

Religious Consultation Report

Volume 7 No. 2

The money is there!!!

By Daniel C. Maguire

A wise man [disclosure: he's my brother, Joe] once said, "Anything that can be solved by money is not a problem — **IF** the money is there."

Grim problems face us denizens of planet earth, and money can solve every one of them:

- **Dirty water.** If one glass of pure water could cure AIDS, many people in the world would have no access to it.
- **Hunger and poverty.** Some 40 million people die every year from hunger and poverty-related causes — the equivalent of 300 jumbo-jet crashes daily — with half of the passengers being children.
- **New, self-induced illnesses.** As forests are destroyed, microbes need new hosts and move to humans. It's not the tigers coming out of the forest that we now fear. It's the microbes. We have lost one-fifth of tropical rain forests since 1950.
- **Unwanted pregnancies.** Half of all pregnancies in our overcrowded world may be unwanted, according to Nafis Sadik, former head of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. We have the money to meet that need with family planning aid.
- **Female illiteracy.** Nothing swells population growth more than female illiteracy. In India overall, the literacy rate for women is 39%, and the fertility rate is more than three children per woman. However, in the remarkable Indian state of Kerala (with its highly Catholic population), the literacy rate for women is 86.3%, and the fertility rate is 1.8.

These are some of the problems. Where's the money to solve them? Going wastefully in other absurd directions....

Money galore!

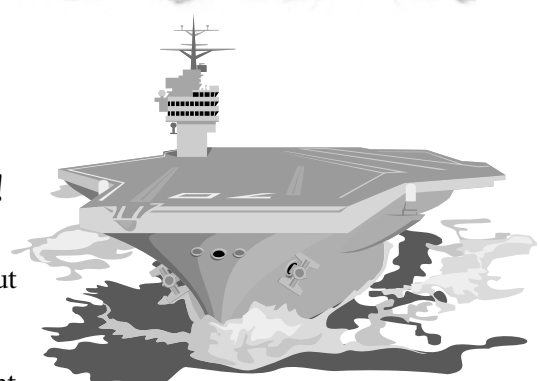
We're literally rolling in money, but most of it is misspent, and the father of all misspent money is the U.S. military, the sacred idol that the U. S. and most nations of the world worship.

Let's just take a peek at one little bit of military madness.

Welcome aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Kitty Hawk.

The Kitty Hawk is like a nuclear-powered floating city. It's three football fields long, as tall as a 20-story building, and it houses nearly 6,000 crew, pilots, and mechanics as well as 70 sleek aircraft. It does not travel alone; it is accompanied by an

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The money is there!!!

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Aegis cruiser, frigates and destroyers, two hunter-killer submarines, as well as supply vessels.

Now hear this: The United States has 13 of these carrier-battle-group killer behemoths! No other country in the world has even one!!

How frustrating it must be for the military. Having such a powerful team and no opponents! This, however, is just one example of our silly spendthrift military budgeting. The accompanying chart prepared by The Center for Defense Information shows how much money the U.S. spends on kill-power, i.e. military power, as compared to essential issues like education, health, alternative energy, agriculture, etc.

Remember, while that money pours into the military, school buildings deteriorate, bridges collapse, and 40 million Americans go without health insurance. When the Congress debates the discretionary budget each year, the military part is not on the table. *Oh, sorry!! It is on the table, awaiting enlargement so that it is now approaching half-a-trillion dollars a year. More than \$10,000 a second going down the military tube!*

Rather than spending more than \$30,000 an hour...24/7!!! ... on things as ridiculous as the Kitty Hawk,

