

The Urgent Need For A Global Ethic.

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Theory One - 'The End of History?'

'Commenting on the end of the Cold War, in 1989, Francis Fukuyama, a policy planner in the US State Department, identified a feeling abroad "that something very fundamental has happened in world history." He characterised this as "the Triumph of the West", a situation in which economic and political liberalism having first seen off Absolutism and Fascism had finally seen the end of Marxism-Leninism. The Soviet Union was disintegrating and this demonstrated "*The total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism.*" It was, he said, "*the end of history as such*".' (Francis Fukuyama: 'The End of History?' The National Interest. Summer 1989).

Theory Two - 'The Clash of Civilisations?'

In an article in 1993 Harvard Professor Samuel P. Huntington argued that 'the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the emergence of a multi-polar world dominated by the USA as the only superpower was not "the end of history" but rather it heralded a return to traditional rivalries. The divisions of the post-cold war world will, he said, be cultural ones between civilisations. He identified eight based mainly on religious systems of thought. Clashes between nations will be replaced by clashes between nations and groups of different civilisations. Civilisations have as their most important determining characteristic not history, language, tradition or culture but religion. *Except for micro-level clashes over the control of adjacent territory the clashes of civilisations will not be concerned with the protection and promotion of vital interests so much as with the advancement of particular political and religious values*.'ⁱⁱ ('The Clash of Civilisations?' Foreign Affairs Summer 1993).

What do you think of these theories?

Reality Check – Attack And Counterattack!

On 9-11-2001, Osama Bin Laden ordered an attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center at the heart of the American Empire. As the world looked on in astonishment Bin Laden cried '*Here is America struck by God Almighty in one of its vital organs, so that its greatest buildings are destroyed.*'ⁱⁱⁱ

In retaliation George Bush ordered an attack on Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan - and also an attack on Saddam Hussein in Iraq (who did not have any weapons of mass destruction, or anything to do with the 9-11 attack, but had tried to kill Bush senior.) Bush claimed '*God told me to strike al-Qaeda and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike art Saddam, which I did.*'^{iv}

Do you think this is the 'clash of civilisations' Huntington predicted?

Issue One - Religion's Role In Major Wars.

In calculating the role of religion in major wars, we need to take into account five factors: one, religion as a mobilizer; two, religious motivation and discourse by political leaders; three, attacks on symbolic religious targets; four, conversion goals; and five, strong support from religious leaders.

On a scale of 1-5 the top five major wars where religion has played a role are:

1. Arab Conquests 632-732 and The Crusades 1097-1291
2. *al-Qaeda Terror War 1992-*
3. Reformation Wars 1562-98, Thirty Years War 1618-48, Afghan-istan's anti-Soviet War 1979-89 and *US Invasion of Iraq 2003-*
4. Moghul Conquest of India 1503-29, Spanish Conquests in North and South America 1492-1541, War of the American Revolution 1775-83, Sudan Civil War 1983-, American Indian Wars 1860-90, European Colonial Wars, Africa, Asia, Pacific 1870-1945, Spanish Civil War 1936-39, Arab-Israeli Wars 1947-82, *US-Soviet Cold War 1948-91*
5. Fall of Constantinople 1453; Seven Years War 1756-63; Second World War 1939-45; Northern Ireland 1968-98; Iran-Iraq War 1980-88; Bosnia 1994-95; Chechen Wars 1994 and 1999; *US and Allied invasion of Afghanistan 2001-*

* Many smaller scale conflicts, such as Hindu-Muslim clashes in India (claiming some 2,000 lives in 2002) and Christian-Muslim clashes in Indonesia and in Nigeria are tied to religious identity.^v

What does the evidence say about the role of religion in major wars?

Issue Two– Our Religion's Role In Major Wars.

If we look at the role particular religions have played in major wars we note:

- Two atheistic totalitarian states -Stalin's Russia and Mao's China - have perpetrated more mass murder than any state dominated by a religious faith. Stalinism cost the Soviet Union between 9 and 60 million lives; Maoism cost China between 30 and 40 million.
- In killing six million Jewish people, Hitler's Germany was responsible for the single most devastating genocide in history of a group identified by their religion and race.
- *In the past 1,000 years there have been more devastating wars among Christian states fighting each other than between Christian and Muslim states.*

- *Predominantly Christian states have killed more Jews and Muslims than predominantly Muslim states have killed Christians or Jews.*^{vi}

What does the evidence say about the role of our religion in major wars?

Question One– Can Religions Work For Peace?

