

alpha

the unofficial guide

*O*VERVIEW

**A Whole New Study
on the Alpha Course**

Elizabeth McDonald
and Dusty Peterson

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on the Alpha Course**

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and Dusty Peterson

Alpha - the Unofficial Guide: Overview

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IMPORTANT INTRODUCTION!

This powerful volume has been carefully constructed so that it can apply not just to standard Alpha Courses but to post-Course materials and to adaptations also. As a result, it really needs to be read in a linear fashion from page one rather than ‘dipped into’. (For readability, each chapter has an average length of less than five pages.) Here are some comments from people who have read the book through *from the start*:

“Thankyou thankyou thankyou” (*A.R., England*)

“God bless you for your research” (*J.G., New Jersey, U.S.A.*)

“[This] will really help us” (*C.R., England*)

“[T]he read has been exquisite” (*V.C., Kansas, U.S.A.*)

“Absolutely GREAT!” (*J.S., New Jersey, U.S.A.*)

Please forgive the UK spellings if they are unfamiliar. Please also be aware that this exceptional book makes regular reference back to the *main* Guide from which it was derived. Although such ‘back references’ may make for a slightly novel reading experience, they are needed because the authors could not fit every relevant comment, Bible verse, or Alpha quote into this summary.

Where the main Guide goes into significantly greater detail than is possible here, explicit references to it serve several valuable purposes. These are listed in the *Preface*, along with some other information which should substantially enhance your appreciation of this extremely fine work.

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

**“[T]o the only wise God our Saviour,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and forever. Amen”**

(Jude 1:25)

Grateful thanks are also due to
the brothers who have checked this work so thoroughly
and made such superb contributions.

PREFACE

What is Alpha? Alpha is normally billed as a “practical introduction to the Christian faith” and is often used as both an evangelistic program and as a church commitment course. It usually comprises a series of fifteen talks plus some ministry times. (The titles of the talks are listed at the start of our ‘References’ section.) Alpha typically takes place over ten weeks - including a day or weekend retreat. Each talk is commonly preceded by a meal and is followed by a ‘small group’ session where questions raised by the talks can be freely discussed. Alpha is now used in the great majority of the countries of the world, and in many of its languages.

As most readers will know, Alpha was devised at Holy Trinity Brompton (‘HTB’) - an Anglican church here in England. What is perhaps less well known is that it was not actually *created* as an evangelistic course, but originally consisted of a series of talks for *believers*. The first version of Alpha appeared in 1977, but it was 1990 before Nicky Gumbel took over responsibility and began to add his outreach elements.

Alpha has since enjoyed explosive growth in use and been taken up by churches worldwide. It has proved straightforward to run and has precipitated a large number of testimonies. For these reasons many groups conduct the Course largely ‘as is’ without fully considering whether aspects might be problematic...

Some Christians even feel that Alpha is above any examination and that questioning this view is almost sacrilegious. But its background means that there is much more to Alpha than the evangelistic side alone. Also, many of the Course topics have *eternal* significance, and God calls us to be

particularly diligent to make sure that *everything* we teach about His Kingdom is accurate (1 Tim. 4:13-16; Jam. 3:1). We are dealing with men’s *souls*, thus the Bible commands us to test “**all** things” regardless of their source (1 Thess. 5:21; Gal. 1:8), and even the apostle Paul encouraged his hearers to check what he said (1 Cor. 10:15b; Acts 17:11).

The authors fervently believe in bold evangelism but we also believe, in view of the awesome responsibility the Church has toward those she educates in the Lord, that no harm can come from prayerful, sincere efforts to line up Alpha’s content against the whole of Scripture. The intriguing results of just such an undertaking are available in a twin-volume “Unofficial Guide”. (This was primarily researched by Elizabeth and written by a brother, Dusty Peterson.) The book you are holding contains a distillation of these findings and serves a variety of purposes including:

- (1) Giving a concise summary for those folks who need to access the principal facts in a hurry and who do not require all sorts of extras,
- (2) Providing a detailed review of the main manuals to help readers decide if they, or any friends, would benefit from possessing the fuller treatment, and
- (3) Acting as a memory jogger incorporating all the central points of the main volumes (plus advanced material) in a convenient single package.

This synopsis has the same structure as the main *Unofficial Guide* and therefore also functions as a navigational aid, being roughly a quarter-length miniature of the complete study. (The latter’s size reflects its deeper coverage and its more extensive proofs as well as its greater obligation to quote Scripture explicitly. It is thoroughly documented and also includes very many Alpha quotes beyond those used in this mini-Guide.)

Our material applies to all the official types of Alpha Course, (e.g. “**Alpha for Youth**”, “**Alpha for Students**”, and “**Daytime Alpha**”) each of which comprises the same number of talks, in the same order, and with the same essential content as the ‘standard’ Course.

It may comfort readers to learn that more than eight man-years of full-time research have gone into this work. Naturally, every part of an official Alpha Course was specially attended, but beyond this we have read practically *every* Alpha-related book and official Alpha newspaper, plus

many other publications from HTB / Nicky Gumbel (as well as many relevant books, articles etc from *other* sources), and every Alpha video was watched multiple times in order to create this Guide.

As explained in the *Introduction* section, this ‘Overview’ volume often refers back to our *main* Guide. Here are our reasons for this:

- (a) If a reader has a problem with something we have written, they can be assured that we face up to it in the main Guide. By knowing this, they will hopefully feel able to continue reading this *Overview*. (Folks who are unhappy with any statement in this shorter document should indeed find that their concern is handled in the main Guide. If any problem persists there then the reader is urged to write to us with the details.)
- (b) If a reader is new to a topic, but is basically happy with our reasoning on it, then they will have the confidence to *rely* on our points if they know that much greater supporting evidence has been provided elsewhere. (Later comments in this book are often dependent on preceding material, which is why we recommend that it be read from page one.)
- (c) If a reader has areas of particular interest within the topics we discuss, then it will be useful for them to be told the specific strengths of the main Guide so that they can make an informed judgment as to whether they should obtain a copy.

The primary reviewer of the *main* volumes has called them “much needed” and we too believe their contents to be very important. One role of this *Overview* volume is therefore to promote them. However, this ‘marketing’ side of the text was not added for *financial* benefit! In order to make the material as inexpensive, and hence accessible, as possible, we have both felt it right to accept no royalties whatsoever from the project.

Please also note that this work is ordered by topic - rather than by Alpha talk - so that it can offer the most logical progression (thus the chapter and section titles are our own). This book also endeavours to make up for the common observation that the Course misses some salient information. We hope it blesses you richly, for that is its aim throughout.

E. McD. & D. P., England

PART ONE

“THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH”

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS THE “TRUTH”?

IMPORTANT NOTE: Readers must be sure to have read the Preface before embarking on this volume.

1:1 INTRODUCTION It seemed like her studies would never end. Then one day it was all over, and my sister was at last a fully-qualified midwife. I was astonished at the amount of knowledge and training required to be able, consistently and safely, to deliver newborn babies regardless of any complication. But what does one need in order, consistently and safely, to deliver *re-born* babies?

Our full “Unofficial Guide” begins by establishing that truth is vital (or, as Alpha puts it, “truth matters **very much indeed**”¹). The Lord Jesus defined the truth as being God’s written Word (John 17:17) and others in the Bible described it likewise. In Daniel 10:21 it is *called* the “scripture of **truth**”, and it is salutary to consider that the Lord quoted frequently and unquestioningly from the scriptures, even on the cross.

These opening paragraphs of our main “Unofficial Guide” (or “Guide” for short) go on to explain that the Bible is the plumbline for testing everything in the Christian life because it is God’s written revelation of His Word to man. This is why the Lord Jesus is its theme throughout (Luke 24:27; John 5:39), and why Scripture is one of the very few things to be called ‘holy’ in the New Testament.

1:2 PHARISAICAL? Our main Guide/manual then reviews the idea that unswerving commitment to the Bible is akin to being a *Pharisee*. The Lord actually accused the Pharisees of “teaching for doctrines the commandments **of men**” - rather than God’s scriptural commandments (Mark 7:7-13). Indeed, He then said “Full well ye **reject** the commandment of God, that ye may keep **your own** traditions” (v9).

So the Pharisees were not *genuinely* committed to the scriptures but instead followed their pseudo-biblical beliefs (Matt. 15:1-9). They misapplied and over-emphasized an unrepresentative selection of scriptures to the detriment of the rest (Matt. 23:23). Our main Guide reasons that putting the (whole) Bible first, i.e. before any other notions, is ironically the *opposite* of Pharisaism. Alpha’s leader, Nicky Gumbel, rightly says the following:

“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** over and above the traditions of leaders of the church of the time and over and above the opinions of others. 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.**”²

There are all sorts of reasons why the Bible cannot have been authored by man, and we supply several of them. Our main Guide then notes how desperate Satan is to keep men from knowing God’s written Word and how hard, and often, he has tried to destroy it. Thankfully, God has preserved His Word - just as He promised to do in places like Isaiah 40:8 and 1 Peter 1:23.

1:3 CHRIST’S WORD Subtle arguments are sometimes used to dissuade us from studying, and living by, our Bibles. The Guide entreats readers to take note of *Christ’s* comments about the scriptures. (The Lord stressed that every Christian *must* respect His sayings, according to Luke 6:46-49, 9:26; Matt. 7:24-27; John 12:48; Deut. 18:18-19 etc.) The Lord Jesus made numerous statements showing that He:

- (a) Had total faith in the scriptures (Mark 14:49) and expects us to (Luke 24:25),
- (b) Had unswerving loyalty to the scriptures (Luke 24:44-46) and requires it of His followers likewise (Luke 11:28),
- (c) Had thorough knowledge of the scriptures (Mark 9:12-13; Luke 19:46; John 7:38b etc) and calls for us to also (Matt. 21:16,42; Mark 2:25, 12:10a etc),
- (d) Was obedient to the scriptures (Luke 22:37a; John 13:18; John 19:28 etc) and said true disciples would be similarly obedient to them (John 8:31), &
- (e) Withstood deception by using the scriptures (Matt. 4:3-11) and directed His followers to do the same (Matt. 22:29; Mark 12:24-27).

Christ Jesus also said “**Search** the scriptures” (John 5:39, KJV) and declared that “scripture **cannot** be broken” (John 10:35). As already noted, we cannot afford to ignore any of His statements, for He also said:

“If a man **love Me**, he will **keep My words**: ... He that **loveth Me not** keepeth **not My sayings**” (John 14:23-24); “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but **My words** shall **not** pass away” (Matt. 24:35).

(Incidentally, every time God’s ‘Word’ or the ‘words’/‘sayings’ of Jesus are referred to in any New Testament quotes or references within this chapter - including all of the above passages - the underlying Greek term is always “logos”).

1:4 “THOU HAST MAGNIFIED THY WORD” Here the Guide muses on the intricate relationship between the written “Word of truth” and the “Word made flesh” (Jesus). They are devoted to one another and are inseparably linked - such that an attack upon one is surely an attack upon both. In answer to those people who say ‘God is greater than His Word’, God Himself has said His *holy Scripture* is our supreme authority. God has magnified His Word even above His own great Name (Psa. 138:2), thus the only Kingdom being served as a result of Christians not knowing - and believing - their Bible, is Satan’s.

1:5 HOW IMPORTANT IS TRUTH? Truth is evidently of paramount importance. The Guide demonstrates this by pointing out that, if a man is to avoid God’s wrath, he must: *believe* the truth (2 Thess. 2:12); *obey* the truth (Rom. 2:8); and actually *love* the truth (2 Thess. 2:10). From the huge number of references to ‘truth’ in Scripture, the Guide deduces that we should be valiant in seeking it and protecting it (Jer. 9:3) and that we must never compromise on it (2 Cor. 4:1-2; Prov. 23:23).

The text then lists a few of the wonderful blessings promised to those who diligently search for the truth (e.g. Prov. 3:1-4 & Psa. 40:11), and remarks that we need to keep truth at our very core (3 John 1:3-4; Psa. 51:1,6a). The Bible *is* the truth and contains all the principles we need for our faith and for the practice of that faith (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Guide praises Nicky’s comment that “if Christianity is true, it is true for everyone, not just for me”,³ but we report the view of some teachers that not *all* of the rest of the Course stays faithful to that statement. We promise to check this suggestion - initially in the context of Alpha’s position on other religions.

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CHAPTER 2

WHAT ABOUT OTHER FAITHS?

2:1 OTHER GODS? This chapter of our main Guide commences by drawing attention to the need for Christians to know, and agree with, God’s perspective on other religions. At some time or another we are all, as Nicky says, “**bound** to be asked ... ‘What about other religions?’”,¹ so here we seek to determine whether Alpha gives commensurate weight to the issue - and whether Course teaching lines up fully with the biblical position.

Deut. 6:13-15 and Josh. 24:20 verify that the world’s religions serve and worship “gods” *other than* the God of the Bible. The Guide shows that there is just one *real* God (see Isa. 44:6; Isa. 45:5a; 1 Cor. 8:4-6 etc) and concludes that, although other beings exist which men *call* gods, the God of the Bible (i.e. Jehovah) is “the only **true** God” (John 17:3).

“[T]hou shalt worship **no other** god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exo. 34:14).

2:2 WHO CAN SAVE? Scriptures like Hosea 13:4, John 14:6, and Acts 4:10-12 announce that no other “gods” can save anyone from their sins. This means that these entities, which pagans serve in place of the true God, cannot keep them from Hell - and are thus useless.

2:3 WHAT DOES ALPHA TELL US? The Alpha talks themselves are rather quiet on the matter of other faiths. Only in Nicky’s book *Searching Issues*

(which was published to answer the questions most commonly raised during the ‘small group’ discussions following each Alpha talk) does the subject of other religions get examined. In it Nicky helpfully states:

“**Jesus** is the only name that can save ... None of the other great religions even claims to have a Saviour ... **Jesus** is the one who brings salvation ... **Jesus**, the unique Son of God, the unique Saviour ... is the only way to God.”²

(It is perhaps unexpected to see the adjective “great” used in relation to non-Christian religions, and it would have been good if Nicky had referred to “**Jesus Christ**” - to help distinguish Him from the fundamentally different “Jesus” that other religions teach about - but the statement is obviously important nonetheless.)

2:4 WHO OR WHAT ARE THESE “OTHER GODS”? Our manual then uncovers the true identity of the entities behind the “gods” that men worship in place of the God of Israel. To start revealing the spiritual dangers involved in such misdirected worship, we give many Bible passages (including Lev. 17:7, 19:4; Psa. 106:35-37; Jer. 19:13; and Deut. 32:17) to prove that these “gods” are actually idols representing *devils* - a.k.a. demons. (This explains why the apostates of Christ’s day needed so much deliverance!)

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

Other religions not only preach false gods but also reject the Deity of Jesus and thereby deny the true God. In so doing, they also deny His Word which repeatedly declares that Jesus Christ *is* God incarnate. We catalogue some of the many verses teaching this, such as: John 1:1-3; Col. 2:9; Isa. 9:5-6; and Heb. 1:8. In Isaiah 7:14 He is called “Immanuel” - i.e. ‘**God** with us’, and Nicky makes this statement: “we say that Jesus is ... **fully God**”.³

“In the beginning was the Word, ... and the Word **was God**” (John 1:1)

If Jesus Christ is not God then He was born of Adam and was tainted by Adam’s fall. In which case, He was not a *spotless* sacrifice - so His crucifixion cannot have paid the required price for us. Any religion that denies the Deity of Christ *cannot* be of God, for Jesus Himself said (in John 8:24) that anyone who did not believe He was Jehovah (meaning “I Am”) would die in their sins. (We supply the sort of information in this paragraph because it is not yet covered by Alpha.)

2:5 WHERE DO OTHER RELIGIONS COME FROM? We contend that all false religions have a single spiritual source and are variations on the same

original. Satan, in his quest to become “like the most High” (Isa. 14:4; 2 Thess. 2:4), created a religion comprising a close, but impotent, approximation to the true gospel. Our book describes the way that this deadly, works-oriented creed blossomed in Nimrod’s Babel (otherwise known as ‘Babylon’ or ‘Chaldea’, see Gen. 10:9-10, 11:4-9).

The Bible uses the term ‘Babylon’ to refer to *any* idolatry or false belief, and Isaiah 14:4-14 (in the KJV) proves that the spiritual King of Babylon, and thus the head of all unbiblical religions, is Lucifer. (Satan is called Lucifer, meaning ‘light-bearer’, because he masquerades as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14), offering false ‘illumination’.)

Since there is “no new thing under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9, KJV) it is not surprising to find that the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the world’s false religions (even the ‘modern’ ones) can be traced back to Babylon. We corroborate this with numerous examples - reminding readers, for instance, that Roman ‘mythology’ is merely a permutation of the Greek religion which preceded it, and that this in turn derived from Egypt and thence Babylon. Likewise Hinduism is really just the Babylonian Mysteries in different garb, and the doctrine underpinning the New Age movement is little more than Hinduism expressed in quasi-biblical language. (Hence leading New Agers admit that their “Christ” is *Lucifer*.)

Druids and muftis, Krishna and Kali, Odin and Wodin, Zen and Zoroaster etc etc; all are easily traceable back to Babylon. (Satan is the god of confusion, hence the variety of names, but God exposes the whole of this false church as ‘Babylonian’ right to the very last book of the Bible.) Much more evidence of the relationship between other religions and their Babylonian predecessor can be found in Alexander Hislop’s wonderful work *The Two Babylons*.

We then discuss the miraculous powers and supernatural occurrences experienced by heathens - observing that the Bible *warns* of such “**lying** signs and wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9). Satan can imitate true healing, deliverance, etc simply by easing or removing the problem - especially where he brought it in the first place - while superposing a different one, and he will happily do this if it will deceive people into thinking they have found truth.

Finally we note that the many supernatural events experienced in other religions constitute yet more evidence that these faiths are *demonically* inspired rather than just man-made. (We will see Nicky’s thoughts on this issue shortly.)

2:6 SOME MAJOR RELIGIONS The Guide then supplies (in a prudent, safe manner) potted overviews of the prime heresies within Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, highlighting their dangers and providing biblical refutations of them.

Their respective relationships to the Babylonian Mysteries are also touched on (e.g. the name “Buddha” means ‘light-bearer’ just like Lucifer), as is the way they all preach *another* Jesus from the one described in Scripture (Islam’s ‘Jesus’, for instance, was never crucified.)

Later we alert readers to some of the other ways in which false faiths disarm and deceive, explaining how they often (a) use parts of the Bible (or corrupted versions of it); (b) contain Judeo-Christian features; and (c) champion gods that have similarities to the true.

We also remark on the way in which several religions worship a personal god, and even a trinity, but that Babylon did likewise and that this trinity is the *false* one spoken of in Rev. 16:13-14 and Rev. 20:10. (All false gods are simply variations on - or reflect different aspects of - the three that comprise the false trinity.) “[A]ll the gods of the nations are **idols**” (Psa. 96:5).

Many faiths preach ‘grace’ and ‘love’ while still permitting religious violence, and Christians should not be fooled by the fact that other religions may promote moral standards. Satan does not mind how ‘graceful’ or ‘loving’ or ‘righteous’ we are - just so long as we do not make Jesus Christ our personal Saviour.

Finally the text insists that all religions failing to line up with the Bible are forgeries that are designed to seduce men - including God’s People (1 Tim. 4:1). They all deny the true Christ and therefore deserve no credibility (1 John 2:22-23).

2:7 INCLUSIVISM? This section gently protests at the support which Alpha’s home church gives to Clark Pinnock - a man who praises non-Christian religions which are leading so many, for whom Christ died, to Hell:

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

“Pinnock writes, ‘As an **inclusivist** [i.e. someone who *denies* that the Jesus of the Bible is the only Way a person can 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**’”⁴

Far from “welcoming” and “respecting” false religions, God *abhors* them. Galatians 5:19 and Isaiah 45:20 indicate the stance that believers are supposed to take regarding idolatry. (Note: Chapter 5 of our book will demonstrate that Paul held this same view - even when he went to the Areopagus.)

2:8 NICKY'S VIEW After this, attention is drawn to the teaching on truth that Nicky gives in *Searching Issues*:

“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. Jesus said, ‘I am the Truth.’ In him, **ultimate** truth is to be found ... But this does **not** mean that parts of the truth cannot be found in other religions ... Only 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.”⁵

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 is only added to deceive and the note has no *legitimate* value. Nicky is perhaps forgetting the source of these religions. Babylon’s doctrines did not come from God; its ‘errors’ were *deliberate*.

Truth and deliberate error come from *different* spiritual sources (1 John 4:6; 1 John 2:21b) - hence religions that lie are not only misguided but are also from the wrong spiritual kingdom. Satan undeniably combines falsehoods with ‘truth’, but Christ condemned the *entire* mixture (e.g. in Matt. 4:1-11).

2:9 DOES SATAN HAVE SOME TRUTH? We continue our analysis of Nicky’s words here and show that there is *no* truth - in the spiritual sense - in Satan (John 8:31). We follow this by attesting that truth cannot be split into “ultimate” and lesser “parts” or fallible and “infallible” components, just as Christ (who *is* “the Truth”) cannot be subdivided. Logically, when the truth is compromised such that the true Messiah is not preached then there is *no* Truth (Hosea 4:1).

Nicky never goes further than admitting “there is a dark **side** to other religions”.⁶ Presumably he believes that all their other ‘sides’ are light. This is dangerous, for these religions lie about Christ and are therefore in total darkness. It is not a matter of *us* “writing them off”; *God* has already done so. He has judged false religions as being “of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-3) and has not allowed us the option of modifying His Word to accommodate them.

2:10 WHAT ELSE DOES NICKY SAY? This final section of chapter 2 gives Nicky’s justification for teaching that other religions possess truth:

“[W]e would expect to find **truth** in **other** religions for **at least** three reasons. First, although God’s revelation of himself in Jesus, witnessed to in Scripture, is unique and final, God has partially revealed himself in creation [But see Rom. 1:20-25!] ... 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 under-

standable then that we find **good** in **many** religions ... It also explains why there is often a certain **continuity** for those who become Christians from other faiths” [*Searching Issues*⁷].

The Guide reluctantly challenges the above in a number of ways. Truth mingled with error does not equal anything but error in God’s eyes. Nicky fails to differentiate between individuals and the religions they follow. Nicky’s observations are true of *people* but not of the false doctrines they adhere to - which are a product of Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan is a master deceiver who has somehow even managed to dupe *angels* (Rev. 12:9).

Christ indeed “lighteth every man that cometh into the world”, but this certainly does not mean that there is light in the world’s *religions*. Our book goes on to narrate how light gets snuffed out in these dark religions. Through a substantial number of scriptures (including Acts 26:17-18; Col. 1:13; and John 12:35,46), the text demonstrates how deceived people *can* have “**no** light” (Isa. 8:20). We also contend that those believers who claim the world’s religions have ‘light’ end up furthering the very delusion that the inventor of these religions seeks to propagate.

This section winds up by questioning Nicky’s view that there can be a spiritual “continuity” from our previous lives when we become Christians, for God’s Word says: “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).

---oOo---

Please Note: If you are unhappy with the views we express in this chapter, but have no plans to check the Bible references supplied, this book is not at all suited to you. Please refer instead to the main ‘World’ volume and forgive the inconvenience we have caused you. Any readers who decide to continue with the Overview volume are urged to look up the Scripture references for any and all aspects of the book with which they disagree.

CHAPTER 3

OTHER FAITHS AND ALPHA

3:1 WHAT AGREEMENT? This chapter of our full Guide traces Nicky's stance on other religions... to Rome. (The Catholic Church enjoys unstinting support throughout the Alpha talks.) 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 [But why would God bless a false religion?], and will learn how to disprove the errors in them, and to share the **full** light with those who lack it” [*Vatican II*].

Appealing though this sounds, we are forced to state that there are problems with it. These religions don't simply *have* “errors”; they *are* error. They are deliberate - and poisonous - *counterfeits*. According to the Bible, God does *not* “respect the religious beliefs” of pagans. In fact He calls their beliefs and practices “detestable” and “abominations” (e.g. in Deut. 18:9-14; 1 Ki. 21:25-26; 1 Pet. 4:3) and He expects us to see these things as He does (Deut. 7:26; Psa. 119:104 etc).

Our book asks how, if a religion denies the true Christ, it can possibly possess authentic “goodness and truth”, and why Rome makes no mention of the potential dangers of close association with other faiths. We advertise several scriptural warnings about the snare that heathen religions can be (including Psa.

106:35-37; Deut. 7:25-26; & all of Lev. 17). We then submit that only mature believers with a specific calling from God should ever ‘delve’ in the way Rome encourages; hence Paul’s cry to “**flee** from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:13-14).

At this point Catholic readers are sensitively urged to persevere with the main manual in view of the fact that everyone, even those who have formed Rome’s dogmas, can make mistakes at times. (Witness Rome’s treatment of Galileo for instance.) The book promises to identify important scriptures which Catholic readers have possibly never come across before, and we remind them of Nicky’s call to make the *holy Bible* our supreme authority. After this, we continue the above quote from Rome:

“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 ... acknowledges the radical insufficiency of this shifting world ... The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is **true and holy** in these religions.”

