

A Charter for Engaged Spirituality in the 21st Century Working Draft Outline

INTRODUCTION

Scholars of religion point to “the Axial Age” (roughly the first millennium BCE) as the period of the dawn of the great classical religions that we know today. These days, it’s often suggested that we have entered a second great “turning on the religious axis,” a Second Axial Age. If the first brought the *individual* to the fore, the latter shifts our focus to the *global* dimension of ethical, religious, and spiritual awareness and action.

The great theologian Ewert Cousins believed that the 21st century marked a new evolutionary turning that will reshape religion and spirituality in extraordinary ways.

If we shift our gaze from the first millennium BCE to the eve of the twenty-first century, we can discern another transformation of consciousness. It is so profound and far-reaching that I call it the Second Axial Period. Like the first it is happening simultaneously around the earth, and like the first it will shape the horizon of consciousness for future centuries. Not surprisingly, too, it will have great significance for world religions, which were constituted in the First Axial Period. However, the new form of consciousness is different from that of the First Axial Period. Then it was individual consciousness, now it is global consciousness.

The “Awakened World 2012” conference will center on the evolution of religion and spirituality in the 21st century. In that process, the *Charter for Engaged Spirituality in the 21st Century* can serve as an inspiration and a guide as we take up a number of vital questions. What are the most dramatic changes that might be on the horizon for religion and spirituality in the years ahead? What is the promise of our evolutionary age? What are the dangers, the challenges, and the opportunities? What does it mean to be at the threshold of a “Second Axial Age?” What commitments to action can we offer?

SIXTEEN AXIAL MARKERS: DOMAINS AND STAGES

The Charter is structured around sixteen *Axial Markers* – observable signs that ours is indeed a time of dramatic evolutionary change in religious and spiritual values. The Markers are presented in a matrix with four vertical columns, representing thematic areas – **Domains** – and four horizontal rows, representing key **Stages** of the evolutionary unfolding. The Markers are certainly not the only indicators of progressive shift; the list is not exhaustive, but it is descriptive and persuasive. It will help to shape many of the event's discussions and, it is hoped, many of the concrete initiatives that arise from our group efforts.

		SECOND AXIAL MARKERS			
		Reconciling with the Other	Transforming Society	Embracing the Earth Family	Rediscovering the Sacred
STAGES	Signs of Change	Interreligious Awakening & the Global Interreligious Movement	Peace and the Just Society: Striving for Nonviolence, Social and Economic Fairness, & Human Rights	Care for the Planetary Community and Sacred Earth	Interspirituality: Spiritual Convergence and Mutual Illumination
	Systemic Shift	The Passing of Exclusivism: A New Openness	The Passing of Patriarchy: Women's Leadership and Authority; the Divine Feminine	Global Spiritual Perspective and the Emerging Global Consensus	Celebration of the Whole: Interdependence as the Key to Evolutionary Values
	Engagement	Beyond Dogma: Toward Creative Inquiry	Spiritually Motivated Social Engagement	Healing the World: Sustainability, Resources, and Equity	The Inner Life: Mysticism / Consciousness / Enlightenment
	Embodiment	The New Religious Story: Spiritual Evolution in Our Time	New Models and Maps for Community, Leadership, and Governance	New Lifestyles: Sustainability, Compassion, Fairness, and Trust	Reclaiming the Great Meme: The One and the Many

PREAMBLE

If ours is indeed an age of value shift, no dimension of that epochal change is more important than that which is underway in the world's great religious and spiritual communities. It is a movement that embraces the possibility of peace, champions the causes of justice, accepts the burdens and privileges of ecological stewardship, and demonstrates compassionate service in the face human need.

Each of these commitments springs from a deeper spiritual understanding, grounded in experience.

We gather here, early in the second decade of the 21st century, to affirm these principles and to chart a course that will inspire hope and energize action.

Awakened World 2012 brings together distinguished religious and spiritual leaders, noted experts in the most critical issues, and committed global citizens representing some of the most vital action frontiers of our time.

Together, we articulate the indisputable challenges facing the human and planetary communities. We envision a hopeful future. We commit to creative common action to bring the wisdom of the world's religious and spiritual traditions to bear on the urgent needs and beckoning opportunities that shape our reality. And we hold in our hearts joy and excitement for the future of a child born today.

THE VISION

We are in the first stages of a period of dramatically accelerated cultural evolution – a *sea change*: a shift in the dominant values of humankind toward a closer fit with reality. The religious and spiritual manifestation of that process has been termed “a Second Axial Age” (after the First Axial Age of the first millennium BCE, which gave rise to the great religious traditions). The dominant characteristic of the new axial period is the emergence of global awareness, concern, commitment, and spiritual understanding.