For over a century representative from all the major religions in the world have been meeting in a Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions to cultivate harmony among the world's spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world to achieve a peace, justice, and sustainability.

The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR) dates from 1988 when two monks from the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago suggested organizing a centennial celebration of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago. The 1893 Parliament marked the first formal gathering of representatives of eastern and western spiritual traditions. Today it is recognized as the occasion of the birth of formal global inter-religious dialogue.^{vii}

Answer One – A Common Ethic For Peace!

In 1993, the Parliament of the World's Religions was convened in Chicago, with 8,000 people from all over the world coming together to celebrate diversity and harmony and to explore religious responses to the critical issues, which confront us all.

The representatives looked to see if they could find a common ethic in their religious traditions that they could use to address the issue of violence. And they found the famous *Golden Rule*. *Not the new cynical version - 'those with the gold rule.'* But *the old spiritual version - 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'.*

The Golden Rule	<i>Hinduism</i> 'Never do to others what would pain you' <i>Panchatantra</i> 3.104	<i>Buddhism</i> 'Hurt not others with that which hurts yourself.' <i>Udana</i> 5.18	<i>Zoroastrianism</i> 'Do not to others what is not well for oneself.' <i>Shayast-na-shayast</i> 13.29
<i>Jainism</i> 'One who neglects existence disregards their own existence' <i>Mahavira</i>	<i>Confucianism</i> 'Do not impose on others what you do not yourself desire.' <i>Analects</i> 12.2	<i>Taoism</i> 'Regard your neighbour's loss or gain as your own loss or gain.' <i>Tai Shang Kan Ying Pien</i>	<i>Baha'i</i> 'Desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.' <i>Baha'Ullah</i> 66
<i>Judaism</i> 'What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour.' <i>Talmud, Shabbat, 31a</i>	<i>Christianity</i> 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. <i>Matthew</i> 7.12	<i>Islam</i> 'Do unto all people as you would they should do to you.' <i>Mishkat-el-Masabih</i>	<i>Sikhism</i> 'Treat others as you would be treated yourself.' <i>Adi Granth</i>

In Taoism the call is *descriptive*. 'Regard your neighbour's loss or gain as your own loss or gain.' In Jainism the call is *instructive*. 'One who neglects existence disregards their own existence'. In Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Judaism and Baha'i the call is *imperative* and is framed *in negative terms*. 'Never do

to others what would pain you.' 'Hurt not others with that which hurts yourself.' 'What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour.' 'Do not impose on others what you do not yourself desire'. 'Desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.' While In Christianity, Islam and Sikhism the call is *imperative* and is framed in *positive terms*. 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. 'Do unto all people as you would they should do to you'. 'Treat others as you would be treated yourself.

The great value of the Golden Rule is that it is acceptable as a global ethic not only to religious people, but also to secular philosophers -like Peter Singer. '*Reciprocity,*' says the controversial Aussie philosopher, 'seems to be common to ethical systems everywhere.' People of all religions – or none - all over the world know that - there are no short cuts; that there are no quick fixes; and that we cannot hope to develop community unless we 'do unto others as we would have them do unto us'.^{viii}

What are the limitations of the Golden Rule as Global Ethic?

What are the possibilities of the Golden Rule as a Global Ethic?

At the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, USA, 1993 the religious leaders felt the need to clearly spell out the implications of the Golden Rule in terms an agreed Global Ethic.

At the Parliament, an assembly of religious leaders gave its assent to a document called *Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration*. *The declaration is a powerful statement of the ethical common ground shared by the world's religious and spiritual traditions. Towards a Global Ethic has emerged as one of the most significant building blocks in the continuing process of creating global ethical understanding and consensus.*

Drafted initially by Dr. Hans Kung, in cooperation with the staff and trustees of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions and experts drawing on many of the world's religious traditions, *Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration* identifies four essential affirmations as shared principles essential to a global ethic.

Affirming '*respect for all life*', '*economic justice and solidarity*', '*tolerance and truthfulness*', and '*equal rights and partnership between men and women*', the document elaborated eloquently on the significance of each value for our modern world.

