

UPF Meeting

'Ethics are more important than religion' (Dalai Lama)

Are ethics more important than religion?

Munich, Germany, 26. February 2016

Even if somewhat belated, the Munich UPF group held an interreligious meeting on Friday, 26 February to mark the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week. Our chosen topic was: 'Ethics are more important than religion' (Dalai Lama)/ Are ethics more important than religion?

This statement and the question it poses led to a surprisingly lively discussion. Reference was repeatedly made to the booklet of the Dalai Lama which deals primarily with this topic.

Emotions were stirred, and representatives of many different world views expressed their opinions—from the Christian Science Church, Islam, the Innayathi-Sufi Order, Scientology, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), and diverse independent religious groups.



Marlene Straub from the Inayathi-Sufi Order introduced us to the 40 ethical rules which should be emulated in the **course of one's life in order to develop a spiritually mature personality.**

Here are only a few of these rules:

Do not speak badly of others behind their backs...

Do not look down on those who look up to you...

Do not boast about your good deeds....

Dr. Alfons Wellenhofer from UPF pointed out that ethical principles are without doubt essential for mankind and that a religion of high quality must not only abide by, but should even exceed, ethical principles. He said that reality is often ignored and this leads to a big deficiency. And that is namely the



reality that there is a cause behind all that exists and lives. Whoever looks in **detail at life's complexity** and ingenuity cannot but realize that there is an intelligent, creative and loving force behind it all: an original being that is the cause of, and is reflected in, creation.

The representatives from Christian Science laid much value on a spiritual interpretation of the Bible and the creation story. Man is an image of God and thus he must live for his own sake, as well as for the sake of his fellow man.

Ute Eilzer, Scientology Church, stated that mankind is created to be happy and quoted a few passages from their guidelines for a better life, such as:

Do not be promiscuous, be faithful to your partner, do not do anything **illegal...**

For Bilal Akkaya from the Intercultural Dialogue Center Munich (IDIZEM), religion and a love for Allah play a big role. From these come virtues and good deeds. Education, ethics and service to humanity is a part of religion.

Siegfried Jensen of the FFWPU Munich gave the last presentation and began by quoting words of the founder, Rev. Moon:

Religion is an institution for training and education, to renew dysfunctional mankind and restore it to its original

state. Religious teachings are not for the benefit of religion itself. Religion is the means to fulfill the will of God, which is to recreate us and raise us as God's children. It is not possible to limit God by the doctrines and rituals of established religions. The task of religion is to cultivate our character in that we live a life of faith, embracing enlightenment as well as personal growth, so that we can walk with God in our daily life.

Siegfried continued: it is not enough simply to have rules for a moral life; mankind must also be motivated to live by these rules and to have the ability to persevere with such a life. And in order to accomplish this, there has to be a reformation in human nature such that mankind is in a position to restore the vertical relationship with God. The conscience, when intact, is a powerful entity enabling man to behave in an ethical fashion.

There were lively discussions between and after the presentations, illustrating the importance of this topic to each person.

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The presentations (in German) are available from UPF Munich:

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