



(HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCES SPECIAL EDITION)

Holy Scriptures are components in a continuum. Fountain of Inspiration is the same. All Scriptures are like chapters of the same book. So let us say that there is only one Holy Book. One Word and Many Versions.

Editorial

The intertextuality conference was born at Melbourne University, Australia. It was serendipitous. A few interfaith practitioners who met for the first time in life championed the cause of this international conference series.

When the journey started no one imagined it would be so exciting an enterprise. Now it has earned a reputation and status that is unerasable. Scholars around the world find time, energy and resources to come and present excellent and erudite papers, which are published as books also.

We are so grateful to all those who supported us in the past sixteen years. We look forward to another fruitful phase ahead.

Conferences were held once in two years, first in India and thereafter in different parts of the world. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Centre for Dialogue (AMCD), Kottarakkara and URI Cosmic Community Centre, Karickam are joint organizers.

Is there any other series of conferences in the world similar to this? We are not sure, but we know that this is very unique and special. We need an interfaith philosophy against all divisive forces. That is our primary objective.

We pray for the abundant blessings of the Almighty and seek continued support from all our well wishers.

Abraham Karickam



9th International Holy Books Conference

August, 2020

Venue: To be finalised

Theme: Holy Books and Children.

Papers invited.

All those who would like to contribute an article related to this theme are requested to send it by January, 2020. (Not more than 10 printed papers)

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NB: We would like to invite interfaith organizations to be our partner in this endeavor.

1st INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE - 2004 at Kottarakara

Theme: "Intertextuality of the Holy Books".

Participants with Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa at Jubilee Mandiram, Kottarakkara.



Kollam, August 25: Dr. Philipose Mar Chrisostom Marthoma Metropolitan has said that the inter-faith dialogue is an agenda for transcending all the limitations in the process of knowing the ultimate truth of God.

He was inaugurating the International Inter-faith conferences on Inter – Textuality of Holy Books held under the auspices of Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Centre for Dialogue at Kottarakkara.

He said that differences were inevitable in the process of knowing the ultimate truth and unity could be archived through dialogue.

Dialogue would even transform the faith as one could enrich his own faith by understanding others. Many of the followers of religions have turned anti-religious as they failed to understand the cardinal principles of religion.

Delivering the keynote address, Justice K.T Thomas said that one could find commonality in all the holy scriptures. Quoting Swami Vivekananda, he said that all the holy books were like the photographs of a thing in different angles.

Presiding over the function Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa said that it would be most unchristian for a Christian to tell a Hindu brother that he would not find salvation by following his faith. Religious diversity was a gift of God to the humanity, he said.

Head of Ramakrishna Ashram, Thrissur, Swami Tatwamayananda released the book "Intertextuality of Holy Books" by handing over a copy to Imam of Kottarakkara Abdul Shukkoor Moulvi Alkhasimi at the function.

Centre General Secretary Dr. Abraham Karickam welcomed the gathering. Programme Manger Dr. Ruwan Palapth Wala of Australia proposed a vote of thanks.

Delegates from Australia, U.K, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Italy and Malaysia are participating in the conference. The conference will conclude on August 29.

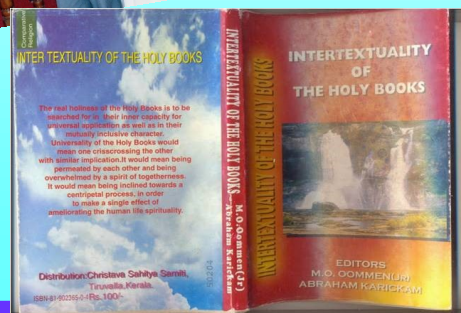
(Indian Express - August 26, 2004)



Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan inaugurating the International Inter-faith Conference on Intertextuality of the Holy Books at Kottarakara on 25th August 2004. Others on the dias are (from left to right) Dr. Ruwan Palapathwala, Justice K.T. Thomas, Swami Tatwamayananda, Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius and A. Abdul Shukkoor Maulavi Alkhasimi (Imam of Kottarakara).



Supreme Court Judge Justice K.T Thomas lighting the lamp.



