

# **CUSTOM MAID SPIN For New World Disorder**

*Political Dust Storms, Corrosive Money and Slick Oil*

*A contemporary post 9/11 geopolitical guide for constructive change. How  
Americans can re-orient and clean up their act to survive, thrive and  
continue to guide in the 21st century*

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO OUR CHILDREN WHO ARE OUR  
FUTURE. “RESPICE FINEM-E PLURIBUS UNUM” – AN EYE TO  
THE END-FROM THE MANY, ONE



## Chapter Three

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### **Fundamental Religious Crusades**

*Imagine - John Lennon*

#### ***Religious Harmony***

**H**ong Kong has roughly six hundred temples, monasteries and shrines. Most are small. Some are enormous, including a high rise Zoroastrian Temple in Causeway Bay, the Jamia Mosque on Shelley Street, Ohel Leah Synagogue on Robinson Road, Saint John's Cathedral on Garden Road, the Po Lin Monastery on Lantau Island, the Temple of Ten Thousand Buddhas at Shatin and Wong Tai Sin Temple in Kowloon. The 26-meter tall, 220-ton Tian Tan Buddha at Po Lin is the world's largest outdoor bronze Buddha. One the Taleban would love to dynamite. An ideal setting for an Al Gore fundraiser. The hair-raising bus ride along the steep and narrow road to the Buddha takes the traveler past Christian monasteries co-existing off the same road, and reminds one of how different religions can co-exist harmoniously as they do in Hong Kong. On any day one can see Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Taoists and a variety of other traditional and new age believers all interact. They shop, eat, do business and play together. The God most Hong Kongers believe in is Mammon, the God of Gold, but Buddha, God and Allah also play a spiritual role.

Confucianism is not a religion. It embraces ancestor worship and in pure Confucianism there is no supernatural element involved. It is a political philosophy designed to create a stable society based on filial piety, a system where the older generation expects to be obeyed. The staunch Confucians were the literati who were the

ruling class. The nearest of these gentry in Hong Kong were the Tang clan who controlled the lands around Kam Tin in the New Territories. However, there were no literati living on Hong Kong Island when the British took over in 1841 and many of the population worshipped the old Earth Gods.

A giant park with a Christian theme is being built on Ma Wan Island. “Rainbow Paradise” was inspired by the tale of Noah’s Ark and is being funded by Protestant groups. They hope it will complement the Hong Kong Disneyland.

Robert Hendricks, the exuberant professor of religion at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, who was raised as a Lutheran, says: “In Christianity, we grow up to think in very moral terms: what to and what not to do. With the Tao, virtue is invisible. Virtue is energy, a force. According to the book, it is the creator of ten thousand things, it pushes you to grow and nurture yourself not through rules but according to your nature.”

Western religions base themselves on a negative attitude towards humanity – whether via the Christian notion of original sin or the Jewish contract with the Ten Commandments. Taoism, says Hendricks, “takes a more golden view of people. The Tao says that if people are left to their own devices, if they simply let their own nature take its natural course, then people will be actually good.”

Climbing the stairs towards the Tian Tan Buddha, in company with many people of different faiths – some come to pray and burn incense, others to sightsee – I couldn’t get out of my head how peaceful religious co-existence is in Hong Kong. It contrasts markedly with the religious conflicts in America and elsewhere. The mellow faces of the monks and initiates, clad in their saffron robes, swim tolerantly in a sea of Chinese and Barbarian faces of all colors and creeds.

When the monks’ oasis was threatened by a government mass transit redevelopment project that would bring a cable car and mega-tourist bazaar with bars and restaurants to their remote outpost, the monks threatened to close off the monastery grounds to the thousands of daily visitors for a week. The monks, strict vegetarians

who have succeeded in persuading local vendors not to even sell seafood in the vicinity, were horrified at the prospect of losing money from tourists chomping on Big Macs and chicken legs as they walked past the holy relics.

They took out full page ads in several Chinese-language newspapers asking the public to support their demand that the government reconsider the proposed development. The threatened closure and publicity worked. The government reconsidered the project.

These same saffron-clad monks shivered as they gaped in amazement at the snow spewed out by snow machines at the Euro Christmas 2000 display on a Hong Kong promenade. Children, many of whom had never seen snow, made snowmen and had snowball fights. European customs were on display and European foods served. Midnight mass was non-denominational. The Chief Rabbi, Muslim Mullah, and all Christian and non-Christian denominations were invited to participate. This was before 9/11.

Studying, the cheerful faces of locals and visitors alike as they enjoyed the Great Buddha or the snow, I couldn't help but reflect on how brutal religions have been and wonder why all religions cannot co-exist as peacefully as they do in Hong Kong. Why do Christians and Muslims have to continue their vengeful religious crusades in the 21st century? Why does religion have to continue being the root of all evil in the 21st century?

### ***Burning Religious Zeal***

Religion remains the root of much of the suffering and pain at the dawn of the new millennium. War, hunger, divorce, hypocrisy, illiteracy, prejudice and hatred. These anguishing issues with religious roots have to be addressed directly if we want everlasting solutions. Religion can be the most unifying force on earth instead of the most destructive.

How different are extreme Christian fundamentalists from Muslim fundamentalists? How different are Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell from Osama bin-Laden and the Taleban's leader Mullah Omar? Extreme Christian beliefs brought about the Crusades. Extreme Muslim beliefs brought on 9/11. Religious zealots embracing ideas that are dated and not in tune with the reality of the 21st century.

Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son, called Islam a "very evil and wicked religion". Pat Robertson said: "To think that Islam is a peaceful religion is fraudulent." Robertson went on to call the Prophet Muhammad "an absolute wild-eyed fanatic...a robber and brigand...a killer." Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Osama bin-Laden and Mullah Omar claim God has been insulted by those that do not adhere to their interpretation of the message of God. God's anger against America was the reason for the bombings of September 11, according to televangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. Osama bin-Laden and Muslim fundamentalists agree. Now who is on which side?

The Bible, Koran, American Constitution and Declaration of Independence express and echo the language and prophecies of the prophets and sages who recorded their messages of peace, harmony and understanding, not hatred and bigotry.

Why do mainstream religious teachings in America and the Muslim world instill fear of their own God and his damnation, fear of other religions, fear of mixed marriages and fear of co-existence? If I have to answer my own questions, I have to recognize that, for poor and working class people, with nothing else to brighten up dull lives in grubby places, sectarian religious organization is an excitement, something of a rush, a harbinger of violence and a definition of themselves. God, Christ and Muhammad were much more tolerant and understanding than their extremist self-serving apostles advocate to inspire their misguided followers.

How any of these extremists can implicate Allah or God in their extreme beliefs is absurd yet understandable. Governor Ventura tried to make this point in his Playboy interview. "I was commenting on the fact that organized religion gets misused a lot. In the hands of the corrupt, it can become a way of controlling people, when people with religious authority start to pretend they speak for God. Worse still is when corrupt people with religious authority also start courting political authority. The combination can be deadly." For a wrestler he makes more sense than most priests, and certainly more than career politicians. Some are so fiery and scalding one would think they must have been burned at the stake in a former life.

Hypo-Christians and hypo-Muslims, the extreme hypocrites in both

faiths, have to be removed from the current New World Disorder and put in their place if we are to have a functional 21st century. It is up to *We the Maids* to sweep them aside.

The picture of President George W. Bush standing next to a Muslim cleric and Jewish rabbi in Washington National Cathedral on the Day of Prayer and Remembrance for those killed on September 11 is what America is all about. Tolerance of all religions and beliefs. No religious extremes.

### ***Religion and Politics – A Lethal Combination***

In Hong Kong there is a separation between Church and State and different religious groups live harmoniously. People of all religions have been working together for over a century and a half. One's political beliefs and affiliation have no bearing on what is important – religious harmony and business.

Historically, religion, politics and business in America have been intertwined. Unfortunately, *We the Apathetic People* have paid the price. "The First Amendment offers the same protection for religious freedom – even the freedom not to be religious if we don't want to be – as it does for freedom of speech and thought. The First Amendment basically says that religion is none of the government's business," Governor Ventura reminds us. Atheists and Pagans are also protected under the First Amendment. Business, like politics, works best without the interference of the divine. Hong Kong is a divine example.

There has to be a clear-cut separation of religious and governmental authority. Feudal religious-political marriages of convenience have no place in the New World Order the 21st century promises. Is America a democratic republic or a Christian fiefdom?

The decision by Turkey's highest court in the last decade of the 20th century to ban the country's largest political party on the grounds of subversion was a positive step. The court ruled its political agenda sought to replace the secular order, created by the founder of modern Turkey Kemal Attaturk, with one based on Islam. The court also banned the leaders of the religious Welfare Party from all political activity. When the party renamed itself, and declared itself secular and promised not to mix religion with politics, it



was allowed to retain the political offices it won in the 2002 national election. Isn't it time America did the same?

To American Democrats, banning a party with a religious platform is undemocratic. In Turkey, Kemal Attaturk brought the rump of an empire out of decadence and humiliation and set in motion his vision of a secular and progressive nation. Attaturk abolished the Islamic Caliphate and replaced it with the Turkish Republic in 1923. He dissolved religious courts, secularized schools, replaced Arabic script with Latin script, replaced the fez with the homburg, adopted the Swiss civil code and granted women the right to vote. Isn't that what America's Founding Fathers had in mind? Isn't it the model all potential Islamic Republics should emulate?

The U.S. federal court was right to reject the Virginia-based Family Policy Network suit against the University of North Carolina for teaching Islam on the grounds it was unconstitutional for a publicly-funded university to do so. The Family Policy Network continuously lobbies for taxpayer dollars to fund its activities. A classic example of a white Christian religious pot calling Islam a black kettle.

The idea of a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to expand charitable choice is unconstitutional and a feudal regression. Why should any religious organization in America get federal funds? Why don't they provide food, jobs, shelter and education with all the tax-deductible donations they collect directly every Sabbath – and at every other opportunity – from *We the Apathetic People*?

To add insult to injury, the faith-based program bill proposed allowing religious groups that receive federal funds to discriminate in hiring and firing based on religious beliefs!

Religion should not be a department of state and used as a political or military tool to expand the interests of the state. There has to be a separation between church and state. There is no room for religious parties, or religious extremists who dictate a party platform, to play a role in any government in the New World Order. Not in the United States, Israel, any of its Muslim neighbors or any forward-thinking country. And just as important, religious organizations should be self-sufficient. They cannot and should not

be supported with taxpayer's money in the New World Order. *We the Maids* can no longer be taxed to clean up continued religious mistakes and failures.

### ***Married Priests***

Catholic priests who want to get married, and are open and honest about it, can be found by the thousands. Church bells in the opening year of the millennium rang the echoed marriage vows of Catholic Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo of Lusaka who "placed himself outside the church" by marrying. The 71-year-old Archbishop said God wants him and the Catholic Church to abandon the celibacy rule. The interfaith melodrama he created between the Catholic Church and the Unification Church when the Archbishop decided to leave his wife and return to the Catholic Church only highlighted the absurdity of celibacy.

Consider these terms in the 21st century: Padre and Grandpadre. In the Philippines, like all former Spanish colonies, padre, or father, has always had a double meaning when applied to priests. Many Latinos have holy blood. Spanish blood from a priest was an honor because it improved the lineage and looks. The most famous descendant of a priest is former first lady Imelda Marcos. "I don't understand what the fuss is to have a priest as an ancestor. It was something we took for granted," she said.

It gets better. When a secular priest tied the knot with his partner of 25 years, formalizing a relationship that has given them two children and two grandchildren, members of the 1,000-strong Philippine Federation of Married Catholic Priests attended the ceremony. Since married priests have no authority to solemnize a marriage, a Regional Trial Court judge administered civil rites. At the rate they are going, there won't be a priest left in the church to solemnize a marriage in the Philippines.

The Pope and the Vatican are dangerously out of touch with their priests and congregations. According to Father Ed Kelly, a non-practicing Irish priest based in Manila, "the majority of Catholics favor letting their priests marry. Surveys in Ireland put 82 percent in favor and in America it is 69 percent." How appropriate a number. Why isn't the church listening?

According to Justino Cabazares, the president of the Filipino chapter of the International Federation of Married Catholic Priests (IFMCP), about two-thirds of the priesthood there, some 4,000 of the 6,700 men, have a lover. Most love in secret, though in many countryside communities it is an open secret.

Why is the celibacy vow enforced more than the vow of chastity? Many priests throughout the Philippines and the Latino world are of the opinion that hypocrisy is an evil bigger than optional celibacy. They contend they can count on their fingers how many priests, at least in their diocese, are truly chaste and celibate. Is that any different in America?

Catholic priests everywhere are getting married. Not just in the Philippines. About 20,000 former priests in Spain and Italy are now married, according to Spanish and Italian organizations of married priests, and another 80,000 elsewhere have left the ministry to marry. God knows how many there are in America.

The Spanish Church – traditionally one of the most steadfast pillars of Catholicism – is rapidly running out of clerics, ordaining around 200 priests every year as 400 retire or leave, according to the weekly *Cambio 16*.

Celibacy became commonplace by about 300 AD., when the Spanish Council of Elvira mandated that bishops, priests and deacons who were married refrain from sex with their wives. Stricter Church laws were enacted by the First Lateran Council of 1123 and confirmed by subsequent councils. The crackdown was a response to widespread corruption, as priests and bishops openly took wives and had children who then inherited their property – thus taking land away from the Church. Celibacy has been mandatory for Catholic priests only since the Second Lateran Council in 1139. It was believed it would increase the number of candidates fourfold and would prevent priests from impoverishing the Church by leaving property to their children.

The child molestation-sex abuse victims of priests argue that priests and bishops who are sexually active with adults create a web of dishonesty in the Church. These men are reluctant to reveal wrongdoings by fellow clergy, including child molesters, for fear of being exposed themselves. Sexually active priests-heterosexuals,

pedophiles and gays living and protecting each other in a hypocritical web of divine heavenly deceit. Dean Hoge, a professor of sociology at Catholic University, in a 1985 study of college men, concluded that making celibacy optional, as it is for Eastern Orthodox and Protestant clergy, should be considered.

Alfredo Romualdez, a doctor and former Philippine health secretary, says: "Celibacy may pose some risk to health," claiming that chastity can increase the risk of cancer. Graham Giles of Australia's Cancer Council says that research shows that Roman Catholic priests are 30 percent more likely to get prostate cancer. It is not only the health of the priests at stake but the health and very survival of the Church. Who will administer the Catholic Church's last rites? According to a two-year study presented to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2000, more American priests died in 1999 than were ordained. As a result, 3,000 of America's roughly 19,000 parishes were left without a resident pastor and about 2,400 have to share one. The study also pointed out that the average age of priests in America is 57. Even more troubling, of roughly 27,000 active priests only 298 were under 30. The exodus from nunneries is even more spectacular.

### ***Sexual Abuses – Wired Apology***

A month doesn't seem to go by without reading about some case being settled somewhere by the Church or a court awarding a judgment against the church for child abuse by clergymen. Since 1978, over 3,000 Catholic priests have been accused of sexual assault in America alone. Maybe it's just the legacy of prospective Popes having their testicles checked by a young Cardinal, while seated in the sedia stercoraria on their coronation day, to confirm that the future Pope is a male after Pope Joan and her child were killed. More on Pope Joan later!

Church, or Canon, law, which is published in Latin, went through its last complete revision in 1983. It requires all cases of sexual abuse by priests to be referred to the Vatican alone instead of being handled locally. Historically, the Vatican distanced itself from such cases because it believed the problem was limited to America. Now that Austria, Australia, France, Ireland, Portugal and even Pope John Paul's Poland are embroiled in sex scandals the church

is acknowledging it is not just an American problem. Pedophilia and homosexuality are global Catholic problems.

Father Patrick O'Neill, a high-ranking priest in the Miami archdiocese and former University professor, was arrested and charged with soliciting sex after he pulled his Mercedes to a stop and propositioned a male undercover cop.

Phoenix Bishop Thomas O'Brien was under so much criticism for knowingly re-assigning known priestly sex offenders that he was forced to resign, not for his re-assignments, but because of a fatal hit-and-run. He left the scene of a traffic fatality after he killed Jim Reed.

In earlier days, like today, Catholic priests were merely transferred to other parishes. One of the older cases I enjoyed reading about, actually the first recorded case of sexual harassment, and the first where the woman won, occurred in the Philippines. Loreto Lucero, who was 16 in 1894, slapped Padre Santiago Perez, parish priest of Sta. Ysabel, Bulacan, and pushed him down the stairs of her father's house. He had made advances and used vulgar language, and she had the courage to express her indignation in positive action. She went to court and won. The friar was transferred to another town.

The Pope apologized to nuns and other people who have been sexually abused by Catholic clerics in his first address to the world via the Internet. He acknowledged the Church's failure to stop abuse and asked for forgiveness. Why hasn't he used the same strong words of apology addressed to all the innocent children who were abused and suffered because of the Church's shortcomings? To read that the Vicar of Christ "knows what's been happening in the U.S. but we don't think he needs to know all the gory details" is astounding. Why not? Is it because at the height of the sex scandals he truly represented the Church he led? Frail and sick?

