

rooted out; leading state figures, such as J. Edgar Hoover, wrote regularly in mainstream Christian publications explaining how they were advancing God's Plan in government (Herman 1997, chapters 2, 7). Although there were domestic adversaries, the "evil of Communism," for example, was clearly something with distinctly foreign origins. But now, when Hilary Clinton and a "load of lesbians" embark on an international excursion, just what is it they are doing? Are they exporting American feminism abroad? Will they bring some new danger "home"? Is there a meaningful distinction to be made between "home" and "abroad"?

The processes, effects, and, just as important, perceptions of globalization, such as the emergence of fluid boundaries, international identity movements, and instantaneous communication are developments that help to create a kind of postmodern miscegenation between the United States and the rest of the world.⁵ By this we mean that, for many conservative Christians, globalization is facilitating the dilution (and pollution) of what is perceived to be historically, romantically, and essentially "American." It then becomes impossible to tell where the United States ends and the "rest of the world" begins (and vice versa). For the PR, such a contamination is highly toxic, both for those who believe a Christian America could withstand the Tribulation and for those who seek to construct islands of bounded, authentic purity, be they "the family," "the church," or "the nation."

3.

Nation, Church, Family: The Christian Right Global Mission

In the previous two chapters, we traced Christian Right constructions of the international order and the role of prophecy belief in animating an anti-United Nations stance among CR activists. Our analysis demonstrated that for the CR, the UN figures prominently as an agent of the Antichrist, playing an important role in the consolidation of world power into a single, global government, leading to the apocalypse. We now turn to look at CR activism with this very same UN. Starting around 1994, the CR began to establish a more permanent presence at the UN. Organizations such as Concerned Women for America and Focus on the Family became involved in a series of UN conferences, of which the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women is the most notable. At the same time, CR newsletters and communiqués began to include more reporting on global politics. This "internationalization" of CR interests is significant in a movement that has a deeply formed theological and political opposition to the UN, and a more general hostility to things international.

The decision by CR activists to become involved at the UN denotes a shift in CR thinking on the nature of the UN, and the possibilities for a CR politics at the international level. Moving away from a view of the

UN as a key institution leading to the apocalypse, a new strand in CR thinking has emerged in which the UN is seen as a good and potentially Christian organization, corrupted by certain forces. The emergence of this new vision of the UN is partly attributable to the parallel establishment of a global interfaith alliance. The prospect of a community of conservative religious actors working together against a shared foe has provided the impetus for many on the CR to commit to an international politics.

While the advent of a conservative religious alliance at the UN has invigorated CR international politics, it has also disrupted CR understandings of “the international” as a fundamentally anti-Christian space. Working within the UN has softened some CR rhetoric on the UN, suggesting a new political strategy emphasizing UN reform rather than UN abolition. In this chapter, we explore these changing conceptions of the UN and their impact on shaping CR international campaigns and strategies. We argue that while the emergence of a CR alliance has altered CR envisionings of the UN and its project there, CR UN politics are haunted by a conviction that the UN is an agent of world dominance, and hence essentially anti-Christian. The difficulty for the CR UN then becomes accommodating these divergent views into a coherent politics.

Our objectives in this chapter are threefold. First, we analyze CR UN constructions of the UN as a political space for a conservative Christian project. Through this analysis we outline the terrain on which the CR UN is waging its struggle, both as a framework for understanding the particular direction of CR UN politics and as a means for elaborating the broader “worldview” in which CR UN politics are embedded.

Second, we consider how CR UN politics are shaped, and sometimes constrained, by a deep-seated ambivalence about the international realm generally and the UN specifically. This ambivalence, we argue, directly impacts CR UN strategizing at the international level. More than an area of disagreement among the various CR actors, conflicting conceptions of the UN present serious obstacles as this interfaith alliance attempts to define its objectives at the UN. In this chapter, we outline the nature of this dilemma, looking at conflicting CR UN understandings of its long-term objectives at the international level. In chapters 4 and 5, we build on this analysis to explore specific tensions within the interfaith alliance itself.

Finally, our analysis in this chapter explores the nature of the CR

UN’s global project. Despite deep uncertainties about the international realm, the CR UN appears committed to international political engagement. Rather than retreating into a more localized politics or advocating the return of some bygone era, CR UN politics, we argue, are very much directed to a future vision of the global order, albeit a fraught one.

Foes and Friends at the United Nations

We start this analysis of the CR’s politics at the UN with “the enemy.” Understanding the CR UN’s construction of its enemy—or enemies—is key to understanding the CR UN’s constructions of its friends, its politics, itself (Lechner 1993, 34; Aho 1994). This is not to say that the CR’s global politics are merely a politics of opposition, that they exist simply to counter the international politics of its perceived foes. Rather, we take as our starting position that the global politics of the CR are based on a culture of a “friend-foe way of thinking” (Meyer 2001, 8), in which a politics of change is constituted through a process of contesting “the enemy” (Aho 1994, 14–15).

In the following discussion, we consider three distinct enemy types identified by CR UN activists: socialists/globalists, secularists/humanists, and feminists. In doing so, we are not suggesting that each of these enemies is a discrete category with separate, identifiable traits. Rather, the CR UN often ascribes very similar motivations and characteristics to all three enemies, and sometimes uses the labels of “globalists,” “socialists,” and so on interchangeably. Nonetheless, within CR UN literature, each actor is portrayed as pursuing a distinct global agenda, with implications for the “natural” family and religious values.

Socialists/Globalists

One of the key and recurring enemies for the CR UN are socialists/globalists. We have grouped socialists and globalists together because the CR UN depicts the move toward a global government (and the demise of the nation-state) as the ultimate goal of an enemy bent on a socialist world order.¹ In this view, the disintegration of the state, together with the removal of territorial boundaries, will reinforce the global centralization of power in the hands of a few key people (Reid 1999; Wright 1999). The United Nations, in this scenario, is positioned as the “governing body” of a globalized (i.e., “nation-less”) world order (Wright 1999; Benoit 2000), and large financial donations to the United Nations by wealthy

American businessmen, such as Ted Turner and Bill Gates, are evidence of the alliance between monetary interests and the UN (Reid 1999; Wright 1999).

While the actions of “globalists” and the move to a centralized global authority is a recurring concern in CR literature, little explicit attention is paid to “globalization” per se. To the extent that it is addressed, it is defined almost exclusively in terms of a universalization of social policy. Harold Brown of the Howard Center, a leading think tank for CR international politics, explained the relationship between globalization and social relations in his speech to the second World Congress of Families:

Globalization is the concept or ideal that tells us not that small is beautiful, but that small is pitiful and out of date. The nation replaces the family, as in the U.S.A. public welfare replaces the father, and instead of individual nations . . . we shall create a “world community.” (Brown 1999)

This conception of “globalization” thus includes a structural dimension—the centralization of a global governance—which is threatening primarily for its perceived impact on the intimate, familial level. With its challenge to domestic boundaries—of the nation and the family—globalization is seen as dangerous for the impact it has on the configuration of the nation-state, the nuclear family, and gender roles. Globalization, in this respect, is seen as imposing one form, “a cookie-cutter standard,” of social relations on all people, without accounting for the “differences” of culture and religion (Wright 1999; see also Ruse 1999c).

Missing from this analysis of globalization is an explicit reference to, or engagement with, economic factors—capital mobility, foreign direct investment, and the liberalization of financial markets—that impact upon global change (Held et al. 1999, chapter 4). The CR UN maintains, sometimes imperfectly, a rigid separation between the globalization of social relations—the “cookie-cutter” phenomenon—and economic globalization.² In an interview, Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute and a key spokesperson for the CR UN, dismissed economic globalization as not a concern of the CR UN. “[T]he left has a problem with [economic] globalization. . . . we believe that globalization is trying to do a one-size-fits-all question on reproductive rights” (1999c).

This lack of an explicit economic analysis is surprising given the

domestic CR’s procapitalist economic analysis (see Lienesch 1993, chapter 3). For the domestic CR, a neoliberal economic order in which the state plays, at best, a minimal role, is linked to the achievement of other aspects of a conservative Christian social policy (such as the promotion of the “natural family,” home schooling, and so on). Some domestic CR actors have also developed this further into a detailed economic critique of globalization. The Eagle Forum, for one, opposes United States membership in the World Trade Organization on the basis that it, alongside the UN conference system, the Law of the Sea, and international environmental agreements, constitutes a policy of “global governance” in which international agencies such as the UN will “dictate” laws and policies to the United States (see, for example, Eagle Forum 1997).

For the most part, however, CR activists have avoided an explicit critique of the economic dimensions of globalization in the context of their global political project, focusing instead on the homogenization of social relations considered to accompany global change. The “cookie-cutter” phenomenon is seen as both a consequence of globalization and characteristically socialist. Thus, the goals of socialists and globalists are the same: a single global order, dominated by a strong centralized government (the UN), which pursues a welfarist, interventionist government policy. Who are these globalists/socialists? In some analyses, they are influential individuals holding key positions in the UN (see, for example, Carlson 1999a), while in other accounts they are the “radical” governments of “[t]he US, the European Union, Canada, New Zealand and to a certain extent Japan,” whose pursuit of “radical” reproductive rights marks them out as socialists/radicals (Ruse 1999c). !!!

Secularists/Humanists

Within CR thinking on world government and the role of the UN, there is a clear overlap between the means and effects ascribed to socialists, globalists, and secularists. For the CR UN, the movement to a one-world government signals a homogenization of social values that is both socialist in its universal reach and secularist in its presumed rejection of religious values and the traditional family. The relationship between globalism and secularism is central to CR theology and politics at the UN, but it is a relationship that is far from clear. We have separated the secularist enemies from the globalists in our analysis because the CR also separates them within its own discourses on the UN. This

separation, however, belies the complex and sometimes problematic relationship the CR envisions between secularism and the move to global government.

In CR domestic politics, secularism figures as the large, amorphous development that is both resisted by and justifies CR involvement in the political process (see Lienesch 1993). CR battles over such things as abortion, prayer in schools, and taxation are all described in terms of resisting creeping secularism. At the international level, the battle against secularism is more generally encompassed within a broad “natural family” politics, which is largely focused on resisting human rights. For the CR UN, the promotion of rights for women and children is a direct attack on religious values (see Buss 2000a):

[T]he new global civilization . . . is militantly secular, ferociously anti-traditional, fundamentally hostile to autonomous families, the enemy of robust marital fertility, and a threat to the newly conceived child everywhere . . . including the new Christian child. (Carlson 1999a, 39)

In this view, the secularist threat at the UN is bent on destroying the “natural family” as part of a larger effort to secularize the international domain (see, for example, Francis 1998; Ruse 1999c; Landolt 1999; O’Leary 1998). The means and effects of the secularist threat are described in relatively narrow terms: secularists want a godless world and they are attacking the family because it is central to a Christian society. No explicit link is made here between the secularist threat and globalism. In effect, these are treated as separate, though overlapping phenomena with secularism helping the cause of globalism, and globalists definitionally secularist.

However, upon closer reflection, globalism and secularism are inextricably connected, with one necessarily leading to the other. The link between the threat to the family, secularism, and the prospects of a global government are explicitly drawn by Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, who describes the CR’s project at the UN as the defense of three sovereignties, nation, church, family:

The way that I talk about work at the United Nations is that from certain quarters, not all . . . there are three sovereignties that are under attack, sovereignty of the nation, of the church, and of the family and

each in their own way are defenders and protectors of us as we make our way through life, and we believe that each was instituted by God in a certain way. (1999c)

Ruse’s comments are instructive on a number of levels. First, he makes clear that the CR UN is not just resisting a narrow range of policies. From its perspective, secularism and other threats at the international level are directed at the family, institutionalized religion (Christianity), and, crucially, the structure of an international order predicated on the nation-state. The secularist threat is thus connected to a globalism that seeks to undermine the state as a God-given institution.

Second, Ruse identifies the UN as the principal locale for this threat to family, church, and nation. This relationship between the UN and secularism is not unproblematic. For some, such as Ruse and Allan Carlson, the UN itself is not necessarily secularist, nor essentially anti-family. It has been corrupted by antifamily forces but can be redeemed and returned to its original, family-friendly roots. In a series of essays on the history of the United Nations, Carlson traces the source of secularism at the UN to the influence of a few, key individuals who promoted “a socially radical form of Scandinavian democratic socialism” (1999a, 6; see also 1999b, 2000b). The proponents of this “democratic socialism” pushed for measures, such as population control and a devaluing of “traditional” marriage, that undermined the “natural” family (1999a, 6–10).

