

# Religious Consultation Report

News & Views from The Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health, and Ethics

Volume 8 No. 2

## The pro-life lie

People should be judged by how they honor the ideals they most loudly profess.

By Daniel C. Maguire

Okay, “pro-lifers,” here goes.

Archbishop Tutu (would that we had even one bishop like him in the U. S.) writes: “Some 2 million children have died in dozens of wars during the past decade...This is more than three times the number of battlefield deaths of American soldiers in all their wars since 1776 .... Today, civilians account for more than 90 percent of war casualties.”

Children are the prime casualties of modern war. As Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University writes: “Children in urban war zones die in vast numbers, not just due to violence, but also from diarrhea, respiratory infections, and other causes, owing to unsafe drinking water, lack of refrigerated foods, and acute shortages of blood and basic medicines in clinics and hospitals.” Pregnant women and their fetuses suffer from these same lethal deprivations, and pregnant women and their fetuses are being bombed in their homes.

If you who sanctimoniously wear the “pro-life” banner were really pro-life — and pro-fetus — endangering women, children, and fetuses would bother you, and we would be hearing your voices raised powerfully in peace protests around the world. We don’t. Therefore we must conclude that you are not “pro-life” and that if you say you are, you lie.

American military leaders in Iraq have been quoted as saying, “We don’t do body counts.” (Interesting, since even “The Mob” does body counts.) The respected British journal, *The Lancet*, has counted the bodies of civilians killed in Iraq

thus far. They counted more than 100,000 civilian deaths, most due to U.S. military action.

“Some 2 million children have died in dozens of wars during the past decade...This is more than three times the number of battlefield deaths of American soldiers in all their wars since 1776 .... Today, civilians account for more than 90 percent of war casualties.”

—Archbishop Tutu

President Bush is responsible for those murders because he entered this war without the Declaration of War that the Constitution requires (Article one, Section 8). A cowardly Congress in a week of infamy (October 3-10, 2002) limply

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## The pro-life lie

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handed over their war-declaring rights to him. Congress essentially gave the President open-ended authority to use unrestricted power, which could mean nuclear weapons, whenever he alone deemed it appropriate.

How did those who call themselves “pro-life” respond to this appalling assault on the Constitution and on life? They voted en masse for George W. Bush, the slaughter-master of Iraq, the killer of civilian men, women, and children, including pregnant women and their fetuses — in a war that Pope John Paul called a “defeat for humanity.” Mr. Bush said he saw their vote in the last election as an endorsement of his war. He was right. The election was a chance to vote against that war, but, overwhelmingly the so called “pro-life” vote was for war.

Can you understand why we call you liars?

## A poem to celebrate life



**P**oet Elliot O. Lipchik attended a “naming” celebration for a baby, replete with animal performers and a booming band. The experience stirred the poet to dream of a gentler welcoming into life.

### What’s My Name?



Speak the truth as you look me in the eye  
not with microphonic emotion blasting  
across an algic pond, but with  
a resonating hum silence of the deep  
feeling and love

Hold me in a protective embrace that lightens my burden  
No holy water sprinkles or crosses to evoke  
obsolete prophets and false gods  
No public pronouncements or promises  
to be broken as easily as crumbling  
a loaf of bread.

Give me a name, a simple one with ancestral residues  
Dance with me in rhythm to your heart  
with a beat steady strong and close as when  
I lay enclosed in the womb  
Give me your breast as a connection  
to all the womanly strengths of the past  
Touch me with silent tenderness  
I vow to return the same.

Those who oppose all abortions and also all wars must find a new motto, since, in the United States, “pro-life” has been co-opted by right-wing militarists.

Sister Joan Chittester writes of a large, front-page, four-color photo in *The Irish Times* showing a small Iraqi girl: “Her little body was a coil of steel. She sat knees up, cowering, screaming madly into the dark night. Her white clothes and spread hands and small tight face were blood-spattered. The blood was the blood of her father and mother, shot through the car window in Tal Afar by American soldiers while she sat beside her parents in the car, her four brothers and sisters in the back seat.”

Indifference to this atrocity and all war crimes like it is criminal and sinful in the extreme. Indifference to such suffering by those who canonize themselves with the “pro-life” insignia — and who recently voted for more war — is even worse. Such hypocrisy should be called by its name. Its name is fraud. Its name is lying, lying under the very banner of “life.”

### RELIGIOUS CONSULTATION MISSION STATEMENT

The Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics is an international network of progressive feminist religious scholars and leaders who seek out the positive, renewable moral energies of their faith traditions to direct them to the interrelated issues of population, reproductive health, consumption/ecology and the empowerment of women. The Consultation accomplishes this by participating in international and governmental forums, by convening small symposia of theologians and religious ethicists, and by publishing both scholarly and popular materials.

