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Dialogue and the 1993 World's Parliament of Religions

by

Cory Hollon

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Approved by

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a report on the 1993 World's Parliament of Religion held in Chicago between August 28 and September 4. A report on the proceedings of the Parliament is given, followed by a description of the document sponsored by the Parliament, the "Global Ethic." Finally, from these events, conclusions about the prospects and problems of interreligious dialogue are drawn.

DIALOGUE AND THE 1993 WORLD'S PARLIAMENT OF RELIGION

From August 28th to September 4th 1993, leaders of nearly fifty religious traditions gathered at the Palmer Hilton Hotel in Chicago in hopes of promoting interreligious dialogue and understanding among the religions of the world. Peter Steinfels reported in the New York Times that "the Parliament marked the centenary of the World Parliament of Religions held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition of the 1893 Chicago World's fair" (Steinfels 1993, 25[1]). At the 1893 Parliament, Swami Vivekananda -- a young Bengali ascetic destined to be the leader of the Ramakrishna Math, an important Hindu revitalization movement -- was "beyond question the most popular and influential man in the Parliament" (Seager 1993, 338). The Parliament of 1893 saw a good deal of Anglo-Saxon triumphalism, but it marked the

"revelation of the plurality of religious forces on the domestic and international scenes" (Seager 1993, 8). The Parliament of 1893 was "the incipient broadening of and diversification in the American religious mainstream" (Seager 1993, 9). By contrast, Dennis P. McCann wrote in the 1993 Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics that "religious pluralism rather than global convergence will be the dominant theme of the 1993 Parliament [sic]" (McCann 1993, 291). The Parliament of 1993 offered another chance to look at the state of diversity in the American religious experience.

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Such a gathering naturally begged the question of purpose. Why did the individuals who participated in the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions gather in Chicago for that week of interaction? The leaders of the Parliament declared that "the Parliament is a collective spiritual process through which a richly diverse group has to create a special environment, charged with sacred energy where people from all classes and creeds can gather. Together we can find ways for the world's communities to live peacefully"(Matsumoto 1993, 1). Michael Hirsley, the religion writer for the Chicago Tribune, reported that "the oft-stated aim of those who came to this parliament was to converse in harmony[sic]"(Hirsley 1993, 1[1]). David Briggs of the Associated Press claimed that the "the goal of the Parliament is to promote peace among religions and nations"(Briggs 1993, 7[1]). Both of these perspectives of the goal of the Parliament, conversation and expedition of world peace, found explicit expression in the signing of an inter-faith document entitled the

"Global Ethic" at the conclusion of the Parliament on September 4th. The purpose of the Parliament was to create an atmosphere of trust and openness among the representatives of the world religions, and, specifically, to present the "Global Ethic" as a unified statement of the religions addressing the problems of the world.

have shocked the heavens. With two hours of invocations and blessings that should have roused the heavens - or possibly created stupor there - religious leaders from every corner of the globe and virtually every imaginable faith opened a once-in-a-century Parliament of the World's Religions" (Steinfels 1993, 13[A]). Reports of the gathering gave the number of people present as anywhere from 5000 to 7000 people. At the opening ceremonies, each representative was present in his or her own "religious attire" including the crimson robes of the Roman Catholic delegates alongside the flowing white robes of the Shinto priests. As the delegates came together for the opening ceremonies, the diversity of the Parliament was given form. Participants reported that a general feeling of good will toward all present pervaded everything done there. The opening ceremonies saw some awkward moments, however. When, for example, Irfan Khan of the American Islamic College asked all to raise their hands to ask for the assistance of God, many kept their hands in their laps. Later when the Lady Olivia Robertson of the Fellowship of Isis shook her hand rattles and asked, "Holy Goddess Isis, mother of all beings, come to thy children," nearly everyone at the gathering sat silently with the exception of one man in the back of the room who joined in her movements (Hirshley

