

Religious Consultation Report

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

Volume 8 No. 1

The chastity mask

By Daniel C. Maguire

When you are up to a lot of immoral mischief, and even criminality, you must either openly admit you are evil or find some way of looking sensitive and good — preferably in an area that will not inconvenience you much.

In other words, you need a mask.

The United States is a rogue nation, armed to the teeth with Weapons of Mass Destruction while preaching disarmament — sort of like the village sot preaching sobriety. We are the only nation to use atomic weapons on population centers in a classic example of terrorism, having today 800 military installations sprinkled all over the world. We are a nation that has rushed into wars without declaring them in the way the Constitution requires, overturning more than 25 governments around the world since 1945; a nation that ranks 22nd among the 22 richest nations of the world in per-capita foreign aid, welching on its bills to the United Nations; and a nation that ignores millions of its own children who remain bereft of health care insurance.



Time for a mask!

The first tactic of mask-making is displaced indignation — minor issues stir fervent moral passions. Rigid pelvic orthodoxy is a favorite masking technique: get really serious about sexual and reproductive issues.

President George W. Bush deserves a masking award.

Of course, he requires a good mask. He is marked out by being the first president in United States history to be waging and losing two wars simultaneously. (Neither Iraq nor Afghanistan could be described in terms of “victory.” Chaos, yes, but victory, no.)

So suddenly, same sex marriages threaten our civilization, our families, and our own heterosexual

marriages. The Constitution (that document Mr. Bush violated by going to war without a declaration) must be amended to stop them. Abortion decisions by women are

Abortion decisions by women are more serious and abhorrent than the carnage of our military misadventures and the deaths from our foreign-aid penury.

more serious and abhorrent than the carnage of our military misadventures and the deaths from our foreign-aid penury. In a weird contortion — resulting no doubt

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The chastity mask

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from an excess of puritanical zeal — contraceptive aid to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (aid that would *prevent* abortions) was stopped by the President's imperial decree. On top of all that, our reformist president, who should have been a bit more tolerant on the subject of drugs, agonized in his 2004 State of the Nation address about performance-enhancing drug use by athletes. Horrors!

Meanwhile, Rome burns.

Of course it is an old gambit. If you are allegedly sexually abstemious and judgmental, you can swallow big doses of evil. A United States delegate to the Baptist World Alliance congress in Berlin in 1934 gave this telling comment on Nazism:

"It was a great relief to be in a country where salacious sex literature cannot be sold, where putrid motion pictures and gangster films cannot be shown. The new Germany has burned great masses of corrupting books and magazines along with its bonfire of Jewish and communistic libraries."

Commenting on this, biblical scholar Walter Wink writes: *"Surely, so the reasoning went, a leader who does not smoke or drink, who wants women to be modest, and who is against pornography cannot be all bad. Evil is always parasitic of the good and must masquerade as good in order to remain in office."*

There were German chaplains accompanying the Wehrmacht in its ruthless invasion of the Netherlands who preached sermons warning the troops against the Dutch prostitutes while overlooking a few other problems, like World War II and the holocaust of Jews, Poles, gypsies, and homosexuals.

Evildoers wearing chastity masks make other hypocrisies seem almost benign.

"Catholic and Pro-Choice" pamphlets available

The Consultation has recently published an English version of its **Catholic and Pro-Choice** pamphlet, which had originally been available only in Spanish and Portuguese.

Nearly all 100-plus Planned Parenthood affiliates nationwide have ordered copies to place in clinics to alert visitors to the Catholic Church's strong theological tradition in favor of the right to choose an abortion.

Catholic and Pro-Choice is also a valuable informational tool that can be used in the classroom or parish adult education programs. Pamphlets are available in quantities of 85. If you are interested in using the pamphlets, call the Consultation office (414) 962-3166 or fax your order (414) 962-9248 or email us at orders@igc.org. Pamphlets are free; moreover, Spanish and Portuguese translations are still available.



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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Water for sale ... and going to the highest bidders

The earth's poor are (once again) being deprived of the earth's resources.

By Daniel C. Maguire

It is amazing to think that we are drinking the same water the dinosaurs bathed in. Of course, some changes have been made as to purification, but the fact is that we have "a closed hydrologic system." As the authors of **Blue Gold: The Corporate Theft of the World's Water**, Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, put it, "Water is continually being recycled through rain and evaporation, and none of it leaves the planet's atmosphere."

Sounds like a great system. It is.