Spiritual evolution unfolds as a key dimension of the process of cultural evolution: the slow, steady (and occasionally dramatically accelerated) shift of prevailing cultural values, assumptions, memes, and behavior patterns toward a closer fit with our best understanding of reality.

“Four strong winds” of cultural evolutionary transformation drive the process and helped to shape the Awakened World 2012 dialogues:

- *Complexity*: the tendency of human culture to grow steadily more complex and, in the process, more evolved
- *Chaos to Order*: a dynamic system’s inclination **to** move from turbulence to transformation...from apparent chaos to emerging order
- *Creativity*: cultural evolution from the bottom-up, through the astonishing processes of “self-organization” and “emergence”
- *Cooperation*: human social evolution’s inherent bias toward interdependence

FOUR DOMAINS OF EVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION

Together, we call attention to the progressive changes already underway in the world's great religious and spiritual communities. We envision a not-too-distant future in which that *axial turning* will give rise to new levels of understanding, mutuality, commitment, and service to the human community and the Earth. To that end, we pledge our energies – physical, conscious, and spiritual – to the realization of the evolutionary promise embodied in these four *Domains* of evolutionary transformation.

RECONCILING WITH THE OTHER

From Enmity to Empathy

VISION

We envision a world in which the cultural and religious barriers that once divided humankind have been overcome at last. We trust that one day every stranger will come to be seen as a neighbor and every neighbor as a friend

CALL

We call on the World's Religious and Spiritual Communities and all concerned groups and individuals...

- To work to broaden and deepen understanding, respect, and cooperation among the world's religious and spiritual communities.
- To engage the openness and unspoiled wisdom of the *next generation* in initiatives fostering interreligious dialogue and engagement.
- To strive to move beyond religious *exclusivism* and to nurture the developing spirit of *inclusivism* and *pluralism* in our communities and our world.
- To support efforts to identify and overcome our own rigidities and unexamined certainties and to create in their place new models for dialogical exchange and creative inquiry.
- To celebrate the *new story* of religious and spiritual evolution as part of the larger emerging story of the ongoing evolution of planetary culture.

BEYOND THE CHARTER: OUTCOMES

Insights:

World that works for everyone
Regular spiritual practices
Web of interconnection, causes and action
Importance of education in systemic changes
Sharing Resources
Mediation in community
Forgiveness
Self responsibility for change
No pre-conceived agenda
Reconciling masculine and feminine within ourselves
Respect of self and others
Faith communities connecting with wider
community

Proposals:

1. Develop curriculum of new earth learning
2. Use of games for peace
3. Resources for pluralistic Sunday
4. Awakening the Dreamer/ Changing the Dream
5. Transition Towns International Movement
6. Key websites to share resources
7. Agenda-less tourism in Israel/Palestine and other places
8. Interfaith centers
9. Commitment to nonviolence

TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

From Redemptive Violence to Restorative Justice

VISION

We envision a world in which peace and fairness are cherished as inseparable and vital dimensions of the existence of every individual and of the whole human community. We trust in the growth of a powerful and universal new story of nonviolent conflict resolution and restorative justice.

CALL

We call on the World's Religious and Spiritual Communities and all concerned groups and individuals...

- To engage in creative common action in for peace, nonviolence, social and economic justice, and human rights.
- To work to heal the social and economic inequity driven by the "unlimited growth" paradigm and the systemic disregard of the needs of the Earth's disadvantaged.
- To strive to hasten the decline of patriarchy through the creation of new initiatives to energize women's leadership and authority.
- To develop and share – in collaborative networks and with a strong emphasis on the *next generation* – new models and maps for community, leadership, and governance at every level of society.
- To commit our energies to learning about, proclaiming, and defending the *Global Commons* as the shared physical, biological, social, intellectual, and cultural heritage of humankind.
- To dedicate ourselves, our organizations, and our communities to *spiritually motivated social engagement*.

BEYOND THE CHARTER: OUTCOMES

Insights:

Self Transformation; what can I do

Balance feminine & masculine

Key Values:

Nonviolence, compassion, humility, accountability with transparency

Whole continuum of Respect

New political accountability structures

Sacredness to structures

Collaboration & paying attention to process

Facilitators; listening to what's needed

Individual daily actions, sourced from being-ness

and network what's working

3. Globalization for the Common Good Initiative- intercultural and interdisciplinary education & business programs

4. Pachamama Alliance- ecological sustainability...

5. Occupy Movement

6. Women of Spirit and Faith Alchemy Project

7. WAVE

Proposals:

1. Foundation for Women- eliminate poverty through microfinance

2. Birth 2012 and Beyond- establish conscious evolution

EMBRACING THE EARTH FAMILY
From Exploitation to Deep Ecology

VISION

We envision a world in which human culture reclaims the deep human bond with the entire planetary community. We trust that the ethic of loving stewardship of the Earth family and the gentle rhythms of sustainable living will come once again to guide our course.