2nd INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE - 2007 at Kottarakkara



Theme: "One Word, Many Versions: A Re-Reading of The Holy Books".

Participants with Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa and Rev. Dr. Charles Gibbs and TPA delegates at Kottarakkara.

Greetings of love and peace from India. I am sitting listening to the Arabian Sea washing over the beach below my hotel room. As I write, it is nearly 1 a.m but I am more energized than weary after an extraordinary day that capped the two previous days of the second triennial seminar convened in Kottarakkara to explore the interconnectedness of the world's holy books. I AM aware that we are in a spiritually powerful moment – the Jewish High Holy Days and Ramdan come together. I wish our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters every spiritual blessing.

I am also aware that the anniversary of September 11 is upon us. All in all, this seems like an auspicious time for our gatherings here in India.

There is one major disappointment for us. Our sister and brothers from Uganda were unable to obtain visas to come to the Moral Imagination workshop. We hold them in our thoughts and prayers, and realize we have serious work to do on visa issues before the global assembly in 2008.

Before I go any further I want to apologize for all the names of people and places I won't be able to capture adequately in what follows. Once I'm back home and have some time I will work to make essential additions and corrections, but for now I feel it is more important to share this with URI's Global Community than to have everything perfect.

This year's seminar was titled "One Word, Many Versions: A Re-reading of the Holy

Books". The core of the seminar is an academic approach to sacred texts called Intertextuality. It's important, first of all, to mention that texts are understood broadly, to include not only written texts, but also spoken and sung texts, as well as other artistic expression of the sacred. The focus of intertextuality, as best I understand it, is to regard each sacred text with profound respect for the text and for the people for whom it is sacred, and to recognize that there are multiple interpretations of each text. At the same time, there is a call to see all sacred texts together forming one large and extraordinary varied expression of human relationship with the eternal, known by many names. The work of intertextuality is to weave an ongoing tapestry of shared meaning and wisdom as we engage in dialogue among the various texts and those who hold them sacred.

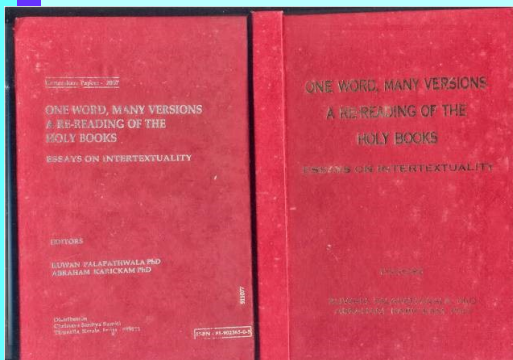
Abraham Karickam and his colleague from Australia, Ruwan Palapth Wala, are the practical visionaries behind this effort. Among Abraham's many responsibilities as a deeply spiritual and religiously committed humanitarian, educator and community leader, he serves as URI's Coordinator for the South Zone of India, perhaps the part of the worlds where URI is growing most rapidly and involving many committed and idealistic young people.

I believe the intertextuality approach to sacred texts has great potential to lay an innovative scholarly foundation for URI's work that can greatly enliven the political

work of enduring, daily interfaith cooperation. I won't try to rehearse two days papers and lively discussion, though I will say that most of the papers presented are published in the second volume of the Kottarakkara papers – "One Word, Many Versions: A Re-reading of the Holy Books".

I'd also like to say how impressed I was by the quality of people involved in this work and how proud I was that URI was a Co-sponsor of the seminar. In addition to Abraham's essential leadership, URI greatly enriched the seminar by the presence of our leadership teams from Ethiopia and Philippines and the US and by a leader of URI's CC in Bangladesh. Many new friends saw the living face of URI and experienced a microcosm of our global community in a compelling way. URI already is strong here in Kerala, but our time together here promises to add some new energy here, as well as planting some important seeds in Melbourne, which will grow and add to the URI work already underway in different parts of Australia.

Rev. Dr. Charles Gibbs
(Founder Executive Director,
United Religions Initiative)



Delegates with Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan at Mar Thoma College Thiruvalla.

3rd INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE - 2009 at Santhigiri Ashram, Aluva

Theme: "Holy Books and Violence".



