

fail to document examples that demonstrate their point. Occasional anecdotes provide food for thought but by their very scarcity and uncertainty, serve rather to emphasize how very safe hypnosis can be when used in an ethical and professional way. Indeed, evidences of people being led into confusion and false teaching by preachers are much more readily available.

Perhaps more extraordinary is the fact that strong condemnation of hypnosis can be brought forward by Christian writers with such a limited appeal to Scripture. If hypnosis is so hazardous, we should expect more than a passing reference to it in Scripture. Important principles are invariably given repeated attention. In the present situation, one isolated verse is brought forward, a verse that suffers from poor exegesis. Put simply, the Bible is silent on the dangers of hypnosis.

If we follow the biblical material that appears to refer to hypnosis, words such as sleep and trance, we find a

favourable linkage with its use by God as Creator, as well as the highly significant spiritual experiences of Peter and Paul.

We may then be thankful for a technique which can prove so powerful in so many situations. Of itself, it is neither good nor bad. Many have found relief from problems through its use. Many have been able to draw nearer to God, to experience a deeper awareness of spirituality and to enrich their understanding of God's mercy. It is a tragedy that so many Christian people have been warned off hypnosis, when it has such great potential to provide benefit to body, mind and spirit.

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Third world population crisis: the trinity as basis for motivation

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When the author first went to Africa as a missionary in 1971, it was to Swaziland, a small kingdom to the east of South Africa. He has since moved to other ministries, but Swaziland is still there. It has changed in many ways in a quarter century, but what is striking is the number of people. In just those few years, the population has more than doubled! Nor is such growth exceptional, being a feature of most of Africa, and indeed much of the third world. Whereas in the West, or 'first world', the problem is one of a declining and so aging population, giving rise to concern in such areas as pension provision, in the third world the population is young and growing rapidly. This is a major problem; what makes it particularly serious is that it contributes greatly to the poverty which is also a feature of third world life. Despite the efforts of some economists, both from a capitalist¹ and a socialist persuasion² to detach the issue of population growth from the wider question of poverty, the two are surely linked. There lurks the prospect of a Malthusian disaster some time in the future,

and not so far into the future, if analyses such as that of Meadows³ are to be believed. It is surely undeniable that population growth must be curtailed. The big question is how that can be done.

Like many problems of economics it is perceived on a large scale, and is often not visible to the ordinary individual. How many really experience what population growth means? And yet, as with other problems, it is generated at the individual level. It is the choice of individuals, multiplied by the millions and billions, that generates poverty, and it is the same with population growth. A very personal and individual choice has a very long term and multiplying effect. This means that individual motivation is of crucial importance. The individual must be convinced that a decision made to have a child, or to act in such a way that children are a possibility, is an important matter for humanity as a whole. Obviously one more child is of little overall significance, although it affects individual lives, but when multiplied countless times, the effect is catastrophic.

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So how is the individual motivated to limit procreation? There are programmes, notably that in China, which provide incentives and sanctions, and therefore motivate people in quite a successful way. The western world has also largely overcome the problem, but there the underlying reason has usually been economic, or even directly selfish. Children are expensive, and so their number must be limited for the sake of the economy of the family; children interfere with lifestyle, and so must be avoided.

Is there a Christian approach?

But are such motives acceptable to Christians? Do Christians have to accept secular thinking? Are we not in danger of being submerged in a secular worldview? Do we have to limit ourselves to economic and legal motivation? Are there no specifically Christian arguments that can motivate behaviour? It seems to me that there is a dearth of specifically Christian thinking to deal with modern issues, such as the question of population.

This is ironic when it is undeniable that one of the most successful means of motivation is religion. The desire to obey and to please God has resulted in what is, from other perspectives, most extraordinary behaviour. People have been willing to deprive themselves of normal pleasures, such as sex or food, and even positively to inflict suffering upon themselves, for religious reasons. If it therefore can be shown that God wants population curtailment, that will go a long way towards solving the problem.

It must of course be admitted right away that Christianity in general has not been successful as far as population control is concerned. Indeed it may be accused of the opposite, of motivating attitudes which lead to a population explosion. Without going into great detail here, Christianity is firstly obviously pro-life, a feature which many people believe must lead to a rejection of abortion. Life is good, so the more life, the better! It is this which has also contributed to population growth in that Christian compassion has motivated health care and has thus extended life spans and reduced infant mortality, both resulting in population growth. A large factor in the population problem has been the decline in the death rate.⁴ Secondly, it has been felt that the Bible positively commands population growth, notably in the 'creation mandate' of Genesis 1:28: 'be fruitful and multiply.' Thirdly, some have even urged Christians to have large families in order to increase the overall proportion of Christians in the world.⁵

In general, having children has been felt to be the will of God, so that it may even be believed to be sinful to prevent procreation, by such means as artificial birth

control. After all, it was to have children, albeit by adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5), that Christ came to bring about salvation. Is Christianity then responsible for both sides of the population problem, of both reducing deaths and encouraging procreation?

