society, and marriage is the fundamental Islamic institution."
- (2) From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994: "The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life."
- (3) From the Christian reformer *Martin Luther*, in 1520: Marriage is "the highest religious order on earth," while the *procreation of children* is "a divine ordinance which it is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore."
- (4) From sociologist *Benjamin Schlesinger* [1971]: "Throughout the centuries, the family has always occupied the central place in Judaism as the primary social-religious unit."
- (5) And from the Chinese scholar of Confucius, *Chang Chi'i-Yun* [1980]: "[I]t is the family, more than any other unit in society, which constitutes a solid base for national life."

Another set of quotations affirms a shared valuation of the child-rich, or large family among the faith communities:

- (a) The *Qur'an* teaches that multitude is highly regarded in Islam, that the purpose of marriage is to beget children, and that children are the adornment of life;

- (b) *Martin Luther* argued that women were created by God to conceive and bear children; they should marry early and have as many children as possible, for “this is the purpose for which they exist.” He called fathers home as well, to commit themselves to the care and rearing of children. In one passage from his essay, *The Estate of Marriage*, Luther described how “God, with all his angels and creatures,” smiled on the father who is washing diapers,” because he is doing so in Christian faith.”
- (c) Pope Pius XII declared in 1958 that “Large families are most blessed by God and specially loved and prized by the Church as its most precious treasures....Where you find families of great numbers, they point to: the physical and moral health of a Christian people; a living faith in God and trust in His Providence; the fruitful and joyous holiness of Catholic marriage.”
- (d) Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, long time leader of the Lubavitcher Hasidim, a Jewish community, stressed the importance of the command in Genesis 1:28—“Be fruitful and multiply”—in urging the creation of large families. As he spoke in 1979: “A child is not a faucet to be turned on at will. No power on earth can guarantee the birth of a baby....Such power is God’s and God’s alone....The blessing so disclaimed earlier may not be available later. Take his blessings when He offers them, gratefully, and rest assured that this third partner is benevolent...and can be trusted to know the best time.”
- (e) And finally, an early leader of the LDS Church, Heber J. Grant, stated in 1913: “I am thankful that healthy, vigorous, strong, sweet babies are the best crop of [our community], and I hope and pray earnestly that it will ever be so.”

Indeed, it was this implicit *shared agreement* among the world’s religions on the value of the large family, on the preciousness of children, that stirred earlier in this century the opponents of family, faith, and fertility into a powerful campaign. Called *neo-Malthusianism*, it stands today as the most fervent foe of God-centered, family-oriented peoples. Its power extends from the halls of the United Nations and World Bank to the newly internationalized media. When CNN’s founder, Ted Turner, recently described Christianity as a “religion for losers,” dismissed all people of religious faith as “a whole bunch of dummies,” and called for a global one-child-per-family policy, we could see the face and attitudes of the modern neo-Malthusian. It is important that we take time to understand the history and purposes of this campaign.

THE MALTHUSIAN CANCER

Ironically, the movement takes its name from an Anglican cleric. The Rev. Thomas R. Malthus laid out his basic premise in 1798, citing “the constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it.” From this bleak biological perspective, Malthus concluded that human numbers would invariably grow faster than food supplies; that each new baby generated a demand on resources which exceeded the benefits derived from the new source of labor. Eventually, he concluded, famine, war, and pestilence would drive “over-populated” nations back into balance with their natural resources.

While having lost faith in God’s providence, Malthus remained faithful in other ways. He refused to consider either contraception or abortion in response: these were vile, insulting to women, and unChristian. Instead, he argued in his later editions for sexual abstinence and delayed marriage as brakes on population growth.

However, some of his 19th Century followers embraced artificial birth control as absolutely necessary. As soon as these new, or *neo-Malthusians* gained a foothold among wealthy English elites,

they spread this new gospel of “the child as enemy” to the whole British Empire. As demographer John Caldwell recently explained, “the English-speaking world became the nineteenth-century cradle” of anti-natalist thought. In British India, for example, colonial administrators argued that the subcontinent faced perpetual famine unless the population could be reduced. As one British official in the old Raj wrote:

[T]he only practical method of limiting the population is by the introduction of artificial means of birth control, though it is not easy to exaggerate the difficulties of introducing such methods in a country where the vast majority of the population regard the propagation of male offspring as a religious duty and the reproach of barrenness as a terrible punishment for crimes committed in a former incarnation.

Still, the British worked hard and with some success to convince Indian elites that *human fertility* begot starvation. Only the followers of Mahatma Gandhi both *saw through* the scheme and *offered* significant political *resistance* to the Western anti-natalist creed.