Here's the problem. The species that calls itself "sapiens" is fouling up the planet's water and rendering much of it unusable. Water waste is at crisis levels. To make matters worse, corporate grabbers are also trying to monopolize the

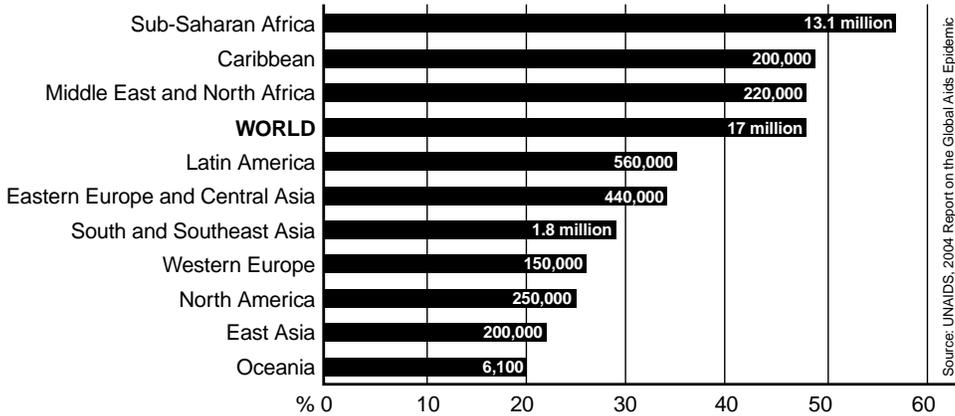
precious commodity and sell it to the highest bidder.

Fact: 65-70% of all water is used in irrigation, increasingly for huge "industrial farms." These water hogs are subsidized by governments and so have little motive to employ conservation practices, such as drip irrigation.

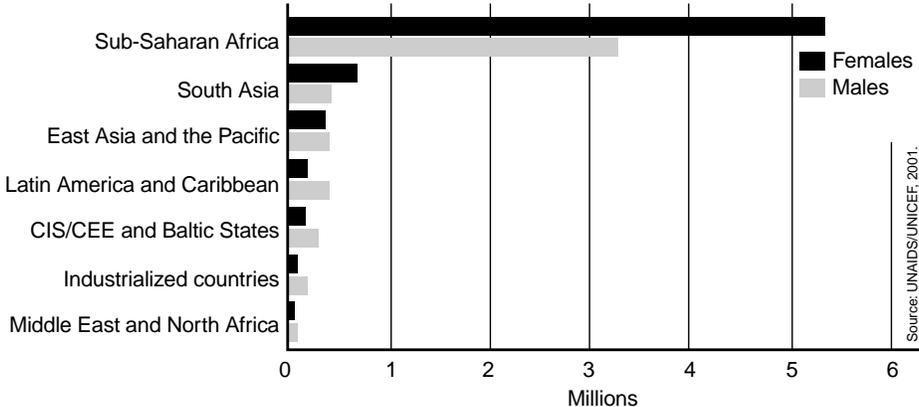
If anything is a basic human right, the right to water is. Yet this ancient and natural resource is moving into the marketplace and becoming increasingly available only to the well salaried.

By 2025, demand for water will exceed availability by 56%. The main losers, of course, as ever, will be the poor. All the world religions preach compassion for the poor. Nice thought, but few of them address water needs or the corporate grab for water which is taking it out of the hands of those who live on the planet and turning it into a sellable commodity.

Estimated proportion of HIV-positive adults (aged 15-49) who are women, end 2003 (numbers are given on bars)



Young people (aged 15-24) living with HIV/AIDS, 2000



The greater an HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the more long lasting it is, the more feminized it becomes as heterosexual intercourse becomes the main method of transmission. Indeed women are more at risk than men. This is partly for biological reasons; they are the more likely to be infected during intercourse. Young women are particularly vulnerable. They tend to have sex earlier than young men, and with older partners, who may already be infected; one study in Zimbabwe, for example, found that nearly a quarter of women in their 20s were in relationships with men at least ten years older. They are also often even less able than older women to resist pressure for unsafe sex: many also experience rape and forced sex, which increases the danger of transmission even further.

Our Planet, The Magazine of the United Nations Environment Programme, Vol. 15, No 2, p. 17.

