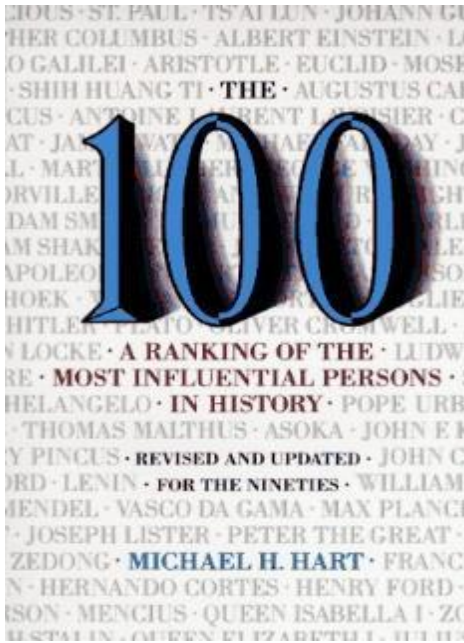




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The impact of Jesus on human history is so obvious and so enormous that few people would question his placement near the top of this list. Indeed, the more likely question is why Jesus, who is the inspiration for the most influential religion in history, has not been placed first... Now, these ideas [The hard sayings, Matthew 5:38-43] – which were not a part of the Judaism of Jesus' day, nor of most other religions – are surely amongst the most remarkable and original ethical ideas ever presented. If they were widely followed, I would have had no hesitation in placing Jesus first in this book. But the truth is that they are not widely followed. In fact, they are not even generally accepted. Most Christians consider the injunction to 'Love your enemy' as – at most

– an ideal which might be realised in some perfect world but one which is not a reasonable guide to conduct in the actual world in which we live. We do not normally practise it, do not expect others to practise it and do not teach our children to practise it. Jesus' most distinctive teaching, therefore, remains an intriguing but basically untried suggestion.