Carlson’s essays attempt to distinguish between the UN as a relatively benign institution and the people (socialists/secularists) who have influenced its policies. He argues that in its formative stages, the UN expressed explicitly “pro-family” policies, evidence of which can be found in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its references to the family as the fundamental unit of society.³ After that period, key individuals, primarily from Scandinavian countries, enjoyed an unprecedented degree of influence and were able to redirect UN energies in an antifamily direction (Carlson 1999a, 6–10; 2000b).

In Carlson’s analysis, the UN, because of the influence of individual policymakers, is developing into the instrument by which secularists are establishing a “global civilization” that is antifamily by definition (1999a, 39). In a strategic sleight of hand, however, it is not the UN itself that is under attack here; it is UN agencies and the implementation of seemingly inauthentic international human rights guarantees that are the real

antifamily instruments. Later in this chapter we explore the different conceptions of the UN that abound in CR UN publications and that have, we argue, consequences for the direction of CR global activism. For now, it is important to note that Carlson's image of the UN, as good but corrupted, contrasts with another view of the UN as fundamentally anti-Christian. This view sees the UN not just as an instrument of secularism, but as intimately connected to secularism and definitionally antithetical to Christianity. Denesha Reid of Concerned Women for America explains it thus: "The very essence of Christianity is the realization that God is the ultimate ruler and that God is our provider. The concept of the UN is that government is the ultimate ruler and that government will be the provider and decide what is best for you" (1999). No matter how "family friendly" the UN may be, it will always be a threat to Christians because it will always be a form of big government that seeks to replace God (Ingraham 1994). As we discuss later in this chapter, these divergent views prove difficult as the CR UN endeavors to develop its project at the UN.

Feminists

Conservative Christian opposition to feminism is well known and well documented. As we explored in chapter 2, Protestant premillennial discourse on the UN is emphatically antifeminist. This is equally true for the CR UN. It is not surprising, then, to find that the global politics of the CR are often explicitly directed at "radical" feminists and the perceived radical feminist agenda. The term "radical feminist," or, as is sometimes used, "gender feminist," are CR UN expressions used to distinguish between a feminism acceptable to the CR UN and a radical feminism defined as antifamily and antichild (see, for example, CWA 1996a; Hsu 1995a). This distinction parallels a shift in domestic U.S. CR strategy. Sara Diamond argues that the CR has had to adjust its anti-feminist rhetoric in light of the increasing importance and competence of women in fighting *for* family values. "Even on the Right," she says, "it is no longer politically correct to make direct attacks on women's equality. . . . one does not read or hear arguments from the Right that women *should* be paid less than men for the same work" (Diamond 1998, 127). The distinction between types of feminism allows the CR UN to answer the criticism that it is antiwoman. By targeting "radical" feminists rather than just feminists, the CR takes the position that it is

not against policies directed at helping women, but against "antifamily" policies. As a number of CR UN representatives interviewed for this book commented, it is difficult to be *against* human rights for women and children (Moloney 1999; Reid 1999; Wright 1999). This does not mean that "feminism" is embraced by the CR UN. Far from it. But this attention to terminology suggests a tactical shift in CR politics in which its antifeminism is defined in terms of combating a larger evil. This theme is developed further in chapter 6 where we look specifically at CR UN political activism around women's rights and UN conferences such as the Beijing Conference on Women.

In the context of this discussion of enemies, "feminists" occupy something of a paradoxical position in CR UN politics; they are center stage in CR UN discourses as the real "face" of the anti-Christian/antifamily forces, but at the same time they are sidelined by CR UN attempts to define a larger enemy behind global "antifamily" politics. The result is that while CR UN activists minimize the "feminist threat," feminists are most often the actors that the CR UN identifies as the forces behind the "antifamily" measures of women's rights, reproductive freedom, population policy, and so on.

According to the CR UN, feminists have managed to secure a strong grip on the UN and hence have an upper hand in influencing the international agenda. Conservative religious organizations, by contrast, are "outnumbered and outspent," and have to counter UN bureaucracy and unfair treatment used to keep them out of important UN meetings.⁴ These claims are not entirely baseless. Feminist NGOs have demonstrated effective organization and consequently have been successful in influencing the international agenda on issues such as human rights, development, and population policy (Joachim 1999; Sen 1995; Stienstra 2000). Moreover, some states, such as Canada and the United States during the Clinton presidency,⁵ have occasionally included feminists on state delegations sent to UN conferences and meetings, thus giving some feminists access to negotiation sessions at which NGOs are otherwise unrepresented.⁶ Finally, many of the current CR organizations active at the UN came to international activism without much experience. Arriving on the doorstep of conferences such as Cairo and Beijing, CR UN activists sometimes found themselves not only encountering a strongly organized feminist NGO sector with some "inside" connections, but also a draft agreement, the bulk of which had been negotiated months

earlier. In effect, they arrived too late to set the negotiation agenda and, in their view, were left countering only the most extreme effects of feminist policies.

The CR UN portrayal of the “feminist threat” goes further than simply recognizing their organizational advances. Feminists are seen as having successfully infiltrated key UN agencies and as working to secure the implementation of their agenda through UN bodies. Thus, feminists are reported to have “secret meetings” with UN “antifamily” officials to “mastermind” the reinterpretation of existing international rights to include “implied rights for abortion and homosexual rights” (Real Women of Canada 1998).

According to the CR UN, abortion and homosexual rights are central to the “radical feminist” agenda, which is ultimately an agenda to “free” women from childbearing.

[I]t seems . . . the most important thing to them [radical feminists] is complete freedom from their reproductive systems, which some feminists have referred to pregnancy as a kind of sexual slavery. . . . So at the end of the day, perhaps they are looking for complete transformation in mankind, but along the way, I think they want to be freed from the constraints of nature. (Ruse 1999c)

Thus, while women’s rights may seem like a laudable aim, they are rejected by the CR UN because they cloak a much more nefarious agenda variously described as the promotion of “abortion and sex education” (Wright 1999); the separation of women from their “religious and cultural ties” (Real Women of Canada 1999a); the exploitation of children; the destruction of the family; “the foe of every religion, the very Angel of Death” (Carlson 1999a, 23); and the promotion of a “boundless society” (Reid 1999), leading ultimately to the acceptance of homosexuality (Wright 1999).

Feminists are clearly seen by the CR UN as part of the “antifamily” camp at the UN, but their role in the secularist/humanist conspiracy is less clear. The extensive CR UN literature on “the feminist threat” at the UN, at first glance, seems to suggest that feminists are the principal enemy confronting the CR UN and “the natural family.” However, in interviews, CR UN activists made it clear that while feminists have a strong influence at the UN, the UN is not a mere puppet of a feminist hegemony. Rather, feminists work “in partnership” with the various

anti-Christian agents at the UN (Reid 1999). This argument depicts feminists as almost a “single issue” actor, promoting a “misguided” equality between women and men that denies the dictates of biology (Ruse 1999c). The CR UN may oppose feminists, but this is not the only enemy they seek to counter.

Sitting alongside feminists, in CR UN politics, is an emerging international threat: “the homosexual.” While the CR UN depicts feminists as a separate actor, it sees a large degree of overlap between feminism and lesbian and gay activism. Many CR organizations active on the American domestic scene have historically made little distinction between feminists and lesbians (Herman 1997, chapter 4). Indeed, Concerned Women for America argues that the feminist movement at the UN is largely “peopled” by lesbians, and that women’s rights inevitably lead to homosexuality (Reid 1999; McFeely 1999). The view of many in the CR UN is that some groups, primarily feminists, are trying to introduce language into international agreements that will amount to a de facto acceptance of homosexuality. However, as we discuss in chapters 5 and 6, the homosexual “threat,” while looming large on the horizon, is often subsumed within the larger villains of globalism, secularism, and “radical feminism.”

Each of these villains—globalists/socialists, secularists, and feminists—is identified by the CR UN as part of the danger motivating a CR UN politics. Each enemy represents a different type of danger facing the “natural” family, but no one enemy has emerged as *the* force of evil at the international realm. Sometimes these enemies are portrayed as acting in concert, but each remains a distinct actor, with different, usually overlapping agendas, requiring a particular CR UN response. The CR’s portrayal of multiple and shadowy enemies can be read in several ways. The lack of a clear certainty about “the enemy” might suggest a movement uncertain of its direction. Or it might suggest a movement potentially divided along ideological and theological lines in its worldview. Or it might simply suggest a movement whose politics play to a number of different concerns and different agendas and for whom the lack of specificity about “the enemy” has certain strategic benefits. In our view, the CR UN’s identification of its enemies reflects all of these. For our purposes, however, what is important about these multiple, and sometimes conflicting enemies is that they point to very different conceptions

within the CR UN of its role at the UN, and indeed, to different conceptions about the UN as a political space within which to undertake a “natural” family, conservative Christian politics.

In the following section, we build on this discussion of the CR UN’s enemies to look more closely at the CR project at the UN. What is it about these enemies—globalists/socialists, secularists, and feminists—that requires an international CR presence, and what does the CR UN hope to accomplish at the UN?

Taking It to the UN: Defining a CR International Politics

The entry point for the CR at the UN is the UN-hosted conference. Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, a series of inter-governmental negotiations, often referred to as “conferences,” were held at which the international community agreed on “plans of action” for a number of topics, from the environment (1992), population policy (1994), and women (1995) to racism (2001) and HIV/AIDS (2001). These negotiations proved to be ripe terrain for social activists seeking to affect international policy and consensus building, and are generally lauded as facilitating the formation of social justice networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998a, 168–69; Riles 2000).

For our purposes, the proliferation of UN-hosted conferences in the 1990s and early twenty-first century has resulted in two key developments. First, it has facilitated the expansion and further institutionalization of NGO involvement in international law and policy making. Second, it has broadened the range of social policy issues on the international agenda. The conferences themselves have become international media events, attracting the participation of the world’s press and a wide range of social activists, as well as top-level state delegates. For the CR UN, the involvement of NGOs, together with the perception that the UN conference is a hotbed of social activism, makes it both a dangerous “antifamily” arena and a promising political space within which an interfaith, “natural family” alliance can have an immediate impact.

CR UN activists often point to these conferences, particularly the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, as the “birthplace” for a conservative Christian global politics (Ruse 1999c). In chapters 4 and 6, we discuss each of these conferences in more detail. In this section, we turn our attention more generally to the role of the UN conference in shaping CR UN activism. The

UN conference is both the entry point for the CR’s global politics and a source of danger justifying that politics. For the CR UN, it is precisely because the UN conference has become a site for social activism that it is seen as a dangerous “antifamily” arena.

The 1995 Beijing Conference on Women was the first UN conference to attract a broad range of CR UN actors, who saw their participation as essential to countering the activist presence of feminists and safeguarding American law from the excesses of UN policy making (see, for example, Dobson 1995; Roylance 1995). While some scholars and activists have applauded the emergence of an active NGO sector as the laudable development of an international civil society, the CR UN is deeply suspicious of NGO involvement in international (including UN) matters (C-Fam 1999). For the CR, NGOs are the source of what Austin Ruse calls “all the wacky ideas in the world” (1999d), which then “percolate” through the UN system (C-Fam 2000d). As a forum at which NGOs have an active role, the UN conference is seen as similarly excessive. According to Katherine Balmforth of the World Family Policy Center, the Beijing Conference on Women, for example, promoted a “radical world view” and is being used as a tool for “social engineering” (quoted in C-Fam 2000b).

Thus, the UN conference, far from being a democratizing space, is seen by the CR UN as profoundly undemocratic, allowing activists, such as feminists, to pursue a social policy agenda through the backdoor of international law and policy that was unsuccessful when introduced through the front door of domestic policy (see, for example, Ruse 1999c; CWA 1998b). Having failed at the domestic level, the argument goes, social activists—primarily feminists—are now turning to the international realm as an alternative arena within which to advance an “antifamily” agenda (Hirsen 1999, 31; see also Hafen 1999). This view of the “alternative” political space offered by international law and policy is, at some level, shared by many social activists who presumably have seized on the international realm precisely because it provides another way to affect social policy. The question this raises is, whose policy is being affected? Is it domestic U.S. policy or international policy? Or both?

