APPLYING SPIRITUAL WISDOM

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Abstract

There is a body of literature that cuts across all religious traditions called "spiritual wisdom." For those in public administration, this literature is especially helpful to make more informed decisions on values and ethical choices at the individual and group levels. In this globalized world where information related technology is rapidly changing society, secular thinking found in governmental and educational settings as well as the thinking of religious institutions are fundamentally inadequate in confronting our most fundamental public administration problems and difficulties. The former has stripped out of itself the wisdom of the ages and the latter seeks too often to advance its own interests rather than those of society as a whole. This article argues that we now need to examine the common spiritual wisdom of all religious traditions to help us confront and properly deal with our ultimate values and ethical challenges of our profession.

Introduction

As we move into the next millenium with all its challenges, we face a critical choice. We can move forward based on the total accumulated knowledge of humankind. Or we can ignore selective segments of our acquired knowledge. Given the challenges of the next millennium that are already upon us, we are wiser to use all the wisdom available to us. This essay argues that this is especially true in the case of spiritual wisdom that can be found in all the religious traditions. This wisdom can help us make more informed value and ethical choices at both individual and group levels. At the end of this millennium, we are increasingly aware that secular thinking alone can

not resolve our problems and difficulties, nor can our religious institutions, because too often they are designed to only advance their own interests rather than the interests of the total society.

As shall be noted later, the next millennium is both a continuation of the past but also a time of new challenges that will require new approaches that particularly stress the importance of interdependence and individual empowerment throughout society. The private sector has proven its usefulness as a vital part of a dynamic evolving society, and government has proven that it provides essential services necessary for our society to advance. Although the new millennium has not yet even begun, an increasingly global interdependent society is evident. Already we can see that we will need higher quality skilled and remarkably ethical individual leaders in every role in society; leaders who not only are skilled and knowledgeable, but also possess and use spiritual wisdom to guide their actions.

In this essay, we shall make the case for spiritual wisdom and why we must reach out to the literature of all faiths to help us deal with the problems of our future. To make this case, we will explain why the future will not only be different from past periods of human history, but explain in what critical ways it will be different. We will also explain why spiritual wisdom is central to those challenges and explain the remarkable resource that we have available to us that can help us more intelligently meet those challenges. Finally, this paper will end with some conclusions of what we can do to put our most important resources to good use.

A Paradigm Shift: A Fundamental Shift

Leonard Swidler, Ewert Cousins, and Hans Kung note that we are experiencing a post-Enlightenment paradigm shift of remarkable proportions. This massive shift in thought, that has permeated our entire human consciousness, can be seen in the basic epistemology associated with both physical and social sciences. It influences every area of human activity, including understanding itself. Swidler explains the implications of this radical shift as follows: "As always, when a new major paradigm shift occurs, old answers are no longer helpful, for they respond to questions no longer posed, in thought categories no longer used, within a conceptual framework which no

longer prevails." This fundamental shift in thought touches the very core of our understanding of our interrelations with virtually every aspect of what we call the "entirety."(1)

This is a shift from a relationship defined first as dependence, than as independence, and now changing to interdependence. This shift can be seen in the way people interrelate with each Other (Covey, 1990, p. 145) and in the change in human consciousness from the Pre-Axial period, to the Axial Period (800 – 200 B.C.E.), and now to the Second Axial Period described by Cousins. In the Pre-Axial period, Cousins notes the dominant form of consciousness was cosmic, collective, tribal, mythic, and ritualistic. Thus human consciousness could be described as human dependency. The tribe defined each person as organically related into their group as a whole including their birth, death, nature, and even the cosmos.

In the Axial period, consciousness transformed us to what we now call our contemporary perspective of human independence. This radical change stressed the importance of the individual as a knowing self. This becomes critical to each person, as does the importance of individual responsibility. This self-reflective, analytic, critical consciousness severed the harmony with nature and the organic relationship with the tribe. However, this new consciousness made possible radically new social structures, mental imageries that permitted radical progress in knowledge development, and most significantly opened the individual spiritual path with its inner way to transcendency.

Our separate institutions of religion were able to capture our historic past consciousness in their literature known as scriptures, but as time wore on, the institutions themselves grew more fiercely independent, agitating and even creating schisms and ruptures in the whole society.

Now, we are moving into what Cousins calls the Second Axial Period where human interdependence is the dominant theme of human consciousness. Like the previous change, it is occurring around the world simultaneously and is changing us fundamentally, including our world religions. With our new consciousness, we see ourselves living in a global society with universal inter-dependence that has profound implications for us economically, socially, and

spiritually.   World diversity is intensified into web-like centers or units that lead to an evolving more complex set of units and relationships among the units.