In our century, Malthusian doctrine has evolved into a comprehensive world view or ideology. As much an emotional state of mind as a rational argument, the modern Malthusian choir has taken four voices:

Demographic Malthusians see biology as the key factor in human history and cast excessive human reproduction as the primary source of poverty and misery. People—especially other people—are the problem, a conviction held with emotional intensity. One Malthusian activist, Paul Ehrlich, wrote about a “stinking hot night” he had spent in Delhi, India:

The streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people...[S]ince that night I've known the feel of overpopulation.

Resource Malthusians stress that nature is finite, that basic “natural resources” are limited, and that the current consumption of “non-renewable” resources represents a crime against future generations.

Economic Malthusians fear unregulated or unplanned economic expansion: in other words, they fear the free and open market. Indeed, history has repeatedly shown the logical and policy connection between a “planned population” and a “planned economy.”

Linguistic Malthusians focus their ire on acts of creation, be they material or biological. Examples would include the loathing often directed toward business owners and builders and the emotional devaluation suffered by the word “motherhood.” This orientation takes its strongest form in an animus directed toward children, symbols as they are of risk-taking, unpredictability, and growth.

In his new book from Oxford University Press, entitled *Intended Consequences*, historian Donald Critchlow shows how a small cabal of wealthy neo-Malthusians have carried this ideology into prominence and political power. One early episode is particularly instructive: the introduction of neo-Malthusian ideas into the American territory of Puerto Rico. The wealthy American industrial leader, Clarence Gamble, funded creation of a Malthusian center there in 1925. The Rockefeller Foundation then sent doctors to expand the beachhead. In 1932, one of the Rockefeller-funded doctors, named Cornelius Rhoads, wrote a memo. It shows plainly the racism that lurked at the heart of the neo-Malthusian campaign. “The Puerto Ricans,” Rhoads stated “are beyond doubt the dirtiest, laziest, most degenerate...race of men ever inhabiting this sphere. What the island needs is not public health work

but a tidal wave or something to totally exterminate the population.”

While the tidal wave could not be ordered up, an aggressive campaign against the Puerto Rican people's fertility would have the same result. Goaded on by wealthy American figures such as John D. Rockefeller III and Hugh Moore, the U.S. government introduced an island-wide birth control campaign (something it still feared to do in the States). It was said that Puerto Rican women had a “lack of inhibitions in regard to sex,” which made control of them all the more necessary. Opposition by the dominant Roman Catholic Church was dismissed or subverted through lies and obfuscation.

MODERN MALTHUSIANS

Since the 1950's, neo-Malthusianism has been in the ascendant around the globe, with much of the pressure—I am ashamed to admit—coming from the United States. The publication in 1954 of the Hugh Moore Fund's provocatively titled and widely circulated pamphlet, “The Population Bomb,” called attention to high population growth rates occurring in the less-developed areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In July, 1959, the U.S. Department of State released a report on world population trends which concluded that rapid population growth threatened international stability. An October report issued by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concluded that “some means of controlling population growth are inescapable.”

Over the next few years, neo-Malthusian indictments extended from the undeveloped world to America itself. It is important to note that the U.S. birth rate had started falling in 1957 and by the early 1960's had clearly entered a period of serious decline. Nonetheless, in their 1964 book, *Too Many Americans*, demographers Lincoln and Alice Day blasted the “American Fertility Cult” which welcomed large families and population growth. They argued for a fundamental change in ideas about what constitutes a social responsibility, so that “a large family can no longer in itself be viewed as a social contribution....If the parents of three children decide to have a fourth, it should be with the full awareness that they are choosing to indulge their personal desires at the expense of the welfare of their society.”

By mid-decade, neo-Malthusian ideas were winning victory after victory within the U.S. government. In his June 1965 address before the United Nations, President Lyndon Johnson declared: “Let us in all our lands...including this land...face forthrightly the multiplying problems of our multiplying populations and seek the answers to this most profound challenge to the future of all the world. Let us act on the fact that five dollars invested in population control is worth one hundred dollars invested in economic growth.” U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall “vigorously challenged” the myth that population growth was the key to prosperity and the good life: “Instead, it is more likely to lead to poverty, degradation, and despair.” Indeed, this government agency even agreed with biologist Julian Huxley that mankind itself had become the “cancer of the planet.”

By the late 1960's, a new wave of frantic Malthusian tracts appeared. “Catastrophe is foredoomed,” wrote William and Paul Paddock in their global-oriented work *Famine 1975!* “[I]n the 1970's the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked on now,” wrote Paul Ehrlich in his popular work *The Population Bomb*. We “must” cut out “the cancer of population growth,” Ehrlich concluded.

