

# Alpha

the unofficial guide

WORLD

A Special Handbook  
on the Alpha Course  
*plus the missing bits!*

Elizabeth McDonald  
and Dusty Peterson



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*Alpha – The Unofficial Guide: World*

First published in Great Britain in November 2002

by St Matthew Publishing Ltd

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ISBN: 1 901546 1 3 6

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Cover graphic: Janice Andrews Designs

Cover Design: Rachel Schroeder, The Ink Spot Instant Printing Pty

First Revision (typographical amendments) February 2003

Second Revision November 2003

(Revisions 1 and 2 also published by CWM in Australia)

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**With love to our precious  
brothers and sisters in the  
Lord who have readily  
contributed excellent advice,  
inspired material, lots of  
prayer – and endless patience.**

**“...the LORD thy God shall  
bless thee...”**  
*(Deuteronomy 16:15)*

**Most of all, though, we want to  
dedicate this book to our  
Heavenly Father who has  
faithfully supplied everything  
we have needed to produce it  
and has graciously directed  
our steps.**

**“Because Thou hast been my  
help, therefore in the shadow  
of Thy wings will I rejoice.”**  
*(Psalm 63:7)*

# I MPORTANT INTRODUCTION!

**“A masterpiece ... Essential reading”** (*MH, Missionary, Spain*)

**“I have been fascinated ... [and] learned a lot”** (*NW, London*)

**“Wonderful to read”** (*RB, England*)

St Matthew Publishing is delighted to be able to offer this crucial volume to the Church. The reader should find it one of the most helpful and vital books available today.

The authors have both invested a great deal of time and care into producing this volume, and their commitment has resulted in a profoundly useful work. For instance, the material has been structured and written to provide an exceptionally clear and logical flow. (As such, it is particularly effective when read from the *start*.)

St Matthew Publishing also commends the *Foreword* and *Preface* to the reader, as both sections provide information which should substantially enhance your enjoyment of this very fine work.

**“So comprehensive and so well annotated, the mind boggles at the amount of work you have put in”** (*CB, Pastor, England*)

**“I have thoroughly enjoyed your book”** (*GC, Australia*)

**Philip Foster**  
**St Matthew Publishing**  
**Cambridge, England**

# FOREWORD

Anyone put off by this book's title or cover text need not be alarmed. This book is not destructive but constructive; I would not have written a Foreword for it otherwise!

To those who feel that they already know everything they need to about Alpha, or who groan at the thought of 'yet another book' about the Course, I urge you to think again. *Alpha – the Unofficial Guide* is unlike anything else on the market. It comes from an exciting and different angle, and the vast majority of its information is simply unavailable from other guides.

This book is not just a 'quick read' as some are these days; it is a sensitive and enthralling look at Alpha, full of great tips and eye-opening quotes, while serving as a reference work for later use too. Its qualities go much deeper still because it gently, yet powerfully, enables people to recognize how their entire worldview fits together – and how it relates to Scripture. This makes *The Unofficial Guide* a superb resource for *every* member of the Body of Christ, including new or struggling Christians and those with a ministry to them. I believe that many will find it a tremendous blessing.

I am impressed by the clarity of this book. Luke tells us that he 'investigated everything carefully' (Luke 1:3), and Elizabeth has emulated him – an approach which she probably developed during her University studies in Church history. She also has the ability to present her findings in a highly readable way. She has saved us a lot



of time and effort by performing the hard graft herself; all we have to do is sit back and benefit from the results. Yet, because everything here is properly documented and corroborated (unlike the *unsupported* statements that some others have made), we do not have to ‘take her word for it’ but can easily verify matters for ourselves – and demonstrate them to our friends as well.

Elizabeth has put both thought and vitality into this work and she has gone out of her way to make sure that it ‘connects’ with as many people as possible. Although it unavoidably contains some data that will surprise and challenge, and while not everyone will agree with every word, anyone who is hasty enough to stop reading will miss out on much essential spiritual knowledge (Hosea 4:6). I invite you instead to discover this immensely important book – one which I thoroughly commend to all.

**Doug Harris**

Director, Reachout Trust

[Note from the authors: Reachout Trust is an international ministry that upholds biblical truth and builds bridges to those in the cults, occult and new age. For many years an affiliate member of the Evangelical Alliance, its website can be found at [reachouttrust.org](http://reachouttrust.org)]

# PREFACE

**What is Alpha? The Alpha Course is normally described as “a practical introduction to the Christian faith”. Originating in England, it usually comprises a series of fifteen talks plus some ministry times, and typically takes place over ten weeks – including a day or weekend retreat. Each talk is generally preceded by a meal and is followed by a ‘small group’ session where questions raised by the talks can be freely discussed. It has been used in almost every nation on earth.**

The Alpha Course is a favourite method by which we can introduce the unsaved to the Christian Church – and it is having a global impact. The unprecedented popularity of the Course has resulted in its authors receiving praise from almost every quarter. Of more importance though, Alpha has directly led to the growth in size of many Fellowships. These are phenomenal and incontrovertible facts. People today are dying (literally) to hear the truth and know what the Bible has to say. Well-written evangelistic material is a priceless gift.

This book is multi-purpose and should be a considerable asset to all believers, especially those concerned with Alpha in any way. (That includes Course helpers and participants.) Among its aims, the book has been designed to furnish readers with just about everything they need in order to gain, and bring others to, a significantly deeper knowledge of the truth. It explains and enlarges on the main teachings of Alpha, and it provides robust tips for everyone involved in running Courses. (For churches that have so far chosen *not* to use

Alpha, this book should help them to be better informed about the subject. Some folks have charged the Course with compromising over vital issues. We want to give the truth of the matter. Where any potential ambiguity is apparent within the Course materials, we have endeavoured to deal with it so that misinterpretations can be avoided.)

Regardless of the level of the reader's association with Alpha, from onlooker to veteran leader, all should find the material seriously informative and interesting. We are confident that anyone planning to oversee future courses will find that this book plays a critical role in getting God's very best. The commentary should also enable past attendees to fully grasp what they have been through. If the reader is thinking of attending their first Alpha Course, we encourage them to explore this volume beforehand.

We have sought to make the book's content as readable and accessible as possible (please forgive the UK spellings if they are unfamiliar though). For example, we have been able to quote many high-quality sources, and even the most advanced material normally starts from first principles. Another feature of the book reflects the fact that people both inside and outside the Church want to know and understand the Bible better. This volume has been constructed to be a real aid in every way and therefore includes a sensible quantity of Scripture reference in the text, remembering that God's written Word says we should receive

**"...knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."** (*Proverbs 8:10-11*)

Each of the chapters comprising the body of this book covers a different area of Alpha and is quite self-contained. Thus, if any readers find they are having problems with a given chapter, they can move on to the next. They will be able to do so without difficulty. Each chapter looks at topics of crucial importance, so the book should greatly bless readers even if they decide to skip a portion. (Note that it is ordered by subject rather than by Alpha talk. This has enabled us to create a vastly more useful work which can also cater for the var-

ious Alpha-related books and post-Alpha resources, as well as for local adaptations and other variants of the Course.)

Although this volume has been written to answer questions raised as it goes along, this has not *always* been appropriate. The reader is therefore urged to continue with subsequent sections even if a matter does not seem to be totally dealt with *in situ*. They should find, by the end, that outstanding queries have been handled and that the fabric of the book holds together very cohesively.

A number of people have worked on this volume, or have diligently reviewed it and agree with it. However, readers must be discerning *for themselves* and check what they read against Scripture. After all, we are commanded to test “**all** things” (1 Thess. 5:21). If any errors are identified, *please* write to us so that they can be corrected for a subsequent printing.

Finally, the reader should be advised that this manual is committed to the truth and, as such, may seem a little unsentimental in places. Alpha deals with life-and-death issues, so we feel it is important that believers do not allow anything to cloud their judgment. (This is one reason why we have decided not to accept any royalties from the project.)

Our earnest desire is to edify the Body of Christ, but please be prepared for thought-provoking material. This book should inspire, but we have also not hesitated to express concerns where necessary (although these are mainly relegated to footnotes so that they can be ignored if they are not of interest.) We are convinced that anyone who is genuinely eager to search out the truth and is open to learning more about the Lord will find this book very rewarding. Those who are rigidly set in their ways will inevitably have a more difficult time! The Lord’s advice to us is “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23). May God bless you.

*Dusty Peterson and Elizabeth McDonald*

# PART ONE

## “THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH”

### CHAPTER 1

## WHAT IS THE “TRUTH”?

**1:1 INTRODUCTION** A gentle start. Most of us like our books to have a gentle start and to ease us from our everyday lives into the subject at hand. A smooth ride rather than a nasty jolt. Hopefully these first three sentences have gone a little way to achieving that, because we now need to move straight to some of Nicky Gumbel’s<sup>1</sup> many powerful statements:

“The singer Sinead O’Connor said this ... ‘People out there ... are **screaming** for the **truth**’” [Talk 12, Edn. 2.2<sup>2</sup>].

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<sup>1</sup> Nicky Gumbel is on the staff of Holy Trinity Brompton, the birthplace of Alpha. Nicky, while not the author of the *original* Course, is the author and director of its modern manifestation.

<sup>2</sup> We have used the term ‘Edition 2.2’ to refer to the official set of Alpha video talks that were released in transcript form by Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) in the Summer of 2000. All Alpha talk quotations are from this set unless otherwise stated.

## Chapter 1 - What is the “Truth”?

“Stand firm with the belt of **truth** buckled round your waist”  
[Talk 11].

“Josephus wrote this: ‘Jesus ... was a doer of wonderful works –  
A teacher of such men as receive the **truth** with **pleasure**”  
[Talk 2].

Plainly we should start out by considering the topic of truth. It is obviously a fundamental issue. Nicky confirms “Truth matters **very much indeed**” [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1<sup>3</sup>], so Course attendees past and present need to know the astonishing things that the Bible has to say about truth. (Other contributions that Alpha makes to this key subject will naturally be cited too.)

It is surely pointless to ask, as Pontius Pilate did, “What **is** truth?” No answer could ever satisfy a person who posed that question. It is not surprising that Jesus gave Pilate no reply. In our heart of hearts we all know what truth is. It is much more sensible to ask “What **is the** truth?”

What did Jesus say the truth is? He revealed the answer in the prayer to His Father in John 17:17. He said “Sanctify them [*i.e.* *My disciples*] through Thy truth: **Thy Word is truth**”. (Incidentally, the Greek term translated “Word” here, as in every other quotation in this chapter, is “logos”.) Jesus Christ proclaimed that the Bible *is* the truth and He reinforced this point by quoting from it frequently and unquestioningly – even during the torture of the cross. The Bible is not merely ‘true’, but is apparently also the very essence of truth. Other scriptures confirm this...

The Psalmist devoted the longest chapter in the entire Bible to extolling God’s written Word. He declared: “O LORD; ... **all** Thy commandments are **truth**” (Psalm 119:151). Paul termed the Bible “the Word of **truth**” (2 Timothy 2:15) and the angel which visited Daniel called it “the **Scripture of truth**” (Daniel 10:21a). It is the standard by which the truth of anything else in the Christian life is supposed to be established.

The reason for the pre-eminence of the Bible is that it is God’s written revelation of His Word to mankind. Our Lord is not only the Author of the Bible, but is also the constant theme of it. That is why Jesus said: “**the scriptures** ... are they which **testify of Me**” (John 5:39). He also showed, in Luke 24:27, that He is repeatedly referred to in “**all** the scriptures”. Their glorious Subject, and their divine inspiration, explains why Paul calls them

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<sup>3</sup> We use the term ‘Edition 2.1’ to refer to the Alpha videos released by HTB as Edition 2.

“the **holy** scriptures”.<sup>4</sup> (Few things are called “holy” in the New Testament – when something is given this prefix we should take note.)

**1:2 PHARISAICAL?** In the past, people who were steadfastly committed to God’s written Word were called “evangelical”. Today they are often dismissed as “Pharisaical”. But the Pharisees were not *genuinely* committed to the scriptures. The Lord Jesus exposed their true loyalties when He said to them “**laying aside** the commandment of **God**, ye hold the tradition of **men**” (Mark 7:8). He upbraided them for “making the Word [Greek *logos*] of **God** of none effect through **your tradition**” (Mark 7:13). Again, “He said unto them, Full well ye **reject** the commandment of **God**, that ye may keep **your own** tradition” (Mark 7:9; also Matt. 15:1-9).

The Pharisees focused excessively on a minority of lesser matters and used these to justify ignoring the “weightier” remainder of the Bible (Matt. 23:23). Putting the whole Bible first, i.e. before any other notions we might have, is ironically the *opposite* of Pharisaism. In Talk 5, Nicky tells us that the Bible is our final authority:

“Jesus treated the Scriptures as being **inspired of God**. What the Scriptures said, as far as he was concerned, was what God said and it was Jesus’ **supreme** authority ... The reason we take the Bible as our supreme authority is, if Jesus is our Lord, our attitude to the Bible **should be what his was**” [Talk 5, Edn. 2.1].

We can begin to see why Satan hates the Bible so much, and why he uses every means at his disposal to keep people from knowing its contents. Ever since he said to Eve “**Yeah hath God said...?**” (Genesis 3:1) he has been trying to question, and pervert, and break God’s Word.

“The Bible has withstood ages of ferocious and incessant persecution. Century after century men have tried to burn it and to bury it and to extirpate [*root out and utterly destroy*] it ... The worst opposition of all has been during the last two hundred years, with rationalism and modernism seeking to undermine the authority, inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy scriptures”<sup>5</sup>

Thankfully, God has promised to preserve His Word, regardless of the enemy’s efforts:

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<sup>4</sup> See Romans 1:2 and 2 Timothy 3:15.

<sup>5</sup> Professor Dyson Hague, *The Wonder of the Book*, quoted in Rev. W. MacLean, *The Providential Preservation of the Greek Text of the New Testament*, (Westminster Standard Publication, No. 31, 4<sup>th</sup> edn., 1983), p43.

## Chapter 1 - What is the "Truth"?

"The words of the LORD are **pure** words ... Thou shalt **keep** them, O LORD, Thou shalt **preserve them** from this generation **for ever**" (Psalm 12:6-7). See also Isaiah 40:8.

"Being born again ... **by the Word of God**, which liveth and abideth **forever**" (1 Peter 1:23). (Again, the Greek term used here is "logos".)

The Bible not only directs us to God in a *spiritual* sense, it also contains many pieces of information that mankind did not know at the time they were written. These two facts point firmly to God as the author. The following examples, from a range of disciplines, are only a tiny proportion of these "wondrous things", as the Psalmist put it, in God's written Word.<sup>6</sup>

### Astronomy:

- ❖ In Abraham's day, men obviously did not have telescopes. Even in recent centuries Johannes Kepler could only count 1005 stars in the night sky. The total number of stars visible to the naked eye is *cert-ainly* no more than 5000. Yet back in Genesis 22:17 God likened the true number of stars to the number of grains of *sand*: "I will multiply thy seed as the **stars** of the heaven, and as the **sand** which is upon the sea shore". Only from the 20<sup>th</sup> century did we have the ability to see that these two quantities are indeed comparable.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ The Hebrew scriptures (often called the "Old Testament") also state "the host of heaven **cannot** be numbered" (Jer. 33:22). Several *thousand* years after these words were written, modern astronomers finally admitted that they can only *estimate* the true number of stars.<sup>8</sup> The total is unimaginably enormous.
- ❖ To the naked eye, many stars look identical to one another. But 1 Cor. 15:41 states: "One star differeth from another star in glory". Astronomers now indeed report that no two stars are exactly alike.<sup>9</sup>

### Biology:

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<sup>6</sup> Psalm 119:18. For plentiful further evidence that the Bible is the truth, see the Recommended Reading lists at the end of Parts 1 and 3 - which include several superb books for any readers who are wondering how the biblical account of creation is to be understood.

<sup>7</sup> Henry M. Morris, *Science and the Bible*, (Moody Press, 1986), p12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp11-12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p12.



- ❖ God commanded the Israelites, in Lev. 12:3, to circumcise their children on the *eighth* day after birth. It is a *very* modern discovery that the clotting chemical vitamin K is at an inadequate level until the 8<sup>th</sup> day after birth (and that a second vital chemical, prothrombin, skyrockets to 110% on – and only on – that very day).<sup>10</sup>
- ❖ Again in Leviticus we are told that blood is the source of life and healing (Lev. 17:11; see also v14). When that book of the Bible was penned, unbelieving doctors thought the *opposite*. Indeed, until the 19th century all manner of ailments were treated by ‘bleeding’ the patient to get rid of the ‘bad blood’. Thankfully, we have finally caught up with Scripture on this topic.
  
- ❖ Modern science knows that HDL cholesterol is a killer. It often leads to strokes, coronary heart attacks, and angina, among other grave diseases. Its three main causes throughout the millennia have been: eating animal fat (warned against in Lev. 3:17 & 7:22-24); becoming overweight (warned of, for instance, in Php. 3:19 & Rom. 16:18); and carnal emotions or stress (exposed in Psa. 91:3-7 & 46:1-3 etc).<sup>11</sup>

### **Meteorology:**

- ❖ In the ancient world, pagan science believed wind to be weightless. Yet according to Job 28:25, wind *has* weight – and so it proves.<sup>12</sup>
  
- ❖ It was also believed in earlier times that winds blow in straight lines. But Eccl. 1:6-7 insists that they blow in cyclones (as indeed they do). In fact this ancient passage gives a “comprehensive outline of the water cycle of the earth” many centuries before it was understood by science.<sup>13</sup>
  
- ❖ The other crucial phase of the hydrologic cycle (water vaporizing and precipitating) was clearly described, several *thousand* years before it was proved scientifically, in Job 36:27-29.<sup>14</sup>

Again, the above represents an extremely small proportion of the known examples, and only a fraction of the disciplines we could have men-

<sup>10</sup> S.I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*, (Lakeland, 1966), pp21-24.

<sup>11</sup> S.I. McMillen, *op. cit.*, pp85-89.

<sup>12</sup> See Bob Mitchell’s video *God’s Amazing Word* (Shofar Ministries, P.O. Box 5, St. Leonards on Sea, East Sussex, TN37 6WH, UK) for the first example here.

<sup>13</sup> *Science and the Bible*, p15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p15.

tioned. Every attempt to annihilate the Bible has failed – and many opponents who zealously tried to disprove it have been obliged to acknowledge the Bible as the truth, and have accepted its divine Author.<sup>15</sup>

**1:3 CHRIST'S WORD** Satan has concocted an array of subtle arguments as to why we need not study, nor submit ourselves to, God's written Word. But instead of listening to the enemy, let us take Nicky's advice here and emulate the attitude that *Christ* showed. Before we briefly look at the words of Jesus on this issue, we should bear in mind that He also said the following:

"If a man **love** Me, he will **keep** My **words**: and My Father will love him .... He that **loveth Me not** keepeth **not** My sayings" (John 14:23-24).

"**Whosoever** shall be ashamed of Me **and** of My **words**, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed" (Luke 9:26). See also Matt. 7:24-27; and Deut. 18:18-19.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My **words** shall **not** pass away" (Mark 13:31). (Some readers may be surprised to learn that "logos" is the Greek term in *each* of these three quotes too, including the reference to "sayings" in the first one.)

What, then, was the Lord's attitude?

### **Faith**

- Jesus Christ had absolute faith in the Bible. He said "the scriptures **must** be fulfilled" (Mark 14:49).
- He expected His followers to have such faith in the Bible too: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe **all** that the [*Old Testament*] prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25).

### **Loyalty**

- Jesus had unswerving loyalty to the written Word of God: "All things must be fulfilled, **which** were **written** in the law of Moses, **and** in the [*books of the*] **prophets**, **and** in the **psalms**, concerning Me" (Luke 24:44), "It is **written**, and **thus it behoved** [*i.e. was incumbent upon*] **Christ...**" (Luke 24:46).

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Frank Morison's, *Who Moved the Stone?* (as listed in our Recommended Reading section).

- He also expected *us* to have unswerving loyalty to it: “Blessed are they that hear the Word [*“logos” again*] of God **and keep it**” (Luke 11:28).

### Knowledge

- Jesus Christ knew, and used, the Word of God: “As the Scripture hath said...” (John 7:38b), “It is also written...” (John 8:17), “For David himself saith in the book of Psalms...” (Luke 20:44; Mark 12:36), “Isaiah prophesied of you...” (Mark 7:6) etc. The phrase “It is **written**” is present scores of times in the Bible. Other than Paul, the Lord Jesus is recorded as saying it more than anyone else.
- Jesus also expected the People of God to know and use the Word of God: “Did ye never **read** in the scriptures...?” (Matt. 21:42, plus v16; 12:3,5; 19:4; and 22:31), “And have ye **not read** this Scripture?” (Mark 12:10a, plus v26), “Have ye **never** read what David did...?” (Mark 2:25), “Is it not written...?” (Mark 11:17). See also Luke 6:3.

### Obedience

- Jesus faithfully obeyed the Bible: “This that is **written** must yet be accomplished **in Me**” (Luke 22:37a), “...**that** the **scripture** may be fulfilled...” (John 13:18), “After this, Jesus knowing that **all** things were now accomplished, that the **scripture** might be **fulfilled**, saith, I thirst” (John 19:28).
- He also expected *us* faithfully to obey it: “**If** ye **continue** in **My Word** [*logos, as ever*], **then** are ye My disciples indeed” (John 8:31). (Jesus Christ is part of the ‘Godhead’, therefore the Bible *is* His Word.)

### Utilization

- The Lord overcame Satan’s temptations and deceptions by knowing the scriptures: “When the tempter came to him ... [*Jesus*] answered and said, It is **written**...”, “Then the devil taketh him up ... Jesus said unto him, It is **written again**...”, “Again, the devil taketh him up ... Then saith Jesus unto him, ... it is **written**...” (Matt. 4:3-11).
- He also taught *us* to avoid error by knowing the scriptures: “Ye do **err, not knowing** the **scriptures**...” (Matt. 22:29), “Ye know not the **scriptures**, ... ye **therefore** do **greatly err**” (Mark 12:24-27).

Nicky mentions some of this in Talk 11 when he relates that “Paul says ... take ‘the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God’. That’s

getting this [*Nicky holds up his Bible*] into the system, learning it. Jesus, every time he was tempted, he replied with a verse from the **Bible**".

Nicky is absolutely right. Jesus said "**Search the scriptures**" (John 5:39, KJV) and, as Nicky quotes in Talk 5, "...Scripture **cannot** be broken" (John 10:35). The Lord also taught that we must *believe in* what the scriptures say. If, for example, someone does not believe those scriptures written before Christ came, then they are unlikely to be truly committed to the things that Christ Himself said either (John 5:46-47).

**1:4**      "**THOU HAST MAGNIFIED THY WORD**"      Just as the Bible is God's revelation of His Word to man in *written* form, so Christ is God's revelation of His Word to man in *human* form. Hence the Lord Jesus is called "the Word made flesh" and is also, just like the *written* Word, called "the truth" (John 5:33 and 14:6a).

Christ Jesus was devoted to the Bible, and the Bible is devoted to Christ Jesus. They are inseparably linked. An attack on the written Word is an attack on its great Subject, Jesus. When someone insists (e.g. by teaching that "God is greater than His Word") that we are not to see the Bible as our supreme authority, they are implying that God contradicts His own Word. God, of course, foresaw such misguided ideas. He dealt with them when He arranged for the Psalmist to write that God esteems the Word even above His *own wonderful Name*:

"**Praise Thy Name** for Thy lovingkindness **and** for **Thy truth**:  
for **Thou** hast **magnified** Thy **Word** **above** all Thy Name"  
(Psalm 138:2). See also Psalm 19:7-11.

Christians should beware of anyone who would deter them, in whatever way, from being familiar with their Bible. We don't mean to offend, but any person who doubts that we need to study the scriptures ought perhaps to ask themselves the following question: Whose purposes are best served by Christians not knowing their own Bible? God's or Satan's? Nicky is clear:

"The Bible ... is uniquely precious. The psalmist describes the Scriptures as 'more precious than gold' ... [*it is*] the 'most valuable thing that this world affords'" [Talk 5].

**1:5 HOW IMPORTANT IS TRUTH?** Truth is of absolutely *paramount* import. God proclaims that, on Judgment Day, men “will be **damned** who believed not **the truth**” (2 Thess. 2:12), and further asserts that any who “do not **obey the truth**” are destined for His “indignation and **wrath**” (Rom. 2:8).

God takes it further; promising that anyone not *loving* the truth is in *serious* trouble. Such people will “**perish**; because they received not **the love of the truth**” (2 Thess. 2:10). Even beyond this, a generation of God’s People was condemned because it failed to be “**valiant** for the truth” (Jer. 9:3). The rest of Scripture reflects these statements by referring to words like “true” or “truth” many hundreds of times. It is clear that God is continually desirous to emphasize the primary importance of the Scripture of truth.

The truth is *eternal*: “the truth of the LORD **endureth for ever**” (Psa. 117:2; see also Psa. 100:5); and must *never* be compromised (see 2 Cor. 4:1-2 and Prov. 23:23); for we shall be *judged* by it (Psa. 96:13, John 12:48). Little wonder God wants the truth to be at our very core: “Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts” (Psa. 51:6; see also 3 John 1:3-4).

Let us see some of the related blessings that accrue from being committed to the truth...

- The truth leads us closer to God: “O send out Thy light and Thy **truth**: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles” (Psa. 43:3; see also John 15:26),
- The truth promotes holiness, and therefore freedom in God (John 8:32; John 17:17; see also v19),
- And the truth preserves us: “O LORD: let ... Thy truth **continually preserve me**” (Psa. 40:11; see also Eph. 6:14).

The following passage is overflowing with sweet promises for those who are utterly committed to the Word of truth:

“My son, ... let thine heart **keep** My **commandments**: For length of days, and **long life, and peace**, shall they add to thee. Let **not** mercy and **truth** forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine **heart**: **So** shalt thou find favour and **good understanding in the sight of God and man**” (Prov. 3:1-4).

The Bible contains all the information we need to find God, to be saved by God, to know God, to walk with God. It contains all the principles

## Chapter 1 - What is the "Truth"?

we need for our faith and for the practice of that faith. (This belief is the true meaning of the word 'evangelical', although some who now adopt the term have sadly watered it down.)

The Bible spells out God's view of the truth. Nicky rightly teaches that "if Christianity is true, it is true for everyone, not just for me",<sup>16</sup> but some evangelists protest that not *all* the rest of the Course currently stays faithful to that statement. We shall now examine this astonishing suggestion with a view to helping people respond aright to Alpha's detractors. (The following material should also assist readers in coping with queries regarding other religions.)

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<sup>16</sup> Talk 1, Edn. 2.1.

## CHAPTER 2

# WHAT ABOUT OTHER FAITHS?

**2:1 OTHER GODS?** There are many religions in the world, with billions of followers between them. It is vital that Christians have a right understanding of what God thinks of these other faiths, and in what way He calls us to relate to them and their adherents. As Nicky says, we believers “are **bound** to be asked ... ‘what about other religions?’”<sup>17</sup> Let us consider this topic to ensure there are no discrepancies needing to be borne in mind.

Perhaps the first thing to establish is whether other “gods” exist or whether all the world’s religions actually refer to one and the same God.

“Thou shalt worship no **other god**: for the **LORD**, Whose Name is Jealous, is a **jealous God**” (Exod. 34:14).

“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve **Him**, ... Ye shall **not** go after **other gods**, of the **gods** of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee” (Deut. 6:13-15). See also Deut. 12:1-3,29-32.

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<sup>17</sup> Talk 12, Edn. 2.1.

“If ye forsake the **LORD**, and serve **strange** [*i.e. other*] **gods**, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good” (Josh. 24:20).

So we have established that there *are* other beings that can be “gone after”, “served” and “worshipped”. According to Scripture, people also bow down to them, sacrifice to them, burn incense to them and so on, so they *do* exist. The next thing to check is whether these beings are true deities. If not, then obviously we need to determine what they are, because that will surely influence how we view them and their worshippers.

“Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, ... **I Am** the first, and I Am the last; and beside Me there is **no** God” (Isa. 44:6). See also v8 and Isa. 43:10.

“**I Am** the LORD, ... there is **no** God beside **Me**” (Isa. 45:5a).

“[W]e know that an **idol** is **nothing** in the world, and that there is **none other God but one**. For though there be [*beings*] that are **called** gods, whether in Heaven or in earth, ... there is but **one** God” (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

We can see that, although other beings exist which men *call* gods, the God of the Bible is “...the only **true** God...” (John 17:3). His Name is Jehovah, or the great “**I AM**” (Exod. 3:14; Psa. 83:18, both KJV).

**2:2 WHO CAN SAVE?** If there is only one God, then logically these other “gods” must be something else. Before we determine what they are, let us first work out whether they are able to save us from our sins.

“**I Am** the LORD thy God ... and thou shalt know no god but Me: for **there is no Saviour beside Me**” (Hos. 13:4). See also Isa. 43:11.

“Jesus saith unto him, **I Am the way**, ... **no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me**” (John 14:6).

“...**Jesus Christ of Nazareth**,... there is **none other** name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be **saved**” (Acts 4:10-12).

The scriptures we’ve studied are unmistakable. They show that entities exist which people serve in preference to the one (and only) God; and that these other entities cannot save them from Hell.



**2:3 WHAT DOES ALPHA TELL US?** As past attendees will know, the Alpha talks themselves are relatively quiet on the subject of other faiths. However, in his book *Searching Issues*,<sup>18</sup> Nicky devotes an entire chapter to non-Christian religions. There he emphatically states that Jesus is the *only* way to God, usefully quoting such scriptures as Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5; and Heb. 2:3.

“Jesus is the only name that can save ... **None** of the other great<sup>19</sup> religions even **claims** to have a Saviour ... Jesus is the one who brings salvation ... Jesus, the unique Son of God, the unique Saviour, the one uniquely raised from the dead, is the only way to God”<sup>20</sup>

**2:4 WHO OR WHAT ARE THESE “OTHER GODS”?** People worship a variety of things. Because God’s creation is so awesome, many people wrongly serve aspects of *it* rather than serving its Creator (Rom. 1:25).<sup>21</sup> But regardless of where the worship is directed, worship is a *spiritual* act and, according to the verses we have seen so far, whenever men worship *anything* other than the true “Lord God of Israel”, they are indeed opening themselves up to spiritual danger. What, then, is the truth behind the ‘gods’ that other religions serve?

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<sup>18</sup> *Searching Issues* is a book looking at the “seven issues most often raised by participants on the Alpha course”. HTB strongly recommends churches running Alpha to purchase copies. Leaders and helpers of the “small group” discussion times are encouraged to have read it.

<sup>19</sup> Nicky must mean the “most popular” or “most widespread” religions. The word “great” obviously carries another connotation and may not have been the best choice. (It is a little like Sandy Millar selecting the word “tremendous” when he says: “today ... there’s a tremendous interest in the occult” [Intro. to Talk 1]. This difficulty reappears when Sandy writes: “interest in the occult ... is as **great** today as ever” [Foreword to **Nicky Gumbel, Telling Others, (Kingsway, 2001), p21**]. *Telling Others* is Nicky’s book on evangelism.)

<sup>20</sup> **Nicky Gumbel, Searching Issues, (Kingsway, 2002)**, pp26-28. These are valuable comments. However, in view of the fact that other major religions – e.g. Hinduism and Islam – teach a fundamentally *different* “Jesus” from the Jesus of the Bible, it might be even better for local Course leaders to refer to “the **Lord Jesus Christ**”, or to “Jesus **Christ of Nazareth**” to limit possible confusion.

<sup>21</sup> John Ruskin, for instance, was an “ardent **nature** worshipper” [Cathy Burns, *Billy Graham and His Friends, (Sharing, 2001), p147*], hence we were quite surprised to find that Nicky praises Ruskin’s spiritual insight [*Questions of Life, p56*].

## Chapter 2 – What About Other Faiths?

“Turn ye **not** unto **idols**, nor make to yourselves molten **gods**: **I** Am the LORD your God” (Lev. 19:4).

“And the houses ... shall be **defiled** ... [*because*] they have ... poured out drink offerings unto **other gods**” (Jer. 19:13).

“...**all** the gods of the nations are **idols**” (Psa. 96:5).

We can see that those people who worship other ‘gods’ are committing *idolatry* and that this is very wrong. But what lies *behind* these idols? What is it that seduces men to be tempted to worship other ‘gods’?

“[T]hey served their **idols**: Yea, they sacrificed ... unto **devils**” (Psa. 106:35-37).

“[Regarding] sacrifice to **idols** ... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to **devils**, and **not** to God” (1 Cor. 10:20-21).

Ultimately, as these verses testify, those who worship any other ‘gods’ are worshipping devils.

*For more proof that other gods are just idols and represent devils, see Deut. 32:17; Lev. 17:7; and Psa. 97:7. Nicky says “we will be challenged as Christians by ... adherents to other religions, for example, their **commitment**, their **devotion** or their **dedication** to what they believe”.<sup>22</sup> The reason they are often so devoted (to a lie) is because false spirits are behind these religions – encouraging men to worship anything other than the true God. It pleases the fallen nature to serve false gods, whereas devotion to the true God requires us to fight our fallen nature.*

*By serving false gods, men end up receiving such spirits, which would explain why so many apostates<sup>23</sup> needed to have devils cast out of them in Christ’s day – and why Christ warned us that the world will hate His true followers (John 15:19). This, in turn, explains the vicious treatment that the early Church received at the hands of pagan Rome – as well as the inhuman acts committed by heathens (and by apostate ‘Christians’) in*

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<sup>22</sup> *Searching Issues*, p30.

<sup>23</sup> The word ‘apostate’ means different things to different people. By ‘apostate’ we mean someone who has been deceived into following false ways and a false god, rather than someone who has abandoned all faith. Also, we do not mean to imply that such a person is necessarily beyond help.

*history – and why Nicky had to report that “More Christians have **died** for their **faith** in this [20th] century than in any other”.*<sup>24</sup>

But what of Jesus Christ? He accepted men’s worship, yet neither He nor God the Father made any complaint about this in Scripture. There can only be one explanation. Nicky makes the powerful statement: “we say that Jesus is ... **fully God**” [Talk 5] and he approvingly quotes C.S. Lewis concluding “I have to accept the view that he [*Jesus*] was and is **God**” [Talk 2]. Nicky elsewhere asserts, “The Athanasian Creed ... [*says*] the Son is **God**”.<sup>25</sup>

A key feature of other religions is the idea that Jesus Christ is not truly God. (Some will call Him ‘divine’ or will pay lip-service to His Deity, but they all damage it in one way or another.) By teaching this, these religions undermine His atonement at a stroke, for if He was not God then He was born of Adam and was tainted by Adam’s sin. (In which case He was not a *spotless* sacrifice, as demanded by God’s law – see Num. 28:3,9 and 1 Pet. 1:19 – so His crucifixion cannot have paid the required price for us. We will look at the gospel in more detail in Part 2.)

An added ramification of other religions weakening, or denying, the Deity of Christ is to deny God’s Word, for the scriptures say of Jesus: “the Word [*i.e. Jesus*] was **God**” (John 1:1), and “**God** was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16, KJV), and that in Christ Jesus “dwelleth **all** the **fulness** of the **Godhead** bodily” (Col. 2:9, KJV). See also John 20:28; Heb. 1:8; Php. 2:6; Isa. 44:6 etc in the KJV.<sup>26</sup>

He appeared to men before His Incarnation (e.g. in Dan. 3:25) and His appearance in Genesis 18 proves that He is Jehovah.<sup>27</sup> We know that religions denying the Deity of Jesus Christ are fatally deceptive, for He said that anyone who did not believe He was Jehovah (the “I Am”) would die in their sins (John 8:24, c.f. v58).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Questions of Life*, p228.

<sup>25</sup> *Searching Issues*, p100.

<sup>26</sup> All Bible references supplied in this book are based on the King James Version. We cannot guarantee that any reference will apply if taken from another translation.

<sup>27</sup> See the whole chapter for the context. Two Jehovahs (usually translated ‘LORD’ in capitals) are referred to *simultaneously* (e.g. in vv13-14 and 17-22), showing that Jesus is God the Son.

<sup>28</sup> Isaac Newton denied the Deity of Christ, yet Nicky unfortunately calls him a “**believer**” [Talk 1]. Newton preferred the heresy of alchemy (mystical philosophy integrating astrology, numerology and chemistry) to biblical

**2:5 WHERE DO OTHER RELIGIONS COME FROM?** The previous scriptures give a big clue to this question. As part of his efforts to “become like God”, Satan created a deceptive, counterfeit religion. This religion had a passing resemblance to the true faith, but was poisonous at its heart. It *appeared* to satisfy man’s need for spiritual food and for ease of conscience, but actually led to self-worship and thus gave Satan more control over its followers.

This false religion blossomed in Babel where man sought to get to Heaven his own way, i.e. by his own efforts. Nimrod was the ruler of Babel (also called Babylon and Chaldea – see Gen. 10:9-10 and 11:4-9 plus Isa. 21:9; Dan. 3:12 and Jer. 50:2). The Babylonian religion has created many children and grandchildren, but each one ultimately stems from it. That *Lucifer* is the King of Babylon, and therefore the head of all false religions, is amply stated in Isaiah 14:

“[T]he **king** of **Babylon**, ... How hath the **oppressor** ceased! ... The **LORD** hath broken the staff of the **wicked**, ... **How** art thou **fallen** from Heaven, O **Lucifer**, son of the morning! ... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into Heaven, **I** will exalt my throne above the stars of God: ... I will be **like** the most High” (Isa. 14:4-14, KJV<sup>29</sup>).

Apart from Christianity and biblical Judaism, the evidence is that the world’s religions are *all* derived – directly or indirectly – from Babylon (otherwise known as the “land of the Chaldees”). Solomon observed that “there is no new thing under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9, KJV) and when we start to investigate the world’s religions we find this to be so of them:

For example, most of us will be aware that the gods of Roman mythology were almost *identical* to those of the Greek religion preceding it, with largely just the names being changed. Greece derived its gods from Egypt – and Egypt from Babylon. Hinduism is essentially the ‘Babylonian

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Christianity. (He was also famously arrogant, and venomous towards his detractors. Not marks of a true believer.)

<sup>29</sup> Note that some modern Bible versions have been altered here to replace the *only* reference to “Lucifer” in Scripture with the phrase “morning star” – one of the names of the Lord Jesus (see Rev. 22:16). Yet not only is this a dishonest translation – the word “star” appears nowhere in the Hebrew – but it demonstrably flies in the face of the words we have highlighted in the surrounding verses.

Mysteries’ in different garb and, as Nicky says, “[M]any of the New Age teachings are derived from ... Hindu and Buddhist doctrines”.<sup>30</sup> So it is with the other world faiths...

The Wodan of Mexico is the Odin of Scandanavia who is the Adon of Babylon; Vishnu is the Sanscrit form of the *Chaldee* (i.e. Babylonian) name “Ish-nuh”; Persia was only one of many nations to worship the Chal-dean ‘goddess’. Freemasonry, druids, muftis: all are easily traceable back to Babylon. Krishna, Zen, Zoroaster, Indra, Kali etc etc: they all originated in Babylon. (We only have space here for examples, but scholarly, unanswerable evidence is available in Alexander Hislop’s book *The Two Babylons*.)

Note that each of these religions claims to be the truth and that their adherents often point, for proof of this, to the miracles they witness. But Scripture, in addition to talking about the “false **ways**” of other religions, also mentions the false *miracles* that their master, Lucifer, is able to produce. These are termed “lying signs and wonders” and Pharaoh’s magicians were a vivid example of pagans who could perform miraculous feats similar to some of those done by God (see Exod. 7:11).

According to Scripture, Satan can easily cause “false visions” and “false dreams”. He and his minions can appear to people as angels or other ‘beneficent’ apparitions, or communicate through whatever other medium they like. They can even engineer ‘coincidences’ that make us think the Lord is directing us. Furthermore, if Satan can cause sickness and can curse people with demons then he certainly has the power to relieve these things – which is why many false religions can claim healings, deliverances, restored relationships and so on.<sup>31</sup> (Note: The very fact that idolatrous religions experience supernatural events is evidence that they are satanic rather than merely an invention of man.) We will come to Nicky’s view on this shortly.

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<sup>30</sup> *Searching Issues*, p55.

<sup>31</sup> It is surely somewhat regrettable to teach “there is only **one** source for **all** healing” [*Searching Issues*, p80], since Alpha guests may assume that other religions which see ‘healings’ are therefore in touch with the true God. Witchdoctors regularly produce healings, otherwise no-one would go to them. Unfortunately, Nicky implies several further times (in *Questions of Life*) that *any* miracle is evidence of the true God working. For example, he writes that “miracles ... **obviously** demonstrate the unusual acts of **God**” [p138], and he suggests that any prophecy which comes to pass is from God [pp34-35]. For similar concerns in that book, see pages 196, 199 and 202 (as well as p33 which refers to special miracles that Jewish tradition said would be unique to the true Messiah).

**2:6 SOME MAJOR RELIGIONS** Just for the record, let us embark on a safe, whistle-stop tour of a few of the world’s major religions:

**Hinduism** erroneously teaches that everyone is part of God. The gods and goddesses worshipped here are supposedly manifestations of God (but see Gen. 3:5). As with many other false faiths, Hinduism preaches a Jesus but it is ‘another’ Jesus (2 Cor. 11:4) than the scriptural one – because Hinduism believes Jesus was *not* God, but only a teacher and guru. According to Hinduism, His death did *not* atone for sins and He did not rise from the dead.

Hinduism also has the dangerous teaching of reincarnation (c.f. Heb. 9:27).<sup>32</sup> Several of its practices are described and condemned in Deut. 18:9-14 and Rom. 1:23&25. This faith is connected with Transcendental Meditation<sup>33</sup> and, like all false faiths, is just a variation on Babylonianism.<sup>34</sup>

**Buddhism** is mostly atheistic. Many Buddhists do not believe in a God of any kind – but God declares “The **fool** hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa. 14:1). Buddhists do not believe that people have a soul or spirit. They do not believe in Heaven or Hell. Nevertheless, Buddhism possesses many features of the false Babylonian ‘Church’.<sup>35</sup> To Buddhists, Jesus was

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<sup>32</sup> Nicky mentions reincarnation - although sadly without comment - in *Searching Issues*, p55, and in Talk 2. In Talk 2 he says “Some people claim to be ... **Elvis Presley** reincarnated but they’re wrong”. We think it would have been good for Nicky to explain that these people are wrong because there is *no* reincarnation rather than wrong because they can’t ALL be Elvis.

<sup>33</sup> Hindu (and Sufi Muslim) fakirs are able to use the enemy’s power to achieve superhuman feats such as lying on a bed of nails without being hurt. Strangely, as part of the entertainments at the Covent Garden launch of the 1999 UK September Alpha Initiative, HTB hired “Mark Stafford, who juggled with knives and lay on a **bed of nails**” [*Alpha News*, #20, p3].

<sup>34</sup> Hinduism can produce false miracles including healings. In *Questions of Life*, p197, Nicky describes the healing of a man “brought up as a **Hindu**” as being from God, but Nicky never actually mentions any repentance from Hindu beliefs on the part of the man. Some readers may erroneously infer that God respects Hinduism.

<sup>35</sup> See Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* (Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 2<sup>nd</sup> USA edn., 1959), pp18, 57, 178-9, 188, 193, 199-201 and 222.

merely an enlightened man.<sup>36</sup> The name Buddha has precisely the same meaning as Lucifer.<sup>37</sup>

Buddhism has various offshoot religions including ‘Nichiren Shoshu’ which, like Babylon, teaches that prosperity and healing can come through repeating a phrase or “mantra” (a practice banned in Scripture, see Matt. 6:7), and that fulfilling worldly desires brings enlightenment.

**Islam** Moslems use parts of the Bible but they believe it to have become corrupted (we have seen Christ’s view about this belief however). Moslems try to persuade Christians that Islam worships the God of the Bible, but a character comparison rapidly shows that theirs is *not* the same God. Islam’s God is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but (as evidenced by the preponderance of crescent moon designs within Islamic art) is ‘Allah’, the moon god worshipped in Babylon (see Deut. 4:19; Job 31:26-28; and Rom. 1:25).

As usual, Islam reveres a ‘Jesus’, but it insists he was only a prophet and was definitely not God the Son. (Islam teaches that God has no need of a Son and that anyone believing otherwise is *cursed*<sup>38</sup> – while ignoring the fact that *man* has need of God’s Son.) Their Jesus was not crucified (according to some Moslems it was actually Judas on the cross). Their Jesus ascended to Heaven *without* dying and will return in the future to live *and die* (but see Heb. 7:16).<sup>39</sup>

Many faiths teach a personal god, a triune god, and even a god of “love” but, theirs is an imitation trinity exposed in Revelation 20:10. (Note that the names of *Babylon’s* false trinity were Nimrod, Semiramis and Tam-

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<sup>36</sup> As other commentators have noted, Hindus and Buddhists are happy to use the word “Christ” because they mean something different from the biblical Christ. It may therefore confuse Alpha participants when they are told, without any clarifying comments, that “The universal church consists of **all** those worldwide and down the ages who profess or have professed the name of **Christ**” [*Questions of Life*, p205].

<sup>37</sup> Oddly, Nicky favourably quotes the following: “The Pali Canon of Buddhism **records** the **great** entrance of ... the Buddha into Nirvana” [*Searching Issues*, p28]. In truth, the ‘Pali Canon’ *invents* the entrance.

<sup>38</sup> Surat At-tauba, 9 Ayat 30 of the *Koran* – as other ministries have noted.

<sup>39</sup> Note from Dusty: The host of an official Alpha Course that I attended in 2000 was convinced that Islam revered the same Jesus as Christians do – and told me so. But Islam’s Jesus is *very* different, and cannot possibly be the same person. (The host of that Course had run Alpha several times previously.)

muz; precisely mirrored, for example, in Hinduism’s Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Note also that, just as the members of the real Trinity have various names and features, so all of Hinduism’s hundreds of gods are simply different aspects of the three that make up their trinity. The true identity of the members of the trinity worshipped in the world’s religions is also revealed in Rev. 16:13-14.) As we have shown, these gods are NOT the God of the Bible, but false ones.<sup>40</sup>

Many faiths teach peace, yet they often permit violence towards those who do not share their beliefs. For instance, provided it is for the furtherance of Islam, mistreatment of non-Muslims (including murder) is acceptable. Indeed, Islamic shariah law *demand*s that Muslim men who convert to Christianity be killed. Many faiths promote righteous living, good conduct, grace, and so on, but this must not fool us. We have seen from Scripture that these faiths are clever forgeries to trick mankind.

Outwardly, they often contain some Judeo-Christian features – including a moral code – in order to be even more deceptive. (Satan does not mind us being moral; he *does* mind us submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. Only the latter will get us into Heaven.) We must not be seduced by high morals within other religions. These religions are hateful to God and extremely dangerous to man.

It would be wrong to attach any credibility to these unbiblical religions or to sanction them in any way. Indeed, anyone who denies the true God and denies that Jesus is the Messiah is, according to 1 John 2:22-23, a liar and “anti-Christ”. Verse 26 reveals that such people are (consciously or otherwise) attempting to delude Christians and cause them to “fall away” from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:3; Heb. 6:4-6).

**2:7 INCLUSIVISM?** Alpha’s home church, Holy Trinity Brompton (‘HTB’) has promoted a man called Clark Pinnock. Bearing in mind the above material, and how God must feel about these ‘faiths’ which are leading so many men and women, for whom His Son died, straight to Hell, let us consider the following quotes:

<sup>40</sup> It is a pity that the unique names for God – e.g. “Adonai”, “Jehovah/Yahweh” or “the God of Israel” occur *extremely* rarely in the Alpha resources. For example, out of the sixteen songs that HTB picked for its *Alpha Worship Songbook* (HTB Publications, 1997), not one includes any of these names. (The result is that most of the songs – indeed *all* of those in the latter half of the list – are *generic* and would be perfectly acceptable to a wide variety of other faiths.)



“Pinnock is a ... theology professor at McMaster Divinity College in Ontario. ‘Clark Pinnock is to be saluted [*says a supporter*] for having done much to lead the evangelical **wing**<sup>41</sup> of Christianity **away from** the old **exclusivism**, which believes that **only Christians are saved...**’

“Pinnock writes, ‘As an **inclusivist** [*i.e. someone who does not believe that Christianity is the only way to be saved*], ... ‘I **welcome** the Saiva Siddhanta literature of **Hinduism**, which celebrates a personal God of love, and the emphasis on grace that I see in the Japanese **Shin-Shu Amida sect**. I also **respect** the **Buddha ... and Mohammed...**’<sup>42</sup>

But does *God* show “welcome” and “respect” to false religions? The scriptures we have examined state irrefutably that the Lord *detests* false religions. From the above, Clark Pinnock is in danger of misleading the true Church and ultimately benefiting the false one. God’s Word plainly says:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; ... **Idolatry**, witchcraft, **heresies**, ... and such like: ... **they which do such** things shall **not** inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19); “The nations ... pray unto a god that **cannot save**” (Isa. 45:20).

*(Some readers will think us ‘negative’ for pointing out such concerns. We briefly discussed this view in the Preface, but a small analogy that a friend once gave us may help here. Whenever soldiers have to navigate a minefield, they need colleagues to help warn them of danger areas. From one perspective it may seem ‘negative’ to hear specific advice about prob-lems, but wise troops in the minefield appreciate it as a vital help. It is with this motivation that we note areas of potential concern.)*

**2:8 NICKY’S VIEW** On the matter of truth and error, there is one paragraph in *Searching Issues* that currently appears to demur slightly:

“The **fact** that Jesus is the **only** way to God does **not** mean that we simply write off all **other** religions as misguided or demonic [*But we’ve already seen from Scripture that they are demonic*]. Jesus said, ‘I am the Truth.’ In him, **ultimate** truth is to be found

<sup>41</sup> As we saw in chapter 1, according to the Bible there are no ‘wings’ or types of true Christianity other than the Bible-believing variety.

<sup>42</sup> *Christian News*, 15:Apr:1996, quoted in CROSS+WORD, banner.org.uk/ news/Allthenews.html, *News Update April/May 1999*. Another inclusivist is Lesslie Newbigin [Burns, *op. cit.*, p236] – whom Nicky unfortunately quotes rather often in Alpha resources (e.g. in Talks 4 and 14).

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 ... [O]nly in Jesus Christ do we find **infallible** truth ... By putting other religions alongside God's revelation in Jesus Christ, we see that they contain both **truth** and error".<sup>43</sup>

The difficulty is this. To say that other religions contain some truth is to ascribe *value* to them. A forged banknote may contain a lot of 'truth', but this 'truth' is only added to deceive, and the note has no *legitimate* value. Nicky is perhaps forgetting the source of these other religions. Babylon's errors were deliberate. (Babylon had no excuse, because Noah, who knew and preached the true gospel, was still alive when Babylon emerged.) Scripture tells us that truth and deliberate error come from *different* spiritual sources:

"...Hereby know we the spirit of **truth**, and the spirit of **error**"  
(1 John 4:6); "**No** lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21b).

While Satan is capable of – and does – add 'truth' to error to serve his diabolical purposes, the Lord Jesus condemned the *entire mixture*. An obvious example is the temptation in the wilderness where Satan accurately quoted Scripture and made other 'true' statements (see Matt. 4:1-11). Christ did not say "You have some good points there". He saw through the deceit and rejected it *all*. (Compare also God's words to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17 with Satan's 'adaptation' in Genesis 3:1-5.<sup>44</sup>)

**2:9 DOES SATAN HAVE SOME TRUTH?** Just because Satan knows Scripture and quotes it, does that really mean he has some truth? Not according to Christ: "The devil ... abode not in the truth, because there is **no** truth in him" (John 8:31&44).

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<sup>43</sup> *Searching Issues*, pp28-31. Nicky reiterated this when he stated: "Jesus said 'I am **the Way**' ... but it doesn't mean to say you write off other religions" [Final part of *Alpha: Will it Change Their Lives?*, a UK TV series on ITV1, broadcast on 18:Nov:2001].

<sup>44</sup> N.B. It is this particular mixture of truth and error that has inspired the philosophy behind the New Age movement - and even some teachings coming into parts of the Christian Church. It is therefore sad to hear Nicky teach that "There is **validity** in pretty well all religions" [Final part of *Alpha: Will it Change Their Lives?*, TV show, *op. cit.*]. (If the reader is finding these footnotes unduly offensive then they are encouraged to ignore them since they are not central to the book and are largely offered for completeness.)

Course leaders may want to consider the fact that truth is not something which can be divided up into “ultimate” and lesser “parts” or fallible and “infallible” components. Truth cannot be *less* than “ultimate” or *other* than “infallible” because truth is the *Person of the Lord Jesus Christ* - who is perfect. Nicky often quotes Jesus as saying “I am the way, **the truth**, and the life...” (John 14:6a). Note that Jesus did not say He was “ultimate” truth, or “infallible” truth or even the ‘perfect’, ‘complete’ or ‘whole’ truth. He is simply the truth. We cannot have “parts” of the Lord Jesus; thus it is not possible to have “parts” of the truth. When the truth is compromised such that the true Messiah is not taught then there is *no* truth (Hos. 4:1).

Another analogy may be useful here to illustrate the danger of false religions. Consider two cups filled with an attractive-looking brew. One indeed contains fresh, green tea, and would be very good to drink. The other cup has been introduced by an enemy. It holds a liquid with a similar colour and the same smell, at the same temperature and consistency – but is poisonous. Even though the second cup contains a lot of ‘truth’, it would be reckless not to tell a thirsty man the real nature of it. Some of the ingredients may be “good or harmless”,<sup>45</sup> but the poison means we cannot afford to value the mixture *at all*.

Nicky admits “There is a dark **side** to other religions”,<sup>46</sup> but we noted earlier that other faiths do *not* teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the way<sup>47</sup> – and therefore they are in *total* darkness. These religions do not speak according to the written Word of God and therefore there is *no* light in them (Isa. 8:20). It is surely not a matter of *us* “writing them off”... *God* has

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<sup>45</sup> Nicky uses this term about ingredients within the New Age religion [*Searching Issues*, p55].

<sup>46</sup> *Searching Issues*, p31. This statement does not actually tell us much – especially if you consider that pagans could make the same claim about Christianity. After all, Scripture says that the God of the Bible will thrust unbelievers into “outer *darkness*” (Matt. 22:13) to be “tormented with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 14:10) and suffer “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46). Dark stuff. Nicky even agrees that, as Christians, there is a “dark side to **our** hope” [Nicky Gumbel, *30 Days*, (Alpha Publications, 2001), p124. (The book *30 Days* is advertised as “A thirty day practical introduction to reading the Bible”.)]

<sup>47</sup> It is a relatively small point, but Nicky ends *Questions of Life* by describing walking with God as the “**best** ... way to live” [p231]. This *could* leave the door open for readers to think that there are *alternative* “ways”, when in fact Christianity is the *only* way to find life. And although Nicky often quotes John 14:6, he frequently misses out the second half of the verse (viz. “**no** man cometh unto the Father, but by **Me**”).

already done so. He has judged these religions as being “of devils” – and He has not allowed us the option of modifying His Word to accommodate them.

**2:10 WHAT ELSE DOES NICKY SAY?** Nicky supports his current stance on other religions with the following analysis:

“[W]e would expect to find **truth in other religions** for at least three<sup>48</sup> 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 ... Secondly, human beings are made in the image of God and God has given us a conscience with which to distinguish right and wrong ... Thirdly, in every heart there is a hunger for God ... It is understandable then that we find **good in many religions**<sup>49</sup> ...”<sup>50</sup>

While the three central points Nicky makes here are important and right, there are also a couple of problems too. Firstly, as we have seen, truth mixed with error does not equal anything other than error in God’s eyes. Secondly, although Nicky’s observations are true of *individuals*, it does not follow that they are true of the *religions* to which individuals adhere. Again, we have seen that the source of these religions is the *enemy*, who is “a **liar**, and the father of it [*i.e. of lying*]” (John 8:44). We must realize that Satan is a master deceiver who has even managed somehow to fool other *angels*, let alone many men. As Revelation states:

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<sup>48</sup> We feel certain that Nicky would have mentioned other ‘reasons’ if there were any.

<sup>49</sup> A veteran leader of *Alpha for Youth* states: “Today there is a desperate need within the Church to reach and keep young people who once attended church but no longer do so. Recent statistics suggest that only 7% of those under 18 years of age have any regular contact with ‘**organized religion**’” [*Youth Alive and Alpha Course Team Up*, web article at [deceptioninthechurch.com](http://deceptioninthechurch.com)]. The inference seems to be that, as long as people have contact with an ‘organized religion’ of any description, then that is good. Arguably, this is also the idea Nicky gives in *Searching Issues*, p25, when he says “**Atheists** amount to a **mere** 4.5 per cent [*of the world’s population*]”.

<sup>50</sup> *Searching Issues*, pp28-30. Nicky’s statement closes with the words “It also explains why there is often a certain **continuity** for those who become Christians from other faiths”. In truth, there really should be *no* spiritual “continuity” from our previous lives when we become Christians: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new** creature: old things are passed away; behold, **all** things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17; see also Rom. 6:6-11).

“Satan, which deceiveth the **whole world**: ... was cast out into the earth, and his **angels** were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:9).

Nicky makes useful reference to creation, but we must remember God’s indictment that heathens are “without excuse” (Rom. 1:20) because they *still* choose to worship *other* gods in spite of what God’s creation tacitly declares to them.

In the Church today, great emphasis is often placed on a single passage in John 1 that tells us Christ “lighteth every man that cometh into the world”. But this does not mean there is light in the world’s *religions*. Nor does it mean that people do not close their eyes to (or snuff out) the light they have been given (Acts 26:17-18; Rom. 1:21-25). In fact, if a person does not come to the light on offer then they are under the “power of darkness” (Col. 1:13). Here is a little analogy: Our sun radiates light all around, making light available to the surface of the whole world; but if someone does not like the light and hides away from it then that person will be devoid of light. The world’s false religions have done just this.

The following Scripture demonstrates that people can have *no* light: “if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is **no** light in them” (Isa. 8:20). John himself writes that if we don’t follow Christ Jesus and abide in Him then we “abide in **darkness**” (John 12:46; see also John 12:35 & 8:12 plus Eph. 5:8,17). On the basis of all this, it is clearly important for Course leaders not to suggest that the world’s religions inevitably have light in them – otherwise it would have the effect of furthering the clever delusion these religions seek to propagate.

God made it painfully clear to Israel that if any non-Israelite accepted the one true God, they were to *repudiate utterly* their past gods, and *all* associated practices (see Lev. 18:26-30). They were to cleave *only* to the commandments, and people, of Israel. See Ruth 2 for a beautiful example of this. (Incidentally, chapter 5 of our manual will demonstrate, in a dozen different ways, that Paul maintained the same stance towards false religions that we have offered here – even when he went to the Areopagus.)

We don’t wish to end this chapter on such a note, so let us praise Nicky for making no bones about the fact that God calls anyone involved in *overt* witchcraft, such as divination, “detestable to the Lord”.<sup>51</sup> Our point is simply that God sees *all* false religion as detestable (Deut. 13:1-18; 7:25-26; Ezek. 7:20-22 etc).

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<sup>51</sup> *Searching Issues*, p56.

## CHAPTER 3

# OTHER FAITHS AND ALPHA

**3:1 WHAT AGREEMENT?** As Alpha participants will be well aware, the Course talks and related publications consistently support the Roman Catholic Church. Interestingly, some observers believe that Rome’s own position on other faiths is somewhat at odds with the Bible. Rome says:

“[M]en are learning more every day to **respect** the opinions and **religious beliefs** of others ... They should ... be introduced to a knowledge of the other religions ... In this way they can better understand the elements of **goodness and truth** which such religions possess **by God’s Providence**,<sup>52</sup> and will learn how to disprove the **errors** in them, **and** to share the **full** light with those who lack it...” [*Vatican II*].<sup>53</sup>

*We hope that Catholic readers will bear with us as we discuss Rome’s view on this issue. Human frailty means that everyone can make mistakes at times (James 2:2) – even those who have formed Rome’s teachings. (Augustine, for instance, called the idea that the Earth was*

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<sup>52</sup> This is an interesting suggestion, but *why* would God bless a false religion?

<sup>53</sup> Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, (Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1966, Imprimatur), Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, point 2, pp661-2.

spherical “absurd”.<sup>54</sup> Roman Popes and Church ‘Fathers’ have disagreed with each other.<sup>55</sup> Rome herself admits that she sometimes gets things wrong<sup>56</sup> and that even her Pope is not infallible except when he speaks “*ex cathedra*”. Rome says she is moving “**toward**” full truth,<sup>57</sup> but this clearly leaves the door open for some errors still to be present.)

*We have no wish to upset readers, we just seek to identify some relevant scriptures they may not have come across before (and which could possibly have been overlooked by some of their leaders in the past). As Nicky noted at the start, where there is a discrepancy between the Bible and the teachings of mortal men, the Bible must be our supreme authority.*

Returning to that quote from Rome. It offers points that certainly appeal but which do not appear to line up with the scriptures we have seen so far. Does God *really* “respect the ... religious beliefs” of pagans? Does God think there are “elements of truth” in false religions, or that these Babylonian deceptions offer light – if not the “**full**” light? In truth He calls their practices and beliefs “abominations”. The above statement did not explain in what way these idolatrous religions possess “goodness and truth” but, according to the Bible, only God is truly good (Luke 18:19). God has nothing to do with these religions which refuse to adhere to His commandments. As we have already seen, these religions reject “the Truth” that is Christ, and His Father therefore rejects *them*.

Revelation 9:20-21 gives an important warning about false religion. Nicky usefully supplies this reference in his material about the New Age

<sup>54</sup> Augustine wrote “As to the fable that there are Antipodes, that is to say, men on the opposite side of the earth ... that is on **no** ground credible ... it is too absurd...” [*The City of God*, quoted in Alan Hayward, *Creation and Evolution*, (Bethany House, 1995), p70].

<sup>55</sup> Rome looks upon Origen as one of her earliest and best ‘Fathers’. Nicky writes that “[T]here have been times when the church and society have had a **totally repressive** and negative attitude towards sex. Origen, one of the early theologians of the church, regarded sex as something **inherently** sinful” [*Searching Issues*, p38]. (Interestingly, Nicky hints here that Rome was the *only* church at the time of Origen.)

<sup>56</sup> Rome has expressed remorse, for example, over the failure of Pope Pius XII to say anything against the Nazis during the holocaust. Rome also expresses regret for aspects of her handling of the Reformation, and of her treatment of Galileo. As Nicky puts it “Galileo ... [*discovered*] that planets revolve around the sun ... Although he was persecuted by **the** church, he was a devout Catholic Christian...” [*Searching Issues*, pp85-88]. (Again, note how Nicky seems to say that Rome is “**the** church”.)

<sup>57</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, Revelation, point 8, pp115-116.

movement,<sup>58</sup> and it applies to all other idolatrous ‘faiths’ too. It says that, despite God’s coming judgment, they “repented **not** of the works of their hands, that **they should not** worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk”.

Rome says that we should learn about these devious religions. But why is no account taken of the dangerous snare that “learning their works” can represent? Consider these two warning passages:

“*Our fathers*] were mingled among the **heathen**, and **learned their works**. And they served their idols: which were a **snare** unto them” (Psa. 106:35-37). See also Lev. 17 and Deut. 7:25-26, 20:18.

“[C]ome **not** among these nations, ... neither **make mention** of the name of their **gods**, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: But cleave unto the LORD your God, ... Else if ye do in **any wise** [*i.e. in any way*] ... cleave unto the remnant of these nations, ... they shall be **snares and traps** unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye **perish**...” (Josh. 23:6-13). See also vv14-16.

One would need to be a mature believer with a thorough knowledge of Scripture *and* a specific calling from God towards the adherents of a particular false faith before exposing one’s self significantly to such. This is why Paul told us to “**flee** from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:13-14), rather than respect or investigate it. Our initial quote (from Rome’s “Vatican II” Council) continues:

“In our times, when every day men are being drawn closer together and the ties between various peoples are being multiplied, the Church is giving deeper study to her **relationship** with non-Christian religions ... [I]n Hinduism men contemplate the divine mystery, ... Buddhism<sup>59</sup> ... acknowledges the radical insufficiency of this shifting world ... The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is **true and holy** in these religions.”

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<sup>58</sup> *Searching Issues*, p56.

<sup>59</sup> Nicky rightly gives the scientist Chandra Wickramasinghe credit for his findings regarding the probability that life began spontaneously, but Nicky inexplicably adds that Wickramasinghe “comes from a **Buddhist** background” [*Searching Issues*, p96]. Is this truly relevant? Might it not confuse some readers into imagining Buddhism has wisdom and value?



The fact is that there can be *nothing* biblically holy about a religion which opposes the Bible. And does God *really* call us to draw “closer together” and have “ties” and a “relationship” with non-Christian religions?...

“[W]hat fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and **what** communion hath light with darkness? And **what** concord hath Christ with Belial? or **what** part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And **what** agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor. 6:14-16).

“**Take heed** to thyself, lest thou make a **Covenant** with the [*pagan*] inhabitants ... lest it be for a **snare** in the **midst of thee**” (Exod. 34:12. See also v14).

The Lord warns again and again that false religions, although tempting because they teach that man can earn his salvation, are deliberately deceptive and must therefore be steered clear from. Rome seems to disagree. Since Alpha mentions Rome more frequently and positively than any other group it would be appropriate to see what else she teaches in this regard:

“She looks with **sincere respect** upon those **ways** of conduct and of life, those rules **and teachings** which ... **often** reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men ... The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: through **dialogue** and **collaboration** with the followers of **other religions** ... preserve, and promote the **spiritual** and moral goods found among these men” [*Vatican II*].<sup>60</sup>

To exhort “collaboration” seems unwise because Scripture commands precisely the opposite – i.e. that it is *repentance* which “should be preached in His Name among **all nations**” (Luke 24:47). See also Acts 17:30 and 2 Pet 3:9. Does our Heavenly Father say that anyone who worships another god has “spiritual good”? Did Christ “dialogue” with unbelievers who worshipped other gods? Or rather, did He confront them, as graciously as possible, with the undiluted truth that their works and “moral goods” are never going to help them but merely serve Satan’s ends. There is surely no scope for dialogue; the gospel of Christ is non-negotiable. Rome currently goes on to say:

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<sup>60</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, Non-Christian Religions, point 2, pp662-663.

“Upon the **Moslems**, too, the Church looks with **esteem**<sup>61</sup> ... They adore one God ... they strive to submit wholeheartedly even to his inscrutable decrees ... Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere him as a prophet” [*Vatican II*].<sup>62</sup>

Again, this does not appear to reflect God’s written Word accurately. After all, even *satanists* adore one ‘god’ and ‘strive to submit wholeheartedly to his decrees’. This is not the test. Islam’s position on God’s Word and God’s Son prove it is a satanic deception. It doesn’t matter what a religion teaches about ethics or lifestyle or anything else; if it is unbiblical then it is, by definition, *false*.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Nicky regrettably calls Islam a “great world religion” [*Searching Issues*, p27], when defending Moslems from the suggestion that their veneration of Muhammed is idolatrous, and his strongest word against Islam is just to call it a “**tradition**” [Talk 8]. It would surely have been much safer to use another term here? This term is a particular worry because Nicky has stated that there should be “unity” between the church and “the **traditions**” [Wallace Boulton, Ed., *The Impact of Toronto*, (Monarch, 1995), pp82-83]. In Talk 2 Nicky refers to the Koran but neglects to make any comment that would dissuade his hearers from thinking of it as a sensible book to read. (Indeed he promotes the Bible largely on the basis that it is “popular” and “precious” to many people [Talk 5], but on this flawed basis the Koran can certainly claim to be of value.) This all helps explain the following testimony from a Christian called Barbara who was in her front garden when an Englishman in his early 20s stopped at the front gate and: “... asked if any Muslims lived in the house because ... [*he was*] on a mission to convince lapsed Muslims to return to going to the mosque ... The young Englishman then proudly told me he had become a Muslim **6 weeks** before. I asked him what the Koran said about the forgiveness of sins and how would he know if he had eternal life? [*He*] then said, “Oh I know about Jesus dying for my sins”. I said, “So you’ve had some Christian upbringing.” to which he replied, “Oh ... I’ve **recently** done an Alpha Course **at Holy Trinity Brompton**.” After I swallowed hard I asked him how on earth he found Mohammed more wonderful than Jesus who had died for us” [*Tony and Barbara Pearce Prayer Letter*, September 2001]. (Tony is very well versed in Islam and talked at some length with the visitor on a later occasion. In Part 5 of this book – see the sister ‘Church’ volume of this Guide – we will find out how things ended up for this young man.)

<sup>62</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, point 3, p663. The present edition of the *Catholic Catechism* goes even further and says, “**together with us** they [*Muslims*] adore **the** one, merciful God” [Para. 841].

