



MONEY: ENDS & TRENDS

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Burning Alight: 12 Endtime Fuses –Part I

B y W i l f r e d H a h n

Says the National Intelligence Council in a recent report: “We are at a critical juncture in human history, which could lead to widely contrasting futures. It is our contention that the future is not set in stone, but is malleable, the result of an interplay among megatrends, game-changers and, above all, human agency.”¹



This excellent report seeks to identify mega trends that will impact America and the world. As the above quote suggests, the NIC senses that an extraordinary period of time is ahead ... that the entire world is now at a “critical juncture.”

Bible-believing Christians would agree. In fact, interestingly, some of NIC’s forecasts find parallels in Bible prophecy. While the Bible and NIC would share the view that the future is largely the result of “human agency”—in other words, the choices of people and mankind overall—the Bible goes one decisive step further, claiming a foreknowledge of these ultimate choices.

God Jehovah, the author of the Bible, specifically chose to differentiate Himself from all other gods by being the one and only who can reveal both the beginning and the future. He said: “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10).

The mistake that most philosophers and economists often make in their forecasts, is simply to extrapolate present trends, assuming the underlying forces that gave rise to them in the first place will continue to accelerate as before. Most often, this is an unreasonable assumption. The created order simply cannot support infinite trends.



For example, infinite compound growth is not possible, despite what humanists will want to believe. Yes, mankind can inflate money almost without limit, but not real wealth. God Himself is infinite, but not Creation. Therefore, all trends on earth must eventually decay or collapse spectacularly.

To the extent that mankind's decisions, expectations and beliefs are based on illusory untruths and false gods, it will face the judgment of a spectacular collapse.

Just what are the major trends that we see, reflecting the unwise choices of secular mankind today? These will lead to judgment ... i.e. the global collapse of mankind's kingdoms and global order. In this series, we propose to list 12 of such developments, these being burning fuses that likely will have explosive implications.

However, may we first mention a few caveats. Our list will surely overlook some important trends. Nor can we likely order them correctly in terms of their importance. Why? Like every other generation that has sought to interpret Bible prophecy or peer into the future, we are influenced by the light of our time. It is impossible not to be biased by the current trends and conditions that we see around us. We really have no idea of the exact course of these trends into the future. These may accelerate, then reverse, only to accelerate again or to be subsumed by another trend.

It is also challenging to sort factors into major and minor categories. Some may have a significant impact, yet are the fall-out or companion development to another. With these cau-

tions being expressed, we venture into our list of 12 fuses burning. Approximately half fall into the realm of secular humanism; the other into Biblically prophesied or implied developments of the end time. All assume a Biblical worldview and are the direct consequence of shifting human beliefs and/or idolatry.

1. Population Growth and Post-Familialism: Changing Perspectives on Marriage.

The U.S. birth rate plunged to an all-time low in 2011. Quoting an article written by Gary D. Halbert, "The overall birth rate is now at its lowest level since reliable records have been kept, falling to 63.2 births per 1,000 women who are of childbearing age in 2011.



That is down from 122.7 births at the peak in 1957 during the Baby Boom."²

Some claim that this trend is due to economic difficulties in recent years. People simply do not want to undertake the financial burden of another child. But, actually, declining birth rates are a long-time global phenomenon, not just North American. Looking at this trend closer, one realizes it is the result of a global shift in values and beliefs. It is a rapid one. David Brooks, in the *New York Times* writes: "The speed of change is breathtaking.

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A woman in Oman today has 5.6 fewer babies than a woman in Oman 30 years ago. Morocco, Syria and Saudi Arabia have seen fertility-rate declines of nearly 60 percent and in Iran it's more than 70%. These are among the fastest declines in recorded history.”

Around the world, attitudes toward marriage and childbirth are changing. For various reasons, also including the populations of emerging nations where the fertility rate has been relatively high, birth rates are dropping dramatically. Many countries, particularly in the advanced nation bloc, are already experiencing population shrinkage (notably Japan and several European nations). Of course, people are free to make their own choices. We only point out that all changes in beliefs that have an impact on human action will have consequences.