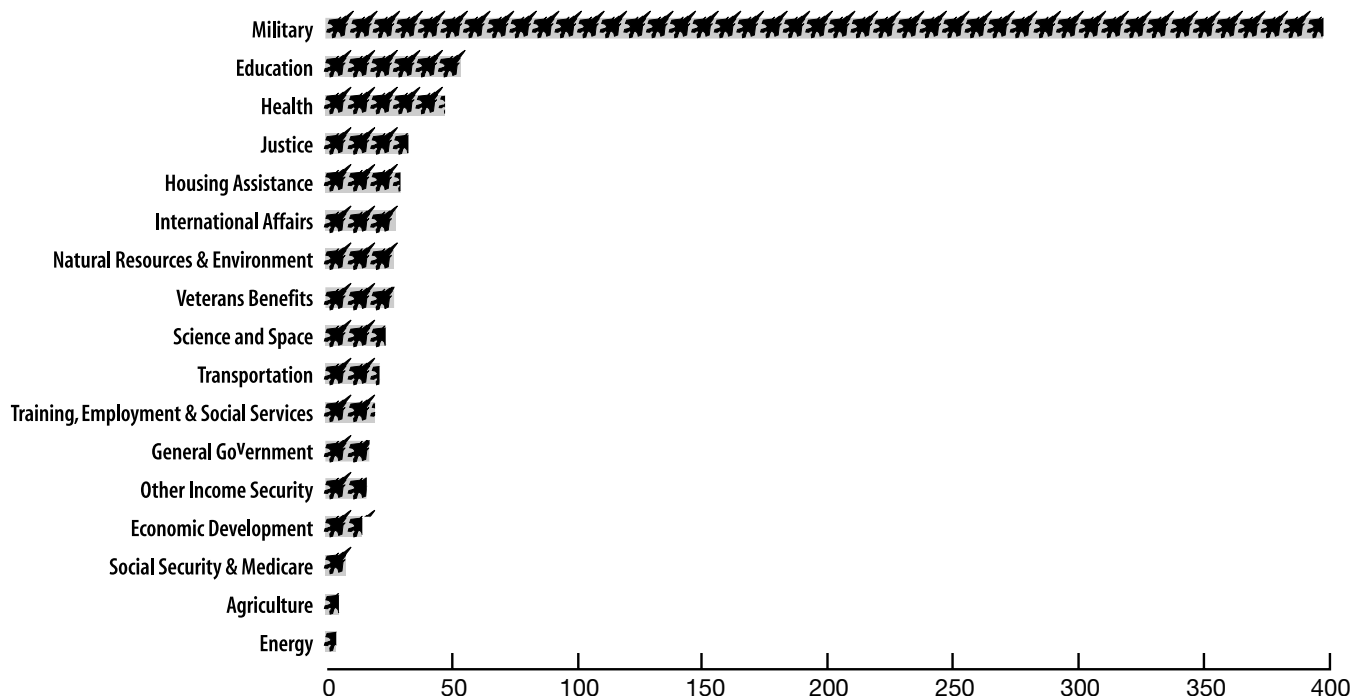
we could cut our military spending in half and still be over-armed. \$40 billion a year would provide a G.I. Bill for all qualified students in public colleges in the United States. We could rebuild U.S. schools over 10 years for \$12 billion a year. Basic health care and nutrition for the world's poor could be had by spending \$13 billion per year. We could double the salaries of elementary and high-school teachers, rather than honoring them while starving them as we do now.

We could provide universal health care for all U.S. citizens without spending any more than we now are spending on health as a nation. All we need do is adopt a health care system such as exists in Denmark and other northern European countries.

According to the United Nations, reproductive health care for all the women in the world could be had by spending a mere \$12 billion a year. Water and sanitation for everyone would require only \$9 billion a year. Basic education for all would be only \$6 billion per year.

If these were items on the U.S. budget, we would not fear "terrorism." We would be respected, not hated. We would be what early America dreamed of being, "a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people upon us." Other nations would not fear us for our military mania and intrusive imperial misadventures, but admire us as once we were admired.

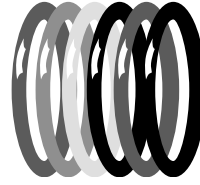
Fiscal Year 2004 Discretionary Budget (Dollars in Billions)



NOTE: The "Social Security & Medicare" funding in this graph refers to administrative costs associated with these programs, and does not reflect actual benefits paid out.

Source: *The Defense Monitor*, Vol. XXXII, number 2, April/May 2003.

New Consultation project on homophobia funded



Freedom Rings, designed by David Spada with the Rainbow Flag in mind, are six colored aluminum rings. They have come to symbolize independence and tolerance of others.

Homophobia is an attitude that reaches beyond sexuality — tainting thinking about reproductive health, parenting, AIDS, and gender justice.

The Consultation is pleased to announce that we have received initial funding for a new project: **Homophobia: Roots and Cures in World Religions.**

The question might be asked, *Why is the Consultation taking this on?* Our central concerns focus on population and reproductive health. Should we address the problem of heterosexism? Would this not distract from our mission?

Not at all.

Reproductive health involves attitudes toward sexuality. Heterosexism and homophobia poison societal attitudes regarding the meaning of sexuality and of healthy relationships, generally. If sexuality has moral legitimacy only in a heterosexual mode, then the very meaning of sexuality and sexual pleasure is shrunken and distorted, affecting the societal sense of all relationships. Indeed, there are links between sexism and heterosexism that we will explore. Also, reproductive health and parenting are not just issues for heterosexuals.

Homophobia promotes injustice toward persons whose sexual orientation does not match the dominant and intolerant societal “norm.”

In this project, we will show that religion, in ways subtle and not so subtle, is a major cause of homophobia and heterosexism. Religious interpretations of gender, sexual pleasure, reproductivity, status, family, and other prime social categories can stimulate homophobia.