<sup>63</sup> Nicky teaches that some non-Christian religions are “much nearer being right than others” [*Searching Issues*, p31] – again implying degrees of validity rather than degrees of subtlety. We fear this could mislead hearers in the attitude they should take. The subtlest heresies are surely the most

**3:2 DOING BUSINESS** There is a general thrust today to make us believe that Christianity can “do business” with the World’s other religions because, so the argument goes, we all worship the *same* God – to whatever degree of understanding we possess. Consider this data:

“The omnipresent **New Age movement** ... is also helping to bring the World Religions together, especially through Western adoption of aspects of **Hindu** and **Buddhist** thought and practice. The Roman Catholic Church has done much to contribute to this in advancing its strategy for ecumenical and religious **cooperation**. For example, the **entire** May/June edition of ‘The Catholic World,’ in 1990, was given over to **Buddhism**. Among the articles ... were ‘The Buddha Revered as a **Christian Saint**’ and a glowing biography of ‘His **Holiness** the Dalai Lama.’ The Tibetan leader (who is, in fact, **God** to most of his followers) was described as having **frequent** contact with Catholic leaders, including ‘his old friend’, John Paul II ... [*who*] has endorsed him as ‘a **great** spiritual leader’...”<sup>64</sup>

But why seek to legitimize ‘Buddhist thought’ among Christians? Do other religions have spiritual truths that we are missing? Would God really leave some vital knowledge in the hands of pagans? No. All vital truths are in the hands of the *Church* (1 Tim. 3:15). The Bible is complete.

If God’s written Word was not complete then how could we ever distinguish between true and counterfeit revelations from other sources? The standard answer is that anything good must be of God – and therefore true – whether or not it is in the Bible...

But just because something seems good to us does not mean it is of God. Eve thought it would be ‘good’ to eat the forbidden fruit. She was very wrong. The girl in Acts 16 who followed Paul and Luke crying out, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation” might well appear to have been good – she would be touted as a great conversion by many today – but she was “possessed with a spirit of divination”<sup>65</sup> (v16) and was *not* in God’s will. See also passages

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*dangerous!*

<sup>64</sup> Michael de Semlyen, *All Roads lead to Rome? The Ecumenical Movement*, (Dorchester House Publications, 1993), p94.

<sup>65</sup> One type of divination is astrology. Although Nicky calls them “Christian” [*Searching Issues*, pp87&88 resp.], both Copernicus and Kepler were actually astrologers (as well as astronomers). Copernicus even admitted that he

like 1 Sam. 15:9-23, or 1 Kings 13 (especially v18), or Matt. 2:7-8, for just a few of the other biblical episodes where something apparently ‘good’ was *not* of God.<sup>66</sup>

Truth can certainly be gleaned from other sources, but the test of its truthfulness is whether or not it agrees with holy writ. The Bible stands alone and has demonstrated itself to be the truth – despite all the attacks that Satan and men have devised. None of its claims has *ever* been disproved, its histories are *totally* accurate, and its prophecies come to pass *exactly* as foretold – and at precisely the predicted time. This is all in sharp contrast with the world’s other ‘holy’ books.

“Five **hundred** times in the Pentateuch [*Genesis to Deuteronomy*], three **hundred** times in the following books [*of the Bible*] and **twelve hundred** times in the prophets, the declarations are prefaced or concluded with such expressions as ‘Hear the Word of the Lord,’ or ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ **No** other book **dares** thus to address itself to the universal conscience. **No** other speaks with such a binding claim...”<sup>67</sup>

Here are just three of the manifold areas we could examine in this regard:

**Cosmology** According to Job 26:7, God “hangeth the earth upon nothing”. Now we can view the Earth from satellites, we find it is indeed suspended in space.<sup>68</sup> Scientists would have mocked this idea a few centuries ago. It also compares rather well with the traditions of pagan religions. The ancient Hindu position was that the Earth was held up by four giant elephants on the back of an enormous turtle. Mayans variously believed that the Earth was

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used astronomy so he could practice better *astrology*.

<sup>66</sup> Nicky writes “**All** good gifts are from God” [*Questions of Life*, p138]. Without clarification, this could lead guests to accept extrabiblical teachings as being of God if the bringer of the teaching, *or the teaching itself*, appears to be good. In the same book, Nicky says “There is a close connection between good and God ... Behind the power of good lies Goodness itself” [p157 - see also p224]. Since this is a book aimed at unbelievers (i.e. people without a regenerate mind to help them discern between good and evil), the danger is even greater.

<sup>67</sup> Professor Dyson Hague, *op. cit.*, p44.

<sup>68</sup> The Hebrew means “without any **thing**”. As Morris says, “the **force** called gravity [*i.e. rather than any object*] is invoked” to account for the earth hanging in space, “but that doesn’t explain anything, since no-one knows what gravity is or why it works” (p14).

supported at four corners by four deities, or that the sky was supported by four trees.<sup>69</sup>

**Medicine** *Papyrus Ebers* was a medical book written in Egypt circa 1552BC.<sup>70</sup> It contained the accumulated *pagan* medical wisdom available to Egypt at that time. Embedded splinters were dealt with by applying asses' dung. "Since dung is loaded with **tetanus** spores, it is little wonder that lockjaw took a heavy toll of splinter cases".

The remedies in many other cases were worse than the diseases. Yet very shortly after this, when Moses (who was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians), wrote the book of Exodus with its medical advice, he did not incorporate *any* of these medical misconceptions. His God-given instructions regarding, for example, the matters of washing and hygiene, of managing leprosy, and of handling the dead, have only become medical orthodoxy in very recent times.

**Prophecy** Nicky usefully confirms that "Jesus fulfilled **over 300** Old Testament prophecies" [Talk 2]. (The total is widely reckoned at 332.<sup>71</sup>) This is an extraordinary fact which unbelievers need to take very seriously. Nicky's valuable words regarding another religion bring quite a contrast: "[*Islam*] cannot point to **any** prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth."<sup>72</sup>

*(As an aside, there are some people today who have been brought up to believe that the parts of the Bible written before Christ's incarnation can now be dismissed. The argument is that the Old Testament (OT) has been superseded and hence no teachings which rely in any way on the OT books can be accepted today. But is that what the Greek portion of God's eternal Word says? Needless to say, the Mosaic law has been fulfilled, and its Levitical decrees and stipulations about sacrifices have certainly been done away with now that the Person to whom they all pointed has come and fulfilled them. But there are many spiritual principles in the Old Testament above and beyond this symbolic physical material – consider the books of the Psalms and Proverbs for example.*

<sup>69</sup> Incidentally, "Most Maya today observe a religion composed of ancient Maya ideas, animism and Catholicism" [*Maya Civilisation, Cosmology and Religion*, www.civilisation.ca/civil/maya as at 26:Sep:2002].

<sup>70</sup> The information for this section was obtained exclusively from S.I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*.

<sup>71</sup> For Nicky to write that "our faith is based on **good** historical grounds" [30 Days, p17] seems a bit of an understatement!

<sup>72</sup> *Questions of Life*, p35.

*Rather than teaching that the Hebrew scriptures were no longer relevant, the apostles quoted frequently from them in letters to the early church. Nicky too cites OT passages regularly in Alpha resources. The fact is that the “Old” Testament provides us with much more than details of the old Covenant. Oddly, those who teach that it has all been overtaken are usually more than ready to exploit parts of it when they need to!*

Through holy writ, Christians have *already* been given “**all** things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). The Bible has *all* we need to be perfect (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We are *not* to associate with other religions for the sake of gaining extrabiblical truth, because they have none (Jer. 10:2a).

“There is much in Roman Catholic tradition to contribute to [*this type of*] thinking: mysticism, medieval and modern; [*and*] the writings and activities of prominent Catholics, past and present ... Fr. Thomas Merton championed the **merger of Zen Buddhism** and Christianity. American **Dominican** Matthew Fox’s ‘Creation-centred Spirituality’, [*was*] based on **multi-faith and pagan ideas...**”<sup>73</sup>

**3:3 ROME’S SPECIAL PLACE** At this point we should explain that, although other groups share Rome’s views, she is worthy of special attention here for a number of reasons. Firstly, as we have already indicated, she is referred to approvingly on Alpha more than any other institution. Secondly, Rome has been at the forefront of mixing with other religions for a *very* long time. Thirdly, it is primarily she who is encouraging these other groups to follow suit. For example, it is her influence on the Church of England (through people like Cardinal Newman) which has injected Rome’s attitudes into it. It is Rome who is at the head of interfaith developments.

*(We admit that we are questioning Roman Catholic teaching on this issue. There are those who believe it is ‘uncaring’ ever to challenge, but believers need to be mature and not put themselves above correction. Nor should they see it as automatically uncaring. After all, Paul’s criticism of the Corinthians, e.g. in 2 Cor. 7:8-12, was a demonstration of his care. We care deeply for the welfare of every Catholic.)*

“Meeting with Muslim leaders in West Africa in 1993, the pope ‘called on Christians, **Muslims** and **animists** ... to **respect one**

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<sup>73</sup> Michael de Semlyen, *All Roads Lead To Rome?*, p96.

another's **religious** beliefs ... Speaking to **Shintoists** and **Buddhists** in Tokyo in 1981, John Paul II **commended** the **wisdom** of their ancient religions which inspired them 'to see a divine presence in each human being ... I express my joy that **God** has distributed these [*religious*] gifts among you' ... In Togo in 1985 the pope exulted that he had '**prayed** for the first time **with animists**'"<sup>74</sup>

It is worth noting here that John Paul II also said that *all* religions would worship *together*.

"One of John Paul II's most amazing feats was the gathering at Assisi, Italy, in 1986 [*repeated in 2002*] of **130** leaders of the world's **12 major religions** ... Praying together were **snake worshippers, fire worshippers, spiritists, animists, North American witch doctors, Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus**, as well as 'Christians' ... The pope declared that **all** were 'praying to the **same** God.' On that occasion the pope allowed his good friend the Dalai Lama to **replace the cross** with **Buddha** on the altar of St. Peter's Church in Assisi and for him and his monks to perform their **Buddhist worship there**'"<sup>75</sup>

"[T]he Parliament of the **World's religions**, was held in Chicago in September 1993, and was attended by about 6000 representatives of the **world's major faiths** ... Catholic leadership was

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<sup>74</sup> Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, (Harvest House, 1994), p418. One page earlier, Dave revealed that "One of the world's most influential **Hindu** leaders, Sri Chinmoy, known as 'the guru of the United Nations', (where he holds twice-weekly meditations for staff), has been **praised** by more than one Pope of Rome. Chinmoy's 80-plus meditation centres around the world have led **millions** into Hinduism's darkness, yet John Paul II considers him a friend and co-worker and has greeted him thus: 'Special blessings to you ... [*and*] to your members. We shall continue **together**.' Pope **Paul VI** told Chinmoy, 'the Hindu life and the Christian life shall **go together**. Your message and my message **are the same**.'" (Incidentally, Nicky seems happy to be associated with "Pope Paul VI" [*Telling Others*, p39], even though Paul VI blessed a conference at which Christians dialogued with "Buddhists, ... Muslims, ... Zoroastrians" and others [Burns, *op. cit.*, p22]. Paul VI even admired and congratulated a man called Cardonnel who was "a hardened **devil-worshipper**" [Burns, *op. cit.*, p423]. For full details, and for even more shockers about Paul VI, see Burns, *op. cit.*, pp22,423-5.)

<sup>75</sup> Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, p424.

**much** in evidence ... ‘On one night, followers of the **neo-pagan Wicca** [*witchcraft*] religion<sup>76</sup> performed a **full-moon ritual**’<sup>77</sup>.

In the ‘light’ of this, one wonders why Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (see Daniel 3) preferred to be burned alive rather than bow down to the image that the King of Babylon had set up. They should apparently have instead been urging their friends to join in with this unifying, monotheistic religious ceremony. (Note, though, the spectacular evangelistic effect that resulted from their uncompromising faithfulness to the true God.)

**3:4 ROME AT HOME** Elliot Miller and Wendy Howard respectively make very good points in the following analyses:

“This past summer, at the 1993 Parliament of the World’s religions in Chicago, ... **Many** speakers at the Parliament made it clear that interfaith dialogue is **only the beginning**: since (as they suppose) we all worship the same God by many names, only religious prejudice could keep us from worshipping that God together ... Lofty ideals ... motivated many of the appeals for interfaith Communion. But such categorical acceptance of all religions leads to the conclusion that there are **no false prophets** after all; there is **no religious evil** that we need to separate ourselves from. No one who takes seriously the teachings of the Bible should agree to this. It is a denial of the biblical God. It is apostasy”<sup>78</sup>.

“**Cardinal** Arinze ... had **severe criticism** of those who demand that their religion is ‘superior’ to others, and want their countries to have ‘**one** religion’. We live in a ‘global village’ Arinze insists, we should have ‘Unity and Diversity’”<sup>79</sup>.

*(Note that Cardinal Arinze is no wayward ‘loose cannon’ in Rome. Indeed, he has been widely tipped as one of the frontrunners for the papacy.)*

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<sup>76</sup> When discussing this type of religion, Nicky tends to choose terms that soften the impact. He often refers merely to “**tribal** religions” [*Searching Issues*, p25] or “**folk** beliefs” [*Ibid*, p56] or “**nature** religions” [*Ibid*, p55] – presumably to show respect. The problem is that it obscures the terrible truth about these pagan things.

<sup>77</sup> Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, p427.

<sup>78</sup> Elliot Miller, *Should Christians Join in Interfaith Communion?* Christian Research Institute Journal, Spring / Summer 1994, p47.

<sup>79</sup> W.B. Howard ed., *Despatch*, Report from The First Religion and Cultural Diversity Conference, Melbourne, July 1997.



“John Paul II [*has*] allowed a **Shiva priestess** to create the traditional Shiva mark on his forehead ... The New Age Dictionary defines the Shiva (pronounced ‘siva’) as the ‘**Hindu God of illusion, Yoga, Animals, Ascetics; Lord of the Dance** ... [H]ow can he [*John Paul II*] sanction the false religion of Hinduism? How can he allow a ceremony in which he not only receives a mark on his forehead, but he allows himself to take part in a ceremony which clearly identifies himself as being subservient to the Shiva priestess? Has Pope John Paul II forgotten our Lord’s Words on this matter of other religions?”<sup>80</sup>

(Please note the reference here to Shiva as “Lord of the Dance”. Contrary to popular belief, the song of this title often sung in children’s schools and believed to be about the Lord Jesus, is nothing of the sort; *nowhere* in Scripture is the Lord called this. Instead: “I discovered the god **Shiva** was also called Bhudapati, ‘**Prince of demons**’, a Biblical description for Beelzebub or **Satan**”.<sup>81</sup>)

**3:5 KNOWING GOD** An argument often used to encourage Christians into associating with interfaith groups is that ‘no-one can know God’ (and thus we may all simply be worshipping different aspects of, or giving different names to, the *same* being). The Christian response is that we can know a lot about our God through what His own Word says about Him – which is a great deal. As Nicky points out, “God has revealed himself through creation, but the **main** way we know about God ... is through his written revelation in the **Bible**” [Talk 5].<sup>82</sup>

Scripture also says more than enough to know that unbiblical religions are *not* worshipping God. It is true that we will not know *everything*

<sup>80</sup> The Cutting Edge website. Referring to the Jan/Feb/Mar 1998 issue of the newsletter of Former Catholics For Christ.

<sup>81</sup> Paul James-Griffiths, *Out of the Twilight Zone, Dawn of the New Age: 5 New Agers Relate Their Search for the Truth*, (Penfold Books, 1998), p10.

<sup>82</sup> Nicky seems a bit less sure when he says God “cannot be put in a neat box” [*Searching Issues*, p106]. A few sentences later he writes that: “St. Augustine himself said, ‘If you can understand it, it’s not God’”. But we can understand much about God through His perfect Word. He has also *promised* to deal with us according to the principles He has laid down for us there. Nicky elsewhere implies that other religions believe in the “Judeo-Christian” God (albeit that they ascribe some differing attributes to Him) – see *Searching Issues*, p10. In the same volume, Nicky says “It is not clear whether Buddha believed in the existence of God **as such**[!]. ‘Early or classical Buddhism had **no** god’” [p27]. This again could suggest that belief in any god is tantamount to believing in the one true God.

about God until we go to be with Him, but the Bible tells us all we need to know during our time on earth.

If we know Christ Jesus in our lives (and Nicky agrees that we can indeed “know him” [Talk 4]) then, according to the scriptures, we *do* know the Father – else we do *not* know Him (John 14:7; 1 John 5:20). If the Holy Spirit dwells in us then we know God, otherwise we do not (John 14:17). In other words, it is only non-Christians who ‘do not know’ God:

“They are of the world [*i.e. they do not live by the Bible*<sup>83</sup>]: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are **of God**: he that **knoweth God** heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us” (1 John 4:6-7). See also 2:13-14.

“And hereby **we do know** that we **know** Him, if we **keep His commandments**” (1 John 2:3).

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<sup>83</sup> Nicky says that ‘the world’, in the context of the Bible, means “the world that has **shut God out**” [Talk 15], but he also gives the impression that followers of other religions have not done so! Consider this statement by him: “[W]hen they begin Alpha, ... some [*people*] are adherents to **other** religions ... Alpha will enable them to take a **step forward in their relationship with God**” [*Telling Others*, p34]. Nicky suggests that adherents to false religions are *already* in a relationship with God and are therefore *not* part of ‘the world’. (This same idea is reflected in the quote by Lesslie Newbigin which Nicky gives in *Searching Issues*, p30.) A related problem is that we Christians are taught to cease conforming to the pattern of this world (Rom. 12), but if we exclude pagans from ‘the world’ then we could be tempted to conform to their ‘pattern’. Unfortunately, Nicky also says that non-Christians can “feel things in their **spirits**” [*Questions of Life*, p150] – thus again indicating that they are *not* spiritually dead to God (John 14:17) but are instead in a relationship with Him. Indeed, because Abraham, David and the tax collector were all justified by faith *before* Jesus’ incarnation, Nicky infers that it is possible to be saved “even if someone has never heard of Jesus” – and that you simply need to have a “‘sense of ... need’” and a “‘self-abandonment to God’s mercy’” [*Searching Issues*, p32]. Two obvious faults with this are: (a) The three men above were all *Jewish* and therefore *did* know of the Messiah from the scriptural prophecies about Him, and (b) Many people in other religions have a “sense of need” – else they would not follow those religions. They also throw themselves on the mercy of the ‘God’ behind their religion. If Nicky believes this ‘God’ is the God of the Bible then no wonder he indicates that any pagan who has done the above but who dies *without having faith in the Messiah* will still be saved [*Ibid*, p33].

Again, Jesus made plain that only those who follow Him will ever know the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 14:8-21). Some try to teach that, because we “see through a glass, darkly”, we cannot be sure that another religion is false. Such people are not only ignoring the message of the rest of the Bible, but they are also hiding the context of this statement. These words do not refer to the Christian *faith* – how else could Scripture say “stand fast in the faith”? They refer to the extent to which we know God Himself while we are on the earth:

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then **face to face**”  
(1 Cor. 13:12).

Christians need to ‘wise-up’ and realize that other religions are *designed* to ensnare people – and that their followers can be very accomplished at it. That is why the Bible commands the People of God to avoid involvement in any other ‘faiths’.

## CHAPTER 4

# CULTS

Satan loves to counterfeit the true so as to hoodwink those who are seeking the truth. We have already noted that the world’s other faiths borrow from the true faith in that they have varying degrees of Judeo-Christian flavouring to help them appear to be rooted in truth rather than error. In this chapter, we will quickly look at a few of the pseudo-Christian cults that also plainly stem from Babylon (remembering that any religion undermining the written Word is inescapably false).<sup>84</sup>

**Mormonism** uses the Bible but only alongside ‘inspired corrections’ and other ‘inspired’ books. As in Babylon, it teaches that God the Father was originally a man but *became* God. According to Mormonism, God the Father has a physical body, as does his *wife*; and there is no Trinity, but instead separate gods.

The Jesus of Mormonism was married, and his sacrifice does not provide full atonement.<sup>85</sup> According to Mormons, the Holy Spirit is a fluid-

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<sup>84</sup> We are greatly indebted, for the material on cults in this chapter, to a pamphlet available from Reachout Trust.

<sup>85</sup> On the subject of unity between Christians, Nicky cites 1 John 5:1 in the NIV, which says “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” [*Questions of Life*, p208]. Nicky doesn’t supply any clarification here, which makes this verse a slightly unfortunate choice in view of the fact that Mormons do indeed believe that their “Jesus” is “the Christ”. (Many cults

like substance by which the Father exercises his influence. They also teach that we are saved (and made gods) by works including Mormon Baptism and other rituals. They claim that there is no eternal life without Mormon membership.<sup>86</sup> (The number of Babylonian elements overtly present in Mormonism is very substantial and includes: belief in baptism for the dead, oaths of secrecy, and ‘celestial marriages’.)

**Jehovah’s Witnesses** (‘JW’s) use a Bible version that removes or obscures many scriptures supporting the Deity of Christ. To JWs there is no Trinity and Jesus is *not* God but is a created being who died on a stake (not a cross). They also do not believe He is coming again, but that He returned invisibly in 1914 and that, very soon, He and the angels will destroy all non-JWs.<sup>87</sup> (As people advance as JWs they are told that Jesus was really the archangel Michael – but see Hebrews 1! This is a very New Age teaching.)

As in Babylon, JWs preach a works-based salvation. Full salvation, in Heaven, is supposedly limited to 144,000 JWs. This number has already been reached. According to JW teaching, the rest of the righteous, who mainly earn their salvation by ‘door-to-door’ work, will live on the earth and must obey God perfectly for one thousand years or be annihilated.

*(In Alpha Video Talk 14, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Nicky made an excellent observation when he affirmed that “All these heresies, all these cults were around in a very similar form in New Testament times ... and the answers are there in the Bible”. We think it a pity that this comment was removed from Edition 2. The original video also mentioned – if briefly – that the teachings of groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Moonies can be*

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possess a ‘faith in Christ’ but it is not a saving faith in the true Christ. This is what makes statements like ‘I/he/she came to faith in Christ’ [see Talks 5 & 12 etc] so easy for unbelievers to misconstrue).

<sup>86</sup> When Nicky says that “you can go to **any** part of the world to **any** church and you **will** find brothers” [Talk 9, Edn. 2.1], it is likely to be unclear to hearers that they need to avoid many ‘churches’, including spiritualist ‘churches’, Unitarian ‘churches’, and the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints’ (the Mormon ‘church’). Likewise, Nicky says the following to guests at the celebration supper: “I would really encourage you to investigate [Christianity] ... [Y]ou could go along to **any** church, ... and say, ‘I would like to investigate, is there a course that I could go on that you run?’ There are **many different** courses” [Talk 1]. We suspect that there are many different cults which call themselves ‘churches’ who would be only too happy to welcome these unwary seekers.

<sup>87</sup> We look at the subject of the ‘end-times’ in Part 4 (see the sister volume).

*seen to be wrong because they do not line up with Scripture. Sadly, the mention got even shorter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition video, with no groups at all being named.<sup>88)</sup>*

**Christian Science** uses the Bible but teaches that it is not as reliable as the writings of its founder, Mary Baker Eddy. It teaches that God is an impersonal Principle of life, truth, love, intelligence and spirit and also that God is all that truly exists – i.e. matter is an illusion. Christian Scientists (so-called) hold that Jesus was not the Christ but displayed the “Christ **idea**”. Just as in Babylon, the Son is demoted. They teach that Jesus was not God and that God can never become man or flesh. Jesus did not, and could not, suffer for sins in their eyes. According to them, Jesus did not die on the cross, was not resurrected physically and will not literally return.

The Holy Spirit is defined simply as being the teaching of Christian Science; i.e. just an impersonal power. They further teach that Humanity is already eternally saved, because sin, evil, sickness and death are not real; and besides, Heaven and Hell are just states of mind, and the way to reach “Heaven” is by attaining harmony (oneness with God) – just as in Babylon’s religion.<sup>89)</sup>

*(Please note that many other individuals and ‘ministries’ around the globe have adopted false beliefs from Christian Science. Because these people call themselves “Christians” but are not, they give Christ and His true followers an extremely bad name. They need to be recognized for the deceivers they are. As Nicky suggests, there is “a **dark side to the way some people use Christianity**”.<sup>90)</sup>*

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<sup>88</sup> It is of concern that *Alpha News* made much of the testimony of a woman who had been a Jehovah’s Witness for 15 years, in which she refers to having received the Spirit – for the testimony makes no mention of any conviction by the same Holy Spirit of her previously held false beliefs – e.g. that Jesus Christ is not God [*Alpha News*, Jul – Oct 1998, p16]. (Note: All references in this book to *Alpha News* refer to the UK editions unless otherwise stated.)

<sup>89</sup> Surprisingly, HTB uses a review of Alpha by the *Christian Science Monitor* newspaper to promote the Course [See *An Introduction to the Alpha Course*, undated HTB booklet, p2]. This is a paper founded by Mary Baker Eddy and which, in every issue, promotes “The First Church of Christ, Scientist” and its appalling beliefs. HTB’s decision to quote this newspaper was surely unnecessary and could be taken to suggest that HTB encourages respect for the ‘Christian Science’ cult.

<sup>90</sup> *Searching Issues*, p31.

**Unitarians**, as their name suggests, do not believe in the Trinity of the Godhead. Instead they teach “divine unity” or the “oneness of God”. Some Unitarians hold that God is not a person at all but a Principle, while others see Him as a *created* being. To them all, though, Jesus is not God or Saviour; he was merely a good man, the scriptures are not the inspired Word of God but are the invention of men, and man’s reason and conscience is his final authority.

As ‘Universalists’, Unitarians believe that everyone will ultimately be saved and that there is no Hell.<sup>91</sup> Salvation, to them, comes through “character development” or good deeds and education – just as in Babylon. Unitarianism esteems the teachings of all religions and argues for a World Religion – more Babylonianism. (We should observe here that a Unitarian was on the board of translators for one of the most popular modern versions of the Bible. It is worth knowing how one’s Bible version came into being.)

Again, according to God’s measure, these faiths are false because they do not adhere fully to Scripture nor teach the Scriptural truth about His Son.<sup>92</sup> (The Christadelphians are another group denying His Deity.) Many followers of these religions would claim to “love Jesus” but they are talking about *another* Jesus. For these reasons we should understand that, however subtle these religions might be, or whatever “elements” of “truth” they may offer, they are from the same source as the world’s other false religions.

Simply put, if someone perceives God to be anything other than the God described in the Bible, then they are **not** worshipping the God of the

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<sup>91</sup> Oddly, Nicky quotes more than one Unitarian. For instance, he cites Sigmund Freud [Talk 2], Albert Camus [30 Days, p67] and Dag Hammarskjöld [Ibid, p72] – all Unitarian universalists [Burns, *op. cit.*, p71]. Thankfully Nicky does not call them “Christians”, although he does appear to suggest they are worth listening to.

<sup>92</sup> How is Alpha in this area? The following is an exact transcript of Nicky’s words on this crucial issue. They do seem rather apologetic and confused to us: “The Bible ... is our authority for teaching, for rebuking. For saying what is wrong, why we don’t believe some of the things, for example, **some** of the cults believe, because we believe, if you look at the Bible, that’s not the right things to believe” [Talk 5]. Elsewhere he writes “‘whoever believes **in** him [Jesus] will not perish...’ ...The way people take this step of faith varies **enormously**” [Nicky Gumbel, *Why Jesus?*, (HTB Publications, 1997), p17]. Some readers may conclude that, provided a person has made some sort of step of faith and ‘believes in’ the Jesus they have been taught about (even by a cult), then they are saved. This is not the message of the Bible.

Bible but another “god” – an idol that cannot save.<sup>93</sup> (Demons will happily transform themselves into whatever ‘god’ a person wants or expects; see 2 Cor. 11:13-15.) It is a shame that Nicky avoids broaching the subject in the Alpha talks, because the Lord is unequivocal in His condemnation of all idolatry.

**Important Note:** The Lord Jesus hated false *religion* but cared greatly about the souls bound up in it. These chapters are not promoting hatred of any person, but only of falsehood. The people who are convinced by false religions / cults are terribly deceived and desperately need to be told the whole truth in love. We ought to have *compassion* for them rather than any malice – even if they hate or assault us (Luke 6:27-35).

The Lord was crucified without fighting back physically, and a New Covenant was brought into being. The true Church is protected and built up “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6; see also John 18:36).

Our book does not incite hatred of *anyone* in another religion. On the contrary, we promote Christ’s command to “**love** your enemies” (Matt. 5:44). However, to conceal the truth about false religions would be extremely *unloving*.

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<sup>93</sup> It is a shame that Nicky implies all ‘monotheistic’ religions believe in the *same* God (e.g. see *Searching Issues*, p100, and Nicky’s references to “God’s mercy” on p32 of that book). Indeed Alpha *never* acknowledges that other religions pertain to other ‘gods’. On the issue of monotheism, a different Alpha resource says “[The] **New** Testament affirms only one God” [*Searching Issues Manual*, (HTB Publications, 1998), p32]. This leaves scope for guests to imagine that the *Old* Testament ‘affirms’ other gods (but see the scriptures in section 2:1 of our book). Also, why use the word “affirms” rather than a less ambiguous one like “declares”?



## CHAPTER 5

# OUR ATTITUDE TO OTHER RELIGIONS

**5:1 TAKE HEED** Despite Rome's preparedness to condone, and even be involved in, the worship of other gods, we have already noted that such activity is completely banned by the Lord. As Christ said, when tempted by Satan to fall down and worship him, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and **Him only** shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:8-10). It is never safe to disobey God, but it is *especially* dangerous to be involved in the worship of other gods. We *cannot* serve two masters (Matt. 6:24).

"I the LORD thy God am a **jealous** God" (Exod. 20:5); "The LORD thy God is a **consuming fire**, even a **jealous** God" (Deut. 4:24).

"And it shall be, if thou do **at all** forget the LORD thy God, and walk after **other gods**, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye **shall surely perish**. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God" (Deut. 8:19-20).

This final Scripture confirms (a) that there *are* other “gods”, (b) that the Lord destroyed nations who walked after them, and (c) how serious it is for us to turn away from the Lord. (Elsewhere, God actually calls this *adultery* against Him.)

“**Take heed** to yourselves, that your heart **be not deceived**, and ye **turn** aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD’s wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up the Heaven...” (Deut. 11:16-17).

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye **obey the commandments** of the LORD your God, ... And a **curse**, if ye will **not obey** the commandments of the LORD your God, but **turn aside out of the way** ... to go after **other gods**...” (Deut. 11:26-28).

For other clear, unmistakable, descriptions of God’s uncompromising position, see Lev. 18:24-30 or Deut. 29:10-29.

**5:2 IS IT OK TO WORSHIP OUR GOD AT THEIR CEREMONIES?** Paul asked this question, rhetorically, of the Corinthians, many of whom had themselves come out of pagan beliefs and practices. Rome’s Cardinal Cooke seems to think there is much agreement. At a Catholic conference:

“[T]he Dalai Lama was given a **standing ovation** by the overflow crowd. Said Cardinal Cooke: ‘This is one of the dramatic **movements of the Spirit** in our time. We make each other welcome in our churches, [*Buddhist*] **temples** and synagogues’”.<sup>94</sup> (Note that the standing ovation was for the Dalai Lama claiming that ‘*all the world’s major religions are basically the same*’. As long as we exclude Christianity (as we must) then his statement is actually true – for they are all Babylonian.)

But Paul did not think there was agreement:

“Be ye **not** unequally yoked together with **unbelievers** ... for ye **are the temple** of the living God; as God hath said, ... I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore **come out from among** them, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and **touch not** the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be

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<sup>94</sup> Dave Hunt, *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*, (Harvest House Publishers, 1990), pp152-153.

a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

“[T]he things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to **devils**, ... and I would **not** that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye **cannot** drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye **cannot** be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. 10:20-21).

A recurring reason for keeping a distance from those who hold to other faiths is, as we have seen, the danger of gradual, but fatal, deception:

“...thou shalt make no Covenant with them, ... For they **will** turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods: **so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly**” (Deut. 7:2-6). See also Ezra 9-10.

In contrast, God is a God who hates lies and cares passionately for truth: “He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a **God of truth** and without iniquity, just and right is He” (Deut. 32:4); “The LORD liveth, in **truth**, in judgment, and in righteousness” (Jer. 4:2a).

The ‘bottom line’ over this is that “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him **must** worship Him in spirit **and in truth**” (John 4:23-24). We must “**serve Him** in sincerity **and in truth**...” (Josh. 24:14). Approaching God in any way other than that which He has ordained is extremely dangerous, as Nadab and Abihu discovered:

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, ... offered strange fire before the LORD, **which He commanded them not**. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they **died** before the LORD” (Lev. 10:1-2).

Uzza also found this truth out too late (see 1 Chr. 13 and 15), as did the Church members referred to by Paul in 1 Cor. 11:27-30.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Nicky's personal view is given in his post-Alpha book **A Life Worth Living** (Kingsway, 2001) where he writes “it does **not** matter **what** form worship takes **or where** we worship” [p70]. His suffix that “What matters is that we worship ‘by the Spirit of God’” is not terribly useful – especially to the many pagans who erroneously believe they are already in touch with the ‘Spirit of God’ (or to those believers who have mistakenly started dealing with a false spirit – e.g. as per 2 Cor. 11:4). *Far* safer to say ‘What matters is that we worship in a way fully consistent with the New Testament’.

**5:3 EVANGELISM** But what about evangelism? How will those in false religions and in pseudo-Christian cults hear of the God of the Bible if not from us?

Obviously we are not to withdraw ourselves totally from the world (e.g. into enclosed monasteries or convents). For how else can we reach people with the truth except by communicating with them? Christians certainly need to preach the truth to those in error. But we’ve just seen that mingling with those of other faiths and “learning their works” is a very perilous activity. We need to understand that these false faiths represent a false church which we need to handle with grace but also with *extreme care* (Prov. 19:2).

The remainder of this chapter will concentrate on the subject of evangelizing those who worship other gods. But a primary lesson is that believers who are young in the faith are *not* equipped to cope with knowledgeable pagans. It is a job for those who know their Bible and are mature in the things of God and who can stand under the pressures involved in dealing with adherents of other faiths. It would be good for Course leaders to make that plain to Alpha guests.

**5:4 HAVE THEY REJECTED THE LIGHT?** To begin with, we ought to recognize that any non-Christians who care to investigate the root of their faith will discover that it leads back to *Babylon* rather than what they have been told. We should pity them because they are deceived but we must be aware that they have permitted it, and have rejected God’s light. They need to repent.

The heathen could also already know from history that the God of Israel is the true God – from the way He has miraculously and faithfully dealt with His People: “Thy [*i.e. Israel’s*] renown **went forth among the heathen** for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 16:14), and “The LORD hath **made known** His salvation: His righteousness hath **He openly showed in the sight of the heathen**” (Psa. 98:2). But the heathen have rejected Israel instead of humbling themselves and learning of her God.

How does God teach us to reach the lost? By respecting their faith and giving weight to it? This cheapens the Christian Faith. Who is going to

be interested in *repenting* if they are told that God respects their religion? God values their souls, but not their views.<sup>96</sup>

Just as with Israel, unbelievers today are supposed to see a holy (i.e. *separate*), pure, people whom God blesses (and chastises when they err from His ways). Those who fear the Lord are wise (Job 28:28). And wisdom is something that greatly attracts and impresses unbelievers (1 Ki. 10:24 & 10:4-9).<sup>97</sup>

**5:5 THE ‘MODERN’ VIEW** At last we come to Paul’s speech at Mars Hill, recorded in Acts 17:18-34. Many folks today concentrate only on a handful of the seventeen verses in this passage, and hold this small selection up as the ideal way of making converts from other religions. They claim that Paul honoured the Athenians’ religion and merely had to bring them the “*full light*”. They assert that Paul endorsed the faith of these people and simply needed to redirect them to the ‘more complete’ truth, e.g. by giving a biblical name to their god.

This is certainly easier than having to stand up and, as led by God, denounce a false religion and trust God’s Spirit to witness to the truth and to convict the hearers. But such people apparently fail to notice the following facts about the events in Athens:

(a) Paul recognized that the Athenians were “**wholly** given to **idolatry**” (v16). Rome may have “sincere respect”, but Paul seems to have had

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<sup>96</sup> When discussing how to evangelize, in TALK 12, Nicky repeatedly states that Peter and Paul commanded us to speak “with respect” and to “be respectful” to unbelievers, but the passages he cites refer to respecting the *Lord*, not the lost. Nicky also teaches, in the same talk, that it is “arrogant” not to respect pagans. We should love them, but does the Bible really command us *always* to speak respectfully to those who hold to false religions? Might not the Holy Spirit sometimes want us to speak in other ways? (Presumably Nicky accords the famous cultist Rajneesh the unfortunate title “Bhagwan Shree” (meaning “Sir **God**”) *without* using quotation marks [Searching Issues, p64] because these would question the legitimacy of this title and hence show disrespect?)

<sup>97</sup> Ironically, Nicky may actually *discourage* evangelism toward those who believe in other gods when he says things like: “[E]verlasting life is offered to all who **believe**.” [Questions of Life, p66] – without explaining there the details of *what* we must “believe”. (Likewise Nicky writes “All who **believe** will be healed on that day” [Ibid, p190].)

little – if any. He will have *loved* the Athenians, but that is very different.

- (b) Paul was *encountered by* these heathens while he was *preaching in the market* (v17) – he was *avoiding* their Temple, not seeking it out!
- (c) Paul did *not* initiate the visit; the Athenians “**brought** him” to the Areopagus (v19).
- (d) *They* asked him about “this new doctrine” (vv19-20) – Paul was not involving himself in their worship, nor was he speaking of his own volition.
- (e) He immediately confronted them and said “in **all** things ... ye are **too superstitious**” (v22). In other words, however gracefully he spoke to these people, he didn’t “affirm” them or show respect for their “faith”.
- (f) He only happened upon their inscription to the “**unknown** god” *by providence* (v23) – Paul hadn’t deliberately sought to “learn their ways”. Despite his special ministry and his remarkably close and mature walk with the Lord, he still kept himself at arm’s length from deception.
- (g) Paul was not putting a Christian slant on a god that the Athenians already knew<sup>98</sup> – he was revealing a God that was, indeed, “**unknown**” to them. (Ecumenism, in contrast, ‘Christianizes’ *known* gods – ones that are already served. You cannot serve a god unknown to you.) There is no evidence that Paul showed the slightest regard for the gods that the Athenians *knew*.
- (h) He vehemently refuted their ideas, e.g. that God dwelt in a *man-made temple* (v24), or could be worshipped with men’s hands, i.e. “as though He needed anything” – see v25.
- (i) Paul quoted one of their *poets* (not one of their priests) but this was to illustrate the inconsistency of their beliefs and to highlight the fact that their religion did not worship the God of the Bible. He did not sanction their spiritual leaders.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Nicky worryingly says that “there are two possible gods: our Lord Jesus Christ or our ‘stomachs’” [*A Life Worth Living*, p90], which may lead some readers to imagine that pagan gods pertain to Christ instead of Satan.

<sup>99</sup> Whereas Nicky appears to attach some credibility to a “**pagan** thinker” when he quotes him in *Questions of Life*, p136.

- (j) He made clear that God “commandeth **all** men every where to **repent**” (v30) – i.e. not to rename their ‘gods’ and ‘correct their understanding’.
- (k) Paul did not ask for their views or for a debate or a ‘dialogue’ with them. He listened to God rather than the pagan ideas of his hearers. The pattern throughout Scripture is to *preach* the gospel.
- (l) He went on to warn them that a day of judgment was on its way (v31).

So much for the idea that being “all things to all men” means watering down the Gospel!<sup>100</sup> Paul’s own writings confirm what we have seen above. There is NO scope for ‘Christianizing’ heathen gods (2 Cor. 6:14-18). We are not to ‘modify’ the religious views of pagans; instead we are to show them, gently and patiently, why they have accepted a lethal counterfeit.

Nicky, on the other hand, says that we need to be “positive” when dealing with other religions because “Peter in Acts 4 did not attack other faiths”.<sup>101</sup> But Peter didn’t mention other faiths at all in Acts 4; nor did he need to since his audience consisted entirely of followers of the God of Israel who had faithfully travelled to the Passover Festival in obedience to the OT law. Elsewhere, Peter was very happy to “attack” (i.e. condemn) idolatrous faiths and false belief (see 1 Peter 4:3-4 or the whole of 2 Peter 2).<sup>102</sup>

**5:6 THE SCRIPTURAL VIEW** If “Christianizing” other religions is so sound, do we see it used elsewhere in biblical evangelism? Do we, for example, see Solomon trying to win over the Queen of Sheba by suggesting that his God was similar to hers? No. By giving her the unadulterated truth, Solomon had a huge impact:

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<sup>100</sup> In 1 Cor. 9:22 Paul actually wrote “I am **made** all things to all men”. In other words, he acted as God directed him, not as he himself thought best. Since the Bible is God’s infallible rule of faith *and practice* for us, any method of presentation of the gospel must have a clear biblical precedent to be ‘of God’.

<sup>101</sup> *Searching Issues*, p34. Even more worryingly, Nicky elsewhere teaches that “Jesus accepted **everyone**...” [*A Life Worth Living*, p62]. This may come as news to Herod and Caiaphas!

<sup>102</sup> For similar reasons, Nicky says “[W]e **don’t** start [*Alpha*] with the issue, ‘Is there a God?’ We start with the session, ‘Who is Jesus?’” [Talk 2]. But we really need to preach as to pagans – like Paul did in Athens – not as to Jews, like Peter in Acts 4. (See the book *Creation Evangelism for the New Millennium* recommended at the end of Part 3 for more.)

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the Name [*i.e. character*] of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions ... [*Ultimately, she said*] **Blessed** be the LORD **thy** God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD **loved Israel for ever**, therefore made He thee king, to do judgment and justice” (1 Ki. 10:1&9).

The first thing to say is that *we* cannot win souls. We can do nothing of ourselves (John 15:5). Only God’s Spirit can convict of sin, reveal the Saviour, and lead men to repentance.

Also note how, when Jonah was *sent* to preach to Babylon’s capital, Nineveh, he didn’t ‘get alongside’ the heathen, he didn’t attempt to Judaize their religion, and he went (eventually!) *when told by God*. He did not mince his words or “dialogue” with them, yet they repented. It was fully 150 *years* before the spirit behind Babylon finally led that city back into apostasy to its destruction.

To be effective in attracting the unsaved to Christ we need to live godly lives. If we do not “shine” God’s light then we cannot expect people to be attracted: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, ... in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye **shine as lights** in the world” (Php. 2:15). We should also be patient, kind, and gentle. But being Christ-like means that *truth* always comes first. Even Christ had to be firm at times in order to rescue people from deception.

How can we be like Jesus Christ (or indeed preach Him) if we are ignorant of Him? If we are going to be effective witnesses of the truth then we ourselves need to know the truth. We need to know the Word of God and allow the Spirit of God to enliven it to us. To do this we must approach the scriptures in the way God requires (see Prov. 2:1-10):

- We need to approach the Bible reverently (Isaiah 66:5), and gratefully, as the infallible Word of God,
- We need to pray before reading it and ask God to speak to us through it by His Holy Spirit,
- We need to read it frequently and with careful attention and with delight,
- We need to meditate on what we have read and obey it.



**5:7 THE WORD “WORD”** Please excuse the following slight digression, but it needs to occur here. Numerous Bible quotations appearing in this book refer to “the Word”. It is widely held that this is often not a reference to God’s written Word but to His ‘speaking’ word (and that therefore we don’t really need to concern ourselves with the former). This view is taken because of the understanding that the Greek words “rhema” and “logos” (both often translated “word”) mean totally different things. However, those who have been taught that when the Bible refers to “the Word” or “the Word of God” it often means something other than Scripture, ought to consider the following important questions:

- 1) Why does the entirety of Psalm 119 (all 176 verses of it) say that both the “Word” and “Word of God” refer to the “commandments”, “statutes”, “precepts”, “testimonies” and instructions that are given in the *holy scriptures*? Any Christian who wishes to understand the meaning of “the Word” really needs to read this Psalm. The Psalmist here also reveals the attitude to the scriptures that is required for God’s Spirit to bring those scriptures alive to us.
- 2) Has the person actually checked a concordance to see the contexts in which the word “logos” is used? They may get a shock if they do. The word “logos” is not only used *far* more frequently than the word “rhema”, but it is also used to mean *both* things – strongly indicating that both concepts are, at the very least, closely related.
- 3) Is the person aware that it is *logos* being used when the Bible says “He cast out the spirits with His **Word**” (Matt. 8:16)? Do they realize that the entire parable of the sower refers to the “logos” Word? – as do each of these examples:

“He [*Jesus*] preached the Word unto them” (Mark 2:2); “the disciples were astonished at His words” (Mark 10:24); “And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, ... because thou believest not my words” (Luke 1:20); “And they were astonished ... for his Word was with power” (Luke 4:32, see also v36); “they believed ... the Word which Jesus had **said**” (John 2:22); “ye seek to kill me, because My Word hath no place in you” (John 8:37); “Now ye are clean through the Word which I have **spoken** unto you” (John 15:3). This is just a fraction of the passages we could quote – in the Gospels alone!

- 4) Similarly, has the person looked up the verses where “rhema” occurs, or has the person just trusted someone who told them that the two words are not synonymous? A notable example of the two words being used

interchangeably is the passage 1 Pet. 1:23&25 where they are described *identically*. Another is: “They watched Him, ... that they might take hold of His words [*logos*], ... And they could not take hold of His words [*rhema*]” (Luke 20:20,26). The words are also used interchangeably in, for example, Matt. 12:36-37; John 12:48; Acts 10:36-37 (& v44); and Heb. 12:19.

**5:8** **“HEAR HIM”** Romans 10:17 says “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”. But the context of the surrounding verses shows that Paul is referring to attentive exposure to the contents of the *written* Word (whether preached or otherwise). For example, he lambasts zeal without *knowledge* (v2) and condemns *ignorance* of God’s righteousness (v3). The solution to both shortcomings is through the Bible. Paul defined “the Word” as the things that he and the other apostles preached (v8) – and we know that they preached from the Hebrew scriptures and produced the “New Testament” as a result; indeed, in this *very Chapter*, Paul writes “as the **Scripture** saith...” (v11).

In the two verses immediately before the “Faith cometh” quote above, Paul twice appeals to the written Word, saying “as it is **written**” (v15), and later quoting Isaiah. Each of the subsequent verses of the chapter quotes Scripture too.

In fact, to interpret “hearing comes by the word of God” to mean “hearing God comes by God speaking” appears nonsensical – it makes the statement pointless. Is it not more honest to acknowledge that it means ‘hearing God comes by [*respectful*] exposure to His written Word’?

Some teachers focus excessively on this one verse and thereby end up denying much of the rest of the New Testament. They cling to this solitary verse from Paul – but they reject his other words, for he said:

“Let the [*logos*] Word of Christ **dwelt in you richly**” (Col. 3:16).

And stated that:

“The holy **scriptures** ... are **able to make thee wise unto salvation**” (2 Tim. 3:15). See also 1 Tim. 4:13.

Soberingly, and as Nicky quotes during the Alpha Course, Paul also taught that:

“**All scripture** is given by inspiration of **God**, and is **profitable** for ... correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be **perfect**” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). (Note that the Greek here says that Scripture is “*God-breathed*” – i.e. has proceeded out from Him. This verse puts a rather different slant on Christ’s statement, in Matthew 4:4, that “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every** word that **proceedeth out** of the mouth of God”)

Even if a person *continues* to insist that rhema and logos *do* have different meanings, the actual usage in Scripture must force them to concede that the two are nevertheless *inextricably* linked. In other words, we normally hear from God by honest exposure to His written Word. As Nicky says, “God speaks to us, primarily when we read this book ... **[T]he Bible** is God’s revelation to all people. This is his will ... This is **God speaking to us** ... ‘The Bible is **alive**’” [Talk 5]. “**Scripture**. That’s the first – and **by far the most important way** in which God guides us.” [Talk 7].

A few final questions occur... Where does God teach that He does not direct His disciples today through study of His written Word? Why has God given us the Bible if we do not need it? (And is He not capable of giving us a Bible that applies in all ages? In fact, has He not promised to do exactly that?) Why did all the men of God throughout Scripture – including the Lord *Himself* – devote themselves to knowing the Bible and urge their hearers to do likewise? Why have godly men and women over the centuries given their lives to protect it? And why does the underground Church in China constantly beg for Bibles?

In his final Talk, Nicky encourages us most wisely to: “listen to things that will build us up in our faith; **listen to what God says in the Bible**” [Talk 15]. Elsewhere, he confirms that: “this book ... **is the word of God**” [Talk 4] and that “through the **Bible**, God speaks to us”.<sup>103</sup> Thus, wherever we mention “God’s Word” in this Unofficial Guide, we are referring to the scriptures – to which we in the West have the privilege of easy access. Here endeth the digression!

Let us conclude with what Paul – who was, after all, the apostle of the Gentiles – had to say. Romans 16:25-27 is a passage that beautifully sums up all the things we have touched on in this first Part of the book:

“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you **according to my gospel**, and **the preaching of Jesus Christ** ... and **by the**

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<sup>103</sup> 30 Days, p136.

## Chapter 5 - Our Attitude to Other Religions

**Scriptures** of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **made known to all nations** for the **obedience** of faith: To God only wise, be **glory** through **Jesus Christ for ever**. Amen.”

## RECOMMENDED READING

Note: We consider all the books and websites we have recommended in this and the following Parts to be generally sound and very helpful, but please test them against Scripture. If any teaching does not line up with the Bible then that teaching *must* be rejected (see 2 John 1:9-11; 1 Tim. 6:3; Gal. 1:8).

We ought to remember that the Bereans were commended as being “more noble” because “they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily**, [*to find out*] **whether those things** [*that Paul taught them*] **were so.**” (Acts 17:11). Please also note that, just because we recommend a book or a website here does not necessarily imply that we endorse *every* aspect of the writer’s ministry. Most bookshops should be able to obtain the items we cite.

### Truth and the Scriptures

**William R. Kimball, Is the Bible the Word of God? (Christian Equippers Int., 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150, 1985)**

*Explains why the Bible is the Word of God and gives sixteen reasons for accepting the Bible. A very helpful little booklet.*

**Andrew Rigden Green, The Authority of Scripture, (Kingsway Publications, 1 St. Anne’s Rd., Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 3UN, UK, 1990)**

*“Defends the claim, so crucial to evangelical belief, that Scripture is the Word of God, and as such our supreme authority.”*

**R.A. Torrey, Powerful Faith, (Whitaker House, 1996)**

*“Torrey provides ... proof that the Bible is true.” He answers questions such as ‘Does the Bible contradict itself?’, ‘What proof is there that the Bible is God’s Word?’ and ‘What Bible prophecies have already been fulfilled?’ A very concise treatment.*

### Science and the Scriptures

**Dr. David Rosevear, Creation Science, (New Wine Press, 1991)**

*A riveting book, easily digestible even for the least science-oriented reader, on the enormous weight of evidence supporting the Bible and on the honest scientists prepared to challenge their humanistic counterparts.*

## Recommended Reading for Part One

### **Henry M. Morris, *The Remarkable Record of Job*, (Master Books, Santee, California, 92071, USA, 1988)**

*A wonderful walk through the main lessons of the Book of Job and an eye-opening study of the multiplicity of accurate, modern scientific knowledge to be found there.*

For more information (including many other great books) on the relationship between science and the scriptures contact:

#### **The Creation Science Movement**

P.O. Box 888, Portsmouth, PO6 2YD, UK

Phone: +44 2392 293988

Website: //www.csm.org.uk

**or**

#### **Answers in Genesis**

P.O. Box 5262, Leicester, LE2 3XU, UK

Phone: +44 116 270 8400

Website: //www.AnswersInGenesis.org

## **The Trinity / Deity of Christ**

### **Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (Send The Light Books, P.O. Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 0QS, UK, 1987)**

*A classic work by a professional detective who was a renowned expert in scientific evidence as used in courts of law. He was not a believer, and examined the evidence in order to refute Jesus' resurrection. He was converted by his researches.*

### **Stuart Olyott, *The Three are One – What the Bible Teaches about the Trinity*, (Evangelical Press, 12 Wooler Street, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 1RQ, UK, 1979)**

*“How do we understand the Bible's teaching on the Trinity? And how can we refute those who reject this truth? In straightforward language, the author shows that the fact of the Trinity is clearly taught in Scripture and that it is foundational to the Christian gospel.”*

## **Bible Versions**

### **Dr. J.E. Cullis, *English Bibles: A Guide to Choice*, (J.E. Cullis, 1995)**

*The author looks at the qualities and weaknesses of English Bibles. A very useful and comprehensive introduction to the important subject of Bible versions.*

**Alfred Levell, The Old is Better – Some Bible Versions Considered, (Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 7 Brackendale Grove, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 3EL, UK, 1990)**

*The author, Chairman of the Trinitarian Bible Society for eleven years, looks at which are the most reliable and trustworthy versions of the Bible in this informative and very readable little booklet.*

(Other recommended books on this subject are listed at the end of subsequent Parts.)

Further information on Bible versions can be obtained from:

**The Trinitarian Bible Society,**

Tyndale House, Dorset Road, London, SW19 3NN, UK.

[//biz.ukonline.co.uk/trinitarian.Bible.society/contents.htm](http://biz.ukonline.co.uk/trinitarian.Bible.society/contents.htm)

## **Religions and Cults**

**Erwin W. Lutzer, Christ Among Other Gods: A Defence of Christ in an Age of Tolerance, (Scripture Press Foundation (UK) Ltd., 1994)**

*“A refreshing contemporary defence of the uniqueness of Christ against the background of our pluralistic society.”*

**Rabi R. Maharaj, Death of a Guru, (Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 97402, USA, 1977)**

*“A unique revelation of the inward struggles of a Hindu ... tracing his difficult search for meaning and his struggle to choose between Hinduism and Christ.” Very highly recommended.*

**G.J.O. Moshay, Who is this Allah? (Dorchester House Publications, Gerrards Cross, Bucks, SL9 8HA, UK, 1995)**

*“Many people in the West have little knowledge of Islam, and many Muslims have not been taught the difference between the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of the Quran ... A scholarly work ... but lucid and readable.”*

**‘What They Believe’ – A series of booklets on various religions, sects and cults by Harold J. Berry, available from most Christian bookshops.**

Also various publications on other religions, sects and cults available from Reachout Trust, 24 Ormond Road, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6TH, UK. (See website address at end of Foreword.)

## Recommended Reading for Part One

### **Helpful Websites**

As well as the Reachout Trust site (see Foreword) the following sites are especially pertinent to Part One. While some of them have significant problems, nevertheless they all also contain lots of good articles on many subjects, including the Trinity, Salvation and Christian living, Evangelism, Cults and Sects, World Religions, and Creation Science.

#### **Bible Believers Resource Page**

[//www.biblebelievers.net/kjcbible.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.net/kjcbible.htm)

#### **Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry**

[//www.carm.org/relativism/whatistruth.htm](http://www.carm.org/relativism/whatistruth.htm)

[//www.carm.org/bible/ms\\_science.htm](http://www.carm.org/bible/ms_science.htm)

[//www.carm.org/doctrine.htm](http://www.carm.org/doctrine.htm)

[//www.carm.org/questions\\_Jesus.htm](http://www.carm.org/questions_Jesus.htm)

[//www.carm.org/cults.htm](http://www.carm.org/cults.htm)

#### **Let Us Reason**

[//www.letusreason.org/Tridir.htm](http://www.letusreason.org/Tridir.htm)

[//www.letusreason.org/Islamdir.htm](http://www.letusreason.org/Islamdir.htm)

[//www.letusreason.org/Budhdir.htm](http://www.letusreason.org/Budhdir.htm)

#### **Evangelical Outreach**

[//www.evangelicaloutreach.org/deity.htm](http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/deity.htm)

#### **The Bible Truth Home Page**

[//www.acts2.com/thebibletruth/Cults\\_Archive.htm](http://www.acts2.com/thebibletruth/Cults_Archive.htm)

#### **Apologetics Index**

[//www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/apologetics.html#azindex](http://www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/apologetics.html#azindex)



# PART TWO

## WHEN IN ROME...

### CHAPTER 6

## ALPHA'S UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP

**6:1 INTRODUCTION** In Part One we saw that any unbiblical faiths are false and detestable to God – not least because they lie about His beloved Son and the incomparable sacrifice He made for an unworthy world.

We also noted that Rome's current attitude towards these other religions does not line up with Scripture and, in some cases, even amounts to an endorsement of the worship of false gods. (God calls all such worship "idolatry" and He repeatedly warns His People about it.) During none of its many references to Rome does the Alpha Course warn of this error. So are there any other facets of Catholicism that Alpha participants really need to know about?

Some readers may object to us focusing on Rome. After all, every church has its shortcomings. The following factors peculiar to Rome are some of the reasons why she deserves to be treated as a special case:

## Chapter 6 – Alpha’s Unique Relationship

- 1) Rome is an enormous institution, covering the globe and wielding both spiritual and political power over hundreds of millions of people. She is thus unlike any other part of the professing Church;
- 2) Rome always seems to play a prominent part in any gatherings of the World’s religions and has been the main force in leading, or encouraging, other churches into joining with these religions;
- 3) Rome sees herself as the inalienable head of the resulting World Church / World Religion;
- 4) Rome is mentioned more frequently in the Alpha Course material than any other church; and
- 5) While prepared to make some less-than-positive comments relating to some denominations,<sup>104</sup> Alpha treats Rome with enormous respect.

There are many glowing references to the Roman Catholic Church (plus numerous quotes from prominent Catholics) throughout the video talks and the related publications. For example, one issue of *Alpha News* devoted three pages (easily the largest article) to the subject of Alpha and Catholicism; and, in the same issue, another full page was given over to the views of two Catholic Bishops.<sup>105</sup>

For all these reasons, and others which will become apparent as we go along, it is the fascinating topic of Rome’s teachings (and her remarkable relationship to Alpha) that we must look at in this Part. If the reader should find they have problems with any section, it is hoped that this will not stop them from moving on to the next. We can guarantee that this study will prove to be a rewarding one when read through to the end.

In this opening chapter we will briefly assess the position Mary holds, and the devotion accorded her, within the Catholic belief system. Of course, not everyone in the Catholic Church holds to *all* the teachings of Rome, but the fact that the following instructions about Mary represent firm dogma – i.e. they *must* be accepted by anyone wishing to be a member of the Roman Church – means that any treatment of Rome would be very incomplete without a look at her. There may, too, be aspects of Rome’s teaching on Mary of which the reader is not currently aware, so please bear with this chapter before we move on to other things.

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<sup>104</sup> For example, Baptists (see Talk 9) and Anglicans (see Talk 1).

<sup>105</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar – Jun 2000.

**6:2 MOTHER OF GOD AND SINLESS BLESSED VIRGIN** The first point to note is that Rome refers to Mary as the “Mother of God” and the “perpetual Virgin”. Catholicism teaches that Mary was “Immaculately conceived” (i.e. born free from sin) so that she was not subject to death: “[S]he is acknowledged and honoured as being truly the **Mother of God...**” [*Vatican II*],<sup>106</sup> “[*Mary is*] ...the Mother of God, **ever Virgin**” [*Vatican II*]<sup>107</sup>

“She was **preserved** from **all** stain of **original sin** and by a special grace of God committed **no** sin of **any** kind during her **whole earthly life**” [*Catholic Catechism*].<sup>108</sup>

“[P]reserved free from all guilt of original sin, the **Immaculate Virgin** was taken up **body** and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn” [*Vatican II*].<sup>109</sup>

So strongly does Rome maintain these beliefs that any person not holding to them will, she claims, “incur the wrath of Almighty God”. Consider the following copper-bottomed statement from her:

“We pronounce, declare, **and** define it to be a **divinely** revealed **dogma**: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the **ever Virgin** Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory. Hence, if **anyone**, which God forbid, should dare wilfully to deny **or** call into doubt that which we have defined, let him know that he has fallen away **completely** from the divine and Catholic faith ... It is **forbidden** to **any** man to change this, Our declaration, pronouncement, and definition or, by rash attempt, to oppose and counter it. If **any** man should presume to make such an attempt, let him know that he **will incur the wrath** of Almighty God...” [Pius XII]<sup>110</sup>

Unfortunately, we can find no unambiguous support for these teachings in the Bible. Although Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ *when He was on the Earth* it is not possible for her to have been the “Mother of God”, since Father, Son and Holy Spirit all existed before her:

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<sup>106</sup> Walter M. Abbott, Gen. Ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, The Church, point 53, p86. (See also point 66, p94.)

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, point 69, p96.

<sup>108</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, [www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/ccc.html](http://www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/ccc.html), as at 03:Nov:2002

<sup>109</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, The Church, point 59, p90. (See also point 56, p88.)

<sup>110</sup> The Decree of Pope Pius XII on the Assumption of Mary, From the Bull *Munificentissimus Deus* (A.D. 1950), Quoted in William Webster, *Saving Faith: How Does Rome Define it?* (Christian Resources Inc., 1995), pp35-36.

“**Before** the mountains were brought forth, ... even from **everlasting** to everlasting, **Thou art God**” (Psa. 90:2); “Art Thou not from **everlasting**, O LORD my God,...?” (Hab. 1:12a); “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham** was, **I Am**” (John 8:58). See also Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:13-17, John 1:1 etc.

“God has no mother. God has always existed. God Himself is the Creator of all things. Since a mother must exist before her child, if you speak of a ‘Mother of God’ you are thereby putting someone before God. And you are therefore **making that person God** ... Mary would weep to hear anyone so pervert the truth as to call her the mother of her Creator”.<sup>111</sup>

Mary also bore other children and so she was *not* a perpetual virgin: “And he [*Joseph*] knew her not **till** she had brought forth her **firstborn** son” (Matt. 1:25). For some details of her other offspring, see Mark 6:3 and Mark 15:40.<sup>112</sup> (Any readers who feel that it is inappropriate to investigate Rome’s teaching on Mary should perhaps consider that John Paul II *confirmed* his belief in *all* of Rome’s Marian dogmas.)

Although Mary was righteous, and found favour in God’s sight, she, like us all, was still in need of a Saviour: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon **all** men, for that **all** have sinned” (Rom. 5:12; see also Rom. 3:9-12,19-20,23). “And **Mary** said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God **my Saviour**...” (Luke 1:46-47). As additional proof of this, Mary was not exempt from making the required *sin* offering after Christ’s birth (Luke 2:22-24, c.f. Lev. 12:2-8).

**6:3 CO-REDEEMER** Scripture notwithstanding, Rome goes further and claims that Christ Jesus *was not* our sole Redeemer, but that Mary is actually “co-redemptrix” with Him:

“[In 1995] Pope John Paul began a lengthy catechesis on the Blessed Virgin Mary ... culminating ... with his instruction on Our Lady’s active participation in the Sacrifice of Calvary. This **active participation** of Our Lady at **Calvary** is called the **co-**

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<sup>111</sup> Marcus Meyer, *No Mother*, quoted in Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), p135.

<sup>112</sup> Nicky does not correct the idea that, even centuries after the Lord’s birth, Mary was still “the Virgin”, when he mentions her in *Searching Issues*, p38.

**redemption.** Already in 1982 and 1985 Pope John Paul II used the term ‘coredeptrix’ in reference to our Lady in public addresses ... Since the time of Pope Benedict XV, this terminology was under review by the holy See [*papal office*]; the present Pope’s usage is a confirmation of this **traditional** view of Mary’s role in salvation history”.<sup>113</sup>

Yes, Mary *was* present at Christ’s crucifixion. But if we start going down the road described above then we would have to say that the malfactor on the cross next to Jesus was also a co-Redeemer, due to his ‘active participation’ in the crucifixion scene. But Scripture says no such thing about Mary or anyone else. The Lord Jesus Christ *alone* was beaten, lashed and crucified. He *alone* is sinless, and therefore He *alone* is able to save:

“Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... **Neither** is there **salvation** in **any** other” (Acts 4:10,12); “For there is one God, and **one** mediator [*or ‘reconciler’*] between God and men, the man **Christ Jesus**; Who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

“God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by **His Son**, whom ... **by Himself** purged our sins” (Heb. 1:1-3). See also 1 John 2:2; Rom. 3:23-25; and John 1:29 & 3:17.

The word ‘Redeemer’ can be found eighteen times in the Bible. In each case the surrounding text confirms that there is only one redeemer. The plural version of the word *never* occurs.

*Luke 1:42-48 shows that God the Father permits Mary to be called “blessed” for “all generations” because He chose her to bear the Lord Jesus Christ. She was a faithful and godly Israelite woman, and hers was a unique role, but other women in Scripture are also called “blessed” (e.g. in Gen. 24:60; Judg. 5:24; and Ruth 3:10).*

**6:4 MEDIATOR** Following on from the teaching that Mary is coredeptrix, Rome insists that she is also the mediator between us and her Son, the Lord Jesus – and as such is to receive the prayers of the faithful:

“[T]aken up to Heaven, she did **not lay aside** this **saving** role, but by **her** manifold acts of intercession continues to win for us **gifts of eternal salvation**. By her maternal charity, Mary cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth ... [T]he

<sup>113</sup> Pope John Paul II – Vicar of Christ: A Biography, [home.ici.net/~aath/alliance/apostles/johnpaul/life.html](http://home.ici.net/~aath/alliance/apostles/johnpaul/life.html), as at 29:jul:1998. See also *Documents of Vatican II*, The Church, point 56, p88, and point 58, pp89-90.

Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate [*Intercessor*], Auxiliatrix [*Assistant*], Adjutrix [*Adjudicator*], and **Mediatrix** [*Go-between*]" [*Vatican II*]<sup>114</sup>  
"Let **all** the children of the Catholic Church ... continue to **venerate**,<sup>115</sup> **invoke** and **pray to** the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, conceived without original sin ... **[S]he presents our petitions** in a most efficacious manner. **What she asks, she obtains**" [Pius IX]<sup>116</sup>

But only a High Priest – a *male* – can intercede with God on our behalf. The Bible just mentions one mediator between the Father and us: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have **an advocate** with the Father, **Jesus Christ the righteous**" (1 John 2:1). See also Rom. 8:34 and Heb. 7:25-26. There is no mention in Scripture of our needing to reach the Lord Jesus through prayers to Mary.

"How dishonouring it is to Christ to teach that He is lacking in pity and compassion for His people, and that He must be persuaded to that end by His mother! When He was on earth it was never necessary for anyone to persuade Him to be compassionate. Rather, when He saw the blind and the lame, the afflicted and hungry, He was 'moved with compassion' for them and lifted them out of their distress.

"He had **immediate** mercy on the wicked but penitent thief on the cross, and there was no need for intercession by Mary although she was there present. His love for us is as great as when He was on earth; His heart is as tender; and we need no other intermediary, neither His mother after the flesh, nor any saint or angel, to entreat Him on our behalf".<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, The Church, point 62, pp91-92. See also point 66, p94 and point 69, p96.

<sup>115</sup> As David Cloud points out, the word "venerate" primarily means "to solicit the goodwill of a **god**, [to] **worship**" [*Webster's College Dictionary*, Random House].

<sup>116</sup> *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pope Pius IX, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1854, quoted in *Pagan Sun Worship and Catholicism: The Sunburst Image, the Queen of Heaven and Baal*, [www.aloha.net/~mikesch/sunburst.htm](http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/sunburst.htm), as at 02:Nov:2002. When Nicky says, "For **most** of us there have been times when we have not been whole-hearted" [30 Days, p90], he suggests that others *have* been wholehearted – thus leaving a gap which Catholic teachers can easily fill with Mary.

<sup>117</sup> Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp147-148. Just as the opening chapter of *Questions of Life* spends a full page honouring someone who consecrated his life to Mary instead of to Christ (see end of section 6:7 for details), so the opening chapter of Nicky's book *30 Days* is largely about Mary. Nicky claims that, after the resurrection, she was "**utterly** changed" and experienced an "**utter** transformation" even though the Bible does not say

“For through **Him** we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

For us to pray to anyone but God is wrong (Deut. 18:10-12; Matt. 6:6; Luke 11:2). If people were reaching the true Mary then she would admonish them for disobeying God. Since this is not happening, who are people really contacting? And what of the increasingly frequent ‘Marian apparitions’ occurring around the world? Despite there being no examples of Marian apparitions in the Bible, nor any scriptures prophesying that Mary would reappear, growing numbers of Catholics believe that the apparitions are images of the true Mary. But the messages being given by this ‘angel of light’ reveal her true identity:

“**Each** religion is worshiping ... the **same** Creator! ... **All** religions are ... inspired by the Creator. **All** words which have been written in the Holy Books have been written by men in **unity** with the Creator”;<sup>118</sup> “One religion ... is **not** better than another”;<sup>119</sup> “Allah and God are the **same** spirit”<sup>120</sup>

These teachings are from *Babylon*. Indeed, the Babylonians too worshipped a woman whose image reappeared after her demise. An example of this is referred to in Acts 19:35. The enemy is easily capable of producing

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this. Nicky even appears to attribute much of the “explosive growth of the church” to this transformation of Mary [pp11-12].

<sup>118</sup> Annie Kirkwood, *Mary's Message to the World*, (Perigee, 1991), p45 as quoted in Roger Oakland, *New Wine and the Babylonian Vine*, (Understand the Times, 2002), p311. Note that Lourdes is one of the places the Vatican has confirmed as a site of ‘genuine’ Marian apparitions. (These famously occurred in 1858 to Bernadette Soubirous, and five million pilgrims now visit there yearly.) On page 12 of the official HTB magazine *An Introduction to the Alpha Course*, one Alpha testimony refers to a woman who came back from a visit to Lourdes “feeling **quite** changed” and thinking “I **definitely** want to become [a *Christian*]”. For HTB to include this testimony AND to add the unnecessary mention of Lourdes can only encourage people to go there or similar Marian shrines. Note that this testimony does not appear in some old, obscure HTB publication (though that would be unfortunate enough) but appears in the first column of the first testimony in a magazine central to Alpha which HTB encourages as many believers as possible to obtain. The person in question, Diane Louise Jordan, is one of the most famous faces on British television among young people – having been a presenter on some very popular shows.

