

WTE column of May, 2015. Editor's headline: "US bursting at the seams"

CST of same date: "Reflections on our runaway populations"

I have been studying a scholar and social critic whose premise is that every child born on this earth should be a wanted child. Russell Adams believes that population enlightenment, supported by religious leaders, can achieve this.

His book, "A Letter to Dear Children," loaned me by the writer's cousin, is a sobering reflection on the world's runaway population; still, the author seeks to secure "for our children . . . what remains of the blessings that living generations were born with." As board member of Dawn of HOPE, he works to reduce genocide, famine, poverty and war. (HOPE stands for Helping Others through Population Enlightenment.)

His twin theses: 1.) all successful civilizations have been built on slave labor; ours has shaken off slavery only because of labor-saving technology, yet its fossil-fuel consumption has become our bane, and 2.) these civilizations' religious systems have endorsed slavery over and against the golden rules that are their cornerstones.

Adams begins by clarifying the Golden Rule that many Christians take to be an original utterance but which Jesus may have quoted or paraphrased from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbath, Folio 31a, §13 and 14: "That which you hate, don't do to others." A similar concept is found in the Qu'an: "Show kindness unto . . . the neighbor who is not of kin, and the fellow traveler and the wayfarer . . ." The Gautama Buddha of the Hindu Bhagavad Gita admonishes we "cultivate . . . loving-kindness toward all the world." Sadly, the overpopulation burden renders us increasingly intolerant of others.

In the U.S., we condone a quasi-slavery mindset that fosters mass incarcerations, for-profit prisons, human trafficking, child prostitution, warmongering, and drone killings.

Overpopulation, the writer convincingly argues, devalues human life, and he draws connections between its consequences and the climate-change conundrum. Unless we introduce change, he foresees dictatorial oppression, in our country as elsewhere, because resource shortages mandate the destruction of others. As population growth outruns technological progress, faith-condoned violence and discrimination morph into a "booty economy" that seeks to take from others what is increasingly scarce. Out of fear we support authoritarian leaders.

Not only in the U.S. but in societies around the world, babies are born faster than jobs can be created. In many countries, highly educated young people cannot find work. The biggest U.S. employer today is Manpower, Inc, which specializes in temporary jobs that puts untold burdens and insecurities on the workforce.

The author cites a report that reveals the high cost of U.S. teen pregnancies: lost tax revenues, public assistance, child health care, foster care, and involvement with the criminal justice system is estimated to amount to \$7 billion annually. Simultaneously,

overpopulation worsens U.S. unemployment, devastates public finance, and inflates political-campaign financing. Today our government pays for one in three births because “parents conceive more children than they can support.” Up to one-half of U.S. births are “unplanned or unintended.”

A “religion-business” that draws 90 percent of adherents from raw fertility issues edicts that family planning is sinful. Golden-Rule-based thinking, by contrast, is “the still, small voice within.” Once we heed this voice, we will not inflict on society more babies than can be sustained. As it currently stands, however, we exhaust our children’s natural capital and create Ponzi schemes of “bill-my-kids” economics.

Is overpopulation too hot to handle? We’ve made scant progress since November 1992, when 1,700 global scientists (102 Nobel Prize winners among them) issued their Warning to Humanity, urging that overpopulation and materialism needs change “if our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated.” They emphasized that modifying population growth requires the commitment of religious leaders. Adams submits these examples:

In the “debtocracy which is Greece,” population grew by almost 30 percent between 1971 and 2010. Farms, factories, schools, and infrastructure had to grow by a third—but land resources did not—could not—grow, nor did sea harvests.

The population-aggressive “debt trap” in Tunisia has meant that, from 1974 to 2010, the country’s population grew from 5,641,000 to 11,860,000—an increase of over 110 percent. Naturally, farm- and seafood resources failed to increase in tandem.

Egypt’s population quadrupled since 1960, an increase of 188 percent; today, 40 percent of Egyptians live on two dollars a day or less. The Arab Spring was prompted by the “youth bulge,” young, highly educated people without job prospects.

The U.S., singular among developed nations, continues to expand far beyond sustainability, its population and national and personal debts.

To reduce unplanned and unintended pregnancies, we must apply the golden-ruled strengths of global religions. Religious leaders need to come together on this. According to the cousin, the author travels to interested communities to begin the conversation.