Trinity and population

I want to suggest that in fact the opposite is true. Obviously the question has other facets, indeed specifically Christian ones, but I want to take what is often a neglected facet of Christian truth, the Trinity, and suggest that it provides a basis for motivation to bring about a sustainable population. This should not be a strange basis for a discussion of population level! Surely as Christians we are called to imitate God, and since God is trinity, that Trinitarian nature should be applicable to life, and even to questions such as that of population. In fact, not only, after centuries of neglect, are the basic issues that led to the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity being re-examined but it is also possible to see that doctrine as remarkably relevant to the modern world.

It must firstly be observed that the 'creation mandate' may be interpreted in a Trinitarian context. 'Let us make man in our image, and let them have dominion...' (Gen. 1:26). Even though it is difficult to justify this view from an Old Testament perspective, many Christians, as far back as the days of the early church, have seen the divine plural as referring to the Trinity. Theologians such as Barth⁶ then interpret the 'image' in terms of plurality and relationship. The command to multiply, to increase plurality, follows immediately; because God is plural within himself, people must also be plural. A solitary person is unnatural, and suffers accordingly. Loneliness or enforced solitary confinement can be dreadful things. The justification for procreation also follows in that it would seem that the creation was of couples. The rest of the Genesis 1 narrative refers to 'male and female', and the implication is that this is continued in humanity. The Genesis 2 account of the creation of the woman can well be seen as an expansion of the first chapter. In any case, if Adam was created alone, it was with the capacity, and probably intention, of his having a companion. But if the creation of the first couple is a reflection of God, that implies multiplication. God cannot be a binity, but by very nature includes a third. Augustine saw the Spirit as a necessary third, the mutual love of Father and Son, and the thought is taken up frequently by later theologians. If this is the nature of God, then should not people generate relationships as much as possible, which requires more people to have relationships with?

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Indeed the very nature of God, particularly from a Trinitarian perspective, is generative. Not only did God create the world, indeed a multiplicity of worlds, but the Trinitarian understanding is that the Father generated the Son, and the Spirit also proceeded. It is hardly surprising that sexual identity was a fundamental aspect of the creation, and indeed that its own reproduction is one of the major concerns of much of life. Generation is fundamental to the Trinity in itself, and the generation of further life is fundamental to God's work in creation and in redemption. If this is true of God, it can then follow that procreation is absolutely right for humanity, not just by nature, but in imitation of God.

But to assert that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity necessarily motivates population growth is due only to misunderstanding. Just as a fuller understanding of Christianity in general does encourage family life and procreation, but only to a certain point, so also does a correct understanding of the Trinity.

In the first place, it must be observed that the Trinity is not a limitless multiplication of deity. Not only does Christianity, like Judaism, insist that God is one, which is by no means denied by its affirmation that Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, are divine, but Jesus is the only begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit likewise is. The Trinity is three and three only. Thus Richard of St Victor, arguing from the idea of God as love, believed that this was maximized if God was Trinity.⁷ Relationships within God would not be increased if there were more Persons, but would even deteriorate. There is nothing here of the human idea that more is always better. In this case, if humanity is indeed in the image of God, it would follow that there is for each area, an optimum population. This of course follows also from demographic considerations.⁸ Thus there is no idea that human population should keep on expanding; in fact Moss⁹ argues that the word 'fill' in Genesis 1:28 itself implies filling to a limit and no further.

No tritheism

In fact, it would seem that excessive population growth (or even its decline) is in general due to inadequate interpersonal relationships, and that if there were a better reflection of the Trinity, then the problem would be to a large extent alleviated. Just as there is a need to avoid Trinitarian heresy by a correct view of divine interpersonal relationships, so it is essential for people to relate together correctly. The need for proper relationships in turn demands population limitation. On a personal level, too many children spoil relationships, and even the fear of an

unwanted child can wreck intimacy, which can of course be a strong motive for birth control. On a wider level, too many children harm the relationship with the rest of creation.