The scarlet color of Cardinals' hats and robes represents blood, the willingness of the cardinals to make the ultimate sacrifice. What will their ultimate sacrifice be in the 21st century?

In Hong Kong priests that engage in pedophilia and are reported to the diocese get fired, suspended, or in the case of one minor

infraction, removed to duties not involving contact with children. The head of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong, Cardinal John Baptist Wu, said: "The diocesan authorities cannot and will not tolerate pedophile practices in any shape or form, whether of the serial or singular kind, least of all among those in the sacred ministry, in whom the faithful in particular and the public in general place a special trust." Police arrest the priests in question when the abuse becomes public. Isn't this what the Catholic Church in the Vatican and America should be saying and doing?

Kevin Sinclair, an FCC regular, broke the Hong Kong church sex story. While being debated at the Main Bar and compared to the injustices in America and the Vatican, Stuart Wolfendale regaled those gathered with a joke he had just heard from a friend in America with his best Irish accent.

Tommy Shaughnessy enters the confessional box and says, "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. I have been with a loose woman." The priest asks, "Is that you, little Tommy Shaughnessy?" "Yes Father it is." "And who was the woman you were with?" "I can't be tellin' you Father. I don't want to ruin her reputation." "Well Tommy, I'm sure to find out sooner or later, so you may as well tell me now. Was it Brenda O'Malley?" "I cannot say." "Was it Patricia Kelly?" "I'll never tell." "Was it Liz Shannon?" "I'm sorry, but I'll not tell her name." "Was it Cathy Morgan?" "My lips are sealed." "Was it Fiona McDonald then?" "Please Father, I cannot tell you." The priest sighs in frustration. "You're a steadfast lad, Tommy Shaughnessy, and I admire that, but you've sinned and you must atone." He gave Tommy penance and dismissed him. Tommy walks back to his pew and sits down. His friend Sean slides over and whispers to Tommy, "What'd you get?" Tommy said, "Five good leads."

More seriously, though, Catholic dioceses and their insurers have had to pay out billions of dollars to victims. The Church would like the world to think all this is a media-honed misconception, of course. But if officers of a corporation or a business were repeatedly found guilty of such offenses, the company would be banished from the community or forced into a bankruptcy court and required to restructure, and its officers would be jailed. Why should churches

be any different? Especially, since they receive our hard-earned tax dollars from the government. Tax exemptions do not exempt religious figures and their churches from criminal prosecution. Pedophile priests should not be sent to a different playpen. They belong in jail.

Former Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating resigned in June 2003 as head of the Church's sexual abuse oversight panel after his blunt criticism of the Church's attempts to thwart his group's inquiries. Keating compared some Church leaders to the Cosa Nostra for hiding information on the pedophile sex scandal. Yet several cardinals and bishops continue to suppress damaging information in spite of pledges in June 2002 to be more open.

The Massachusetts Attorney General, Tom Reilly, accused the Boston Catholic Church of perpetuating a "culture of secrecy". "The mistreatment of children was so massive and so prolonged that it borders on the unbelievable," Reilly said when he released his report in 2003 on a 16-month investigation into sexually abusive priests in the Boston archdiocese. The archdiocese's own records documented that 789 victims had come forward since 1940 with allegations of abuse against 237 priests – numbers that highlight the "inexcusable failure" of Church leaders to put a stop to the mistreatment. "When information from other sources is considered, the number of alleged victims who have disclosed their abuse likely exceeds 1,000," the report said. And that is just for the Boston area.

The report detailed a "culture of secrecy" within the archdiocese that was more concerned with protecting abusive priests and the reputation of the Church from scandal than protecting the children at risk.

The Catholic Church's Sexgate cover-up is more contemptible than Monicagate because the victims are young and innocent. The Church's refusal to recognize that the world has changed and that people are not as ignorant or gullible as they were in feudal times is just as pathetic and has to be registered loudly and clearly. Mel Gibson is to be applauded for criticizing the Catholic Church. "I believe in God," he told the newspaper *Il Giornale*. "My love for religion was transmitted to me by my father. But I do not believe in the

Church as an institution.”

Sex-offending priests should be treated no different than anyone else. The First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom does not protect or exempt priests who are pedophiles or sex criminals. It is not a liability shield behind which any church is allowed to hide any more. Men and women of the cloth of all religions can no longer be allowed to hide behind the facade or vestment of a church in the 21st century. The Catholic Church in America does not have diplomatic immunity. Priests should be treated no different than doctors, teachers and others who come into daily contact with children. They can no longer be exempted from any state mandatory reporting law in the 21st century.

### ***Breach of Faith***

Religious slush funds serve a myriad of purposes. Monsignor Emilio Colaiovanni, who lives in Rome and has counseled Pope John Paul, was charged with fraud and conspiracy by U.S. federal prosecutors because he pledged \$1 billion from the St. Francis of Assisi Foundation charitable foundation that he ran as collateral to Martin Frankel’s insurance scam. The Monsignor had his own slush fund set up with the \$40,000 he received from Frankel as the down payment for the additional \$5 million he was promised.

What about the suicide, murder and gay sex that belie the pomp and circumstance of the 500-year-old Swiss Guard? In their dated uniforms designed by Michelangelo, the private army is dedicated to ensuring the Pope’s personal safety. It arrived in Rome in 1506 to protect Pope Julius II from infidels. Today it is protecting itself from the events of May 4, 1998, when the bodies of the newly appointed commander of the guard, Alois Estermann, his Venezuelan wife and 23-year-old Vice-Corporal Cedric Tornay were found in the Estermanns’ Vatican flat.

The discovery of the body of Roberto Calvi, “God’s Banker”, found hanging on Blackfriars Bridge in London on June 15, 1982, has led investigators into the close-knit web of the Vatican’s criminal dealings with Italy’s prime ministers, bankers and mafia godfathers. The murdered body of Calvi, disguised to look like a suicide, led police investigators to the secretive right-wing Masonic lodge called Propaganda Due, or P2. Calvi was a member of P2 which has



been linked with Nazism and by some theorists to the assassination of Prime Minister Aldo Moro and the unexpected death of Pope John Paul I, both in 1978.

*Gone With the Wind in the Vatican* is an account of intrigue, homosexuality, money smuggling and corruption within the Vatican bureaucracy. Written by Father Morinelli, who worked in the Vatican, the book and writer clashed head on with Vatican censors.

“The book does not question the sanctity of Jesus Christ, the Eucharist or the Catholic Church,” Morinelli said. “It just points out that the Vatican is made up of men, who, like me, are flawed.” So flawed that they even refused to admit that the Vatican radio antennae may have spread cancer faster than religion. The residents of Cesano, a suburb north of Rome, were subjected to emissions from Vatican Radio transmitters that broadcast Roman Catholic programs to five continents. The Vatican, invoking its status as a sovereign state, refused to comply with Italian safety regulations until the Italian government threatened to cut off power to the station.

If the flaws of the Catholic Church are to be remedied in the New World Order, American Catholics have to take the lead, just as they did in the pedophile sex scandals. The American Roman Catholic Church is the third largest in the world. It has over 63 million members. It is unlikely that an American will be elected Pope. It is therefore up to *We the Maids* to sweep the Vatican clean of feudal ideals in the 21st century.

### ***The Reformers***

It is the South and Central American prelates along with the English, Dutch and Germans who are the reformers dealing with reality. They have in the past and will continue to do so in the 21st century.

Historical religious abuses and mis-steps are not limited to Catholics. Buddhist monks, Jewish rabbis, Muslim mullahs and men of the cloth of all religious beliefs are fallible human beings. In Japan a Buddhist priest was arrested for forging minutes of the religious corporation’s board meeting in order to assume the presidency.

The Taleban leadership in Afghanistan was a current prime time 21st century New World Disorder example of a religious one-hit wonder. They hanged television sets and draped trees with videotape

pulled from cassettes. Computers were “executed” on the spot with rifle butts to the monitors. The Taleban and technology were enemies from the start. Except when it came to air-conditioned SUVs. They were a lot cooler and faster than the camels and donkeys they were preaching everyone else should use. “Do you know why they don’t teach sex education and drivers education in Afghanistan the same day?” was a popular question circulating around the FCC Main Bar after the U.S. bombing raids on Afghanistan started to flush out Osama bin-Laden and Mullah Omar. “Because it’s too hard on the camels!”

Chevrolet Suburbans are Osama bin-Laden and Mullah Omar’s vehicle of choice and Toyota Land Cruisers are an acceptable backup. Preferably the ones with the smokestack-like air inductors running up the windshield pillars. The minimum cost is \$50,000 for the basic package – and then there are the extras to be tacked on. But, what the hell, like other religions the mosque and the believers will pay. Wade Hoyt, Toyota’s spokesman in New York, put the best corporate spin. “It is not our proudest product placement,” he said. “But it shows that the Taleban are looking for the same qualities as any truck buyer: durability and reliability.” What happened to the camels? Probably smoking them.

All religious leaders, regardless of their religion, succumb to human nature and temptations. Even their teachings cannot stop them from being human. So why do they insist everyone else should practice what they preach and cannot practice?

I have never been able to understand the logic of people who go to priests to confess or seek counseling for problems of the heart or family. How can unmarried, chaste priests, or surreptitiously unchaste priests for that matter, really understand confessions relating to sexual matters, personal family problems and the torment of extra-marital relationships? Do they really understand?

What is it going to take for *We the Maids* to sweep reform in to organized religion and force reform so that organized religion has the tools people need as we face the realities of the new millennium?

### ***Sex, Pill, Abortion, In-vitro and Cloning***

Abortion is a reality in both Hong Kong and America. In fact Hong

Kong has one of the highest abortion rates in the world. This is because of the Chinese cultural attitudes towards children born outside an acceptable family structure. As a result, only two percent of babies in Hong Kong are born outside marriage, compared to more than 30 percent in the United States. Abortion is the reason for the disparity in numbers.

The Pope and the Catholic Church's position on celibacy, sex, birth control, abortion, in-vitro fertilization and cloning have done more damage to the Church's relevance in the 21st century than anything else

The Catholic Church's ultimate excessive religious reach and interference beyond the bounds of basic human decency was its pronouncement condemning the raped Kosovar women who wanted to abort their unwanted Serb offspring.

The Vatican reiterated its condemnation of all such efforts by volunteers and international organizations, no matter how desperate the women were. "The 'morning after pill' does not exist," declared Monsignor Elio Sgreccia. "This is an abortion." Most of the Kosovar rape victims are Muslims, not Roman Catholics, but that detail doesn't alter the Church's stance. I hate to think what they will say and do now that the abortion pill RU486 has been approved by the FDA.

People in the Philippines, like their brothers and sisters in Latin America and the U.S., are too poor to follow the dictates of the Catholic Church to the letter, especially when it comes to contraception. If they listen to the church they won't be able to feed all their children. That is why there are so many abandoned street children in Catholic countries. The overriding pre-occupation to procreate more Catholics seems to override and obviate the concern that they may be poor and suffer. But then again, that fits in with the teachings of the Church. Listen, suffer and a better world awaits in the hereafter. Any wonder the masses welcomed Geri Halliwell, the Goodwill Ambassador for the International Advocacy Campaign for Reproductive Health Care, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women throughout the world, while the Church protested? Why is the Church doing nothing to house and feed the homeless and hungry children created by its own dictatorial practices? Not

just in the Philippines but in all Catholic countries in the New World Disorder?

Catholic Church leaders in the Philippines were outraged at the former Spice Girl's trip to promote safe sex and birth control. She was greeted at a Manila high school by adoring screaming crowds. "It was like sending Salman Rushdie as an ambassador of goodwill to a Muslim country," Monsignor Pedro Quitorio, spokesman for the Philippines Catholic Bishops' conference, said. What hypocrisy! Most Catholic Filipinas practice birth control otherwise their families would starve on the street!

The Catholic Church's teachings in Africa and the Catholic developing world banning the use of condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS by pronouncing condoms to be porous and the tool of Satan for spreading AIDS is reprehensible. The Church is consciously killing millions of innocent believers with its deceitful hypocritical propaganda. The Church's blind determination to ban all forms of contraception is not only unethical, but criminal.

On the flip side, the Catholic Church is opposed to in-vitro fertilization that some of its devout followers advocate and practice because they want children and cannot have them the "church's way". When it comes to cloning there is nothing to discuss. Kind of ironic that the foremost advocate and practitioner of cloning is an Italian Roman Catholic. In-vitro and cloning are issues the Church has to address and come to terms with as it must with birth control and abortion in the 21st century.

### ***Jerusalem***

Joseph Farah, an Arab-American journalist, reminds us that East Jerusalem was not captured from Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians during the Six Day War. In fact Arafat was not born in Jerusalem either. He was born in Egypt. Jerusalem was captured from Jordan's King Hussein. "The truth is that Palestine is no more real than Never-Never Land. The first time Palestine was used was in 70 AD when the Romans committed genocide against the Jews, smashed the Temple and declared the land of Israel will be no more. They promised from then on the land of Israel would be known as Palestine – a name derived from the Philistines, a Goliathian people conquered by the Jews earlier. Palestine has never existed before

or since as an autonomous entity. There is no language known as Palestinian. There is no distinct Palestine culture. Palestinians are Arabs, indistinguishable from Jordanians, Syrians, Lebanese or Iraqis. There has never been a land known as Palestine governed by Palestinians. It was ruled alternatively by Rome, by Islamic and Christian crusaders, by the Ottoman Turks and, briefly, by the British after World War I.”

Arthur Hacker was listening for a change. “What about Islam’s holy sites? There are none in Jerusalem. Shocked?” Farah continues. “You should be. I don’t expect you will ever hear this brutal truth from any one else in the international media. It’s just not politically correct. It’s not true that the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem represent Islam’s third most holy site. In fact, the Koran says nothing about Jerusalem. It mentions Mecca hundreds of times. It never mentions Jerusalem. With good reason. There is no historical evidence to suggest Muhammad ever visited Jerusalem.

“So how did Jerusalem become the third holiest site of Islam?” Arthur asked. “Muslims cite a vague passage in the Koran, the seventeenth Sura, entitled ‘The Night Journey’. It relates that in a dream or a vision Muhammad was carried by night to heaven ‘from the sacred temple to the temple that is most remote, whose precinct we have blessed, that we might show him our signs... In the seventh century, some Muslims identified the two temples mentioned in this verse as being in Mecca and Jerusalem. And that’s as close as Islam’s connection with Jerusalem gets – myth, fantasy, wishful thinking. Meanwhile, Jews can trace their roots in Jerusalem back to the days of Abraham,” is Farah’s response.

The Israelites sanctified the Jerusalem hilltop 3,000 years ago by building a temple on it. Jews continued to pray there until the Romans laid waste to Jerusalem. The Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock were built by the Arabs after they captured Jerusalem in the seventh century. They were situated on the esplanade, which had been built by the Jews to hold the Temple and its outer court.

Let’s not forget that the holiest of Christian sites are also in Jerusalem. Christ was arrested, tried and crucified there. Does that mean Jerusalem

should come under the sovereignty of the Vatican or other Christian state?

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the foundation of the first Temple built by Solomon. It is the holiest site for Jews. For there to be a long-lasting solution to the violence in the Middle East, we need to begin with fundamental truths.

### ***Religious Co-Existence***

Religions have a lot more in common than differences. They can and must learn to co-exist in the 21st century.

John Naisbit succinctly summarizes the similarities between Western Christianity and Islam. “While there appears to be a clash between Western Christianity and Islam, a special report on Islam in *The Economist* notes that they ‘have more in common with each other than either has with the Confucian world or the Hindu one...’ Both have their origins in religions that believe in a single God...’ Few westerners believe that God dictated the Koran, and no Muslim believes that Jesus was the Son of God. Those are important disagreements, but they sit alongside a large number of shared convictions. A Muslim and a westerner both believe, more clearly than most other people, in the idea of individual responsibility. They can exchange opinions about the nature of good and evil, or property rights, or the preservation of the environment, in something like a spirit of brotherhood. To say that the West is evil and materialistic, in comparison to Islamic belief, is incorrect. Both the Koran and Muhammad himself assumed a system based on individual enterprise and individual reward”.

Let’s not forget that the cornerstones of all three monotheistic religions, the Ten Commandments, Koran and Bible, all mirror each other: individual enterprise, judgment, harmony, spirituality and honesty.

Islam is the largest non-Christian religion in Europe, and the fastest growing.

Throughout Asia, including Hong Kong, there is a growing number of corporate leaders who have converted to Islam. A fact unknown to many is that Islam is generally not incompatible with trade and commerce. The overland Silk Road trading route from Mecca to China and the maritime Silk Road from Arabia to Canton via Hong

Kong brought many Arab merchants and traders who intermarried with Chinese and settled permanently. The Prophet Muhammad, himself a merchant trader in earlier days, has been reported to have said, “A truthful and trustworthy merchant will be gathered together with the prophets, martyrs and truthful.” Traders and businessmen of all religions co-exist harmoniously in Hong Kong. Why can’t they do the same in America and Europe?