For the CR UN, it is both. Within the CR’s campaign literature there are two basic arguments about the effect of UN conferences. The first and most prevalent goes like this: “Antifamily” activists—“radical feminists, population control ideologues, and homosexual rights activists”

(Balmforth 1999)—push for international recognition of “new” rights that are framed very generally as, for example, “reproductive rights.” This vague human rights language is a “trojan horse” that masks a more nefarious “antifamily” agenda (Hafen 1999). With each new UN meeting, language referring to “reproductive rights” is repeated and repeated until it becomes an accepted part of international law, in turn binding upon domestic states (see, for example, Bilmore 1998; Hirsén 1999; Wright 1999; C-Fam 2001b). Thus, the political activity that takes place at seemingly far-flung UN conferences is actually “a direct path to power” for these “antifamily” forces, allowing them to affect U.S. politics beyond the reach of democratic accountability (Balmforth 1999). The task for CR UN activists is to prevent international agreement on language such as “reproductive rights.”

The second, increasingly prominent view is that social activists, such as feminists, are fundamentally changing the international order, making it a profoundly antifamily arena. In this view, the rationale for a CR politics is less specifically about protecting the United States than about stopping the global dominance of the “antifamily” forces. Proponents of the “natural” family need to act now because time is running out. Allan Carlson explains it thus:

It is not hysterics, but objective observation, to suggest that the defenders of those “family moralities” that still *hallow* marriage and still *welcome* children have little time left, perhaps a decade, before the virulent secular individualism of the new so-called “Western” order completes its work. (1999a, 40)

Whereas both of these views—of a direct threat to U.S. domestic law and politics and an “antifamily” takeover of the international realm—are used to justify a CR UN political engagement, each entails different conceptions of the international realm and the nature of the United Nations. In the following sections, we outline the different views of the UN and the international realm, exploring how these, in turn, offer different visions of the CR UN’s international mission.

Making Sense of “the International”

For many on the American political and Christian right,⁷ the UN is the epitome of big government: a “big unorganized body” character-

ized by corruption, “inbreeding,” and “nepotism” (Moloney 1999). As a large, lumbering institution, the UN is seen as somewhat ineffective: a “backwater” (Ruse 1999c), “isolated and in-bred” (Wright 1999). In this conception, the UN is considered largely incompetent: “[W]e laugh because what is actually productive about the UN is that it is unproductive” (Moloney 1999). But this image of an ineffective UN is seemingly in contradiction to the international threat to Christianity and family values that motivates CR international activism. If the UN is so incompetent, why bother with it? To a certain extent, this is the view taken by many in the CR who oppose American involvement in the UN but have gone no further. The turning point for the CR UN, however, appears to be the perception that this “backwater” is becoming a threat, precisely because it is a big inefficient organization operating on the margins of domestic politics. As a large, faceless bureaucracy, the UN is seen as more susceptible to infiltration by radical NGOs and democratically unaccountable, sympathetic UN bureaucrats (see, for example, Moloney 1999; O’Leary 1998; Ruse 1999c). As with the work of Allan Carlson, in which the UN is seen as good but corrupted, the UN, in this analysis, is depicted as a passive, arguably feminized institution that “has become all too vulnerable” to the “invasion” of “powerful” antifamily forces; “all too easy a conquest” (Gusdek 1998). In contrast to the feminization of globalist philosophy outlined in chapter 2, in which the “sirens of globalism” denote the “evil power” of woman, this construction of the UN elides the feminine with *powerlessness*. It is also a UN in distress and in need of rescue by the forces of good.

This view of the UN is also facilitated by a conceptual split between the UN itself and its constituent agencies, which are seen by CR UN activists as being more specifically the instruments of the antifamily movement. This is particularly the case with UN agencies, such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund, which are vilified in CR campaign literature as instruments of “population ideologues” (Balmforth 1999).

A contrasting image is of the UN as an essentially un-Christian, negative force. For some groups like Concerned Women for America or the Eagle Forum, the UN is, and always will be, a force for the international centralization of power. As the size and scope of international agreements grow, some CR activists see an expanding UN as leading to a world

government, with the “Secretary General . . . positioned to become *the* premier global leader” (CWA 1998h). As a form of big government with global aspirations, the UN must be resisted:

Coming from a Christian perspective, walking into the UN and listening to these conferences, it is a stark contrast to the principles by which Christians stand. The very essence of Christianity is the realization that God is the ultimate ruler and that God is our provider. The concept of the UN is that government is the ultimate ruler and that government will be the provider and decide what is best for you. (Reid 1999)

Linking these very different understandings of the UN is a shared conviction that international law, and the international arena more generally, is having an increasingly powerful effect on domestic governments. For example, the CR UN sees the UN-hosted conference as directly affecting international law, as well as domestic law and policy. For the CR UN, the existence of multiple documents with agreed-upon language on, for example, “reproductive rights,” gives this language a normative quality. As such, these documents and related human rights standards are seen as becoming—potentially—agreed-upon standards against which U.S. law might be measured.⁸ The “soft” quality of these conference agreements makes them even more dangerous. Because conference documents are “plans of action” and not formal treaties, the CR UN argues, they can be introduced into U.S. domestic policy through the “backdoor” of executive orders, rather than being subject to the more rigorous approval process required of formal treaties.⁹

The CR UN’s depiction of the insidious but profound effect of UN conferences on domestic and international law and policy, while in some ways an overstatement of the operation of international agreements, is, in other respects, partly accurate.¹⁰ Certainly, for some international lawyers, UN conferences are important but not central to the evolution of international law.¹¹ Under more traditional readings of international legal doctrine, UN conferences, with their consensus-based “plans of action,” are more aspirational than legal; they are expressions of policy direction rather than formal, legal developments. For other theorists, however, social activism at the international level has changed both the direction of international policy and the way that international law develops. Like the CR UN, international legal scholars are beginning to look at the ways that legal norms are evolving internationally, and at

the complex relationship between events such as UN conferences and human rights and international law (see, for example, Bianchi 1997; Mertus 2000; Spiro 2000).

In this respect, CR UN activism offers an interesting comment on the changing nature of international law. Within dominant thinking on international affairs, international law has occupied a marginal position as an aspirational, idealistic discipline out of step with the power politics said to govern affairs between nation-states.¹² Not only is state behavior governed by economic and military might, according to this view, but the idea of an international law regulating state conduct is seen as simply impossible in an international realm devoid of a centralized state with the power to punish noncompliance. How can this be law, the argument goes, if it cannot be enforced?

In a curious twist, we now find, with the CR UN, a discourse on international law that condemns it not for its aspirational quality, but for its power. For the CR UN, the international realm is a dangerous, “antifamily” arena precisely because the decisions made and the consensus reached there have the power to change domestic law and policy. This view of the reach of international law stands in sharp contrast to the realist critique of international law outlined above. But it is a view shared by many activists, such as feminists and environmentalists, who have turned to the international realm as an arena within which to achieve social change.

Having identified the power of the international realm, the more difficult question for the CR UN is how best to confront this power. What is the CR UN mission at the UN? With very differing conceptions of the United Nations and its role in a perceived “antifamily” international order, the CR UN appears divided about its task, and a much larger question remains for this movement: to what end is it working?

Defining a Purpose at the United Nations

While all of the CR UN organizations discussed in this text may agree broadly that they are needed at the UN to defend the three sovereignties—nation, family, and church—they differ in their long-term objectives. Very generally, the CR UN groups can be divided into two types: the “reformers,” who see reforming the UN as essential to stopping the “antifamily” agenda; and the “illuminators,” whose role is more narrowly defined in terms of raising public awareness.

Groups like the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-Fam) and the Howard Center argue for an active presence at the UN to both counter their enemies and reform the UN itself. Building on Allan Carlson's depiction of a benign UN corrupted by secularist forces, the CR UN's role is, for some, rescuing the UN from the brink of secularist domination. Initially, this requires resisting attempts by secularists and their supporters—such as feminists—to shore up the “antifamily” agenda. In concrete terms, this means attending UN conferences and other UN meetings to lobby against women's rights, children's rights, and population policy. Austin Ruse of C-Fam, for example, argues that the CR UN is doing “triage” at the UN: “Most of these documents [negotiated at UN-sponsored conferences] are just horrible and what we try and do is get out the worst of things” (1999c). But in the face of a secularist dominance of the UN, CR UN activists must do more than triage; they must also start to operate on the sick patient that is the UN:

Our side has generally been content with scanning the document which the other side writes and trying to improve their language. This still remains the most important part of our work. But we will not win until we begin writing language and getting governments to introduce it for us. At Cairo +5 we did this for the first time. (Ruse 1999e)

More fundamentally, however, Ruse argues that the “antifamily” movement at the UN can only be stopped by ultimately changing not just the UN, but the whole world (1999c). In this view, western governments (in their globalist and secularist guise) are able to impose an antifamily politics on the third world because of global disparities in economic resources. So long as the west can “manipulate” third world governments, secularists will be able to promote their antifamily politics. The task then becomes changing the UN—ostensibly making it fairer to developing countries—and making the developing world less reliant on western aid:

[A] lot of these things [antifamily policies] are allowed to come in the debate because the developing world needs money. So a developing world/country will say “O.K., we will allow this radical language and we may institute these changes in exchange for development money from the UN and the World Bank and IMF.” So, I don't think until that monetary incentive is removed that this will change much. Sadly many on the American right don't understand that. (Ruse 1999c)

This ostensibly “liberal” position, taken by a self-defined “conservative Christian,” is clearly not shared by others on the American right. Organizations like Concerned Women for America or the Eagle Forum are ideologically hostile to international aid, seeing in it an extension of the welfare state to the international level:

Eagle Forum's position is that we should completely get out of the UN. We don't think our U.S. dollars should be funneled through this organization. . . . [W]e have a number of private organizations—religious and secular—that do international charity work. We don't think that it's necessarily [up to] American taxpayers . . . to [fund the UN] involuntarily. (Moloney 1999)

For others, international aid is part of a global plot to “channel Americans' wealth . . . into Third World countries” (James 1997a; see also P. Robertson 1991, 206–7). In addition, for these organizations, the UN itself is part of “the problem.” Thus, no matter how effective the “natural family” lobby is at changing UN policy, the UN itself cannot be condoned.

The role that groups like CWA define for themselves at the UN is primarily to expose what goes on there for the purpose of then mobilizing Americans to demand changes in U.S. foreign policy and revoke U.S. membership in the UN (Wright 1999; Moloney 1999). CWA, for example, describes its role at the UN in largely passive terms: “CWA is committed to standing as a watchman on the wall in order to alert American families to an United Nations activity [sic] that will affect their future” (CWA 1997d). The Family Research Council, in contrast, sees a more activist role, but one that is still largely about monitoring rather than reforming the UN: “The Family Research Council's current United Nations Project is an attempt to call the U.N. to account for its failure to protect human rights around the world” (Wagner n.d.).