Loose sexual relationships between people manifest themselves in promiscuity. These naturally produce more children than in stable monogamous marriages. Indeed in a third world situation, a major cause of unwanted children is teenage promiscuity, and obviously the population explosion is fuelled at an alarming rate. This is especially the case when the children become uncared for, and themselves grow up to promiscuity and perhaps prostitution in order to survive at all. What often happens is that the unwanted children are given to others, often grandmothers, but perhaps other relatives or charitable or state institutions. Without the responsibility, there is little disincentive to produce yet more children. In this situation there is unlikely to be the correct relationship between child and mother, or between mother and those who are actually doing the caring. It could also be suggested that polygamy falls into this category. Although many polygamous unions are stable and permanent, there cannot be the same depth of relationship as is possible in monogamous relationships.

Even when there is a stable marriage, a desire for security in old age can prompt a wish for a large family, especially where there is an expectation that many of the children will not survive. Both a high infant mortality and insecurity in old age are symptoms of lack of care by the rest of society, so again a lack of adequate interpersonal relationships in society. Incidentally, it could well be argued that Onan was condemned (Gen. 38:9) not for preventing procreation, but for inadequate relationships.

It is interesting here that in the South African context, there was a strong move in the black population to have many children. This was due to a perception that black power lay in numbers and was one of the only effective weapons against white domination. In this and similar contexts, birth control measures can then be viewed as oppressive.¹⁰ A similar motive was a feature of pre-war Germany, where patriotic Germans were urged to procreate as a patriotic duty. In all of these cases, there is an increase in population, but the relationships between people are inadequate. The theological parallel to this is polytheism, or tritheism in the case of three gods. In contrast to this, the idea of Trinity emphasizes the deep divine interpersonal relationships. If society reflected Trinity rather than tritheism, the problems due both to promiscuity and old age would in fact fall away.

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No unitarianism

Lack of adequate relationships can be taken to an extreme which is more characteristic of the modern West than the third world, and which also has consequences for population. Perhaps the main feature of this society is its individualism, an attitude very compatible with the dominant free market or capitalist ideology. Here the problem of care in old age is largely taken care of by personal investments and pension plans. Although in western countries there are state pensions, many seek to augment them, finding them inadequate. What is however most definitely not done is to rely on family and others for support in old age. It is viewed as a personal responsibility. Children are therefore inessential, at least for this purpose, and indeed are counterproductive, absorbing resources which could be invested for later years.

Indeed children, far from being of economic benefit as they are in the third world, make economic demands, particularly in view of educational and other costs not so applicable elsewhere. It is hardly surprising that population in the West has peaked, and is even declining. The area has experienced what has been termed a 'demographic transition'. It is however highly debatable whether such a situation can pertain in the third world.

Sex is of course still important, but more for individual gratification; the possibility of children being produced is often seen as a hazard, and not, as in the third world, as beneficial and even as a demonstration of manhood. Children can in any case be easily prevented, and if disaster happens, can be readily aborted. Nevertheless, if the motive is personal benefit, the temptation is always to have sex without real regard for the other or for future consequences. Promiscuity, and inevitably at least some children, will result. This is hardly paralleled in the Trinity, where the desire of each person is to glorify the others.

Could it be suggested that this situation of excess individuality is also parallel to a Trinitarian deviation, effectively monism or unitarianism? This is a denial of plurality in God, and so especially of the Holy Spirit as the author of life. Such a god is not by nature generative, as is the Trinitarian God.

No modalism

It is perhaps not surprising that with such an emphasis in modern western society, there has also been a growth in homosexuality. The basic desire for such relationships is also of course individual gratification. These relationships naturally produce no children, and in fact may further reduce population if they prevent normal heterosexual marriages from taking place. Marriage, on

the contrary, is entered into not just for personal benefit, but at least partly from a desire to produce children. The Trinity indeed is a reflection of productivity, both of the creation, but also in itself. The Holy Spirit is a part of the relationship between the first two persons, and is himself productive of relationships and of the gift of life. Now homosexuality is effectively a change within the persons resulting in a change in their relationship; the Trinitarian parallel to this would be the heresy of Sabellianism, in which it is believed that the Father changes his mode to that of the Son and then to the mode of the Holy Spirit.

Sabellianism can also be paralleled by another feature of the West, one which is more likely to produce excessive numbers of children. Relationships between people are not looked upon as permanent, but change is viewed as acceptable. Not only idle encounters, but affairs, divorce and remarriage are features of modern life. Westerners are polygamous, if in a serial rather than in a concurrent way! The Trinity, on the contrary, exhibits stability. This has certainly been the Christian teaching, and can result in planned procreation, and incidentally also avoids the problems of sexually transmitted disease, notably AIDS.