<sup>119</sup> Kirkwood, *op. cit.*, p154, as quoted in Roger Oakland, *op. cit.*, p311.

<sup>120</sup> Kirkwood, *op. cit.*, pp40-44, as quoted in Roger Oakland, *op. cit.*, p312.

such ‘lying signs and wonders’ (2 Cor. 11:14-15) and Paul warned us to be on our guard against this (Gal. 1:8).<sup>121</sup>

*(Of course, large numbers of people believe in the errors we have cited above. But any reader who imagines that “a billion people can’t all be wrong” should consider the pattern throughout Scripture where it was indeed the majority who were usually in the wrong. It was often just a tiny remnant that overcame Satan’s temptations and deceptions and remained true to God’s Word. Among the large number of examples we could list: Only two people (out of the estimated two million escapees from Egypt) made it to the Promised Land, because the rest did not maintain a living faith in the God of Israel; only a very small proportion of the people in Elijah’s day stayed true to the Lord; and only an infinitesimal fraction of the exiles from Israel ever returned.)*

**6:5 AVE MARIA** One of the ways in which Catholics believe they can pray to Mary is by recitation of the ‘Hail Mary’ (or *Ave Maria* in Latin): “The Hail Mary is probably the most popular prayer known by Catholics outside the Mass. It forms part of the rosary ... In the rosary it serves as a **mantra**, a **repetitive** sequence of words, thoughts and rhythms...”<sup>122</sup>

This contradicts the Lord’s express command to us: “But when ye pray, use **not** vain **repetitions**, as the **heathen** do: ... **Be not ye therefore**

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<sup>121</sup> Nicky rightly says that God sometimes guides through visions [*Questions of Life*, p106]. He then mentions that Paul saw a vision “of a man in Macedonia standing and begging him”, and follows this by saying “**Not surprisingly**, Paul took this as guidance” from *God*. Sadly, Nicky thereby suggests that *all* visions (especially those of a lone person standing up and asking for something) are from God.

<sup>122</sup> Paul Turner, *Hail Mary*, [www.rpinet.com/ml/2304bi2.html](http://www.rpinet.com/ml/2304bi2.html), as at 02:Nov:2002. It is a shame that one of the six Alpha testimonies published in full in Nicky’s book *Telling Others* gives the distinct impression that the person in question believed they were saved through their mother’s prayers to *Mary*. The mother was described as a “devout Catholic” rather than as a “devout **Christian**” [p101]. (Naming her daughter ‘Mary’ does not exactly suggest she rejected Rome’s view and did not venerate Rome’s Queen.) When the daughter grew up, her mother begged her to join the *Catholic* church rather than a sound Protestant one [p104]. Mary wrote: “[O]ne of the things I **truly believe** is that it is through **her** prayers that I’m here today” [p101]. Instead of HTB clarifying this, they actually repeat the idea in their introduction to the testimony.



**like unto them:** for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask **Him**” (Matt. 6:7-8).<sup>123</sup>

Incidentally, the ‘Holy Rosary’ (used also by Moslems and others, and composed of a string of beads each of which is ‘counted off’ as the relevant prayer is recited) did not originate with Rome. It is of *pagan* origin, having been used for millennia in the religions of Buddhism and Hinduism:

“[I]n the **Hindoo** sacred books reference is made to it [*the Rosary*] again and again. Thus, in an account of the death of Sati, the wife of **Shiva**, we find the rosary introduced: ‘On hearing of this event, Shiva ... beheld lying the body ... **holding a rosary** in her hand.’ ... [T]he very idea of such a thing is thoroughly Pagan. It supposes that a certain **number** of prayers must be regularly gone over; it overlooks the great demand which God makes for the **heart**, and leads those who use them to believe that form and routine are everything, and that ‘they must be heard for their much speaking [Matt. 6:7]’”.<sup>124</sup>

A rosary is also to be seen around the neck of the Ephesian ‘goddess’ Diana (also known as “the Mother of the gods”), the worship of whom Paul thoroughly denounced in Acts 19:24-28.<sup>125</sup> Given these facts about the “Ave Maria”, it is unexpected to find Nicky making a quip on the topic:

“I heard of one man, he was a Cockney, and he was in a dilemma because he had these two girlfriends and he didn’t know which of them to marry ... Sharon ... [*or*] Maria ... so he decided to go

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<sup>123</sup> Oddly, one of Nicky’s favourite conversion testimonies includes a reference to something like a mantra: “I began **talking** [*rather than ‘crying out’?*] to the living God ... The **only** words I could say aloud were ‘Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!’” [Talk 3]. Another mantra-like testimony (albeit in Russian) appears in *Questions of Life*, p149.

<sup>124</sup> Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, pp187-188. Although Nicky helpfully says “God does not **want** us to repeat meaningless words” [*Questions of Life*, p91], he does not ban the repetition of words that *do* have some ‘meaning’. He also sandwiches this statement between two others that nullify it. Firstly Nicky says, “There is no set **way** to pray ... we are free to talk to him [*God*] **as we wish**”, and then he teaches, “many people find it helpful to have a **pattern** for prayer”. Later in the same book he again defends “**set** forms of prayer” [p133].

<sup>125</sup> One danger of importing pagan practices into the church is that pagan faiths which continue to use those practices can, with time, appear to be ‘church-like’ and ‘on the right track’ to Christians who have adopted those same practices and think them to be of Christian origin.

inside a **church**<sup>126</sup> to pray. So he said to the Lord ‘Oom shall I ‘ave?’ and he looked up and saw ‘**Ave Maria**’” [Talk 7].

Is it really wise to refer to an idolatrous practice in such a light-hearted way? The Lord certainly does not make light of it (see 1 Cor 10:14). Nicky is seemingly oblivious to what is involved in the *Ave Maria*.

The above quote was in the context of marriage. It continues: “Are we spiritually compatible? It’s **common sense** that the person we marry is someone who is ... **spiritually compatible**” [Talk 7]. We think this is somewhat ironic because, if a person encourages friendly relations with Rome’s view on Mary then they are *not* promoting spiritual compatibility.<sup>127</sup>

“**Be not deceived:** neither ... **idolators**, nor adulterers ... shall inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

**6:6 QUEEN OF HEAVEN** Although Mary was respected by the people of her day, Christ Jesus took every opportunity to *refute* the idea that she was to be ‘adored’, emphasizing instead that *all* who hear and obey the Lord God are blessed:

“A certain woman ... said unto Him, Blessed is the **womb** that bear Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked. But **He** said, Yea **rather**, blessed are they that **hear the Word of God**, and **keep it**” (Luke 11:27b-28).

From the scriptures below it can be seen that there were actually some occasions when Mary was *obstructing* Jesus’ ministry, for which He needed to reprove her:

“**While He yet talked** to the people ... one said unto Him, Behold, Thy **mother** ... [*is*] desiring to speak with Thee. But **He** answered ... **Who is My mother?** ... [W]hosoever shall do the will of my Father Which is Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, **and mother**” (Matt. 12:46-50).<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Although Nicky occasionally defines a ‘church’ as a body of people, he often uses the word “church” to mean a physical building [e.g. in Talks 8 (3 times), 10 (3 times), and 13 (twice)]. Even if this is done out of habit, should church buildings really have ‘Ave Maria’ on their walls?

<sup>127</sup> Nicky also teaches that “you can pray **any way at all**” [Talk 6]. This is not borne out by Scripture but allows Rome to seriously misdirect people.

<sup>128</sup> Mary was obstructing the Lord’s work here. Nicky seems quick to praise Mary as if she was the most faithful disciple in Scripture, but her attitude was *not* always right. Nevertheless, Nicky states: “Our **attitude** should be like that of **Mary**. **Mary** said this: ‘I am the Lord’s servant’. This is **Mary**

“Jesus saith unto her [*Mary*], **Woman, what have I to do with thee?**...” (John 2:4a).

In fact Jesus, while naturally *respectful* toward Mary, did not hesitate to correct her wrong thinking concerning His actions – even as a child of twelve: “His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? ... And He said ... How is it that ye sought Me? **Wist** [*knew*] **ye not** that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:48b-49).<sup>129</sup> Despite all of this, Rome adores her as ‘Queen’: “...She was exalted by the Lord as **Queen of all...**” [*Vatican II*].<sup>130</sup>

“From the earliest ages ... the Catholic Church ... has addressed prayers of petition and hymns of praise and veneration to **the Queen of Heaven** ... Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, **reigns** with a mother’s solicitude over the entire world, just as she is crowned in heavenly blessedness with the glory of a Queen” [Pius XII]<sup>131</sup>

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the mother of Jesus. ‘**I** am the Lord’s servant, and **I** am willing to do **whatever** he wants’” [Talk 7]. That is *not* what she said, even in Nicky’s Bible version (NIV); nor do these words reflect how things always worked out. Nicky’s Bible version actually quotes Mary, in Luke 1:38, saying to the angel “May it be **to** me as you **have said**”, *not* “I am willing to do **whatever** he wants”. The two translations bear almost no resemblance to one another. (As we said in chapter 2, if the reader is finding these footnotes so annoying that there is a risk of ditching the entire book then please ignore them. The body of the book does not rely on them, but they will be of value for certain people.)

<sup>129</sup> Regarding the level of faith possessed by the mother of Jesus, Nicky gives an analogy. He likens the Lord to ‘Blondin’ (the 19<sup>th</sup> century tightrope-walker). Nicky says that the *only* person who completely trusted Blondin was *his mother*: “Blondin couldn’t persuade **anybody** ... [*apart from*] **his own mother**. She was the **only** one who trusted him enough...” [Talk 4]. “Blondin’s **mother**, [*was*] the **only** person willing to put her life in his hands” [*Questions of Life*, p60]. Whether it is entirely wise to liken the Lord to a circus performer is one thing, but the message about His mother will delight those who seek ammunition with which to promote Mary-worship. In truth, Nicky is factually mistaken anyway. Blondin’s manager too allowed himself to be carried across Niagara – and *on Blondin’s back*. This required substantially greater trust because it was a far more exhausting technique – and was therefore far more dangerous. It nearly killed them both.

<sup>130</sup> *Documents of Vatican II*, point 59, p90.

<sup>131</sup> *Ad Caeli Reginam*, Encyclical of Pius XII on Proclaiming the Queenship of Mary, October 11, 1954, [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xii/encyclicals/](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/), as at 02:Nov:2002.

There is only one passage in Scripture in which reference is made to ‘veneration to’, or adoration of, a “Queen of Heaven” – and such behaviour is shown to be an abomination to the Lord:

“[T]he women knead their dough, to make cakes to **the Queen of Heaven** ... that they may provoke **Me to anger** ... Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, Mine anger and My **fury** shall be poured out upon this place ... **Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, ... I will watch over them for evil, and not for good:** ... until there be an end of them” (Jer. 7:18-27).

The “Queen of Heaven” is the Babylonian goddess, Semiramis (also known as Ishtar or Easter<sup>132</sup> etc in different countries, plus Astarte – the plural of which is Ashtaroth) who, along with her husband Nimrod (Bel or Baal – plural Baalim) and her child Tammuz, formed the false trinity worshipped by Israel during times of apostasy:

“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served **Baalim**: And they **forsook** the LORD God of their fathers, Which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the **people that were round about them**, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to **anger**. And they forsook the LORD, **and served Baal and Ashtaroth**. And the **anger** of the LORD was **hot** against Israel...” (Judg. 2:11-14).

“Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange

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<sup>132</sup> Nicky seems happy to quote an author as calling our Lord “the **Easter Jesus**” [*Searching Issues*, p65] and as referring to the “**Easter grave**” [*Questions of Life*, p38]. Nicky also refers to the Lord’s body as being “absent from the tomb that first **Easter day**” [Talk 2]. This breaks the crucial link between the Lamb of God and the Jewish Passover. It also seems an unnecessary reference to the Babylonian festival of ‘Easter’ (a pagan fertility festival – hence the preponderance of rabbits and eggs in Easter celebrations). Besides, the Lord’s “absence” did not occur on the *first* Easter; this festival had already been observed for centuries, even by the Romans – hence “**Herod [was] ... intending after Easter to bring him [Peter] forth**” (Acts 12:1,4, KJV). Although the Greek word translated “Easter” here is *pascha*, this term was used to refer both to the Jewish Passover *and* to the Roman festival of Easter that Herod would have observed. (And since the Jewish Passover *preceded* the feast of unleavened bread, which was already underway (v3), the reference to *pascha* here can only refer to the pagan counterfeit. See *Conies, Brass, Easter* by Dr. Jack Moorman (A.V. Publications), for fuller details.)

gods and **Ashtaroth** from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines ... And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served **Baalim and Ashtaroth**” (1 Sam. 7:3 & 12:10).

Note that the *true* Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost have various titles (e.g. Jehovah, Adonai, Tree of Life, Lamb of God, Comforter, Spirit of Truth etc) and are described in Scripture in various ways and forms (e.g. as a Judge, a King, a Shepherd, a High Priest, a burning bush, an angel, a voice from Heaven, a smoking furnace and so on). In a similar way, the members of the *false* trinity were each given various names and ‘identities’. When we discover these names and characters, a number of seemingly impenetrable scriptures referring to these ‘gods’ suddenly make sense.<sup>133</sup>

The original name of the son in the false Babylonian trinity was Tammuz. Like Christ, Tammuz died young. Hence:

“He said also unto me [*Ezekiel*], Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see **greater abominations** that they do. Then He brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD’S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women **weeping for Tammuz**” (Ezek. 8:13-14).<sup>134</sup>

Rome teaches that Mary “has been **appointed by God** to be the Queen of Heaven and earth” [Pius IX].<sup>135</sup> But according to God’s own Word, the Queen of Heaven is an “idol” and an “abomination”. It is pertinent to note that the Babylonian goddess, Semiramis, was also called “the Virgin Mother” and the “Mother of the gods”. The ‘Mary’ that Rome

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<sup>133</sup> For example, Bel is another name for Nimrod – the man behind the tower of Babel where the Lord confounded the speech of the people, so we get: “Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, **Bel is confounded** ... [*Babylon’s*] **idols** are **confounded**, her **images** are broken in pieces” (Jer. 50:2).

<sup>134</sup> Incidentally, the annual forty days of bewailing (a form of self-punishment) for the Babylonian god Tammuz has been adopted into the church, through Rome, and renamed ‘Lent’. A substantial article in the March 1999 issue of HTB’s *UK Focus* newspaper was devoted to the belief that we should “give up something” for Lent, insisting that it is a *Christian* festival – despite no Bible verse saying it is a sound NT practice. In fact, Paul taught the *opposite* in Gal. 4:9-11 and Col. 2:20-23. Although ‘Lent’ is now part of official teaching in Nicky’s denomination (C.ofE.), he does not follow the official Anglican line on other matters, so why here?

<sup>135</sup> *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pope Pius IX, 1854, quoted in *The Sunburst Image*.

worships is not the Mary of the Bible but the goddess of Babylon. (This would explain why most images of ‘Mary’ look nothing like the face of a Jewess.)<sup>136</sup>

Rome claims that the ‘type’ of worship given to Mary is different from the ‘type’ that God should receive. The Bible, however, does not make a distinction. ANY type of worship to anyone other than God is a terrible act in the eyes of our wonderful, holy, jealous Lord (Exo. 20:1-5; Matt. 4:10). In practice, Mary holds the central place in the hearts of many Catholics regardless.

What the scriptures say about Mary is more than sufficient to know (a) she was a sinner like us all, (b) she wasn’t always helpful to the Lord’s ministry, (c) she wasn’t a perpetual virgin, (d) she wasn’t co-redemptrix, (e) she isn’t a mediator, and (f) she is not ‘Queen of Heaven’.<sup>137</sup>

It is also apparent that, if Mary is meant to be so central to the Christian Faith then this fact would be made very plain in the Bible – instead of her receiving just a few brief mentions. When this observation is put to Catholics, some suggest that the discrepancy is due to parts of the Bible going missing over the years. Patently this is not so. If the Lord God created the scriptures would He not ensure their preservation? Indeed He has promised to do so:

“**For ever**, O LORD, Thy Word is **settled** in Heaven ... Thy Word is true from the beginning; and **every one** of Thy righteous judgments **endureth for ever**” (Psa. 119:89&160); “The law of the LORD is **perfect**...” (Psa. 19:7); “The counsel of the Lord standeth **for ever**, the thoughts of His heart to **all generations**” (Psa. 33:11).

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<sup>136</sup> There can now be no doubt too that the ‘Jesus’ which Catholics reach through ‘Mary’ is a different person from the Lord Jesus Christ – as per 2 Cor. 11:4a. (This would likewise shed light on why Rome’s pictures and statues of Christ do not look Jewish either.) See Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, Chapter 2, Section 3 for a very comprehensive treatment of the subject of Mary and Semiramis.

<sup>137</sup> Nicky gives real credibility to ‘Cardinal’ Schönborn’s book *Loving the Church* by calling it “fascinating” and by quoting it at some length in *Alpha News*, #20, p18. Peter Burden-Teh points out that this book refers to “the Blessed Mary **Ever-Virgin praying** to God for us”, and that it also proclaims the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception [*Christianity and Society* magazine, April 2001, p14].

“[T]he Word of our God shall stand **for ever**” (Isa. 40:8), “[T]he Word of God ... abideth for ever ... [T]he Word of the Lord **endureth for ever**” (1 Pet. 1:23-25a).<sup>138</sup>

**6:7 SAINTS AND IMAGES** While Mary receives special ‘veneration’, Rome also encourages the revering of other historical ‘saints’ and the observance of ‘Saints days’. But when Scripture refers to ‘saints’ it means *every one* of the Lord’s true followers, not just a few deceased ones: “Unto the church of God ... **to them** that **are** sanctified [*i.e. made saintly*] **in Christ Jesus**, called to be saints...” (1 Cor. 1:2; see also Rom. 1:7). The epistles are addressed to *living* saints:

“...unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which **are** in all Achaia” (2 Cor. 1:1); “...to the saints which **are** at Ephesus...” (Eph. 1:1). See also 2 Cor. 13:13, Php. 1:1 & 4:21-22, Col. 1:2 & Heb. 13:24.

Although we should emulate the faithful men and women of God from past centuries, Rome’s reverence goes well beyond that – into idolatry. Astonishingly, many of Rome’s saints can be traced back to *pagan* heroes and heathen ‘gods’ and have simply been adopted by Rome in a ‘Christian’ guise. Although this may have been done to draw pagans into the Roman Catholic Church, it now means that believers are honouring idols.

(Besides, men should be drawn into the Church by its *dissimilarity* to the world, not by its similarity. As Nicky quotes in Talk 15, Romans 12:2 says “Be **not** conformed to this world”. Far from encouraging us to bring pagan things *in*, the Lord blesses those who purge all such things *out* – see 2 Ki. 10:26-30, 11:17-20; 2 Ki. 18:1-6, 23:24-25 etc.)

Charles Chiniquy, a Catholic priest for many years, reveals the practices of that vast institution in his famous book *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*. He had this to say of Rome’s saints and the images that have been made of them:

“Were not our prayers to the Virgin and to the saints repeated, almost in the same words, by the [*pagan*] worshippers who

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<sup>138</sup> As an aside, if the reader feels that 66 is a rather odd figure as a total for the number of books in the Bible and is tempted to think that four might be missing – because seventy is a much more ‘biblical’ number – it is worth remembering that the Psalms comprise 5 books on their own, bringing the actual total to 70.

prostrated themselves before the images of their **gods**, just as we repeated them every day before the images which adorn our churches?...

“We knew by history the year in which the magnificent temple consecrated *to all the gods*, bearing the name of **Pantheon**, had been built at **Rome**. We were acquainted with the names of several of the sculptors who had carved the statues of the gods in that **heathen temple**, at whose feet the idolators bowed respectfully, and words cannot express the **shame** we felt on learning that the Roman Catholics of our day, under the very eyes and with the same sanction of the Pope, still prostrated themselves before the SAME IDOLS, in the SAME TEMPLE, and to obtain the SAME FAVOURS ... but instead of calling this statue Jupiter, we call it Peter; and instead of calling that one Minerva or Venus, we call it St. Mary”.<sup>139</sup>

Though Rome works hard to downplay the nature of her practices regarding statues of Mary and other departed ‘saints’, Scripture is very clear:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any **graven image**, or any **likeness** of any thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt **not** bow down thyself to them, **nor serve them**” (Exod. 20:4,5a). See also Deut. 5:7-9; Lev. 19:4; and 1 John 5:21.

“They ... were mingled among the heathen, and **learned their works**. And they served their idols: which were a **snare** unto them... Thus were they defiled with their own works, ... Therefore was the **wrath** of the LORD kindled” (Psa. 106:34-40).

While Nicky rightly points out that “the word ‘saints’ **as it appears in the New Testament** simply means Christians” [Talk 7], he doesn’t specify that it means ALL Christians,<sup>140</sup> and he neglects to make any reference to the *idolatry* involved in Rome’s ‘veneration’ of her ‘saints’.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, he

<sup>139</sup> Charles Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, (Protestant Truth Society, undated edn.), pp48-49, non-bold emphases in original.

<sup>140</sup> A similar comment appears in *Questions of Life*. Sadly, it is hidden away as an end-note (Number 34 – one of only *four* such explanatory end-notes for the whole book). Throughout his material on the ‘Counsel of the Saints’ in *Questions of Life*, pp108-10, Nicky consistently allows for the interpretation that these ‘saints’ do not still need to be living on the earth. In *30 Days* he actually implies that saints are “all who have **died** in faith” [p50].

<sup>141</sup> When Nicky discusses the fact that we can receive guidance through “the Counsel of the Saints” [Talk 7] he doesn’t make plain that this means



often prefers to use the unnecessary prefix “saint” rather than “apostle” when referring to Peter, Paul or John. Likewise he invariably uses the term when quoting such heroes of Rome as Augustine of Hippo,<sup>142</sup> ‘John of the Cross’, and Francis of Assisi.<sup>143</sup>

Another ‘saint’ eulogized by Nicky is peculiarly relevant to this chapter. His name was Maximilian Kolbe and, in a WWII concentration camp, he sacrificed his life for a man he didn’t know. Unfortunately Nicky doesn’t mention a rather important fact about Kolbe that would be known by almost all of his Catholic hearers – but completely unknown by virtually all Protestants...

The reason Kolbe was made into a Roman ‘saint’ was not primarily because he died in another man’s place; others have done the same.<sup>144</sup> His ‘sainthood’ was conferred because he was possibly the most ardent Mariolator (Mary-worshipper) in Roman history. He: formed the ‘Militia of Mary Immaculate’ with the aim of “bringing all men to love Mary Immaculate”; built a city in Poland called “the City of the Immaculate” for the sole purpose of promoting Mariolatry; set up a similar base in Japan for the same purpose; published monthly reviews and daily newspapers extolling Mariolatry; and created a seminary to “prepare priests for ... every task in the name of the Immaculate and with her help”. He believed Mary is the “spouse of the Holy Trinity” and that she, not Christ, will “crush the serpent’s head”.

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*living* saints only. Regarding the people from whom we should seek guidance, Nicky also says “we should choose the people because of the **position** that they **are in**” [Talk 7]. For Romanists, no living saint can be in a higher position than those already in Heaven. (Personally, we think the choice should not be based on formal ‘positions’ – otherwise the Pharisees would have been high up the list in Jesus’ day. Better surely to pick those who are older and wiser in the faith and who clearly show the fruit of the Spirit of God as listed in Gal. 5:22 and 1 John.)

<sup>142</sup> See, for example, Talks 13 & 15 or *30 Days*, p107.

<sup>143</sup> Towards the very end of the Alpha videos, Nicky drives home where he thinks the term “saint” should be used. He has “**Saint** Paul”, “**Saint** John”, “**Saint** Francis of Assisi” and “**Saint** John of the Cross” all appearing in the same talk [Talk 14]. Also, in the very last chapter of *Searching Issues*, Nicky refers happily to “**St.** George”, “**St.** Andrew” and especially to Ireland’s “**St.** Patrick” [p107]. (Note that Francis of Assisi was a panentheist who was strongly influenced by Sufism and was a loyal subject to the ‘Pope’ who conceived and launched what was to become the “bloody Inquisition” of the Dark Ages [Burns, *op. cit.*, p457-8].)

<sup>144</sup> Nicky himself supplies an example of a man giving his life “as a substitute to save others” on page 45 of *Questions of Life*. But no recognition by Rome is mentioned. Indeed even the man’s name is omitted.

He even took the name ‘Mary’ as his middle name. He is today often known as ‘Apostle of Mary’.

So what lay behind his sacrifice in WWII? Was it love for a fellow Pole in severe trouble? Kolbe himself admitted that everything he did was actually for the sake of Mary and to help “spread her cult”. “He regarded himself as no more than an instrument of her will.” And *she asked him to be a martyr*.<sup>145</sup> Nicky takes up the story:

“[Kolbe] went with the other nine [men] to the starvation bunker and apparently there was an amazing atmosphere in that starvation bunker. He got them all praying and singing together. In fact, ... they didn’t even die of starvation, they needed that bunker for other people and they gave them a lethal injection on the 14 August, 1941. The orderly apparently said that the bunker was just like a church.”

As most Catholics will know, the orderly also said “[T]here were daily loud prayers, the **rosary** and singing ... Fervent prayers and songs to the **holy Mother** resounded in all the corridors of the Bunker ... **Fr. Kolbe was leading** and the prisoners responded in unison”.

In 1982 Kolbe was the focus of a special gathering in Rome described by Nicky in Talk 3. Nicky says “in St. Peter’s Square, Rome, Maximillian Kolbe’s death was put in its proper perspective.” Unfortunately, Catholic hearers will be aware that the “proper perspective”, and the purpose of that day, was that Kolbe’s unswerving love for Mary in place of Christ was to be rewarded with Roman *sainthood*. Course leaders may want to be aware of this because many participants come from a Catholic upbringing and misunderstandings could easily occur.

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<sup>145</sup> Kolbe said that, as a young man he had “asked the Mother of God what was to become of me. Then she came to me holding two crowns, one white, the other red. She asked if I was willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant I should persevere in purity, and the red that I should become a **martyr**. I said that I would accept them **both**”. He genuinely believed that “suffering accepted with love” would bring him “closer to **Mary. All** his life he had dreamt of a **martyr’s crown**” [Mary Craig, *Blessed Maximilian Kolbe – Priest Hero of a Death Camp*, [www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/kolbe2.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/kolbe2.htm), as at 02:Nov:2002]. We will unfortunately have to point out further examples of Nicky honouring well-known Mariolators later in the book.

## CHAPTER 7

# “BLESSED BE MY ROCK”

**7:1 “COMPLETELY YOURS”** Perhaps more so than any previous Roman Pope, John Paul II dedicated his pontificate to Mary. His oft-repeated prayer *totus tuus Maria* means ‘I am **completely** yours **Mary**’.<sup>146</sup> It was also his practice to consecrate each place visited to the ‘Blessed Virgin’. In 1983, at Fatima, he consecrated the *world* to the ‘Immaculate heart of Mary’.<sup>147</sup> On 8<sup>th</sup> October 2000 he also consecrated the ‘humanity of the New Millennium’ to her. As we have seen, though, this ‘Mary’ is not the mother of Christ but a Babylonian ‘goddess’. So, to whom did John Paul II *actually* ‘consecrate’ the world?...

Nicky regularly mentions the Roman Pope.<sup>148</sup> To help Course leaders advise Alpha guests about the papacy we must now turn to that office. (We have already seen that Rome expects her Pope to be at the head of any unified World Church – or indeed of a unified World Religion. Clearly (and taking into account the aforementioned Papal consecration of the world to ‘Mary’) this issue is of major spiritual importance.)

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<sup>146</sup> For the text of his main prayer to Mary, see [zenit.org/English/visualizza](http://zenit.org/English/visualizza).

<sup>147</sup> See *Pope John Paul II - Vicar of Christ - A Biography*.

<sup>148</sup> For example, Nicky refers to “The Pope” [*Questions of Life*, p20]; “the Pope” [*Ibid*, p171]; “The Pope” [*Ibid*, p208]; and “the papal household” [Talks 9 & 14].

**7:2 PAPAL POWER** Some of the titles claimed by the Roman Pope are ‘the Vicar of Christ upon earth’, ‘Supreme Head’, ‘Sovereign Pontiff’, and ‘His Holiness’. These are all very grand titles, suggestive of a mighty and magnificent office – and that is indeed what we find in papal statements regarding the extent of Papal power:

Pope Boniface VIII asserted that “[E]very human creature is **subject** to the Roman pontiff, – this we declare, say, define, and pronounce to be **altogether necessary to salvation**”,<sup>149</sup> and Pope Innocent III said “**Every cleric must obey the Pope, even if what he commands is evil; for no-one may judge the Pope**”.<sup>150</sup> Rome’s assertions go further still:

“[A]ll the faithful of Christ **must** believe that the holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff possesses the **primacy over the whole world**, ... This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which **no one can deviate** without loss of faith **and salvation**”  
[*Vatican I*]<sup>151</sup>

“[A]s Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has **full, supreme, and universal power over the Church**. And he can **always** exercise this power **freely**”  
[*Vatican II*].<sup>152</sup>

The Pope of Rome, then, would have tremendous rule and control over anyone who was to move on from the Alpha Course into the Roman Catholic system. So how do these and other ‘papal’ claims stand up to examination by the light of God’s Word? And what are the implications?

**7:3 PETER’S SUCCESSOR?** It would probably be helpful to start this topic by examining Matthew 16:15-19 upon which the whole papal

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<sup>149</sup> Pope Boniface VIII (1302). Endorsed by *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, giving historical background to papal decree *Unam Sanctam*, quoted in William Webster, *Saving Faith: How Does Rome Define It?*, pp21-22.

<sup>150</sup> Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), quoted in Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, p87. Innocent III also said that the “vicar of Jesus Christ” is “higher than man, who judges all and is judged by no-one...” [Sermon on the Consecration of a Pope, quoted in Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300* (Univ. of T. Press, 1988), p132].

<sup>151</sup> Vatican I, quoted in Webster, *Saving Faith*, pp24-25. Innocent III confirmed this, writing that Peter was given “not only the Universal church but the **whole world to govern**” [*Letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople* (1199), quoted in Brian Tierney, *op. cit.*, p132].

<sup>152</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, The Church, point 22, p43.

position depends, and then move on to examine what God’s Word says about some of the other papal titles:

“*[Jesus said]* whom say ye [*plural*] that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed **it** unto thee, but My Father Which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon **this rock** I will build My church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against **it**” (Matt. 16:15-18).

Rome claims that, by saying to Peter: “upon this rock I will build my church”, the Lord Jesus made him both the head of the Church and its foundation. Furthermore, Catholicism teaches that Rome later became Peter’s bishopric, so it follows that all subsequent bishops of Rome inherited this commission. According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

“It is Peter who is the rock of the Church ... Here then Christ teaches plainly that in the future the ... Church will be built on Peter ... **Peter** is to be to the Church what **the foundation** is in regard to a house ... **what is not joined** to that foundation is **not part of the Church**; ... He is to be the principle of unity, of stability, and of increase ... by **possessing authority over it**”.<sup>153</sup>

Thus does Rome insist that Peter is the “rock” on which Christ’s church will be built. However, even a cursory study of this passage shows that Rome’s claims are problematic:

Firstly, Christ doesn’t say “upon **you** I will build my church”, so verse 18 is not as conclusive as Rome would wish. When Christ talks of “this rock”, He is referring to the “it” of the previous verse where He says “flesh and blood hath not revealed **it**”. What is this “it”? It is that He, the “Son of man”, the man who was soon to be crucified, to die, and to rise again, is (as Peter had just testified) “the Christ, the Son of the living God”. It is *this* central fact that was going to be the basic truth, the “rock”, on which Christ’s church was going to be built. This is a truth that God reveals to *all* believers (1 John 5:20) – despite Nicky’s odd assertion that “we **can’t** all do what Peter did”. Peter was merely rewarded with a change of name that reflected the truth he had just uttered.

The previous point is heavily reinforced when we look at the word “rock” as it appears in Scripture. The word translated ‘Peter’ is ‘Petros’ (masculine) in Greek meaning ‘pebble’ or ‘stone’; while the word translated

<sup>153</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, [www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm), as at 02:Nov:2002.

‘rock’ is ‘petra’ (feminine). Though the two sound similar, their meanings are quite different. Rome tries to argue that the Aramaic word is the same in both instances. But if that is the case, why is the same *Greek* word not used in both instances in the Bible? Rome is adamant that the Aramaic word for “Peter” (i.e. “Cephas”) means “Rock”, but God has already dealt with this misconception in John 1:42...

“And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called **Cephas**, which is by interpretation, **A stone**”

The Lord is making a play on words, as often happens in scripture. He was not identifying, but *contrasting*, Peter with the *immovable Rock* – i.e. Himself. As the wise man built his house upon the solid rock, not the shifting sand of the foolish man (Matt. 7:24-27), so it would be folly to build the Christian Church on a pebble which is movable and easily overturned – just as, in fact, Peter unfortunately proved to be so soon after this event (see Matt. 16:21-23). The Word of God makes it abundantly clear that *Christ* is the rock: “For who is God save the LORD? or **who is a rock save our God?**” (Psa. 18:31).

Note that the Hebrew name for “Jesus” is “Yeshua” meaning “salvation”. There are numerous places in Scripture that speak of this “Rock of salvation” (e.g. Psalm 89:26; Psalm 95:1; and Isaiah 17:10), including:

“Truly my soul waiteth upon **God**: From Him cometh my salvation. He **only** is my **rock** and my salvation; ... In **God** is my salvation and my glory; the **rock** of my strength, and my refuge, is in God” (Psa. 62:1-2 and 6-7). See also Deut. 32:4; Rom. 9:33 and Psa. 18:2a,46.

While the true Church *is* “built upon the foundation of the apostles **and prophets**” (i.e. the Bible), Peter was just one of many involved. The chief corner stone of the Church, and the foundation for the life of each believer, is the Lord Jesus Christ alone: “For **other foundation can no** man lay than that is laid, **which is Jesus Christ**” (1 Cor. 3:11).

“Behold, I lay in Zion for a **foundation** ... a precious **corner stone**, a **sure foundation**...” (Isa. 28:16); “**Jesus Christ** Himself being the **chief corner stone**; In Whom **all** the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:20).

In fact, in his epistle, *Peter himself* reiterates this truth when he quotes God the Father proclaiming: “Behold, I **lay** in Sion a **chief corner stone**, elect, precious: and he that believeth on **Him** shall not be confounded” (1 Pet. 2:6).

The wonderful revelation that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” was not limited to Peter alone, but is given by God’s Holy Spirit to *every* person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ:

“And **we** know that the **Son of God** is come, and hath given us an understanding, that **we** may **know Him** that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). See also John 16:13-14.

Unfortunately, Nicky supports Rome again here. He states, “Peter of course was ... the one **of** whom Jesus said, ‘On this rock I will build my Church’. **So** Peter became this great figure in the Christian Church” [Talk 12]. Certainly Peter became a very fine man of God, but he was only one of *twelve* founders of the Church, none of whom ever claimed that Peter was its head.<sup>154</sup>

It is interesting to note the verse following: “Little children, keep yourselves from **idols**” (1 John 5:21), which is precisely what Roman Catholics are being forced to make of their Pope:

“[T]he Roman pontiff **alone** is rightly called universal ... **all** princes shall **kiss the foot** of the **pope alone** ... the name applied to him [*papa / father*] belongs to him **alone** ... he can be judged by **no-one**”.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Nicky likewise seems to lift Peter to a special position when he claims that none of the disciples had recognized Jesus for who He really was “until **Peter** looked at Jesus and he said “You are the Christ...” [Talk 2]. Nicky also exalts Peter when he says “St. Peter, when he was reading one of Paul’s letters he said, ‘There are some things in them which **I** find hard to understand’. Well, if **he** found them hard to understand it is not surprising that **we** have problems...” [Talk 5]. (In fact 2 Peter 3:16 does *not* include the word “I” and Nicky omits the very significant latter-half of the verse too.) Nicky’s statement may put people off tackling Scripture, but his own Bible version quotes Paul, in 2 Cor. 1:13, writing “we do **not** write to you anything you cannot read or understand” [printed in *30 Days*, p126].

<sup>155</sup> *Dictatus papae* [Rules of the Pope] points 2,9,11,19. Drawn up by the papal government during the pontificate of Gregory VII (1073-1085), quoted in Perry, Peden and Von Laue, *Sources of the Western Tradition*, Second Edition, Vol 1: *From Ancient Times to the Enlightenment*, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), p237.

“It is **not enough** for the people only to know that the Pope is the **head** of the Church ... they must also understand that **their own faith** and religious **life flow from him**; that in **him** is the bond which unites Catholics to one another, and the **power** which strengthens and the **light** which guides them; that **he** is the dispenser of spiritual graces, the **giver** of the benefits of religion”.<sup>156</sup>

**7:4 THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** So how are we to understand Christ’s subsequent statement to Peter that “[I] will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 16:19)? Surely this supports Rome’s stance? Well, what are these keys, and are they only ever in the possession of one man? Are they, as Rome claims, keys of “legislative and judicial authority”? She says:

“In [*verse 19*] He promises to bestow on Peter the keys of the Kingdom ... In all countries the key is the symbol of **authority**. Thus, Christ’s words are a promise that He will confer on Peter **supreme power** to govern the Church. Peter is to be His **viceregent**, to rule **in His place**. Further, ... this power is granted in its **fullest measure**”.<sup>157</sup>

But keys do *not* necessarily mean authority; they are simply a means of access. (If a parent gives a child a key to the front door, it does not mean the parent is giving the child rulership over the house.) If we look up “key” in Scripture, we find that the “keys” in view are the truths about God and His Kingdom. Luke 11:52 explains: “Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the **key of knowledge**: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.” So Christ is promising to teach Peter the knowledge required for Peter to be able to “enter in” to the Kingdom of Heaven. Below is the true background to *Rome’s* interpretation...

Long before the Christian era began, the person who held the highest place in the pagan priesthood had the role of explaining the Mysteries to the initiated. In the Babylonian language (Chaldee), the title of this person was “Peter” meaning “the interpreter”. He was the Grand Interpreter, which, when translated, is “Pet-Roma”. Because of his role in unlocking the Mysteries, he was decorated with two keys...

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<sup>156</sup> *La Civiltà Cattolica* (1867), quoted in Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides The Beast*, p88.

<sup>157</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, [www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm), as at 02:Nov:2002.



Thus we already have a pagan “Peter” with keys (which explains why many pagan countries knew of the keys of “Peter-Roma” from antiquity). By renaming Simon, Christ was mocking this pagan religion and showing that anyone who comes to *Christ* in truth can have the keys of knowledge:

“For God giveth to a man that is good in His sight wisdom, and **knowledge**, and joy” (Eccl. 2:26a).

“[*I pray*] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the **knowledge** of Him” (Eph. 1:17). See also 1 Cor. 2:14 and 1 Tim. 2:3b-4.

Note that Peter *himself* confirms this, especially in his second epistle (see 2 Peter 1:2-8).

Like the Babylonian god Janus, the Roman Pope is said to be the ‘god of the hinge’ who can open and close Heaven. (It is also worthy of note that the word ‘Cardinal’ means ‘hinge’.<sup>158</sup>) If we compare Isaiah 22:22 with Revelation 3:7 we see that it is *Christ* who is the way and *Christ* who is the door, not some mortal man. It is, therefore, *Christ* who holds the keys to Heaven.

**7:5 BINDING AND LOOSING** So what about the final element of Matthew 16:19, where the Lord says “whatsoever **thou** shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever **thou** shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven”? Rome is forced to admit that this does not prove that Peter was given special powers because, just two chapters later, Christ makes the *identical* promise to all His other disciples (see Matt. 18:18 and John 20:23).

Rome believes the ‘power of the keys’ or the ‘power to bind and loose’ is actually the power to bind and loose *souls* in Heaven, although this is not stated in these verses. When considering this verse we need to

<sup>158</sup> Nicky says, “God has created **huge** diversity ... there is just an **infinite** variety of ... **different** ministries” [Talk 14]. Rome can easily defend its bewildering array of ‘ministers’ and ‘ministries’ through such statements. There is no reference in the New Testament to ‘cardinals’, but Nicky appears happy to attach weight to this term – e.g. in Talk 3 when he indicates that the value of a particular gathering (viz. Kolbe’s canonization – see section 6:7) was substantially increased by the presence of “26 **cardinals**”. Also, whenever a Roman cardinal welcomes Alpha it is big news in HTB newspapers (e.g. see *Alpha News*, #31).

remember that we cannot take God’s place or tell Him what to do (Dan. 4:35; Psa. 24:1 etc), and that all Bible verses must be held in tension with all others – including ones like the following:

“**Thine**, O LORD [*Jehovah*], is the greatness, **and** the **power**, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for **all** that is in the Heaven and in the earth is **Thine**; **Thine** is the Kingdom, O LORD ... **Thou** reignest over **all**...” (1 Chr. 29:11-12).

So what *does* the ‘binding’ passage mean? Plainly we need to look a little deeper. Careful observers will note that the Lord does not say the entity which is bound or loosed on earth “shall **consequently** be” bound/loosed in Heaven and, according to Greek scholars, the relevant words are in the *passive* voice of the future perfect tense,<sup>159</sup> so any ‘binding’ or ‘loosing’ done by the apostles on earth could only be declaratory of what had *already* been bound or loosed in Heaven.

Christ’s immediately preceding words about the “**keys**” of Heaven, and the preceding three verses of the Matthew 18 occurrence above (where a believer adamantly refuses to repent for a trespass, and must therefore be expelled from the Church), both strongly suggest another meaning for the ‘binding’ passage altogether...

That is, if we are adhering to God’s instructions then we need not hesitate to carry out His ordinances – typically in relation to church discipline – *physically*, since such discipline “shall be” the case *spiritually* already. In the example above, God had already ‘bound’ the unrepentant trespasser’s spirit from His presence, so believers could confidently do likewise on earth.<sup>160</sup>

**7:6 OTHER POINTS** Rome points to Peter’s ministry as being unique and therefore indicative of a chief, or Pope-like, place within the

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<sup>159</sup> E.g. see J.R. Mantey, *Was Peter A Pope?*, (Moody Press, 1949), pp56&70. See also J.R. Mantey, *Distorted Translations in John 20:23, Matt. 16:18-19 + 18:8*, Review and Exposition, 78 (1981), pp409-416. The phrase “thou shalt bind/loose” is in the ‘aorist subjunctive’ and so does *not* signify the time of the action but makes an assertion about which there is some doubt – an uncertainty which only arises because the action has *not yet occurred*. The words “shall be bound/loosed” are in the ‘perfect passive participle’ which represents an action *completed in the past* – albeit with continuing results. In other words, Heaven is *not* following earth; it is the other way around!

<sup>160</sup> A helpful treatment of this issue appears in Opal Reddin, Ed., *Power Encounter – A Pentecostal Perspective* (Central Bible College Press, 1999), pp217-223.

church. While Peter had a distinguished place among the apostles, so did others. Besides, he and they completed their work and died. As with so many Roman Catholic terms, we won't find the phrase "Apostolic Succession" in Scripture.

Although there can still be apostles (in the sense of 'messengers of God') around today, we are taught that there were *only twelve* of the specially equipped and specially commissioned apostles who finished the Bible and founded the Church (Eph. 2:20). That there are *only twelve* is proved by the fact that the twelve foundation stones of the "heavenly Jerusalem" are named after them (Rev. 21:14). In other words, even if one insists that Peter was a 'special' foundation stone, this is still a very long way from proving there is a Peter-like office *today* – and further yet from proving that the Bishop of *Rome* is the person meant to fulfil any such role.

But there are other serious problems with the idea that Peter was a Pope. Firstly, he was married (see Matt. 8:14) despite Rome's prohibition, made law in 386AD, of this state for her priests and Popes.

*(Indeed, we are warned in 1 Tim. 4:1-3 that "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" – both of which Rome does – are indicative of "departure from the faith" and "giving heed to seducing spirits". It does not take much imagination to recognize the array of dreadful sins that are encouraged by 'forbidding to marry' – especially forbidding someone in a position of authority, trust and power! Observers therefore consider it a shame that Nicky, when describing singleness as "a very **high** calling indeed" [Talk 7], decided not to clarify his somewhat ambiguous statement.<sup>161</sup>)*

Secondly, there is no evidence that Peter was *ever* the Bishop of Rome – indeed there is no credible evidence that Peter even visited Rome.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> See also the quote in *Searching Issues*, pp50-51, where Nicky suggests that there are "**multitudes**" of celibate Christians who, *apparently against their will*, successfully redirect their sexual energy into the "self-giving service **of God** and other people". Rome – and her dangerous, man-made tradition – comes out well from this statement.

<sup>162</sup> The sole extant 'evidence' for this (a document called *The Clementines*) has been shown to be deliberately corrupted to include a reference to Peter being in Rome. See, for instance, Hislop, *op. cit.*, p208.

**7:7 SUPREME HEAD** We turn now to look at just a few of the Roman Pope's other titles to see whether they are corroborated by the Word of God:

"The pope, therefore, as Vicar of Christ, is **the visible head** of Christ's Kingdom on earth, the Church, of which Christ Himself is the invisible head".<sup>163</sup>

Scripture states that there is only *one* head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no hint anywhere of the necessity for the Church to have an earthly or 'visible' head. (If the Pope of Rome *really* held such a powerful spiritual position, why does he need an *earthly* army of bodyguards? See Psalm 118:6!) If the Pope is part of the Church then he is a part of Christ's *body*, and he is subject to Christ in exactly the same way that every other member of the body is. (See 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

"[G]row up into Him in all things, **which is the head, even Christ**: From Whom the **whole** body [*is*] fitly joined together" (Eph. 4:15-16a).

"**All** power is given unto Me [*Jesus*] in Heaven **and in earth**" (Matt. 28:18). See also Eph. 1:22-23a; 5:23b-24a; and Col. 1:18a.

**7:8 FATHER, MASTER, VICAR OF CHRIST** The word 'pope' derives from 'papa' meaning 'Father', so Course leaders may want to consider the following 'problem passage':

"Call **no man** your father upon the earth: for **one** is your Father, Which is in **Heaven**" (Matt. 23:9).

Whatever arguments people employ to justify ignoring this verse, Christ's words stand. He categorically commanded us not to look to any man as a spiritual Father but God Himself. Yet Rome does just this. Even if there were no other such passages, the above is sufficiently clear not to be misunderstood. But scriptures like Matt. 6:9, Rom. 1:7, and 1 Thess. 3:13 are similarly unequivocal. Rome's rejection of this command to call no-one on earth 'father' in this religious sense is simply disobedience to the Lord

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<sup>163</sup> Quoted in *Was The Apostle Peter A Pope?* mywebpages.comcast.net/davidriggs01/petera.htm, as at 02:Nov:2002.

God.<sup>164</sup> It is no accident that, while Rome is happy to dedicate churches to Mary and various saints, God *the Father* is rarely given such an honour.

Likewise, consider this assertion of the ‘Catholic Truth Society’: “The **Pope** is **the** spiritual Father of all Christians”,<sup>165</sup> and that of Pope Gregory VII: “Does anyone doubt that the priests of Christ are to be considered as **fathers** and **masters** of kings and princes and of all believers?”<sup>166</sup> We are very definitely told in Matthew 23:10-12 that we have only *one* spiritual Master, the Lord Jesus Christ: “Neither be ye called masters: for **one** is your Master, **even Christ**” (Matt. 23:8, see also John 13:13-14).

The Lord Jesus Christ is God: “...and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, **God with us**” (Matt. 1:23b). See also John 1:1, John 10:30 etc. Rome calls their Pope ‘the Vicar of Christ’ which means ‘a substitute for’ or ‘in the place of’ Christ.<sup>167</sup> Truly, Roman Catholics have allowed Christ to be replaced by a mere man. Indeed, when they use the term ‘Lord’ they are seldom referring to the Lord Jesus, but to their Pope.

“I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me **not**: if **another shall come in his own name**, him ye **will** receive” (John 5:43).

The only place in Scripture where anyone is said to be ‘in the place of God’ is in reference to the *anti*Christ:

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<sup>164</sup> Sadly, Nicky seems content to use ‘Father’ in a spiritual sense about mortal men. He refers to “**Father**” Kolbe [*Questions of Life*, p19] and to “**Father**” Cantalamessa [Talks 9 & 14]. Incidentally, if the Roman Pope too is known as “**the Father**” then how do Alpha guests know to whom Nicky is referring when he prays to, and speaks of “the Father”? (Nicky uses this phrase much more often than “**God** the Father”. Indeed, in the section where Nicky defines the church, he *only* uses the term “the Father” [*Questions of Life*, pp212-3].)

<sup>165</sup> *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, Catholic Truth Society, imprimatur, 1971, p15. Note that, in all Nicky’s references to ‘the Pope’, there is never a suggestion given that there is any problem with this title. Neither is it qualified by, for instance, referring to the ‘**Roman** Pope’.

<sup>166</sup> Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), quoted in Perry, Peden and Von Laue, *Sources of the Western Tradition*, p237.

<sup>167</sup> The concept of a human “vicar” really is dangerous. No man can be a substitute for Christ, yet this is what the term means. However, Nicky repeatedly uses the term with no hint of any problem [e.g. see Talks 3, 8, 9 & 14]. He describes Sandy Millar as “the Vicar here” [Talk 5] and “our vicar” [Talk 15] and “my vicar” [*Questions of Life*, p109].

“Let **no** man deceive you by any means: ... that **man of sin** ... the **son of perdition**; ... opposeth and **exalteth himself** above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he **as** God sitteth in the **temple of God**” (2 Thess. 2:3-4, see also Rev. 17:8-11).

**7:9 PONTIFF** ‘Pontiff’ means ‘bridge’ or ‘priest’. Other titles of this kind claimed by the Roman Pope are ‘Sovereign Pontiff’ meaning ‘kingly’ priest and ‘Summus Pontifex’ or ‘Pontifex Maximus’ meaning ‘supreme’ or ‘high’ priest.

It is an error running throughout Roman Catholicism that substantial elements of the symbolic (and/or prophetic) religious and political system which God ordained for Israel as recorded in the Old Testament still apply to His People in the post-resurrection Body of believers. The Word of God makes clear that the ceremonial law and these physical trappings were a prefigure or “shadow” of heavenly things (Heb. 8:5) and that they pointed to Christ (e.g. Rom .5:14; Heb. 9:9-12 & 10:1). Jesus Christ was the “lamb” of God who was sacrificed on the “altar” of the Earth and is our great “High Priest”:

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and **High Priest** of our profession, **Christ Jesus**” (Heb. 3:1).

“Seeing then that we have a **great high priest**, that is **passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God**, let us hold fast our profession...” (Heb. 4:14-15). See also Heb. 6:20b & 7:26-8:1.

Hence Christ said “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to **fulfil**” (Matt. 5:17). God’s People no longer need a mortal High Priest; the position is already filled by our glorious, eternal Saviour.

Likewise, Rome claims that, because Israel had a mortal man as its King, then so should the Church. (Note, however, that Israel was severely chastised by the Lord for rejecting His reign over them by demanding a human king – see 1 Samuel 8.) Hence the Roman Pope is crowned as a monarch, making himself priest / king or high priest / emperor.

As we have seen, he is called the *Sovereign Pontiff* and, in keeping with this title, wears the papal tiara (a jewel-encrusted triple crown) at various Catholic ceremonies. But the Early Church knew that, since Christ’s

death, it was *wrong* to perpetuate the physical pattern given to Israel;<sup>168</sup> these things don't appear *at all* under the "better" New Covenant. Indeed, it is only Christ who can hold these two great offices of High Priest and King and it would be to deny Christ to claim that there is another ruler over the Kingdom of God. It is *Christ*, the Son of King David, who is our promised King:

"Where is He that is born **King of the Jews**?" (Matt. 2:2); "Behold, thy **King** cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matt. 21:5); "Christ the **King of Israel**" (Mark 15:32).

In contrast to the true Church, whose head is Christ Himself, the false Babylonian church has always had a mortal man 'at the top' ever since Nimrod's day. Amazingly, one of the titles of this position in the false church was "Pontifex Maximus" – precisely the title which the Pope claims for himself and which was taken from the Roman Emperors who preceded Constantine:

"[T]he title 'pontiff' ... which literally means 'bridge builder' (*pōns*, bridge, and *facio*, make), comes not from the Bible but from **pagan Rome**, where the emperor, as the high priest of the heathen religion, and in that sense professing to be the bridge or connecting link between this life and the next, was called '**Pontifex Maximus**'. The title was therefore **lifted** from paganism and applied to the head of the Roman Catholic Church".<sup>169</sup>

It is interesting to note that, just as the Pontiff today is happy to indulge any religion provided it acknowledges him as its head, so each Roman Emperor was happy to indulge any religion in his day that accepted him as its head. In both cases it denies Christ His rightful position. It can be

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<sup>168</sup> We feel Nicky could be clearer about the fact that the Old Testament life of Israel is a physical picture of the spiritual principles behind the Church. His only comment to this effect is that "Often things that happen in a physical way in the Old Testament happen in a spiritual way in the New Testament" [Talk 8], but he seems never to preclude those things happening "in a **physical** way" in the New Testament too. Indeed, in Talk 14 Nicky teaches that the festivals ("celebrations" is Nicky's preferred term) which God commanded for Israel ("Passover, Pentecost, New Year" as Nicky puts it) have a *physical* corollary for believers today. Some hearers will assume from this that they should celebrate New Year. But logically they ought to celebrate the *Jewish* New Year because the Western date is from *pagan* timing. (Hence "hogmanay" is a *Babylonian* word.)

<sup>169</sup> Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p125.

seen, then, that Rome’s claims above are completely mistaken, contradicting the explicit teachings (and warnings) of the Word of God.

**7:10 SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD** There is a tiny minority within the Roman Institution who yet claim that the Pope is just a figurehead, emphasizing that he is also called *Servus servorum Dei* (i.e. servant of the servants of God). However, that is certainly not consistent with the teaching given by Rome throughout her history, nor does it reflect the way the Pope or the Roman Church actually acts. And however much recent Popes may *appear* to have been more open to compromise over the issue than their predecessors, the following is quite plain:

“Pope John Paul II said yesterday that ... he would **not** accept a symbolic papacy without **teeth** and that **Rome would have to hold the primary place among Christians**. He also said a pope should have the authority to make **infallible declarations** regarding the basic tenets of faith”.<sup>170</sup>

**7:11 THE “GIFT OF AUTHORITY”** A statement on the subject of the extent of papal power is contained in the third ARCIC (Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission) document *The Gift of Authority* published in May 1999. The ‘Gift’ referred to in the document is the Pope and, in its introduction, the document declares “the need for a **universal primacy** exercised by the **Bishop of Rome** as a sign and safeguard of unity within a re-united Church”. It expands on this by saying:

“Within his wider ministry, the Bishop of **Rome** offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth, as an expression of **universal primacy** ... this is a **gift** to be received by **all** the churches” [paragraph 47]. See also paragraphs 60 and 62.

But according to Article XXXVII of the Church of England, of which Nicky, Sandy and many other Alpha leaders are ordained clergymen: “The Pope of Rome has **no** jurisdiction in this Realm of England.” (The prime historical reasons for which we shall identify shortly.) So why does Nicky choose not to give even *one* word of warning about this matter, preferring to relate stories and quotations all guaranteed to show the Roman

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<sup>170</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, 31:May:1995. Note that Nicky appears to assist, rather than refute, the idea of Papal infallibility. He never suggests that any Pope has been fallible, even when mentioning past failings of Rome itself. And during a comment about Peter, he writes the following complete sentence: “He [*Peter*] was **absolutely right**.” [*30 Days*, p20]. Surely it would have been far wiser for Nicky to avoid the ambiguity that this sentence causes?



‘pope’ in a good light?<sup>171</sup> We think this is a significant mistake. It seems clear that Rome is not going to change her mind about the papacy (as we will see later, it is one of Rome’s proudest boasts that she is *semper aedem* – i.e. *always the same*).<sup>172</sup>

**7:12 “THEIR ROCK”** To conclude this chapter, let us consider the following from Hislop’s incomparable study on the Roman Church:

“In the countries where the **Babylonian** system was most thoroughly developed, we find the Sovereign Pontiff of the **Babylonian** god invested with the **very attributes** now ascribed to the Pope. Is the Pope called ‘God upon the earth,’ the ‘Vice-God,’ and ‘Vicar of Jesus Christ’? The King in Egypt, who was Sovereign Pontiff, was, says Wilkinson, regarded with the highest reverence as ‘THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DIVINITY ON EARTH’.

“Is the Pope ‘Infallible,’ and does the Church of Rome, in consequence, boast that it has always been ‘unchanged and unchangeable’? The **same** was the case with the **Chaldean** Pontiff, and the system over which he presided. The Sovereign Pontiff, says the writer just quoted, was believed to be ‘INCAPABLE OF ERROR,’ ... Does the Pope receive the adoration of the Cardinals? The **king of Babylon**, as Sovereign Pontiff, was adored in like manner ... Is the Pope addressed by the title of ‘Your holiness’? So also was the Pagan Pontiff of Rome”.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> See the footnotes to section 7:1. Each reference is a positive or neutral one. Nicky makes another reference to the papacy, in relation to Jesus’ claim to Godhood. Ironically, Nicky’s precise words could be applied to the post of Roman Pope too. He writes: “If somebody makes claims like these they need to be tested. There are all sorts of people who make all kinds of claims. The mere fact that somebody claims to be someone does not mean they are right. There are many people, some in psychiatric hospitals, who are deluded. They think they are ... **the Pope**, but **they** are not” [*Questions of Life*, p31].

<sup>172</sup> Sandy too does little to distance himself from the idea of the papacy when he says there should be just one man enjoying a “**presidential** sort of role ... [t]o hold together the sacramental side of the church, the teaching side of the church, the pastoral side, **everything** of that kind” [Sandy Millar, audiotope “*Worship on Alpha*”, (HTB Publications with Alpha Resources, 1997), start of side 2]. (Sandy does not clarify what he means by “the church” here.)

<sup>173</sup> Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, pp211-212.

How dangerous it is to put a man at the head, rather than our truly infallible Mediator, Shepherd and King the Lord Jesus Christ. Men can be deceived. And, if we build a man-made church hierarchy, all Satan needs to do is to take the leaders into error and the entirety of the obedient church would follow. Suffice it to say that the rock on which Roman Catholicism is built is in the form of sand. As Deuteronomy 32:31 puts it, "their rock is **not** as our Rock".<sup>174</sup>

**Please note that, for every chapter in this book, further observations and relevant quotations from HTB materials - especially from post-Alpha resources - are supplied in the 'Sweeter than Honey' section of our website (bayith.org).**

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<sup>174</sup> Nicky could be misunderstood by Romanists when he quotes Lesslie Newbigin as saying "The church ... [exists] through the ministry of ... **apostles** right down the ages until now ... The fact of this great **rock**, ... needs to be **at the centre of our thinking** as Christians" [Talk 14]. Romanists believe that the papacy, or great 'rock', represents the church and has continued the ministry of the apostles right down through the ages. But the Lord Jesus alone should be at the centre of our thinking.

## CHAPTER 8

# ADDING UP THE MASS

The Roman “Mass” is a very reverent ceremony pertaining to the bread and wine given by the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples at the ‘Last Supper’. It is a pivotal part of Roman Catholic practice, considered vital to salvation. Anyone who goes on from the Alpha Course into Roman Catholicism would *have* to observe the Mass. Yet, by Rome’s own admission, it differs *fundamentally* from Communion as performed by others:

“The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, has called on the Roman Catholic Church to abandon its practice barring Protestants from taking Communion in its churches ... Mgr. Kieran Conry, director of the Catholic Media Office, said ‘There are **fundamental differences** [*between Protestant Communion and the Catholic Mass*]’. Nicholas Coote, secretary to the Catholic Bishop’s Conference for England and Wales, added that his [Carey’s] proposals indicated a “misunderstanding of the Catholic position”.<sup>1</sup>

So, what are these ‘fundamental differences’? Does the Mass line up with God’s Word? When we compare the Roman ceremony with the Bible we find some extraordinary things.

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<sup>1</sup> London *Daily Telegraph*, 27:Apr:1998.

**8:1 “THE REAL PRESENCE”** The teaching of the ‘real presence’ in the Catholic Mass is known as ‘transubstantiation’. This is the doctrine that, with the priest’s words in the ceremony of the Mass (or “Eucharist”), the bread and wine turn into the *actual* body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Catholic Catechism states that:

“[T]hat which **was** bread and wine before consecration, **after** consecration is **truly** the **substance** of the body and blood of the Lord ... [N]ot only **the true body of Christ** and **all** the **constituents** of a true body, such as **bones and sinews**, but also Christ **whole and entire**”.<sup>2</sup>

Ever since the Council of Trent, Rome has taught that this is a “dogma” – a fundamental truth not open to question – and that anyone who does not agree with this belief is “anathema” (i.e. accursed):

“If **any one** denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained **truly**, really, and **substantially**, the body and blood together with the **soul and divinity** of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the **whole** Christ; but saith that he is only therein as in a sign, or in a figure, or virtue; **let him be anathema**” [*Council of Trent*]<sup>3</sup>

This discourages many from testing Rome’s doctrine of the Mass against the Holy Bible, but *God’s* command is that we do just that, so...

- (1) The first problem is that this miraculous change is supposed to have originally taken place with Christ *still bodily present in the room*: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body” (Matt. 26:26). Is it possible that the bread turned into the actual body of the Lord when He was still physically there?
- (2) Leaving aside the problem that thousands of wafers supposedly all become the “whole and entire” body of the Lord simultaneously each Sunday morning, there is the fundamental difficulty that, according to Scripture, Christ’s resurrected body is at the right hand of the Father:

“Who ... when He had by Himself purged our sins, **sat down on the right hand** of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3). See also Acts 2:34b & 7:56.

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<sup>2</sup> John Hardin, *The Catholic Catechism*, (Doubleday & Co., 1975), pp.228-229.

<sup>3</sup> *Council of Trent*, The Eucharist, Canon I, Quoted in William Webster, *Saving Faith: How Does Rome Define It?* p78.

- (3) It is certainly important to interpret Scripture literally when the context, or the rest of Scripture, does not call us to do otherwise. For, although figurative Hebrew idioms are very common in Scripture and need to be recognized and understood for what they are, when a passage does not use idioms or poetic language etc, then we must be honest with God and take His words at face value. However, to interpret the phrase “This is My body” – in the context of the verse where it appears – as *literally* meaning the actual body of the Lord, has some bizarre implications...

This is because elsewhere in Scripture Christ calls Himself a door (John 10:9), a vine (John 15:5), a stone (Mark 12:10), a light (John 8:12) and so on. If we are insistent that we must use this method of interpreting Christ’s words here, then we must also be *consistent*. It demonstrably makes no sense to interpret these passages literally.

Likewise, in the context, the plain meaning of “This is My body” is “This *symbolizes* My body” – in the same way that, when the Lord said of John the Baptist, “this is Elijah” he was saying that John *symbolized* Elijah. (John was not physically the same person as Elijah, as is shown in John 1:21.)

Here is a similar situation. David described some water as being men’s “blood” in an incident, recorded in 2 Sam. 23:16-17 and 1 Chr. 11:18-19, because it *symbolized* their blood. His bravest soldiers had put their lives on the line to bless him by bringing him water from a much-loved well that was in the hands of pagans. They “drew **water** ... and brought it to David: but David ... said, My God forbid it me, ... shall I drink the **blood** of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy?”<sup>4</sup>

- (4) We also have a major problem with interpreting “This is My **blood**” to mean that the wine literally became blood – because drinking blood is banned by God under both the Old and New Covenants (see Lev 17:10-14 and Acts 21:25 respectively) and yet everyone at that Passover meal would have drunk of the contents, as Mark confirms:

“And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and **they all drank** of it” (Mark 14:23).

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Chr. 11:18-19. (There are other lovely parallels between this and the Lord’s sacrifice.)

Not only is it unreasonable to believe that the Lord was able to eat His own Body, but He would have been sinning to drink blood or encourage others to do so.

- (5) Besides, the verse immediately following His statement that “This is My blood” records that Christ said “Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the **fruit of the vine**, until that day that I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.” The wine did not turn into blood but remained the “fruit of the vine”.

So, what of the passage in John 6:53 where Christ said: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you”? Surely this is saying that the bread and wine turn into the flesh and blood of the Saviour? As always, the explanation can be found in the surrounding verses. The rest of the Chapter is actually about having a living faith in the Messiahship of Jesus. Thus the act of “coming” to Christ and “believing on” Him is likened to eating and drinking:

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that **cometh to Me** [*not ‘he that eateth Me’*] shall never hunger; and he that **believeth on Me** shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

Later in the Chapter it is confirmed that believing on Christ is what gives life – i.e. this is what is meant by eating the bread of life:

“For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth **life** unto the world ...He that **believeth on Me** hath everlasting **life**. I am that bread of life” (John 6:33-48).

We are to partake of Christ in the sense that we are to cling to Him and abide in Him: “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, **dwelleth in me**” (John 6:56a). We are to take in the Word of God – i.e. to devour and digest the holy scriptures – hence the way God’s Word is likened to bread in Matt. 4:4 and the way Christ’s words are said to be life-giving and a source of the spirit in verse 63 of the passage we are looking at.

As for the blood, we are to be like organs transplanted into Christ and thus cleansed inside by His blood. This picture is used many times in the Bible. It is in this sense that we “drink” Christ’s blood. If we stop abiding in the Vine and drinking the spiritual sap from it then there will indeed be “no life” in us.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, Nicky teaches that the bread of Holy Communion comprises “**spiritual bread**” rather than just *physical* [*Questions of Life*, p94] – tending to support the error of transubstantiation.

The Lord's Supper is certainly to be taken extremely seriously. But its immense spiritual importance stems not from the bread and wine, but from the significance that God the Father has given the occasion. Holy Communion is an opportunity for us to express the gravity we attach to His Son's death, not the weight we attach to a piece of bread. The emblems are there simply to help remind us of this pivotal event in history. *That* is what God cares about.

We have perhaps laboured this point, but for a very good reason. Roman Catholics are strongly encouraged to worship the wafer (or "host"). Understandably, they do not need much persuasion since, according to strict teaching, they are in the immediate presence of the Lord Himself. But the 'real presence' is not all that Rome has to say about the Mass.

**8:2 A REPEATED SACRIFICE** According to the Word of God, Christ's sacrifice was a once-only affair. On the cross He was able to proclaim "It is finished", and subsequent events certainly confirmed it. So do many scriptures, including Hebrews 10:

"We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once** for all ... [T]his man ... offered **one** sacrifice for sins **forever** ... For by **one** offering He hath **perfected forever** them that are sanctified ... Now where remission of these is, there is **no more** offering for sin" (Heb. 10:10,12,14,18).

The passage in Hebrews 9:24-28 is no less unequivocal. That is why the bread and wine are an ongoing *memorial* or commemoration of what our Lord did for us **once** on the cross:

"When He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in **remembrance** of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood: this

do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in **remembrance**<sup>6</sup> of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24-25).

The only purpose of an altar is for performing sacrifices. We should be wary of any church that feels the need to keep an altar, because it implies that more sacrifices are needed beyond Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice on the cross itself. But according to Rome...

“The sacrifice of the Cross **is continued** on earth **through** the **Sacrifice** of the Mass” [*Catholic Catechism*].<sup>7</sup>

When asked “What is the Sacrifice of the Mass?”, Rome teaches:

“It is the sacrifice in which **Christ is offered** under the species of bread and wine in an unbloody manner. The Sacrifice of the **altar**, then, is no mere empty [*sic*] commemoration of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, but a **true and proper act of sacrifice**. Christ, the eternal High Priest, in an unbloody way **offers himself** a most acceptable **Victim** to the eternal Father, **as he did upon the Cross**” [*Catholic Catechism*].<sup>8</sup>

In the same document, Rome also asserts: “The Sacrifice of the Mass is of **infinite** value, **no less** than that **of the Cross**” [Qn 1294]. Nicky goes some way to denying this when he says “in **Jesus** there was a perfect sacrifice. One, perfect sacrifice. Once and for all. For all time, for all people” [Talk 3].<sup>9</sup> But Nicky doesn’t mention *the cross* here, so unbelievers may not

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<sup>6</sup> At the end of a long discussion about baptism, Nicky makes the following statement. Note that he *includes* a reference to the bread and wine - but in a way which tends to give the impression that Christ was talking about *baptism* when He said those pivotal words about remembering His death. “**Jesus** was buried ... **That’s** what going down into the **waters of baptism signifies**. When **Jesus** was raised to **life** ... **That’s** what coming out of the **water signifies** ... Jesus told his followers to baptize and he also told them, after he had broken bread with them and drunk wine with them, he said to them, ‘Do this in remembrance of me’” [Talk 14]. Will hearers know that “this” refers to Holy Communion, not baptism?

<sup>7</sup> *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*, Qn 1264. See also Qn 1269.

<sup>8</sup> *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*, Qn 1265.