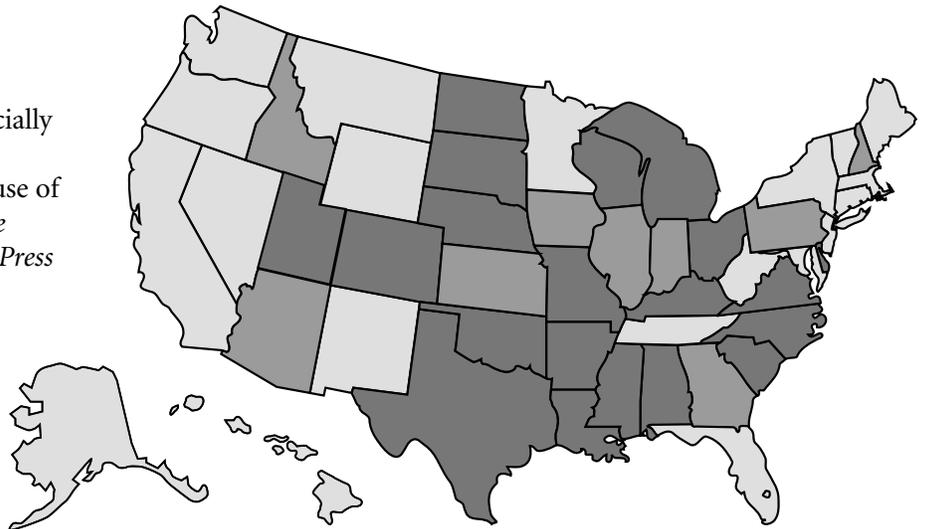
The shaky future of Roe v. Wade

How likely is it that Roe v. Wade could be reversed by the Supreme Court?

It's a question that deserves attention, especially now that Republicans have won the White House and control the Senate and the House of Representatives. An article last October in *The Boston Globe* by Jim Abrams of the *Associated Press* analyzed the threat. Here are the highlights.

According to The Center for Reproductive Rights, if the Supreme Court reverses its 1973 ruling, 30 states would likely make abortion illegal within a year.

Many states have old laws on their books that would be quickly reinstated if the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision were reversed. The Center's research reports that 18 states have pre-*Roe* laws that either totally or partially ban abortion. Other states would look to their state constitutions or turn to their strongly anti-abortion legislatures to swiftly reverse the federal protection for a woman's legal right to an abortion.



- States at high risk for banning abortion
- States at middle risk for banning abortion
- States at lower risk for banning abortion

Many states have old laws on their books that would be quickly reinstated if the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision were reversed.

The Boston Globe quoted Nancy Northup, Center for Reproductive Rights' President, as saying, "*The building blocks are already in place to re-criminalize abortion.*"

Here is where the states stand: 21 are termed high-risk and 9 are termed middle-risk, totaling 30 states capable and determined to ban abortion within a year of *Roe* being overturned. The Center concluded that more than 70 million women of childbearing age would be affected by the law.

The Boston Globe quoted Representative Louise Slaughter, Democrat of New York, one of 11 abortion-rights lawmakers to attend the Center's Capitol Hill news conference: "*We are really ... in some peril now.*" Republican Representative Christopher Shays of Connecticut concurred. He said that *Roe v. Wade* was "*an extraordinarily important document,*" and "*we need to elect more pro-choice Republicans to the Congress.*"

A quick look at where the risk lies

**21 states
considered
at high risk
of banning
abortion**

Alabama
Arkansas
Colorado
Delaware
Kentucky
Louisiana
Michigan
Mississippi
Missouri
Nebraska
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Texas
Utah
Virginia
Wisconsin

**9 states
considered
at middle risk
of banning
abortion**

Arizona
Georgia
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
New Hampshire
Pennsylvania

**20 states
considered
at lower risk
of banning
abortion**

Alaska
California
Connecticut
Florida
Hawaii
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Montana
Nevada
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
Oregon
Tennessee
Vermont
Washington
West Virginia
Wyoming



Fundamentalism ironically strong in the U.S.A.

Americans cherish the idea that the First Amendment made us a modern, secular society. Not so.

Consider these findings:

Nicholas Kristof (*New York Times*, August 15, 2003) pointed out that Americans are three times more likely to believe in a literal virgin birth of Jesus — parthenogenesis — than in evolution. 83% for virgin birth and 28% for evolution.

Stunningly, 47% of U.S. non-Christians also accept the miraculous conception of Jesus. Mainstream biblical scholars see the virgin birth as a metaphor, a literary device to signal the importance of Jesus and his mission, and not as a biological stunt.

58% of Americans say belief in God is necessary to be moral, compared to 13% in France.

Says Republican author Clyde Prestowitz (**Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions**, Basic Books, 2003): “Tocqueville noted in the 1830s that Americans were the most religious of people, and that has remained true to this day. On any given weekend, more than half of all Americans will attend a place of worship, as compared with 10-20 percent in most European countries and Canada. In this regard, America is more like the Muslim societies.”