THE 1993 PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

On August 28th, the Parliament opened with participants asking for the blessing of greater powers at an invocation that might have shocked the heavens. "With two hours of invocations and blessings that should have roused the heavens - or possibly created stupor there - religious leaders from every corner of the globe and virtually every imaginable faith opened a once-in-a-century Parliament of the World's Religions"(Steinfels 1993, 13[A]). Reports of the gathering gave the number of people present as anywhere from 5000 to 7000 people. At the opening ceremonies, each representative was present in his or her own "religious attire" including the crimson robes of the Roman Catholic delegates alongside the flowing white robes of the Shinto priests. As the delegates came together for the opening ceremonies, the diversity of the Parliament was given form. Participants reported that a general feeling of good will toward all present pervaded everything done there. The opening ceremonies saw some awkward moments, however. When, for example, Irfan Khan of the American Islamic College asked all to raise their hands to ask for the assistance of God, many kept their hands in their laps. Later when the Lady Olivia Robertson of the Fellowship of Isis shook her hand rattle and asked, "Holy Goddess Isis, mother of all beings, come to thy children," nearly everyone at the gathering sat silently with the exception of one man in the back of the room who joined in her movements(Hirsley

1993, 1[2C])). Despite occasional moments of awkwardness the first days of the Parliament were characterized by attitudes of optimism and joy at the diversity of the Parliament's members. A few individuals seemed to give unique examples of the great diversity of the Parliament by describing themselves as "Buddhist Christian," "Catholic Hindu," "Multidenominational," and "Jewish Hindu Witch." Dr. John Borelli, an interfaith affairs officer for the American Catholic bishops, was quoted in the September 5 New York Times saying, "It's kind of carnival, but that didn't prevent serious dialogue" (Steinfels 1993, 25[1]).

The next seven days provided participants with the opportunity to hear a variety of lectures and panel discussions. Topics ranged from new religious movements or "cults" to religious pluralism to religious methods for cleaning up the environment. Most of the Parliament was devoted to these types of sessions, but participants also had the opportunity to view religious dance and art. The activities were numerous and diverse. The participants were given a chance to speak and to be heard as equals with those around (Küng and Kuschel 67).

The rest of the week contrasted with the opening ceremonies as they were not quite so harmonious. On September 1, the Orthodox Christian delegation withdrew its participation in the event, claiming that the gathering's purpose was compromised by the participation of "certain quasi-religious groups." Although the letter of withdrawal did not specifically name the groups that were objectionable, observers guessed that the Orthodox concern dealt with the participation of self-styled witches and

neo-pagans. The letter concluded by claiming that "it would be inconceivable for Orthodox Christianity to establish a perceived relationship with groups which profess no belief in God or a supreme being"(Hirsley 1993, 1[2C]). Rev. David Ramage, the chairman of the Parliament, was quoted as saying that "we regret this very much, but we understand that these communities are not comfortable with being in conversation with the breadth of religious participation actively present at this parliament"(Hirsley 1993, 5[2C]). The withdrawal of the Orthodox delegation was just the first illustration of the pitfalls of interreligious dialogue.

On Wednesday September 2, four Jewish delegations also withdrew because of the participation of the leader of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan. Together, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Council, and the Jewish Community Relations Council sent letters of withdrawal to Rev. Ramage stating that they "could not participate alongside Farrakhan because he continues to espouse and promote classic anti-Semitic notions of Jewish domination and control"(Hinsley 1993, 3[A]). Earlier, Farrakhan had accused Jewish leaders of having influence and control of black leaders. According to Farrakhan, this claim was evidenced by the leaders of the commemorative March on Washington cancelling his invitation to speak there. "He said that he would continue to speak out against anti-black racism in interreligious dialogue because 'hiding the truth is the greatest offense of all'"(Hirsley 1993, 3[A]). Michael Sandberg, the Midwest civil rights director of

the Anti-Defamation League, supported the withdrawal. "As a parliament sponsor, our name was on that door," said Sandberg. "It can't be on a door that he [Farrakhan] strides through" (Hirsley 1993, 3[A]).