The 3rd International Holy Books Conference was held at the Mar Thoma Santhigiri Asram, Aluva, from 26 – 27 August 2009. The Theme was "Holy Books and Violence". Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Saffragan Metropolitan inaugurated the same. Swami Chaturvedi gave the key-note address.

Justics P.K Shamsuddin, Fr. Albert Nambiar Parambil, Madam Meher Master Moos, , Dr. Homi Dhalla, Dr. D Swami Nathan, Dr. Hira Paul , Biswadeb Chakraborty, Qutab Jehan Kidwai and so on in addition to scholars like Dr. Ian Fry, Dr. Ruwan Palapth Wala, Dr. Shantikumar Hettiarachchi, Dr. Vijay Bhatkar, Patrik Nikish and so on. A group of students from Salwan Public School, Delhi also attended the program.

Since this was in conjunction with the Second National Assembly, here were many dignitaries of URI who participated. They included Swami Agnivesh,



4th INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE - 2011 at Kottarakkara

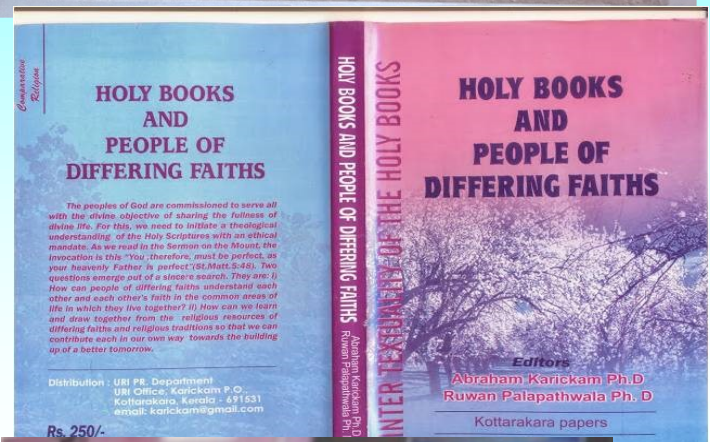
Theme: "Holy Books and People of Differing Faiths".

Participants with Rev. Dr. Charles Gibbs and Chaturvedi Swamiji.



The 4th International Holy Books Conference was held at Karickam International Public School, Kottarakkara from 26 – 30 August 2011. Bishop Thomas Mar Timotheos inaugurated the Conference. The Theme was "Holy Books and People of Differing Faiths". We were blessed by the presence of Chaturvedi Swamiji. Charles Gibbs, Jinwol Lee, Ruwan Palapth Wala, Ian Fry, Galina Ermolina, Shin Park, Meher Master Moos, Kesavadasa Swami, Justics P.K Shamsuddin, Fr. Albert Nambiar Parambil, Varun Agarwal, Vasudeva Rao and so many dignitaries from different parts of the world.

The 4th International Holy Books Conference was also a great success. The Book 'Holy Books and People of Differing Faiths' was also published. Papers were presented by Dr. Ian Fry, Meher Master Moos, Rev. Charles Gibbs (U.S.A), Abrar Ebada (Dubai), Jinwol Lee (Korea), Edith Moliki, Dr. Ruwana Palapth Wala (Australia), Ifthekar Hai (USA), Kesava Dasa Swami (Argentina), Sindu Nair (Kerala), Kazi Nurul Islam (Bangladesh), Sujathe Wijethillake (Sri Lanka), Rev. Dr. M.J. Joseph, Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi (Sri Lanka), Sowmya Ayar (Bangalore), Fr. O. Thomas, Fr. Albert Nambiar Parambil, Galina Ermolina (Siberia), Dr Abraham Karickam and Francis Halder (Bangladesh).



5th INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE - 2013 at Kottarakkara



Theme: "Holy Books and Life after Life".



Swami Sachidananda Bharathi releasing the book 'Holy Books and Life after Life' by presenting the copy to Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa.

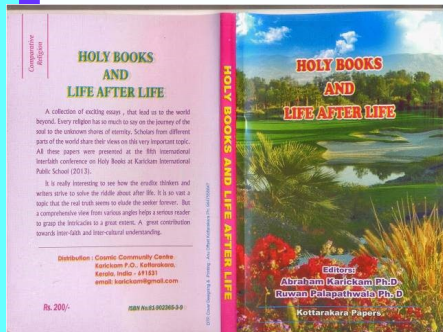
Holy Books and Life after Life.