### ***God’s Law?***

Religion cannot be practiced arbitrarily in ways that is devoid of people, place and circumstances. If we lived today according to “God’s Law” then the calendars of the local courts and the International Court of Justice in The Hague would be booked solid into the next century.

Is homosexuality an abomination (Leviticus 18:22)? Is eating shellfish an abomination (Leviticus 11:10)? Which is worse? Homosexuality or eating shellfish? Should men rape a young girl (Deuteronomy 22:28)? Should we burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice because it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord (Leviticus 1:9) even though it might upset our neighbors? Should we sell our daughters into slavery (Exodus 21:17)? Leviticus 25:44 states that we may buy slaves from the nations that are around us. Does that mean Canada and Mexico?

Exodus 35:2 clearly states one should be put to death for working on the Sabbath. Should we kill those we know who work on the Sabbath? Leviticus 20:20 states that we may not approach the altar of God if we have a defect in our sight. Does that mean all those wearing glasses and contacts should stay away? Leviticus 15: 19-24 prohibits contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness. How does one tell beforehand without offending? Especially if the woman wants the contact? Most people I know trim their hair, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Leviticus 19:27.

How should they die? Leviticus 11: 6-8 says that touching the skin of a dead pig makes one unclean. Does that mean football players have to wear gloves? What about farmers who violate Leviticus 19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as do their wives who wear garments made of two different kinds of thread

(cotton/polyester blend)? Now we know these farmers and their wives also tend to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we get the whole town together to stone them as per Leviticus 24:10? Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws as prescribed in Leviticus 20:14? God help rednecks.

The criticism Dr. Laura was subjected to in Canada for quoting the above verses of the bible on her talk show paled in comparison to the criticism Canadians were subjected to at the FCC Main Bar for her remarks. Michael Ceurvorst, a former U.S. Foreign Service diplomat who heads Democrats Abroad in Hong Kong, brought diplomatic calm and smiles to all faces when he quoted George Bernard Shaw and toasted America's northern neighbors.

"Mr. Shaw and cronies were tipling into the dawn hours, having like us dedicated the evening to discussing the influence of the Bible on the development of Western Civilization. After one more wee drop, Mr. Shaw observed summarily, 'When I think of all the evil that the book has wrought on mankind over the centuries, I truly despair of ever writing anything to equal it'."

"God made man in His image and likeness. Man being a gentleman and not to be outdone, has done the same for God," retorted a chorus of slightly tipsy Canadians.

### ***Homosexuality***

Rabbi Harold Kushner, a co-editor of *Etz Hayim (Tree of Life)* a new Torah and Commentary published at the dawn of the 21st century, who dealt with Leviticus 18:22, said the Torah's prohibitions on homosexual relations "have engendered considerable debate" and that the Conservative synagogues should "welcome gay and lesbian congregants in all congregational activities."

The rabbi's words echoed those of the Reverend Troy Perry, an excommunicated Pentacostal Minister I met in West Hollywood during my politically active days in the 1970s. The Reverend had gathered a dozen gay congregants in his living room in 1968 to sing hymns. Today his Universal Fellowship Metropolitan Community Church has over 44,000 members in 23 countries. The Church was founded a year before the Stonewall riot in New York



City that gave rise to the gay rights movement.

The Reverend Perry's political endorsement was highly prized by candidates seeking political office in Los Angeles. Listening to political candidates trying to convince the reverend why they would make a difference in the lives of gays brought the same cynical smirk to the reverend's face that I had expressed to the candidates in preparation for the meeting seeking the endorsement. Gays have been used by politicians and then abused and persecuted politically and religiously almost as genocidally as Jews.

This truth was brought to the forefront in 2003 when Gene Robinson, a homosexual, was appointed Anglican Bishop of New Hampshire, and Canon Jeffrey John, also a homosexual, was appointed Bishop of Reading in England. The resulting controversy merely reminded people that there are a large number of gay believers in all communities. Vicars, rabbis, mullahs, clergy of all religious denominations, just like their many gay congregants, politicians, soldiers, teachers...

America was settled and built by people fleeing religious persecution in Europe. The church of the Founding Fathers was the same Episcopal Church that appointed Gene Robinson Bishop of New Hampshire. Isn't it time America start honoring the founding principles of the Founding Fathers and accept all people regardless of their religious beliefs and sexual orientation? The Episcopal Church of the Founding Fathers also acted as the government in the puritan colonies during the British colonial days. Politics and religion were inseparable. That is why the Founding Fathers consciously and deliberately separated the Church from State in the Constitution. There is no room for politics in religion or religion in politics in 21st century America.

"Trembling Before G-d" is a film that describes the anguish of men and women trying to reconcile their homosexuality and Orthodox Jewish religion. The director, Sandi Simcha DuBowski, an Orthodox Jew who explored the plight of Orthodox Jews both in America and abroad, says that what he discovered and the film explores also applies to gay Catholics, Mormons and members of other religions worldwide. Is it right in the eyes of God for gays of any religion to continue to be subjected to religious discrimination in the 21st century?

**God?**

Does God exist or is he a figment of our imagination? Scientists in the new field of Neurotheology are seeking the biological basis of spirituality. What mystics call nirvana and what Christians describe as a state of grace, scientists are trying to explain in terms of neural networks, neurotransmitters and brain chemistry. The frontal lobe, parietal lobe and temporal lobe each play a role in spirituality. Could the flash of wisdom that came over Siddhartha Gautama – the Buddha – have been nothing more than his parietal lobe quieting down? Could the voices Moses and Muhammad heard on remote mountaintops have been just a bunch of firing neurons – an illusion? Could Jesus’ conversations with God have been a mental delusion? Andrew Newberg, a scientist studying religious experiences, says: “The brain is predisposed to having those experiences and that is why so many people believe in God.”

No matter what scientists find out and tell us, people of all religious beliefs will continue to believe what they want and find the arguments to support their convictions. That’s all right as long as they don’t try to impose them on others holding different beliefs, especially by force. Dogmatic beliefs are the cause of religious wars, fanaticism and intolerance. Including the bombings of September 11 and the resulting war on terrorism. Christian crusaders, Muslim martyrs, Hindu clerics and Jewish rabbis have all preached religious dogma that killed millions of innocents and destroyed many civilized contributions to human development. Who gave them the right to preach the absolute truth? *We the Apathetic People!* This human and cultural genocide must end in the 21st century.

**Judaism**

Judaism is based on monotheism, democracy and the teachings of Moses and the Talmud. The Chosen People believe people make their own heaven or hell here on earth. Not in the afterlife. God, the supreme power, can be whatever *We the People* want to believe he or she is.

The Ten Commandments Moses brought down from Mount Sinai after the Israelites left Egypt are the underlying cornerstones of the Talmud and the Torah – The Book Judaism revolves around, including the Old Testament. Jews read The Book, discuss and

debate its contents, meaning and what the various writers of the scriptures meant and whether interpretations are still relevant. Questioning and conversing about God in an inclusive participatory democratic process in pursuit of the truth are an integral part of Judaism.

The central premise of Judaism is the Jewish view that history was a meaningful story, providentially ordained, a cosmic drama of the unfolding design of the one, omnipotent God for His chosen people. Through His covenant with that people could be found guidance for right action, and it lay in adherence to His law. The breaking of that law had always brought punishment; it had come to the whole people in the deserts of Sinai and the waters of Babylon. This great drama was the inspiration of Jewish historical writing, in which the Jews of the Roman empire discerned the pattern which made their lives meaningful.

That mythological pattern was deeply rooted in Jewish historical experience. The Exile which began in 587 BC when the Babylonian conquerors took many of the Jews into slavery after the destruction of the Temple was the last crucial experience in the molding of the Jewish character and national identity.

The Persian overthrow of Babylon in 538 BC allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem. The Temple was rebuilt and Judah became a Persian province, a sort of theocratic satrapy, effective administrative power being in the hands of the priestly aristocracy, which provided the political articulation of Jewish nationhood until Roman times.

Different interpretations result in different Jewish groupings. Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Kabala and Jews For Jesus. Jesus and his disciples and followers were a group of Jews questioning and discussing The Book. A Jewish offshoot discussing God, love and tolerance of neighbors. They also questioned a totalitarian Roman Caesar and why Caesar is not God. Why God is the one and only Almighty, who is above all religions and beliefs. Including Rome. The Jewish offshoot became Christians. Their religion spread after Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and made it the religion of the Roman Empire.

The concept of property rights dates back to biblical times in the

land of Israel. Christian teachings adopted and modified the Jewish concept of property rights to suit the Church's needs. The Israelites' concept and definition were developed to protect their property from autocratic rulers, including their own, that they had been subjected to in Egypt and the desert. David S. Landes, in his scholarly study of property painstakingly detailed in *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, cites two examples, where the response to popular initiative is directly linked to the sanctity of possessions. "When the priest Korach leads a revolt against Moses in the desert, Moses defends himself against charges of usurpation by saying, 'I have not taken one ass from them, nor have I wronged any one of them'." (Numbers 16:15).

The tradition of property belonging to people distinguished the Jews from the other kingdoms around them and earned them the hostility of nearby rulers. Who needs such troublemakers? But it tended to get lost in Christianity when the community of faith became a church, especially once that church became the official, privileged religion of an autocratic empire that wanted to control property. "One cannot well bite the hand that funds," Landes correctly concludes.

The illiterate masses of the time outside the land of Israel knew nothing of the Jewish concept of property rights. The Church decided to keep it that way. The best way to do so was to let only "qualified" people, religious leaders and clerics, know the Bible. The Good Book, with its egalitarian laws and morals, its prophetic rebukes of power and exaltation of the humble, invited questions, challenges, and invited "indiscipline among the faithful and misunderstanding with the secular authorities". Only after censorship and elucidation could it be communicated to the laity.

It was not until the appearance of such heretical sects as the Waldensians (Waldo, c. 1175), the Lollards (Wiclif, c. 1376), Lutherans (1519), and Calvinists (mid-16th century) that the Judaic-Christian tradition entered explicitly into the European political consciousness. These "heretics" put the emphasis on personal religion and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular which reminded rulers that they held their wealth and power thanks to God, and then on condition of good behavior. This was, and continues to be, a very inconvenient

doctrine for the Catholic Church, its leaders and Islamic Republics and Saudi royals. Isn't it time *We the Maids* again sweep out the rulers who have forgotten this fundamental property right of ours?

### ***Islamic Democracy***

When Napoleon Bonaparte proclaimed the French revolutionary slogans of Democracy and People Power after he conquered Egypt no one had a clue about what he was talking about. Not many do today either. Islamic fundamentalism has been changing slowly since then. Very slowly. To put things in perspective, let's keep in mind that not one of the 22 Arab states represented at the Arab summit held in Beirut in 2002 had a democratically-elected government. Including those that walked out! Archaic totalitarian regimes govern one-fifth of the world's population and control roughly a quarter of our energy resources.

However, there is hope in the New World Order. Reformist Islamic intellectuals are openly talking about new interpretations of the holy word. Political power, they argue, should rest with *We the People*. The clerics should not believe that they have a mission from God to run peoples' affairs. Some even appear to question the Islamic republic's most sacrosanct concepts – and one has been put on trial in Iran for his audacity. But the rethinking has started. The phrase Islamic Reformation is now sometimes even heard in Iran. Reformasi has also been heard loudly and publicly in Muslim Indonesia and Malaysia. These non-Arab Muslim countries, with their Asian brothers and sisters in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, are Islam's center of gravity. They are home to over 60 percent of the world's Muslim population. A Muslim population that is moderate, tolerant and becoming democratic.

The Islam practiced by the Taleban was an extreme mixture of religion and politics recognized by only three Muslim countries. "The whole policy of the Taleban was opposed by the vast majority of Muslim and Arab countries," Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League, said, "so the cause of supporting bin-Laden and so forth by the Afghan regime was a strange cause..."

The tiny Arab state of Qatar adheres to the same Wahabbi strain of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia. Yet it has managed to modernize the practice. Alcohol is openly consumed, women drive, vote and

run for office and its Al Jazeera TV station openly criticizes Arab leaders.

In the Muslim world, however, only 23 percent of countries are democratic. Eleven of the 47 countries that are predominantly Muslim are democratic. "Since the early 1970s, when the third major historical wave of democratization began, the Islamic world, and in particular its Arab core, have seen little evidence of improvements in political openness, respect for human rights and transparency," concluded the Freedom House survey, *Freedom in the World 2001-2002*.

"In countries where there is an Islamic majority, there is just one free country, Mali, while 18 are rated partly free and 28 are not free," the report said. The most democratic nations after Mali are Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey and Morocco.

In the final years of the last millennium, 100 Arabs from 15 countries did meet, at great danger to themselves, to send a cry for Arab rights to the world, which eagerly avoided it, and to their own people, those who somehow get word despite censorship and the religious police.

The statement deals bravely with the "grim" truth that even the few scraps of liberties Arabs do hold are declining. Saudi Arabia and some Gulf States, it says, lack even the symbols of democracy – no constitution, parliament or modern legal system. Countries that had made progress are back-peddalling – Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan. In Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Bahrain there are "massive and dangerous human rights violations". Only Morocco got some praise for a "relative improvement" this past decade. A present for the host but a very conditional one.

The statement attacked armed Muslim groups for physical and intellectual terrorism. Going further, the signatories denounced regimes that used "Islam's specificity" as an excuse to reject reform. This was an overt attack on fundamentalism.

Is it because of religion that Islam has so miserably failed to create democracy and tolerate human rights? The Crusaders and the Catholic Inquisition acted in a similar spirit, but this kind of fanaticism gradually became less fashionable in Europe as the Enlightenment and modern science began to undermine traditional religious

certainties.

Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and particularly Protestantism often overcame bigotry and the calls for eyeball-plucking in their own pasts and have produced representative government through debate as well as war. Isn't it time Muslims, American-Muslims in particular, peacefully bridge the misperception of their fellow Muslims? Isn't it time that they share their knowledge and benefits of balancing the best of Islam and other civilizations? Isn't it time they actively engage in overcoming the propaganda of the extremists?

Listening to Fareed Zakaria, Editor of *Newsweek International*, speak to the Manhattan Institute For Policy Research about his book *The Future of Freedom* at the Harvard Club in New York City on May 29, 2003, right after America's "victory" in Iraq, I decided that democracy and Islam are compatible if allowed to develop the Islamic way. After his lecture, I had the pleasure of chatting briefly with Fareed and asked him why he thought America's policy-makers don't understand that their policies are misunderstood and misinterpreted in the Muslim world and why they unwittingly contribute to America's sad state of affairs with Muslims by not introducing democracy in an acceptable way. "Americans, the Christian world in general, forget that Islam and the Muslim world never had a Pope against whom kings and royalty could rebel to bring about a reformation the way they did in Europe," Fareed replied as Lawrence Mone, the President of the Manhattan Institute, reminded Fareed we had to move on to the next room for dinner.

The Papacy allowed the kings in the Christian world to rebel and the reformation to flourish. The Ayatollahs in Iran created the moral and religious equivalent of the Papacy and created an Islamic Reformation by the people instead of royalty. U.S. policy-makers and the Muslim monarchs and dictators America coddles should take serious note of this reality. Orderly and non-violent change will come to the Muslim world when the Western equivalent of either a constitutional monarchy or a religious equivalent of the Papacy, as was the case in Iran, are in place which will allow for an orderly reformation and transition to democracy.

Democracy and Islam can co-exist in the New World Order. Not only in America, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Turkey and Qatar, but

throughout the entire Muslim world, including the Arab Middle East. Jordan is a fledgling example. The 2003 parliamentary election saw 25 to 30 parties compete and a higher voter turnout than America. Nearly 59 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. Granted that democracy in a Muslim country can be a double-edged sword. It can bring extreme fundamentalists to power – it almost happened in Algeria and some argue it has already happened in Turkey. It happened in Pakistan in the 2002 parliamentary elections where Islamic fundamentalists won 48 seats and formed a ruling coalition with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party.

In a young Muslim democracy it is inevitable that extreme Islamic fundamentalist parties will win office. That is a short-term sacrifice that is much more desirable than military or monarchical dictatorships. Islam's democratic nature is all inclusive. In time the moderates will prevail as they are doing in Iran.

"No one has a divine right to rule," Iran's Mohammad Khatami said, taunting the theocrats who claim they do. Khatami's election twice as President of Iran by 80 percent or more of the votes cast shows that democracy exists and can prevail even in closed Islamic societies. This was confirmed in the parliamentary election of March 2000 when the reformers took control of Parliament. Even the grandson of the late Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini, Sayyid Hussein Khomeini, welcomes the long-awaited freedoms democracy can bring. He even went so far as to welcome U.S. intervention in Iran to bring about democracy. He labelled Islamic theocracies as misguided.

The reformers are up against the wall from conservative mosque pressure but in Iran there has always been a balance to be held between the secular ruler and the mosque. The Shah allowed it to be skewed radically. The theocratic mullahs are repeating the Shah's blunder. If a balance can be found again, Iran is set to become a regional power and alternative beacon of secular democracy to Turkey's for the Arab Middle East to emulate. Indigenous and established by popular mandate instead of being imposed by force as was attempted in Iraq.