Individuals do not disappear but rather increasingly redefine and understand themselves as units of the union or entirety. Thus, this increasing and ever evolving complexity of consciousness leads to a convergence of cultures and religions. This new interdependence or global consciousness is rediscovering its roots in the earth and the central role spirituality has in our lives. Like the Pre-Axial Period, the tribe becomes important but tribal consciousness is redefined into the whole of humanity as a single tribe with a single collective consciousness.   Both fundamentalism and bland universalism are inadequate as we evolve into a new complex collective consciousness rooted in the obvious desire of having a stable secure world.

Swidler refers to the post-Enlightenment epistemological Paradigm-Shift where mankind's absolute, static, and monolithic view was "deabsolutized" or cast into intellectual disregard. Contemporary philosophy's deabsolutization of knowledge has completely undermined the eighteenth century "truth" that a statement about reality was conceived in an absolute, static, exclusive either-or manner. Thus, the notion of any version of absolute truth, including scientific theories, was fundamentally challenged to the point of claiming that all knowledge is relative. Some, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, even announced that God was dead because belief in an absolute, such as God, had become impossible (1954).

Swidler disagrees by stressing the conceptual differences between relative and relational. He counters that deabsolutized logic leads not to relative truth but rather to the existence of a relational situation where there is an obviously true aspect to each person's perspective, even though each is relational.   The always partial, perspectival, deabsolutized view of a truth statement is recognized at the same time as the common human basis for perception and description of reality and value. Swidler notes, "All human beings experience certain things in common…Our cognitive faculties perceive structures in reality as variations and symmetries in pitch, color and form." (1997, p.2) Here we find a basis for building a universal fundamental epistemology and value system predicated on a collective spiritual wisdom.

The post-modern argument about hermeneutics cited by Swidler especially needs closer treatment. Knowledge of any text comes from the interpretation of it. Thus postmodernists argue this interaction constitutes a deabsolutizing of the claim of "true" meaning. From the post-modernism point of view, any knowledge learned from the text is only interpretative or relative and therefore valid only to the particular reader interpreting it. However, as all knowledge is interpreted knowledge, the perceiver is still part of the perceived. The object and subject are really one as the very process of seeing a relationship between the two means that the two can also be considered parts of one perception process.

This somewhat complex reasoning means that once we start thinking, everything that comes into our thinking process can be considered by each of us as a part of the whole that includes our thinking process. The very process of dialogue with others thus moves us toward Oneness with them. In the words of the Gospel of Thomas (Meyer, 1992, p.106) saying, "When you make two into one, you become children of humanity..." In other words, dialogue gives us the tool to create for ourselves an evolving universal truth by the very act of thinking. To the extent that the vision of a universal truth is shared, it is universal but also remains a relational truth. Such a truth is dynamic because with continuing dialogue each relational member can help other members and themselves gain an ever increasing dynamic perception of truth that is always expanding and changing as we gain insight in the continuous creative process. We become, in the words of the Gospel of Thomas, children of humanity.

The Power of Vision

Ideas guide behavior and place value on people, things, and activities when they are shared by a number of people. As those ideas evolve through a sharing process, society proceeds. An example of this is the early twentieth century vision called the Progressive Movement that existed and so greatly influenced contemporary America. In the same period, Socialism and Communism also influenced many of today's nations in the world. All three visions built on a Christendom that evolved into what is called Western Civilization, a belief system that permits a strong central role for government in society.

In America, the Progressive vision called for government to regulate and largely direct a strong private sector based on government decided national, social, economic, and environmental goals. Those goals reflected a concern for such policy issues as child labor, factory safety, meat and drug regulation, political corruption of democracy, and economic monopolies (Brier, 1992). The Progressive vision called for government to play an activist role by providing leadership and direction for society including being the guarantor of the national economic condition, safety, and well being of the citizenry. Progressivism helped address newly urbanized America's social, environmental, and economic problems that the earlier excess of the Gilded Age, with its stress on individualism, had failed to confront.