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# Using condoms to fight AIDS gathering momentum — in the Catholic church

The ground is beginning to shift beneath the Catholic Church. Its once stalwart stance — the absolute denial of using condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS — is beginning to erode here and there. The clergy are starting to speak out:

- The bishop in Mozambique, South Africa.
- Cardinal Daneels in Belgium, a clear candidate in the next Papal election.
- Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor in England.
- The Spanish bishops who attended the recent bishops' conference in Madrid.
- And finally, a voice from Italy, from inside the Vatican itself: Cardinal Georges Cottier, theologian in the pontifical household, and one of Pope John Paul II's preferred theologians.



## Spain speaks

In early 2005, the spokesperson for the Spanish bishops' conference announced, "*The time has come for a joint strategy in the prevention of such a tragic pandemic as AIDS, and contraception has a place in the context of the integral and global prevention of AIDS.*" In this statement, the Spanish bishops were not rejecting the role of abstinence or fidelity. They were simply saying that *all* available methods should be used to stop the pandemic.

Yet the statement caused quite a stir, and the bishops had then to backpedal. The next day, the Conference issued a further statement reinforcing that the Church had not changed its stance on condom use. The Conference clarified: their statement must be understood "*within the meaning of Catholic doctrine which says the use of condoms implies immoral sexual conduct.*"



## A voice from Italy concurs

However, within days, Cardinal Cottier, a close ally of the pope and the most senior member of the clergy among all of the voices heard so far, told the Italian news agency Apcom that the use of condoms was "morally legitimate." Cottier called it a way to save lives in the poorest regions of Africa and Asia, where taking the time to instill the concepts of abstinence and fidelity is not medically practical.

The Catholic Church has always held that intercourse expresses heterosexual marital love and must always further the goal of creating new life. Cardinal Cottier explained that his proposing a "legitimate" use of condoms is an exceptional circumstance. He repeated that condoms should not be used

as contraceptives because doing so would encourage immoral sexual conduct.

However, the Cardinal also pointed out that during the sexual act, there is a risk of transmitting death as well as bringing life. Given the immediacy of the threat, using condoms becomes the lesser of two evils in this moral argument. It is an argument that has been proposed by bishops in France and Spain as well. The Irish even find a precedent in Catholic history for such thinking.



## The Irish propose a solution

The *Irish Independent* offered a solution to the Church's moral dilemma. In following the controversy spurred by the Spanish bishops' statement, the newspaper offered a way for the Church to get itself out of "the moral corner into which it has painted itself" by citing St. Thomas Aquinas as a precedent.

Thomas Aquinas, the saintly theologian of the Middle Ages, thought that prostitution, although morally wrong, should be tolerated for the greater good. Aquinas believed that prostitutes eased male antisocial behavior that posed a threat to women everywhere. Essentially, Aquinas distinguished between what is morally ideal and what goes on in the real world. He stressed the need to serve the greater good.

Despite the fact that many bishops and some theologians in the Church believe that using condoms is immoral, using condoms prevents death by the thousands, which is obviously the greater good in this century. It is, says the *Irish Independent*, the real-world response to the AIDS pandemic.

The newspaper alleges that even people who are "basically well disposed towards the Church" fail to understand why it is risking lives for a teaching that seems "at best highly eccentric and dated." Perhaps if the Church's hierarchy were more yielding to the common sense approach of using condoms for prevention, it might be a more credible voice when promoting abstinence and fidelity as other ways to fight AIDS.

Amen to that.

Roman Catholic teaching on abortion is pluralistic. There is a strong theological tradition in favor of the right to choose an abortion and there is a conservative "no-choice" view. Neither of these views is official and neither of them is more Catholic than the other.

—D.C.M.





# The Crowning of the President – Jan. 21, 2005

## Choosing between security and liberty for all.

By Mary E. Hunt, Participating Scholar

I had to see for myself the spectacle of George W. Bush's second inaugural. It was quite the show in the nation's capital as security fences worthy of San Quentin and empty buses lined nose-to-nose eliminated any semblance of freedom of assembly.

My Mennonite pastor friend, Cindy Lapp, and I bundled up and hustled downtown. We knew that many of our friends around the world would have wanted to be there to convey their anti-war sentiments, their contempt for Bush's unjust domestic policies, and their outrage that this country would spend upwards of \$40 million to party while tsunami survivors needed clean drinking water. I wore an anti-war scarf and a peace pin — signs enough to make clear I was not part of the fur coat, big hair, high heels, party set.