President Bush talked to his heavenly father, not his earthly father, before launching his “crusade” into Iraq — and the mass of Americans seem to accept that with a quiet *Amen*.

On the basis of faith, President Bush considers little clusters of embryonic stem cells to be the moral and civil equivalent of himself and other born persons ... *citizens* in a word. (Could they be called for jury duty?)

And then there is the Fundamentalist website, dutyisours.com/gwbush.htm that said of the 2000 elections: “God defeated armies of Philistines and others with confusion. Dimpled and hanging chads may also be because of God’s intervention on those who were voting incorrectly. Why is GW Bush our president? It was God’s choice.” (God certainly has a lot to answer for!)

Said the English poet, Alexander Pope, “*The worst of madmen is a saint gone mad.*” When the saint is infused with a superstitious anti-intellectual fundamentalist piety, when the saint is the most powerful military and economic nation on the planet, and when that saint feels called by God to impose its concept of “freedom” on others by force, small wonder the people of the world are scared.

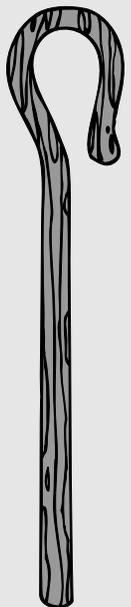
The defrocking of bishops’ authority

Catholics for a Free Choice commissioned a significant national opinion survey of likely Catholic voters that illustrates how the bishops have squandered their moral authority by pontificating on issues about which they have no privileged expertise. (See *Conscience* Summer/Autumn 2004.) Here is what the Catholics surveyed say:

- 83% think Catholic politicians should not follow the bishops’ lead in voting.
- 78% do not agree with the bishops on denying pro-choice politicians the sacraments.
- 76% say the bishops should not deny communion to pro-choice Catholics.
- 61% of Catholics agree that abortion should be legal.

When bishops speak, Catholics still listen, but increasingly, they don’t agree. Not only are the bishops out of touch with contemporary Catholic and ecumenical theology, but they more and more embrace a right-wing agenda, bashing Democrats in ways that promote Republicans.

As businesspersons, the bishops should see perils here: the bishops are endangering the tax-exempt status of their properties. “Tax exempt” is a fiction — it should read “tax shifted” since other citizens are expected to pick up the tab. Why should other citizens subsidize the bishops’ political partisanship! That’s a question whose time has come.



Two new Consultation projects launched

Two groups of Participating Scholars met last summer at the Temple University SugarLoaf facility in Philadelphia to begin their projects on **The Religious Roots of Violence Against Women** and **Heterosexism: Roots and Cures in World Religions** (For more details on these projects, see past issues of this newsletter: Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 8; and Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 3, respectively).

Violence Against Women

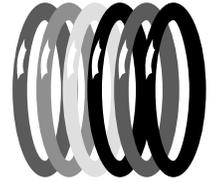
The **Violence Against Women** project includes scholars from Judaism, Protestant and Catholic Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and African indigenous religions. The project recognizes that all religions — some more, some less — encourage the subordination of women. Yet there are better insights in all those religions to combat this subordination. After spelling out some of the horrors that religions inflict on women, the scholars will seek out the cures within those same traditions.



Heterosexism

The **Heterosexism** project will do the same, showing how religions in subtle and not-at-all-subtle ways have engendered and fomented homophobia. Then those religions will be called before the bar of their own professed ideals to fight this prejudice. This project will also defend, on religious grounds, the right to same sex marriage.

Watch future issues for updates as the studies progress.



In Kenya, the two main providers of reproductive health services refused to sign the Bush Administration's gag rule. They lost funds, closing five family planning clinics, eliminating women's access to maternal health care, contraception, as well as voluntary counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS.

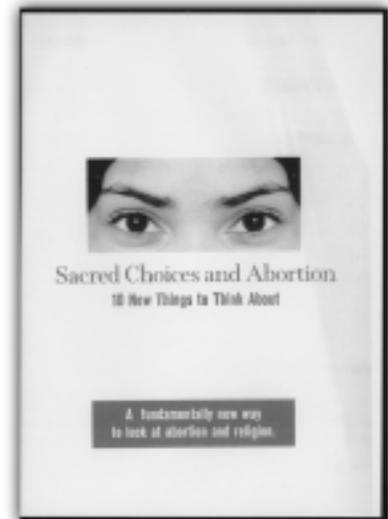
New Sacred Choices video documentary available

The Consultation has produced a new 55-minute video, **Sacred Choices and Abortion: Ten New Things to Think About**. It is available on request for \$10.00 in DVD or VHS formats, in English or in Spanish. To order, phone the office at (414) 962-3166, email us at orders@igc.org, or fax (414) 962-9248.

