

## The Future of Christianity in the West – 6

*This is the sixth of nine articles in a series entitled “The Future of Christianity in the West.”*

Since just 2015 a more militant secularism has entered the stage of American public life. “Marriage” has been redefined, or rather, defined out of existence. Any group of people associating with each other are now recognized as “family.” If *everything* is a family, *nothing* is a family. Abortion is now celebrated rather than merely tolerated. The same is true of homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgenderism, with polygamy on the horizon. None of this will promote human flourishing. These trends will not end well.

The issues we raise are volatile, to say the least. Let me say again that we recognize that women have always been in the workplace making valued contributions in medicine, education, law, advertising, agriculture, graphic design, and countless other fields. That is not the issue. What is at issue is the dignity, propriety, and priority of the home and childrearing.

In addition to strengthening the church, the family, and marriage (which means being pro-fatherhood and pro-homemaker), the Christian community must be pro-children.

### *Pro-children*

The secular culture of death prevents conception through birth control, terminates life through abortion, and flirts with the practice of infanticide. Current birth rates in the United States are at a 32-year low. Newspapers proclaim “America’s Millennial Baby Bust.”<sup>1</sup> The outlook of progressives is profoundly anti-child. The Christian community must be pro-life and pro-child. This means wanting and welcoming all children whom God is pleased to give.

In a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled “A Woman Doesn’t Need an Office to Be Empowered,” Erica Komisar, a psychoanalyst and author that we noted earlier, battles the idea that the only “meaningful” work is that done outside of the home. “A woman’s value isn’t only a matter of how much she can earn,” she writes. She rebuts the “career first” philosophy, the implication of which is “that women are useful to society only if they work full-time and add to gross domestic product... that staying at home to raise children is a waste of their precious education, a cop-out, not ‘real work.’” She argues instead that “motherhood isn’t weak or worthless; nurturing children is *the most significant and meaningful work a person can do.*”<sup>2</sup> After her article was published, a number of letters to the editor vehemently objected. She responded with a letter of her own reaffirming her position:

The defensiveness of so many to the concept that a woman’s value is so much more than how much she earns only reinforces my concern that society has overlooked nurturing as the most important labor. A maternal economy doesn’t preclude women from working or earning money, or striving to achieve great things in their careers; however, it does elevate women who choose to prioritize mothering as of equal value to those who work for pay... My central message has

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<sup>1</sup> The Editorial Board, “America’s Millennial Baby Bust,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 29, 2019, A14.

<sup>2</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 21/22, 2019, A13 (my emphasis).

always been and always will be that the needs of children must come first and mothers are essential to their emotional development.<sup>3</sup>

Must we want and welcome *all* the children that God gives? Can we afford to have multiple children? Even the most sincere believers worry about how they can finance a large family. Esolen points out the irony:

We live in comforts that the richest of aristocrats not very long ago could never have dreamed of, and yet we claim that we are too poor to have more than a child or two.

Instead, he claims,

the truth is the reverse: we are too rich to have more than a child or two, too committed to work for work's sake and to the purchase of prestige, mansions, the 'best' schools, and toys for grownups.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the *Wall Street Journal* article cited above acknowledges that "the uncomfortable truth may be that the 'two-income trap' is more about maintaining a certain high living standard than it is access to a decent life in America."<sup>5</sup>

The Apostle Peter calls us "exiles" (1 Peter 1:1). We feel like exiles in this corrupt culture. Thankfully, the Bible has instructions for exiles. The prophet Jeremiah directs the Hebrew exiles in Babylon to build houses, plant gardens, marry, pray, and please note, have children:

<sup>4</sup> "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup> Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. <sup>6</sup> Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. <sup>7</sup> But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (Jer 29:4-7)

"Bear sons and daughters, multiply there and do not decrease" always has been the divinely-given strategy of the people of God. *Multiply*, God says to His people.

Our goal in raising these issues is to alert the Christian community to harmful cultural trends. Yet we do not want to be heard to say that women should never work outside of the home. That is not the point. The wifely ideals of Proverbs 31 portray wide-ranging activities within and beyond the home. Lydia, "a seller of purple goods," was a successful businesswoman whose vocation is left uncriticized (Acts 16:14-15). Neither are we saying that it is invalid to utilize the services of a daycare or a nanny. We recognize that life is complicated and multiple factors enter into these decisions. One family may not judge another.

Rather, let me repeat, we seek merely to elevate the status of those who wish *not* to work outside of the home. We seek merely to highly esteem the work that goes on *within* the home, *in particular, that of child rearing*. Let's not forget the Apostle Paul's exhortation to older women

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<sup>3</sup> Erica Komisar, "Society Should Better Support All Mothers," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 7, 2019, A18.

<sup>4</sup> Esolen, *Out of the Ashes*, 128.

<sup>5</sup> "America's Millennial Baby Bust," *Wall Street Journal*, May 29, 2019, A14.

to train younger women to “love their husbands and children... *working at home*” (Titus 2:5). This is not merely a personal preference, but a biblical ideal. Certainly this ideal has to be nuanced. Certainly there are extenuating circumstances. Yet it is and must be an ideal for the Christian community. If we live more simply, have fewer career and material aspirations, make fewer financial commitments that obligate high levels of income, we may be able to afford to have more children, and mom may be freed to *devote her full time to rearing them*.

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TAGS: Proverbs 31; Acts 16:14-15; Titus 2:5; Jeremiah 29:4-7; 1 Peter 1:1; Erica Komisar; childrearing; career; pro-children; two-income trap; Anthony Esolen, *Out of Ashes*, Rod Dreher, *Benedict Option*.