Despite these different roles, an increasing number of CR UN organizations, such as Concerned Women for America and Eagle Forum, are seeking formal recognition by the UN as nongovernmental organizations. This process of formal recognition entitles an NGO to more permanent standing at the UN, with greater and more immediate access to UN meetings. The decision by various CR UN organizations to seek this formal accreditation is part of a general expansion of CR UN activism beyond simple attendance at UN conferences. CR UN groups have

become more permanent actors in the UN system, regularly monitoring UN agencies and departments, such as the World Health Organization and the Commission on the Status of Women, and attending sittings of the committees that oversee the implementation of human rights agreements.¹³ Once again, the CR UN's concentration tends to be on women's rights and population policy, and an ongoing focus of CR UN activism is the committee that monitors the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (see MacLeod and Hurlburt 2000; Balmforth 1999) and the equivalent committee for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁴

This expansion of CR UN activism entails a number of difficulties for this movement, particularly in light of the different views taken by member organizations about the long-term objectives of a CR global politics. First, the CR UN's engagement with the UN, no matter how strategic, belies the hostility with which many CR activists view this organization. Despite the apparent willingness of many groups to work within the context of a global interfaith alliance, this overt hostility to the UN reasserts itself in often extreme anti-UN rhetoric. For example, Real Women of Canada, while ostensibly seeing merit in UN policies on disaster relief and peacekeeping, describes UN policies as:

like a coiled serpent, ready to strike at the throat of a nation's cultural and religious values, and its very foundation—the traditional family, bringing them crashing down to a cruel death. The anti-life, anti-family serpent at the UN is determined to triumph as it holds the world prone to be swallowed up and digested. (Real Women of Canada 1999a)

While Real Women seems to separate the UN itself from its policies, suggesting that perhaps the UN can be redeemed (Landolt 1999), it is difficult to reconcile this with an image of the UN as a snake that “will return to attack again and again” (Real Women of Canada 1999a). For many, the prospect of an interfaith orthodox alliance is the vehicle by which a “natural” family politics is possible at this otherwise evil institution. Real Women, in the same newsletter quoted above, goes on to herald the interfaith alliance as a potential “tamer” of the UN “serpent”:

[S]omething positive is taking place at the UN. The NGOs from around the world, speaking many languages and representing many faiths, together with the Christian and Muslim delegations and observers, work

together in perfect harmony—understanding and trusting one another implicitly. It is truly a miracle which gives us the assurance that we are not alone and abandoned in our struggle against the UN serpent. (1999a)

Despite this apparent hope in the future of the UN, the CR UN's often virulent antiglobalist/anti-UN rhetoric may pose particular problems as this movement engages in mainstream political debate at the UN and other international institutions. Excessive rhetoric, for example, may prove counterproductive as the CR UN endeavors to promote a “natural family” politics as a reasoned alternative to the “excesses” identified in feminist politics. Similarly, the extreme language used to describe various UN agencies may make it difficult to sell a global activism to an otherwise resistant grassroots membership: if the UN is so evil and ready to “strike at the throat of religious values,” what hope can there be for a CR UN politics?

As the CR UN becomes more “mainstreamed” within UN structures (as, for example, UN-accredited NGOs), a further difficulty arises for a movement that often defines itself as outside of, and hence somewhat immune to, the power politics of the global order. Through their participation at the UN, CR activists are becoming a part of the very activist NGO sector they disdain, and with the Bush administration, the CR UN may find itself with more ready access to the centers of power than it had expected. Under Bush, CR activists have been included as official representatives on the U.S. state delegation to UN conferences, such as the 2002 World Summit on Children, a position the CR UN heavily criticized when occupied by feminists (see above).¹⁵ Thus, the CR UN's self-portrayal as the marginalized and maligned “innocent abroad,” fighting against the privileged and powerful secularist, globalist, and feminist cliques at the UN may prove to have a limited shelf life as the CR becomes an established UN player.

Perhaps most problematically, the CR UN's uncertain mission at the UN exposes a larger difficulty for this movement: the role of the domestic state in a changing global order. Implicit in all variants of CR UN activism is a concern that the international realm—whether as a fundamentally anti-Christian space or an emerging power largely under the sway of antifamily forces—poses a threat to the domestic state both at “home” in the United States and in the “vulnerable” third world. This threat may be envisioned in different ways—as a move to world governance or as the

secularization of all societies, domestic and international—but it shares a single feature: an attack on the power of individual nations to define their own religious and cultural practices.

Behind this concern with the growing power of “the global” is an implicit valorization of the nation-state as a bulwark against globalization and the universalization of social policy. This is a curious and not unproblematic position for a movement that in its domestic politics is highly critical of the domestic state. For the domestic CR, the state is a controversial player in delivering social policy. While many CR activists oppose any role for the state, others foresee a possible role for the state acting as a “moral leader” (Herman 1997, chapter 7). In the international realm, CR UN politics construct an implicit vision of an independent, muscular, domestic state. As the guardian of religious and cultural beliefs, it must be relatively strong, capable of resisting stronger (presumably “antifamily”) states, as well as the involvement of international agencies such as the World Bank or the United Nations Population Fund. This state, then, must be financially independent (and hence above the ministrations of international agencies who come “bearing gifts”) and secure from military and cultural incursion.

But is this a vision of the domestic state acceptable to all within the CR? And how is this strong state achieved in an era of globalization? Earlier in this chapter, we noted that the CR UN limits its critique of globalization to the social policy dimension, largely omitting any consideration or analysis of international economic factors. This is a curious omission given the domestic CR’s comparatively well-developed economic analysis. The difficulty for the CR UN is that the neoliberal economic vision promoted by the domestic CR may not play well internationally, particularly in the context of a CR global vision of a “natural” family order, characterized by strong, independent nation-states. This leaves a number of questions unanswered: what is the vision of the “economic good life” underpinning a CR global politics? Is an empowered nation-state economically self-contained, or is it a player within an equal and accessible trading regime? Are all nation-states to be empowered, or only those evincing a religious orthodoxy? Can the “natural” family be protected within any society, or only those with particular political (liberal democratic) and economic (neoliberal) institutions? Is it enough to have an empowered, “family-friendly” state, or must international institutions themselves be reformed?

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have done three things. First, we have analyzed the scope and direction of CR UN activism, focusing on the particular forums and means by which the CR UN advances its political agenda. Second, we have considered how CR UN ambivalence about the UN and the international arena more generally have impacted CR UN politics. We have argued that the CR UN evinces different and sometimes contradictory conceptions of the UN. More than a curious anomaly, this uncertainty about the UN affects CR UN strategizing. Is this a movement advocating structural reform of the UN, or one that simply exposes the fundamentally flawed nature of this institution? The CR UN’s failure to answer this question haunts its political project at the UN.

Third, we have shown that the CR UN is engaged in the processes of global change. Whether termed “globalization” or the “imposition of a cookie-cutter standard,” what is at issue in CR UN politics is an attempt to participate in the negotiation of global social change. The CR UN may resist aspects of globalization—the perceived imposition of universal social policy, for example—but its political engagement demonstrates a commitment, on some level, to participating in the international realm. This is not a movement advocating a knee-jerk isolationism and a return to “simpler times.” This is a “modernist” movement, responding to social and political change and deeply involved in contemporary processes (Caplan 1987a, 5; see also Lechner 1993, 30; Marty and Appleby 1993a). It is now fairly well recognized within social movements literature that religious fundamentalism is not the regressive, antimodernist movement as it was sometimes characterized (Lechner 1993; Marty and Appleby 1993a, 3). The above analysis takes this conclusion further to demonstrate that a CR international presence cannot be read simply as an “antiglobalization” stance. Rather than retreating into a regressive nationalism in the face of a globalized world order, the CR UN is developing a worldview that accommodates a changing understanding of self and community.

6.

The Gender Agenda: Women's Rights, Radical Feminism, and Homosexuality

The stakes are incredibly high. . . . Radical feminists will be everywhere. EVERYWHERE.

Austin Ruse, newsletter, December 1999

In the spring of 2000, under the auspices of the General Assembly Special Session "Women 2000," government delegates and nongovernmental organizations met to negotiate an agreement on progress made since the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. This conference, known as "Beijing +5," was the site of a pitched confrontation between the Christian Right and feminist and women's groups. The final UN General Assembly Special Session, and the preparatory meetings leading to it, have been described as "one of the most difficult UN negotiating sessions in recent years," with a "climate of hostility" characterized by "rancorous debate" (Barnes et al. 2000).

Not only did the Beijing +5 process involve, once again, international discussion on women's rights, controversial in itself, but it came at an important moment in CR UN mobilization. Although some CR UN organizations were active at the original Beijing conference in 1995, it was not until after that event that the CR UN began to organize more

effectively and concertedly. The Beijing +5 process provided an arena within which the CR UN could flex its newly acquired muscle and (more important, from its perspective) strike a potentially fatal blow to feminists and other "radicals." According to Austin Ruse, if the CR UN could prevent international agreement at Beijing +5, the "defeat" of "radical" forces, such as feminists, would "be a rout" (2000a).

The CR UN thus "stormed" the Beijing +5 process, sending nearly four hundred delegates with the apparent intent of ensuring a disruptive CR UN attendance at every meeting (Butler 2000, 3).¹ More important, the CR UN appeared to have successfully followed through on plans to mobilize sympathetic state governments into a single, conservative religious voice. Negotiations during the Beijing +5 process were dominated by a small group of countries that included not only the "usual suspects"—European Union countries, Japan, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—but more significantly, Pakistan, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Iran, Syria, and Libya (Barnes et al. 2000). This second bloc of countries was generally lauded by the CR UN for standing up for pro-family values during the Beijing +5 negotiations. Austin Ruse of C-Fam referred to them as "strong and brave" despite their "records on human rights" (Ruse 2000a; see also Human Life International 2000). In the face of this concerted opposition, rumors abounded of a plot to sabotage Beijing +5.

The debates and sticking points at Beijing +5, with some exceptions, mirrored the negotiations at the original Beijing conference, with suggested language on women's health, sexual and reproductive rights, and sexual orientation resulting in protracted debate and controversy (see Barnes et al. 2000). Once the dust settled, agreement was reached at Beijing +5. The consensus view, outside of CR UN circles, seems to be that the CR UN did not entirely undermine the Beijing +5 process and that important gains were reached in a number of areas including "health, violence, globalization, the economy, human rights and empowerment" (Barnes et al. 2000). For the CR UN, Beijing +5 may not have been the blow to feminists they had wished, but it was still seen as a victory for the "little guys" because the CR UN was able to prevent further substantial gains by feminists (Kaufman 1998b; Butler 2000, 9–11).

More than just another conflict between the CR UN and its feminist foes, the events at Beijing +5 underline the centrality of women's rights to the CR UN and a broader conservative religious interest at the UN.

As we have shown in previous chapters, the CR UN views itself as countering a much more significant and malevolent enemy than “just” feminists. But as we have also noted, feminism and women’s rights occupy a central position in CR UN politics. In this chapter, we look at women’s rights and feminism as the target of CR UN activism at the international level. Beijing +5 was chosen by the CR UN as a “defining moment” precisely because it was a chance to revisit the 1995 Beijing agreement. The original Beijing conference encapsulates, for the CR UN, the immediacy of the threats it perceives to family and Christianity. Together with the 1994 Cairo agreement, Beijing represents feminist ascendancy at the international realm, the establishment of a women’s rights framework within international policy, and the inexorable move to the destruction of “the natural family” and the celebration of a “culture of death.”

In this chapter, we shift our focus somewhat from individual CR UN organizations to look at another, but equally important, actor in the emerging international conservative religious presence: the Vatican. With an established history at the UN, the Vatican has become the principal voice speaking out against women’s rights.² In this respect, it has provided both motivation for, and leadership of, the emerging interfaith orthodox alliance at the UN. Our discussion of the Vatican and women’s rights is primarily focused around the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. That conference, and the events leading to it, provide an important context for understanding the nature and significance of the Vatican’s assumed role in the international debate around women’s rights. Our analysis, however, does not stop with this agreement in 1995. Looking at Vatican statements in the following years, we trace the emergence of a broader discourse on “the family”: the “natural” roles of women and men within the family and the threat of “homosexuality” to the family and the global order. Aspects of this discourse on the family echo some of the CR UN positions explored in chapter 5. In other respects, however, the Vatican’s international vision, and the role of the family within it, suggest a very different view of the international order from some of the Protestant and Catholic groups discussed earlier.

Although this chapter starts with a specific focus on women’s rights and “the feminist threat,” our analysis inevitably takes us back to “the natural family” and its importance to CR UN activism. The Vatican’s linkage of women’s rights with a broader critique of “the family” in international law brings together many of the themes we’ve explored

throughout this book: the interrelationship, within CR thought, between women’s rights, the “culture of death,” and the disintegration of the family; the growing, but not unproblematic, significance of “the family” as a conceptual touchstone in CR UN politics; and the increasing significance of “the homosexual threat” to the CR UN.

The Vatican: A Primer

The term “Vatican” is generally used to refer to both the city-state of the “Vatican” located within Rome and the “Roman curia,” the offices located in the Vatican that assist the Pope “in governing the universal church” (Reese 1996, 5). The “Holy See,” which is the official face of the Vatican at the UN, technically refers to the diocese—the “seat”—of Rome. In practical terms, “Holy See” refers to the Vatican’s representatives at international forums and organizations. The actual “foreign affairs” department of the Holy See (though not officially called this) is run out of the Secretariat of State located in Rome (Hanson 1987, 68–69). In this book, we use the term “Vatican” because it has a broader meaning and includes both the Holy See and the offices through which the Pope functions and the church is governed (Reese 1996, 5).