No arianism

Sabellian modalism was in fact never really popular in the early church, and has never really been an option since. It has been significant mainly because the Eastern church feared that the West had a tendency to Sabellianism, and in reaction, so stressed the difference between the persons that it tended towards Arianism. Another reaction can be seen in a third world fear of some aspects of western society such as its perceived immorality, its individualism, and especially the result of this in political and economic oppression. This has led to a desire to strengthen local culture, and as a part of this, to increase population numbers. Local cultural practice is in any case liable to disapprove of western birth control and its techniques.

Reference has been made to Arianism, the idea that there is inherent subordination in the Trinity, that the second, and even more the third, Person are less than the first. Particularly if the third Person is understood to be the relationship, this heresy is paralleled by an inadequate sense of relationship between people, especially between the different sexes. Indeed, a view of the inferiority of women is a contributory factor to excessive population growth.

In some cultures there is a desire to 'try out' the prospective wife first, to see whether she can bear children before a commitment to marriage is made. This in itself will not cause an excessive number of

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children, but if marriage does not follow, the child would then be unwanted, so contribute to excessive population growth. The point here is however that the woman is treated as less than the man, almost as a piece of equipment to be used at the man's pleasure. The same is true of forced intercourse, either outside marriage in rape, or even within it. Very often the woman wants to restrict the number of children, as she is usually the one who takes the major responsibility for the care of the child, even after the suffering involved in the actual pregnancy and birth. Quite often, however, the man is unwilling to use, or even have the woman use, any form of birth control. However, if the woman is treated as subordinate, her desires and feelings will not be taken into full consideration, and unwanted children are the result.

In contrast to this, there is a oneness of will in the Trinity. Action is not just at the will of the Father. Specifically, the Holy Spirit, the mutual bond, is sent from the Father by the Son (Jn. 15:26); both Father and Son are involved. (East and West differ on the exact relation between the Spirit and the other two Persons, but agree that both Father and Son are involved in his procession.)

Of course sex itself is devalued when the man is seen as the dominant partner. Instead of being a powerful force uniting the couple, it is a mere implement. Whereas it can be a means of enhancing the value of the woman, it demeans her. The Trinitarian parallel here is twofold. On the one hand some theologians, notably the Cappadocians, sought to safeguard the equality of the Persons by reference to 'perichoresis', the mutual interpenetration or sharing between the Persons. The sexual parallel is obvious; if there is real sharing between the couple, including a mutually satisfying sexual relationship, the two are then of equal value. Of course such perichoresis is really possible only if there is essential equality in the first place. On the other hand, others, such as Augustine, also accepting equality, have seen the third Person, the Holy Spirit, as the bond of unity between the first two Persons. It is significant here that one of the parties in the Arian controversy was the Macedonians, or Pneumatomachians, who viewed the Holy Spirit as so subordinate to the Father as to be a thing made, a creation.

This relates strongly to a further example of 'Arian' influence, when children are viewed as manufactured by the couple, or even just by the man 'planting his seed' in the passive woman. They are then very much treated as subordinate to the parents, especially the man, and their production is then put at the level of the manufacture of inanimate objects such as tools. In this case the production of one more or less is not treated as a very significant

matter. If, on the other hand, children are seen as fully human beings, of equal value to the parents, then their procreation would be regarded in a much more serious light, and unwanted children regarded as much more of a disaster. Just as a Trinitarian attitude to procreation will respect the equality of women, it will acknowledge the full humanity of children, and insist that every child is wanted.

Children are also devalued when the value of a man is enhanced by the number of his children, as is the case in many cultures. In a sense this is in fact paralleled by the Trinity in that the Father is known and glorified by the work of the Son and Spirit. However, the value of the Father would not be enhanced by more Sons or Spirits, since the Persons are all equal, and as such their revelation is complete. In the same way the number of children should not enhance the parents. In fact it is rather the case that a few children, well cared for and brought up correctly, would be more of a credit to parents than a larger number. Again, subordination leads to a multiplicity, a need for quantity, while a stress on quality does not. In any case, of course, from a Trinitarian perspective of the equality of the Persons, all people are equal, and there is no need to enhance personal value in any way, such as by proving virility by the number of progeny.