Endorsed at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, USA, *Towards a Global Ethic* urges all men and women of good will to join in the commitment to these vital shared principles.^{ix}

The Declaration of a Global Ethic

The world is in agony. The agony is so pervasive and urgent that we are compelled to name its manifestations so that the depth of this pain may be made clear. Peace eludes us ... the planet is being destroyed ... neighbors live in fear ... women and men are estranged from each other ... children die! *This is abhorrent*

We condemn the abuses of Earth's ecosystems. We condemn the poverty that stifles life's potential; the hunger that weakens the human body, the economic disparities that threaten so many families with ruin. We condemn the social disarray of the nations; the disregard for justice which pushes citizens to the margin; the anarchy overtaking our communities; and the insane death of children from

violence. In particular we condemn aggression and hatred in the name of religion. *But this agony need not be.*

It need not be because the basis for an ethic already exists. This ethic offers the possibility of a better individual and global order, and leads individuals away from despair and societies away from chaos. We are women and men who have embraced the precepts and practices of the world's religions: We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic. We affirm that this truth is already known, but yet to be lived in heart and action. We affirm that there is an irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations, and religions. There already exist ancient guidelines for human behaviour which are found in the teachings of the religions of the world and which are the condition for a sustainable world order.

We Declare:

We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the community of living beings, for people, animals, and plants, and for the preservation of Earth, the air, water and soil. We take individual responsibility for all we do. All our decisions, actions, and failures to act have consequences.

We must treat others as we wish others to treat us. We make a commitment to respect life and dignity, individuality and diversity, so that every person is treated humanely, without exception. We must have patience and acceptance. We must be able to forgive, learning from the past but never allowing ourselves to be enslaved by memories of hate. Opening our hearts to one another, we must sink our narrow differences for the cause of the world community, practicing a culture of solidarity and relatedness.

We consider humankind our family. We must strive to be kind and generous. We must not live for ourselves alone, but should also serve others, never forgetting the children, the aged, the poor, the suffering, the disabled, the refugees, and the lonely. No person should ever be considered or treated as a second-class citizen, or be exploited in any way whatsoever. There should be equal partnership between men and women. We must not commit any kind of sexual immorality. We must put behind us all forms of domination or abuse. We commit our-selves to a culture of non-violence, respect, justice, and peace. We shall not oppress, injure, torture, or kill other human beings, forsaking violence as a means of settling differences.

We must strive for a just social and economic order, in which everyone has an equal chance to reach full potential as a human being. We must speak and act truthfully and with compassion, dealing fairly with all, and avoiding prejudice and hatred. We must not steal. We must move beyond the dominance of greed for power, prestige, money, and consumption to make a just and peaceful world.

Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first. We pledge to increase our awareness by disciplining our minds, by meditation, by prayer, or by positive thinking. Without risk and a readiness to sacrifice there can be no fundamental change in our situation. Therefore we commit ourselves to this global ethic, to understanding one another, and to socially beneficial, peace-fostering, and nature-friendly ways of life.

We invite all people, whether religious or not, to do the same.^x

What do you feel is the value of a declaration like *Towards a Global Ethic?*

Question Two– Can Christians Work For Peace?

Towards a Global Ethic was drafted by a Christian, the famous German Catholic theologian Dr. Hans Kung. He argues Christians must find a way of working for peace with people from other religions; or end up fighting and killing one another.

The difficulty that Christians have in working with people of other religions is that we are 'Christians'. We believe in the unique-yet-universal significance of Christ, our Saviour, who we believe is God's 'full and final revelation of truth'. And, that being so, most of us find it difficult to work together with people of other religions – or none – who do not acknowledge Christ in the same way. In the church I was brought up in I was actually taught that I should not -under any circumstances - become 'unequally yoked with unbelievers.'(2 Cor.6:14.)

Answer Two– If Less Christian And More Christlike!

Kung suggests that the only way for 'Christians' to work with 'non-Christians' is on the basis of *a common ethic that we know Christ publicly endorsed*. As 'Christians', Kung says, we may see the endorsement of Christ as 'the central concern for us.' (See Fig.1) But if we are going to work with 'non-Christians', we will need to accept that, while the endorsement of Christ is 'the central concern for us, it will - in all probability - be 'a peripheral concern' for others.(See Fig.2)

