

REPRESENTATIVES AGREE THAT MANY PATHS LEAD TO GOD

Spiritual Renaissance Conference
finds denominations praising
the diversity of world's religions

By Michael Mark

"Unity, not uniformity" was the theme when representatives of eleven of the world's major religions met last Saturday at Berkeley's Pacific School of Religion to discuss "The Supreme Goal of Religion." The event was the eighth annual Spiritual Renaissance Conference, co-sponsored by PSR and the Spiritual Renaissance Institute.

Noting the incredible diversity of the natural world, the panel of eight men and three women agreed that the many differing racial viewpoints and diverse religious beliefs of the world are necessary, even desirable.

Shinto spokesperson Masonouri Takota from Japan said he believes men can get along despite their different beliefs. San Francisco rabbi and storyteller Barry Ring expressed his view that the greatest strength of humanity is our diversity.

Islamic leader Ghazi Fawwel observed that "while men will never cease to differ, we can learn to recognize the beauty of the diversity with a growing awareness of the more essential unity exemplified by one God, one humanity, one earth, one chance, one origin and one destiny."

Bettina Gray, past-president of the Berkeley Area Interfaith Council, concluded that any attempt to achieve uniformity is a sad mistake. "The experience of God within us," she said, "will save us from errors of creedalism and nationalism."

Here are a few highlights of the conference:

- Panel co-ordinator Vern Grimsley, Director of the Spiritual Renaissance Institute in Berkeley, told the audience of about 150 that: "There is dawning on this planet a

spiritual renaissance that one day is going to make more differences in life on this world than any war that has ever been waged, any battle that has ever been fought, any social, governmental, political or economic upheaval in all of human history."

- Another speaker called attention to the difference between a "religious" and a "spiritual" reawakening. He cited the example of the Middle East which with its Christian, Jewish and Moslem populations has no shortage of religion, and yet is one of the most bitter and embattled regions in the world today. A spiritual renaissance by contrast, he explained, refers to a growing awareness of, and loyalty to, spiritual values of truth, beauty, goodness and love, and will far transcend narrow loyalties based on racial, creedal or nationalistic allegiances.

- Confucian teacher Dr. Yi Wu added that the need for a global or world language is a crucial one.

- Zoroastrian spokeswoman Gulmoher Gandhi observed that religions are like languages; while they differ, truth may be found in each, and that all lead to one God.

- Representing Sikhism, spokeswoman Guru Terath Kaur Khalsa emphasized the importance of loving service to our fellows, as well as the critical role that child culture is to play — the rearing of future citizens of the world.

- Calling for a return to a more child-like faith and trust in God, Christian minister and scholar Ronald Wallen noted that several aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern religions may be profitably studied by all peoples, including the ideals of calmness, serenity and self-mastery.

- Moderator Grimsley remarked that the final frontiers of this strife-torn world are not going to be physical ones such as the ocean depths, nor the uttermost corners of the earth, neither the vast and silent starry stretches of space, but rather, he said, they will consist of the ever-expanding search within ourselves for higher intellectual meanings and spiritual values.