Among other things, the video tells the painful history of women killed in the pre-Roe v. Wade period and includes segments on clinic violence. It opens and closes with strong scenes from the April 2004 March for Women's Lives in Washington. It also features pro-choice testimony from Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim scholars.

In one of its most powerful segments, the video tells the story of Rosita, a nine-year-old Nicaraguan girl who was raped and impregnated. The Catholic hierarchy and local authorities tried to prevent Rosita from having an abortion. The bishops even offered to adopt the baby!! However, courageous doctors and Catholic laity helped the family to get the abortion and give the little girl back her life. With threats of excommunication in the air for the parents and the doctors, some 26,000 Catholics presented the Vatican with a statement saying they all wanted to be excommunicated too. The hierarchy fell silent.

In 10 insightful segments, the video explores "the big lie"... that religion is opposed to a woman's right to choose. The video, made possible by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, reframes the debate over reproductive rights within the context of the world's religious cultures.



News from Indonesia

Call to prayer and Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer

Participating Scholar Paul Knitter has received a Senior Special Fulbright Award to teach and lecture at the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Here's what Paul writes:



Where else in the world can you be stirred from your sleep at 4:45 a.m. by the rousing, thundering Muslim call to prayer, mixed with the jingle of bells playing *Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer*!

I'm back in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. And every morning, this is the summons I hear from the nearby mosque and from the breadman on his bike making his first rounds of the day. It's good, so good, to be here again. I arrived on September 11, and will begin the long journey home on October 2.

The magic carpet that brought me here is a Fulbright "Senior Specialist" award. On the occasion of the recent Indonesian publication of my book, **One Earth Many Religions**, I've been enlisted to give lectures and workshops for the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS) of Gadjah Mada University. This is where I taught a year and a half ago, so it has been like coming home to old friends and familiar surroundings.

Indonesia is the world's largest Islamic nation. Yes, the vast majority of the Muslims here take their faith very seriously. But this is also a nation where religious freedom is not just affirmed but lived, where minority religions — Christians, Hindus, indigenous traditions — are not just tolerated but given a respected place in society and culture. All of my Muslim students are committed to showing, through hard-nosed scholarship and their daily living, that Islam is not just compatible with, but conducive to, democracy and diversity. I feel so privileged to be invited to offer them a helping hand.

I was also privileged to be with my Indonesian friends on a very historic day in their nation's development. On my second day in Yogya, Indonesians went to the polls and for the first time elected a new president in what monitors and the local critics have judged to be free and fair elections. Only six years after throwing off the 32-year yoke of the dictator Suharto, Indonesia has moved from autocracy to democracy.

Admittedly, we don't know what the new President S. Bambang Yudhoyono will be like. Admittedly, corruption

still pervades much of the political and legal system. But democracy has been exercised, the so-called Islamic extremists have been clearly rejected, and there has been a resolute call for the demilitarization and de-corrupting of the political process. All this, in a dominant, devout Muslim nation! In Indonesia, I have experienced the reality, and the growing promise, of a dialogue, not a clash, of civilizations.

I have been lucky and privileged to be here.

Be well,

Paul Knitter
Participating Scholar

THE AFRICAN HOLOCAUST

Calling for vigorous implementation of the Cairo Program, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "The price of inaction in Africa in the next 10 years is too high to contemplate. Roughly, the estimates are staggering—

2.5 million maternal deaths
7.5 million child deaths
49 million maternal injuries

Putting population growth in perspective

Worldwatch Institute recently pointed out two encouraging statistics:

- In the mid 1960s, each of the world's women gave birth, on average, to six children. Today, that number is slightly lower than three.
- Forty years ago, 10-15% of married couples in developing countries used a modern method of contraception. Today that number has risen to 60%.

Such numbers may suggest that the world has responded to the dire warnings of the mid-60s about the ticking population bomb. In fact, a few countries like Italy, Japan, and China are concerned that smaller numbers of young people won't be able to economically sustain the needs of the aging population. However, we shouldn't start congratulating ourselves yet.

Consider this: Worldwatch reports that while the rate of population growth has declined since 1970, *the rate of growth is being applied to the largest population in the history of the planet.* Currently, 1.2 billion young people between 10 and 19 constitute the largest generation in history. The choices made by these young people will determine the future of the planet in mid-century. Now there's a sobering thought. Here are some more.