The Intertextuality series of conferences under the auspices of Dr. Alexander Marthoma Centre for Dialogue, Kottarakkara and Cosmic Community Centre, Karickam was initiated in the year 2004. The theme of the first conference was "Intertextuality of the Holy Books". The second conference in 2007 dealt with the subject "One Word Many Versions: A Re-Reading of the Holy Books". The third conference was held at Santhigiri Ashram Aluva and its subject was "Holy Books and Violence". The fourth International Seminar was conducted again at Kottarakkara in the year 2011 with the theme "Holy Books and People of differing Faiths". The fifth conference was held at the International Public School Karickam from 30th September to 3rd October 2013. Several eminent scholars from different parts of the world presented papers on "Holy Books and Life after life".

The program was inaugurated by His Holiness Presanna Venkittacharya Chaturvedi Swami (President, Ramanuja Mission Trust, India). Rt. Rev Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, (President, AMCD) gave the keynote address. Swami Sachidananda Bharathi released the Book (Holy Books and Life After Life- Edited by Dr. Abraham Karickam and Dr. Ruwan Palapathwala) by presenting the first copy to the Bishop Thomas Mar Timotheos. Dr. Alexander Marthoma Peace Award 2013, was presented to Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph. Sidhartha Siva (President's award winner for the best debutant Director), Cosmic Rajan (best URI Cooperation circle award), P.A Sajimon (best teacher award), Afna Jaleeb (First Prize winner, URI essay contest) were also given cash award and citations on the occasion. Ian Fry, Australia (The Tripwire to More Questions than Answers), Bishop Kumara Illangasinghe, Sri Lanka (Aryubovan :A Wish for (long or more) Life), Dr. Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi, Sri Lanka (The Living WORD in the Words of the Living), Emmanuel Ande Ivorgba, Nigeria (Examining the concepts of God, Death and the Life Hereafter in African Traditional Religions)

Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph, Kerala (Affirming the Power of Life) Dr. Galina Ermolina, Russia (Life after Death), Jayanti R Chavan, Mumbai (The Eternity of Holy Books and Life) Rodrijo, Enzo and Luis, Uruguay (Life After Life), Sidhar Dr. B. Rajaram, Coimbatore (Holy Books & Life after Life – interpretation) Rev. Dr. K.V. Mathew, Kerala (Life After Life) Greshma, Punalur (After Life), Dr. Abraham Karickam, Kottarakkara (The Journey of the Soul) Tinumeren Ozukum, Andhra Pradesh (Life after Life: Biblical Implication), Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master- Moos, President, Zoroastrian college (Holy books and life after life From the view point of the ancient Avestan Mazdayasnie Zarathushtrian Dae-na) Rev. M. O Ommen Jr., Bangalore (Resurrection of the dead: Towards a Pauline Understanding) Kesava Dasa Swami, Argentina (After Life: References from the Srimad Bhagavatam) Reid Shelton Fernando (Intertextuality of the Holy Books: An interview with Santhi Kumar Heterachchi), Kamal Waleboda, Sri Lanka (The Concept of the Life after death in Buddhism) Sankara Rameswaran, Tirunelveli (Life after life: A Vedic experience), Vasudeva Rao, Vedanta Institute, Calcutta (Vedas and life after life), Fr. O Thomas, Kottarakkara (Expedition of the Soul: A personal experience) were among the scholars who presented papers at the conference.

Dr. Alexander Marthoma Centre for Dialogue was founded twenty years ago as a project of Marthoma Students' Conference. The Intertextuality conference was started with the intention of developing a philosophical foundation for Interfaith dialogue by analyzing the connecting threads among the Holy Books. The underlying concept is that there is only one Holy Book and all the scriptures are to be read like different Chapters of one book.



6th INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE - 2015 at Sri Lanka

Theme: "Holy Books and Eco Spirituality".