But *can* there be anything biblically holy about a religion that opposes the Bible? Does God *really* call us to have “ties” and a “relationship” with heathen religions? Surely 2 Cor. 6:14 and Exo. 34:12-14 correct Rome’s teaching here? Later, our book quotes *Vatican II* again:

“She [Rome] 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 [*sic*] found among these men.”

The Guide suggests that “collaboration” is not a wise idea; for the Bible instructs men instead to *preach repentance* among the nations (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). We fail to find any scriptures saying that idolators possess “spiritual good”, or any verses where Christ’s disciples “dialogued” with pagans rather than confronting them, graciously, with the undiluted truth. What scope for dialogue *is* there when the true gospel is non-negotiable?

Note: By not drawing any distinction between Paul’s Jewish and Gentile audiences, Nicky implies that Paul “reasoned”, in the sense of dialogued, with pagans - and that we should therefore do likewise.¹ But Paul only ever reasoned in this way with proselyte Jews and with the lost sheep of Israel, not with his Gentile listeners. (The Jewish faith is different because it did not start in Babylon.)

Rome's *Vatican II* goes on to say:

“Upon the **Moslems**, too, the Church looks with **esteem** ... They adore one God ... [and] strive to submit wholeheartedly even to his inscrutable decrees ... Though they do **not** acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere him as a prophet” (Yet the true Jesus *was* God, so this is *another* ‘Jesus’. The Koran states that “God has **no** son”. Unfortunately, Nicky lends a certain degree of credibility to the Koran on the occasion that he mentions it.²)

Since even Satanists adore one ‘god’ and strive to submit wholeheartedly to his decrees, these are not suitable tests. Any religion - including Islam - that attacks the Word of God must be a 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.

3:2 DOING BUSINESS Here the Guide surveys the efforts in various quarters to make us Christians believe that we can ‘do business’ with other religions because they deal with the ‘same God’ as us. Consider this:

“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 **co-operation**. 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, seen as ‘God’ by most of his followers) was described as having frequent contact with Catholic leaders, including ‘his old friend’, John Paul II ... [who] endorsed him as ‘a **great** spiritual leader’...”
[M.de Semlyen]

Why would any believer want to legitimize ‘Buddhist thought’ amongst Christians? Do other religions have spiritual truths that the Bible lacks? Would God really leave some vital details about Himself solely in the hands of pagans, despite what He says in 1 Tim. 3:15? No, the Bible is complete. It stands alone and has demonstrated itself to be the truth despite all the attacks that Satan and his servants have devised. (Nicky teaches that some non-Christian religions are “‘much nearer being right than others’”³ - implying degrees of validity rather than degrees of subtlety - yet *none* of them has truth in the spiritual sense of the word.)

If God's written Word is not complete then how can we ever distinguish between true and counterfeit revelations from other sources? The standard answer

is that anything which is 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 make it of God - as Adam and Eve discovered! See also passages like 1 Sam. 15:9-23 or Acts 16:16-18. Truth can certainly be gleaned from other sources, but the test of its truthfulness is whether or not it agrees with holy writ.

The Guide here documents why the Bible is unmatched by any of the books that are holy to the other world religions - not just regarding the total reliability of the huge quantity of biblical prophecies but also in numerous other fields. We illustrate this with examples from the fields of astronomy and medicine.

(As an aside, we also explain that the Hebrew portion of Scripture is not to be looked down upon. For, although the symbolic old Covenant is now physically obsolete, there is much more in the Hebrew scriptures than just this - as Alpha acknowledges.)

Holy Scripture supplies the knowledge we need as Christians. Through God's Word we have *already* been given "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:2-4). The Bible has all the wisdom we require. We are *not* to associate with other religions for the sake of gaining extrabiblical truth - because according to God they have none (Jer. 10:2a; Rom. 6:20-21; 1 Cor. 3:19-20 etc). Yet Rome feels otherwise, as this observation about her shows:

"There is much in Roman Catholic tradition to contribute to **New Age** thinking: mysticism, medieval and modern; [and] the writings and activities of prominent Catholics, past and present ... **Father** Thomas Merton championed the merger of **Zen Buddhism** and Christianity. American **Dominican** Matthew Fox's 'Creation-centred Spirituality', [is] based on **multi-faith** and **pagan** ideas..." [M.de Semlyen] (We only have space in this *Overview* volume to provide references for *Alpha-related* quotes. Full documentation for *all* quotes is available in the main Guide.)

3:3 ROME'S SPECIAL PLACE This portion of the Guide proffers several reasons as to why Rome is worthy of special attention here despite the fact that other groups share her interfaith view. (Apart from anything else, Rome is referred to more than any other institution in the Alpha material.)

The book concedes that we are being 'critical' of this aspect of Rome's teaching - but explains that we are not being uncaring in this; quite the opposite (2 Cor. 7:8-12). The authors care very deeply for the welfare of everyone in the Roman Church; that is precisely why we voice these concerns.

Consider these reports of multi-faith meetings held by John Paul II:

“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 to pray for peace. Praying **together** were **snake worshippers, fire worshippers, spiritists, animists, ... witch doctors, Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus**, as well as ... Catholics. 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...**

“[T]he Parliament of the **World’s religions** ... was attended by about 6000 representatives of the world’s major faiths ... Catholic leadership was much in evidence ... On one night, followers of the **neo-pagan Wicca** [witchcraft] religion performed a **full-moon ritual** ... Roman Catholicism is proving to be the bridge that brings together **all** faiths...” [D.Hunt]

(Note that, when discussing this type of religion, Nicky tends to choose adjectives which soften the impact. Thus he usually refers merely to “tribal religions”⁴ or “folk beliefs”⁵ or “nature religions”.⁶ The problem is that such terms obscure the terrible truth about these pagan things.)

In light of this, one wonders why - in Daniel 3 - Shadrach et al preferred to burn to death rather than bow down to the image that the King of Babylon had set up. They apparently should instead have been exhorting their friends to join in this unifying, monotheistic religious ceremony! (Note, however, the spectacular evangelistic effect that their uncompromising faithfulness to the *true* God resulted in. See also 2 Chr. 15:1-15; Deut. 7:5-6; and 2 Ki. 23:24 for examples of similarly godly behaviour when faced with idols.)

3:4 ROME AT HOME This penultimate section of the chapter comprises some extraordinary quotes including the following two:

“Cardinal Arinze [a candidate for Pope] ... 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 insisted, we should have ‘Unity **and Diversity**’” [W.Howard].

“John Paul II [has] allowed a **Shiva priestess** to create the traditional Shiva mark on his forehead ... The New Age Dictionary defines the Shiva [also called ‘the Prince of **demons**’] ... as the ‘**Hindu** God of **illusion, Yoga, Animals, Ascetics**’; ... If the ... Pope is “Jesus Christ’s Vicar On Earth” ... then how can he 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?" [*The Cutting Edge*]

We also report this valuable statement:

“At the 1993 Parliament of the World’s religions ... [speakers] 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 ... 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**” [E.Miller].

3:5 KNOWING GOD Since Alpha again neglects to mention it, this section warns readers about the clever argument (used to support interfaith activities) that no-one can truly know God. The biblical response (in verses like John 14:7,17; 1 John 5:20; and 1 John 2:13-14) is provided.

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

This chapter of the full Guide rounds off by calling Christians to ‘wise up’ to the dangers of other faiths - for those who follow these religions do not know God *at all* (Matt. 11:27; John 14:8-21).

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The reader may be wondering why portions of our material have so far made few references to Alpha. There are many reasons for this (one of which was given at the end of the Preface). Another reason is that we need to supply certain background in this first Part to act as a foundation for points we will make later on. Several further reasons will become clear as we go. Thank you for bearing with us.

CHAPTER 4

CULTS

This short chapter of our main manual gives a whistle-stop tour of four of the most popular pseudo-Christian cults, viz. Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science and Unitarianism. Our Guide reveals how they, just like every other false religion, pervert the scriptures. We then lead readers past the superficial similarities to biblical Christianity and uncover the astonishing doctrines and Babylonian nature underlying these movements. Mormonism, for instance, still retains *many* of the heresies of Babylon. (Strangely, Nicky approvingly quotes several Unitarians within Alpha.¹)

The text shows how all these cults (a) add to God's Word, (b) place their 'prophets' above the Bible, (c) teach, like any other world religion, that man's works are part of his atonement, and (d) undermine the Deity of Christ (as do Christadelphians and every other cult).

(In Alpha's 1st video edition, Nicky said that cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and 'Moonies' can be seen to be wrong because they do not line up with Scripture.² This brief mention became even shorter in the 2nd edition, with no groups being named at all. It is of concern then that HTB's *Alpha News* newspaper made much of the testimony of a woman - who had been a J.W. for fifteen years - in which she refers to having received the Spirit, since the testimony makes no mention of *any* conviction by the same Holy Spirit of her previously held false beliefs, e.g. that Jesus Christ was not God.³)

Note: Many cult members will claim to “love Jesus” but, again, they are talking about a *different* Jesus from the Person described in Scripture. We conclude that these cults are no better than other pagan religions, and that they actually share the same root.

(Some people argue, on the basis of 1 Cor. 12:3 and Php. 1:18, that a man *must* be of God if he preaches a “Christ” or *thinks* he serves the Lord Jesus. Alpha itself hints at this.⁴ But these verses both assume that the *true* Jesus Christ is being referred to. If you believe another gospel then you are following *another* Christ (Matt. 7:21-23, 24:24; 2 Cor. 11:4,13). This fact instantly reconciles Luke 9:50 & 11:23 too.)

Simply put, if someone perceives God to be anything other than the God delineated in the Bible, then they are not worshipping the God of the Bible but *another* ‘god’ - an idol. (Devils will happily transform themselves into whatever ‘god’ a person wants or expects; see 2 Cor. 11:13-15.) The Lord is unequivocal in His condemnation of all idolatry, even if Nicky avoids broaching the subject in the Alpha talks.

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 man’s might, nor his power, but only by God’s Spirit (Zech. 4:6; John 18:36). All those who use violence for the sake of their church are furthering the *false* church (Rev. 18:23-24).

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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CHAPTER 5

OUR ATTITUDE TO OTHER RELIGIONS

5:1 TAKE HEED This final chapter in Part One of our main Guide opens by restating the Bible's total ban on involvement with "other gods". We show the dangers of such dabbling (e.g. via Deut. 8:19-20; Deut. 11:16-17, 11:26-28; and Lev. 18:24-30) and how God actually calls it *adultery* against Him.

5:2 IS IT OK TO WORSHIP OUR GOD AT THEIR CEREMONIES? Here the popular interfaith view today is compared with that of the apostle Paul. Consider Rome's position:

"[T]he Dalai Lama was given a standing ovation ... 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'" [D.Hunt]. (Note that the standing ovation was given after the Dalai Lama claimed that all the world's major religions are "*basically the same*". If we exclude Christianity, as we must, then his statement is true - for they are all Babylonian.)

Paul rebuffed the idea that there was any agreement between the Church and idolatry (see 1 Cor. 10:20-21 and 2 Cor. 6:14-18). There is a terrible risk of gradual, but fatal, deception from collaborating with other religious groups - even just socially (Deut. 7:2-6 and Ezra 10).

God is a God of *truth*, not compromise (Deut. 32:4; Jer. 4:2a) and He must only be worshipped in truth (John 4:23-24; Josh. 24:14). This discussion ends by contradicting those who think they can approach God in any way other than that which He has ordained in His perfect Word (Lev. 10:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:27-30). (Nicky's words, in one Alpha resource, that "it does **not** matter **what** form worship takes **or where** we worship" are surely not very helpful in this regard.¹)

5:3 EVANGELISM The text now turns to the question of how pagans and cultists are to find the truth. In order for Christians to reach the lost, we obviously cannot withdraw totally from them. The Guide emphasizes the need for grace - but also extreme care. (We urge, too, that believers must be properly equipped and strong in the Lord before attempting to proselytize adherents of heathen faiths. Nicky sadly fails to say this.)

5:4 HAVE THEY REJECTED THE LIGHT? This section argues that pagan nations have *chosen* to believe a lie - for if they took time to delve into the roots of their faith they would find it Babylonian and hence false. And if they checked *Israel's* history they would discover that the God of Israel is the true God (Ezek. 16:14; Psa. 98:2). Likewise, if they considered Creation seriously, they would see the baseness of their own gods (Rom. 1:18-25). Their problem is *not only* one of ignorance.

The Bible says that all non-Christians are without excuse and need to repent. The Guide questions the idea that heathens will be encouraged to repent through being told that God respects their idolatrous religion(s). The biblical alternative is to impress and convict pagans by our holiness, wisdom and purity (and by our practical love for the brethren). Christians reveal the true God to this world as they obey His perfect Word.

5:5 THE 'MODERN' VIEW After this, we review Paul's behaviour at Mars' Hill (in Acts 17:18-34) and question the prevailing idea that he respected the Athenian religion and merely needed to 'refine' it or 'fill it out'...

We list twelve features of the event which negate this popular attitude to dealing with other faiths. For example, Paul was in no doubt that the Athenians were "**wholly** given to **idolatry**" (v16), and we demonstrate how Paul was not putting a Christian slant on a god the Athenians already knew and served - he was revealing a God that was, indeed, "**unknown**" to them (v23). Ecumenism "Christianizes" *known* gods: you cannot serve a god who is unknown to you.

The Guide thus establishes that, far from "dialoguing" with the Athenians, or honouring the gods they worshipped, Paul preached the pure gospel and made clear that God "commandeth **all** men **every where** to **repent**" (v30). 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, suggests that we need to be “positive” when dealing with other religions because “Peter in Acts 4 did not attack other faiths”.² 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 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).

5:6 THE SCRIPTURAL VIEW The Bible is bereft of occasions where God calls anyone to “Christianize” elements of other religions. Our Guide compares Jonah’s preaching at Nineveh to the evangelistic methods being espoused by some. Christians attract unbelievers not by watering down the faith but by being beacons of truth and godliness (Php. 2:15). For this, we all need to know the Christian faith better through the study of God’s Word. The treatise closes by describing the right attitude to the scriptures - i.e. the one that will maximize the degree to which the Holy Spirit can enliven them to us. (We also assert that evangelism must be Spirit-led.)

5:7 THE WORD “WORD” The final two sections of this chapter represent a slight digression centred on the matter of God’s “word”, for this term can be misunderstood. The Guide looks at the common belief that the Greek words ‘rhema’ and ‘logos’ have different meanings and that we can dispense with the (logos) Bible as inferior because we can hear God speaking directly (rhema).

The manual asks a set of questions of any reader who subscribes to this idea. For instance: is this the view expressed in Psalm 119? Has the person ever checked a concordance for the usage of the two Greek words? We reveal (by giving more than two dozen examples) that ‘logos’ is repeatedly used when ‘rhema’ is expected (e.g. in Matt. 15:12; Mark 7:29; Luke 4:32; and John 2:22), and demonstrate - through numerous further verses - that the two words are employed *interchangeably* (e.g. see Luke 9:44-45; 1 Pet. 1:1:23,25; Acts 10:44; and John 12:48). Luke 20:20,26 offers clear proof of their interchangeability:

“And they [the chief priests etc] watched Him [Jesus] ... that they might take hold of His words [LOGOS] ... [but they failed:] they could **not** take hold of His words [RHEMA].”

This subtle notion (i.e. that there is a difference) has been derived not from the Koine Greek of the scriptures, but from a few profane texts written in the - seriously distinct - *Classical* Greek.

5:8 “HEAR HIM” This section considers Paul’s statement, in Romans 10:17, that “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing **by** the word of God”, showing that Paul is referring to exposure to the contents of the *written* Word. We then remind readers about Paul’s other exhortations to know the scriptures (e.g. in Col. 3:16 and 2 Tim. 3:15-17). The Guide goes on to pose further hard questions for anyone who obstructs faithfulness toward the Bible. As Nicky observes, “God speaks to us, primarily when we read this book”.³

We end by quoting Romans 16:25-27... a passage which beautifully sums up each of the various topics raised in Part One.

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RECOMMENDED READING

After urging readers to take a ‘Berean’ attitude to all our material (as per Acts 17:10-11), we offer suggestions for ways in which to follow up the subjects mentioned in this - and every subsequent - Part of the Guide. Full details are given, along with short review, of books the authors recommend on matters such as: ‘Truth and the Scriptures’, ‘Science and the Scriptures’, ‘The Trinity/Deity of Christ’, and ‘Religions and Cults’. We also supply contact details for several ministries that specialize in listed subject areas and we give internet addresses for some reputable websites which also cover them.

Note: As with the remainder of this book, Part One of the main Guide supplies a large number of further quotes from Nicky and from HTB resources on the issues raised here. Nonetheless, the ‘Overview’ volume you are reading still contains many of the key Alpha quotes and Scripture references, plus most of the points required to deal fully with all the questions at hand.

If any of our comments about the main Guide appear remotely arrogant, please accept our sincere apologies. We truly believe in the contents of the main volumes, and we also wanted to introduce extra variety into our wording. Most importantly, however, any praise is for the Lord alone who deserves all the glory for anything of value in our work.

We do hope our ‘back references’ to the main Guide are not proving too tedious for readers. In the Preface, we offered three serious reasons for utilizing them, and we believe that readers will rapidly get used to them, but they will disappear later.

Incidentally, if you should decide to ‘give up’ on this book before the end, please contact us (e.g. via our publisher or our website) to let us know where you stopped - and why. We are utterly convinced, however, that you will be very fully repaid if you keep reading.

PART TWO WHEN IN ROME...

CHAPTER 6

ALPHA'S UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP

6:1 INTRODUCTION Alpha refers to the Roman Catholic Church more frequently - and more positively - than to any other religious body. This must surely influence Course participants when they come to choose a church. Despite the dangers of Rome's interfaith stance, Alpha invariably speaks *very* highly of her. Since the Catholic Church is far larger than any other institution, Part Two of our main *Unofficial Guide* looks more closely at her remarkable relationship to Alpha and asks if she has any other shortcomings of which Course leaders ought to be aware.

This first chapter starts out by delicately explaining why Rome deserves to have space especially dedicated to her. Our text then seeks to give a feel for the closeness she enjoys with Alpha. (There are many glowing references to Rome - plus numerous quotes from prominent Catholics - throughout the Alpha talks and in related publications. For example, one issue of *Alpha News* devoted its largest article to the subject of Catholic-run Alpha Courses and, in the same issue, another page was given over to the views of two Catholic bishops.¹)

The Guide reassures people that they will find the subsequent material interesting and rewarding and we encourage folks to keep reading because of the importance of the information supplied. We then introduce the primary topic of this chapter - that of Mary's place in the Catholic faith.

6:2 MOTHER OF GOD AND SINLESS BLESSED VIRGIN This section quotes *Vatican II* and the Catholic Catechism to illustrate Rome's view that Mary was a "perpetual virgin" who also "committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life" and is, in fact, "the Mother of God" who ascended bodily upon the completion of her "earthly sojourn". We point out that these beliefs about Mary form a part of Rome's dogma, and that anyone who so much as *calls them into doubt* is said to have "fallen away **completely** from the divine and Catholic faith".

The full Guide then examines these teachings. It finds that Christ existed before Mary - who thus cannot be the "Mother of God" in the way Rome means (John 8:58; Eph. 3:9; Mic. 5:2 etc). As others have said, calling Mary the "Mother of God" puts her before God and therefore makes her God. Similarly, if Mary was born without sin then she must have been born of God rather than of Adam - another doctrine that makes her out to be God. This is an act that would surely have horrified this graceful Jewish woman.

The book draws attention to the scriptures denying Mary's "perpetual virginity" (Matt. 1:25; Mark 6:3), and we regret Nicky's intimation otherwise.² The Guide also shows that Mary, like all of us, was not free of sin (Luke 1:46-47; Rom. 5:12; Luke 2:22-24 c.f. Lev. 12:2-8).

6:3 CO-REDEEMER When some are saying that Rome is correcting her view of Mary, this section publicizes John Paul II's catechesis on her which culminated in him stating that Christ was not our sole Redeemer, but that Mary was our "co-redemptrix". The text answers Rome by proclaiming that there is only "**one** mediator [or 'reconciler'] between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). We offer six further verses to dispel Rome's idea, including Heb. 1:1-3 and Acts 4:10-12.

6:4 MEDIATOR The manual reminds readers that Catholics are still taught to "invoke and pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary" who, "by her manifold acts of intercession, continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation" [*Vatican II*]. (Rome claims we must pray to Mary because Christ is so unmerciful that He is only prepared to answer requests from His mother. Rome is most definitely teaching a different Jesus here from the hugely merciful one described in the Bible.)

But only a High Priest - a male - can intercede with God on our behalf. The Bible mentions just one mediator between us and the Father: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, **Jesus Christ**" (1 John 2:1). We list other supporting Bible references and we quote other useful sources...

Praying to anyone but God is wrong (Deut. 18:10-12; Matt. 6:6; Luke 11:2). If people were reaching the true Mary she would admonish them for disobeying

God. Since this is not happening, who are people *really* contacting? In light of this, is Nicky really wise to teach that “you can pray **any** way at **all**”?³

Our Guide then examines the increasingly frequent ‘Marian apparitions’ occurring around the world. Despite no scriptures prophesying that Mary would reappear, growing numbers of Catholics *and Protestants* believe that the apparitions are images of the true Mary. But the messages being given by this ‘angel of light’ reveal her actual identity. We offer quotes from these apparitions including:

“**Each** religion is worshipping ... 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**”; “One religion ... is not better than another” [Both quotes courtesy of Roger Oakland⁴]

This teaching is from Babylon. Indeed, the Babylonians worshipped a woman whose image reappeared after her demise (see Acts 19:35). The enemy is easily capable of producing such ‘lying signs and wonders’ (2 Cor. 11:14-15) and Paul warned us to be on our guard about this (Gal. 1:8).

6:5 AVE MARIA This section discusses the Catholic practice of reciting the ‘Hail Mary’ (or *Ave Maria* in Latin). We look at its relationship to the rosary in which it “serves as a mantra, a repetitive sequence of words” and how this actually violates Christ’s command in Matthew 6:7-8. The Guide discovers that the rosary did not originate with Rome but had much earlier *Babylonian* roots. We then question Nicky’s decision to make light of this very wrong practice:

“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 ... and Maria ... so he decided to go inside a church to pray. So he said to the Lord ‘Oom shall I ’ave?’ and he looked up and saw ‘**Ave Maria**’”.⁵

Nicky’s subsequent advice on marriage is surely ironic, given the incompatibility of Mariolatry with the Bible: “Are we spiritually compatible? It’s common sense that the person we marry is someone who is ... **spiritually compatible**...”⁶

6:6 QUEEN OF HEAVEN While acknowledging Mary’s unique role in history, the Guide also draws attention to some of the scriptures which put her ‘in her place’ (e.g. Luke 11:27b-28 and Matt. 12:46-50). We compare these with the way Rome adores Mary as “Queen of all” and Rome’s encouragement of “hymns of praise and veneration [i.e. worship] to the Queen of Heaven”. The only Bible passage about venerating a “Queen of Heaven” is a reference to an *idolatrous* practice (Jer. 7:18-27). This “Queen” actually represents the Babylonian goddess -

a member of the false trinity called Astarte (or ‘Ishtar’, or ‘Easter’ etc in certain countries) - whom Israel worshipped during times of apostasy. The Guide identifies some aliases used by the other members of this false trinity (e.g. Tammuz, the son) along with a few of their mentions in Scripture.

(In passing, the practice of self-punishment for ‘Lent’ derives from a Babylonian festival that God denounced in Ezekiel 8:13-14, but which Rome introduced into the Church. See Hislop, chapter 3, section 2 for more. A large article⁷ in HTB’s UK Focus newspaper was devoted to the belief that we should “give up something” for Lent and insisted that it is a Christian festival, despite not one Bible verse saying it was a sound New Testament practice. In fact, Paul taught the opposite in Gal. 4:9-11 and Col. 2:20-23.)

This section goes on to divulge that Babylon’s goddess was *also* called “the Virgin Mother” and “Mother of the gods”. We are forced to conclude that the ‘Mary’ worshipped by Rome is not the Mary of the Bible but a counterfeit. Readers are directed to two books for further investigation about this matter. The manual again makes clear that *any* worship (regardless of the ‘type’) given to anyone but the one true God is simply idolatry (Exo. 20:1-5; Matt. 4:10).

Finally, we answer those folks who are tempted to imagine that bits of the Bible permitting Mariolatry have gone missing. Scriptures like Psa. 119:89, 160; Psa. 33:11; and 1 Pet. 1:23-25a seem unanswerable in this regard.

6:7 SAINTS AND IMAGES This final section gives the scriptural response to Rome’s teaching on “saints” and “Saints’ days”. We also reveal that many of Rome’s revered saints can be traced back to *pagan* heroes and heathen ‘gods’.

We call for *dissimilarity* to the world, and we quote Charles Chiniquy’s telling report about the saints and images that form such an important part of Catholicism - i.e. how he recognized that they were the very same idols that Babylon employed “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”.

The Guide then repeats the Bible’s warnings against the use of images and the adoption of heathen practices and idols. Finally we note how Nicky regrettably uses enough ambiguity, e.g. about ‘saints’, to allow Rome to go unchallenged. (For example, he seems to make a special effort 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 and Francis of Assisi.)