Consumption



Many countries — Pakistan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example — are expected to double their populations by mid-century. Yet food crops, water, and forests are already dwindling in these countries while indigenous species are being crammed into ever-smaller spaces. Says Worldwatch, "Populations in the world's 48 least developed countries could triple by 2050."

Women in Niger give birth to more children per woman than any other nation: currently, they average 8 children during their lifetimes. The country is "bulging" with young people. 50% of the population is under age 15; 70% of the population is under 25.

Family size has declined in most wealthy nations, but the U.S. population grew by 32.7 million people (13.1%) during the 1990s, the largest number in any 10-year period in U.S. history. The U.S. is now the third most populous nation.

In rich countries, high rates of consumption are sapping the earth of its resources. Look at Worldwatch's numbers:

- Carbon dioxide levels are 18% higher today than in 1960 and an estimated 31% higher than at the start of the Industrial Revolution.
- 50% of the world's forest cover is gone, and another 30% has been degraded or fragmented.
- 90% of all large ocean predators, such as tuna, marlin, swordfish, cod, halibut, skate, and flounder, have been fished out in the past 50 years.
- An estimated 10-20% of croplands and more than 70% of rangelands are degraded.

As the world consumes increasing amounts of natural resources — oil, animals and fish, forests and water — in the form of fuel, food, paper, and electricity, the planet's resources are disappearing. What's more, people are living longer, and extended families no longer share a single household and share energy and goods. The result? Consumption is growing enormously. According to Worldwatch, "A one-person household in the U.S. uses about 17 percent more energy per person than a two-person home."

Beyond reproductive rights

The global conferences that have convened since the 90s have concluded that the solution to many of these problems lies not just in providing modern methods of family planning, but in taking a further step: expanding the choices and capabilities of women. Studies show —

- Women with education have smaller, healthier families; their children have improved chances of avoiding impoverished lives.
- Wealthier women and those who have the power to make their own decisions also have fewer children.
- Women who have the choice to delay marriage and childbearing until after their teen years have fewer children.
- In countries where gender inequality exists, little is done to combat poverty or spur economic growth. All these problems go hand-in-hand.

Still struggling

In the face of these findings, women continue to struggle to be heard. Worldwatch cites these facts.

- More than 100 million girls will be married before they reach age 18 — some as young as 8 or 9 — despite that early childbearing is known to be the #1 cause of death and disability among developing countries for women ages 15 to 19.
- At least 350 million women still lack access to a full range of contraceptive methods.
- Demand for reproductive services will increase an estimated 40% by 2025.
- Two-thirds of the world's 876 million illiterates are women, and a majority of the 115 million children not attending grade school are girls.
- Nowhere in the world are women judged to have political, economic, and social power equal to men. Even in the U.S., women's reproductive rights continue to be constrained by tightening of restrictions on choice. (See page 5, *The shaky future of Roe v. Wade.*)

A recent study suggests that if every person alive today consumed at the rate of an average person in the U.S., three more planets would be required to fulfill these demands.

Then there is AIDS. For the first time in 2003, women's rate of infection equaled men's.

So while some numbers are down, let's look at the whole picture. We've got a good ways to go and plenty of obstacles to surmount before we can celebrate any victories.

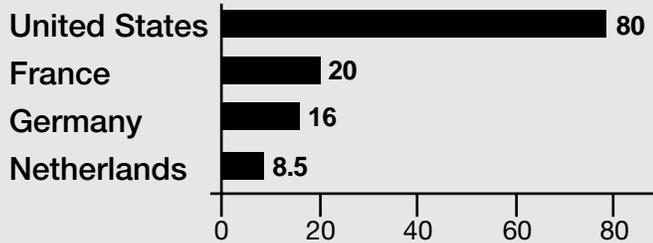
Life expectancy in the least developed countries is estimated at 49.6 years.

Source: Popline, May-June 2004

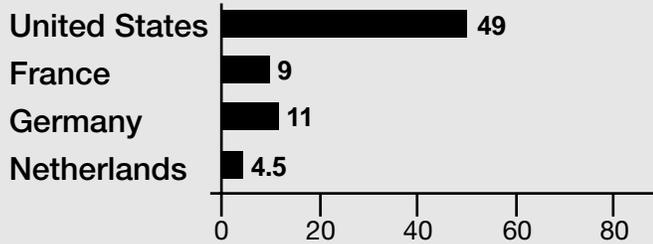
Adolescent pregnancy, birth and abortion rates are far lower in Europe than in the United States.

The Bush Administration argues that giving teens sex education and access to family planning services will only increase abortions, their stated reason for opposing all family planning, and exclusively funding "abstinence only" programs in schools. Statistics prove the opposite. In Western Europe, where sex education/responsible parenting classes are routinely taught in schools, and access to birth control is available to all persons, there are far fewer unplanned pregnancies, unwanted children, and abortions.