6th INTERNATIONAL INTERFAITH CONFERENCE ON HOLY BOOKS, 2015 SRILANKA

REPORT: SRI LANKA HOSTS 6TH INTERNATIONAL INTERFAITH CONFERENCE ON HOLY BOOKS.

by Abraham Karickam

The 6th International Interfaith Conference on Holy Books was held in the first week of February at the Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning in Sri Lanka. About 125 delegates from different parts of the world attended the four-day program, held in celebration of this year's U.N. Interfaith Harmony Week.

Every other year for the past ten years, the Cosmic Community Centre in Kerala, India has sponsored "intertextual" conferences bringing scholars and leaders from different religions to talk about their "Holy Books." The Centre has been a pioneer in promoting the ideals of United Religions Initiative in India. Specifically, it was established to promote dialogue and to study different religions with the intention of encouraging students to form their own interfaith groups. Its

activities have included participating in Intertextuality conference, the International Day of Peace Rally, holding interfaith exhibitions, celebrating Gandhi Jayanthi as a day of youth service, and embarking on pilgrimages of study etc.

This year, in collaboration with Dr. Alexander Marthoma Centre for Dialogue in Kottarakara, and the Sarvodaya Santhisena Institute in Sri Lanka, the conference was held outside of India for the first time, in Colombo.

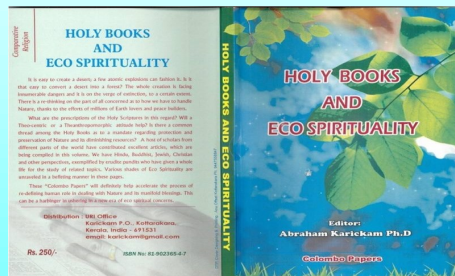
Intertextuality conferences started in 2004 in Kerala. In 2004, as president of the Cosmic Community Centre, I was invited by Melbourne University in Australia to an interfaith conference. I met eminent scholars from different parts of the world who are deeply interested in holy scriptures. So I suggested the idea of a biennial conference on Holy Books. The idea was welcomed wholeheartedly. Our first conference was held in 2004, attracting a large number of scholars from academic and theological circles.

At each conference, we publish a book including all seminar papers from that year. These books are widely circulated for discussion and study.

Inaugurating the Colombo Conference was Magsaysay Award winner Dr. A. T. Ariaratne, popularly known as the Sri Lankan Gandhi. Interfaith dignitaries from Australia, South Korea, and the United States as well as India and Sri Lanka brought greetings and good wishes for the gathering.

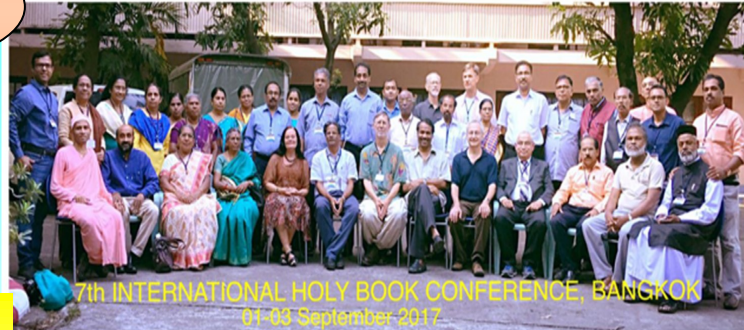
Nineteen papers were presented. Eco-spirituality was explored from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Zoroastrian perspectives. Specific papers included "Revisiting Green Spirituality through the Lens of Vedic Scriptures," "Towards an Islamic Environmental Ethics," and "Water: The Great Divide between the Earthly and the Ethereal."

The conference book, *Holy Books and Eco Spirituality* was released by Dr. A. T. Ariaratne and Victor Kazanjian, executive director of United Religions Initiative, with the first copy presented to Dr. Vinayaka Ariaratne, general secretary of the Sri Lanka's Sarvodaya Movement.



7th INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE - 2017 at Bangkok, Thailand.