Fig.1

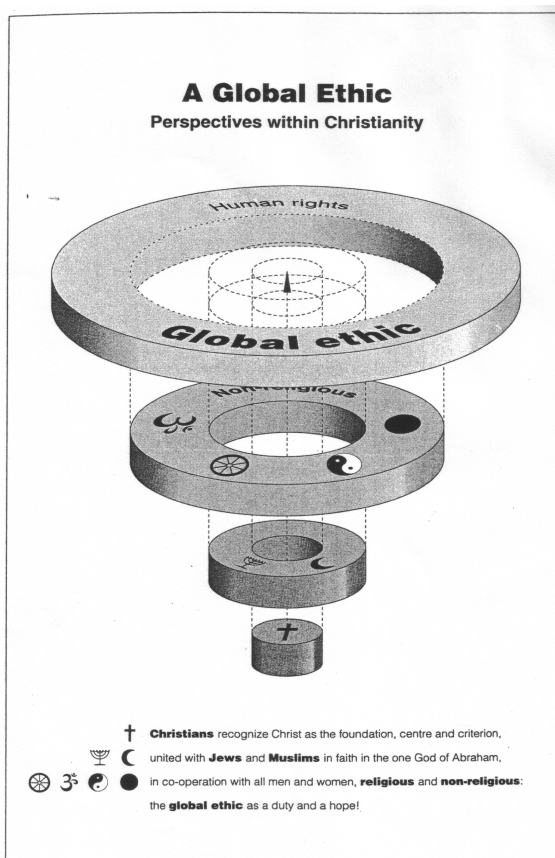
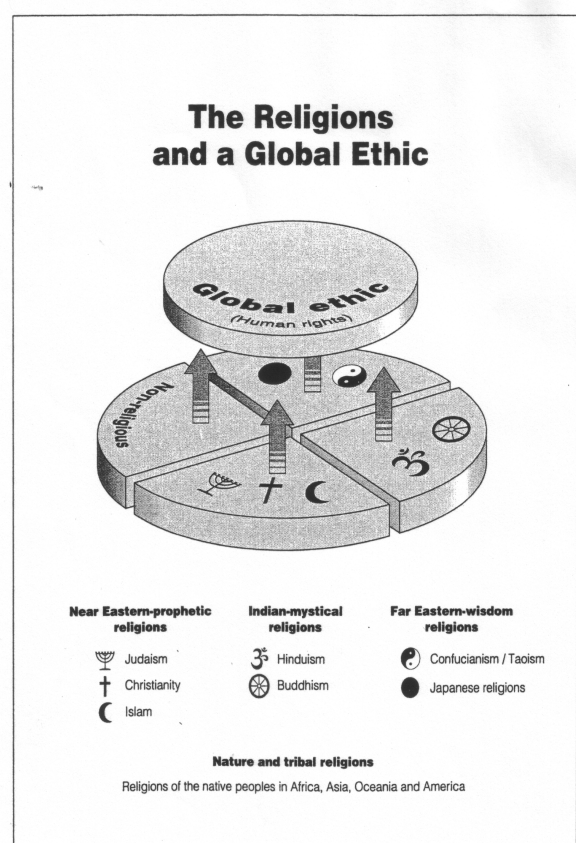


Fig.2



What do you think is the significance of the difference in these views?

For some 'Christians', to work with 'non-Christians' - knowing that Christ is 'a peripheral concern' for them and probably will remain 'a peripheral concern' – without constantly trying to convert them - would be tantamount to a betrayal of their very faith in Christ. So, for these 'Christians' to be able to work side by side with 'non-Christians' - as their equals - would be just about nigh on impossible.

The only way that 'Christians' can work side by side with 'non-Christians' as equals is - if we become less concerned about being 'Christian' and a lot more concerned about being 'Christlike'. Christ said 'I am the Way'. But we need to remember that the one who said he was 'the Way' showed us the way to work with people of other traditions by telling his disciples not to be so paranoid about them, but to remember 'if they're not against you, they're for you!' (Mark 9:30). Christ deliberately held up people of other religions, like the 'Good Samaritan', whom his co-religionists would have despised, as examples for Christians to emulate. (Luke 10:30-37)

We should have the same approach towards people of other religions as Christ.

Christlike ideas include:

*'whatever is true,
whatever is honest (has dignity),
whatever is right (or is just),
whatever is pure, (has integrity),
whatever is lovely (or is lovable),
whatever is admirable (or is kind);*

*if anything is excellent (has quality)
if anything is honourable (has credibility)
we should think (and talk) about these things'*

(Phil. 5: 8)

Christlike attitudes include:

*'being united with Christ,
living in harmony,
being like-minded,
having the same love,
being one in spirit and purpose;
doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,
but in humility considering others better than yourselves;
looking not only after your own interests,
but also looking after the interests of others.'*

(Phil. 2: 1-8)

Christlike actions include

*'Love that needs to be sincere.
Renouncing what is evil; embracing what is good.
Being devoted to one another in love.
Honouring one another above yourselves.*

*Making sure you don't lack in enthusiasm,
but maintaining your spiritual passion, serving the Lord.
Being joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

*Being careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.
Not being conceited, but living in harmony with one another.
Not being proud, but associating with marginalised people.
Sharing with those who are in need.
Practicing hospitality.
Rejoicing with those who rejoice;
Mourning with those who mourn.*