Religious poisons can be fought only by religious medicine. Homophobia promotes injustice toward persons whose sexual orientation (LGBT) does not match the dominant and intolerant societal “norm.” Discrimination is metastatic. Each sanctioned mode of discrimination opens doors to other forms of discrimination. This is especially and powerfully true when religions provide the sanctions and support the laws and policies that impose this religiously blessed bias on whole societies.

Homophobia also inhibits response to the HIV-AIDS crisis since many blame this epidemic on sexual minorities and see it as divine retribution. The solid research of first-rate scholars will show that many religion-rooted negative attitudes toward sexual minorities can be countered by the

teachings of those same religions. In this way, we will counter the influential ignorance of the Religious Right. The one thing the Right does not want: serious religious scholars demonstrating that its heterosexist reading of the religious traditions is flawed, and therefore, not a suitable basis for public policy or law.

This project will show the moral beauty of same-sex marriage and show how that beauty is supported by the world's religions. The distinguished faculty for this project includes —

- Judith Plaskow (Judaism)
- Marvin Ellison (Protestant Christianity)
- Mary Churchill (Native American Religions)
- Simeon Ilesanmi (Native African Religions)
- Ann-Marie Hsiung (Taoism and Confucianism)
- Mary Hunt (Catholic Christianity)
- Paul Schalow (Buddhism)
- Anantanand Rambachan (Hinduism)

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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WANTED: 34 Million Friends to improve women's health — one dollar at a time

Together, two American women have begun **34 Million Friends of UNFPA**, a grassroots effort to replace the \$34 million that President Bush withdrew from the United Nations Population Fund when he took office. The Fund is the world's primary multilateral provider of voluntary family planning services, including contraceptives, pre- and post-natal care, and HIV/AIDS prevention services.

Experts estimate that the lost \$34 million could have prevented two million unwanted pregnancies per year, 800,000 induced abortions, 4,700 maternal deaths, and 77,000 infant and child deaths.

Grassroots effort

Jane Roberts is a retired French teacher from Redlands, California. Lois Abraham is a lawyer who practices in Taos, New Mexico, and San Francisco, California. For more than a year and a half now, these two women have been asking Americans to contribute at least one dollar to help fill the UNFPA void left by the Bush administration.

In an interview with *WeNews* correspondent Barbara Crossette, Jane Roberts said, "No other country has ever de-funded UNFPA for other than fiscal reasons. The country of Mali, which is one of the 10 poorest countries in the world, gives \$3,000 a year. It's just ... something that you do. It's part of a social contract, and we have reneged on this contract. Lois and I find this absolutely appalling."

Money put to use

The first \$1 million raised was used very practically. In Timor Leste, for example, the money went to fill modest but utilitarian needs —

- Purchasing two-way radios to connect the only two hospitals providing emergency obstetric care.
- Training three Timorese doctors outside the two hospitals to perform Caesarean sections, an urgently needed service.
- Providing 80 motorcycles for midwives to reach women living in areas with poor roads or without public transportation.

All the money raised in the campaign will be used to help with motherhood services and emergency obstetric care, as well as treating genital cutting, obstetric fistula¹, and sexual abuse. Money will also be used to distribute information on contraceptive methods, reproductive health care/counseling, and HIV/AIDS testing and counseling.



A standard of care

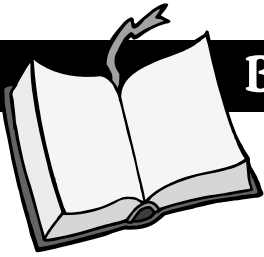
Roberts has traveled to Mali and Senegal to view first-hand the Population Fund's work. In the *WeNews* article, Roberts related the story of coming upon a pregnant woman lying on a donkey cart on a dirt road. It was noon and 95°. The woman was in labor and six miles from a clinic. Roberts and the doctor with her got the woman in the back of their truck and took her to the clinic. Stories like this one form the impetus for the fund-raising campaign. The **34 Million Friends** campaign believes that a pregnant woman has the right to survive, and that women should get prenatal vitamins, sonograms, mammograms, and contraceptive choice.

The power of education

Roberts reiterates what studies have found. Educated women marry later and have fewer children. They practice better hygiene. They learn techniques of family planning. The cost of this minimal education — basically an elementary school education — is so little compared to the enormity of the benefits. At one school, Roberts reported that printed on the cover of the little books that the children used to write their school work were the words, "*Little girls deserve as much food, education, and health care as little boys.*" It's an elementary thought with tremendous implications.

As of the writing of this article, the campaign has raised nearly \$2 million. To contribute or to learn more about the **34 Million Friends** of UNFPA, go to www.34millionfriends.org. Recently, the United Nations Foundation announced that it would match new donations 25 cents on the dollar.