Little shocks me from this administration, but the absurdity of this scene was prize-winning. Picture the beautiful expanse of Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House, a distance of about 1.3 miles, lined with military personnel stationed every 15 feet or so. Security is the latest make-work project of the Bush administration. Police trainees with their backs turned to the crowd were interspersed with the soldiers for reasons that remained

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...outrage that this country would spend upwards of \$40 million to party while tsunami survivors needed clean drinking water.

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obscure. Sharpshooters stood atop the buildings. Helicopters hovered. Police cars zipped about.

To get closer, we had to pick one of several entrances to the cordoned-off zone and go through a pat-down search. I had not seen gates so stout since I did an internship in a prison some years ago. We were now inside.

We picked the right entrance because when we arrived at our viewing site, we were pleased to see many protestors. Creative signs and chants lent a festive air. We stood cheek by

jowl with people who were there to cheer their president. We did not apologize for shouting "End the war," and "Play music, don't shoot." But from the chilling looks we got, it was obvious that some people had not come all that way to have free speech rain on their parade. Democracy sneaks up on you when you least expect it, folks.

Security personnel were everywhere. One fellow looked like something out of a movie: thin, plainclothes, sunglasses at a rakish angle, earpiece, and chewing gum. He paced our section like a nervous cat, scanning the crowd for dangerous customers.

There were really two parades. The first was a phalanx of police on motorbikes, followed by black vans, cars, and emergency vehicles of all sorts. Wedged inside the tangled mess was the limousine carrying George W. Bush. He was behind tinted glass, waving at what looked like the wrong side of the street. Spectators were only allowed on our side. Then he was gone, and the parade seemed over. More tangles of black vehicles followed — one protected the vice presidential limo — but it looked more like military maneuvers or the Mafia on holiday than a parade.

The real parade came later. This had only been the warm-up act, the President's way to get to the reviewing stand. Millions of dollars in Homeland Security funds for the District of Columbia had just been spent to assure George Bush's safe passage from the swearing-in to the reviewing stand. Talk about sin. And what will happen if/when some real security problem/disaster arises in D.C., and there is no money to deal with it?

We wove our way around street closings and metal fences to the 12th Street entrance and its prison-like enclosure. It was bleacher seating *by invitation and ticket-only*. At one street corner, we were denied access to the zone while fur-wearing, red-scarved Republican folks ahead of us were ushered in without identity checks by a Secret Service officer. He claimed they were congressional people. I wished for more legal observers because such is the stuff of lawsuits. After all, this was not a private nightclub with bouncers, but a public event on public land. What citizens wear ought to be irrelevant — though it seemed to be the coin of the realm here.

Once the President was safely ensconced in his bubble of a reviewing stand, the security apparatus was suddenly torn down, and the hoi polloi were allowed in. A short time later, we exited at 14th Street into a cordon of helmeted D.C.



police (looking like armadillos in their rippled security vests) who were holding protestors at bay. Why, I wondered, as two blocks below, the gates were wide open. Sanity had little place at the inaugural event. Things were tense there as we headed home. I learned later on the evening news that the armadillos unleashed their pepper spray shortly after we left. Several protestors and police were injured.

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Millions of dollars in Homeland Security funds for the District of Columbia had just been spent to assure George Bush's safe passage from the swearing-in to the reviewing stand.

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In his inaugural address, George W. Bush said piously: *"There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment and expose the pretensions of tyrants and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom."* We had just experienced the antithesis of freedom on the streets of Washington. President Bush prattled on about *"the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world"* while we encountered tyranny here in the name of security. The one thing Mr. Bush did say in his speech that rang true: *"The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands"* because his administration has all but killed liberty here.

If Inaugural Day is any indication, now that George Bush wears the crown for his second term, we in the U.S. need all the help we can get from free people around the world. More is the pity.

## One in five U.S. teens have sexual intercourse by age 15

Research from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy has revealed these numbers about the incidence of sexual intercourse among teens in the U.S. by age group:

- 4% of 12-year olds
- 10% of 13-year olds
- 19% of 14-year olds

Source Popline, May-June 2003

## Chicago judge says embryos are human beings

**Judge rules that fertility clinic error can be charged as "wrongful death."**

**A** Chicago area county judge ruled that life begins at fertilization, and therefore, a frozen embryo destroyed in error in a Chicago fertility clinic was a human being. Consequently, the embryo's parents may file a wrongful-death lawsuit.