CALL

We call on the World's Religious and Spiritual Communities and all concerned groups and individuals...

- To make care for the planetary community and the sacred Earth a core value and decision-making principle in all that we do.
- To work to articulate and share the emerging *global consensus* with respect to the challenges and strategies that define engaged life on Earth in the 21st century.
- To commit ourselves to the healing of the world through the vital linkage of human equity and the stewardship of resources.
- To shape and model new lifestyles grounded in sustainability, fairness, forgiveness, and trust.
- To turn to the *next generation* for guidance, inspiration, and the promise of the future as we strive to heal the Earth and sustain our human relationship with her.

BEYOND THE CHARTER: OUTCOMES

Insights:

Connecting ourselves with the Divine; sacred activism
Education for next generation
Earth as Self and family: liberation from all forms dualism
Share planetary resources; commons movement
Integration of macro/micro; personal and political
Spiritual awakening and social transformation
Gaia theory, new holistic ways of thinking
"Youthing"- mentor and support both in meetings and daily lives
Collaboration
Honoring family and culture
Being gender conscious, teaching gender equity
Values based media (Kosmos, truth-out.org)

Proposals:

1. Find at least one youth to mentor
2. Spiritualize business
3. Support Birth 2012
4. Develop personal responsibility for direct action; do at least one thing
5. Kosmos Journal
6. Pure Essence, Global Shared Agreements for Young Girls
7. House concert/ salon for visioning change in communities
8. "Global seal of goodness" movement
9. "My life is my message" ~Gandhi
10. The Widening Circle Campaign for a Global Citizens Movement
11. Support Peace Movement Jeju Island

REDISCOVERING THE SACRED
From Praying Apart to Celebrating the Whole

VISION

We envision a world in which spiritual growth is recognized as a genuine human possibility and the most authentic goal of every life. We trust in the emergence of a rich, mutually-irradiating interspirituality among the world's religions.

CALL

We call on the World's Religious and Spiritual Communities and all concerned groups and individuals...

- To deepen our own spiritual lives – and those of others – by learning about the richness of *interspirituality*, by deepening awareness of spiritual convergence, learning about the gifts of other spiritual paths, and by sharing the power of the mutual irradiation of every authentic spirituality by every other.
- To engage the energies of the *next generation* in the great work of *interspirituality*.
- To explore the power of *interdependence* as one of the most important philosophical / spiritual insights of our age and as a critical key to the evolutionary transformation of human values.
- To broaden understanding of the oldest human wisdom story – a powerful memes for our time – the tale of the interpenetration of the *One and the Many*.

BEYOND THE CHARTER: OUTCOMES

Insights:

What we need and what we are
Strong enough inside to do the work, making our spiritual practice of utmost importance
GLOBAL Consciousness
Sacred shift between I and We
Seeing the sacred within ourselves
Accept the sacred in every person
Spiritualize the work we do
Use our stories to reach others and tell about ourselves
Search for deeper purpose and look toward the bigger picture
Don't be afraid to engage
Going deep to our roots, we will meet each other there
Being what we're trying to accomplish; ex: our health

Proposals:

Group One

1. University Dialogue Exchange Program

2. Transforming education; student based leadership, creativity of the child
3. End child hunger- 'Nourishing the Children',
4. Promoting literacy (in prisons, with children: 'Save the Children')
5. Music, arts, dance, humor, soulful engagement
6. Defunding of Trident submarine in U.K.
7. Global effort for disarmament

Group Two

1. Continuation of teleseminars based on domains
2. Replicate Awakened World conferences
3. Bring conference design into other settings and projects
4. Engaging youth in interfaith centers in colleges and universities
5. Global online network structured under domains; linking projects
6. Online resources for each focused area

BEYOND THE CHARTER

We, the undersigned, participants in the “Awakened World 2012” conference in Rome and Florence, Italy, and others who embrace the creative work of that gathering, commit ourselves to spiritually grounded service to the whole of the Earth family.

We pledge our energies and resources to bold, achievable initiatives to advance the evolution of religion and spirituality in our time. We commit ourselves:

- to work consciously toward a future of cooperative common action
- to nurture nonviolence and peace,
- to promote restorative justice,
- to encourage sustainable economies and lifestyles, and
- to deepen spiritual awareness and action.

We offer, in the spirit of *A Charter for Engaged Spirituality in the 21st Century*, the above proposals, projects, and promises to one another, to the global community of evolutionary activists, to our brothers and sisters of the world’s religious and spiritual families, and to all life.

The convening organizations pledge in their turn to share the Charter and these initiatives as widely as possible, to track their progress and report regularly on outcomes and instructive experiences. In this way, we hope to multiply the extraordinary energies of Awakened World 2012 and to help to breathe vibrant life into the Second Axial Age.