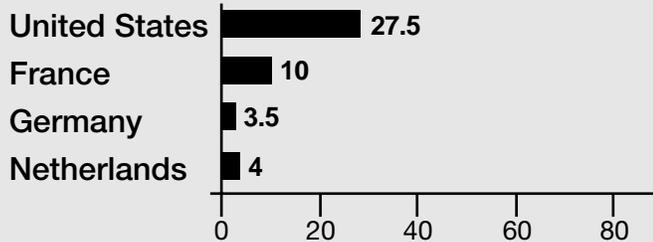
Pregnancy Rate per 1,000 Women — Ages 15 to 19



Birth Rate per 1,000 Women — Ages 15 to 19



Abortion Rate per 1,000 Women — Ages 15 to 19



Source: Population Reference Bureau, "World Population Data Sheet 2003" and "Family Planning Worldwide 2002 Data Sheet."



Movers & Shakers ... Activites of our Participating Scholars

Harold Coward,

who teaches at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, has released four books in the last two years. He has written **Yoga and Psychology: Language, Memory and Mysticism**, SUNY Press, 2002 and **Hinduism and Human Rights**, Greenwood Press, 2004. Harold has also edited **Indian Critiques of Gandhi**, SUNY Press, 2003, and co-edited **Religion and Peacebuilding**, SUNY Press, 2004, with Gordon Smith.



Chris Gudorf has contributed several entries to **Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Sex**, Alan Soble, ed. (New York: Continuum Publishers, 2005). She has also written a review essay in the Fall 2004 *Journal of Religious Ethics* on three books by Susan Franks Parsons: **Feminism and Christian Ethics** (Cambridge University Press, 1996), **The Ethics of Gender** (Blackwell, 2002), and **The Blackwell Companion to Feminist Theology** (Blackwell, 2002).

Hsiao-Lan Hu, a member of the **Religious Roots of Violence Against Women** project, co-authored with Theresa Yeh, **Yearning for Justice and Mercy: Visions of Hells in the Nineteenth-Century Chinese Pao-chüan** [precious scrolls] in **Considering Evil and Human Wickedness**, edited by Daniel E. Keen and Pamela Rossi Keen, Oxford, United Kingdom: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2004. Hsiao-Lan's book, **Taoism**, will be coming out in spring 2005, Chelsea House Publishers.



Ben Hubbard participated in a **State Department-sponsored visit to India and Bangladesh** last July to meet with Muslim leaders and hear their concerns. The visit was led by Participating Scholar **Dr. Riffat Hassan** who also went with other members of the ten-person delegation to Pakistan.

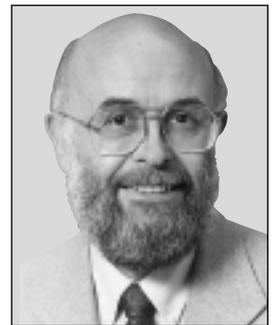


Pinar Ilkcaracan, a member of **Women for Women's Human Rights – New Ways**, reports that last September the organization brought together in Jakarta 25 NGO representatives and researchers from Muslim societies in South and Southeast Asia. It was the first solidarity network of activists and scholars working on the issues of sexual and bodily rights in the Middle East and North Africa. The organization has also published in English, Turkish, and Arabic, the first comprehensive reader on the issue, *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies*.

Patti Jung contributed *Sexuality for Christianity: A Complete Guide* John Bowden, ed., Continuum International, soon to be published. She also contributed *Heterosexism for Sex from Plato to Paglia: A Philosophical Encyclopedia*, Two Volumes, Alan Soble, ed., Greenwood Press, 2005.



Paul Knitter participated in a conference, "*Peacemaking and Muslim-Christian Dialogue*" in **Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa**. The workshop, organized by the **The Interreligious Council of Liberia**, gathered together about 80 Muslim and Christian leaders as well as ministers, grassroots organizers, and students. Paul, who spoke on the need for a "globally responsible dialogue" among religions and on the hopes and challenges of authentic inter-religious dialogue, was the only non-African in the conference.



David Loy and his wife, Linda Goodhew, have just published a book, **The Dharma of Dragons and Daemons — Buddhist Themes in Modern Fantasy**, Wisdom Publications. This groundbreaking book has received wonderful reviews. It employs a Buddhist perspective to appreciate some of the major works of modern fantasy — and uses modern fantasy fiction to elucidate Buddhist teachings. This pioneering work illuminates both the stories themselves and the universal qualities of Buddhist teachings. Loy and Goodhew examine J.R.R. Tolkien, Philip Pullman, Ursula K. LeGuin, and the animé movie, *Princess Mononoke*.