In an increasingly post-agrarian country (1870 to 1930), the earlier Thomas Jefferson and Adam Smith notion that "the least government was the best government" created a social economic environment that allowed the robber barons of capitalism to exploit Social Darwinism. This extreme individualism expected the weak to evolve (i.e. die off) out of existence and resulted in extreme economic elitism and periodic periods of mass unemployment. Not surprisingly, the non-application of the golden rule by government and economic elites created a backlash in society that led to a reversal of policy from government inaction to government action. Thus, the by-products of the "successes" of the Industrial Age with its lack of spirituality planted the seeds for a partnership of sorts between the public and private sector in America and the entire replacement of the private sector for a total public sector in many other countries in the world.

In a very real sense, these early twentieth century political and social reforms reinvented government to cope with the emergence of the new industrial economy that created vast new problems but also vast new opportunities. The Progressive Era shaped contemporary America. Large manufacturing corporations and large government used strict hierarchies to control their organizations and perform their work. Mass markets were the keys to private economic success. As a result, a large middle class grew in prosperity and developed communities with strong family units and neighborhoods.

The Information Age and the Paradigm Shift

As we approach the new millennium, many of the hallmarks of the previous era have reversed because fundamental technological changes have altered the driving forces of society. We now have the computer with its remarkable ability to store and manipulate information. The very way we communicate with each other has changed. The Information Age altered the glue that held society together. As a result, today we are continually in a future shock society with rapid technological and scientific advancements that arise out of increasingly more complex use of information, coming together in ever-new combinations.

No longer is the economy creating significant numbers of manufacturing jobs that are characterized by being unionized, male, high wage, high school educated. Instead, we have a proliferation of both service job creation, offering predominantly low paying jobs, and knowledge job creation, offering fewer higher wage jobs but requiring much higher skills and capabilities. Unlike the earlier work force, this new one places a high positive economic premium on skills, talent, knowledge, and creativity, and a low economic premium for the average and below average worker. As a result, the economic profile of the country has a significantly dwindling middle class, some expansion in the number of higher paid positions, and many more lower paid positions.

Information is often the key to economic success and those that can better use it in the academic arena and work place tend to be the more highly successful. Economic success for business is found in global and regional marketing with specialty niches and innovative units being especially rewarded. Large organizations are now dinosaurs that cannot move or change fast enough to be successful in an environment that is always re-inventing itself into new configurations to take advantage of the latest technological opportunities. Increasingly, successful people are spread out, live in isolation including gated communities, and have fragmented family units with both spouses engaged in the work place.

The nature of the work place itself is changing, as the new information dependent people tend to work better in decentralized units that connect together in webs rather than hierarchies. Our

work places and opportunities are becoming more global, reverting us ironically to our tribal instinctive behavior by cutting us off from our previous social groups and replacing them with specialty friends often connected together by computer communications such as e-mail. The now outdated large private and public organizations are experiencing reinvention that renders them smaller but more interconnected.

These new web like organizations require the strategic brokers to exist at the nodes or centers of interrelations with others. They become the key problem identifiers and problem solvers much in the same manner of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's "creative unions."(1955, p.3) These centers generate energy and create ideas and jobs that not only expand the economy but raise the nation's productivity and standard of living (Reich, 1992). If a large organization is to compete in this new era, it must become information based, single or nearly single mission oriented, much smaller, decentralized, and organized using the web concept. The result is much flatter organizations that have fundamentally changed the way work is conducted in society (Drucker, 1989).

The Need for Spiritual Wisdom-Utility of Spiritual Wisdom

Spirituality or spiritual wisdom teaches us a way to live our lives. Normally based on a belief in the transcendent, spiritual wisdom defines the realm of divine and human encounters and informs us how to conduct ourselves in the world. It motivates us not to live selfish but generous lives by providing a continuous source of inspiration and guidance that allows us to function positively in the whole of society. It speaks of both an outer and inner life while stressing the importance of deepening and strengthening the inner life so that it can properly guide our outer life.

The spiritual wisdom of most religious traditions inextricably intertwines God and us as individuals and as communities. To spiritual wisdom, everyday life, with its pleasures and pains, is one of the two linked spheres that are united by God's creation. The other sphere is the life of faith that goes well beyond just believing in God's existence as it includes manifesting that belief constantly in our everyday thinking and actions toward others and the whole (O'Connor, 1990, pp. 14-16).

