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AMERICA'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE

It's More Than Numbers

by Larry M. Vogel

Changing cultural landscape: definitions and scope

THERE'S A JOKE ABOUT DEMOGRAPHERS. How are demographers different from accountants? They're identical, but demographers don't have as much sex appeal. Rev. Day asked me to talk about demographics and our culture. Let's jump right into the excitement...with definitions.

Anthropologist Charles Kraft says that culture is the structure of *customs* and *assumptions* by which a group of people live in their *environment* — in other words, culture is about daily practices and the ideas about life that guide those practices.² Demographics is the study of a population in order to (1) describe it accurately, (2) identify patterns and developments and (3) predict new social realities, which means that if you care about people, then demographics is pretty important. It's big picture study of groups of people. Three basic things that demographers study about a group are its age and sex distribution, its birth rate and migration patterns (who is moving into, out of and within the group).³

The best single marker for a strongly counter-cultural religious group is a significantly higher than average birth rate. There is no evidence of that in the LCMS; rather, other markers indicate we are more similar than dissimilar to the “average American” — with few kids, but also plenty of divorces and living together in particular.

The mission priority for fathers like Walther and Wyneken was gathering the Lutheran immigrants coming to America — immigrants like them from Germany who were lost, erring and searching.¹ We are foolish if we think that it was easy — people were just beating down the doors to start confessional churches. It took vision, sacrifice, powerful preaching, clear teaching and, above all, love for the lost.

I will examine those core factors, especially regarding the U.S. population, then compare them to the demographics of the LCMS and close with a few suggestions for LCMS mission priorities.

Core demographic change — the demographic transition

Ever since Malthus, a lot of people have been worried about too many people. Phillip Longman might then surprise us when he informs us that, “All told, some 59 countries, comprising roughly 44 percent of the world's total population, are currently not producing enough children to avoid population decline, and the phenomenon continues

to spread.”⁴ The term “demographic transition” (DT) describes this phenomenon. It's one of the most helpful observations from the study of demographics. The DT unfolds over time in stages. A visual may help.⁵ Pre-transition (stage 1), a society must have lots of children because lives are short for most and many die in infancy. Mortality and birth rates are both high. Note how the DT changes this:

- *Declining mortality:* The population experiences an increasing average life span as a result of declining infant

¹ On German immigration to the U.S., see Michael Barone, *Shaping Our Nation*.

² Charles Kraft says that culture “consists of all the things that we learn after we are born into the world that enable us to function effectively as biological beings in the environment.” *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 6. The quote here is from Kraft, 31.

³ Donald T. Rowland, *Demographic Methods and Concepts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 2008), 30.

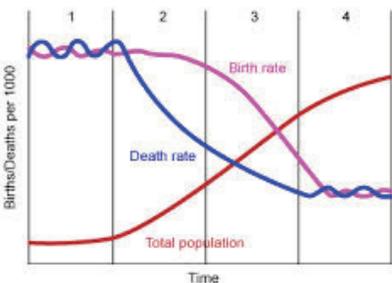
⁴ Phillip Longman, *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity and What to Do About It* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 26.

⁵ Visuals that were not created by the author contain the source either within the visual or as a caption.

mortality and greater longevity as nutrition, sanitation and medicine all improve.

- **Population growth:** As a direct result, the population increases as it experiences natural, biological growth.
- **Declining fertility:** The population experiences declining birth rates as women, in general, have fewer babies.
- **Population aging:** The natural growth rate of the population decreases and the average age of the population rises.⁶

All the stages are complete in Europe, North America, Latin America, Russia, East Asia, Australia and most of Southeast Asia. It took about two centuries to



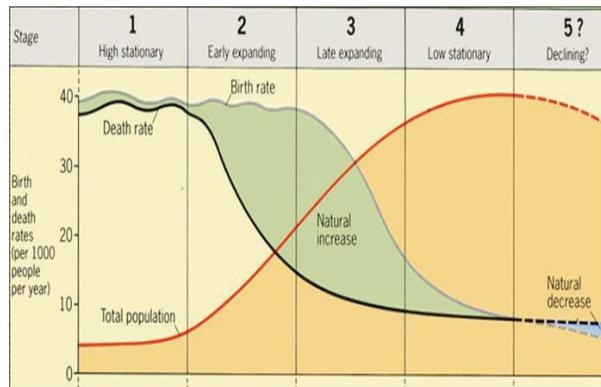
1: papp.iusp.org

happen in the Western world, but much less than a century in the East.⁷ Much of the world is still early in the DT.

The second graph shows the same phenomenon, but has a stage five, marked with a question. It

shows what has happened wherever the previous stages are completed. In this stage, the birth rate stays below replacement levels and eventually total population declines. We are on the cusp of this phenomenon in the West. Despite many questions about it, this stage of the transition is occurring throughout the developed world.⁸

The DT develops slowly, often unnoticed. Rates of declining mortality and childbirth are not uniform. Nevertheless, the DT is one of the most helpful frameworks for understanding population conditions globally.⁹ There is also strong economic correlation with



2. coolgeography.co.uk

this transition. Aging nations tend toward prosperity, while youthful nations earlier in the DT are poor.¹⁰

To summarize: What is most relevant today is to realize the profound effects the DT has on a society. Great changes have already occurred due to the DT throughout the Western world, but future changes promise to be even more widespread. The DT began in the Western world more than two centuries ago, but it is on target to be completed worldwide by 2100. World population

those who have completed the transition to low mortality and low birth rates and those who are at various stages within the process. Russia is an outlier. It has experienced a decline in infant mortality to sub-replacement levels, but longevity is not increasing because of high levels of substance abuse, smoking, chronic illnesses, AIDS, suicide and other problems. See Murray Feshbach, “Population and Health Constraints on the Russian Military,” chapter 5 in Susan Yoshihara and Douglas A. Silva, eds., *Population Decline and the Remaking of Great Power Politics* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2012), Kindle location 1445–1710. It is noteworthy, however, that a recent trend in Russia toward more births is a significant move back to a more sustainable population. See Mark Adomanis, “‘Dying’ Russia’s Birthrate Is Now Higher than America’s,” *Forbes* (April 11, 2014), <http://www.forbes.com/sites/markadomanis/2014/04/11/dying-russias-birth-rate-is-now-higher-than-americas/>. Accessed Nov. 7, 2014.

¹⁰ On the one side, Europe has gone through the four stages and is now struggling to maintain its native populations. On the other, Africa has experienced certain elements of the DT without others; overall mortality is declining slowly (due to less infant mortality), but, while birth rates have declined about 20 percent in recent decades, they continue to be among the highest worldwide. Clint Laurent, *Tomorrow’s World: A Look at the Demographic and Socio-economic Structure of the World in 2032* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 19. Tim Dyson notes that the correlation between economics and DT is not iron-clad: “There is no reason to believe that a major rise in per capital income is required for the constituent processes of the transition to unfold.” (*Population and Development*, 5). See also Longman, *Empty Cradle*, 30. Longevity in Africa is also facing headwinds like AIDS, malaria, and significant deaths from violence and warfare. See The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), “Total Fertility Rate (Children Born per Woman)” at <http://kff.org/global-indicator/total-fertility-rate/#map>; accessed Oct. 18, 2014. The accompanying World TFR Map is from the same site. See also Longman, *The Empty Cradle*, 8–11. Longman theorizes that declining TFRs in the Mid-East have fueled fundamentalism because they are a byproduct of greater freedom for Muslim women, which is viewed as a Western evil imported to Islam. World TFR maps are available from many sources. This is from <http://www.mapsofworld.com/thematic-maps/world-total-fertility-rate-map.html#>. Accessed on Nov. 9, 2014.

⁶ Tim Dyson argues that another fundamental change involved in the DT is the urbanization of the population in question; *Population and Development: The Demographic Transition* (London, New York: Zed Books, 2010).

⁷ In Western Europe and the U.S., the process occurred over a couple of centuries, paralleling the rise of industrialization. Elsewhere (e.g., South Korea, Taiwan, China) the DT has taken less than a century.

⁸ For a couple of decades, there was a theory among demographers that populations would naturally maintain replacement levels of population as the transition was completed. Recent facts don’t corroborate that theory. Rather, in a number of countries including almost all of the former Soviet-bloc countries, Cuba, Japan, Germany and much of the EU, the DT is at a stage in which all have very low, sub-replacement TFRs. So stage 5 can happen, but whether it is a “natural” result of the basic model itself remains a topic of debate.

⁹ One can easily, for example, divide world regions into two categories:

will continue to grow until then, but more because of increased aging than childbirth.¹¹

1. Demographic patterns and details

For affluent populations, the transition to aging has already occurred. Three specific demographic details are important: age and sex, birth rate and migration.

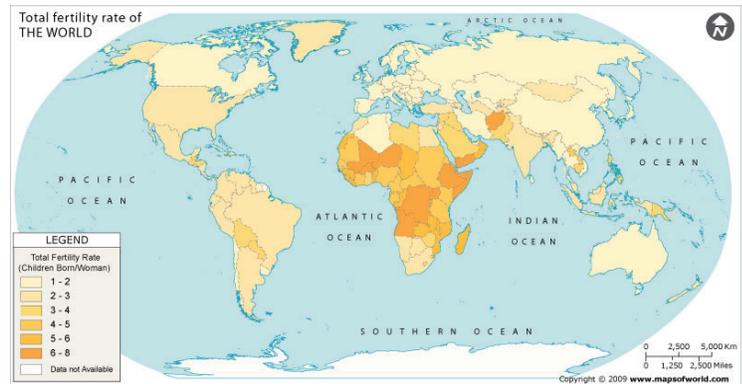
a. Age-sex distribution over time¹²

Note the series of age-sex pyramids for the U.S. based on census data. At the end of the baby boom in 1960, 38 percent of the U.S. was under 20 and 13 percent over 60. By 1985, less than 30 percent of the population was under 20, a drop of almost 25 percent. The boomers ballooned the 20–40 cohort and 16 percent of America was over 60, with a few over 85. In 2014, the distribution is generally uniform in age-sex from infancy to about 60 years. About a fourth is 0–19 years, another quarter is 20–39, a third is 40–59 and a final fourth of the population is now aged sixty and up — a 150 percent increase for that increasingly female group. Notice the significant number of people over age 85, especially compared to 1985. Less than a tenth of 1 percent of the population was over 85 years of age in 1985. Today almost 2 percent of the population is — a 20-fold increase.