A third breakdown of relations at the Parliament occurred among the Indian delegations on Thursday. A Kahmiri Sikh speaker, who was not identified in any of the reports of the Parliament, accused the Indian government of repressive action in Kahmir. According to press accounts, the Indian participants shouted him down, "provoking a brief flurry of shoving among the Parliament participants" (Steinfels 1993, 25[1]). The violence was obviously a more serious matter and was of some concern to the organizers. According to David Toolan of the magazine America, "at one point the police had to intervene to separate Hindus and Kasmiri Sikhs who were at each other's throats" (Toolan 1993, 3). The Parliament was an occasion for, among other things, the airing of grievances, and occasionally this would have unfortunate repercussions. These illustrated the possible problems of interreligious dialogue, but "most of the Parliament's participants carried on oblivious to these skirmishes" (Steinfels 1993, 25[1]).

Some other events of the Parliament that occurred away from the Palmer House provided an interesting sight for citizens of Chicago. After a legal battle over the freedom of religious expression, Neo-pagans won the right to hold a ritual outdoor "moon" ceremony in Grant Park. At 8:00 P.M. on Wednesday, 200 people from the Covenant of the Goddess converged upon Grant

Park. As they swayed and chanted "Gaia carry us home for Mother we are one," a group of onlookers formed a semi-circle around them. Some of the participants chose to become "sky-clad," or naked, during the ceremony. The scene must have seemed incredibly strange for the on-lookers. Michael Hirsley reported that two men who were obviously inebriated stepped into the clearing and "stood for a while at the edge of the circle, then rubbed their eyes and walked away" (Hirsley 1993, 1[1]). To be

Other activities included a Navajo delegation visiting the Field Museum of Natural History to hold a "re blessing" of tribal masks, medicine bundles, and religious artifacts. One hotel meeting room was designated a "meditation room" with dimly lit chandeliers providing the only light to the individuals who, although chairs were provided, chose to sit on the floor. Rituals devoted to the Egyptian goddess Isis were so popular that the Palmer House staff had to re-arrange room assignments three times to accommodate the crowd. T'ai Chi Master Al Huang led a group of "Western rock'n rollers in the art of moving with the grace of Chinese tigers and cranes" (Toolan 1993, 3). The entire week was, according to Peter Steinfels, "a kind of spiritual bazaar" (Steinfels 1993, 15[A]).

The week-long Parliament came to an end with closing ceremonies in Chicago's Grant Park. Here, nearly a hundred participants representing more than a dozen faiths signed a declaration outlining a common global ethic. The signing of the "Global Ethic" was followed with an address by the Dalai Lama. Self-professed Roman Catholic, Father Hans Küng, the principal

author of the "Global Ethic," claimed that "we have here a minimum ethic, a baseline to which all religions could hold themselves and others accountable"(Steinfels 1993, 15[A]).

While his speech was important and characterized the Parliament on certain levels, the most memorable and telling part of the closing ceremony was the release of the Global Ethic. David Briggs of the Associated Press argued that "the statement is the most visible action of the Parliament"(Briggs 1993, 7[1]). To be sure, the "Global Ethic" is the legacy of the Parliament.

As executive director of the Chicago Center for Peace Studies William F. George notes, "the ethic is introduced by a jeremiad against the evils of the age - poverty, women and men estranged from each other, massive injustice, and especially aggression and hatred in the name of religion"(George 1993, 536). The long version claims that the world "is experiencing a fundamental crisis in global economy, global ecology, and global politics"(Küng and Küschel 1993, 17). "Politicians, businesses, and even religions are leading the planet into a state of decay that threatens us all. Conflict between races, classes, and countries are rampant and the current leadership of the world is not doing anything constructive to remedy the situation." The "Global Ethic" condemns these problems and "declares that they need not be"(Küng and Küschel, 1993).