The Vatican is, in many respects, a complex bureaucracy, the workings of which are beyond the scope of this book. However, an increasing amount of attention has been paid to the functioning of the Vatican in the context of a highly visible and active pope: John Paul II. Under John Paul II, the Vatican has undergone significant and sometimes controversial change. Described as a “conservative,” John Paul has instituted a number of measures to centralize church structures and increase the authority of the pope (Keely 1994, 237; Reese 1996, 241–63). According to Vatican watchers, John Paul has surrounded himself with like-minded conservatives (Reese 1996, 34) and has supported a number of theologically and politically conservative organizations such as Opus Dei and the Neocatechumenate movement (Reese 1996, 188; Urquhart 1995).³ The result is a tension in the church between “theologians and the papacy” and the increasing perception of a problematic “Papal fundamentalism” (Stephens 2000, 19).

This papal regime has also become a high-profile international actor (Hanson 1987), positioning itself as a “moral superpower in international affairs” (Reese 1996, 272). With a highly trained diplomatic service and a committed staff at the Secretariat of State, John Paul II

has undertaken an active involvement in international affairs, with a focus on “human rights, economic justice, and peace” (Reese 1996, 231). Supporting the Pope’s international work are a number of papal councils, the most important of which, for our purposes, is the Pontifical Council for the Family, which has provided crucial legwork for some Vatican interventions in the area of international population policy and women’s rights (Reese 1996, 266; Urquhart 1997, 2–3).

While gender issues and “the family” figured prominently in the Vatican’s international activism in the 1990s, international development and peace are also high on its international agenda. Even on topics like population and reproductive health, on which it takes a strong, oppositional stance, the Vatican is committed to addressing global inequality and ending poverty (see, for example, Holy See 1994a, paragraph 1). In addition, John Paul II has maintained the church’s strong support for the UN, and has called for a strengthening of the UN’s role in the international realm (see John Paul II 1996, paragraphs 14–15).

Despite the arguably multifaceted nature of Vatican involvement in world politics, its international work remains, justifiably or not, linked to its vocal opposition to sexual and reproductive rights, gender issues, and abortion. Starting with the Cairo Conference in 1994, the Vatican has taken a strong and active role in international conferences where issues relating—in any way—to population, abortion, contraception, reproductive health, and women’s rights are discussed.⁴ In this capacity, the Vatican does not see itself as either an “oppositional” or a “Catholic” actor. Rather it characterizes itself as a statelike entity with universal citizenship, whose role is to provide a moral voice in the international realm. John Paul II describes the Vatican’s role at the UN as a “specifically spiritual mission, which makes it concerned for the integral good of every human being” (John Paul II 1996). In the context of women’s human rights, the Vatican has defined its spiritual mission as defending women, children, and the family from the threat posed by radical feminists. In the following discussion, we examine the Vatican’s opposition to women’s rights, first at the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, and then at the Beijing Conference on Women. Our purpose is to explore the Vatican’s position at these events to elucidate the larger world and spiritual view informing its politics at the UN. Once again, we resist categorizing the Vatican as simply “antiwoman.” Rather, we consider its opposition to women’s rights in the context of a particu-

lar ideology of “the family,” in which women’s rights, the sanctity of the family, and global solidarity are inextricably connected.

Frequent Flyers: The Vatican from Cairo to Beijing

As we discussed in chapter 4, the Vatican strongly opposed the draft Cairo Programme of Action. While the Vatican has played an active international role in the United Nations since its inception, the Cairo conference was something of a catalyst for this current phase of Vatican international activism. For a conservative papal regime committed to a particular morality in which abortion and contraception are seen as unrelentingly “evil,” population policy in itself is problematic. The Cairo conference was especially worrying for the Vatican because it was seen as leading to international recognition of a right to abortion (see Holy See 1994b). As a result, the Vatican launched a high-level campaign prior to the final Cairo negotiations, lobbying state governments to resist aspects of the draft agreement. That campaign is described by Thomas Reese (1996, 263) as follows:

[A]ll of the ambassadors to the Holy See in Rome were called in to have the Vatican’s position explained to them by the Secretariat of State. The pope also wrote each head of state. Each office of the Roman Curia was told to emphasize family issues since 1994 was also the international year of the family. . . . Bishops’ conferences around the world were asked to pressure their governments to oppose pro-abortion language in the Cairo document. Nuncios [Vatican representatives abroad] also worked at developing alliances with Muslim and Catholic countries that opposed abortion.⁵

In addition to abortion, the Vatican’s objection to the Cairo programme focused on a number of key issues: the relationship between development and population, the meaning of “sexual and reproductive rights,” and the perceived absence of a moral framework in reproductive decision making. Reflecting a long-term commitment to development issues, the Vatican expressed concern that a broad definition of development should be incorporated rather than an approach emphasizing “simple accumulation of wealth” (John Paul II 1994). In the area of “sexual and reproductive rights,” the Vatican expressed reservations about the meaning of “reproductive rights,” seeing in it the possibility of a backdoor legitimization of abortion (Holy See 1994b). References

to sexual rights were strongly opposed on the basis that they promoted a view of the world in which all were sexually active, and the call for responsible sexual behavior was objectionable if not balanced with a moral framework within which decisions (e.g., "abstinence") could be made on sexual activity.

The biggest concern for the Vatican, however, remained abortion, which was described by John Paul II as "a heinous evil" (John Paul II 1994). Increasingly, however, at Cairo and later, the Vatican's opposition to abortion extended to include a more general opposition to sexual and reproductive rights. As we discussed in chapter 4, the Cairo Programme of Action was a notable departure from its predecessors in its emphasis on a rights framework as central to any policy on population. Essential to that rights framework was a commitment to the empowerment of women in all aspects of their lives. For the Vatican, linking women's rights with population policy was a dangerous move. "[T]o formulate population issues in terms of individual 'sexual and reproductive rights,' or even in terms of 'women's rights' is to change the focus which should be the proper concern of governments and international agencies" (John Paul II 1994). Although governments were "properly" concerned with development and the environment, the status of women and sexual and reproductive decision making came within the jurisdiction of the family. "[Q]uestions involving the transmission of life and its subsequent nurturing cannot be adequately dealt with except in relation to the good of the family: that communion of persons established by the marriage of husband and wife" (John Paul II 1994).

Responding to the Vatican's call for international opposition to the draft Cairo Programme of Action, organizations on the American Catholic Right also became active in the Cairo process. For example, the Catholic Campaign for America (CCA)—an organization with strong ties to the Republican Party and a commitment to increasing Catholic representation in American public policy making (Askin 1994, 13–17)—worked within the NGO process at Cairo to oppose aspects of the programme. During the Cairo conference itself, CCA put out a daily "Catholic Alert" fax bulletin detailing the work of the Vatican and criticizing its opponents in the U.S. administration (Gould 1994, 2–3).

The Vatican's opposition to abortion and abortion-related language delayed consensus at the Cairo conference. Eventually, however, agreement was reached on compromise language, and for the most part, Cairo was seen as something of a feminist success story. A year after the Cairo

conference came the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China. Coming on the heels of Cairo, Beijing was, in many respects, a continuation of the debates at Cairo around reproduction, women's health, sexual autonomy, and women's rights.⁶

The Beijing Conference on Women was a large event, ^{糯米} attracting over fifty thousand people to the official intergovernmental conference and the parallel NGO forum in nearby Huairou (Otto 1996b, 7). The final document agreed upon at Beijing—the Platform for Action—is a lengthy, dense document of over 350 paragraphs covering twelve "critical areas of concern": women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment, and the girl-child.⁷ Much has been written on the Beijing Platform for Action (see, for example, Bunch and Fried 1996; Charlesworth 1996; Chow 1996; Larson 1996; Morgan 1996; and Otto 1996b), and a detailed assessment of the document itself is beyond the scope of this book. However, Beijing, on balance, was seen as a watershed event in placing women's issues on the international agenda. Aside from the details of the actual agreement (many of which are seen by feminists as positive gains for women), the actual event of the Beijing Conference and the parallel NGO forum facilitated international networking among various women's groups (Morgan 1996; Riles 2000). For many feminist participants, even if Beijing resulted in no other positive gains, its role in facilitating international networking on women's issues was victory enough.

While Beijing may have been an important event in encouraging feminist activism, it was also key in attracting the attention of the CR to international arenas. The high-profile position of the Vatican at Cairo acted as a clarion call for others on the Catholic and Protestant Right, who then mobilized to attend the Beijing Conference. For many of the individuals active in the CR UN, Beijing was their first exposure to international activism, and was a key motivator in their decision to engage, on a more permanent basis, with the international realm (see, for example, Royslance 1995). For our purposes, however, Beijing is most important for providing a forum within which the Vatican, and to a lesser extent the CR UN, outlined, and to a degree consolidated, their views on women, the family, and the role of the international order.

In the lead-up to Beijing, the Vatican took a number of steps to

clarify its position on women's issues and to distance itself from its image at Cairo as the principal opponent of women's rights. In addition to the Vatican's active participation in the preparatory process, John Paul II issued a number of statements on the topic of women, such as his "Letter to Women," and his "Address to Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the Fourth World Conference on Women." These statements appeared to be part of an effort by the Vatican to redefine itself as a progressive international voice, responsive to the needs of women. In this vein, the Vatican appointed, as head of its Beijing delegation, Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard law professor. As a law academic, Glendon presented a professional face for the delegation, and as an established scholar, she arguably brought a degree of sophistication and insight to the Vatican's negotiating positions at Beijing.

Through the interventions of John Paul II and Vatican representatives at Beijing, a coherent policy on women, family, and human rights unfolded. In this policy, the Vatican portrayed itself as representing an inclusive world vision in which the needs of women were promoted in the context of larger struggles against poverty and global inequality. In this way, the Vatican's position was not simply "antiabortion" or "anti-woman." The Vatican had, instead, a commitment to recognizing women's "dignity" as essential to an international society in which human rights, "the family," and "womanhood" are inextricably connected. For our purposes, the Vatican's position at Beijing focused on the following key areas: women's "natural" roles, "women's rights" and the importance of "the family," gender and equality, and the distinction between "real" and "radical" feminists.

John Paul II and the "Vocation and Mission of Women"

On 10 July 1995, the Vatican released a letter from John Paul II addressed to the world's women, in which he both thanked women and apologized "if" the Catholic Church had contributed to their historical oppression (John Paul II 1995b). In particular, John Paul thanked all women who as "mothers," "wives," "daughters and sisters," including those "who work," are "consecrated," or are simply "women," for contributing to humanity. Recognizing women's historical disadvantage, John Paul called for "real equality in every area: equal pay for equal work, protection of working mothers, fairness in career advancements, equality of spouses with regard to family rights and the recognition of everything that is

part of the rights and duties of citizens in a democratic state." His letter clearly identified and to a degree supported the many roles women play, not just as mothers, but also, for example, as "workers." However, this recognition of women's diversity is balanced against a very specific description of what "true" womanhood means, one steeped in a conservative definition of "the family" and women's roles within the family as mother and helpmate.

For John Paul II, women achieve their "deepest vocation" by "placing themselves at the service of others." "The creation of woman is thus marked from the outset by the principle of help," and this special "genius of women" is "part of the essential heritage of mankind." The Vatican thus supports the strengthening of international commitment to improving the status of women, provided that commitment is consistent with a vision of women's unique roles as mothers and wives. For the Vatican, this means recognizing women and men as equal but different. Women and men are "human beings to the same degree," but they perform different and complementary roles in life. This complementarity results from the fact that women and men "are marked neither by a static and undifferentiated equality nor by an irreconcilable and inexorably conflictual difference" (Holy See 1995; John Paul II 1995b). While the complementary roles performed by women and men are dictated by their different biologies—women, for example, are "wives and mothers"—the Vatican says it rejects the view that biology determines fixed and static roles for women and men.⁸ Rather, the nature of men and women's roles can change over time, allowing women to be, for example, "employees" and "mothers." While rejecting the phrase "biological determinism," the Vatican nonetheless uses "complementarity" to signify a sexual division of labor in which women's reproductive capacity means they will be "mothers" and "wives." The Vatican seems to suggest that this construction of gender roles is not biologically determined because it accepts that some women will perform roles other than just being mothers and wives. However, women's roles as mothers and wives are essential both to achieving their true vocation and as part of the "heritage of mankind," the very nature of (global) society.