Spiritual wisdom is not rote religious answers to human problems but rather a means to break through the mystery of choice that constitutes the ambiguity of human experience. To the spiritual wisdom authors, life is not a simple set of absolute truths to be followed scrupulously but rather a continual encounter with conflicting truths with each making apparently valid but competing claims on the seeker. Paradoxical life requires our discernment from situation to situation as we decide when and if to act. Because truth is ambiguous and paradoxical, every person must engage in self-dialogue to discover and resolve their own conflicts of truth. Typically, the literary genre of spiritual wisdom is the *mashal* which is a comparison, short saying, proverb, aphorism, or riddle expressing a truth about life in concrete, succinct images. Life's challenge is to learn ever more spiritual wisdom leading one to a deeper, transcendent truth. The seeker must meet the *mashal* with openness, discernment, and application of the experiences gained from wisdom. Spiritual wisdom requires individual discovery, vigilance and choice (O'Connor, 1990, p. 20).

Although spiritual wisdom is the tool of the individual, it must always be used in the context of the enhancement of the life of the whole or the entirety. Anything that enhances the whole is considered harmony, joy, satisfaction, and agreeable. Priority in life goes to the community rather than the individual except the development of spiritual wisdom within the individual. We are all invited to spiritual wisdom without earthly cost to share in the blessing of God and join in His communion (O'Connor, 1990, p. 21).

Language helps us to appreciate the richness of the meaning of "Wisdom." The Hebrew and Greek nouns for wisdom are hoknah and sophia. The variety of their meaning is not reflected adequately in English, so a listing of meanings follows to enrich our comprehension of what spiritual wisdom can mean to each of us. Some of the meanings are:
- broadly divergent realities,
- way of thinking,
- way of living,
- a body of literature,
- various technical or artistic skills,
- search of meaning and order, and
- sagacity about life and human behavior.

Spiritual wisdom crosses cultures providing a global source of knowledge that instructs us on proper behavior and attitude. Spiritual wisdom is didactic in tone with a strong pedagogical flavor designed to continually teach us. However, we can learn it dialogically within ourselves and between others (Swidler, 1997). Ultimately, spiritual wisdom is a divine gift that we should seek but realize that wisdom finds us and not the converse (O'Connor, 1990 pp. 23-24, 34).

Proverbs as an Example

One example of spiritual wisdom can be found in the Hebrew Bible's Book of Proverbs. This collection of wisdom sayings grew out of the daily living of noble and common people alike, and represents word pictures or verbal snapshots. They are unclassified and most lack thematic or chronological order, but like a family cache of photos, they provide glimpses of humanity with all its good and bad foibles. Proverbs instructs by permitting us to compare models of wise living with examples of foolish behavior. Proverbs gives us insight into how to rule over the apparent chaos of life. However, the insights must be deduced from the proverbs within a process similar to dialogue because each attempt to employ proverbs must be done in the greater context of life. Proverbs does not seek blind acceptance but rather flexible minds to determine what behavior is appropriate for us in a unique new circumstance. The wisdom message is spiritual and enduring (O'Connor, 1990, pp. 35-41).

The spirituality of Proverbs in particular and spiritual wisdom in general is relational. Its intention is holistic as the virtues or qualities of the wise concern not only the whole person but the whole community. The goal is to prefect the individual as a contributing member to the whole community. The matrix of wisdom is the proper, respectful, and wise relationship with others because the interrelationship makes life beautiful, challenges us to the core, and provides the most intensive and surprising joy. All the qualities of the wise are directed toward peaceful, life-giving relationships in society. Religious practices are not central, but living life intensely and coping with life's dilemmas with honesty, faith, and positive desire to enhance the lives of others are central (O'Connor, 1990, pp. 51-52).

In Proverbs, our relationship to God is the beginning of knowledge and is expressed by the phrase "fear of Yahweh." This

idiom does not mean terror or fright, but it is a relational term referring to an overpowering awe and wonder. This feeling is combined with human loving trustful obedience toward the living God. Fear of Yahweh provides a profound sense of right and wrong. It is not motivation from terror or legal purity, but rather motivation built on an intimate relationship with the God of justice and harmony. Fear of Yahweh means confidence and security. It means living in loving devotion and in a deeply intimate relationship with God. Fear of Yahweh means recognizing that spiritual wisdom and its harmony pulsate through the universe, providing enlightenment to those who seek it. Such a wisdom has always been there to embrace them, but in the end spiritual wisdom is a gift from God based on the integral Oneness of all of God's creation (O'Connor, 1990, pp. 52-53).

