



Jesus, Salvation & The World's Religions

Adventist Today Sabbath Seminar

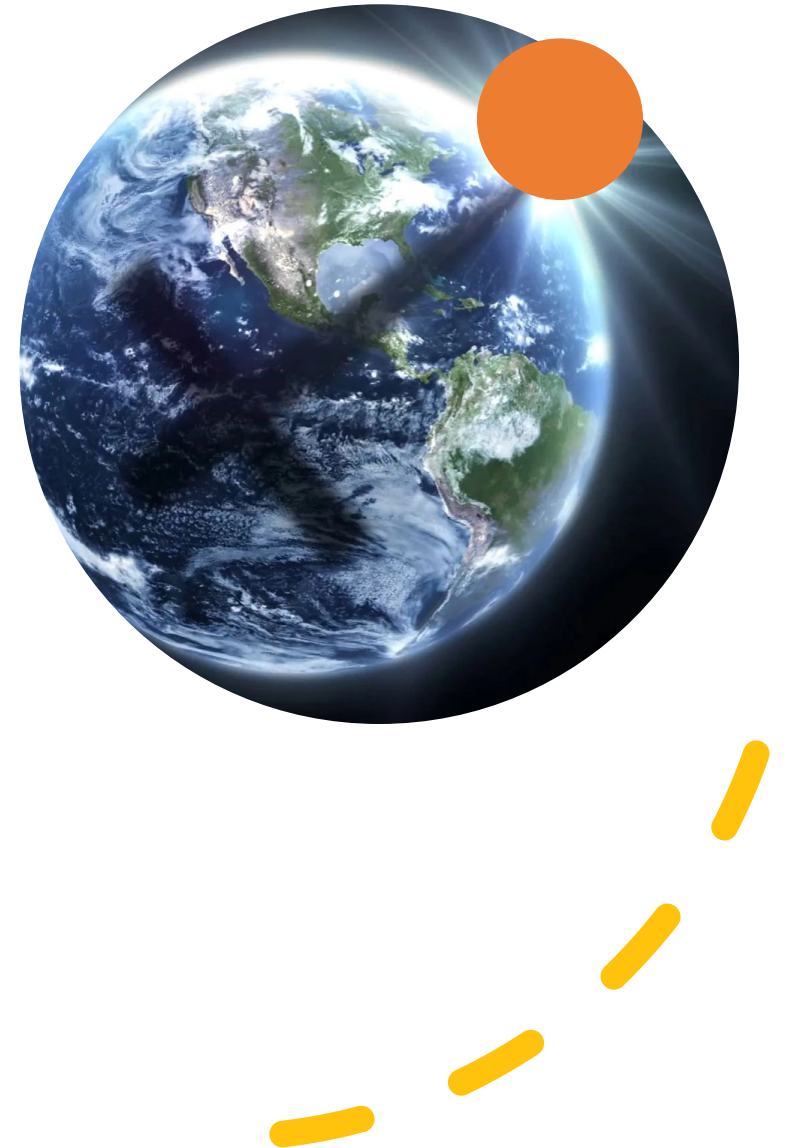
April 23, 2022

My thesis:

People from all religious traditions, including those who have not confessed faith in Jesus, will have a place in the “Hereafter”.

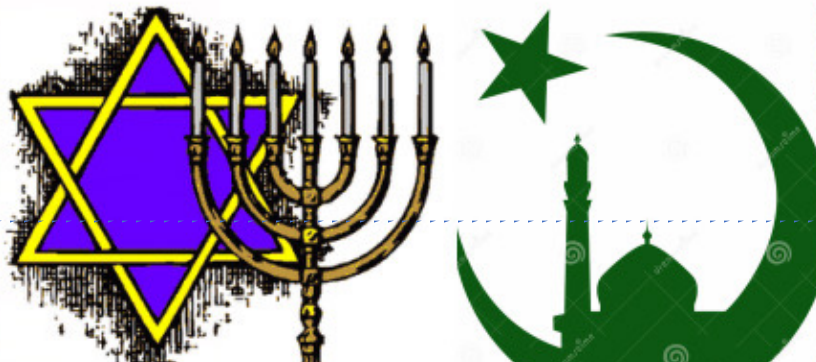
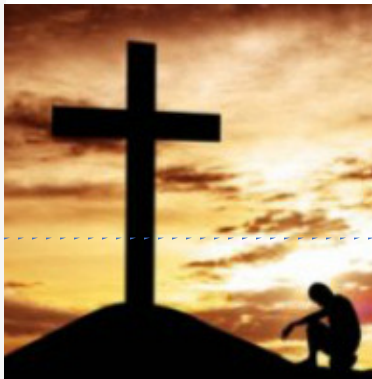


The destiny that Jesus secured for humans through his life, death, and resurrection will be experienced even by Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and others who do not profess faith in him



Reflections:

- Can we, Christians, hear echoes of God's voice in the lives of a Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim?
- Can we do so and feel enlarged, and not diminished?
- What becomes of our faith when we make space for another faith, another way of interpreting the world?



How I got
here . . .



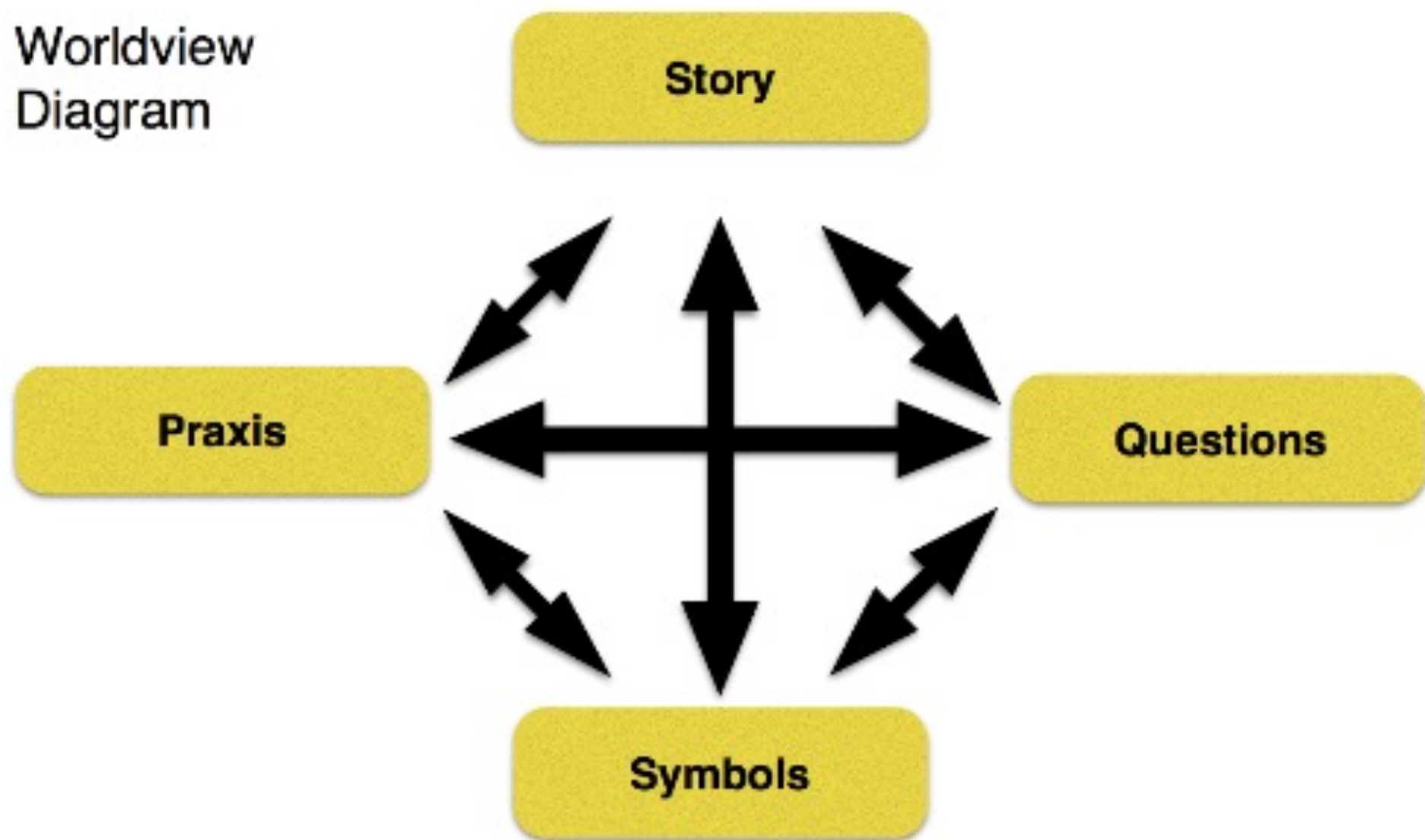
Worldviews:

We are products of our stories.