If women's roles as mothers and wives are part of the "heritage of mankind," then their (married) union with men is the fundamental building block of society. According to John Paul, "It is only through the duality of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' that the 'human' finds

full realization” (John Paul II 1995b). “Women’s rights” can only be realized within this context. The Vatican thus supports a strengthened international response to the victimization of women, provided such a response is consistent with this vision of women and men’s separate roles.

When Women’s Rights Are Not Human Rights

While the Vatican may support rights for women, it does not support women’s rights. The difference, for the Vatican, could not be more fundamental. In the 1990s, a number of feminist and women’s groups became active in the campaign to make “women’s rights human rights” (Friedman 1995). Their argument was that international human rights law has, for a variety of reasons, failed to address the human rights needs of women (see, generally, Peters and Wolper 1995). The solution was not simply to “add” women to existing human rights guarantees. To a certain extent, that had already been done and was a resounding failure (Larson 1996, 697–702). Rather, what was needed was a rethinking of the way international human rights assumes and incorporates western masculine norms about the nature of human rights, state involvement, and the hierarchical nature of human rights violations (Charlesworth 1995). Thus, the phrase “women’s rights are human rights” is as much a campaigning banner as a shorthand reference to a rethinking of existing human rights principles to better account for the ways that women suffer human rights abuses that are particular to them as women.

Through very careful language, the Vatican makes clear that it distinguishes between rights for women and “women’s human rights.” For example, Vatican statements (see John Paul II 1995; Navarro-Valls 1995b) often refer to the “human rights of women” in the context of statements on the universality of human rights, with the implication that women’s rights are encompassed within existing human rights agreements (Riles 2000, 81). In its reservations and interpretative statements to the Beijing Platform for Action, the Vatican stated that it interpreted the phrase “women’s rights are human rights” to mean only that “women should have the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.” That is, the Vatican refused to accept that existing human rights were unrepresentative of women, or that recognizing women’s particular positions of disadvantage entailed rethinking rights in a way that recognized that disadvantage.

Christian Right activists make a similar distinction. For the CR UN,

“women’s rights” as used by feminists is a dangerous concept because it represents “new” rights that have not been agreed to through democratic means, and that act as a vehicle for the infiltration of other “radical” feminist ideas. In this analysis, “women’s human rights” are not “true” human rights, but are a new invention by feminists that have the effect of undermining, first, “true” universal rights, and, second, the “natural family” (Bilmore 1998; O’Leary 1998). According to Katherine Balmforth, former director of the conservative Mormon organization, World Family Policy Center, by broadening the meaning of human rights, feminists and other “antifamily” forces succeed in moving international policy “into private areas traditionally reserved first to families and religious institutions” (Balmforth 1999). Their purpose in doing so, according to the CR UN, is to denigrate the “importance of motherhood” and promote “homosexuality, abortion-on-demand, and the removal of parental rights” (CWA 2000a).

While not as polemical as some CR UN activists, the Vatican’s opposition to women’s rights mirrors that of the CR. For example, the Vatican, like the CR UN, argues that women’s human rights undermine existing universal guarantees through the inclusion of “sexual and reproductive rights,” and more problematically, a “right” to abortion (Holy See 1994b). Similarly, the Vatican argues that seemingly benign language, such as reproductive rights and women’s right to health, are a feminist ruse to introduce more subversive rights.⁹ For example, the Vatican opposes the phrases “sexual rights” or “women’s rights to control their sexuality,”¹⁰ claiming they legitimate promiscuity and homosexuality: ✓

The Holy See does not associate itself with the consensus on the entire chapter IV, section C, concerning health; . . . the Holy See cannot accept ambiguous terminology concerning unqualified control over sexuality and fertility, particularly as it could be interpreted as a societal endorsement of abortion or homosexuality.¹¹

Finally, the Vatican, like the CR UN, views women’s rights and the agreements reached at both Beijing and Beijing +5 as amounting to an attack on the family. First, the language around women’s empowerment is seen as “antifamily” because it is not balanced with language recognizing women’s unique roles within the family (Holy See 2000a). Second, the focus on women’s sexual and reproductive rights is seen as advancing an “individualist concept of sexuality,” when the “exercise of sexual

expression by men and women" should take place only in the context of "the family" (Holy See 1999a). Finally, the Vatican, like the CR UN, argues that the Beijing agreements view the family in almost entirely negative terms (see, for example, Navarro-Valls 1995b). Evidence of this is found in calculations of the number of times "family" is mentioned in international agreements. For example, Austin Ruse offers the following analysis of the agreement reached in the Cairo +5 process:

A cursory count shows the word "father" appears twice in the document, "men" once, "boy" four times. The word "family" appears 29 times but almost always in the phrase family-planning. The word "parents" appears once and then only to tell governments that parents should be taught about the need for childhood sex-ed. On the other hand, "sex" appears 62 times, "gender" 59 times and the term "reproductive health," always a code word for abortion, appears 103 times. (Ruse 1998c)

Dignity, Equality, and the Perils of Gender

Ultimately, the Vatican opposes "women's human rights" because it suggests a view of social relations inimical to its own. At the root of the Vatican's opposition is a view different from that held by feminists about the meaning of women's empowerment. For the Vatican, women's empowerment must be pursued within the confines of the strengthened traditional family form, in which women and men perform specific roles (John Paul II 1995a). The theory of complementarity, which lies at the heart of the Vatican's worldview, thus entails a rejection of "equality" or "equal rights" as undermining the important differences between women and men. What is needed, according to the Vatican, is not equality as "sameness" but an equal "dignity." The Vatican avoids, where possible, references to "equal rights" and instead refers to the "dignity" of women. Dignity as opposed to "rights" is achievable not on the basis of equality, but by the recognition of difference: "The Holy See considers women and men as being of equal dignity in all areas of life, but without this always implying an equality of roles and functions" (Holy See 1995, paragraph 2(a); see also Navarro-Valls 1995b).

The Vatican and other conservative groups also oppose the use of the term "gender." In the preparation process leading to the Beijing conference, the Vatican, supported by other groups such as Focus on the Family, succeeded in having all references to gender in the draft platform

placed in brackets, meaning that it was subject to further debate (Baden and Goetz 1997, 11). The term "gender" was objected to because the idea that "male" and "female" are socially constructed categories is inimical to the Vatican's view of women and men as essentially complementary. For both the CR UN and the Vatican, "gender," used to mean the social construction of identities, is dangerous for two reasons. First, it is a profoundly elastic term, encapsulating a broad feminist rights strategy that includes abortion (Ruse 1998a). As discussed above and in chapter 4, any language seen as promoting abortion is also seen as an attack on the family (Hamm 1995; O'Leary 1998). Furthermore, by challenging the "naturalness" of an essential "femaleness," the Vatican and the CR UN see feminists—through the term "gender"—undermining the complementarity of women and men, and hence the "natural family" (O'Leary 1998).

Second, and more problematically, the CR UN and the Vatican see "gender" as a "code word for gay rights" (Ruse 1998a). At Beijing, opposition to "gender" by the Vatican and the CR became a major debate in the negotiations. CR UN groups repeatedly made the argument that the term "gender" referred not to male and female, but to five genders in total. James Dobson writes:

Relating again to "the deconstruction of gender" . . . the goal is to give members of the human family five genders from which to choose instead of two. When freed from traditional biases, a person can decide whether to be male, female, homosexual, lesbian, or transgendered. Some may want to try all five in time. (1995)

In this analysis, "gender" was seen as the means by which "the lesbian caucus was hoping to achieve their agenda" (Hamm 1995, 137). Not only was the term "gender" objectionable, but women's rights themselves were seen as tainted by a "gender agenda," violating the "vision for women, family, and human dignity" reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (O'Leary 1998).

Contesting Radicals: The Vatican's Alternative to Radical Feminism

At the 1995 Beijing conference, the Vatican's opposition to women's rights was framed not as an outright rejection of women's rights, but as a condemnation of a liberal, western rights strategy. In arguing this position, the Vatican depicted itself not as antifeminist, but as opposed

to “radical” feminism. Whereas the Vatican portrayed itself as the only truly inclusive voice at the international level, occupying a feminist “middle ground,” “radical” feminism represented an impoverished, western-centric view of women that failed to account for women’s differences. This characterization is important because it came at a particular historical point when feminist groups had achieved a degree of success in lobbying for changes to international human rights.¹² The threat of looming feminist dominance was a significant mobilizing force for the CR UN. The Vatican’s construction of feminism as outdated and unrepresentative was, however, a more insidious critique that posed important questions for feminist international activism. The tactic of marginalizing feminists as raging radicals is predictable. Damning them as “mainstream” is, arguably, a more sophisticated critique of feminists. In this section, we examine how the Vatican has endeavored to marginalize feminism by constructing it as, first, a western-dominated movement that is unrepresentative of women from the economic south; second, as an outdated version of feminism that is unrepresentative of even western women; and finally and most critically, as relying on a mainstream and limited rights discourse that is of little value to women.

In the lead-up to Beijing, Dr. Joaquin Navarro-Valls, director of the Holy See’s press office, wrote that the conference was under threat by an attempt to impose on the world “a Western product, a socially reductive philosophy, which does not even represent the hopes and needs of the majority of Western women” (1995b). This threat of (an albeit unrepresentative) western imperialism was seen in the “disproportionate attention [paid] to sexual and reproductive health.”¹³ According to the Vatican, the entire chapter in the Platform for Action devoted to women and health was seen only in a reproductive context that was unrepresentative of the interests of women in developing countries. In particular, it argued that the platform gives “preference to sexually transmitted disease or those which refer to reproduction,” while diseases of more concern to women from the south, such as “tropical ones—which each year become more contagious and cause more deaths than sexually transmitted diseases—are not given serious consideration” (Navarro-Valls 1995b, 4). The Vatican thus denounced what it saw as an attempt to “reduce the human person—woman in this case—to social functions that must be overcome” (Navarro-Valls 1995b, 2). The promoter of this troubled view, according to the Vatican, was “feminism,” whose characteristics are “a

negative attitude towards the family, acritical support for abortion and an angry anthropology in which feminine problems are linked solely to sexuality and contraception” (Navarro-Valls 1995b).

The Vatican’s opposition to the “angry anthropology” of feminism appears restricted to a particular type of feminism, which it characterizes as outdated, speaking only for a minority of women. In its report in preparation for the Beijing conference, the Vatican argued that

[t]he collapse of myths and utopias associated with the dominance of ideologies in the Sixties and Seventies, has brought with it a tendency to move beyond a radical “feminism”; complete uniformity or an undifferentiated levelling . . . of the two sexes is no longer seen as a goal; instead there is a growing sensitivity to the right to be different . . . in other words, the right to be a woman. (Holy See 1995, paragraph 4 [3])

This view of two feminisms—a new and an old—is clearly linked to the Vatican’s own views about the biological construction of gender roles. The new feminism described here sits comfortably with Catholic doctrine concerning women and their different but complementary roles, while the old feminism is described as an “angry anthropology” concerned solely with “sexuality and contraception” (Navarro-Valls 1995b, 2).

As evidence of feminism’s dated views, the Vatican offers a stinging indictment of the reliance on a limited rights strategy with its emphasis on an “exaggerated individualism” (John Paul II 1995b, paragraph 8). In its reservations to the final Platform for Action, the Vatican condemns the final document as a product of

an exaggerated individualism, in which key, relevant, provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are slighted—for example, the obligation to provide “special care and assistance” to motherhood. This selectivity thus marks another step in the colonization of the broad and rich discourse of universal rights by an impoverished, libertarian rights dialect. Surely this international gathering could have done more for women and girls than to leave them alone with their rights! (paragraph 11)

The implication is clearly that the responsibility for this “impoverished” outcome lies largely with the feminist movement and its perceived exclusive focus on reproductive health and sexuality issues. The compelling nature of the Vatican’s arguments is reflected in the very powerful last sentence in the above quotation. By this remark, the Vatican evokes a

number of images: of abandoned children, an uncaring community, and a feminist movement preoccupied by formalities at the expense of the lived experience of women and girls. Importantly, through this comment, the Vatican also seeks to distance itself from the Beijing process. While others may have abandoned women and girls, the suggestion is that the Vatican is still fighting for them. In this way, the Vatican positions itself as the only true radical voice advocating women's human rights. Unlike western feminists, the Vatican argues, its emphasis is on development issues, poverty, and the interests of women from the south. According to Robert Moynihan, writing for *Inside the Vatican*, a Catholic magazine supportive of the church hierarchy, at Beijing the Vatican had

✓ a double strategy: to ally with all those forces which are "progressive" to increase women's role in society (including some Western secular feminists, but not including strict Muslims, who oppose this development) but at the same time to build an "anti-radical" alliance against the proponents of radical feminism. (1995)

That alliance, as we have shown throughout this book, has begun to emerge in the post-Beijing period, and the Vatican maintains its role as an informal leader of the "natural family" movement at the UN. In the following section, we look more closely at this leadership role in conservative religious politics at the UN and at the Vatican's increasingly hostile position to feminism and lesbian and gay rights. With the Vatican, we see a crystallization of a "natural family" politics that has come to provide the grounding for opposition to issues like abortion, contraception, feminism, and lesbian and gay rights.