<sup>9</sup> Nicky’s book *Questions of Life* is different. In it, Nicky correctly asserts: “No **further** sacrifices are necessary” [p213] and “there is no need for **further** sacrifices” [p213]. But since ‘sacrifice’ can be both a noun and a verb, Rome would be very happy with these statements because she too says that Jesus is the only sacrifice necessary. Nicky’s choice of words does not preclude the *same* sacrifice being offered repeatedly. In fact he teaches that the Lord “participated in the suffering of the cross **and** he



grasp the full truth. Not only was *Jesus* given to us “once and for all”, but so was the sacrifice He made *on the cross*.<sup>10</sup> This is an important distinction.

Needless to say, it must be an outstandingly emotional experience to believe that one is in the physical presence of Christ as He is being sacrificed for one again. A cause for extremely deep and sincere worship:

“The Eucharistic Sacrifice ... in which the Sacrifice of the cross is forever perpetuated, is **the summit** and the **source** of **all worship** and **Christian life**”; and “Christ’s faithful are to hold the blessed Eucharist in the highest honour ... with **great** devotion ... and should **revere** it with the greatest **adoration**”.<sup>11</sup>

See also Chapter V of the Council of Trent on the Eucharist, where the faithful of Christ are encouraged to “render in veneration the **worship** ... which is due to the true God, to this most holy sacrament ... for we believe **the same God** to be **present therein**”.

*For readers who may be confused by the sheer number of Romanists who worship the host, the following Scripture may help put things into perspective: “[W]ide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and **many** there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and **narrow** is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few** there be that find it.” (Matt. 7:13-14)<sup>12</sup>*

suffers for us ... **now**” [Searching Issues, p24].

<sup>10</sup> Nicky teaches, “The central service of the Christian church is a service which **centres on** the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus Christ ... St. John says that, ‘the blood of Jesus cleanses us.’ It’s almost like the windscreen wipers of the car just washing and washing and washing. The word is a kinetic word. It goes on and on and on. The blood of Jesus cleanses us, cleanses us, cleanses us” [Talk 3]. There is the distinct impression given that we are in fact cleansed through the *repeated* ‘Eucharist’ / Communion service. Since Catholicism teaches that the ‘host’ includes the blood of Christ, and since there are two possible meanings of the phrase “centres on” (i.e. it can mean ‘physically approaches’), it is easy for Rome to exploit these statements.

<sup>11</sup> *The Code of Canon Law, The Mass / Eucharist, Canons 897 and 898 respectively, as quoted in William Webster, Saving Faith, p80.*

<sup>12</sup> This is probably a good moment to note one of Nicky’s closing comments to those unbelievers who have attended the preliminary Alpha talk and who want to know more about Christianity. He recommends they “go along to **any** church, I don’t think it matters ... **which** denomination, what part of the church it is, just go along...”. The most common and most public churches (i.e. usually the least sound ones) are likely to be the main beneficiary; especially Rome – given that she came first in Nicky’s list of acceptable types only a few seconds earlier [Talk 1].

**8:3 THE MASS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION** Now that we have seen from Scripture that the wafer (or “host”<sup>13</sup>) does *not* turn into Christ Himself we are left with a very serious problem – quite aside from the fact that the Roman priest, in implying that Christ needs to be sacrificed again, is being profane...

If Roman Catholics are worshipping something that is NOT the true God then they are inevitably worshipping something else. As we saw in Part One, this is not only detestable to God, because it constitutes idolatry, but it also leaves the worshipper open to demonic forces. Given that Catholics are *eating* the object of their worship, they are taking into themselves in a very real way whatever spiritual entity lies behind the wafer they have been worshipping.

We know from our earlier study on the love of the truth that there is a very subtle enemy of God who desires to lead God’s People away into danger – into his own stronghold. If he could fool them into worshipping something other than God, they would be made vulnerable to demonic attack and thus brought ever further into subjection under him. But how to persuade God’s People to do such a thing? One very effective way would surely be to invent a counterfeit Communion and convince the people that the wafer *was* their God, when in actual fact it was the “host” for another spirit altogether.

If the enemy did this, he would obviously do everything he could to encourage the people to take part in his invention. He would claim that it was *vital to salvation* and would urge that it be observed *often*. Amazingly (and in direct contention with Scripture again) Rome declares the Mass to be vital to salvation:

“[T]he Mass is the **same** Sacrifice as that of the Cross,<sup>14</sup> to continue on earth until the end of time ... **The Mass**, therefore,

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<sup>13</sup> Given the religious significance of the word “host” regarding the communion meal, it seems a little unwise for Nicky to write “**Jesus ... himself is the host ... we accept what Jesus has done for us on the cross ... Come to the banquet. Come and meet the host, Jesus Christ. Come and eat...**” [30 Days, pp29-32].

<sup>14</sup> Nicky states this: “Paul says that through Christ’s **death** we have been justified” [Talk 3]. But according to our KJV, Paul *never* said “death” in this context. Since Romanists believe the Mass also constitutes the death of Christ, they will readily agree with Nicky’s statement here.

**no less than the Cross, is expiatory [i.e. pays the penalty] for sins” [Catholic Catechism].<sup>15</sup>**

Rome also urges that it be performed often: “Remembering **always** that in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice the work of **redemption** is **continually** being carried out, priests are to celebrate **frequently**”.<sup>16</sup>

**“As often as the sacrifice ... is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption carries on” [Vatican II].<sup>17</sup>**

The enemy would have to threaten anyone who questioned his subterfuge, and he would also claim that his Communion had all sorts of *temporal* benefits aside from spiritual ones. Consider whether Rome’s teaching that the sins of a departed loved one can be paid for with Masses taken by living relatives (or ‘said’ on their behalf) can possibly come from God or instead is derived from another source:

**“If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; or, that it is a bare [!] commemoration<sup>18</sup> of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory [i.e. atoning] sacrifice; or, that it profits **only** him who receives; and that it ought not to be offered for the living **and the dead** for sins, **pains, satisfactions, and other** necessities, let him be **anathema**” [Council of Trent]<sup>19</sup>**

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<sup>15</sup> *The Question And Answer Catholic Catechism*, Qn 1277. See also Qns 1279 and 1294. (N.B. “Expiation” is a favoured Catholic term also used by Nicky – see Talk 3, Edn. 2.1.)

<sup>16</sup> *The Code of Canon Law, The Mass / Eucharist*, Canon 904. Quoted in William Webster, *Saving Faith*, p80.

<sup>17</sup> *The Documents of Vatican II, The Church*, point 3, p16.

<sup>18</sup> Sadly, Nicky never says that Holy Communion is *purely* a commemoration, thus Rome can claim it is a commemoration *and more* without fear of contradiction from Alpha. Furthermore, Nicky says “Teaching on Holy Communion is ... **not** included on the video or audio tapes” [Telling Others, p203]. This obviously helps Rome to teach what it likes on the subject.

<sup>19</sup> *Council of Trent, Canon III*. Nicky leaves the door open for Rome by saying “At the service of Holy Communion, sometimes called ... the **Eucharist**, we ... **partake** of its **benefits** [plural] ... on such occasions there are sometimes conversions, [and] **healing** [sic]” [Questions of Life, pp213-4]. (Re: healings, we think Nicky should have made clear that any true healings result from God’s grace, not from the bread or wine. Re: conversions, Nicky surely ought to have noted here that unbelievers should not eat the emblems.)

**8:4 A BLOODLESS SACRIFICE** As if all the above were not bad enough, and despite the enormous Scriptural emphasis on Christ’s blood – which is, after all, what cleanses us from our sins – the Roman Mass constitutes a *bloodless* sacrifice. By claiming the Mass is “expiatory for sins” Rome maintains a continual ‘unbloody’ *repeat-presentation*<sup>20</sup> of the once for all blood-drenched sacrifice of Calvary:

“It is the sacrifice in which Christ is offered under the species of bread and wine in an **unbloody** manner ... a **true** and proper act of **sacrifice**. Christ, ... in an **unbloody** way offers **himself**<sup>21</sup>...”  
[*Catholic Catechism*].<sup>22</sup>

But “without **shedding of blood** [*there*] is **no** remission [*of sins*]” (Heb. 9:22a) as Cain found out (Gen. 4:3-7a). An unbloody sacrifice has *never* been able to cover sin.

**8:5 THE ORIGIN** Interestingly, *Babylon* had an effectively *identical* ritual. It too represented an ‘unbloody sacrifice’. But that is not the only similarity between Rome and Babylon regarding the Romish Mass. Rome insists the wafer, or ‘host’ be circular, despite there being no indication of this in biblical descriptions of Holy Communion. Babylon’s Sun-worship *also* centred around a *circular* wafer – i.e. a disk to represent the round sun.

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<sup>20</sup> Rome is happy to describe the Mass as a ‘representation’ of Jesus, but she tells her follow-ers to interpret it as a ‘re-**presentation**’ – i.e. a ‘presenting again!’ Nicky apparently yields to Rome’s ambiguous terminology when he writes “The bread and wine **represent** the body and blood of Jesus” [*Questions of Life*, p214]. Nicky asked the Catholic theologian Peter Hocken to see if there was anything he would like Nicky to alter in Alpha’s teaching about Holy Communion [Mark Ireland, *A Study of the Effectiveness of Process Evangelism Courses in the Diocese of Lichfield, With Special Reference to Alpha, Fourth Phase*]. Nicky says that Hocken asked him to change the word “represent” here – yet Rome uses the same word herself, and Hocken makes no mention of this ‘problem’ in his official article endorsing Alpha [‘Father’ Peter Hocken, *Alpha and the Catholic Church: A Priest and Theologian’s Reflections*, [www.christlife.org/alpha](http://www.christlife.org/alpha) as at 08:Jan:2003], despite elsewhere demand-ing that Protestants respect the Romish Mass [Hocken, *The Glory and the Shame*, Eagle, 1994), p190, as quoted in Peter Burden-Teh, *op. cit.*, p18].

<sup>21</sup> In *Questions of Life*, Nicky states: “There is no need for sacrificing priests today” [p213] but again Rome can slip through the net because she does not claim her priests actually *do* the sacrificing, but that Christ sacrifices *Himself*. Nicky supports the idea that a priest must be present when he writes: “we do **not** receive the bread and wine **on our own**” [*Questions of Life*, p214].

<sup>22</sup> *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*, Qn 1265.

Also, like Rome, Babylon’s ceremony used a shiny plate in the form of a *sun* – i.e. with a sun-burst design – to show off the wafer above the altar so that it looked especially impressive and deserving of worship. (Rome’s name for this holder is a “monstrance”, and everyone present has to reverently bow or kneel before it.<sup>23</sup>)

Babylon’s Communion required that each communicant fast beforehand – as does Rome. Catholicism claims that such fasting is “indispensable”, and yet the original ‘Lord’s Supper’ took place *straight after a meal*. Babylon had its false trinity, the Egyptian names for which were Isis, Horus and Seb. Unbelievably, Rome’s wafers bear the same initials: ‘IHS’.

Finally, consider that Rome teaches, regarding the Mass, that the communicant is eating another person (i.e. eating the ‘actual body’ of the Lord Jesus). The word for someone who eats another is “cannibal” which derives from “Cahna-Bal” meaning priest of Baal. Baal is the name of Babylon’s demonic, central god.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> When the ‘host’ is being lifted up, both in the monstrance and later by the communicant, Catholics *look up towards* the wafer. It is therefore very unfortunate for Nicky to teach that, “as we receive communion we **look up to Jesus...**” [*Questions of Life*, p214]. Nicky ends the sentence saying “we look up to Jesus **with expectancy**”, but this suggests we are expecting to receive things back from Him for obeying His simple instruction. In the absence of clarification, Nicky’s words allow Rome to insert her own ideas here. (Just because we can expect temporal curses if we approach the Lord’s Supper in an *irreverent* way, it does not follow that we receive temporal blessings if we approach it *aright*. We are supposed to be giving honour *to* Him, not doing it for some temporal reward *from* Him.)

<sup>24</sup> Consider the following wording from Nicky: “in heaven we are going to celebrate for eternity at ‘the wedding **supper**’ of **Jesus Christ** (Revelation 19:9). The bread and wine are a **foretaste** of this” [*Questions of Life*, p214]. The Bible calls this event the ‘wedding supper of **the Lamb**’ (see Rev. 19:7 too). Replacing the words “the Lamb” with “Jesus Christ”, while retaining the word “of” (but without any clarification), could lead some biblically-ignorant readers from a Catholic upbringing to suppose that this supper will *consist of* Jesus – especially since Nicky then uses the word “**foretaste**” rather than, say, “prefigure” or “shadow”. Besides, neither of the two scriptures Nicky subsequently cites claim that Holy Communion *is* a ‘foretaste’ of the marriage supper. It is purely a commemoration of the Lord’s death until He comes.

**8:6 “IS THIS NOT IDOLATRY?”** Chiniquy, a priest in the Catholic Church for many years, had these grave observations to make concerning the ‘priestly’ part in the Roman ceremony of the Mass:

“To make one’s self believe that he can convert a piece of bread into **God** requires such a supreme effort of the will, and complete annihilation of intelligence, that the state of the soul, after the effort is over, is more like death than life.

“I had really persuaded myself that I had done the most holy and sublime action of my life, when, in fact, I had been guilty of the most outrageous act of idolatry! My eyes, my hands and lips, my mouth and tongue, and all my senses, as well as the faculties of my intelligence, were telling me that what I had seen, touched, eaten, was nothing but a wafer; but the voices of the Pope and his Church were telling me that it was the real body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ.

“I had persuaded myself that the voices of my senses and intelligence were the voices of Satan, and that the deceitful voice of the Pope was the voice of the God of Truth! Every priest of Rome has to come to that strange degree of folly and perversity, every day of his life, to remain a priest of Rome...

“The Egyptians worshipped God under the form of crocodiles and calves; the Greeks made their gods of marble or gold; the Persian made the sun his god; the Hottentots make their gods with whalebone, and go far through storms to adore them. The Church of Rome makes her god out of a piece of bread! **Is this not idolatry?**”<sup>25</sup>

Thus has Rome “superseded the simple but most precious sacrament of the Supper instituted by our Lord Himself” with a pagan fake. Of all the occasions in which Catholicism is raised in Alpha, could Nicky not have found a solitary moment to warn the prospective sheep of the truth behind the Roman Mass? There is nothing at all. Hence Alpha graduates with a Catholic upbringing come away from the Course imagining that the Roman Mass is a “Christian” belief.<sup>26</sup>

“Now therefore fear the LORD, and **serve Him** in sincerity and **in truth**: and **put away** the gods which your fathers served ... and serve ye **the LORD**” (Josh. 24:14).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Charles Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, pp96, 99 & 105.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, **Mark Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *The God Who Changes Lives, Vol. 3, (Alpha Publications, 2000)***, p37.

<sup>27</sup> Nicky quotes this verse (in *30 Days*, p70), but he doesn't really help readers understand what lay *behind* these ‘gods’. He just supplies the odd

“I have written into you **not to keep company**, if any man that is **called** a brother be ... an **idolator**” (1 Cor. 5:11).

It may be that some readers, offended by the horrors being exposed here, believe we should only discuss praiseworthy things. We sympathize with this view, but we feel it is dangerous to be ignorant of Rome’s ways when other believers are promoting them. After all, when Ezekiel was ignorant of the details of the apostasy in his day he was commanded by the Lord to “Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do there” (Ezek. 8:5-18). We must (carefully) face up to the truth about Rome’s teaching, and explain the shortcomings by comparing it to what the Bible teaches.

Others will claim that we are being ‘anti-Catholic’. But we are certainly not. We care greatly for those ensnared in error, and those in bondage to false ways. It is Catholicism, i.e. those teachings which are sending its adherents to Hell, that we oppose – not the precious folks entangled in it. In reality, it is those who *fail* to warn the souls caught up in Rome’s idolatry that are the ones being anti-Catholic.

**8:7 CHRIST’S MASS** As a postscript to this discussion of the Roman Mass, we perhaps ought to ask about the celebration of Christmas (or Christ’s Mass) which Rome has given us. Oddly, it is held on a date which most scholars agree could not possibly be even *close* to Christ’s birthday.

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sentence that “The gods referred to claimed to be modern and scientific with control over agriculture, sex and fertility” [p71]. He doesn’t explain where they came from, and he implies that they have now disappeared. He also notes that “Many people today are bound ... by things like ... bad temper, patterns of thought, envy, jealousy, anger, immorality, or **whatever**” [Talk 8]. His list is very reminiscent of both Gal. 5:20 and Col. 3:5, but both verses explicitly list “idolatry” too, whereas Nicky does not. On pages 70-71 of Nicky’s book *30 Days* he does include the very clear and serious warnings that appear in Josh. 24:14-24 about ‘foreign gods’ – but he again fails to identify what they really were, and he even seems to deny their existence today. He says: “‘Other gods’ in **our** context are any **activities, habits or attitudes** which lead us away from the Lord, such as materialism, promiscuity or self-centredness”. No *devils* to avoid? In *Searching Issues* there is an extremely rare mention of the word ‘idol’, but here again we are not warned of the spiritual reality but merely that “**Sex** has become **the** idol of our times” [p37]. Likewise, the only mention of the word in the whole of *30 Days* is “**sex** and **money** ... [*can*] become idols” [p132].

Actually, the date of December 25<sup>th</sup> is one that was central to the *Babylonian* calendar – thus greatly *predating* the incarnation of the Person we are told it commemorates! Many features of Christmas are derived not from Christianity but from pagan religious practices. These include the holly and ivy, the mistletoe, Midnight Mass,<sup>28</sup> and the Yule log (“Yule” is a Babylonian word). Even the decorated tree has its roots, so to speak, in false religion:

“[T]he customs of the people are **vain**: for one **cutteth a tree** out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the **axe**. They **deck it with silver and with gold**; they **fasten it** with nails and with hammers, that it move not” (Jer. 10:1-4).

“[*Ahaz*] walked ... according to the **abominations** of the **heathen**, ... And he **sacrificed** [*i.e. offered gifts*]... **under every green** [*i.e. coniferous*] **tree**” (2 Ki. 16:3-4).

Some Christians are very attached to Christmas and argue that it is harmless. But should a pure bride (us) be flirting with the trappings of foreign gods in front of her wonderful, betrothed husband (the Lord Jesus Christ)? If we are obedient to Him and His Word then the answer is *no* (Jer. 10:2a).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The UK edition of *Alpha News* for March 1998 “tells of the conversion of two Alpha Course students after attending Christmas **Midnight Mass**” [Colin Mercer, *The Alpha Course Examined*, (Mourne Missionary Trust, nd), p8]. Why were they there? And why did HTB feel the need to include this part of these testimonies when making them public?

<sup>29</sup> Nicky is a teacher, yet he makes frequent references to “Christmas” which perpetuate the error that it is Christian: “There is something almost **magical** about **Christmas** ... [W]e picture **Christmas trees** ... [with] piles of presents ... What is at the heart of **Christmas**? ... [T]he ‘central event in the history of the earth...’ ...[T]he point of **Christmas** is **Jesus Christ**” [Nicky Gumbel, *Why Christmas?*, (HTB Publications, 1997), pp1-4].



## CHAPTER 9

# WHAT WE MUST DO TO BE SAVED

**9:1 OUR BURDEN** What does the Word of God teach about salvation?

“For by **grace** are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: **Not** of **works**, lest any man should **boast**” (Eph. 2:8-9). See also Gal. 3:26; and Rom. 3:28.

Saving faith means certain hope for our souls: “For we are saved **by hope...**” (Rom. 8:24); “[*We belong to*] Christ ... **if we hold fast** the confidence and the rejoicing of the **hope firm unto the end**” (Heb. 3:6). See also 1 Tim. 1:1.

By this faith we can be ‘hidden’ in Christ and thus saved. To be hidden in Christ<sup>30</sup> requires that our sins be forgiven, which demands that we sincerely repent of them. Only then can we be “washed in the blood of

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<sup>30</sup> It is a surprising omission from Alpha that the crucial phrase “in Christ” is used [e.g. in *Searching Issues*, p19, or in Talks 4, 7 & 9] without being explained. It is only at the end of the Course, in the penultimate talk, that Nicky touches on it. But all he says here is “when you come to faith in Christ, you are in Christ” [Talk 14]. Hopefully our coverage, both here and in Part 3, will make up for this gap.

Christ” and made clean and presentable to the Father. We need to stand firm on the truth that Christ was never tainted by sin; that He was therefore fully able to pay the price for us and, moreover, that He did so. We must have faith in this. In other words we must “believe **on**” (i.e. trust in, cling to and rely on) Jesus Christ.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth **on** Me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47); “...Believe **on** the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...” (Acts 16:31).<sup>31</sup>

It could be noted that the Greek scriptures frequently use the ‘present continuous’ tense when referring to these things. So, for example, 1 John 1:9 teaches that, if we *go on* confessing our sins He will *go on* forgiving and cleansing us. In other words we are to *keep* trusting in and *keep* clinging to Him and *keep* right with Him. One way of putting it is that we must “abide” in Him:

“**Abide in Me** ... If a man abide **not** in Me, he is **cast forth** as a **branch**, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are **burned**” (John 15:4a&16), “...**abide in Him**” (1 John 2:28). See also John 15:5-6; 1 John 2:1-7,24; & 3:24.

We must continue with Him to the end. That is part of what ‘being faithful’ means: “But he that shall **endure unto the end**, the same **shall be saved**” (Matt. 24:13; see also Matt. 10:22); “If ye **continue** ... then ye are My disciples” (John 8:31); “**Hope to the end**” (1 Pet. 1:13).<sup>32</sup>

This point can be illustrated by likening Christ Jesus to a lifebelt which has been thrown to us. It is *only the lifebelt* that can save.<sup>33</sup> (Unfor-

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<sup>31</sup> Sadly, Nicky almost always refers to believing “**in**” Jesus [e.g. in *Telling Others*, p41, plus Talks 4, 6, 8, 10 & 11]. According to James 2:19, “The devils also **believe**”; but that is not enough! It is *not* adequate to believe “in” what Jesus said He was; we must rely **ON** it. Since Alpha is meant to be reaching the “*unchurched*”, there is huge scope for guests to misinterpret the expression “believing **in**”, yet Nicky uses it regularly in *Questions of Life* without clarification. On one occasion he follows it by writing that all who believe “in” Jesus are Christians, and that the group of people who have this faith in Jesus includes “**you** and me”. How can he say that of someone who is simply reading his book?

<sup>32</sup> Some other relevant Scriptures here include Luke 12:42-46; Rom. 11:21-23; Heb. 2:3, 3:14; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; Col. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 15:2; Gal. 6:8-9; 1 John 1:24-28; 1 John 4:16; Rev. 2:10-11; and 3:5&21.

<sup>33</sup> The authors’ present understanding of God’s Word on the possibility of a

unately, the enemy offers bogus routes to safety, including imitation ‘life-lines’ that cannot save.) It is evident from Scripture that we are saved *only* by God’s grace, through faith in His Son.

The malefactor on the cross next to Jesus (Luke 23:39-43) gives yet more evidence that we are only saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the space of three verses this man did everything necessary to be saved: He recognized his evil deeds and repented toward God of them. He recognized Christ Jesus as (a) sinless and therefore able to bear the sins of the world, (b) the promised Messiah of Israel, and (c) God. He trusted in Him. And, finally, he cried out to the Lord that he might be saved. This is exactly what was preached in Acts, i.e. “**repentance** toward God, and **faith** toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

To underline the point about salvation through faith alone, here are two more clear-cut scriptures: According to Romans 5:1, we are “justified by faith” (see also Gal. 3:11b), and 2 Tim. 3:15 says we obtain “**salvation through faith** which is in Christ Jesus” (see also Gal. 2:16 and Php. 3:8-9). The faith being described here is a real, sincere, deep faith in what Scripture teaches about Christ. (A summary of the full gospel is supplied in chapter 13 of this book.)

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Christian losing their faith is that, although faith is a gift from God, it still needs exercising, and that ‘keeping the faith’ - as Paul put it - is not a ‘work’ (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 4:5; 9:32). For more about about living by faith, see Rom. 11:20-23; 1 Tim. 6:10-12; 2 Tim. 4:6-7; Rev. 3:3-5; Luke 21:19 etc. The lifebelt analogy illustrates the position we believe reconciles all the many disparate scriptures on this issue: consider a lifebelt floating next to a person in the sea. The lifebelt represents our Saviour. Choosing simply to cling tightly *and tenaciously* to the belt (i.e. until actually pulled home) is a clear admission of total helplessness - rather than something to boast about - and the person is making no attempt to get a single inch closer to the shore by his own effort... The person is saved through humbly maintaining his belief that the lifebelt is his only hope. He holds on because he trusts that the lifebelt alone will rescue him. Indeed, Scripture seems to tell us to “hold on” like this (e.g. in 1 Tim. 1:19; and Heb. 4:14). (Who could ever *boast* if everyone else had done exactly the same and if the Saviour had actually *died* to save us?) But whatever one’s stance over whether we have been granted the freedom to “shipwreck” our faith (1 Tim. 1:19) or “cast off” the gift (1 Tim. 5:12) after having truly believed on Christ previously, there can be no question from Scripture that we are only saved by God’s grace - and only through an enduring faith (1 Pet. 1:13; Gal. 5:1-5; Heb. 3:14).

Any such true, living, faith will *inevitably* show itself in the life and behaviour of the person, hence the teaching in James’ epistle about the need to be generating works in order to prove our faith. Nevertheless, it is *only* determined faith toward the Lord that will save us – by His grace. (Although the “sheep” in Matt. 25:31-46 superficially *appear* to have been saved by their works, the Lord is careful not to say this. They were saved because their faith was real and it thus produced works, i.e. service to God’s People, as a *by-product*.<sup>34</sup>) Although Nicky helpfully teaches that we can be “saved by grace, through faith”, he doesn’t actually say that this is the *only* way people are saved. Man’s works cannot add *anything* to the perfect sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross. To believe otherwise is to insult God (and call Him a liar).

But what of Rome’s teaching here? (We all need to understand the position of Rome, the largest religious group in the world. Whether we have been brought up in a Catholic household, or have Catholic acquaintances, or might develop some in the future, or are an Alpha Course leader who has to look after such guests, we all need to be informed about this.) Is ‘salvation through faith alone’ what Rome teaches? It is not. Catholicism teaches a doctrine of salvation in which many requirements – including the ‘Sacraments’ of the Eucharist (discussed in the previous chapter), Baptism and Penance – are added.

**9:2 BAPTISM** Firstly, Rome declares its Baptism to be of “**absolute necessity** for salvation” (Rome only permits two very extreme exceptions) – so much so that even a child dying without Roman Baptism “**cannot** be admitted to glory”. Baptism *is* an important part of our Christian life; any true believer will *out of obedience to their Saviour* endeavour to be baptized.

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<sup>34</sup> The criterion for salvation is not that someone does good works – many unbelievers do lots of good works. The criterion is a strong, genuine faith in Christ Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. However, Nicky refers not to faith-based passages like Eph. 2:8-9, but to the *works*-based “sheep and goats” parable as identifying the “criteria” (plural!) for salvation [Final part of *Alpha: Will it Change Their Lives?*, a UK TV series on ITV1, broadcast on 18:Nov:2001]. Nicky says, with regard to “What happens to us on the Day of Judgment”, that “‘What happens to you will depend on how you’ve **treated** ... [Jesus’] **followers**’” [Questions of Life, p30]. But that’s a *work*. Our salvation depends on faith alone, *not* on works. We will be judged solely by our faith. Nicky makes the same mistake when he says that “**the golden rule**” is good works – i.e. “‘Do to others what you would have them do to you’” [Ibid, p29].

But baptism is not a prerequisite to salvation – it is symbolic of the repentance *already made* (see Acts 8:26-39, especially verses 36 and 37<sup>35</sup>).

Rome insists that the effect of baptism is to “**regenerate** us ... **making us** children of God”<sup>36</sup>. (Taken on their own, a few scriptures like Acts 2:38 do imply that baptism is essential to salvation. But others, e.g. Luke 23:39-43, can be read as teaching that baptism is optional. We must not swing to one extreme or the other. The position that explains *all* the relevant verses is that baptism is a fundamental sign of the salvation *already received* and that anyone with a living faith will desire to, and – if possible – will *be*, baptized.<sup>37</sup>)

In the first video edition of Talk 14, Nicky indicated his own position on baptism when he described it as “essential”. This was removed from the second edition. Yet even now, during his discussion on *baptism*, he says we are saved by being “born of **water** and the Spirit” [Talk 14] – neglecting to explain that, as the surrounding verses in John 3:3-8 show, the phrase “born of water” refers to our physical birth, not to our baptism. Again, in all the *unambiguous* references to Christian baptism in Scripture, it is a step taken deliberately by a person to show others what God has already done for them. Rome is in direct conflict with Scripture again.

This error of ‘Baptismal regeneration’ is found amongst Hindus and Brahmins, as well as in the pagan religions of Scandinavia and Mexico.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Acts 22:16 does *not* say that the act of baptism will wash away sins – it is the ‘calling on the name of the Lord’ that achieves this (see Rom. 10:13). Only the blood of the Lamb can wash away sins.

<sup>36</sup> Bishop Hay’s *Sincere Christian*, Vol 1, p356, quoted in Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, pp129,130.

<sup>37</sup> Nicky says that “baptism is **the** visible **mark** of being a member of the church” [Talk 14] but, again, it wasn’t so for the malefactor on the cross. Nicky promotes infant baptism in *30 Days*, p43 when he fails to explain that Jesus’ words “salvation has come to this **house**” does not mean the family were magically saved. Infant baptism is also a central feature of one of the testimonies in *Telling Others*, p139. Infant baptism obviates the need for a clear (and publicly recognizable) rebirth later in life. The end result is to fill churches with the unsaved.

<sup>38</sup> Since other religions observe baptism, the following misquote from Nicky is very unfortunate: “Paul writes this, that ‘**anyone** who has been baptized has been baptized into Christ Jesus’” [Talk 14]. (Nicky offers no verse reference for this, because it does not actually appear anywhere in his Bible.) This misquotation also serves to justify infant baptism. HTB practices infant baptism and does **not** re-baptize people when they become saved as adults [*Telling Others*, p203]. Part of HTB’s justification for

Again, the concept is ultimately derived from Babylon where baptism was often the mode of initiation before instruction could be received in the Chaldean Mysteries. By now it will come as no surprise to the reader to be told that the whole Roman Baptism ceremony is lifted straight from the Babylonian original. Cardinal Newman admitted, for example, that “holy water” (i.e. water “consecrated” with salt), along with many other things, were “the very instruments and appendages of **demon-worship**”.<sup>39</sup>

The Roman Church claims merely to have adopted these things, but why should God’s church feel the *need* to adopt pagan practices, going so completely against His Word in the process. Hasn’t He given us everything we need already?

“And they rejected His statutes, and His Covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and **went after the heathen** that were round about them, **concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them**” (2 Ki. 17:15). See also Jer. 13:10.

“Thus saith the LORD, **Learn not** the way of the heathen” (Jer. 10:2a). See also Rom. 12:2.

**9:3 PENANCE** While Rome believes that the sacrament of Baptism cancels out original sin, the Christian is still prone to commit post-Baptismal transgressions – and the sacrament of Penance (self-punishment, as imposed by a Roman priest) exists for the remission of these sins:

“For those who **after** Baptism have fallen into sin, the Sacrament of Penance is **as necessary** unto **salvation** as is Baptism itself for those who have not yet been regenerated’ ... Penance, therefore, is **not** an institution the use of which was left to the option of each sinner so that he might, if he preferred, hold aloof from the Church and **secure forgiveness** by some other means, e.g. **by acknowledging his sin** in the privacy of his own mind ... the power granted by Christ to the Apostles is twofold, to forgive and retain, in such a way that what **they** forgive **God** forgives and what **they** retain **God** retains”.<sup>40</sup>

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this is that it is “the traditional practice of **the** church down the ages” [p203]. Even if we *were* to be guided by man’s tradition, HTB’s view very much depends on which ‘church’ you follow!

<sup>39</sup> Cardinal J.H. Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, (1878), pp351-353.

<sup>40</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ‘Penance’, [www.newadvent.org/cathen/11618c.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11618c.htm), as at 02:Nov:2002. See also Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Bishops, point 30, pp418-419 and

This idea comes from John 20:21-25 which includes these words of Jesus to His apostles: “Peace be unto you: ... Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained”. Rome takes this to mean that those people she ordains to her ‘priesthood’ have the power to tell God whom He should, and should not, forgive. (Rome would claim she ordains men only in the sense of confirming *God’s* ordination of them, but she refuses to accept that this very concept has direct application to the above verse and thus undermines her view on penance – as we shall see in a moment.)

If this passage *really* means what Rome thinks, then it flies in the face of many other parts of Scripture. For example:

- ❖ David went to *God* for forgiveness rather than to man, and said to the Lord “Against **Thee**, Thee only, have I sinned...” (Psa. 51:4). How can anyone but *God* possibly forgive sins against God?
- ❖ Jesus said that the publican in Luke 18:13-14 was justified not because he confessed to a *priest* but because he confessed his sinfulness to *God* and cried out to *God* for mercy.
- ❖ When Simon sinned, even Rome’s beloved Peter did not say “I forgive you, so God will”; instead he directed Simon to go straight to *God* to seek forgiveness from Him (Acts 8:22).
- ❖ The Lord’s prayer does not read “Our Father which art in heaven ... obey our priests when they instruct you to forgive us” or “forgive us our sins when we’ve confessed them to somebody else”. Jesus instead taught “When ye pray, say Our Father which art in heaven, ... **Thy** will be done, as in heaven, so in earth ... And **forgive us our sins**; for **we also forgive** every one that is indebted **to us...**” (Luke 11:2-4). He closed the prayer with some other very relevant words: “For **Thine** is the kingdom, **and the power**, and the glory, **for ever. Amen**” (Matt. 6:13). The power is God’s.
- ❖ Even the Lord Jesus Himself, despite being God and having the authority to do so, is never recorded as saying “**I** forgive your sins against God”; He simply passed on the news that His *Father* had forgiven the person: “He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.”

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Priests, point 5, p542.

(Luke 7:48), “He said unto the man, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee” (Luke 5:20).

- ❖ See also verses like Psa. 25:18, 86:5; 1 John 1:7-10; Exod. 32:32; and the Lord’s wonderful words on the cross (Luke 23:34), all of which likewise make Rome’s interpretation untenable.

Obviously people have the ability to ‘forgive’ trespasses committed against *themselves*, and this fact explains many verses that discuss the subject of believers “forgiving” each other, but it clearly does not cover the sole passage above to which Rome clings. So what does that verse mean?

It is important to note that, when the Lord spoke about sins being remitted/retained, he did NOT use the words “forgiven” or “unforgiven”, nor did He say those sins would be “remitted/retained **in heaven**”. The true sense is the same one we saw regarding “binding and loosing” in section 7:5 – viz. church discipline...

The people to whom the Lord was speaking were men who had just been given the Holy Spirit and who would soon be tasked with founding the New Testament Church. As such, they were furnished with the authority and ability<sup>41</sup> to determine if a wayward believer was to be ‘forgiven’ in the context of church discipline. This accords perfectly, for instance, with Paul’s comments in 2 Cor. 2:7-10. “Forgiving” someone in this sense just means allowing them back into Fellowship.

We are ready to return to the above quote from Rome. As can be seen, this ‘sacrament’ brings us again to the issue of ‘binding and loosing’. In Rome, the sinner is required to confess his wrongdoings to his priest who then exercises the ‘power of the keys’ – firstly, by ‘binding’ the sinner with a suitable punishing burden, then ‘loosing’ him by forgiving him his sin. Without this priestly “absolution”, the sinner remains unforgiven or ‘bound’. It is sobering here to note what the Lord Jesus had to say about the religious leaders of His day who did similarly:

“The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat: ... they **bind heavy burdens** and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of

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<sup>41</sup> Authority or ability is sometimes translated “power” in the Bible. The preceding words “Peace be with you” could thus be translated “remain in harmony with God”. The point being that, if the apostles remained close to God then this would help them discern God’s judgment about a matter – enabling them to *report* it to others.



their fingers ... But **woe** unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matt. 23:2,4,13).

The sacrament of Penance contradicts (on several counts) James 5:16 which says “**Confess your faults one to another**, and pray for **one another**”.<sup>42</sup> It is by this verse that the Romish idea of ‘confession of sins to a priest’ is supposedly justified. However, the verse says we should confess to “one another”, yet Rome’s priests do not confess to the unordained.

According to 1 Peter 2:5 and 9, we are all priests. Rome argues that the clergy represent a special ‘type’ of priest, despite no such idea being in the NT.<sup>43</sup> We are all to confess our *faults*, not our *sins*, and we are to confess them *to one another in the body*, not to ‘special’ believers like Roman ‘priests’. We may wish to admit a sin *to the person we trespassed against* (unless telling them would hurt them), but we only *need* to confess sins to *God* who, when we do so, is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Sadly, some modern Bible versions have been influenced by Rome and have changed the Greek used here – and thence the English translation – surely in order to support their doctrine.

<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately Nicky also claims that there is “another” type of priest and that “there are **still** priests ... [of this special type] **today**” [*Questions of Life*, p213]. The Bible disagrees and provides us with perfectly good and unambiguous words for whatever role a person has – e.g. ‘elder’ or ‘deacon’. (On the same page, Nicky agrees that “All Christians ... have access to God” but he doesn’t say we have *direct* access, and he doesn’t identify what *things* of God we can, and can’t, access.) In at least two further places in the Alpha materials, Nicky, through a lack of any clarifying comments, gives the impression to many that special ‘priests’ exist today (see *Telling Others*, p45, and *Questions of Life*, p139).

<sup>44</sup> Alpha *never* categorically says we are to confess sins to *God*. Nicky does say “we need to confess” [Talk 6], but he always leaves it up to the church running the Course to tell participants *to whom* they should confess (see also his incomplete references to confession in, for instance, *30 Days*, pp142-3). Interestingly, Nicky is happy to use the Roman term “clergy” [e.g. in Talk 6], but never uses the correct word “elder” in *any* of the Edition 2.2 talks. In Talk 11 he says “forgiveness is possible ... we can receive forgiveness”, but in his description of “what we need to **do**” to receive it he neglects to mention God and that we can only go to *God* for forgiveness. On page 22 of *A Life Worth Living*, Nicky speaks glowingly of new converts “**awaiting their turn** to confess”. But they should have confessed to *God*; you do not need to queue up to reach *Him*.

The confessional gives priests unrestricted access to incredibly private (and potentially incriminating or embarrassing) information. This makes it a tremendously powerful tool with which to control the people. It has been used to great effect in manipulating influential national figures – even Catholic Kings. No Christian has the right to control another (John 8:36; Matt. 23:8-11; Rev. 2:6; Matt. 20:25-27) and should not be tempted to.<sup>45</sup> Chiniqy exposed the evils of this practice in his book *The Priest, the Woman and the Confessional*. As the reader may have guessed, the use of Roman-style confession was initiated in Babylon.

**9:4 PURGATORY** Rome teaches that Michael the archangel holds the balance of God’s justice in his hands and that a Christian’s merits and demerits are weighed at his death to decide whether he has done enough good works to counteract his sins. Therefore, according to the Council of Trent, “**no** man can know with infallible assurance of faith that he has **obtained** the grace of God”. A corollary of this lack of assurance of one’s salvation is the idea of Purgatory; a ‘halfway house’ between Earth and Heaven – or Hell – wherein outstanding sins (other than especially serious “mortal” ones) will supposedly be purged from the believer. Rome describes Purgatory as being:

“[W]here the souls of those who die in the state of grace but not yet free from all imperfection make expiation [*payment*] ... and by so doing are purified before they enter Heaven”.<sup>46</sup>

Ever since the Council of Trent, and like many other Roman doctrines, belief in Purgatory is not optional:

“If **anyone** says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every **repentant** sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in **Purgatory** before the gates of Heaven can be opened, **let him be anathema**” [*Council of Trent*]<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Nicky advocates “cell” groups requiring individuals to be “accountable” to, and “intimate” with, the cell leaders [Talk 14]. This has the distinct potential to become a proxy confessional and easily leads to control because the cell leaders will be in a position to blackmail members with the knowledge they have obtained. Since each cell reports upwards, the one person at the very top of the hierarchy thus has control over every person in the entire structure.

<sup>46</sup> *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol XI, (Washington DC, 1967), ‘Purgatory’, p76.

<sup>47</sup> *The Council of Trent*, Canon 30.

The prominent Catholic spokesman, Tom Forrest, says:

“As Catholics – now I **love** this one – we have **Purgatory**. Thank God! I’m one of those people that would never get to the Beatific Vision without it. It’s the **only** way to go...”<sup>48</sup>

But Scripture states that “It is appointed unto men **once** to die, but after this the **judgment** [*i.e. not the Purgatory*]” (Heb. 9:27). Our *works* will certainly be tested by fire, but we *ourselves* are sanctified only by abiding in the truth (Acts 15:8-9; 1 John 3:2-3). How else could the Lord say to the malefactor on the cross “Verily I say unto thee, **Today** shalt thou be with **Me** in **paradise**”?

The only purifying fire that Christians suffer is the heat of *earthly* tribulation (as in Mark 4:5-6,16-17; and Rom. 5:3-5).<sup>49</sup> Again, Babylon had the concept of purgatory, but the Bible does not.<sup>50</sup> Only the blood of Jesus Christ is pure enough to cleanse us from our sins. (Nicky quotes John as saying that “the blood of Jesus cleanses us” [Talk 3], but unfortunately he does not currently stipulate that it is *only* the blood of Jesus which can do this.)

The idea of merits (obtained by Masses and Indulgences) and demerits (paid for with Penance and Purgatory) becomes a ‘works-oriented’ salvation. It seems that the cross of Christ is simply not enough for Rome. But the Epistle to the Galatians is one of several places in Scripture where this type of ‘gospel’ is strongly denounced.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Tom Forrest, (1990), quoted in Dave Hunt, *Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist*, p273. (Nicky appears to endorse Tom Forrest in *Questions of Life*, p171.)

<sup>49</sup> See also passages like 1 Thess. 4:14-17 and 1 Cor. 15:51-52 which show the true state of believers after death and before meeting Christ.

<sup>50</sup> See John 17:17; Heb. 10:14; Eph. 5:25-26 etc for more.

<sup>51</sup> Nicky understandably says “it’s not easy to be a Christian” [Talk 1], but Jesus actually said “My yoke **is** easy and My burden is **light**” (Matt. 11:30). As usual, Nicky really needs to clarify what he means, otherwise his statement could be taken as supporting the idea of salvation through works. Elsewhere, he indicates that we can say to God “I’ll pay the penalty myself” – in the same way that a criminal can say this to a judge [see Talk 3]. Nicky omits to point out that, in this life, a criminal may be able to pay back even a large fine, or serve a long prison sentence (akin to time in Purgatory) to ‘pay off’ the debt *and then go free*, but that we can never repay *God* for our sinfulness. If we do not accept God’s payment of the penalty through the shed blood of His Son Jesus Christ then we will ‘pay’ the penalty ourselves – in Hell for eternity. It has to be eternal because no

The dreadful ‘flip-side’ to the idea of Purgatory is that it can lead a desperate man to succumb to the temptation to commit some heinous act – since he believes he can ‘make up for it’ later. Rome teaches that, provided enough good things are done to ‘tip the balance back’ (or provided one is prepared to put up with a longer time in Purgatory), then such a sin will not unduly affect one’s ultimate chances of salvation.<sup>52</sup>

Doctrines such as Purgatory have yet more dangerous implications. Once they are accepted, they can be used as the foundation for all manner of further falsehoods. The *combining* of false teachings can lead to some truly bizarre notions. Below is just one example of what can result from this.

Here are the ingredients. Begin by taking the once-for-all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and allow it to be degraded through the idea of an oft-repeated ‘bloodless re-sacrifice’. Add in the possibility of a co-redeemer. Finally, mix in the concept of Purgatory and leave it to stand. The result? An astonishing piece of necromancy:

“One of ... Roman Catholicism’s greatest modern heroes (soon to be canonized by Pope John Paul II as the first step to sainthood) was Padre Pio. As a novice monk, he **asked** and was granted permission by his superior to **suffer for the sins of the world** – a clear denial that Christ fully paid for our sin by His suffering on the cross. Pio manifested the stigmata (bleeding) from hands and feet for 50 years.<sup>53</sup> He testified that multitudes of **spirits of**

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amount of time we spend in Hell will ever pay off the debt – only a spotless lamb can do that, and only Jesus is that lamb (the only person not tainted by Adam’s original sin).

<sup>52</sup> Is Nicky hinting at Purgatory when he teaches that “The love of Christ ... [goes] all the way through our lives ... from the moment we accept Christ to the moment we die **and then beyond that** into eternity. How deep it is: it can reach down to us in the **very lowest place**” [Talk 10]? Might some hearers not wonder why Nicky would feel the need to mention that Christ’s love doesn’t stop when we die? Might some therefore ask if believers go to a ‘low place’ after death? Where is the clarification?

<sup>53</sup> We are certainly called to bear one another’s *burdens*, but only Christ was able to suffer *bodily* for others in God’s eyes. Yet Nicky says, with regard to the ministry of healing, “How in practice do we go about it? ... Sometimes it’s a **sympathy pain**. There’s a pain that we know is **not ours**” [Talk 13]. This is not seen in Scripture. In this regard, it seems that experience is leading to explanation at HTB, where “We have **found** that one of the most common ways we receive words of knowledge is by what we call ‘a **sympathy pain**’” [*Telling Others*, p156]

**the dead** came to visit him on their way to Heaven to thank him for **paying for their sins** with his sufferings **so they could be released from Purgatory**”.<sup>54</sup>

Many sincere Catholics – even popes – reportedly suffer the most dreadfully anguished and spiritually tormented deaths (in stark contrast to the graceful deaths of the men and women of God in Scripture), strongly suggesting they are being dragged off by demonic forces to the depths of Hades. The doctrine of Purgatory is an extremely convenient way for Rome to deal with these agonized deaths. They can be explained away as the faithful merely being taken into the *temporary* fire of purification.

Of course, this entire teaching from Rome flies in the face of numerous scriptures, and again we find that the true root of such teaching is from Egypt and, before that, Babylon. For an excellent treatment of this whole matter, the reader is encouraged to go to Chapter IV, Section II of Alexander Hislop’s *The Two Babylons*. So poisonous is Rome’s teaching here, so blasphemous to the finished work of Christ, one would have thought that Alpha could include a cautionary note *somewhere* about it within one of Rome’s frequent mentions.

**9:5 ASSURANCE** Nicky’s teaching on the question of ‘assurance of salvation’ is good, if a bit too fleeting to challenge Rome’s claim that we can never be certain in ourselves that we have ‘obtained the grace of God’. Nicky seems to spend quite a long time encouraging us to ‘work up’ assurance in ourselves, but he just touches briefly on where *true* assurance comes from. These are the two clearest mentions in the fifteen talks. Both occur early on:

“The Holy Spirit brings a deep personal conviction that we are children of God. As Saint Paul writes in Romans 8, verse 16: ‘The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God’. The Spirit witnesses to us” [Talk 4].

“[O]ver a period of time, ... it may happen gradually, but he [*the Holy Spirit*] will testify with our spirit that we are children of God” [Talk 4].<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion: The Subtle Seduction of the World and Church*, (Harvest House, 1998), pp387-388.

<sup>55</sup> Where does the Bible say that the Holy Spirit does this ‘gradually’, or over a period of time? Does He not do it the instant we *become* sons of God? We have been saved and transferred to a totally different Kingdom, so why would God delay confirming this if it has truly occurred? Yet Nicky

True assurance of our salvation comes from faith in the scriptures *combined with the direct witness* of the Holy Spirit to our spirit as soon as we become children of God: “And it is the Spirit that **beareth witness**, because the Spirit is truth ... He that believeth on the Son of God hath the **witness in himself**” (1 John 5:6b & 10a); “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a **witness** to us...” (Heb. 10:15a).

Once regenerate, our conscience bears witness to our spiritual state (unless we have damaged our conscience through repeated sin after God has restored it):

“...my conscience **also** bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 9:1, see also Rom. 2:15); “Holding faith, and a **good** conscience...” (1 Tim. 1:19a); “Let us draw near with a true heart in **full assurance** of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an **evil conscience**...” (Heb. 10:22).

If we have never known an abiding inner peace, it is unlikely that we were ever saved.<sup>56</sup> Or, if we lose our peace and inner joy, it is a sign that we are not abiding in Him.<sup>57</sup>

According to Rome, having a definite assurance of salvation is one of the two *most* serious sins a Catholic can commit. But it is not surprising that Rome tells its faithful not to expect assurance of salvation. If we believe Rome’s teaching that Christ did not make full atonement, but that we have to do some work ourselves in order to help ‘bridge the gap’, then we

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repeatedly implies that assurance only “**starts** to happen” [Talk 4] or “begins to **develop**” [Talk 4] while actually warning participants in no uncertain terms that they must *not* expect to feel any different: “assurance ... is based on **facts** and **not** on feelings ... [Again] It’s based on facts and **not** on feelings, that’s **very** important” [Talk 4]. Why is Nicky trying so hard to suggest that Alpha converts will not feel assured?

<sup>56</sup> “Therefore, being **justified by faith**, we have **peace** with God” (Rom. 5:1a); “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and **peace** in **believing**, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15:13); “To be **spiritually** minded is life and **peace**” (Rom. 8:6). (N.B. this peace is sensed in our *spirit*, not our soul.)

<sup>57</sup> “Thou wilt keep him in **perfect peace** whose mind is **stayed** on Thee...” (Isa. 26:3); “[**B**]ecause of **my sin** ... I am **troubled** ... by ... the **disquietness** of my heart” (Psa. 38:3b,6a & 8b); “**Renew** a right spirit within me ... **Restore** unto me the **joy** of Thy salvation” (Psa. 51:10b & 12a); “And hereby we **know** that He abideth in us, **by the Spirit** which He hath given us” (1 John 3:24). See also Acts 5:32 and 1 John 4:13.

are denying the truth about Christ's sacrifice and thus we are not saved. Hence we receive no assurance.

All false religions deny the true Christ and instead teach salvation by works. This mistake was made first by Cain when he gave the fruit of his own labour to God instead of a lamb as offered by Abel. Cain's offering was not accepted by God, but instead of repenting, Cain gave the world the first martyr – his brother (see Genesis 4 and 1 John 3:12). Note that the false church has been martyring true believers ever since.

**9:6 NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH** For Rome, it is not a real and living relationship with God that is the vital thing, but *being part of the Church of Rome* – as the following official pronouncements confirm:

“The Church ... is **necessary** for **salvation** ... Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the **Catholic** Church was **made necessary** by God through Jesus Christ, would refuse to enter her or to remain in her **could not be saved**” [*Vatican II*].<sup>58</sup>

“For it is through [*the*] **Catholic** Church **alone**, which is the all-embracing **means of salvation**, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained” [*Vatican II*].<sup>59</sup>

It is important to realize that Catholicism does not, and never has, encouraged her ‘laity’<sup>60</sup> to have an *individual* (i.e. personal) relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Indeed, it criticizes Alpha for this very reason (as we shall see in a moment). For Rome, salvation comes only through the Church. By ‘Church’, Rome means only the visible *Roman Catholic* Church – and, within that, strictly only the pope, cardinals, bishops, and priests<sup>61</sup> (for

<sup>58</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, The Church, point 14, pp32-33.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, Ecumenism, point 3, p346. See also *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*, Qn 413. Note that HTB often uses the Catholic terms ‘churched’ and ‘unchurched’ to describe a person’s familiarity with Christianity. But this is problematic because you are either a part of the church of Christ or you are not. This term is ambiguous and really ought to be reconsidered.

<sup>60</sup> The word ‘lay’ or ‘laity’ in this context refers to unordained members of a church. It is a tool to help control the masses (hence the term “**Nicolaitan**” as condemned in Rev. 2:6,15). Unfortunately, Nicky seems quite happy to defend the use of this word. He does so twice during his definition of ‘church’ [*Questions of Life*, pp212-3].

<sup>61</sup> Although Nicky says “Every Christian is part of the church”, his definition of “the church” switches between the “**universal** church” (e.g. see *Questions of Life*, p205) and the restricted Roman definition. For instance, Nicky

these alone can distribute the sacraments through which ‘salvific’ grace is supposedly dispensed). But it is not being in a *visible* church that matters!<sup>62</sup> A visible church may look the part, but it is being *in Christ* that matters...

“Abide in **Me**, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, **except ye abide in Me**. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth **in Me**, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for **without Me** ye can do **nothing**” (John 15:4-5).<sup>63</sup>

But what of the ‘Catholic Charismatic movement’ that has become so widespread within the Roman church in recent decades? Many Protestant

calls us to stay under the “protective umbrella” of “the authority of the **church**” [*Telling Others*, p146]. (Exactly the same phrase occurs in HTB’s *Prayer Ministry Training Manual* (HTB Publications, 2001), p10.) Note that Nicky doesn’t use the phrase “the authority of the **elders**”. He thus implies that “the church” can mean only those in authority over the rest of the believers. Note also that Rome’s ‘church’ in this sense is exclusively male and that, in his definition of “the church” in Talk 14, taken from 1 Cor. 12:12, Nicky says it can include “Jews or Greeks, slave or free” but he omits the third phrase “male **or female**” – whereas women *can* be members of the church of God. Regarding the foundation of the church, Ephesians refers to the “foundation” (*singular*) that was laid by the twelve apostles. Nicky regrettably alters this reading and thus allows for the idea that *present* “‘apostles and prophets’ act as the foundations [*plural*]” [*Questions of Life*, p212]. This again serves to support the authority of the Roman papacy and Cardinals.

<sup>62</sup> The word ‘church’ is biblically only ever able to mean a local group of believers or the worldwide body. But regarding the meaning of the word ‘church’ Nicky writes this: “Some associate the word ‘church’ with the **clergy**. Somebody who is entering the ordained ministry is said to be ‘going into the **church**’” [*Questions of Life*, p204]. Nicky doesn’t deny this false notion but perpetuates it. In one talk he twice suggests that a church has a “governing body” of men [Talk 8], whereas it is Christ Jesus alone who should govern. (1 Cor. 12:28 is not referring to “government” of the church.) Given the above footnotes, plus Nicky’s statements defending the papacy (see the footnotes of chapter 7) and his support for the idea of special priests (see the footnotes of section 9:3), no wonder Sandy Millar was able to declare that Alpha “presents the church ... (as described) in Catechism of the **Catholic** Church” [Letter, *Catholic Herald*, 15:Nov:99, p7, as quoted by Peter Burden-Teh, *Christianity and Society* magazine, April 2000, p11].

<sup>63</sup> Nicky too hints that salvation comes through being part of the church when he writes “It is **vital** to be an active participant in a church ... [*It*] gives you an opportunity to serve God. We **cannot** do it on our own” [*30 Days*, p139], and “[N]one of us can find God **by ourselves**” [*Searching Issues*, p30].



Pentecostals and Charismatics assume that the existence of such a movement proves that Rome is changing and that God is blessing her. But let us take a closer look at the testimonies emanating from Catholics who have received the Romish version of the charismata:

“The **initiation** into this new experience ... is referred to as being ‘baptized in the Holy Spirit’. The following effects have been experienced: A greater appreciation for **the Mass**...”<sup>64</sup>

“**Nothing** has happened to the great Mother of God [*since I became a charismatic Catholic*]. She still remains **Queen of Heaven and Earth**”<sup>65</sup>

“**Traditional** devotions such as those to **Mary** have become meaningful to us. The sacramental life of the church has become more meaningful, particularly the sacrament of **penance** which we **both use now**...”<sup>66</sup>

Some readers may suspect that these are one-offs by ‘loose cannons’ trying to discredit the movement, so let us see the testimony of someone who was present at the very beginning of the modern Catholic Renewal movement, and who spends much time promoting it:

“Did you know that 30 years ago when the Charismatic Renewal was born on the Duquesne Weekend, Mary was there? After all, she is the ... **Mother of the Church**. When we students from Duquesne gathered in the chapel ... our **first** activity was a meditation on **Mary** ... [*Since then*] I’ve **asked Mary** to be my mother and teach me to pray ... Mary ... [*was*] standing near the Cross ... receiving from the lips of Jesus her new mission to be mother **of us all** ... ‘**Spouse** of the Holy Spirit’: this is the title

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<sup>64</sup> Publication by the Church of the Transfiguration, 4325 Jarvis Ave., San Jose, CA, as quoted in *Charismatic Catholics*, [www.angelfire.com/ky/dodone/Charismaticcath.html](http://www.angelfire.com/ky/dodone/Charismaticcath.html) (as at 23:Mar:2001) This article is subsequently referred to as ‘CC’. According to John V. McHale, in *The Furrow*, May 1973, this is “unanimous” among Catholic Charismatics and assures them of the “**Real Presence**” of Christ *in the host*. Rome admits that Catholic Charismatics “attend Mass **more** regularly” after this experience rather than steering clear of this attack on the cross [*The Catholic Gospel*, Vol. 14 #1, p4].

<sup>65</sup> Interview with “renewed” Catholics in Bombay, India. *Light of Life* magazine, June 1979, as quoted in an article entitled *Charismatic Movement Continues to Grow in RCC*, Way of Life website, [wayoflife.org/~dcloud/fbns/charismaticmovement\\_continues.htm](http://wayoflife.org/~dcloud/fbns/charismaticmovement_continues.htm), as at 22:Mar:2001. This web article is subsequently referred to as ‘WL’.

<sup>66</sup> Bert Ghezzi, from quote in *Catholic Pentecostalism*, Kenneth Ranaghan, 1969, cited in de Semlyen, p28.

for Mary used by many ... Like any spouse, she has an infinite knowledge of the One who loves her<sup>67</sup>

“When I was first asked to contribute this teaching on continuing in the Spirit, my mind turned naturally to those traditional means of spiritual growth: ... the sacraments, ... devotion to **Mary and the saints**. ... Yes, **Mary**, give us your own faith<sup>68</sup>

But let us be certain. Let us focus now on the original *leader* of the modern Catholic Charismatic movement – Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens. His words will be even more authoritative. What did *he* have to say?... “Let me share with you one secret, how to receive the Holy Spirit in the best way. The secret of our unity with the Holy Spirit is our unity with **Mary**, the **Mother of God**”<sup>69</sup>

“Since I have had this [*charismatic*] experience, my allegiance to the holy Father as the **Vicar of Christ** in the world has been **heightened and strengthened**. My appreciation for Mary as the **co-redemptress and mediatoress of my salvation** has been **assured**. My appreciation of the **Mass** as the **sacrifice of Christ** has now been **heightened**”<sup>70</sup>

Do other such leaders of Catholic Charismaticism concur? They most assuredly do. The Italian charismatic priest Serafino Falvo wrote the first Italian book on the subject. He says: “We **exclude** in the **most categor-**

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<sup>67</sup> Patti Gallagher Mansfield, Blessed Is She Who Believed, *ICCRS Newsletter*, Jul – Aug 1997.

<sup>68</sup> Patti Gallagher Mansfield, Continuing In The Spirit, *ICCRS Newsletter*, Mar – Apr 1999.

<sup>69</sup> Cardinal Suenens, 1905-1996, address at the *Seventh International Charismatic Congress* at Notre Dame, as quoted in ref. CC. The same article cites dozens of other examples showing the true nature of the Catholic Renewal. For instance, it notes that there are cases where tongues are being interpreted as ‘Hail Mary’ and that the RC journal *Dialogue* admits “Catholic Pentecostals tend to go **back** and cultivate **all** the avenues to God that they had abandoned: **Rosary**, visits to the **Blessed** Sacrament [i.e. Mass], devotion to **Mary**, [and] frequent confession”. It also quotes a “recognized theologian of the RC charismatic renewal”, Priest O’Connor in the book *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church*, (Paulist Press, 1974), as saying “Rebaptism is **unacceptable** because **at baptism** one is reborn [*rather than at the point of accepting the gospel and repenting!*] ... To undergo believer’s baptism is **heretical** ... **No-one** can receive the knowledge that he is saved”.

<sup>70</sup> Cardinal Suenens, *Charismatic Ecumenism: The Road to Rome*, by Michael McCoskey, as quoted in ref. WL. Perhaps it is not altogether surprising that Suenens was a **Freemason** [*Bulletin de l’Occident Chrétien* Nr.12, July, 1976, (Directeur Pierre Fautrad a Fye – 72490 Bourg Le Roi, as analysed by “The Enddays Ministry. See also Burns, *op. cit.*, p22].

ic way, that this is a movement tending to **change, [or even] modify** ... the present structures of the [*Roman*] church”.<sup>71</sup> Regarding Mary, Falvo goes on to say “In the charismatic renewal, the **Virgin Mary** occupies an **essential** place alongside the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can **not** do other than bring one to **Mary** ... wherever Mary is, the Holy Spirit falls”.<sup>72</sup>

The spirit behind Rome’s Charismaticism is patently a deceiving one. It has unfortunately fooled many Protestants too who think these people are sound because they have experienced a spiritual outpouring – and that the spirit involved *must* be of God. They argue that ‘God is prepared to give this movement His Holy Spirit because they use the Bible’. But this is *not* Scriptural...

God does *not* give His Holy Spirit to those who simply possess, or even use, the Bible. Mormons use the Bible, but do not have God’s Spirit. The Pharisees likewise. The Lord gives His Spirit to those who *believe and obey* Him: “...**we** are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, **whom God hath given** to them that **obey Him**” (Acts 5:32), and “If ye love Me, **keep My commandments**. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you ... the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive” (John 14:15-16).<sup>73</sup>

Despite all the above material to which Nicky has full access, he has reiterated his belief that the Catholic Church is ‘just **another denomination** of the **Christian faith**’.<sup>74</sup> This is a world away from Nicky’s sound statement elsewhere that “cults” are identified by putting their beliefs “alongside the Bible” and thereby testing them. If their beliefs are “not consistent with the teaching of the New Testament”, then Nicky originally confirmed that they are teaching “heresies”.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Serafino Falvo, *Lora dello Spirito Santo*, p186, as quoted in William C. Standridge, *What’s Happening In The Roman Church? A Report From Rome*, (Independent Faith Mission, 1975), p21.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p197 & 204, as quoted in William Standridge, *op. cit.*, p21.

<sup>73</sup> In Talk 10 Nicky strongly hints that provided you are “longing” to receive the Spirit and you make yourself “receptive” to receiving something supernatural, you will get ‘it’ even if you belong to “a **very** unlikely group”. Yet all of Nicky’s examples from Scripture refer to people who believed and were *already faithful* to God’s Word. Nicky makes special mention of an “Anglo-**Catholic vicar** ... [*who was*] filled with the Holy Spirit” [Talk 8] without any apparent repentance by the man of his Catholic leanings either before or after.

<sup>74</sup> Neil Richardson, *Unmasked: Nicky Gumbel – A Tale of Two Cities, Part One: Rome*, *Vanguard*, Issue 2, Jan 1997, p31. Indeed, every time HTB offers a list of what it considers to be ‘denominations’, Roman Catholicism always seems to be included.

<sup>75</sup> Talk 5, 1<sup>st</sup> Edn.

**9:7 ALPHA IN ROME** Given all these entrenched heresies in Roman Catholicism, it is surely an indictment of the present version of Alpha that Rome is able to use it. Yes, Rome *officially* endorses Alpha and uses it to bring people into her system.<sup>76</sup> But since Rome’s gospel is so very different from the one described in Scripture, what does this say about the true state of the Course as it stands? Does it not indicate that it is compromised on this issue?

When checked, the Course material seems engineered to appease Rome. This is achieved not just by having lots of positive references to her, but also by using wording itself that, doctrinally, can be taken in different ways. (See the copious footnotes throughout Part Two of our book for details.)

“I did Alpha at Rostrevor and I was in a mixed group of **Catholics** and Protestants. The atmosphere was wonderful because there weren’t **any** divisions over doctrine...”<sup>77</sup>

“There will be a growing realization that the faith we have is a **common** faith and [we] will ask [ourselves] ‘What **are** we divided about?’” [Alpha News].<sup>78</sup>

This constant ambiguity is why the US Catholic Alpha Office has said “Alpha is ... compatible with Catholic teaching”<sup>79</sup> and its UK equivalent has affirmed that “Catholics who have read the Alpha material have found it remarkably free from **anything** which we might object to”.<sup>80</sup> Think about those statements in the light of what we have just uncovered about Catholicism and the reader will see that all *cannot* be well. Since the gospel is “the power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16) it is vital to make no changes to the gospel that we believe and preach for *any* reason other than biblical accuracy.

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<sup>76</sup> Alpha has been publicly endorsed by more than one Catholic cardinal, including the late Cardinal Hume and Cardinal Williams of Wellington [An Introduction to the Alpha Course, undated HTB A4 booklet, p14].

<sup>77</sup> Alpha News, Mar – Jun 1998, pp10-11.

<sup>78</sup> Comment by the leader of the mixed Rostrevor course cited above, Alpha News, Mar – Jun 1998, pp10-11.

<sup>79</sup> Alpha for Catholics: Questions and Answers (Ellicott City, MD. ChristLife Catholic Evangelization Services, nd), p6, as quoted by William J. Cork, Is “Alpha for Catholics”?, www.wquercus.com as at 08:Dec:2002.

<sup>80</sup> Catholic Alpha Office website (as at 01:Jul:2001), currently at members.iinet.net.au/~nosnikta/alpha/index.html), Alpha in a Catholic Context.

For those who imagine that Rome’s preparedness to use Alpha is a sign that, underneath it all, she is changing, we need to consider a couple of things. Firstly, several years after Rome first used Alpha, the man in charge of Rome’s doctrines stated that Protestant churches are not true churches because they are not part of Rome and they deny transubstantiation:

“[T]he Catholic Church ... is the **single** Church of Christ ... the Catholic Church **governed** by the **successor** [*singular!*] of **Peter**”<sup>81</sup>

“[Those ‘churches’] which have not preserved ... [*the RC belief in the*] **substance** of the Eucharistic Mystery, are **not** churches ...”<sup>82</sup>

Consider also these words from a Roman Bishop, published on the ‘Alpha for Catholics’ web site: “There is indeed a **danger** that [*if*] **we** make no use of the Course, Catholics will go to Alpha Courses run by **Protestant** churches and **perhaps even end up** in those churches”.<sup>83</sup> What “danger” is there, unless Rome doesn’t think Protestant churches are real churches?

We will see further examples of Rome’s intransigence later. Given the footnotes we have provided, it seems that all the movement has been from *Alpha’s* side. As if to confirm this, a senior Catholic clergyman has announced that “Alpha does **not** contain **anything** that is directly opposed to

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<sup>81</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger, *Dominus Iesus*, published 06:Aug:2000. Nicky almost appears to make HTB subservient to the Pope when he says that Alpha is one of the “initiatives arising out of the **renewal movement** in the **Decade of Evangelism**” [*Telling Others*, p29]. Both of the emboldened terms derive from *Rome*.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Ambrose Griffiths, “OSB” (“Order of Saint Benedict”), Bishop of Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, England, *Alpha for Catholics* website, [www.christlife.org/alpha](http://www.christlife.org/alpha) as at 25:May:2002. (Note that these telling words from Griffiths were removed from the fuller quote when it appeared in HTB’s *Introduction to the Alpha Course* booklet!)

any Catholic teaching”,<sup>84</sup> and Nicky legitimizes Rome’s entire catechism (the means of instruction in Catholic theology) in several ways:

- ❖ Nicky has read *Vatican II* (the Council that updated Rome’s image post-WWII) and reports that he can find ‘**nothing** wrong with it’,<sup>85</sup> despite the fact that it not only failed to repeal a solitary edict from the Council of Trent, but actually *re-affirmed* the whole of that Council and all the curses it pronounced on biblical Christianity.
- ❖ Nicky quotes Cardinal Schönborn very favourably<sup>86</sup> and informs us at the same time that he is aware this man is the “general editor of the Catholic Church **catechism**”.
- ❖ Nicky also honours Anselm of Canterbury whose writings “covered the **whole** field of Catholic doctrine”.<sup>87</sup>

As proof that Rome is not changing, we should bear in mind that folks attending Catholic-run Alpha Courses do not do Alpha ‘as is’, but are presented with *additional* talks – undermining participants at a stroke:

“[*Alpha is*] still lacking ... We now have [*extra*] ... video and audio cassettes containing ... talks: [*including*] **Why should I go to Mass?** ... They help people ... to appreciate the ... sacra-

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<sup>84</sup> Ambrose Griffiths, Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, *Alpha for Catholics*, a six-sided leaflet (undated), published by the ‘Alpha for Catholics Office’, p2. Bishop Griffiths endorsed Alpha even further in an official HTB booklet entitled *An Introduction to the Alpha Course*. On page 17 he is quoted as saying: “The course ... doesn’t contain **anything** that is **contrary** to Catholic doctrine”. That “Alpha is compatible with Catholic teaching” is confirmed on the U.S. Alpha For Catholics website (as at 25:May:2002) [see the ‘*Theological Issues*’ section of [www.christlife.org](http://www.christlife.org)]. In our book we have clearly stated what ‘orthodox Catholicism’ means and yet, according to Romanists, Alpha is a “tool for communicating the basics of orthodox **Catholic** faith” – rather than the basics of orthodox *Christian* faith [*Telling Others*, p195].

<sup>85</sup> *Vanguard* magazine, Issue 2, p31.

<sup>86</sup> Nicky quotes Cardinal Schönborn’s book *Loving the Church* at some length in *Alpha News* #20, p18. (As Burden-Teh points out, Schönborn is referring here to the *Roman Catholic* Church.) Nicky can be seen shaking Schönborn’s hand in HTB’s *UK Focus*, August 2003.