- The place we are born;
- The home of our youth;
- The experiences we have;
- The education we receive;
- The people who frequently speak into our lives;



Worldview
Diagram

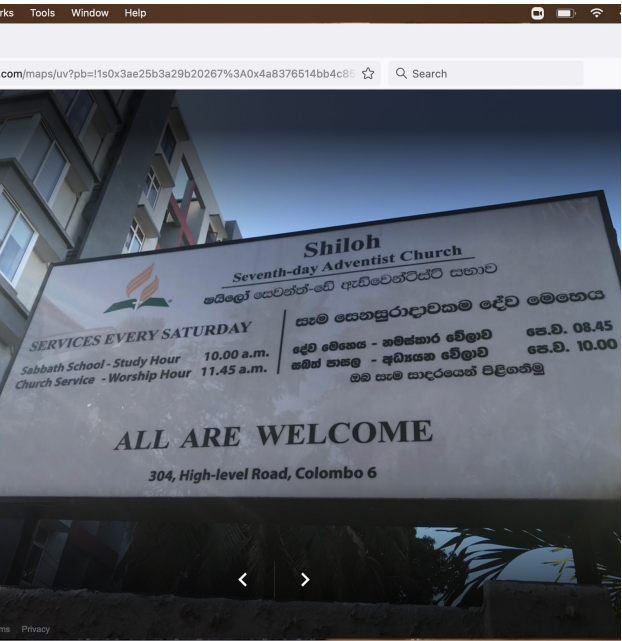


Two worlds – Two stories:

1. Stories in the world of Adventism

- “Jesus loves me, this I know . . .”
- Adventist identity: The Third Angel
- Adventist eschatology





Stories in the world of Adventism:

- A big God who loved little me,
 - An affectionate family and church family who were there for me
-
- I was a little bit more deserving of the love of God than those outside my faith community;
 - I should be cautious and skeptical about those “outsiders”.
 - If possible, I should avoid them and fear these imagined adversaries.

Stories in the world of Adventism:

Fear was a subtle default setting:

- Fear of believing the wrong thing;
- Fear of not praying enough, or studying the Scriptures enough
- Fear of not evangelizing my neighbors and friends enough
- Fear of not giving the tithe;
- Fear of “non-Christians”
- Fear of temples, shrines, meditation, yoga, incense sticks
- Fear of movies, dancing, tea, coffee

Life inside the Adventist bubble:

Life inside the bubbles becomes rational and normal;

“The very nature of a bubble is that there’s an inside and an outside, an expanding reality-distortion field that assures people inside the bubble that they’re doing things that are rational and normal.

And people outside the bubble are supposed to feel deprived, less-than, or deceived, because that’s part of the fuel of life inside the bubble.” --Seth Godin





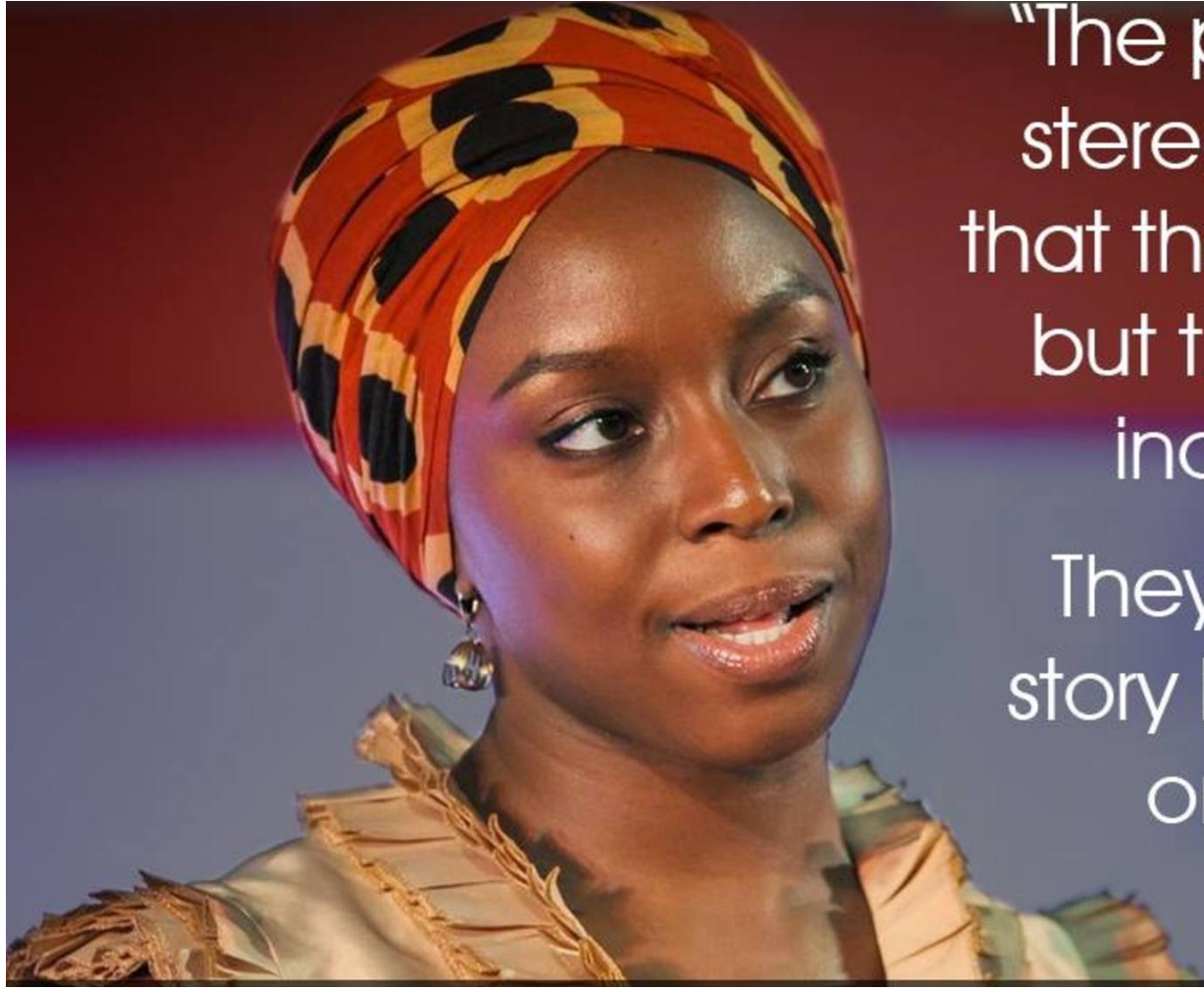
Life inside the Adventist bubble:

Those who do not share my faith (or my race or my ideology) are second-class citizens. They are the unsaved, the unbelievers, the infidel, the unredeemed; they stand outside the circle of salvation.



The danger of a single story

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



"The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete.

They make one story become the only story."

