

DIALOGUE
◀ Of ▶
CIVILIZATIONS
A Symposium

Invitation To Participate In an International Correspondence For a ‘Dialogue Of Cultures’

Helga Zepp LaRouche

Oct. 15, 2001

The horror-vision of a “Clash of Civilizations” has, unfortunately, since the attacks in the United States and the military strikes against Afghanistan, already begun to become a reality. Whatever may be uncovered as the truth behind the attacks, any further spiral of violence will cause a collapse of humanity into a New Dark Age.

In this situation, it is all the more urgent, to define anew the basis within reason and universal principles, which instead make possible a “Dialogue of Cultures” and an ecumenical understanding among the religions on the highest level. Such a dialogue were also necessary if, after a period of continuous violence, and decades or even a century of war, the community of peoples is to be reconstructed and nation-states to be rebuilt from the ruins.

But, in order to avert such unspeakable misery of many millions of people, let us hope that such a dialogue can help to deepen the understanding between cultures in time to prevent the worst.

Even though there are many differences between the situation in 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by Mohammed II, and today’s attacks, and although the background to the attacks in the United States represents a completely different phenomenon, the reference to this date is, from one important viewpoint, reasonable.

At a moment when lesser spirits were screaming for revenge and retaliation, Nicolaus of Cusa, the 600th anniversary of whose birth we celebrate this

year, wrote, under the impression of news of the horrors, his magnificent piece *De Pace Fidei* (*On the Peace of Faith*). This dialogue, in which Nicolaus had representatives of seventeen religions and nations participate, can, also today, show us the way.

Nicolaus begins *De Pace Fidei* with the following words:

“The news of the atrocities which have recently been perpetrated by the Turkish King in Constantinople and have now been divulged, has so inflamed a man, who once saw that region, with zeal for God [Nicolaus is talking about himself and his journey to that city], that amongst many sighs he asked the Creator of all things if in His kindness He might moderate the persecution, which raged more than usual on account of diverse religious rites. Then it occurred that after several days—indeed, on account of lengthy, continuous meditation—a vision was manifested to the zealous man, from which he concluded that it would be possible, through the experience of a few wise men who are well acquainted with all the diverse practices which are observed in religions across the world, to find a unique and propitious concordance, and through this to constitute a perpetual peace in religion upon the appropriate and true course.”

Nicolaus then presents the representatives of the seventeen religions and nations in a dialogue with the “Word of God,” as all the conflicts amongst them always



Lyndon LaRouche and Helga Zepp LaRouche meet India's President in New Delhi, Dec. 5, 2001. Left to right: EIR correspondent Ramtanu Maitra, President Shri Kocheiril Raman Narayanan, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., and Helga Zepp LaRouche.

erupted in His name. As most people lived in poverty, in great drudgery, and in slavish dependency upon their masters, they would by no means have the leisure to use their free will and to develop their own cognitive powers. The concerns of daily life would divert them too much from the search for the Hidden God. But if an assembly of wise men of the different religions could come together, then the solution would be “simple.”

Nicolaus’s solution is conceived from the standpoint of *coincidentia oppositorum* (the coincidence of opposites) “from above.” One fault would be, to fail to distinguish between the prophets and God Himself, and otherwise to mistake the traditions, to which one is accustomed, with the truth. In that God addresses the representatives of the religions, as wise men, He easily succeeds in convincing them, that there is only *one* wisdom and *one* truth.

The oldest of the participating representatives of the religions, a Greek, asks, how to bring together the diversity of religions, since they would hardly accept one new united religion, as they had defended their own with their blood. The Word of God answers, that they should not introduce any new religion, but that the true religion *precedes* all other religions. The peace which brings a new unity of religion is not a synthetic, new belief, but, rather, what is reasonable to reason, as soon as reason becomes conscious of its premises. The Greek representative reacts enthusiastically over the “spirit of reason” (*spiritus ratio-*

nalis), who is “capable of wonderful arts” (*capax artium mirabilium*), from which comes human perfectibility. If this spirit is oriented toward wisdom, he can approach her more and more. He will never reach absolute wisdom, but come closer and closer to her, and to him she will taste as an eternal food. Unity is therefore attainable, if all spirits are oriented toward wisdom and truth, and this truth is recognized as primary and basic.

The Cusan approach is therefore totally different from the modern pantheistic or phenomenological forms of ecumenical dialogue, in which the existence of the one knowable truth is denied, in favor of a democratic plurality of religious opinions. This dialogue can only have success, if all participants start from a view of man, which understands man as a “living image of God” (*imago viva Dei*), whose likeness to God consists in the fact that his potentially infinitely perfectible cognitive capabilities can always better understand the lawfulness of the order of creation, and with the application of this cognition, can improve the living standards of all men, and increase the population potential of the Earth.

Pope John Paul II has, after all, by his most recent journeys, stressed, that there is no alternative to such an ecumenical dialogue on the highest level.

Helga Zepp LaRouche is the founder of the international Schiller Institute.