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CHAPTER 7

“BLESSED BE MY ROCK”

7:1 “COMPLETELY YOURS” Popes are increasingly devoted to Rome’s Queen. John Paul II even dedicated his pontificate to her. His oft repeated prayer of *totus tuus Maria* means ‘I am **completely** yours Mary’, and it was his practice to consecrate each place he visited to her.

Given all this, and that Rome expects the papacy to rule a unified World religion, the office of Pope, and what Alpha says in this regard, deserves a short study.

7:2 PAPAL POWER This section lists some of the grand titles attributed to popes. We also provide several extraordinary quotes from Rome which she uses to legitimize these titles.

For example, we catalogue how Rome teaches that “**every** human creature is subject to the Roman pontiff”, and how acceptance of this belief is “**altogether** necessary to salvation”. The Guide concludes that the Pope would have tremendous authority and control over anyone who was to move on from Alpha into the Roman Catholic system.

7:3 PETER’S SUCCESSOR? Here, Matthew 16:15-19 (the primary passage used to justify the papal office) is examined. We show that the “rock” upon which Christ’s Church will be built is not Peter *himself* (his name only means ‘stone’ -

see John 1:42, KJV), but is Peter's *statement* - viz. that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God". This is a truth which God reveals to *all* believers (1 John 5:20) despite Nicky's rather unhelpful assertion that "we can't all do what Peter did".¹ Peter was merely rewarded with a change of name that reflected the truth he had just uttered.

The full Guide shows how foolish it is to build a Church on a movable stone - as Peter proved to be. It then supplies half a dozen Bible passages, including Psalms 62:1-7; Psalm 18; and Romans 9:33, each of which shows that *Christ* is the true Rock. The name 'Jesus' means 'salvation' - hence the "**Rock** of salvation" referred to in various scriptures. More verses are presented to confirm that Christ alone is our foundation and corner stone (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:11; Isaiah 28:16; and Eph. 2:20).

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".² Certainly Peter became a very fine man of God, but he was only one of *twelve* founders of the Church, none of whom is recorded as ever claiming that Peter was its head.

The section terminates with two more Roman quotes alleging that Christ's rightful place actually belongs to the Pope. Rome teaches that a Catholic's "**own faith** and religious **life flow** from" the Pope and that the Pope is "**the power**" and "**the light**" and "**the dispenser of spiritual graces**". Is not this belief idolatrous?

7:4 THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN Peter was promised certain "keys" in Matthew 16:19. The manual compares the Catholic interpretation of this passage (i.e. that Peter was: to have "supreme power"; to be Christ's "vice-regent"; and to "rule in His place") with what the rest of Scripture says. Keys are just a means of access, so the 'Keys to Heaven' are simply the truths that show a person how they can enter the Kingdom of God (Luke 11:52).

But *Babylon's* highest priest was also called 'Peter' (the Chaldee word for 'interpreter') and was decorated with two keys. By renaming Simon, Christ was mocking this pagan religion and was saying that *all* disciples could receive the keys of knowledge (Ecclesiastes 2:26a; Eph. 1:17; 2 Peter 1:1-8 etc). Like the Babylonian god Janus, the Pope is said to be the "god of the hinge" who can open and close Heaven, but, in reality, it is *Christ* who is "the way" and "the door" and who holds the keys to the gates of Heaven (Isaiah 22:22, c.f. Revelation 3:7).

(The word 'cardinal' means hinge and never appears in the NT. Yet Nicky appears happy to attach weight to this term, e.g. in Talk 3 where he indicates that the value of a particular gathering in Rome - viz. Maximilian Kolbe's canonization - was substantially increased by the presence of "26 cardinals".)

7:5 BINDING AND LOOSING At the end of the Matthew 16 passage, the Lord says to Peter “whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven”. But this statement is not exclusive to Peter; according to Matthew 18:18 the same is true for all of Christ’s disciples.

Incidentally, the passage does *not* mean that certain people have the power to bind and loose men’s souls in heaven (as Rome believes). For a start, we need to 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, 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. The Greek tense of the passage actually inverts the usual interpretation, and 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. Christ’s earlier 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 - 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 sight, so believers could confidently do likewise on earth.

7:6 OTHER POINTS This section attempts to dispel any remaining notion that the Church is supposed to have a human chief. It then deals with the idea that men can forgive trespasses against *God*. It also describes various problems with the idea that Peter was ever a ‘Pope’ - one such being that Peter was married (see Matt. 8:14) despite Rome’s prohibition of this state for its priests, nuns, bishops, cardinals, popes etc.

(As an aside, 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”. Furthermore, it does not take much brainpower to recognize the dreadful types of sin that are en-

*couraged by forbidding someone to marry, especially someone in a position of authority, trust and power! It is a shame that Nicky, when describing singleness as “a very **high** calling indeed”,³ decided not to clarify his somewhat ambiguous statement.)*

7:7 SUPREME HEAD The next sections analyse some of the Pope’s other titles, in order to see whether they are supported by the Word. Rome believes that “the Pope, ... as Vicar of Christ, is **the visible head**” of the Church. The Guide contradicts this idea by identifying that the only head (visible *or* invisible) of the Church is the Lord Jesus (Eph. 4:15-16a; Matt. 28:18; 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

7:8 FATHER, MASTER, VICAR OF CHRIST The word ‘pope’ means ‘father’. This portion of the manual chastises Rome for her disobedience to God’s commands (e.g. in Matt. 23:9, c.f. 1 Thess. 3:13; and Matt. 23:8, c.f. John 13:13) in calling her human leader “Father” and “Master”. (Nicky too uses the title “Father” when referring to Rome’s human leaders.) We declare that Christians only have *one* true spiritual Father and Master: God Himself.

The term “**Vicar**” of Christ means ‘a substitute for’ or ‘in the place of’ Christ. Truly, Roman Catholics have allowed Christ to be replaced by a mere man. Indeed, they often see the word ‘Lord’ as referring to the Pope. However, we are obliged to point out that the only places in Scripture where anyone is said to be ‘in the place of God’ are in reference to the *antichrist*, the “man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:3-4; see also Rev. 17:8-11).

7:9 PONTIFF The word ‘pontiff’ means ‘bridge’ or ‘priest’. The Pope is called ‘**Sovereign** Pontiff’ and ‘Pontifex Maximus’ (high priest). This section of the Guide contends that the post of high priest in the Mosaic Covenant (just like the rest of the symbolic law) simply pointed to Christ, our “great High Priest” (Heb. 4:14-15; Heb. 3:1) who completely fulfilled the law (Matt. 5:17-18).

We go on to refute the idea that the Pope is King of the Church. We look at Israel’s error in demanding a king in preference to God’s direct rule (1 Sam. 8) and scriptures are then offered which prove that Christ alone is King of God’s People.

Next we reveal that the counterfeit church in Babylon had a mortal ruler who *also* enjoyed the title ‘Pontifex Maximus’ and that this same position and title was adopted by the emperors of Rome. Just as Rome’s pagan emperors were happy to indulge any religion that acknowledged them as its head, so too have Roman Catholic pontiffs subsequently.

7:10 SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD Here the Guide discusses the view, held by a minority within the Roman Institution, that the Pope is just a

figurehead. These folks emphasize that he is called *Servus servorum Dei* (i.e. ‘servant of the servants of God’), but this is *not* the way that popes have acted through the centuries - and John Paul II insisted he would *never* accept a “**symbolic** papacy without **teeth**”.

7:11 THE “GIFT OF AUTHORITY” This section scrutinizes the ARCIC (Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission) and the way it demands that the Roman Pope has “universal primacy” - i.e. *final* authority over *all* churches...

This is contrasted with Article 37 of the Church of England - of which Nicky Gumbel and many other Alpha leaders are ordained clergymen - that says “The Pope of Rome has **no** jurisdiction in this Realm of England”. The section ends by asking why Nicky chooses not to give even *one* word of warning about this matter, preferring to relate stories and quotations all guaranteed to show the Roman ‘Pope’ in a good light.

7:12 “THEIR ROCK” This chapter terminates with a substantial excerpt from Hislop confirming that “the Sovereign Pontiff of the **Babylonian** god [was] invested with the **very** attributes now ascribed to the Pope”. Finally we again serve notice of the dangers inherent in following deceivable men rather than our Divine and infallible Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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If you find yourself asking ‘Why all the stuff about Rome?’, one answer is because many Alpha graduates go on to join the Catholic Church. A fuller answer will become clear in a few pages time. (This Part of the book is, in several respects, foundational to the remaining portions - all of which are devoted to Alpha.)

If you feel we are being unfair toward Alpha then PLEASE refer to the main Guide which will deal fully with all your concerns.

CHAPTER 8

ADDING UP THE MASS

This chapter of our main Guide opens by inspecting the way in which Catholicism distinguishes *fundamentally* between the Roman ‘Mass’ (or ‘Eucharist’) and the ‘Holy Communion’ as performed by others. Anyone going on from the Alpha Course into Roman Catholicism would *have* to observe Rome’s Mass - hence we need to check that this ceremony lines up with God’s Word.

8:1 “THE REAL PRESENCE” Our inquiry begins by articulating Rome’s belief in ‘transubstantiation’. Rome teaches that the bread and wine become “not **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**” (i.e. including His “soul and **divinity**”). We go on to document how, ever since her Council of Trent, Rome has labelled as “anathema” (accursed) anyone who denies this doctrine. Nicky noticeably declines to deny it.

The full text gently, but thoroughly, dismantles Rome’s claim from five different angles. For example we ask how, at the very first Communion, the bread could have turned into the actual body of the Lord when He was still physically there (Matt. 26:26). Christ’s resurrected body is *sitting in Heaven* (Heb. 1:3). The Guide notes that the phrase “this is My body”, which the Lord used during His final Passover meal, is a Hebraism meaning “this *symbolizes* My body” (c.f. John 10:9; John 15:5; Mark 12:10 etc).

Among our approaches, we point out that it is a sin to drink blood (Lev. 17:10-14; Acts 21:25). After this, Christ's statements in John 6 - about eating His flesh and drinking His blood - are explained, e.g. by their context (including v35) and by comparable analogies (including 2 Sam. 23:16-17).

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. (Unfortunately, Nicky calls Communion bread "**spiritual** bread",¹ despite the fact that the Lord Jesus described *Himself* as spiritual bread (John 6:35,41).

The Roman Church strongly encourages Catholics to *worship* the wafer of bread. Understandably they do not need much persuasion since, according to strict teaching, they are in the immediate presence of Jesus 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 (see Heb. 9:24-28 and 10:10-18). 1 Cor. 11:24-25 declares that the bread and wine are a *commemoration* of His sacrifice (whereas Nicky sadly gives many of his hearers the impression that, when the Lord said "Do this in remembrance of Me",² He was talking about *baptism*.) An altar's only purpose is for sacrificing living things. Since no further sacrifice is needed after the cross, we conclude that no church is justified in possessing an altar.

We then give several astonishing quotes which spell out Rome's belief - for she insists that through her "unbloody" eucharistic sacrifices "Christ ... offers himself" *again* "as he did upon the Cross" and that "the Mass is of **infinite** value, **no less than** that of **the Cross**". More quotations prove that Rome expects her devotees to worship the sacramental wafer (or 'host') with "the **greatest** adoration"... after all, Rome's Christ is "present therein".

*For readers who may be confused by the sheer number of Romanists who worship the host, the following scripture may help to put things into perspective: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for **wide** is the gate, and **broad** is the way, that leadeth to **destruction**, and **many** there be which go in thereat: Because strait [i.e. uncompromising] is the gate, and **narrow** is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few** there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13-14)*

8:3 THE MASS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION Here the preceding two sections are brought together. Since it has been demonstrated that the 'host' does

not turn into Christ, and that Catholics worship the host, they are worshipping something other than God - and thus must be committing idolatry in God's eyes.

The Guide ponders how such a deception could have been foisted on sincere people. It also records how Rome compounds her error when she claims that the Mass not only has all sorts of *temporal* benefits but “**no less than the Cross, is expiatory** [i.e. *pays* the penalty] for **sins**”. (“Expiation” is a favourite Catholic term which Nicky too has used inappropriately.³) What is the *true* source of the Mass, given that Rome anathematizes anyone who doubts it is an atoning work?

8:4 A BLOODLESS SACRIFICE There is an obvious discrepancy between Rome's teaching that her 'bloodless sacrifice' pays for sins, and the plain statement in Hebrews 9:22a that “without shedding of blood [there] is **no** remission” of sins.

8:5 THE ORIGIN *Babylon's* religion included a ritual which was effectively *identical* to Rome's Mass. The former's version was 'unbloody' too and, like Rome's, used circular wafers and 'monstrances' (unbiblical vessels for showing off the 'host'). Rome also shares Babylon's requirement that communicants fast beforehand - even though the very first Communion took place straight after a meal. The section lists several other such parallels.

8:6 “IS THIS NOT IDOLATRY?” This portion quotes Chiniquy's experiences and views of the Roman Mass. (His assessment was that it was idolatrous.) The Guide then laments the way that Nicky, given all the occasions he finds to *extol* Rome, could not set aside a single moment to warn prospective sheep of the true nature and implications of the Roman Mass. Knowing the religious significance of the word “host” regarding the Communion meal, it seems very unwise for Nicky to write the following: “Jesus ... **himself** is the **host** ... [W]e accept what Jesus has done for us on the cross ... Come to the banquet. Come and meet the **host**, Jesus Christ. Come and **eat**...”⁴

At this point we quietly challenge the idea that Christians should never discuss unpleasant things. After all, the Bible discusses such unsavoury matters at times. We also repudiate the suggestion that we are being 'anti-Catholic'. We, and others, are endeavouring to *serve and love* Catholics by exposing the danger they are in. It is surely those who *fail* to warn the precious souls caught up in Rome's idolatry who the ones being anti-Catholic.

8:7 CHRIST'S MASS The final paragraphs of this chapter take a brief look at traditional aspects of the 'Christmas' festival which Rome has given us, and ask (in the light of passages like Jer. 10:1-4) where the roots truly lie.

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CHAPTER 9

WHAT WE MUST DO TO BE SAVED

9:1 OUR BURDEN This chapter of our complete handbook starts by identifying what Scripture says about how men are saved. Using numerous verses, our material demonstrates that people are only saved by God’s grace (Eph. 2:8-9) through deep faith in His sinless Son (John 6:47). This section also asserts that we cannot be ‘hidden in Christ’ without sincere repentance.

Our book then explains that “believing **on**” the Lord Jesus means trusting in, clinging onto, and relying on Him (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 15:12; 1 Tim. 4:10 etc). Regrettably, Nicky almost always prefers the more ambiguous phrase of “believing **in**” Him.¹ (See James 2:19 for the crucial importance of distinguishing between the two.)

Although there is debate as to whether or not God has given His followers the capacity to *choose* to “continue in the faith” (Acts 14:22), the Guide notes the Bible’s frequent use of the ‘present *continuous*’ tense when referring to the matter of salvation. In other words, disciples must *keep* trusting in the Lord - hence the call to “**abide**” or “**dwel**l” in Him (John 15:4-6; 1 John 2:1-17, 2:24,27-28, 3:24 etc). Seventeen scriptures (including Matt. 10:22; John 8:31; Col. 1:21-23; and Rom. 2:6-8) are listed to prove that we must continue with Him to the end. That is surely part of what being ‘faithful’ means (Rev. 2:10).

The authors’ present understanding of God’s Word on the possibility of a 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 guidance 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.

Here is an analogy which illustrates the position we believe reconciles all the disparate scriptures on this issue: Consider a lifebelt floating next to a person in the sea. The lifebelt represents our Saviour. Being prepared simply to cling tightly - and tenaciously (i.e. until actually pulled home) - to the belt is a clear admission of total helplessness (rather than anything 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; Heb. 3:6; and Heb. 4:14). Note: This is only a picture; no 'work' is required to cling to Christ. Besides, it is God alone who gives men the ability to hold on.

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).

The Guide shows how the malefactor on the cross supplies unimpeachable evidence that we are only saved through "**repentance** toward God, and **faith** toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). The argument is bolstered by yet more verses (e.g. 2 Tim. 3:15).

The two classic scriptures used to refute this vital truth are then dealt with. (We point out that a saving faith will always *result* in 'works', and that Christ never actually told the sheep in Matt. 25:31-46 that they were *saved* by their good works - despite Nicky lending credence to this idea.²) Rome teaches another doctrine from 'salvation by grace alone through faith alone' and the following paragraphs will set out some of the works that Rome adds to Christ's perfect sacrifice.

9:2 BAPTISM Rome's claim that baptism is of "**absolute necessity** for salvation" is scrutinized. We submit that the only position which fits *all* the relevant scriptures is that baptism, while an important part of Christian life, is only symbolic of the repentance *already made* and is hence not a prerequisite to salvation.

(The manual reports, however, that Nicky intriguingly called baptism "essential" in the original video version of Talk 14. Even now, during his discussion on *baptism*, he says we are saved by being "born of **water** and the Spirit"³ -

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. We are only saved by being born *again*, i.e. born of the Spirit.)

The book goes on to reveal that Rome’s unbiblical belief in ‘baptismal regeneration’ is a feature of various *pagan* religions and was ultimately derived from Babylon. Parallels between the Catholic baptism ceremony and that used in Babylon are also shown. We seriously question the need to adopt pagan practices into the Church, and we quote scriptures like 2 Ki. 17:15 and Rom. 12:2 which clearly ban it. “Thus saith the LORD, **Learn not** the way of the heathen” (Jer. 10:2a).

9:3 PENANCE This section spotlights the Catholic sacrament of Penance (self-punishment, as imposed by a priest), and Rome’s view that it “is as necessary unto salvation as is Baptism”. We analyse the supposed need to confess *sins* to other people (the Greek in James 5:16 only says “Confess your **faults** one to another”) and we mourn the excessive power and control that Penance and Confessionals give to Rome’s priests, especially in view of the fact that *every* Christian is a priest now (1 Pet. 2:5,9). Lastly our book reports that Nicky is again vague on this whole question and that the use of Roman-style confession was actually initiated in Babylon rather than in the New Testament.

9:4 PURGATORY Here we uncover the doctrine of Purgatory - the fiery place where, Rome says, deceased believers are purified and can ‘pay’ for remaining sins. We note that, once again, Rome anathematizes anyone who demurs over this teaching. The text overturns this doctrine from the Bible, inquiring (among other things) how justification can possibly be a “free gift” (Rom. 5:15-18) if we have to *pay* for it.

Unfortunately, Alpha never categorically states that we are saved through faith *alone*. (As with other issues we raise in Part 2, Nicky sometimes *hints* at this - but always seems to let ambiguity to creep in. He also makes some statements which point in the *opposite* direction. Again, please may we remind readers that this Overview volume of the Guide seeks to give our overall impression of Alpha, but the main volumes give a much more detailed picture.)

Next we question the Roman belief 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. Citing Galatians for evidence, the manual opposes this works-based salvation and declares that the blood of Christ is the only purifier of our souls. The full Guide then reviews some of the dreadful effects that doctrines like Purgatory can have, including the opportunity it affords Rome to explain away the tormented deaths of even her own ‘popes’. Again we determine, from Hislop, that the idea of Purgatory emanated from Babylon. Again too we find that Alpha fails to offer any caution over this assault on the finished work of Christ.

9:5 ASSURANCE Rome says that no-one can have reliable assurance of salvation. This section begins by partially commending Nicky's position - i.e. that assurance of our salvation comes from both trusting the promises contained within God's Word *and* from the *direct witness* of the Holy Spirit to our spirit⁴ - see Rom. 8:16; Heb. 10:15a; 1 John 5:6b,10a. (The Guide reinforces this latter point by showing biblically that a healthy conscience bears witness to one's spiritual state. See, for example, Romans 9:1.)

Nine other passages (e.g. Rom. 5:1 & 15:13) are then given which show that we *will* know peace and joy in our spirits if we are truly walking with God... Little wonder Rome has to reject this, given that her gospel denies the truth about Christ's perfect sacrifice and therefore cannot save. The book reminds readers that a gospel of works is a feature of all Babylonian religions too.

9:6 NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

This section establishes that, for Catholicism, it is not a living relationship with God that is the imperative thing, but *being part of* the Church of Rome. *Vatican II* says "Whosoever ... would refuse to enter her or to remain in her could **not** be saved". Rome thus discourages the laity from cultivating a personal relationship with God, whereas the Bible says that it is *fundamental*.

We also refute the idea that the spirit behind Romish charismatics is *God's* Spirit, for the Lord gives His Spirit to those who *obey* Him, not to those who call themselves Christians or who merely *read* the Bible (Acts 5:32; John 14:15-16). We supply a number of testimonies from 'Catholic Charismatics' illustrating that it is "another spirit" at work (2 Cor. 11:4). The set includes these:

"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-redemptrix** and mediatrix of **my salvation** has been **assured**. My appreciation of the **Mass as the sacrifice of Christ** has now been **heightened**" ['Cardinal' Suenens, late head of Charismatic Catholicism].

"**Nothing** has happened to the **great** Mother of God [since I became charismatic]. She **still remains** Queen of Heaven and Earth."

"The initiation into this new experience with God is referred to as being 'baptized in the Holy Spirit'. The following effects have been experienced: A greater appreciation **for the Mass...**"

"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**" ['Cardinal' Suenens (again)].

“We [Catholics] 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**” [Tom Forrest, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Organization].

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**’⁵ and that “you can go to **any** part of the world to **any** church and you’ll find brothers”.⁶

9:7 ALPHA IN ROME Given all these entrenched errors in Roman Catholicism, it is surely an indictment of the present version of Alpha that Rome is able to use it. Rome *officially* endorses Alpha and employs it to bring people into her system. Since Rome’s God is so different from the one described in Scripture, the Course must be compromised for Rome to be prepared to use it. The Course material appeases Rome in many ways, e.g. through clever wording that allows Alpha’s teachings to be taken two ways:

“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**...” [*Alpha News*].

“As more churches of **all** denominations take on the Course ... there will be a growing realization that the faith we have is a **common** faith and [we] will ask ‘**What are we divided about?**’” [Leader of the Rostrevor Alpha Course mentioned above].

Hence the Catholic Alpha Office has affirmed that “Catholics who have read the Alpha material have found it remarkably free from **anything** which we might object to”.⁸

Despite such comments, many folks imagine that Rome’s preparedness to use Alpha is a sign that, underneath it all, she is changing. But that does not explain how, several years *after* Rome first used Alpha, the man in charge of Rome’s doctrines (Cardinal Ratzinger) could still insist that Protestant churches are not even real churches because they deny transubstantiation. He wrote: “[Those so-called ‘churches’] which have not preserved ... [the RC belief in] the genuine and integral **substance** of the Eucharistic mystery, are **NOT** Churches...”.

(We illustrate Rome’s intransigence more fully in the main Guide and in a later chapter of this Overview.) It seems that all movement has been from *Alpha’s* side, for a Catholic bishop has categorically declared that “Alpha does not contain **anything** that is contrary to Catholic doctrine”.⁹ One should also bear in mind

that *Catholic*-run Alpha courses are *immediately* followed by additional talks (presented using the Alpha format):

“[Alpha is] still lacking from a **Catholic** point of view ... We now have ... [extra] video and audio cassettes containing ... talks: [including] Why should I go to **Mass?**” [Catholic Alpha Office¹⁰]

A British edition of *Alpha News* has carried an advert, entitled “Catholic Follow-Up to Alpha” for *fifteen* supplementary videos.¹¹ So, not only does Nicky fail to alert Course participants to the heresies contained in these supplementary talks, he even runs adverts for them - effectively lending official HTB approval to the material. (This may or may not lead guests in Catholic-run Courses to believe that the extra videos are actually part of Alpha, but it is an honour accorded to no other organization’s follow-up material except HTB’s own.)

Perhaps most shocking of all, Nicky refuses to caution his listeners that Rome will quickly snuff out any possible relationship they would have with Christ Jesus. The Catholic Alpha Office says:

“If Alpha had been written by Catholics ... it might **not** have emphasized the need for 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**.”¹²

What signs of change do we have here? What hope do Alpha’s babes have in Rome’s crushing embrace? Many Protestants believe that Rome can be turned around by the insertion of Alpha graduates, but it has never been God’s way to insert spiritual babies into such a dangerous situation. Not even a mature believer would join a Mormon church in order to save Mormons, yet Alpha directs sucklings into Rome. It represents man’s way, not God’s. (We will come to God’s way in Part 4, but 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Eph. 5:12; and 1 Tim. 6:3,5 give clear guidance on this question.)

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CHAPTER 10

SACRED SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

10:1 INTRODUCTION This chapter of our full Guide begins by reminding readers how wholeheartedly Christ extolled the scriptures and how strongly He denounced those who hid them from the people. We then recall Alpha’s statement that the scriptures were “Jesus’ supreme authority”, and we quote more of Nicky’s comment:

“The view of the **Roman Catholic** Church today is enshrined in *Vatican II* which says this: ‘the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament 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 error’. This view of the Bible was, **until the last [i.e. 19th] 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.**”¹

From this, Nicky’s hearers are likely to conclude that Catholicism is substantially more committed to the holy scriptures than Protestantism. This is most definitely worth checking...

