

ALPHA'S ECUMENICAL FIGUREHEAD: NICKY GUMBEL

It goes without question that **NICKY GUMBEL** is the face and the voice of **The ALPHA Course** and I have written about him and it on a number of times in the past.

This is the time of year when many churches are launching **ALPHA** courses and so I want to reproduce here a helpful article that details the close ecumenical and unscriptural links that **NICKY GUMBEL** has with the Roman Catholic religion.

The article was the lead article in the **British Church Newspaper** of 4 September 2015 (No. 313) and it is reproduced here with kind permission of both the author and the paper.

Nicky Gumbel gives keynote speech at Catholic evangelisation conference

After the Rev. **Nicky Gumbel**, Director of the **Alpha** courses, met both the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury in June, announcing news of their joint project to combat slavery and human trafficking, he was once again in close co-operation with the Papacy in July.

The Roman Catholic Church (R.C.) selected him as one of their five keynote speakers at a major evangelisation conference, '**Proclaim '15**', at which over 900 delegates attended. The R.C. described it as a 'once in a generation' conference which would set the tone for Catholic evangelism for the foreseeable future.

EVER CLOSER RELATIONSHIP

Gumbel spoke of the 'ever-closer' relationship between the Papacy and the work of **Alpha**, which now operates in almost all countries. The ever-closer working relationship between the Papacy, the Church of England and **Alpha** was evident at the conference, coinciding with developments in inter-religious co-operation, such as 'Christlam', a movement seeking ever-closer co-operation and even union between Christian churches and Islam.

GUIDED BY THE POPE

All five R.C. archbishops of England and Wales attended '**Proclaim '15**', held at Birmingham's Repertory Theatre, along with many 'ecumenical guests'. A member of Pope Francis's Rome-based Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation was also present.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols told delegates to be 'guided by the Pope's invitation to proclaim mercy', and asked: "But the next step, what might it be?" Answering his own question, he said: "My suggestion: the Pope asked for a Jubilee Year of Mercy, beginning in December. Let that guide our choice of what to do next".

The Rev. **Nicky Gumbel** had travelled with C of E Archbishop **Justin Welby** to his meeting with the Pope on 16 June, indicating the powerful position he now holds in the eyes of the Papacy, the C of E, and among many of today's charismatic Christian churches.

Welby and the Rev Nicky Gumbel are old friends from their days together at Holy Trinity Church, Brompton, where Welby was mightily influenced by rock-star-turned-charismatic-leader John Wimber, an exponent of the so-called 'Toronto Blessing'.

Six days earlier, **Welby** had met with Global Freedom Network, a joint initiative of Catholics, Anglicans and Muslims, which seeks to eradicate slavery and trafficking by 2020.

REFORMATION A SCANDAL

At his meeting with the Pope, **Welby** expressed some anxiety that the imminent decision of the C of E in favour of women bishops might hinder the ever-growing closeness between the two churches, but said: "This is a difficulty, but a difficulty that we can handle in the context of a good relationship rather than a pit into which we fall". At this second meeting of these heads of their two churches, Pope Francis used his strongest language yet, in describing the division into Catholic and Protestant churches in the Reformation as 'a scandal'.

POPE 'RESOLUTELY LEADING'

Further evidence of closer-than-ever relations between **Alpha**, the Papacy and the C of E came in May, at a week-long **Alpha** Leadership Conference held at various venues, including Holy Trinity Brompton and the Royal Albert Hall.

A keynote speaker was **Father Cantalamessa**, Preacher to the Papal Household, who said: "Christian churches are becoming less distant from one another and improving dialogue", adding that "A tectonic movement contrary to the one which drew the present continents apart is taking place spiritually among us. Christian 'continents', once very distant...are coming together again...Pope Francis is resolutely leading us Catholics in the direction of unity".

'HISTORIC MOMENT'

Cardinal Nichols and **Archbishop Welby** made a joint appearance at the conference event at the Royal Albert Hall, giving a unique joint interview and praying together for Christian unity. The vast audience of **Alpha** leaders applauded after the prayer for unity, **Gumbel** describing this as “a historic moment”.

Over in the U.S., popular leader Pastor **Rick Warren** referred at a recent rally to Pope Francis as ‘Our Pope’ and ‘The Pope of all Christian worldwide’. Dealing with queries about the Papacy’s worship of Mary and dead ‘saints’, he used a familiar stock phrase: ‘We all worship the same Jesus’.

PASTOR DEFECTING

Meanwhile, there was a minor sensation in Sweden last year when the Pastor of a charismatic ‘mega-church’ of 3,500 members, **Ulf Elkman**, announced he was defecting to the R.C. church. He said: “I discovered how little I really knew about Catholics... Unconsciously I carried many prejudices and bad attitudes...I have repented from nonchalant, shallow opinions and discovered a very rich heritage”. He added: “The movement I have represented for the past 30 years is part of the ongoing Protestant fragmentation of Christendom”. He also resigned from the board of the Yoido Full Gospel Church, whose founding Pastor, **David Yonggi Cho** and his son, were recently convicted of embezzling £8 million.

POPE ASKS FOR PRAYER

U.S. charismatic ‘Word of Faith’ movement leader **Kenneth Copeland**, another who embraced the ‘Toronto blessing’, has recently issued a stream of statements supporting the Papacy. In one speech, he said: “Recently, I received a message from Pope Francis in which he asked that, as a ministry and part of the Body of Christian believers, we pray for him. The Bible teaches that we are to pray ‘for all that are in authority’. It is our duty to honour the Pope’s request”.

These developments prompted one Christian observer, John Shipton to write: “There are many religious leaders in Christendom working to form this united front, including many Christian seminaries and colleges, Christian publishing houses, the Christian media, and leaders of the established church, denominational or otherwise”.

Links to the other articles I have written that relate to this subject can be found on

<http://www.takeheed.info/index-for-assorted-articles/alpha/>

and the links to my video talk on **ALPHA** are located on

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6DjxpYR7mk> (Part one)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ll0A00LqKeM> (Part two)

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