John Raines has been elected *Prof of the Year* for 2004 by 1,200 honors students at Temple University. However, John has been busy in other areas as well.

An article that John wrote, *The Room Where I Work Is A Class-room*, will be published in an upcoming edition of *Cross Currents*. The article shows how classrooms

perpetuate the stratification and dominance of society's economic "classes" from one generation to the next.

John has received funding from **The Henry Luce Foundation** to support a three-year graduate student exchange program between U.S. students and students from The Center For Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The American universities that will participate in the program are Temple, Florida International University (where Participating Scholar **Chris Gudorf** is chair of the religion department), and The University of California at Santa Barbara.

Sa'diyya Shaikh, one of our board members, received her doctorate last May from Temple University in Philadelphia. Sa'diyya's areas of concentration include Islamic Studies and Women's Studies. Her dissertation, *Spiritual Cartographies of Gender: Ibn 'Arabi and Sufi Discourses of Gender, Sexuality and Marriage* earned distinction.



Sa'diyya presented *Narratives of Gender, Violence, and Sexuality: Wife-battery in a South African Muslim Community*

at the Conference on Gender and Islam in Africa: Discourses, Practices, and Empowerment of Women at the **Institute for the Study of Islam in Africa** at Northwestern University.

Alice Shalvi is collaborating with her husband on a **Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia of Jewish Women**, which, Alice reports, contains some fascinating articles on reproductive issues in Jewish thought and practice.

Lloyd Steffen, Professor and Chair of Religion Studies and University Chaplain at Lehigh University, recently participated as a featured speaker for a Thursday U.N. briefing panel on "Population, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals." Steffen, who is the NGO representative to the United Nations for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, spoke on *Religious Ideology and Reproductive Health*. The panel was sponsored by the United Nations Association-USA and the Business Council for the United Nations.

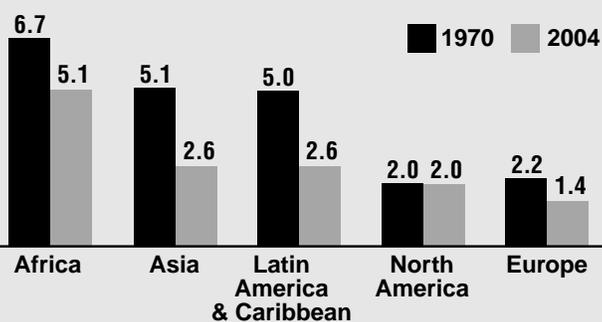
HEALTH SPENDING INEQUITIES

In the least developed countries, health spending is about US\$11 per person a year — well short of the WHO's recommended \$30–\$40 per person needed to cover essential health care — compared to more than US\$1,900 per person annually in high income countries. As a consequence, people living in poor countries have less access to medical technologies and good quality care than those in better-off countries.

Source: Population Reference Bureau, ©2004

Childbearing Trends in Major World Regions 1970 and 2004

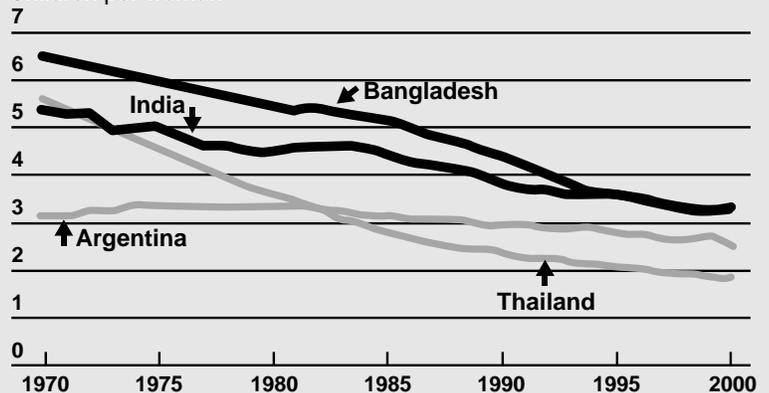
Total fertility rate (children per woman)



Source: UN Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision* (1970 data); and C. Haub, *2004 World Population Data Sheet* (2004 data).

Different Patterns of Fertility Decline 1970–2000

Children per woman



Sources: Registrar General of India; Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Argentina); United Nations Population Division; Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Thailand; Demographic and Health Surveys; and PRB estimates.

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