10:2 ROME'S TRACK RECORD Although *Vatican II* may *claim* the Roman Church has “**always venerated** the divine Scriptures”, nevertheless she does not *live by* them. Indeed, she has often withheld them from the people - e.g. by banning translation into the common tongue and by utilizing only a few tiny portions in Church meetings.

“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 ... subject to disrespect...” [‘Pope’ Gregory VII]; “[I]f the Holy Bible ... [be] allowed to everyone ... [it] will cause more evil than good to arise from it” [Council of Trent].

The full Guide discloses that, in 1229, the Catholic Council of Valencia revealed Rome’s own degree of ‘respect’ for Scripture by officially placing the Bible on its *Index of **Forbidden Books***. We then document a fraction of Rome’s persecutions toward those who translated the scriptures into the vernacular or who read them without written permission from their bishop. (People have been burned alive by the Catholic Church just for reading the Lord’s Prayer in English; the people of Spain were still prohibited from owning Spanish Bibles right up until **1967**.) The Guide contrasts this position with the unrecognizably different one given in the Word of God itself. As Boettner says:

“Where the Bible is a closed book men soon find themselves in darkness ... How insulting to God is such teaching, that His Word as read by the people will do more evil than good! That attitude ... is the mark, not of a true church, but of a false church.”

Some might imagine that, with *Vatican II*, Rome has dramatically changed - especially since she said there that “Easy access to sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful”. But we identify several of the fatal restrictions that Rome still enforces which effectively deny any “easy access” (not least the way Catholicism seriously hinders access to the true Holy Spirit for illumination, and the way Rome’s leaders demand the final say over interpretation).

10:3 APPROVED BIBLE VERSIONS The text then looks briefly at the Bible versions produced by Rome over the centuries (along with their respective flaws). The Guide especially surveys Rome’s ‘Jerusalem’ Bible, published in 1966, and discusses the many omissions and corruptions in it. We primarily illustrate these by reference to the most important topic of all, i.e. how it treats the Lord Jesus Christ. Verses in the Jerusalem Bible are compared with those in the King James version and our Guide encourages the reader to check their own Bible so as to ascertain how much Romish influence it has suffered:

Is He Christ? It is crucial that we recognize Jesus as God's sole Messiah. He is the only Christ. New Agers teach about a 'Jesus', and about 'Christhood', but they are less eager to talk of 'Jesus Christ' - especially when referring to periods other than His Incarnation. The manual cites over a dozen examples (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:1; Heb. 3:1; Rev. 12:17; Acts 19:4; and 2 Cor. 5:18) where the Jerusalem Bible separates the person of Jesus from His inherent Messiahship. Several 'Jerusalem' verses that seriously downplay Christ's importance (e.g. Gal. 4:7; John 6:47; and Rom. 1:16) are also revealed.

Is He the Son of God? Being the only begotten Son of God makes Jesus the only true God too, rather than just 'a' god - as New Agers would claim Him to be. (Regrettably the Alpha videos never describe Jesus as the 'only begotten' Son of God the Father, and nor do they employ an equivalent phrase.) Believing He is God's Son is critical to salvation (1 John 4:15)...

Catholicism, just like the New Age movement, obscures Jesus' Sonship - and our book gives approximately one dozen examples of Rome's Jerusalem Bible doing precisely this. See, for instance, Acts 3:26; Matt. 24:36; Acts 3:13; and Eph. 3:14; plus Acts 4:30 which Nicky himself quotes during the Course as reading "Your holy **servant** Jesus" rather than "Thy holy **child** Jesus".² (A man is still his father's child, no matter how old he is.)

The full Guide also stands against the idea that the the correct readings for Bible passages should be relegated to footnotes that few people seem to read - and which only serve to confuse those who do read them.

Is He Lord? Christ's Lordship is pivotal too, yet we find this fundamental truth weakened in the Jerusalem 'Bible'. The Guide highlights ten of the occasions when this happens, including Acts 19:10; 1 Cor. 16:22; Acts 22:16; Luke 23:42; 1 Cor. 15:47; and Acts 9:6. (Of course, not every verse that supports Jesus' Sonship, Christhood or Lordship has been altered; that would be far too conspicuous.)

Is He God? According to New Agers, being the 'Lord' is potentially different from being *God*. The Guide catalogues nine of the places where the Deity of Christ is undermined in the Catholic Jerusalem Bible. (Some of these are: 1 John 3:16; Acts 7:59; and 1 Tim. 3:16. Christ is even made *distinct* from God in verses like Jude 1:25, Rom. 5:9 and Rom. 14:10-12). All of these corruptions serve to destroy the Bible's perfect balance and make the truth harder to defend.

The Jerusalem Bible questions other vital doctrines about Christ (six additional areas are recorded, such as His eternal nature and His ascension). *Many* modern versions - including the NIV which is heavily promoted by Alpha - display *all* of the 'adaptations' we have cited for the Jerusalem Bible, and others beside.

(The Guide reports that this is not unexpected given that a senior editor of the Greek committee underpinning these versions was from Rome's 'Society of Jesus' and that the two primary manuscripts behind these versions are from the Vatican and a Catholic monastery!)

The resulting Greek removes the name "Jesus" seventy times, and the word "Christ" a further 29 times. The true Spirit of God *glorifies* Christ rather than demoting Him. Passages like John 2:22-23 and 1 John 4:3 are surely worth considering over this whole matter. (The latter passage is itself altered in many modern translations such that preparedness merely to confess "Jesus" is all that is required to pass the test.)

10:4 GOOD NEWS? We acknowledge Rome's preparedness to produce translations "in cooperation with the separated brethren", but we also point out her huge proviso: "the Church with maternal concern[!] sees to it that **suitable** ... translations are made". Other common verse corruptions that directly help promote Romish doctrines are then identified. Through these we encourage readers to use the KJV when looking up Scripture references given in the Guide.

(The KJV's language is not nearly as old-fashioned as people are often led to believe, as is evidenced by the quotations in this book. For example: there are amazingly few archaic words in the KJV given its age, and these usually appear only once or twice each; the occasional, seemingly quaint, phraseology is simply there to express Hebraisms accurately; the sentence structure reflects the Hebrew and Greek texts, not Elizabethan English; and "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.)

10:5 INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES Rome's position is that, although lay Catholics have finally been permitted access to a "suitable" version of the Word of God, they must not think that they can ever decide its meaning (through the Holy Spirit) for themselves. We prove this via several authoritative quotes, from Rome's own mouth, where she demands that all interpretation is "subject finally to the judgment" of her leaders. This idea is refuted using several unmistakable scriptures (e.g. Acts 17:11; Deut. 31:11-13; & 1 Thess. 5:27).

10:6 SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION Here we analyse the suggestion from Nicky that Protestantism lags behind Rome in reverence for Scripture. The Guide agrees that infallibility of Scripture is indeed denied by humanistic 'experts' - some of whom may *claim* to be 'Protestants' (indeed, Nicky himself appears to deny the infallibility of the Bible on occasion³) - but the material argues that it is in no small part *because* of Protestantism that we have the true Word so available to us today.

The Guide asserts that the scholar who arguably did the most to undermine infallibility (viz. F.J.A. Hort) was actually a Romanist sympathizer who believed in Purgatory, baptismal regeneration, and Mariolatry - but not in the infallibility of God's perfect Word (even though Nicky calls Hort "probably the greatest" textual critic ever⁴). The book notes that God used the *Protestant* Reformation to help restore His Word to its rightful place.

We are saddened by the way Alpha suggests that Rome is *at all* above reproach regarding holy Scripture. We draw particular attention to the fact that Rome's 'tradition' - consisting of hundreds of Church decrees plus the writings of the Church 'Fathers' etc - takes precedence over the Word of God for Catholics:

The Apocrypha Here the Guide supplies information about the fifteen non-inspired books that Rome adds to the Bible. (Nicky's recitation from *Vatican II* skips hastily over Rome's veiled reference to the Apocrypha, hidden behind the four words "with all their parts".) We then discuss the Septuagint from which these books came and note that, once again, the Council of Trent anathematizes anyone who does not accept them as being part of the Canon.

The Church 'Fathers' The full study denounces Rome's belief that the writings of the early Church theologians (comprising *thirty five* volumes) are on a par with Scripture. Since the Bible *is* "without error", we are baffled as to why Rome does not appreciate the fact that anything which contradicts it (regardless of the source) must logically be false (Gal. 1:8-9; Isa. 8:20).

We also expose the uncomfortable truth that, despite Rome's insistence that these Church 'Fathers' had "unanimous consent", they in fact disagreed with each other repeatedly.

The Church's Magisterium The text then looks at Rome's other controlling mechanism: the idea that Church decrees represent God's truth 'ever more accurately' and therefore transcend the plain scriptures.

"This tradition which comes from the apostles **develops in the Church ...** for there is a **growth in the understanding ...** [T]he Church **constantly moves forward** toward the fullness of divine truth" [*Vatican II*].

The Guide briefly puzzles as to how the slide from the Acts of the Apostles to acts like the mind-numbingly inhuman Dominican Inquisition could possibly be described as a move "forward".

Next we demonstrate that, despite Rome's claim, many Papal pronouncements have contradicted previous ones and have thus proved far from infallible. We also show, from the oath that every new member *has* to swear, that Catholics

have no choice but to embrace *all* of Rome’s “sacred” traditions - and must accept them “**without hesitation**”.

Rome places her human traditions above the Bible, thereby making the commandments of God “of none effect” - just like the Pharisees did (Mark 7:8-9). (Despite popular belief, it is those who *discourage* a thorough commitment to the Bible who are actually the ones being Pharisaic.)

10:7 THE REFORMATION AND SCRIPTURE This section gives the rest of the picture (which Nicky regrettably omits) regarding the Protestant position over the Bible. We also repeat the Protestant Reformation’s cry of *Sola Scriptura* - i.e. that Scripture is infallible *and* that the source of truth about the Christian faith is ‘Scripture alone’. (This is what we mean by ‘inerrancy’.)

10:8 WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE ITSELF SAY? The full Guide then refutes, from God’s Word, the Catholic belief that only *certain* Christians can reliably interpret the Bible. The manual shows that it can be comprehended by anyone who seeks and obeys God (Psa. 119:100; Prov. 28:5; Psa. 111:10).

We lay out what Christ and the apostles really thought about the traditions of men (see Matt. 15:3b,7-9; Col. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:18 etc). To wrap up the chapter, we turn to other passages which express the incomparable greatness of God’s Word (including Psa. 1:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:16b-17; and Psa. 119:9-16). God’s Word is pure (Psa. 12:6) and *complete*: “...thou shalt **not** add thereto, **nor** diminish from it” (Deut. 12:32b).

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CHAPTER 11

THE REFORMATION

Alpha only brushes past the Reformation. It thus contributes to the general lack of awareness about this immensely significant period of Church history. Chapter 11 of our main Guide endeavours to compensate for this missing element, although it should be noted that most Catholics themselves are unaware of the following material too. (N.B. Outside of Rome, Bible-believing Christians did exist - albeit in small numbers - throughout the preceding Dark and Middle Ages. Incidentally, for any readers unfamiliar with the notation 'N.B.', it is a common shorthand in some countries for saying 'Important Note'. It is abbreviated Latin for 'Note well'.)

11:1 MARTIN LUTHER This section looks at the part Luther played in bringing about the Reformation. A conscientious Catholic monk, he only found peace when it was revealed to him that justification is a free gift received solely through faith in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus - and that sacerdotal mediation, sacraments, indulgences, papal pardons and the like were blasphemous attacks on the cross.

Luther subsequently denounced the papacy as antichrist (i.e. as usurping Christ's rightful place). It was on the twin issues of 'justification through faith alone' and *Sola Scriptura* that the Protestant Reformation was founded - and defended - against all the Babylonian paraphernalia of Catholicism.

11:2 COUNTER-REFORMATION Here, a flavour is given of the ferocious efforts by Rome to stop, and reverse, the Reformation. Our Guide makes known that it was primarily for this very purpose that the ‘Jesuits’ were created. (It remains their prime function today.) We also mention the large part that the revived ‘Holy’ Office of the Inquisition played in martyring many brave Reformers.

11:3 ENGLAND Starting with Henry VIII, the Guide supplies an overview of the Reformation in England and tells of the many Protestants (including bishops) whom ‘Bloody Mary’ put to death for refusing to accept Roman heresies. We then come to Elizabeth I (who permitted the Reformation to resume), noting that Rome made several desperate attempts to bring England back under subjection during Elizabeth’s reign.

The Spanish Armada A synopsis of the massive naval assault launched by Philip II of Spain in 1588 is provided. We disprove Rome’s denial that the papacy had direct involvement, and we record the thoroughly miraculous deliverance which God wrought. (Again, although this section may not seem directly related to Alpha, nevertheless it does help to show how misguided Nicky is about Rome. Alpha will be fully in view again later in this chapter, and will return to centre stage in Part 3 of this book.)

Assassination Plots We draw attention to some of the papal statements threatening Queen Elizabeth’s life, including the one authorized by ‘Pope’ Gregory XIII which stated “whosoever sends her out of the world, with the pious intention of doing God service, not only **does not sin**, but **gains merit**” (but c.f. John 16:2b-3).

A few of the numerous Catholic assassination attempts against Elizabeth are then listed. We also make clear that, although some of the people involved were punished for their treason, *no* Catholics were executed just for their religious beliefs - in stark contrast to Mary’s merciless and unprovoked treatment of Protestants. (Rome has since *beatified* - i.e. posthumously declared to be worthy of public *veneration* (a form of worship) - many of those who tried to bring down the throne of this Sovereign State by force.)

The Gunpowder Plot The main manual then refers to this thwarted attempt, undertaken by Romanists and resourced by Jesuits, to blow up Parliament in 1605 and thereby seize control of England.

The Later Stuarts Here the Guide mentions the accession of subsequent (Catholic) monarchs, and the persecution and murder of Protestants that followed. We then touch on the roles that other factors played in saving England from Roman bondage once again.

Finally we document how Romanists, through various means, have succeeded in obscuring England's God-given heritage such that the populace is kept ignorant of its true history - and how Alpha only helps to maintain this unhealthy situation!

11:4 MARTYRS IN SCOTLAND, WALES AND IRELAND This section expands the focus to the rest of Britain, narrating, for instance, the amazing story of grace and courage shown by the Scots woman Helen Stark - put into a sack with her new-born baby and drowned because she would not pray to 'the virgin' Mary.

The Guide goes on to relate a few of the less harrowing details of the unspeakably cruel methods used to murder tens of *thousands* of Protestant men, women, and children by Irish Catholics in 1641.

We also note the parallel subterfuge, merciless violence and general ungodliness still being used to destroy Protestantism in Ireland and to undermine Protestant rule over Ulster. (Rome remains unafraid to take corrupt paths to stop those who competently warn of the lies and dangers of popery.)

11:5 PROTESTANT MARTYRS IN EUROPE Our attention then turns to the rest of Europe and the massacre, for example, of thousands of Huguenots (early French Protestants) in 1572. We also point out that other Protestants in France were still being murdered for their faith as recently as the 19th Century.

The text questions the spirit behind Rome that has led her supporters to commit such large-scale barbarities, and we contrast Rome's tolerance of pagan religions with her vicious attacks on Bible-believing Christians. (What is likely to be the true agenda behind today's European integration, in view of the Catholic nature of the majority of countries at the centre of it?)

11:6 ROME AND ALPHA A common retort is: "Catholics have been martyred by Protestants too". The Guide gives numerous reasons as to why this argument is highly misleading (for example, because the comparison ignores the respective breadth, size, longevity, methods and causes/provocations involved in such events). We also discuss the fact that Rome's atrocities have not only been *condoned* by her leaders, but even instigated and equipped by them.

[Rome may grudgingly now be offering some apologies for her past "mistakes", but such statements of "regret" are vague and muted - not to mention hundreds of years late. Besides, until Rome explains how she could have sired such appallingly diabolical episodes and how her followers could have been transformed into such devils in her service, and until she proves that the spirit behind these many ghastly acts has been tackled, then she has not truly repented and there is no

reason to suppose that such horrors won't recur when it suits her. This becomes especially problematic when we consider that the doctrines which prompted them have actually deteriorated since those times. Indeed, the Guide directs readers to several books proving that Rome's persecutions have continued in the intervening centuries - and, in various ways and various countries, still go on today.]

The text then explores the way in which Alpha encourages ecumenical co-operation with Rome, and how unaware the Course leaves its participants about Rome's true nature and aims. Here are some telling quotes from attendees:

"I'm enthusiastic about the potential for the course ... in Ireland. It is non-threatening and 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*¹].

"On Alpha, we can **set aside** our own traditions [i.e. our beliefs?], **come together in worship** ... and develop **trusting** relationships [c.f. Ireland in 1641 or 1916!]" [*Alpha News*²].

But no wonder. By stating that there are "18 hundred **million** Christians in the world today",³ Nicky is effectively telling participants to assume that every Catholic is saved. And he conditions his hearers to accept Rome through the way he uses the archaic and ambiguous word "catholic" to describe the worldwide Church - not just once, but **FOUR** times in the same talk - without any distinction being made between this and the Roman institution of the same name.⁴ (Ambiguity can have its uses in some spheres of life, but it has no place when teaching doctrine to people sincerely seeking the truth.)

11:7 A MYSTERY SOLVED In earlier chapters we examined some of the main features of the Roman Catholic religion. We showed that, while many of them contradict the Word of God, they adhere to the beliefs and practices of the false Babylonian religion condemned so often throughout the scriptures...

The full Guide briefly lists two *dozen* other such Babylonian elements of Catholicism (e.g. icons, nunneries, relics, pilgrimages, and scapulars), referring readers to yet more illuminating verses like Gal. 4:9-11 and 1 Tim. 4:6-7 which call us to turn away from these beggarly things. It transpires that Roman Catholicism mirrors the essence of the Babylonian religion in *every* aspect.

[Again it must be stated that most Catholics, including most of Rome's 'clergy', have no idea of these things. Just as in the Babylonian Mysteries and the esoteric New Age movement, only those people in the very 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 Freemasonry (the real meanings of which are likewise kept from lower-level initiates), are thoroughly pagan despite the Judeo-Christian window dressing. Once again, The Two Babylons provides much proof.]

Next the manual discusses the ‘holy’ Roman Empire in the light of Daniel 2:40-41 and shows how Rome precisely fits the description of the fifth empire descended from Babylon. We also note her destiny (see Jer. 50 & 51, plus Rev. 17 & 18).

11:8 THE WOMAN The Guide proceeds to identify the ‘woman’ - a picture of a powerful religious body - described in Revelation 17. Numerous clues given in this passage are unravelled (e.g. this religious body: is Babylonian (v5); is inherently linked to a physical city (v18) that sits on seven hills (v9); and enjoys great political power). Only Rome fits them all. We direct readers to Revelation 17 & 18 for the unavoidable conclusions to draw about Rome’s true nature and position.

11:9 CAPTIVATING In this final section of the chapter, we discuss the way in which Rome outwardly adorns her leaders, her buildings, and her ceremonies in order to conceal the godlessness underneath. We also show the fundamental difference between this and the New Testament model for Fellowships - comprising humble believers who live and worship in “simplicity and godly sincerity” (2 Cor. 1:12).

Rather patronizingly, Rome calls the NT disciples ‘primitive’, but they were certainly not *spiritually* primitive - they turned many to Christ without having to bully, extort, murder, or use any of the world’s other false ways.

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CHAPTER 12

ALPHA AND ECUMENISM

12:1 NICKY’S KNOWLEDGE This chapter reflects on how very dangerous to the body of Christ is the following comment from Alpha:

“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.**”¹

In this short paragraph, Nicky sweeps away the entire Reformation as well as the murder by Rome of so many men and women throughout the centuries who would not compromise their faith. Is he right to do this? Is the Roman Church *really* just another ‘denomination’? Nicky continues:

“There are some issues which aren’t that important about which Christians have divided. It is *amazing* the issues about which Christians divide. New denominations start sometimes over the most *trivial* matters...” [Emphases in original²].

Nicky doesn’t state which denominations he considers started over “trivial” matters and which - if any - started over fundamental issues. Since he has already called Romanism ‘a denomination’ it does not take much for any uninformed

Alpha participant to assume that the Protestant ‘denominations’ divided from the Catholic ‘denomination’ over trivial issues and that this was *not* a good thing. Nicky is quoted further on the theme of denominational ‘disunity’:

“There is only one body ... 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 ... 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...”³

Paul does indeed say that there is one body and one Spirit, but also that there is only *one* true Lord and only *one* true faith (Eph. 4:5). If the teachings of Roman Catholicism were true to that one Lord and one faith, then Nicky would be right to encourage unity with the Roman Church...

But Catholicism teaches ‘another Jesus’ (one whose death does not fully atone); ‘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 be *separate* from them (e.g. in 2 Cor. 6:6-16; and 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Isa. 48:20; Jer. 50:8; Eph. 5:11; and 1 Tim. 6:3,5 all reinforce this point, but 1 Cor. 5:11 is surely as clear as day:

“[N]ow I have written unto you not to keep company, if **any** man that is called a brother be ... an idolater.” (The verse goes on to say that you must not even eat with such a person - else you discourage their repentance and deceive less mature believers.)

Many people agree with Nicky that the disunity between Protestants and Catholics is “nonsense”,⁴ but this is because most people today have been taught little or nothing about Rome and her background. Nicky, however, has no such excuse; he has access to hundreds of tomes dealing with Church history and doctrine and cannot plead ignorance of the ongoing beliefs and practices spread by Rome.

Any Course participant who *did* try to expose Rome would quickly be silenced, since Course leaders are told that Rome is just another denomination and Nicky says “we make it a **rule** on Alpha **never** to criticize another denomination”.⁵ The main Guide asks what Nicky thinks about the events of the Counter-

Reformation and all those courageous souls (including many early members of his own denomination) who were tortured and killed for refusing to accept a perverted gospel.

12:2 WHO ARE THE “BIGOTS”? Here the Guide notes that, if *any* group thinks “**their** denomination is the **only** denomination that are true Christians” it is the *Roman Catholic* ‘denomination’! We give quotes from Rome to corroborate this. Rome refers to Protestants as ‘separated’ from the Catholic Church, rather than the two being separated *from one another*. Rome says:

“[T]he **Catholic** Church ... is **the single** Church of **Christ** ... [T]he Catholic Church **governed** by the **successor of Peter**” [Cardinal Ratzinger]

“The **Catholic** Church possesses the **whole** of the wealth of God’s revealed truth and **all** the means of grace. **It is unable to concede similar status to others**” [Cardinal Hume]. (See also the quote at the start of section 9:6. Note too Hume’s use of the phrase “**means** of grace”. Grace, by its very definition, cannot be worked for; yet Rome says the “means” to it include our own works.)

The Guide tells how, in *Vatican II*, ecumenism is defined as submission to Rome and how *Vatican II* also reaffirms every heresy set out by the Council of Trent. Yet Nicky says he has read *Vatican II* and “can find *nothing* wrong with it”.⁶ This section of the Guide ends by counselling that, while *Vatican II* may have put a different *face* on Rome (e.g. by now addressing Protestants more subtly than just “heretics”) yet the *message* remains essentially unchanged.

12:3 SOCIAL ACTION In this section, readers are alerted to the inherent dangers of working with Rome on social issues and are warned against legitimizing Rome in the eyes of others. We also caution people over the matter of efforts to promote false peace - i.e. peace without justice and righteousness. That type of ‘peace’ is not of God (see Jer. 6:13-14 and 1 Thess. 5:3).

12:4 ADDITIONAL POINTS The Guide then looks at scriptures such as 2 Thess. 1:3; Rom. 12:10-13; 1 Pet. 4:8-10; and John 13:34-35 regarding the provision of temporal (as opposed to spiritual) assistance. It follows this by gently enquiring, in the light of these Bible references, whether Nicky shares God’s view on where the Church ought primarily to direct her humanitarian efforts.

The section also deals with the two most common arguments used to disregard the priority identified in the above texts, and we follow up our point with references to *twenty* other supporting passages - as well as to three entire Bible chapters, viz. 1 John 3-4 and 2 Cor. 9. We discuss the Bible’s true position on

charitable service towards those outside the community of God's People - and are thus obliged to take issue with Nicky's Romish teaching on social action.

The Guide acknowledges the extremely impressive social works that some Catholics undertake, and we remark that it is indeed astonishing what people are prepared to do when they believe not only that their time in *Purgatory* relies upon their own work, but that their very *salvation* depends upon it too.

12:5 JESUIT ACTIVITY Next we uncover something of the extraordinary truth behind the 'Society of Jesus' and, from Rome's own mouth, we demonstrate its ongoing aim to destroy the Protestant stand for 'Scripture **alone**' by absolutely ANY means necessary.

The Catholic Renewal Movement and Ecumenism Here we identify Charles Whitehead, the highly influential figure amongst British Charismatics, as a Jesuit-trained Romanist who is leading the Protestant Church into Rome rather than the other way around. As we saw in section 9:6, the spirit behind Catholic 'Renewal' is a deceptive one.