In Muslim Malaysia, the Muslim world's first truly multi-racial



and sectarian party, The People's Justice Party (PKP) – a cross-section of Malaysian society with Muslim clerics, Indian workers, Chinese businessmen and Eurasian professionals – was formed in 2003 and can be the model for the rest of the Muslim democratic world.

India, with the second largest Muslim population in the world, has a Muslim president because of its secular democratic framework. Over a billion people with a bewildering range of differences spanning religion, ethnicity, culture, language and caste are coming to terms with the forces of modernity and globalization in a participatory political process.

Benjamin Barber, author of *Jihad vs. McWorld*, wrote: "In the long run, war cannot defeat terror alone because violence cannot defeat fear. Only democracy can do that."

U.S. foreign policy was a major contributor to the quashing of democracy in the Muslim world, a result of its confused petro-dollar policy that conveniently fused with its Cold War policy.

Political Islam became a convenient tool of American foreign policy to fight communism. Saad Mehio, a regular contributor to *The Daily Star* in Lebanon and *Al Khaleej* in the United Arab Emirates, correctly points out that: "The alliance between Western democracies and local despots, whether Saudi royals or Saddam Hussein in his early years, had two results: the destruction of democratic openness in the Arab world, and the obliteration of any chance for a liberal Arab nationalist movement that could act as a bridge to the modern world."

This misguided and shortsighted foreign policy not only brought fear to America's shores, but quashed democratic movements in the Muslim world. *We the Maids* have to Hoover out this oil-colored policy in the New World Order and sweep in democracy and American values.

Let us not forget that the Athenian ideal of self-rule once had an uncertain hold in the world beyond a handful of Western European nations, America, Canada, Japan, India, Australia and New Zealand. Only a generation ago, Spain, Portugal and even Greece were ruled by the same sort of dictators that ruled Africa, Latin America,

Asia and the Communist world.

Americans faced similar doubts about the universality of democracy in Japan after World War II. There was little in Japanese history that led experts to believe it was ready to embrace democracy after a suicidal war of conquest similar to the one embarked upon by Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait. But just as Japan did, Iraq and its nearby desert sheikhdoms will and can embrace democracy on their own terms, not America's. Even conservative Saudi Arabia has reluctantly announced it will hold municipal elections in the future. Freedom of expression is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That doesn't mean that democracy can be parachuted or bombed into a country overnight. It takes time and education for democracy to take root in any culture. It evolves and builds according to each country's unique traditions and values.

### ***Fear of Democracy***

The Saudi government, through various charities including U.S.-based charities, has continuously funded terror and anti-Semitic hate groups because of its inherent fear of democracy. They funded anti-Semitic groups in America in the hope they could break down American support for Israel. After the fall of communism, the Saudis took over funding the most militant terror organizations for direct attacks against Jewish and Palestinian supporters of the peace process. Oliver North wrote in his autobiography that every time he tried to do something about terrorism, he was told to stop because it would embarrass the Saudi government.

The Saudi government secretly funded al-Qaeda, Hamas and Islamic Jihad for two reasons: the destruction of the State of Israel and the prevention of the formation of an independent Palestinian State. Hamas and Islamic Jihad were specifically chosen and funded by the Saudis because of their willingness to undermine Arafat's Palestinian Authority. The Saudi goal is to create such animosity between Israel and the Palestinian Authority that it would wreck any chance for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Their tactics specifically called for the intimidation or murder of those Palestinians who were willing to work with Israel for peace. The covert Saudi network funded the murder of fellow Muslims

for the crime of wanting to create the first democratic Arab state. Whatever harm the Israelis may have done, they did build an excellent public education system, including several universities, for the benefit of their Palestinian neighbors. That was a problem for the Saudi Wahabbis.

The government of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt is also afraid of democracy because it will bring an end to his lucrative family business. Like other dictators in the Arab world he is grooming his son to take over as president. The fact that America has kept him in power at the expense of U.S. taxpayers is an embarrassment. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Egyptian Mohammed Atta led the kamikaze attack on September 11 because of his anger at America's support of Mubarak's repressive dictatorship in Egypt.

September 11 and the harsh prison sentence handed down by an Egyptian court against American human rights activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim for his criticism of the repressive Mubarak regime are 21st century reminders of why America has to fight for and defend democracy in the Arab world if it is to be respected there in the new millennium. Even if democracy yields some extreme Muslim governments, this is a short-term risk worth tolerating. Iran has shown us that time and education lead to moderate democracies.

The literacy rate in the Arab world is below 50 percent. In Israel it is 97 percent. Israel is the only place in the Middle East where an Arab woman can vote. In 50 years, Israel has created the first Arab class to be exposed to democracy, literacy and Western values. To the Saudis and Egyptians, a democratic Palestinian nation would be a cancer in the Arab world, a destabilizing example of freedom that would threaten Arab dictators everywhere. Next to the Jews, the House of Saud and Mubarak hate the Palestinians the most.

### ***Open Mind***

My parents decided, because of their different religions, to expose me to both of theirs and those of our Muslim and Orthodox Christian neighbors and let me make up my own mind. Consequently, I believe I am a little more open-minded and receptive to honest religious discussions and the pros and cons of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. I went to Anglican Sunday school and church and Jewish temples, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, depending

on where I was. Turkish neighbors took me to the local mosque. I celebrated both Christian and Jewish holidays. Christmas and Hanukkah were just a rolling holiday.

My father's family tree has been traced to 600 AD Sweden where my forefathers were Vikings who marauded, raped and pillaged Europe. From then on the family moved wherever there was a good fight to be fought or an army to modernize, from Germany to Russia. My father was born in Russia.

My mother's family tree has been traced to the Tribes of Israel and specifically the tribe of Cohanim – the Jewish priesthood, founded by Moses' older brother Aaron. Her family fled the various wars and pogroms everywhere and wound up in Russia where her father was a textile merchant and local lay rabbi. Like my father she was also born in Russia.

Both fled the Bolshevik revolution. My mother's family wound up in Palestine and my father in England. He was sent to Palestine with the occupying British forces to fight the "terrorist Zionists" and my mother worked for Israel's independence. They met and as they say the rest is history – and collaboration.

Growing up in Cyprus and Israel, I was raised on religious war stories going back to biblical times. Vikings, Alexander the Great, Muhammad, Saladin, Attaturk, Phoenicians, Crusaders, Romans, Cleopatra, Ottomans and modern day Israeli-Arab and Greek-Turkish conflicts. I experienced first hand the horrors of religious conflicts. I read the romanticized versions of many religious wars. My parents, friends, teachers, priests, Muslim clerics, rabbis and neighbors, Greeks, Turks, Arabs and Israelis, all had self-serving biased interpretations. They all repeatedly fought over and conquered and recaptured Cyprus and the Holy Land, the land of Israel.

Because Cyprus is so strategically situated in the Mediterranean, it has experienced most religious and political trends that have blown across the region.

The Byzantine and Crusader walled cities of the Middle East are all around. They were built upon and modified by each conquering civilization, especially Muslim and Christian. Walking to the beach always involved circumnavigating the walls of the "Old City".

The story- telling about the history of each city and the region have different versions and interpretation depending on whether told by a Turk, Greek, Arab, Israeli, Bedouin or European. The Indian and Pakistani tailors and merchants had their own saucy take on history.

The war in Kosovo between Orthodox Serbs and Muslim Kosovars reminded me of what happened in Cyprus between Orthodox Cypriot Greeks and Muslim Cypriot Turks, with the support of Greece and Turkey respectively. Ethnic cleansing took place in Cyprus in 1963 when the Greek Cypriots cleansed neighborhoods of Turkish Cypriots. The religious hatred between the two groups is passionate and unswerving.

Stories of Serb and Kosovar boys disappearing reflect the experiences of Greek and Turkish neighbors who all had similar stories of military age children disappearing. Children I played with while we were growing up were ethnically cleansed.

Story-telling and backgammon were the primary pastimes in the fifties and sixties in the Middle East as TV was still relatively new. Few people had access to one. We took long walks, hitchhiked and went on camping trips for recreation through the Negev and Sinai deserts, visiting the Dead Sea, Mount Sinai, the alleged Burning Bush, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Masada, Galilea and all holy sites in between. We explored, learned religious histories and communicated with each other. On street corners, bazaars and homes. With no TV or Internet we had no choice. Shouldn't we try to plan more quality time with our children teaching them history, geography, religion and positive story-telling – or do we just leave them to Star Wars, the chaos of the dot.com world and the fantasies of Harry Potter?

Camping in a desert for several days is a cathartic experience. Swimming in the Sea of Galilee, River Jordan, waterfalls of Ein Gedi, the Dead Sea and the Red Sea with all its underwater wonders, one can understand why the roots of Judaism, Islam and Christianity lie under the sifting sands and gentle waters of the warring Middle East.

### *Spiritual Search*

Jedi is the mystical faith followed by some of the central characters in the Star Wars films. More than 70,000 Australians upset Australia's statistics agency by identifying their religion as "Jedi." How many Americans do? The Star Wars mania is a liturgy of Asian mythology for people seeking a better life. A mish-mash of recycled comic strips, dreary Saturday-morning serials and half-baked mysticism and mythology for a generation alienated and spiritually lost. Americans are spiritually starved thanks to their churches and to religious leaders they cannot understand or relate to.

Maybe that is why the 20th century ended with a global religious revival. Search and convert missions. Take all prisoners. Religion is offering "refuge" and "identity" and offers answers to needs lost in this drug trip called "post-industrialization", "service industry", and "information highway". More broadly, the religious resurgence throughout the world is a reaction against secularism, moral relativism, self-indulgence and a reaffirmation of the values of order, discipline, work, mutual help and human solidarity. Religious groups meet social needs left unattended by families and state bureaucracies.

Parents who grew up in secular homes are sending their children to religious schools. They are seeking moral guidance for their children. Adults of all denominations are turning away from secular classes. Affiliated schools of all religious denominations are turning students away!

Young people today are rebelling by seeking refuge in religion. To grab them, religions are reviving the ancient practices, exploring Gregorian chants, Kabala, the Latin Mass. Our children are looking for their religious roots. Tradition. The truth. Hell, John Lennon and Paul McCartney found each other and the truth having met at a church in Liverpool as searching lost teenagers.

Money and materialism cannot buy individual fulfillment. Ever see an armored truck follow a hearse?

Maybe that is why alternative New Age religions reviving ancient Hindu and Buddhist sex practices such as Tantra are gaining popularity again. Who says one is limited to practicing traditional single-deity worship? After all, religious freedom is guaranteed to all

by the Constitution. Tantra is Goddess worship that evolves around sacred sex. It is definitely less violent and more loving. How you differentiate between a sacred orgasm and a secular one has got to be worth finding out! If we are to be tolerant of all religious practices in the new millennium, we must allow others to pray to any God or Goddess they choose. Tolerance, understanding and love is the cornerstone of all major religions and the American Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

Tantra, like Confucianism, is not a religion. Nevertheless, like Islam it is gaining followers among Americans at an astonishing rate. Tantra made its first splash in America in 1981. Its chief apostle was the Oregon commune leader known as Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh. Many today in America see the mix of sex and New Age cachet as an irresistible selling point to Americans shedding their inhibitions and willing to treat their sex lives like their tennis games – something to be worked on, preferably with the help of a pro.

The Baha'i faith founded in the 1800s is also gaining followers in the U.S. It emphasizes racial unity, even to the point of encouraging interracial marriage. Isn't this what every religion in our New World Order should be doing?

Maha Kumbh Mela saw many American celebrities and the Dalai Lama join 25 million Hindu pilgrims in the opening year of the millennium in India purifying themselves in the River Ganges. The event takes place every 12 years. The 21st century dawned with the 144th-year alignment of the planets.

While celebrities embrace Hinduism, many Hindu Dalits – or Untouchables – are escaping from the clutches of their religion to Buddhism. They change religion and names to escape the caste system. Ram Raj, leader of the Dalit group, the Confederation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Organizations, said: "I am walking out of Hinduism because the 3,000-year old caste system will never allow me any respect or dignity. There is no future for us in it." Shouldn't more of *We the Maids* be questioning the organized religion we know and compare it with what we really think?

### ***Religious Revival***

Hong Kong, like America, is experiencing a religious revival. More and more people are converting and re-prioritizing from Mammonism to religion. Money is no longer the only god. Buddhists, Taoists, Mormons, Muslims and Jews are seeing their numbers rise. Falun Gong, Christian Scientists, Baha'i and numerous New Age spiritual groups are also feeling the upsurge. But, then again, Hong Kong and America have always been spiritual. They are the front lines of peaceful religious expansion in the 21st century.

Hong Kong is still a missionary launch pad. Not just for China but Asia. In Asia, Christianity is also emerging as one somewhat surprising religious option. David Barrett, editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, estimates that around eight percent of Asia's population is Christian. Each day some 25,000 Chinese join the Protestant faith. Three new churches open every two days. One of the major factors in the growing number of converts is the film *Jesus* which has been translated into 830 languages and seen by over five billion people, more than have seen *Gone With The Wind*, *Titanic* and *ET* courtesy of the missionary zealots from the Campus Crusade for Christ International.

Christianity claims nearly a third of the world's population as adherents. Most of the credit goes to women. Christianity's appeal for women was a major reason that it grew so rapidly in competition with other religions of the Roman Empire. Then, as now, most Christians were women. The new religion offered women not only greater status and influence within the church but also more protection as wives and mothers. Many became church leaders. We saw it happen again in the late 20th century in the Soviet Union after the collapse of communism. Women, young and old, flocked to join convents and the church even though many do not initially believe in God. They seek His sanctuary from the harsh realities of life.

There were women priests and bishops in the first five centuries as well as cross-dressing saints, according to Peter Stanford in *The She-Pope*. Shades of *Yentl*, the 1983 movie in which Barbra Streisand plays a Jewish girl who disguises herself as a man to learn the Talmud. If the Roman Catholic Church in the middle



of the ninth century (853-855) was headed by Pope Joan, a woman disguised as a man as Stanford claims in *The She-Pope*, why can't women be priests in the 21st century?

Chaucer's Wife of Bath was right on when she said, "Christ was a maid, and yet shaped like a man." The church has continuously reinforced the idea that women are inferior, and scare the hell out of men to believe, fear and deny the very qualities Jesus promoted.

Women were the first to recognize and accept Christianity as disciples, prophets, and the first to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Nevertheless, the macho world of the first few centuries after Jesus died did everything to suppress and deny the role of women. So what else is new? Robert McElvaine, a professor of history at Millsape College, focuses on the fact that "although three of the Gospels plainly state that the risen Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, and women are prominently mentioned throughout Gospel accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection, Saint Paul's account of the first Easter and its aftermath sounds as if it took place in a men's club."

The church also protected children from the whims of tyrannical fathers. Under Roman law, fathers could and often did commit infanticide. Female babies were especially vulnerable because they were nothing but an expense. Sound familiar?

Over the past few years, Islam has become one of the fastest growing religions globally. Many adherents in the United States are more devoted to their religious practices than those in their homelands because they studied and embraced the Koran while in refugee camps waiting to come to America. No different from Mike Tyson when he was in jail.

In the United States, Muslims in the not too distant future will outnumber Jews. One critical reason why, and a point to keep in mind, is that of the three monotheistic religious faiths it makes the least demands on the newly converted at the beginning. Great marketing. Once hooked, reel them in. About half the Muslims in the United States are African-Americans. Only 12 percent are Arabs. The rest are Asian, Anglo and Latino. It is ironic that it was usually Arab traders who captured and shackled their forefathers and delivered them to the slave ships in West Africa.

The language of choice of Latino Muslims is Spanish. Mariam Montavio explains why. "I had a lot of problems with the church. One Bible says one thing, and another Bible says something different."

Scores of Latinos throughout the U.S. – specifically in New York, New Jersey, Chicago and Miami – have fled the church of their birth and embraced Islam as their newfound faith. Women converts to Islam outnumber men by four to one. Islam has adherents throughout Latin America and the Caribbean as well, with especially strong followings in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Panama.

A 1998 Georgetown University study of people aged 20 to 39 found that eight percent of the Latinos had joined another denomination or religion. Of those, at least 65 percent left for the evangelical Protestant groups, Pentecostal churches or Mormonism. A smaller percentage accepted other religions, including Islam and Buddhism.

Mark Twain's proposed solution for missionaries at the turn of the century still holds true today.

"Let us import American missionaries from China, and send them into the lynching field," he wrote.

"With 1,511 of them out there converting two Chinamen apiece per annum against an uphill birth rate of 33,000 pagans per day, it will take upward of a million years to make the conversions balance the output and bring the Christianizing of the country in sight of the naked eye; therefore, if we can offer our missionaries as rich a field at home at lighter expense and quite satisfactory in the matter of danger, why shouldn't they find it fair and right to come back and give us a trial?"

"The Chinese are universally conceded to be excellent people, honest, honorable, industrious, trustworthy, kind hearted, and all that – leave them alone, they are plenty good enough just as they are; and besides, almost every convert runs the risk of catching our civilization. We ought to be careful. We ought to think twice before we encourage a risk like that; for, once civilized, China can never be uncivilized again..."