Nor were Ehrlich and his colleagues shy about the price that would have to be paid. “Drastic policies” were necessary to get populations under control, Ehrlich wrote. “Coercion? Perhaps, but coercion in a good cause....We must be relentless in pushing for population control.” Among his many proposals, Ehrlich urged the creation of a powerful Department of Population and Environment which would promote sex education in the schools, give “responsibility prizes” to childless marriages, and develop a

“mass sterilization agent” to be placed in water supplies. He called for taxation systems that would penalize all families with children, but especially those “irresponsible” couples with more than two.

Others were even more extreme, as the “our children as enemy” theme gained explicit treatment. Bio-ethicist Garrett Hardin stated that “Every babe’s birth diminishes me.” He told a medical audience that obstetricians should discourage fertility among their patients, “in order to diminish the amount of adult stupidity, which itself is a form of social pollution, and a most dangerous one.” A voluntary system of birth control, Hardin argued, could not achieve the goal of national population control: “some form of community coercion—gentle or severe, explicit or cryptic—will have to be employed.” Even with the change of administration, the U.S. government kept in lock-step with the neo-Malthusian surge. In his unprecedented July 1969 “Message to Congress on Population,” President Richard Nixon labeled population growth “one of the most serious challenges to human destiny in the last third of our century.” He urged the American people to respond to “the population crisis” facing the United States and the world.

The public policy consequences of the neo-Malthusian ascendancy also grew. Starting in 1965, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funds were increasingly diverted to population control work. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities accelerated its work, soon joined by the World Bank, guided by population control zealot Robert McNamara. I fear that you know their work all too well here in the Philippines.

The campaign soon ricocheted back on the Americans themselves. In 1967, the U.S. Congress allocated its first \$50 million for domestic population planning efforts. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 was the key step in shifting the U.S. income tax burden onto families with two or more children, while the unmarried and childless gained a tax cut. The Family Planning Services and Population Research Act of 1970 moved the Federal government into population control work in a big way, authorizing \$382 million for the period through 1973.

MALTHUSIANS FALLACIES

But some might still ask, weren’t the neo-Malthusians at some level right? What about those charts showing the explosion in human numbers since 1800, and the continued reduction in the number of years it has taken for the world’s population to double: 200 years, 80 years, 37 years, 18 years,...? Aren’t we doomed to an ant-like existence unless we use all the tools available, including coercive ones, to control our reproduction?

The simple answer is “no.” At the very least, doubt about the neo-Malthusian arguments bantered about during the 1960’s should arise from the fact that all the dire predictions of that decade simply proved wrong. The mass famines *guaranteed* for the 1970’s and beyond have not occurred. There is, of course, hunger in the world and some die of starvation. But these deaths are attributable almost exclusively to wars, political corruption, and the abject failure of centrally-planned economics. Even in 1999, governments in the USA, Canada, Australia, Europe, and elsewhere are still trying to conjure up new ways of suppressing agricultural production.

More basic, though, are the fatal logical flaws in the whole Malthusian argument. *First*, the birth of a baby not only represents the addition of a new mouth to the world; it also means the addition of a new mind capable of innovation and a new set of hands capable of work, provided they have the freedom to do so. *Second*, resources are not finite. Rather, it is the human mind which takes hitherto “worthless” materials—rocks and weeds, for example—and transforms them into something of value. Over the long run, human beings in this sense create new resources and thereby reduce scarcity; and the more minds added to that creative process, the greater the resource base. *Third*, even the maintenance

of a quality environment has little relationship to human numbers, and a strong linkage to human values and self-discipline. This is why Holland (with a population density of 1000 persons per square mile) is a delightful place to live, while Chad (with a density of only 8 persons per square mile) is a poor, starvation-racked land.

Fourth, the neo-Malthusian credo blurred over the vital role that population growth can play in economic development. Demographer Alfred Sauvy has shown how a moderate increase in population size may actually be necessary for any social and economic progress. He points to the experience of France, which had a relatively stable—indeed, at points a declining—population between 1850 and 1960 and which suffered from serious economic troubles throughout the period. It was only during the 1960's, after century-old obstacles to a free market—called “Malthusianisms” in the famed 1959 Rueff Report—were removed and population growth resumed, that the modern French economic boom began.

