



ASK International Conference 2007

South Africa

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“Gnostics and Politics” – Summary



The 8th International Conference on “Gnostics and Politics”, held on April 27-29, offered an unparalleled opportunity for overseas visitors and local participants to gather and listen to the sound from which harmony emanates, in the splendid setting of the Rasooli Community Centre in Pretoria, South Africa. Seldom, if ever, has such an event unfolded in a Muslim community centre, where scholars and spokespersons from the various world religions, came together to grapple with the need to tap into the higher summits of knowledge, yet work out a creative way to deal with the daily realities of politics. The politics of self-management, public politics, as well as divine politics, were joyfully explored. Human sciences scholars, scientists and politicians engaged and articulated the variations of the Higher light (*nur ala nur*). Listeners were able to swim along with the great sages in Buddhist, Jewish, Christian and Muslim thought, as well as in classical and quantum theory physics.

Iqbal Jhazbhay, of the University of South Africa, eloquently chaired this annual gathering of hearts and minds.

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri’s Opening Talk set the tone for the Gathering, as he addressed the “WHAT, HOW and WHY” of the human quest in life, by following the path of reliable contentment and happiness through self-knowledge, gnosis and appropriate response to others, or the outside world – in other words, politics”.

Dr. Angelo Nicolaidis of Wits University in South Africa introduced us to “Gnosticism and Orthodox Christianity”.

Prof. J.L.P. Wolmarans of the University of Johannesburg spoke on “Early Christian Gnostics”.

Hajj Mustafa Sterling from America approached the unity of the Abrahamic realization through the practices of the Jewish mystics – Kabbalah – in his talk. “Jewish Mysticism and Political Action.”

“Diverse Sufi response to colonialism in 19th century North Africa”, was reviewed by Muneera Haeri of South Africa, who focused on the teachings of ten acknowledged Sufi masters in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

Dr. Adnan Al-Adnani of England mapped the evolution of scientific paradigms – from Aristotle to Newton, Einstein and present-day Quantum theory – that tried to describe the reality of matter in space and time. His talk highlighted that “the light of consciousness shines in everyone identically, similar to the quantum of action in a photon. Light is the subtlest level of all creation that lies beyond all form”.

Sidi Hosam Raouf from the UK delivered valuable examples of “Inspired Leadership”.

“Gnosis Across Religions” was explored by Prof. J.S.Kruger of the University of South Africa, using the metaphor of the ancient, mystical ascent on the mountain of spiritual ascent/descent, where gnosis is found at the summit of the mountain, then flows down into political, social, economic and other spheres of human activity.

Dr. Ali Allawi from England shifted the subject in his talk on “Gnostics and Political Action”, to examining the nature of power, and “how do you relate yourself and your actions to power”, or encapsulated in a simple quote “How do you maintain integrity in a dark age?”

Muna Haeri-Bilgrami from Pakistan spoke on “Gnostic Women and Political Action”, sharing the example of an outstanding Sufi woman and African role model, Nana Asma’u.

“Ethical Politics and the New Consciousness” began with Dr. Bashar Al Naher from England inviting the delegates to take part in a meditation, which focused on the silence between his words and the underlying silence, denoting the state of intense presence. With regard to political change, he urged the audience to take enlightened action.