¹ Obstetric fistula, a rupture caused by prolonged, obstructed labor, leaves a woman incontinent, and frequently an outcast of society. Africa numbers 50,000–10,000 cases a year. (See last fall's issue of *Religious Consultation Report*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 7.)



BOOK NEWS

Participating Scholars in print

Marvin Ellison

Same-Sex Marriage? A Christian Ethical Analysis
(The Pilgrim Press, 2004)

In his new book, Marvin Ellison examines the arguments for and against same-sex marriage and concludes that as a matter of justice, the institution of marriage should be open to same-sex couples. However, he asserts, marriage is not necessarily ideal for all lesbian or gay people, just as marriage is not for all heterosexual people.

In dialogue with both legal scholars and theologians, Ellison examines the strengths and weaknesses of how marriage traditionalists, advocates of same-sex marriage, and radical marriage critics analyze the issues and frame their arguments. He then offers constructive proposals for revitalizing Christian sexual/family ethics and moving the debate forward, regardless of whether the right to marry is won or lost.

Michael Bronski, author of **The Pleasure Principle: Sex, Backlash, and the Struggle for Gay Freedom**, says of Ellison's book, "It is a call for common sense and common justice in how we, as a culture, must allow, promote, and sustain a wide range of intimate relationships. Written with energy and argued with elegance, Ellison's book will be a revelation to everyone who cares about society, families, love, sex, politics, and justice."

Says Mary L. Bonauto, civil rights director of GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders), "Marvin Ellison's book offers an essential voice in the marriage debate by bringing the broad ethics of Christianity to what is otherwise a legal question about the justness of discrimination against gay and lesbian couples in civil marriage."

Lloyd Steffen

The Demonic Turn: The Power of Religion to Inspire or Restrain Violence
(Cleveland, Pilgrim Press)

Steffen cites the penchant of religions to be absolutist and unrealistically dogmatic as the source of destructive, life-defying religion. This, he says, is the central reason and the main cause for religions becoming dangerous and turning demonic. He explores the ever-present malignant power of religion as well as the multiple positive ways we have of being "religious." He also delves into the ways that religion can restrain violence. Historically, it has made the case for pacifism but also the case for holy war, and the more fudged concept of "just war."

Steffen looks at all of this with unusual candor for someone writing in the cautious American tradition of religious scholarship. He knows that religion is powerful and that thus religion is dangerous as well as promising. He dares to look at the dynamic of the dominant monotheistic traditions of the West, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. He acknowledges the prodigious power of these religions to inspire either slaughter or peace. Both potentials are there. Steffen faces them.

The religions we are familiar with have God as a central construct. Other religions, such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism do not so imagine reality, and Hinduism certainly handles the God construct differently and with more imaginative freedom that Judaism, Christianity, or Islam allow.

This is an unusual and courageous and very un-dull book that should not be ignored.

World's Largest Countries in 2003

Rank	Country	Population (millions)
1	China	1,289
2	India	1,069
3	United States	292
4	Indonesia	220
5	Brazil	176
6	Pakistan	149
7	Bangladesh	147
8	Russia	146
9	Nigeria	134
10	Japan	128

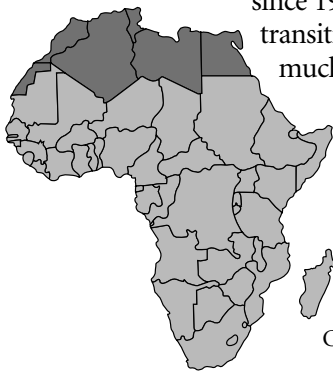
World's Largest Countries in 2050

Rank	Country	Population (millions)
1	India	1,628
2	China	1,394
3	United States	422
4	Pakistan	349
5	Indonesia	316
6	Nigeria	307
7	Bangladesh	255
8	Brazil	221
9	Congo, Dem. Rem. of	181
10	Ethiopia	173

Population growth in sub-Saharan Africa

While contraceptive use continues to rise overall in developing countries, the fertility rates remain high in sub-Saharan Africa —

- In 10 sub-Saharan African countries, fewer than 10% of married women use contraception.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's highest fertility rate: 5.3 children per woman.
- In Niger, the fertility rate is 7.2 children per woman.
- In 9 of the 16 sub-Sahara countries, fertility has dropped by more than one percent per year since 1990. However, the transition to lower fertility is much slower in Africa when compared to other countries during the same period.



Source: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Communications Programs.

Separation of Church and State? One bishop draws the line: pro-abortion lawmakers cannot receive communion

In early January, the then La Crosse, Wisconsin Bishop Raymond Burke, a rigid conservative, decreed that priests within his diocese must withhold Holy Communion from any lawmaker who supports abortion or euthanasia. The ban will hold until such lawmakers reverse their stands and “publicly renounce their support of these most unjust practices.”