<sup>87</sup> Nicky quotes Anselm without hesitation [*Questions of Life*, p134]. Yet Anselm was a famous Mariolator and a supporter of clerical celibacy. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that “There are **few** pages of our theology that have **not** been illustrated by the labours of Anselm”.

ments through which we grow as **Catholics**” [*Catholic Alpha Office*].<sup>88</sup>

“It is **essential** that Alpha be followed **promptly** by ... **Catholic teaching**” [*Director of Catholic Evangelization Services*].<sup>89</sup>

“On the question of Sacraments, [e.g. *Penance*] Alpha is **seriously** deficient ... Catholics using Alpha as a tool of evangelization ... will **clearly** expect participants to go on to discover the full riches of **Catholic sacramental** life through catechetical programmes” [*Catholic Alpha Office*].<sup>90</sup>

“Alpha ... **happily**, is being **supplemented** by specifically **Catholic** materials ... It is within the context of **this** ... that I encourage the use of Alpha in our parishes”.<sup>91</sup>

A UK edition of *Alpha News* has carried an advert (entitled *Catholic Follow-Up to Alpha*) for fifteen extra videos.<sup>92</sup> These are published by the Catholic Alpha Office and are to be used straight after *standard* Alpha Courses. They give Rome’s teaching on “Mary and the Saints”, Roman Baptism, “Getting More out of the Mass”(!), the sacraments of Rome (all seven of them), etc.<sup>93</sup> In other words, not only does HTB fail to alert Course

<sup>88</sup> Catholic Alpha Office website (as at 01:Jun:1998), *Post Alpha Catholic Teaching*, CatholicAlphaOffice.org/pact.htm.

<sup>89</sup> David Palmer, *Catholic Herald*, 08:Sep:2000, as quoted Burden-Teh, *Christianity and Society* magazine, April 2001, p16.

<sup>90</sup> Catholic Alpha Office, *Questions and Answers*. Note: If the Alpha Course is run in Catholic churches in the identical way it is run across all denominations, why is there a special comment at the start of the *Alpha Administrator’s Handbook* saying “The Catholic Alpha Office can give advice and information to anyone planning to start a course in the **Roman Catholic** church”? [p6]. That the copious guidance published by HTB is not considered adequate for Rome suggests that Catholic churches do not run even the *main* Alpha Course in the way everyone else does.

<sup>91</sup> Cardinal Keeler, letter to Baltimore diocese, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

<sup>92</sup> *Alpha News*, March – July 2000, p17.

<sup>93</sup> Seven of the talks are given by the preacher to the ‘*papal*’ household, Raniero Cantalamessa. Alpha therefore has the blessing of the ‘Pope’ himself. These talks were advertised on the *front* page of *Alpha News* #19 under the heading “Papal preacher gives Alpha follow-up talks”. With Gumbel’s clear endorsement, the article goes on, “The series, [*is*] entitled, *Drink from the Wells of the Church*”. Note that the title is not ‘Drink from the Wells of the Roman [or Catholic] Church’. The implication is that Rome is *the* Church. Cantalamessa has been the “Preacher to the Papal Household” since 1979 [HTB’s *Focus* newspaper, 10 August 2003, pUK3]. If he was preaching the *truth* to the ‘Pope’ for all that time then why on earth did JP II do all the appalling things he did in the intervening years (only a few of

attendees to the heresies contained in these talks, it even runs adverts for them. Think about this. These sheep will be force-fed all the heresies we have just looked at, knowing that the videos enjoy HTB's official blessing.

Most shocking of all, Nicky fails to caution his listeners that Rome will quickly snuff out any personal relationship they would have with Christ. The Catholic Alpha Office criticizes "Alpha's emphasis on the individual" and the Course's emphasis on

“an **individual** and **personal** response to the gospel message, in the form of a **commitment to Christ** as Lord and Saviour ... Alpha's emphasis on the individualistic approach can be a **weakness**, but only if the **necessary teaching is not done afterwards**”.<sup>94</sup>

Anyone going on from Alpha to Rome has the idea of an 'individual and personal commitment to Christ' speedily quashed. They will simply not be knowledgeable or spiritually mature enough to avoid it. (This is not helped by the fact that Alpha teaches them to trust Rome – which is why they go there in the first place. Hence Alpha graduates who join Catholic churches send their children to *Catholic* schools<sup>95</sup> and seem happy to defend *Catholic* doctrines and practices.<sup>96</sup>)

Many Protestants believe that the Catholic Church can be turned around by the insertion of Alpha graduates. But Babylonian churches that have deceived and corrupted their congregants for nearly 1700 years are not going to be changed by the introduction of some baby believers. Besides which, it has never been God's way to insert spiritual children into such a

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which are cited in this book)? Incidentally, as far as we can establish, Cantalamessa believes in all the heresies we have described in our assessment of Rome here. In the space of ten minutes, during one of the above talks, he: confirmed the existence of a special priesthood; reaffirmed baptismal regeneration; taught that the church is Christ; insisted that ingesting the wafer at Mass “makes us holy” and strongly implied that the Mass was the “living sacrifice” of Jesus [“Why the Eucharist Makes us Holy”, as stated on the audio tape *Alpha: Attend or Avoid?* (Cecil Andrews, Take Heed, 2000)]. Note that Cantalamessa was the principal speaker at HTB's 2003 'Home Focus' week away. See HTB's *Focus* newspaper, 14 September 2003 for some of his shocking views on “The **Virgin Mary**”, “The Pope”, and conversion.

<sup>94</sup> Catholic Alpha Office website (as at 01:Jul:2001), *Questions and Answers, B: Theological Issues; Q6: Is its emphasis too individualistic?*

<sup>95</sup> *The Day Marie's Husband Left*, www.christlife.org/alpha as at 08:Jan:2003.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, the testimony of Christine Woodall in *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 2001, p9, or the testimonies of Jenny Baker and the Palmer family in *Alpha for Catholics*, a six-sided leaflet (undated), published by the 'Alpha for Catholics Office', p4.



spiritually dangerous situation. There is not a single biblical precedent for doing this. It represents man's way, not God's. (We will come to *God's* answer in Part 4.<sup>97</sup>)

“[W]hat agreement hath the temple of God with **idols**? ... Wherefore **come out** from among them, and be ye **separate**” (2 Cor. 6:16-18).

“[H]ave **no** fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **reprove** [*i.e. expose*] **them**” (Eph. 5:12).

“If **any man teach otherwise**, and consent not to wholesome words ... He is ... **destitute** of the truth ... [F]rom such **with-draw** thyself” (1 Tim. 6:3&5).

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<sup>97</sup> Part 4 appears in the sister 'Church' volume of this two-volume guide.

## CHAPTER 10

# SACRED SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

**10:1 INTRODUCTION** As we saw in Part One, Christ magnified the scriptures. He declared they are Truth and Life. He emphasized their inerrancy and permanence. He promised blessing to those who studied *and obeyed* them. And He rebuked those who hid, or corrupted, or did not believe them. Thus He expected His People to know the scriptures, and He showed their importance by repeatedly quoting them.

In Talk 5, Nicky rightly affirms the supreme authority of the Bible over and above every other writing or opinion: “What the Scriptures said ... was Jesus’ supreme authority over and above the traditions of leaders of the church of the time and over and above the opinions of others...”<sup>1</sup> He immediately goes on to say:

“The view of the **Roman Catholic Church** today is enshrined in **Vatican II** which says this: ‘the books of the OT and the NT in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical, because of having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and are therefore without

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<sup>1</sup> Talk 5, Edn. 2.1.

error’. This view of the Bible was, until the last [*i.e. the 19<sup>th</sup>*] Century, the view of all the **Protestant** churches as well and it is still held by many fine scholars today, though ridiculed at a school level.”

Nicky’s hearers are likely to conclude from this that Catholicism is much more committed to the holy scriptures than is Protestantism. This is most definitely worth checking.

**10:2 ROME’S TRACK RECORD** Rome certainly *claims* to honour the scriptures. After all, *Vatican II* also says: “The Church has **always** venerated the divine Scriptures”.<sup>2</sup> However, from our studies of Rome’s unbiblical teachings in the chapters above, we have seen that this is not so in practice. In fact her history regarding the Bible has not been a good one *at all*.

In contrast to the exhortations of the Lord Jesus and His apostles to the early church to read, and obey, the scriptures, it has been the practice of Rome throughout the centuries to *withhold* them. During the Middle Ages the only version of the Bible available was Jerome’s Vulgate which, being in Latin, could not be read or understood by the overwhelming proportion of the people (or even by most parish priests, who simply memorized the few parts they needed to recite for the Mass).

As for translations into the vernacular, these were expressly banned, even for the “regular clergy” – as the following letter from ‘Pope’ Gregory VII concerning a request from a monastery in Bohemia shows:

“[W]e can **by no means** favourably answer this your petition ... not without reason has it pleased Almighty God that holy Scripture should be **a secret** ... lest, if it were plainly apparent to all men, perchance it would be little esteemed and be subject to disrespect...”<sup>3</sup>

But how can the populace truly esteem a book of which they have virtually no knowledge? Who is showing the *real* disrespect for the scriptures here? Astonishingly, in 1229 the Catholic Council of Valencia officially placed the Bible on its *Index of Forbidden Books*: “We **prohibit** also the permitting of the laity to have the books of the Old and New Testament,

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<sup>2</sup> *Documents of Vatican II*, p125.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Pope’ Gregory VII, (1079), quoted in Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions*, (Cambridge University Press, 1920), p24.

... we **strictly forbid** them to have the above-mentioned books in ... [*their own*] tongue”.<sup>4</sup>

Attempts by some brave men to translate the scriptures into the vernacular were met with varying degrees of persecution by Rome. John Wycliffe was one such courageous soul, translating the Latin scriptures into English in 1392. A leading Catholic historian of the day accused him of casting “the **Gospel** pearl ... before swine”. (This was an inventive argument – even if it *was* calling Rome’s congregants “swine” – but it ignores (a) the need of *everyone* for the Gospel, and (b) the fact that, if the people had been taught the Word properly by Rome then the problem would not have arisen in the first place.) Wycliffe posthumously received the following loving response from Rome for his efforts:

“This **pestilential** and most wretched John Wycliffe of **damnable** memory, a child of the old devil, and himself a child or **pupil** of **Anti-Christ**, who, while he lived, walking in the vanity of his mind ... **crowned** his wickedness by **translating the Scriptures into the mother tongue**”.<sup>5</sup>

Wycliffe, however, got off lightly. Just over a century later William Tyndale was *burnt at the stake* for translating the Bible into English.

“[F]or ages the Bible was practically an **unknown** book. Martin Luther was a **grown man** when he said that he had never *seen* (let alone read) a Bible in his life. No jailor ever kept a prisoner closer than the church of Rome kept the Bible from the people”.<sup>6</sup>

Rome withheld the Bible from the people at two levels: the individual and the corporate. Firstly, translations into the vernacular for individuals to read for themselves were refused by Rome. But, on top of this, only tiny portions of Scripture were recited, *in Latin*, by her priests, in church meetings. Thus Rome withheld both the Word of God *itself* from Catholics plus any *teaching therefrom*.

The decree of the Council of Valencia, forbidding the Bible, was reaffirmed by the Catholic Counter-Reformation’s Council of Trent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Anyone who possessed or read a Bible without *written permission* from their bishop was “anathema” (i.e. to be detested and cursed):

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p97.

<sup>5</sup> Catholic Archbishop Arundel, quoted in David Fountain, *John Wycliffe, the Dawn of the Reformation*, (Mayflower Christian Books, 1984), p45.

<sup>6</sup> Prof. Dyson Hague, *op.cit.*, p43.

“In as much as it is manifest, from experience, that if the Holy Bible, translated into the [*people's*] tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to everyone, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it”.<sup>7</sup>

Why, then, was the Word originally written in the common languages of the common people rather than in some obscure tongue? If there is risk associated with people having the Word of God in their own language we would be warned of it in Scripture; however, there is no mention here of the Bible *ever* being deliberately kept in an obscure tongue. Joshua not only chiselled the Word in the language of the people so that it was permanently and publicly readable, but even read the *entire* law out to the people in it (Josh. 8:30-35). Another instance of this occurs in Nehemiah 8:2-3.

Nevertheless, in 1541 for example, Thomas Bainard and James Moreton were condemned and *burned alive* by the Catholic Church; the former just for reading the Lord's Prayer in English and the latter just for reading the epistle of James in English.

Rome's practice of prohibiting the free use of Bibles is not restricted to ages past. As recently as the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Bible remained on the *Index*, even to those training for the Catholic priesthood. And during the 20<sup>th</sup> century various Bible Societies were subject to the same treatment; their depots being closed and their Bibles confiscated and burned.<sup>8</sup> The Spanish people were still breaking the law if they possessed a copy of the Bible in their own language as recently as 1967.

“It is virtually axiomatic [*i.e. a self-evident truth*] that where there is an open Bible, men will not long remain in bondage. But by the same token where the Bible is a **closed** book men soon find themselves in darkness and servitude ... For a thousand years ... while the Roman Church held sway, the Bible remained a closed book. The Roman Church, instead of being a Kingdom of light, ... [*was*] a Kingdom of darkness, promoting ignorance and superstition and holding the people in bondage...

“[O]bserve particularly ... [*her claim*] that the reading of the Bible in the native tongue will do ‘more evil than good’! Imagine that, as the deliberate teaching of a church professing to be Christian! How insulting to God is such teaching, that His Word as read by the people will do more evil than good! That attitude

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p97.

<sup>8</sup> See Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p100.

toward the Word of God is the mark, not of a true church, but of a false church".<sup>9</sup>

Some might claim that, with *Vatican II*, Rome has dramatically changed. After all, she has now said: "Easy access to sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful".<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately there are stringent provisos attached to each of *Vatican II*'s statements which effectively nullify any 'easy access' to God's Word by Catholics:

Firstly, only heavily corrupted versions of the Bible are approved by the Church; corruptions to support Rome's beliefs (see later). Secondly, though Rome's 'laity' may now *read* their 'Bibles', they must still go to 'the Church', rather than to the Holy Spirit, for final interpretation. Thirdly, their reading is to be supplemented by the Church's own writings, decrees and promulgations. (When pressed, Roman priests are forced to *admit* that biblical proofs of Catholic doctrines simply *do not exist* – and that Catholics must go elsewhere to justify them.<sup>11</sup>) As we have seen, Catholics are obliged, on pain of excommunication, to believe Rome's unbiblical doctrines even if their Bibles patently disagree.

Fourthly, although the Holy Spirit *enlightens* the Word to us, demonic spirits darken minds from being able to see its truths (as they did with the Pharisees). Unfortunately, the "Christian faithful" referred to above are those who are committed to Roman Catholicism and who will thus have partaken of the idolatrous spirit behind it.

**10:3 APPROVED BIBLE VERSIONS** For many centuries, Jerome's Latin Vulgate was the only version used by the Roman Church. However, it was based on systematically corrupted Alexandrian manuscripts. (Egypt, and especially Alexandria, was infamous for doctoring manuscripts.)

Though declared by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) to be infallible, numerous faults and inconsistencies have been found in the Vulgate (quite apart from the many falsehoods and heresies that were injected into it). The Rheims and Douay Version, not translated from the original Greek or Hebrew manuscripts but from the Latin Vulgate c1600, thus contains the same fatal flaws, as do lesser-known ones like the 'Confraternity' version produced in 1941.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp96-98 & 100-101.

<sup>10</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, Revelation, point 22, p125.

<sup>11</sup> 'Father' Kenneth Ryan, *Catholic Questions, Catholic Answers*, (Servant Publications, 1990), pp95-96.

As well as changes to the text, Catholic Bibles have frequently suffered from the addition of footnotes that simply serve to induce confusion and doubt. Often these Bibles have contained introductions that attempt to justify the Roman liturgy and explain why the Bible should be subservient to Rome's teachings. To cap it all, Catholic Bibles like the Douay contained the Apocrypha *as if it were part of the canon* (more on that shortly).<sup>12</sup> Not all modern Catholic Bible versions retain the Apocrypha. But Rome still stands by it. Modern Romanist versions often exchange the Apocrypha for even worse corruption of the true canon.

Rome's 'Jerusalem Bible', which came out in 1966, contained *even more* alteration of the text to support Romish doctrines. For example, at the end of Luke 1:28 the King James Version ('KJV') records the angel saying to Mary: "blessed art thou **among women**". In order to maintain the Catholic superstition that Mary was *not* just a woman but was actually divine, the Jerusalem Bible removes these words.

Catholicized versions deliberately omit thousands of important words from verses, resulting in major corruption and in the undermining of fundamental teachings. We could prove this in many ways, but we shall illustrate it primarily with respect to the greatest topic possible: the Messiahship, Sonship, Lordship, and even *Deity* of Jesus – the most crucial doctrine imaginable. It is the one that most readily separates Christianity from false faiths, and one which few realize is repeatedly assailed by Rome.

We shall compare verses given in the Authorized ('King James') Version, with Rome's 'Jerusalem Bible'. The reader may like to check their own to see which one it agrees with and thus check if it has suffered Romish influence. We have listed only a *proportion* of all possible examples.

## Is He Christ?

It is vital that we recognize Jesus as the Messiah (or 'Christ' in Greek). He is the only Christ of God. New Agers teach about a 'Jesus', and about 'Christ', but they are referring to *two separate entities*. To them, references to 'Jesus' relate to the *man*, but 'Christ' pertains to a god-like 'Christ consciousness' which supposedly indwelt Jesus. Keen to deny the Deity of Jesus, they frequently separate the two. Amazingly, the Jerusalem

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<sup>12</sup> The early editions of the KJV did include the Apocrypha but this material was clearly marked as apocryphal and kept separate from the canon. This is not true of Romish Bibles.

Bible alters many references to “Jesus Christ”, thus encouraging readers to separate the person of Jesus from His inherent Messiahship.

- Where the KJV has “Jesus **Christ**”, the Jerusalem regularly prefers just to say “Jesus”. See, for example, Rev. 12:17; 1 Cor. 9:1; Acts 15:11; and 2 Cor. 11:31. In another passage (Rev. 1:9), “Christ” is removed twice in the *same* verse. Similarly, where the KJV has “**Christ** Jesus” (e.g. in Acts 19:4 and Heb. 3:1), the Jerusalem again drops the “Christ”.
- Even though “Christ” is removed from “Jesus Christ” in several other places (e.g. 2 Thess. 1:8; Acts 16:31; 1 John 1:7; and *twice* in 1 Cor. 5:4), the Jerusalem Bible doesn’t stop there. On some occasions when it is prepared to refer to Christ, it deletes the word “Jesus” instead, thus separating Him from His Christhood once again. See, for example, 2 Cor. 5:18 and Matt. 8:29. (It is regrettable that Nicky himself refers to “Jesus” or “Christ” more often than to “Jesus Christ”.<sup>13</sup>)
- In John 6:47, Jesus confirmed His Christhood, saying “He that believeth **on Me** hath everlasting life”. The Jerusalem ‘Bible’, among others, carefully extracts the words “on Me”.<sup>14</sup> Consider the effect on that verse!

Catholicized versions dramatically downplay the significance of Christ anyway. In Romans 1:16, the KJV quotes Paul’s words: “I am not ashamed of the gospel **of Christ**”; but apparently the Douay and the Jerusalem Bibles *are* ashamed of it, for they remove the words “of Christ” here. According to the KJV, each believer is made “an heir of God **through Christ**” (Gal. 4:7)... but not according to the Douay nor its offspring, the Jerusalem. When the KJV says “I can do all things through **Christ** which strengtheneth me” (Php. 4:13), the Douay and Jerusalem ‘Bibles’ again obliterate the word “Christ”. How do these verses read in *our* versions?<sup>15</sup>

### Is He the Son of God?

Being the only *natural* Son of God makes Jesus God. Believing He is God the Son is vital to salvation (1 John 4:15). Catholicism, not unlike

<sup>13</sup> At least when the Bible separates the names it is done in the context of the ‘Old Testament’ and so there is less scope for misinterpretation.

<sup>14</sup> The Jerusalem ‘Bible’ changes John 7:38 from ‘believing **on**’ Jesus to ‘believing **in**’ Him. Interestingly, Nicky quotes this verse as saying ‘in’ too [Talk 8]. See the footnotes for section 9:1 of our book for the significance of this.

<sup>15</sup> Sadly, Nicky’s version (quoted in *A Life Worth Living*, p105) reads “I can do everything through **him** [where has ‘Christ’ gone?] who gives me strength”.



the New Age movement, is quietly keen to obscure this unique Sonship of Jesus Christ. The Jerusalem Bible starts straight away by changing Luke 2:33 from “**Joseph** and His mother” to a reading which indicates that Jesus had a *human* father.

- In the same way, there are several places where Christ referred to “**My Father**” but the Jerusalem ‘Bible’ instead reads “**the Father**”. Examples include Matt. 24:36 and John 14:28. (In John 10:29-32 this alteration has been subtly introduced more than once.)
- In Eph. 3:14 the KJV reads “I bow my knees unto the Father **of our Lord Jesus Christ**”. It will come as no surprise that the Jerusalem Bible deletes the last five words. Similarly, where the KJV reads “God, having raised up his Son **Jesus**” (Acts 3:26), the Jerusalem Bible and its ilk remove the word “Jesus”. (The true Bible is in perfect balance. Corruptions like this destroy that balance.)
- Rome is happy to teach that Jesus was merely God’s *servant*. Thus its Bibles, including the Jerusalem, regularly change “His **Son** Jesus” to “His **Servant** Jesus”. See, for example, Acts 3:13; Acts 3:26; and Acts 4:27 – as well as Acts 4:30 which Nicky himself quotes during the Course as reading “Your holy **Servant** Jesus” rather than “Your holy **child** Jesus” [Talk 12].

We believe (just as the Eunuch did in Acts 8:37) “that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”. Does your Bible say this? (The Jerusalem omits the entire verse; many others insert doubt-inducing square brackets around it.)

### **Is He Lord?**

Christ’s Lordship is non-negotiable too. Yet we find this fundamental truth weakened in the Jerusalem ‘Bible’. How do our versions compare?

- Again, by altering several references to “the Lord”, Catholic Bibles subtly undermine Christ’s position. In Acts 19:10, for example, the KJV refers to “the Lord **Jesus**”, so the Jerusalem simply takes out “Jesus”. Likewise, in other places referring to the “**Lord** Jesus”, or “**Lord** Jesus Christ”, corrupt Bibles like the Jerusalem delete the word “Lord”. See, for example, 1 Cor. 16:22; 2 Cor. 4:10; 2 John 1:3; and 2 Tim. 4:1.

- Paul tells us that “the second Adam” (i.e. Jesus) was the “**Lord** from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47). The Douay, the Jerusalem, and their like destroy this unambiguous statement by removing the word “Lord”. Yet Paul was well placed to write this, having encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus (in Acts 9:6). In this verse, Scripture confirms Christ’s Lordship *twice* with: “And [*Paul*] trembling and astonished said, **Lord**, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the **Lord** said unto him...”. The Jerusalem ‘Bible’ doesn’t bother altering these words; it simply *deletes the whole passage*.
- As Christians, for whom the cross is central, we should find the following corruption (in Luke 23:42) particularly distressing. The malefactor crucified next to Jesus was perhaps the *only* mortal man present who grasped something of what was truly happening, and his faith must surely have been a real comfort to the Lord. The KJV reads “And he said unto Jesus, **Lord**, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom”. Out goes the word “Lord” in the Jerusalem ‘Bible’ and its stablemates.

See Acts 22:16 for yet another place where the ‘Jerusalem’ thinks Christ’s Lordship doesn’t belong. (Obviously, not every reference to Jesus’ Christhood or Lordship is changed – that would be far too conspicuous.)

## Is He God?

According to New Agers, being ‘Lord’ is potentially different from being the one true *God*. But the disciples in Acts 4:24 knew the truth. They cried: “Lord, **thou art God**” (unless, of course, you are using a Bible like the Jerusalem version, which is audacious enough to take out these emboldened words.) Many people suppose, because Rome uses the three names of the Trinity, that she is Trinitarian. However, Rome attaches a fundamentally different meaning to the word ‘Trinity’ than it first had<sup>16</sup> – thus we see the Deity of Christ subverted in her Bible versions:

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<sup>16</sup> The word ‘Trinity’ originally meant three persons with one *substance*, whereas Rome claims it means three persons with one *purpose*. Rome will happily say that ‘Jesus is God’, but only in the (erroneous) sense that the whole universe is God. It is like saying, of a man involved in the U.S. secret services, “He’s CIA”. We say this because it is shorthand for saying he represents, or is *part* of, that organization. Equally, we might say, regarding a piece of jewellery, “It’s gold”. We are not saying it comprises all the gold in existence. Jesus is not *part* of God; He is the one true God in totality (as are the two other members of the Trinity).

- In 1 Tim. 3:16, one of the most unarguable confirmations of Christ's Deity, the KJV says: "great is the mystery of godliness: **God** was manifest in the flesh". Corrupt versions like the Douay and the Jerusalem replace the word "God" with "He" in order to obscure this. (See also Heb. 1:3 where the KJV tells us that Christ is the "**express image of [God's] person**" not a mere representation of His nature.)
- In 1 John 3:16, the KJV says "Hereby perceive we the love **of God**, because He laid down his life for us". This unambiguously tells us that the person who laid down His life for us (Christ) is actually God. Catholicized versions like the Jerusalem remove the words "of God" from this passage, thus it no longer teaches Christ's Deity. (In relation to this, having referred to God in the verses preceding 1 John 4:19, the KJV says "We love **Him**, because He first loved us". Catholic Bibles have the audacity to remove the word "Him" here too, despite it reflecting the greatest Commandment.<sup>17</sup>)
- In Acts 7:59, as he was about to die from his stoning, the KJV says that Stephen was "calling upon **God**, and saying, **Lord Jesus**, receive my spirit". The Deity of the Lord Jesus is again affirmed here, so the Jerusalem and other Catholicized Bibles remove the word "God", or replace it with "Lord", in order to mask this truth. Could the reader prove Christ's Deity with a Bible like this?

The Jerusalem version goes *further still* and includes readings that actually serve to help *deny* the doctrine that Christ is God by introducing unwarranted distinctions not found in the KJV, e.g. in: Romans 5:9 (where Christ is separated from the wrathful God); Jude 1:25 (where Christ is no longer our Saviour); and Romans 14:10-12 (where the Judgment seat is no longer Christ's).

The Jerusalem Bible questions many other vital doctrines about Christ. We could go on to expose verses which cast doubt on His eternal nature (e.g. Micah 5:2), or where His hand in Creation is removed (e.g. in Eph. 3:9). Likewise we could reveal verses which hide his perfection (e.g. Matt. 19:16-17<sup>18</sup>), or where His death is questioned (e.g. in Luke 9:31), or where His Resurrection is downplayed (e.g. Luke 13:32), or where His Ascension is hidden (e.g. in John 16:16), and so on. In fact, the doctrine of

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<sup>17</sup> Nicky also removes the word 'Him' from this verse [Talk 14].

<sup>18</sup> Jesus does not tell the man that he was wrong to call Him "good"! He was trying to get the man to see the logical conclusion - i.e. that He (Jesus) was God.

Christ's Deity is weakened, or obliterated altogether, in many *scores* of places.

How does the reader's Bible measure up? Is it trustworthy, or does it show the wounds of Rome's attacks? (See the Recommended Reading sections of this book for more information on this whole, fundamental, subject.) The reader may be surprised to learn that most modern versions – including the one that Alpha promotes – display practically *all* of the above corruptions, and many others beside.<sup>19</sup> But all this is not really unexpected, given that the editor of the Greek committee underpinning these versions was a Roman Catholic.

People frequently attempt (as Nicky did in Talk 2, Edn. 1) to dismiss this problem by pointing out that the 'other' readings (i.e. the KJV ones) are supplied in the footnotes of these modern versions. But why should the correct readings be relegated to footnotes in the first place? And how often are footnotes referenced when most people read their Bibles? A lot of people *never* access them.

The true Spirit of God *glorifies* Christ rather than demoting Him. Furthermore, 1 John 2:22-23 teaches that those who deny Jesus His rightful position are "antichrist". We therefore contend that it was not the *Holy* Spirit that inspired these versions. Interestingly, the test for a false spirit (in 1 John 4:3) *also* centres on Christ's Divinity. It comes as little surprise, then, that these Catholic versions alter the text here too. The KJV reads, "every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus **Christ is come in the flesh** is not of God". Many modern versions, happy to confess *a* Jesus, simply remove the uncomfortable portion about His Incarnation. But in doing so they are actually admitting that they are "**not** of God".<sup>20</sup>

**10:4 GOOD NEWS?** It might seem like good news to learn that *Vatican II* approves the production of translations "in cooperation with the separated brethren".<sup>21</sup> But lest we rejoice too soon (and bearing in mind the deliberate corruptions in Rome's own versions), *Vatican II* continues: "the Church with **maternal** [!] concern sees to it that **suitable ... translations** are

<sup>19</sup> It often takes only one word to be added to a verse (or, more commonly, subtracted because this is even harder to spot) to completely change the meaning of a passage.

<sup>20</sup> With the new reading of 1 John 4:3, all someone needs to do to pass the test is to confess "Jesus", rather than confess His *Deity*. Any New Ager can pass such a weak test.

<sup>21</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, Scripture in the Life of the Church, point 22, p126.

made". Sure enough, Catholics like the Jesuit Cardinal Martini figure large in the world of Bible translation committees, heavily influencing the result in favour of Rome's heresies...

For example, in order to support the idea of baptismal regeneration (while simultaneously undermining Christ's Deity once again) Romish versions try to claim that Jesus only received the Spirit of God *in the River Jordan*, by hiding the fact that, as a *child*, He "grew, and waxed strong **in spirit**" (Luke 2:40).<sup>22</sup> For similar reasons, they also remove the clear demand from Peter that baptism is only for those who are already believers (Acts 8:37).<sup>23</sup>

The reader will understand why the KJV, with its amazing track record, has been used throughout this book. Indeed, if readers wish to look up any of the Bible references we quote, they are strongly recommended to use the KJV because of the background of other versions.<sup>24</sup> There are numerous reasons for believing that the KJV had God's hand on its creation.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Nicky says that "John the Baptist is the first person who makes the link between the Spirit and Jesus" [Talk 8]. We can't find this in the Bible and, given that the word "makes" in this context could mean "identified" or "**caused**" (which Rome would love), we feel Nicky could have done without this sentence.

<sup>23</sup> Additionally: The papacy is supported by changing John 1:42 to say "Peter" or "Rock" instead of "a stone" (Nicky has "Peter" when he quotes this verse in Talk 12); the Mass is supported by the removal of the word "unworthily" from 1 Cor. 11:29 - and of the word "broken" in 1 Cor. 11:24 (it was the *breaking* - i.e. crucifixion - of the Lord's body that was "for" us); Purgatory is helped by changing "perform" to "show" in Luke 1:71-72 (man's deceased fathers do not require further mercy to be shown them, because they are not in Purgatory!); and the idea of salvation by works is encouraged by introducing the word "salvation" into 1 Pet. 2:2 (you cannot *grow* in salvation). *All* of these corruptions, and more, are present in most modern versions.

<sup>24</sup> Even the "New King James" encourages confusion and error - e.g. by printing (and hence legitimizing) the corrupt 'alternative readings'. Nicky never hints that any versions might be corrupt; indeed he suggests that they are *all* trustworthy [see the start and end of Talk 5]. HTB newspapers advertise the NIV and recommends "access to a **modern** translation" [*Telling Others*, p110] - even though these can hardly claim God's hand on them.

<sup>25</sup> God's hand on the KJV is evident in many ways. For example, this version 'happened' to get translated at precisely the time that the English language reached the very pinnacle of its capacity - and was thus brilliantly placed to communicate the depth and power of Holy Scripture. (This was also the moment in history when the English language stabilized

*(The KJV is often avoided because of the widespread belief that it is too old to be easily understood, but the KJV's language is not nearly as old-fashioned as people are often led to believe.<sup>26</sup> For example: (a) there are amazingly few archaic words in the KJV, and these usually appear only once or twice each (the meaning of any such word is usually obvious from the context of its first occurrence); (b) the occasional, seemingly quaint, phraseology is simply there to express Hebraisms accurately;<sup>27</sup> and the sentence structure likewise reflects the Hebrew and Greek texts, not Elizabethan English; (c) words like "thee" and "ye" etc, which were not even in common use when the KJV was translated, are needed to communicate faithfully the singular and plural "you" used in the original Bible languages.)*

In reality, Rome's behaviour regarding the scriptures is designed to continue discouraging her members from Spirit-led access to the true Word, while fooling the rest of us into believing that she is actually dedicated to the Bible. And it seems that Nicky has been one of the people taken in by her.

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- and printing presses were readily available so as to enable copies to be produced *far* more cheaply than before.) All of those involved in translating the KJV were giants of their trade who make today's 'scholars' look like infants. (These giants also all believed in the inerrancy and divine preservation of Scripture.) The KJV is simultaneously beautiful, memorizable and accurate. Surely only the Holy Ghost could achieve this. (Many further reasons are supplied in the rec-ommended books at the end of this and subsequent Parts. No wonder the KJV is hated and abused by Rome.)

<sup>26</sup> The idea that the KJV is out of date is a view usually circulated by people who have never read it through from the start. In fact, the modern versions often replace easy KJV words with harder ones, in order for their version to be different enough to be 'copyrightable' - a financial, rather than spiritual, consideration. The Lord is more than capable of giving understanding if people ask Him to. Even in recent years, the Lord has taught entirely unschooled people to read English purely from faithful exposure to the KJV. The error many people make is to expect to understand every verse of God's eternal Word on their first exposure. This is not realistic - even if they had a deep grasp of Hebraisms. The Word is meant to be studied often and verses will become clear after a solid grasp of related scriptures is attained.

<sup>27</sup> This is why most Christians coming from a Jewish background choose the KJV.

**10:5 INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES** As we have seen, although Rome’s laity might now be allowed by their church hierarchy to read a ‘suitable version’ of the Word of God, they must not think they can interpret its meanings for themselves:

“The task of authentically interpreting the Word of God ... has been entrusted **exclusively** to the living teaching office of **the Church...**” and “[T]he way of interpreting Scripture is **subject finally** to the **judgment of the Church...**” [*Vatican II*].<sup>28</sup>

“Man can obtain a knowledge of God’s word from **the Catholic Church** ... When he has once mastered this principle of divine authority, the inquirer is **prepared to accept whatever** the divine Church teaches on faith, morals and the means of grace”.<sup>29</sup>

Remember that, for Rome, the ‘Church’ does *not* mean every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, but only the ordained ‘priesthood’, so any suggestion that an individual can turn directly to the Holy Spirit for decisive understanding of the Word is unthinkable. This is still the case today, as proved by the offering below from ARCIC:

“The meaning of the revealed Gospel of God is fully understood **only** within the Church ... The Church **cannot** properly be described as an aggregate of individual believers, ... So, though one person’s journey of faith may **begin** with **individual** reading of Scripture, it **cannot** remain there. Individualistic interpretation of the Scriptures is ... **incompatible** with the nature of the authority of the revealed Word of God”.<sup>30</sup>

Augustine of Hippo, revered by so many in the Protestant Churches as a theologian second only to Paul, agreed with *Rome* on this matter: “I would not **believe in** the Gospel if I were not **brought** to do so **by the authority** of the **Catholic Church**”.<sup>31</sup> But Luke – in contrast to Augustine – *commended* the Bereans “in that they ... **searched the scriptures daily**” to determine whether Paul’s teaching was right or not (Acts 17:11).

Rome teaches (and Augustine implies) that ‘lay’ believers are incapable of understanding what Scripture says without the Church to interpret for them. But if this is true then surely, far from commending the Bereans,

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<sup>28</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, Revelation, points 10 and 12, pp117-118 & 121.

<sup>29</sup> *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, quoted in Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides The Beast*, p335.

<sup>30</sup> ARCIC, published in May 1999, paragraph 23.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in William Standridge, *op. cit.*, p32.

Luke should have challenged them for being so misguided as to think they could possibly interpret the scriptures for themselves. And how much more so for having the impudence to think that they were actually capable of *testing Paul's teachings* by them!

Over and over again in Scripture we are told that *all* the people were to read the Word of God or hear it read to them. There is never any suggestion that anyone capable of comprehending normal speech would not be able to understand it:

“[T]hou **shalt** read this law before **all** Israel in **their hearing**. Gather the people together, **men**, and **women**, and **children**, and thy **stranger** ... that they may **hear**, and that they may **learn**, and fear the LORD your God,... And that their **children** ... may **hear**, and learn to fear the LORD your God” (Deut. 31:11-13). See also 2 Ki. 23:2 and Jer. 36:6-10.

“And these words ... thou shalt teach them **diligently** unto thy **children**, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut. 6:6-7).

“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto **all**...” (1 Thess. 5:27). See also Col. 4:16 and Rev. 1:3.

“**[F]rom** [*when you were*] a **child** thou hast **known** the holy scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15).

“And **all the people** gathered themselves ... And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and **all** that could hear with understanding [*i.e. were old enough*] ... And he read therein ... **from the morning until midday**, before the men and the women, ... and the ears of **all** the people were attentive unto the book” (Neh. 8:1-3).

**10:6 SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION** Nicky suggests, in the quote at the start of this chapter, that although “Protestant **churches**” *used to* revere the scriptures and “many fine [*Protestant*] scholars” still do, it is “ridiculed at a school level” within Protestantism. But this remark is rather misleading. The infallibility of Scripture is indeed denied by the *world* and their humanistic ‘experts’ – some of whom may *claim* to be ‘Protestant theologians’ (indeed, Nicky *himself* calls infallibility into question in both Talks 2 and 13 and also in *Searching Issues*<sup>32</sup>). But as we shall see, it is

<sup>32</sup> For example, he says “The longer ending in Mark was not in the original of Mark’s gospel” [Talk 13] – but see John Burgon’s superb work, *The Last*



largely *because* of Protestantism that we have the true Word available to us today.

The “Protestant” scholars who arguably did the most to undermine infallibility (viz. Westcott and Hort) were actually *Romanist sympathizers* who were totally devoted to two desperately corrupt Manuscripts (one found in a *Catholic* convent, and the other in the *Vatican* library). While some Protestants have been led away (often by Catholics) from the founding Protestant belief in *Sola Scriptura*, Protestantism was a major tool in exalting the Bible to its rightful place and opening it up to the World.

*(Nicky calls Hort a “probably the greatest” textual critic ever.<sup>33</sup> Hort claimed to be a Christian, yet he admitted to being a “staunch sacerdotalist” (i.e. one who depends on mortal priests and their ‘sacraments’, rather than on faith in Christ alone, as the means of grace). He believed in Purgatory and he mocked evangelical Christianity as “easy belief”, saying “The pure **Romish** view seems to me nearer and more likely to lead to truth than the evangelical”.<sup>34</sup> He attacked the Atonement, and called the idea that Christ bore our sins “heresy”. Among his many other Romish statements, he claimed that “Mary-worship and Jesus-worship have **much in common***

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*Twelve Verses of Mark* (DBS Press), proving this wrong. Nicky says that we only have “substantially” the original text, enjoying only “general” integrity [Talk 2]. According to Nicky, there IS a degree of “doubt” [Talk 5] and that infallible truth is to be found “**only** in Jesus Christ” [*Searching Issues*, p30], not in the Bible too. When Nicky quotes Paul’s famous statement that “**All** scripture is God-breathed”, he says Paul was only writing about the ‘Old Testament’ (i.e. the Hebrew) scriptures, in other words only “the scriptures **that were available to him**” [Talk 5]. Nicky does the same when he says “This is the way that Jesus himself treated the scriptures **of his day**” [Talk 5]. Yet both Jesus and Paul knew that the Hebrew Scriptures were incomplete until they had been complemented with the details of the New Covenant and other revelations Jesus brought and which He promised the Holy Spirit would remind His disciples of. Only since the N.T. canon was added is the Bible complete. Note that Nicky never specifically calls the Bible ‘complete’ on Alpha, but is happy to say that “There are moral problems with the Bible, there are historical problems ... there **are** problems with it” [Talk 5]. Acknowledging that the Bible is “totally inspired by God” and “exactly as he wants it to be” [Talk 5] is *not* the same as believing it to be *inerrant*.

<sup>33</sup> Talk 2, Edn. 2.1.

<sup>34</sup> F.J. Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Hort*, (Macmillan Press, 1896), Vol. 1, p211, as quoted by Burden-Teh, *Christianity and Society* magazine, June 2000, p4.

*in their cause and in their results*". [See Heresies of Westcott and Hort<sup>35</sup> by D.A. Waite for more.]

Nicky's comment that the inerrancy of Scripture is "ridiculed at a school level" is potentially misleading for another reason. His statement could imply that the Word of God does not stand up well to scholarly scrutiny, and that the only scholars who believe in the infallibility of the scriptures do so by overriding what their learned brains are telling them. This is very far from the truth. Many Protestants have proved the scriptures in the fields in which they are expert (history, archaeology, philology etc).<sup>36</sup>

It is *worldly* scholars with their own deceitful agenda who try to sow doubts about the Bible. The Word of God stands up to every claim it makes of itself. But these people treat it as if it is any other man-made book, when true Christians believe it to be, as it claims, God-breathed and Divinely preserved – and must therefore be approached from that starting point.<sup>37</sup>

Shamefully, some so-called Protestant groups and theologians *do* now deny the inerrancy of God's Word. But it is misleading to leave Alpha participants with the impression that the Roman Church is *in any way* above reproach here. Rome may well claim to hold Scripture in high esteem, but Rome's 'traditions', consisting of hundreds of her decrees and pronounce-

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<sup>35</sup> Christians wisely reject the Jehovah's Witness translation because they know it has been doctored to attack the Deity of Christ. So what should we do about other versions that do the same? Most modern versions even use the same corrupt 'Westcott and Hort' Greek used by the JWs. As well as roundly praising Hort, Nicky also legitimizes *Westcott* more than once in his material (e.g. see *Questions of Life*, p167).

<sup>36</sup> Unrivalled *Protestant* experts have shown, using their outstanding scholarship, that the King James Bible is entirely trustworthy. (For the record, here are the names of some of these giants: Edward Miller (Dean Burgon's colleague), Robert Wilson, Sir Frederic Kenyon, Edward Hills, and Herman Hoskier.) It has actually been *Rome*-inspired corruptions of the Word over "the last Century" which have caused its reduction in use and respect.

<sup>37</sup> The result of this worldly, humanistic attitude is called "Higher Criticism", and Catholics have been heavily involved in developing and espousing it. But God will laugh at such haughtiness of men who would ignore His promises, and *He* ridicules *their* foolish conclusions. Sadly, when Nicky applies *secular* rules of textual criticism to the supernatural Word of God (which he does in *Talk 2*), he too is being humanistic. We cannot treat the Bible just like any other book, else we lose sight of Satan's attempts to attack it – and of God's promised preservation of it.

ments, plus the writings of the Church ‘Fathers’ and other writings, take precedence over the Word of God for her.

Despite the doublespeak for which Rome is justly famous, the message from the following quotes is clear enough:

“It is **not** from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything that has been revealed ... the Church always understands and interprets Scripture in the light of her continuous **tradition**. Therefore both sacred **tradition** and sacred Scripture are to be **accepted** and venerated with the **same** sense of **devotion and reverence**” [*Vatican II*].<sup>38</sup>

“Sacred **Tradition** and sacred Scripture form **one** sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is committed to the Church ... It is **clear**, therefore, that sacred **tradition**, sacred Scripture, **and** the teaching authority of the Church, ... are so linked and joined together that **one cannot stand without the others**” [*Vatican II*].<sup>39</sup>

## The Apocrypha

The Apocrypha forms a part of this tradition and consists of 15 extra books including the “Epistle of Jeremy”, the “Song of the three Holy Children”, and “Bel and the Dragon”. Nicky’s quotation from *Vatican II*, as given at the beginning of this chapter, includes Rome’s veiled reference to this collection of writings in the four words “**with all their parts**”.

These books were a part of the Septuagint (a Greek version of the Old Testament originating with the Hellenists in Alexandria), but were not included in the (trusted) Hebrew Masoretic Bible of non-Hellenistic Jews. Although a version of the Septuagint<sup>40</sup> was used in Israel during the time of

<sup>38</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, Revelation, point 9, p117.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, point 10, pp117-118. See also point 21, p125 and point 24, p127.

<sup>40</sup> N.B. The Septuagint is often quoted in the New Testament, but the Lord providentially ensured that the Septuagint translated the required verses accurately - or that it supplied a representative paraphrase of the original Hebrew [Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, (Zondervan, 1982), p31, point 2]. But the Septuagint elsewhere contains many serious corruptions and other shortcomings, which is why Helena Blavatsky (a Luciferian and the mother of the modern New Age movement) was a big fan of it. Since we now have Hebrew dictionaries and faithful copies of the original Hebrew, we should no longer look to this derived Greek version - even assuming it has not been further corrupted since the version used in Christ’s day. No wonder the Lord denounced the Scribes during His Incarnation, for they will certainly have known that the Septuagint was not a faithful rendering of

the Lord Jesus, this was because most Israelites no longer spoke Hebrew and because no better Greek version yet existed. Besides, even the Septuagint was sufficient to expose the great apostasy of those times and rescue people from it, just as Wycliffe's English version of the Vulgate was sufficient to expose the dark apostasy of his day and sufficed until much more reliable versions (like the Tyndale, Cranmer, and eventually the Authorized) were produced.

Jews did not accept the Apocryphal books as part of scripture. Neither Jesus nor His apostles ever quoted from any of these books (or even *referred* to them), though they quoted from virtually every other book in the Old Testament – and on numerous occasions.

According to *Vatican II*, the Septuagint is Rome's preferred version of the Old Testament,<sup>41</sup> from which Jerome's Latin Vulgate was translated. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Rome insisting on the authenticity of the Apocryphal writings. In fact the Council of Trent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century anathematized anyone who did *not* accept them as being part of the Canon of Scripture.<sup>42</sup>

The word Apocrypha means 'hidden things' in the manner of being (a) secret or mysterious, (b) unknown in origin, forged or spurious, or (c) unrecognized or uncanonical:

"It is primarily in the sense of **spurious** or **uncanonical** that we use the term ... Christ quoted [*the Jewish Old Testament*] as authoritative, and said, 'The Scriptures cannot be broken' (John 10:35). But the reason that neither He nor the apostles ever once referred to the Apocryphal books is obvious. They did not regard those books as Scripture ... Romanists sometimes charge Protestants with having 'cut those books out of the Bible.' But the record makes it clear that if anyone cut them out it was Christ Himself".<sup>43</sup>

### **The Church 'Fathers'**

the Hebrew yet they did nothing.

<sup>41</sup> See Abbott, *op. cit.*, Revelation, point 22, p126.

<sup>42</sup> See William Webster, *Saving Faith: How Does Rome Define It?*, p90. Nicky never warns his hearers about Bible translations that include the Apocrypha. And, according to Burden-Teh, Nicky indirectly attaches credibility to the Apocrypha by legitimizing the Catholic book *Loving the Church* (which uses the Apocrypha). See the closing footnotes for section 6:6 of our book for more.

<sup>43</sup> Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp80-81.

Another source of tradition used by Rome is the writings of the Church ‘Fathers’ – certain ‘theologians’ of the early centuries.<sup>44</sup> There are at least 35 volumes of writings from these ‘fathers’ and, though it is no doubt the case, as Nicky says, that the early church theologians held Scripture in high regard, and that some of these volumes are useful for reference, they are *not* infallible. Indeed, they repeatedly contradict one another (and even themselves) on many doctrines.<sup>45</sup>

“When a Roman Catholic priest is ordained he solemnly vows to interpret the Scriptures only according to the ‘unanimous consent of the fathers.’ But such ‘unanimous consent’ is purely a myth...

“Augustine ... in his later life wrote a special book in which he set forth his *Retractions* ... The early fathers condemned the use of images in worship, while later ones approved such use. The early fathers almost unanimously advocated the reading and free use of the Scriptures, while the later ones restricted such reading and use. Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome ... denounced the assumption of the title of Universal Bishop as anti-Christian. But later popes ... have been **very** insistent on using that and similar titles which assert universal authority”.<sup>46</sup>

### The Church’s ‘Magisterium’

The word Magisterium comes from the Latin for ‘Master’. Rome uses the term as shorthand way of referring to the teaching authority which, she claims, rests in her pope and bishops. According to Rome, the writings of the apostles in the New Testament, though inspired by the Holy Spirit, are yet continually evolving or ‘developing’ through Church decrees:

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<sup>44</sup> See Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Revelation, point 8, p116.

<sup>45</sup> Yet Nicky attaches substantial weight to church tradition. For instance, in the Green *Alpha Manual*, in a section entitled ‘*Why Should We Believe in the Existence of the Devil?*’ [p41], the justification given immediately below ‘Scripture’ is that “Christians down the ages (**tradition**): and **Fathers...**” believed it. (Likewise on p54 where Irenaeus, Origen and Augustine are cited as the only reason for believing that God has healed in history since Bible times.) See also *Questions of Life*, p159.

<sup>46</sup> Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp78-79. As we saw in chapter 1, Nicky rightly says that the Bible overrides the traditions of the leaders who were around *in the days of Jesus*. However, his choice of wording does not automatically mean he includes *subsequent* man-made traditions in this. Indeed, Nicky himself gives authority to what he claims to be extra-biblical tradition when he says that “the longer ending in Mark was not in the original ... **but** it’s good **evidence...**” [Talk 13].

“And so the apostolic preaching ... This tradition which comes from the apostles **develops** in the Church ... for there is a **growth** in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down ... [T]he Church constantly **moves forward** toward the fullness of divine truth...” [*Vatican II*].<sup>47</sup>

(*N.B.*<sup>48</sup> *It is difficult to comprehend how the slide from the pure church – as described in Acts – to Rome’s diabolical Council of Trent and her ‘Holy’ Inquisitions could be called “development”. If there has been “growth in the understanding” from the time of Paul to the blasphemous doctrines now taught by Rome, it is hard to see. And how the recent introduction of dogmas like Papal Infallibility, Mary’s Assumption and Mary as Co-Redemptrix could be regarded as “the Church constantly moving for-ward toward the fulness of divine truth” is, we freely admit, a mystery.*)

There are many hundreds of Church Council Decrees and *ex Cathedra* Papal Pronouncements. These are held by Rome to be infallible, due to the position of the pope as “offer[ing] a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth”.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless many such statements contradict Scripture – and even countermand *each other* (just like the writings of the Church ‘Fathers’) as succeeding popes alter or retract what their predecessors have decreed. Not *all* the following papal pronouncements on abortion, for example, can be ‘infallible’. (Nor do they all display “growth in understanding”):

“Gregory VI (1045-6) said, ‘He is **not** a murderer who brings about abortion before the soul is in the body.’ [*There is no such period!*] Gregory XIII (1572-85) said it was **not** homicide to kill an embryo of less than 40 days since it **wasn’t yet human**. His successor, Sixtus V, who rewrote the Bible, **disagreed**. His Bull of 1588 made all abortions for any reason homicide and cause for excommunication. His successor, Gregory XIV, **reversed** that decree. In 1621 the Vatican issued another pastoral directive **permitting** abortion up to 40 days. As late as the eighteenth century the Church’s greatest moral theologian, St. Alphonsus de Liguori, still **denied** that the soul was infused at conception”.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, Revelation, point 8, pp115-116.

<sup>48</sup> ‘N.B.’ is abbreviated Latin for ‘mark well’. It can be read as saying ‘Important Note’.

<sup>49</sup> ARCIC, May 1999.

<sup>50</sup> Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, pp519-520. (See also Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp248-253 for examples of more papal errors and contradictions.)

In addition to the Apocrypha, the writings of the Church ‘Fathers’, and Council/papal decrees, there are also numerous sayings of various ‘saints’ through the ages which must be accepted as a part of “sacred tradition”. The Catholic Catechism leaves the faithful Catholic no choice but to embrace all this “sacred” tradition. They must swear:

“I admit and **embrace most firmly** the apostolic and **ecclesiastical** traditions and **all** the **other** constitutions and prescriptions of the Church ... besides I accept **without hesitation**, and profess **all** that has been handed down, defined and declared by the Sacred Canons and by the General Councils, **especially** by the Sacred **Council of Trent** and by the Vatican General Council, and in a special manner concerning the primacy and **infallibility** of the Roman Pontiff ... This same Catholic Faith, outside of which **nobody** can be saved, which I now freely profess and to which I truly adhere, the same I promise and swear to maintain and profess ... until the last breath of life”.<sup>51</sup>

So, what does it all mean?

“As Roman Catholicism works out in actual practice, the traditions of the church at any time are **what the church says they are**, Scripture means what the church says it means, and the people are permitted to read the Bible only in an approved version and within the limits of a **predetermined** interpretation.

“But when the Christian message is thus shackled by tradition and ecclesiastically dictated interpretation it ceases to be the free grace of God offered to repentant sinners, and becomes a tool in the hands of the clergy for the control of the people. In professing to interpret the Bible in the light of tradition, the Roman Church in reality places tradition **above** the Bible, so that the Roman Catholic is governed, not by the Bible, nor by the Bible and tradition, but **by the church itself** which sets up the tradition and says what it means”.<sup>52</sup>

Rome avoids and discourages a *real* commitment to Scripture. Although abused today, the term ‘Pharisaic’ applies very precisely here for this is exactly what the Pharisees did.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Roman Catholic Catechism*, quoted in Michael de Semlyen, *All Roads Lead to Rome?*, p58.

<sup>52</sup> Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp76-77.

<sup>53</sup> Unhappily, Nicky himself encourages people to allow those in ‘leadership’ to override the Bible when he indicates that it is rarely, if ever, right to disobey their counsel. All he will say is that “Sometimes it **may** be right to” [*Questions of Life*, p108]. In the same book, after referring to his “vicar”, he says “We should consult people on the basis of their **spiritual authority**” [p109]. This is an ambiguous term that, in the context, will be seen as

**10:7 THE REFORMATION AND SCRIPTURE** The Protestant Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was based on the principle of *Sola Scriptura* – i.e. ‘Scripture alone’. The Protestant reformers insisted that all extrabiblical writings be subordinated to Scripture, not aligned with it.

“When the leaders of the Reformation appealed to Scripture and thundered against the errors of the Roman Church, that church had to defend herself. And since she could not do so from the Bible alone, she resorted to these other writings ... It is natural that the Roman Church does not want to give up tradition. It cannot. If it were to give up tradition the whole system would fall to the ground, so much of its doctrine and practice has no other foundation ... the Reformers based their teaching squarely on the Scriptures to the exclusion of all accumulated tradition...

“The Reformers declared that even lay people, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can interpret Scripture by diligent and prayerful searching and reading. **Every** born again Christian has ... the Holy Spirit, and is therefore able to understand the basic essentials of what God has written”.<sup>54</sup>

Hislop relates a very telling story in this regard: “When Linacer, a distinguished [*Catholic*] physician ... in the reign of Henry VIII, first fell in with the New Testament, after reading it for a while, he tossed it from him with impatience and a great oath, exclaiming ‘**Either this book is not true, or we are not Christians.**’ He saw at once that the system of Rome and the system of the New Testament were **directly** opposed to one another”.<sup>55</sup>

**10:8 WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE ITSELF SAY?** Rome claims that only *certain* Christians can understand Scripture; but the Word of God can be comprehended by *anyone* who seeks and obeys God:

“I understand **more** than the ancients, **because** I keep Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:100).

“Evil men understand not judgment: but they that **seek the LORD** understand **all** things” (Prov. 28:5).

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referring to the authority that *man*, rather than God, has conferred on a person.

<sup>54</sup> Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, pp79&90.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p129.



“[4] **good** understanding have **all** they that do His commandments” (Psa. 111:10).

Rome claims that its traditions are equal with Scripture but the Word of God condemns man’s traditions.

“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God **by your tradition?** ... Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But **in vain they do worship Me, teaching** for doctrines **the commandments of men.**” (Matt. 15:3b & 7-9).

“Beware lest any man spoil you through vain philosophy and vain deceit, **after the tradition of men...**” (Col. 2:8). See also Mark 7:9,13; and 1 Pet. 1:18.

The traditions (or ordinances) of which Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15, and 3:6 are those teachings given by the apostles that became the Greek canon; they have nothing whatsoever to do with *additions* to the true gospel “which was **once** delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

God’s Words are *pure*: “The words of the LORD are **pure** words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, **purified seven times**” (Psa. 12:6). God’s Words are *complete*: “...thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deut. 12:32b). And God’s Words are *sufficient*: “That the man of God may be ... **thoroughly** furnished unto **all** good works” (2 Tim. 3:16b-17).<sup>56</sup> In order to know God and to be His disciples we need nothing else on earth.

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<sup>56</sup> See also Psalm 1:1-3, Psalm 19:7-11 and the whole of Psalm 119, especially vv9-16.

## CHAPTER 11

# T THE REFORMATION

Please Note: Although the next two chapters will be required to tie up the ‘loose ends’ on Rome, the remainder of the book will focus *directly* on Alpha. Also note that most Catholics are never taught the following and so are totally unaware of the contents of this chapter and its ramifications...

Forbidden to own or even *read* copies of God’s precious Word in the vernacular, many groups of evangelical believers during the Middle Ages nevertheless did so. Groups such as the Waldensians in France, Italy and Spain, the Hussites in Bohemia and the Lollards in England rejected all the false teachings of Catholicism and were thus viciously persecuted and martyred by Rome for their refusal to bow the knee to Rome’s false god. Others, by God’s grace, survived Rome’s Inquisitions against them, paving the way for the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**11:1 MARTIN LUTHER** The most well known name associated with the Reformation is that of Martin Luther. A Roman Catholic monk, he strove for spiritual perfection according to the rites and rituals of his Church yet he had no assurance of salvation:

“I was a good monk, and kept my order so strictly that I could claim that if ever a monk were able to reach Heaven by monkish discipline I should have found my way there”.<sup>57</sup>

Instead he suffered intense depression and guilt that the sacraments and works of the Church did nothing to dispel. He could only feel convicted, not forgiven, by God and he despaired of ever attaining the righteousness demanded by God in Romans 1:17. When the Holy Spirit revealed to him that this righteousness was a free gift received only through faith in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, Luther at last found the peace for which he had been searching. He described this glorious experience as being ‘reborn’.

“...the light of truth shone with such brilliance, and brought such deliverance into his spirit, that he felt Paul’s words, ‘The just shall live by **faith**’ were the very gate of Paradise itself. And so this great truth, THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY **FAITH** ... became the fundamental truth of the Reformation. In other words, a wonderful Reformation came personally to Luther before God used him as the instrument of the Reformation in Europe”.<sup>58</sup>

Luther’s revelation undermined the Roman Church’s claims of ‘sacerdotal mediation’ – i.e. clergy superiority over the ‘laity’. For if salvation is a matter between God and the individual, there is no need for ‘ordained priests’ and all the rigmarole associated with their office: *All* Christians are priests (Rev. 1:6) and can enter the Holy of Holies (Matt. 27:51).

This truth revealed all the Roman Church’s sacraments to be useless as the means of grace; indeed they were not just irrelevant but harmful as they detracted from the *real* means of grace – the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Rome talks about “all the **means** of grace”, she is implying that there are means *of earning* grace. But the very definition of grace is that it cannot be earned.

It was the matter of the sale of ‘indulgences’ by Tetzel, a papal envoy in Saxony in 1517, which brought Luther’s Reformation into the public domain – and the wrath of Rome upon his head. (Indulgences are good works or financial payments made to the Church to commute the time spent in Purgatory atoning for the sins of one’s self or those of a deceased loved one.)

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<sup>57</sup> M. Mullet, *Luther*, (Lancaster Publications, 1986), p23.

<sup>58</sup> S.M. Houghton, *Sketches from Church History*, (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), p81.

The system of indulgences was very profitable for Rome. Through this practice she had come to own vast areas of land in Europe by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The jingle made famous by Tetzl at the time of Luther, “As soon as the gold in the coffer rings / right then a soul to Heaven springs”, was already commonplace at least a century earlier. But whereas others had previously criticized the *abuse* of the system, Luther now denounced the *theology behind* it. In his 95 theses, which he pinned up on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg for all to read, he declared:

“Papal pardons are **not** the way man is reconciled to God’ (Number 33) and ‘every truly repentant Christian **already has** from God **full** remission of guilt’ (Number 36)”.<sup>59</sup>

Luther subsequently burned a papal bull issued from Rome condemning his actions, denouncing, as he did so, the pope as Antichrist (i.e. as usurping Christ’s rightful place). He was summonsed to appear before the Emperor Charles V and was there ordered to withdraw his writings against Rome. He refused:

“[T]his I say and profess as **resolutely** as I may, without doubting or sophistication [*i.e. without using unnecessarily clever or complicated arguments*], ... that if I be not convinced by testimonies of the Scriptures (for I believe not the Pope, neither his General Councils, which have erred many times, and have been contrary to themselves), my conscience is so bound and captived [*sic*] in these Scriptures and the Word of God, that I will not, nor may not revoke **any** manner of thing; considering it is not godly or lawful to do anything against conscience. Hereupon I stand and rest”.<sup>60</sup>

As we have already seen, Scripture highlights the importance of acting on one’s God-given conscience rather than on the orders of men (e.g. in John 8:9, Acts 24:16 and Rom. 2:15). It was on the twin issues of Justification by Faith Alone and *Sola Scriptura* that the Protestant Reformation was founded and defended against all the unscriptural and Babylonian paraphernalia of Roman Catholicism.

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Mullet, *Luther*, p30.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, (Whitaker House, 1981), pp172,173. We certainly do not approve of *everything* Luther did after this time, especially towards the end of his life. But it should be remembered that many Reformers were hampered by the legacy of Rome hiding the truth for centuries.

**11:2 COUNTER-REFORMATION** Needless to say, as Luther's teachings began to spread across Europe the Catholic Church did not meekly acquiesce but fought for all it was worth to regain its power through whatever means necessary:

“In 1540, the Society of Jesus or **the Jesuits** [*was*] established, whose **principle function** was to win back the Protestant countries of Europe by **political** means. ... [*Founded by Ignatius de Loyola, the Jesuits*] worked among the **nobility and royalty** of Catholic Europe using methods akin to the Diplomatic Corps and the Secret Service. In 1542, the Holy office [*was*] established in Rome, the Central Administration of **the Inquisition**, the vicious organization aimed at the **extermination of Protestants by torture**.<sup>61</sup>

“In 1545 the **Council of Trent** [*met*] ... At this major Council of the Roman Catholic Church, a full statement of the Canons of the Church [*was*] declared and their answer given to the Reformation. War was there and then declared upon Reformation Doctrines, and the Counter-Reformation was launched, and is **still very much in progress**”.<sup>62</sup>

**11:3 ENGLAND** England's Reformation was a stop-start affair. Making a hesitant beginning under Henry VIII (who remained a Catholic), it advanced quickly, but all too briefly, during the five-year reign of his son Edward VI – only to be strangled during the following five years under Edward's Catholic half-sister, Mary Tudor. (Mary was the granddaughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain who were responsible for the horrific suffering of so many Jews and Moors in the Spanish Inquisition.)

A staunch Catholic, Mary was well named 'Bloody Mary' for the hundreds of Protestants she and her husband, Philip II of Spain, had consigned to the fires of Smithfield. Bishops Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, John Hooper and Thomas Cranmer are perhaps the best known of her victims who suffered at the stake for refusing to accept the abomination of transubstantiation and other Romish doctrines. But many, many others also suffered martyrdom purely for their Christian Faith at her hands. The

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<sup>61</sup> Bizarrely, Nicky quotes de Loyola very favourably [*A Life Worth Living*, p82]. He also gives the impression that the Inquisition was an altogether gentler affair by writing that, when Galileo became a victim, all he suffered was “house arrest” [*Searching Issues*, p85].

<sup>62</sup> J.R. Broome, *Reformation and Counter-Reformation: 1588 - 1688 - 1988*, (Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 1988), p3.

brave words of Latimer to Ridley as they were bound to the stake to die together have been quoted countless times throughout the centuries by teachers of the Reformation:

“Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out”.<sup>63</sup>

Tragically, in carrying out her Church’s commands, Queen Mary genuinely believed she was doing the will of God. Christ warned that apostasy in the church would reach such depths: “Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will **think that he doeth God service**. And these things will they do unto you, because they have **not** [*actually*] known the Father, nor Me” (John 16:2b-3).

When Mary died (childless), she was succeeded by Elizabeth I whose primary concern as Queen was to restore peace and stability to England after the horrors of the previous five years. Leaning towards Protestantism (which allowed many Marian exiles to return to Britain) but unwilling to fully nail her colours to the mast, she adopted a *via media* (middle way) in religion that enabled the Reformation to proceed once again, albeit more slowly than many would have liked.

### The Spanish Armada

Rome made several attempts during the reign of Elizabeth to bring England back under subjugation – all of them miraculously thwarted. The Spanish Armada is perhaps the most famous example. Unable to persuade Elizabeth to marry him – and thus take England back under Rome through the succession – Philip II of Spain launched a massive naval attack on England in 1588.

Rome has persistently denied direct involvement by the papacy in the Armada. Today, historians, school-teachers and the media often hide the Catholic forces that lay behind this, and other, conflicts. Instead they seek to imply that such disputes were simply between nations and had little or no religious significance. But the original *Official Despatch* from Rome to Philip II, found in the Spanish State Archives at Simancas (and published by the British Government), shows that ‘Pope’ Sixtus V agreed with Philip II that “the end [*purpose*] ... **shall be** to bring back [*England*] **to the obedience of the Roman Church**”. The despatch states, moreover, that the Ro-

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, p309.

man Pope would *finance* the expedition to the tune of hundreds of thousands of crowns should it succeed.<sup>64</sup>

However, incredible storms and other acts of God caused the ruin of the Spanish fleet. Thomas Fenner, one of Drake’s captains, recognized the Lord’s intervention for what it was. He even wrote in his report “THE MIGHTY GOD OF ISRAEL STRETCHED OUT BUT HIS FINGER AGAINST THEM”.<sup>65</sup> “I sent you to fight against men, not with the winds” said King Philip to his Admiral. For Elizabeth, however, “**God** blew with His winds and they were scattered”.<sup>66</sup>

### Assassination Plots

Previous to this, in 1570, ‘Pope’ Pius V had issued a papal bull excommunicating Elizabeth, declaring her to be no longer Queen of England. This put her life in danger from her Catholic subjects who were taught that their allegiance belonged to the ‘Pope’ before their national Sovereign. Ten years later ‘Pope’ Gregory XIII authorized the following statement against Elizabeth:

“Since that guilty woman of England rules ... and is the cause of so much injury to the **Catholic** faith and loss of so many millions [of] souls, there is **no** doubt that **whosoever sends her out of the world**, with the pious intention of doing God service, not only **does not sin**, but **gains merit**”.<sup>67</sup>

Among the numerous assassination attempts were the Ridolfi plot (financed by ‘Pope’ Pius V) in 1571, the Throgmorton Plot in 1583, Dr. Parry’s Plot in 1584 and the Babington plot in 1586. All of these planned to murder Elizabeth and put her Catholic cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, on the throne of England. This was treason, and Elizabeth reluctantly agreed to have Mary and her accomplices put to death as traitors.

It is instructive to note that, while Mary Tudor had hundreds of Protestants burnt at the stake *on religious grounds alone*, none of whom had committed any form of treason, the same could not be said of those Catho-

<sup>64</sup> See the Spanish State Papers, Volume 4, British Mus. p393 as referenced by Albert Close in *Jesuit Plots From Elizabethan to Modern Times*, (Protestant Truth Society, undated), pp126-127.

<sup>65</sup> Captain Fenner’s Report From Sea – Aug. 4, 1588 (emphasis in original) quoted by D.C. Relf in his excellent booklet *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, (Protestant Truth Society, 1987), p13.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in S.M. Houghton, *Sketches From Church History*, pp149-150.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in J.A. Kensit, *Our Protestant Throne*, (Protestant Truth Society, undated), p13.

lics (who have since been ‘beatified’<sup>68</sup> by Rome) put to death under Elizabeth.

“No Roman Catholic was executed in the first eleven years of Elizabeth’s reign, prior to the Pope Pius V inciting **all** Roman Catholics to rebellion, commanding them **not** to obey her, on pain of **excommunication**. It is an unchallengeable fact that **no Roman Catholic was executed solely on account of his religious beliefs**. The truth is that most of those laymen ‘beatified’ were put to death for assisting the ‘seminary priests’ in their design to **bring down the throne**; 63 out of the 85 ‘English martyrs’ were ‘seminary priests’, trained abroad and sent back to further the plots of the Pope to undermine the English throne.

“These had been stepped up after Pope Gregory XIII’s sanctioning of the assassination of Elizabeth in 1580 and the organizing of invasion in 1588 ... With this background in mind it is impossible to agree that these men were martyrs in any proper sense of the word. On the contrary, what the Church of Rome is engaged in doing is **glorifying traitors, spies and conspirators**”.<sup>69</sup>

## The Gunpowder Plot

In 1605, shortly after James I (James VI of Scotland) had succeeded to the English throne, Rome tried again to reclaim England. The Gunpowder Plot, instigated by Catholics and resourced by Jesuits, attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament – thus allowing Romanists to seize the government of England. Once again, however, God kept this nation. The plot was discovered and the leading conspirators executed.