Of Hedonism, Homosexuality, and "Human Race Feminism": Leading the Pack in Defense of the "Natural" Family

Earlier we discussed the Vatican's view of itself as a global moral voice, speaking on behalf of a universal constituency. In many respects, this role is confirmed by organizations on the Christian Right who applaud the Vatican's leadership in opposing women's rights. Groups like Concerned Women for American or Focus on the Family look to the Vatican as the voice of "conscience" at the UN (see, for example, Wright 1999; Reid 1999; Moloney 1999). In *the Vatican*, they see an autonomous international actor, not tied to the geopolitics of international aid and

hence immune from the pressures imposed by western aid benefactors. Because of its independence, the CR UN argues, the Vatican is able to ensure that moral standards are articulated at the international realm (Wright 1999), and the CR UN is supportive of the moral positions taken by the Vatican. In this respect, the CR UN accepts the Vatican as more than just an independent voice. It is seen as a moral standard bearer, representing "faith" at the international realm.

In some respects, this seemingly unqualified support for the Vatican's leadership is surprising. As we discussed in chapter 2, many on the CR have historically viewed Catholicism, and the Vatican in particular, with outright hostility. Indeed, the pope has often figured in CR endtimes scenarios as an Antichrist figure. In addition, the Vatican supports a strengthened United Nations that will provide leadership in an international realm characterized by solidarity and a commitment to global equality (see, for example, Holy See 2000b and 2000c). As we discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the prospect of a strengthened international realm is anathema to a CR deeply suspicious of both the UN and the prospects of global interdependence.

How is it, then, that this same CR now looks to the Vatican to provide international moral leadership? There are probably a number of factors that have contributed to this. The first is the actions of John Paul II, who has brought in not only a new era of Catholic conservatism but also a commitment to interfaith dialogue. Second, and parallel to this, are moves within both the Catholic and Protestant Right to join political forces in pursuit of common aims (Hitchcock 1991). In the 1990s, this was most clearly evident in attempts to include a Catholic subsidiary of the Christian Coalition (Xanthopoulou 1995, 1). While the idea of a Catholic Alliance linked to the Christian Coalition never really took hold, this move reflected the growing recognition among religious conservatives that they often had more in common with other orthodox believers than with the more liberal members of their own faith (Butler 2000, 5–6). The attempt to build an orthodox alliance at the UN is an outcome of this thinking.

The pivot around which the orthodox alliance functions is the shared commitment to a "natural family" politics. It is in this way that the various CR UN political positions and objectives are distilled into a concentrated political agenda that is able to bring together the various factions

within the CR UN as well as the Vatican. In this “natural family” position, there is much to ally the CR UN with the Vatican. Both the CR UN and the Vatican have placed their opposition to various international issues, from women’s rights to population policy, in the context of a larger aim to protect “the natural family.” In the following discussion, we look at the Vatican’s “family” politics in the context of its interventions at the international realm. Protecting “the family,” as defined by the Vatican, has become an important rhetorical device, providing the framework within which the Vatican articulates a particular view of social relations. This “family” politics, while potentially limited as a worldview, provides an important point of continuity with CR UN politics. This “natural family” platform, for both the Vatican and the CR UN, has become a basis from which to challenge the perceived growth of “gender ideology” and “pro-homosexual” politics at the UN.

Family, Women, and the “Heritage of Mankind”

“The family” figures prominently in Vatican statements on international policy. Depicted as the central building block in society, the Vatican resists any measures, such as women’s rights, which it sees as undermining the family (Holy See 1999a). For the Vatican, the family provides a “community” through which “cultural, ethical, social and spiritual values” are taught, and “the young, the aged, and the disabled are sustained” (Holy See 2000c). In its educative, nurturing, and economic functions, the family is essential to a society in which public and private spheres are maintained. Without the family, “the State must increase its interventions in order to solve problems directly which ought to remain and be solved in the private sphere, with great traumatic effects and high economic costs” (Pontifical Council for the Family 2000b).

The Vatican defines “the family” as the “union of love and life between a man and woman from which life naturally springs,” and which is sanctified by marriage (Pontifical Council for the Family 2000a). As we discussed above, this “union” is based on a “natural” division of roles, in which women are crucially “helpmates,” providing “service” to their families (John Paul II 1995b, paragraph 12). Womanhood, according to John Paul II, is “part of the essential heritage of mankind,” and the family unit, as described above, is part of “a common patrimony” (John Paul II 1995b, paragraph 12; 2000). In this way, “the family,” defined

by marriage between a man and a woman, is both essential to and the “property” of the global order.

As we discussed in chapter 5, there is a tension in an orthodox “natural family” alliance between those organizations (primarily the Christian Right) whose definition of the family is narrowly focused on the nuclear family, and those organizations that refer to an extended family. The Vatican’s definition is much more closely aligned to the latter view, and building on this, sees the family as the building block of (global) society: the “Family of Nations” (John Paul 1996; Holy See 2000c). Within this family of nations, however, the Vatican recognizes a problematic inequality with pronounced gaps “between rich and poor countries,” resulting, to an extent, from omissions “on the part of developing nations” (Holy See 2000c). “In too many cases, some countries ignore their duty to cooperate in the task of alleviating human misery. Instead of producing shared prosperity, this age of globalization, characterized by greater interdependence among nations, has led to an even greater disparity in wealth and increased exploitation” (Holy See 2000c).

This conception of “the family of nations” offers interesting parallels to the family as a union between a man and a woman. In the family of nations, like the family defined by marriage, the language of duty is used to convey a universal responsibility to a communal good. However, unlike in the context of marriage, the family of nations is described, albeit aspirationally, in terms of an “equality” among the various members. While all may have duties to this family, each member of the family is nominally equal, and all have a responsibility to ensure that equality. In contrast, the family defined by marriage between a man and a woman is characterized by an explicit difference and an arguable *inequality*. While both women and men may have duties in that marriage, the best they can hope for is an equal “dignity,” realized through their different roles. There is no suggestion that the family of nations is similarly characterized by an “equal dignity” achieved through difference. For example, while women’s unique role as “helpmate” is part of the common heritage of mankind, the developing world is not seen as playing an analogous role as the “servant” to the western world. Indeed, the idea of complementarity, so essential to the Vatican’s definition of marriage, is not translatable to the international realm. To suggest, for example, that the family of nations, like the family defined by marriage, is characterized

by a role differentiation, where one party provides “service” to the other, would result in a very inhumane, unequal world order.

Although promoting a global order predicated on equality is an important objective for the Vatican, that objective is increasingly sidelined by a preoccupation with protecting the family defined by marriage. In the post-Beijing period, the Vatican has made increasingly pronounced condemnations of the forces it sees as threatening the family. As discussed above, its position at Beijing was arguably characterized as an attempt to occupy a feminist middle ground. However, in the post-Beijing period, the Vatican has seemingly abandoned this position in favor of a more concerted opposition to the foes of “the family,” which it defines as hedonism, homosexuality, and “human race” feminism.

Confronting the “Culture of Death”: Hedonism and the “Ideology of Gender”

John Paul II has long condemned the western “culture of death,” which he sees as encouraging “divorce, birth control, homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia” (Urquhart 1995, 172). In recent years, the Vatican has more specifically identified the proponents of this amorphous “culture of death” as “minority” groups advocating a dangerous, antifamily politics. These “minority” interests remain largely unidentified by the Vatican, but are characterized as representing a “narrow” or “small” segment of the population, who are pushing a dangerous “ideology” on the international community (see, for example, John Paul II 2000; Holy See 1999b; Holy See 2000b).

Given the Vatican’s opposition to women’s rights, we can assume that this reference to “minority interests” includes feminists who support women’s rights to sexual and reproductive health. But it is not only feminists the Vatican sees behind the western “culture of death.” Rather, it is a more general western hedonism (John Paul II 1998), manifest in the promotion of an “ideology of gender” (John Paul II 1996; Pontifical Council for the Family 2000a). The proponents of this “ideology” are, of course, “radical feminists,” but also advocates of lesbian and gay rights. In this way, “gender ideology” becomes the link between feminists and lesbian and gay advocates, who are portrayed as joined in a shared project to undermine marriage and the family. According to longtime Vatican watcher Gordon Urquhart, Bishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary

of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith,¹⁴ identifies “human race feminism” as the source of the attack on “the family,” by which he refers to the attempts by “gays and lesbians to abolish the two sexes of male and female, replacing them with a single neuter gender” (Urquhart 2000). 派
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Eliding gays and lesbians with feminists is, of course, nothing new (see, for example, Herman 1997). As we discussed in chapters 2 and 3, many in the CR UN view “radical” feminists as lesbians, and hence, it is not surprising that they see the political and social objectives of these two groups as the same. Such a view is additionally supportable in the context of a view of feminism that distinguishes between “true” feminism and a radical feminism pursuing “minority” aims. In the context of the Vatican, this slippage between feminists and “homosexuals” is important for signaling a growing preoccupation with the human rights claims by lesbians and gays. As the comment by Bishop Bertone suggests, the Vatican sees “radical” feminism and “homosexuality” as two sides of the same “gender” coin.

Confronting “Homosexuality”: A Point of Convergence?

As discussed earlier, “homosexuality” has until recently occupied a curious nonposition in CR UN politics. For the most part, the CR has focused on feminism and women’s rights as the immediate target of its activism. However, for some CR UN groups with an established domestic profile in antigay politics, such as Focus on the Family, the international realm was initially viewed as hosting a progay faction. For example, James Dobson’s decision to send Focus on the Family delegates to the Beijing Conference on Women was motivated, primarily, by a concern about “gender feminism” and the promotion of homosexuality (Dobson 1995). To a certain extent, Dobson’s views seem to be shaped by a conception of the international order more consistent with the views discussed in chapter 2, in which the international realm was seen as the playing fields of the Antichrist. With the growing commitment by the CR UN to an international politics, the concerns with lesbian and gay rights seemed to recede into the background, with abortion, population policy, and women’s rights taking center stage. Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, for one, dismissed homosexuality as a “non-issue” at the UN: “The question of

homosexuality does not come up here, it just does not come up in the United Nations. . . . I am surprised, honestly, I am surprised that they [homosexuals] are not here" (1999c).

Despite this comment, there now appears to be a growing and increasingly vocal concern among the CR UN about homosexuality, with groups like Concerned Women for America, the Family Research Council, and the World Family Policy Center including regular comments on homosexuality in their online newsletters and commentaries.¹⁵ In part, this growing concern with international recognition of the legitimacy of lesbian and gay identities reflects the fact that advocates of lesbian and gay rights are beginning to have an effect at the international level. At both Beijing and Beijing +5, references to "sexual orientation" were included in draft sections prohibiting discrimination against women on a number of protected grounds (Otto 1996a, 25–26; Barnes et al. 2000). In both cases, the phrase "sexual orientation" was controversial, and in both cases it was eventually struck out because of a lack of international consensus. However, the impact of these debates is significant. In the context of the 1995 Beijing Conference, for example, a number of state governments agreed to interpret the phrase "other status" to include "sexual orientation" (Otto 1996a, 26).

For the Christian Right and the Vatican, these debates confirm their suspicions that first, feminists are in league with homosexuals, and second, that women's human rights guarantees can be used to promote "antifamily" politics, such as the acceptance of homosexuality. At the same time, the CR UN is also correct that lesbians and gays are not as active politically at the UN as are feminist and women's groups. There are many reasons for this, some of which we have already canvassed in chapter 5. In addition, the international realm is in itself inhospitable to lesbian and gay activism. Many countries strongly resist any recognition of the rights of sexual minorities, and human rights violations against lesbians and gay men continue with little apparent international condemnation (Amnesty International United Kingdom 1997). Perhaps reflecting this, lesbian and gay activists have met with resistance in their attempts to establish an activist presence at the international realm.