Paul Taylor from the Pew Research Council explains:

We'll have almost as many Americans over age 85 as under age 5. This is the result of longer life spans and lower birthrates. It's uncharted territory, not just for us, but for all of humanity. And while it's certainly good news over the long haul for the sustainability of the earth's resources, it will create political and economic stress in the shorter term, as smaller cohorts of working age adults will be hard-pressed to finance the retirements of larger cohorts of older ones.¹³

To summarize: The U.S. population has experienced a



3. mapsofworld.com

long-term trend of declining percentages of young people and an increasing average age for both males and females, but with a higher percentage of females relative to males.

b. Birth rate

One of the most significant demographic measures is “total fertility rate” or TFR. TFR is the average number of children women will bear. A replacement TFR for a population requires more than 2,100 births each year per thousand women in a society. In individual terms, that means that the average individual woman must have at least two children for a population to remain constant.

The accompanying map compares countries by birthrate. Lighter colors indicate low birthrates and a completed DT in Europe, affluent Asia and elsewhere. Darker colors, showing high birthrates and a much earlier stage of the DT predominate in Africa, parts of the Middle East, India and Muslim Asia.¹⁴ As for the U.S., on the map, we are in the 2–3 children per woman category. But that is deceptive, since U.S. TFRs have been hovering only slightly above and often below 2.0 for some time. In 2012, the last year for which we have firm statistics on births in the U.S. from the CDC, the general fertility rate hit a 25-year low.¹⁵

¹⁴ Total Fertility Rate, Maps of the World, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/thematic-maps/world-total-fertility-rate-map.html>. Accessed Nov. 9, 2014.

¹⁵ Note:

Total fertility rate

The 2012 total fertility rate (TFR) for the U.S. was 1,880.5 births per 1,000 women, 1 percent below the 2011 rate (1,894.5) (Tables 4, 8, 13, and 14). After generally increasing from 1998 through 2007, the TFR has declined for each of the last 5 years. The TFR estimates the number of births that a hypothetical group of 1,000 women would have over their lifetimes, based on age-specific birth rates in a given year. Because it is computed from age-specific birth rates, the TFR is age-adjusted, and can be compared for populations across time, population groups, and geographic areas.

The TFRs declined for nearly all race and Hispanic origin groups

¹¹ See Ronald Lee, “The Demographic Transition: Three Centuries of Fundamental Change,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Fall 2003), 167. He calculates that aging will be ten times more important than births.

¹² Based on visualizations and data by Martin De Wulf at “Population Pyramids of the World 1950–2050,” <http://populationpyramid.net>. Accessed on Oct. 2, 2014, at <http://populationpyramid.net/united-states-of-america/2015/>.

¹³ *The Next America* (May 10, 2014), <http://www.pewresearch.org/next-america/#Two-Dramas-in-Slow-Motion>.

The most recent CDC report on births says, “Since 1971, our TFR has exceeded 2.1 only two times (1971, 2007). It was 1.9 in 2012. With the exception of Hispanic women, all ethnic or racial groups in the U.S. have below replacement fertility.”¹⁶

The accompanying table from the 2010 U.S. Census compares the 2000 and 2010 census results, especially with respect to the growth of the white population over against other races and people of Hispanic or Latino origin.¹⁷ It indicates an overall growth in the U.S. population of just under 10 percent for the decade. That means that, obviously, the U.S. did more than replace its population

White Population: 2000 – 2010						
Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin	2010 Number in millions	2000 Percent of total pop.	2010 Number in millions	2010 Percent of total pop.	Change 2000-2010 in millions	Change 2000-2010 by percent
Total Population	281.4	100	308.7	100	27.3	9.7
White alone or in combination	216.9	77.1	231.0	74.8	14.1	6.5
White alone	211.5	75.1	223.6	72.4	12.1	5.7
Hispanic/Latino	16.9	6.0	26.7	8.7	9.8	58.1
Not Hispanic/Latino	194.6	69.1	196.8	63.7	2.3	1.2
White in combination	5.5	1.9	7.5	2.4	2.0	36.9
White: Black/African American	0.8	0.3	1.8	0.6	1.0	133.7
White: Some Other Race	2.2	0.8	1.7	0.6	(0.5)	(21.1)
White: Asian	0.9	0.3	1.6	0.5	0.8	86.9
White: Am. Indian (Eskimo)	1.1	0.4	1.4	0.5	0.3	32.3
White: Black, Am. Indian	0.1	-	0.2	0.1	0.1	105.7
All other combinations	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.2	50.4
Not White alone or in comb.	64.5	22.9	77.7	25.2	13.2	20.5

– Percentage rounds to 0 0
 Note: In Census 2000, an error in data processing resulted in an overstatement of the Two or More Races population by about 1 million people (about 15 percent) nationally, which almost entirely affected race combinations involving Some Other Race. Therefore, data users should assess observed changes in the Two or More Races population and race combinations involving Some Other Race between Census 2000 and the 2010 Census with caution. Changes in specific race combinations not involving Some Other Race, such as White **and** Black or African American or White **and** Asian, generally should be more comparable.
 Sources: U S Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File*, Tables PL1 and PL2; and *2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File*, Tables P1 and P2

in 2012, down 1–2 percent for non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic and AIAN women. The rate for API women rose 4 percent from 2011 to 2012, however.

The 2012 U.S. TFR remained below “replacement” — the level at which a given generation can exactly replace itself (generally considered to be 2,100 births per 1,000 women). The TFR has been generally below replacement since 1971. With the exception of Hispanic women (reflecting mainly, rates for Mexican and other Hispanic women), the TFRs for all other groups were below replacement (Tables 8 and 14).

From Joyce A. Martin, et al., *Births: Final Data for 2012*, National Vital Statistics Reports (vol. 62, no. 9), Center for Disease Control, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2. Abbreviated as CDC 2012. Accessed on Oct. 2, 2014 at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62_09.pdf.

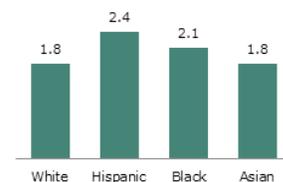
¹⁶ Data published on Dec. 30, 2013. For as long as the CDC has tracked TFR for Hispanic women, they have exceeded the overall U.S. TFR, but in 2012 the Hispanic TFR had diminished to 2.2, only slightly above replacement level. CDC 2012, 7. The CIA, which uses slightly different measures than the CDC, estimated the TFR for the United States at 2.0 for 2014. See Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, online at <https://www.cia.gov>; from Country Comparison: Total Fertility Rate, accessed Oct. 2, 2014, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html>.

¹⁷ Because the census identifies both by race and ethnicity, there is some overlap — as when an individual is identified as both white and Hispanic — which the chart takes into account. Lindsay Hixson, Bradford B. Hepler, Myoung Ouk Kim, *The White Population: 2010*, 2010 Census Briefs (September 2011), 3. Accessed Oct. 7, 2014, at <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>.

in the decade. However, growth is not coming because of overall births, but because of the growth of the Hispanic population. Non-Latino whites increased their population by only 1.2 percent for the decade,

and that result is due to modest immigration from Europe. Non-Hispanic white deaths exceeded births beginning in 2012.¹⁸ Compare the 1.2 percent white population growth to Hispanic population growth of 58.1 percent. Latino

Fertility Rate, by Race and Ethnicity, 2010

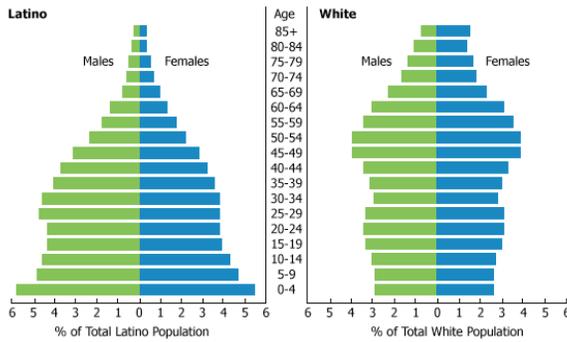


Notes: Racial groups include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Fertility rate, also known as “total fertility rate,” is a prediction of how many children the average woman will have, based on current age-specific birth rates.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2010 American Community Survey Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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¹⁸ See Sam Roberts, “Census Benchmark for White Americans: More Deaths Than Births,” *New York Times* (June 13, 2013), online at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/13/us/census-benchmark-for-white-americans-more-deaths-than-births.html?_r=0. Last accessed Nov. 7, 2014. I can find no reliable data comparison of births to deaths for 2013.



growth is based first on immigration, second birthrate and third on increasing longevity.

The expression, “Demographics is destiny,” claims too much, but it contains more than a kernel of truth. In the accompanying visual (Fertility Rate), you can see that Hispanics have a higher TFR than any U.S. ethnic or racial group. Latino equals youth in the U.S.: 37.1 percent of Latino Americans are under 20, compared to 22.4 percent for whites.¹⁹ Latinos will have a much larger proportion of their population of child-bearing age for the foreseeable future. Thus, the U.S. Latino population pyramid differs markedly from that of the non-Latino white pyramid.²⁰

To summarize: The U.S. is not reproducing itself by childbirth. U.S. population would be in decline except for immigration. Growth in the U.S. population depends on two primary factors: immigration and immigrant birth rates.

c. Migration

The final core demographic component is migration, which includes two elements: international immigration and internal migration.²¹

Synod’s overall numerical decline, then, clearly is due in part to the demographics of non-Latino white America with low birth rates, and also to where we are concentrated geographically.

4: migrationpolicy.org

The United States has, throughout its history, been the most frequent single destination for worldwide immigration.²² Today, “[a]bout 20 percent of all international migrants reside in the United States, even though America is less than 5 percent of the world’s population.”²³ The accompanying graph shows the percentage and number of immigrants by decades beginning in 1900.²⁴ Historically, a significant rate of immigration is not exceptional

includes all the foreign-born in the U.S. as nearly as they can be counted, including documented and undocumented immigrants as well as those immigrants who are now naturalized citizens.

²² See Michael Barone, *Shaping Our Nation: How Surges of Migration Transformed America and Its Politics* (New York: Random House, 2013). One can clearly see the effect of the emergency quota and immigration exclusion laws of the early 1920s, legislation that remained in full force until 1952 and was only replaced in 1965.

