



THE DALAI LAMA

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Although great progress was made in many directions during the twentieth century, it was a period marred by conflict and war. Sadly, religious differences have been one of the sources of conflict. People often use religion for purposes and intentions other than spirituality. Unfortunately, once religion becomes involved, the emotions of people become aroused. This is why harmony among different religious traditions is so essential for world peace. In order to develop genuine harmony, it is extremely important that we cultivate genuine respect for one another.

We need to encourage a worldwide sense of pluralism among religions. Religious differences should not be the grounds for antagonism. Religion should be the basis for friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood. I believe that people with religious interests have special responsibilities in this regard.

On the one hand, all religions counsel forgiveness, patience and compassion and ways to cultivate them. These are practical qualities that are of great value in creating a dialogue that we can share with others. If followers of various religious traditions sincerely practise these qualities, inter-religious disharmony and conflicts seem impossible. On the other hand, as I have already mentioned, we also have to admit the unfortunate fact that religion is sometimes the cause of conflict. When this is the case, the causes more often than not are due to ignorance and misunderstanding, and the fear that result from them. I believe each of us can contribute to countering these shortcomings through engaging in active dialogue with members of other religious traditions. I have no doubt that there is much we can learn from each other. For example, my own experience has taught me that there is enormous potential for mutual enrichment in the dialogue between Buddhist and Christian traditions, especially with regard to ethics and spiritual practice, such as the practices of love, compassion, meditation and patience. I believe that we should all make greater efforts along these lines to promote understanding amongst our different religious traditions.

Therefore, I am encouraged by the establishment of a new multifaith institute in Canada called *Across Boundaries*. I fully support its goal of promoting dialogue and mutual understanding among different religious traditions, and equally important between religious and secular visions of the world. I believe we should take every opportunity to create harmony wherever we can and that *Across Boundaries* can make a significant contribution in this direction.

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