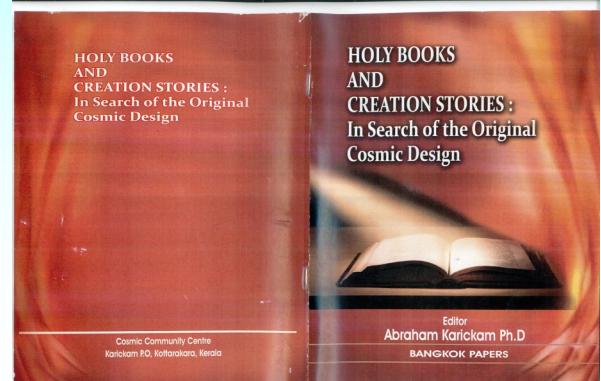
Theme: "Holy Books and Creation Stories: In Search of the Original Cosmic Design".



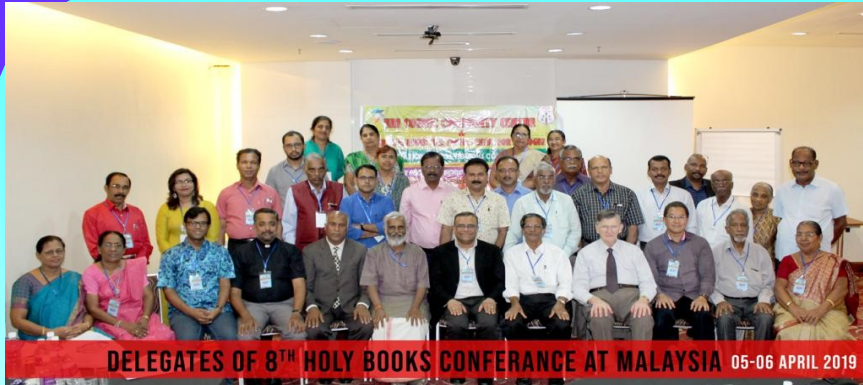
The 7th International Interfaith Conference on Holy Books was held at the Students Christian Centre in Bangkok, Thailand from 2017 September 1 to 2. There were around 50 participants from different parts of the world. The theme was "Holy Books and Creation Stories". Rev. Dr. Charles Gibbs, former executive director of URI presided over the inaugural function. Mr. John Samuel, Director of Asia Forum inaugurated the conference in the intertextuality series. He stressed the importance of the networking of all humanitarian and interfaith organizations for building up a world free of terror and destruction. Rev. Dr. Charles Gibbs reminisced about his experiences when attending the second Holy Books Conference in Kerala.

The papers were presented by Rev. Dr. Mathew Cobb - USA, Mohammad Jahangir Alam - Bangladesh, Morgana - Netherlands, Bishop Kumara Illangasinghe - Sri Lanka, Fr. O. Thomas - India, Santhikumar Hettiarachchi - Sri Lanka, Dr. Abraham Karickam - India, Abu Taher - Bangladesh, Rev. Charles Gibbs and so on.

We are grateful for the amazing hospitality of the Student Christian Centre, Thailand.



8th INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE—2019, MALAYSIA



DELEGATES OF 8TH HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE AT MALAYSIA 05-06 APRIL 2019

Theme: "Holy Books and World Literature".

8th International Holy Books Conference at ANCASA HOTEL, KAULALUMUR, MALAYSIA DURING 5-6 April 2019.

The 8th International Holy Books Conference was held at ANCASA HOTEL, KAULALUMPUR, MALAYSIA during 5th and 6th April, 2019. The theme was "HOLY BOOKS AND WORLD LITERATURE". The registered participants started arriving at the hotel in the morning on Friday, 5th April 2019. The inaugural session started at 3.00 p.m. with prayers of different Faiths.

Dr. Amir Farid, Former URI Global Council Trustee, from Malaysia chaired the session. Followed by a round of Self Introduction by participants, Mr. George Panicker, Secretary AMCD, gave the welcome address.

Dr. Abraham Karickam, Asia Secretary General and Coordinator URI South India Sri Lanka explained the dynamics of the conference. He opined that there is always life in good books. Some of the books live several decades and some continue to be ever living. The Inter-textuality series of the Holy Books has become popular; that is why the Holy Books Conferences are strengthened year after year. The papers presented in the conferences are compiled and published as books, which have become reference materials for many. First conference was held at Kottarakara in 2004, thereafter in the subsequent alternate years at different places. This year it coincided with the World Golden Rule Day celebrations on April 5th.