²³ Chiamaka Nwosu, Jeanne Batalova, and Gregory Auclair, “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute (MPI) website: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>. Accessed Oct. 23, 2014. MPI’s sources are Migration Policy Institute tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2010 and 2012 American Community Surveys, and 2000 Decennial Census. Data for 1960 to 1990 are from Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, U.S. Census Bureau, Working Paper No. 29, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1999.

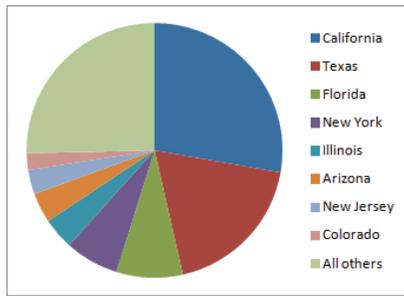
²⁴ As of 2011 a little over 13 percent of the U.S. population is foreign-born, about 41 million people out of a total of 310M. That is high compared to the middle of the 20th century, but not as high as the early 20th century. Currently, a little over half of the total foreign-born population of the U.S. is from Latin America (with the majority of this group from Mexico). The second largest share is Chinese immigrants, and the third largest is Indian immigrants. In 2012, however, India sent more immigrants to the U.S. than China did. See MPI, *Current and Historical Numbers and Shares*, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#1>.

¹⁹ Based on 2012 numbers — latest available — at U.S. Census Bureau, *Hispanic Origin, The Hispanic Population in the U.S.: 2012*; <https://www.census.gov/population/hispanic/data/2012.html>. Accessed 11/10/2014.

²⁰ Even if the Latino-American birth rate drops to that of whites, the Spanish-heritage proportion of the population will grow about twice as fast as the non-Hispanic white share. In the decade 2000-2009, 9 Latino-Americans were born for every Latino who died, while white births barely exceeded deaths. Saenz, Rogelio, *Population Reference Bureau. Population Bulletin Update: Latinos in the United States 2010*, (December 2010), 1-2. <http://www.prb.org/pdf10/latinos-update2010.pdf>. Last access 11/10/2014.

²¹ Emigration from the U.S. is too low to be considered. Immigrant and foreign-born are synonymous terms; the immigrant population

for the U.S. The U.S. is the only nation that has ever experienced immigration on this level and has done so throughout most of its history and to its benefit.



5: Immigrant Destinations

The U.S. population is undergoing dynamic changes in its makeup. The Census Bureau predicts that white population will peak in ten years and then begin to fall in totality and as a percentage. Black population will grow slightly, Asians and Hispanics dramatically.²⁵

While current percentages of immigrants to the U.S. are similar to those from the 1850s to the 1920s, the source countries for U.S. immigrants have changed markedly. Today's immigrants are largely Latino, Asian and African rather than European.²⁶ Overall, immigrant growth is most evident in cities, in the coastal U.S. and along the Southern border and is less evident in the suburbs and rural America (although there are some small towns and smaller cities that are growing only because of immigration). The accompanying pie graph identifies the

Our church has one strength that amounts to more than any of her weaknesses: our evangelical and catholic faith. . . As the Augustana reminds us, we know that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church will not fail.

top state destinations for immigrants entering the U.S.

We turn now to internal migration — movement within the country. Americans have always been mobile, seeking opportunity. Mobility continues today.²⁷ Almost 3 percent of the U.S. population moves to a different state each year and about a third of the U.S. population has moved from the state where they were born.²⁸ Internal migration correlates with age and is regional. Those under 45 are three times as likely to move out of state as those older.²⁹ With few exceptions (e.g., North

Dakota), the Midwest and Northeast are struggling to retain population.

The most important aspect of internal migration is urbanization. To be sure, some urban centers (like Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago or St. Louis) are static or are in population decline (although with increasing percentages of immigrants and other minority populations). Broader urban areas — cities plus suburbs/exurbs — continue to grow, however. Small to mid-sized cities are also growing.³⁰ Rural and small town America is suffering except in areas where immigrants are minimizing their population loss.³¹ Immigrants

are themselves highly mobile. Many settle near the entry points — thus the heavy Latino populations along the Southern border and Asian populations on the West Coast. Not all immigrants remain in these states, however. The next visual shows that the number of states in which Hispanic kids comprise more than 20 percent of kindergartners has doubled in twelve years. These now include states in the aging Northeast, the Great Plains and

²⁵ “The non-Hispanic white population is projected to peak in 2024, at 199.6 million, up from 197.8 million in 2012. Unlike other race or ethnic groups, however, its population is projected to slowly decrease, falling by nearly 20.6 million from 2024 to 2060. Meanwhile, the Hispanic population would more than double, from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million in 2060. Consequently, by the end of the period, nearly one in three U.S. residents would be Hispanic, up from about one in six today. The black population is expected to increase from 41.2 million to 61.8 million over the same period. Its share of the total population would rise slightly, from 13.1 percent in 2012 to 14.7 percent in 2060. The Asian population is projected to more than double, from 15.9 million in 2012 to 34.4 million in 2060, with its share of nation's total population climbing from 5.1 percent to 8.2 percent in the same period.” “U.S. Census Bureau Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation Half a Century from Now” (Dec. 12, 2012), <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html>. Accessed October 29, 2014.

²⁶ Pew reports that the Latino percentage of immigrants has been declining while Asian immigration has increased. The drop in Hispanic immigration as a percentage of immigrants coincides with recent economic decline and increasing focus on border security. “The Rise of Asian Americans,” Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends. April 4, 2013, at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/> accessed Oct. 23, 2014.

²⁷ Internal migration hit a 30-year low since the recession of 2008. Raven Molloy, Christopher L. Smith, and Abigail Wozniak. 2011. “Internal Migration in the United States.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 25(3): 173–96. Accessed online at <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/jep.25.3.173> on Oct. 23, 2014.

²⁸ Molloy, 178.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

³⁰ Kenneth Johnson, *Demographic Trends in Rural and Small Town America* (University of New Hampshire: Carsey Institute, 2006), online at <https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/demographic-trends-rural-and-small-town-america>. accessed 10/23/2014. See also Hope Yen, “Rural America Is Steadily Shrinking, Census Data Says,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (July 28, 2011), accessed online Oct. 23, 2014.

³¹ Mark Mather and Kevin Pollard, “Hispanic Gains Minimize Population Losses in Rural America,” Population Reference Bureau (August 2007) online at <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2007/HispanicGains.aspx>, both accessed Oct. 23, 2014.

the Northwest.³²

From the standpoint of demographics, immigration is a huge plus for our country — and, indeed, the only hope for the ongoing stability of programs like Social Security. Paul Taylor reminds us that immigration is “akin to raising the birthrate, but its impact is more immediate, because the newcomers arrive ready to work.”³³

Despite some exceptions, rural/small town decline remains. Kenneth Johnson says:

The share of people in rural areas over the past decade fell to 16 percent, passing the previous low of 20 percent in 2000. The rural share is expected to drop further as the U.S. population balloons from 309 million to 400 million by mid-century, leading people to crowd cities and suburbs and fill in the open spaces around them.³⁴

To summarize: In the U.S. immigration is the most significant migratory factor. Population growth is dependent more on immigrants and immigrant birth rates than on native population growth. In terms of internal migration, urbanization, broadly understood, continues. Smaller cities, suburbs and exurbs are benefiting more than center cities themselves. The center cities are increasingly marked by immigrant groups and other minorities.

2. Current and future realities: sociocultural consequences of demographic change

Demographic change affects culture — that is, customs and assumptions — both directly and indirectly. These effects are general. Nevertheless, broad trends are instructive, and what I will consider is all true to a great extent in American society and in the culture of North America.

Demographer Tim Dyson argues that the social effects of demographic change are centered in a new attitude

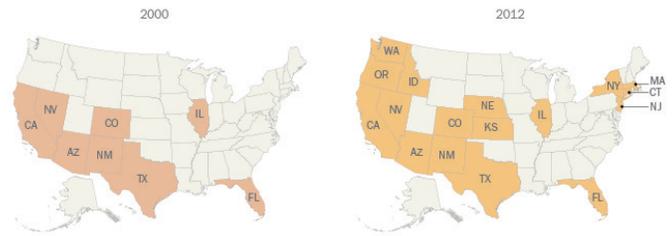
³² Jens Manuel Krogstad, “A View of the Future Through Kindergarten Demographics,” Pew Research Center FactTank (July 8, 2014), at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/08/a-view-of-the-future-through-kindergarten-demographics/>. Accessed Nov. 10, 2014.

³³ *The Next America*, 86.

³⁴ Johnson, *Demographic Trends*.

Hispanic Children Are a Growing Share of Public Kindergarten Classes

States where 20% or more of kindergartners are Hispanic



Source: Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project tabulations of the 2012 American Community Survey and 2000 decennial census (1% PUMS)

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The Church will remain forever because she is grounded in God's unfailing promises of life and salvation, flowing from their pure scriptural source and bubbling forth in the spoken Word and the visible, Christ-given Gospel signs of Baptism and Eucharist.

about life based on increasing longevity: “A key point here is that mortality decline generates higher levels of confidence in society as regards the worldly future.”³⁵ Since people feel more certain about their future here and now, their attitudes change about everything from how many children they should have, to sexual and marital habits, to gender roles, and so forth. In biblical language, demographic change results in people taking far more “thought for the morrow” (Matt 6:34, KJV) — for an extended earthly life rather than life everlasting.

a. Direct results of the demographic transition

Certain cultural changes are direct results of the demographic transition.³⁶

- First, quite obviously, the population increases as more children survive infancy and older people live longer. Decreasing infant mortality initially results in “increasing dependency” (more children needing adults to care for them) early in the DT. However, as dependency increases and urbanization occurs, bigger families are liabilities, not assets. People begin to seek ways to limit family size (contraception), and smaller families become the ideal. This represents a radical reassessment of the importance of children and, with it, of family itself.
- Second, with delayed marriage and contraception, the

³⁵ Dyson, 159, emphasis added.

³⁶ These changes are, arguably, direct effects with demographic causes and not merely correlates.

birth rate (TFR) declines, although at varying speeds. Although males are affected, the lives of women are altered profoundly as they spend less of their lives nurturing children. Sex roles thus begin to be less distinctive immediately and change even more over time.

