

## Notes from What About Other Religions?

Searching Issues Series (Book 2)

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“Worldwide, Christianity is by far the largest 'religion'. According to the Pew Research Center, it has 2.2 billion adherents worldwide, amounting to around 32 per cent of the world's population. There are 1.6 billion Muslims, 1 billion Hindus and nearly 500 million Buddhists, in addition to many other smaller groupings such as Jews, Sikhs, Bahais and tribal religions. Atheists amount to a mere 2.5 per cent of the world's population.”<sup>1</sup>

“Modern society and communication have made us all increasingly aware of other faiths. Many of us have significant personal contact with people of other faiths - in the classroom, neighbourhood, work and social activities.”<sup>2</sup>

“Jesus himself said, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6).”<sup>3</sup>

“In Acts 4, when Peter and John healed the crippled man outside the temple, a large crowd gathered. Peter proclaimed Jesus as the 'author of life' who had been crucified but was now resurrected and glorified. They were arrested and put on trial and asked by what power' the crippled man had been healed. Peter, 'filled with the Holy Spirit', replied that it was 'by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth' and that 'salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is unequivocal. Jesus is the only name that can save.”<sup>4</sup>

“Jesus is uniquely able to bridge that gap of sin, first, because of who he is. Peter proclaimed him as the 'Holy and Righteous One' (Acts 3:14), the 'Author of life' (v. 15). He is the one the prophets foretold (v. 18). He is the 'Christ' (v. 20). He is the one whom the early church worshipped as God.”<sup>5</sup>

“...This sets him apart from the leaders of the other great world religions. Muslims do not like being described as Muhammadans, because they do not worship Muhammad. No one in the Islamic world has ever dreamed of according to him divine honours - he would have been the

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<sup>1</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 10.

first to reject any such suggestion as blasphemy. It is not clear whether Buddha believed in the existence of God as such, but it is clear that he did not consider himself to be a god.”<sup>6</sup>

“Second, Jesus is unique in his achievement, or what he has done.”<sup>7</sup>

“We all need a saviour because we have all sinned and we cannot save ourselves from the results of sin. None of the other great religions even claims to have a saviour.”<sup>8</sup>

“By contrast, Jesus is the one who brings salvation. He saves us from our guilt, he saves us from the addictive power of sin and he saves us from the judgment we all deserve.”<sup>9</sup>

“Third, Jesus is unique in comparison with the leaders of the other great faiths of the world in his resurrection.”<sup>10</sup>

“By contrast, the resurrection of Jesus lies at the heart of the Christian faith. Jesus Christ is alive today.”<sup>11</sup>

“If Jesus is the only way to God, this immediately raises two further questions: first, What do we say about other religions?’ Second, What about those who have never heard about Jesus?’ What do we say about other religions?’<sup>12</sup>

“Jesus said, 'I am the truth'. In him, ultimate truth is to be found and he is the standard by which all truth claims are to be tested. But this does not mean that parts of the truth cannot be found in other religions. Indeed, we would expect to find truth in other religions for at least three reasons....First, although God's revelation of himself in Jesus, witnessed to in Scripture, is unique and final, God has partially revealed himself in creation...Second, human beings are made in the image of God and God has given us a conscience with which to distinguish right and wrong...Third, in every heart there is a hunger for God. God has 'set eternity in the human heart' (Ecclesiastes 3:11).”<sup>13</sup>

“It also explains why there is often a certain continuity for those who become Christians from other faiths. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, who was a bishop in South India for fort years, spoke of

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<sup>6</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 12.

<sup>13</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 13-14.

“an element of continuity which is confirmed in the experience of many who have become converts to Christianity from other religions. Even though this conversion involves a radical discontinuity, yet there is often the strong conviction afterwards that it was the living and true God who was dealing with them in the days of their pre-Christian wrestlings.”<sup>14</sup>

“Nevertheless, it is illogical to assert that all religions are equally true or that all religions lead to God. The theologian Alister McGrath points out that some world religions are avowedly non-theistic and that 'a religion can hardly lead to God if it explicitly denies the existence of a god or any gods.’<sup>15</sup>

“We are all fallen human beings (Christian and non-Christian alike), and none of us can find God by ourselves. But God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus who is 'the truth'...He is the standard by which all truth claims must be examined.”<sup>16</sup>

“...we can be sure that God will be just. When Abraham asked the rhetorical question, ‘Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ (Genesis 18:25), he clearly expected the answer, ‘Yes, of course he will.’ We need not fear that God will be unjust.”<sup>17</sup>

“...we do know that no one will be saved by their religious behaviour. We are saved by God’s undeserved love through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8).”<sup>18</sup>

“...it is important to note that it is at least possible to be saved by grace, through faith, even if someone has never heard of Jesus. 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness' (Romans 4:3). Paul tells us that David also speaks of were the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works' (Romans 4:6). This is possible because the cross is effective for all those who lived before as well as after Jesus.”<sup>19</sup>

“In the same way, the person who lived at the time of Jesus or after him would be justified by faith - even if they had not heard about him.”<sup>20</sup>

“... as John Stott points out, there are biblical grounds for great optimism... we seem to be assured by Paul that many more people will be saved than lost because Christ's work in causing salvation will be more successful than Adam's in causing ruin and because God's grace in

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<sup>14</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 16.

<sup>17</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 18.

<sup>18</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 18.

<sup>19</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 18-19.

<sup>20</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 19.

bringing life will overflow "much more" than Adam's trespass in bringing death." (See Romans 5:2.)<sup>21</sup>

If that is the case, why should we bother to tell others about Jesus? First, because the route we have taken all the way through this booklet has begun with Jesus and set out into the world: who he is, what he has done, the reality that he is risen. We are compelled to proclaim the glory of Jesus Christ. Second Jesus commanded a too:

First, of course, we need to be humble and sensitive.

Christians are no better than those of other religions or those of no religion. We are all in the same boat: we all need a saviour and there is no room for arrogance.

Second, we need to be positive. In Acts 4, Peter did not attack other faiths. He preached the good news about Jesus.

Third, we need to be respectful. We need to respect everyone as being made in the image of God - whether they are Christians or not.

Finally, we need to be courageous. The early Christians were unashamed witnesses to Jesus.

Their message was unpopular and it got them into trouble.

But they did not stop. We need to do the same in an age when tolerance, not truth, is the order of the day.

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<sup>21</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *What About Other Religions?*, 3rd ed., vol. 2., Searching Issues (London, UK: Alpha International, 2016), 20.