While the causes that are given are many, the remedy seems

THE GLOBAL ETHIC

The "Global Ethic" has two forms. The short form was meant to be read at public gatherings, specifically the closing session of the 1993 Parliament. The long form does not differ from the short except in the amount of material devoted to explanation of the precepts put forth. Both will be examined here, but special emphasis will be put on the long form because it provides more justification, reasoning, and, as a result, a better chance to look at the principles that helped in the formulation of the ethic.

As executive director of the Chicago Center for Peace Studies William F. George notes, "the ethic is introduced by a jeremiad against the evils of the age - poverty, women and men estranged from each other, massive injustice, and especially aggression and hatred in the name of religion" (George 1994, 530). The long version claims that the world "is experiencing a fundamental crisis in global economy, global ecology, and global politics" (Küng and Kuschel 1993, 17). Politicians, businesses, and even religions are leading the planet into a state of decay that threatens us all. Conflict between races, classes, and countries are rampant and the current leadership of the world is not doing anything constructive to remedy the situation. The "Global Ethic" condemns these problems and "declares that they need not be" (Küng and Kuschel, 1993).

While the causes that are given are many, the remedy seems

very simple: a new global ethic is needed. The world must have a grand unifying vision. The source for the new ethic is already in place in the various religious traditions of the world.

"There is already a consensus among the religions which can be the basis for a global ethic - a minimal fundamental consensus concerning binding values, irrevocable standards, and fundamental moral attitudes"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 18). According to the authors, this minimal standard, if held by all, could bring the problems of the world to an end.

The fundamental demand of the new ethic is that "every human being be treated humanely"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 21). Religion can provide the "change in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, the 'hearts' of people and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 22). The principle that religion can bring into being is most commonly known as the "Golden Rule." What one wishes done to oneself, one should do to others. The "Global Ethic" states that "this should be the irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations and religions"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 24). From this principle the "Global Ethic" draws "four irrevocable directives."

The first directive is a "commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 24). Humans will have conflicts, but these conflicts "should be resolved without violence within a framework of justice"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 25). In his commentary on the "Global Ethic," principal author Hans Küng points out that the commitment to the

culture of non-violence should not be interpreted as an extreme passivism which refuses to even defend the security of person.

"The right to self-defense is clearly affirmed both for the individual and for the collective - but in the context of a culture of non-violence it applies only in extremis, in extreme instance, namely when non-violent resistance is senseless"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 68). Respect for life includes a respect for one's own life.

The second irrevocable directive is the "commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 26). Throughout the world there is widespread poverty, hunger, and need. Taking the ancient directive of "you should not steal," the authors expand it to the societal level to claim that "we must utilize economic and political power for service to humanity instead of misusing it in ruthless battles for domination"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 29). They call for moderation and modesty to be watchwords for those in religion in an attempt to limit the amount of poverty and disparity between social classes. Not stealing is more than a prohibitive command; it means dealing fairly with everyone. "No one has the right to rob or dispossess in any way whatsoever any other person or the commonweal or to use his or her possessions without concern for the needs of society and Earth"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 27).

Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness is the third directive within the "Global Ethic." The problem of deceit and treachery are rampant in the world today, claims the authors. "There is no global justice without

truthfulness and humaneness"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 31). The Ethic lists a myriad of problems resulting from corrupt politicians, misinformation in the mass media, and false science (George 1994, 531). According to the Ethic, "no woman or man, no institution, no state or church or religious community has the right to speak lies to other humans"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 30). One of the strongest condemnations in the "Global Ethic" was reserved for those representatives of religion who "stir up prejudice, hatred, and enmity towards those of different belief, or even incite or legitimate religious wars; they deserve the condemnation of humankind and the loss of their adherents"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 31).

Finally, there must be a "commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 32). This fourth directive is taken from the religious injunction "you shall not commit sexual immorality." This is developed to mean that women and men should live in love and partnership. As Küng later notes in his commentary, this part of the "Global Ethic" is problematic for some religions. "It must be conceded that what is said in this section about equal rights for women doubtless presents a challenge not only to some Muslims and Hindus but also to more conservative European and American Christians"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 69). Even with this complication, the Ethic does not waver from its assertion of the necessity for partnership between men and women. "No one has the right to degrade others to mere sex objects, to lead them into or hold them in sexual dependency"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 33).