With the growth of Islam in America today his call rings truer than ever if we are to believe the Christian extremists. Moreover,

if America is to continue pursuing its role of terrorist exterminator and global peacemaker in the religious conflicts of the 21st century, it has to first get its religious house in order.

In the wake of the Catholic Church's sex scandals in America, it has to heed Twain's admonition if it wants to stop closing rural churches and maintain enough priests to tend to its flock.

### ***Shamans and Virgin Dragon Lady***

Following the rise of Chinese-style capitalism, China like America has become a nation of spiritual seekers. The Communist Party advocated atheism because Marxists regarded religion as "the opium of the people."

The shamanistic religion called Dongba boasts the last living hieroglyphic language known as Naxi. It is a Tibeto-Burman language whose unique script has 2,400 characters and a 1,000-year recorded history. It is a nature-worshipping faith that believes the Earth's original people were not living "righteously" if they chopped down trees and polluted waters. Such activities would prompt angry gods to send down floods to wipe out the population. In the old days, anyone who cut down a tree near a river was ostracized from the village until he planted an orchard to replace it.

The shamans dance to the beat of drums, cymbals and conch horns to pay homage to the gods. The robed priests dance together stooping forward and rearing back, twirling to the trance-like rhythm much like Native-Americans. Young helpers wave burning branches of spruce to purify the air. Farmers line up to collect holy branches they will burn to ward off evil.

The Black Dragon Pool Temple in Zhenchuan was built around a natural spring during the Ming Dynasty, nearly 500 years ago. The story of the temple's founding is tied to another traditional belief: an immaculate conception and the birth of five dragon kings.

A maiden, the story goes, was washing clothes by a creek when she spied a peach bobbing downstream. She ate it and found herself pregnant. Sound familiar? Ultimately, she gave birth to five dragons – black, green, yellow, red and white – that emerged from her mouth, nostrils and ears.

The maiden was proclaimed a goddess – the Niang Niang goddess – and became a symbol of fertility. The Black Dragon made his home in the valley that ultimately took his name. Thousands of farmers, farmers’ daughters, mothers, nephews and nieces make the pilgrimage to pray and burn incense at China’s Bethlehem.

Robert Hendricks reminds us that Chinese religion can be classified as a series of “folk religions”. One does not “join” them or go on certain days. “Instead, there are core beliefs. You are raised in these beliefs. The Taoism of the Tao temple isn’t the same as the original philosophy. That I suppose is true for every religion.”

### ***Being Honest***

Historically, intolerance was dictated “by the fears of the clerical hierarchy, by their distaste for the findings and paradigms of a science that negated religious doctrine,” David Landes reminds us. As the English chemist and Unitarian minister Joseph Priestley put it, the pope, in patronizing science, “was cherishing an enemy in disguise”, for he had “reason to tremble even at an air pump, or an electrical machine”.

Thomas Cahill, the author of *The Hinges of History* series and *Pope John XXIII*, asks what changed Christianity? How did Christians learn the virtue of tolerance? “Centuries of bloody religious wars and persecution finally convinced most Christians that there must be a better way to organize society, a way that did not involve quite so many burning bodies, human charnel houses and corpse-strewn battlefields. The slow germination of this revolution in consciousness can be traced at least to the 18th century, toward the end of which a country finally emerged – America – that officially refused to play the old game of whose religion was true. It took a generously agnostic view of religious truth: you may believe what you like, and so may I, and neither can impose belief on the other.” Isn’t it time *We the Maids* sweep this constitutional cornerstone clean to make sure it is not forgotten in the 21st century?

We’ve come a long way since 1600 when Giordano Bruno, a defrocked priest from Naples, was burned at the stake for espousing, among other things, his belief that there might be other worlds and other life-forms beyond Earth. The U.S. government still does its best to belittle that view, even though it spends billions of dollars supporting

NASA's quest to find life on other planets. In 1633 Galileo-Galilei championed the Copernican view that the Earth revolves around the sun, and is not the center of the universe. This "heretical" assertion brought him into conflict with the Roman Inquisition which forced him to appear and, under threat of torture, recant his opinions. He refused and spent the last years of his life under house arrest.

Father Tissa Balasuriya was excommunicated by the Vatican for denying the Catholic dogma of original sin and because he also denied the immaculate conception, that Mary was a virgin and that her body was assumed into heaven after death. Significantly, he also questioned papal infallibility. Should creative religious leaders like Bruno and Father Balasuriya be excommunicated for being honest and creative and saying what they believe is in the best interest of the church?

Leonardo Boff, a Franciscan friar in the Brazilian Catholic Church, clashed with the Vatican and was also punished. "Human rights should apply within the church," he stated. "I strongly question the church as an institution. It is a vestige of feudalism. It claims to know the absolute truth, and to have a monopoly on salvation. I feel I work within the Christian ideal. The hierarchy is one thing, another is the church as a community of the faithful. I am completely comfortable with the community of the faithful. I define myself more as Franciscan Catholic than Roman Catholic. Never forget, Saint Francis was a layman, he wasn't a priest or part of the hierarchy. This is possible within the Christian faith," he said.

"The great theme of our day is not about the future of Christianity or the future of the church, but the fate of the planet, and of humankind. And by liberating the poor, everyone will achieve liberation. For 20 years we have worked among the poor who live off scraps in a garbage dump in Petropolis [outside Rio]. The Vatican is frightened of this approach, because there is a part of the church that is an accomplice to this unjust social order. We want to break that complicity. One of our errors was that we concentrated heavily on politics and economics."

If Catholics like Father Tissa Balasuriya and Franciscan Leonardo Boff are excommunicated why weren't Hitler and his Catholic

Nazi henchmen? Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler, Bormann were all Catholics. How about the Catholic primate of Germany who ordered the Requiem sung after Hitler's suicide? Why are their names still on the rolls of the Catholic Church? The Catholic Church had no compunction in excommunicating every Communist party member after World War II ended. Why not Nazis? Why did the Vatican and the Catholic Church compound their offense by offering the Nazis the Croatian Rat Line and other escape routes, operating in Rome from a Vatican Catholic college, to flee Europe to Catholic havens in South and Central America? Why did the Catholic Church protect these war criminals and hide them from the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal?

Is it because Hitler's slogan of *Totalitatsan spruch* "claim of the whole" was music to the Catholic Church's ears? A promised return to the medieval ideal of one nation and one church? Is it because the doctrine of the separation of church and state was as detested by Hitler as by the popes?

Is it because the Vatican declared the Magna Carta (1215) null and void because the Vatican detests the foundation of constitutional government and enjoys the company of dictators and wants to return to the Roman Catholic Empire's heyday of glory?

When Hitler came to power the Vatican signed its concordat with the Third Reich. The Catholic Church was the first foreign power to enter into a bilateral treaty with Hitler. In 1933 the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Germany had overridden an earlier ban on Catholic membership in the Nazi party.

Dr Konrad Adenauer, the first post-World War II German chancellor, was an early critic of the Roman Catholic hierarchy for its failure to oppose Nazism. "I believe," he declared in 1946, "that if all the bishops had together made public statements from the pulpits on a particular day, they could have prevented a great deal. That did not happen, and there is no excuse for it. It would have been no bad thing if the bishops had all been put in prison or in concentration camps as a result."

The Pope's visit to the Holy Land in the closing year of the millennium in an attempt to bring reconciliation among all three Abrahamaic

faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and peace, the duty of anyone who would call himself the vicar of Christ, is a giant step all his successors and followers should follow in the New World Order. What a contrast to Pope Paul VI's same trip in 1964. I was in Israel at the time and remember his insensitivity when he managed to insult the Israelis by never referring to Israel once as a state, and the Jordanians by implying Israel was the only Holy Land.

Hopefully the successor to Pope John Paul will set a tone for honest atonement, address the realities Catholics face in the new millennium and will be more receptive and open to the wishes of Catholic congregations worldwide. We the Believers, people and maids, religious leaders, as well as political leaders, have to be receptive in order to survive in the New World Order!

The Anglicans are coming clean. The Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has been made an honorary white druid in an ancient Celtic ceremony. He said the suggestion that the honor was linked to paganism was offensive. Richard Burton, Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother were also white druids.

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, leader of the world's 70 million Anglican faithful, triggered a religious storm after questioning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "I can tell you frankly that while we can be absolutely sure that Jesus lived and that he was certainly crucified on the cross, we cannot with the same certainty say that we know he was raised by God from the dead."

The Archbishop's "Jesus 2000" message went on to launch a broader attack on the Church's record through history, stating it "defamed the name of Jesus" by contributing to the Jewish Holocaust.

### ***Poor Man's Sword***

In the Philippines, the Moro Muslim rebellion that started in the early 1970s in southern Mindanao is a blend between traditional pirates, modern-day terrorists and a modern-day Christian Muslim crusade. The Abu Sayyaf, which claims to be fighting for an independent Muslim state, appears more interested in kidnapping foreigners and wealthy Filipinos for ransom payments.

Politically motivated religious kidnappings are a common Muslim

practice even today. That is why the new millennium started much like the last two ended. Kidnappings for money. Armed rebels in Algeria kidnapped 14 European tourists in the Sahara desert in 2003 and demanded 4.6 million euros for their release. Africans and Chinese were kidnapped and sold as slaves. American and European sailors were also obtained through kidnappings. Not much has changed at the dawn of the 21st century.

Today slavery still exists. Muslim raids to capture slaves and hostages in the Philippines, Indonesia, parts of Africa and many other countries, have gone on for millennia. Ferdinand Magellan brought slaves with him when he circumnavigated the world and discovered the Philippines.

Tourists and reporters are constantly kidnapped. In 2000, hotel guests and workers were abducted by boat from an island resort hotel in Malaysia to which Muslim extremists in the Philippines make claim. War-like Moro Muslim clans in Zamboanga, Basilan and the Sulu archipelago in the Southern Philippines today, much like their Bedouin forefathers in Arabia, carry on the tradition of banditry and vendettas as cherished local customs and practices. The various Abu Sayyaf factions brought this to the world's attention with their kidnappings of millennium global rainbow hostages. The reality is that they were kidnapped for ransom by bandits. Not political activists. These criminal kidnappings under the guise of religion continue in the 21st century.

This is nothing new. That is why the Spanish and Filipino Christians built Fort del Pilar in Zamboanga and Fort San Pedro in Cebu and why old church and convent walls in the Southern Philippines are so thick. A case of "Praise the Lord – and pass the ammunition." Not only in the Philippines, but all colonies of the Roman Catholic Spanish Empire.

Low-level wars for Muslim converts and independence have raged for years in Asia. Muslim Mindanao, in the Philippines, Aceh in Sumatra and the southern provinces of Thailand.

Horrific stories of religious persecutions are still prevalent today in the remote areas of the Malukuas in Indonesia. There, several thousand villagers are practicing Muslims during the week. On



Sundays they secretly attend Christian services in nearby hills far from the eyes of strangers. Otherwise, like their priest, they will be killed. Jihad holy wars follow medieval practices of forced conversions in the name of Islam. Destroy churches, crosses, change names because Christian names are “not good”. All men in the village are circumcised with a single, blunt razor blade.

Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul points out the “calamitous effect” of Islam on the peoples who converted over the last two millennia. Naipaul referred to Western civilization as “our universal civilization”. The beauty of this civilization is that it enshrines “the idea of the pursuit of happiness...the idea of the individual, responsibility, choice, the life of the intellect, the idea of vocation and perfectibility and achievement.” Such a society, he said, “cannot generate fanaticism”. To be fanatical would be intellectually dishonest and sterile. Well guess what? There are a lot of intellectually dishonest and sterile career politicians and religious leaders that plan our daily agendas.

Naipaul is disturbed by Islam’s textual rigidities and by its inability to allow the word to slip into secular grasp. Above all, he is disturbed by that religion’s tendency to turn men into “nothing” and by the willingness of that religion’s adherents to “allow themselves to become nothing”. In his *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples*, Naipaul reminds us that the conquests and conversions of Islam, conducted by Arab armies in lands to the east of Arabia, were more destructive of local histories, and of local self-images, than even the worst excesses of Western colonialism. It is not uncommon to hear Pakistanis, for example, describe dates as their favorite fruit, instead of the local mango. In this cultural genuflection to the desert lands of Arabia, one sees trivial, but telling, evidence of what Naipaul detests – the deracination of Islam of “converted peoples”. The Taleban reminded the world of their destructive religious fervor with their cultural and civilizational genocide of Afghanistan.

The Taleban’s religious conquest of Afghanistan posed a threat not only to America and Western civilizations, but to all neighboring Muslim countries, especially Pakistan where they were first trained and sent from to Afghanistan.

Pakistan’s decision to support America and the coalition to destroy

the Taleban was a politically astute decision to preserve the country from the clutches of the Taleban and other religious extremists. Contrary to its track record in the region, America took care of the political threat to Pakistan as promised.

Kashmir has become the latest frontier of Muslim guerrilla excursions. Pakistani Kashmir volunteers, and veterans of the Afghan Mujahedina now lead the rebellion.

The Muslim fringe of the former Soviet Union, the Uzbeks, the Kazakhs, the Tajiks and the Turkmens, all seem vulnerable to Taleban contagion. One fatal flaw for them is that their borders are largely artificial. The area is much more of a trading crescent. The governments in the tawdry national capitals have a difficult misperception to maintain. On the other hand, trade is vigorous, traditional and potentially rich. If the borders, including Pakistan's, soften and continue to talk money and politics rather than religion then what the Taleban offer is very unattractive.

Afghanistan in its ferocity and aridity has few equals. The Taleban are unschooled fundamentalists coming from distant towns in the driest and hardest parts of Afghanistan. What they have, even for modestly angry anti-American lower and middle-class Muslims, is uniquely unexportable. No different than any extreme interpretation of any religion.

"Islamic movements today are driven more by appalling local social conditions than by some all-pervasive ideology," Khalid Ahmed, a Pakistani writer on Islam, reminds us. He goes even further in saying that "in the Islamic world, by and large, the ruling elites have failed to deliver the goods to the people, and the end of the Cold War has only stripped off the veil. The growing gap between rich and poor, runaway inflation, unemployment, massive corruption, and widespread disillusionment with the mainstream parties and their leaders are the core issues in the Islamic world." That was made crystal clear in Indonesia with the removal of Suharto and Wahid and in Pakistan when both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were removed from office and charged with corruption. Although fragile and slow, democracy does bring change to countries ruled by Muslim dictatorships. This is something that cannot be forgotten or done away with in America's new war on terrorism. Democracy

cannot be compromised for oil or political support from dictators supporting the war effort.

Muslims clearly have problems living peacefully with their neighbors. Muslims make up about one-fifth of the world population but in the 1990s were far more involved in intergroup and intragroup violence and wars than any other group of people. “Quite clearly,” James Payne concludes, “there is a connection between Islam and militarism.” Richard Nixon also pointed out that “Muslim-versus-Muslim conflicts have cost ten times as many lives as the Arab-Israeli conflict.”

Let’s keep in mind what Islam stands for. Obedience and submission to Allah, not to any mortal who comes around the corner. It is to be distinguished from fanaticism. Will Rogers reminds us that “a fanatic is always the fellow that is on the opposite side.”

### ***Self-Destructive Jews***

The cultural war between secular and orthodox Jews in Israel could nudge towards internal strife that will only hasten a self-fulfilling prophesy – Armageddon. The destruction of the Third Temple.

The debate in Israel on who is a Jew in the late 20th century and 21st century is also revolting. The burial of Staff Sergeant Michael Oxman in a section of the military cemetery set aside for non-Jews was not only revolting but tragic. He was an Israeli citizen who considered himself Jewish. He fought for Israel and died at the hands of a Palestinian fighter defending the country he loved. Yet he could not be buried as a Jew because his mother was not a Jew.

What right do the Orthodox Jews have to dictate who is a Jew? Do they want to again bring about the implosion and destruction of the Third Temple? Are they determined to create an internal Holocaust whereby Jews do to themselves what the Parses have done? Eliminate themselves by a self-destructive definition and behavior?

They almost succeeded in the eighth century B.C. when the 10 tribes of Israel disappeared after being driven out of the land of Israel by the Assyrians. Luckily, they were recently discovered through DNA testing and are now living in an Indian community

on the Burmese border. Some Israeli rabbis believe the descendants of the lost tribes number more than 35 million around the world today. Shouldn't these Jews be welcomed with open arms back to Israel?

### ***Religious Poverty***

Piety and poverty have a direct correlation. The more religious people become, the poorer they are. This is an overall generalization which economic, political and religious history supports. There are exceptions. Religious and political ignorance continues to perpetuate self-serving religious and political leaders. This has to change in the New World Order if poverty is to be eliminated.

A few modern-day extreme examples can be seen in the city of Sofia in Bulgaria, the village of Sasgargram in Madhya Pradesh and the practice of Devadasism – the religiously sanctioned consignment of girls to a lifetime of sexual slavery – in India. Mutilating a corpse is a crime. Unless of course you are the Pope of the Catholic Church. According to the Rome daily *La Repubblica*, an undisclosed body part of the exhumed dead Pope John XXIII was removed and wrapped in a medieval cloth and delivered by Pope John Paul to Sofia's new cathedral during his four-day visit to Bulgaria in 2002. It will be kept in the cathedral as an object of veneration. One of the more popular popes of modern times, he is revered in Bulgaria, where he served as a priest from 1929 to 1934.