- Third, because of urbanization there is a decline in the importance of the extended family as many single individuals, couples and nuclear families leave rural areas and smaller communities. This is a change of worldview — of lifestyle and not merely location. People lose the influence of extended families, folk traditions and values, and often inherited religious beliefs out of a need to seek employment opportunities. Migration not only undermines the significance of the extended family; it also strains nuclear families as more is demanded of them.³⁷ Finally, those who migrate are frequently unmarried, and the percentage of unmarried adults rises.
- Lastly, over time these demographic factors result in an aging population. This is true for every developed nation.³⁸ As populations age, there is a new form of increasing dependency, but on the other end of the age spectrum. Instead of large numbers of dependent children, aging societies are supporting an increasing number of older people with limited ability to provide

for all their needs.³⁹ Even as large numbers of dependent children are viewed as liabilities, so are large numbers of older people. Note how this number is increasing (see graph from WSJ⁴⁰).

To summarize: The direct results of the demographic transition are, in turn, a rising youth population as mortality drops, then a declining birth rate, and, finally, population aging.

b. Indirect demographic effects

Each stage of the DT also has indirect effects — effects that correlate with core demographic changes, but for which the DT is not directly causal. The stage of *declining mortality* prior to significant decline in birth rates is one of youthful population growth and high childhood dependency. Africa illustrates this today. A frequent corollary to growing numbers of children is poverty. That corollary is evident both internationally and within population segments. Virtually every country in the world today that is in the early stage of the DT is impoverished with a very youthful population. Moreover, the most youthful immigrant population in the U.S. — the Latino population — is also marked by high rates of poverty.

Violence, another indirect effect of early stage population increase, corresponds to a high percentage of young men. The world's hotspots are almost without exception places where there is a high percentage of young men relative to the general population. Young men are more willing to go to war than old men. So, whether in central Africa or Salafist Muslim areas of the Middle East, or in youthful Afghanistan and Pakistan, one finds an increased willingness to engage in violence.⁴¹ This indirect effect, of course, is also related to poverty. A high percentage of poor young men without many economic opportunities is a prescription for disaster — and even terrorism. And while the technology of the West and the U.S. in particular can stem this in many ways, the current (as of this writing) crisis in Syria and Iraq indicates the degree to which wars still require the boots of young soldiers on the ground.⁴²

³⁷ Families also become more child-centered (social supply and demand). Having fewer children means greater emotional investment in children since rarity makes for value. Consider what can be called the “4-2-1 effect” in China where every four parents now have only two children and every two children produce only one grandchild or, on a more mundane level, the constant whirl of social, school and sporting events focused on American kids. In its extreme, children are feted and catered to and parents become hypervigilant, fearing the injury or loss of the only child. Children experience increasing influence over against parents and others. *The Wall Street Journal* and other outlets recently noted the phenomenon of children calling parents by their first name. In Britain some child advocates recommend such things as having children participate in the interview process for hiring new teachers. See “Children Put ‘Mom’ and ‘Dad’ on a First Name Basis: For Attention, Power, or a Test” (October 29, 2013) accessed online Oct. 29, 2014 at <http://online.wsj.com/articles/children-put-mom-and-dad-on-a-first-name-basis-1414609230>. “Pupils ‘interviewing teachers for jobs,’” BBC News online (April 3, 2010) at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/8599485.stm. Accessed Oct. 25, 2014.

³⁸ Europe and most of Latin America are aging and so is the U.S. and Canada. In China there was a precipitous TFR drop in less than a generation because of the government's one-child policy. In other parts of Asia such as Taiwan (1.1), South Korea (1.25), and Singapore (0.8), the TFR drop was nearly as rapid and is now lower than in China—a self-imposed one-child policy. CIA, “Country Comparison: Total Fertility Rate,” *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html>, accessed Oct. 27, 2014.

³⁹ Longman, 52–57.

⁴⁰ Dan Fitzpatrick, “Rising U.S. Life Spans Spell Likely Pain for Pension Funds,” *Wall Street Journal* (Oct. 27, 2014). <http://online.wsj.com/articles/rising-u-s-lifespans-spell-likely-pain-for-pension-funds-1414430683>. Accessed Oct. 27, 2014.

⁴¹ Magnus, 205–209.

⁴² Phillip Longman says, “The United States lacks the amount of people necessary to sustain an imperial role in the world, just as Britain lost its ability to do so after its birthrates collapsed in the early 20th century.

TFR decline also has important indirect corollaries. An obvious aspect of TFR is the desire to restrict childbirth and, therefore, a demand for contraception.⁴³ Contraception has more than a physical dimension. Its widespread use distances sex from conception, thus often divorcing sexual relationships from marriage.

Contraception also diminishes sex role specificity, leading to further cultural effects. The blending of gender roles is significant especially for women. Since nothing is more gender specific than pregnancy and childbirth, as birth rates decline, the average woman spends less of her life on pregnancy and infant child care. Ronald Lee estimates that pre-DT women on average spend 70 percent of their lifespan nurturing small children, but after the DT, only about 17 percent.⁴⁴ That's a sea change of difference in terms of sex-specific responsibility. Other effects follow.

Women have a greater portion of life available for employment outside family responsibilities. The need for and access to female education rise. Marriage is often postponed in lieu of education and also career. Women's autonomy rises. More women are unmarried, either intentionally or because education and work serve to limit marriage possibilities.⁴⁵

As women's lives change, so do households. The accompanying table⁴⁶ shows concrete examples for the U.S.: In 1940, 90 percent of American households

Household by Type	1940	1960	1980	2000	2010
Family households	90.0	85.1	73.7	68.1	66.4
Married couples with kids	42.9	44.3	30.7	23.5	20.2
Married couples w/o kids	33.4	30.5	30.2	28.1	28.2
Single parents with kids	4.3	4.1	7.2	9.2	9.6
Other family type	9.4	6.2	5.6	7.1	8.5
Non-family households	10.0	15.1	26.4	31.9	33.6
One person	7.8	13.4	22.6	25.8	26.7
Other nonfamily	2.2	1.7	3.8	6.1	6.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial censuses

consisted of a family: husband-wife, with or without kids, or mother or father alone with kids. Today just over one-third of American households are non-family households of single individuals or unrelated persons living together.⁴⁷ Clearly, marriage is in decline when only 48 percent of households are married. Even more significantly, families of any sort are also in decline, with over one-third of households being non-familial. Nicholas Eberstadt warns of a “flight from marriage” (a “global tidal wave away from early stable lifelong conjugal unions”).⁴⁸ The flight from marriage creates diverse social problems — further indirect effects of the DT. To mention just one, consider the societal costs of children in a single parent household. Demographer Sara McLanahan argues that as the DT moves to sub-replacement birthrates, it widens “social class disparities.”

Children who were born to mothers from the most-advantaged backgrounds are making substantial gains in resources. Relative to their counterparts 40 years ago, their mothers are more mature and more likely to be working at well-paying jobs. These children were born into stable unions and are spending more time with their fathers. In contrast, children born to mothers from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are making smaller gains and, in some instances, even losing parental resources. Their mothers are working

For countries such as China, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain, in which one-child families are now the norm, the quality of human capital may be high, but it has literally become too rare to put at risk.” “The Return of Patriarchy,” *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2006), 59.

⁴³ It is noteworthy that restricting childbirth is not solely the result of contraception. Europe limited its TFR in the 19th and early 20th centuries primarily through coitus interruptus. See Ronald Lee, “The Demographic Transition: Three Centuries of Fundamental Change,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Fall 2003), 174.

⁴⁴ Lee's estimate is striking. He calculates that prior to the DT an average woman spent 70 percent of her lifespan caring for young children, but now spends only about 17 percent of her life in such nurture. *Demographic Transition*, 167.

⁴⁵ Sara McLanahan notes: “The primary trends of the second transition include delays in fertility and marriage; increases in cohabitation, divorce, and nonmarital childbearing; and increases in maternal employment (Lesthaeghe 1995; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 1988; Mason and Jensen 1995).” “Diverging Destinies,” 607. See also Longman, “The Return of Patriarchy,” Taylor, *The Next America*, 107–124, and Dyson, *Population*, 170–179.

⁴⁶ Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Families and Living Arrangements, Table HH–1 Households by Type, 1940 to Present, <https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/households.html>. Downloaded Oct. 27, 2014.

⁴⁷ Table of “Selected Social Characteristics in the United States,” U.S. Census Bureau American Fact Finder, at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_3YR_DP02&prodType=table. Abbreviated as CenFact, accessed on Oct. 28, 2014.

⁴⁸ Nicholas Eberstadt writes: “Perhaps more important than any of the other portents for future childbearing is what has been termed by demographic specialists ‘the flight from marriage’: the modern global tidal wave away from early stable lifelong conjugal unions.” In Susan Yoshihara, Douglas A. Sylva, Nicholas Eberstadt, *Population Decline and the Remaking of Great Power Politics* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2012), Kindle edition locations 131–133).

at low-paying jobs. Their parents' relationships are unstable, and for many, support from their biological fathers is minimal.⁴⁹

The University of Virginia's National Marriage Project (NMP) further corroborates these concerns in a report titled *When Marriage Disappears*.⁵⁰

In middle America, marriage is in trouble. Among the affluent, marriage is stable and appears to be getting even stronger. Among the poor, marriage continues to be fragile and weak. But the newest and perhaps most consequential marriage trend of our time concerns the broad center of our society, where marriage, that iconic middle-class institution, is foundering.⁵¹

The "affluent" in the NMP are Americans with a bachelor's degree or better, which is about 30 percent of those 25–60 years old. The likelihood of the affluent educated getting and staying married today remains very high. The "poor" correspond to those who never finished high school, roughly 10 percent of the population (12 percent to be exact). They continue in a pattern of not marrying and unmarried childbearing. The crisis is in "Middle America," the remaining 60 percent of the adult population who finished high school, may have had college or trade school education, but never achieved a bachelor's degree. Their marriage trend lines are the most troubling, resembling those of the uneducated poor, not the affluent 30 percent: less likely to marry, bearing children outside of marriage, high divorce when they marry and less happiness if still married.⁵²

⁴⁹ McLanahan, 608.