The final section of the "Global Ethic" includes a call for other communities to develop similar ethical statements. "Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed" (Küng and Kuschel 1993, 36). What the authors call for is a "conversion of the heart." By signing the document, the representatives effectively committed themselves "to a common global ethic, to better mutual understanding, as well as to socially-beneficial, peace fostering, and Earth-friendly ways of life" (Küng and Kuschel 1993, 36). Steinfels reports that the Ethic was "a statement [the signers] described as an initial step to applying ancient principles to current problems" (Steinfels 1993, 25[1]). Furthermore, "the statement does not claim to be creating a new ethic, but extracting a common one from existing religious traditions" (Steinfels 1993, 15[A]). The "Global Ethic," as the legacy of the Parliament, showed what can be accomplished in interreligious dialogue, but the process can have its problems, as well.

finding practical ways of living together. According to Hans Küng, the peace of the world is dependent upon peace among the religions. David Krieger, the director of a major research project on interreligious environmental ethics, asserts that "the pressing need for global cooperation on all levels - economic, social, political, and cultural - has made it apparent how deeply religious and ideological differences affect human community and the possibility for peace, justice, and prosperity" (Krieger 1993, 332). Although peace, justice, and prosperity are vague terms, the point is well taken that in order for the world's nations to

PROBLEMS AND PROMISE OF THE PARLIAMENT

What does all this mean for interreligious relations? What can be determined from an examination of the events of the Parliament and the Global Ethic for the state of interreligious dialogue? The Parliament gives good examples of why individuals or representatives of an organized religion would participate in interreligious dialogue. These reasons can roughly be divided into three categories: political, theological, and transformative.

David Neff, writing from the conservative/evangelical perspective in Christianity Today, claims that "without the study of other religions we shall not be able to talk to our neighbors" (Neff 1993, 20). Political reasons concern the manner in which individuals ought to live together. They avoid theological matters and focus instead on fundamental ethics and finding practical ways of living together. According to Hans Küng, the peace of the world is dependent upon peace among the religions. David Krieger, the director of a major research project on interreligious environmental ethics, asserts that "the pressing need for global cooperation on all levels - economic, social, political, and cultural - has made it apparent how deeply religious and ideological differences affect human community and the possibility for peace, justice, and prosperity" (Kreiger 1993, 332). Although peace, justice, and prosperity are vague terms, the point is well taken that in order for the world's nations to

cooperate, the world's religions must be able to communicate.

The Parliament's stated purpose most closely fits into this justification of interreligious dialogue. Hans Küng, whose views and assumptions are important because of his place as the primary author of the "Global Ethic," can be placed within this category. In Theology for the Third Millennium, he argues that "every religion is genuine, is true, insofar as it practically and factually gives proof of the 'miraculous power' to make a person welcome 'in the eyes of God and man'" (Küng 1988, 229). Religious truth is not as important as the purpose that religions serve. He further claims that "insofar as a religion serves the virtue of humanity, insofar as its teachings on faith and morals, its rites and institutions support human beings in their human identity, and allows them to gain a meaningful and fruitful existence, it is a true and good religion" (Küng 1988, 244). Religions are judged by the purposes they serve; therefore, dialogue between the religions should focus on means of cooperation and coexistence.

Theological justifications focus upon the spiritual growth of the community of believers among those involved in dialogue. "No critical ecumenical theology is thinkable apart from the dimension of the world religions" (Küng 1988, 227). Theological reasons are associated with the life of the religious community. They try to find the similarities and differences between the religions for re-examination or reinforcement of current doctrinal positions. The Parliament could have done this for the different traditions because, as author Hans Küng notes, the

Parliament offers scholars within each tradition the chance to examine "how strongly the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic is rooted in their own traditions, how far their own tradition corresponds with other ethical traditions, and how far their own tradition has a distinctive, specific, special contribution to make to the ethic"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 73). Here, Küng argues that the religions can benefit from dialogue because they can be developed in their own right more fully through interaction with other traditions. As Karl Kuschel, Küng's Tübingen University colleague, points out, "no religion any longer exists in splendid isolation"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 102). Because of the interdependence of all people, individuals of particular religious traditions must converse and cooperate in order to better understand the Other and, therefore, themselves.