Two worlds – Two stories:

2. Stories in the world of diversity

- Neighbors, school-mates, friends
- Multiple symbols, images, sights and sounds





Ethnic diversity:

Sinhalese (74%),

Tamils (18%);

Moors/Malays (7%);

Burghers (0.3%);

Religious diversity:

Buddhist (70%)

Hindu (13%)

Muslim (9%)

Christian (6%)



buddhist temples

Sri Bodhi Viharaya

5.0 ★★★★★ (2)

Buddhist temple · Colombo 02,
Vauxhall St

Closing soon: 9:00 PM · +94 77 656 0201

Website

Directions

Temple

4.8 ★★★★★ (8)

Buddhist temple · Colombo - Batticaloa Hwy

Open 24 hours

Directions

Walukaramaya Raja Maha Viharaya

4.7 ★★★★★ (53)

Buddhist temple · Walukarama Rd

+94 112 575 004

Directions

Polwatte Sri Dharmakeerthiyaramaya

4.3 ★★★★★ (14)

Buddhist temple · Sri Dharmakeerthiyarama Rd

Directions

Gangaramaya Temple

4.6 ★★★★★ (7,789)

Buddhist temple · 61 Sri

Website

Directions

Showing results 1 - 20

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☐ Update results when map moves

★ Rating ▾

🕒 Hours ▾

🏠 All filters

Layers

Map data ©2022

United States

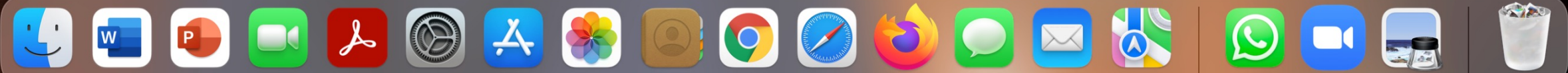
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Map



buddha statues



Buddha Statue

No reviews
Colombo 00500
Sri Lanka



Buddha's Statue(බුද්ධ ප්‍රතිමාව)

4.8 ★★★★★ (4)
Shrine · Reid Ave



Buddha Statue and Bodhi Tree

4.6 ★★★★★ (76)
Buddhist temple · High Level Rd
Open 24 hours



"Buddha statue in the city for worship"

Buddha Statue

5.0 ★★★★★ (1)
Buddhist temple · Sri Vajiragnana
Mawatha

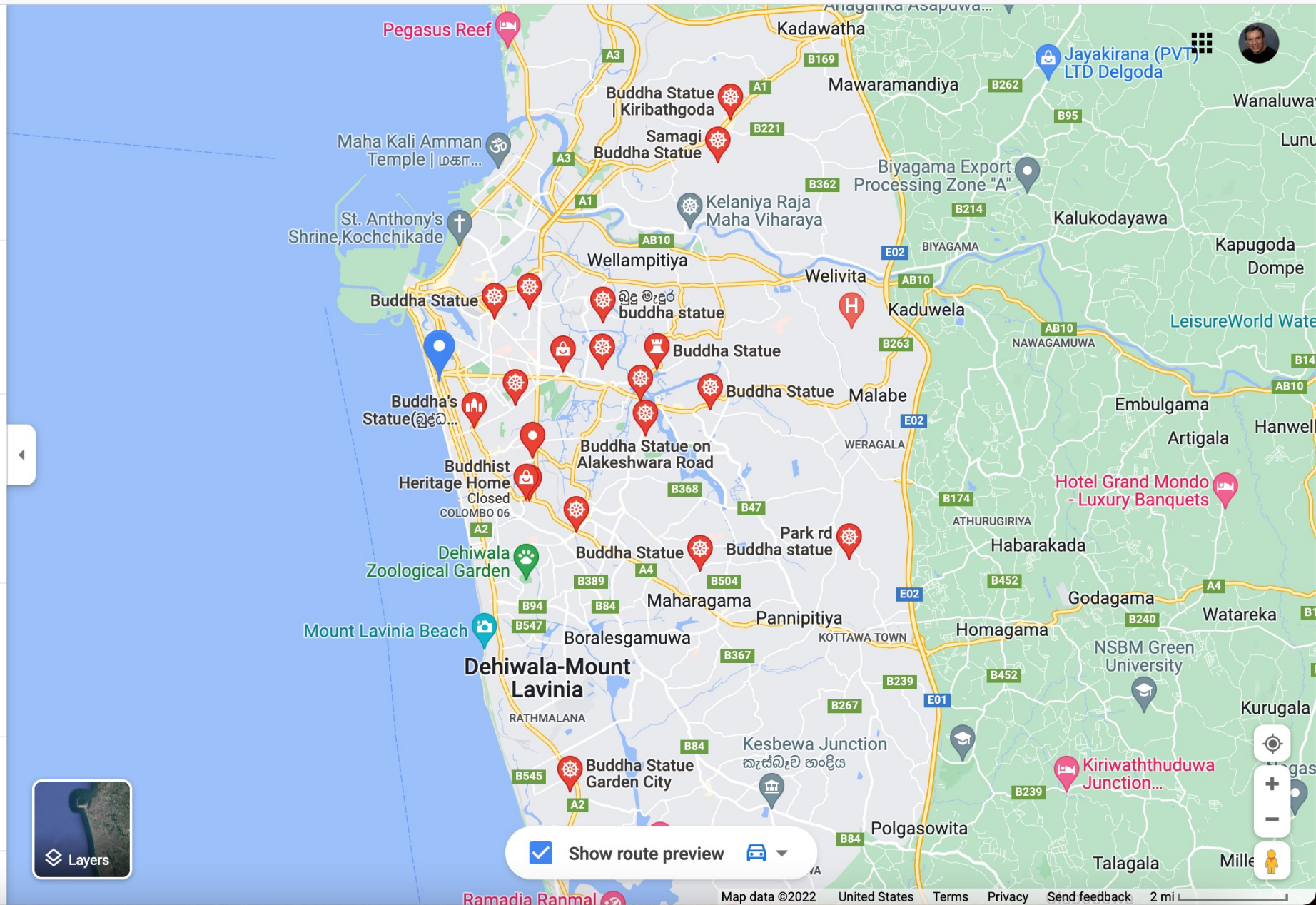
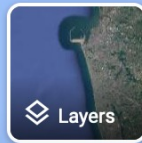


Replica of Aukana Buddha Statue (බුද්ධ ප්‍රතිමාව)

4.6 ★★★★★ (56)
Buddhist temple · Raubbhaloka




Showing results 1 - 20






St. Anthony's Church
4.9 ★★★★★ (44)
Catholic church · WV43+XJX
Closing soon: 9:00 PM




Holy Rosary Church
4.9 ★★★★★ (28)
Catholic church · 55, Justice Akbar Mawatha




👤 "Quiet and serene church in the middle of ..."

St. Mary's Church, Bambalapitiya
4.8 ★★★★★ (530)
Catholic church · 66 Lauries Rd
Closed · Opens at 6:00 AM

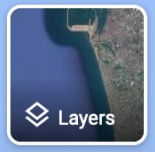


👤 "Very nice and peaceful Roman Catholic church"