The manual then quotes two stunning sources that bring to light the secrets of the ecumenical movement and its manipulation of gullible Protestants. All the doctrinal changes involved in ecumenism seem to be one-way (i.e. toward Rome). But since the gospel is "**the power of God to salvation**" for us (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.

The Guide observes that the Alpha Course is proving to be a most profitable vehicle for Rome's ecumenical goals. Raniero Cantalamessa, a powerful *and entirely 'orthodox'* Catholic whom Nicky quotes favourably and often, was described by the Catholic Alpha Office as being "**very enthusiastic** about Alpha, **especially** for its **ecumenical** [rather than evangelistic!] potential".⁷

12:6 SO NEGATIVE The Guide answers, patiently but biblically, those readers who would reject this material as 'negative'. We protest that there is surely nothing negative about warning God's People of danger, and that the *promotion of heresy* is the truly negative thing. In closing, the Guide points out that, if alerting people to perilous doctrines and hazardous groups is 'negative', then the Bible is *frequently* 'negative' (e.g. see 1 Cor. 5; 2 Pet. 2; and Gal. 3).

12:7 EVANGELISM After this, the Guide quotes some wise words from Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones that are particularly relevant to Alpha's position on Rome. An excerpt from the apostle Peter's own warnings about false doctrines seeping into the Church is then supplied (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

We later contend that the unity which Alpha is encouraging here is not the godly type described in John 17:21 but the unbiblical variety cited in Revelation 17:13. In fact, some of Rome's own Cardinals have admitted the terrible reality of the situation:

“The Roman Church is **either** the masterpiece of **Satan** or the Kingdom of the Son of God.’ insisted **Cardinal Manning** ... **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 **antichrist**’” [M. de Semlyen].

We then return to the question of who is right: the Reformers, and others, who stood up to Rome and exposed her Babylonian teachings, or Nicky who would apparently have us close our ears to the cries of so many evangelical martyrs.

The section ends by quoting the insightful words of an ex-Roman Catholic who lets us in on the truth behind Rome's ecumenism and reminds us of the scriptural admonitions toward those who are yoked to non-Christians.

12:8 MEDIA OBJECTIVITY? Attention is drawn to the consistently positive attitude which Rome enjoys in the world's press and other media. (On the rare occasions when a media reference involving Rome *is* negative, it is often *Christians generally* against whom any slur is made.) Surely Rome is blessed by the world because she is *part of it*.

12:9 SEMPER EADEM Despite the hopes of Protestant ecumenicals, Rome's true spirit will never improve. (Indeed, in the decades since *Vatican II*, her heresies have become *worse*.) This should not surprise us, since Rome actually boasts that she is *semper eadem* - i.e. '**always the same**'.

In this section of the main book we provide two quotes which hammer home the point that, just as with a chameleon, no amount of effort will cause Rome to change her *nature*, including:

“Rome does **not** change [i.e. improve] her **dogmas**. 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, ... 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” [M. de Semlyen].

The Bible does not call us to *work with* Rome but to make known her real side; God's Word says that her adherents need to be shown another way, not told to

remain in her. The Guide points readers to relevant scriptures such as Jude 1:17-23 and James 5:19-20 to settle the question.

After this, the Guide quotes a few of the many verses calling us to be joined together only with those of the same mind (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:10b; and 1 Cor. 16:13). The Word says: “Beloved, ... ye should **earnestly contend for** [not “earnestly disregard and compromise on”!] the faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). The section terminates by citing Jer. 51:9 and Rev. 18:1-19:5, both of which confirm that Babylon will never repent.

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, ... **Come out of her**, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:2,4).

12:10 CONCLUSION In this very final section of Part Two we encourage readers to check up on the ‘difficult’ things we have had to say. We also advise them that, although Rome is in the numerical majority, this is no endorsement since the majority were invariably wrong in Scripture. Lastly, we direct our gaze instead to the true Bride of Christ - and the reward she will get for her purity (see Rev. 19:6-9).

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RECOMMENDED READING

As with Part One, the Guide here gives details of various excellent books to help readers become more knowledgeable about the issues raised. The titles dealing directly with Rome are split into the following categories: ‘Teachings /Doctrines’, ‘Political Activities’, ‘Rome and Europe’ and ‘Rome and Babylon’.

Other recommended books cover ‘The Ecumenical Movement’ and ‘Church History & the Reformation’. In addition we list five websites which contain extremely good articles on Rome/The Reformation/Ecumenism. We also give names and addresses of four organizations that can supply further information (as well as regular bulletins) on these matters.

Please Note: If the reader believes that the preceding parts of the book were not focused enough on Alpha, then Part Three should more than put that right.

If the reader is finding there is an irritatingly large number of references back to the main volumes then we apologize profusely. Again, Part Three should be more reasonable in this regard, although (for the reasons laid out in the Preface) some back references are still felt necessary.

PART THREE

THE BEST TESTIMONIES

CHAPTER 13

A GOSPEL SUMMARY

13:1 INTRODUCTION Having examined some *false* gospels, our full Guide now turns to the true one. As our text points out, HTB's head, Sandy Millar, describes Alpha as just an "introduction" to the Christian faith.¹ Nevertheless, several of the sessions end with a prayer of commitment, so the Course must offer more than that. Our main *Unofficial Guide* observes that prospective converts need to be taught enough to understand what they are doing - and how best to do it.

13:2 A GOSPEL SUMMARY This section gives an overview of the gospel of Christ as laid down in Scripture. We open with an account of the attributes and character of God, and how these are often discernible from His Creation as well as from His Word (Rom. 1:20; Psa. 19:1). Our synopsis goes on to explain the existence of Satan and his angels. (We also look at what they seek to do, plus the appalling nature of the place to which they will be despatched.)

The Guide examines the Fall and evaluates its terrible impact on every one of us, noting that we are all sinful and that we thus deserve the same fate as Satan. The text then reveals the 'way out' that God has graciously provided for man. After this the Guide looks at Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and explains why He *is*

this ‘way out’. His ministry is summarized as is His torture, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

By outlining what real repentance entails, the book is then able to describe how we can be cleansed from our sin and ‘hidden in’ Christ. The Guide also explains the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the difference between this and the *baptism/gifts* of the Holy Spirit. To round off, we identify the significance of being hidden in Christ when God’s judgment and His wrath are poured out.

After this précis, the manual lists six of the emotional phases that a sincerely seeking person would probably go through as they heard a Spirit-led gospel message of the type above. This includes the person’s awe at learning of God’s total and utter holiness, His unbridled majesty and glory and His infinite power, plus horror at learning of their own true nature and of their current destination, followed (if accepted) by a sense of cleanliness and unbounded gratitude to God for His mercy and for His Messiah.

The chapter closes with the highlights of a fine testimony from outside Alpha (see below). This is inserted to help us all gauge the quality of those testimonies coming from *within* Alpha, with a view to checking if there are any significant differences and if Course leaders can do anything to improve the depth of conversions:

“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.”

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CHAPTER 14

THE EXPERIENCE OF ALPHA

14:1 GENTLE AND ENJOYABLE This chapter of our main manual starts by commenting on the tremendous congeniality of the Course. Alpha has been advertised as “a gentle and enjoyable experience”¹ and we attest to its convivial atmosphere. The following quotes hint at the profound impact it can have:

“The whole thing was just **so** easy going, **so much** fun ... It was genuine **fun**” [*Alpha News*²]; “It was warm and friendly and I walked out that evening smiling; in fact, the next day I found myself walking down the street smiling” [*Alpha News*³].

“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” [*Alpha News*,⁴ italic emphases in original].

(The Course is run in a very relaxed way, and Nicky Gumbel strongly encourages informality - hence we mostly refer to him as ‘Nicky’ in this book.) Our Guide then notes how the experience of just *attending* Alpha can be very therapeutic in itself:

“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” [HTB’s *UK Focus* newspaper⁵].

14:2 THE CONTENT Progressing to the ‘nitty gritty’ of official conversion testimonies emanating from Alpha:

“[S]omebody said to me, ‘Do you know how to get Jesus into your life?’ I said, ‘No, haven’t a **clue**, mate’ ... [Others then said] ‘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?’ ... ‘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*⁶].

We have grave misgivings about this testimony. There is *much* more to being saved than simply ‘doing a prayer’ just because you “can’t see any harm in it”. We are also saddened by the things said at the beginning and end of this quote, for they hardly suggest that the gospel has been clearly taught and properly received. But we move on...

“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*⁷].

This is better, but it still does not mention *any* conviction of, or repentance from, sin. Nor is there any mention of such basic matters as God’s forgiveness. What is 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? 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, many Alpha participants *are* enjoying ‘dramatic spiritual experiences’. We report on these in Part Five. But many participants describe such events as *preceding*, rather than following, any commitment to Christ. Clearly, having a spiritual experience is not a guarantee that a person has been saved; the unsaved can be greatly touched spiritually, as testimonies like the following 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*⁸];

“[O]n the weekend away ... Nicky asked for the **spirit** to come ... I felt this enormous warmth come through my back. It was so 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 ... scepticism**” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *The God Who Changes Lives*⁹ (a series of books from HTB containing Alpha testimonies)].

“[T]he Holy Spirit was invited to come and I felt a **really intense** glowing sensation ... [Note: This *preceded* any reference to this man reaching:] the point of repentance ... [when] I could fully become a Christian and **accept the gospel**” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.¹⁰].

(We will see other examples later, but even one of Alpha’s highest profile advocates admits that people are experiencing these manifestations *before* they make a commitment to God.¹¹ Indeed, many participants are so certain that they were not saved before their experience that they assume the experience *was* their salvation. These experiences often happen when participants merely request proof that the spirit realm exists. This is obviously different from salvation.)

We return to 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*¹²].

We regret the way this person describes the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as “ideas” - and that his praise is for the *presenters* of the message rather than for the Subject of it. Also, did his increased calmness *necessarily* come from conversion - or could it instead have resulted from the “immensely sympathetic” and mentally restorative nature of the Course itself?

It must be said that, since there is no mention of the very Person who makes conversion possible, the above cannot be regarded as a clear conversion testimony by itself. Our main Guide supplies such a testimony - albeit not resulting from Alpha. We record how this non-Alpha testimony goes on to speak of the first love that “burst forth” for Christ and how the person realized that the Lord was “**all** that mattered”. The testimony later describes the death of the “old man” combined with the removal of the person’s own fear of dying. The person in question knew what had changed. This contrasts strikingly with the following *Alpha* testimony:

“Since I said the prayer of commitment something has changed. **I don’t know what**, but **something** has changed.”¹³

If this person has truly been born again then they have become a child of God, cleansed from their sins and freed from Satan’s slavery. 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 that itself could have caused a change in their outlook. We strongly encourage Course leaders to be discerning about this and to investigate what folks have really gone through before assuming salvation has taken place.

14:3 DEAD OR ALIVE The Guide now looks at more Alpha testimonies to check if the Course needs improvement. One participant states:

“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*¹⁴].

(It is worth noting that, as with our other testimonies, the above quote is the sum total of what this person had to say about their conversion experience in the *Alpha News* article.)

The Spirit of Christ can certainly ‘fill the void’ and give us a sense of contentment and fulfilment - but other things can seem to do likewise. Again, there is no mention above of the fundamentals of conversion, even as a result of the person subsequently attending a church and ‘learning more’. (Incidentally, we were shocked when a colleague reported meeting believers who had been attending HTB regularly for *two full years* who still could not describe how to be saved.)

“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” [*UK Focus*¹⁵].

Many people in other faiths feel God loves them and feel He is an integral part of their lives. That is *not* the essence of a conversion testimony:

“There can be no true conversion **without the conviction of sin** ... 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**” [W. McDonald].

14:4 AFFIRMATION Does Alpha tell people what their true predicament is? One Bishop, praising the Course, said: “it meets people where they are; it befriends

them. They feel **affirmed** and they enjoy it”.¹⁶ We argue that the people in the Bible who met Jesus did not go away feeling “affirmed”. Using more than half a dozen Scripture references we demonstrate that the true gospel does not “affirm” sinners; it condemns them. If they do not harden their hearts, then the gospel humbles and breaks them. Either way, it is hardly ‘enjoyable’!

The same problem is exhibited by the *Alpha for Youth Manual*. Youth leaders are told to avoid damaging the participating teenagers’ self-esteem: “**Don’t Ever ... attack their self-respect ... Do ... Affirm** and encourage them **whenever you can**”.¹⁷ But how, if an unbeliever feels respectable, will they ever throw themselves at God’s mercy? 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 to indulge in self-respect or self-confidence (see, for instance, Psa. 22:6; Rom. 7:18; and 2 Cor. 3:5), yet: “Alpha is **about** listening to people **where they are** and showing them they are ... **accepted**” [*Alpha News*¹⁸]. This section proclaims that only Jesus Christ is acceptable to God - which is why we must be hidden in Him - and it concludes by debating whether Alpha is softening the gospel to make it popular at the price of downplaying the vital truths such that they are not being grasped.

14:5 PROMOTION COMMOTION In this final portion of the chapter, we sensitively discuss a possible explanation for some of the ‘nice’ - but seriously emasculated - testimonies being reported in *Alpha News*. We suggest that they might be published as non-threatening adverts for future participants. We also point out, however, that such impoverished testimonies should be the exception rather than the rule - especially in a newspaper that claims to task itself with “Keeping **church leaders** informed about the Alpha Course”.

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Please allow us to apologize if any of our back references come across as prideful. We are genuinely excited about the main Guide and we want to give a full picture of the strengths that we believe, by God’s grace, it possesses.

CHAPTER 15

CROSS ROADS

15:1 CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST This chapter of our main Guide commences by asserting that the old, worldly self needs to go to the cross for a person to be saved. Our manual appeals to several scriptures on this, including Gal. 5:24; Rom. 6:6-7; and Gal. 2:20. We then include six paragraphs of a piece by A.W. Tozer, called *The Old Cross and the New*, which lament the way that, in many places, the gospel message has become misrepresented and how the emphasis has fundamentally shifted from that seen in the Bible.

“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 ... The [‘new’] 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.

“The new cross does not slay the sinner, it **redirects** him. The philosophy behind this kind of thing ... is false because it ... misses completely the whole meaning of the cross ... The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew **all** of the man ... It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim”.

Unfortunately there are even ‘showcase’ Alpha testimonies that suggest it may be the ‘new’ cross which is being communicated today: “I was searching at

the time and Alpha was the start of a new beginning for me. It **redirected** [rather than *revolutionized*?] my train of thought” [*Alpha News*¹]; whereas the Word of God says: “**ye are dead**, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Christ ... **is our life**” (Col. 3:3-5). We ought to know when we ‘died’. But, as the manual reveals, even high profile Alpha testimonies are very vague in this regard.

15:2 THE PRAYER OF COMMITMENT Here we review the ‘prayer of commitment’ in Nicky’s booklet *Why Jesus?* - because it is the one which is consistently used on Alpha. The sentence which precedes the prayer in *Why Jesus?* reads:

“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.”²

Note that the focus is not on being saved from Hell. Words like ‘saved’ or ‘salvation’ are nowhere to be found. Nicky defines ‘iniquities’ as “the things we **do wrong**”,³ but this is far weaker than the Bible’s definition and almost suggests they are accidental - rather than being our deliberate fault. God sees our iniquities very differently. According to Him we are *all* “evil” and “wicked” and that even our righteousnesses are “as **filthy rags**” (Isa. 64:6).

The Guide contends that the good news can only be properly effective after the *extremely bad news* is made known. Christ spoke about Hell more than He did about Heaven, yet it is mentioned only three times in all the Alpha videos - and then only incredibly briefly. (Nicky also fundamentally misrepresents Hell when he implies that it is merely a place of speedy, and *total*, annihilation.⁴ Passages like Mark 9:43-48 and Rev. 14:11 paint a very different picture.)

Our manual follows this point by giving more examples of the insufficient understanding that can result from an incomplete gospel presentation which attempts to portray the most serious (and *eternally* consequential) issue as fun:

“I understood from Alpha that it was **important** [not ‘absolutely essential’?] to repent. ... I had done **two** bad things in my life that I had been carrying around with me...” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.⁵]; “Alpha ... has shown me that there is something there which is **quite** important” [*Alpha News*⁶].

For those readers unfamiliar with Alpha’s prayer of commitment,⁷ we reproduce it in three portions along with some commentary:

“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 forgive me. I now turn from everything which I know is wrong.”

Our main manual pinpoints certain concerns with this portion, including the fact that repentance involves deep remorse and abhorrence over sin, not just saying “sorry”. We also mourn the way in which participants are given neither adequate time nor knowledge of God’s standards to be able to recognize and truly repent of their sins. (We point Course leaders to several pertinent scriptures here.)

“Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.”

The Guide cries out for us all to face up to the *whole* truth about what we have been “set free” from - viz. eternity in a lake of fire. Again we proffer relevant verses and are forced to remark that none of Jesus’ *own* words “wrath”, “damnation”, “vengeance”, “torment”, or even “punishment” (nor even these *concepts*) appears anywhere in *Why Jesus?* Are we ashamed of His words? If so, Luke 9:26 says that we are in big trouble.

“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.”

The Guide ponders the potential for confusion here between the indwelling and the gifting of the Holy Spirit. Finally we suggest 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*⁸].

While many testimonies show worrying uncertainty, others show worrying *delay* over noticing any significant effect of yielding to Christ: “By the end of that **year** I could definitely say I had changed” [*UK Focus*⁹]. Compare such delay, after what is supposedly a high-quality gospel presentation, with Acts 2:40-47 or 2 Cor. 5:17.

15:3 CENTRAL ISSUES Our Guide looks at the substantial confusion suffered by guests because they have not had the complete gospel expounded. Even when this confusion is verbalized, leaders apparently do not resolve it accurately. Consider the test of Christianity that Nicky adopts for the following individual:

“I finished [Alpha] ... But, if somebody said ‘Are you a Christian?’ I would say ‘No.’ ... I remained **very confused**. I said [to Nicky], ‘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 ... ‘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**” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.¹⁰].

Our Guide submits that, because many *unsaved* people also read the Bible and attend Church and even pray, Nicky should instead have asked what the person thought *of the Lord* (and/or of themselves).

Next, the Guide looks at the idea that salvation means we are doing God a favour. Converts in Scripture do not say things like “I made a commitment to Christ”; they instead focus on what *God* has done. By contrast, Alpha testimonies frequently speak of “accepting Jesus” or “letting Him into my life” - often accompanied by statements expressing serious doubt that God even exists:

“[T]he following morning [after the Holy Spirit weekend] ... I [said] ‘Lord, **if** you are real, then come **into** my life’” [Alpha News¹¹].

“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’” [Alpha News¹²]. (See also some of the other quotes in chapters 14-15.)

“I thought he was going to say a quick ‘grace’ or something ... But it was a really long prayer asking God to ... 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.¹³].

The full Guide then reiterates the contrition and desperation (and genuine faith and trust) involved in true conversion. To be saved, we do not let Jesus “into” our life; we let Jesus *have* our life.

(Crucially, it remains God’s choice whether or not to save someone. A second analogy explains our current grasp of this. Imagine that a king decides he wants some wives. He sets a test, viz. the applicants must love the king in order to be considered. Even if they ‘pass the test’, the king still has complete power to accept or reject them. That God’s huge grace means He has elected to receive all who enduringly love Him does not negate the fact that it was His choice alone.)

15:4 GOD’S LOVE Along with gratitude for the warmth and kindness extended to them by fellow Course members, many Alpha participants report the

feeling of being loved, which they attribute to God. Our Guide observes, however, that these same people do not appear to grasp the love that was exemplified by God when He allowed His only begotten Son to die for us.

“In Alpha, God is love and little else ... [T]he course has [practically] missed all the aspects of His great character that refer to His holiness and glory ... But without the context of God’s holiness and absolute perfection, the meaning of that love is lost to us” [Chris Hand¹⁴].

Accounts of gospel preaching in the scriptures do not dwell on the love of God toward us (indeed not one of the NT sermons so much as *mentions* the love of God; in the book of Acts the word “love” is totally *absent*). What *is* reiterated throughout Scripture is the *fear* that we should have toward *God*:

“The **fear** of the LORD is the **beginning** of **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); “**Fear** Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into Hell; **yea**, I say unto you, **fear Him**” (Luke 12:5).

N.B. 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). Sadly, these central attributes are not brought home in Alpha.

“Be not high-minded, but **fear**: ... Behold therefore the goodness **and severity** of God” (Rom. 11:20-22)

15:5 “MESSED-UP LIVES” Other quoted testimonies emphasize regret for a ‘messed up’ life rather than conviction over 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*¹⁵]. This attitude (that sees salvation as God rescuing people from the ‘mess’ they have made of their lives rather than redemption from a sinful nature) manifests because that is the way the gospel is presented on Alpha. Nicky says:

“[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.”¹⁶

Scripture tells us that there are ‘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). Our book gently suggests that Alpha’s version does not truly humble people, and certainly never gets across the fact that “the *heart* is the source of the problem and [that] even if we *didn’t* do these [‘wrong’] things, we’d still be in trouble” [J. Richardson¹⁷] This is a devastating weakness in the present Course.

15:6 WHAT ARE WE SAVED FROM? For many participants, the central motive for ‘conversion’ appears to be a (perfectly understandable, but scripturally inadequate) desire for healing from past sorrows or hurts suffered:

“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 ... Nicky invited us all to say a prayer ... to welcome Jesus **into** our lives and to say sorry” [UK Focus¹⁸].

It must not be a broken heart alone that brings us to the cross for salvation, but the realization of our own rebellion against a holy and righteous God *regardless of what others have done to us*. Is Alpha supplying a complete, accurate, and Spirit-led gospel? Given that courses normally comprise *fifteen* talks over ten weeks, plus an entire weekend retreat, there seems little reason for misunderstandings to occur.

Our Guide then notes that almost all Alpha testimonies have one thing in common: they are ‘me-centred’ or Alpha-centred, rather than Christ-centred. We give several examples. The Lord rarely gets a *single* mention: “**Alpha** is the most wonderful thing I have ever encountered. **It** truly did change my life. **Alpha** gave me ‘me’ back” [UK Focus¹⁹]. But see 1 Cor. 6:19-20!

Finally the Guide confirms that, while some Alpha testimonies are certainly emotional, many people attending secular psychotherapy meetings will have very moving experiences and ‘real’ results too. (We give examples.) Indeed, a substantial number of participants get so hooked on the atmosphere of Alpha that they attend Course after Course. This happens so frequently that a term has been coined for it: such folks are being called “Alphaholics”.

Undoubtedly Alpha *has* changed lives, but has *Christ* given these people an altogether *new* life? Or have they simply felt affirmed and accepted and loved, and been given more meaning in their lives? That is far from the gospel which slices through our hearts and shows us how filthy and miserable we are before a totally righteous and all-powerful God.

15:7 WHAT ARE WE SAVED TO? Chapter 15 ends by discussing those testimonies that speak of how circumstances are so much better after salvation:

“We thought our life together was pretty **good before** [but where is their *repudiation* of their life before, as per Php. 3:7-9?], but we’ve just watched it get **better and better**” [*Alpha News*²⁰].

How can a Christian compare the two like this? Our book queries whether Alpha’s graduates will really stand firm when hardships or troubles enter their lives (as per Hab. 3:17-18, or Job 13:15, or Mark 4:16-17). We fear that many folks are not being properly taught to ‘count the cost’ of following the Lord Jesus before they start trying to follow Him (see Luke 14:28-33). He said:

“[W]hosoever he be of you that forsaketh not **all** that he hath, he **cannot** be My disciple” (Luke 14:33).

We conclude with the sad statistic that almost none of the hundreds of Alpha testimonies we have seen or heard comprise even a few of the classic hallmarks. The only sound ones we have seen are either from people whose salvation had been prayed for over a very long time, or who had been given the *full* gospel earlier in their life - which Alpha simply prompted them to recall.

Again, let us not imagine that manifestations from the ‘Holy Spirit weekend’ are proof of the salvation of those involved. As we saw in section 14:2, this simply isn’t so:

“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 that prayer I felt a **really** funny feeling within me ... It gave me a **buzz** - like **Ecstasy**...” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.²¹].

Lastly the Guide remarks that, no matter how reasonable a Fellowship may think Nicky’s gospel presentation looks *on paper*, he is failing to communicate it to his hearers. They invariably come away from these talks not humbled and fearing God but instead feeling, as Nicky approvingly quoted one person putting it, “accepted for who **I** am”.²²

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Again, please forgive us if you are finding the frequent references back to the main volumes annoying. They have been included to help certain groups of readers and we are very grateful for your patience. You may be relieved to know that, although the next third of this ‘Overview’ volume follows a similar pattern, the FINAL third is not a summary of the main volumes and therefore does not have such references.

CHAPTER 16

THE STAR

16:1 INTRODUCTION Part Three of our main Guide ends by delicately broaching the question of whether it is Christ or *Alpha* that is primarily being glorified in Course publications. We begin by lamenting the way in which Nicky displays virtually no emotion at all as he relates, with unnecessary haste, the dreadful details of the torture and death of the Saviour. We then supply a series of quotes from Alpha sources and, below each one, offer an apt passage from Ephesians in order to illustrate where attention *ought* to be directed. For example:

“We feel really blessed by **Alpha**” [*Alpha News*¹] versus: “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** totally changed the life which I had before” [*Alpha News*²] versus: “**Christ** is the head of the church: and **He** is the Saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23b).