The judge's ruling was based on his belief that an embryo is a human being, regardless of whether or not it resides in a womb. As a result, the frozen embryo's parents are legally able to sue for compensation, as would any other parents who have lost a child. The judge maintained that his ruling is backed by the Illinois Legislature's definition of when life begins.

Opponents of the ruling allege that this decision, thought to be the first of its kind in the country, will be overturned on appeal. However, say pro-choice supporters, the ruling itself could discourage doctors from practicing reproductive medicine and sets an unnerving legal precedent. Pro-life supporters applauded the judge's ruling but realistically expect the case to move to the Illinois Supreme Court.

In the past, courts have allowed homicide charges for fetuses killed when mothers were killed. However, un-implanted embryos have never been given similar legal status.

Although the parents in the case have been given permission to request a new hearing on the issue of wrongful-death, legal experts conclude that the case against the clinic's negligence is really a breach-of-contract case, not a wrongful-death action.





## Integrating recovering sex offenders into faith-based communities

Debra Haffner is the Co-Director of the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing.

**R**everend Debra W. Haffner, one of our Participating Scholars and a member of our Board, has just published **Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations**, an online resource by the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The website, a manual on sex offenders and faith-based communities, addresses policies to educate children and adults about sex-abuse prevention and screening, along with ways to keep children safe from sexual abuse, assault, and harassment. It also suggests strategies on how to include a treated sex offender in congregational life.

It is the first resource in the U.S. that directly addresses integrating sex offenders into faith-based communities.

As anyone watching the news these days knows, child sexual abuse is being revealed as a pervasive and devastating

public-health problem. Many denominations have been roiled by allegations of sexual abuse by clergy, staff, and volunteers who work with children.

Sex-offender registries now let us know when a person with a history of sex offenses enters our congregations, but most congregations are ill-equipped to handle such disclosures. Debra has spent part of the last year researching this issue, interviewing congregations and clergy with experience in these matters, and meeting with experts.

Although this e-manual is designed for Unitarian Universalist congregations, it is helpful to congregations of all faiths. Debra has developed an interfaith version for Christian and Jewish congregations that will be published in hard copy this spring.

You can find more information about the manual on the homepage of the Unitarian Universalist Association: [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org). The manual is also available as a downloadable pdf at [www.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing/BalancingAct.pdf](http://www.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing/BalancingAct.pdf).



## An eyewitness report Tsunami and spiritual relief

By Ouyporn Khuankaew, Participating Scholar,  
International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice,  
Chiang Mai, Thailand

**O**n December 26th 2004 the tsunami that swept through South and Southeast Asia took more than 200,000 lives, leaving countless people suffering. Food, clothes, shelter, and medicine from around the world poured into the area from countries trying to help. However, sustaining life for many of these people goes beyond material needs. Religion is a resource that helps people in less materialistic cultures get through difficulties. Regretfully, spiritual support from others was less forthcoming.

### Two stories

Migrant workers from Burma were not entitled to material assistance because of their illegal status in Thailand. However, material help was less important to them than performing a Buddhist ceremony for loved ones they had lost.

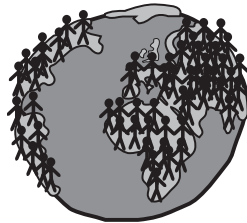
When I arrived to counsel these groups a month after the tsunami, I participated in a Buddhist ceremony for families who could not find the bodies of their dead to give them a proper cremation. During the ceremony, a monk chanted sutras and then called the names of the dead, urging them to release themselves from all attachments. After the ceremony, an elderly mother's face cleared, showing deep relief. She said that she could go back to Burma now. She believed that her dead children had found peace.

A Thai woman construction worker and her husband from the poorest area of Thailand miraculously survived the tsunami. She told me that when she was hit by the wave and was underwater, her mind focused on two things: a monk respected in her region and a legendary local queen worshipped highly today. She said, "While I was under the strong current full of mud, I had a clear vision of the monk and queen's faces and called out their names. That brought me the strength to emerge through those waves. When I emerged, I found a coconut tree and grabbed it firmly, watching other people float away and drown. I held on for almost half an hour. My hands were very tired, but I had so much faith that I would be safe that I did not give up."