Quoting Halbert further: “In Europe, Asia, and most advanced countries, people are running away from marriage, children, and family life at an amazing rate. For example, 30% of

German women today say that they do not intend to have children. In Japan in 1960, 20% of women between 25 and 29 had never married; today the number is more than 60%. It is estimated that up to 25% of all East Asian women will remain single up to age 50, and up to a third will remain childless.”

What must be acknowledged here is that a change in behavior has occurred that is related to human values and beliefs. Crucially, taking a Biblical worldview, we must further add that it is a turning away from “Biblical values and beliefs.” Many surveys today document the declining preference for marriage and child-rearing.

For example, consider this summary of a survey conducted by the *Weekly Standard*:

Americans have been wedded to marriage for a very long time. Between 1910 and 1970, the ‘ever-married rate’—that is, the percentage of people who marry at some point in their lives—went as high as 98.3% and never dipped below 92.8%. But beginning in 1970, the ever-married number began a gradual decline so that by 2000 it stood at only 88.6%. Today, the numbers are even more striking according to the 2010 Census. Almost 24% of men, and 19% of women, between the ages of 35 and 44, have never been married. If we look at the people between 20 and 34—the prime-childbearing years—the numbers are even more startling: 67% of men and 57% of women in this group have never been married. When you total it all up, over half of the voting-age population in America, and 40% of the people who actually showed up to vote this time around, are single.³

The author of the article from the *Weekly Standard*, Jonathan V. Last (author of the recent book, *What to Ex-*



pect *When No One's Expecting: America's Coming Demographic Disaster*) provides a chilling summary:

It's a complicated story involving, among other factors, the rise of almost-universal higher education, the delay of marriage, urbanization, the invention of no-fault divorce, the legitimization of cohabitation, the increasing cost of raising children, and the creation of a government entitlement system to do for the elderly childless what grown children did for their parents through the millennia.

But all of these causes are particular. Looming beneath them are two deep shifts.

The first is the waning of religion in American life. As Joel Kotkin notes in a recent report titled 'The Rise of Post-Familialism,' one of the commonalities between all of the major world religions is that they elevate family and kinship to a central place in human existence. Secularism tends toward agnosticism about the family. This distinction has real-world consequences. Take any cohort of Americans—by race, income, education—and then sort them by religious belief. The more devout they are, the higher their rates of marriage and the more children they have.

The second shift is the dismantling of the iron triangle of sex, marriage, and childbearing. Beginning in roughly 1970, the mastery of contraception decoupled sex from baby-making. And with that link broken, the connections between sex and marriage—and finally between marriage and child-rearing—were severed, too.

This burning endtime fuse is leading to a type of explosion, namely an implosion (a slow and reversed ver-

sion of explosion). Already, more than half of the world's population is residing in countries where birthrates are below the replacement level. Little do people realize that this shift carries an undesirable sting ... an unavoidable consequence.

Without a doubt, the biggest contributor to prosperity is population growth (everything else being equal). To the modern humanist, this will sound like an old-fashioned notion.

Yet, this is an inviolable fact of economics. Why?

Economics is human economics. It couldn't be any other way.

The slower the population growth, the slower will be economic expansion. The maximum wealth and prosperity that can exist in the world is defined by total labor output.

Where is this trend headed? Jonathan V. Last says the following:

In a word, higher. There are no indicators to suggest when and where it will level off. Divorce rates have stabilized, but rates of cohabitation have continued to rise, leading many demographers to suspect that living together may be crowding out matrimony as a mode of family formation. And increasing levels of education continue to push the average age at first marriage higher.

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The ratio of workers per retirees is declining in most Advanced Nations. One does not need to be a mathematician or economist to conclude that the lifestyle of future retirees is bound to deteriorate dramatically. Financial markets, therefore, will be in recurring crisis. It all connects, as there is no escape from consequence.

