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## Be Faithful and Multiply

The Disputation

David Klinghoffer | Fri. May 25, 2007

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When our twin boys were born last week here in Seattle, it struck me that my wife and I were implicitly registering a dissent from the secular liberal value system of most Seattleites, as from that of the residents of America's other biggest left-leaning cities.

Jacob and Saul are our fourth and fifth babies.

This damp, tree-loving city is lushly green but largely sterile. Seattle is America's second-most childless city, just behind San Francisco. It is also the chief metropolis of the country's most unchurched region, the Pacific Northwest. People tend to have dogs rather than kids.

The correlation between holding secular liberal views and preferring not to reproduce has been noted elsewhere, but not adequately explained.

The data come from a juxtaposition of the red-and-blue quilted electoral map of the 2004 election with information from the National Center for Health Statistics and the 2004 General Social Survey.

Arthur Brooks, a professor at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Public Affairs, writes in The Wall Street Journal: "If you picked 100 unrelated politically liberal adults at random, you would find that they had had, between them, 147 children. If you picked 100 conservatives, you would find 208 kids. That's a 'fertility gap' of 41 percent."

David Brooks notes in The New York Times a "spiritual movement" of "natalists," but offers no insight into why exactly a spiritual perspective much more than a secular one would encourage reproduction. After all, secularists and liberals love their children too.

Certainly, conservative culture is imbued with scriptural values more than liberalism is. And the Bible not only lends strong support to conservative beliefs, but takes an insistently strong pro-natalist stance. This could be part of the explanation.

God likes babies. Noah, whose family alone survived the deluge that engulfed the rest of humanity, was given the commandment of populating the world: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land" (Genesis 9:1).

Isaiah taught that God made the world with reproduction uppermost in mind: "He is the God, the One Who fashioned the earth and its Maker; He established it; He did not create it for emptiness; He fashioned it to be inhabited" (45:18).

Of course, plenty of secularists have children, too. If asked why they choose to do so, and with no less

enthusiasm than that of their religious neighbors, they would say: "I love children." "I want to give my love to a child or children." "I want to nurture a human being, and see him grow and thrive."

These are all beautiful and sincere sentiments. But not one of them would be unexpected coming from a would-be pet owner looking for a dog or cat to care for.

No, I am not saying that secularists see their children as pets, nor that the traditionally religious always make better parents. But the absence of an additional religious imperative for child-raising makes it understandable that liberals reproduce less often. Just as pet ownership is optional, so too is having children if the only reasons for doing so are those cited above.

It's also possible to have too many pets, and the neighbors will chastise you for this. A staple of local news stories, frequently posted on the Drudge Report, is the eccentric person with way too many pets: There was the lady in Clearwater, Fla., with 100 cats, which led police to condemn her house as a public nuisance. Florida was also home to a man in Ocala charged with animal cruelty for keeping 300 cats. And so on.

Just so, families with five or more children can expect to be reproached by strangers in supermarkets and on sidewalks, wanting to know, "Don't you think you've had enough already?"

The religiously motivated are undeterred because, unlike liberalism and secularism, a biblical worldview sees children as having a role besides that of the recipient of parental affection and nurturance. These adorable little tikes have the glorious task of being transmitters of an ancient tradition to posterity.

The Bible teaches this in connection with the Exodus from Egypt. "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying 'It is because of this that the Lord acted on my behalf when I left Egypt'" (Exodus 13:8).

In Deuteronomy, Moses advises: "And these matter that I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children and you shall speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise" (6:6-7).

Just as your Internet access depends on countless other computers being linked to yours, the link between generations is stronger depending on how many children you have.

This is of special relevance for Jews, of all denominations. I've written before in this space about Jewish fertility and how it is impacted by worldview. As the statisticians Antony Gordon and Richard Horowitz have shown, every 100 Reform Jews will be reduced within four generations to only 10 Jews. Every 100 Conservative Jews will be reduced to 29.