*Continued on page 9*

# U.N. population projections: Dire news for the planet

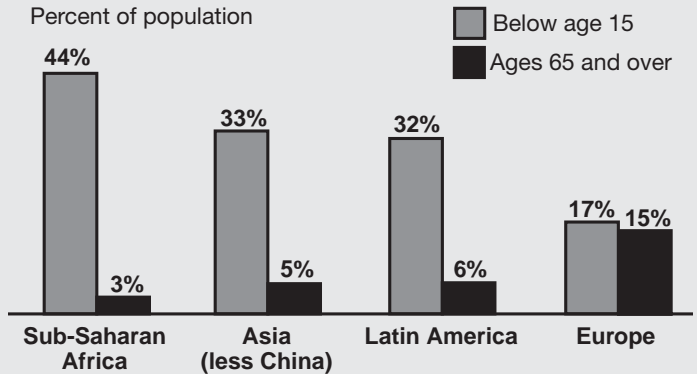
The news is not good. Here are some highlights from a report released by the U.N. Population Division in February of this year.



- The world's population will grow 40% to 9.1 billion by 2050. What's worse than the number is where the growth will take place: Virtually all the increase will occur in the world's 50 poorest countries.
- The population of developed countries will remain mostly unchanged, roughly 1.2 billion. While this population will age, immigration will stabilize these numbers.
- The U. S., the major focus of international migrants, will receive 1.1 million annually. The country's population will grow to 394 million in 2050, up from 298 million in 2005.
- However, in the least self-sufficient countries of the world, those that are already challenged with caring for their inhabitants, the population is projected to burgeon, from its current 5.3 billion to 7.8 billion in 2050.
- Median fertility is projected to fall from today's 2.6 children per woman to slightly more than 2 children per woman in 2050.
- India's population will overtake China's in the coming decades. India's current fertility rate is 3 children per woman. China's is estimated at 1.7 children per woman.
- Between 2005 and 2050, eight countries will account for half the increase in the world's population: India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Congo, Bangladesh, Uganda, U.S., Ethiopia, and China.
- The decline in births in several sub-Saharan African and South Asian countries was slower than expected.

Between 2000 and 2005, fertility levels per woman remained above 5 children in 35 of the 148 poorest countries, including 30 of the poorest nations.

## Across World Regions, Contrasting Age Structure Will Lead to Sharply Different Demographic Futures.



Poor countries will far outpace developed countries in population growth because of a young age structure as well as higher birth rates. High birth rates in the past, and falling but continued high birth rates for many poor countries, guarantee several decades of growth. In the more developed countries, very low proportions of youth and high proportions of older people are significant factors in the coming population decline.

2004 World Population Data Sheet of the Population Reference Bureau

## India removes proposed family planning incentive for its leadership

Last November, the Indian government decided to withdraw the constitutional amendment that proposed a small-family requirement for elected representatives.



The proposal would have prohibited anyone with a family of more than two children from being elected to either the House of Parliament of the legislative assemblies and councils in the states. The movement to drop the amendment was based on the government belief that family planning should be voluntary rather than mandatory.

According to U.N. Division of Population, India's population will exceed China's in the coming decades. See article at left. India's current fertility rate is 3 children per woman. China's is estimated at 1.7 children per woman.



# Terri Schiavo and Catholic Moral Theology

Dan Maguire was busy in the press and on TV, commenting on the prolonged dying of Terri Schiavo. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* (March 20, A 24), he criticized Vatican hard-liners for their “fetishism of life signs, whereby any sign of life is used as justification for postponing death. They are putting tremendous stress on the physical life signs rather than survival of the personality.” Death is a process, not a moment, and her dying has been delayed fifteen years, he said. 80% of her brain was gone and the other 20% was radically compromised; with a flat EEG, her death was already well advanced.

Dan told the *L.A. Times* that Vatican theology, which he distinguishes from Catholic theology, is boxing the Vatican into “a very interesting conundrum.” Pope John Paul II departed from the wisdom of his predecessor, Pope Pius XII, who held that no extraordinary means — including nutrition and hydration — should be used to keep the life signs going when there is no hope of a return to normal functioning. As a result, Maguire said, “you could have a totally incompetent pope for an indefinite period.” In that case, Maguire has said in other interviews, the Vatican would suddenly rediscover the wisdom of Pope Pius XII and traditional Catholic theology, and they would “pull the plug.” In fact, when Pope John Paul II was experiencing severe breathing problems in his final days, he was not given respirator relief nor was he sent to a hospital.

Against his better judgment, Dan Maguire accepted an invitation to be interviewed on Fox’s *On the Record*. Gretta Von Sustern in her introduction kept referring to him as “a former priest,” not as a theologian. When Dan got to speak—

and he was cut off very quickly—he said that he was indeed a former priest and that he was also a former high school student, but that he was not appearing as such, but as “a Catholic theologian, trained in a pontifical university in Rome and teaching on a Catholic faculty at Marquette University.”

