

open, conversations with these cultures can be medicinal. Each of these religious traditions show strong respect for the gift of children, and each of them sees fertility as a blessing. Each of them also sees it as a potential curse.

Family planning is not a radical idea. It is simply the service we owe this earth, an earth that is, in novelist Alan Paton's words, "lovely beyond any singing of it." No one could say that our "abortion wars" are normal or represent humanity at its best. Maybe some of the peace of these other cultures who faced the same questions can quietly seep into our souls. This may seem an unlikely dream, but to adapt the words of the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, tread softly if you would tread upon that dream.

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