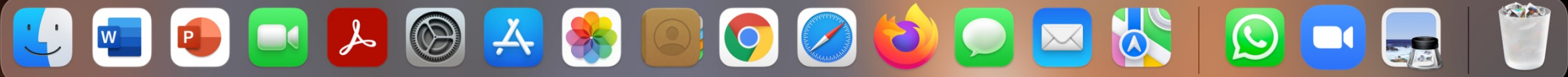
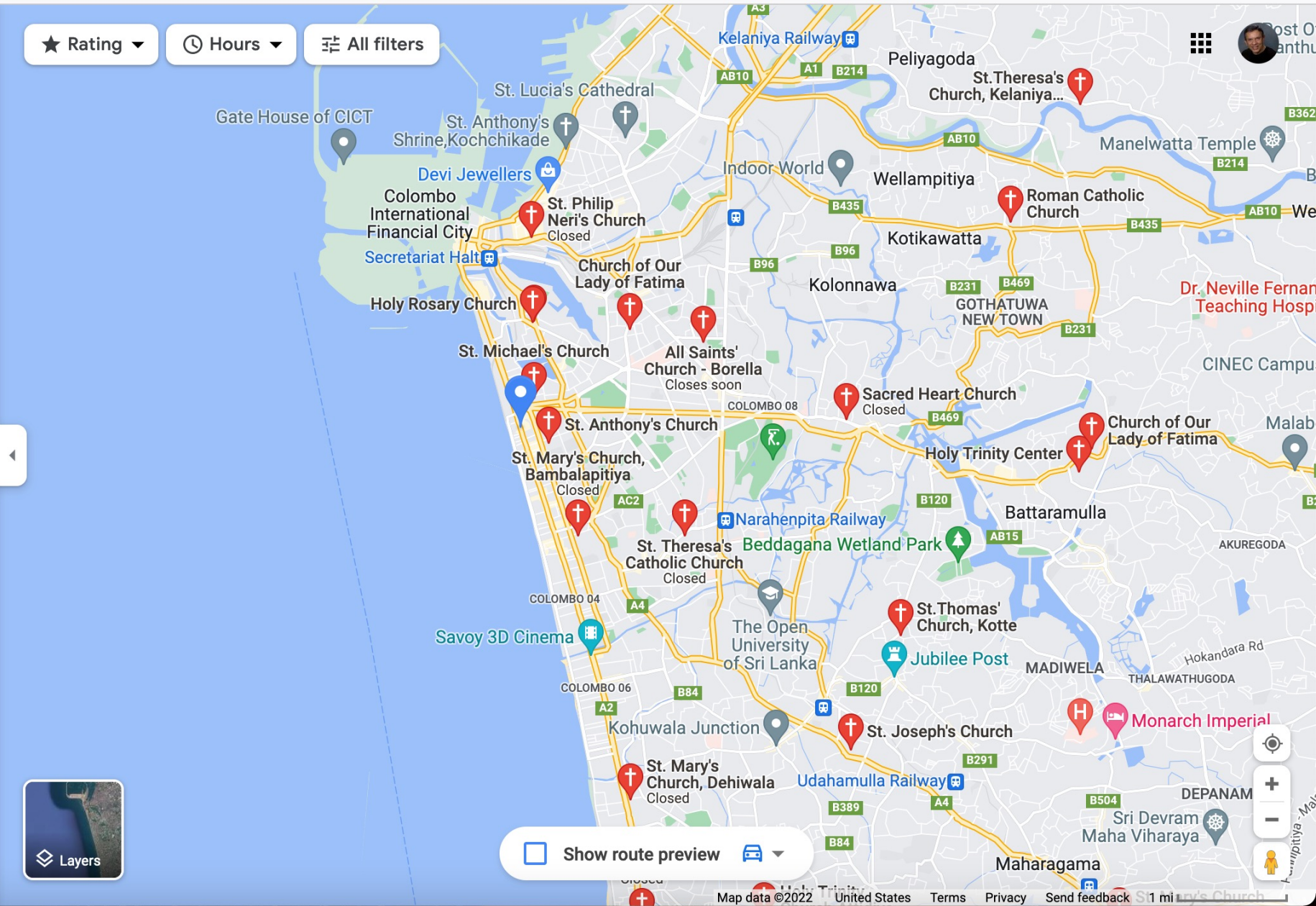
St. Philip Neri's Church
4.6 ★★★★★ (184)
Catholic church · 157 Olcott Mawatha
Closed · Opens at 5:30 AM



👤 "It's a Roman catholic church"



Layers



Christian Reformed Church, Regent Street

3.8 ⭐⭐⭐⭐☆ (4)
Church · 69 EW Perera Mawatha



Christian Reformed Church (Dutch Reformed Church), Maligakanda

5.0 ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ (1)
Church · 55 Maligakanda Rd
Closed · Closed · Opens 8AM Sun



Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka

3.9 ⭐⭐⭐⭐☆ (50)
Christian church · Wolfendhal Ln
Notable 17th-century Protestant church
Closed · Opens at 8:30 AM

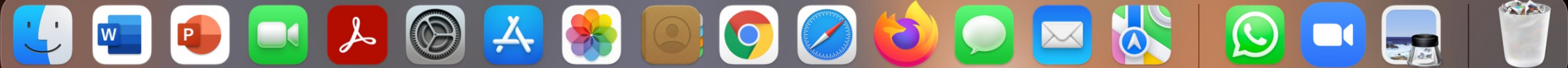
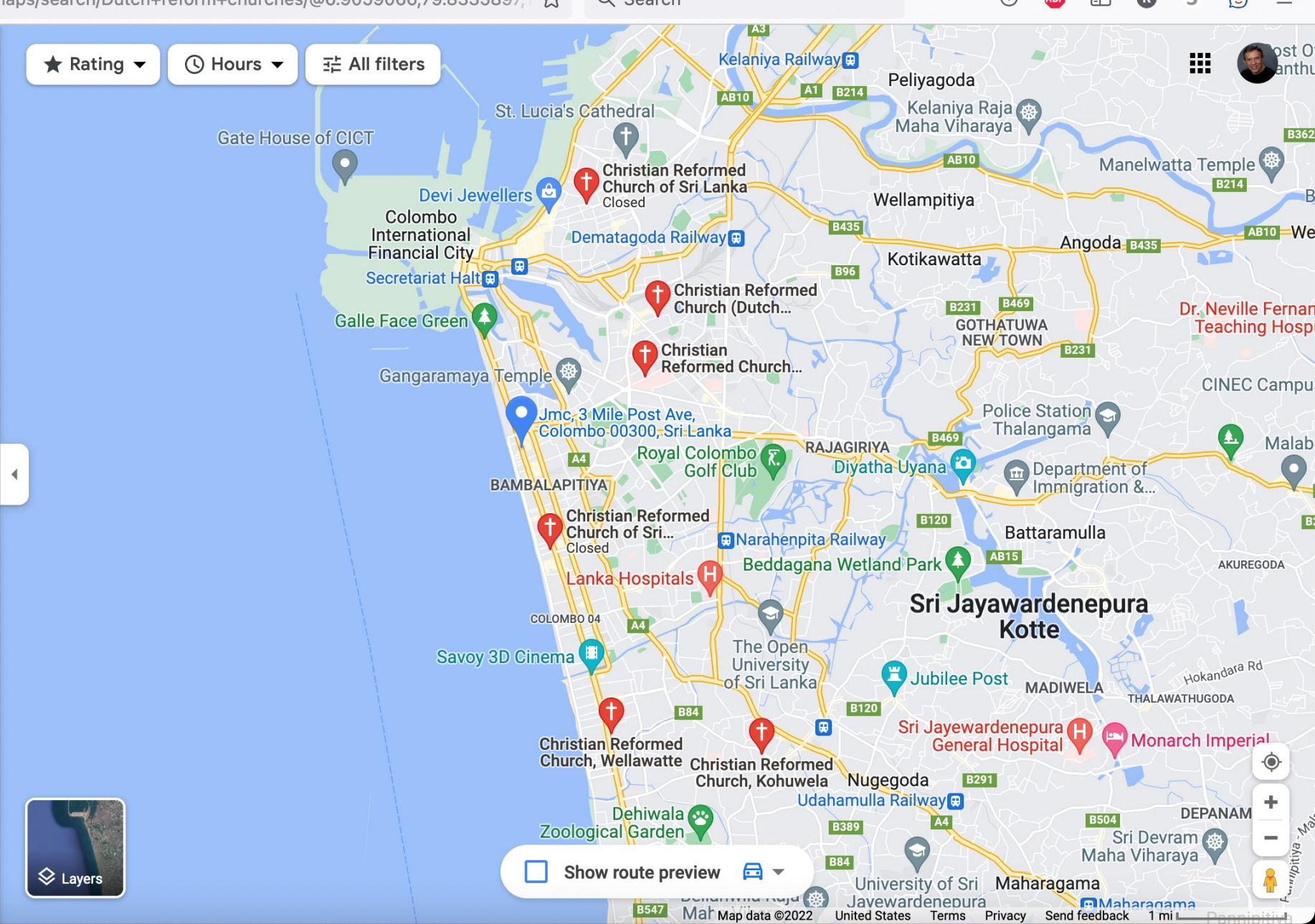
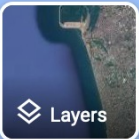


Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka - Bambalapitya

4.6 ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ (16)
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urch St



Wekanda Jumma Masjid



/C3+52J

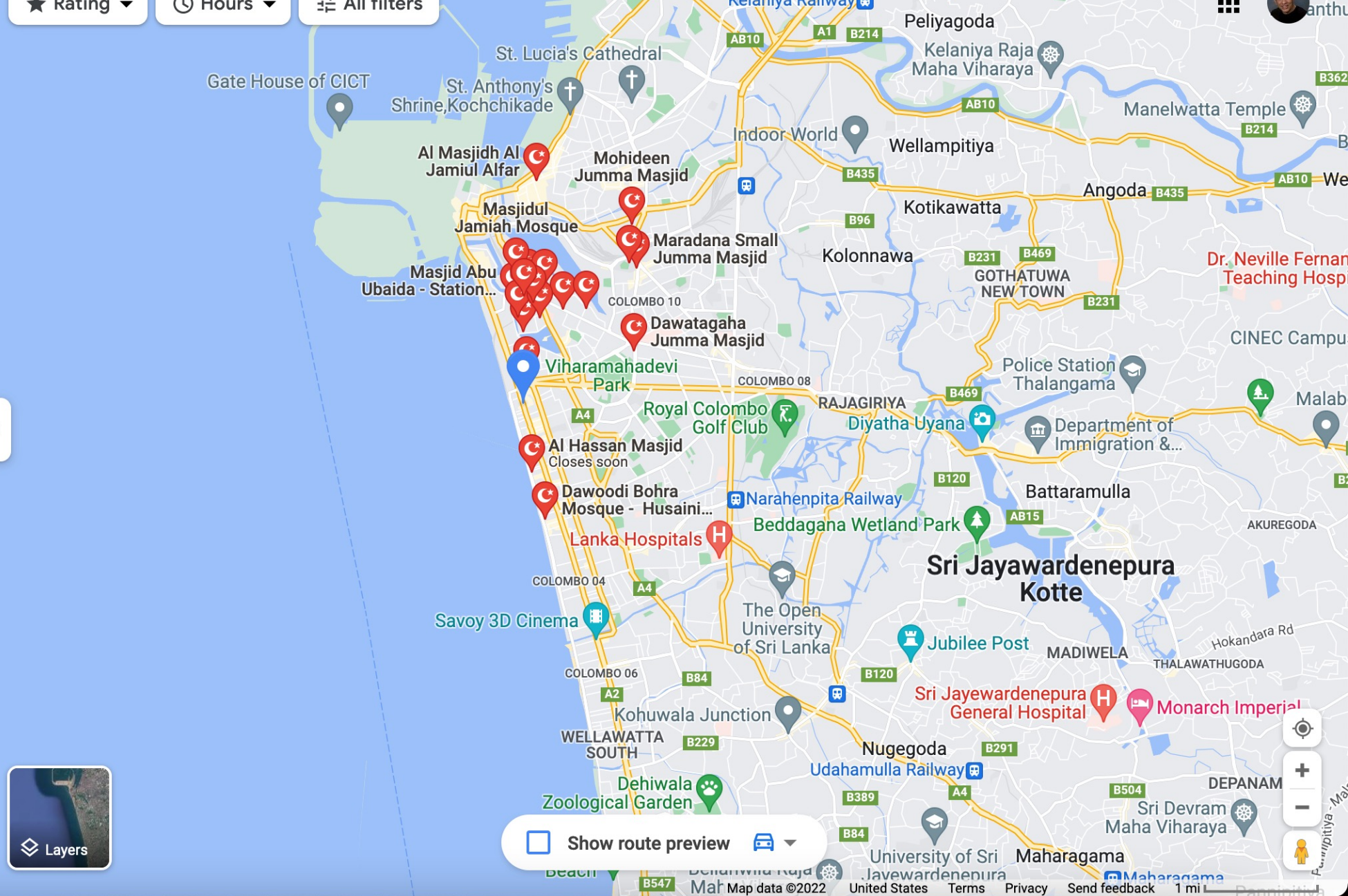
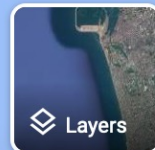


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Results when map moves



School:

- Selective entry boys' school
- Founded in 1835
- Named the **Royal College**, Colombo with consent from Queen Victoria
- The first school to gain the prefix, "Royal", outside of the British Isles
- Enrollment in 2010: 8,600
 - **One SDA**

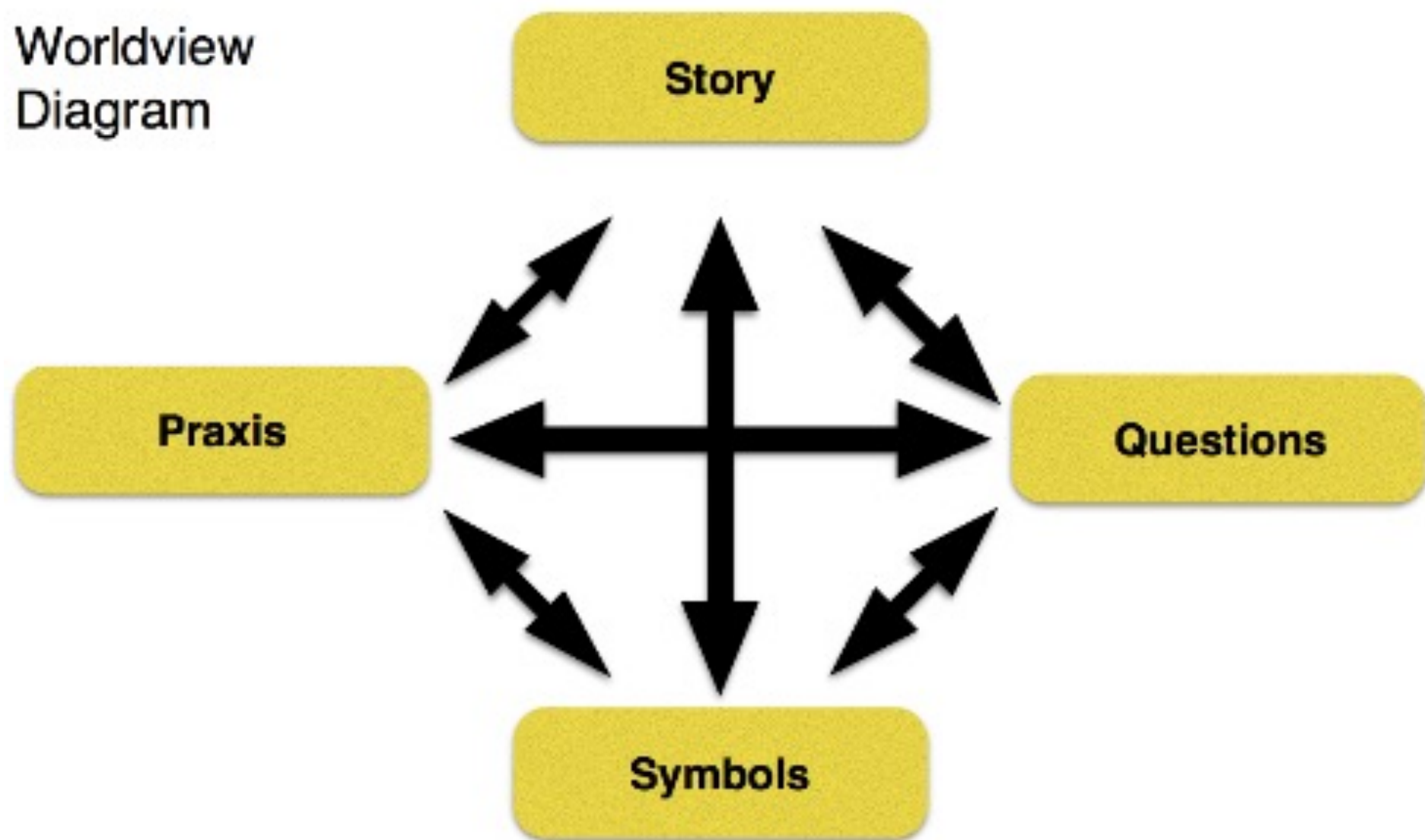


“Royal College ‘59 Group”:

- 230 boys in one grade
- Divided into six classes
- **Today 117 of us are connected online.**



Worldview
Diagram



What I learned from the stories in the world of multiple religions:

- We share the same human experiences
- We enjoy some of the same things – friendships, food, play,
- We hold similar views that somethings are good and others are not;
- We know some actions are just and fair, others are not;
- We experience and express kindness, respect, honesty,
- We have similar aspirations, desires, hopes
- We suffer losses, pain, sorrow
- We have a sense of the transcendent

The oneness
of humanity



The moral basis of our shared humanity



God, the Creator of all, set his image on humans prior to and independently of our varied cultures and religions. Thus, God conferred on human life a dignity and sanctity that transcends our differences.