In this and in other interviews, Dan remarked that the press usually interviews priests or bishops who are not theologians but play one on television. Thus the press is regularly getting misinformation on true Catholic teaching from those who could not pass a graduate exam in theology but happen to be priests or bishops. Gretta then immediately, with much deference, brought on a priest who was not a theologian to refute Dan.

Dan told the unwelcoming Fox interviewer that this macabre Schiavo spectacle signaled an inability of the dominant American cultures to accept that death is as natural as birth. Mrs. Schiavo should have been allowed to die fifteen years ago, he said, as soon as they discovered that her brain had already deteriorated drastically.

In other interviews, Dan called ours a “cryonic culture,” referring to the freeze-away-for-a-better-day approach to dying...i.e. freeze the body in hopes for a technical fix at some future time. He has also said that the so-called “pro-life” mourners who wanted Schiavo’s heart and lungs kept going after her cerebrum had died have no tears for the 26 murders of prisoners by U.S. forces or for the more than 100,000 civilians killed in Iraq. Pro-life has become a shallow motto shielding the hypocrisies of right-wing militarism, Maguire said.

## Understanding pro-choice values

An excerpt from an address, *Defining “Moral Values” for the Next Four Years, was presented to the National Press Club by Participating Scholar Lloyd Steffen, November 9, 2004.*

Consider the 2004 Republican Platform advocating a “Human Life” Amendment to the Constitution. That proposal makes no provision to protect a woman’s right to choose, even in those restrictive cases of rape, incest, or to save a woman’s life. The Platform plan invokes the language of “innocent life” without ever explaining what that means. “Innocence” here refers to a religious idea of life described as “sacrosanct,” that is, innocent in the sense of being untainted, pure, undefiled, even “sin-less.”



The fetus is metaphysically innocent — without sin — and who else is sinless? For Christians, the only others to fit that category would be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with some others adding Mary, Mother of God. *So this attribute of divinity is being ascribed to every fetus.* If reporters could get politicians to explain what they mean by such seemingly innocent terms as “innocence,” the religious nature of the abortion debate and the religious nature of beliefs about fetal status would become much clearer, and courts would have a much easier time seeing this issue as the advancing of a religiously grounded theory of life, a religious viewpoint, that ought not be endorsed by government fiat or rationalization.



# Book Reviews

**A Portable Egypt**, Catherine Madsen (Xlibris, 2002)

An eye-opener of a novel whose incisive moral intelligence and wicked sense of humor transform the terms of the abortion debate. As Dara Horn (author of **In The Image**) has said, “A **Portable Egypt** is that rare, almost unheard-of creature: a ‘political’ novel that treats a divisive issue not as a chasm that runs between people but as one that runs within them.”



Catherine Madsen’s unusual novel suggests that wherever we place ourselves in relation to the abortion issue, we are all deeply conservative, we are all deeply liberal: whichever position we take, we are likely to contradict it in our lives at some critical point.

Madsen, a contributing editor to the inter-religious journal, *Cross Currents*, describes herself as a wildcat theologian. She writes an elegant sentence, an arresting argument, and a plot whose acceleration barely allows the reader to sleep. Her characters present personalities and viewpoints you will never see represented in the news. This is the novel that religious pro-choice readers have been waiting for.

“The art inspired by God’s laughter does not by nature serve ideological certitudes, it contradicts them. Like Penelope, it undoes each night the tapestry that the theologians, philosophers, and learned men have woven the day before.”

—Milan Kundera

**Hinduism and Human Rights A Conceptual Approach**, Participating Scholar Arvind Sharma, Oxford University Press.

This book makes a germinal contribution to the rather sparse discourse relating to the place of human rights in Hinduism. The author is a trained and talented philosopher, well grounded in classical Indian jurisprudence, and raises many a pertinent issue concerning the relations between Hinduism and human rights. Lawpersons, social theorists, philosophers, and comparativists will all find here some fresh starts as well as new provocations.



—Upendra Baxi, Professor of Law, University of Warwick

## History repeats itself ...

“I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. As a result of the war, corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed.”

—President Abraham Lincoln

*From a letter to Colonel William F. Elkins, 21 November, 1864*



## Tsunami and spiritual relief

*Continued from page 6*

The couple survived, but lost everything, including a big paycheck because their boss died in the tsunami. Without anger or frustration, the woman calmly told me, “We are so lucky that we did not die and that we did not lose our minds. All the material things, we can find them again.”