*As far as it depends on you, living at peace with everyone.
Not taking revenge.
"If your enemies are hungry, feeding them;
if they are thirsty, giving them something to drink."
Not repaying anyone evil for evil.
Blessing those who persecute you;
blessing and not cursing.
Not being overcome by evil, but overcoming evil with good.'*
(Rom.12: 9–21)

Christlike outcomes include:

'The fruit of the Spirit:

At a personal level -

*love - passion and compassion.
joy - awareness and appreciation.
peace - trust and tranquillity.*

At a relational level -

*patience - persistence
kindness - sweetness, not bitterness*

At a social level -

*goodness - generosity
faithfulness - fidelity*

And at a political level -

*tolerance and nonviolence
self-control and self-management.*

(Gal.5:22 –23)

What would it mean for you to be less 'Christian' but more 'Christlike'?

A Final Suggestion – A Framework for Problem Solving In The Real World.

In the real world there are some circumstances in which problem solving is possible, and some circumstances in which problem solving is *not* possible. Problem solving is only possible where all the parties in dispute are willing to move towards dialogue.

There are five possibilities in any situation -

The first possibility is

- that no-one is interested in us and there is nothing that we can do.
 - ◆ All we can do is give up on our goals and our relationships
 - ◆ The only option is – **Total Avoidance**.
 - ◆ So 'wipe the dust from your feet and move on.' Luke 9.5

The second possibility is

- that someone is interested in us, but there is still nothing we can do.
 - ◆ All we can do is let go of our goals and hold onto our relationships
 - ◆ The only option is - **General Accommodation**.
 - ◆ So 'be as innocuous as a peace dove.' Matthew 10.16

The third possibility is

- that no-one is interested in us, but there is still one thing we can do.
 - ◆ All we can do is hold onto our goals and let go of our relationships
 - ◆ The only option is - **Unilateral Action**.
 - ◆ So 'get on with it while you have the chance.' John 9.4

The fourth possibility is

- someone is a bit interested, and there are one or two things we can do.
 - ◆ We can hold on to some of our goals and hold onto our relationships.
 - ◆ And **Modest Negotiation** becomes an option.
 - ◆ So 'settle matters as quickly as you can.' Matthew 5.25

The fifth possibility is

- that someone is interested a lot, and there are a range of things we can do.
 - ◆ We can hold onto our goals and hold onto our relationships.
 - ◆ And **Meaningful Dialogue** is now an option as well.
 - ◆ So 'find a way that is acceptable to all.' Romans 12.18

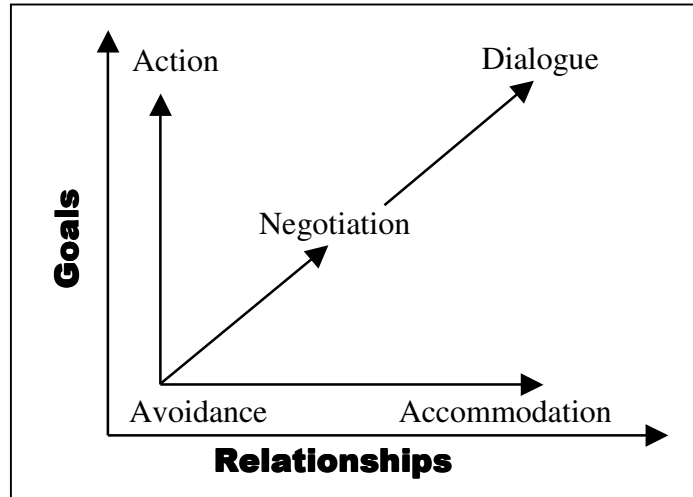
Note that

- Problem solving is possible where there is Modest Negotiation
- But preferable where there is the chance of Meaningful Dialogue

Note that

- One indicator is - a willingness to actually get together.
- Another is - a willingness to try to resolve the problem.

Possibilities For Problem Solving In The Real World^{xi}



i Gwynn Thomas Tomorrow's Enemies <http://www.worldsocialism.org/trowwars.htm>

ii Gwynn Thomas Tomorrow's Enemies <http://www.worldsocialism.org/trowwars.htm>

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iv Greg Austin, Todd Kranock, Thom Oommen God And War Department of Peace Studies, Bradford 2003

v 'Alive & kicking' New Internationalist, August, 2004

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viii Peter Singer One World Text Publishing Melbourne 2002

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xi S. Fisher, D. Ibrahim Abdi, J. Ludin, R. Smith, S. Williams, S Williams Working with Conflict 2000, Zed Books, St. Martin's Press, New York