Applying Spiritual Wisdom

Today, the secular approach, with its non-use of the spiritual wisdom literature, is employed to confront and resolve most public and private policy decisions and the result is a very real continuing problem in American policy making. We integrate values and ethics into our society using the positive law concept of "regime values," meaning the values of a nation that were brought into being by an existing constitution. The use of regime values is justified based on three considerations: (1) ethical norms should be derived from the salient values of the regime; (2) these normative values for public employees relate directly to the oath of office that they take upon assuming public employment; and (3) these values can be discovered by merely examining the public law of the regime (Rohr, 1978, pp.59-74).

The problem with this notion is that such a definition can be used to justify any regime, including the Hitler and Stalin regimes, as long as it is based on an existing constitution. We need to abandon judgments based on "regime values" and instead use the "common spiritual values of humankind." We need to forsake the spiritual wisdom-values dichotomy brought to us by secularized thinking that removes all linkages between spiritual wisdom and public values. In our correct attempt to remove religion from both the quest for knowledge and making public and private policy decisions, we have literally thrown the baby out with the bath water. We have failed to

recognize that spiritual wisdom exists independently of religions and that spiritual wisdom is there for us if we choose to seek it out.

We need to redefine our values and ethics to include not regime beliefs but the wealth of spiritual wisdom in all aspects and segments of our accumulated civilizations. This redefinition of values should not include religious myths, rites, ceremonies, or dicta of contemporary religious leaders, nor should it include per se customs, ceremonies, rules, and norms of specific groups. Instead, we should use only the spiritual wisdom that is found between and among the most holy scriptures of all the major religious traditions of the world. In particular, investigators seeking value and ethical guidance need to focus on the common messages among the holy scriptures of the five major religious traditions. This can be done by a process of triangulation, where one first defines a likely common spiritual wisdom concept and then looks for it in the holy scriptures of the major religious traditions, in an approach similar to content analysis. This research requires looking past wording and focusing on the meaning of the various wisdom messages.

This investigative procedure can be applied to recurring major problems in both the public and private sectors around the world. For example, one significant public policy today in the United States is federal budget gridlock and its associated interest group politics. In Federalist 10, James Madison addressed without embarrassment the necessary evil of political factions and used that as the rationale behind the very structure of the United States Constitution (Smith, 1987). Today, the evil identified by Madison has become the significant force in American politics. We need only look at the budget gridlock in Washington to realize that the only winners are those that champion their own roles or their own interests. Losers champion the larger whole, the nation, because they are the ones that will lose the next election. At least, that is how the politicians and interest groups see the process working. Losing is defined in terms of not continuing in public office or not continuing to be the majority party.

Let us reconsider this public policy problem, but investigate what spiritual wisdom tells us. First, let us start with the Hebrew Bible:

> Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalms 133:1)

Second, let us quote from the Buddhist Dhammapada scriptures:

> Victory breeds hatred; the defeated sleeps in misery. One who has calmed down sleeps in comfort, having given up victory and defeat (Cleary, 1994, p.70).

Third, let us quote from the Qur'an (1961):

> Have you heard the story of the two litigants who entered his chamber by climbing over the wall? When they went in to David and saw that he was alarmed, they said: "Have no fear. We are two litigants, one of whom has wronged the other. Judge rightly between us and do not be unjust; guide us to the right path. My brother here has ninety-nine ewes, but I have only one ewe. He demanded that I should entrust it to him, and got the better of me in the dispute." David replied: "He has certainly wronged you in seeking to add your ewe to his flock. Many partners are unjust to one another, but not so those that have faith and do good works, and they are few indeed." David realized that this was the test for him. He sought forgiveness of his Lord and fell down penitently on his knees. We forgave him his sin, and in the world to come he shall be honored and well received (XXXVIII, pp. 21-28).

Spiritual wisdom often uses the parable, and our minds are often puzzled by its message. Notice that David was acting as a public official. He made a secular decision, but he quickly realized that his decision was a test for him. By secular standards, he ruled in an apparent equitable manner, but he realized that he failed God's test. In the parable, he sought, and God gave him, forgiveness. That parable may be puzzling, but perhaps the following quote from the King James version of the New Testament might clarify the point of the Qur'an parable:

> And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? (Luke 12:13-14).

As is common in working with holy scriptures, the interpretation is subject to disagreement as we "see" the parable differently based on our perception and awareness of spiritual wisdom.

However, the key is looking for the common message among all four quotes. Humankind is a divider, but God wishes unity or Oneness. In other words, James Madison was correct: division is evil. Rather, our actions should be guided by making the whole work better for all of us. Scriptures teach us that our goal should be unity, love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and all else that constitutes and brings about Oneness and not separateness. Unity or Oneness should be our value for a constitution, a public service ethic, and even a private decision as we approach the task of passing and implementing a budget for a nation or making a decision for our business.