Those who participate in interreligious dialogue also claim that individuals gain transformative benefits from the experience. John Berthrong argues that interreligious dialogue fosters creativity and transformation within the lives of those who engage in it.

A new situation emerges: a dialogue event, however fleeting, shallow, or even destructive. This event - this interchange - transforms the lives of the people who take part . . . dialogue fosters creativity through novel forms of togetherness.(Berthrong 1989, 183)

According to Berthrong, creativity in the new situation promotes the growth and change of the individuals involved in that situation. Dialogue provides an opportunity to "suspend bias and stretch one's horizon's"(Toolan 1993, 3). Dialogue's purpose "is not merely to exchange views; rather, its aim is mutual

transformation, or, . . . creative transformation"(Sturm 1993, 5).

The best example of this given from the 1993 Parliament is a report from Peter Gardella, chair of the department of religion at Manhattanville College. He said that "the Parliament of the World's Religions left me feeling much better"(Gardella 1994, 104). Individuals who attended the Parliament felt that it was a wonderful experience. Even as the withdrawals and accusations flew around them, the people who participated "carried on oblivious to these skirmishes"(Steinfels 1993 25[1]). Individuals genuinely encountered other faiths and came away feeling refreshed and renewed in their own traditions.

The Parliament serves as an example of the reasons individuals may gather for interreligious dialogue. It also illustrates what could go wrong with encounters of this kind. Michael Hirsley reports that "the oft-stated aim of those who came to this parliament from around the world was to converse in harmony, but the meeting served as a textbook on the pitfalls of interfaith dialogue"(Hirsley 1993, 1[1]). With the withdrawals of the Orthodox and Jewish delegations, the Parliament experienced difficulties that could plague dialogue. The withdrawals show "how hard it is to pull together a community of spiritual leaders to stand united against what they see as the world's evils"(Hirsley 1993, 1[1]). The Parliament was based in large part upon a philosophy of tolerance and harmony. The Jewish delegation withdrew because of conflicting political views that they believed could not be tolerated. The Orthodox

Christians withdrew because of conflicting theological views that they believed could not be tolerated. Conservative and fundamentalist Christian organizations did not attend because of the theological barriers. Because they believe that all of Truth is contained within the Christian tradition, dialogue with other traditions is useless.

James Livingston in Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religions describes the way individuals understand the diversity of religions in the world and the way that they react because of their understanding. One option is exemplified by the Jewish and Orthodox withdrawal and the abstention of the fundamentalist Christians. It is called "exclusivism." Exclusivism holds that the different religions of the world have unique and mutually exclusive views about the Ultimate, the way to salvation, and the world itself. From this view, exclusivists argue that "since truth is invariant and indivisible, one religion only can be the way and the truth" (Livingston 1989, 352). Exclusivists argue that since all religions make factual claims about the nature and structure of the universe, and, because truth cannot be divided, most religions have adopted, at one time or another, an attitude of unique superiority over other religious traditions. Livingston reports that "this view continues to be held by conservative and evangelical groups within Protestantism" (Livingston 1989, 355).

In the instances of withdrawal, perception was the key. When differences can no longer be set aside as unimportant by those engaging in dialogue, dialogue will break down. The Sikhs

and the Hindus had political differences, but neither one withdrew because these differences, while very important, were not enough to compromise their cooperation on matters like the "Global Ethic."