Before issuing this formal canonical decree, the bishop had written privately to several legislators. In his letter, he warned that the lawmakers were jeopardizing their souls. When his personal pleas failed, the bishop issued his decree banning communion.

On January 9th, *Catholic World News* reported that in his pastoral letter, the bishop argued that “while the Church cannot and does not seek to sway public policy, Catholics remain bound by the principles of natural law, which point to the moral principles that no lawmaker can morally ignore.”

In an obvious promotion, on January 26th, Bishop Burke became the new Archbishop of St. Louis, Missouri.



Vatican enters leaky condom debate

The Vatican claims that condoms are permeable, and that the HIV virus can pass through condoms' tiny holes. The Catholic Church has spread this message across four continents, despite the scientific community's claims to the contrary.

Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, president of the Vatican Pontifical Council for the Family, is quoted as saying, “the AIDS virus is roughly 450 times smaller than the spermatozoon.” He alleges, “the spermatozoon can easily pass the ‘net’ formed by the condom.” The Cardinal's comments appeared in a BBC1 Panorama program, *Sex and the Holy City*.

The World Health Organization (WHO) strongly condemned the Vatican's words, “These incorrect statements about condoms and HIV are dangerous when we are facing a global pandemic which has already killed more than 20 million people, and currently affects at least 42 million.”

According to WHO, “consistent and correct” condom use reduces the risk of HIV by 90%. The organization further asserts that condoms do not have holes through which the

virus can pass. Condoms may break or slip, but an intact condom provides “a highly effective barrier to the transmission of particles of similar size to those of the smallest STD viruses.” The U.S. National Institutes of Health agrees.

The Vatican scare campaign against condoms is active throughout the world, reaching into Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Archbishop of Nairobi is quoted as saying that “AIDS has grown so fast because of the availability of condoms.” In Lwak, near Lake Victoria, it has been reported that some priests are saying that condoms are laced with HIV/AIDS.

Not all clergy voice such nonsense. In Mozambique, there is a bishop who blesses the condoms on Sundays (See *Religious Consultation Report*, Vol. 6 No.2, p.7). In South Africa, another bishop has spoken out, saying the AIDS crisis requires the Church to permit the use of condoms to stop transmitting death. (*Religious Consultation Report*, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 6)

Source: Planned Parenthood of South Central Michigan



The Vatican enters the presidential race

When Raymond Burke was a Wisconsin bishop, he forbade priests to administer Holy Communion to lawmakers who supported abortion or euthanasia. (See p. 6) Now, as Archbishop of St. Louis, Missouri, he announced the day before the Missouri presidential primary that he would deny Holy Communion to John Kerry because of Kerry's support of abortion rights and same-sex unions.

According to the Associated Press, Kerry's Bishop in Boston, Sean O'Malley, has also "endorsed the principle without naming the senator."

What spurs these decrees and involves Catholic bishops in American politics? Last year, the Vatican announced that politicians are obliged to uphold the Church's "non-negotiable ethical principles." The Vatican rejects same-sex unions and describes politicians who fail to oppose these unions as acting immorally.

While Kerry opposes gay marriage, he supports same-sex civil unions. Kerry was one of 14 senators who voted against the Defense of Marriage Act, which limits marriage to hetero-sexual unions and refuses to recognize gay marriages. When asked about reconciling his Catholicism and his voting record, the Associated Press reports Kerry saying, "I believe in the Church and I care about it enormously. But I think that it's important to not have the Church instructing politicians. That is an inappropriate crossing of the line in America."

Showing the Vatican's distance from the wisdom of the faithful, the mayor of San Francisco, an Irish Catholic, authorized same-sex marriages. His action was approved by Mayor Daley of Chicago, another Irish Catholic.

Georgetown University, aborted fetuses, and stem cells

A letter last fall from an anti-abortion group posed an unexpected quandary for Georgetown University Medical Center. A Florida-based group wrote to Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington that some scientists at Georgetown, a Catholic university, were doing research using cells derived from aborted fetuses.



An in-house investigation verified the claim. But when 14 of the researchers involved said that ending the use of the cells in question would jeopardize years of work and funding, the matter was turned over to ethicists.

In a recommendation that scholars said could mark a first in Catholic medical research in the U. S., Georgetown has decided to let those researchers continue their work.

The Rev. Kevin T. FitzGerald, a university bio-ethicist, said he reasoned that the scientists did not know the cells had come from aborted fetuses when they began their work and should not be forced to abandon potentially life-saving studies or risk forfeiting grants. The benefits to society, he said, far outweigh the harm done by using the cells, because the abortions were not performed for the purpose of providing the cells to scientists.