### Incomplete aid

Yet faith and spirituality are not on the agenda of most local or international aid agencies. Unfortunately, even the religious organizations that offer help often misinterpret or fail to fulfill the religious needs of the people. I heard of one group of Buddhist monks who refused to perform a ritual people asked for because the monks didn’t think it was important. Another monk from Burma told people, “This suffering is a result of your karma.” One Christian white man walked out of a displaced camp saying, “Oh, my God, they do not believe in God.”

This is the dilemma. Some international and local aid agencies have purely secular agendas, providing only material resources. Some religious groups bring with them interpretations that undermine the people who need help, or worse, try to convert them by alienating them from their spiritual roots.

### Better solutions

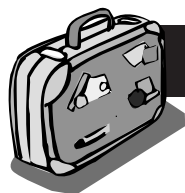
How should progressive religious people approach this dilemma?

First, we must remind ourselves that suffering people are not necessarily poor and weak. On the contrary, many people who are not materially wealthy are spiritually strong and wise. They know their problems and how best to solve them. They need us to listen with respect to their stories, support their choices, and treat them equally.

We must respect victims’ faith and belief systems. We cannot get stuck with our own expectations that lead us to try to move others to where we want them to be.

When donating material resources, we must ask an aid organization how it works with people in a way that empowers them, physically, mentally, and spiritually, not weakens people’s spirit and strength. Whenever possible, we should support local groups who emphasize spiritual practice in their programs.

Lastly, we must challenge our own local religious institution about its intentions and methodologies when providing support to people.



## MOVERS & SHAKERS ...

### Activities of our Participating Scholars

#### MOVERS & SHAKERS BOOKS



**Mary E. Hunt** is the editor of *A Guide For Women In Religion: Making Your Way From A TO Z* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

**Grace Jantzen: Foundations of Violence: Volume I of Death and the Displacement of Beauty**, 2004 Routledge. *Volume II: Godly Killing: Violence in Western Religions*, forthcoming in 2006. *For William James and the Varieties of Postmodern Religious Experience* in Jeremy Carrette, ed., **William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience**, London and New York; Routledge, 2005; pp. 97-105.

**Catherine Keller's** forthcoming book, **God & Power: counter-apocalyptic journeys** (Fortress Press), explores theological options in a time of empire; co-edited **Postcolonial Theologies** with Mayra Rivera and Michael Nausner.

**Anantanand Rambachan** has contributed chapters/articles to four recent publications:

- *To Recognize and Love God in All*, in Amanda Hughes ed., **Five Voices Five Faiths** (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2005).
- *Global Hinduism: The Hindu Diaspora*, in Robin Rinehart ed., **Contemporary Hinduism** (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004).
- *The Path People Take, From All Sides, Are Mine*, **Union Seminary Quarterly Review**, vol. 56:3-4, 147-156.
- *Hinduism, Hindutva and the Contest for the Meaning of Hindu Identity*, **Swami Vivekananda and V.D. Savarkar**, in Sukalyan Sengupta and Makarand Paranjape, **The Cyclonic Swami: Vivekananda in the West** (Delhi: Samvad India Foundation, 2005).

**Rosemary Ruether** has had two books published: **Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization and World Religions** (Rowman and Littlefield, 2004) and **Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History**, (University of California, Berkeley) coming in May, 2005.

**Sa'diyya Shaikh's** recent publications include —

- *A'isha* in the **Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World**, ed. by R.C. Martin. New York: Macmillan.
- *Transforming Feminisms: Islam, Women and Gender Justice* in **Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism** ed. by O. Safi. (Oxford: Oneworld Publications).

#### MOVERS & SHAKERS HONORS

**Susannah Heschel**, Eli Black Associate Professor of Jewish Studies in the Department of Religion, Dartmouth College, will receive an honorary doctorate this spring from Colorado College.



**David Loy** has been appointed the next **Besl Professor at Xavier University** in Cincinnati, Ohio, beginning January 2006.

**Rosemary Ruether** will conclude her term as the **Carpenter Professor of Feminist Theology** at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, this June. She will continue at the Graduate Theological Union as well as teach one class a semester at the Graduate School and Theological School in Claremont as a research professor, starting Fall 2005.

#### MOVERS & SHAKERS EVENTS



**Ghazala Anwar:** following the recommendations of the UN Study on Disarmament and Peace Education unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2004, Ghazala has undertaken to work within Pakistan's public school systems to find ways to teach critical peace skills to the country's children.

**Liora Gubkin** helped produce the hugely successful **What Men Owe to Women** program at California State College, Bakersfield, on February 16th. Liora also participated in the March 2005 **International Conference on Judaism and Domestic Violence**. Participating Scholar Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha and Dan Maguire also spoke at this event.