Living in Two Worlds



Faith Formation:

- **The oneness of humanity;**
- **Identity divides: the very process of creating an “Us” involves creating a “Them”**
- **God is God of all people: God’s love is vast and universal**
- **Jesus**



**Religious
identities and
classifications
are human
constructs.**



Religious identities are a human construct.

Religious claims are made within the framework of particular texts and myths:

- Judaism claims to be God's covenant people within the framework of *its* scriptures;
- Islam claims its legitimacy within the framework of *its* scriptures;
- Christianity claims its legitimacy within the framework of *its* scriptures
- Hinduism makes its claims based on the **Vedas** and other texts;
- Buddhism makes its claims based on the **dharma**, the teaching of the Buddha.

Religious identities are a human construct:

Religions are like languages. They seek to describe ultimate realities, but the ways they do so are almost infinitely varied. There is no universal religion, even as there is no universal language.

Identity divides:

- Religion is about identity, and identity divides.
- For every “We,” there is a “Them.”
The very process of creating an “Us” involves creating a “Them”





The challenge to the religious imagination is to see God's image in one who is not in our image.

The hurdle of religion:

To see God, or good, or human dignity in those whose faith is not my faith, and whose truth is not my truth.

The hurdle of religion:

Few things have done more harm than the belief on the part of individuals and groups that he or she or they are in sole possession of the truth.

Origins of Religion:

There is no broad consensus regarding the origin of religion.

Early theorists:

- Animism
- Naturalism
- Primitive Polytheism
- Ethical Monotheism

Biblical Monotheism:

“Biblical monotheism represents the moment when mankind first lifted its sights beyond the tribe, city, and nation and thought of humanity as a whole.”

--Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*



“The proposition at the heart of monotheism is not what it has often taken to be: one God, therefore one path to salvation. To the contrary, it is that unity is worshiped in diversity. The glory of the created world is its astonishing multiplicity: the thousands of different languages spoken by mankind, the proliferation of cultures, the sheer variety of the imaginative expressions of the human spirit, in most of which, if we listen carefully, we will hear the voice of wisdom telling us something we need to know”

--Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*



Biblical Monotheism:

“The truth at the beating heart of monotheism is that God transcends the particularities of culture and the limits of human understanding. He is my God but also the God of all mankind, even of those whose customs and way of life are unlike mine.

That is not to say that there are many gods. Nor is it to say that God endorses every act done in his name.”

--Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*



Classification of Religions:

There has never existed any people, anywhere, at any time, who were not in some sense spiritual or religious.



Classifications of Religions:

One purpose for religious classifications was to bring intelligibility to the vast range of knowledge about human religious experience

- Normative: “True” vs. “False”
- Geographical
- Phenomenological

The Convergence of Religions

Religions **differ** in doctrine, ritual, and experience;

Religions **converge** in at least three important ways:

The Convergence of Religions

Religions **converge** in at least three important ways:

1. Ethics
2. They begin with the recognition that something is wrong with the world
3. They recognize the human yearning to know what there is after this life

Something is wrong with humans . . .

- Christianity: **Sin** (Solution: Salvation)
- Islam: **Self-sufficiency** (Solution: Submission)
- Hinduism: **Rebirth** (Solution: Release)
- Buddhism: **Suffering** (Solution: the Eightfold Path)
- Judaism: **Exile** (Solution: Return)
- Confucianism: **Chaos** (Solution: Character)
- Shintoism: **Pollution** (Solution: Purification)

God is universally present:

If we hold to the biblical view that God is everywhere – universally present – should we also hold that God is present in the cultures and religions of the world?

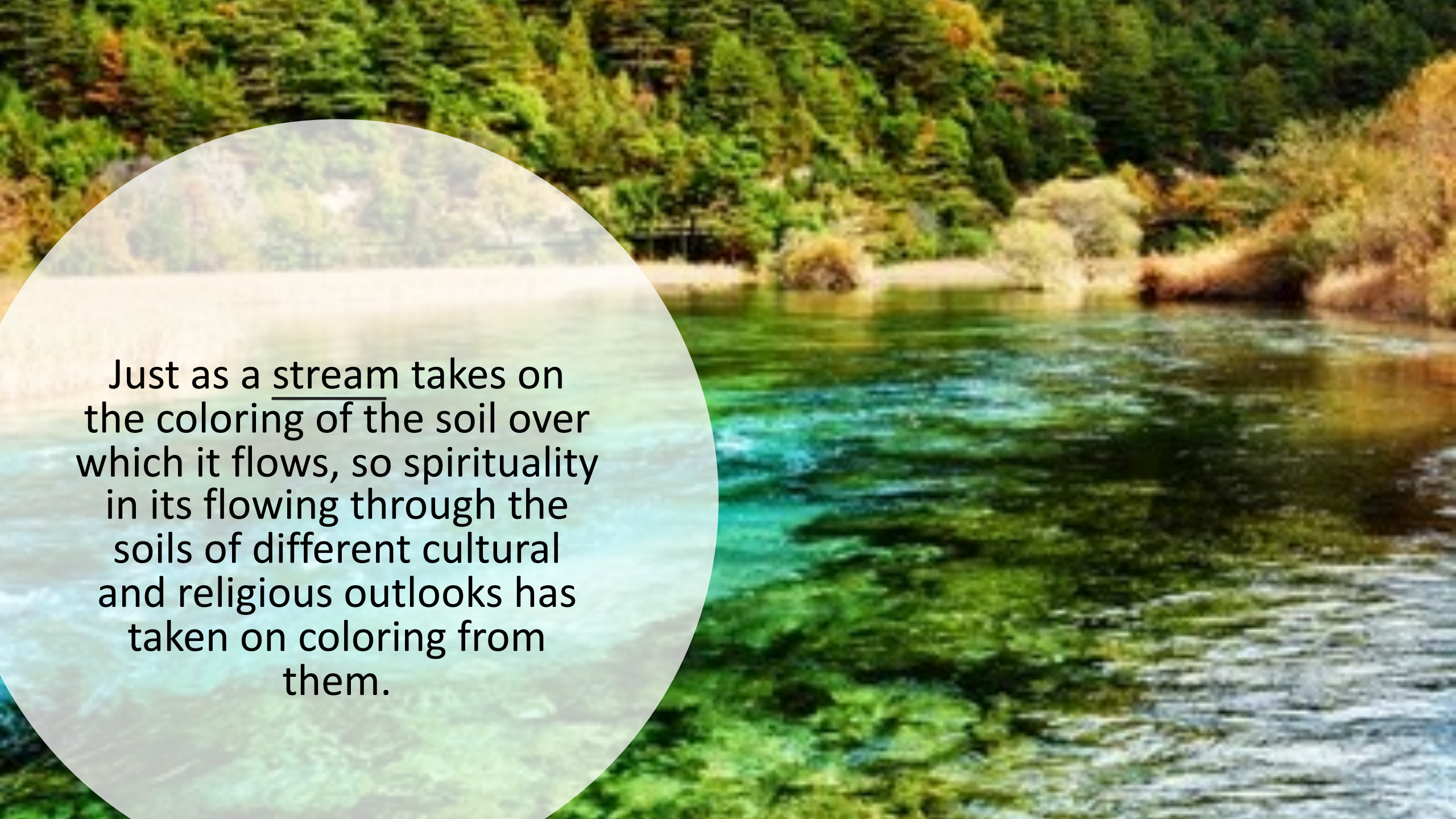
What are the implications of such a view?