2. Global Urbanization: An ever greater share of the world population is moving from rural areas to urban ones ... to the city life. This is called urbanization, and it is a rapid trend. According to forecasts of the United Nations Population Division (UNPD), 16.3% of the world's population (2.6 billion people) will be moving to urban areas over the next 39 years.⁴ Assuming this forecast is correct, more than two-thirds of the world's population (or 6.3 billion people) will then be living in cities.

It therefore only follows that there will be more big cities ... in other words, greater agglomerations of peo-

ple. While there were only 10 urban agglomerations with an excess of 10 million people in the world in 1990 (Tokyo, New York, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Bombay, Osaka-Kobe, Calcutta, Los Angeles, Seoul, Buenos Aires), there are 23 today. The UNPD forecasts that there will be 37 such cities by 2025.

Interestingly, as a side note, the UNPD does not see Baghdad or any of its suburbs qualifying as one of these big cities in the near future. If we are to go by the UNPD's forecast, it will yet be some time before Babylon can again rise as a "great city" and serve as

the world's nexus point for commerce and trade. A number of prophecy teachers do believe that a physical Babylon will again revive.

The Bible generally does not reflect an approving view of great cities. According to secular anthropologists, greater urbanization tends to go hand in hand with the deterioration of the family unit, lower marriage rates, and consumerism. Seen from the Bible's perspective, these are not developments that the Creator designed as preferential and most blessed for mankind.

The Bible goes further, indicting other moral pitfalls of city life. Several times it decries large cities for their violence and immorality. For example, of Nineveh, Nahum says: "Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims!" (Nahum 3:1). Isaiah describes Jerusalem as such: "See how the faithful city has become a prostitute! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her—but now murderers!" (Isaiah



1:21). Sodom and Gomorrah are shown as cities at the apogee of great moral failure.

The woes of Bible prophecy are frequently addressed to cities. One characteristic noted is the potential for smugness and self-determination, the same attitude that afflicted Babel. For example, Babylon the Great boasts in her heart: “I sit enthroned as queen.

I am not a widow; I will never mourn” (Revelation 18:7). Sodom is said to be “arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49). Seen in this light, cities are hotbeds for both humanism and immorality.

Most cities mentioned in the Bible would likely have had less than 3,000 inhabitants, according to estimates. A few large cities are mentioned: among these Nineveh, said to be 120,000 in population and to be a “very large city” (Jonah 3:3); Babylon, which would have even been larger; and most certainly, the ancient metropolis of Babel. How large was Babel? No one knows. Yet it stands as an example of an “agglomeration” of people of which God did not approve. He intervened, scattering them with a confusion of languages.

The Bible refers to “great cities” 10 times in the Book of Revelation. Only one of these ten references points to a wonderful and benevolent outcome, and this is the “great city” of the New Jerusalem, “[...] that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:10). In a sense, we may see that the world’s immoral cities finally have their redemption in the form of the New



Jerusalem. Just as God redeems people, so also eventually the great city.

Today, we see a world of larger and larger cities, ever higher population density, and globalism (this being a form of a global city)—unified, smug and intent upon constructing a world apart from God. The sins of Babel are today being replicated on a massive global scale.

Points to Ponder – Part I

While the entire world looks apoplectically into the future, anticipating accelerating and interrupting change (though not exactly knowing what), the fact is the world has already experienced such change. Many do not realize this. Much more change lies ahead, also impacting the geopolitical sphere. We will review the remaining 10 “endtime fuses burning alight” in the following series. (MC)

ENDNOTES

- 1 National Intelligence Council’s (NIC) 2012 report (Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds).
- 2 Gary D. Halbert. Forecasts & Trends Letter: US Birth Rate Hits New Low—A Nation of Singles, December 18, 2012.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 United Nations Population Division. World Urbanization Prospects—The 2011 Revision.

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