



Anantanand Rambachan

The very short history of mankind has already been littered with a long and growing list of major conflicts triggered by religious intolerance.

Chancellor, today there stands before you a man whose clear stream of reason has not lost its way in the dreary sands of dead belief. His study of religion and its place in society has blended spirituality with scientific argument and at the same time building social relevance - creating a unique academic mosaic with the capacity to heal inter-religious strife.

Born and bred in Trinidad and Tobago, Anant Rambachan completed his tertiary education right here at The University of the West Indies. He is currently the Professor and Head of Religion at St Olaf College in Northfield Minnesota. He is the first individual outside of Judaism or Christianity to have had this honour.

His scholarly works on Hindu Theology and Philosophy have contributed significantly to our understanding of the Hindu tradition. His writings are essential to many

undergraduate and postgraduate courses on Religion at universities and often included in the list of required reading.

In addition to numerous scholarly papers in journals, he has contributed many chapters to books. He has also written three major books, all of which have received outstanding reviews but particularly his third, "The Advaita World View" which has been awarded the 2007 CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title Award. This is a highly prestigious award for the most select academic manuscripts.

His subject matter includes interreligious dialogue and relationships, religious diversity, gender and caste injustice, and Hindu liberation Theology. He has formulated and clarified the Hindu position on old themes like death and dying, wealth and poverty as well as contemporary ones like homophobia and the status of women.

For over 25 years he has chanted his mantra of interreligious dialogue, working to promote deeper understanding and relationship-building amongst the world's great religions.

In 1997, he delivered the keynote address at the World Conference of Churches on the topic, 'Towards One World family'. His scholarship extends well beyond academic circles and he has lectured to public audiences all around the globe, including a 20-lecture series delivered via the far reaching British Broadcasting Corporation.

In 2003, he delivered the invocation address at the historic inaugural celebration of Diwali at the White House and in 2008, he delivered the Lambeth Lecture entitled 'Hindus and Christians: Celebrating Friendship and Family Challenges with Hope' on invitation of The Archbishop of Canterbury.

He has been invited to the Vatican on four occasions to participate and lecture on matters related to peacemaking, interreligious cooperation and religious conversion.

Ever since its first description some 2000 years ago, there has been a steady succession of cases in which virtuous men are denied the honour of being considered prophets in their own land. Not so today!

This man of religion whose thoughts and ideas have been shared but equally received in simple white-washed temples of Caroni as well as in The White House in Washington, DC; at the World Conference of Churches in Geneva and in the Vatican in Rome.

He who has shown that religion does not have to sow the seeds of discord teaches that religion has the power to illuminate NOT eliminate.

*For his universal message of hope and brotherhood, Chancellor, I invite you to receive him, this prodigious prodigal son of the University of the West Indies and confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.*

St. Augustine Campus

Thursday 27th October, 2011