“And I’d like to say that, **thanks to Alpha**, I’m not the father I used to be” [*UK Focus*³] versus: “[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).

The Guide also records one Church of England clergyman wryly noting:

“I counted over **500** uses of the word ‘Alpha’ in their 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, ... ‘World bishops speak of their need for **Alpha**’; ... ‘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?” [Philip Foster⁴].

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). And if these publications offer the *best* testimonies that can be found, can we not legitimately be concerned about what the *others* must be like?

16:2 AN AMAZING APPENDIX This section essentially comprises the majority of a great article by Wendy Howard on the techniques which Alpha leaders are taught to employ when running the “small group” discussions that take place after each talk. Having attended a training course for potential Alpha leaders, Wendy proves that the methods being taught are not just unbiblical but actually *gag* the preaching of God’s Word. She goes on to reveal how dangerous it is for immature believers to attend sessions deliberately dominated by the views of the *unbelievers*. She also shows how the Christian faith is watered down through dialogue and consensus, and how the (unregenerate) ‘feelings’ of the unsaved participants are the guiding force - rather than the uncompromising truth of the gospel. This substantial piece is both astonishing and extremely significant.

To end on a happier note, we close the chapter with another sound and very uplifting testimony obtained from outside the world of Alpha.

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RECOMMENDED READING

As for both previous Parts, the main Guide then reviews the best books we have come across on the following subjects: ‘The Gospel/Salvation’, ‘Evangelism’, ‘Creation’, ‘End Times’, ‘Discipleship’ and ‘Self-Esteem/Psychology’.

N.B. In the main Guide, this point represents the end of the first volume. (That volume is subtitled ‘WORLD’ because it deals with Alpha’s view of - and approach to - the world. The second volume is subtitled ‘CHURCH’ and obviously covers Alpha’s view, and treatment, of the Church.)

PART FOUR PURE UNITY

CHAPTER 17

DIVERSITY

Important Note: This latter portion of the Overview moves at a fair pace and we beseech readers to look up the Scripture references supplied - especially if the accompanying text is doubted - as we believe these more than prove the points we have made. (Surely each of the passages we cite must be honestly explained away before the associated point can sensibly be rejected.)

17:1 IS TEACHING IMPORTANT? Think of her reaction! Think what my sister, despite being a well-trained midwife, would feel if she were told by a baby's proud parents that she would have to nurture and train that new creation right up to the point where it could deliver other babies! A daunting prospect indeed, even with the complete manual available. So, what teaching do *spiritual* babies need - such that they can safely deliver other precious souls?

Volume 2 of our main *Unofficial Guide* starts by spotlighting the immense importance that the Lord Jesus attached to teaching. Through verses like Mark 4:1-2 and Mark 6:34, and by pointing out how many years the Lord spent instructing his disciples, our book also shows the substantial quantity of good teaching needed for a Christian to be properly equipped. (In Matthew 28:19-20, Christ told His disciples to teach men *everything* He had ever taught them.)

The term ‘doctrine’ is not a dirty word but essentially just means ‘teaching’. To illustrate the enormous significance of right teaching, witness 1 Tim. 4:13-16:

“[G]ive attendance to **reading**, to exhortation, to **doctrine**. ... [G]ive thyself **wholly** to them; Take **heed** unto thyself, **and** unto the **doctrine**; **continue** in them: for **in doing this** thou shalt both **save** thyself, **and** them that hear thee.”

Finally the Guide encourages readers to persevere with the material in this Part even if some of it challenges their current views.

17:2 HOW MANY TEACHINGS ARE THERE? This section opens by demonstrating (e.g. via 1 Tim. 1:3 and 1 Cor. 14:33) that there can only be one *true* teaching about Christ and the Kingdom. The manual then draws attention to the massive difference that exists between the amount of teaching required for *salvation* and the amount that a maturely-functioning disciple needs.

Despite what Nicky tells us, the word ‘gospel’ actually derives from the Anglo-Saxon for “God’s Word” rather than from the phrase “good news”. The Guide proves this fuller definition using eight Bible passages including Eph. 1:13 and 1 Pet. 1:25. Galatians 1:8-9 further confirms that only *one* gospel is right, while (in 2 Cor. 11:3-4) Paul forewarns the Church that those who preach erroneously about Jesus are actually preaching “**another** Jesus” or “**another** gospel”.

Some matters are obviously more important than others, but *no* portion of teaching (either from Christ Jesus *or* the apostles) is ever biblically described as optional - or even unimportant - for a church. (If parts of the Bible *are* unnecessary, one is entitled to ask why such superfluous and supremely confusing material is there, clogging up God’s precious Word.) We conclude that *any* error in a Fellowship’s teaching is unhelpful and, like misinterpreted architectural plans, is destined to have unexpected side-effects and to cause problems sooner or later (Psa. 119:98,101).

17:3 DISPUTABLE MATTERS The Guide acknowledges that Romans 14 and Colossians 2:16ff allow for some differences of outlook between believers, but we point out that the *same* two areas are mentioned in each passage and that both areas are only issues of *personal* practice (i.e. a private matter between an individual and God) rather than teachings about the Lord or His Kingdom. (These two areas are: eating habits and the observance of special days.) No other variation of opinion is sanctioned in either passage - or indeed anywhere else in Scripture. We urge the reader not to be put off by this radical suggestion, but instead to consider the evidence we give...

Our proof of the above assertion begins by acknowledging that it is difficult for a believer to know much without having the Scriptures available, but that those parts of the Church which are blessed with easy access to Bibles - and to related aids like concordances - have no such excuse. Abundant truth has been given to these parts of the Church, and *much* truth will therefore be expected from them (Luke 12:48).

By examining the five different ways in which Scripture deals with disputable matters, the Guide shows that the same two areas are always in view, i.e.:

- (1) The Pharisees hunted for any unbiblical acts on Christ's part. Other than His Messiahship, the only things the Pharisees thought they could challenge were the Lord's views on **eating habits** (e.g. in Matt. 15:1-2 and Mark 7:2-5) and the **observance of special days** (e.g. in Luke 14:1-6 and John 9:14-16).
- (2) In Matthew 12, Christ gave two examples where believers justifiably 'broke' the law. The first centred on David's **eating habits** (in using the showbread) and the second looked at **observance of special days** (i.e. the temple priests doing work on the Sabbath).
- (3) The only two commandments which Christ rebuked people for being *too* rigid over were **eating habits** (e.g. in Matt. 15:10-20) and **observance of special days** (e.g. in John 7:22-23 and Matt. 12:10-12). The Lord even combined the two issues in Luke 6:1-10.
- (4) Romans 14 does indeed say that there are "disputable" areas but, as we intimated above, the only things mentioned are **eating habits** (vv2-3, 6, 14-15, 17, 20-21 and 23) and the **observance of special days** (vv5-6). Paul's teaching is very clearly delineated and he never invited people to extend this concept.
- (5) Once again, in Colossians 2:16-23 (the only other passage that teaches on 'disputable' things), the sole areas in view are **eating habits** (e.g. in v21) and the **observance of special days** (e.g. in v16).

The very early Church was devoted to sound teaching (Acts 2:42). This gave it the defence it needed against the doctrinal attacks that were to come. We close this section by focusing on the huge amount of time the apostles spent founding each church such that it received the necessary amount of teaching to be able to operate correctly (Acts 20:27,31). (The next chapter will take a good look at Alpha's position on these things.)

17:4 WHAT ABOUT INTERPRETATION? The Guide agrees that Bible passages can have multiple interpretations, but we note that: (a) the apostles never

taught *divergent* interpretations, (b) only those interpretations which fit with the *whole* of the rest of Scripture can be true, and (c) legitimate interpretations will never conflict with each other.

The Guide warns against Bible interpretations which leave ‘problem passages’ unresolved. All supposed contradictions in the Bible are reconcilable when seriously investigated. For instance, different passages often merely give different *aspects* of the same matter. We demonstrate, using a vivid example, how seeming ‘disharmony’ between the gospels can instantly disappear when straightforward principles like this are applied.

By explaining that the biblical phrase “the faith” often refers to the gospel (see Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:1; and Php. 1:27b), we confirm that there is only *one* true faith, *one* true gospel, *one* true doctrine. These terms are *interchangeable*.

17:5 GOD’S TRUTH Here we make known the great frequency with which the Bible extols seeking of the truth. On well over one hundred occasions Scripture encourages us to desire such knowledge (e.g. in Prov. 8:10, 18:15, 23:12; Hos. 6:6; 2 Pet. 3:18 etc) and cautions against belittling the knowledge of the truth (e.g. in Prov. 1:22-33, 19:27; Hos. 4:6; Luke 11:52 etc).

The Lord aligns Himself extremely closely with truth (Psa. 33:4-5; John 1:14) - thus it is foolish not to cherish truth. We review the protection that the Alpha organization affords the content of its Course (HTB’s copyright bans all changes to its doctrine¹) and we ask if Alpha applies this same strict attitude towards “other gospels” - and those who promote them.

17:6 WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT OTHER TEACHINGS? Our full study establishes here that all gospels other than the one true version must necessarily be false. God sees them as *perversions* (Gal. 1:6-7). We then serve notice, with the necessary biblical support, that all such forms of the gospel (a) are never from God, (b) lead us *from* God, (c) lead us toward sin, and (d) spread if unchecked.

At this point the book scrutinizes Bible references to ‘leaven’, showing that it is *always* a picture of false ways and of sinful man (Luke 12:1; Exo. 15:19; Mark 8:15 etc). We examine the parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33) in this light and reveal that it means the opposite of what many Christians are taught. The message is that falsehood is contagious and needs to be actively opposed before it takes hold in a Fellowship and becomes irreversible (Matt. 16:11-12; 1 Cor. 5:6-8).

The Guide observes that the reason Israel often fell was as a consequence of Satan’s subtle attacks on her true faith and practice - rather than as a result of his

physical attacks (e.g. Num. 22; c.f. 2 Pet. 2:15a). Physical attacks on the early Church were similarly ineffective. Satan’s companion strategy of *undermining the truth* is being repeated in these days.

The manual later explains how a skewed interpretation of Scripture leads to a skewed, and hence false, view of God which, in turn, will distance us from Him and may thus give rise to further error. If not corrected, this could lead to a destroyed witness and even to our *own* destruction (2 Tim. 2:16-18 & Titus 1:10-13).

It is therefore extraordinary for Nicky to almost encourage multiple doctrines and divergent beliefs about God and His Word - for he says, at the border between a discussion on gifting and one on unity between denominations, that “God creates variety”² and that “unity does not mean uniformity”.³ The lack of clarification as to which discussion these statements apply is most unfortunate.

God’s Word does call for uniformity of understanding (e.g. in Php. 1:27b; 1 Cor. 1:10a; Eph. 4:4-5; and 2 Cor. 13:11), and we take issue with the idea that those non-Christians who are searching for truth will be impressed by a bunch of believers whose views differ markedly from each other and who show little regard for their own holy Book.

In closing, this chapter investigates the widespread belief that Christians can never be deceived. The Guide shows that, according to God’s Word, people can indeed “err from” and “depart from” the faith and that numerous men of God in Scripture were deceived at times. A church needs to be thoroughly equipped if it is to deal properly with deception (and the pull of the carnal nature) while simultaneously rearing disciples who are mature enough to produce equally sound disciples themselves.

To sum up the matters raised in this chapter, and to underline the importance of accurate teaching for a healthy church capable of surviving the worst that the enemy can throw at it, we end by quoting Paul’s apt final words to the Ephesians - as recorded in Acts 20:27-32 - of which the following is just a part:

“For I **know** this, that after my departing **shall** grievous wolves enter in among you ... speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore **watch**, and **remember**, that by the space of three **years** I ceased **not** to warn **every** one **night** and day with **tears**.”

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CHAPTER 18

TEACHERS AND ALPHA

18:1 SHOULD WE QUESTION TEACHINGS? This section of our main Guide looks at the idea that some ‘leaders’ are ‘too anointed’ to have their words checked against Scripture. Even the best teachers can make mistakes (Jam. 3:2) and God calls men to test *all* things (1 Thess. 5:21). As we saw in the Preface, the apostle Paul *encouraged* people to judge his words (e.g. in 1 Cor. 10:15b & 11:13). Christ actually *commends* those who steadfastly weigh teachings regardless of the person bringing them (Rev. 2:2).

The manual identifies other Divine commands that require us to examine all teachings received (e.g. 1 Tim. 5:17), and seeks to dismantle a standard argument used to prohibit such examination. If we are to prevent error from coming into our churches then we must never assume that what is said from ‘the front’ is *necessarily* ‘gospel truth’.

18:2 DO NOT JUDGE This portion of the book begins by reaffirming that we are mandated to judge teachings and prophecies by the light of Scripture, and that Scripture tells us what conclusions to draw and how to spot *false* teachers and prophets.

The Guide then faces up to Matthew 7:1 which says “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged”. From the subsequent verses, we show that this passage refers to rash, hypocritical judgment rather than to the biblical type - for the Lord also said “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Passages like 1 Cor. 5:11-13 and 1 Cor. 6:3 are quoted to reveal Paul’s alarm that churches were *not* judging the brethren - since such lax standards enable *false* brothers to get in (Jude 1:4). Next we bemoan Nicky’s failure to mention the possibility of false brothers, and we note this unwise statement of his:

“The Father loves all his children. We should say ‘we accept as our brothers **all** those you receive as your children.’”¹

The problem is that Alpha prohibits us from determining who God has or hasn’t “received” - because Nicky also demands that “we must stop judging one another”.² Such a combination is very risky and unbiblical (Matt. 7:15-21; Luke 21:16). The Alpha videos elsewhere mention the admission by one man that he had held the post of bishop for *fifteen* years while *still being an atheist*.³ Nicky would seemingly have banned the brethren from questioning, during those fifteen years, whether this man taking authority over them was a true believer!

The full Guide then studies the belief that ‘you can never know someone’s heart’. The material demonstrates from three separate angles that this is inaccurate, and we finally observe that the *entirety* of John’s first epistle is dedicated to explaining how believers can indeed distinguish real brothers from false ones.

18:3 DANGER OF DEATH! This section starts by listing six more scriptures obliging Christians to ‘watch each other’s backs’ and to keep an eye on each other’s spiritual welfare as well as their own (including 2 Thess. 3:6 and 1 John 3:24-4:6). After all, what does a true disciple have to fear from biblical assessment by his brothers? And who benefits when this is not being done?

It is actually the Word of God which furnishes the judgments; Christians are merely to apply them. Among the passages we reference are Psalm 119:101-108 and John 12:48. In other words, *Scripture* lists the criteria for determining God’s judgment about a person (e.g. the signs of a false apostle); we believers are simply called to agree with God’s conclusion and to act appropriately.

The manual follows this with a set of twelve areas (backed by 28 passages like Rom. 11:18-23; 1 Cor. 9:27-10:15; 1 Tim. 6:7-12; and Jam. 1:12-26) which pinpoint when a brother has truly walked away from Christ. Unrepentant sinfulness is incompatible with living by faith. We contend that refusal to submit to these clear New Testament judgments is highly dangerous for all concerned.

Five more such damning scriptures (including Eph. 5:5-7) are then referred to. We Christians are instructed to compare the behaviour we see with that which God has described - and then to accept what He has said about it. Finally the Guide notes with interest that the most frequent judgment is reserved for those who are unfaithful *to God's Word* (e.g. Rom. 2:8-9; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; Rev. 22:18; 2 Pet. 3:16-17; and 1 Cor. 15:1-2).

18:4 HOW CAN WE KNOW ERROR AND FALSE TEACHERS? A teaching *must* be erroneous if it does not line up with Scripture *when taken as a whole*, but instead leaves parts that disagree with it and which cannot be honestly explained away. We are not to disrespect *any* portion of God's Word (see Psa. 119:6, 104, 172 etc). The mark of a sound teacher is that he is faithful to the *complete* Word (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim. 5:7). Nicky correctly asserts that the Bible is "our authority for what we teach".⁴

The original Alpha videos included a particularly important comment, for they said that we can determine a false teaching if we "put it alongside the Bible ... and **test** it".⁵ In the replacement videos, however, Nicky restricted the Bible's helpfulness to confirming "belief" (instead of belief *and practice*), and he regrettably removed the word "test". (N.B. In neither edition does he mention the potential for false *teachers* appearing in the Church, despite 2 Peter 2:1.)

Our Guide exposes misleading 'evidences' of a true teacher and then proves that inconsistent interpretation of God's Word is the mark of a false teacher (Isa. 8:20; 1 Tim. 6:3-5). Another sign for which to be on the lookout is *unrepresentative* teaching of the Word. If, for example, the Bible refers to God's Kingship ten times more often than His Fatherhood then a similar ratio ought to be present when someone teaches about Him at any length - especially to those who do not already know the Bible, or when trying to convey an overview of Him.

The Bible says "Whosoever ... **abideth not in the doctrine** of Christ, **hath not God**" (2 John 1:9-11). Since Christ is the living Word, it is surely fair to argue that *all* the doctrines of the Bible make up the 'doctrine of Christ' to a lesser or greater extent. (Many impact *directly* on His character, Deity or ministry.)

Our book concludes that anyone who persists in such behaviour after being challenged must be adjudged a false teacher. The Bible tells us never to allow false teachings to spread. Sadly, Alpha does very little to notify its babes about these crucial matters.

18:5 HOW SHOULD WE FEEL ABOUT FALSEHOOD? This section specifies how God *hates* to see His children being taught false things - and how we should abhor it likewise (Psa. 119:104).

“I love Thy commandments above gold; yea above **fine gold**. Therefore I esteem **all** Thy precepts concerning **all** things to be **right**; and I hate **every** false way” (Psa. 119:127-128).

We remark on how enraged Paul was by those people who troubled the church with falsehoods (Gal. 5:4,12; 2 Thess. 1:6) and we call believers to stand boldly for the truth (2 Thess. 2:15; Psa. 119:30-31). We also chide Nicky for saying - at the end of a discussion on *teaching*, and with evident approval - that “There is **diversity** within the body of Christ”.⁶

Our book then asks where the Bible *ever* says that diversity of doctrine is acceptable. Diversity of belief really means confusion, disorder and doubt, and this always leads to peril (Hos. 4:6). The section closes by confirming that every church has its flaws but that most Fellowships could be much more biblical if they so chose. (More than a few seem to be going in the *opposite* direction.)

18:6 HOW SHOULD WE REACT TO FALSE TEACHERS? The main Guide charges that God has given us all the responsibility to oppose error - and that He has equipped us (via His Word and Spirit) to do so.

The text explains that our response to hearing error will depend on certain factors, and that Scripture gives the necessary guidance. The manual notes that passages like 1 Timothy 1:3 and Titus 1:10-13 apply to those who teach falsehoods, but that the (oft-abused) Matthew 18:15-17 does not, because it refers to private trespasses rather than public teachings.

We praise the great lengths to which the Church went in Acts 15 to overturn the false doctrine being spread abroad that the cross of Christ is not enough. We contrast this firm stand with the way the Alpha organization promotes a denomination - Seventh Day Adventism - which teaches this same heresy.⁷ The Bible is clear about anyone who dogmatically insists on holding a heretical view:

“A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition **reject**; Knowing that he that is such is **subverted**, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:10-11).

The Guide then offers especial advice to those who are young in the faith about how best to deal with false teachings they receive. Even small errors should, in love, be corrected before they grow. Inaction over heresy is a serious disservice to the brethren (2 John 1:9-11).

18:7 SHOULD WE NAME NAMES? We jeopardize the Church if we withhold warnings about false teachers or false ‘brothers’. There are plenty of scrip-

tural precedents for this, including 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 1:15; and 3 John 1:9-10. Our forbearance simply allows their damaging work to continue.

18:8 NEVER CRITICIZE? Nicky says “I make it a rule, and I hope I keep to it, **never** to criticize another Christian”.⁸ Laudable though this seems, is it a “rule” taught by God or by man? Does Acts 8:20-22 (where Peter castigates Simon) or James 4:1-3 (where the apostle berates the brethren) not sound like criticism?

Nicky doesn’t define what he means by the word “criticize”... It apparently doesn’t preclude him calling a certain Baptist minister “very, very bigoted and arrogant” (see section 12:1) or saying that “in some churches ... they have lost God”.⁹ He should make clear that admonition, reproof, and even rebuke (which, to us at least, sounds *stronger* than “criticism”) are all vital parts of a healthy church (Rom. 15:14; 2 Thess. 3:15) and are *encouraged* by the Lord (e.g. in Prov. 9:8b; Prov. 28:23; and Luke 17:3a).

(Rather than admit they have been deceived, some folks unfortunately prefer to stay sitting under false teachers than to hear what the Bible says about such ‘leaders’.)

Our book shows that it is, in fact, unloving *not* to rebuke an erring brother (Prov. 13:24; Lev. 19:17). Nicky insists, with a lack of adequate support, that: “We are **not** to criticize one another”.¹⁰ The text compares this with scriptures like 1 Tim. 5:20 and 2 Tim. 4:1-4 which illustrate how absolutely *essential* biblical criticism is to a sound church. We all need to be admonished at times.

18:9 WHAT IS THE CORRECT ATTITUDE TO CRITICISM? While sensitive to the fact that criticism hurts a person’s pride, the main study remarks on how very valuable fair criticism can be to one’s *spirit* (Prov. 25:12) and how immensely receptive we should be to correction (Prov. 19:25b; Prov. 15:5b).

Godly criticism is a blessing (Eccl. 7:5; Prov. 27:5). It is therefore very disturbing for Nicky to insinuate, as he has done, that he doesn’t take his dissenters seriously.¹¹ (Shortly after the original Alpha videos appeared, Elizabeth published a booklet assessing them. Various articles from others followed which were *seriously* critical of Alpha. Yet, two years later, Nicky was still playing down the admonitions levelled at HTB.¹²) Scripture has some profoundly solemn things to say about those who imagine they ‘know it all’ and who look down on reproof - see Prov. 12:1, 13:18, & 26:12. (The full Guide lists nine further such passages.)

It is no use ignoring criticism and just ‘loving the person back’. In fact, the *truly* loving (not to mention wise) thing to do would be to take all comments seriously and to humble ourselves before God and check whether they are justified.

If Nicky dismisses people who challenge him, then what encouragement will they have to help restore him to the right path if he needs correction in the future? We go on to spell out the likely end of those who treat scriptural admonition lightly.

18:10 “TOUCH NOT MINE ANOINTED” This section endeavours to answer the suggestion that the verse “Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm” (1 Chr. 16:22; Psa. 105:15) means that some teachers are above criticism. The Guide approaches this idea from a variety of angles, showing among other things that the context refers to *physical* harm rather than to verbal challenges.

Real men of God are humble and love the truth and have no problem with their teachings being weighed against Scripture - and themselves being challenged where necessary (as both Peter and Apollos were). We conclude that the “touch not” argument simply serves to frighten and cow the people of God.

“The fear of man **bringeth a snare**: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Prov. 29:25), so we should not fear these ‘untouchable’ leaders - and *they* should trust *the Lord* (instead of their own attempts to subjugate men) to keep themselves from “harm”.

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CHAPTER 19

FAITH TOWARD...?

Please Note: If something we have written in this book should cause the reader to sense an indignation in their spirit then this suggests we are mistaken about that issue. If, however, what we have written should cause a rage to arise in their mind then that is very different. It is surely a sign that our material is revealing the truth - and that the spirit behind the falsehood we are exposing is trying to keep it from being accepted. In such cases, one needs to be especially careful to seek out the truth no matter how angry one may feel.

**God bless you for being determined to put
His truth above personal feelings or traditions.**

19:1 INTRODUCTION If a person is selective enough in the choice of verses, they can ‘prove’ (i.e. find *some* apparent support in the Bible for) *any* idea. The enemy is more than happy to so misuse Scripture - because he can thus fool those believers who do not have a working knowledge of God’s Word. This chapter of our larger handbook discusses one badly misguided movement whose doctrines have steadily managed to enter the Church by this means. A short critique of it is included in our Guide because this movement has influenced Alpha’s teachings and also has direct *spiritual* links to the Course.

19:2 A PRELIMINARY LOOK AT GOD This section states that a sound, genuinely satisfying, Christian walk depends on having an accurate view of God.

(This is the true significance of Proverbs 29:18, hence the frequently ignored latter half of the verse.) Unfortunately the God described by certain teachers is a far cry from the one portrayed in the Bible. The Guide here quotes several scriptures illustrating how fearsome and awesome the true God is (see Psa. 145 & 148; Jer. 10:10-13; 1 Chr. 29:11-15 etc etc).

”The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble ... Let them praise Thy great and **terrible** Name; for it is holy” (Psa. 99:2-3)

19:3 THE FEAR OF GOD IS...? The Bible repeatedly tells us to “fear God”. It should be fundamental to us (Eccl. 12:13; Deut. 8:6). This section is dedicated to thoroughly dispelling the myth that we are merely to “revere” God. The relevant Hebrew and Greek words mean a lot more than revere, hence Scripture almost always ignores this inadequate substitute and confirms that we are to “tremble” at God’s terrible majesty (Jer. 5:22; Job 37:22-24).