⁵⁰ E. Bradford Wilcox, ed., *When Marriage Disappears: The New Middle America; The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America* (Charlottesville: The National Marriage Project, December 2010 [NMP]), in Executive Summary; accessed Sept. 5, 2014, as e-book pdf download from <http://www.stateofourunions.org/>.

⁵¹ *When Marriage Disappears*, ix. Emphasis in the original.

⁵² NMP, 13–16; 19; 20; 22. These patterns might seem to indicate that the middle and the poor have stopped caring about marriage, but something else is going on. All three groups, from the poor to the affluent had similar responses to the question of how important they think marriage is — more than 75 percent across the board. NMP, 27. See also Sara McLanahan: "As marriage becomes more concentrated among high-income groups, couples in the bottom part of the distribution may come to see it as less attainable for them, thus losing whatever benefits are associated with this universal institution (Waite 1995). This idea is consistent with what unmarried parents in the Fragile Families Study (McLanahan et al. 2001) have said. When asked why they are not married, parents often say that they are waiting until

The stage of population aging is also having dramatic indirect effects and corollaries. To mention only a few, consider the pension crises facing many cities and states. It is, primarily, a result of demographics. Add to that skyrocketing health care costs, which are directly affected by longevity as ever older people cost the system more and more while payments into the system on their behalf are restricted by stringent Medicare reimbursement limits. The stresses go farther, with the Social Security Administration now publicly warning that current benefits cannot continue beyond 2033 with a shrinking base of workers paying in and a mushrooming number of retirees demanding checks.⁵³ Either older retirement ages or reduced retirement benefits or tax hikes will be necessary to make the program fiscally solvent. The U.S. military budget will be hard-pressed in the future to achieve its primary purpose of defending the nation because of the cost of supporting pension costs, which in 2012 were nearly equal to the cost of active duty military pay.⁵⁴

It has never been easy to proclaim Christ to the city of man — it will not be easy today. Yet, we pray nonetheless, "Thy kingdom come."

These things are true in the U.S. because we are an aging society, even though we are still much younger than Europe or Japan and other parts of Asia. Such countries are facing even greater secondary repercussions from aging.

Finally, migration has indirect effects and corollaries. Most obvious is the potential for intra-group friction. Contemporary debates about immigration are, in part if not largely, a result of ethnocentrism as individuals encounter a different language, customs and values. Nativism to one degree or another seems a constant corollary to the whole of U.S. immigration history.⁵⁵ Urbanization multiplies the potential for friction by

they can achieve a certain lifestyle that they associate with marriage." "Diverging Destinies: Children and the Second Demographic Transition," *Demography* (41:4, Nov. 2004), 619.

⁵³ The Social Security Administration's own website states this bluntly when accessing one's personal statement of benefits online: "Without changes, in 2033 the Social Security Trust Fund will be able to pay only about 77 cents for each dollar of scheduled benefits." "About Social Security's Future" at <http://www.ssa.gov>, accessed Oct. 24, 2014.

⁵⁴ See Lawrence J. Korb, "Reforming Military Compensation: Addressing Runaway Personnel Costs Is a National Imperative," Center for American Progress, accessed on Oct. 24, 2014 at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/report/2012/05/07/11573/reforming-military-compensation/>.

⁵⁵ See Barone, *Shaping Our Nation*.

increasing the size of conflicting groups. The difficulty of learning a new language compounded by poverty among immigrants only furthers the potential for anti-immigrant resentment.

As people from different backgrounds, cultures and languages begin to interrelate at work, shopping and in other aspects of public life, long-held customs and practices begin to change. I have already mentioned how family customs feel the effects of migration, but religion does as well. In 2008, 8.1 percent of America claimed a religion other than Christianity, including Mormon (1.7 percent) and Jehovah's Witnesses (0.7 percent) as well as all the completely non-Christian religious traditions (4.7 percent). As new religions are introduced, some individuals find them appealing and switch. Others find enough similarity to think that religious distinctions no longer matter and reject religion altogether. They become agnostics, atheists and "spiritual but not religious" (16.1 percent of the U.S.).⁵⁶ What was once sacred is now questioned increasingly.

To summarize: The most significant indirect socio-cultural effects of the DT include declining sex role differentiation (changing women's lives in particular), declining familial relationships, a flight from marriage, economic stress from an aging population, inter-ethnic and inter-racial conflict, diversification of religious beliefs and practices, and more distinctive generational and religious differences.

c. Will there be exceptions to this demographic trend?

Other societies have faced demographic decline. It was a significant problem in the Roman Empire. There were too few children being born.⁵⁷ Many are recognizing that same problem today, especially in Europe and most of East Asia. Demographers note that countries as diverse as Sweden and Singapore are sponsoring programs to encourage increased family size, offering services and financial incentives to women to have more children. They are doing not because they are enamored of marriage, but because their demographics have them scared, as their national populations are in decline. They realize there will not be enough "human capital" (that is,

young working people), to support the aging.⁵⁸ To date, none of these government-sponsored programs have successfully reversed the second demographic transition and produced TFRs high enough to sustain a population. It is doubtful that any policy change will be able to effect meaningful upward change in TFR for the West or for Asia. As Longman puts it, "When cultural and economic conditions discourage parenthood, not even a dictator can force people to go forth and multiply."⁵⁹

Historically, the one major recent change in the almost inexorable trajectory of the DT has been the result of the horror of the Second World War. Only after that slaughter was there a significant change in TFR — a change that involved most of the countries affected by the war. It was called the "baby boom" and it reversed the TFR slide toward smaller families that had started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It lasted a generation. One can only plead for God's mercy to spare us the sort of bloodbath that changed the trend for a time last century.

There is another exception to the general rule of declining fertility. The title of a recent book by Eric Kaufmann summarizes the point by way of a question: *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth?*⁶⁰ The short answer is yes. He says: "Simply put, this book argues that religious fundamentalists are on course to take over the world through demography."⁶¹ This is not quite as new as Kaufmann thinks. Rodney Stark cogently argues in his *The Rise of Christianity* that the higher fertility of Christian women in comparison to pagans and Romans was a significant factor in the early church's growth.⁶² That fits Kaufmann's thesis: "Those embracing the here and now [the most secularized individuals and societies] are spearheading population decline, but individuals who shun this world are relatively immune to it."⁶³ He is not talking about the ordinarily religious, but those with religious commitments strong enough to pit them against their surrounding culture — those Niebuhr almost certainly would have categorized as "Christ against culture" religious types, although you don't have to be Christian to qualify. So Kaufmann notes the population

⁵⁶ Pew Religious Landscape, 10.

⁵⁷ See Phillip Longman, "The Return of Patriarchy," *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2006): 56. Rodney Stark comments on this extensively in *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 115–128.

⁵⁸ E.g., Longman, *Empty Cradle*, 52–67; Yoshihara, *Population Decline*.

⁵⁹ "Return of Patriarchy," 58.

⁶⁰ Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth? Demography and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Profile Books, ebook [Kindle] 2010).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 51.

⁶² Stark, 115–128.

⁶³ Kaufmann, Kindle location 63.

growth of the Old Order Amish and the QuiverFull movement among Christian groups, but also adds Mormons to the mix before turning to Salafist Muslims (fundamentalists), and finally to the mushrooming population of ultra-Orthodox Jews.⁶⁴ With Michael Blume, he grudgingly admits that “when it comes to Creationism vs. Intelligent Design, ‘evolutionary theorists brought up far more scientific arguments but committed believers in supernatural agents brought up far more children.’”⁶⁵ He also concedes that “[r]eligious zealots are no more violent than socialists or anarchists.” His fear is elsewhere. “The greater threat is cultural: that fundamentalism will replace reason and freedom with moral puritanism.”⁶⁶ Or as Longman predicts: “If no alternative solution [to declining birthrates] can be found, the future will belong to those who reject markets, reject learning, reject modernity, and reject freedom. This will be the fundamentalist moment.”⁶⁷

Please note: No one expects this to be an overnight change. They accept that secularization of attitudes will continue to dominate for some time,⁶⁸ that overall decline in religiosity will not soon change; and that an aging society is inevitable. Their point, rather, is that the highly religious will be important long-term exceptions to demographic decline and that the highly religious will increasingly exercise the power of growing numbers. This growth of religious influence will occur primarily through childbirth, not conversion.

To summarize: Although we won’t see Old Order Amish or QuiverFull fundamentalists (or, for that matter,

Mormons) taking over the U.S. in our lifetime, the U.S. and other aging societies will experience a growing percentage of the highly religious while the moderately religious continue to decline.⁶⁹

3. The LCMS and demographic change — implications for theology and mission

a. LCMS and U.S. age-sex demographics

What, if anything, does such demographic change mean for the LCMS and its mission? My answers are based on extrapolations from LCMS statistical reports and from other data that is available about the LCMS from

Pew Research’s *Religious Landscape Survey*.⁷⁰ I want to publicly thank Gene Weeke and Ryan Curnutt, Synod’s statisticians, for their assistance.⁷¹

To get a helpful picture of the LCMS demographically, we must start with race. As members of a church body that is 95 percent non-Latino white (the highest percentage of any Christian tradition except the ELCA), the LCMS must simply realize

that we are representative of a shrinking demographic

Race by Protestant Denomination

	Non-Hispanic					Latino	N
	White	Black	Asian	Other/Mixed	%		
Total Population	71	11	8	2	12	95,101	
Total Protestants	74	16	1	3	5	18,753	
African Methodist Episcopal (Historically Black Tradition)	1	93	0	5	1	125	
American Baptist Churches in the USA (Mainline Tradition)	81	4	2	6	7	406	
Anglican Church (Mainline Tradition)	92	6	2	0	0	130	
Assemblies of God (Evangelical Tradition)	72	2	2	6	19	477	
Church of Christ (Evangelical Tradition)	76	13	2	3	6	561	
Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) (Evangelical Tradition)	83	2	1	3	11	124	
Church of God in Christ (Historically Black Tradition)	11	71	1	4	13	158	
Church of the Nazarene (Evangelical Tradition)	95	2	0	1	2	103	
Disciples of Christ (Mainline Tradition)	79	8	0	3	10	137	
Episcopal Church in the USA (Mainline Tradition)	92	4	1	1	2	468	
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Mainline Tradition)	97	1	0	1	0	887	
Free Methodist Church (Evangelical Tradition)	86	7	5	3	0	103	
Independent Baptist (Evangelical Tradition)	91	0	1	4	3	905	
Independent Baptist (Historically Black Tradition)	0	97	0	0	3	121	
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Evangelical Tradition)	99	2	0	1	0	859	
National Baptist Convention (Historically Black Tradition)	0	98	0	0	2	549	
Nondenominational Charismatic Churches (Evang. Trad.)	75	14	2	1	9	170	
Nondenominational Evangelical Churches (Evang. Trad.)	73	10	4	4	9	412	
Nondenominational Fundamentalist Churches (Evang. Trad.)	79	7	3	1	9	103	
Presbyterian Church in America (Evangelical Tradition)	86	5	4	1	4	168	
Presbyterian Church USA (Mainline Tradition)	91	4	2	1	2	542	
Seventh-Day Adventist (Evangelical Tradition)	43	21	5	4	27	134	
Southern Baptist Convention (Evangelical Tradition)	85	8	1	3	2	2,520	
United Church of Christ (Mainline Tradition)	91	4	0	4	1	246	
United Methodist Church (Mainline Tradition)	93	2	1	2	2	2,232	

Due to rounding, rows may not add to 100.