(Note that the English Government providentially learned of the plot before its final implementation. The Government allowed it to reach its full maturity so as to enable the nation to see for itself how treacherous and dangerous Catholicism really was to England. It is verifiable from extant primary sources<sup>70</sup> that there was active Jesuit involvement emanating from the Vatican in the inception of the plot, and that all the traitors involved were

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<sup>68</sup> Beatification means they were posthumously declared to be worthy of public *veneration* – a form of worship!

<sup>69</sup> United Protestant Council, 1987, quoted in Michael de Semlyen, *All Roads Lead To Rome?*, p143. Yet many Roman Catholic churches are named ‘Church of the English Martyrs’ – e.g. the one in Stockton-on-Tees which features in HTB’s *Alpha Supper Initiative* video for 2001.

<sup>70</sup> See J.P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution: Documents and Commentary 1603-1688*, (Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1986), pp165-171. See also Albert Close, *Jesuit Plots from Elizabethan to Modern Times*, pp143-146.



Catholics. But when did Christ ever tell His followers to murder men for Him? Was Rome *really* “constantly moving forward toward divine truth”?)

### **The Later Stuarts**

During the reigns of the pro-Catholic Kings Charles I, Charles II and James II, Catholic influence gradually crept back into Britain through various forms of legislation and subsequent persecution of dissenters. The pro-Catholicizing tendencies of William Laud, Archbishop to Charles I, led to the English civil war in 1642. Under Charles II, for example, the Scottish Covenanters suffered severe persecution; the worst years (from 1684-5) being dubbed ‘The Killing Times’.<sup>71</sup>

Charles’ brother James II had been received into the Catholic Church several years prior to his accession to the throne in 1685 and fully intended to restore Romanism into the Kingdom. When his son was born, English politicians, determined to allow “no popery in this realm”, sought William of Orange (who had already proved himself an able defender against the Catholic Louis XIV of France) to become King. James II fled to France, and the Lord God once again saved England from a return to Roman bondage. After hundreds of years of dark, Catholic oppression, the Bill of Rights (1689) declared that:

“All and every Person ... that is ... reconciled to or shall hold Communion with the See or Church of Rome or shall profess the Popish Religion or shall marry a Papist shall be excluded and be for ever incapable to inherit possess or enjoy the Crown and Government of this Realm and Ireland and the Dominions thereunto belonging ... or to ... exercise **any** Regal Power Authority or Jurisdiction within the same”.<sup>72</sup>

This Bill later became the Act of Settlement (1701) – Britain’s attitude to which has dramatically weakened in recent years! England has forgotten her God-given heritage, but there are clandestine reasons for this. Books exposing the history of Rome have been ‘lost’ from libraries over the centuries, and Rome’s servants have managed to remove some of the incriminating records held in National archives (although God has miraculously preserved others).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Jock Purves, *Fair Sunshine: Character Studies of the Scottish Covenanters*, (Banner of Truth Trust, 1968).

<sup>72</sup> W.C. Costin and J. Steven Watson, *The Law And Working Of The Constitution, Documents 1660-1914*, Vol 1, 1660-1783, (A. and C. Black, 1952), p73.

<sup>73</sup> See Albert Close, *Jesuit Plots from Elizabethan to Modern Times*.

**11:4 MARTYRS IN SCOTLAND, WALES AND IRELAND** We have mentioned some of the Protestant martyrs in England who died during the reign of Mary Tudor. Throughout the rest of Britain the persecution was also present. In Wales there were martyrs like Rawlins White and Dr. Robert Farrar who died at the hands of Rome's followers. Three of Scotland's martyrs were Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart (both burned at the stake) and Helen Stark, put into a sack with her newborn child and drowned because she would not pray to 'the Virgin' Mary. Her story is one of incredible grace and courage as can be witnessed in a letter she wrote to her husband shortly before her death:

"Husband, rejoice, for we have lived together many joyful days; but this day, in which we must die, ought to be most joyful unto us both, because we must have joy forever; therefore I will not bid you good night, for we shall suddenly meet with joy in the Kingdom of Heaven".<sup>74</sup>

As for Ireland, the Romanists there murdered in a *single* year (1641) tens of thousands (Foxe asserts that the total reached 150 thousand) of their civilian Protestant neighbours.<sup>75</sup> No grievance could possibly begin to justify these actions. This massacre was perpetrated with a terrifying ferocity and barbarity against men, women and children unequalled since Medieval times – if it was not worse.<sup>76</sup> The butchery was even more breathtaking because the Irish Catholics had promised safe passage to the inhabitants of many Protestant towns, only to renege on their oaths as soon as the trusting souls came out.

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<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, p246.

<sup>75</sup> The nature and extent of these murders is hotly disputed by Romanists, yet the testimonies of the surviving Protestants should surely be given no less credence than those from anyone else. As Protestants, they were not known for lying. Indeed, one of the major reasons why the City of London went on to overtake rival Catholic capitals as a world centre for commerce was that Protestants could be trusted, whereas *dishonesty and corruption* was the order of the day in Catholic countries – a fact that made business in those places much less attractive!

<sup>76</sup> The medieval 'Crusades' to Israel, for instance, were military expeditions of extraordinary brutality financed by Rome and led by Catholic priests. One such encourager of the Crusades was the Catholic priest Richard of Chichester. As Romanists admit, Richard actually died "while preaching, at the Pope's command, a crusade against the Saracens". Yet Nicky still chooses to honour him [*30 Days*, p69]. (Incidentally, Richard was a Bishop who, among other Romish demands, required all his clergy to be celibate and all the laity to "know by heart" the Hail Mary.)

The nature of these deaths was so horrible that even Foxe, who recorded the appalling manner of martyrdom of so many victims of Rome, says “such [*deaths*] could have been invented only by demons instead of men”. Some acts were so unutterably inhuman that he could not bring himself to relate them. For the sake of unsuspecting readers, we have decided not to give the details of these mind-numbing crimes. Suffice it to say that inventions like the spiked ‘Iron Maiden’, which trapped and slowly drained the blood of its victims, were far from being Rome’s most depraved techniques for destroying God’s People. If the reader requires further information, our Recommended Reading section provides it.

Nowadays we hear almost *nothing* of this whole ghastly episode. But the Romish spirit is the same as ever, and remains strong in Ireland where, while ‘front’ organizations are demanding peace, unforgiving Catholic groups are using any method (however ungodly) to bring Ulster back under the yoke of a Catholic government – and thus Rome.<sup>77</sup>

**11:5 PROTESTANT MARTYRS IN EUROPE** Along with the Catholics Francis I and Henry II of France, Louis XIV was responsible for the deaths of very many French Protestants (known from 1560 as ‘Huguenots’). The infamous St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre on 24 August 1572 actually lasted three days and three nights with tens of thousands of men, women and children being slain just for their faith. Philip II was delighted at such a ‘victory’ for Rome and ‘Pope’ Gregory XII commissioned the artist Vasari to paint a mural of the massacre – which is *still* on display in the Vatican today. Repentant indeed.

In 1685 the persecution of Huguenots began again. All Protestant worship was suppressed, churches were destroyed, and Huguenot children were forced to be brought up as Catholics. Those who escaped France fled to Protestant Britain, Holland, Prussia and Switzerland.

“Their case reminds us of what is declared of Old Testament worthies in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews

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<sup>77</sup> Nicky says “Thankfully, we [*in the UK*] live in a part of the world where we’re unlikely to suffer physical persecution” [TALK 15], but this is not true of evangelical Christians working in the Republic of Ireland. Staunch Romanists, especially the Catholic clergy in rural areas, frequently persecute Protestants in their midst. It would also not have been out of place for Nicky to acknowledge that the relative lack of persecution in Britain is thanks in no small part to *the Protestant Reformation* and to many Bible-believers who “loved not their lives unto death” during it.

‘Through faith (some) escaped the edge of the sword ... (others) were slain with the sword’ (vv34&37)”.<sup>78</sup>

For readers who suppose that this is all prehistoric information, the ‘Holy’ Inquisition was still going on in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and Protestants in France were still being martyred for their faith that recently. And, because spiritual forces remain the same, history has a nasty habit of repeating itself – as we shall see in a moment. (The Inquisition only curtailed its overt activities because Napoleon demanded that it do so. The department of the Vatican that ran the Inquisition has never been closed down and remains operational to this day. Is it not remarkable the lengths to which Rome will go to accommodate pagans while attacking true Christians?)

In the Netherlands, Protestants were put to death by being burnt at the stake, beheaded, hanged, drowned, walled up, racked, or buried alive. In the following extract from a letter, written by three martyrs in Antwerp to their brethren just before their deaths, can be seen once again the Spirit of Christ so lacking in their Roman persecutors:

“Since it is the will of the Almighty that we should suffer for His name, and be persecuted for the sake of His Gospel, we patiently submit, and are joyful upon the occasion ... We are not comfortless in confinement, for we have faith; we fear not affliction, for we have hope; and we forgive our enemies, for we have charity. Be not under apprehensions for us ... We desire not to be released, but to be blessed with fortitude; we ask not liberty, but the power of perseverance...”<sup>79</sup>

**11:6 ROME AND ALPHA** Unpleasant though it is to relate these dreadful facts, it is necessary to do so to expose the true spirit behind Rome. Just as the physical Babylon of the Old Testament was a tyrant to God’s people before Christ came, so the spiritual Babylon that is Rome has been a tyrant to the people of God since Christ’s day.

When challenged on its past, Rome’s adherents love to reply that “other churches have done bad things too” or “Catholics have been martyred by Protestants also”. This cannot absolve Rome – especially as she makes such lofty claims for her church.<sup>80</sup> But regardless of Rome’s claims,

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<sup>78</sup> S.M. Houghton, *Sketches From Church History*, p134.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, [www.hut.fi/~orlando/fox111.htm](http://www.hut.fi/~orlando/fox111.htm), as at 18:Oct:1999.

<sup>80</sup> Protestantism is not a church in the same sense. In this context the word Protestant merely refers to *any* professing Christian who is not a visible

the sins of any ‘Protestants’ have been utterly incomparable with her own behaviour. (And besides, no true evangelical would put someone to death purely because of the latter’s faith.)

Rome’s track record:

- Has not just been the persecution of a few *by* a few – though that alone would have been wrong.
- It has not just been confined to one or two localities – sinful though that, too, would be.
- It has not just been for a brief period.
- Nor have people suffered using means that were ‘normal’ to the society of the day.

Instead it has been the grotesque and systematic persecution and torture of millions of people (common estimates actually put it at *tens* of millions<sup>81</sup>), throughout many countries, for hundreds of years, without any justification. It has been the rape and slaughter of innocent people, often simply for owning a Bible or for refusing to commit idolatry...

It has not just been condoned by its leaders, but instigated and resourced by them. Yes, these appalling acts have been both demanded *and organized by* the ‘divinely-appointed’ archbishops, cardinals, and ‘popes’ of Rome – the leaders of an institution which insists it is the representative of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth; the leaders who claim they are the ‘Apostolic succession’.<sup>82</sup> This all makes Rome’s guilt incomparable with the sins of any Protestant group.

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part of Rome. Clearly, there is plenty of scope for Protestants to fall into other deceptions outside Rome, so we cannot make any “lofty claims” for the “Protestant Church” *per se*.

<sup>81</sup> Note that most Romanists seem to find it almost impossible to forgive. More than thirty years after thirteen demonstrators were tragically shot dead in Ulster by British soldiers (who: were untrained for such situations, knew that armed terrorists were in the crowd, and had seen colleagues murdered by the IRA merely for trying to disarm *all* paramilitary groups), many Irish Catholics still seem unable to forgive this event. Compare 13 people with 13 *thousand*, or even 13 *million*, killed by Rome, and readers will see the perversity of this situation.

<sup>82</sup> Regarding the error of Apostolic “succession”, one particular Alpha statement is regrettable. Nicky quotes Gibbon as writing: ““The Christian Church from the time of the **apostles** ... has claimed an uninterrupted **succession** of ... powers”” [*Questions of Life*, p196]. It is unfortunate that Gibbon chose to use this ambiguous term instead of a safer one like ‘flow’ or ‘supply’.

Rome may now reluctantly be offering “apologies” for these past “mistakes” – but such statements are vague, muted and hundreds of years too late to be meaningful. Besides, until Rome explains how these extraordinarily demonic things happened, and she proves that the diabolical spirit behind them has been purged from Romanism, there is no reason to trust that they won’t recur when it suits her – especially given that her heresies have actually become worse in the intervening time. Nicky’s attitude will consign us to the same fate as our evangelical predecessors.

Indeed, if the reader is tempted to imagine that this all ended a long time ago, we would implore them to study Rome’s more recent deeds. See, for instance, *The Vatican’s Holocaust* by Avro Manhattan, in the Recommended Reading list at the end of this Part, for the truth about Rome’s unspeakable and widespread atrocities against non-Catholics in Yugoslavia during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>83</sup> In countries where Catholicism is the dominant religion, Rome’s persecution of Protestants and other dissenters remains to this day. It is only in predominantly non-Catholic countries – i.e. where she has yet to seduce the populace into joining her – that she puts on such a charming face.

Yet the Alpha Course encourages ecumenical co-operation with this Institution, promoting her in its courses around the globe. These quotes from Alpha participants show just how little they know about the true nature and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church:

“There was a strong sense among many of those present [*at the Alpha Catholic conference in May 1997*] that they were **taking part in history** as the Anglican and **Roman Catholic** churches – as well as other denominations – **came together** through Alpha” [*Alpha News*].<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See also such books as *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, (Chick Publications, 1975), by Edmond Paris, *Or Is Alberto for Real?* (Chick Publications, 1988), by Sidney Hunter, for details of Rome’s shockingly large part in the inception and promotion of German Nazism and its Italian counterpart. All senior Nazis were Catholics for instance. (Most Catholics of the day seem to have been in favour of Hitler (a Catholic who was never excommunicated by Rome), but you would think the opposite from the Alpha materials as they give totally unrepresentative coverage to the few Catholic individuals (e.g. Otto Neururer [*30 Days*, p19]) or Catholic-dominated organizations (esp. the Kreisau Circle [*A Life Worth Living*, p31]), who opposed the Nazis.)

<sup>84</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 1997, p12.

“Protestants and **Catholics** can do it together **and feel comfortable** with it. I see Alpha as a means of bringing the Protestant and Catholic communities together to find a unity **within their diversity**” [*Alpha News*].<sup>85</sup>

“On Alpha, we can **set aside** our own traditions [*i.e. our beliefs*], come **together in worship** ... and develop **trusting** relationships [*Like Ireland in 1641 or 1916?*]” [*Alpha News*].<sup>86</sup>  
 “I was in a **mixed** group of Catholics and Protestants ... there’s a **bond and harmony** between us...” [*Alpha News*].<sup>87</sup>

But no wonder; by insisting that “there are 18 hundred **million** Christians in the world today”,<sup>88</sup> Nicky is telling participants to assume that every Catholic is saved. He also conditions his hearers to accept Rome by using the arcane and ambiguous word “catholic” to describe the worldwide Church – not just once, but *four* times in the same talk without any distinction given between this and the Roman institution of the same name.<sup>89</sup> If the naiveté of these statements isn’t already apparent, it should certainly become so during the following sections.

**11:7 A MYSTERY SOLVED** In the above chapters we have examined some of the main elements of the Roman Catholic religion. We have shown that, while many of them contradict the Word of God, they adhere very closely to the beliefs and practices of the false and pagan Babylonian religion condemned so often throughout the scriptures.

(There is not the space here to look at the many other Babylonian features of the ‘faith’ of Roman Catholicism<sup>90</sup> such as: relics; the crook or

<sup>85</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar - Jun 1998, pp10-11.

<sup>86</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 1998, p10.

<sup>87</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar - Jun 1998, pp10-11.

<sup>88</sup> Talk 14. Nicky reinforces this idea with other statements like “this universal church which we belong to is **vast**” [Talk 14]; “[we are] part of a **huge** family” [*Questions of Life*, p136]; and “[Jesus has] approaching two **billion** followers” [*Ibid*, p9]. This last statement means that Nicky is incorporating the Eastern Orthodox church - which Rome would be happy with now that it is largely back under the ‘Pope’.

<sup>89</sup> Talk 14, Edn. 2.1.

<sup>90</sup> There are many other Babylonian practices that have played a prominent role in Rome’s history. Tonsures, for instance, which are an obvious violation of Lev. 19:27 and yet were used by Romanists for hundreds of years. (Nicky’s reference to this passage stops at verse 26 [*Searching Issues*, p56], so no reader would realize what Rome’s past love of tonsures meant.)

crozier;<sup>91</sup> stigmata; candles;<sup>92</sup> incense; vestments;<sup>93</sup> scapulars; halos and other sun-based designs;<sup>94</sup> kissing one's own hand; monasticism;<sup>95</sup> nunn-eries; skullcaps;<sup>96</sup> Romish mitres (which, when viewed side-on, represent fish-heads, after the Babylonian fish god, Dagon);<sup>97</sup> pilgrimages; processions and other celebratory public services;<sup>98</sup> prayers for the dead... the list seems almost endless.)

Recording in his diary the years of training for Roman priesthood, Chiniquy wrote:

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<sup>91</sup> Catholic 'Archbishop' O'Brien, complete with his crozier, appears without any stated problem in *Alpha News*, Nov 2000 - Feb 2001, p4.

<sup>92</sup> Biblical Judaism obviously required incense and candles too, but the way they are used by Rome shows that their derivation is from Babylon rather than the Old Testament. No Christian service should use them. (HTB accepts 'Candlemass', yet this too derives from Babylon.)

<sup>93</sup> Compare with Luke 20:45. The long robes of the Catholic priests outfit are present in *Alpha News* - worn by the RC Bishop of Brentwood [*Alpha News*, Mar - Jun 2001, p7].

<sup>94</sup> Babylon saw its primary God as the sun god, hence Rome's 'monstrances' (referred to in chapter 8) are made to look like the sun. Halos added to images of Christ have allowed generations of pagans to bow to this design while making gullible Romanists think they are reverencing Christ rather than the sun device behind. *Alpha News* adverts involving halos (e.g. in Jul - Oct 2001, p14) and even reprinted a picture from a secular newspaper of Nicky with a halo (Nov 2001 - Feb 2002, p2). The 'Celtic cross' is a cross with a sun device behind it and serves the same purpose. Celtic crosses are in evidence in HTB publications (e.g. in *Alpha News* Nov 2000 - Feb 2001, p5, and *Alpha News* #17, p3).

<sup>95</sup> From what he writes in *Questions of Life*, p111, Nicky clearly believes that monks form a genuine part of the true church despite scriptures like Jude 1:19 and 1 Cor. 5:9-10.

<sup>96</sup> When used by men during public prayer, as they are, skullcaps patently contravene 1 Cor. 11:4 & 7. Sadly they are even in evidence in *Alpha News*, e.g. on the Cardinal of Tokyo [*Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 2002, p12] and Cardinal Hume [*Alpha News*, #19, p7].

<sup>97</sup> For some reason, drawings of men wearing mitres and robes appear on page 63 of Nicky's book *30 Days* and on page 126 of *Telling Others*. A photo of a "Catholic leader" in full garb, including mitre, appears without comment in *Alpha News*, Nov 2000 - Feb 2001, p4.

<sup>98</sup> Nicky endorses the "gathering of a lot of churches together for a celebration" in Talk 14 describing them as "important", but he is only able to support these statements on the basis of symbolic 'Old Testament' law, not on New Testament principles. In the same talk, Nicky says these "very large gatherings" enable us to "recapture a vision of how great God is", but the Bible does not say we glimpse God's glory through seeing a large



“The further we advanced in the study of pagan antiquity, the more we were forced to believe that our religion, instead of being born at the foot of Calvary, was only a pale and awkward **imitation of Paganism**”.<sup>99</sup>

Consider this statement in the light of some scriptures:

“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how **turn ye again** to the **weak and beggarly elements**, whereunto ye desire again to be **in bondage?**” (Gal. 4:9-11).

“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a **good** minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of **good doctrine**, whereunto thou hast attained. But **refuse profane** and old wives’ **fables**, and exercise thyself rather unto **godliness**” (1 Tim. 4:6-7).

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crowd – otherwise people would be converted by watching a super-bowl game. We glimpse it by considering the wonders of *God’s* Creation rather than a man-inspired creation like a gathering. With no New Testament precedents, Nicky struggles to justify such multi-church celebratory public gatherings. He says “it provides a visible presence of the church in the community” but again he has no scriptures in defence of this. It is particularly incongruous to see Nicky encourage public meetings just seconds after he has mentioned the strength of the *underground* church. (See also *30 days*, pp135-6, and the *Green Alpha Manual*, p57.)

<sup>99</sup> Charles Chiniqy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, p48.

*(For completeness, and as we touched on in section 6:7, statues and all other religious images – e.g. sculptures;<sup>100</sup> icons;<sup>101</sup> and crucifixes<sup>102</sup> – are banned from use by the NT church but are a feature of Babylonian faiths. Again, it must be stated that most Catholics, including most of Rome’s ‘clergy’ have absolutely no idea of these things. Just as in the Babylonian Mysteries and the esoteric New Age movement, only those people in the highest echelons of the Catholic religion are taught the true – and sinister – significance of the various rituals and superstitions employed by Rome. These beliefs and practices, like the ceremonies and rules of*

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<sup>100</sup> Nicky mentions a religious sculpture created in NT times [Talk 10] without any reservation about the legitimacy of such things since the cross.

<sup>101</sup> Nicky apparently sanctions “artistic designs” and “all kinds of crafts” for religious use today [Talk 8]. He promotes them by teaching that “Hearts can be touched and lives changed” by such things [Questions of Life, p118]. Some crafts were certainly part of the Old Testament arrangements, but they were physical prefigures of spiritual truths revealed in the New Testament. (All aspects of the Temple design etc pointed to Christ who has fulfilled them, and any ‘images’ were *specifically commanded by God* and kept only to the holiest parts of the Temple – well away from the eyes of the people. The Temple is now gone, as are the related items.) Images of God have always been banned in Scripture, but all religious ‘designs’ are banned for the Church (Deut. 16:22; 2 Ki. 23:24 etc). Nicky’s use, during Alpha, of Holman Hunt’s painting of ‘Christ’ is most unfortunate [see also Questions of Life, p56, where it is called “‘sacred’”]. So too is the way Nicky paraphrases Jesus as saying “‘If you want to know what God looks like, **look at** me’” [Questions of Life, p73]. Will this not encourage people to obtain and use images that Alpha tells them are of Jesus (even though they plainly do not portray a Jew)? In *Searching Issues*, Nicky rephrases Hebrews 12:2 so that “looking **unto** Jesus” becomes “we need to keep our **eyes fixed on** him” [p23]. In *Questions of Life*, this verse is rephrased thus: “As we look **at** Jesus ... we **see** how much God loves us” [p231]. In the same book, Nicky writes “We offer him [God] our eyes and what we see ... some things we **look at** ... can lead us **closer** to God” [p227]. Nicky does not clarify this.

<sup>102</sup> The crucifix is a model of a cross with a graven image of the Lord still hanging from it. Rome is known to most people as a home for the crucifix. (Indeed, a picture of a crucifix appears on the front of an item called ‘Exploring the **Catholic Church**’ – which is advertised in *Alpha News*, Mar – Jul 2000, p17.) If guests are ever tempted to physically look at, or grasp hold of, a statue of ‘Christ on the cross’ then a *Catholic* church would be an obvious place for them to go. There is therefore scope for some Alpha participants to feel encouraged to get closer to Rome when Nicky says “if you take those things – how wide and long and high and deep [*is Christ’s love*] – they form a **cross**. And supremely it’s **on** the cross that we understand ... **that Jesus died** for us, ... If you **ever** doubt that God loves you, just **look** at the cross. **That’s where** we **see** His **love**. And the Spirit **always** points

*Freemasonry (the real meanings of which are likewise kept from lower-level ‘initiates’), are pagan – despite the Judeo-Christian window dressing. Once again, The Two Babylons provides fulsome proof of this.<sup>103</sup>*

In the sixth century BC the prophet Daniel interpreted a dream for King Nebuchadnezzar involving four empires following one another (see the second Chapter of Daniel). Historically, this has indeed happened. The first empire was the Babylonian, the second the Medo-Persian, the third the Grecian and the fourth the *Roman*:

“And the **fourth** Kingdom shall be strong as **iron**: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and **subdueth all** things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise” (Dan. 2:40).

That description was certainly true of the mighty and vicious Roman Empire. Note that Rome was likened to iron. Described in the next verse was a fifth power to follow, also involving the iron of Rome:

“And whereas thou sawest ... **iron**, ... there shall be in it [*i.e. in this final empire*] of the strength of **the iron**, forasmuch as thou sawest the **iron**...” (Dan. 2:41).

Sure enough, even after the fall of the pagan Roman Empire, Rome has continued to wield huge power – whether politically or spiritually or both. The subsequent verses show that the Lord, when He returns, will

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us to the **cross**. So Paul prays that they may **grasp** ... this” [Talk 10]. But the true Spirit always points us to *Christ*, not to a graven image. Nicky writes “**Look at** [*not ‘Consider’, or ‘Meditate on’*] the **cross** of Christ again today. **Picture** yourself dying with Christ...” [30 Days, p83]. As David Coaker has pointed out, the cross on its own is usually taken to symbolize the *resurrection*; it is the *crucifix* that is generally taken to symbolize how “Jesus died for us”.

<sup>103</sup> Rome even uses the term ‘Mystagogy’ – meaning ‘to *initiate* into the *Mysteries*’. Compare this with the “**simplicity** that is in Christ” of which Paul speaks in 2 Cor. 11:3. Although Paul did speak of Christian ‘Mysteries’, he was primarily referring to those things which were mysteries before Christ’s incarnation and which are now revealed. The ‘Mystery’ that Rome controls is what Paul referred to as the “Mystery of **Iniquity**” (2 Thess. 2:7). Rome uses the word ‘Mystagogy’ to help overcome the fact that her teachings are thoroughly confusing and wildly contradictory (whereas the God of the Bible is not the author of confusion – 1 Cor. 14:33).

descend on this fifth empire and will personally destroy it (Jer. 50-51; Rev. 17-18).<sup>104</sup>

**11:8 THE WOMAN** In the book of Revelation the spiritual part of this empire is described. Just as the *true* church is likened in Scripture to a *pure Bride*, so the *false* church is likened to a woman, but this time to an *harlot*.

“And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are **seven mountains**, on which the woman sitteth ... And the woman which thou sawest is that **great city**, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:9&18).

So, a great city – a city which has been great since Christ’s day, and one which sits on seven mountains (also translated ‘hills’ in Luke 23:30). Only Rome fits this description so accurately – not least because she is the *only* city in classical literature to be called the “city on seven hills”. (See the introduction to *The Two Babylons* for more details.) In the Book of Revelation we are told of this foul woman:

“And I saw the woman drunken with the **blood** of the saints, and with the blood of the **martyrs** of Jesus” (Rev. 17:6).

It is a fact of history that Rome has caused more Bible-believing Christians to be martyred than has any other organization. It is ironic that it was *Roman* soldiers, answering to their King the Pontifex Maximus, who crucified Christ, and it has been soldiers of the *Roman* church, answering to their King the Pontifex Maximus, who have killed so many of Christ’s followers since. (It will come as no surprise that many Romish Bible versions do what they can to obscure the identity of the woman – e.g. by removing the word “martyrs” in the above verse. For fuller details of Rome’s unimaginably brutal acts toward the saints ‘in the name of Christ’ throughout the centuries since, see *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*.)

Note too that Rome’s clergy and choirs are clothed in the colours of purple and scarlet, and that the mitres and ceremonial outfits of the ‘Pope’ and his cardinals and bishops are ornately and expensively decorated. Consider then, this description of the false church:

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<sup>104</sup> Given the terrible persecutions that Rome perpetrated on early Christians, it is perhaps not in the best taste for Nicky to talk at length about how his son had a school project to “make a poster for a **Roman slave market**” [Talk 15]. Nicky calls the end result “beautiful”, but without any reference to the beautiful Christians who were bought and sold like objects at such markets.

“And the woman was arrayed in **purple** and **scarlet** colour, and **decked with gold** and precious stones and pearls” (Rev. 17:4a).

In Isaiah 14:4, Babylon is described as “the **golden city**”. Does not this description line up with Rome whose palace and buildings are so decked? We have seen how Rome is spiritually akin to Babylon. Now we see that even the outward appearance is comparable. To prove that this woman, whom we have identified as Rome, is indeed spiritual Babylon we learn: “And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, **BABYLON THE GREAT**” (Rev. 17:5a).

To conclude, Scripture prophesied the power of Rome and identifies her as the head of the false church; the spiritual version of Babylon. Her religion, like that of the New Age movement, is simply the Babylonian religion in different garb. As such, her God is the false god of Babylon, *not* the God of Israel. (More evidence, from both the Bible and elsewhere, is available from the books we recommend at the end of this Part.)

**11:9 CAPTIVATING** Rome is very clever. Despite her obvious heresies, she wears a mask of piety to hide the truth about them. The problem with this constant show of apparent purity is that it does not assuage the deep guilt felt by people who do not have the spirit of Christ, who are therefore not regenerate, and who know full well that their lives do not match up to the holy talk and holy rituals of their church. Rome thus works hard to numb that nagging doubt about the false gospel she preaches, and that uneasy feeling that the true God is not really present.

To take a congregation’s mind off the confusing, unbiblical, Godless nature of its meetings, Rome simply puts on an extravagant show with exquisite buildings<sup>105</sup> and great processions and gorgeous outfits and solemn, convoluted ceremonies and rituals.

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<sup>105</sup> Nicky says “...church architecture. I have come to be **very** interested in ... what amazing buildings often have been built to the glory of God by people who want to worship him” [Talk 14]. Apparently it is only those who *really* want to worship God who erect such buildings. But the NT church did not erect special buildings - let alone showy and expensive ones. Creation already shows God’s glory far better than any man-made building could. These unbiblical edifices are actually built to the glory of organizations like Rome - and to ‘cow’ the flock into submission to them.

The early Church had none of the physical frills and adornments to be found in the Roman Catholic Church. Hence Rome has to refer to the early Church (in a rather patronizing way), as the ‘primitive’ Church...

“[T]he **primitive** church **allowed** many things to pass **unheeded**, which, after Christianity had **grown stronger**, and when religion was increasing, were **corrected** by subtle examination...”

[‘Pope’ Gregory VII<sup>106</sup>]

“In the **Primitive** Church<sup>107</sup> everything was done in a simpler and **grosser** way than in the modern Church ... [*in which*] all things are done **more worthily** ... [T]he apostles ... **omitted** what the modern Church has fulfilled”.<sup>108</sup>

Yet it was this ‘Primitive’ Church that turned the world upside-down (and without needing to resort to violence or extortion). It certainly wasn’t *spiritually* primitive. It was chronologically closest to the Lord Jesus and His teachings. It witnessed Christ’s death and resurrection, and it experienced Pentecost firsthand. It had the “simplicity that is in Christ”, and it lived “in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom” – *and it was effective...*

It was single-minded about, and devoted to, the Word of God – and thus to loving the Lord and each believer (Col. 1:2-9). Hence it had God’s blessing *so it needed nothing else*. Its power was in its purity. Many in it were even able to cope with horrendous persecution – particularly that which came from the Roman Emperors.

What sort of ‘development’ is it that goes from the apostles’ “simpler and grosser” Church in the first century, which produced such a huge spiritual awakening, to the “more worthy” Church of Roman Catholicism two thousand years later that has used every sin imaginable in order to

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<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, p24.

<sup>107</sup> The phrase “the **primitive** Church” is also acceptable to Nicky, for it is to be found in *Questions of Life*, p196. Obviously, the word “primitive” can simply mean “original”, but it is usually interpreted as meaning immature or underdeveloped (which is the meaning Rome forces on it). Nicky would be safer to clarify the term or simply to stick with phrases like “the **early** church” or “the Acts church” or “the First Century church” or “the New Testament church”.

<sup>108</sup> H. Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, (California University Press, 1967), p117. Instead of saying that God wants us to **return** to the true ways of the original apostles and their early Church, Nicky himself says “the Holy Spirit wants to bring **new** things to the church” [Talk 8], suggesting that the ‘primitive’ Church only had *part* of the truth.

further its worldly empire? There is no scripture that says we should not be like the first century church; in fact we should seek to emulate the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia who (though materially poor) were spiritually rich (Rev. 2-3). They held fast to the Word, were faithful in persecution (even unto death), and were loved by our Lord.

## CHAPTER 12

# ALPHA AND ECUMENISM

**12:1 NICKY'S KNOWLEDGE** Now that we are aware of the true nature of the 'Church' of Rome, we can see just how dangerous to the body of Christ is the following statement from Talk 14:

"One of the exciting things that is happening in these days is that God is lowering the denominational barriers and people don't mind so much anymore whether you are a Methodist or a Baptist, whether you are a **Roman Catholic** or an Anglican. These are **not** the significant things".<sup>109</sup>

In this short paragraph, Nicky sweeps away the entire Protestant Reformation and the pitiless murder of countless men and women who would not compromise their faith during it. Is he right to do this? Is Rome *really* just another 'denomination', or is it, as we have so far seen, a false religious system which has persecuted true believers throughout the centuries and continues to do so in countries where it holds sway? Nicky goes on:

"There are some issues which aren't that important about which Christians have divided. It is *amazing* the issues about which

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<sup>109</sup> Talk 14, Edn. 2.1.



Christians divide. New denominations start sometimes over the most *trivial* matters...”.<sup>110</sup>

Nicky doesn’t say which denominations he considers started over “trivial” matters and which – if any – started over fundamental issues. And since he has already included Rome as a denomination earlier in that talk, it does not take much for any historically uninformed Alpha guest to assume that the Protestant ‘denominations’ divided from the Catholic ‘denomination’ over trivial issues – and that this was *not* a good thing. Nicky speaks on the theme of denominational disunity in Talk 9:

“Paul says there is only one body; one Holy Spirit indwells Christians. So **it doesn’t matter** whether you are a **Roman Catholic** or a Protestant ... Of course, there are still some people who think *their* denomination is the only denomination that are true Christians. It is very rare, but you do come across it.

“I **heard** of one person who was like that – a Baptist pastor, a true Christian, a **very, very bigoted and arrogant** man – who was going to preach at a church one Sunday. It was an **ecumenical** Sunday; a time when we were meant to be looking at unity between denominations, but he didn’t want anything to do with that and people who knew that stayed away ... But it is a very unusual attitude these days because most people recognize that the Spirit of God unites us with ... every denomination, because there is one family...”.<sup>111</sup>

Paul says that there is one body and one Spirit, and that there is *one* Lord and *one faith*. If the teachings of Roman Catholicism were true to that one Lord and one faith, then Nicky would be right to urge unity with the Roman Catholic Church. But Roman Catholicism never has been a part of the body of Christ and it never will be; it is teaching ‘another doctrine’ (1 Tim. 1:3) and ‘another gospel’ (Gal. 1:6,8), and far from urging unity with false teachers, Paul commands the true body of Christ to *separate* from them (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor. 6:16-18).

“**[F]lee ye** from the Chaldeans...” (Isa. 48:20); “**Remove out** of the midst of **Babylon** and go forth **out** of the land of the Chaldeans” (Jer. 50:8). See also Isaiah 14:22 & 21:9.

By contrast:

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<sup>110</sup> Talk 14, Edn. 2.1 (italicized emphases in original).

<sup>111</sup> Talk 9, Edn. 2.1.

“My father ... decided to send me to a **church of England** school ... I was married in the church **attached** to the school ... [After] **Alpha** ... I was received into the **Catholic** Church”.<sup>112</sup>

Nicky views the division between Protestants and Catholics as “absolute nonsense”. But the reason “people don’t care so much these days which denomination someone comes from” is simple: few people today know anything about Church History – the Protestant Reformation being just one of the extremely important periods that is no longer properly taught in schools. Nicky, however, has no such excuse. He has access to hundreds of tomes dealing with Church History and cannot claim ignorance of the ongoing teachings of the Roman Church. (Nicky’s selective description of the history of the Christian Church even gives the impression that the Roman Catholic Church was the original to which we all therefore ought to be reconciled.<sup>113</sup>)

And even if an Alpha participant happened to be aware of the material we have supplied about Rome, it is very likely they would be quickly silenced if they tried to raise these issues. This is because all Course leaders are told that Rome is just another denomination and “we make it a **rule** on Alpha **never** to criticize another denomination”.<sup>114</sup> Such an approach into the hands of the largest church – i.e. Rome.

What does Nicky think about the Reformation? What does he think of those brave Protestant men and women who were murdered by Rome for rejecting the abominations of the Mass, and Purgatory, and Mariolatry and sacerdotal mediation? What does he think of the countless faithful Christians

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<sup>112</sup> Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp149-153.

<sup>113</sup> Nicky says “The history of the church has been a sad story of disunity. In the fourth and fifth century [*sic*] there was a separation of the **lesser Eastern** churches [*away from Rome in the West - and those Eastern churches which followed her*]. In the eleventh century there was ... the division between the Orthodox and the **Catholic**. In the sixteenth century you have the division between the **Catholic** and Protestant ... Disunity is a scandal” [Talk 14]. The inference is that, because the *Roman* Church is present throughout, it must be the initial Church - and therefore *the true* Church. Note too how the Eastern churches are called “lesser” rather than “smaller”, allowing the interpretation that they were lesser in *other* respects to the Western ‘Patriarchate’ (Rome). It is indeed “sad” when separation becomes necessary, but note that Nicky teaches that it is those who do not feel able to stay united with Rome’s heresies who are the ‘scandalous’ ones, whereas Rome’s false teachings are surely the real scandal.

<sup>114</sup> *Telling Others*, p146.

who were put to death by the cruel Dominican Inquisition<sup>115</sup> in the centuries leading up to the Reformation because they read the holy scriptures for themselves? What does he think about these Bible believers and so many others like them who have stood up against the evils of the mighty Roman Institution for the last 1700 years?

In fact, what about his own predecessors? The Church of England was founded by men of awesome faith and courage. For example, the deaths of Revs. Rogers, Saunders, Marsh, Cardmaker, Bradford, Bland, Frankesh, Samuel, Palmer, Hullier, Rough, and Yeoman were each an incredibly moving story of heroic courage and immense grace at the hands of their Catholic persecutors.<sup>116</sup> How does he explain their deaths?

**12:2 WHO ARE THE “BIGOTS”?** As we have seen, Nicky brands as bigots those who believe that “*their* denomination is the only denomination that are true Christians”. However, if *any* group thinks “*their* denomination is the only denomination that are true Christians” it is the *Roman Catholic* ‘denomination’ – as we have already seen (in section 9:7) from their own official documents!

If we are still in any doubt as to who the ‘bigots’ are, here are some further telling statements from Rome. Please note that she always seems to refer to Protestants as being ‘separated’ from her, rather than the two Churches being separated *from one another*. It follows that, for the Catholic Church, ecumenism is *not* a movement of Protestants and Catholics *toward one another*, as Protestants believe, but is seen as the ‘separated brethren’ reconciling themselves *to the Roman Church*.

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<sup>115</sup> To his credit, Nicky now admits that the Spanish Inquisition involved the “widespread use of torture” [*A Life Worth Living*, p29]. (He omitted this fact from the early editions of the book.) But he only writes that these horrific practices were not a “legitimate way of preaching the good news” [p29]. This is not saying a great deal, especially since the Inquisition was never *designed* to “preach the good news”, and Nicky certainly implies that Rome had the right *message* even if her *methods* were awry. Some observers are tempted to wonder whether Nicky only inserted these few extra words about the Inquisition so as to dissuade people from reading up on this horrendous topic after he was obliged to make some reference to it to keep students of the Reformation happy.

<sup>116</sup> See Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*.

“The Catholic Church possesses the **whole** of the wealth of God’s revealed truth<sup>117</sup> and **all the means** of grace.<sup>118</sup> **It is unable to concede similar status to others.** When Catholics pray for the restoration of full Communion with other Christians they are praying for that unity ... which is found in all its characteristics in the **Catholic Church**”.<sup>119</sup>

“Is it possible to explain this attachment of an entire people to their own [*Protestant*] church as a fully conscious act of rebellion, and of open revolt, **as it was in their founders?** ... Certainly **our church is right, while** ... the one in which they live is **wrong...**”.<sup>120</sup>

“The Church ... **Catholic** ... is the one [*i.e. sole*] Ark of salvation for **all**”,<sup>121</sup> “The **sole** Church of Christ ... is governed by the **successor of Peter**” [*Catholic Catechism*]<sup>122</sup>

“The Church ... is upheld infallibly in the truth: Christ governs her through Peter and the other apostles, who are present in their successors, the **Pope** and the college of bishops.” [*Catholic Catechism*]<sup>123</sup>

Similarly, in *Vatican II*, ecumenism is nothing other than submission to Rome. Hence we read:

“[O]ur **separated brethren** ... are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow ... For it is through Christ’s

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<sup>117</sup> This is an interesting claim. Rome’s usual excuse for dealing so complacently with the abuse of children committed by her priests in the past is that these activities preceded the world’s awareness of the problem and its terrible consequences. But if Rome has “all of God’s revealed truth” then she should have known these things long ago - and would certainly have been aware that the problem could not be solved simply by moving the priest elsewhere.

<sup>118</sup> The phrase “the **means** of grace” is a euphemism for ‘good works which earn grace’ - yet the whole point about grace is that it is undeserved and *cannot* be earned.

<sup>119</sup> Cardinal Basil Hume, *Towards A Civilisation Of Love*, quoted in Michael de Semlyen, *Was The Reformation A Mistake?* (audio tape, Spirit of ’88).

<sup>120</sup> Aristide Brunello, Professor in the Superior Institute of **Ecumenical** Theology, Quoted in William Standridge, *op. cit.*, p24.

<sup>121</sup> *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, (Catholic Truth Society, imprimatur, 1971), p17. For several more such quotes from Roman Popes and other officials, see Burns, *op. cit.*, pp444-7.

<sup>122</sup> *Catholic Catechism*, para. 870.

<sup>123</sup> *Catholic Catechism*, para. 869.

**Catholic Church alone**, ... that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained...” [*Vatican II*].<sup>124</sup>

“The ‘**ecumenical** movement’ means those activities and enterprises which ... are started and organized for the fostering of unity among Christians ... The result will be that ... all Christians will be gathered ... into that unity of the one and only Church ... **This unity**, we believe, **dwells** in the **Catholic Church** as something **she can never lose**” [*Vatican II*].<sup>125</sup>

As we have seen from many of the quotes given so far, the Council of Trent vigorously and repeatedly denounced the Scriptural truths upheld by the Protestants of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. And while *Vatican II* may have put a different *face* on Rome, now addressing Protestants more subtly as ‘separated brethren’ rather than ‘heretics’, yet the *message* is the same. When Rome calls us “separated brethren”, she means that, until we are back in her clutches, we are *lost* brethren, separated *from God*.

Here are just some of the Roman Catholics (not to mention Anglo-Catholics) whom Nicky cites as founts of wisdom, or as examples of true Christianity: Descartes;<sup>126</sup> Gregor Mendel;<sup>127</sup> Clifford Longley;<sup>128</sup> Phan Thi Kim Phuc;<sup>129</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge;<sup>130</sup> Tom Wright;<sup>131</sup> G.K. Chesterton,<sup>132</sup> and Graham Greene.<sup>133</sup> Nicky neglects to identify any of them as Catholics, thus many Protestants will not be aware that he is implicitly endorsing Rome on these occasions (although most Catholics will). Could Nicky not find people with a sound doctrinal base to legitimize? Has no evangelical Christian ever said the things Nicky wants to quote here? And if not, why can’t Nicky go to the Bible instead of sanctioning the Roman church like this?

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<sup>124</sup> Walter M. Abbott, Ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, Ecumenism, point 3, p346. Incidentally, according to the spine of this book, Abbott was a Jesuit.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, point 4, p347.

<sup>126</sup> Talk 1.

<sup>127</sup> *Searching Issues*, p89.

<sup>128</sup> Talk 6.

<sup>129</sup> *30 Days*, p113.

<sup>130</sup> Talk 9, or *30 Days*, p109. Muggeridge became a Catholic in 1981. Seven years later he denied that the virgin birth was an “historical truth” [See Cathy Burns, *op. cit.*, p80]. Also, “Addressing Jesus, he asked ‘Did You live and die and rise from the dead as they say? **Who knows**, or, for that matter, **cares?**’” [*Ibid*].

<sup>131</sup> Talk 2.

<sup>132</sup> Talk 15, plus *Searching Issues*, p59.

<sup>133</sup> *30 Days*, p85.

**12:3 SOCIAL ACTION** There is plenty of evidence to show that any ecumenical ‘movement’ is indeed “all one way”. Protestants who foolishly think they can work with Rome on social issues – however worthy those concerns may be – all too easily succumb to Rome’s false religious spirit. For example:

“[A]t the large ecumenical conference in Indianapolis in August 1990, which I attended ... Catholic priest Michael Scanlon [*sic*]<sup>134</sup> told of his experiences in ecumenical anti-abortion demonstrations. He described how he and a group of other **Catholic and Protestant demonstrators** were arrested and jailed for several days. They were **incarcerated together** in a barracks of some sort, and during this time the priest conducted **Mass** each day and led the **group** in praying the **Rosary**...

“The priest testified excitedly that some of the **Protestants** adopted the **Rosary permanently** into their own private devotions! This is the danger of fellowshiping with error. ‘Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners’ (1 Cor. 15:33)”<sup>135</sup>

Even if someone thinks they know better than the Lord, and they imagine that associating with idolators would not be a snare to them, nevertheless just by working with Rome in this sort of way they are legitimizing her in the eyes of others.<sup>136</sup>

Protestants need also to be aware that Rome’s calls for world peace are not all they seem. Of course peace is a very attractive proposition, and as individuals we are promised true *shalom* (peace and harmony) with God if we accept His gospel and walk with Him (2 Thess. 1:7-8; 1 Pet. 4:17-19). But God’s Word does *not* promise either the world *or* the Church physical

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<sup>134</sup> ‘Father’ Michael Scanlan is another leader within the Catholic Charismatic movement.

<sup>135</sup> David Cloud, *The Danger of Ecumenical Social Projects*, [www.wayoflife.org/fbns/dangerofecumenical.htm](http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/dangerofecumenical.htm), as at 02:Nov:2002.

<sup>136</sup> Note that, with regard to abortion, it must be recognized that Rome’s only reason for opposing it (as with *all* forms of artificial contraception) is to increase the size – and hence income and influence – of the Roman Church. An added benefit for Rome is that its stand against abortion deceives true believers into thinking Rome actually cares about unborn life; but even a cursory glance through Foxe or Avro Manhattan proves that not to be so. Pregnant Protestant women in Ireland and elsewhere have been murdered in the name of Rome along with their *unborn* children. All too reminiscent of 2 Kings 8:12 and Amos 1:13.

peace *on earth*. Far from it: “In the world ye **shall** have **tribulation**” (John 16:33). Satan however wants men to be at peace with *him* using whom he will to that end. He is only too happy to promise temporal peace if it will lead people to join his false church.<sup>137</sup>

“[E]very one is given to **covetousness**; and from the **prophet** even unto the **priest** every one dealeth **falsely**. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people **slightly**, saying, **Peace, peace**; when there **is** no [*true*] peace” (Jer. 6:13-14).

But this false peace will be destroyed when the Lord Jesus returns:

“For when they shall say, **Peace and safety**; then [*at the Lord’s return*] sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child and they shall **not** escape” (1 Thess. 5:3).

**12:4** **ADDITIONAL POINTS** While we are on the subject of social activism, it is – as always – worth checking what Scripture says, rather than assuming that God shares our traditional outlook on things. What does God’s Word say about a Christian’s primary social concern?

“We are bound to thank God always for you, **brethren**, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, **and** the **charity** of every one of you all **toward each other** aboundeth” (2 Thess. 1:3).

“Be kindly affectioned **one to another** with **brotherly** love; ... Distributing to the necessity of **saints**” (Rom. 12:10-13).

“And above **all** things have **fervent** charity **among yourselves** ... Use hospitality **one to another** without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same **one to another**, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:8-10).

From the above it appears that we should be especially concerned for the temporal welfare *of fellow believers*. “But the Bible says ‘do good to

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<sup>137</sup> Rome is the main instrument in the enemy’s hands here. Outwardly she promotes peace between governments, nations, and religions, while behind the scenes her Jesuits and their minions foment discord and aggression so that a war-weary world will gladly accept a false peace. See, for example, *The Secret History of the Jesuits* by Edmond Paris in the Recommended Reading section at the end of this Part for details of this aspect of Jesuit activity.

**all men**”! Of course we must desire the good of all, and seek to be a blessing to everyone whom the Lord introduces into our lives. We must do good, rather than evil, to those with whom the Lord brings us into contact. But let us not lose sight of the remainder of that verse:

“[D]o good unto all men, **especially** unto them who are of the **household of faith** [*i.e. Bible-believers*]” (Gal. 6:10).

Even if our own local church may have no great needs, our suffering brethren elsewhere in the world certainly do. In many regions they are persecuted and impoverished by the governments and people of pagan nations. Organizations like *Voice of the Martyrs*<sup>138</sup> regularly expose the attacks that bible-believers are experiencing in growing numbers of nations.

During the famine in Judea in Acts 11:28-30, the disciples in other regions seem to have actually been primarily concerned for the *believers* in the land.<sup>139</sup> It is notable that the ‘Great Commission’ made no reference to *social* activism – only spiritual.

We *are* called actively to bless those unbelievers who live very close to us. This includes people who have committed themselves to us in a significant way (e.g. because they work for us, or rent property from us). But the point about the ‘good Samaritan’ (Luke 10:29-37) is not that *everyone* is our “neighbour”. For a start, the Samaritans were half-Jews who also lived in the land of Israel – i.e. they were related to, and identified themselves with, God’s People. The ‘good Samaritan’ was more eligible to be

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<sup>138</sup> Other groups who have served the persecuted church over the years include ‘Open Doors’, ‘The Barnabus Fund’ and ‘Release International’. They were still publishing very valuable information at the time of going to press, although compromises appear to be creeping in.

<sup>139</sup> When Scripture refers to giving materially to “the poor” in the Old Testament, it always referred to the poor *living in the land of Israel* (Deut. 15:7-11; Exod. 23:11; Psa. 72:1-4, 132:13-15; Isa. 3:14-15, 10:2 etc). Today this means the *People of God* and those who identify themselves very closely with them. This puts a very different complexion on New Testament references to helping “the poor”. A fine example of this principle appears in Romans 15:26. Likewise, the word “strangers” in this context is an OT reference to Gentiles who identified with, and lived alongside, Israel (e.g. see Deut. 31:11), thus an NT verse calling us to bless “strangers” primarily refers to those who identify with God’s People. It is worth noting that God never commanded Israel to go on humanitarian missions outside her borders.



treated as a neighbour than the hypocritical ‘leaders’ of God’s People *because he was good*.<sup>140</sup>

The emphasis on loving the *brethren* first and foremost is repeatedly given in Scripture: “Love the **brotherhood**. Fear God” (1 Pet. 2:17). See also John 15:12-19; 1 Thess. 3:12 and all of 1 John 3. Christ reinforced this point in Matt. 25:34-40 (c.f. Matt. 12:48-50 and Joel 3:2). If we, the beloved, fervently love one another (as per 1 John 4:7-12; 1 Pet. 1:22; and 2 John 1:5), then the result will be to draw unbelievers to Christ (John 13:34-35). *This* is what they most need.

We must be certain of God’s will for us over a given social situation before launching in, however good our intentions may be. Many Christians go on humanitarian aid trips that have negligible evangelistic content. Like anything else, active social help *without the Lord’s specific direction* is bound to do nothing but harm to the Kingdom.

For example, God sometimes brings distress upon nations so as to humble them and encourage them to cry out to Him – and find Him. If they have a man-made safety net, we may well not just be propping up ungodly regimes, but actually keeping people from seeking the Lord and being saved – see Acts 17:26-27. Man’s good intentions frequently get in the way of God’s higher purposes – as exemplified in Matt. 16:21-23. The proper way for a nation to be healed is given in 2 Chr. 7:14.

Even when there *is* evangelistic preaching alongside our philanthropy, we must avoid the temptation to ‘bribe’ people into the Kingdom, as this is very unlikely to make true converts. Christ was loving toward the Samaritan woman, but He was more interested in giving her *spiritual* aid than physical. (Indeed, He requested physical aid *from* her.)

We need to be wise about the extremely impressive social works that some Catholics undertake; even devoting many years of their lives to very moving causes around the world. People are prepared to do amazing things when they believe that their very *salvation* – and not just the duration of their time in “*Purgatory*” – relies upon works. (The Pharisees too were zealous and tithed generously and went to huge lengths to make converts (Matt. 23:15). And members of other works-based religions (e.g. Mormons) can be similarly devout and selfless. This is not the test of a true believer.<sup>141</sup>)

<sup>140</sup> The more accurate term for this Samaritan is ‘compassionate’ – see v33.

<sup>141</sup> HTB’s emphasis, however, seems much more geared towards social

The question we should ask ourselves is whether these works are God-ordained or rather the result of man's ideas – in which case they are not serving the Kingdom but are actually getting in the way of God's true calling for the person doing them. In fact, 'good works' by Catholics end up promoting the heretical Roman church and serving its long-term goal of deluding "all nations" (Rev. 18:23). None of those helped is actually taught the *true* gospel. Catholics are simply providing temporal balm before consigning the person to eternal doom. Where is the 'good' in that?<sup>142</sup>

**12:5 JESUIT ACTIVITY** The Jesuits are not history. They are alive and well and still determinedly carrying out the work they were originally formed to do. The following information may be a little difficult to accept, but it is fact nonetheless, and can easily be confirmed if the reader wishes to do so:

"Cardinal Manning, leader of Catholicism in England at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a staunch supporter of Papal infallibility in 1870, spoke to the Jesuit 'fathers' in stirring fashion, calling them to battle and unmistakably laying out the strategy and plan of attack for the 20<sup>th</sup> century: 'Great is the prize for which you strive. Surely a soldier's eye and a soldier's heart would choose by intuition this field of **England**. None ampler or nobler could be found. It is an head of **Protestantism**, the **centre** of its movements and the **stronghold** of its power. **Weakened** in England, it is paralysed elsewhere. **Conquered** in England, it is conquered throughout all the world. Once **overthrown** here, all else is but a war of detail. All the roads of the world meet in one

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action among unbelievers (e.g. see *Questions of Life*, pp199,227). On page 226 of that book, Nicky even deletes the reference to God's People when referring to the command to "share with God's People" and he completely drops the references to church members being "devoted to **one another**" and "honour[ing] **one another**" (the latter includes charity in the sense of the word 'honorarium'). Sandy too suggests that "the work of the Kingdom of God" is social action among the unsaved [*Elsdon-Dew, Ed., The God Who Changes Lives, Vol.3*, p9]. The Lord Jesus said "I am not sent but [*only*] unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel". Thus, Isaiah's prophecy about "binding up the broken-hearted" etc (Isa. 61:1-3), referred to *Israel*. For us, it applies to all God's People, but Nicky omits this fact when he quotes the Isaiah passage [Talk 8] and applies it to all men - i.e. including unbelievers.

<sup>142</sup> Nicky is right to say that there will be times when we need to "prepare a person for death" [Talk 13], but he then goes on to say "Thank God, for example, for the hospice movement which does exactly that". In the case of the unsaved, however, unless this movement gives the person the gospel then it is not remotely 'preparing' the person.

point, and this point reached, **all the world is open to the Church's will**”<sup>143</sup>.

“Jesuits, or at least those with Jesuit training, for the first time in our history, are in the most influential leadership roles; as ... broadcasters, as chaplains in Britain's top schools, and educational establishments and as speakers, teachers and organizers among the leading para-church organizations...”<sup>144</sup>

## The Catholic Renewal Movement and Ecumenism

Consider also this quote: “Another former pupil of top **Jesuit** school, Stoneyhurst College, is leading English Charismatic Charles Whitehead. In his testimony ... he has revealed and **affirmed** his **Jesuit** background ... [*He*] **heads the Catholic Charismatic organization** in Britain and also for Northern Europe, for which he regularly reports to the Vatican. His para-church activities ... have **greatly** influenced **many** Protestant **leaders**, who have been led in an ecumenical direction by him”<sup>145</sup>.

We must emphasize that we are not to be deceived into accepting *any* arguments in support of Rome, no matter how subtle or clever they are, if they do not line up with Scripture...

For example, as we noted in section 9:6, many Protestants have been seduced by Catholic Charismaticism into believing that God is changing Rome and that we must likewise work with her. This deception has

<sup>143</sup> Edward Sheridan Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning*, quoted in Michael de Semlyen, *All Roads Lead To Rome?*, pp137-138. (It may be instructive to note at this point that the great majority of European nations now making up the European Union, were – and still are – Catholic. Hence the design of the EU flag: 12 five-pointed stars on a blue background – a Catholic emblem which refers to ‘Mary’. Indeed, the very name “Europa” is a moniker of the Babylonian goddess that Rome calls “Mary”. See *The Principality And Power Of Europe* by Adrian Hilton in the Recommended Reading section at the end of this Part for the integral spiritual and political relationship between the Vatican and the European Union).

<sup>144</sup> Catholic Research Information Bureau, quoted in *All Roads Lead to Rome?* p138. In Napoleon's *Memoirs*, he wrote: “The Jesuits are a **military** organization, **not** a religious order ... and the aim of this organization is: POWER. Power in its most despotic exercise ... Jesuitism is the most absolute of despotisms: and at the same time the greatest and most enormous of abuses” [*Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, as quoted in Eric Jon Phelps, *Vatican Assassins*, Halcyon Unified Services, 2000).].

<sup>145</sup> M. de Semlyen, *All Roads Lead to Rome ?*, p135. Whitehead has spoken at HTB and the tape is still available from there.

been fuelled by the dishonest way in which Rome's charismatics spent the first 25 years of their movement hiding the fact that their 'Holy' Spirit leads them deeper INTO, rather than rescuing them out of, Rome's heresies.<sup>146</sup> Even then, clear statements were kept for Catholic audiences alone. Let us consider Tom Forrest. At the time he made the following speech he was already the head of the entire Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement:

"Our job is to make people as ... fully Christian as we can ... by bringing them into the **Catholic** Church ... [Y]ou **don't** just invite someone to be a **Christian**. You invite them to **become Catholics** ... Why should this be **so** important? ... First of all, there are **seven** sacraments, and the **Catholic** Church has **all seven**...

"We don't just have the Eucharist as a **symbol** of the body and blood of Christ. On our altars we have **the** body of Christ; we **drink the blood** of Christ; Jesus is **alive** on our **altars** ... [*Rome also has the*] sacrament of anointing the sick ... [*which*] opens the doors of paradise and deals even with the temporal **punishment due our sins**. What a sacrament! What a Church! ... As Catholics we have Mary: and that mom of ours, Queen of Paradise, is praying for us ... As Catholics we have the papacy ... the rock upon which Christ did build his church ... Our job is ... evangelizing everyone we can into the **Catholic** Church"<sup>147</sup>

The spirit behind the Jesuits, and behind the Catholic charismatic movement they guide, is a very different spirit from God's.

"Their [*Jesuits*] sincerity and the courage of their convictions in relation to their cause is not to be questioned. **This is the very thing** that makes the situation **so dangerous** and why it is vital that '**the watchman sound the alarm**'. The aim of the Papacy and its secret army is as it always has been, to gain **world domination** and every human subject to it. The ecumenical movement was not founded on the free evangelical message of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but was spawned in the dark corridors of the Vatican by the **Jesuit** General Bea. This movement is the latest expression of that system, spoken of in

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<sup>146</sup> This has even been admitted (albeit with a degree of understatement) by Michael Harper, a supporter of the Catholic Charismatic movement. He has written "The Charismatic Renewal does **not** have a particularly good track record when it comes to concern for **truth** ... it has tended ... to **ignore** truth ... and **side-track many** of the big issues" [*Charismatic Crisis*, 1980, as quoted in de Semlyen, *op. cit.*, pp26-27].

<sup>147</sup> Tom Forrest, Saturday morning training session for Roman Catholics at Indianapolis '90, as quoted in de Semlyen, *All Roads Lead to Rome?*, pp28-29.

Scripture, which will be destroyed [*by God Himself*] according to ... Rev. 17:16-18”.<sup>148</sup>

“Cardinal Bea, who was Pope Pius XII’s personal confessor and a close advisor to several other popes, saw the blossoming **Charismatic** movement as a **vehicle** for RC’s ecumenical goals. The Cardinal sought out David DuPlessis (known as ‘Mr. Pentecost’), whom he invited to the Second Vatican Council. DuPlessis and other **leading Pentecostals and Charismatics** accepted gladly and became Rome’s unwitting pawns. Thus began a growing acceptance of Catholicism by Protestant Charismatics. Today’s [*Protestant*] Charismatic movement is a major bridge to Rome”.<sup>149</sup>

As things stand, could we not equally well replace the words ‘Charismatic movement’ with ‘the Alpha Course’ and produce just as accurate a statement?

“Cardinal Bea ... saw the blossoming **Alpha Course** as a vehicle for Roman Catholicism’s ecumenical goals ... leading **Protestants** accepted gladly and became Rome’s unwitting pawns. Thus began a growing acceptance of Catholicism by Protestant **Alpha participants**. Today’s **Alpha Course** is a major bridge to Rome.”

If the reader thinks this unfair, then consider that Raniero Cantalamessa (whom Nicky quotes favourably – and often – in his talks and publications, and who will reappear in a later Part of this book) was described by the Catholic Alpha Office as being “**very enthusiastic** about Alpha, **especially** for its **ecumenical** [*rather than evangelistic!*] **potential**”.<sup>150</sup>

We *must* beware of any group that acts as a stepping-stone to Rome, rather than as a force standing *against* it and *for* the truth.

**12:6 SO NEGATIVE** We acknowledge that some will accuse this material of being ‘negative’, although the word doesn’t appear in Scripture. The fact is that, if dangers exist which threaten God’s beloved “little flock” then the ‘sheep’ need to be alerted to them. There is nothing negative about warning the People of God of hidden traps or wolves in sheep’s clothing or

<sup>148</sup> Catholic Research Information Bureau, quoted in *Ibid*, pp138-139.

<sup>149</sup> Dave Hunt, *Global Peace And The Rise Of Antichrist*, p153.

<sup>150</sup> *NEWS!*, CatholicAlphaOffice.org/news.htm (as at 01:Jun:1998).

other dangers that could lead them away from the Good Shepherd. It is the damaging, deceptive teachings and practices we expose that are the truly negative things. We highlight false teachings. In truth, is it we or is it those promoting heresy who are the 'negative' ones?

If people insist that anything which alerts them to perilous teachings or dangerous movements is automatically negative, then God's Word is frequently negative. Jeremiah, full of the Holy Ghost, was immensely 'negative', as were Hosea, Ezekiel, and many other prophets – despite the fact that they were inspired by God to write these highly 'negative' things. It was actually the compromised individuals among the people who foolishly rejected these prophets for being 'negative'. We would suggest that the *truly* negative people are those who negate God's Word.

**12:7 EVANGELISM** The following quote from a speech given by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones to fellow evangelicals in 1967 at Keele Conference would seem particularly appropriate for Alpha's 'evangelistic campaign':

"I remind you that the Protestant Reformers were not just bigoted zealots or fools. Their eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit: Luther, Calvin, Knox, all of them. They saw this horrible monstrosity depicted in the Bible and were warning against it. At the risk of even losing their lives they stood up and protested. They confronted Rome, ... The Roman Church is **a counterfeit, a sham**, it represents prostitution of the worst and most diabolical kind. It is indeed a form of the antichrist; it is to be rejected and denounced, but, above all, **it is to be countered**. And there is only one thing that can counter it and that is a Biblical, doctrinal Christianity.

"A Christianity that merely preaches '**Come to Christ**' or '**Come to Jesus**' **cannot stand** before Rome. Probably what that will do ultimately, will be to add to the numbers belonging to Rome.<sup>151</sup> **People who hold evangelistic campaigns and say,**

<sup>151</sup> In *Alpha for Catholics*, a six-sided leaflet (undated), published by the 'Alpha for Catholics Office', an American Cardinal admits that Alpha promotes the *Roman Church*. He says: "those who have completed the **Alpha** course ... are ready **and eager** to learn more about **our** church and **her sacraments**" [Cardinal William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore, p3]. The leaflet proves this with several testimonies: "Within 8 months of starting Alpha I had ... joined the **Catholic** Church" [Anna Whitelock, p4]. According to *another* Cardinal (Peter Sei-ichi Shirayanagi, Cardinal archbishop of Tokyo) Alpha has helped to restore to Rome "those who have strayed from" her [Alpha News, Jul - Oct 2002, p12]. After all we have seen in these chapters, the following quote from the Catholic Archbishop Harry Flynn makes perfect

**Are you Roman Catholics? Go back to your church', are denying New Testament teaching. We must warn them".<sup>152</sup>**

The apostle Peter, whom the See of Rome erroneously believes to be the rock upon which the Catholic Church was built, wrote to his fellow believers to warn them of false teachers who would infiltrate the Christian faith:

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be **false** teachers **among you**, who privily shall **bring in** damnable **heresies**, even denying the Sovereign Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And **many** shall follow their **pernicious ways**; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of ... whose **judgment** now of a long time lingereth not, and **their damnation** slumbereth not” (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

Earlier we quoted the brave and hopeful cry of Bishop Latimer to his fellow martyr, Bishop Ridley, as they prepared to face the flames rather than deny the Sovereign Lord who bought them. Tragically, the candle they lit is indeed being snuffed out, and the modern Alpha Course – the largest single evangelistic undertaking in the world – seems almost to be in the *vanguard* of this ecumenical effort to bring the Protestant Church back under the yoke of Rome.

“The unity [*between Protestants and Catholics*] which is being forged is not that of John 17:21 but of Revelation 17:13: ‘These have **one mind**, and shall give their power and strength **unto the beast**.’ ... There simply isn’t any middle ground. Catholics have **ever** been crystal clear about that: ‘**The Roman Church is either the masterpiece of Satan or the Kingdom of the Son of God.**’ insisted Cardinal Manning. His contemporary and colleague, Cardinal Newman was just as emphatic: ‘A sacerdotal order (of priesthood) is historically **the essence** of the Church of Rome; **if not divinely** appointed, it is doctrinally **the essence** of **anti-christ**’”<sup>153</sup>

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sense. In January 2002, he “sent a letter to his priests, deacons, and seminarians” observing that Alpha is “consistent with the foundational teaching of the **Catholic Church**” [Paul Likoudis, *Making Catholics Protestant: Alpha And The "New Evangelization"*, TheWandererNewspaper.com, 07:Mar:2002]

<sup>152</sup> Martin Lloyd-Jones, quoted in Michael de Semylen, *Ecumenism: Where is it Leading Us? Unity, Peace and Rome*, (Dorchester House Publications, 1989), p48.

<sup>153</sup> Michael de Semylen, *Ecumenism*, pp57& 59.

Even according to Nicky's own measure, Rome must, *at the very least*, be a cult. So, is ecumenism – unity with the Roman Catholic Church – in accord with the Word of God? Is God indeed breaking down the denominational barriers as Alpha and other like-minded movements are assuring us He is? Should we sweep away the Protestant Reformation, as Alpha is teaching its participants to do?

Should we shut our eyes and ears to the martyrs of the Reformation whom God used so mightily and fearlessly to break the awful shackles of that dreadful “synagogue of Satan”? Should we forget the deaths of thousands upon thousands of evangelical believers through the long dark centuries in the medieval period before the Reformation – and the deaths of millions in the centuries since? Should we shut up our hearts to the billion souls still in bondage to Rome's heinous, perverse doctrines, looking the other way as they plummet into a lost eternity? How can we?

“This ecumenical evangelism has provided fertile ground to rebuild the **religious tower of Babel**. Multitudes are being influenced by perverted gospels, doctrines of demons and false teachers. Many more are being persuaded by highly visible evangelicals to join the crusade. It is no surprise that the Roman Catholic Church has been the driving force behind this ecumenical movement since the close of Vatican Council II.

“No longer able to **force** people to submit to its popes under the threat of death and persecution, the Vatican has **changed its strategy** to win the world. Wearing a **new face** of love and concern for the ‘separated brethren’, she is now calling all Protestants back home to the ‘**one true church**’. Tragically, many pulpits are incredibly silent regarding the numerous scriptural warnings against being yoked with unbelievers”<sup>154</sup>

**12:8 MEDIA OBJECTIVITY?** This misguided view of Rome is fostered in the media; but it shouldn't be helped by the evangelical church! If one wants further proof that Rome is headed by the god of this world, one need only look at the press and other media and how they portray her.

- Films frequently go out of their way to show the Catholic faith in a good light, or as harmless. From *The Sound of Music* to *Sister Act*, and from *M\*A\*S\*H* to *The Mission*,<sup>155</sup> almost every major cinematic refer-

<sup>154</sup> Mike Gendron (ex-Roman Catholic), *Let No One Deceive You with Ecumenical Evangelism*, in *Adullam News*, Jun 1999, p7.

