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The article, *Giving Up on God: The Global Decline of Religion*, is published in the non-profit, non-partisan journal *Foreign Affairs* which was founded in 1922. The author is Robert F. Inglehart and this article is based on his forthcoming book, *Religion's Sudden Decline: What's Causing It and What Comes Next?*

The numbers and the changes they imply are irrefutable.

One of the supporting factors for affiliation with a religion and the long-standing place of importance that religion occupied in all places, he maintains, has to do with fertility and the economic and political necessity of high birthrates to maintain social and political entities such as nation, states, and countries.

He places religions role in regard to maintaining high birthrates in the development and teaching of moral dictums that gave in some cases divine authority to the absolute prohibition of any kind of sexual activity that was not open to procreation. As other data makes clear, in our times, high birthrates have become in all countries an issue that contributes to other serious and potentially damaging conditions.

So, maintaining high birthrates and the importance of fertility are not the priorities that they had been for generations and generations and with the loss of that recognized need and the role of religion in meeting it, people of all kinds of economic, social, educational, and national backgrounds are asking, *Why God? And Why religion?*

Many people all over the world, not simply young people, are developing an appreciation of human sexuality in ways that are not addressed by conventional religions, so they look elsewhere for wisdom and affirmation.

The author points out that an issue bringing about a decline in belief and affiliation, seen, I think not entirely accurately, as uniquely Roman Catholic is the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents by the clergy and the loss of confidence in the clergy by Catholic people.

I have no argument with the article, although, I am sure some hyper religious folks will go off the rails blaming secularization, young people, and the Democrats for dragging people away from God and onto the slippery slopes of hell, damnation, and eternal punishment.

The point that I want to make is that we need to question what we are offering people to believe about God and religion. The pandemic will be a cause, probably, although the opposite may happen of further erosion in the practice of religion.

Scarcity of just about everything, not to mention a scarcity of human bodies to do the work to raise the armies and grown the crops and make the nation was the mindset of almost everyone from ancient times to biblical times right up to our own day, so high birthrates and high fertility can understandably be seen as a reason for religions and God. But I do not think that was a concern for Jesus.

First of all, Jesus is not recorded anywhere in the New Testament as having even a remote concern with birthrates as factors in economic, military, religious, or national significance.

There is, to cite a few, a concern for the widow of Naim, her only son restored to her, the little child dead, again, restored to her parents, the woman with the hemorrhage that was cured so her fertility could return but a fertility of ministry not her womb. There is even the case of Zechariah and Elizabeth with no child and the angel announcing there will be a child but that was necessary for the plot more than any economic or social issue.

On top of all of that we have the totally unique narratives and claims of the conception and birth of Jesus that was not a fertility issue but a salvation issue.

What we do have is Jesus not living in the world of scarcity of any kind, but quite the contrary, living in a world of abundance.

Think of all that bread and fish, those “great crowds,” the wine at Cana, the disciples fishing “skills,” those seeds that yield 40, 60, and 100fold, the breaking nets filled with so many fish, all kinds of tales of abundance.

So, maybe this religion, the multi-faceted face of Christ reflected in the Christian religions didn't need to get caught up in concerns about high birthrates, maybe that was not the Good News that Christ commissioned his followers to spread, maybe it was something else that was Good News, just maybe, and maybe this decline in numbers is like pruning grape vines so that the wine next time will be better.

Maybe we might return to the Gospels with repentance as Jesus asked us to and seek out the truth of the Good News more accurately than we have done before.

Maybe for all those years we were worried about maintaining high birthrates, we might have been more on the mark in making sure that people knew that "God's" love for them was everlasting and that the death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ was about all of us and that when that precious reality of our life seems to die and all of what we did done in vain, just maybe, eye has not seen, nor ear heard what "God" has ready for those who love "God."

In all of this I seriously want to call to mind and heart all of those women who bore child after child until they were exhausted, many dying in childbirth and many, many of those children dying as babies or kids leaving broken hearts all in the name of "God," and I want to intentionally call to mind and heart the many, many women and children forced in the name of "God" to live with abusive, violent, terribly damaged men who in turn damaged women and children making them the victims of their rage, killed in body, mind, or heart.