God is universally present:

Implication 1: God can be experienced in culturally conditioned images and notions in the nations of the world.

Implication 2: “The longing for justice, the quest for spirituality, the hunger for relationships, and the delight in beauty are echoes of a Voice.”

--N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*



Just as a stream takes on
the coloring of the soil over
which it flows, so spirituality
in its flowing through the
soils of different cultural
and religious outlooks has
taken on coloring from
them.

What would such an
enlarged faith be like?

It would be like being secure in
one's home, yet moved by the
beauty of a foreign place, knowing
that they are someone else's
home, not mine, but still part of
the glory of the world that is ours.



Can we feel enlarged and not diminished by the faith of another?

The **Compassion** of Buddhism?

The **Non-violence** of Hinduism and Jainism?

The **Respect for the earth** of Native Americans?

The **equality of races and genders** of the Baha'i?

The **oneness** and inclusiveness of Sikhism?



A diverse group of people, including a Buddhist monk, a Sikh, a Muslim woman, and others, standing in a line. They are dressed in traditional and religious attire, representing various world religions. The background is dark and out of focus.

There are multiple worlds of wisdom, each capturing something of the mystery and radiance of God and refracting it into the lives of its followers.

Each world of wisdom is, as it were, the native language of its followers, but combining in a hymn of glory to the Divine.

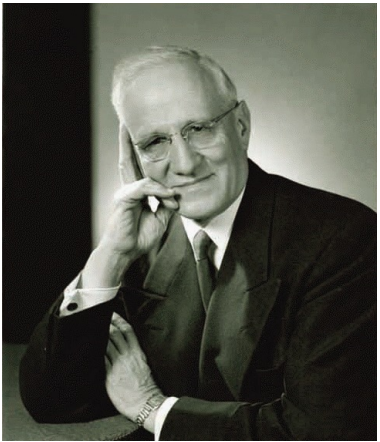
**This world view should not
be a threat to our identity
but a call to a moral and
spiritual generosity more
demanding than we had
sometimes supposed it to
be.**



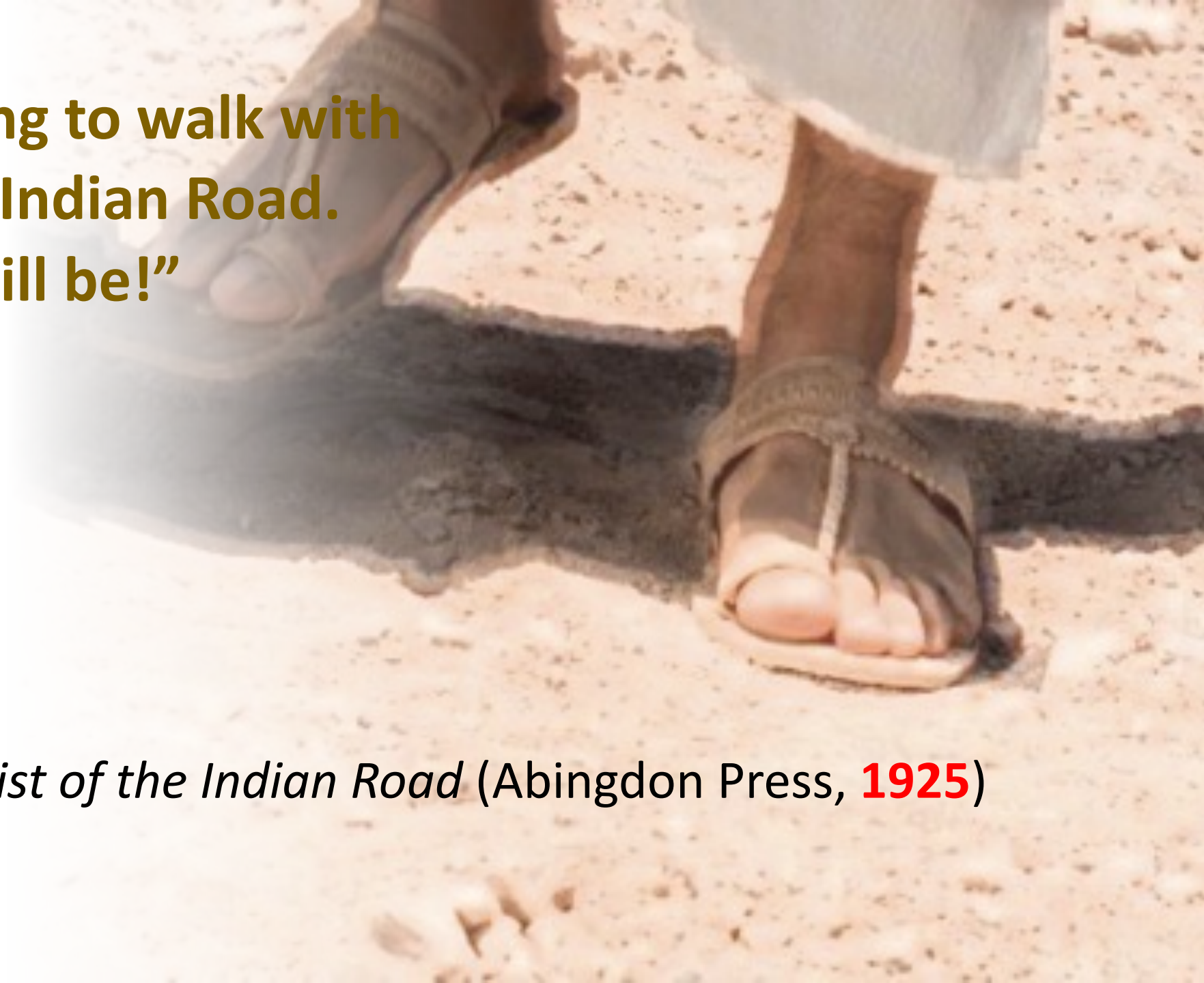
If we hold to such an enlarged faith, what becomes our purpose for Christian missions and evangelization?

