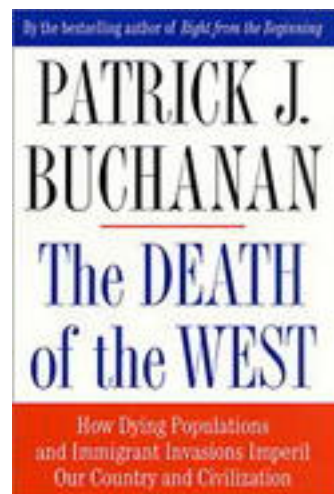


## The Abnormal Society

by [Joseph Sobran](#)

As readers of this space know, I've already mentioned Patrick Buchanan's new book [\*The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization\*](#) (Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press) several times. But until last week, I hadn't had a copy to read through. Having finished it, I want to urge everyone to read it. But brace yourself. It's even more shocking than I expected.



Buchanan cites familiar figures showing that the birthrates of the Western countries, once known as Christendom, are plummeting. As recently as 1960, these countries contained a fourth of the earth's population; today they have a sixth; by 2050, at present rates, they will have only a tenth, with an average age above 50. Such traditionally Catholic countries as Spain and Italy are far below replacement levels, with the average woman bearing only one child.

Meanwhile, non-Christian Third World immigrants are pouring in, and they are having babies. They supply the young people needed to support the aging white populations who will increasingly depend on the welfare state rather than their own children. The West is breeding itself into oblivion. It's simple math.

Buchanan cites many factors, from which one can draw a conclusion he implies but doesn't spell out: Liberal democracy has been a disaster. The Western governments have pursued allegedly humanitarian policies that have combined to produce a crisis they utterly failed to foresee. All the bright ideas of the 20th century – the welfare state, secularism, feminism, sexual freedom, contraception, abortion, homosexual rights, civil rights,

high taxes, state-directed economies, multiculturalism, easy immigration, and many others – form a great design, intended or not. All might have been calculated to destroy the white, populations of the West, with their Christian heritage.

For the most part Buchanan leaves open the possibility that these policies were those of well-meaning but shortsighted and muddleheaded elites, but he also documents with ample quotation the anti-Christian animus of many influential liberals. De-Christianizing America has been high on the progressive agenda, and, thanks to the government (especially the federal courts), it has been a great success. Nor can we overlook the contribution of the entertainment industry, which now determines what passes for "culture."

The main practical vehicle of de-Christianization has been the Sexual Revolution. A few radicals have called for the abolition of the family, but most liberals have been more discreet, avoiding hostile rhetoric while quietly but constantly pursuing policies that result in lower birthrates and fatherless children. George Gilder noted all this in his 1973 book *Sexual Suicide*, but at that time the demographic results had barely begun to appear. Today we can see the consequences; in fact, it may already be too late to reverse them. Even young married women in the West simply don't want to stay home and raise children; though historically recent, this attitude has become deep-seated.

And where is the other side? In the Vatican, and hardly anywhere else. The last great counterattack on the Sexual Revolution was Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. And it was loudly rejected by nearly all respectable intellectuals, including Catholics – and not only liberal Catholics but conservatives like William Buckley. This was the real triumph of the Sexual Revolution – not the rise of abortion and "gay rights," but the normalization of contraception in marriage. That is, the marital act itself has become recreational sex. As usual, most conservatives abandoned essential principles as soon as it became painful to defend them. (Today conservatism has been "defined downward" to the point where the pro-abortion, pro-sodomy adulterer Rudy Giuliani can be hailed as a conservative hero.)

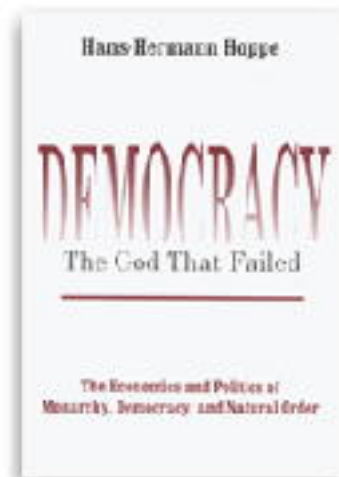
One of the charges against the encyclical was that it was actually immoral – that is, irresponsible in the age of "the population bomb." Unless the Church changed its rigid and unrealistic position, we were told, the Third World, especially its poor Catholic people, would soon face overpopulation and mass starvation. That this dire prediction never

panned out did nothing at all to abate hostility to the Church's teaching. The real goal of her enemies was something other than the welfare of the world's poor. We should hardly be surprised.

Of course Paul VI could not have foreseen the long-term impact of contraception in combination with political decadence. As the Universal Pastor, he was concerned with the morality of the act itself. And the sophisticated would have laughed him to scorn if he had ventured to warn that the corruption of marital relations would one day have awful consequences for the whole planet. Yet today *Humanae Vitae* appears one of the most prophetic documents of the 20th century. Over time, sin will bear its terrible but unpredictable fruit.

Is it reasonable to make the modern state a chief culprit for the looming disaster? I think so. Government has ceased to mean upholding and reinforcing the traditional rights and morals of the governed; it now means compulsion in the service of social engineering. Gone are the days when you could be a law-abiding citizen merely by keeping the Ten Commandments. Nearly all the baleful policies Buchanan adduces involve forcing good people to do things they would not naturally or freely do. This is what state planners really mean when they speak hopefully of "building a new society." That inevitably requires bulldozing the old society.

But the old society, for all its imperfections, at least reflected normal and natural human desires. Only a huge and systematic use of organized force could have brought about such perverse relations between man and state, man and man, and even man and wife as we have now become inured to. We would have been far better off with no state at all, as Hans-Hermann Hoppe argues in another recently published book, [\*Democracy – The God That Failed: The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy, and Natural Order\*](#) (Transaction Books).



Yet the illusion persists that the state is "protecting" us, when it has been more destructive than all the private-sector criminals and terrorists in the world. Its very purpose, its telos, is to create an abnormal society.

Whether or not the planners have been candid about their real intentions, what they have achieved is very remote from the intentions they proclaimed. Not that this will move them to remorse or self-examination; they remain as fanatical as ever in pursuit of their policy goals, with no desire to give up the power they have amassed.

The abnormal society has been realized. It has its ludicrous features, but it is not a joke. Anything so profoundly abnormal must die.

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