In summary, we have permitted the secularization of our thinking. This is the mistake! We need to reach out to our own and other spiritual wisdom sources to help us learn from the common spiritual message. Then we must take those messages and live them in our daily activities in order to bring those messages into practice.

Conclusion

In the next millenium, individuals in the ever-changing organizational webs will be critical to the success of the new evolving society. Without or with little direction and supervision, these individuals must think in terms of the universal tribe rather than themselves or any sub-group of society. In other words, they must continuously apply the common spiritual wisdom of the golden rule that constitutes the essence of global ethics. If they do not, anarchy can easily erupt as each person only thinks of him or herself and the essential interdependence of society breaks down. Faith and trust in others permits interdependence to work, and selfish acts destroy that faith and trust. Conversely, application of the golden rule creates deeper faith and trust.

When an employee defrauds the group, three elements exist: motive, opportunity, and rationalization. Of the three, two involve directly and only the mind of the individual, and reflect his or her lack

of application of the golden rule. Organizational policy, procedures, and practices can minimize the opportunity element. For example, proper use of internal controls can lessen the opportunity associated with white-collar crime. Proper use of objectives and performance measures in contractual relationships can help establish accountability in those relationships. However, ever increasing administrative mechanisms to limit the likelihood of dysfunctional behavior are administratively costly and dampen work force morale and creative initiative. The ideal is to have each individual curb his/her dysfunctional behavior by spontaneously and independently choosing to follow the golden rule.

Unlike organizations and society of the twentieth century, curbing opportunities for dysfunctional behavior becomes increasingly perplexing in the future as the largely independent symbolic analysts at the various web nodes increase in numbers and importance. Curbs on dysfunctional opportunities are burdensome to apply to virtual organizational relationships because controls restrict the creative energy of the symbolic analysts. Faith and trust become the hallmark of their relationships or they cannot function. Thus, what motivates individual or group actions, and what underlies the reason for those actions, becomes central to the success of society in the next millenium. If they choose to think in terms of their individual benefit or the benefit of their sub-group, then a breakdown of faith and trust will occur and working relationships will not endure or be created.

We increasingly live in a global society requiring ever more complex interrelationships with people of various cultures and nationalities. Given this remarkable need for complexity, achieving continuous faith and trust seems impossible until one realizes that each culture and nationality has universal values and ethics that the spiritual wisdom of their religious traditions have largely defined. Each tradition has a spiritual wisdom that is the source of each culture's values and ethics. Although the Axial Period produced various highly influential religious traditions, it also produced, for those who wish to see, a universal global ethic and value. Swidler demonstrates this by showing how the golden rule exists in the spiritual wisdom literature of almost all cultures (Swidler, 1996).

If a common global ethic and value can be defined from the most holy scriptures of each religious tradition, then what appeared to be an impossible complexity of cultures and nationalities is merely a

search for what we fundamentally share in common. Based on dialogue, this search becomes a common quest to inform us on what should motivate our actions and how we should rationalize our behavior. Each of our traditions' spiritual wisdom literature has parallel core beliefs that can be defined so that we can be a global tribe of One. As the wisdom of the Gospel of Thomas tells us, "When you make two into one, you become children of humanity, and when you say, 'Mountain, move from here,' it will move" (Meyer, 1992, p. 63; Layton, 1987, p. 398). We can isolate that common core of spiritual wisdom and make the many into one with our agreement. When we do, nothing for us is impossible, including a common global ethic.

Spiritual wisdom teaches us that our actions reveal what we really are to everyone, including ourselves. When we gain the common spiritual wisdom of all of our cultures and act accordingly, we too become children of humanity. We become concerned chiefly or wholly with furthering others and being completely surrendered to God. If we earnestly try, and we believe wholeheartedly in our God-given capability, God becomes the source of our energy and strength, and there are no limits to what we can achieve. In the Gospel of Thomas quotation, telling a mountain to move is a metaphor expressing that we can do the impossible.

Certainly, having humankind realize that authentic spirituality is a unifying force may seem impossibility, but we can bring it about one step at a time. Because we are what our actions are, we will finally be led to discern that there is no sense to having factions and divisions.

Notes

1. From the essay by Leonard Swidler.

2. Ibid.

3. Cousins, Ewert. (1993). "Judaism-Christianity-Islam: Facing Modernity Together." <u>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</u>. 30(34), Summer-Fall: pp. 417-425.

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