“Sanctify the LORD of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your **dread**” (Isa. 8:13).

Our Guide explains why godly fear helps prayers to be heard (Heb. 5:7; Isa. 11:2-3), and we cite over a dozen other passages demonstrating that it is not just *unbelievers* who are to fear God. These include Heb. 12:28-29; 1 Sam. 12:24; Acts 9:31; Psa. 2:11-12; and Psa. 34:9. When the Lord Jesus said “fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell” (Matt. 10:28), He was talking to His *disciples*, yet we are having trouble detecting much fear of God among HTB’s leaders. (Indeed, in the Alpha videos, the fear of God is explicitly discouraged as being incompatible with Christianity. Although we should fear nothing *except* God, Nicky seems adamant that Christians should fear nothing *without exception*.)¹ The *Bible* says:

“God is **greatly** to be feared in the assembly of the **saints**” (Psa. 89:7a).

19:4 A POPULAR TEACHING The Guide then turns to the unhelpful gospel of the movement in question. The treatment begins by surveying the scriptures on ‘faith’ and shows that we are meant to have unswerving faith in the *Lord alone*, not in some impersonal ‘force’ (Prov. 3:5a; 2 Chr. 16:8). It is *God* who wields all power, not us (John 14:10; 1 Chr. 29:11-12).

“Commit thy way unto **the LORD**; trust also in **Him**; and **He** [rather than our faith] shall bring it to pass” (Psa. 37:5).

Having faith in our own faith rather than in the Lord is very foolish (Jer. 17:5; Psa. 62:8a). The faith that the Lord Jesus demanded of those folks who

needed a miracle from Him was a strong faith (i.e. belief) in His Messiahship - and His resultant ability to perform the miracle - not a faith in the recipient's own capacity to imagine receiving the miracle strongly enough. The Guide verifies this from passages like Matt. 9:28-29; Eph. 1:15; Acts 3:16; and Col. 2:5.

The text then patiently unpicks the favourite verses of the "faith in faith" proponents. It follows this by reminding readers that God, and God alone, was the creator of *all* things. Man can create nothing from thin air. Finally, after quoting more unequivocal verses such as Isa. 44:24 and Jer. 17:7, we observe that the "faith in faith" doctrine is effectively *identical* to that being taught by New Age metaphysical cults like the "Christian Science" movement.

19:5 THE FAITH OF GOD This section refutes the idea that God creates things by His own 'faith'. He is the Almighty, all-powerful God; He does not need to rely on some 'force of faith' (see Psa. 102:25 or Jer. 10:12). Our Guide explains that Bible phrases like "the faith of God" mean, depending on context, 'faith **from** God', 'faith **regarding** God' or 'faith **toward** God' - *not* 'God's personal faith'. We then show, through verses like Isaiah 45:18, that God is not subservient to some other power.

The section closes by proclaiming that it is the Lord God, not our own "faith in our faith", which is our fortress and tower and shield and deliverer. We need to look to *God*, not to ourselves. "**God** is my strength and power" (2 Sam. 22:33), whereas Nicky ambiguously teaches that God's power is "with **us**".²

19:6 VISUALIZE THIS Here the Guide explores the belief that, by visualizing what we ask for, we can obtain it. The material advises that this represents having faith in one's *self* - i.e. faith in one's own ability to conjure up realistic images - rather than holding an elementary, childlike trust in *God*.

Our full Guide then confronts two Bible passages used to support visualization, especially Gen. 30:37-39. We demonstrate, from three different positions, that these verses are *not* teaching Christians to use such a technique. (The point of the above passage is that, if we focus on the wooden cross - that our Master streaked with His own blood - and if we always keep in mind what He did for us on it, then we will bear Christ-like fruit.) Trying to alter reality *directly* by the power of thought is unbiblical because it attempts to bypass God.

Given that the act of visualization is shamanic rather than scriptural, it is worrying that Nicky encourages Alpha participants to visualize Jesus.³ (Nicky even shows Course attendees a painting of a 'Jesus' complete with Romish halo.⁴) Christians may get results from visualization - the enemy loves to reward people for straying from God's ordinances - but we will always pay for it in the long term.

19:7 GOD IS SOVEREIGN The book testifies that God does as He wants and that we exist to serve and please Him - not the other way around (see, for example, Rev. 4:11; Rom. 9:20-21; and Job 2:10.) To teach that the Most High God is ever *obliged* to do things for us is a serious error because it demeans God and exalts man.

We are God's property (1 Cor. 6:19-20), so it is vain to believe that we can claim "rights" from God or manipulate Him. Yet the 'Faith' movement denies God's sovereignty by teaching that, through utilizing certain spiritual laws, we can "write our own ticket with God" - as the late Kenneth Hagin Snr. put it. Kenneth Copeland says that "As a believer, you have the **right** to make commands ... Each time you stand on the Word you are **commanding** God". His error is evident from Psalm 66, yet Nicky too informs us, without any clarification, that we have "royal **rights**" which can apparently be exercised before the Lord's return.⁵

19:8 HEALTH INSURED? Two of the "rights" we are supposed to be able to demand are physical health and wealth. The Guide demonstrates, however, that God is rather more interested in our *eternal* welfare - and that of others - than in our temporal conditions. When these interests clash, it is always *spiritual* health and wealth that will take precedence.

The manual also relates that God has purposes for sickness beyond simply chastising our sins. The Lord may use it, for example, to glorify Himself (as with Lazarus), or to bring the gospel (as with Paul - see Gal. 4:13), or to prove us (as with Job), or to educate us (as with Timothy), or to increase our reliance on Him (as with Jacob). For some strange reason, God neglected to tell *any* of these servants to "positively confess" their healing!

Stripes Our Guide looks at the idea that the part-verse "with His stripes we are healed" is proof that no faithful Christian need experience illness. We find that the context in both Isaiah 53:5-6 *and* 1 Peter 2:24-25 (plus the Lord's respective choice of *figurative* Hebrew and Greek words for "healed") shows that it is healing *spiritually* (i.e. not necessarily bodily) which has been achieved (see also Isa. 6:8-10; Mark 2:17; Jer. 51:8-9 etc).

We then cover the Matthew 8:16-17 'argument' and show how, because only *demoniacs* are mentioned there (i.e. everyone healed on that occasion had suffered *spiritual* injury), the passage actually helps to *confirm* our point rather than disprove it. Later we touch on a few common curses (mainly those in Deut. 28) and how they can be healed through the work of Christ.

Other Favourites Next the Guide handles two other verses that are often abused in this regard, concluding that if we are suffering we should *thank* God (1 Thess.

5:18; Eph. 5:20) and should believe that “**all** things work together for good to them that love God...” (Rom. 8:28a). We should ask God for the reason behind our illness - and *then* pray. We must never *command* Him; He is our King.

Paul Paul was content despite his multifarious troubles, and his testimony in 2 Cor. 12:7-10 clearly puts the lie to this other “gospel” of guaranteed prosperity. Our study contrasts Paul’s attitude with that of the ‘Faith’ teachers who say “we don’t allow sickness in our house” - proving them unbiblical for several reasons. (Thanks to Hagin’s teaching that “no believer should ever be sick” and “that’s the way I pray: ‘I **demand** my **rights!**’”, more and more followers of this idea are dying because they are ignoring their symptoms instead of seeking God over the cause.)

*On the Alpha videos, Nicky chooses to intimate (without any qualifying statement) that “God **promises** healing to his People”.⁶ Later, he strongly hints that the sole reason “not **all** are healed” is because “the Age to come is ... not **fully realized**”⁷ - even though this implies that God is unfair and/or limited.*

Finally our book points out that the “name it and claim it” doctrine is simply not borne out in the lives of the men of faith in Scripture - and that even the most faithful believers would get nothing but Hell if it wasn’t for God’s love. Although a rebellious tongue can certainly bring a *curse*, nowhere does the Bible say that *blessings* work in the same way. We cannot speak blessings into being - we rely on God’s *grace* for every blessing we receive (Lam. 3:22-23).

19:9 REAL REPENTANCE? The Guide momentarily focuses on the ways in which proponents of this ‘Faith’ gospel have tried to avoid criticism. We contradict the idea that these people have been misquoted or quoted out of context. We later dismantle the argument that they have now “come to a deeper understanding” of matters. Lastly we observe that any ‘repentance’ by them has invariably been minimal or short-lived - or both. (Please note that the manual gives full references for its ‘Faith’ movement quotations as it does for all other quotations.)

19:10 WANT WEALTH? Financial lack is another tool that God uses - not only to bring correction but also to purify and teach us (and enable us to relate to the poor). Regrettably, ‘Faith’ teachers display an inordinate love of unrighteous Mammon. Their covetousness, and encouragement of it in others, is as unbiblical as it is offensive. We look at faith-teacher statements such as:

“You can talk to me all you want while I’m **driving by in my Rolls Royce that’s paid for** ... [T]alk all you want ... Doesn’t bother me”; and “The reason why I drive a **Rolls Royce**; [is] I’m following Jesus’ steps”.

...comparing them with nine gainsaying scriptures, including Heb. 13:5; Luke 12:15; 1 John 2:15-16; and 1 Tim. 6:9-10. The Guide subsequently debunks the theory that the “meek and **lowly**” Christ was materially rich. For a start, according to Mark 14:3-8, His disciples were not at all accustomed to Him having expensive things.

Christ Jesus wanted people to be attracted by His character rather than by outward appearance. Yet even the Alpha Course infers that He was outwardly attractive. Nicky has said, with unfortunate imprecision and without providing any scriptural backing, that:

“Jesus on earth was **so attractive** ... he was **magnetic**, so the church of Jesus Christ, His body now on earth, should be so **attractive** that people are drawn to it.”⁸

A more accurate statement of how the world actually saw Jesus is given in Isaiah 53:2-3. Jesus was so ‘magnetic’ that, fewer than four years into His ministry, He was cast away by the world and put to an horrific death.

Next the Guide examines the ‘Faith’ idea that the *apostles* were rich, dispelling this suggestion from four separate angles. Our Guide then patiently unpicks the prevalent teaching that Christians are promised material prosperity just like Abraham enjoyed. We note several major faults with this theology - not least that physical riches were never part of the Abrahamic *covenant*. (We also face up to various other ‘problem passages’ exploited by ‘Faith’ teachers and point out that the balance is most definitely not leaning to their side.)

In closing this section, the Guide specifies that the “exceeding great and precious promises” which we *can* stand on are *spiritual* ones (e.g. Eph. 1:13; Acts 2:37-39; and 1 John 2:25) - whereas Nicky ambiguously promises his novice hearers “all the riches of Heaven”⁹ and will only go so far as to say “There’s no **guarantee** in Scripture that **every** prayer for an **Aston Martin** ... will **necessarily** be answered”.¹⁰

19:11 SOWING DISCORD This section tackles the “seed-faith” principle that insists we will reap *materially* if we give materially to God’s Kingdom. The book establishes that the scriptural promises about “reaping” refer to spiritual, rather than physical, rewards. Galatians 6:7-8 shows that sowing for the sake of material reward is wrong.

The Guide also observes that the popular statement on sowing in 2 Cor. 9:6 does *not* say we will reap *materially* (except that we will have sufficient resources to live and to function as Christians) - but that we will reap God’s *love* (v7) and

His grace (v8) and reward in heaven (vv9-10). In fact, the whole of this very epistle is devoted to exhorting the church to look not for earthly wealth, but spiritual.

Our full Guide lambasts those “prosperity gospel” teachers who intimidate and manipulate their followers into giving them money, and we maintain that believers can be ‘right with God’ and still not necessarily prosper outwardly (see 2 Cor. 4:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:12 etc). We then testify to the disgust that many unbelievers feel toward Christianity because of the shameless methods of the ‘Faith’ leaders, quoting some of the things that the Bible has to say about such teachers (e.g. see 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 1:10-11; and 2 Pet. 2:1-3).

Unfortunately, the Alpha Course too implies that Christianity will bring a person *temporal* success instead of potentially *costing* them it. The cost includes temporal *sacrifice* and *suffering*. We list seven proof-texts along with Nicky’s remarkable understatement that living for Christ “**may** mean **some** rejection”¹¹ and that “there **may** be **some** sacrifice”.¹² Nicky also says:

“Our land desperately needs Jesus Christ ... for marriages to be restored, for families to be reunited, for people to be healed.”¹³

But Nicky is missing the point. Our land desperately needs Jesus Christ because its people are currently *on their way to Hell*.

19:12 BE SPECIFIC The ‘Faith’ teachers call for great specifics in our prayers. The obvious problem is that this implies we always know what’s best, which is often not true (Isa. 55:9; Rom. 8:26); hence the many non-specific prayers from men of great faith recorded in Scripture.

The Guide reflects on this whole question, and we remark that a person can only pray *specific* prayers on a matter (i.e. without needing to add an ‘If it be Thy will’) once they *know God’s will* on that matter. Similarly, while verbal proclamation of what God has said in His written Word about a given situation certainly has its place, since it serves to strengthen our faith - as well as the faith of those who hear us - and therefore helps to repel the enemy, there are many situations where we cannot know *which* scriptural promises apply until we have sought God over our particular set of circumstances.

19:13 THY WILL BE DONE This final section begins by illustrating, from Christ’s words in Matthew 26:39-44, that it does not necessarily show a lack of faith to say “if it be Thy will”. Rather, it is showing a godly submission to our heavenly Father. Paul used the same words in 1 Cor. 4:19 and elsewhere. (Nicky agrees about this in one talk, but seems to forget the principle later.¹⁴)

The Guide turns to the very fitting passage in James 4:13-16, showing how this goes totally against the grain of the 'Faith' doctrine - which is why Benny Hinn has to demand that we must "never, ever, **ever** go to the Lord and say, 'If it be thy will...'" The Guide follows up with cautionary tales, from Scripture, of believers praying outside of God's will. The 'Faith' teachers contend that it is *we*, through our "faith in faith", who cause the results, so we can demand whatever we like. But 1 John 5:14-15 says the *exact* inverse.

Our complete manual then highlights two examples in the Bible where 'negative' confessions were the righteous ones and 'positive' confessions were the foolish ones (i.e. Matt. 16:21-26 and Acts 21:11-14).

In view of the fact that David, Paul, and even Christ (among others) got 'negative' replies to their prayers, consider how boastful and unbiblical Hagin's words were when he said that he had not "prayed one prayer in 45 years ... without getting an answer ... [A]nd the answer was **always** 'yes'".

Consider too that Nicky apparently has no problem with such teachers and that, according to Alpha, we should never judge - or even criticize - them.

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CHAPTER 20

THE BIBLE'S VIEW OF GOD

20:1 THE FAITH FAILURE This chapter opens by reminding us all that our God is “great and dreadful [i.e. very fearsome]” (Dan. 9:4) and that believers should always seek to give Him glory. We then cite numerous examples of (supposedly infallible) ‘Faith’ leaders like Kenneth Copeland doing precisely the opposite. (We will shortly see the relevance of all this to Alpha.) Their teachings about the Lord are overturned from Scripture. For instance:

- We examine Copeland’s belief that “the biggest **failure** in the ... whole Bible is **God**” and that Satan managed to outwit the Lord (despite verses like Psa. 147:5; Rev. 19:6; and Jer. 32:17).
- We also check Copeland’s view that God is subservient to some ‘force’ or ‘Court’ (in direct contradiction to such verses as Psa. 24:1 and Dan. 4:35).
- From scriptures like 2 Chr. 6:18, we repulse Copeland’s incredible teaching that God is “a being that stands somewhere around 6’2”, 6’3”, that weighs somewhere in the neighbourhood of a couple of hundred pounds”.
- We also rebuff Copeland’s statement that “Adam was not a **little** like God; he was not **almost** like God; he was **not subordinate** to God even”. Genesis 2:7 and Psalm 50:19-23 are just two of the passages used to prove him very mistaken.

20:2 DOES OUR IDEA OF GOD MATTER? This section argues that if we have an emasculated view of God then we will not fear Him and this, in turn, will rob us of the extraordinary blessings that the Lord pledges to those who do. The

Guide spotlights seventeen such promises, including Psa. 33:18-19; Prov. 19:23; and Psa. 103:17. Well might one say with the Psalmist “**Oh** how **great** is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that **fear** Thee” (Psa. 31:19)!

We continue by listing several of the *curses* promised to those who do *not* fear God, including Eccl. 8:13; Jer. 2:19; and Mal. 3:5. God will send many souls to *Hell*. Anyone teaching a non-fearsome God is teaching a false God.

As Nicky rightly says, it is *Satan* who “gives us a false view of God”,¹ yet the Alpha videos never once tell participants that God is to be feared. Indeed, Nicky even suggests that it is *Satan* who introduces “fear in the relationship” with God.² Nicky thereby undermines those who stand up for God’s Word on this pivotal matter.

“**O** that there were such a heart in them, that they would **fear** Me, and keep **all** My commandments **always**” (Deut. 5:29). (See also sections 15:4 and 19:3. N.B. Obedience to God’s commandments is the *fruit* of a saving faith, not the *means* of salvation.)

20:3 THE CHRIST OF THE FAITH MOVEMENT Here we look at some of the ways the ‘Faith’ movement undermines the Deity of Christ. For instance:

- ◇ Like J.W.s and New Agers, ‘Faith’ teachers promote the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ was a *created* being who did not even properly exist before His incarnation. We overthrow this suggestion, not least by quoting John 1:1-3 and by citing three of the Old Testament appearances of the Lord.
- ◇ Faith leaders teach that Christ did not claim to be God - Copeland even quotes *his* Jesus as saying this very thing to him. We list just some of the occasions (like John 8:58 and John 10:30-33) in which Christ did indeed claim to be God. (Nicky concurs at one point over this, but undoes his good work later - see below.) As we saw in section 2:4, if Jesus was not God then His sacrifice can have had no efficacy.
- ◇ A most monstrous ‘Faith’ teaching is that the Lord Jesus became a *satanic* being on the cross. Benny Hinn teaches that Christ “became one with the nature of Satan”. We show how the ‘proof-text’ (regarding the *mock* serpent that Moses lifted up on the pole in Numbers 21) is being mis-used and how Christ remained utterly holy throughout His ordeal.
- ◇ Finally we expose the ‘Faith’ heresy that Christ *died spiritually* and was ‘born again’ in Hell. In four different ways, and using ten separate scriptures, we demolish this doctrine - even though it has its equivalent in Alpha.³

(Here we are obliged to take Nicky to task for some of his own statements about Jesus Christ, including his highly ambiguous teaching that “Jesus had evil thoughts”⁴ and his use of the episode in which the Lord prayed twice for the restoration of a (faithless!) man’s sight to suggest that “even ... Jesus” had a fallible faith and therefore sometimes had to heal people over “the long term”.⁵ Additionally, Nicky never gives an unqualified statement on the videos that he believes “Jesus Christ is God”. He instead sees fit to differentiate between Jesus and “God” much more often than Jesus and “His Father”.⁶ Nicky sometimes even suggests that our pre-existent Lord was a created being.⁷)

We have now seen the ‘Faith’ movement deny the true, biblical Father and Son by teaching a different Father and Son. God’s Word predicts the infiltration of teachers like Copeland et al into the Church who would “**deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ**” (Jude 1:3-4). The Bible says “He is **antichrist**, that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). Our book regrets Alpha’s totally different line on heresy. For, while Nicky claims that “it sometimes almost breaks my heart to see how the Lord is portrayed”,⁸ he elsewhere says:

“The fourth [ministry] value is **harmonious relationships** ... We make it a **rule** on Alpha **never** to criticize another ... church or Christian leader” [*Telling Others*⁹ (a book containing Nicky’s advice on evangelism)].

“I **long** for the day when we drop **all** these labels and just regard ourselves [i.e. anybody and everybody who claims to be saved?!] as Christians...”¹⁰

20:4 THE ULTIMATE HERESY Satan’s plan in Eden was to convince Eve that she and Adam would “be as gods” (Gen. 3:5). The enemy’s ‘New Age’ movement teaches the same... and so does the ‘Faith’ gospel. Hagin said that, if you are born again, you are “as **much** an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth”. Kenneth Copeland words it thus: “You don’t have a god *in* you, you **are** one” while Benny Hinn’s phrase is: “You are a little **god**”...

Our manual responds to the ‘Faith’ arguments for this view and, in six different Scriptural ways, disproves the idea. Well over one dozen Bible passages are employed to do this, including Mark 12:32; John 3:16-18; 2 Cor. 3:5; Psa. 144:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:24; and Mic. 6:8.

20:5 ARE WE CHRIST? Hagin asserted that “**we’re** Christ” and Hinn teaches that “You are **everything** He [Christ] was and **everything** He is and **ever** He shall be”. Amazingly, Alpha supports this by strongly hinting that we are Christ’s *actual* body - see the three quotes below. The main Guide offers a full answer to this belief, noting, for example, that, while it is certainly true that the Spirit of Christ indwells us, this does *not* make us Christ. We are a ‘body’ *belonging* to

Christ, but He still possesses His own body (Heb. 10:12; Php. 3:21 etc). Hinn's words ("Don't tell me you 'have' Jesus ... Don't say 'I have', say 'I Am, I Am, I Am, I Am, I Am'") are *specifically* prophesied and denounced in Scripture - in Luke 21:8. However, Nicky appears to share this dangerous idea too:

"When Jesus ascended he **changed bodies**. Now **the body** of Christ is **still on earth**, but **we** are the body of Christ - the church **is** the body of Christ".¹¹

"The Church is **the** place ... where he [i.e. God] lives";¹² "[T]he Church is Christ".¹³

20:6 THE ROMISH CONNECTION Here the Guide mentions the close association between the 'Faith' movement and Rome, and between their respective views. For instance, Rome says:

"Let us rejoice then and give thanks that **we** have become **not only** Christians, but **Christ Himself** ... Marvel and rejoice: **we** have become **Christ**..."

Our book lists a huge number of similarities between 'Faith' churches and the Roman Church in terms of corrupt doctrines, subjection and exploitation of followers, devotion to outward appearance, theatrical meetings and 'holy' objects etc. These two institutions are evidently from the same source, yet Alpha would have us accept them, and everyone else, blindly. Nicky has written the following. Remember the dreadful teachings being pushed by 'Faith' churches as you read it:

"I feel **particularly** strongly ... we **need to unite**. We need to encourage ... **whatever** God is doing in different places, not try to put our experience onto **any** other church [i.e. not expect the Bible to apply?!] ... Locally we have **always** worked with **all** the denominations, and **all** the Alpha conferences go **right across the board**. [Think about that! This 'board' includes:] ... Roman Catholics ... **Nobody** is suspicious of **anybody** else. **Everyone** is working together and **I believe that is what the Spirit achieves**."¹⁴

We respond with incredulity. How does Nicky know that it *is* God who is operating in all these "different places"? He doesn't say. Does God not care about false teachings? And when did Christ or the apostles ever indicate that different churches would have disparate experiences of the *same* Holy Spirit? Where are the scriptures that warn of deception? What spirit is it that causes confusion of belief and practice? Nicky has his own view of what the Spirit achieves, but the Spirit of God surely achieves *separation* from heresy and unrighteousness, not unity with the 'Faith' movement and its siblings.

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CHAPTER 21

THE TELL-TALE EXAMPLE OF PAUL

21:1 WHAT ELSE DOES SCRIPTURE SAY? So much for the ‘Faith’ movement’s *doctrines*. This next chapter of our full Guide looks at what God’s Word says about the movement’s ‘*apostles*’. If they genuinely have the same spirit that Paul had, then their behaviour should be similar. A common term for the role of an apostle today is “missionary”. (Again, a major reason why we include the information in this short chapter is because Alpha doesn’t.) Paul catalogued the signs of a true apostle in 2 Corinthians 10-11...

Paul taught with “meekness” (10:1) Our Guide protests at the lack of meekness amongst the ‘Faith’ leaders, and laments their pride and boastfulness. (Again, Christ Himself was meek, and His under-shepherds must not have domineering personalities or overbearing charisma as these lead to *control* - not to Christ.)

Paul taught with “gentleness” (10:1) Here the Guide uncovers the huge contrast between Paul and the intimidating style of ‘Faith’ teachers who shout their views and who show little patience for those who question them. We quote, for example, the horrible curses that Benny Hinn was accidentally recorded uttering against the children of his detractors.

Paul did not walk “according to the flesh” (10:2-3) The manual describes the carnal practices of ‘Faith’ teachers - and the opposing position taught in Scripture.

Paul’s “bodily presence [was] weak” (10:10) Paul wanted the church to concentrate on his teaching rather than be dazzled by outward appearances. The Guide shows how very different this attitude is from some ‘leaders’ today who work so hard on their looks and outward image.

Paul’s “speech [was] contemptible” (10:10) Paul didn’t rely on seductive words or impressive speeches but on the power of the pure gospel. In contrast, Copeland, Hinn and crowd are very smooth and charming talkers just like those mentioned in Romans 16:18. The Guide pinpoints other relevant scriptures and then calls readers to choose the truth above mere clever talk.