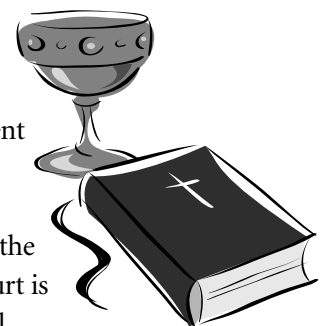
"The ideal would be not to be involved with [aborted fetal cells] at all," said FitzGerald, a Jesuit priest who holds a doctorate in molecular genetics. "Obviously, we don't live in an ideal world. We do the best we can."

Reprinted from a report distributed by Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin

Priest backs same-sex marriages

Father Timothy Ryan, 67 has filed an affidavit with the Supreme Court of Canada in support of same-sex marriages and in direct opposition to a recent document from the Vatican condemning homosexual unions. "The definition of marriage should include same-sex couples," said Ryan, who has worked for 30 years with the gay and lesbian community. "As with various issues touching on matters of sex and sexuality, many Canadian Catholics do not share the views of the hierarchy, including myself," he said.

Canada's federal government has asked the [Canadian] Supreme Court to consider including same-sex couples in the definition of marriage. The court is to deal with the question by fall.



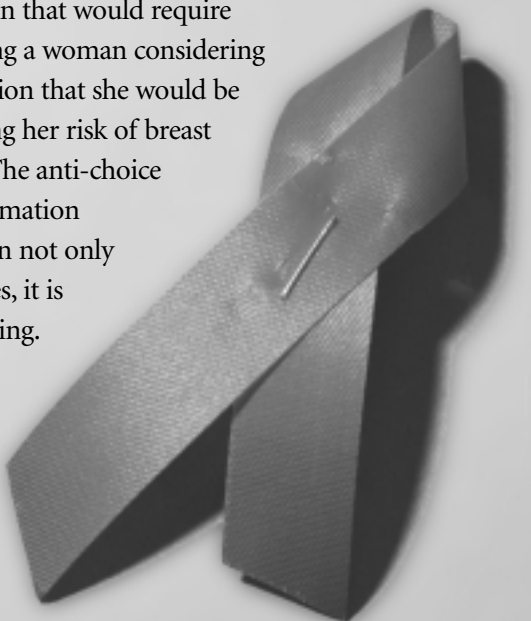
An excerpt reprinted from the *National Catholic Reporter*, March 5, 2004

Anti-choice campaign Scare Tactics: Linking breast cancer to abortion

Anti-choice extremists are using misinformation as their weapon against safe and legal abortion. Disregarding the lack of evidence for their allegations, the group has launched a campaign to “educate” women. Their message uses a barrage of media: television ads, billboards, bumper stickers, and print ads. One ad sponsored by Christ’s Bride Ministries appears on public transportation vehicles and warns, “women who choose abortion suffer more and deadlier breast cancer.”

Never mind that the National Cancer Institute, The American Cancer Society, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the World Health Organization, The New England Journal of Medicine, major universities, and studies in Sweden and China say that they have found no relation between having an induced abortion and breast cancer.

Undeterred by scientific studies, anti-abortionists are also lobbying for legislation that would require informing a woman considering an abortion that she would be increasing her risk of breast cancer. The anti-choice misinformation campaign not only continues, it is accelerating.



Vatican seeks special clout with European Union

Catholics for a Free Choice-Europe is calling attention to the Vatican’s effort to gain special consultative status within the European Union. If the status is granted, says Elfriede Harth, spokesperson for the organization, “a great number of people could face discrimination and be denied their human rights.”



Says Harth, the exemption would allow the Church the right to organize and administer its agencies without having to comply with any European policies and regulations that violate Church teachings. The ramifications are many. The Church could refuse to hire and have the freedom to fire people whose lives do not align with Church teachings: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered people, as well as those who remarry after divorce. Others who could be affected: people who publicly disagree with Church positions on contraception or abortion.

Such discrimination violates the basic human rights of those who work for the Church, yet consultative status would ensure that Church institutions would still receive EU funds — even though the institutions violate the EU charter. In a press release last November, Elfriede Harth pointed out that The Vatican rejects EU policy but gets EU money. EU funding goes to Catholic organizations that do not always reflect the progressive values of the EU, especially in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Harth cited the Vatican campaign asserting that condoms cause AIDS as an example.

Between 1997 and 2002, Catholic charities received nearly \$99 million of EU funding under the budget line that goes to fund NGO development projects — that’s close to 10% of the total \$1 billion the EU spent on such projects.

