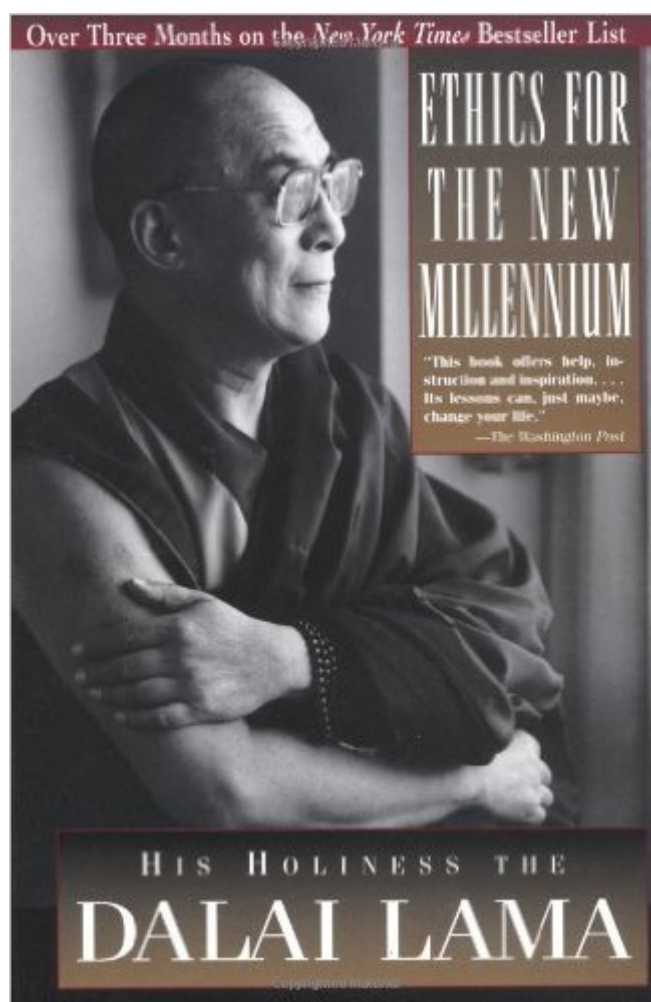


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Ethics For The New Millennium



Synopsis

In a difficult, uncertain time, it takes a person of great courage, such as the Dalai Lama, to give us hope. Regardless of the violence and cynicism we see on television and read about in the news, there is an argument to be made for basic human goodness. The number of people who spend their lives engaged in violence and dishonesty is tiny compared to the vast majority who would wish others only well. According to the Dalai Lama, our survival has depended and will continue to depend on our basic goodness. Ethics for the New Millennium presents a moral system based on universal rather than religious principles. Its ultimate goal is happiness for every individual, irrespective of religious beliefs. Though he's himself a practicing Buddhist, the Dalai Lama's teachings and the moral compass that guides him can lead each and every one of us "Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddhist, or atheist" to a happier, more fulfilling life. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's newest book, *The Wisdom of Compassion*, is now available from Riverhead Books.

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Customer Reviews

Looking back over the last 5,000 years, it appears to me that all religions have focused on the preservation of their own particular brand of cultural and social ethics under the name of religion and by and large have ignored the more important and universal spiritual ethics that underlie all religions. The same can be said of many New Age courses that have sprung up like mushrooms all over the globe, where the emphasis appears to be more on gaining power and getting what you want out of life as opposed to an inner spiritual involvement. This has bothered me for some time.

However, reading the Dalai Lama's "Ethics for the New Millennium" was like a breath of fresh air and a home coming where I can rest my own inner beliefs which up until now, I have not found an example of in any other author. We teach our children dogma, we teach them ritual, we teach them salvation in one form or another, but do we ever teach them simple spiritual ethics, for example, don't steal. I don't mean the obvious, as in stealing someone else's possessions, I mean theft on a more personal scale, as in stealing somebody's time, somebody's energy by either moaning and bringing them down with our own sorry tales or getting other people to do things for us when we are too lazy to do it for ourselves. Or, in the name of friendship, inviting a whole lot of people to a dinner party, not because they are truly our friends, but because we ourselves are bored or want to look popular. It is to these inner disciplines that the Dalai Lama looks and it is about time too. If more people adopted the principles he advocates in this book, there might just be a chance for peace, both in the microcosm of the family unit and in the macrocosm of the world at large. The void, the emptiness that many societies try to fill with a hamburger, might instead be filled with inner serenity and confidence as opposed to frustration and depression.

Having read with great interest a lot of the Dalai Lama's other books, I found this one easily the most compelling. The language is simple and direct which has the effect of making some very complex ideas easy to understand. The Dalai Lama emerges as someone with a thoroughgoing understanding of human nature. But whereas his image is generally of someone who is limitlessly patient and benign, in this book he clearly shows that he has both depth and edge. The Dalai Lama makes a very clear connection between human happiness and what he calls inner discipline. He also makes clear that it is not really meaningful to speak of compassion except in the context of self-restraint. This shows that Buddhism is much more than the feel-good religion it is sometimes taken for in the west. It also shows that Buddhist ethical thinking is much closer to traditional Judeo-Christian and even Catholic social teaching than one might suppose. In fact when this is taken on board it becomes much easier to understand the Dalai Lama's near insistence that people stick to the religious tradition of their own culture. One of the most remarkable things about this book is his assertion that each of the major faith traditions are effective means of attaining human happiness. Stranger still for a major religious leader is his statement that, although religion is helpful, it is not actually essential if we are to be happy. What is essential is that we develop what he calls our basic human qualities. The first of these are love and compassion, but he also talks a lot about patience, tolerance, generosity and humility - each of which presuppose a degree of self-discipline. It is tempting to write the Dalai Lama off as an oddity - especially given the way he seems

all too ready to cosy up to celebrities. But reading this book, you begin to get the feeling that there really is something going on inside his head. In none of his other books have I been able to detect the intelligence, the cogence and the incisiveness that is so obvious even through the sometimes mangled translations when you see him in the flesh. As a would-be Catholic I can also say that the Dalai Lama's spiritual teachings are as relevant as any from within my own tradition. Is there any way the Pope could make him a Cardinal!?

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