In India gods give their blessing to sexual slavery of poor girls. Members of the Banchhara caste, one of the poorest in the country, encourage their elder daughters to become prostitutes at the age of 12. These girls support entire families and are worshipped as living goddesses. "It is only in India where girls are worshipped and marketed...prostitution is part of their religious cult," said Justice Gulab Gupta, head of the human rights commission in the region. "They believe that they have divine sanction to initiate their daughter into the flesh trade...They don't see it as ruining their daughter's life. For them, it is God's will. Ironically, it is not a male God who ordains this prostitution, it is a Goddess."

In India, 15,000 girls are also sexually abused by Hindu priests and then "dedicated to god" in temples each year in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Devadasism

thrives on a regular supply of girls belonging to the lower castes who are systematically suppressed by the higher castes in India's traditional social hierarchy. The girls' "marriage" ritual to a god is performed in a temple where priests take turns raping the girls while their families are engrossed in ceremonies and a banquet to mark the occasion.

Samuel Huntington in his *Clash of Civilizations* points out: "Indeed, outside of North America, the most prosperous, least crime-ridden and most educated countries are the post-Protestant societies of Northern Europe, in which traditional Christianity is in serious long-term decline, and the highly secular Confucian societies of East Asia. Conversely, the parts of Europe and the Americas in which institutional Christianity has been strongest in recent centuries, the Catholic and Orthodox countries, have been characterized by poverty, tyranny, and political instability, which exist to an even greater degree in the Muslim world. The most religious part of the United States, the South, has long been the poorest, most violent, and most illiterate section of the country."

As Ignace Lepp points out: "Miracles, which used to be regarded as the chief guarantee of the truth of Christianity, are today its main stumbling block." Lepp goes on to say: "Christ was always said to be on the side of the poor and the oppressed, but those who claimed to speak in His name taught them that their chief duty lay in resignation – a resignation which played into the hands of the rich and powerful." The same holds true in India and many developing countries obsessed with traditional religious practices that suppress the progress of ignorant illiterate peoples.

All great religious teachers from the last Buddha to The Prophet confronted the conventions and corruption of the day. In the present day, any one of them, including Jesus, would have a U.S. Federal warrant out against them for being subversive. *We the Maids* had better start separating the wheat from the chaff in this political and religious New World Disorder.

Today's religious leaders, and their career politician spokesmen, perpetuate the historical lie of the poor and lower classes being predestined to their misery and that the only way to salvation is strict compliance with their religious dogmas. Heaven awaits them

if they listen and dutifully comply. The alternative is the Great Satan's hell, which is even worse than their current plight.

*We the Maids* have to take a careful and honest look at the infallible truth and what the scriptures of both Christians and Muslims say about the seductive devil infidels, and make sure We sweep out the hypocritical self-serving untruths.

### ***Politicized Religious Penis***

Christianity declared a division between man and beast in the realm of sexual behavior. To be human was to contain one's animal passions; to accede to them was to sink to the level of a brute. But the Western imagination, shaped in Greece and Rome, was still haunted by pagan myths that spoke of satyrs, centaurs, and other beings half-man and half-beast. Implicit in those myths was the idea that to be closer to nature was to be closer to sex – and farther from civilization. I highly recommend David Friedman's *A Mind of Its Own, a cultural history of the penis*, for those who want to have a better historical perspective of how the Church politicized the role of the penis.

After white Europeans reached black Africa, the Greco-Roman images of natural sexuality were revived and infused with the Christian notion of sin, then projected onto Africans, people who, by European standards, seemed to live with no sexual inhibitions. Few Europeans objected to this because blackness was already loaded with negative meaning. It symbolized filth and death, while whiteness stood for purity and life. Christians linked blackness with sin and lust even before the myth of The Curse of Ham became part of their oral tradition.

The Curse of Ham occurs in the ninth chapter of Genesis:

The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth...These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled. Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and

told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japhet took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father's their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers."

"Nakedness" is clearly a euphemism for penis. By staring at his father's penis, Ham mocked both patriarchal authority and the Mosaic laws of sexual modesty. His actions showed him to be a son without respect, a crosser of moral boundaries, someone unwilling to contain the erotic beast within, according to the Christian interpretations and oral tradition.

The English, when they became richer and stronger imperial rulers, began to see themselves as God's Chosen People. This elevated The Curse of Ham into a divine rationale for enslaving hundreds of thousands of black Africans, then shipping them off to work the tobacco, cotton and sugarcane plantations in the English colonies in America, just as the Spanish, French, Portuguese and Dutch did for their colonial holdings in the New World.

Nearly every "witch", European women burned at the stake for consorting with the Devil, described his penis as black. Their crime, knowledge of the Demon rod. The Christian witch burnings brought out the entire community. Church bells rang and priests led the masses in prayer.

All penises are ultimately tools of the Devil, taught Augustine, the Church's most influential theologian. But now some of them – those on Africans – were declared more satanic than the rest. The proof was in their size and color, each a punishment from God. It was not long before other experts, using the secular language of science, reached a similar conclusion.

Anti-semitism campaigns in Europe often presented cartoons depicting Jews with massive syphilis-spreading erections lusting after Christian virgins. The Nazi party newspaper *Der Sturmer* was rife

with such cartoons. Making this libel even more odious was the widespread belief that Jews themselves were immune from syphilis. It was the Jew's nature, his diabolical mission, such racial thinkers believed, to foster racial corruption by creating hidden Jews among the larger population with large diseased penises. One cure for this threat to the Christian body politic was castration, which was occasionally administered to Jews via vigilante justice in a fashion not unlike lynchings in the American South. Just like the African penis, the Jewish penis was racialized, criminalized, and, on occasion, excised by the Christian believers.

### ***Holy Peace-Seductive Devil***

Political Christian and Muslim religious leaders created an illusory evil tempting seducer who represents all things distasteful to their respective political and religious agendas. The Devil in the New Testament became the Seducer in the Koran. They allegedly tempt people who pursue desires that are distasteful and threatening to the political agendas of religious leaders. Freedoms of expression, religion, culture and desire are freedoms that threaten religious teachings and political power. Jews were an easy and convenient target to identify with the Devil. Even for the tolerant Reverend Billy Graham. The great American evangelist told Nixon the nation's problems lies with "satanic Jews", according to Nixon aide H.R. Haldeman.

Today the Seducer to Muslim fundamentalist leaders is represented by American culture and conveniences. The Devil to Christian fundamentalists is any freedoms they disagree with. Eternal damnation became the creative tools to scare the bejezus out of true believers.

Whose God decides anyway? Doesn't God belong to all of us? Who decided God advocates war, death and destruction? *We the Maids* must never forget it was religious political leaders that have advanced and justified war for a variety of self-serving political and religious reasons. Not God or Allah! The Almighty never advocated war and never took sides when religious and political leaders started them in God's name.

According to both the Bible and the Koran, God calls for justice and love for all, even the unjust, regardless of political or religious



agendas or affiliation. That is what Jesus preached and why he was respected and accepted by all. His message is universal.

No country, political party or organization has the right to claim a monopoly on God. Conversely, no one can accuse those with different religious beliefs of being the Seductive Devil.

America, true to the constitutional mandate of its Founding Fathers, has embraced, if sometimes reluctantly, all religions, including Islam. Why is it therefore necessary for both Christian and Muslim fundamentalist extremists to continue on their religious crusade in the 21st century?

### ***Yankee Evil Dollar***

The U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1789. Washington was elected President and he invited Thomas Jefferson to be Secretary of State. Alexander Hamilton was appointed Secretary of the Treasury. But when the first federal Congress came together in 1789 the mood was one of anticlimax. Few delegates bothered to make it to the official opening in New York, and it took another three weeks to reach a quorum. Nobody was sure how a federal government ought to behave, or even what to do next. Washington presided over dinners where no one was allowed to talk, and “played on the table with a knife and fork like a drumstick”. Delegates didn’t know what to call him. Washington was no wiser as how to address them, and had no clear idea of their powers. The one thing they agreed on was God had none! Is this the Evil Satan many Moslem extremists rave about?

Money, and the U.S. dollar in particular, is accused of being the root of all evil. When the U.S. declared independence in 1776 it issued 10 million dollars to be used throughout America as the official currency. Sinister messages may be hidden in the Great Seal of the United States, which appears on the back of the dollar bill. A popular theory fingers a Masonic sect called the Illuminati, whose aim is to overthrow governments. It is so secret and ruthless that nothing more is known about it. The first American to become frightened by the Illuminati was a Boston preacher called Jediah Morse, whose more famous son was the inventor of the Morse code. Another obscure belief of occultists is that a mysterious man in black appeared one day at Thomas Jefferson’s elbow and told

him how to reproduce the symbols of the Great Seal. Anyone with a ruler, compass and a taste for voodoo can use a dollar bill to design the nine-pointed star traditionally associated with calling up the Devil.

George Washington made his way on to the dollar bill in the 1920s, before the Great Depression, before World War II. The same face on the same greenback. “It was produced in the Roaring 20’s, the age of skyscrapers, mass production and design consultancies: an 18th-century portrait among the laurel leaves and table mirrors of a fancy whorehouse,” Jason Goodwin tells us in his book *Greenback*. He’s looking at us through tired eyes, a stubborn commander who won his war by refusing the possibility of defeat. He kept his army together for eight years until the enemy’s army – the world’s best-trained, best-paid and most powerful force – finally gave up.

Today there are seven trillion greenbacks in circulation. It is the world standard. The great majority of these dollars exist electronically, but about \$666 billion’s worth, in denominations from \$1 to \$10,000, are printed on 22 billion paper bills, of which almost a third are held outside the United States. This means there are more dollar bills in existence than any other branded object, including Coke cans. George Washington and Mammon are America’s idols. I personally know the power of those idols. When all reason fails with career politicians or customs officials anywhere, a few greenbacks get the job done.

### ***Lucifer***

Thanks to Bush and his Christian Coalition, the removal of the Saddam regime brought to light the Yezidi tribe living deep in the Sinjar highlands of Kurdish-dominated northern Iraq. They have a 2,000-year-old shrine dedicated to Lucifer, the chief angel of their religion. A black stone snake, which they stroke for good luck, slithers up the wall by the front entrance. Inside, a sarcophagus containing the 1,200-year-old remains of Shaykh Adi, one of the great thinkers of the Yezidi religion.

At sunrise and sunset, the Yezidi face the sun to pray. They do not wear blue clothing or eat lettuce – both are forbidden for reasons that have been lost. They do not believe in heaven or hell because Adam, the first man, never left the Garden of Eden. Belief in the afterlife, while central to the philosophy, is not essential for the

million or so Yezidis scattered around the world. Makes me wonder if my neighbor in Rivas Canyon, Los Angeles, with a Lucifer license plate on his red Ferrari was a Yezidi. Probably not, he acted like a Jewish turd – not a Kurd.

The Yezidis are so relaxed about religious obligations that they can nominate proxies to pray and fast for them, paying their stand-ins for each sin they ask forgiveness for. "Is there paradise or not? It is very difficult to say," Prince Tasin Beg, chief of the Yezidi tribe, says in an agnostic uncertainty. "It is not necessary to believe in paradise or hell. All people are free to believe as they choose. Some do, some don't."

Far from being evil incarnate, Lucifer, according to the Yezidis, was not cast out of heaven by God but was forgiven and restored to his position as chief of seven angels. Yezidis deny they are devil-worshippers and are forbidden from referring to Lucifer as Satan, but they are part of an ancient sect which reveres him as the archangel and creator of the material world. Lucifer, Adam and Gabriel are regarded as pretty much the same being rolled into one chief divine figure called Malak Taus, or the peacock angel, who rules the universe on behalf of God, who lost interest after creating it.

### ***Suicide and Unjust Wars***

Suicide bombers don't just kill Americans and Jews. The September 11 attack on the World Trade Center was a grim reminder. The suicide bombings in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey don't just kill Americans and Jews. They kill Arabs, Muslims, foreign workers and tourists.

Suicide is not condoned, sanctioned or approved by either the Torah or Koran. The descendants of both sons of Abraham abhor and prohibit suicides. Life belongs to God who grants it, not to mortal men who are its trustee. Both Judaism and Islam celebrate life and promote its enjoyment.

Martyrdom – *istishhad* – is an old and esteemed idea in Islam. It took root in 680 when Husayn, the son of the Caliph Ali and the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, died at Karbala in southern Iraq. Shiite Muslims, who see rightful rule in Islam descending

through Ali's bloodline, permanently embedded the death of Husayn, "the prince of all martyrs", into the broader Muslim consciousness. Shiite Iran's revolution in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war between 1980-88 electrified and made modern the concept of martyrdom and holy war throughout the Muslim world.

The ancient Roman proverb, "Beware the man of one book," seems to grow more urgent by the month when the book is a Holy Scripture. Killing in the name of God is hardly unknown in history, but the extent of freelance religious violence committed around the world lately might cause a Borgia Pope to blush. The Talmud, which is the Jewish oral tradition, asks: Why did God test Abraham? So the world would know that if anyone tells you they are committing murder in the name of God they are a liar. No Jewish religious court has had the power to levy a death sentence since Jesus' time. It was Romans, not Jews, who crucified Jesus. The Fifth Commandment proclaims "Thou shalt not kill." How can Christians then justify their support of the death penalty?

Sheik Muhammad Rafaat Othman, who teaches Islamic law at the most prestigious Islamic school in the Middle East, Cairo's Al-Azhar University, unequivocally states the Koran prohibits suicide, even as a tactic in a legitimate holy war. "As I interpret our religion, I don't see any evidence of exception to this rule...You can expose yourself to a situation where you might get killed. But you can't knowingly take your life." Sheik Muhammad added: "Attacking innocent, unarmed people is forbidden. Prophet Muhammad demanded that we not kill women, children or the elderly. Attacks should be against soldiers and armed civilians." Even the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheik Abdulazia bin Abdallah al Sheikh, said: "Jihad for God's sake is one of the best acts in Islam, but killing oneself in the midst of the enemy, or suicidal acts, I don't know whether this is endorsed by Sharia or whether it is considered jihad for God. I'm afraid it could be suicide." He added that such suicide bombers do not die as martyrs but as suicides.

Islamic law forbids harm to non-combatants. Verse 190 of the second chapter of the Koran reads: "Fight in the path of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. God does not love transgressors." Even in war, Islamic law and tradition clearly prohibit

any transgressions, including any damage to property. This injunction is partly based on a famous saying of the Prophet: “Do not burn a plant, or cut a tree in the territory of combatants.”

These eminent Muslim scholars echoed the words of their fellow imams in America. “It violates the very foundations of Islamic law,” said Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, a Jesuit school. “We respect your faith...Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah,” President George Bush correctly declared.

Muslim extremists, like Christian extremists, have hijacked the teachings of the Prophets. No different than what the career politicians have done to the teachings of the Prophets of America—The Founding Fathers.

“It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see that a guy who went to bars and strip clubs down in Florida isn’t a good Muslim. And the intentional killing of civilians isn’t permitted under Islamic law. So whatever these guys are fighting for, it isn’t classical Islam,” said Cleveland State University law school professor David Forte, whose language about Islam being hijacked by the September 11 kamikazes was used by President Bush and is still remembered as one of his most memorable lines.

The Catholic Church came up with the just-war theory in the mid-19th century to justify the wars the Vatican supported. To hear Pope John Paul II say there is no such thing as a holy war in Kazakhstan and Armenia as America was preparing to go to war in Afghanistan, words he used when the American-led coalition went to war against Iraq, was another millennium reminder that war cannot be justified by any religious teachings or religion. “Religion must never be used as a reason for conflict,” the Pope proclaimed at an outdoor mass attended mostly by Muslims.

For Holy Peace to replace Holy Wars all religions have to acknowledge and respect other religions. Pronouncements such as those made by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger’s dictum, “Dominus Jesus”, of August 6, 2000, that the Catholic Church is “the only true church” are not only offensive and disrespectful but perpetuate religious hatred

and unnecessary wars in the new millennium. Fighting evil with violence cannot contribute to Holy Peace.

### ***Abort Fundamentalist Crusades***

President George W. Bush launched a “crusade” in response to September 11. “Operation Infinite Justice”. As Sheik Taha al-Alwani, chairman of Islamic jurists in North America, pointed out, the term could be translated to “absolute justice”, which is something that only God can deliver. Could it be that President Bush thinks he is God in America, like Caesar, Muhammad’s successors and the Chinese emperors?

The Iraq War underscored the dangerous religious fundamentalist crusade undertones our Founding Fathers cautioned us to look out for and avoid. The Iraq War became a religious war. America’s born-again Christian president peppers his speeches with religious terms and almost always ends them with a solemn “God Bless America”. The U.S. Congress passed a resolution calling on President Bush to order a nationwide day of prayer for the country. U.S. soldiers in Iraq had been asked to pray for President Bush so that “God’s peace be [his] guide”. Meanwhile secular Saddam Hussein put Islam at the heart of his victory and survival. “Oh Arabs, oh believers across the world, oh enemies of evil, God is on your side,” he said. “Rely on God and the soldiers of the merciful on our land will be granted victory.”