For example, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), an umbrella organization representing various lesbian and gay organizations, tried unsuccessfully to become a consultative NGO at the UN, representing lesbian and gay issues. ILGA was accredited in July 1993,

and by September 1993, their status was challenged by the United States, which argued that ILGA included an organization promoting pedophilia (Sanders 1996, 67–68). In September 1994, at the initiation of the United States, ILGA's consultative status was revoked "pending a review of its member organizations" (Sanders 1996, 68) and has not been reinstated, despite new applications by ILGA.¹⁶ ILGA's experience at the UN certainly did not stop lesbian and gay groups from using UN mechanisms, but it did mean that there was no permanent organization representing lesbian and gay issues at the UN.¹⁷

The result has been that lesbian and gay issues have made it onto the international agenda only in a sporadic and partial way. Despite this, and paradoxically because of it, the CR UN is increasingly concerned about the threat of homosexuality, seen as lurking in the corners of various international agreements and UN agencies. For example, Tom McFeely, writing for the Family Research Council publication *Insight*, describes the UN as advancing "homosexual rights" by "stealth," "subterfuge," and "camouflage."¹⁸ Evidence of the "covert" nature of lesbian and gay rights can be found in terminology like "various forms of the family" and "gender," both of which, he argues, legitimize "homosexuality." In an argument similar to that advanced in the context of women's rights, "homosexual" rights are seen as undermining "the family" as well as international law. The promotion of "homosexual rights" denigrates the "authentic body of human rights" found in, for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. More problematically, homosexuality results in "calamities such as the AIDS epidemic now raging among male homosexuals" (McFeely 1999).

The Vatican has also taken an increasingly vocal stance against lesbian and gay rights, and, like the CR UN, is distrustful of human rights language that may suggest an acceptance of homosexuality. For example, the Vatican has long resisted the term "sexuality" used in provisions recognizing women's rights to control their own health, on the basis that sexuality "could be interpreted as a societal endorsement of . . . homosexuality."¹⁹ Recently, the Vatican has turned its attention to the subject of "homosexual unions" (Pontifical Council for the Family 2000b). The prospect of international or domestic recognition of partnerships between individuals of the same sex is vehemently resisted by the Vatican. In same-sex partnerships, the Vatican sees the implementation of a gender ideology that "rejects the fact, inscribed in corporeity, that sexual

difference is an identifying characteristic of the person" (John Paul II 1999).

Attempts to gain legal recognition of "homosexual unions" are seen by the Vatican as a profound attack on the family. The Pontifical Council for the Family report on "de facto unions," for example, condemns any union between a man and a woman not sanctified by legal marriage. The main thrust of that report, however, is arguably on "homosexual unions" and their destructive impact on society.²⁰ The legitimization of lesbian and gay partnerships is threatening enough, but holds an additional dangerous possibility of lesbian and gay families adopting children. The Pontifical Council, quoting John Paul II, concluded the following:

In the case of homosexual relations, which demand to be considered de facto unions, the moral and juridical consequences take on special relevance. "Lastly, 'de facto unions' between homosexuals are a deplorable distortion of what should be a communion of love and life between a man and a woman in a reciprocal gift open to life." However, the presumption to make these unions equivalent to "legal marriage," as some recent initiatives attempt to do, is even more serious. Furthermore, the attempts to legalize the adoption of children by homosexual couples adds an element of great danger to all the previous ones. "The bond between two men or two women cannot constitute a real family and much less can the right be attributed to that union to adopt children without a family." (Pontifical Council for the Family 2000b, paragraph 23)

This report by the Pontifical Council is clearly motivated by, and reflects a concern with, the increasing profile of gay and lesbian activists, both domestically and at international forums like the UN or the European Union. The council's conclusions, together with the very strong statements by John Paul II, firmly proclaim the Vatican's unequivocal opposition to the recognition of gay and lesbian rights. The Vatican's position in this regard is important not just as a clear expression of its commitment to opposing homosexuality, but also as suggesting a potential shift in conservative religious thinking on human rights, women's rights, and a politics based on "the family." In the following concluding comments, we consider this "antihomosexuality" stance in the context of women's rights. Drawing together the various themes of this chapter, we look at international human rights as the central arena within which

conservative religious politics have taken shape. Women's rights, as the focus of much CR UN activism, has, in many respects, become the dramatic persona in a larger politics based on protecting "the traditional family" but increasingly oriented to opposing lesbian and gay rights.

In Conclusion: From Women's Rights to "Homosexual" Rights

Our objective, at the outset of this chapter, was to consider the international politics of the Vatican in the area of women's rights, as reflecting a complex worldview based on a particular conception of social relations. Wanting to resist the too simple characterization of the Vatican as "antiwoman" or "antifeminist," we have examined its opposition to women's rights in the context of a social and political project defined in terms of protecting "the family" as defined by marriage between a man and a woman. At the 1995 Beijing Conference, the Vatican framed its objection to women's rights as, first, protecting the family from a "radical" feminism that sought to deny the complementarity of men and women, and, second, as rejecting an "impoverished" rights strategy that failed to offer a progressive vision of society and women's roles within it. In this way, the Vatican offered a nuanced argument against "women's rights" and "radical" feminism without explicitly rejecting either the rights of women or "feminism." It argued, instead, for a vision of society based on the family defined by marriage and against the use of human rights discourse as a vehicle for (a particular form of) social change.

In this respect, we can see the Vatican's opposition to women's rights as not only promoting its own vision of gender relations based on a sexual division of labor, but also reacting to what it sees as a feminist or western "hedonist" co-optation of international human rights. By challenging what it perceives as the overreliance on rights rhetoric, the Vatican sees itself as standing outside the dominant international framework within which questions of social relations are discussed. Not only does the Vatican challenge the definition and scope of those social relations, it opposes the way in which the international community "talks" about them (i.e., through the language of rights). In this way, the Vatican perceives itself as being at the margins of international human rights discourse, challenging the views of those in the mainstream: feminists and western governments.

Many would argue that the Vatican does not occupy a position at the margins of international human rights decision making, but neither does

it lie entirely at the center. The Vatican's view of social relations, which reinforces certain dominant power relations (i.e., between women and men), combined with its years of power and influence, is not consistent with a "marginalized" social actor. But the rise of feminist international organizations and their impact on human rights, as well as the increasingly dominant discourse of rights, have altered the nature of international dialogue on social relations in a way that might appear to isolate certain actors, such as the CR UN. In this respect, the shifting terrain of international human rights discourse and its impact on the religious right can be compared to the CR's domestic politics in response to strengthened legal protection for women (De Hart 1991) and gays and lesbians (see, for example, Herman 1997). In the American domestic context, the CR mobilized to stop what it saw as the authentication of a particular view of social relations inimical to its own. While focused on the concrete policies of rights for women, gays, and lesbians, the CR's rationale is drawn more broadly as a protection of family and religion from the dangers of secularism (Herman 1997, 4).

In the international context, similar motivations apply. Moves to recognize the rights of women to sexual and reproductive freedom are seen as a nefarious attempt to undermine "nation, family, and church." In the domestic context, the CR UN distinguishes between legitimate rights (such as religious freedom) and the claims by illegitimate "minorities," such as lesbians and gays (Herman 1997, chapter 5). In the international context, the distinction is drawn between the "core" international human rights found in the Universal Declaration (such as the "rights of families") and the "new," and hence illegitimate, rights of women (O'Leary 1998; Ruse 1998a). In both the domestic and international realms, the unifying theme is the rejection of a rights strategy promoting a view of social relations that both the CR and the Vatican see as destructive to faith and family. At the international level, the stakes are seen in more "macro" terms as a battle not just against secularization but also against a globalization of social relations. For the Vatican, the threat to faith and family is also a threat to a global social order predicated on "the family" defined by marriage.

In the post-Beijing period, women's rights remain a central concern for the Vatican and the CR UN but are increasingly characterized as problematic to the extent that they legitimate "homosexuality." In this new focus on homosexuality, the CR UN and the Vatican have fewer

concrete measures to confront. For example, there are no conferences or agreements on the meaning or scope of lesbian and gay rights. Perhaps because of this, the CR UN and the Vatican turn their attention to women's rights as the vehicle by which homosexuality is promoted. In this way, feminism and women's rights become subsumed within a larger antihomosexual agenda. While feminists are not often named in Vatican statements, they are obliquely referred to as promoting a "gender ideology" that promotes homosexuality. Women's rights are similarly seen as introducing fluid sexualities or promoting a sexual liberty that includes homosexuality. Thus, homosexuality, which has been a creeping subtext in CR UN opposition to women's rights, is increasingly articulated as a central concern for a "natural family" politics.

This is not to suggest that the CR UN and the Vatican do not continue to see women's rights and feminism as dangerous political developments in and of themselves. Groups adopting the "natural family" political banner, with its emphasis on marriage and the "traditional" division of labor between women and men, are necessarily suspicious of a feminist politics that seeks to empower women within and outside of the home. However, it is equally important to recognize the extent to which the CR UN and the Vatican have come to view women's rights as coextensive with lesbian and gay politics. As we have discussed in this and other chapters, the CR UN often frames its objections to women's equality measures, whether express human rights or other social commitments, as leading to homosexuality (as well as the destruction of the family). In the words of Wendy Wright of Concerned Women for America, "[W]hen you buy into the concept that there is no distinction between men and women that leads you down a path that gets you to accept homosexuality. What's the difference between a man and a man together if there is no difference between men and women?" (1999). In the case of the Vatican, the linkage between women's rights and homosexuality is made in the continual reference to a western hedonism promoting an "ideology of gender" (Pontifical Council for the Family 2000b, paragraph 8), which, through its promotion of homosexuality and the legitimization of "homosexual unions," undermines the "true" family form defined by marriage.

This, of course, begs the question: Why homosexuality? In the case of women's rights, one could understand CR UN and Vatican mobilization as a response to specific gains made by feminist activists at Cairo and

Beijing. In the case of lesbians and gays, however, any gains made at the international level have been few and far between. True, feminist groups have attempted to introduce language recognizing women's rights to control their own sexuality, and at Beijing specifically introduced language prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Largely, however, there has been a failure to win substantial concrete protections for lesbians and gays at the international level. So, why the growing pre-occupation with "homosexuality"?

One reason may be the relationship between CR domestic and international politics. As we discussed above, there are parallels between CR UN opposition to women's rights and CR domestic campaigns against the rights of women, lesbians, and gays. As Herman (1997) has shown, lesbian and gay rights have been a central concern for the CR, whose "antigay" agenda is a priority in their domestic politics. As many of the Protestant CR UN groups have an active, antigay domestic politics (such as Focus on the Family and Concerned Women for America), it is likely that their domestic priorities and experiences inform their international politics. Having schooled themselves in a specific antigay politics, it may be the case that when members of the CR UN turn their gaze to international human rights, they inevitably see the specter of homosexuality in the "radicalization" of women's rights. The question for the future is, will the CR UN continue to focus on "homosexuality" as the enemy of the "natural family" movement? Will homosexuality, in other words, become the "new" CR UN enemy?

Conclusion

The events of September 11, 2001, are widely known: four passenger planes were hijacked within the United States, the pilots overpowered, and the jets flown into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington (a fourth crashed in a field), to devastating effect. The two towers of the World Trade Center collapsed, and nearly three thousand people are estimated to have lost their lives in the crashes and resulting destruction. The hijackers, all allegedly men of Middle Eastern origin, appear to have been acting in the name of Islam, and with the expectation of divine reward for their deeds in the afterlife.

In many respects, "September 11" is a truly postmodern event. It exposes the paper-thin artifice of national boundaries and state sovereignty, challenges categories of identity in a fluid and migratory world, and calls into question the sources of danger in a changing global order. Despite its vast military power and extensive border patrols, the United States was unable to prevent this attack on its own people within the borders of its own state. The presumed source of the attack, a network of men apparently devoted to the beliefs and politics of one man, Osama bin Laden, has proven to be a difficult enemy to characterize or, indeed, to effect retaliation upon.¹ While bin Laden himself was based in