**Christine Gudorf** delivered the **Earl Lecture at Pacific School of Religion** in January 2005, *Sex and the City of God*.

**Mary E. Hunt** gave the **55th annual Aquinas Lecture at Manhattan College** on *Same-Sex Love and American Catholicism: Eradicating the Sin of Heterosexism*.

**Grace Jantzen** spoke at the Lund, Sweden, **Conference on Creative Theology**, September 2004 and the **Second Christian Conference on Gender, Religion and the Body**, in Helsinki, Finland, March, 2005. Grace will speak at **Woodbrooke Weekend on Religion, Gender and Violence** (Birmingham, UK) this May.

**Catherine Keller** is currently helping to organize a **Drew Transdisciplinary Theological Symposium** for Sept. 28-30, 2005, *Ground for Hope: Faith, Justice and the Earth*.

**David Loy** presented the annual **Thulin Lecture** at the University of Illinois on *The Religion of the Market* on April 5.

**James Martin-Schramm** gave the keynote speech, *Constructive Engagement: The United Nations Population Fund in China*, delivered at the **2005 Roe v. Wade Dinner** co-sponsored by the United Nations Association of San Diego and the Coalition for Reproductive Choice, January 20, 2005.

**Veena Oldenburg** has been busy with various projects:

- One of three professors to participate in a **three-part documentary on India** produced by the History Channel and Arts & Entertainment.
- Featured speaker at the **University of Colorado, Denver** for Women's History Month.
- Participated in a briefing on India at the **Committee on Foreign Relations** at Tampa, Florida.
- Acted as commentator at the **Woodrow Wilson Seminar in Washington D.C.:** "New Dreams/Old Cities: *The Presence of the Past in India and the United States*."

**Tavivat Puntarigivat** is Secretary General of the Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award Committee: Tavivat's group hosted an awards ceremony at the United Nations in Bangkok, on 7 March 2005, the **United Nations International Women's Day**. Buddhist women from around the world were recognized for their extraordinary religious and social work in alleviating violence and poverty among women and girls — especially in South and Southeast Asia.

**John Raines** participated in the **Conference on Terror and Democracy**, hosted by a group of 55 former heads of state, called The Club of Madrid. The group formed after the March 11th, 2004 Madrid train bombings killed 192 and injured 2,000. The conference convened to address issues of safety and terrorism. More than 800 participants from all over the world attended the conference. John was part of a panel entitled: *Women, Terror, Religion and Democracy*.

**Laurie Zoloth** provided expert testimony on Stem Cell Research at the **Texas State Legislature**, Austin, Texas in January 2005. She has been a guest on **NPR's Speaking of Faith**, March 6, 2005; *Embryonic Stem Cell Research*, Total Living Television Network's Newsmakers, February 23, 2005; *Science and Religion*, **NPR's Science Friday**, January 21, 2005.

**MOVERS & SHAKERS PAPERS & ARTICLES**



**Ann-Marie Hsiung Hsien-kuan:** *Compliance and Resistance—the Struggle of Singaporean Chinese Women*, at the **International Conference on the Inspection and Prospect of Asian Women** organized by Beijing University and Hong Kong Chuhai Universities, December 2004.

**Marjorie Muecke:** in *Culture Health and Sexuality:* *Shifting sexuality among lowland Thai women* (6:3:183-188) and *Female sexuality in Thai discourses about maechii* (lay nuns) (6:3:221-238).

**Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha:** two articles on African philosophy and African epistemology in the **Encyclopedia of Black Studies** (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005).

**Tavivat Puntarigivat:** 19th World Congress of the **International Association of the History of Religion**, 23-30 March 2005, *The Clash of Civilizations: A Buddhist Perspective* on the topic of "Religion: Conflicts and Peace," in Tokyo.

**Sa'diyya Shaikh:** *Knowledge, Women and Gender in the Hadith*, in **Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations**, 15 (1):99-108.

**Suwanna Satha-Anand:** *Fluid Boundaries, Institutional Segregation and Sexual Tolerance in Thai Buddhism* at the Plenary Session of *Boundaries and Segregation* at the **19th World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions** in Tokyo, Japan, March 24-30, 2005.

**Critically acclaimed documentary, available on VHS and DVD**

**A** small number of healthcare professionals in this country have become targets in a deadly conflict. They receive little public support for their work and face dedicated and unpredictable opponents. Their ranks are shrinking. *On Hostile Ground* enters the lives of three abortion providers to reveal the obstacles — practical, legal, and emotional — that they face everyday, and shows them struggle with the decision to perform this procedure.

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