Does this religious fundamental crusade between Muslims, Christians and Jews dating back to the first Crusade have to continue in the new millennium? America has to be proactive to ensure this ongoing clash ends.

Do the new form of Crusades or Fatwas disguised as ethnic cleansing or terrorism have to continue in the New World Order? Is it really necessary for Osama bin-Laden’s disciples to pursue the World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders? Likewise, is it necessary for America and its allies to pursue their democracy crusade in Muslim countries? Algeria, Bosnia, Kosovo, Indonesia and Afghanistan can do fine without an American-imposed political structure. America will be better off getting its democratic house in order first. The mullahs’ offer to send observers to future U.S. elections is a reminder of how much *We the People* have to do at home first to implement

the Founding Fathers' constitutional principles.

The millennium ended with the "Good Friday" peace accord in Ireland and its architects John Hume and David Trimble justly earning a Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. Hopefully, it will stand the test of time. Their example, like those of Sadat and Begin, Rabin and King Hussein, should shame the dictators and the mullahs into pursuing peace and prosperity. If they don't, *InShallah*, God willing, their successors will.

America has been a key broker in bringing different warring religious factions together. In Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine. Christians, Muslims and Jews. To continue being an honest credible impartial "peace broker" in the 21st century, America has to first get its religious house in order. Then Americans can learn, understand and appreciate the different religious cultures around them and be accepted as the impartial country the Founding Fathers intended.

A splendid working model to achieve better understanding has been adopted by the Marks & Spencer retail chain in Britain. It takes management trainees from Israel, both Jewish and Arab Israelis, in an attempt to use business to build bridges across the divide. This is a ritual that takes place every day in Hong Kong. People with different beliefs work together side by side every day. Shouldn't more companies and communities be doing the same with all remaining religious combatants?

The religious strife at the dawn of the 21st century in Nazareth, a once sleepy town populated by Arab Christians and Muslims, over the Muslims' plan for a large new mosque to be built with funds donated by the Gulf states, near the Christian Basilica of the Annunciation, where tradition says the angel Gabriel told Mary she was pregnant, is another millennium reminder of how religious bonds in the New World Order still transcend national and local boundaries, even ethnic groupings.

"There is no argument in the world that carries the hatred that a religious belief does. The more learned a man is the less consideration he has for another man's belief," Will Rogers reminded us early in the 20th century. He went on to say: "I have sometimes wondered

if the preachers themselves have not something to do with this. You hear or read a sermon nowadays, and the biggest part of it is taken up by knocking or trying to prove the falseness of some other denomination. They say that the Catholics are damned, that the Jews' religion is all wrong, or that the Christian Scientists are a fake, or that the Protestants are all out of step.

"Now, just suppose, for a change they preach to you about the Lord and not about the other fellow's church, for every man's religion is good. There is none of it bad. We are all trying to arrive at the same place according to our own conscience and teachings. It don't matter which road you take." Isn't it time we all tried to converge on to the same road in the 21st century?

### ***Religious Impartiality and Neutrality***

I understand, but have difficulty accepting, the lack of tolerance Christians and Muslims have for each other which has been increasing over the centuries. Russia, like Slavic Serbia, conducted one of the biggest anti-Muslim purges after World War II. In its predominantly Muslim areas of Russia, Central Asian and Soviet areas of Turkestan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, as well as in the Crimea, including Chechnya, Russia expelled Muslims from their homes and replaced them with Russians. It repeated its ethnic cleansing of Chechnya at the sunset of the old millennium and continues to do so at the beginning of the new.

This intolerance took new turns in the closing decades of the millennium. In addition to the bombings of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, American embassies in Africa, the USS Cole, terrorist bases in Afghanistan and Sudan, there were cases of destruction of churches and mosques in India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Bosnia, Georgia and Kosovo and growing anti-semitism in the Western world against Arabs. The Islamic participants plot the assassination of CIA officials, prominent Westerners and the bombing of civilian aircraft like the Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland. The United States plots the overthrow of extremist Islamic regimes. During the 15 years between 1980 and 1995, according to the U.S. Defense Department, the United States engaged in 17 military operations in the Middle East, all of them directed against Muslims. No comparable pattern of U.S. military operations occurred against



the people of any other civilization.

Religion has played a critical role in the evolution of humanity and the world as we know it today.

The Catholic Church's active opposition to communism in Poland, Russia and Italy is suspect. Communism was a threat to Catholicism.

The Pope – a Pole – and the Catholic Church actively fought communism after the post-war establishment of the Eastern bloc, not only in Russia, Poland but in Italy where the Communist party almost came to power.

John Paul II's Polish nationalism and his fearless anti-German position as Bishop of Cracow, as well as acts of courage towards Polish Jews, are well-known. Equally well-known has been the Church's unwillingness to castigate conciliatory right-wing regimes in Catholic nations. In that John Paul II has been complicit – especially in South America. In a New World Order the Holy See should interfere in foreign matters of brutality and deep disgust but it must do so with disinterest and not socio-political partiality. What Sister Gertrude, a former mother superior, and Sister Maria Kisito, two Rwandan nuns at a concentration camp where thousands of Tutsi refugees were slaughtered, did to facilitate the genocide is inexcusable in the New World Order. Their prison sentences are justified.

The Catholic Church in Hong Kong has balanced its role in the community. Catholic Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-kian said the clergy has a duty to denounce injustice in Hong Kong. "We have a role as a prophet in society. We have to judge whether things happening in society are right or wrong. It is the church's teachings that we should uphold, those that are just, and condemn those that are unjust." The church was outspoken against government decisions and comments on the controversy over which mainlanders should get right of abode in Hong Kong, over the Falun Gong and Article 23, the new security law. It criticized outgoing Chief Secretary Anson Chan Fang On-sang for not speaking up against Beijing, saying she does not deserve her reputation as "Hong Kong's conscience." When the government declared the children of parents seeking right of abode in Hong Kong could not attend local schools until their legal status was determined, the Catholic Church stepped

in and defied the government by enrolling them in church schools.

Bishop Zen joined other Christian leaders in Hong Kong who called on their 600,000 church members to join the campaign against the proposed national security legislation because it would harm civil liberties and religious freedom. More than 50 prominent figures from the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian churches joined forces in their personal capacity to protest against the legislation. Over 500,000 people joined the protest. Almost 10 percent of the population. Imagine what would happen in America if church leaders got 10 percent of their apathetic followers to take to the streets and protest the Patriot Act!

The Catholic Church in Hong Kong counts among its members influential and prominent figures such as the Chief Secretary, Donald Tsang, the Secretary for Housing, Dominic Wong Shing-wah, and former Democratic Party leader Martin Lee Chu-ming. Bishop Zen said the church could lobby such prominent members to put forth the church's position. However, "Is it suitable to lobby them frequently and in high profile? I think it should be avoided because people might then say the Church wants to control Government," Bishop Zen rightly cautions. Shouldn't all church leaders be doing the same in the 21st century?

The Pope and Church's refusal to condemn fascism was political. Its refusal to condemn genocide was wrong. No political movement should be opposed or supported by any religious leader or religious organization. Acts of barbarism against humanity, no matter what religious reason is cited, must be condemned by all religious leaders. Separation between State and Church must be pursued and enforced as a universal goal in the New World Order if humanity is to survive.

### ***Religious Nuclear Fallout***

The U.S.-led bombing of Afghanistan was followed by a massacre of 16 Christians in Islamabad, Pakistan. Four of the dead were children under 12, four were women and eight were men. One of the men was Father Emmanuel, the minister conducting the morning service. "Graveyard of Christians – Pakistan and Afghanistan," said the gunmen and: "This is just a start."

A few weeks later Muslim terrorists based in Pakistan attacked

the Indian parliament on a suicide mission to wipe out the leadership of India. The attack took place as the U.S. was flushing Osama bin-Laden from his Tora Bora hideout and almost led to religious nuclear fallout. Tensions between India and Pakistan, who have fought three wars since 1947, have to be contained now that they run the risk of testing their nuclear devices on each other.

Pakistan has to contain the thousands of Taleban and al-Qaeda fighters who have taken refuge there and are re-charging for their next fight. Kashmir is a logical target. A target India will not give up without a fight.

Hindu nationalists must also separate Church from State in the New World Order. The Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian sectarian strife has escalated at the sunset of the 20th century and the dawn of the 21st. Hitler is presented to millions of Hindu school children as a heroic figure in Gujarat state, the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi. Gujarat borders on Pakistan and Muslim-Hindu violence is endemic. Muslim Kausar Bano, eight months pregnant, was allegedly dragged out of her home and gang-raped in front of a frenzied Hindu crowd after an arson attack on a train carrying Hindus killed 59. One of the rapists then reportedly slashed her stomach with a sword and pulled out the fetus. According to witnesses, he displayed it to the crowd, then poured fuel over mother and unborn child and set them alight. Thousands of Muslims were slaughtered in the violence that followed the fire bombing of the train. Rioters also destroyed some 230 unique Islamic monuments during the rampage.

In India a sleeping priest was beaten to death with pump handles, Christian graveyards were dug up and tombstones smashed and bombs exploded in churches around the country. Hindus killing priests like Graham Staines and his innocent sons, Philip, 10, and Timothy, 6, and setting Christian churches ablaze is just as intolerable as Indonesians killing priests and nuns in East Timor and burning Christian churches. India's Hindus must also attempt to minimize the potential nuclear conflict with their Muslim neighbor Pakistan. The thought that India may change from a secular state to a religious Hindu state is chilling. India will be the most populous nation in the 21st century. Let's not forget India still has the second largest Muslim population in the world, even after Muslim Pakistan and

Bangladesh were carved off as independent nations.

“Can you get me a copy of the video I’ve heard about made in India that’s a Hindu rock video honoring their nuclear explosion?” my ex-brother-in-law Don Richstone asked. “I hear it’s real freaky. It glorifies nuclear weapons and India’s nuclear explosions,” he continued. “Have you seen it?” “Yes, it’s actually aired on MTV Asia,” I told him. “Isn’t that a scary thought, India and Pakistan going to nuclear war?” he asked no one in particular. “No! What is the downside, I ask you?” interjected Matt Billet who was putting another log on the outdoor fire as we toasted in the New Year. “You must be joking?” I said knowing he wasn’t.

The serious and dangerous potential of a religious nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan is a reality in the new millennium. FCC member and novelist Humphrey Hawksley outlines a realistic scenario of a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan in his novel *Dragon Fire*. I hope nobody dismisses *Dragon Fire* as one more work of fiction. The political and historical backdrop against which he writes is real.

Hawksley spoke at an FCC luncheon about his experiences researching the book. After his speech, his book and nuclear scenario became the topic of animated discussion at the Main Bar. Luke Hunt, who covered the Kashmir conflict for AFP and spent time in Afghanistan and in Pakistan shortly after the coup, said: “If anyone really thinks Hawksley is a dimwit, then be careful – there is a real risk you will choke on the words ‘he told you so’.” Luke put his money where his mouth is. He placed a HK\$500 bet predicting a nuclear war between India and Pakistan, arguing “dipping into someone else’s wallet is a nicer way of saying ‘I told you so’.” Hopefully, India’s election of President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, a Muslim scientist widely hero-worshipped as the godfather of the country’s nuclear missile program, will keep the silos buried.

Church and State have to be separated and respected by all religions in the 21st century. Religious figures and places of worship, no matter what the religion, have to be respected, maintained and preserved by *We the Maids*. America’s example must be emulated by all. America has gone to great lengths to avoid damaging or destroying places of worship and holy sites. We saw this most

recently during the Iraq War and Afghan War. Holy shrines and mosques were avoided even when legitimate military targets were set up nearby to provoke a destructive attack. During World War II we saw America avoid bombing Kyoto, Japan, out of concern of damaging the numerous historic Buddhist temples there.

The elusive “peace train” that has ridden the tracks of time has to be caught by all religious civilizations in the new millennium. The religious tools used to create conflict for millennia have no place in the New World Order. God has to be demilitarized. The alternative is a nuclear fallout.

### ***New Jerusalem-City of Peace and Religious Harmony***

Jerusalem, the center of the Western world’s three major religions, the fabled city where David ruled, where Jesus died, where Muhammad allegedly ascended to Heaven, might be obliterated in a final battle brought on by religious hatred. Given the mileage between capitals and groups it would be like dropping a nuke on yourself – even a battlefield tactical device. But then again, what do suicide bombers care? It would certainly be a clearing of the decks. The Goyim would shrug their shoulders and say: “Well, there you go!”

The sword carriers of Muhammad, or rather the explosives and nuclear bombs of the fundamentalist suicide bombers, trying to blow apart the “infidels” by “jihad” or “fitnas”, have to be replaced by the peaceful readers of the Koran. The ensuing result is peaceful commerce, prayer and mutual respect. Why can’t this be pursued as a continuous global goal? If even the Irish Catholics and Protestants manage it in the near future, there really can be no excuse for anyone else.

God is One to Christians, Muslims and Jews. All three believe in monotheism – single deity worship. “Let everyone,” as Will Rogers said, “arrive at the same place according to our own conscience and teachings!”

Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews and Muslims are cousins. Jews and Muslims are first cousins. Why do they have to continue being killing-cousins rather than kissing-cousins in the 21st century?

Jerusalem has historically been the birthmark of good behavior between Christian, Jew and Muslim. It has also on many occasions

been its cancer. The problem with Jerusalem begins with its name. The word evokes more than 4,000 years of history and the spiritual heritage of three great religions. But only a tiny part of what is today called Jerusalem is in fact connected to that holy city.

Until 1860, Jerusalem was confined within the kilometer-square walls of what is today called the Old City. The holy places are almost all within those walls and in a smaller area outside embracing the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion. Today's Jerusalem, however, is more than 100 times the size of the Old City. "The sacredness of this modern city has been built by political rhetoric," says Abraham Rabinovich. "If peace can be made to work in Jerusalem, it might even become contagious. Failure certainly will be," Rabinovich correctly opines.

The debate in Israel on whether the Israeli authorities can place a second door in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is an ideal snapshot of religious mania of the New World Disorder.

Most Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected at the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Three denominations – Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian – have principal custody of the Church under an edict issued in 1852 by the ruling Ottoman Sultan and known as the Status Quo. Three additional denominations – the Copts, Syrian Orthodox and Ethiopian Christian – are given space within the church, portions of which date to the fourth century.

The purported tomb of Christ, the centerpiece of the church, remains encased in rusted scaffolding erected more than half a century ago by British Mandate governors seeking to repair earthquake damage. The factions cannot decide how to go about removing the scaffolding, even though it is a harsh blemish on the one feature the pilgrims will queue for hours to behold.

The definitions of The Almighty, The Prophet, True Path and Peace have many parallels to the debate about Jesus. Theological scholars still debate who Jesus was.

There are three proofs that Jesus was Mexican. His first name was Jesus. He was bilingual. He was always being harassed by the authorities. But there are equally good arguments that Jesus

was black. He called everybody “brother”. He liked gospel. He couldn’t get a fair trial.

But then there are equally good arguments that Jesus was Jewish. He went into his father’s business. He lived at home until he was 33. He was sure his Mother was a virgin, and his Mother was sure he was God.

But then there are equally good arguments that Jesus was Italian. He talked with his hands. He had wine with every meal. He used olive oil.

But then there are equally good arguments that Jesus was a Californian. He never cut his hair. He walked around barefoot. He started a new religion.

But then there were equally good arguments that Jesus was Irish. He never got married. He was always telling stories. He loved green pastures. But perhaps the most compelling evidence is ... the three proofs that Jesus was a woman. He had to feed a crowd at a moment’s notice when there was no food. He kept trying to get the message across to a bunch of men who just didn’t get it. Even when he was dead, he had to get up because there was more work for him to do.

The play “Corpus Christi”, which presents Jesus as a lusty, hard-drinking foul-mouthed homosexual, has again tested and survived the First Amendment in Indiana. Jesus is controversial. A continuing controversy over power and rights.

As the controversy over the door shows, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is really a modern-day metaphor not only for the region, but the New World Order, over which diverse people and religions have struggled for a share of land and political power. No faction is willing to cede anything that might take away from its own position or give another faction an advantage.

During the time of the Crusades, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher had a dozen or so doors. The bloody Crusader reign came to an end when the Muslim warrior Saladin recaptured Jerusalem in 1187. He expelled the Crusaders but allowed a limited number of Christian priests to continue to work from the Church. However, to keep

tabs on who entered the church, he ordered all its doors sealed, except half of the main portal. In addition he entrusted the single key to the single door to a single Muslim family, ensuring control over access – and avoiding having to favor either Latin or Eastern Christians.

