

From: S.H.

Subject: CHARTER TEXT

Date: Mon, 3 Feb 2014 14:48:40 -0600

To: B.B. and M.S.

The best idea humanity has ever had...

The Charter for Compassion is a document that transcends religious, ideological, and national differences. Supported by leading thinkers from many traditions, the Charter activates the Golden Rule around the world.

The Charter for Compassion is a cooperative effort to restore not only compassionate thinking but, more importantly, compassionate action to the center of religious, moral and political life. Compassion is the principled determination to put ourselves in the shoes of the other, and lies at the heart of all religious and ethical systems.

The text of the Charter for Compassion:

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any **interpretation of scripture** that breeds violence, hatred or disdain **is illegitimate** ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

Response From; M.S.

To: S.H. and B.B. copied to Dick Bernard

Subject: RE: CHARTER TEXT before Tues.

Date: Sat, 8 Mar 2014 13:57:16 -0600

Hi

The bolded phrase "**interpretation of scripture**" and "**is illegitimate**" were the words that one member of the Open Table group (on the Leadership Team) took pretty extreme exception to. Perhaps it would be a good idea to check with your Charter connections before Tuesday and see if this particular phrase was/is difficult for Catholics or others who believe their faith has the sole right to "**interpretation of scripture** and **legitimacy**." This is what kept the resolution from going forward at the MAP delegate meeting--Dennis suggesting it needed further examination.

We therefore call upon all men and women to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any **interpretation of scripture** that breeds violence, hatred or disdain **is illegitimate**

Peace,

Hi Dick,

I've suggested that B.B. and S.H., who want to have [our peace and justice alliance] pass a resolution for the Charter of Compassion, and who couldn't believe it didn't come out of the group for a delegate vote, check out if others have had trouble with this particular text in the Charter. I believe the "ancient principle" of the "Golden Rule," which is supposed to be at the heart of all religious and ethical systems is more often disregarded. There are numerous examples in all three religions that we are the most familiar with: Judaism, Islam & Christianity. If doing unto others what you would have done onto you includes the masochistic practices of some in these religions, like extreme penance (Christianity), self flagellation (some Islamic & Christian groups), and suicide bombings, Israeli retaliation, Assad's mass killing his people, abortion clinic "disdain" and killing of provider doctors, the Golden Rule (at the heart) becomes meaningless. Certainly, the idea of the Charter is to stop all this; while some seem to strenuously adhere to the right of their religious group (or any religious group) to interpret scripture as their absolute prerogative--so would oppose the Charter even under the circumstances listed--probably the hatred or disdain.

Peace,

**Response to M.S. from
Dick Mar 10, 2014 3:18 p.m.**

I haven't taken a position on this, and was at the [Augsburg Nobel Peace Prize] Forum [NPPF] Friday through Sunday so didn't have the energy to respond in the evenings!

I do have a couple of comments, which you can share as you wish.

1. The Church I happen to be active in, the Catholic Church, is an unruly scum

of perhaps a billion people. With such a mess, it is inevitable that there are plenty of bad actors, some [who take] positions that go directly contrary to the golden rule. But there are plenty of good folks as well.

The second day at the Forum, last Friday, my first stop was at an absolutely fascinating Peace Labyrinth, quilts with the [basic] history/philosophy of many of the worlds major religions. There was a handout on the golden rule there, which you might look at. It is a two page attachment within my blog post at <http://www.outsidethewalls.org/blog/2014/03/07/>. The quilt artist, Jan McTavish, belongs to an interfaith church in Duluth. It was, as I say, utterly fascinating, and beautiful display too!

2. I have trouble getting enthusiastic about this Charter [of Compassion] idea, since it will probably go nowhere. There are, in my opinion, more constructive uses of organization time. For instance, there were three major declarations of World Citizenship enacted in the Twin Cities in the 1960s, bi-partisan, one of which culminated with the UN flag flying at Hennepin Co Plaza for 44 years, until March 27, 2012, when the right wing succeeded in getting the county commissioners to take [the flag] down. I have discussed this in [our group], and people are always interested, but nobody seems to care about doing anything affirmative to address this issue. Why would a Charter of Compassion be any different? My "filing cabinet" about the flag issue is <http://www.outsidethewalls.org/blog/2013/03/27/>

Response from M.S.

Mar 10 2014 5:56 p.m.

Thanks for your reply. I agree with both your points. There are plenty of good people in the Church, especially the ones I consider my friends.

Indeed, it may go nowhere even if it were to pass. B has the idea of trying to get the Twin Cities to become compassionate cities with the hope of some social justice changes, something the Dalai Lama also suggests, which is echoed by S. I have followed your filing cabinet on the flag issue and the move by VFP [Veterans for Peace] to get the Kellogg-Briand pact recognized. And, oh, would that [our] member organizations could see that it is in their best interests to act together like a large organization--it would further their niche issues if [our group] were recognized in the greater community as a large voice.

Peace,