Poverty causes maternal deaths

The poverty of the poor is their ruin — Proverbs, 10:15

95% of the estimated 529,000 maternal deaths in 2000 occurred in Africa and Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in 16 women die in childbirth or pregnancy. In a more developed country, the risk is 1 in 2,800.

More developed countries offer maternal health programs. Skilled health workers help with pregnancy and delivery. When complications arise, women have access to emergency medical care.

Source: Popline, November-December 2003.

Contraception UP, abortions DOWN — surprised?

Three years of research have produced further strong evidence that increasing the availability of modern contraceptive methods decreases abortion rates. Here are some of the findings presented by Dr. Charles Westoff, Princeton University Emeritus professor of demographic studies and sociology:

In 12 countries of central Asia and Eastern Europe. “Despite increasing preference for very small families, abortion rates in eight of these countries have declined, accompanied by steady increases in the use of modern methods of contraception.” Strong evidence shows that increased availability of modern family planning methods decreases the incidence of abortion. On the other hand, traditional family planning methods, such as withdrawal, correlate with a high abortion rate. Thus, when George W. Bush refuses funding for UNFPA, he guarantees higher abortion rates.

Westoff estimates that in past years, 80-90% of unintended pregnancies were aborted. In recent years, however, abortions have dropped significantly where modern contraception, most often intrauterine devices, has become widely available.

In Kazakhstan. The rate of modern contraceptive use rose 50% between 1991-1998. The abortion rate fell by 50% during that same period.

In Azerbaijan. Only 25% of women use modern contraception. The abortion rate was 3.2 abortions per woman in 2001.

In Armenia. Modern contraception use is at 40%, and women had an average of 2.6 abortions in 2000.

Source: Elizabeth Leahy, *POPLINE*, November-December 2003, World Population News Service.

India and abortion

son preference continues to play a significant role in fertility preference among Indian women.

- India's second-trimester abortion rate is thought to be among the highest in the world. It continues to grow.
- Studies show that women undergoing sex-selective abortion are the groups most likely to attempt second-trimester abortion.
- The number of illegal and unsafe abortions continues to be high, with an estimated 6.7 million abortions per year performed by untrained persons under unhygienic conditions.
- Among women with two children, 83% with two sons and 76% with one son did not want more children. Among women with two daughters, 47% said that they wanted more children.



The other extreme...

Many towns along the length of southern Italy are dying out as young people migrate to the more prosperous northeast area of the country. It's a trend that worries the Italian government. Who will pay for future pension and health care for a growing aging population? The news is dire for those approaching retirement age: Working lives must get longer.

By mid-century, Italy could see a ratio of 3-4 deaths for every birth. Already in one small town, deaths have outnumbered births for three of the last four years. Italy boasts the oldest population in the world. And across the country, the birth rate is at an all-time low.

The solution? Baby bonuses. One town, Laviano, is offering \$11,900 per baby born to its families. Only four children were born in this town of 1,600 last year. One critic said that Italians are not so poor that a single bonus will significantly change the numbers. Even if some couples respond to the financial incentive, the coming years promise a serious and widening gap between births and deaths.

Source: *Abortion in India — A Complex and Conflicting Agenda*, Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE).

Introducing...three new board members



Marvin M. Ellison is the Willard S. Bass Professor of Christian Ethics at Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine and an ordained Presbyterian minister. He received his Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York City and his M.A. from the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.

Marvin writes and speaks nationally on a variety of issues, including human sexuality, economic justice, and health-care ethics. He has spoken at the United Nations/UNICEF conference on the rights of children, and he is co-chair of the Religious Coalition Against Discrimination, an interfaith network of religious leaders throughout Maine. The group was first organized to defeat a November 1995 anti-gay referendum on the State ballot.

Ellison is co-editor of *“Body and Soul: Rethinking Sexuality as Justice-Love”* (The Pilgrim Press, 2003), author of *“Erotic Justice: A Liberating Ethic of Sexuality”* (1996), and a principal author of the Presbyterian Church study document, *“Keeping Body and Soul Together: Sexuality, Spirituality, and Social Justice”* (1991). Currently, Marvin is working on a new book, *Breaking the Code: Essays, Speeches, and Sermons on Sexuality and the Social Order*.



Born in Trinidad, **Anantanand Rambachan** completed his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. He is also a student of Swami Dayananda, the distinguished traditional teacher of Vedanta. Currently a Professor of Religion, Philosophy, and Asian Studies at

St. Olaf College in Northfield Minnesota, Anantanand has been teaching courses since 1985.

Anantanand is particularly interested in interreligious dialogue, especially between Hinduism and Christianity. An executive member of the Society of Hindu-Christian Studies, he has actively participated in national and international organizations: for example, serving as the Hindu participant

in The World Council of Churches General Assemblies in Canada and Australia. He is an Associate Editor of the **Encyclopedia of Hinduism**, the first, comprehensive, multi-volume series of the Hindu tradition.