The exchange of gunfire between Palestinian gunmen in the church and the Israeli army in Manger Square resulted in fires that further charred Christ's birthplace while the U.S. Catholic Bishops were being summoned to Rome to discuss the pedophile sex scandals that had engulfed the Church. At the same time, Muslims slaughtered Christians in Indonesia, Muslims and Hindus butchered each other in India while fires there burnt out entire communities; sectarian religious conflicts continued in Africa; and the global crusade against terrorism expanded. These simultaneous events were millennium reminders of how hypocritical and destructive religious fervor and fundamentalist political fires have become at the dawn of the 21st century. They have created the bonfires of hell here on Earth. Fires that *We the Apathetic Maids* have to put out if we are to evolve as a harmonious and peaceful community in the spirit and vision of Christ and Muhammad.

The only momentary respite for humor during the turmoil surrounding Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity were the two Japanese tourists so engrossed in their guidebooks that they did not notice they had wandered unwittingly into a war zone. They were probably looking at the complimentary map of the world without Israel that Fuji Co. gives its customers. According to Fuji, Israel doesn't exist. Saudi, Egyptain and Palestinian Maps also do not have Israel. Local women and children simply gazed at the Japanese in disbelief. Shouldn't we all?

If the Irish and English cousins manage to kiss and make up in the sunset of the old millennium after centuries of mutual hatred and attempted extermination, I fail to see why others of all religious denominations can't follow in their exemplary footsteps in the 21st century! Why don't all religions try to open up a second door for all of us? "Go back far enough and all human kind are cousins," Naomi Mitchison reminds us. Do we really have to experience Armageddon before the coming of a Messiah?



The cancellation of Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, Jesus' birthplace, in the last year of the millennium, because of the violence between Israelis and Palestinians, is also symbolic of the religious conflicts worldwide, whether in Indonesia, Kashmir or Chechnya. Bethlehem must keep its doors open at all times in the 21st century as a symbol of religious tolerance and harmony. That is what Yeshu, the Jewish revolutionary guru, died preaching. The city of peace has to lead the long peace march of the 21st century.

### ***Global Religious Council***

All religions of the world should make a concerted effort to work together to search for the truth in the New World Order and bring about a better understanding, tolerance, love and peace to the world. Bring an end to religious wars. A Global Religious Council with representatives of all religious groups that want to participate should be established in Jerusalem, or other acceptable city, as the Jews, Christians and Muslims did in Cordova at the dawn of the 12th century. It must be self-sustaining with each religious denomination paying its own dues. There cannot be any government or taxpayer support of the GRC. The world's major religions, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and others would be represented on the Council. An assembly of all other religions of the world willing to pay their fair share of dues shall debate and discuss the issues of mutual concern and pass resolutions on a majority basis to be recommended for consideration by the Council. They take effect only if adopted by the Council.

The 21st century should encourage different religious groups to work with each other and attempt to resolve misunderstandings as God intended. With love and compassion.

### ***Abuse of Faith***

President Bush believes his actions, domestic and foreign, are justified "because of the power of prayer". David Frum, who was the Bush speechwriter who coined the phrase "axis of evil", recounts in *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* what the President said at a meeting in the Oval Office when talking to a group of reverends from the major denominations: "There is only one reason that I am in the Oval Office and not in a bar: I found faith. I found God. I am here because of the power of

prayer.”

America’s political leaders abuse and violate the Constitution when they invoke the name of God to justify their actions or lobby for political support. A country, political process and foreign policy cannot be run on faith and prayers. President George Dubya is an extreme example of such blatant abuses. President Bush, it was reported, told Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas that he had gone to war in Afghanistan and Iraq on instructions from God. Is this a justifiable reason to go to war, especially for a secular nation? After all, it is mere mortal taxpayers who pay the costs of war and send their children to fight and die. Not God, Jesus or the Holy Ghost.

Michael Lind correctly concludes in *Made In Texas* that “The Texan conservatism of George W. Bush combines 17-century religion, 18-century economics, and 19-century imperialism. The United States in the 21st century can do better than this.”

### ***Separation of Church and State***

George W. Bush said Jesus Christ was the historical philosopher he admired most. Which one? The blonde version perpetuated by the Church for centuries or the real one with dark Semitic features? Al Gore has declared himself a born-again Christian. Senator Joe Lieberman says “miracles happen” when he accepted Gore’s invitation to be his running mate in a speech that took religious-political rhetoric to soaring new heights. At one point he invoked God’s name 13 times in 90 seconds!

Politicians have to separate their private beliefs from public duties, just as the Founding Fathers did. The “Magnificent Seven” were religious men. God-fearing praying Christians. Nevertheless, they separated their personal beliefs and practices from their vision of America. A country where religion and God had no role. The number of Americans belonging to churches during the American Revolution was only 17 percent! According to a 2002 *Newsweek* poll, 45 percent of American society defined the United States as “a secular nation”; only 29 percent of Americans view the United States as “a Christian nation” and only 16 percent as a “Biblical nation, defined by the Judeo-Christian tradition”. America is the Enlightenment’s secular child.

The United States Supreme Court in the case of *Board of Education v. Everson* ruled that the non-establishment clause prohibits the State from setting up a church, passing laws which aid one religion, or all religions, or prefer one religion over another, and from participating openly or directly in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa.

The “Star Spangled Banner” is what Americans sang until Irving Berlin, a Jewish immigrant from Russia who entered the United States at Ellis Island, wrote “God Bless America” in the 20th century. Irving Berlin was born Israel Baliner in 1888. He also wrote, “White Christmas” and “Easter Parade”.

The Anti-Defamation League of B’nai Brith was correct when it objected to Senator Joe Lieberman’s insistence that, “as a people we need to reaffirm our faith and renew the dedication of our nation and ourselves to God and God’s purpose.” This appeal to belief in God, the agency argued, is contrary to the First Amendment and to the American ideal. Nor did the agency agree with the senator’s belief that “morality cannot be maintained without religion”. American atheists, the ADL declared, “should not be made to feel inferior, or left out of the political process”.

It can be argued that atheism is also a religion. Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the atheist leader who played a key role in banning mandatory prayer in public schools in the 1960s, argued that one did not necessarily have to believe in any deity. That was an individual religious choice. For the state of Florida to label a personalized license plate with the word “Atheist” as obscene, 16 years after it was issued, is a dire warning of how far we have drifted from the fountain of the Founding Fathers’ vision.

Most Americans agree with Senator Lieberman, which is why he said what he did. After all that is what political rhetoric is all about. America is the most religious of Western democracies, and believers who feel excluded from the political process either withdraw or find a way to polarize the parties. “Religious people are all members of a minority religion,” says Yale Law School professor Stephen Carter. “To think otherwise is like black folks looking at white and thinking they are all the same.”

Why should any political candidate's religion be brought up in an election? The last presidential election of the last millennium was a religious nightmare. A religious slugfest. The delicate line between church and state was crossed. The Founding Fathers warned us about crossing the line because America is a country where all religious beliefs can be practiced openly and freely. America is not a Christian country that must elect the best Christian. The Religious Right cannot change this constitutional cornerstone. Americans are atheists, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and adherents of many more beliefs. Not just Christians.

Religion in America has developed as a highly anti-intellectual farce. Along with the "sports" ethic and rampant materialism it has helped push America on its way to becoming a land of profound spiritual illiteracy.

That the U.S. Attorney General presides over a Pentecostal Christian Bible study every morning within the Justice Department that employs 135,000 people with hard-earned dollars collected from taxpayers of all religious denominations is not only outrageous but unconstitutional. "The source of freedom and human dignity is the Creator," John Ashcroft says. "All people are called to the defense of the grantor of freedom, and the framework of freedom he created...And this is our responsibility: the guarding of freedom that God grants is the noble charge of the Department of Justice. It is a cause in which all people may participate."

The devotionals by the chief law enforcement officer of the land are just as illegal as it is to fund-raise for political races on Federal property. The fact that he is the deeply conservative son and grandson of an Evangelical Christian preacher who believes "for every crucifixion a resurrection is waiting to follow" – especially after he lost his Senate re-election campaign to a dead man – does not give him the right to impose his religious beliefs in the U.S. Justice Department.

Religion in public affairs, government buildings, parks and schools in America must suffer the fate of the Dead Sea, the lake in the bosom of the birthplace of the world's three major religions – become lifeless.

Where was God when Ashcroft lost to his opponent Governor Mel Carnahan, who was killed in a plane crash? If the people of the state of Missouri rejected him and his beliefs and principles, why should *We the Apathetic Maids* have them imposed on all taxpayers in America? If Ashcroft spent the time he does praying and preaching on the duties and responsibilities of his taxpayer-salaried job and departmental duties he was appointed to do, the Immigration and Naturalization Service and FBI, which he oversees, would have connected all the dots that were in their and his face before September 11. According to the Founding Fathers, connecting the dots is more important than connecting with God. Isn't it time people like that are swept out of office the way our Founding Fathers intended?

Swept out like Pat Robertson was from the presidency of the Christian Coalition for his endorsement of Jerry Falwell's justification of the September 11 bombings. The bad news about the fallout of the collapse of the Christian Coalition is that Robertson's old lawyers are now working at the Justice Department. If one of the most influential men in U.S. politics in the 20th century can be removed by people expressing their outrage at his comments, why can't *We the Apathetic People* sweep out the rest?

George Dubya is a burning bush. He has scorched the Constitution and burned America economically and geopolitically. It is time *We the Maids* sweep out the ashes and Ashcroft-minded burning bush career politicians.

Why do we have congressional chaplains when America is supposed to be a secular country? There have been over 61 Senate chaplains and 48 House chaplains, and all, save a lone Catholic, have been Protestant. Other religions have been represented on the Hill in the form of visiting clergymen, starting in 1860 when Rabbi Morris Jacob Raphall prayed at the opening of a House session. In 1971, Congress played host to a Native-American holy man and in 1992 Imam Wallace D. Mohammed became the first Muslim to open a congressional session.

The U.S. Attorney General told graduates at Bob Jones University that America was founded on religious principles, and "we have no king but Jesus." For the enforcer of the Constitution to have such a distorted view and to be running the Justice Department

like a church is disturbing. For him to prohibit any correspondence from the Justice Department bearing his signature, to use the word “pride”, which the Bible calls a sin, and the phrase “no higher calling than public service” must have America’s Founding Fathers spinning in their graves.

The 200 gay and lesbian employees of the Department of Justice went into a definite spin when Attorney General John Ashcroft denied them the right to hold their annual meeting in the department’s Great Hall where it has been held for several years. The decision violates the Justice Department’s own non-discrimination policy which promises to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Fundamentalists push to become part of the state. Religious agendas have to be kept separate and apart from politics and entertainment! The declaration of Ohio’s 41-year-old motto “With God, All Things Are Possible” as unconstitutional in the closing year of the old millennium is a constructive good beginning.

Lejla Sehovic, crowned Miss Croatia, was asked to give up her title because of her religion. She is Muslim. She was correct in saying “In future they should list the real criteria for the contest: nationality and religion.” However, I hope they don’t. Non-PC criteria like brains, tits and ass should be the only criteria. Even mullahs make love. The example set in Israel in 1999 is the one to follow in the New World Order. An Arab woman was crowned Miss Israel for the first time. “It is not important if I am Arab or Jewish,” said winner Rana Raslan. “We must prove to the world that we can live here in coexistence. They wanted a beauty queen, not a political queen.”

Incoming German Chancellor Schroeder’s refusal to invoke the name of God or make any religious reference when taking his oath of office because of his desire to further distance the church from politics is to be applauded and replicated by all progressive states in the New World Order. Religion has to disavow its once ordained and now just knee-jerk interference in national politics and private sex. It cannot help, and should interfere in the face of deep cruelty, wrong and evil; but that will take men of intellect in the New World Order to gauge when and where.

Jefferson rode horseback through all 13 colonies, the founding states, preaching the importance of the separation of church and state as the basic foundation of America. There was no room for religion in politics then and there is none today.

Watching once anti-semitic Evangelical Christian Conservative Republicans support Israel and urging the White House to refrain from exerting pressure on “God’s Chosen People” to surrender land to the “Palestinians,” – some like House Republican Leader Dick Armey of Texas suggest that it should be the Palestinians that surrender land to Israel in the quest for peace – is just another millennium reminder of how far America has drifted from the founding cornerstone of separation of church and state.

Shouldn’t we all be wrestling the Religious Right to separate church and state as the Founding Fathers intended? The devil and the occult aren’t just limited to The Exorcist. In 1986 there were only 20 church-appointed exorcists in Italy. Today there are about 300. How about using them to exorcise religion from politics in the 21st century?

It is time for a modern-day Enlightenment. An American Reformation. Freedom and equality for all religious beliefs, including atheism, the occult and devil worship. The pursuit of knowledge of other religions and a real separation of church and state as our Founding Fathers dictated must be foremost on our agenda in the 21st century.

Why do *We the People* pay lip service to religious extremists in America and allow them to dominate the country’s political process? That is not what the Founding Fathers had in mind when they consciously and deliberately separated church from state. Unfortunately, the original spirit and written gospel of the Founding Fathers – like Muhammad’s – has been hijacked by religious extremists.

John Adams wrote, “I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation.” He wrote as a Christian but added that even if he were an atheist and believed in chance, “I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme, intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be

the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization.”

President George Washington wrote a letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, on August 21, 1790, in which religious freedom is laid down as a basic principle of the New Republic.

To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport,  
Rhode Island Gentlemen.

While I receive, with much satisfaction, your address replete with expressions of affection and esteem; I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful Remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport, from all classes of citizens.

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet, from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good government, to become a great and a happy people.

The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: A policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the government of the United States which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection



should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support. It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. May the children of the stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; which every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

G. Washington

Michael Novak, a Roman Catholic theologian at the American Enterprise Institute, says: “The best kept secret of American history is that the favorite language of the republic’s founding generation came from the Torah. The founders referred to their own experiment as the Second Israel.”

Benjamin Franklin proposed as a motto of the republic “Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.” It fit the American circumstance. The signers of the Declaration, after all, were committing treason. They needed some sort of moral warrant. They faced the most powerful army and navy in the world. It helped that they believed that Providence had created the world so that liberty would in the end prevail. For without liberty, how could the creator, who desired the friendship of free women and men rather than the worship of slaves, fulfil His eternal purpose?

Michael Novak adds: “Most historians lazily say that the founders were Deists, because they did not use Christian names for God, like Trinity and Savior and Redeemer. They miss the crucial point. Three names for God in the Declaration – Creator, Judge and Providence – are unmistakably Jewish names for God. This language did not come from the Greeks or Romans. If the schoolchildren of America were to say a daily prayer entirely in the language

of the Declaration, Jews, Christians and Muslims could happily join in.”

The Pledge of Allegiance and U.S. currency did not use the phrases “under God” or “In God We Trust” until 1954 when Congress, at the urging of President Dwight Eisenhower to demonstrate to the godless Communists during the Cold War “the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty”, inserted them.

The “Establishment Clause” of the First Amendment to the Constitution requires that Congress “make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” The Establishment Clause has already led to a series of debates over the separation of church and state, with cases ranging from publicly-funded Christmas displays to school prayer. The Federal Ninth Circuit Court was right to rule the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance are unconstitutional. America managed fine by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance without the words “under God” for almost 200 years as the Founding Fathers intended. They got inserted in the 1950s because *We the Apathetic People* were too busy enjoying America’s new peace and prosperity after the Great Depression and World War II to object.

All politicians in Washington grappling with the issue should, in the words of Senator Barry Goldwater, try to be “men of conscience” and vote their American constitutional mind, not that of their constituency. They must lead their people to heaven. Lead their people back to the founding cornerstone of America that exorcized religion from politics and the national landscape.

Alexis de Tocqueville warned that “religions should be more careful to confine themselves to a proper sphere, for if they wish to extend themselves beyond spiritual matters, they run the risk of not being believed at all.” Nixon admonished that “this is a warning that militants on both the religious right and the religious left would do well to heed. A clergyman’s mission is to change people, not to change governments.”

Tibetan Buddhists, including those in northwest Yunnan and western Sichuan which were once part of the Tibetan province called Kham, are much more traditionally Tibetan than many in present day Tibet.

They drink from cups made of human skulls and listen to the bleating of the kangling, a trumpet made of a human thigh bone, a stark reminder of how inhuman theocracies can be and why religion has to be separated from politics in the New World Order.

People who believe the clergy should play an active role in politics ought to review the dismal record of theocracies, most recently the Islamic theocracy in Afghanistan. Today even the mullahs in Iran are arguing how to separate church from state. Why can't members of Congress in America?

We have to separate religion from politics in the new millennium. It can no longer be allowed to permeate domestic or international political agendas in the New World Order. The space shuttle Columbia, which disintegrated upon re-entry at the dawn of the 21st century with astronauts whose countries, America, India and Israel, represent all major religions, is an example of how the different major religions must explore together how new frontiers can be collectively conquered in the interests of humanity.

What is clear is that the Founding Fathers wanted God's existence to be free of entanglements in the state. The Founding Fathers wanted a country where all people could freely pursue their religious beliefs. An America where there is a clear and distinct separation of church and state. Isn't it time we got this constitutional cornerstone repolished and updated? If we allow this fundamental article to fade away through communal sanctimony and emotionalism then we might as well take the whole Constitution and toss it in the air and see where it falls. Chances are *The Handmaid's Tale* of the 21st century in the Republic of Gilead – the country formerly known as the United States of America – will no longer just be seen in theaters.