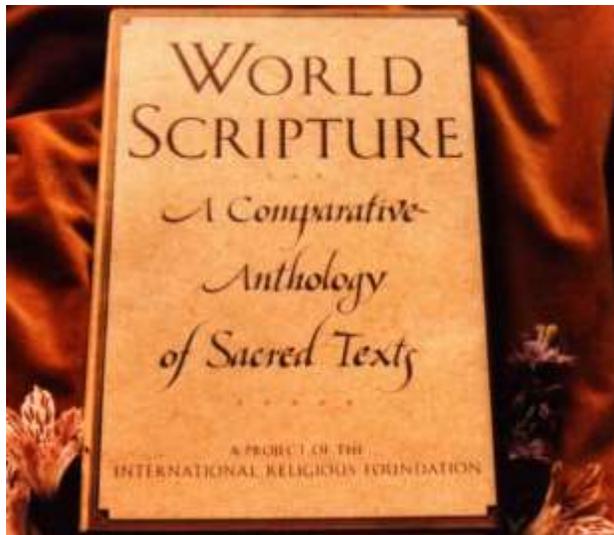


The Czech chapter of UPF initiated a study of *World Scripture: Love Your Enemy*

Juraj Lajda
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Prague, Czech Republic -- The Czech chapter of UPF initiated a study of *World Scripture* with a discussion of the theme "Love Your Enemy."

Eleven participants, including representatives of four main religious traditions as well as UPF members, gathered on April 5, 2018, for the first in a series of monthly study meetings centering on the book *World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts*.

The idea for the study group followed a successful meeting in February to mark World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Rev. Mikuláš Vymětal from the Evangelical Protestant Church opened the discussion with some quotations from the Bible and *World Scripture*. He testified that he had thought the teaching of loving one's enemy appears only in the gospels. But he said he found similar verses and stories in the Old Testament and the Quran as well. Jesus himself practiced this teaching on the cross when he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing," Rev. Vymětal said. He concluded his talk by stating that love is often interconnected with hatred, but hatred is not a counterpart of love.

Afterward there was a relevant and lively discussion of this topic. These are some thoughts from the discussion.

Dr. Vladimír Sánka from the Prague Muslim community said we should not have hatred toward a religion because of an individual of that religion acting wrongly. We should distance ourselves from evil, he remarked.

Mr. Jan Mareš, representing Hinduism, explained that in the Vaishnavisms there is 95 percent agreement with the gospels. Evil returns to us as a reaction from the past, which is the teaching of karma, he said.

Mr. Jakub Koldovský explained that the main purpose of Buddhism is living for the sake of others. Enemies or friends are created by people themselves, he said. Buddhists focus on the very root of the process when things are coming into existence in order to prevent the emergence of evil, he said.

According to **Dr. Kateřina Děkanovská** from the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, it is very difficult to love those who oppose us. Very often we are hurt. Nevertheless, she said, the climax of spiritual maturity is when we learn to love our enemies, which is the highest goal: to reach the universal, all-embracing love of God.

Mrs. Nina Nováková, a former member of the Czech parliament and a practicing Roman Catholic, pointed out that it is important to teach students at schools about the main religious traditions. However, this should not be done by a representative of the religion in question, she said. It should not be a marketing of religions.

We can conclude that the meeting was very successful and even better than expected. It can attract many people in the future, because of the content and atmosphere we were able to create. Some of the participants asked if they can invite their friends for the next meeting. We will meet regularly every month as a study and working group. Each time a different participant will prepare a talk, based on a topic from the *World Scripture*.

Dr. Juraj Lajda, the president of the Czech UPF, in his welcoming speech explained that the purpose of these meetings is to emphasize that religions have some 70 to 80 percent in common. It is hoped that these meetings will bring together people from different religious traditions, inspire them and focus on the correct understanding of God and His providence in the present time, Dr. Lajda said.

World Scripture is a good instrument for interfaith dialogue, harmony, cooperation and alliance, Dr. Lajda said.