The "Global Ethic" is not without controversy, either. First, it contains no means of implementation. The leaders of the Parliament attempted to explain this lack of enforcement in terms of the nature of the religious community. Rev. David Ramage explains this by claiming that "while the religious community must avoid threats or sanctions, this statement makes it clear that whenever anyone does violence or kills in the name of religion, everyone in the world can say 'No, that is not right'" (Hirsley 1993, 1[1]). The "Global Ethic" sets up a standard but gives no method to reach that standard. The document and the Parliament were officially given no status when in a post-Parliament meeting on Sunday, the organizers ruled that all resolutions the body had passed should have no standing since the assembly was not meant to be a group taking action (Steinfels 1993, 15[A]). Even the Dalai Lama, a long-term advocate of interreligious dialogue, could only conjecture and postpone judgment about the implications of the Parliament (Steinfels 1993, 15[A]).

The "Global Ethic" does not have a strong "religious grounding," either. William George argues that for the "Global Ethic" to be rooted in religious conviction, it needs to address not only moral failure, but also the possibility of redemption from that moral failure. What is lacking in the "Global Ethic"

is "put in Christian terms, a vigorous doctrine of grace, and, without such emphasis one wonders just how deep the ethic's desired religious grounding can go"(George 1994, 533).

The Parliament did have positive aspects as well. Many of the individuals who attended confirmed the worth of such an endeavor. Those who were present, like those who were absent or withdrew, had a discernible worldview that helped them engage in this type of interaction. Livingston calls this 'pluralism.' He claims that "pluralism insists that each religion is indeed unique and must be respected as the authentic way that 'God's truth' is revealed to a particular culture at a particular time"(Livingston 1989, 53). Each religion is equally true and should be respected. All traditions have something to offer other traditions; therefore, dialogue with them is very beneficial for the "theological" reasons explained earlier. The Parliament afforded pluralists an opportunity to interact with those from other traditions and showed promise because of this interaction alone.

The "Global Ethic" was also seen as a great sign of hope. David Briggs calls the "Global Ethic" an "historic attempt to find common values among the world's religions"(Briggs 1993, 7[1]). Hans Küng reports "that such a declaration should in the end have been signed by such significant people . . . represents an unmistakable sign of hope for the future of religions"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 72). Interreligious dialogue can help to set some of the goals that the world should work toward achieving. "The 'Global Ethic's' vision of a world in which human beings are

treated humanely and the earth is treated with respect is made no less true when children starve, when dissident voices are silenced by the torturer's tools, when poison fills our waterways and the air"(George 1993, 533).

Yet, these problems with the "Global Ethic" can also be seen as a strength. William George reports that

The lack of specificity in the Global Ethic may be its strength. While the principles enunciated by the ethic do not directly affirm John Paul II's stance on abortion, neither do they close it off. As a result, the pope and in principle other traditions can have it both ways: they can affirm a moral consensus with other religious communities on vague, formal, visionary principles while retaining their own distinctive moral stance. (George 1994, 532)

According to Küng and Kuschel, the "Global Ethic" was not meant to provide a law or edict; it was meant to be a "consensus among the religions which can be the basis for a global ethic - a minimal fundamental consensus concerning binding values, irrevocable standards, and fundamental moral attitudes"(Küng and Kuschel 1993, 18).

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the the 1993 Parliament affords an excellent opportunity to examine the problems and prospects of interreligious dialogue. The Parliament showed that one of the greatest problem is that of participation. It was difficult not only to get some religious groups to attend, but also to get other religious traditions to tolerate the presence of those with whom they disagreed. Its greatest prospect was that a fundamental consensus was be reached and supported by such a wide range of traditions. The 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions can be seen as a success on the grounds that it did produce such a consensus. However, the problems with this consensus and the conflicts during the week make it difficult to label it ultimately successful. Although it is difficult to determine whether the Parliament was a triumph or failure because of the complex issues it addressed and the limitations the organizers placed upon it, the Parliament offered hope for future dialogue by giving a framework for discussion found in the "Global Ethic."

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 conditions 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

APPENDIX

"THE DECLARATION TOWARD 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 . . . neighbours 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 conditions 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 world community, practising 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 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 ourselves 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.

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