Solid quantitative evidence affirming Sauvy's argument came in 1977, with the publication of Julian Simon's masterpiece, *The Economics of Population Growth*. Beginning his massive research project in 1968 as a committed neo-Malthusian, Simon confessed to great confusion by 1970 as the available empirical data refused to confirm Malthus' theory. After still further work, he converted to the anti-Malthusian side. Simon admits the obvious fact that “any additional person adds a burden to parents and society in the short run.” However, he proceeds to his major conclusion: “Moderate population growth has positive effects on the standard of living in the long run (after, say, 30 to 100 years) in both more developed and less-developed countries—as compared to a stationary population and to a very fast population growth.” Recast in Malthus-like terms, Simon puts it: “If population has a tendency to increase geometrically, *output* has a tendency to increase geometrically, and at least as fast—without apparent limit.” Simon acknowledges the theoretical point that population growth will stop sometime, “just as any other growth process will stop sometime.” But he denies that it “must” be “now.”

Finally, there is mounting evidence that the new population problem facing the world is in fact *depopulation*. In half of the globe's nations, populations already are at the zero- or negative-growth level, and the negative economic effects of this demographic stagnation are mounting. Even World Bank and United Nations demographers now acknowledge that their prior projections of rapid population growth in the 21st century were wrong. The true crisis facing the next century will be that of *depopulation*.

CONCLUSION

In sum, neo-Malthusianism as “science” is as dead today as it was a hundred years ago, vanquished by the human imagination and the resource-creating energy unleashed in free societies. Yet neo-Malthusianism as “emotion,” as fear, retains its grip on global institutions and global policy making, discouraging population growth, financially punishing large families, warring against religious faith, and placing roadblocks in front of those innovators who would create new resources. As Frederic Wertham has succinctly put it: “every reactionary tendency of modern times...contains Malthusian elements.”

Indeed, the neo-Malthusian campaign of “enlightenment” posed against human life and religious belief continues still. Just this past autumn, K.K. Fung—a professor at the University of Memphis—proposed in the journal *Population Research and Policy Review* that the entire population of China be vaccinated against pregnancy (with other countries presumably to follow). This vaccine would be neutralized only when the relevant family had accumulated enough *deaths*. Listen to Professor Fung explain this union of “birth control” to “death control”:

“[E]ach death will trigger the issue of a certain amount of birth quota” to the family of the deceased. As the population stabilizes, one birth would equal one death. “Such a changed

focus may induce higher mortality among the hopelessly ill,” writes Fung. He is saddened by the “traditional neglect of mortality as a policy instrument,” but hopes that his new policy would normalize physician assisted suicide and introduce “an element of efficiency into the allocation of births.”

That, my friends, is the neo-Malthusian vision for the 21st Century, stripped of all the empty rhetoric regarding “human rights” or “women’s rights,” and exposed for what it is: anti-life; inhuman; opposed to *both* tradition and progress; exploitative of children; family destroying; the foe of every religion; the very Angel of Death.

But this vision *will not* carry the day. The great majority of the world remains attached to religious doctrines that celebrate the family and reverence life. As I noted at the beginning of my talk, peoples of deep religious conviction are also discovering what they share with orthodox believers in other faiths. A global pro-family movement begins to take form, seeking not power or gain, but only to build a common defense against the militant ideology arrayed against the families of the world.

This past May, representatives from the six inhabited continents and the great world religions met in Rome to discuss the Family of Faith on the cusp of the new century. Defying the secular cynics who relish and encourage religious divisions, this group crafted a common definition of the family:

The natural family is the fundamental social unit, inscribed by the Creator in human nature, and centered around the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage for the purposes of: satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love; welcoming and ensuring the full physical and emotional development of children; sharing a home that serves as the center of social, educational, economic, and spiritual life; building strong bonds among the generations, passing on a way of life that has transcendent meaning; and extending a hand of compassion to individuals and households whose circumstances fall short of these ideals.

We also issued a statement asking the families of the world to sign a “Call” for convening The World Congress of Families in 1999. This is the opportunity for families of faith to coalesce into a global movement affirming those precious things held in common—family bonds and delight in children—and demanding of politicians that they end the campaign against life and family that has so scarred this century.

Join us in this campaign. Sign a copy of the “Call”; seek signatures from your friends, neighbors, and co-worshippers. Work to send leaders of pro-family groups from your country to Geneva next November 7-10, to take part in this great gathering; or perhaps come yourself.

Where the 20th century belonged to the neo-Malthusians and their allies, the 21st century can be the century of The Natural Family. It can be marked by the reaffirmation of the family as the fundamental social unit, and by a renewed celebration of children—and of families with many children—as pleasing to God. We have the power to make this happen, if we show the will to do so. I urge all families of faith to join this movement: the alternative is the darkness of a world without children. Let us choose The Light!