Question: Are you, yourself, of Hispanic origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background? (IF HISPANIC ASK) Are you white, Hispanic, black, Hispanic, or some other race? (IF NON-HISPANIC ASK) What is your race? Are you white, black, Asian, or some other?

⁶⁹ “The established, inherited, moderate religions which used to reign unchallenged are being dismembered by secularism and fundamentalism. Once secularism rears its head and fundamentalism responds with a clear alternative, moderate religion strikes many as redundant. Either you believe the stuff or you don’t. If you do, it makes sense to go for the real thing, which takes a firm stand against godlessness.” Kaufman, Kindle location 204.

⁷⁰ A disclaimer is necessary. The LCMS baptized membership is only 1.4 percent of the total U.S. population, and one cannot make too many assumptions about how well our population reflects the national population given that we are a small sample. I should also note that Pew’s *Religious Landscape* is six years old. I do not think that negates its value, but it should be kept in mind especially when we look at age distributions. Pew Research: Religion and Public Life, *Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic* (February 2008), 15; downloaded from <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>. The survey accounts for most of the data in this section. Among its strengths is its large sample size, but because of language limitations, Pew warns that it provides minimal estimates for non-English speaking groups.

⁷¹ LCMS Department of Statistics, *Forty Years of LCMS District Statistics* (March 25, 2013) is a very helpful resource prepared by Weeke and Curnutt.

⁶⁴ Kaufmann’s comparison of Muslim vs. Christian growth is noteworthy: “The natural increase of Muslims was nearly double that of Christianity, allowing it to outpace Christianity despite the fact that Christianity trumped Islam 3:1 in the market for converts.” Kaufmann, 120, Kindle location, 2494. With regard to Israel, he notes that the ultra-Orthodox population has gone from a 20 percent share of the total population in 1960 to nearly 50 percent today.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Kindle location 274.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Kindle location 117.

⁶⁷ *Empty Cradle*, 168–169.

⁶⁸ Kaufmann, 9–11, Kindle locations 450–503.

group.⁷² Not only are whites declining as a percentage of the population, non-Latino whites are also the group that is declining most rapidly in terms of church involvement, as another Pew study has shown. Pew's 2000 study "Nones" on the Rise is blunt about disaffiliation in the U.S., noting that the increasing number of people, especially young people, leaving the church is not a universal phenomenon across American races and ethnicities. Rather, "[w]hen it comes to race. . . the recent change has been concentrated in one group: whites."⁷³ The shrinkage does cross denominational lines. Such decline is not only true of the mainline, but also in Evangelicalism as a whole.⁷⁴

Our office of Data and Statistics has no information about age and sex of our members or the male-female ratio of the LCMS. Pew's *Landscape Survey*, however, indicates that the LCMS is 47 percent male and 53 percent female overall as compared to a 48 percent male to 52 percent female ratio. The entire Christian population shows a similar pattern of greater female than male participation.⁷⁵

As for age, Pew's *Religious Landscape* stats show the LCMS as one of the oldest religious groups in the U.S.⁷⁶ Note the accompanying compilation of data from Pew and the U.S. census to see how the LCMS compares to the white population and to select other groups in terms of age group proportions. Our level of aging is well above the average for whites, other Protestants and Roman Catholics. We reflect the mainline churches in this area.

To summarize: The LCMS is generally reflective of the

age-sex distribution tendencies of white America. Our proportion of females is slightly higher than the overall population (in line with all other Christian groups). In terms of age, the LCMS varies more widely with significantly fewer adults between 18–49 than average and significantly more adults 50 and over.⁷⁷

Adult Populations by Age	18-29	30-49	50-64	85+
U.S. non-Latino whites	20	35	26	19
Roman Catholic	18	41	24	16
All Protestants	17	38	26	20
Evangelicals	17	39	26	19
Mormon	24	42	19	15
Unaffiliated	31	40	20	8
LCMS	11	32	31	26

Data from Pew, *Religious Landscape Survey* (2008), pages 78 and 79 and U.S. Census 2010.

b. Birth rate

That comparative dearth of young adults has an obvious implication for the overall LCMS birth rate. A low number of births going forward is unavoidable given the lower than average number of potential mothers. However, we have no statistical basis to determine the average birth rate for individual women in the LCMS, so we can only assume that young LCMS women will not have markedly different birth rates than the general white population. Another way to try to get at our birth rate is more round-about, but at least it is specific to the LCMS. Note the following graph of LCMS membership over 50 years. It is in five-year increments from 1962 to 2012, the last year for which I have complete statistics on the LCMS.

The graph goes back far enough to enable us to see the end of the baby-boom generation (those born from 1945–1964). U.S. TFRs peaked around 1960 at 3.6, dropped to 2.9 in 1965 and to 2.5 in 1970. From about 1975 on they have fluctuated — to a low of 1.8, but never exceeding 2.1 significantly. The graph of baptized membership suggests that the LCMS seems to have followed this trend, peaking in 1972 at just under 2.9 million and gradually declining thereafter. Two facts indicate a declining LCMS birth rate. First, significant loss of baptized membership

⁷² Pew, *Religious Landscape*, 77.

⁷³ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Nones" on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation (Oct. 9, 2012), 21. Available as pdf at <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>. Accessed Nov. 9, 2014.

⁷⁴ See John S. Dickerson, *The Great Evangelical Recession: 6 Factors That Will Crash the American Church. . . and How to Prepare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013; ebook), who concurs with Christian Smith's estimates of the Evangelical population of the U.S. as only about 7–9 percent of the U.S. population (25). Pew assumes a figure of about 26 percent (see *Religious Landscape*, 10), but the difference is definitional rather than data-driven. Dickerson defines Evangelicals as those "who believe in salvation by faith," that the Bible is God's Word and without error, and that Jesus is the Savior (23). See also his op-ed piece from the New York Times online at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/opinion/sunday/the-decline-of-evangelical-america.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0. Accessed Nov. 5, 2014.

⁷⁵ Protestants overall and Roman Catholics are at 46 percent male and 54 percent female. Pew, *Religious Landscape*, 95. That pattern reverses toward a male majority in all other religions that Pew surveyed and in those who are unaffiliated with any religion.

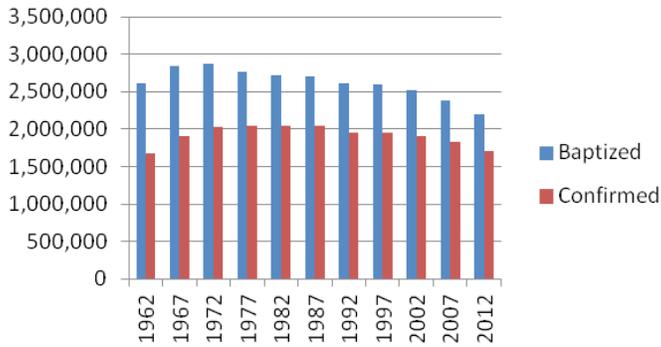
⁷⁶ Pew, *Religious Landscape*, 83.

⁷⁷ See *Forty Years*, an historical study of LCMS district membership. After observing the Synod's overall numerical decline, they note that "In nearly every district, the ratio of baptized to confirmed members has also been shrinking over the years, meaning that there is a smaller group of members who are baptized but not confirmed. This usually is an indicator of an aging membership." (See also graph at bottom of B-3 in *Forty Years*.)

begins in 1977, while significant confirmed membership loss does not begin until 1992 and even then trends downward more slowly than baptized membership, a time spread that matches with typical confirmation ages. In addition, you can see that the percentage of baptized to confirmed membership shrinks consistently over time. In the early 1960s, confirmed members were 72 percent of the total LCMS membership. According to the best stats now, 78 percent of all LCMS baptized members are also

c. Migration

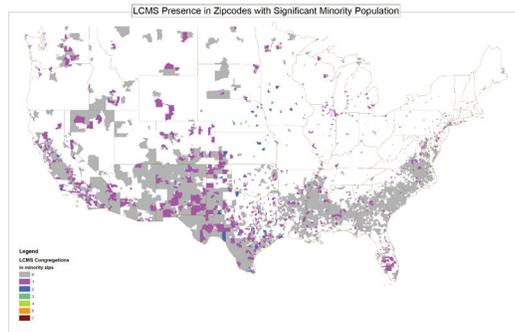
I earlier dealt with the two aspects population movement: immigration and internal migration. The LCMS is clearly dissimilar to the U.S. in terms of reflecting immigration, since the U.S. is less than 64 percent non-Latino white, while the LCMS is 95 percent non-Latino white.⁸¹ The 5 percent includes African, Asian, Hispanic and various other immigrant Americans so there has been some immigration effect, but it is minimal. One reason for this is that the LCMS has little presence in the areas of the U.S. where minority groups live — whether blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos or other immigrants. On this map,⁸² the white portions of the map are zip codes with minimal minority populations. The colors represent minority-dense counties. They are coded according to how many LCMS congregations we have in each. Gray means we



confirmed. Looking from the perspective of the end of the baby boom, between 1972 and 2012 baptized LCMS membership declined by 23.7 percent while confirmed membership declined by 15.8 percent — meaning we were losing baptized membership at about 150 percent of the rate of confirmed membership loss. In noting such realities, LCMS Research Services says this “usually” indicates an aging population.⁷⁸

Pew corroborates these extrapolations, showing that LCMS adults have fewer children living at home with them than the national average or the average for all Protestants (even fewer than the average for mainline churches alone!).⁷⁹ 72 percent of LCMS members have no child at home; 11 percent have one child, 10 percent have two, and only 7 percent have three or more. Nationally the numbers for the total population are 65 percent with none, 13 percent with 1, 13 percent with two, and 9 percent with three or more.⁸⁰

To summarize: Every indication is that the LCMS has a low birthrate. Without doubt its population is aging significantly, with ever smaller numbers of members who are of child-bearing age now and in the foreseeable future.



have no congregations, which you can see includes most of the minority-rich zip codes in the U.S. We have one congregation in the pink zip codes and two in the blue ones.