Dr. Amir Farid in his presidential address stated that there are many commonalities in different Scriptures. He offered a warm welcome to Malaysia and congratulated Dr. Abraham Karickam for choosing Malaysia for this conference.

Rev. Dr. Ruwan Palapath Wala (RMIT, Melbourn) in his inaugural address stated that the founders had a great vision of establishing the connecting links among the Holy Scriptures. He declared the conference formally inaugurated. Rev. Baby Mathew (Kerala) in his felicitation speech stated that it is a privilege to be here and to take part in the conference and wished all the blessings for the success of the conference.

Mr. Ahmed Hussain (Pakistan) acknowledged his gratefulness for enabling him to come and attend this conference.

Dr. Yogi Devraj (Bangalore) mentioned that the purpose of life is very meaningful. Only a very few can go beyond a particular level of bliss. He wished the best to the Holy Books Conference.

Mr. Muthu Kumaran (Chennai), Ms. Noor Zahara (Bangalore), Dr. Alam from Dhaka University (Bangladesh), Dr. Devi Lal, (Kollam, Kerala) also offered felicitations.

Mrs. Susamma Mathew proposed vote of thanks.

Saturday, 6th April, was set apart for the presentation of papers by various scholars. There were 12 papers proposed to be presented by the authors themselves. Except Dr. A.K. Merchant from New Delhi, who could not travel to Malaysia all were present and presented their papers.

Rev. Dr. Ruwan Palapath Wala (RMIT), Melbourn moderated the presentations except the one he presented by himself, which Mrs. Noor Zahara moderated.



1. Dr. Alam Jahangir (Dhaka University), Bangladesh. Dr. Jahangir's paper was on the Holy Books of Vietnam based sect Cao-Dai and its first Arch Bishop Tran Quang Canh Ngo Van Chien, the first disciple of CAo-Dai.
 2. P.K. Ramachandran, Chairman URI South India Region, a retired School Principal from Kerala presented his paper on the Holy Books of Hindus and Related Literature. He gave a detailed description in tablet form on many literatures related to Hinduism.
 3. Rev. Dr. Ruwan Palapath Wala's (RMIT, Melbourn) paper was on The Holy Bible and the Life and Literary Classics of Immanuel Sweden Borg, who lived during 1689-1743. Sweden Borg's works influenced many in the subsequent years in Europe and other parts.
 4. Dr. Ian Fry, who participated in all Holy Books Conferences, except one held in Bangkok, a 85 year old scholar from Australia presented his paper on the Evolution of Systematic Religion and Revelation of Divine Covenant to the present universal covenant and the need for upholding the human values.
 5. Dr. Abu Taher from Dhaka University, Bangladesh presented paper on the Signs and Symbols of Islamic religion like numbers, colors, shapes, Caba, Flags, etc.
 6. Dr. Tenny Abraham, Senior School Principal from Kerala presented his paper on how the Holy Books have influenced different writers of the world.
 7. Dr. Amir Farid, a physician from Malaysia presented a paper based on the Holy Qur' An. He stated that in the Holy Qur An, there is not a single mention about prophet Mohammad; All other prophets are mentioned, which shows its universal nature.
 8. Mrs. Noor Zahara's presentation was a brief introduction of Holy Books as The Bible, Quran , the Thora and Confucianism.
 9. Mr. Sheik Farid of Dhaka University, Bangladesh dealt with "Literary qualities of Holy Quran".
 10. Dr. Yogi Devraj's presentation was based on his book "The Pearls of Vedic Wisdom".
- Dr. Abraham Karickam presented a paper, which happened to be a befitting summary of all the scholars, who presented their papers and also the paper that could not be presented in the conference. His thrust was on Holy Books and English Literature. Mr. K.G. Mathaikutty, Executive Secretary and Liaison Officer of URI South India proposed vote of thanks.
- Certificates of participation in the 8th International Holy Books Conference were given away by the senior most participant, Dr. Ian Fry of Australia. After Multi Religion prayer and group photo session, the conference came to a pleasant conclusion.
- Prepared by : Mr. K.G. Mathaikutty,
(Executive Secretary, URI, South India Region)



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