<sup>155</sup> Amazingly, Nicky recommends using the scene in the film *The Mission* where “Robert De Niro has a huge weight of armour cut away” to explain



ence to Roman Catholicism is affirmative.<sup>156</sup> Where the reference is negative, the slur is almost always against ‘Christianity’ generally rather than against the Roman church specifically.<sup>157</sup>

- Television programming is similarly biased.<sup>158</sup> For example, whenever some tragedy occurs, newscasters speak of those affected ‘praying for the dead’. Papal comments on a given piece of news are regularly turned into a positive, high profile, item – even in Protestant countries. And the ‘Pope’ himself is invariably praised, regardless of what his institution has done. Exceptions are very rare and really do ‘prove the rule’.
- Likewise the press are exceedingly pro-Rome. Journalists seem to have a miraculously short, and very selective, memory when it comes to her behaviour. Her true history is frequently swept under the carpet.<sup>159</sup>

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how we obtain forgiveness. (The film was pro-Jesuit, and De Niro was playing a Romanist seeking forgiveness through works!) See **Alpha For Students Training Manual, (HTB Publications, 2000)**, p33.

<sup>156</sup> The film *The Cardinal* was a particularly brazen promotion of Rome’s dogmas through mainstream cinema.

<sup>157</sup> When the scale of a Romish wickedness is simply too great for the media to be able to keep quiet about it, the *Catholic* faith of those involved is downplayed. The perpetrators are usually simply called ‘Christians’ and so the Lord and His true Church are brought into disrepute. (See the book *Smokescreens* by Jack Chick for more examples and insights on the media’s relationship to Rome.)

<sup>158</sup> TV programmes biasedly draw attention much more attention to Protestant mistreatment of Catholics than the other way around – and invariably play down the context behind it.

<sup>159</sup> A representative example of media bias towards Babylonianism and against Protestantism, picked completely at random, is the October 2002 issue of the BBC’s *History Magazine*. This publication supposedly seeks to “maintain the high journalistic standards traditionally associated with the BBC” [p5]. Their summer debate was hosted by a Catholic [p6]; an enormous article praises monasticism [pp12-15]; the huge cover article pleads for the preservation of Babylonian shrines and temples and statues of female “divinities” etc in Cambodia which Catholic France tried to restore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century [pp22-26]; another long article whitewashes the true composition, and truly unspeakable acts, of the Catholic Ustashi in WWII, and the behaviour of Pius XII who allowed Hitler to operate unhindered [pp42-45]; and yet another article hides the dreadful truth about Rome’s *Opus Dei* organization [p45]. A book is promoted which teaches that “the ‘Chosen People’ were the *Egyptians*” rather than Israel, and that Moses was *not* a Hebrew [p1]; there is a special offer *organized by the BBC* to visit an exhibition of idolatrous pagan art [p66]; and almost every page

Hor-rendous abuses happening today (e.g. by priests against children) are often hushed up unless they become huge in number.<sup>160</sup> Even *govern-ment* cover-ups of such abuses (as have happened in Ireland) enjoy press acquiescence. Seldom the treatment meted out to Protestants!

Given the heavy slant of the media, the world may have an excuse for being ignorant about Rome. Elders in our churches do not.

**12:9 SEMPER EADEM** Like a chameleon, Rome changes her colour to blend into the surroundings, thereby fooling people into thinking she is something other than she really is.<sup>161</sup> But she remains (self-confessedly) the same creature nonetheless. Rome actually *insists* that she is ‘semper eadem’ – i.e. ‘**always the same**’.

“[W]e must avoid the interesting but relatively fruitless anecdotal approach to the understanding of the Roman Catholic Church. That is, ‘Well, I have this wonderful Catholic neighbour, and the way he talks, you know, I believe he’s really saved. I’m sure the church is really changing.’ Or, ‘You know, in our town there’s a priest who has taken all the statues and images out of his church. And he has started reading the Bible with his youth group.

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conceals Rome’s dark and foundational hand behind the topic in question (e.g. the slavery in the Southern states of the U.S. [pp11,33], Tyndale’s martyrdom [p10], Elizabeth I’s difficulties [pp58,60] and the English Civil War [p60]). The ‘balance’ is provided by a solitary review of a TV show about Luther [p67]. Even here Rome is called “**the church**” and Luther’s work is described as defining “the limits of papal power” rather than rejecting the papacy wholesale. According to this magazine “What history shows us is that believers’ actions are *not* dictated by eternal *faith* or static *scriptures*...” [p8]. But what the BBC *History Magazine* shows us is that media actions today are dictated by Rome.

<sup>160</sup> Jeremy Paxman is a famously hard-hitting UK television journalist, yet a 2003 *Newsnight* interview he did with Cormack Murphy O’Connor regarding priestly abuse of children was a laughably gentle and fawning piece of work.

<sup>161</sup> Although not said in the context of *Rome*, Nicky hits the nail on the head when he says “There’s the chrysalis and the **chameleon** [*Christian*]. It’s much easier to mingle with the crowd, to be like everybody else ... A chameleon is a long-tailed **lizard** ... [*which*] changes colour according to the background they’re on” [Talk 15]. Unfortunately, this term could almost be applied to Alpha too since Nicky has made the course “fit in” with Rome at the expense of the plain truth. Despite appearances, these chapters are not exhaustive regarding all of Alpha’s Rome-supporting statements.

There's a real turn to the Bible in the Catholic Church today' ... Any living thing is constantly in **movement**, but this doesn't mean ... that it is automatically becoming something **different...**<sup>162</sup>

“Rome does **not** change her **dogmas** [*for the better*]. She alters her style certainly but **not her substance**. Her face changes; she is very different in different countries. In England she adopts a high moral tone, represented in the Media as being firmer than that of any other ‘part of the Church’ ... In countries where Roman Catholicism’s grip is surer, standards do not rise so high. In Uganda, Haiti and the Philippines ... Roman Catholicism is **fully integrated into local paganism** and the Gospel **totally** obscured within it. In the Philippines, missionaries regularly have a glimpse of the other face of Catholicism which is not to be seen in England”.<sup>163</sup>

Rome herself admits she hasn't changed and *won't* change. We are *not* called to try to change her – it is many centuries too late for that, and anyway she was destined to be this way.<sup>164</sup> We are not even to work with her. The reason Ezekiel did not know of the abominations taking place amongst the so-called believers in his day was that he rightly avoided mixing with apostates. We are to expose Rome's filthiness just as the original Protestants did,<sup>165</sup> and we are to try to rescue any to whom the Lord leads us who are still tangled therein:

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<sup>162</sup> William Standridge, *op. cit.*, p7.

<sup>163</sup> Michael de Semlyen, *Ecumenism: Where is it Leading Us? Unity, Peace and Rome*, pp16-17.

<sup>164</sup> Some folks imagine that Romanists like the late Basilea Schlink (who made statements which appeared to indicate she was a genuine follower of Christ trying to help Rome to change direction from within) prove that Rome produces some real believers and is not beyond hope. They are being fooled. Schlink, and her organization (the 'Evangelical Sisters of Mary'), have been shown – by two ex-members – to be a deliberate deception for this very purpose [Marianne Jansson & Riitta Lemmetyinen, *Wenn Mauern Fallen...*, (Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung, 1997).]

<sup>165</sup> It is so vital to learn from history, else we consign the church to making the same mistakes over and over. Because the spirit world exists, history does indeed repeat itself. We can learn much from past errors made by believers – not least from the accounts in Scripture. It is therefore sad to see Nicky quoting D.H. Lawrence writing “‘If only we could have two lives. The first in which to make one's mistakes ... and the second in which to profit by them’” [*Questions Of Life*, p219]. On the same page, Nicky unfortunately recommends each believer to “**Break with the past**” rather than to “**Learn** from [or renounce] **our** past”.

“Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own **ungodly lusts** ... But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your **most holy faith**, praying in the Holy Ghost, ... of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, **pulling them out of the fire**; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:17-23). See also Ezek. 3:17-19; Ezek. 33:2-5; and Jam. 5:19-20.

We must *not* compromise the “most holy” faith.<sup>166</sup> We are to have the mind of Christ and are to be joined together *only* with those of the same mind: “Watch ye, **stand fast in the faith**, [ac]quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13); “[W]e have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16); “...be perfectly joined together **in the same mind** and in the **same judgment**” (1 Cor. 1:10b). See also Jude 1:3!

Over the centuries the Roman Catholic Church has proved that she is *not* of the same mind as the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles. She *cannot* repent, she *cannot* be saved – and Scripture confirms this:

“We **would** have healed Babylon, but she is **not** healed: **forsake her**, and let us go every one into his own country: **for her judgment reacheth unto Heaven**, and is lifted up even to the **skies**” (Jer. 51:9).

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils ... **Come out of her, My people**,<sup>167</sup> that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto **Heaven**, and God hath remembered her iniquities ... for in one hour **is [her] judgment come** ... by [her] sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth...

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<sup>166</sup> The degree of compromise on Alpha is powerfully illustrated by the following. The “senior priest” (HTB’s words) of the Catholic parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Texas, USA, said these words about why he chose Alpha: “I believe the church exists to evangelise. We realized we needed something that was ... **respectful and maintaining** of the rich tradition that we have of **saints and candles and the Eucharist and confession and sacramental life** ... Now [having started using Alpha] people are just getting lost in **adoration** and weeping **at mass**” [Alpha News, Jul - Oct 2003, p24].

<sup>167</sup> By contrast, Nicky asserts that “God calls us into things, **not out of things**” [Talk 7].

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath **judged the great whore**, which did **corrupt** the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of **His servants at her hand**. And again they said, Alleluia. And **her smoke rose up for ever and ever**. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great” (Rev. 18:1-19:5).

**12:10 CONCLUSION** We have had to say some extremely tough things in this Part. We encourage every reader to follow up on this material. We earnestly desire that readers be as informed as possible about this crucial matter and that they check what we say before rejecting (or indeed accepting) it.

Let us finish by completing the above quotation from Revelation 19, for it gives us a beautiful glimpse of the *true* Bride and her reward for her purity:

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife **hath made herself ready**. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in **fine linen, clean and white**: for the fine linen is the **righteousness** of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, **Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb** ... These are the true sayings of God” (Rev. 19:6-9, KJV).

## RECOMMENDED READING

### Roman Catholicism

#### Teachings/Doctrines

**Rick Jones, Understanding Roman Catholicism: 37 Roman Catholic Doctrines Explained, (Chick Publications, P.O. Box 662, Chino, California, 91710, USA, 1995)**

*A very clear, straightforward analysis of the doctrines taught in the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church – and how they compare to the Holy Bible.*

**William Webster, Saving Faith: How does Rome Define it? (Christian Resources Inc., 1995)**

*“The author, a former Roman Catholic, documents the official Roman Catholic teaching of saving faith from the authoritative source of the R.C. Magisterium. In a time of great confusion as to what Roman Catholicism officially teaches, this book helps to clarify the issues.”*

**Herbert Carson, The Faith of the Vatican, (Evangelical Press, 1996)**

*“Examines afresh the official teaching of the R.C. Church, as set out in some of its most recent publications, to see if there is any shift in its fundamental position.”*

#### Political Activities

**Albert Close, Jesuit Plots from Elizabethan to Modern Times, (Protestant Truth Society)**

*We can confirm that “In this remarkable volume the author has packed its pages full of information which ought to be in the hands of all Englishmen.”*

**Edmond Paris, The Secret History of the Jesuits, (Chick Publications, 1975)**

*A remarkable, eye-opening exposé of the true nature and devilish methods of Rome’s spies and storm-troopers.*

**Avro Manhattan, The Vatican’s Holocaust, (Ozark Books, 1986)**

*Exposes the true spirit behind Rome as manifested by the Catholic Ustashi during WWII. Please be warned that the activities of Romanists described in this book are distressing in the extreme.*

#### Rome and Europe

**Adrian Hilton, The Principality and Power of Europe: Britain and the Emerging Holy European Empire, (Dorchester House Publications, 1997)**

*Amongst many very important facets of the European Union, the author looks at “the role of the Vatican and the political nature of the papacy and the potential consequences for evangelical Christians of a [Roman Inspired] European parliamentary directive on cults and sects”. An essential and timely book.*

## **Rome and Babylon**

**Christopher Wordsworth, Is The Papacy Predicted by St. Paul: An Inquiry, (The Harrison Trust, P.O. Box 47, Ramsgate, Kent, CT11 9XB, 1985)**

*A small but incredibly important booklet explaining the papacy from a spiritual, biblical perspective. An absolute ‘must read’.*

**Bob Mitchell, Rome Babylon the Great and Europe, (Published by the author, P.O. Box 5, St. Leonards on Sea, East Sussex, TN37 6WH, UK, 2003)**

*A wonderful book. The author gives a succinct history of the Roman Church from the visions of Nebuchadnezzar right through to her part in the coming New World Order. Extremely easy to read.*

**I.A. Sadler, Mystery, Babylon the Great, (Published by the author, 6 Aston Close, Pangbourne, Reading, RG8 7LG, England)**

*A very clear and valuable explanation of Rome’s roots. Gives the essence of much of Hislop in a very attractive style. Goes on to reveal the true extent of her involvement in preparing the way – spiritually and politically – for the Antichrist.*

**Dave Hunt, A Woman Rides the Beast: The Roman Catholic Church and the Last Days, (Harvest House Publishers, 1994)**

*“The author sifts through Biblical truth and global events to present a well-defined portrait of the woman and her powerful place in the Antichrist’s future empire. Eight remarkable clues in Revelation 17 and 18 prove the woman’s identity beyond any reasonable doubt.”*

## **The Ecumenical Movement**

**J.R. Broome, Reformation and Counter-Reformation: 1588 – 1688 – 1988, (Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 1988)**

*This book “outlines the events surrounding the Armada and ‘The Glorious Revolution’, giving excerpts from the principle documents and discusses the work and reports of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglican Roman Catholic International Commissions.”*

**Bill Randles, Breaking Down the Barriers, (St Matthew Publishing, 1996)**

*The transcript of a talk, given at a Conference in the UK, showing the dangers of ecumenical activities between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches.*

**Michael de Semlyen, All Roads Lead to Rome?: The Ecumenical Movement, (Dorchester House Publications, 1993)**

*“This book seeks to explain some of the background to the current push for unity between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches, and urges the reader to contend for the faith and hold fast to a true Biblical and Christ-centred gospel of salvation by faith alone.”*

## **Church History and the Reformation**

**John Foxe, Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.**

*“In his honest and compassionate accounts of man’s search for spiritual truth, and the persecution and death that accompanied that search, John Foxe etched a detailed picture of the English Reformation that would have otherwise remained unknown.” This book is essential reading, if disturbing in places.*

**S.M. Houghton, Sketches from Church History, (The Banner Of Truth Trust, 1980)**

*Few Christians “know the spiritual history which lies behind the present day.” The author seeks to show how “church history ought to provide a standard of comparison, raise our vision of God, and what faithfulness to Christ truly means.”*

**J.C. Ryle, Five English Reformers, (The Banner Of Truth Trust, 1994)**

*“Why were such men burned at the stake? This book analyses the reasons for their martyrdom and the salient characteristics of their Christian lives. Readers will rise from the company of their life-stories praying for a similar faith in Christ’s power.”*

## **Bible Versions**

**David Otis Fuller, Which Bible? (Institute For Textual Studies, 1990)**

*The false church has, not surprisingly, given mankind a false version of the Greek New Testament. Unfortunately, most modern versions are based on it. This book comprises a set of superb articles on the intriguing and vital subject of Bible versions.*

**Chick Salliby, If the Foundations be Destroyed, (Word and Prayer Ministries, P.O. Box 361, Fiskdale, MA 01518-0361, USA, 1994)**

*“Most Christians are entirely unaware that the deity of Jesus, His attributes, character, redemptive work, teachings etc. have been seriously damaged in many modern translations of the Scriptures.” This book will rightly shock participants into learning more of the Bible Version question, focusing, as it does, on the version recommended by Alpha and the treatment it metes out to the Lord Jesus.*



## **Helpful Websites**

For a multiplicity of extremely important articles on all aspects of Roman Catholicism, The Protestant Reformation and the current Ecumenical Movement.

### **Bible Believers Resource Page**

[//www.biblebelievers.net/Romanism/kjroman.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.net/Romanism/kjroman.htm)

[//www.biblebelievers.net/History/kjchristr.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.net/History/kjchristr.htm)

### **Reformation Online**

[//www.Reformation.org/index.html#The%20Wonders](http://www.Reformation.org/index.html#The%20Wonders)

### **Let Us Reason**

[//www.letusreason.org/Rcdir.htm](http://www.letusreason.org/Rcdir.htm)

### **The Berean Beacon**

[//www.bereanbeacon.org/berean.html](http://www.bereanbeacon.org/berean.html)

### **Inside the Catholic Catechism**

[//www.deceptioninthechurch.com/cat-ndx.html](http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/cat-ndx.html)

Additionally, further information on the Protestant Reformation, as well as news / prayer letters and regular updates on Roman Catholicism and Ecumenism can be obtained from the following organizations:

### **Intercessors For Britain**

14 Orchard Road, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside, L46 8TS, UK.

### **Spirit of '88**

P.O. Box 67, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 5SJ, UK.

[//www.spiritof88.co.uk](http://www.spiritof88.co.uk)

### **The Protestant Alliance**

77 Amphil Road, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1BD, UK.

### **The Protestant Truth Society**

184 Fleet Street, London, EC4A 2HJ, UK.

# PART THREE

## THE BEST TESTIMONIES

### CHAPTER 13

## A GOSPEL SUMMARY

**13:1 INTRODUCTION** In both preceding Parts we discussed *false* gospels, so let us now come to the true. HTB's chief, Sandy Millar, understandably calls Alpha just an "**introduction**" to the Christian faith.<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless Course leaders seek to preach the gospel sufficiently (i.e. clearly and fully enough) for participants to come to salvation, and several of the sessions end with a prayer of commitment.

Hopefully, every one of us in the Kingdom of God wants desperately to see people saved. We especially rejoice when we have the chance to be personally involved in bringing someone to Christ. After all, "he that winneth souls is **wise**" (Proverbs 11:30), and "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that **turn many to righteousness** as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

If we are going to encourage Alpha participants to make a saving commitment to the Lord (and very many people *are* making commitments

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<sup>168</sup> *Church Times*, Letter to the Editor, 15:Jan:1999.

during the Course) then we must be certain they know what that means. It is obviously crucial to ensure that they have been taught enough to understand what they are doing. If they have not grasped what conversion involves, how can we (or they) be sure what it is they have actually undergone? Fortunately, publications like *Alpha News* collect and report many of the best Alpha testimonies – thus we can find out, first hand, what Course participants understand and experience.

In this Part we will take a look at a cross-section of these important testimonies and see what we can learn from them.

**13:2 A GOSPEL SUMMARY** Perhaps we should commence with a brief reminder of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as stated in Scripture so that we begin with a reliable picture of what conversion is about. (No matter how well a disciple of the Lord knows it, they never mind reading the “good news” again!) A sensible starting point, after confirming that the Bible is the truth, would probably be to identify the nature and character of God. He is Almighty; He is sovereign over the Universe, and He never changes. He is the Creator of all things and the Judge of the whole world. He is unique, and said: “I am God, and there is **none** like Me” (Isaiah 46:9).

Through His creation we can tell a lot about God’s character. For example, we can glimpse His wisdom from its complexity and variety, His power from its scale, and His glorious majesty from its awesome splendour. “Great is our Lord, and of **great** power: His understanding is **infinite**” (Psalm 147:5). A person can also discern that they are separated from God in that He is not personally known to them. Yet from the beauty of creation they could then surmise that the God who fashioned it must be a beneficent God and will therefore have made a way for mankind to reach Him.

So, God is separate from His Creation. The word ‘holy’ primarily means ‘separate’ and, looking through the scriptures, it indeed becomes clear that God’s ‘overriding’ character attribute is *holiness*. (Remarkably, God’s holiness is emphasized in Scripture far more often than His love.) God is *totally* righteous and pure and He never looks upon *any* sin approvingly (see Habbakuk 1:13).

God is deserving of worship and He created the heavens (and its angels) as well as the world (and its people) to worship Him. For worship to be meaningful it has to be offered freely, so the angels and mankind were given the capacity to choose; to decide whether to love their Creator or to reject Him, to offend Him, and thus become separated from Him. He cre-

ated a particularly powerful, beautiful and clever angel to be His chief worshipper (Ezekiel 28:13-17). This angel became proud of his position and sought to be worshipped himself. Pride is a transgression, or 'sin', and is deeply offensive to God. (After all, we have nothing that we weren't given by Him, so what do we have to be proud of?) This rebellious angel – now known as “Satan”, meaning “adversary” – and the ones that chose to follow him, were expelled from their place in Heaven. A place of everlasting punishment (a lake of fire) has been prepared for them and on the Judgment Day they will ultimately be consigned to that place (Hell).

Satan and the other fallen angels (also called “devils” or “demons”) now operate on the Earth. Satan seeks to usurp God's place and lead men to worship him. He endeavours to break God's Word and to deceive or destroy those who worship God.

Adam and his wife Eve were the first people God put on the Earth. Through his great subtlety, Satan was able to deceive them and Adam sinned as a result. As we have seen, God is *absolutely* holy and this sin meant that Adam and his wife deserved to be cut off from God forever. Not only that, but such is the utter purity and holiness of God that, because Adam's 'seed' within him was tainted, all Adam's subsequent generations deserve the same fate regardless of how good their lives have been (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

In other words: as a result of his sin, Adam died in a spiritual sense... including his seed in him (hence all future offspring – i.e. us – died too). Besides, *all* of us have sinned in some way, rejecting our Maker, so we *all* deserve to go to Hell and we can do nothing to *earn* a place in Heaven. Without God providing a way, we are without hope and are destined to eternal damnation in that place prepared for Satan (Matthew 25:41,46; Mark 9:43-48).

Mercifully, God *has* made a way and He made promises about this throughout history, as recorded in His written revelation of Himself to man, the Bible. (Until He provided this Way, He ordained the sacrifice of spotless animals to illustrate what He was going to do later in history.) But the price required was the death (with shedding of the blood) of a perfect man.

If someone could be found who was without *any* sin and was prepared to pay the price (i.e. die bloodily) for *our* sins then we could be saved by completely turning away (or “repenting”) from our sinful nature and evil ways and spiritually ‘clinging’ to this person. But such a man would have to be ‘begotten’ (born) of God, rather than of man, in order to

avoid being stained by Adam's 'original sin'. He would also have to live a sinless life and then sacrifice it for us.

God has a Son. This Son is the *only* begotten Son of God and, as part of the Godhead, is therefore Himself God (see Hebrews 1:8; Titus 2:13; Isaiah 40:3 c.f. Matthew 3:1-3 etc). He is eternal and glorious like His Father. Yet He was prepared to lay aside His fearsome majesty and come to Earth as a man in order to pay the price for us. Jesus Christ of Nazareth was that man.

As a man, he was born in Israel over 2000 years ago and fulfilled each one of the hundreds of prophecies made in Scripture about His first coming. He mainly spent His years of ministry teaching people who already believed in His Father the truth about the Godhead and the Kingdom that His Father had promised to His Son and to all those who were truly committed to Him. (Religious authorities at that time had taught many falsehoods about God, perverting the people's view of Him. This had ruined their understanding of the gospel. Jesus Christ needed to expose these false teachings and replace them with the truth.)

Jesus also healed many people, delivered many demoniacs, and performed other great miracles. He never sinned, yet, aged just 33, He allowed the same people who had taught falsely about His Father to arrest Him and put Him through an illegal trial. Soldiers of the occupying Roman army then flogged Him (which will have destroyed most of His back). They punched Him, ripped His beard out, spat on Him, and mocked Him. (It is sobering to remember that this is *God* we are talking about. He was capable of stopping this wickedness at any moment but He was totally obedient to His Father's will.)

The Lord Jesus Christ was rejected by mankind as a whole. And with blood already flowing from much of His body, and with His face terribly disfigured, men stripped Him naked, nailed Him to pieces of wood and (while continuing to rail and mock) crucified Him. It was on the cross that He prayed for His Father to forgive those people who had caused His crucifixion – which is all of us. After several hours hanging there being scorned, and after the sun was darkened for a long time, He gave up His life so that even those who had rejected Him could be saved if they "repented" (i.e. turned completely away from their past nature) and were (spiritually) washed in His blood. That is AMAZING grace!

At the moment of His death, several extraordinary things happened to attest to Jesus being the Son of God. And because He was without sin, He

could not suffer the curse of death that was on Adam. Instead, after three days and nights in the grave, He was resurrected by the Spirit of God and ascended into Heaven.

By confessing our sins and our fallen nature to God, by hating these things and repenting of them, and by submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we can (by God's grace) be washed in His blood and be "hidden" in Him. At this moment of starting a new life by accepting Jesus Christ as the new centre and purpose of our life, He "abides in us" by His Spirit.

*(As soon as someone repents and is saved, their spirit is reborn – they become 'born again' – because they are reconciled to God. The Spirit of God instantly indwells one's spirit, enabling us to understand His Word, obey His commands, and become ever more Christ-like. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not to be confused with the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit which, while important for the building up of the Church, are distinct from salvation itself.)*

God is coming to judge the world, with unimaginable ferocity, for its rebellious and evil ways (Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 63:3-6). But those who are faithful to Christ when God's wrath is poured out will be safe because they are hidden in Him (like being concealed in a cave or in the cleft of a huge rock). To have faith in (or to "believe on") the Lord Jesus Christ means to trust in His Deity, rely on His atoning work and cling to His commands. Thus we are saved by His grace (i.e. His completely unmerited mercy) through faith.

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That, then, is a very quick synopsis of the highlights of the gospel, all of which should be confirmed by thorough study of the scriptures.

If the Spirit of God is present to witness to the truth of such a message in a meeting, then one would expect to see real emotion expressed as we are told about it:

- We would probably experience wonder and humility as God's omnipotence and magnificence is revealed to us,
- Also, horror and great fear as the Spirit made us aware of our abhorrent and hopeless state before a totally upright and Holy God,

- We would surely feel deep sorrow and shame as we realized, and were convicted of, our many sins,
- And (if we sincerely repented) we might well sense great cleanliness and a discernible release from the burden of sin and of our slavery to the sinful nature with which we were born,
- We could reasonably expect to feel serious joy that God had “provided a (spotless) lamb” to die in our place and that, through His blood, our sins had been paid for and forgiven,
- We would probably also know a beautiful “first love” towards our wonderful Saviour as we were “born again” into His Kingdom. (See Luke 7:44-46 for an example of such love.)
- We would remember that day and be a rather changed person after it!

In the next chapter we will take a look at some firsthand Alpha testimonies to see how effectively the Course is currently getting the message across, and in what ways (if necessary) participants may be helped to experience deeper conversions. How, for example, do they compare to testimonies from elsewhere – testimonies such as the following:

“I’m here ... tonight, just simply, not to speak about myself, but to tell you about our great Saviour ... I’d like to tell you a little about how I was saved ... I knew down in my heart there was a God, and there was a hell... [W]hat must it be to awake and in the split moment ... realize you’re in hell?! What must it be [*for a man*] to learn ... that the mercy of God would never come his way again ... lost for all eternity...

“One night I went to a [*non-Alpha*] meeting and the man preached on ... ‘His visage was more marred than any man’s’ and I began to listen ... I knew the sins that I had done, that helped nail my Saviour there ... I realized ... what I’d become – a horrible man ... My heart was broken ... I started to realize that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God ... I started to realize that Christ died for the ungodly ... I repented and I cried and I said ‘Oh God can you please forgive me? ... please ... save me’ ... It was the first time in my life I felt clean ... I have a Saviour who is alive for evermore ... Jesus died for me ... [I]t’s great to feel free and clean. If I die tonight ... I’ll go to be with the Lord.”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *The Testimony of David Boyd*, given at Cambridge Avenue in Ballymena, Northern Ireland. Tape kindly supplied by Michael Penfold, Penfold Book and Bible House.

## CHAPTER 14

# THE EXPERIENCE OF ALPHA

**14:1 GENTLE AND ENJOYABLE** As past attendees will know, Alpha evenings are extremely congenial. Here is part of an advert for the Course:

“Alpha is a gentle and **enjoyable** experience and whatever you are searching for, this would be a good place to start”.<sup>170</sup>

The following quotes attest to the special atmosphere on the Course and to the genuine emotional impact it can have:

“The whole thing was just **so** easy going, **so** much fun ... It was genuine **fun**”.<sup>171</sup>

“I really didn’t know what to expect, but found myself eating supper and talking with a group of strangers and being totally absorbed. It was warm and friendly and I walked out that even-

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<sup>170</sup> *The Good News*, Advertisement on file comprising an insert for the *Aberdeen Evening Express*, Summer 1998, p5.

<sup>171</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar - Jul [sic] 2000, p11.



ing smiling; in fact, the next day I found myself walking down the street smiling”.<sup>172</sup>

“I went along to Alpha and I was so shocked. I thought Christians were really sad, boring people but I couldn’t believe it – everyone was so happy. They all welcomed *me* and they were really nice to *me*. They wanted to talk to *me*, they were interested in *me*, they wanted to know about *my* life and what *I’d* done – that’s what really struck me”.<sup>173</sup>

The experience of just *attending* an Alpha Course can be a very therapeutic one. Indeed, it received a particularly favourable report in this regard from the *Daily Express* newspaper:

“It was a bit like a free weekly **therapy session** with a **huge** extra helping of Tender Loving Care ... I was **always** greeted with **immense** friendliness and sympathy”.<sup>174</sup>

**14:2 THE CONTENT** For many participants, this “gentle and enjoyable”, “warm and friendly” experience is very restorative and beneficial. But that alone obviously won’t help them much if they are still not actually saved, so let’s take a look at some of the published testimonies to make sure that everything lines up with the gospel summarized earlier.

“[S]omebody said to me, ‘Do you know how to get Jesus into your life?’ I said, ‘No, haven’t a clue, mate’ ... [*then*] somebody said to me, ‘Would you like to ask Jesus into your life?’ I thought, ‘Well, I can’t see any harm in it. The worst thing that can happen is nothing.’ ‘What do you have to do?’ Three of the group came around me and [*one of them*] said, ‘We’ll do it with you – say this prayer with us.’ Once I’d done the prayer, he said to me, ‘How do you feel?’ I said, ‘How should I feel?’ [*He*] said, ‘Well, it’s great, do you want to ring [*your wife*] and tell her?’ I thought, ‘What do I want to do that for?’ All the group were really excited and I was looking at them, thinking they were all nutters...” [*Alpha News*]<sup>175</sup>.

Could this testimony have been published by mistake? It is evident that this man had not had things presented to him clearly enough. He even

<sup>172</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul – Oct 1998, p14.

<sup>173</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar – Jun 1998, pp12-13, emphases in original.

<sup>174</sup> Report by Julia Llewellyn-Smith, *Daily Express*, 16:Nov:1998, quoted in *UK Focus*, Dec 1998, pp4-5, and in *Alpha News*, Mar – Jun 1999, pp10-11.

<sup>175</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1997 – Feb 1998, pp12-13.

told the others that he “hadn’t a **clue**” how to get Jesus into his life. And, as we saw in the previous chapter, there is much more to being saved than simply “doing a prayer” just because you “can’t see any harm in it”. So, are there other ‘exemplary’ published testimonies that are worryingly weak?

“My faith has been a journey. There have been no dramatic experiences of the Spirit, no dramatic conversion. Instead there has been a journey on which I have fallen in love with the whole thing stage by stage” [*Alpha News*<sup>176</sup>].

This is obviously better – yet it still does not mention any conviction of, or repentance from, sin. Nor is there any mention of such fundamental things as God’s holiness or His forgiveness. Although the realization of the full truth may take some time to sink in, the actual experience of being born again should surely be relatively notable when one considers the implications?

There must also be a modicum of concern over the identity of the “thing” that this person has “fallen in love with”. Is it Christ Himself or is it the *idea* of Christ? If Christ, then why not say so? And if it is merely the idea of Christ, then can that idea be accurate if this testimony is the result? We are certainly not saying that this person has not been saved; we are simply encouraging people to look more carefully at testimonies in case of possible problems.

Of course, quite a few Alpha participants *are* enjoying ‘dramatic spiritual experiences’. (We come from a Pentecostal background and we will report on these Alpha experiences in Part Five of this book.<sup>177</sup>) Note, however, that many participants describe such events as *preceding*, rather than following, acceptance of the gospel. Plainly, having a spiritual experience is not a guarantee that a person has been saved; unbelievers can be seriously spiritually touched, as the following Alpha testimonies show:

“On the Holy Spirit weekend, I had an **amazingly powerful encounter** with the Spirit, but being a bit of a sceptic, I went away **without** giving my life to Jesus...” [*Alpha News*<sup>178</sup>].

“[O]n the weekend away ... Nicky asked for the Spirit to come ... I felt this **enormous** warmth come through my back. It was **so**

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<sup>176</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 1998, p7.

<sup>177</sup> Part 5 appears in the sister ‘CHURCH’ volume of the *Unofficial Guide*. See the end of Part 3 for details.

<sup>178</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar - Jun 1998, p4.

warm it was almost **uncomfortable** ... I finished the rest of the course, by **which** time I ... **wanted** God to come into my life ... I **wanted** to take that leap of faith, but was **still being held back** by ... [my] scepticism and cynicism”.<sup>179</sup>

“The Holy Spirit was invited to come and I felt a **really intense** glowing sensation ... [*This preceded any reference to the man reaching:*] the point of repentance ... [*when*] I could fully become a Christian and accept the gospel”.<sup>180</sup>

We will see other examples later, but even one of Alpha’s highest profile advocates admits that many people are experiencing these manifestations *before* they make a saving commitment to God.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, participants are frequently so certain that they were not saved before the ‘weekend away’ experience that they assume the experience *was* their salvation. These mani-festations actually often happen when participants merely request proof that the spirit realm exists:

“It was quite fun ... but I still needed some **physical** evidence of the **existence** of God...” [*Alpha News*<sup>182</sup>].

“I just needed ... confirmation – something I could **feel** in the **physical sense**...” [*Alpha News*<sup>183</sup>].

This need for proof that God exists is obviously some way from actual repentance and salvation. But back to more of the publicized *conversion* testimonies:

“We went along to the first evening – the videos were very good. My job involves presentation techniques and the ideas were put over really well – we made a commitment at the end of the course ... I’m able to see things with a different perspective. My life was very hectic and I’m much calmer now” [*Alpha News*<sup>184</sup>].

This testimony obviously has some positive signs, although the person involved describes the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as “ideas”, and his praise is strangely for the *presenters* of the message rather than for the

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<sup>179</sup> **Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *The God Who Changes Lives, Vol.2, (HTB Publications, 1998)*, pp183-4.** This is a book containing official HTB conversion testimonies.

<sup>180</sup> **Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *The God Who Changes Lives, Vol 1, (HTB Publications,1995)*, p80,** quoted in Chris Hand, *Falling Short?* (Day One Publications, 1998), p88.

<sup>181</sup> Ruth Gledhill, The Magnet of Alpha, *The Tablet*, June 1998.

<sup>182</sup> *Alpha News*, Jun – Oct 1997, p9.

<sup>183</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1997 – Feb 1998, pp6-7.

<sup>184</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1997 – Feb 1998, p5.

Subject of it – i.e. Christ Jesus. While we can definitely see an interest in God here, many people have an interest in God, and even read their Bibles, without truly yielding their lives to Him...

This person's new-found calmness is certainly good to hear but did it *necessarily* result from conversion or could it not have come instead from the "immensely sympathetic" and mentally restorative nature of the Course itself? The effects described in some Alpha testimonies certainly have a spiritual – rather than psychological – cause, but we must be careful before ascribing them *all* thus. New life in Christ gives us much more than just calmness, and, since there is no mention here of Christ or His cross or His shed blood or anything else about the very Person who makes conversion possible, it must be said that the above cannot be regarded as a clear conversion testimony by itself. Unlike the following:

"I ended up ... [*reading*] the Gospel of Matthew, and when I reached the part where Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, crying out to the Father (Matthew 26:36-45) I stopped ... I kept reading it ... [I]t all began to unfold ... I know WHY Jesus is in agony of his soul in the garden. 'It's because he's about to go to the cross! And the reason he is going there is ... for me?! He's doing this for me!?' ... The tears pouring out of my eyes onto the pages ... in no way blur the view of Him ... who gave Himself to the cross for the likes of me ... Me of all people...

"I was trembling in fear ... 'Oh my Lord and my God!' ... It was time I faced the Truth. That's when the Light of God finally broke through, and ... I realized that [*I was*] ... rotten-to-the-core ... I fell on my knees and begged for mercy" [Biff Clement<sup>185</sup>].

The sadness with this testimony is that it was not the result of an Alpha Course. Biff goes on to speak of the first love that "burst forth" for Christ and how he realized that the Lord was worth "far more" to him "than anything this world has to offer" and was "all that mattered". He also describes the death of the "old man" (ironically combined with the sudden removal of his own fear of dying) and the passion for Christ that the "new man" had. He knew what had changed. It is intriguing to contrast this with certain published *Alpha* testimonies:

"Since I said the prayer of commitment **something** has changed. I don't know **what**, but **something** has changed"<sup>186</sup>.

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<sup>185</sup> Biff Clement, *Upon This Rock!*, April Newsletter 1999. Capitalized emphasis in original.

<sup>186</sup> TV Interview of an Alpha participant for *Newsroom South East*, UK, 9:Apr:1998.

If this person has been taught the gospel, then should they not have *some* idea how they have changed? If they have truly been born again then they have become a child of God, cleansed from their sins and freed from slavery to Satan...<sup>187</sup>

On the other hand, if the experience of *attending* an Alpha Course has been a significant moment in their life (just like any therapy session might be) then could that itself not have caused a change in their outlook and life without them actually being saved? The sincere friendliness, warmth and interest shown towards Alpha participants must itself bring a lot of contentment and psychological comfort. Course leaders need to be discerning about this and to investigate carefully what folks have really gone through.

**14:3 DEAD OR ALIVE** Consider this next quote.

“I can’t pinpoint a moment during Alpha when I became a Christian, ... It happened over a period of about 3 weeks. The void became filled and I had a **sense** of contentment and fulfilment that increased as I then went to church and learnt more”  
[*Alpha News*<sup>188</sup>].

The Spirit of Christ certainly gives us a “contentment and fulfilment”, but other things can give a “sense” of this too. Did the above person truly recognize their hopeless condition and cry out to Almighty God in fear and repentance? If so, would they not have had more to say than “the void became filled”? Again, people who have attended group therapy sessions report the same feelings as this person... that is why they are so popular. *True* repentance should result in a witness from the Holy Spirit that the person was now washed clean and saved, but that is not said in this testimony.

Again, there is no mention here of *any* recognition of the person’s depraved state prior to becoming a Christian, nor of Jesus Christ or of Calvary or of their repentance from their past life – even as a result of them subsequently attending a church and “learning more”.

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<sup>187</sup> Given Satan’s rather significant role in the fall of man, and his efforts ever since to destroy both believers and unbelievers, it might have been helpful (and fairer on his audience) if Nicky had chosen to discuss him well before Talk 11. If participants understood Satan’s true fate – and knew that they will share it if they don’t repent properly and beg God’s forgiveness – their conversions might well be deeper.

<sup>188</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1998 – Feb 1999, p5.

*(Incidentally, we were shocked when a colleague reported meeting believers who had been attending HTB regularly for two full years and who still could not describe how to be saved. Hopefully this is not generally the case, but, as 2 Tim. 3:7 tells us, it is perfectly possible to be “ever **learning**, and never able to come to the **knowledge** of the Truth”. Alpha is predicated on the principle that host churches will follow up the Course with solid teaching. Surely Alpha’s own home church is measuring up to this?)*

“The effect of coming to Christ was **gradual**, but with every week I wanted to learn more about Him. On our Alpha weekend at El Rancho, during the lesson entitled *How Can I be Filled With The Holy Spirit?* I felt that God loves me and from now on would be an integral part of my life”.<sup>189</sup>

It is a great relief to see Christ mentioned. A surprisingly small percentage of published testimonies do so. However, there is still cause for concern in the above. To begin with, if we are doing the job of teaching the gospel rightly and with God’s anointing, then the effect of “coming to Christ” should be fairly obvious, if not absolutely momentous.<sup>190</sup> Here again we find no mention of sin, or of Christ’s sacrifice for us – just two of the hallmarks of a biblical conversion.

Wanting to learn more about Christ Jesus is naturally a good sign, but many folks followed Him during His ministry wanting to know more of Him; that does not mean they were saved – indeed many ultimately rejected Him when His message became too unpalatable (Luke 4:22-29; John 6:66). Was the above person being presented with the unvarnished truth about Christ, or maybe a less offensive version of the gospel which was attractive but never actually brought them to their knees and into the Kingdom? Again, many people in other faiths feel that God loves them and is an

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<sup>189</sup> *UK Focus*, Jan 1999, p6.

<sup>190</sup> Nicky says, regarding people being saved, “How that happens will vary” [Talk 4], but there is only *one* way to be saved – you must sincerely repent of your past life and give it over to Christ in faith. Nicky also says, using the analogy of a train journey across a border, “some people will be asleep at that moment [*i.e. unaware of reaching the point of salvation*] and they won’t know when that moment was ... [N]ot everybody in the world knows the date of their birth...” [Talk 4]. Whether or not we remember *years later* the precise date that we came to Christ is one thing, but we all had to submit our whole selves deeply to God and *at the time* it will have been obvious to us if we were truly saved!

integral part of their lives; this is not actually the essence of a definitive conversion testimony.

Let us look again at what conversion is about:

“There can be no true conversion without the conviction of sin. It is one thing that I am a sinner; it is quite another thing to experience the **convicting ministry** of the Holy Spirit in my life. Unless I have a **Spirit-wrought** consciousness of my utterly lost condition, I can never exercise saving faith. It is useless to tell unconvicted sinners to believe on Jesus – that message is only for those who **know** they are **lost**.

“We sugar-coat the Gospel when we de-emphasize man’s fallen condition. With that kind of watered down message, people receive the Word with joy instead of with deep contrition. They do not have deep roots, and though they might endure for a while, they soon give up all profession when persecution or trouble comes (Matthew 13:21). We have forgotten that the message is **repentance** towards God as well as faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”.<sup>191</sup>

**14:4 AFFIRMATION** From the following quote, we can perhaps see that certain parts of the gospel which are required for a sinner to understand the truth about their predicament are not always being adequately enunciated by Alpha as currently run:

“[Alpha] meets people where they are; it **befriends** them. They **feel affirmed** and they enjoy it. Because they enjoy it and are enthused by it, they invite their friends to attend the next course and so it grows”.<sup>192</sup>

It is true that in the scriptures we see the Lord Jesus meeting people where they were. But He did not leave them there. He did not “affirm” the woman at the well in her sinful state (John 4:1-19), or the man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9,14-15), or the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11), or the rich young man (Matt. 19:16-24). The true gospel does *not* “affirm” us; it condemns us for the sinners we are. It is not meant to be an enjoyable parlour game, it is the most extreme and humbling time a person can go through and is meant to break them (Luke 20:18). If they will not soften their heart and cry out to God for forgiveness, then the gospel (rightly

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<sup>191</sup> William McDonald, *The Superficial Conversions Dilemma, Revival*, Sep - Oct 1981.

<sup>192</sup> Catholic Bishop Ambrose Griffiths, quoted in *New Christian Herald*, 4:Oct:1997.

preached) will actually be the stench of death to them (2 Cor. 2:16). Hardly something they will enjoy!

This same problem can be seen in the *Alpha Youth Manual*, where the advice is given to Youth leaders to avoid damaging the participating teenagers' self-esteem:

“Young people need to know that you love and accept them, unconditionally ... Tell them whenever you can how much you appreciate them for who they *are* and not just for what they *do* ... Don't **Ever** ... attack their **self respect** ... Do ... **Affirm** and encourage them whenever you can”.<sup>193</sup>

The Word of God, however, tells us that the unsaved should not fool themselves with “self-respect” because “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately **wicked**: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). If participants feel so respectable, how will they throw themselves at God's mercy?<sup>194</sup>

The only result of affirming the self-respect or self-confidence of the unsaved is that they will fail to realize the utter abhorrence of their sinful state to a Holy God and thus their need to dread His judgment and to repent. Jonathan Edwards – the author of *Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God* – was not worried about damaging the “self-respect” of the hearers of this famous sermon, yet it resulted in the salvation of five *hundred* souls the day he gave it.

Even *believers* are not supposed to indulge in self-respect or self-confidence:

- “Behold, I am **vile**”, “I **abhor** myself” (Job 25:6, 40:4, 42:6). These words were from one of the three most righteous men in the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures (Ezek. 14:20) – a man who was described by God thus: “My servant ... there is **none** like him in the earth, a **perfect** and an **upright** man, one that feareth God, and escheweth [*i.e. shuns*] evil” (Job 1:8)...
- We also read the following from David, regarding whom the Lord said “I have found David ... a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfil

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<sup>193</sup> *Youth Alpha Leader's Manual*, (Nov. 1997), pp5-7. Italicized emphases in original.

<sup>194</sup> Given the centrality of God's mercy to the full gospel, it is to be regretted that, in Edition 2.2 of Alpha, Nicky does not mention God's mercy until Talk 13, i.e. ten full talks after he has completed his main gospel presentation.



all My will” (Acts 13:22): “**What is** man, that Thou art mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:4), and “I am a **worm**” (Psalm 22:6)...

- From the prophet Isaiah, a great man of God, when he saw “the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted” (Isaiah 6:1-3) came the cry: “**Woe** is me ... I am a man of **unclean lips**” (Isaiah 6:5)...
- Furthermore, the apostle Paul, whose life for Christ was a wonderful witness, yet said: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth **no good thing**” (Rom. 7:18; see also Rom. 3:10-18). He also reminded the Corinthians that “we are [*not*] sufficient of ourselves to think **anything as of ourselves**; but our sufficiency is of **God**” (2 Cor. 3:5).

The following quote tells us more about the approach that Alpha takes in communicating the gospel:

“The Rev’d Donald Walker, minister of the rural parish of Banchory, Aberdeenshire, said: ‘Alpha is [*all?*] about listening to people where they are and showing them they are ... **accepted**’”<sup>195</sup>

If Alpha Courses are preaching the gospel adequately enough to bring people to an understanding of salvation and, further, to take them *through* it, then the above statement cannot be true because it is simply not the gospel. Only Jesus Christ is acceptable to God (Gal. 2:20; Matt. 3:17; Php. 3:8-11 etc).<sup>196</sup> Only those who are “abiding in” Christ will therefore be saved on the last day (John 15:1-6). Can it be that some Alpha Courses are softening the gospel to make it acceptable and popular at the price of downplaying the vital truths such that they are being obscured? There would seem to be a possible conflict between what Alpha churches desire to be doing and what they are sometimes actually doing.

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<sup>195</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 1998, p10.

<sup>196</sup> Yet Nicky describes God’s view toward us as “I don’t care **how** you [*do*] ... I think you are **fantastic!** I think you are **wonderful!** ... I **wouldn’t care** if **all** your reports were **bad**” [Talk 4] and, in the same talk, Nicky assures his listeners that “God loves you, he **accepts** you”. Elsewhere Nicky teaches “Paul is saying ... ‘be yourself’. The moment we’ve been accepted by God, we’re free to accept ourselves” [Talk 15], whereas Paul actually instructed disciples to ‘put off the old man’ on a daily basis, and to emulate Christ rather than to ‘be yourself’.

**14:5 PROMOTION COMMOTION** We should stress here that we have not edited out the ‘good stuff’ from any of these conversion testimonies. We are quoting their very core as reported by the Alpha organization – this *is* the ‘good stuff’ as far as it relates to salvation from Hell. So what might the explanation be? Well, some of the published testimonies are no doubt chosen because they can be used to attract unbelievers to future Alpha Courses without frightening them off with talk of wrath, guilt, and our desperate need to give our lives up to the one Person who can save us from hell fire.

It is understandable that HTB makes use of these (more superficial but less threatening) examples to promote the Course. But it is even more important that these incomplete testimonies are the exception rather than the rule. This is especially true in Nicky’s book *Telling Others* which is aimed solely at *believers*, and in the *Alpha News* newspaper which tasks itself with “Keeping **church leaders** informed about the Alpha Course”.<sup>197</sup>

‘Promotional’ testimonies do have one other use. They can be studied and compared with Scripture to help us ensure that future participants are helped to avoid the misunderstandings displayed therein. We provide such a study over the next few pages and we are sure that those readers involved in running Courses will be blessed by it. We start by offering a possible reason why such testimonies occur.

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<sup>197</sup> This is the statement at the top of the front page of each *Alpha News* (e.g. from issues 17-28).

## CHAPTER 15

# CROSS ROADS

**15:1 CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST** As we have noted, the cross is central to salvation. Not only do we need to believe that Christ died on a cross for us, but we also have to put our old, worldly selves on the cross too:

“And they that are Christ’s have **crucified** the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). See also Gal. 6:14.

“**Our** old man is **crucified with Him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth **we** should not serve sin. For **he** that is **dead** is **freed** from sin” (Rom. 6:6-7).

“I am **crucified** with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet **not I**, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20).<sup>198</sup>

Although the following quotation was published a while ago, there are many who believe it is still fully applicable today. (Please note that the quotation is somewhat controversial and requires wisdom and humility on the reader’s part. We firmly believe, however, that the Church can gain

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<sup>198</sup> These scriptures are at odds with Nicky’s statement that we only invite Christ to “be **part** of our lives” [Talk 4].

from it.) A.W. Tozer's no-nonsense article, entitled *The Old Cross and the New*, is definitely worth quoting at length:

**“There has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is *like* the old cross, but different: the likenesses are superficial; the differences, fundamental.**

**“From this new cross has sprung a new philosophy of the Christian life, and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelical technique – a new type of meeting and a new kind of preaching. This new evangelicalism employs the same *language* as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.<sup>199</sup>**

**“The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey ... The *new* cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal and, if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure, only now he takes delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing bawdy songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally if not intellectually.**

**“The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist does not demand abnegation [*i.e. the renunciation and giving up*] of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not contrasts but similarities. He seeks to key into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamouring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the gospel offers, only the religious product is better.**

**“The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, ‘Come and assert**

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<sup>199</sup> The original, and true, meaning of the word “evangelical” is wholehearted belief (just as Christ had) in the Scriptures; i.e. that they are the Word of the living God, that they alone teach all that is necessary for man's salvation from sin and that they alone are the standard by which all Christian behaviour must be measured.

yourself for Christ.’ To the egotist it says, ‘Come and do your boasting in the Lord.’ To the thrill-seeker it says, ‘Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship.’ The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

“The philosophy behind this kind of thing may be sincere, but its sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it ... misses completely the whole meaning of the cross. The old cross is a symbol of *death*. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said good-bye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was not going to have his life *redirected*; he was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.”

Unfortunately there are ‘showcase’ Alpha testimonies that suggest it may sometimes be the “new” cross which is being communicated today:<sup>200</sup>

“I was searching at the time and Alpha was the start of a new beginning for me. It **redirected** my train of thought” [*Alpha News*].<sup>201</sup>

Whereas, the Word of God says: “For **ye** are **dead**, and your life is hid with Christ in God ... [*Christ*] **is** our life” (Col. 3:3-5). As Tozer intimates, we ought to know when we ‘died’. Yet consider the following:

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<sup>200</sup> We do believe, for instance, that Tozer’s words have an application to the following comment from Nicky: “gifts that God gives to His people ... include natural talents which can be trans-formed by the Holy Spirit. The German theologian Jürgen Moltmann wrote this: ‘In principle, every human potentiality and capacity can become charismatic, i.e. a gift of the spirit, through a person’s call, if only they’re used **in Christ**’” [Talk 9]. Nicky has this the wrong way around. In reality, an unbeliever must be prepared to live a totally different life and possibly never again use the talents of which he has been proud. God turns tax-collectors into apostles, and princes into farm-hands. He can give us new talents and He *will* give us a desire in our heart for a complete break. God does not do things man’s way, and frequently does not operate in the way the world expects.

<sup>201</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 1998, p6. Nicky says “Jesus **brings direction** to a lost world” [Talk 1], but in truth Jesus does not show the way; He *is* the Way.

“At the weekend, I said the prayer that Nicky mentions at the back of *Why Jesus?* Where you repent of everything that **has passed** [*no sign of guilt here though*] and ask for forgiveness **etc.** I **guess** that was the **turning** point. **If** there was a moment where I said, ‘Yes, I am now a Christian,’ it was **probably** then”.<sup>202</sup>

As we have seen, truly becoming a believer is more than saying a prayer. And it is, of course, not us but *God* who decides when it is that we have become a Christian. As soon as we are saved He immediately makes this known to us by the cleanness we sense through being washed in the blood of His dear Son. The reference to repentance above seems a little offhand – given what it is supposed to mean.<sup>203</sup> Has this person understood the fundamentals of salvation?

**15:2 THE PRAYER OF COMMITMENT** As many readers will know, the ‘prayer of commitment’ at the back of *Why Jesus?* is the one invariably used on Alpha. It is worthwhile taking a moment to review it, since it is central to Alpha conversions. Are there any modifications that would increase its impact?

The sentence which precedes the prayer in *Why Jesus?* says:

“If you would like to have a **relationship** with God [*but who wouldn’t?*] ... then here is a very simple prayer which you can pray and which **will** be the start of that relationship”.<sup>204</sup>

We believe that herein lies a weakness, for the focus is not on being saved from Hell. The words “saved” or “salvation” are nowhere to be

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<sup>202</sup> *UK Focus*, Nov 1998, p5.

<sup>203</sup> Nicky defines repentance as “turning away from everything that we know is wrong” [Talk 4], but it is more. You might turn away from many things but repentance *unto salvation* requires turning 180 degrees away with sincere renunciation and abhorrence for what you *are* as much as for what you *do*. Nicky shows that he *disagrees* with this when he leads people in a prayer of commitment that starts “I’m sorry for the things **in** my life that have been wrong” [Talk 10] rather than “for my old life and whole nature”.

<sup>204</sup> *Why Jesus?*, p18. Nicky teaches that we can be on friendly terms with God *before* we are saved. His idea that salvation is “a process ... a journey” [Nicky Gumbel, speaking on the final part of the *Alpha: Will it Change Their Lives?* TV show cited earlier] is not scriptural. We are brought to a point of crisis and either throw ourselves at God’s mercy (and are saved at that moment) or we remain at enmity with God.

found. Little wonder that testimonies frequently make *no* reference to *any* of the crucial gospel elements mentioned in the summary we gave in chapter 13. Even *Satan* has a “relationship with God” in some sense, but Nicky reinforces his priority when he says:

“Our iniquities (the things we have done wrong) have caused a barrier so that God **cannot** hear us when we pray ... we are cut off from a **relationship** with God eternally. These are the results of all the things we do wrong. That is **all** the bad news”.<sup>205</sup>

Describing our iniquities as “the things we do wrong” seems remarkably mild and suggests that these ‘things’ are *mistakes* rather than the deliberate product of our dark hearts.<sup>206</sup> God sees our iniquities rather differently. The Bible says we are *all* “evil”, “wicked” “sinners” and that even “our **righteousnesses** are as **filthy rags**” (Isaiah 64:6). And it is not that God *cannot* hear us, but that He *refuses to*. Nor is this “**all** the bad news”...

The good news of the hope of salvation can only make sense and be properly effective after the *extremely bad news* is made known – i.e. that mankind is cut off from God *and deserves to go to Hell*. But while Alpha participants *are* told that unsaved sinners are “cut off from a relationship with God eternally”, they are never given the full implications of that eternal separation.<sup>207</sup> Christ spoke about Hell more than about Heaven, yet it is mentioned only once during the gospel presentation – and then only in passing. It is only referred to on two other occasions in the entire video set:

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<sup>205</sup> Talk 3, Edn. 2.1. In Edition 2.2 of this talk Nicky again defines “sin” as “**the things that we do wrong**”.

<sup>206</sup> Nicky apparently absolves us of blame again when he likens our rebellion to the way “in the ancient world, if they walked through the street, they got dirt on their feet. As we go through life, we pick up dirt” [Talk 6]. It is seemingly no longer our fault, but accidental.

<sup>207</sup> Since Nicky’s unsaved hearers are already cut off from God, and may well feel very happy in that state, they are not going to be particularly concerned at the prospect of remaining in this condition forever. In Talk 3 Nicky says that “**The** result of sin is a broken relationship with God” as if there are no *further* result that needed thinking about.

very briefly in one quotation, and in a way that plays down its seriousness in the other quotation.<sup>208</sup> It gets no mention at all in *Why Jesus?*<sup>209</sup>

The results of such a fatally incomplete gospel presentation can be seen in the following:

“I understood from Alpha that it was **important** [*not ‘absolutely essential’?*] to repent and ask for forgiveness of sins. I had done **two** bad things in my life that I had been carrying around with me for years...” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.<sup>210</sup>]

“Alpha ... has shown me that there is something there which is **quite important**” [*Alpha News*<sup>211</sup>].

For those readers unfamiliar with Alpha’s prayer of commitment (published on page 18 of the *Why Jesus?* booklet) we reproduce it below in three portions along with some comments:

### Section One

**“Lord Jesus Christ, I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life (take a few moments to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience). Please**

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<sup>208</sup> Nicky quotes an imaginary conversation with Jesus (who is called ‘the teacher’ in this quotation): “‘Down in that crack is concealed the whole of hell’. And the man asks, ‘Do you mean then that Hell - all that infinite **empty** town - is down in some little crack like this?’ ‘Yes’, replied the teacher, ‘All Hell is smaller than one **pebble** of your earthly world: but it is smaller than one **atom** of *this* world, the Real World. Look at that butterfly. If it **swallowed all Hell**, Hell would not be big enough to do it **any** harm or to have any taste’” [Talk 11].

<sup>209</sup> Nicky also misrepresents Hell when he implies that it is just a place of speedy, and total, annihilation (e.g. in Talk 13, where he refers, without clarification, to a mere “**day** of destruction”; and in *Why Jesus?*, p11, where he implies that death is “the end” for unbelievers). Passages like Mark 9:43-48 and Rev. 14:11 paint a very different picture. In Talk 11, Nicky twice agrees that sin “leads to destruction”, but on neither occasion does he clarify that it is *the sinner* who is destroyed, nor does he say it comprises *unending* torment *after* death. Indeed he is happy to associate himself with universalists (i.e. people who believe no-one will go to Hell), such as Charles Kingsley [30 *Days*, p64] and J.B. Phillips [Talk 15]. (See also chapter 4, ‘Unitarians’).

<sup>210</sup> **Mark Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *The God Who Changes Lives, Vol 2, (Alpha Publications, 2001)*, p140.**

<sup>211</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar - Jun 2000, p7.



**forgive me. I now turn from everything which I know is wrong.”**

- Becoming saved is more than “saying sorry”. It should involve feeling “cut to the heart” (i.e. being overcome with guilt);<sup>212</sup> it requires unreserved repentance (i.e. a complete ‘about face’); it involves urgently groping for God’s mercy.<sup>213</sup>
- Our sinfulness is not just a matter of our sinful *deeds* but also of our sinful *nature*. This fact is omitted from the prayer.
- Because this prayer is used *corporately*, several people may be saying it at once. They are thus discouraged from holding up the proceedings for everyone else by taking any more than “a few moments”. (We timed it at less than four seconds on the video) to seek God, or their conscience, over all the things of which they need to repent.
- Most non-Christians today have little idea what God’s standards are - and therefore little idea of what *is* wrong. Man’s (corrupted) morality is very different from God’s. It is important to have been properly taught God’s rules (and therefore where we have sinned) if we are truly to repent of breaking those rules. *Why Jesus?* quotes just one Bible passage

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<sup>212</sup> Nicky admits that Peter’s preaching in Acts 2 caused the people to be “cut to the heart”, but this comment is kept until the very end of Talk 8, (a talk about baptism in the Holy Spirit, not the life and death of Jesus - indeed Nicky omits the fifteen verses from Acts 2 that led to this).

<sup>213</sup> Note from Dusty: When a girl, on a Course I attended, asked “What is salvation?”, the leader did not say something like “It means going to Heaven instead of Hell”, but just said “It is this prayer”.

about this.<sup>214</sup> Leaders may like to include other scriptures such as Rev. 21:8; Gal. 5:19-21; Luke 3:8-14; Mark 10:19; and 1 Cor. 6:9-10.

## Section Two

**“Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.”**

The Lord went through the horrors of the cross so that we could *escape eternal torment in Hell* (see Matt. 18:8-9; Jude 1:7). Christ went to great pains to warn us of “eternal damnation”, and that the suffering of the damned would go on forever (Mark 9:43-48, c.f. Isa. 66:22-24). He said that the unsaved would suffer “**everlasting punishment**” (Matt. 25:41&46). Unsurprisingly therefore, Paul taught that the subject of “eternal judgment” was one of the most basic teachings of Christianity. Yet this fundamental point is obscured in the above prayer as it stands. (Not one of Christ’s words “wrath”, “damnation”, “vengeance”, “torment”, or even “punishment” appears anywhere in *Why Jesus?*)

## Section Three

**“Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your spirit. I now receive that gift. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen.”**

There is potential for confusion here between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the *gifting* of the Holy Spirit. But that is another matter. The main gift on which a new Christian should focus is that of *salvation*:

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<sup>214</sup> But Nicky uses weak terms on the Course itself. In Talk 1 he describes a gambling, fornicating drunkard as “drinking heavily, living a **promiscuous** life ... basically leading a **wild** life”. He uses weak terms again in Talk 9 when describing another such person: “[a] **larger-than-life** man ... he was a heavy drinker, led a **wild** life, he **slept around**”. To most hearers today, “wild” is a compliment. Indeed, Nicky himself talks enthusiastically about the “**wild** lunch parties” he has enjoyed with fellow Christians [Talk 9]. Later, instead of saying “All sex outside of marriage is fornication, and God commands us to totally avoid such activities because they are seriously detestable to Him”, Nicky merely says: “In the area of sexual morality, again, we’re called to demonstrate the blessing of keeping God’s standards. God loves us. And ... ‘Pleasure is God’s invention, not the devil’s.’ And the Bible affirms our sexuality. God made us sexual beings ... But the Inventor and Designer also ... tells us how **best** this gift is to be enjoyed” [Talk 15].

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”.<sup>215</sup>

Finally, we believe that the Lord deserves far more than a polite “Thank you” for all He has done. Becoming saved is not like a trip to the supermarket! And yet: “I prayed a prayer to accept Jesus as my Saviour. **It was so easy to say**” [*Alpha News*<sup>216</sup>]. This accords with the following admission from HTB:

“[T]he **material** of the **talks themselves** were all changed to make them as **attractive** as possible [*rather than ‘as effective as possible’*]...”<sup>217</sup>

If a person does not understand the basic ramifications of the gospel then they are surely not in a position to make the actual step necessary to be transformed from the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light. This next quote shows worrying uncertainty as a result:

“[A friend] suggested I should try the Alpha Course ... I loved the discussions but I wasn’t too keen on the Holy Spirit day in the middle ... I started going to church more regularly ... I went to talk to the pastor and said I felt as though I was standing on the edge of a cliff. I thought I was being asked to jump over the precipice proclaiming I was a Christian as I went down, but I didn’t know where I was going to fall. I was just **totally scared**. He said he thought I already had jumped and that God was there in everything I did. Then I realized I had jumped and become a Christian. By the end of that year I could definitely say I had changed”.<sup>218</sup>

Once more, this has none of the biblical signs that the actual gospel has been comprehended by this person. There is not a word about Christ, no mention of love for the God who shed His own blood for us. And the peace that Christ gives the true believer in his spirit has been replaced by a feeling of being “totally scared”.

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<sup>215</sup> In Talk 3 Nicky does say that “the wages of sin is death” and that “The penalty is not just a fine. It’s death”, but Nicky doesn’t describe what happens to an unbeliever AFTER this and, since Christians die too, unbelievers will again not be perturbed at this news.

<sup>216</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 1998, p4.

<sup>217</sup> *An Introduction to the Alpha Course*, undated A4 HTB booklet, p5.

<sup>218</sup> *UK Focus*, Jun 1999, p6.

If this person has *really* yielded their life to Christ, then should they not have been able to say they had “changed” at *that* point rather than “by the end of the **year**”? (See 2 Cor. 5:17). Again, we are not saying that this person isn’t saved; simply that his testimony is not nearly as strong an indicator of it as HTB seems to believe. Remember too that this chapter is looking at the weaker official testimonies to see what we can all learn.

**15:3 CENTRAL ISSUES** Similarly, the following conversation between Nicky Gumbel and one participant is unfortunate. Note how Nicky’s questions – reasonable though they seem – are not the required evidences that someone has actually come to saving faith. To be honest, we would have been much happier if Nicky had asked the person what they thought of *themselves*, or what they thought of Christ their Saviour:

“I finished the rest of the course ... But, if somebody said ‘Are you a Christian?’ I would say ‘**No.**’ ... I decided to do the next Alpha Course ... I remained **very confused** ... Nicky and Pippa hosted a reunion of our first group ... There I managed to get Nicky to one side and asked him for some ‘Gumbel guidance’. I said, ‘I am **so confused** ... am I a Christian or not?’ He simply said, ‘Do you pray?’ ... ‘Do you read your Bible?’ ... ‘Do you go to church on Sundays?’ ... ‘Are you enjoying the Alpha course?’ ‘Yes, I love it.’ [*But did they love Christ?*] He looked at me and laughed, touched me on the shoulder and said, ‘Don’t worry about it – I think it will be all right.’ At **that** point the penny dropped and I suddenly realized that yes, I was there”.<sup>219</sup>

A Christian is someone to whom the Holy Spirit has revealed their desperately corrupt heart and has cried out unashamedly to the Lord for forgiveness and salvation from Hell. It is someone who has submitted their whole existence to God.<sup>220</sup> It is someone who is walking with, and is devoted to, Christ. It is not necessarily someone who reads the Bible or ‘goes to’ church. And even non-Christians *pray* (see, for example, Isaiah 45:20 or Matthew 6:7).

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<sup>219</sup> Elsdon-Dew, *The God Who Changes Lives*, Vol 2, pp195-6.

<sup>220</sup> Nicky almost always avoids describing believers as having “submitted their lives to God” or “made Jesus their Lord” instead, sadly, watering it down in every talk to them having “come to faith in Christ” [e.g. in *Questions of Life*, p101] – which could mean almost anything. In Talks 2 & 5 Nicky equates coming to “faith in Christ” merely with realizing that the Bible is true (rather than *applying* that fact), even though devils know it is true too. And in Talk 13 Nicky’s test of a Christian is just to ask “Do you believe **in God?**”.

When we are born again we are given the most precious gift imaginable – a new life. *We* are not doing *God* a favour. Yet, as in the quote above, people refer to “**accepting** Jesus”, or “letting Jesus” into *their* lives – suggesting they think they are doing just that. These and similar phrases often emanate from Alpha Courses:

“[T]he following morning [*after the Holy Spirit weekend*] ... I [*said*] ‘Lord, **if** you are real, then come **into my** life’” [*Alpha News*<sup>221</sup>]. (Note: we are saved by “believing *on* Christ” – i.e. fully trusting in Him, relying on His Messiahship, and clinging to His cross – not merely believing in His existence... although, sadly, there is not even faith in His *existence* being displayed here.)

“[*Someone else said a*] prayer asking God to forgive **me** and come **into my** life. It was really **nice**. I didn’t really say **anything** myself. I just felt really **easy**. I got up and felt **better**. I have never really said that that is the day that I became a Christian – but I **think** it was” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.]<sup>222</sup>

“At the end ... [*the Course leader*] **does a prayer** where you can commit yourself to God, if you think that is what you are ready for ... I thought, ‘**if** there is a God, then why wait? However, **if there is no God**, then what am I losing anyway by praying to a non-entity? So, I thought that I would pray the prayer ... Lord Jesus, **come into my** life and **change** it [*obliterate it, surely?*] ... ’”<sup>223</sup>

Rather than coming to the Lord in real faith and humble contrition, such language sounds more like someone about to visit a psychiatrist for the first time, or trying out a new job. Nor is becoming a Christian a matter of ‘a prayer of commitment’; it is a matter of true *brokenness*, a *yielding* of one’s entire life, including hopes, aspirations, and relationships. It means an *utter* rejection of “the old man” and an earnest clinging to the cross of Christ - who comes into one’s life as a result of *this*, not as a result of just asking Him to. Our evangelism *must* reflect God’s Word rather than encourage ‘easy believism’, for the Bible gravely states:

“...if [*even*] the **righteous** scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Pet. 4:18)<sup>224</sup>

<sup>221</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar - Jun 1998, p4.

<sup>222</sup> Elsdon-Dew, Ed., **The God Who Changes Lives, Vol 2, (HTB Publications, 1998)**, pp37-38. (This testimony was dropped from the 2001 edition of that volume.)

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, pp191-192.