To a large extent our present LCMS geography correlates with our history as a German immigrant church. The accompanying ancestry map, from the Census Bureau, based on 2010 data, shows the ancestry group with the largest population by U.S. counties. Missouri’s concentration is heaviest in the sky blue, German-heritage counties.⁸³ The third map corroborates this.⁸⁴ In white areas, the LCMS is strongest (between 2 and 6 percent of the population). In the red areas, we are between 0.8 and

⁷⁸ *Forty Years of LCMS District Statistics* (March 25, 2013), ii.

⁷⁹ Pew, 87.

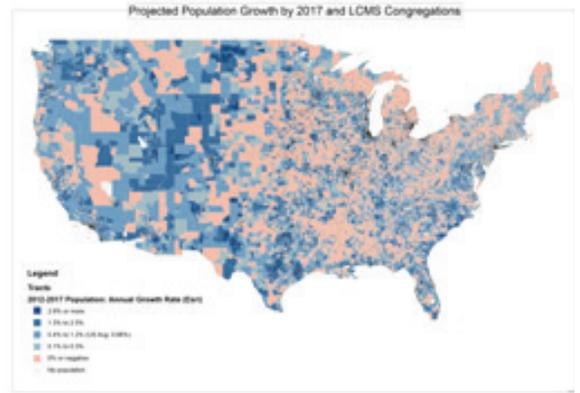
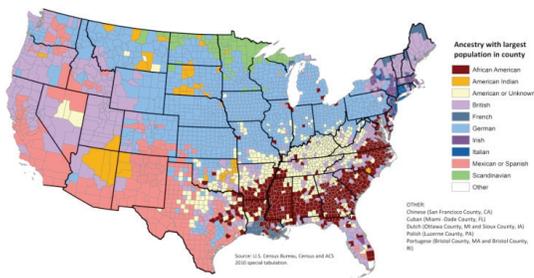
⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁸¹ According to the 2010 Census. See <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>.

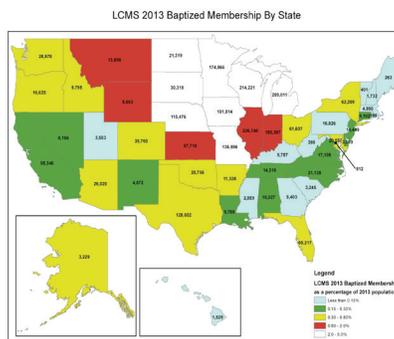
⁸² Prepared by Ryan Curnutt, LCMS Office of Research and Statistics.

⁸³ Hamilto Lombard, “Ancestry: Who Do You Think You Are?” StatChat (University of Virginia, March 13, 2014), <http://statchatva.org/2014/03/13/ancestry-who-do-you-think-you-are/>. Accessed on Nov. 7, 2014.

⁸⁴ Prepared by Ryan Curnutt, LCMS Office of Research and Statistics.



2.0 percent. Yellow is 3/10th to 8/10th of 1 percent and green and blue are less than 3/10th of a percent. We are strongest in states that are not fast-growing and weakest in the largest and most populous states. Pew gives percentages for LCMS membership: 64 percent in the Midwest versus 7 percent in the Northeast, 13 percent in the West and 16 percent in the South.⁸⁵ We are also dissimilar, therefore, to the national population in terms of population location.



The LCMS is similar to the general population, however, in more recent migration patterns. Over the past few decades, the Synod has experienced some shifting of its population to the southern U.S., especially to the Southeast and to Texas. Texas experienced growth in baptized membership over 30 of the past 40 years, as did Florida-Georgia and the Mid-South and Oklahoma Districts, while the Southeastern District experienced growth in 20 of the past 40 years.⁸⁶ In the districts where we are numerically strongest, we've experienced modest growth in several. Nebraska District grew modestly for 30 of the past 40 years (B-8), while there was modest growth for 20 of the 40 years in Missouri (B-4), Kansas (B-16), Rocky Mountain (B-16), and Central Illinois Districts (B-20).⁸⁷ The mention of Midwestern districts in this mix hints that the population shifts that have occurred in the LCMS seem to have followed U.S. trends in which most southern movement is due to whites leaving upper Midwest *cities* and the Northeast's urban areas. Statistics from our districts in such areas tend to bear that out as

well.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, despite some growth in previous decades, no district has experienced overall numerical growth in the past ten years.

Not only are we not strongly present in heavily minority locales, we are also not strongly present in the areas of the country where population is growing fastest overall, which includes many of those minority locales, but other areas as well. The map of projected population growth indicates the fastest growing areas of the country in dark blue.⁸⁹ The dots show where

our congregations are. You see a strong cluster of LCMS congregations in zones that are pink or the lightest blue, where growth is negative or minimal.

To summarize: Synod's overall numerical decline, then, clearly is due in part to the demographics of non-Latino white America with low birth rates, and also to where we are concentrated geographically.

However, while these hard demographic factors must account for a significant part of the LCMS's decline, they are by no means able to account for all of it. We must remember that despite declining TFRs the white population of the U.S. continued to grow through the last forty years. Only two years ago, in 2012, did the continuing spiral of low birthrates cause the death rate

⁸⁵ Pew, *Religious Landscape*, 92.

⁸⁶ *Forty Years*, B-4, B-20, B-12.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, B-8, B-4, B-16, B-20 respectively.

⁸⁸ For examples from *Forty Years*, see Atlantic (about -40%, C-2), New England (about -35 percent, C-36), New Jersey (about -40 percent, C-38), Eastern (about -40 percent, C-8), Michigan (about -20 percent, C-22), Ohio (about -25 percent, C-48), NID (about -40 percent, C-44), SWD (about -30 percent, C-60), and English (about -30 percent, C-10). Atlantic, New England and English experienced significant losses during the Synod controversy in the 70s, but the loss estimates here are based on decline since 1977.

⁸⁹ Prepared by Ryan Curnutt, LCMS Office of Research and Statistics.

Marital Status by Protestant Denomination

	Living with Partner		Divorced		Widowed		Never Married	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Population	54	10	10	19	6	10	65	120
Total Protestants	55	5	13	10	17	17	18,822	18,822
African Methodist Episcopal (Historically Black Tradition)	39	2	16	16	27	13	129	129
American Baptist Churches in the USA (Mainline Tradition)	49	3	16	12	14	14	411	411
Anglican Church in North America (Mainline Tradition)	55	3	15	14	13	13	236	236
Assemblies of God (Evangelical Tradition)	64	5	12	8	10	10	479	479
Church of Christ (Evangelical Tradition)	52	6	13	11	16	16	567	567
Church of God in Christ (Historically Black Tradition)	80	9	13	13	13	13	124	124
Church of God in Christ (Mainline Tradition)	39	6	19	9	30	16	168	168
Church of the Nazarene (Evangelical Tradition)	50	6	14	12	11	11	102	102
Disciples of Christ (Mainline Tradition)	56	2	14	14	14	14	132	132
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Mainline Tradition)	55	6	11	10	16	16	496	496
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Historically Black Tradition)	63	5	10	13	13	13	895	895
Free Methodist Church (Evangelical Tradition)	54	6	15	15	10	10	103	103
Independent Baptist (Evangelical Tradition)	82	5	12	9	12	12	910	910
Independent Baptist (Historically Black Tradition)	23	6	17	9	46	19	119	119
Lutheran Church, Missouri-Synod (Evangelical Tradition)	80	5	11	12	12	12	868	868
National Baptist Convention (Historically Black Tradition)	35	7	16	15	26	14	547	547
Nondenominational Charismatic Churches (Evangelical Tradition)	66	6	10	9	13	13	169	169
Nondenominational Evangelical Churches (Evangelical Tradition)	86	4	8	4	16	13	412	412
Nondenominational Pentecostal Churches (Evangelical Tradition)	81	4	18	7	10	10	103	103
Presbyterian Church in America (Evangelical Tradition)	57	2	10	16	10	10	169	169
Presbyterian Church USA (Mainline Tradition)	82	3	10	14	10	10	539	539
Southwest Baptist (Evangelical Tradition)	46	6	11	7	25	12	126	126
Southern Baptist Convention (Evangelical Tradition)	61	4	13	10	13	13	2,025	2,025
United Church of Christ (Mainline Tradition)	55	6	11	15	13	13	249	249
United Methodist Church (Mainline Tradition)	82	4	11	12	12	12	2,221	2,221

Due to rounding, some may not total to 100.
Questions are presented in Spanish, French, and Chinese. Percentages are rounded. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

to exceed the number of births for non-Latino whites.⁹⁰ But the LCMS decline goes back about 40 years, not two. Obviously, the problem is bigger than the lack of babies.

d. Indirect demographic effects

What about the areas I referred to as “indirect demographic effects” — those other socio-cultural changes that correlate and are associated with core demographic change? The LCMS exhibits both similarities and dissimilarities in this area too.

Take marriage and income, as examples. Pew’s statistics on marriage — which are LCMS specific — are again relevant. They are helpful in terms of household and family information. Sixty percent of LCMS people are married, higher than both the total population or than other Protestants. Five percent of LCMS members live with an unmarried partner, slightly lower than the national average of 6 percent, equal to Evangelicals as a group who are also at 5 percent, but higher than the ELCA that has only 3 percent of its members cohabitating.⁹¹ Our divorce rate is slightly below the national average and the Protestant average. We have about 35 percent more widowed members than the national average and one point more than the Protestant average. We have far fewer never-married adults — 11 percent for the LCMS compared to 19 percent for the national population and 17 percent for all Protestants.⁹²

To summarize: In terms of marriage practices and income, Missouri varies only slightly from the overall patterns of American Protestant churches.

