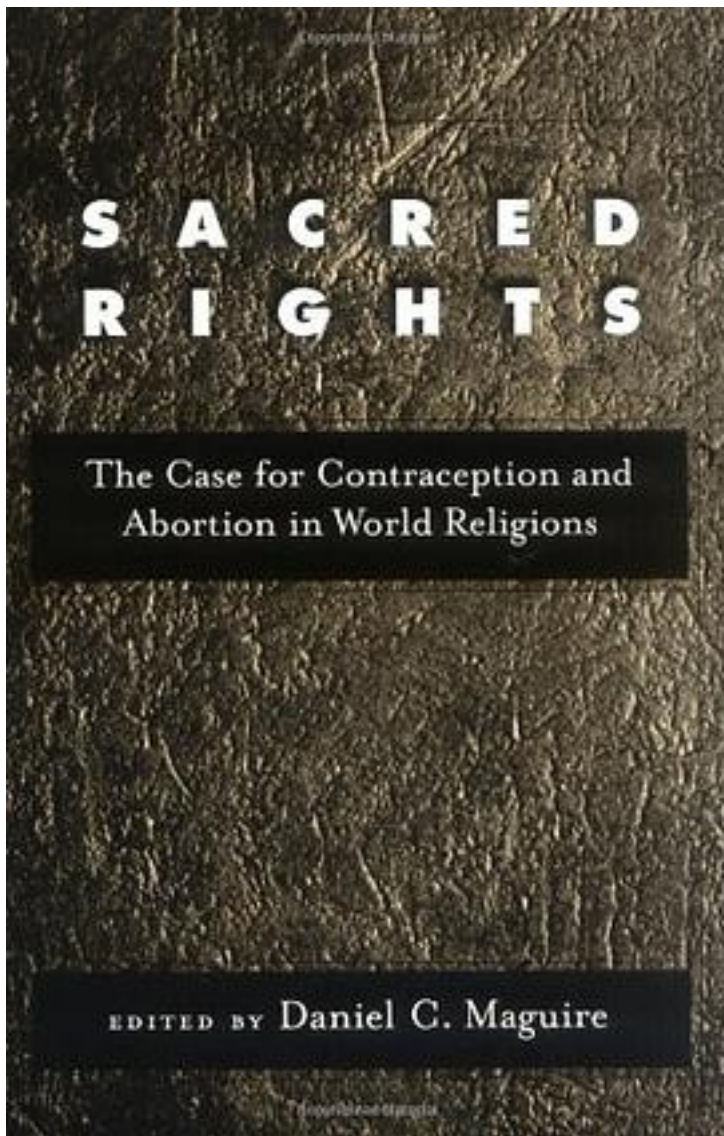


Sacred Rights



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As the global population continues to grow, family planning is fast becoming one of the most critical issues facing the planet. While many organizations-most prominently the United Nations-are trying to implement policies that will help curb the population explosion, these measures are frequently blocked by those professing conservative religious beliefs. In many of the world's religions there is a restrictive and pro-natalist view on family planning, and this is one legitimate reading of those religious traditions. As the essays in this volume demonstrate, however, this is not the only legitimate or orthodox view. Seeking to counteract the simplistic idea that all religions are completely antagonistic toward family planning, the authors-all scholar-practitioners of the religions about which they write-present alternative interpretations of religions' views about family planning. Arguing for the existence of equally valid traditions that allow contraception and abortion, they seek to escape the confines of oversimplified either/or, pro-choice/pro-life arguments. Instead, they point the way forward toward a more open discussion of family planning. Dispelling the notion that the world's religions are uniformly conservative on issues of family planning, the authors show that the parameters of orthodoxy are wider and gentler than that, and that the great religious traditions are wiser and more variegated than a simple repetition of the most conservative views would suggest.

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目录:

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