Anantanand has authored several books and numerous articles and reviews in scholarly journals. Among them are *Accomplishing the Accomplished: The Vedas as a Source of Valid Knowledge in Sankara* and *The Limits of Scripture: Vivekananda's Reinterpretation of the Vedas*. Active in the Hindu community in Minnesota, Anantanand frequently travels throughout the U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean to speak to Hindu groups. He has delivered twenty-one lectures on Hinduism that the BBC transmitted world-wide.

Mutombo Nkulu-N’Sengha

is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at California State University –Northridge.

Born and raised in Central Africa, Mutombo has studied in Africa, Europe, and the U.S. He has earned master’s degrees in African American Studies and Philosophy, as well as certificates in political science and Egyptology, the latter from the Oriental Institute of Rome. Temple University awarded Mutombo his doctorate in Philosophy of Religion.

In Africa, Mutombo studied with some of the founding fathers of African philosophy. He speaks four African languages in addition to French, Italian, and English. His writings have been published many languages, including French, English, and Italian. He has lived in Africa, Europe, and the U.S. and has traveled extensively in Asia.

Besides being a scholar in the field of global philosophy and religion, Mutombo is a poet, and a human rights activist who has worked as journalist at Vatican Radio in Rome. He is currently the editor-in-chief of *Congo Times*, www.congotimes.com. The site speaks of the challenges confronting Central Africa: democracy, human rights, economic and social development, the phenomenon of globalization, and the scramble for post-colonial Africa.



The Bush war on women

This list of Bush's tactics was taken from *Ladies, You Have No Choice*, an article written by Don Hinrichsen in the March/April issue of *World Watch* magazine.

Here are a few of the actions taken by George W. Bush to reverse U.S. progress in family planning and population:

- Prior to inauguration, [Bush] selected an anti-choice zealot, John Ashcroft, to be attorney general — providing an early signal of his intention to have the U.S. government decide how women's bodies are to be used rather than allowing women to make their own choice.
- On his first day in office, restored the Reagan-era "gag" rule withdrawing U.S. funding for international family planning.
- Three months later, closed the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach.
- In his first budget, stripped contraceptive coverage for federal employees.
- Began campaign to pack federal courts with judges zealously opposed to birth control and women's choice.
- Selected Patricia Funderburk Ware, an advocate of "abstinence only" education, to lead the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS.
- Joined with nations practicing extreme suppression of women (basically the "Evil Axis" nations, Iraq and Iran, Syria, Libya, and Sudan) to block U.N. consensus on sexuality education.
- Announced new rules making fetuses eligible for prenatal care — but providing no coverage for pregnant women — thus elevating the fetus to "personhood" while reducing the role of the woman to mere "host" status.
- Appointed a Title IX commission aiming to gut the law that provided athletic programs for girls and women. (Remember the 1950s, when girls did not play soccer or basketball?)



- Withheld \$34 million in funding for birth control, maternal and child health care, and HIV/AIDS prevention from the United Nations Population Fund.
- Rejected U.S. participation in the women's rights treaty (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), which had been ratified by 170 other nations.
- Rejected funding that had been provided by Congress for programs to support women's health in Afghanistan, where maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world.

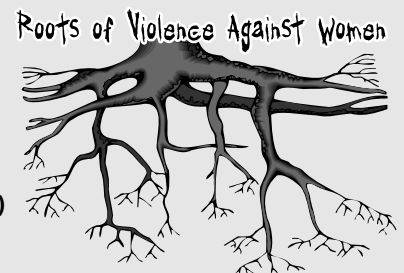
The information used to create the list is provided by Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Population Connection.

Scholars chosen for The Religious Roots of Violence Against Women

In this past year we have received funding for the project that will analyze the religious roots of violence against women. (See last issue of *Religious Consultation Report*, Vol. 7 No. 1). The study will show how antidotal themes and teachings can be found within those same religions.

We have assembled a distinguished faculty to work on this, and the work will commence formally next summer.

- Frances Finnegan (Social History of Women)
- Christine Gudorf (Catholic Christianity)
- Susannah Heschel (Judaism)
- Pinar Ilkcaracan (Islam)
- Grace Jantzen (Protestant Christianity)
- David Loy (Buddhism)
- Dan Maguire (Religious Ethics)
- Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha (Native African Traditions)
- Veena Talwar Oldenburg (Hinduism)
- Kuankaew Ouyporn (Buddhism)
- Maria Jose Rosado (Latin American Christianity)
- Sa'diyya Shaikh (Islam)
- Geling Shang (Taoism and Confucianism)
- Arvind Sharma (Comparative Religions)



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