These factors are all very generational in nature. So it should not surprise us that we are struggling to retain

⁹⁰ There were 12,000 more deaths than births for non-Hispanic whites in 2012. White population grew overall only because of European immigration (+188,000). See Sam Roberts, “Census Benchmark for White Americans: More Deaths Than Births,” *New York Times* (June 13, 2013), online at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/13/us/census-benchmark-for-white-americans-more-deaths-than-births.html?_r=0. Last accessed Nov. 7, 2014.

⁹¹ Pew, *Religious Landscape*, 72–74.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 80.

youthful members, to say nothing of effectively evangelizing them. It would be downright miraculous if the LCMS were not a poster-child for the phenomenon of religious disaffiliation among white Americans, especially those under

thirty. The rising tide of “Nones” is real, and given the age spread of Missouri, must especially be a significant factor for membership decline among the youngest adult population cohort.⁹³

e. Will the LCMS be an exception?

All of this indicates that when one compares the LCMS to the U.S. population overall, we are probably more culturally similar than dissimilar to the rest of the white population. Our similarity to the U.S. population is true in terms of core demography insofar as we have data. We have low fertility and are aging quickly like the rest of white America. The only difference seems to be that these phenomena are truer than the rest of the population because they are exacerbated by the loss of young adults also through disaffiliation. As for migration, we are gaining very few of the new Americans overall — far less than Roman Catholics or Pentecostals, but also some evangelicals. And our present geography makes us congregation-heavy where population is light.

But could we be an exception to the rule of demographic decline among whites? I mentioned that those with the highest religious commitments and a willingness (or even an eagerness) to be counter-cultural are such exceptions — the Amish, the QuiverFull, orthodox Jews. How about Missouri? Could we become a church marked by significantly higher birth rates than average? Could we become the Mormons of orthodox Christianity? If I look at the information available from studies of our population, it is clear that we aren’t bucking any trends in terms of age and birth statistics right now. Even if we kept all our children, it would be hard to stay even into the next generation, and the fact is, we’re losing

⁹³ As Pew shows, the unaffiliated are largely young whites, with the under-30 more than three times as likely to have no religious commitment as those over 65 and more than twice as likely as those over 50. Pew, “Nones,” 10.

an awful lot of our kids.

In other words, though demographers don't use terms like "lukewarm," the LCMS is not a group that they would call "highly religious." There is no evidential basis to assume that the LCMS currently, in an overall way that gets down to the laity in large measure, takes faith commitments to a level that makes us willing to live in open, purposeful cultural contradiction to our society. Like other Christians, we probably have a slightly higher birth rate than America as a whole, but only marginally so. Our pastors do appear to be more purposefully counter-cultural than many other Christians, but I am skeptical about how far that translates into the pews. But the best single marker for a strongly counter-cultural religious group is a significantly higher than average birth rate. There is no evidence of that in the LCMS; rather, other markers indicate we are more similar than dissimilar to the "average American" — with few kids, but also plenty of divorces and living together in particular. Our income level also militates against us being counter-cultural. Nonconformists are typically found more often among the poor.

Maybe that is as it should be. We've all read Niebuhr and know that at least according to his typology we Lutherans should be a "Christ and culture in paradox" and not a "Christ against culture" kind of church. Or not. You decide! My purpose, again, is simply to speak factually as much as I can.

To summarize: LCMS demographics make it unlikely that we would be an exception to overall demographic trends among non-Latino white Protestants.

4. LCMS missions: practice and assumptions

That's enough demographics for me. I warned you that the "numbers" would be grim. They leave me feeling discouraged. I love this crabby old mother of ours, the Missouri Synod, with all her warts. She has nurtured me lovingly. I hate to have to think about more and more decline: the loss of members (including relatives whom I dearly love); financial struggles; closing schools and churches all across America and especially in cities, where my heart is. It grieves me more than I can say. There is no hope in these numbers.

But we live by the Gospel, not numbers. We will all die without it, so I simply would remind you that we walk by faith not by sight or statistics. That doesn't mean we can ignore the numbers, but I pray that it will allow us to keep them in their place.

Our church has one strength that amounts to more than any of her weaknesses: our evangelical and catholic faith. Consider that here. As the Augustana reminds us, we know that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church will not fail. No, the Church will remain forever because she is grounded in God's unfailing promises of life and salvation, flowing from their pure scriptural source and bubbling forth in the spoken Word and the visible, Christ-given Gospel signs of Baptism and Eucharist (AC VII). And that enduring church is still evident in Missouri. Walther, after his despair, came to confess at Altenburg that the gathering of his bedraggled fellow immigrants, despite the disorder they were experiencing and the false teaching they had endured, was still in a church "where children of God may thereby be born" (Theses, II, III).⁹⁴ It is still so.

The Church stands under Christ and His mission to all nations. God the Spirit's past work among us is an encouragement. The mission priority for fathers like Walther and Wynken was gathering the Lutheran immigrants coming to America — immigrants like them from Germany who were lost, erring and searching.⁹⁵ We are foolish if we think that it was easy — people were just beating down the doors to start confessional churches. It took vision, sacrifice, powerful preaching, clear teaching and, above all, love for the lost.

As America changed in the 20th century, Missouri retained a strong small-town and rural presence, but many missionary pastors and leaders followed the population, planting increasing numbers of churches in cities. Planting new churches where America was moving emerged as the mission priority. The new churches were for Missouri's own members, but they were also active seeking the lost in the communities surrounding them. God gave the Synod a booming population in the first three quarters of the 20th century largely from her own babies, but also through such purposeful, wise mission.

Early in that same period, Missouri indicated another home mission priority when she began an outreach to African Americans in the South, emphasizing education as a companion and complement to mission. Despite a too-easy accommodation with segregation, Missouri established a stronger African American practice than any other Lutheran body and most other white Protestants,

⁹⁴ See Walter Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 523–525.

⁹⁵ On German immigration to the U.S., see Michael Barone, *Shaping Our Nation*.

developing wise, visionary black leaders whom we honor still today.

The LCMS has continued its work of mission over recent decades, but has experienced overall decline rather than growth. Theological controversy divided us, but social change is what really shook us — like the rest of Christianity. We loved integration until it came to our neighborhoods, and then we fled the cities in droves. Sexual revolution left us stunned and then seduced. We became more promiscuous (a word no one even uses anymore) ourselves and suffered with everyone else “no fault” violations of solemn marriage promises. While no one even noticed, we bought into the idea that there’s something wrong with a big family, all the while suburbs sprawled and our smaller families required ever larger homes.

As for missions, our efforts were still focused on planting churches in the places our people and people like us were moving. Some of our districts prospered, and many strong churches were planted; praise God! I am certain that such efforts will continue as they should. We will continue to reach out, planting churches where there are young couples and families. We must continue that.

We will also need to continue and expand ministry to an aging America. It will become an ever greater aspect of the Church’s life. It will be evangelistic as well as pastoral. It will take place in homes and institutions. It will involve the shut-in and infirm, but also will present us with opportunities to deploy vibrant retirees in various ways to further the Gospel outreach. We must continue that too.

But that is not enough. Indeed, I believe that in light of the changing demographics of the U.S., the third historic mission priority — the cross-cultural priority that produced a concerted mission to black Americans in the deep South — must become our highest priority. Outreach to those least like us deserves the best of our thinking, a profound commitment and financial sacrifices. Far more importantly that preserving our institutions is the call of our Lord to make disciples of the nations. In the new America, if our church does not turn its attention outward — to those who are least like us, to our “Gentiles,” even those who count themselves as our enemies, we will not be faithful.

I have no illusions about the difficulty of it; I spent over 25 years trying, trying and trying some more to minister faithfully in culturally diverse settings. Crossing ethnic divides isn’t easy. In some ways, it is even harder to cross the popular culture divide so apparent in much of the

Millennials and the generations following. There we face nothing short of antipathy toward the church, especially one that upholds orthodox, confessional teachings and life. Earning the trust of the “other” is a challenge, but not a new one. Stark reminds us that Christianity in its first centuries had that very same challenge — a challenge that was met not only because of its message, but also its manner of life. It brought “charity and hope” to the poor, an “expanded sense of family” and new attachments to cities full of strangers, orphans, and widows. In the midst of inter-ethnic conflict, the unity of the Spirit crossed human divides.⁹⁶ These are salutary and hopeful reminders of the Church’s strength when she proclaims and shares the mercies of God.

In light of our demographics, I want to suggest, in specific, that we ask the Lord to prepare workers for the following segments of America (in no particular order).

1. Those generations in their 30s and under — including those who stand opposed to faith and those who claim a faith that has dispensed with the church. Many will view us with hostility. And many are our kids and grandkids. We cannot abandon them to Satan’s empty secularism.
2. “Minorities” and especially Latinos and other immigrants. Many, if not most, live in poor neighborhoods that we have forgotten. Some are highly educated and prosperous. They are all different from most of Missouri — red, yellow, black, brown and every color. It will not be easy to earn their trust. Yes, many are firmly committed to Rome or Pentecostalism. Yet many other are unchurched and non-Christian.
3. The unmarried — those who have postponed marriage, or scorned it or were never blessed with it; the divorced, the single moms (and dads), the lonely, and the many widows. We will need to value, teach and model holy marriage for them, but we must not make marriage a requirement for discipleship in Christ’s holy family.

Forum Letter recently led with something Augustine said in comparing the city of God to the city of man: “But let this city bear in mind, that among her enemies lie hid those who are destined to be fellow-citizens, that she may not think it a fruitless labor to bear what they inflict as enemies until they become confessors of the faith.”⁹⁷ It has

⁹⁶ Stark, 161.

⁹⁷ *City of God*, 1, Preface, 35, at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.ii.xxxvi.html>. Quoted in Richard O. Johnson, ed., *Forum Letter* (November 2014), 1. Thanks to Carol Geisler who pointed this

never been easy to proclaim Christ to the city of man — it will not be easy today. Yet, we pray nonetheless, “Thy kingdom come.”

God, grant us your Spirit’s power, wisdom and might that we may be faithful to our confession and in proclaiming Christ to our world.

The Rev. Larry M. Vogel is associate director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

out for me.