<sup>224</sup> We can see from this verse that “righteousness” is defined as godliness

**15:4 GOD'S LOVE** Along with gratitude for the warmth and kindness extended to them by fellow Course members, some Alpha participants report the feeling of being loved, which they attribute to God:

“I felt that God loves me...”,<sup>225</sup> “I was feeling very down and depressed when a friend asked me to go with her to an Alpha supper ... I felt God say that he loved me and would make things better”.<sup>226</sup>

Few participants, however, seem to truly grasp what God's love caused Him to do on their behalf (i.e. allow the death of His perfect – and only – Son). Nor do many comprehend the required response to this that makes it effectual for them. In Chris Hand's view, the reason is that:

“The love of God in Alpha is not the love of the God of the Bible ... In Alpha God is love **and little else** ... There is not much else that He **can** be as the course has missed all the aspects of His great character that refer to His holiness and glory ... Why did the Lord come? To save sinners. What moved God to do this? His love. This is what makes His love so special and so wonderful. It is that such a **holy and glorious** God should save **sinners** ... But without the context of God's holiness and absolute perfection, the meaning of that love is lost to us. Instead God merely becomes an emotional being of unconditional love divorced from any true understanding of His true nature and being. Alpha's God will give us an emotional high and make us feel special. The God of the Bible will give us eternal life. There is a big difference between the two” [Chris Hand<sup>227</sup>]

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and sinlessness. Nicky avoids this emphasis, preferring instead to say “Righteousness means **right re-relationships**” [Talk 11]. Plainly this does not get the same message across. Nicky softens the blow yet further by saying “God only asks us to leave behind things that do us harm ... God **asks** us to leave that behind” [Talk 4]. In fact God *insists* (rather than asks) that we abhor ourselves entirely and leave *our whole selves* behind. Nicky again says “God only asks us to leave behind the things that actually don't help us at all. He only asks us to leave behind the rubbish in our lives” [Talk 15]. But our entire nature is dung. It is not just the things we *do*, but what we *essentially are*, that sends us to Hell.

<sup>225</sup> UK Focus, Jan 1999, p6.

<sup>226</sup> UK Focus, Mar 1999, p3.

<sup>227</sup> Chris Hand, *Alpha: The Last Word in Evangelism?* (an undated CRN leaflet).

Now, we are not saying we completely agree with Hand, but we are certainly keen that no-one mislead or short-change Course participants. And we promised at the outset to express any concerns that we have. It may surprise some readers to discover that accounts of gospel preaching in the scriptures do not even *mention* the love of God:

“The book of Acts is the only Biblical account of how the apostles preached the gospel...

“What are the main themes? 1) That Jesus is Messiah, fulfilling the Law and the prophets. That he was crucified and rose from the dead and that through repentance there is forgiveness ... 2) For Gentiles: that God is Creator and Judge who now calls all to repent by faith in Jesus.

“What is ... conspicuous by its **absence** is **any** mention of the Love of God in these sermons. In fact the word ‘love’ does **not** occur in Acts! This is almost a **complete reversal** of current trends in gospel preaching. These days, ‘God loves you’ is more or less where people start! That is not the gospel! Sinners are under **Wrath**.

“Yes, they *are* loved by God, yet unless they repent and turn to Christ, they remain under Wrath – they will not know that God loves them, indeed they **cannot** know. Therefore telling them that ‘God loves them anyway’ will lead either to pride ‘I am worth something!’<sup>228</sup> or dismissal, ‘who cares!’<sup>229</sup>

“Frankly, the last thing Westerners need to hear is that God loves them! Rather the reverse: that God demands their repentance ...”<sup>230</sup>

What *is* emphasized throughout Scripture is the *fear we should have towards God*:

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<sup>228</sup> Nicky says “God takes us exactly where we are” [Talk 9], but this could mislead hearers. God demands a complete ‘about face’ in our lives and a deep humility which leads us to cling to Christ before He will “take us”.

<sup>229</sup> Yet even in Talk 1 Nicky is saying “the heart of the Christian message is this: God loves you. God loves you so much...” and right at the start of Talk 3, Nicky says: “Why did he [Jesus] die? ... The answer, in a nutshell, is because God **loves you**”. Needless to say, this emphasis is repeated in later talks too (and at particular length in Talk 9).

<sup>230</sup> Philip Foster, The Gospel of Love...Or The Gospel Of God?, *Vanguard*, Issue 1, Oct 1996, pp6-9. Italicized emphasis in original.

“[Jesus] began to say ... Be not **afraid** of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But **I will forewarn you** Whom ye **shall** fear: **Fear Him**, which after He hath killed **hath power to cast into Hell**; yea, I say unto you, **Fear Him**” (Luke 12:4-5).

It is foundational: “The **fear** of the LORD is the **beginning** of [*i.e. is fundamental to*] wisdom” (Psa. 111:10; Prov. 9:10); “The **fear** of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7); “The LORD taketh pleasure in them that **fear** Him...” (Psa. 147:11). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; ... Knowing therefore the **terror** of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

Note: There is no contradiction between loving and fearing God, just as we can simultaneously love and fear any gracious but powerful ruler. God is good, but He is also omnipotent and very holy – and strict (1 Ki. 13:11-26; Heb. 12:28-29; Gen. 19:26 etc). “Be not high-minded, but **fear**: ... Behold therefore the ... **severity** of God” (Rom. 11:20-22). Sadly, these central attributes are not brought home in Alpha.

“Let us hear the **conclusion** of the **whole** matter: **Fear God**, and keep His commandments: for **this** is the **whole** duty of man.” (Eccl. 12:13).<sup>231</sup>

If Ananias and Sapphira had had a healthy fear of the “mighty and terrible” God, then their fate, described in Acts 5:1-11, would undoubtedly have been much happier. Likewise Korah’s (in Numbers 16), King Saul’s (in 1 Sam 28 and 31), and so many more.<sup>232</sup>

**15:5 “MESSED-UP LIVES”** Other official testimonies emphasize regret for a ‘messed up’ life rather than conviction of a sinful one:

“I asked Jesus ... ‘Lord, you know how afraid and **tired and weary** of life I’ve been ... I pray for you to be **in** my life” [*Alpha News*<sup>233</sup>].

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<sup>231</sup> In his book *30 Days* (pages 66-69), Nicky looks in detail at Solomon’s search for how to live a fulfilling life. Unfortunately he makes no mention that Solomon found the answer. This verse was Solomon’s ultimate conclusion!

<sup>232</sup> Nicky regrettably insinuates (in Talk 11) that fearing the Lord indicates a relationship with the Lord has been *broken*, not restored!

<sup>233</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1998 - Feb 1999, p16.



“I realized what a **waste** my life had been. In desperation [*not in repentance?*] I called out to God and told him **how I felt**” [*Alpha News*<sup>234</sup>].

The attitude, present amongst some Alpha participants, which sees salvation as God rescuing them from the ‘mess’ they have made of their lives, or the *consequences* of sins committed, rather than redemption from an innate sinful nature (Psalm 51:5), is not so surprising – for this is the way the gospel is currently presented on Alpha:

“[T]he gospel is good news ... Jesus ... paid the price to set us free from the things that grip our lives; the things that deep down we don’t like and would love to be free from; the things that **spoil** our lives”<sup>235</sup>.

“[O]n the last Alpha Course, there was a guy ... [*who*] was desperately **lonely**. And he cried out to God [*i.e. apparently to save him from loneliness, not Hell*] ... And there may be somebody here this weekend who says, ‘That’s my life. My life is **formless and empty**’” [Talk 8].

The result is inevitable. (Again, bear in mind that HTB considers these testimonies to be not only examples of salvation but also to be some of the very *best* Alpha testimonies they know):

“I really believed that life was not **worth living** [*but a believer’s life in this world is only worth living in the sense that it is an opportunity to store up treasure in Heaven*]... A year ago I knew Jesus was there but I did not know that he was truly there **for me** ... He knows me and he knows me well **and all I have to do is dial him up** and he is there **to listen to me**...”<sup>236</sup>

“Now I know that I’m not alone and I have Jesus on **my** side [*not ‘I am on His side’*] helping me every day...”<sup>237</sup>

The true gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). However, Scripture tells us that there are also emasculated, impotent versions of the gospel, which, in reality, are no gospel at all (Matt. 15:9; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3; etc). From what we have seen so far, the gospel sometimes being given today would appear to be...

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<sup>234</sup> *Alpha News*, Mar – Jun 1999, p16.

<sup>235</sup> Talk 3, Edn. 2.1.

<sup>236</sup> *UK Focus*, Feb 1999, p4.

<sup>237</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul – Oct 1998, p14.

“...a gospel which leads the hearers to imagine that sin is not our problem, we just have messed-up lives which God is eager to mend. This ‘God’s’ sole purpose is to make us happy and successful. The ‘converts’ of such endeavours are excited that by their ‘decision for Christ’, God is now on their side and will bless their lives. God’s justice, integrity, honor and glory have no part in this...”<sup>238</sup>

And what of those who do *not* feel they have ‘messed up’ their lives? Would they feel the need to be saved? If not, then how will Alpha ever humble the ‘successful’ unbeliever who considers himself very happy as he is?

“Instead of sin being a corruption of my nature, it is presented as ‘the things I do wrong’... ‘These things pollute our lives’ says Nicky Gumbel, which is true, but [*he*] doesn’t seem to acknowledge the key point that the *heart* [*or ‘nature’*] is the source of the problem [*Jer. 17:9; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:3 etc*] and even if we *didn’t* do these things, we’d still be in trouble”<sup>239</sup>

To reiterate, Course leaders need to be very careful in this regard.

**15:6 WHAT ARE WE SAVED FROM?** For other Alpha participants, the (perfectly understandable, but scripturally inadequate) primary motive for their ‘conversion’ appears to be a desire for healing from past sorrows, bereavements or hurts suffered at the hands of others. While it is certainly – and thankfully – true that “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart...” this is not to be confused with His forgiveness of our sin unto salvation (where, according to Psalm 34:18, He “...**saveth** such as be of a **contrite spirit**”).

Yet this confusion indeed seems to be present behind the following statements. Note that these are very moving testimonies but, for the sake of everyone involved, must still be weighed against the full gospel:

“All that pent up hurt that takes you 30 years to bottle up just came out like that. All those feelings of being unwanted ... I now knew **I mattered** to God ... All the stuff we had been hearing on Alpha up to that time had been intellectual head stuff and I had not really been there with my heart ... Nicky invited us all to say

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<sup>238</sup> Dave Hunt, *The Berean Call*, Jun 1999, p2.

<sup>239</sup> John Richardson, *What’s Wrong with Alpha: A Comment*, (a web article at [Episcopalian.org/efac/alpha.htm](http://Episcopalian.org/efac/alpha.htm)).

a prayer which we could say with him. It was one to welcome Jesus into **our** lives and to say sorry for all the things that we had done”.<sup>240</sup>

“My self-esteem was so low and I was on anti-depressants. My life was falling apart ... I asked some of the other members in the group to pray for me ... Then I burst into tears and kept saying I was sorry for keeping everything bottled up inside for so long [*rather than being sorry for rebelling against God?*] ... After the **sadness** [*rather than sinfulness?*] of the past I am looking forward to a new life in the future...”<sup>241</sup>

Firstly, let us say that we have enormous sympathy for these souls. They have obviously suffered a great deal, and under no circumstances are we seeking to minimize the extent of their pain. God does indeed heal the broken heart; He does gather His children in His arms, enabling us to forgive those who have wronged us...

However, He is not a Father in that sense to the – as yet – unsaved. And it must not be solely a broken heart that brings us to the cross for salvation, but the conviction of our own rebellion against a Holy and righteous God *regardless of what others have done to us*. Recognition of our *own* sinful state in the eyes of God and repentance thereof cannot be bypassed, but the cross of the Lord Jesus is not a part of these testimonies at all. Once again we are not insisting that these precious people are not saved, but that their testimonies leave a huge question mark over its likelihood.

We *must* improve the quality of the gospel message we give. We must make sure it is complete, accurate, and Spirit-led. Alpha Courses normally take place over ten weeks plus a weekend so there seems little reason for misunderstandings to occur.

Almost all of the Alpha testimonies we have seen possess one feature in common: they are subjective rather than objective. They all focus on “me”: *my* concerns, *my* problems, *my* hurts, *my* happiness, *my* life, *my* self. Like rather too many of the choruses we are asked to sing these days, the testimonies are me-centred, instead of Christ-centred. The examples below are just a little more overt than those quoted before. Note, in the third one, how many times the person and the Course are referred to. The Lord rarely gets a mention:

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<sup>240</sup> UK Focus, Jan 1999, pp4-5.

<sup>241</sup> UK Focus, Mar 1999, p3.

“I really have been given **my** life back”.<sup>242</sup>

“I’ve got much more **self**-confidence” [*Alpha News*,<sup>243</sup>]. (Our confidence needs to be in the Lord, not ourselves – see Php. 3:3.)<sup>244</sup>

“**Alpha** is the most wonderful thing I have ever encountered. **It** truly did change my life. **Alpha** gave me ‘me’ back ... **Alpha** did that for me”.<sup>245</sup>

This last is a touching quote, but however much we may be moved by someone’s testimony, we cannot (for their sake) allow ourselves to become so affected that it obscures our discernment as to whether the person really has known God’s salvation. Many people attending secular, psychotherapy meetings will have very real and moving experiences too. This does not mean they have been saved – or even that God was involved at all. Here is another example of a heartfelt testimony but which omits the very centre of the gospel:

“I can honestly say that **Alpha** has changed my life”.<sup>246</sup>

Undoubtedly Alpha *has* changed this person’s life. But has *Christ* given them a *new* life? Or have they simply experienced some lovely meals and evenings with kindly folks who have listened to them, helped them to feel affirmed and accepted and loved, and given them more meaning in their life? That is far from the gospel which slices through men’s hearts and shows them how filthy they are before a righteous and all-powerful God.

We should bear in mind also that all these, unquestionably sincere, individuals are supposed to have offered up their very souls, not just their circumstances, to the Lord. A true convert is not his own anymore – he was bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The same sort of results are often achieved by the world’s unbiblical methods of therapy – as Alpha participants themselves admit:

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<sup>242</sup> Article in *Times Weekend*, 14:Dec:1996.

<sup>243</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1997 - Feb 1998, p5.

<sup>244</sup> Yet Nicky himself parades a testimony from an Alpha participant who said “My **self**-confidence has improved considerably” [Talk 13].

<sup>245</sup> *UK Focus*, Feb 1999, p4.

<sup>246</sup> *The Good News*, Advertisement on file comprising a special insert for the Aberdeen Evening Express, Summer 1998, p5.

“I started a course of hypnotherapy and psychoanalysis ... after the complete treatment I felt **really good**...”<sup>247</sup>

**15:7 WHAT ARE WE SAVED TO?** Finally, there are the testimonies speaking of how circumstances are so much better now that the person is saved:

“My **life** has been **good**, but since Alpha, since I became a Christian, it has become so much richer”.<sup>248</sup>

“We’re constantly being asked how becoming Christians has changed us ... We thought our life together was pretty **good before** [*but where is their renunciation of their life before, as per Php. 3:7-9?*], but we’ve just watched it get **better and better**” [*Alpha News*]<sup>249</sup>.

This all sounds super, but let us keep our eyes on Scripture. Did Paul think that his life before Christ had been “good”?...

“What things were gain to me, those I counted **loss** for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count **all things** but **loss** for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of **all things** and do count them but **dung**, that I may win Christ” (Php. 3:7-9).

More to the point, did the apostles promise unbelievers, as Nicky does, that “God has a wonderful plan for your life” [Talk 7]? It is true that “God will not give us things that are not good” [Talk 6], but unbelievers are unlikely to realize that what is good in *God’s* eyes may differ profoundly from their present interpretation! He gave His own Son sorrow and crucifixion. He has ordained His disciples to suffering (John 16:33; Acts 14:22)<sup>250</sup> – and many to martyrdom. What would happen if God were to take away all the ‘good’ things from the above participants? Are they moving towards the point of being able to say, like Habakkuk:

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive tree shall fail, and the fields

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<sup>247</sup> *Telling Others*, p120. Like Alpha, the ‘feelings’ resulting from secular therapies tend to wear off if the therapy stops.

<sup>248</sup> Neil Richardson, *A Tale of Two Cities: Nicky Gumbel and the Alpha Course*, (CWM, 2000), p15.

<sup>249</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul – Oct 1998, p5.

<sup>250</sup> Regarding the cost of following Christ, Nicky makes quite an understatement when he says “it **may** mean giving up things in our lives that we know are wrong ... **some** people ... have had to change their lifestyle ... they’ve had to make **a** change” [Talk 15].

shall yield no meat; ... **Yet I will rejoice** in the LORD, **I will joy** in the God of my **salvation**" (Hab. 3:17-18).

Is their mindset compatible with that of Job, who said, after *everything* was taken away from him, "Though He [*God*] **slay** me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15)? We fear that many folks are not being properly taught to "count the cost" of following Jesus.<sup>251</sup> Luke 14:26-33 is a very relevant passage, and the Lord concludes it by saying "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not **all** that he hath, he **cannot** be My disciple".<sup>252</sup>

"The message [*our Lord*] preached included the cross as well as the crown ... We popularize the message and promise fun. The result of all this is that we have people believing without knowing **what** they believe. In many cases they have no doctrinal basis for their decision. They do not know the implications of commitment to Christ ... Satan laughs when these conversions are triumphantly announced on earth...

"We should stress the necessity for repentance – a complete about-face with regard to sin. We should stress the full implications of the Lordship of Christ and the conditions of discipleship. We should explain what belief really involves. We should be willing to wait for the Holy Spirit to produce genuine conviction of sin. Then we should be ready to lead the person to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do this, we'll have less astronomical figures of so-called conversions, but more genuine cases of spiritual re-birth".<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Nicky characterizes our walk with Christ not as involving hardships or requiring discipline but as "fun". He says, "[I]magine being with Jesus! What **fun** it would have been! **Think** what **fun** it would have been ... with Jesus ... fun ... fun ... **Wouldn't it have been fun...** [*It*] is the **same today**" [Talk 2]. Was it really fun to hear Him prophesy His own death? Or fun to see Him mocked and slandered and rejected? How much fun was it to be there when virtually all of His followers walked away from Him in John 6? (They apparently failed to notice how much "fun" He was!) Was it truly fun to see Him sweating blood or being led away by an armed horde? Does Nicky feel His scourging and crucifixion was "fun"? Yes, it was sometimes *exciting* to follow Jesus, but when you examine the subsequent lives and deaths of His disciples, "fun" would be a bizarre adjective to choose. In truth it was frequently painful, demanding and sorrowful.

<sup>252</sup> Nicky prefers to describe man's relationship with God as being one of "friendship" rather than servanthood [Talk 11]. But Christ only called us His friends in the sense that He lets us know His plans and His ways of working (see John 15:14-15).

<sup>253</sup> William McDonald, *The Superficial Conversions Dilemma, Revival*, Sep - Oct 1981.

As can be seen from the testimonies in this chapter, there is little (if any) realization of being a sinner in rebellion against God. (Indeed, the lengthy testimonies of the sins involved in the lives of Alpha participants seldom suggest any real shame for these activities – or any struggle to write about their reprehensible past. Some almost appear to *revel* in relating their pre-saved lives in great detail instead of just stating the absolutely necessary bits and then spending the larger part of the testimony focusing on the Lord and what He has done.)

God can certainly save people who cry out urgently and wholeheartedly to Him no matter what Course, or meeting, or other experience prompts them to do so. But from the testimonies we have found, it seems that Alpha is not yet encouraging people to cry out *with all their soul*.

Again, we appreciate that a proportion of the published testimonies have been utilized not because they represent clear conversions, but because they can be used to coax the unsaved to attend subsequent courses. But we must have read virtually *every* testimony published in the Alpha organization's books and newspapers, yet still we find terribly few that mention God's mercy, or the cross, or abhorrence of the old nature, or a strong 'first love' for our Saviour, or any of the other classic marks of a sure conversion. Interestingly, the few sound ones we *have* found all share one or both of the following features:

- A) Someone was praying for the participant's salvation for months, or even years, beforehand and/or
- B) The participant had been given the *full* gospel earlier in their life, which Alpha just prompted them to recall.<sup>254</sup>

Again, let us not imagine that manifestations from the 'Holy Spirit weekend' are proof of the baptism in the Holy Spirit of those involved. As

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<sup>254</sup> Sandy Millar has admitted that the church has experienced "loss of confidence in the Christian gospel" [Intro. to Talk 1], but he needs to realize that this has occurred because the full, unadulterated gospel is no longer being preached in much of the church. Likewise senior Catholics are admitting that their church is "weak in reaching out to those who do not yet believe" [Adam Exner, RC Archbishop of Vancouver, *Alpha for Catholics*, undated six-sided leaflet, p3] but they refuse to consider that their church might be teaching a corrupt message. In the same leaflet, another RC bishop says "It can't **possibly** be that the message is wrong because **we** have the words of eternal life ... yet somehow we don't seem to get it across" [Ambrose Griffiths, p1]. To them, as to Sandy, only the "**method**" needs revising.

we saw in section 14:2, this simply isn't so. Many participants are not even sure of God's *existence* before their experience – let alone are born-again:

“I just said ‘...I would like to be able to get to know you **if you are there.**’ [*That is not a prayer of commitment*] When I said the prayer I felt a **really funny** feeling within me ... It gave me a **buzz** – like **Ecstasy...**” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.]<sup>255</sup>

“[H]e stood up and prayed over me and I felt the most extraordinary **tingling sensation flooding through me** ... [*But, figuratively speaking*] I was **still** heavily chained at the bottom of a deep dark **prison**”.<sup>256</sup>

“I had an experience of the Holy Spirit that blew me away. **After that** I had no doubt – God **is** real... [*A person surely cannot doubt this if they are to be saved in the first place?*]”.<sup>257</sup>

These manifestations do demonstrate that Alpha participants are open to God presenting Himself, or to having the existence of the spiritual realm proved, but these manifestations are being misinterpreted as baptism in the Holy Spirit when the pre-requisite of salvation is not in place. Chris Hand comments thus:

“More often than not [*official conversions in Alpha are*] an emotional experience about the love of God but without *any* understanding of holiness or the need to be saved from our sins. There is no recognition of the need to repent and to turn to God as a matter of life and death ... The needs of our souls for biblical and life-saving truth are far too precious and important to be brought down to this level ... We may merely succeed in adding people to our churches who have never been converted ... To leave someone believing they are converted when they are not is an awful prospect”.<sup>258</sup>

These are tough words. But, with so few convincing testimonies being publicized, it is not surprising that people are asking some searching questions about the quality of Alpha's gospel as it stands. No matter how reasonable Nicky's gospel presentation may look to churches, he is apparently failing to *communicate* it to his unsaved hearers – the vast proportion of whom come away from these talks not humbled and fearing God but

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<sup>255</sup> Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *The God Who Changes Lives*, Vol.2, (1998), p38.

<sup>256</sup> *Telling Others*, p56.

<sup>257</sup> *Renewal* magazine, Oct 1995, pp16-17, as quoted in Chris Hand, “The A-B-C of the Alpha Course”, an article in *Diakrisis* magazine, Spring/Summer 1998, p20.

<sup>258</sup> Chris Hand, *Alpha: The Last Word in Evangelism?* (an undated, CRN leaflet).



instead feeling, as Nicky approvingly quoted one person putting it, “accepted for who I am”.<sup>259</sup>)

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<sup>259</sup> Talk 8, Edn. 2.1. See also *Telling Others*, p57. Unfortunately there are a huge number of other comments from Nicky which reinforce the problems we have listed in these chapters - or even introduce further worries. Please the ‘Sweeter than Honey’ section of our website for more.

## CHAPTER 16

# T THE STAR

**16:1 INTRODUCTION** Christ was everything to Paul (Gal. 2:20). The Lord and His death was the centre of Paul's life, and Paul's primary aim was to glorify his King for this stunning sacrifice.<sup>260</sup> We are here to extol Christ, and our publications should do so too. The following are some of the quotes that HTB has published, mainly in *Alpha News* – which, as we have seen, is aimed at churches. For the sake of ensuring that we don't lose sight of where our main attention and praise should be directed, each quote below is immediately followed by an apt verse from the Epistle to the Ephesians. We hope the reader finds the juxtaposition stimulating.

“We feel really blessed by **Alpha**” [*Alpha News*<sup>261</sup>].

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<sup>260</sup> Incidentally, we believe the impact of Christ's sacrifice is somewhat reduced in Alpha by the way Nicky, in Talk 3, Edn. 2.1, shows no emotion *whatsoever* as he relates the brutal, heart-rending facts of the crucifixion of our sinless Lord and Saviour.

<sup>261</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 1997, p17.

“Blessed be the **God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places **in Christ**” (Eph. 1:3).

“**Alpha** has been so important in building up this church” [*Alpha News*<sup>262</sup>].

“Now therefore ye ... are built upon the foundation ... **Jesus Christ Himself** being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:19-21).

“**Alpha** had an amazing effect on St. Pauls” [*Alpha News*<sup>263</sup>].

“**Christ** is the head of the church: and **He** is the **saviour** of the body” (Eph. 5:23b). (In one testimony in the above issue, Alpha is mentioned *16* times, ‘Holy Spirit’ – twice, ‘God’ – twice, ‘Jesus’ – once.)

“**Alpha** has helped to unite people of different cultures here and has assisted in the process of integration” [*Alpha News*<sup>264</sup>].

“I bow my knees unto the **Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:14-15).

“**Alpha** totally changed the life which I had before” [*Alpha News*<sup>265</sup>].

“**Christ** ... hath loved us, and hath **given Himself for us** an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph. 5:2).

“**Alpha** helped me set a new direction. **It** drew together many thoughts and ideas that I had after years of going to church. **It** also gave me a group of people who cared about me. My response to the whole **Alpha** experience was, ‘**This** is what I need!’” [*Alpha News*<sup>266</sup>]

“[*I pray that the Father*] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That **Christ** may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May ... know the love of **Christ**, which passeth knowledge...” (Eph. 3:16-19).

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<sup>262</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1997 – Feb 1998.

<sup>263</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1997 – Feb 1998.

<sup>264</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul – Oct 1998.

<sup>265</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul – Oct 1998.

<sup>266</sup> *Alpha News*, Nov 1998 – Feb 1999.

“Since I did the Alpha Course my parents have done it as well and **it** has made a real **difference** to their lives”.<sup>267</sup>

“But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as **the truth is in Jesus**: That ye **put off** ... the **old man**, which is **corrupt** according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye **put on the new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:20-24).

“The Bishop talks about **Alpha** whenever he has the opportunity...”<sup>268</sup>

“Be ye ... followers of **God**” (Eph. 5:1).

“...He told me he had been on something called an Alpha Course at his local church. And for 3 days **all** we talked about was **Alpha** and what a difference **it** had made...”<sup>269</sup>

“**Christ** ... loved the church, and **gave Himself** for it; That **He** might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That **He** might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 25b-27).

“And I’d like to say that, **thanks** to **Alpha**, I’m not the father I used to be”.<sup>270</sup>

“[*Make*] melody in your heart **to the Lord**; Giving **thanks always** for **all** things unto God and the Father **in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (Eph. 5:20).

“I found a local course which was running in a home and went along. **It** has changed my life” [*Alpha News*<sup>271</sup>].

“**In Christ Jesus** ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh **by the blood of Christ**” (Eph. 2:13).

One Church of England pastor wryly comments:

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<sup>267</sup> *UK Focus*, Mar 1999.

<sup>268</sup> *UK Focus*, May 1999.

<sup>269</sup> *UK Focus*, May 1999.

<sup>270</sup> *UK Focus*, May 1999.

<sup>271</sup> *Alpha News*, Jul - Oct 1999.

“I counted over **500** uses of the word ‘Alpha’ in their [*latest*] newsletter and only **8** mentions of Jesus or Christ (and that hurriedly in passing). Not one testimony in the paper showed signs of genuine repentance and true new birth, and ‘Alpha’ itself takes on a personality: ‘World bishops speak of their need for **Alpha**’; ‘**Alpha** woke me up to how I could help others’; ‘I don’t know how we would have survived without **Alpha**’; ... ‘From illegal drugs to **Alpha** for Mark, [*aged*] 17’. What spirit is it that exalts Alpha but not Jesus?”<sup>272</sup>

This is a fair question. The ministry of the *Holy* Spirit is to testify of Jesus (John 15:26) and to glorify Him (John 16:14).<sup>273</sup> And if these publications *do* offer the best testimonies that can be found, can we not legitimately ask what the others must be like? Certainly people are being changed by Alpha, but are they being *reborn of God*? While some changes are clearly supernatural, there are many other possible causes for the changes in behaviour being seen:

- ❖ After the weekend away, many participants realize that God exists and is watching them. This alone will inevitably have a profound effect on the way they live their lives. It does not mean they are saved.
- ❖ The loving and affirming atmosphere of Alpha is very soothing and comforting and may well engender feelings of joy and peace and lead to a happier and calmer outlook. This is not salvation.
- ❖ Participants who become enamoured of the warm atmosphere on Alpha may subconsciously make modifications in behaviour to ‘fit in’ with their new-found friends. After all, permanent access to these friends will require certain standards to be improved. This is only imitation.

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<sup>272</sup> Philip Foster, email on file, 28:Nov:1998.

<sup>273</sup> Unfortunately, Nicky actually appears to *denigrate* God on occasion. In Talk 6 he ends up making God out to be the villain of the piece when he says: “[O]ne of my closest friends - 42 years of age - dropped dead of a heart attack, right in front of me. And **I cried out** to God that he would give him life because I loved him, he had six children, aged 6 upwards. He was the **most wonderful** man, everybody loved him, he was the church warden here. And **I cried out** to God to give him life but God did not answer that prayer ... But the fact that some of our prayers don’t get answered is not going to stop me praying”. Who gets the glory here?

- ❖ Quite naturally, participants also feel an amount of pressure not to disappoint those who have invested so much time and energy into running the Course and into showing them such love.
- ❖ Many people are being confused into thinking they are saved now that they merely believe Jesus Christ is who He said He was. As they seek to please Him through higher personal standards and greater self-control they may benefit from ‘common grace’ (i.e. blessings that can accrue to anyone who seeks to live by some biblical principles) and this may well be taken as confirmation of salvation – but it is not.

Unless the features in 1 John are present we should surely err on the side of caution before assuming salvation has occurred.

**16:2 AN AMAZING APPENDIX** At one stage of Elizabeth’s research, she was making notes regarding the *Alpha Team Training Tapes*. She was jotting down points and questions that came to mind concerning the techniques used to deal with participants in the small groups – but she could not quite define what it was about Alpha’s methods that troubled her. Then, by God’s grace, she received Wendy Howard’s article on the subject in her magazine *Despatch*, and the puzzle was solved. Rather than us re-inventing the wheel, Wendy has very kindly allowed us to use her excellent analysis here, for which we are greatly indebted to her.

The piece examines the ‘art of arguing’ (or ‘dialectic’) and the ‘practice of theorizing’ (or ‘praxis’) employed by Alpha, and it requires our careful attention because of the unusual subject matter. Wendy’s article (originally titled *Dialectic, Praxis and Alpha*) goes beyond the scope of our current volume so we have shortened (and very slightly modified) it in order to make it fully relevant to this book.

# Alpha: Course and Effect

By Wendy Howard, Director of End-time Ministries  
and Editor of Despatch Magazine<sup>274</sup>

In the training program for potential Alpha leaders, we were taught that a non-hostile or risk-free environment was essential for an Alpha dinner meeting or weekend. No “confrontation” of the unbelievers is allowed; they must have full freedom to express their own beliefs, feelings and values about God, the Bible, and Jesus Christ. The only trouble is that, in Alpha, the ‘first cause’ (i.e. God and His pure Word) is then set aside.

The CHURCH people sit and listen intently to non-church people holding forth. Their hands are tied in that they are “not allowed” by Alpha to contend or con-front, or to preach or teach sound Scripture.<sup>275</sup>

In order to successfully create a “relationship” with unbelievers, Alpha com-promises and dialogues. The report *The Dialectic and Praxis* by Dean Gotcher is a most helpful piece of work when seeking to understand the problems and dangers with this approach:

“In dialogue, **all one can do is deviate from an original position.** This is why Jesus did not dialogue with Satan when tempted by him in the wilderness. Instead He held to His position by quoting ‘First Cause’, the Scriptures, with ‘It is written...’ and did not respond with ‘I think...’ or ‘I feel...’...”

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<sup>274</sup> See our ‘CHURCH’ volume for fuller details of Wendy’s ministry. (Incidentally, we would agree with every word of Wendy’s superb article, but our use of it should not be construed as an endorsement of *all* her beliefs and associations.)

<sup>275</sup> HTB says that the aim of the Alpha group leader is to “draw conversation out of the small group rather than ‘teach’ them” [*Alpha Administrator’s Handbook*, p23].

“Therefore, if we believe that God’s Word is true, all we can do is give His definition. We thereby give Him control over our life. If we deviate from it, we give the *process of compromise* control over us.” [Gotcher, p.27]

Who is being ‘processed’ in this? Both the unbelievers *and* the church folks. The deliberations of the unsaved can be very convincing and intelligent; many of the “churched” will be unable to stand firm under the pressure.<sup>276</sup>

In our training program for forming Alpha groups we were taught that there should be no prayers that were more than a mere sentence prayer, that the only songs should be simple ones that expressed that God was the Creator. Not many Bible verses or explanations were to be given<sup>277</sup> - but there should be listening to the unbelievers! Lots of this! They should be allowed to express themselves on “what do you feel about God? What do you think about life? and so on.” Why would Christians be expected to opt out in this way? Withholding proper teaching and preaching, prayer and hymns from the unsaved in their midst?...

The reason given by the advisers of the Alpha team (people who have been specially trained at Holy Trinity Brompton) was that this way of acting was to give the unsaved a listening ear for once, because they never had anyone to listen to them respectfully, out there in the world. But the real reason, I would suggest, is to teach Christians the “art” of dialogue, to teach them to respect other people’s views, to make them shift their own positions, to lead them into “tolerance” with other’s belief systems, to bring the church into a less “absolute” way of presenting its “religious” beliefs.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> According to Nicky “Many” of his small group ‘helpers’ are those who have “just finished the previous course” [Telling Others, p69]. How can they cope with the errors?

<sup>277</sup> Our experience is that few verses are offered by group leaders, even fewer references are given, and the Bible itself is almost *never* actually opened during the “small group” discussions.

<sup>278</sup> Nicky states, regarding evangelism, that: “Peter says do it ‘with gentleness and respect’. That means you can’t have any kind of pressure because that wouldn’t be gentle or respectful” [Talk 12]. This is a serious misrepresentation of 1 Peter 3:15 where the ‘gentleness and respect’ (correctly translated “meekness and **fear**” in the KJV) refers to the attitude we need to have towards our Lord while evangelizing – not to our hearers.



"If they [*i.e. Christians*] have any doubts about where ... God stands on the issue, they should read Matthew 10:32-3. He does **not** approve of this type of reasoning." [Gotcher, p.28]

The Roman Catholic hierarchy wants to be "tolerant" and "understanding" of all religious views, and they want the churches to learn proper respect for other group-views. Alpha encourages the use of questions asked of the unsaved, expect-ing from them their own answers. But the unsaved cannot give reasonable answers at all; not answers which we should be listening to.

"Whoever controls the agenda for deciding the questions that will be asked controls the answers as well. In short 'whoever controls the questions, controls the answers.' This is true whether one is participating in education, business, or government

"Socrates was said to have shown a slave owner that his slave had the truth of Pythagoras' theorem already within him, and through a series of questions was able to convince the owner that he did. What Socrates was really doing was controlling the environment of thought, whereby the slave was able to be guid-ed to the only logical conclusion to a presented question. He simply supplied the correct answers to the skilfully laid-out sequence of questions. The answers were in the questions, not in the slave. This questioning is not dealing with 'Science accord-ing to facts,' but instead is 'Science according to Socrates' [Phil Ring]. This is not 'hard' Science but 'soft' Science where 'hypothesis equals fact' [Tim Clem]. This is 'so-called Science' [Apostle Paul].

"We cannot apply the same principle to answer the questions 'Who am I? Why am I here? Where did I come from? or Where am I going?' without accepting either God's Word as the source for the questions to be asked - or human reasoning. God, in His Word, only occasionally asks questions to be answered, and often those questions provide their

own answers. He instead gives us facts (answers) up front to be obeyed. When we come to God and His Word with questions to be answered, it is up to us to 'search the Scriptures', not to question them."

Alpha wants to lead the churches into listening to the answers that the unsaved have worked out for themselves, in regard to the very questions dealt with above - "Why am I here? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What do I think and feel about there being a God or not?" This should never be done! For the Christian Church has been given the mandate to *proclaim* what GOD has given, FACTS, ANSWERS, TRUTH.

Our message is not didactic in nature; it is solid as a rock and divine in power. God does not ask questions of humans that can only be answered by human reasoning; God gives answers and facts "up front." Alpha wants, as well, for the unsaved to seek "feelings" and "experiences", not encounter the preaching of solid, immovable facts and commandments from Almighty God!

The battle for men's souls goes on in our world, stronger than ever in this "New" world of "change" and "feelings" versus facts. Dialectic processes are sweep-ing the world. It is a form of brainwashing, which is promoting an ideology of "let's all respect one another, and listen to one another, and come to peace together." We cannot follow the God of the Bible if we use methods that are designed to use the Scriptures to facilitate delving into the feelings of the unsaved. Alpha begins on the wrong premise immediately, because it gets the group discussion onto the track of "how do you feel about what the Bible says?" Instead, a Bible study group should be based not on feelings, but on the omnipotent Word of God.

Here are some examples of what this is about:

**GOOD: Facts-Level Teaching About the Word of God, and Questioning**

Reading John 3:16. "What is God telling us here about the Son of God?" "What does the verse state God did because He so loved the world?" "Who can

have everlasting life, and not perish, according to John 3:16?”

**BAD: Feelings-Level and Humanistic-Evaluation-Level Questioning**

“How do you feel about the Bible saying God loves us?” “What do you think about Jesus Christ being the Son of God?” “Do you feel that God would really send the rebellious to Hell, so that they will perish?”

**BAD: Values-Level Questioning**

“Would you have been able to give your son to die for the world?” “Wasn’t that an act which showed unloving, even cruel behaviour on the part of God towards Jesus Christ?” “Could such an act be just?”

The NEW AGE declares in our day that FACT teaching, in any area, church or secular education, is a low-level concept. Feelings-level teaching and value-level teaching are supposed to be much higher concepts. THIS IS NOT SO, however. GOD has declared FACTS that we must present to a dying world. If we deny this, we also deny the very Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

People generally tend toward subjective questions that lead to answers that satisfy their own feelings of guilt, selfishness, wonder or fear. God has pre-established answers which are designed to question US, so that we can find the salvation and righteousness which alone will give eternal light, satisfaction, and Life. We Christians have a job to do: we are to give those questions and answers to the world – with no dialogue or smart techniques of brainwashing which compromise the Scriptural message!

“Instead of accepting a black and white world, with its absolute right and wrong answers, they [*i.e.* *New Agers*] now pursue a grey world where change becomes absolute, truth becomes relative, and deviancy becomes the norm.<sup>279</sup> According to the

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<sup>279</sup> Hence modern Bible versions use relative terms like “immoral” in place of absolutes like “fornication”.

process, if mankind is to get along then it will be necessary that everyone develop this same attitude or way of thinking... That is: by higher-order thinking skills, as experienced in Diaprax, that the quest for world harmony and peace is realized. [Gotcher, p.31]

Alpha succeeds as a tool because it is a dialectic tool! It works because the unbelievers feel in control and the church people feel in control, but neither group realizes that the *process* is really in control. Alpha 'works' BECAUSE there are no confrontations with sinners as such; because there are no unsettling Bible convictions involved with the presentation; because the sinners who go to Alpha are honoured and given self-esteem - plus a pretty good meal as well!

Alpha works, just as dialectic works, because a unity is achieved without argument, because the Word of God is NOT preached as it should be. Alpha works on an emotional level, a feeling level and an experience level - we all have those, and we humans can relate to one another on that level, so Alpha is a good relationships process. It is a "feel good", self-esteem program. It makes everyone feel good, but if one thinks about it enough, you can see this gives you hardly anything else.

"Let the wicked **forsake** his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.  
For My thoughts are **not** your thoughts, **neither** are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.  
For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall MY WORD be that goeth forth out of My mouth; and it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall

prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” [Isaiah 55:7-11].

## **QUOTES FROM THE ALPHA COURSE SEMINAR, HELD IN BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA**

All quotes are from *The Alpha Conference, Speaker Notes*:

### **Section from page 13-17, entitled “Leading Small Groups”**

p.13. The speakers made it clear that the non-believers who attended were “guests” not “learners.” The notes say, “with some groups you may never get beyond discussion to Bible Study. This applies especially to groups of non-churchgoers or non-Christians.” Here we see a classic dialectic environment – i.e. a social gathering, not an ordinary Christian meeting; discussion-orientated, not Scripture-orientated.

p.14. Alpha says that GROUPS are ruined by leadership doing the talking “instead of giving people the freedom to speak and to say what is on THEIR minds.” Non-directive, non-preaching.<sup>280</sup>

p.14. “If you FEEL that the group is NOT READY for BIBLE STUDY but DISCUSSION is not flowing easily, possible QUESTIONS to start discussion can be found in Appendix 1. Two basic questions: What do you THINK? What do you FEEL?” [emphasis added].<sup>281</sup> Here we see the subjective, humanistic questioning of the Diaprax set-up.

p.14. The speaker’s instruction was, “don’t go to the Bible until everyone is ‘ready.’” Since there are only fifteen sessions in Alpha courses, when can anyone decide when the unbelievers are ‘ready’? GOD has given we Christians a mandate to preach the Gospel, not wait for some undefined signal that everyone is “ready.” [2 Timothy 4:2-4; Romans 10:13,14].

We were instructed to aim at the weakest person in the group, and to not proceed beyond their ability to assimilate. The notes say,

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<sup>280</sup> According to Nicky, the purpose of the small group leader is not to help guests to understand the truth, but rather to “get everyone talking”, to “start discussion” and to “provoke discussion” [*Telling Others*, p113]. “**The** aim is to bring everyone into the discussion” [*Ibid*].

<sup>281</sup> This is precisely the wording of the “two basic questions” Nicky recommends in *Telling Others*, p111.

“To **learn** to study the Bible togeth-er...” In other words, don’t yet study the Bible, just “learn” to do it soon. “Hear **God** speak. Therefore, **DON’T GIVE A TALK**. Get **OTHERS** to do the **MAJORITY** of the talking.”<sup>282</sup> Here again the preaching of the Word of God is gagged; for that would be termed “giving a talk” in the eyes of Alpha advisers! How can God “speak” if there is no preaching and if Bible teaching is not defined...? They possibly mean by the spurious things brought out by the unbelievers’ “feelings” and “thinking”.

p.14. “**Even if** a Bible study is planned (amazing possibility!), give everyone an opportunity to ask questions arising out of the talk or other questions on their minds.” Here the speaker, (Australian national leader, Mona Carter, who is well trained from many visits to HTB) came out with amazing dialectic, “concepts level” questioning, and programming. Is she aware of the hidden agenda? Who can tell?

**From my own notes on her lecture:**

“SOMETIMES”, she says, “if **all** people in the group are Christians”, they do the Bible studies in the back of the manual. “There are **no** right answers” she says. “Even if people speak up real heresy, try to encourage them, anyway” she says. Here is the dialectic pattern again, there are no absolutes presented. The absolute Word of God is confined, it succumbs in the midst of the Diaprax session.

p.15. Notes give the “fact-level” questions a firm by-pass! The “concepts-level” and “values-level” questions are used to get everyone to **DISCUSS**, not to **LISTEN** to, what God has shown in His revelation to man! On page 15, Alpha even uses direct dialectic and praxis terms:

“Ask **OPEN-ENDED** questions, e.g. ‘What?’, ‘How?’, ‘Who?’ and ‘Why?’, not **CLOSED QUESTIONS** (yes/no answers).” Notice that this effectively bypasses the **ABSOLUTES** of God’s Word. The same page makes sure that all real prayer, by leaders or “guests”, is cut out. This would give **GOD**, as First Cause, a top-billing, but in dialectic environments the “first cause” must have its authority broken, and be set aside. The speaker said here, “Don’t say grace before meals, it might embarrass people.” She also taught, “No long prayers, they are a put-off. Just pray, ‘Lord, thank you for the

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<sup>282</sup> This is exactly the message of *Telling Others*, p113.

weather', or something simple like that. Just let people pray, don't **you** pray."

**Appendix One. p.47**

(On the subject of asking questions at the group dinners.) Note that the majority of the questions are NOT fact-level questions, they are concepts/feeling-level and values-level questions. Compare back to the chart on these in this critique:

- “1. Who is Jesus?
  - a. What are people’s FEELINGS about Jesus?
  - b. If you had a chance to meet Him, how would you FEEL?
  - c. Before you heard the talk tonight, what was your CONCEPT of Jesus?
  
2. Why did Jesus die?
  - a. What is YOUR REACTION to the crucifixion?
  - b. Do you FEEL that sin is an outdated CONCEPT or is it something you THINK about?
  - c. How do you RESPOND to the word sin and the word forgiveness?
  
3. How can I be sure of MY faith?
  - a. What would you write on a form where it asked your religion?
  - b. Do YOU ASSOCIATE love or fear with God?
  - c. When it is said that Christ will make a change in YOUR character, how do YOU FEEL?”

The suggested questions go on over a few pages; all are based on the concepts/feelings-level or values-level, NOT on the FACT-LEVEL of God’s Absolutes as presented in the Word of God.

**OUTCOME-BASED INDOCTRINATION**

The sort of questions that Alpha leads people to ask are really only the old temptation of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, “hath God said?” The OUTCOME, which is being programmed for both unbeliever and churchgoer, is to substitute God’s proclaimed and revealed Truth with one’s own feelings, values and reasoning.

For instance, instead of preaching or teaching the truth about God answering prayer, guiding His Blood-bought children, having a plan for those individuals who respond to Him and accept Christ as Saviour, Alpha presents questions which make it seem all right for people to DOUBT and QUESTION GOD! Read these horror questions for yourself, think about the implications, and see beneath the surface. One can only imagine what answers the unsaved would give in an Alpha session to these questions! [p.48]:

“If you ever pray, do you think someone is listening?”

“How do you feel about being guided by God?”

“How do you respond to the idea of God having a plan for individual people?”

Now look at the questions on the same page about the supernatural world of the Evil One. GOD has shown us what the fallen world and the evil angels and Satan are really all about; He has shown us in the Scriptures. Yet Alpha asks these questions, which are NOT fact-level, of the unsaved person. Remember that Alpha asks ‘open-ended’ questions - there are supposed to be no right or wrong answers:

“Do you BELIEVE in the supernatural / black magic / the occult?”

“Have you a CONCEPT of the devil?”

“Have you ever THOUGHT about the existence of a power of evil?”

“Do you SEE the mess in the world as a result of us / evil power...?”

These questions are not the same as ‘application questions’. A biblical application question leads on to the knowledge of what the Bible declares, it does not lead on to what humans think, feel, have concepts of, doubt about or disbelieve.

## **IT IS WRITTEN**

The Christian Gospel is about the Bible questioning **man** about his sin, rebellion and rejection of the Saviour. Man is never called by God to question His precepts and Sovereign declarations... 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 puts it like this:



“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down **imaginations** and every high thing [*i.e. every proud thought / notion / imagination*] that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every **thought** to the obedience of Christ.”

Dean Gotcher has these words to say to alert and challenge the Christians in these deceptive days of New Age, tactics:

“Higher-order thinking in morals is nothing more than man justifying sin. When it comes to one’s position on God’s Word, the Christian cannot go through the definition sub-phrase of Diaprax using ‘I think,’ or ‘I feel,’ without weakening or destroying their faith. The use of ‘It is written’ during this sub-phrase may well cost the Christian the respect of those in the group, but it is the only way the Christian can stay loyal to his belief and his position in God and His Word.

“To move into the realm of ‘I think’ or ‘I feel’ on matters of ‘It is written’ is folly. Many Christians have fallen prey. While numerous Scriptures come to mind, one in particular applies directly to Diaprax - I Timothy 6:20-21. The Apostle Paul warned Timothy not to participate in ‘opposition’ [*the Greek word used is ‘antithesis’*] ‘of so-called Science whereby many have lost their faith’ [*“so-called Science” patently encompasses the dialectic process*]. It doesn’t get any clearer than that. One cannot participate in Diaprax and keep one’s faith in God.

“If you reject God as the ‘First Cause’ or the purpose for your life, you are doomed to the life of Diaprax. You have based the cause for your existence upon your own wisdom and are bound to the cosmos and its impending judgment. You are

worshipping the created rather than the Creator and are bound to Life-Long Learning<sup>283</sup> without hope of coming to a true understanding of what life is really all about” [Gotcher, p.46].

## CONCLUSION

Where will you stand reader? With God’s Word and its fearless proclama-tion? I pray so.

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Let us end this book with a solid final testimony, albeit not related to Alpha:

“When God speaks, it will strip you of every ounce of pride ... [u]ntil you come to the end of yourself, and realize what you are – not fit for heaven, under the judgment of God, with nothing but ... eternal burnings before you ... I wasn’t brought up in a Christian home ... [*It was*] a drunken, broken home ... [*I*] never heard of Christ except in blasphemy ... My father left my mother ... We were never wanted ... I got to hate the very name of God...

“The head of the warehouse [*where I later worked*] was a Christian ... [*The*] presence of that man [said] ‘God, God, God’ ... [*I thought*] ‘What if there is a God?’ ... a chill went right down my spine ... ‘If there’s a God, there’s a hell, and if there’s a God, you’re going to hell’ ... By the following week ... I was found in the little Gospel Hall ... The fear of God hit me ... I could see the judgment throne; I could see me standing in the presence of awesome Majesty. In my mind’s eye I could see the very flames of hell, and I could hear the voice of my Blessed Lord: ‘Depart from me, ye cursed.’ And I could see me tumbling down to eternal burnings. To be brought before God without a Saviour ... it came with tremendous reality ... I knew there was a God; I knew there was an eternity, and I knew I was damned.

“I determined from that day I’d got to get God’s salvation. I thought you had to pray for it; I started to pray ... at the foot of my bed every night. And I didn’t get peace by praying. I started going to prayer meetings, Bible readings, conferences. And all those Christians, they thought I was saved ... You might be passing off tonight as someone who’s saved, but you’re not

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<sup>283</sup> As per 2 Tim. 3:7.

saved, and you know you're not saved, and God knows you're not saved...

“There was one great truth that gripped me; the truth of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I knew that if the Lord Jesus came, I might be praying, I might be going to meetings, I might be looking like a Christian, but I hadn't got the Christian's Christ; I wasn't saved; I would be ... damned.

“I got down on my knees; I couldn't tell you what I prayed but [*it was simply*] the heart cry of a poor sinner that wants God's salvation. I called upon the Name of the Lord ... I bowed my knees to Christ; I took Him as Lord and Saviour that day, and before I got up off my knees the burden of sin had gone. When I stood up off my knees, I knew I was saved and I knew I was heaven-bound”.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Norman Mellish, speaking at a conference in Vancouver, Canada, in 1986. This testimony is from a tape graciously supplied by Michael Penfold, of Penfold Book and Bible House.

## RECOMMENDED READING

### The Gospel / Salvation

**C.H. Spurgeon, All of Grace, (Christian Focus Publications, 1990)**

*“An earnest word with all those who are seeking salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

**A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, (OM Publishing, P.O. Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 0QS, UK, 1994)**

*In this inspiring book, Tozer devotes each chapter to a different attribute of God, showing that, if the Church does not preach a right understanding of Who and What God really is, then she is preaching “heresy of the most insidious and deadly kind”.*

### Evangelism

**John Blanchard, Ultimate Questions, (Evangelical Press, 12 Wooler St., Darlington, Co Durham, DL1 1RQ, UK, 1987)**

*Recognizing that many Gentiles today are growing up without a basic knowledge of Christian belief, the author uses Paul’s speech to the pagan men of Athens as his pattern for evangelism. The photographs may be dated, but this booklet is a very good presentation of the whole Gospel.*

**John E. Davis, You Asked the Question! (Time For Truth! P.O. Box 1146, Kidderminster, DY10 1WG, UK)**

*An excellent introduction to the Christian faith.*

**Ken Ham, Creation Evangelism for the New Millennium (Master Books Inc., P.O. Box 727, Green Forest, AR 72638, USA, 1999)**

*“Post-Christian people need to hear the bad news that they are lost before they will respond to the good news that they can be saved. The essential revelation concerning human lostness is in Genesis ... most Christians are not fully aware of the vital connection between a belief in a literal Genesis account and matters of salvation...” An absolute must-read for any believer committed to evangelism in today’s neo-pagan Western cultures.*

### Creation

**Ken Ham, The Lie: Evolution, (Master Books, Inc., P.O. Box 727, Green Forest, AR 72638, USA, 1987)**

*“The media and the public education system tell us that ‘creation’ cannot be taught in schools because it is religion, while ‘evolution’ is science.” In this superb account of the history of our origins the author shows that both are “equally*

*scientific and religious ... The controversy is not religion versus science, but the science of one religion versus the science of another religion.”*

**Henry M. Morris, Science and the Bible, (Scripture Press, 1988)**

*A powerful look at Scripture with regard to a variety of scientific disciplines.*

**Don Batten, ed., The Answers Book – Updated and Expanded, (Answers in Genesis, P.O. Box 6302, Acacia Ridge, Queensland, 4110, Aus, 1999)**

*“People everywhere ask the same challenging questions – ‘Where did Cain get his wife?’, ‘Was the flood global?’, ‘What about carbon dating?’, ‘How did the different races arise?’ ... These perceived ‘difficulties to the Christian faith’ are answered clearly in this book.” Non-technical and very easy to understand, this work is a definite must-read.*

## **Discipleship**

**A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God, (OM Publishing, P.O. Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 0QS, UK, 1993)**

*The author’s humble claim for this book is that it is a “modest attempt to aid God’s hungry children to find Him”. For many readers, however, it is much more than that. Drawing on Tozer’s own experiences, this book is a gentle yet urgent encouragement to the Christian to go on with the Lord.*

**Matthew Henry, The Young Christian, (Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Fearn, Tain, Rosshire, IV20 1TW, UK, 1987)**

*For new Christians this is the perfect follow-up to the booklets by John Blanchard and John Davis mentioned above.*

**William MacDonald, True Discipleship, (Walterick Publishers, P.O. Box 2216, Kansas City, Kansas 66110, USA, 1975)**

*Three excellent essays on the terms (and costs) of living the Christian life.*

**J.C. Ryle, Walking with God, (Grace Publications Trust, 139 Grosvenor Ave., London, N5 2NH, UK, 1995)**

*In this excellent book, “both Christians and those seeking the truth about God and His son Jesus Christ will find instruction, challenge and encouragement.”*

## **Self-Esteem / Psychology**

**Jim Owen, Christian Psychology’s War on God’s Word (East Gate Publishers, Santa Barbara, California, USA, 1993)**

*An excellent and very readable book examining “the presuppositions and counselling methods of psychology” for all problems of living.*

**Martin and Deirdre Bobgan, Psychoheresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity, (EastGate Publishers, Santa Barbara, California, USA, 1987)**

## Recommended Reading for Part Three

*This extremely useful book analyses the integration of psychology with biblical counselling.*

**Jay E. Adams, The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, Self-Image, (Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 97402, USA, 1986)**

*This book “brings much-needed clarification to the area of self-esteem and offers the church and every believer a truly Biblical view of self”.*

### **Helpful Websites**

Readers should find on the pages specified below many good and helpful articles giving extra information on the various topics raised in Part Three. As always, though, their inclusion here certainly does not mean we endorse everything they say. Please be “Berean”.

#### **Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry**

[//www.carm.org/doctrine.html](http://www.carm.org/doctrine.html)

[//www.carm.org/evangelise.htm](http://www.carm.org/evangelise.htm)

[//www.carm.org/objections.htm](http://www.carm.org/objections.htm)

#### **Bible Believers Resource Page**

[//www.biblebelievers.net/CreationScience/kjcreats.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.net/CreationScience/kjcreats.htm)

#### **Creation Facts**

[//www.mbowden.surf3net/creatp1.htm](http://www.mbowden.surf3net/creatp1.htm)

#### **Way of Life**

[//www.wayoflife.org/fbns/fbns-index/psychofbns.htm](http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/fbns-index/psychofbns.htm)

#### **Psychoheresy Awareness Ministries**

[//www.psychoheresy-aware.org](http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org)

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## NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

St Matthew Publishing hopes the reader has found this book informative and of benefit. The ‘WORLD’ volume of *Alpha – the Unofficial Guide* has explored, in the context of Alpha, the Bible’s view of the outside world. The final chapter has brought us neatly to the main subject of the companion ‘CHURCH’ volume, viz. the Bible’s view of the *Church*.

There is no overlap between the two volumes, except the standard of research and the number of thought-provoking observations. Gracefully written, and structured to form a totally natural progression from the book you are holding, the insightful ‘CHURCH’ volume focuses on very different issues from those raised so far (including discipleship, Bible interpretation and the ‘Holy Spirit weekend’). Readers are sure to appreciate the top-quality material and the clear way in which each topic has been presented.

Many of those important questions which Christians frequently yearn to know the Biblical answer to are tackled, and each is dealt with in a logical and irrefutable way. We at St Matthew Publishing believe with all our hearts that the committed believer will not for one moment regret reading it but will want instead to share this powerful handbook with their friends. (Ordering details appear overleaf.)

## How to Obtain Copies of the CHURCH Volume

For details of how to order the sister ‘Church’ volume or further copies of this ‘World’ volume, the first port of call is the ‘Sweeter Than Honey’ section of the authors’ website ([www.bayith.org](http://www.bayith.org)), or:

St Matthew Publishing –

1 Barnfield, Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdon  
PE28 9AX **UK** Tel: +44 1480 399098  
Email: [PF.SMP@dial.pipex.com](mailto:PF.SMP@dial.pipex.com)

*or*

Christian Witness Ministries –

P.O. Box 353, Loch Sport, Vic 3851, **Australia**  
Tel: +61 3 5146 0280, *Fax: +61 3 5146 0270*  
Email: [Maureen@Christian-witness.org](mailto:Maureen@Christian-witness.org)

Below are some other ministries that should be able to help in this regard, but a much more extensive list of outlets worldwide is given on our website.

<b>Discernment Ministries</b>	<b>B. McCall Barbour</b>	<b>NPN</b>	<b>Elijah Ministries</b>
P.O. Box 254, High Bridge, NJ 00829-0254, <b>USA</b>  discernment@earthlin k.net	28 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1ES, <b>UK</b>  Tel/Fax: +44 131 225 4816	P.O. Box 2224, Swindon SN6 7LG, <b>UK</b> Tel: +44 7000 073 373 <i>Fax: +44 1793 86183</i>	P.O. Box 55468, Northlands 2116, Jo’burg, <b>S. Africa</b> Tel: +27 11 783 5082 <i>Fax: +27 11 783 5079</i>

<b>Discernment Ministries</b>	<b>Take Heed</b>	<b>David Lister</b>	<b>Nigel Nicholson</b>
P.O. Box 2336, Krugersdorp 1740,  <b>South Africa</b> <a href="mailto:diakonia@icon.co.za">diakonia@icon.co.za</a>	P.O. Box 13, Ballynahinch, Co. Down, BT24 8AL, <b>UK</b> Tel: +44 28 9756 5511 <a href="mailto:takeheed@aol.com">takeheed@aol.com</a>	P.O. Box 100223, Pittsburgh,  PA 15233, <b>USA</b> Tel: +1 412 321 6154 <a href="mailto:jacata@moriel.org">jacata@moriel.org</a>	12 Konini Crescent, Napier,  <b>New Zealand</b> Tel: +64 6 843 2610  <a href="mailto:NNicholson@moriel.org">NNicholson@moriel.org</a> rg





# CROSS-REFERENCE

Certain fundamental areas come up more than once in this book. The following mini-index is supplied in order to assist navigation where such topics cannot easily be tracked down via chapter titles and section headings. Each section of the book that contains help on the listed topic is identified. (Italicized entries refer to sections in the sister ‘CHURCH’ volume. See preceding pages for more details.)

**Key:**

- ‘RR-2’ - the ‘Recommended Reading’ section at the end of Part 2.
- ‘(x2)’ - the topic is referred to twice in the given section.
- ‘A:3’ - the third section of the Appendix that appears at the end of the CHURCH volume.
- ‘See also’ - means ‘the following sections are not as relevant as the earlier ones in the list’

**Alpha Quotes** (Quotations from Course teaching materials. Note that Nicky sometimes modifies video talks *within* editions.)

- Talk 1** “Christianity: Boring, Untrue and Irrelevant?” – 1:5, 2:3, 2:4, 4:0, 9:1, 9:4, 12:2, 12:10, 15:1-2, 15:4, 15:7; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 2** “Who is Jesus?” – 1:1, 2:4, 2:6, 3:1, 4:0, 6:6, 7:3, 10:3, 10:6(x4), 12:2, 15:3, 15:7; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 3** “Why Did Jesus Die?” – 6:5, 6:7, 7:1, 7:4, 7:8, 8:2(x2), 8:3, 9:1, 9:4(x2), 10:6, 11:7, 15:2(x4), 15:4-5; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 4** “How Can I Be Sure of My Faith?” – 2:7, 3:5, 5:8, 6:6, 9:1(x2), 9:5(x4), 14:3(x2), 14:4, 15:1(x2), 15:3; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 5** “Why and How Should I Read the Bible?” – 1:2-4, 2:4, 3:5, 4:0, 5:8, 7:3, 7:8, 9:6(x2), 10:1(x2), 10:4, 10:6(x5), 15:3; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 6** “Why and How Do I Pray?” – 6:5, 8:1, 9:1, 9:3(x2), 12:2, 15:2, 15:7, 16:1; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 7** “How Does God Guide Us?” – 5:5, 5:8, 6:5(x2), 6:6, 6:7(x3), 7:6, 9:1, 11:7, 12:9, 15:7; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 8** “Who is the Holy Spirit?” – 3:1, 4:0, 6:5, 7:8-9, 9:1, 9:6(x2), 10:3-4, 11:7, 11:9, 12:4, 15:2, 15:5, 15:7; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 9** “What Does the Holy Spirit Do?” – 4:0, 6:1, 7:1, 7:8(x2), 9:1, 9:6, 12:1(x2), 12:2, 15:1, 15:2(x2), 15:4(x2); See also our CHURCH volume.

- Talk 10** “How Can I Be Filled With the Spirit?” – 6:5, 9:1, 9:4, 9:6, 11:7(x3), 15:1; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 11** “How Can I Resist Evil?” – 1:1, 1:3, 9:1, 9:3, 14:2, 15:2(x2), 15:3-4, 15:7; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 12** “Why and How Should We Tell Others?” – 1:1, 2:1, 4:0, 5:4, 7:3, 10:3-4, 16:2; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 13** “Does God Heal Today?” – 6:5, 6:7, 9:4-5, 10:6(x2); 12:4, 14:4, 15:2-3, 15:6; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 14** “What About the Church?” – 1:1, 2:7, 4:0, 6:7, 7:1, 7:4, 7:8(x2), 7:9, 7:12, 8:2, 9:1, 9:2(x2), 9:3, 9:6, 10:3, 11:6(x4), 11:7, 11:9, 12:1(x3), See also our CHURCH volume.
- Talk 15** “How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?” – 4:0, 5:8, 6:7(x2), 7:8, 11:4, 11:7, 12:2, 12:9, 14:4, 15:2(x2), 15:3, 15:7; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Questions of Life** – 1:1, 2:4(x), 2:5, 2:6(x2), 2:9, 3:2(x2), 3:5, 4:0, 5:3-5, 6:4(x2), 6:5(x3), 6:6(x2), 6:7, 7:1, 7:8, 7:11, 8:1, 8:2-3, 8:4(x2), 8:5(x2), 9:1(x2), 9:3-4, 9:6, 9:7(x2), 10:6, 11:6(x3), 11:7, 11:9, 12:4, 12:9; See also our CHURCH volume *and* the **Talk number** related to chapter of interest in *Questions of Life*.
- Searching Issues** – 1:1, 2:3(x2), 2:4, 2:5(x2), 2:6(x2), 2:8(x2), 2:9(x2), 2:10(x3), 3:1(x6), 3:5(x2), 4:0, 5:4-5, 6:2, 6:6-7, 8:2, 9:1, 10:6(x2), 11:7, 12:2(x2); See also our CHURCH volume.
- Telling Others** – 2:3, 3:3, 6:5, 8:6, 9:1, 9:2(x2), 9:4, 9:6(x2), 9:7, 10:4, 11:7, 12:1, 14:5, 15:6, 15:7(x2), 16:2(x2); See also our CHURCH volume.
- 30 Days** – 2:9, 3:2, 4:0(x2), 5:8, 6:4(x2), 6:7(x2), 7:3, 7:10, 8:3, 8:6, 9:2-3, 9:6, 11:4, 11:6, 11:7(x3), 12:2(x3), 15:2, 15:4; See also our CHURCH volume.
- Why Jesus?** – 4:0, 5:8, 15:1, 15:2(x8), 16:1; See also our CHURCH volume.
- (*Numerous* other HTB publications are referenced in this *Unofficial Guide*, but the above are the most commonly cited ones.)

**Babylon** (Also known as Chaldea. An enemy of the truth and of God’s People in the Bible.) 2:4-10, 3:1, 3:3, 4:0, 5:4, 6:6, 7:4, 7:9, 7:12, 8:5-7, 9:2-4, 11:0-1, 11:5-8, 12:1, 12:7-9, 30:1-2, 30:9, RR-2, RR-4. See also 5:2, 5:6, 7:1, 9:5, 10:2, 17:6, 19:6, 24:5.

**Believer’s Security** (Verses and comments on salvation and the requirement for security.) 2:6, 8:1, 9:1, 9:5, 18:3, 24:2, 24:4-5, 25:2, RR-3, RR-4. See also 1:5, 9:6, 13:3, 18:4, 18:9, 19:3.

**Bible Versions** (Information on different Bibles, including Alpha’s version, and how they compare.) 2:5, 4:0, 9:3, 10:2-6, 11:8, 17:6, 18:6, 20:3, 23:3, RR-1, RR-2, RR-4. See also 12:5-6, 16:2, 17:1, 17:6, 26:5.

## Cross-Reference

- Character of God** (What God has revealed about Himself, plus Alpha's coverage of this.) 7:8, 13:2, 15:4-5, 19:2-5, 19:7, 20:1, 23:1, 24:6, 25:4-6, 28:2, 29:3, RR-3. See also *A:4*.
- Church** (Information on the operation, or ordinances, of a Fellowship.) 12:4, 17:2-3, 17:6, 18:1-8, 18:10, 20:2, 21:1-3, 22:1-3, 23:1-7, 24:2-8, 25:3-4, 25:8, 26:2, *A:2*, *A:5*. See also 7:12, 8:2, 11:9, 20:6, 24:1, 28:5.
- Criticism** (Guidance about correction, judgmentalism, etc.) 2:7, 3:3, 10:1, 12:1, 12:6, 17:1, 17:3, 18:1-10, 22:1-3, *A:3*. See also 2:9, 6:6, 10:5, 12:10, 20:3, 21:1-3, 23:1-5, 25:2.
- Deity of Christ** (Bible verses proving Christ's Godhood. See also entries under 'Trinity'.) 1:1, 1:3-4, 2:2, 2:4, 3:5, 6:2-4, 6:6, 7:3-4, 7:7-9, 8:1, 9:1, 10:3, 13:2, 15:1, 16:1, 19:4, 20:3, 21:4, 23:1, 26:2, 28:2, 29:3-5. See also 8:2, 10:4, 28:6.
- End Times** (What we will – and won't – see in the last days. Also known as 'Eschatology'.) 16:2, 22:1, 22:3, 24:2-8, 25:1-2, 28:6, RR-2, RR-3, *RR-4*. See also 13:2.
- Fear of God** (Treatments of the crucial subject of what it means to be 'God-fearing'.) 14:4, 15:4, 19:2-3, 19:7, 20:1-2, 22:1, 23:6, 27:2. See also 2:1, 5:4, 8:6, 12:4, 13:2, 14:2, 15:7, 19:5, 21:1, 21:3, 23:2, 23:7, 25:4, 28:5, 29:6, 30:1-3.
- Gospel** (What salvation – or 'justification' – involves.) 3:1, 5:5, 9:1-2, 13:2, 14:2-4, 15:1-7, 16:2, 17:5-6, 21:4, 23:6, 24:2, 25:5, 26:5, 28:7, 30:11, *A:4*, RR-3. See also 8:4, 9:4-5, 10:3, 11:1, 14:5, 17:2, 17:4, 18:2-3, 18:5-6, 19:6, 23:1.
- New Age Movement** (Information on this dangerous religion and its roots.) 2:6, 2:8, 3:2, 3:4, 4:0, 10:3, 11:8, 16:2, 20:4, 25:5-6, 26:4, 27:3-4, 28:7, 29:3, 30:3, 30:5-11, *RR-5*. See also 2:3, 16:2, 24:8.
- Trinity** (References to the triune Godhead and to Satan's counterfeit version.) 1:3, 2:6, 4:0, 6:6, 10:3, 13:2, 16:1, 20:3, 20:5-6, 23:1, 23:6, 24:2, 25:4, 26:2, 27:5, 28:2, 28:6, 29:3, RR-1, *RR-4*. See also 7:8, 15:2.
- Truth** (The significance that God's Word attaches to truth and error.) 1:1-5:8, 8:3, 8:6-7, 12:1, 16:2, 17:1-2, 17:4-6, 18:4-9, 22:1-3, 23:1-7, 24:2, 24:4, 25:2-3, 25:8, 26:2, 27:2, 30:4. See also 10:8, 12:5.
- Word of God** (The approach that Alpha and Bible figures take to the holy scriptures.) 1:1-4, 5:7-8, 6:6, 10:1, 10:6, 10:8, 12:6, 16:2, 17:1-5, 18:3-4, 19:2, 20:2-3, 21:3, 22:1-3, 23:1-7, 24:2, 24:9, 25:8, 29:3, 30:1. See also 4:0, 5:6, 8:1, 10:5, 19:1.