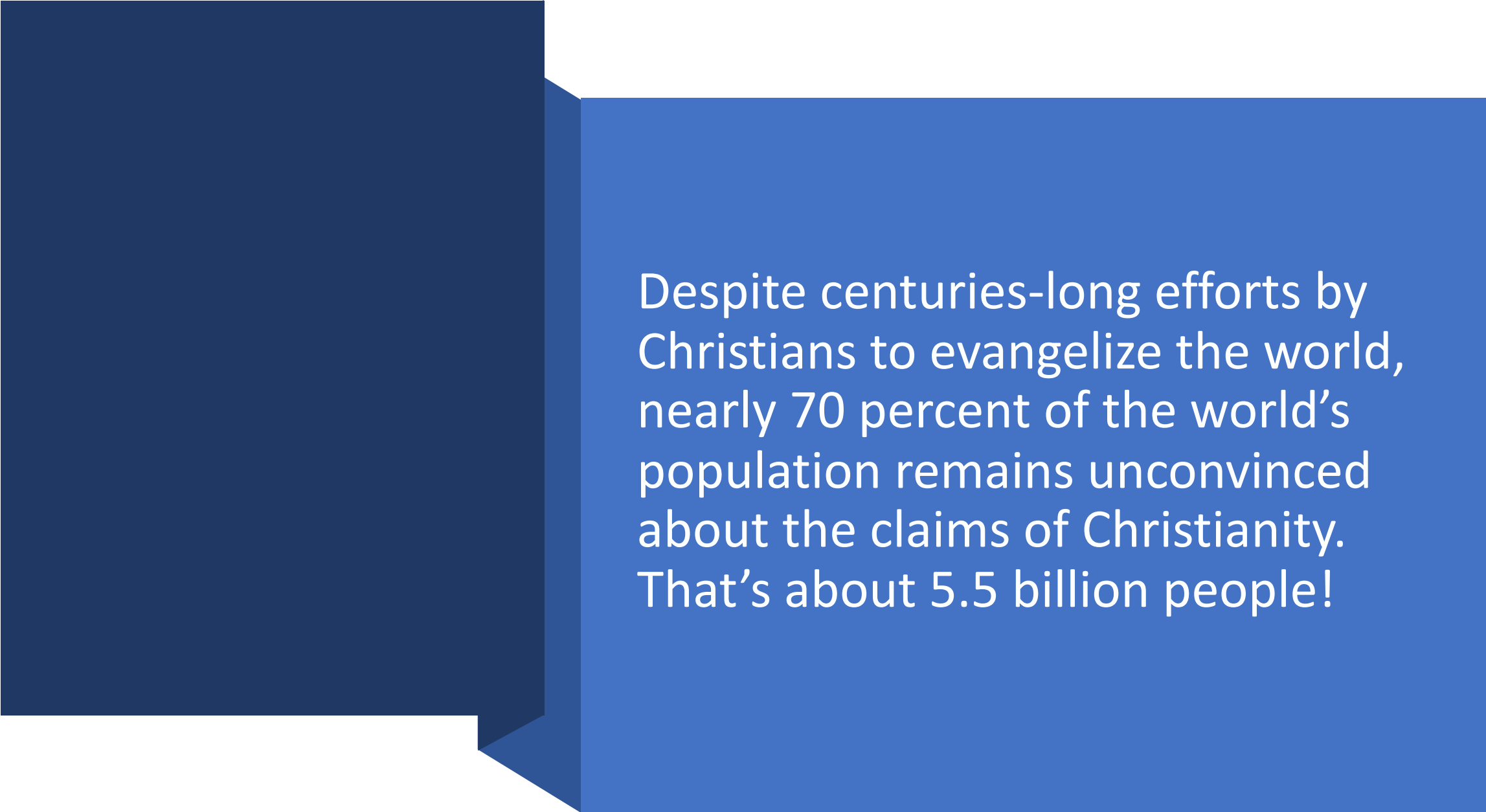
The reality of Christian missions

**“India is beginning to walk with
the Christ of the Indian Road.
What a walk it will be!”**



E. Stanley Jones, *Christ of the Indian Road* (Abingdon Press, **1925**)



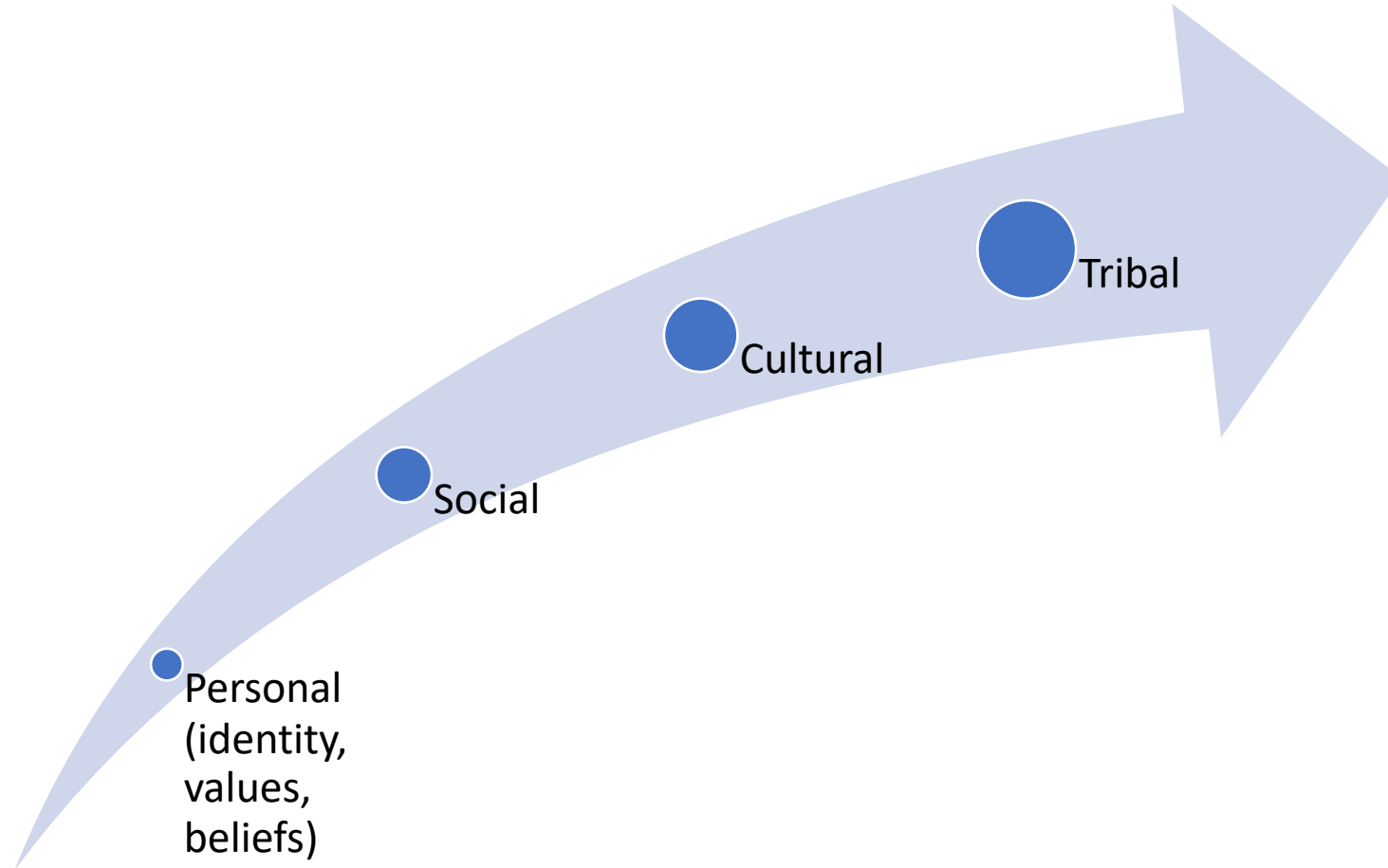


Despite centuries-long efforts by Christians to evangelize the world, nearly 70 percent of the world's population remains unconvinced about the claims of Christianity. That's about 5.5 billion people!

Conversion

- Chang of mind
- Change in beliefs
- Change in conduct/behavior
- “Accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior”
- “Relationship with Jesus”

Religious Conversion:





The point of
Christian mission . . .

**The world needs the
goodness of God
incarnated in the flesh
of the people who claim
to know this good God.**



Is there room
for all?

DO UNTO OTHERS
AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM
DO UNTO YOU

Human destiny: **Limited**

“Everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life”
(John 3:16)

“Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who **refuses to believe** will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)

“There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)

Human Destiny: Limited

A Separation, Matt. 25:31-46

- “sheep” and “goats”
- “right hand and at his left”
- “welcome” vs. “depart from Me”



Human destiny: Unlimited

“The Lord is good to **everyone**. He showers compassion on **all** his creation.”
--Psalm 145:9(NLT)


“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.” --Isaiah 19:19-25

Human destiny: **Unlimited**

The Word “brought light to ***everyone***” (John 1:4)

“Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for ***everyone***, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings . . .new life for ***everyone***” Romans 5:19

“There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and ***humanity*** – the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for ***everyone***.” (I Timothy 2:5,6)



**The merits of
what Jesus
achieved through
his life, death,
and resurrection
have universal
efficacy.**

God's love is universal and inclusive:

“And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully.”

Ephesians 3:18,19 NLT

The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell
It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell
The guilty pair, bowed down with care God gave His Son to win
His erring child He reconciled and pardoned from his sin



Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made
Were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry
Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky

O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure the saints' and angels' song



• **We are one
human family**

• **God is love**

• **Jesus**