In the struggle between rival worldviews that characterizes modern times, the Hebraic view is on the ropes, under constant attack from secularism. As in war, the number of soldiers on the ground matters no less than the qualities of the combatants.

A Jew who believes in Judaism cannot have too many children.

*David Klinghoffer, a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, is the author of the forthcoming "Shattered"*

*Tablets: Why We Ignore the Ten Commandments at Our Peril" (Doubleday).*

Fri. May 25, 2007

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Comments

Susan Miller said:

"It is hard to believe that anyone living in the 21st century could have the ideas that Klinghoffer has on reproduction. In a world where hundreds of species are becoming extinct every year because of human activity we should be limiting our children to 2 per couple. "Be fruitful and multiply" no longer applies. We have fruited and multiplied enough during the past millenia. If one needs to use the Hebrew Scriptures as a guide for life, then please note that God saved two of each animal along with Noah's family. That indicates his desire to perpetuate other species besides humans. A Jew who believes in Judaism cannot have too few children. A truly spiritual life is one lived within the limits that nature provides. A truly spiritual heart respects the intrinsic value of nature. The perpetuation of Judaism is no justification for the continued ecological decimation of the earth.

If Klinghoffer's ideas were not so out of touch with the contemporary realities of life on earth then he might have written a book entitled: "Shattered Balance: Why We Ignore the Environmental Crisis at Our Peril"."

Thu. May 24, 2007

Dave said:

"Note the disussion here. The social lefty thingks we have too many people. The social righty thinks too few. In the words of my favorite pundit, 'the future belongs to whoever shows up for it.' Won't be lefties."

Thu. May 24, 2007

Iacosta said:

"as non-Orthodox, mostly Democrat Jews depopulate themselves willingly, who will listen as they rail at the increasingly conservative, increasing Jewish [read-orthodox] world?"

Fri. May 25, 2007

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David L Nilsson said:

"Susan sounds like a lineal descendant of the Rev. Thomas Malthus. Oh dear, horrible humanity is staining the planet-- all those useless mouths, we'll never feed them! The optimum population for Britain, according to Malthus, was in the low millions. It's sixty million now and somehow we get along, indeed the poorest lead lives of unimagined opulence by the standards of the good reverend's era.

The greatest resource on the planet is the brainpower God gave us, and the more of it the better, especially if the so-called 'smart fraction' (to which I infer Mr Klinghoffer belongs) does its bit to proliferate its higher-IQ genes. But there is a simple reason why ambitious, clever people are slow to reproduce: they can't afford it.

As Steve Sailer ([www.isteve.com](http://www.isteve.com)) has shown, 'affordable family formation' is a lot cheaper and attractive out in the wide open spaces and 'burbs than in the costly, crime-ridden, poorly-schooled multiculti cities. That is why the red states average higher family sizes and younger parenting-- middle class 'white flight', including liberals such as Mr Klinghoffer whose liberalism doesn't extend to squatting in downtown Detroit when kids are on the agenda.

It's no accident that the most polyphiloprogenitive Jews are Orthodox; for they too have fled, into self-created safe spaces. Sociologists find that trust breaks down when you live among people who aren't like yourself-- the multicultural community is a contradiction in terms. Singleton liberals and Reform congregants may exalt the rainbow-nation ideal, but when it comes to raising children, it is better that birds of a feather should flock together."

Fri. May 25, 2007

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Shari Jacobson said:

"A Jew who believes in Judaism cannot have too many children, unless that Jew also has a basic understanding of science and economics, and happens to care about the equitable use and distribution of the world's resources. Americans already consume far more than our fair share and contribute to global warming at woefully disproportionate rates. Our family's commitment to the planet which Jews inhabit is such that we decided two children was sufficient."

Fri. May 25, 2007

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james said:

"just not enough people on the planet yet for some... walmart and all the large corps are with you on that one too, although it is usual to quote biblical sources for support.. i find it ironic there can be too many pets, but never too many people.. take a trip to china or india and see where the planet is headed with mass production of people while downplaying or ignoring the quality of life for those who are being brought into the world."

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