Perichoresis also means that the Persons are totally open to each other. They relate closely. Jesus, we read, always did the will of his Father in heaven; he was totally open to what his Father desired. Again, if we apply this to marriage relationships, we find that the husband and wife must be totally open to each other, which means there must be care for each other. Just as there is no idea here of a forced sexual relationship, which must be foreign to a Christian marriage, but rather concern for what the other wants, an openness to other's needs and concerns, this must also emphasize the idea of a planned family. Children should not arrive accidentally, because of a lack of planning, but as a result of a decision as to how many children are wanted. There are means to achieve; contraceptives are available. It does however require openness, decision on the part of both partners, each one knowing what the other wants. Indeed the whole question of contraception must be an open issue, known to both partners. So often the husband ignores the matter, treating it as simply the wife's problem. The wife often wants to do something about it, but is prevented by pressure in the situation. If in the family the husband and the wife are open to each other, as the Trinity is open to each Person, there must be an openness and knowledge about contraceptive matters.

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Conclusion

It has been argued that population limitation is consistent with, and even demanded by, the doctrine of the Trinity. It could perhaps even be possible to suggest which methods are most consistent with this. Firstly, it is unlikely that abortion, or a post-intercourse pill are acceptable to Christians, as each prevents a fertilized egg from developing. Such would be a denial of the Holy Spirit as the author of life. This may even apply to the inter-uterine device. Secondly, withholding or rhythm methods, as well as notoriously unreliable, would perhaps be seen as contrary to the idea of eternal generation, the permanency of relationship. It could perhaps be argued that the pill is also questionable. This is because it causes an essential change in the metabolism of the woman. This can lead to undesirable long term effects, but could also be seen as tending to parallel Sabellianism or at least a change in God. Barrier methods, such as condoms or diaphragms perhaps present the fewest problems; they permit full sexual relations, only preventing what is intended, which is unwanted children. Lastly, as a permanent solution, sterilization can also be seen as acceptable. The objection that this limits the sterilized party is not relevant in that both Father and Son do limit themselves in creation and incarnation, but nevertheless maintain a full relationship with each other.

It is perhaps interesting that of the Trinitarian heresies, the ones which have not really been significant are monism and Sabellianism. These are the ones which in their societal parallels would dampen down population growth and even produce a decline. On the contrary, the repeated dangers in the church have been Arianism and tritheism, both of which have often been popular. Both of these parallel a situation conducive to population growth, and it is significant that growth, rather than decline, is the problem in the world.

Perhaps it could even be observed that Africa, in which population growth is a major problem, is always sympathetic to Arianism, in that culturally a son is always viewed as less than his father. India, where again there is a problem of over-population is polytheistic. Perhaps other parallels could be drawn elsewhere.

All of the Trinitarian heresies are a result of an incorrect view of relationships within the Trinity. These are not just of academic interest, but vitally affect other doctrines, and so Christian belief and practice. As is well-known, Athanasius was steadfast in his support of Nicene orthodoxy, the belief that Father and Son are 'homoousios', of the same essence, and so equally divine; this was because he realized that if the Son was not completely divine, he would not be able to save

humanity. The same is true of relationships between the sexes. If these are incorrect, then the effect is that the human race will run into disaster. The salvation of humanity is possible only with correct relationships. This relationship, which includes the sexual aspect, is directly connected with, both causing and being affected by, the number of children. Both too few and too many children, and probably especially the latter, detrimentally influence the relationship between the parents. On the other hand, and more significantly for the question of population, a correct relationship between the sexes should result in the correct number of children and so an ending of the population explosion. This can happen if the Trinity becomes not just an intellectual curiosity, but a paradigm to follow.

Footnotes

1 e.g. P.T. Bauer, *Equality, the third world and economic delusion* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), p.45.

2 cf. K. Hürnberger, 1978. The development debate: ideological evasion and Christian obedience, in K. Nürnberg (ed), *Affluence, poverty and the Word of God*. (Durban: Lutheran publishing house, 1978), pp.221-30.

3 D.H. Meadows et al., *The limits to growth: a report for the Club of Rome's project on the predicament of mankind* (London: Earth Island, 1972)

4 J.D. Durrand, 'A brief history', in Q.H. Stanford, (ed) *The World's population: problems of growth* (Toronto/New York: Oxford University press, 1972), 9.18.

5 J.J. Davis, *Your wealth in God's world: does the Bible support the free market?* (Phillipsburg, N J: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1984), p.120.

6 K. Barth, *church Dogmatics vol 3(1): the doctrine of creation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), pp.181f.

7 E.J. Fortman, *The triune God: a historical study of the doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), p.193.

8 J.P. Wogaman, *Christian perspectives on politics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), p.244.

9 R. Moss, *The earth in our hands* (Leicester: IVP, 1982), p.38.

10 'The Hunger project', *Ending hunger: an idea whose time has come* (New York: Praeger, 1985), p.42.

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