Paul’s teaching was “weighty and powerful” (10:10) Paul’s words were godly and effective. Our book compares this with various examples of the fables and bewildering statements produced by the ‘Faith’ movement - as censured in 1 Timothy 1:4-6. (Some of these people actually seem *incapable* of bridling their tongue - but see James 1:26.)

Paul did not “boast” of his “authority” (10:8-16) Paul let his doctrine and his lifestyle speak for themselves. How completely at odds this is with the claims of ‘special revelation’ and ‘unique anointing’ that ‘Faith’ teachers use to repress their audiences. We offer several scriptures that assail the latter approach.

Paul wanted to present the church “as a chaste virgin to Christ” (11:2) The ‘name it and claim it’ teachers would apparently instead have us prostitute our faith for the sake of worldly satisfaction (see vv11:14-18).

Paul feared people’s minds being “corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ” (11:3) Paul was desperate for the church to stick rigidly to the true gospel. The Guide reports how ‘Faith’ leaders ridicule this attitude and how they complicate and confuse the gospel.

Paul “preached ... the gospel of God freely” (11:7) Paul didn’t ask for a *penny* from the Corinthians, despite his obvious need. What a contrast to the extortion so frequently used by so many ‘Faith’ teachers.

21:2 PAUL’S CONCLUSIONS After citing three other *entire* Bible chapters that denounce the ‘Faith’ movement (e.g. the whole Book of Jude), the Guide reproduces Paul’s judgment that those ‘apostles’ who show the opposite spirit to his own “are **false apostles, deceitful workers**” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Our manual continues this quote and, after acknowledging that some ‘Faith’ leaders certainly produce miracles, shows why we should *expect* such people to generate signs and wonders and spiritual outpourings (counterfeit ones that is, as

per Mark 13:22a and Matt. 7:17b). Finally our text asks if other church ‘leaders’ have begun to exhibit the same ungodly characteristics identified above and have started to manifest this other spirit.

21:3 SO WHAT DO WE DO? This section describes what God’s Word tells believers to do about this situation. We are not to fear these people but we *are* to stop listening to them (Jer. 23:16; Jer. 29:8-9; Prov. 12:11b). The Guide urges readers not to respect or envy these prideful teachers (Psa. 40:4 etc) but to *flee* them (1 Tim. 6:10-12) because they are enemies of the cross (Php. 3:17-19) and are therefore spiritually detestable (Psa. 31:5-6).

The Guide also calls us to rediscover the true faith and to live by it and stand up for it (Eph. 5:5-11). Alpha, on the other hand, doesn’t even recommend any books exposing such groups so as to allow participants to make up for what the Course chooses not to cover.

In fact Nicky encourages the opposite of ‘contending for the faith’. He says that “When Christians quarrel they say to God ‘choose between us and them’”.¹ But true Christians are saying no such thing; they are simply obeying God’s Word and seeking to save brothers from false ways that will otherwise destroy them. When Paul quarrelled with a church he wasn’t saying to God “choose between me and them”, he was rightly standing up for the truth of the gospel (Jude 1:3).

Nicky is condemning those who are committed to the truth, while he *praises* those who permit falsehoods to be taught about God. Proverbs 17:15 is a sober warning about such a topsy-turvy situation. As Paul said so heart-rendingly in Galatians 4:16 to those who had allowed false teachings to prevail and who were rejecting him for his stand for the one true faith: “Am I therefore become your **enemy**, because I tell you the **truth**?”

21:4 ALPHA AND ADVENTISM This final section airs several of the main heresies taught by the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church, including the belief that Jesus partook of our sinful *nature*, and that Satan, rather than Jesus, is the scapegoat and ultimate bearer of our sins. HTB boasts, in regard to SDA, that “Alpha is ... uniting different denominations” and that, in Perth for example, “six churches including the **Roman Catholic** church, the church of Scotland, **and** the **Seventh Day Adventist**, are joining together to run an interdenominational Alpha” [*Alpha News*?].

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CHAPTER 22

TRUE LOVE

22:1 WHAT ABOUT LOVE? This chapter of our main Guide confronts the anticipated charge that our material is ‘unloving’. We begin our defence by pointing out that a Christian’s first commitment is to loving and serving *the Lord* and upholding the glory of His Name (Deut. 6:5; Psa. 145:1-2). Since both God’s good Name and the salvation of souls are threatened by false teachings, we must stand up for the truth about our *first* love (2 Thess. 2:13-15).

The Lord is always *furious* to see His Bride being led into error (even from ‘within’). It *cannot* be unloving to seek to diminish the influence of false teachers on God’s Betrothed. Were Elijah, or John the Baptist, or Christ Himself being ‘unloving’ to berate the apostate ‘leaders’ of their day? (Please Note: There are differing interpretations of the term ‘apostate’. When *we* use the term, we do not mean to imply that someone in this condition is necessarily ‘beyond help’.)

We should all love the brethren deeply, but those among us who do not demonstrate the Spirit of Christ (a.k.a. “the Spirit of **truth**”) cannot be treated as true brethren. The Guide here challenges the Western idea of love - proving it is very different from the biblical version that sometimes demands admonition or rebuke (or even ejection, in extremis).

“God **is** love”, but His severe actions - especially when His People follow false ways - prove that His love is not the fuzzy modern variety. We supply half a dozen examples of this from the Hebrew scriptures (e.g. Num. 11:31-34, 21:5-7;

and 1 Sam. 6:19) followed by others from the Greek (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:29-30). The section ends by revealing that true love seeks the protection and maturing of a church - something we achieve by putting God's Word first: "[T]his is love, that we **walk after His commandments**" (2 John 1:5-6). Compare this with Nicky's somewhat naïve and unqualified position which says that criticism and love are totally incompatible: "We are **not** to criticize ... we are to ... love".¹

22:2 OUR RESPONSE TO FALSE WAYS AMONG THE 'LAITY' This section looks at the guidance Scripture gives regarding unbiblical beliefs among those who are not 'leaders'. (Although a popular phrase on Alpha, the word 'leader' is put in quotation marks here because it is not actually used in the NT. Although elders should certainly be treated with great respect because they have a crucial role to play in watching over a Fellowship (every assembly in the NT had *multiple, co-equal* elders incidentally), it is the *Lord* who should *lead* us. As Psalm 23 famously begins, "The LORD is my Shepherd ... **He** leadeth me...".)

Initially the Guide states that heresy is heresy regardless of the source and that it will, if unchecked, keep spreading like leaven (Gal. 5:7-9). We use various metaphors to emphasize this point and to serve notice that the enemy will try to inject false ways into a church through any avenue left even slightly open to him.

We go further and divulge that error, like leaven, actually *grows* if left unattended - and that Paul therefore likened it, in 2 Timothy 2:17, to *cancer*. We also explain that Christ was saying the same thing in the (regularly misinterpreted) passage in Matthew 13:32 about the mustard tree that attracts the "birds of the air" (a phrase used throughout Scripture to refer to servants of *evil*).

If Satan's false brethren can make a church accept a corrupt version of the gospel then they have still destroyed that church and, if even Paul was "in perils among false brethren" (2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4) then so will our Fellowships sometimes be.

The full Guide then distinguishes between *evil* division and the separation that may *have* to occur for the sake of protecting the truth (Prov. 12:17; Prov. 22:10; 2 Thess. 3:6). This sort of firm measure is for the good of all concerned (1 Cor. 5:1-6). The manual juxtaposes such verses with Nicky's claim, as quoted in section 18:2, that we should "accept" all our brothers no matter what. Nicky neglects to define what the word "accept" entails here, but the Bible says that there *can* be circumstances when we need to separate - even from a true brother.

Failure to expel *false* brothers will itself lead to division - at least division from God. The Guide reminds readers of the (oft-forgotten) verses commanding separation (like 1 Cor. 5:11-12 & 2 Tim. 3:2-5), and of the fruit which indicates a

true brother (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9). We also warn of those who say “Let’s just leave it to Jesus to decide on Judgment Day”. Such an attitude is not scriptural and will maximize the harm that error is allowed to do in the Church.

The remainder of the section discusses those *true* brothers who persist in holding erroneous views. We argue that it is much more loving to correct them than to accept their “diversity” of belief (Jam. 5:19-20; Acts 20:26-27; 2 Tim. 2:25). Both the watchmen *and* the sheep are meant to be on their guard for the sake of the flock, rather than letting the flock stray into a ditch.

22:3 UNCORRECTABLE? The Word says: “He that refuseth instruction **despiseth his own soul**” (Prov. 15:32). This section entreats believers always to check their beliefs mercilessly when challenged, and warns that anyone who hates reproof will end up destroying themselves (Prov. 15:10).

The book weighs up various different causes for Christians being in error, but counsels that only those who have been denied access to God’s Word have any real excuse and that we must only associate with deceived people at a spiritual proximity which will not jeopardize ourselves or others. The Guide then supplies examples where the Word says “let **no** man deceive you”; especially 2 Thess. 2:1-3 which pinpoints the circumstances of Christ’s return and our “gathering together unto Him” (often termed the ‘Rapture’). Far from such end-time information representing a “disputable” matter, Paul actually announced:

“If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

Following this, we look at the common questions raised about the ‘Rapture’ timing described in this epistle. We also note that the withdrawal from the brother referred to in the above passage is for his *own* good, just as it is in 1 Tim. 1:19, and that it enables our worship to remain “in spirit **and** in **truth**” (John 4:23-24).

The text then repeats that the level of understanding we need in order to be *saved* is not nearly as great as that which we need in order to be a full, trusted, member of a Fellowship. Truth is a sign both of maturity (Php. 3:15) and spirituality (John 14:26). Unrepentant *sinfulness* requires a similar response by churches to that demanded for obstinately nurturing false beliefs (see, for example, 1 Cor. 5:11-13 or Matt. 18:15-17) - because discipline is the only way that ‘disciples’, and their churches, will stay strong. The chapter closes by standing up for *all* the biblical instructions about running a church, and by asking why practically none of the above is being taught on Alpha.

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CHAPTER 23

TRUE UNITY

23:1 WHAT ABOUT UNITY?! Unity is indeed part of the Church’s witness, but is it the Lord’s *top* priority for her (as Nicky suggests)? This section of our primary manual gently shows that real, biblical, unity comes from putting *truth* first. Through numerous scriptures, our Guide verifies that the “God of truth” commands us to “love the truth” and to “call upon Him in truth” for, by abiding in the Truth, we shall be kept safe (Psa. 91:4) and shall enter Heaven (Isa. 26:2).

Those who believe unity is the priority understandably point to John 17:11 which quotes Christ praying to the Father “**that they** [i.e. Christ’s disciples] **may be one**, as We are”. But does this passage *really* teach that we are to put unity before truth? The Guide disproves this idea by pointing out, for example, that:

- (a) This was a *prayer* requesting the *Father* to do something, not a *command* to us to manufacture unity,
- (b) it pertains to those that have ‘kept God’s Word’ (v6) - i.e. who have put truth first,
- (c) Christ asked the Father “that they may be one, **as We are**”... the Godhead is not divided doctrinally; each Person in it has a different *role*, but identical *views*!

- (d) God’s “Name” - i.e. His character - (v11) is one of pure truth; He *does* bring division where necessary (Luke 12:51-52), and
- (e) Christ’s *higher* priority (i.e. truth) is made plain in the same prayer (vv16-19).

Unity for its own sake is certainly much more pleasant than having to separate from people we are fond of, but this is not God’s way. Such unity is superficial because unity *of belief* is missing.

We investigate the widespread insistence on outward unity in order “that the world may believe”, unveiling numerous problems with this idea - not least the presumption that the world will be impressed by a group of people who actually harbour all sorts of mutually irreconcilable opinions about God. An effective, blessed Fellowship is one which knows and follows the *whole* of God’s Word rather than adhering only to a subset of favoured verses. Those who are obedient and faithful to holy Scripture in this way will shine Christ. Both unbelievers and those in deception will be drawn, repentantly, to this light.

23:2 UNITY 3, TRUTH 300 The words “true” or “truth” appear over one *hundred* times more frequently in the Bible than the word “unity”. Despite this ratio, the Guide focuses on the three verses which *do* refer to “unity” and we show that, even here, truth is the pre-requisite for God-given, rather than contrived, unity.

We also observe that, in other places where people might expect the word “unity” to appear, the word “truth” is present instead (e.g. in 1 Cor. 13:6 and Eph. 5:9). The book asserts that we are called to be “valiant for the **truth**” (Jer. 9:3) and that love of the brethren will flow much more readily and deeply if there is truth first (1 Pet. 1:22). Sadly this is all played down in Alpha; hence Nicky’s incomplete and open-ended statement that “We are to seek **unity** at every level”.¹

23:3 ON JOHN In view of the significance that Nicky attaches to John’s Gospel, this section highlights the eye-opening things that John wrote on the subject of *truth*, starting with portions like 1 John 2:3-5; 2 John 1:4; and 1 John 3:23, not forgetting 3 John 1:3-4:

“I rejoiced **greatly**, when the brethren came and testified of the **truth** that is in thee, even as thou **walkest in the truth**. I have **no greater** joy than to hear that my children walk in **truth**.”

Nicky *admonishes* those who put sound teaching first, and he claims that the Spirit of God, far from seeking purity among disciples, promotes compromise:

“There has been some comment which is not altogether helpful to **unity**. [But the test should always be whether the comment was helpful to *truth*!]

Let us drop that and **get on**. [“Get on” with opening the floodgates to error?] It is wonderful that the movement of the Spirit will **always** bring churches together [no matter what they believe?]. He is doing that right across the denominations and within the traditions.”²

Our Guide comments on this man-made unity (which is inevitably maintained at the expense of truth), following it with another of Nicky’s teachings which swings the door wider still to false brethren: “The Spirit brings unity to the church ... A disunited church, squabbling and criticizing makes it **very** hard for the world to believe”.³ Of course, if churches were committed to the truth then any “squabbling”, as Nicky puts it, or “contending earnestly for the faith” as Scripture terms it, would quickly yield correction and thus true unity.

(In fact, the world is hardly exercised about unity between denominations; unbelievers are *far* more ‘put off’ by the breathtaking hypocrisy within the professing Church - not least the hypocrisies within Rome and the ‘Faith’ movement - groups with which Nicky wants us to join rather than separate.)

Alpha is meant to be encouraging us to learn God’s Word, but when the Course implies that doctrine isn’t important how can we possibly expect participants to bother with serious study? The text then reveals Nicky’s view that unity is the main thing that will attract the world:

“Some churches are not very attractive. Imagine the Church as it was intended to be - the body of Christ. But everyone must play their part - **unity** - **then** we become attractive. [You] cannot get anything more attractive to the world but the body of Christ.” [1st Edition⁴]

However, Christ’s attraction was not that He brought unity; He didn’t. It was that He brought the clear, unadulterated *truth* (John 1:14-17; Matt. 10:34-36). Our Guide develops this point using the analogy of a choir - whose attractiveness will not last long if its members are all singing different tunes, or even different songs! Christ was *not* attractive to the world at large and that He warned us not to expect to be either (John 15:18-20).

(Many churches running Alpha certainly find that the project brings a tangible unity among the believers involved - even among church members who totally disagree on other issues. But this unity comes about because they all believe in *Alpha* and are all sincerely committed to *the Course*; the same effect can be seen in the secular world where people from a great range of backgrounds who are all interested in a particular hobby get on brilliantly with each other - as long as the hobby remains centre-stage! This is a shallow type of unity; it is not “the unity of the Spirit”. So it is with Alpha. The sense of unity merely derives from the

shared interest in it and the preparedness to be practically involved together, not for any deeper, supernatural reason - which is why this ‘unity’ is rarely seen at other social gatherings of the church. No wonder the atmosphere at Alpha meetings is remarked upon by church members.)

23:4 RIGHTLY DIVIDING DIVISIVENESS This section distinguishes between godly and ungodly separation and examines the three verses most commonly used to denounce *all* division. We show that each one (i.e. 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 2:6-8; and Rom. 16:17) puts truth before unity - and that the final one actually *calls* for separation when truth is threatened. The Guide also explains that 1 Cor. 1:12-15 (‘I follow Apollos’, ‘I follow Paul’) is an indictment not of division but of following men rather than God’s Word.

23:5 WHAT UNITES US At one point Nicky relates the following story: “**Father** Raniero Cantalamessa, the preacher to the **papal** household, I heard him once give the most wonderful talk about unity. He said this: ‘What unites us is infinitely greater than what divides us’”.⁵

The Guide supplies a seven-point rebuttal of the agenda behind this quote; bringing to mind, for instance, that God’s Word itself sometimes commands us to separate (e.g. in 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 3:2-5; and 2 Thess. 3:14) - especially from those who preach “another” gospel as Cantalamessa’s church does.

Christians in China’s underground church would rather *die* than join the compromised, state-accredited ones. (Incidentally, Nicky concedes that the persecuted, underground church “by all accounts, is **very strong indeed**”,⁶ but he doesn’t speculate as to why this might be!)

We note that God *congratulated* the churches in the Book of Revelation when they put truth before unity - and condemned them when they didn’t. Finally the Guide reaffirms that Cantalamessa’s teaching would actually lead to us being disunited *from God*. If a believer puts *unity* first, it means they are putting something before their allegiance to Christ, the Truth.

23:6 GOD’S DIRECTION Nicky says that “the Bible is a kind of compass”.⁷ God’s Word does indeed show us where inaccurate teachings “go wrong” as Nicky puts it. But God demands that a church’s doctrines point accurately in the right direction (Matt. 7:13-14), whereas Nicky thinks that churches are free to go off at all sorts of tangents - provided a few “absolute essentials” are in place.⁸

For example, he glowingly quotes the famous call for “**liberty** in non-essentials”.⁹ Unfortunately he doesn’t identify which are the “essentials” that apply to *churches*. Perhaps this is because he realizes the Bible gives no such lati-

tude. Needless to say, Nicky’s chosen “absolute essential” is not ‘belief in the inerrancy/sufficiency of the Bible’. Indeed, his choice fails even to cover the bare essentials of *salvation*, let alone those of church operation.

(N.B. In the back of his *Why Jesus?* booklet, the primary criterion that Nicky gives new Christians when selecting a church is to pick a “lively” one.¹⁰ This is apparently preferable to one that fears God and is committed to the truth. As usual, Nicky doesn’t define “lively” but the accompanying illustration in the booklet shows that he means *physically* lively - yet many cultish groups offer physically lively churches. Christ stipulated what was essential when He said, in John 14:21, “He that **hath** My **commandments**, and **keepeth** them, **he** it is that **loveth** Me”.)

Our manual regrets that Nicky’s teaching about marriage unions does not extend to *church* unions (see section 6:5). In *both* cases there is a need for the other party to be “going in **the same direction** as us in our faith”.¹¹

We close this section by quoting Amos 3:3 which pointedly asks “**Can** two walk together, **except** they be **agreed**?” Unless they share the same compass bearing, they cannot. (It is worth recalling that early believers named themselves “followers of **the Way** [singular!]” rather than employing the less precise term “Christian”. The latter was actually assigned to them by men (Acts 11:26), not by the Lord who clearly wanted to drive home the idea that there was only one right direction.)

23:7 SMALL BUT BRIGHT God can achieve infinitely more with a handful of people who are committed to His Word than with *thousands* who compromise on it (see, for instance, Judg. 7 and 1 Sam. 14, and the example of the apostles in John 6:53-66). Nicky is keen to convince us that “The unity of the people of God was a high priority on Jesus’ agenda and it should be so on ours”.¹² But even if it meant total rejection, Christ was prepared to stand alone for the truth - just like Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and so on.

Satan is using the same tactics against the Church that he employed so successfully against Israel. We urge folks to follow the Shepherd rather than other sheep, and to stick to the narrow path lit by God’s Word (Matt. 7:13).

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CHAPTER 24

“RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD”

24:1 REVIVAL REQUIREMENT? True revival depends not on unity, but on commitment to God’s Word - just as it did in John Wesley’s day. (See our Guide for more.)

Recent promises of revival have actually been based on a supposition that is not truly scriptural. Note that the remainder of this chapter will require especial grace, plus a determination to seek the truth, because the material questions a very popular teaching within parts of the professing Church....

In chapter 1 we saw the overriding importance of truth. But how much do we *really* love (and tremble at) God’s Word? When we come across a passage of scripture that doesn’t seem to fit our view, do we sweep it under the carpet with an embarrassed cough? Do we desperately shake it and retranslate it until it fits our mould? Or do we have the courage seriously to consider whether it might be *our* mould that is in need of the ‘shaking’?...

In other words, are we more attached to our dogmas and denominations than we are to being fully in line with our holy Bible? Is our reaction merely to

clutch at a few arguments that seemingly negate the plain meaning of the ‘problem passage’ in question, or do we have the maturity not to be threatened by an idea that may require us to rethink things?

Are we genuinely prepared to seriously entertain the possibility that it is our existing view that is in error, even if it will mean real cost? To have to let go of a long-cherished belief may not just demand humility. We may have to let go of close friends; we may have to leave an entire denomination; we may even have to repent publicly for misteaching the subject. Few are prepared to pay such a price, but the other option is far costlier in eternity and we can assure readers that God will strengthen those who put their trust in Him.

This next chapter will test many readers in this area, so we urge them to make a solemn decision to be honest with God and to put the whole of His perfect Word before any traditions and worldviews that have been sold to them before.

24:2 RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD Here the manual dwells on the fact that doctrines do not need to reject the Deity of Christ in order to be fatal. For example, they can exploit a few scriptures to downplay certain sins or to teach things that render hearers incapable of remaining faithful and ‘lasting the course’. (Our Guide mentions a further eight separate verses which speak of the need for an *enduring* allegiance to Christ, including 2 Tim. 2:12; Matt. 16:25; & 1 Thess. 1:3-10).

Of course, such doctrines still give a misleading idea of God and His ways. Some resourceful ‘teachers’ could even convince unwary or uninformed believers that a false Christ is the real one (Mark 13:5-6). As we have seen, correct doctrines will be in balance and will line up with the *whole* Word (Prov. 11:1a).

Next the Guide briefly discusses the fundamental rules of Bible interpretation. Our material also observes that interpretations which please the soul/flesh rather than the spirit are highly unlikely to be right (1 John 2:16; Eccl. 1:18). Two such examples are supplied.

The Guide then notes that many verses offer different sides of a given doctrine and that we must not ‘pick and choose’ which verses to accept but must only embrace a doctrine that fits *all* the biblical data. Three common false teachings are briefly surveyed to help illustrate this.

More Dishonesty Here the manual describes one particularly dangerous method of interpretation - viz. the spiritualization of incompletely fulfilled *literal* prophecies. (There is simply no precedent in Scripture for doing this.) Afterwards, five deadly side-effects of using this method are enunciated, i.e.:

- (a) Many straightforward passages suddenly become nonsensical (e.g. Isa. 17:1 which foretells the wholesale destruction of Damascus - a city which, incidentally, has never suffered this, but which is prophesied one day so to do).
- (b) Such passages can easily then be made to mean almost anything a ‘teacher’ wants them to,
- (c) Confused believers are consequently put off reading the Bible - especially the Books of the Prophets - and rely instead on the false teachers who are promoting this ‘gnostic’ system,
- (d) Such interpretation renders related portions of Scripture much more difficult to understand (which in turn exacerbates the problem listed in point ‘b’), and
- (e) This method completely obscures the truth about the very last days; a period with which we must be properly in tune - as we saw in section 22:3.

24:3 THE LAST DAYS This portion of the Guide demonstrates the folly of the allegorical system outlined above by pointing out how the resulting idea that the Church will rule the nations *before* Christ’s physical return is totally at odds with the Lord’s sobering description of the true circumstances that believers will experience in the days before He comes back (e.g. in Matt. 10:16-23). For, when asked by His disciples in Matthew 24:3 “What shall be the sign of Thy coming...?”, Jesus did *not* say “The Church will have taken authority over the world and made it ready for Me”. In fact He answered:

“[People shall] deliver you up to be **afflicted** ... and ye shall be **hated** of **all** nations for My name’s sake ... And because **iniquity** shall **abound**, the love of **many** shall wax cold. But he that shall **endure** unto the end, the same shall be saved” (vv5-13); “[T]hey shall **lay their hands on you** and **persecute** you ... And ye shall be **hated** of **all** men for My name’s sake” (Luke 21:12,17).

God’s Word further states, regarding this period:

“This know also, that in the **last** days ... men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, ... disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ... Yea and **all** that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer **persecution**” (2 Tim. 3:1-12).

Certainly ‘the gospel will be *preached* to all nations’ before the Lord’s return, but these nations will not *repent* (see, e.g., Matt. 24:14; Luke 21:12-17).

“[T]ake heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and ... ye shall be **beaten**: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony **against** them” (Mark 13:9).

24:4 IT GETS WORSE According to Scripture, Christ's return will actually be preceded by a *falling away* - and one so widespread that it makes possible the rise and acceptance of the ultimate manifestation of the *Antichrist*:

“Now we **beseech** you, brethren, by [i.e. regarding] the **coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**, and by our gathering together unto Him ... Let **no** man deceive you by **any means**: for that day shall not come except there come a **falling away first, and that Man of Sin** [the final Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:1-3).

This Antichrist will be able to “make **war** with the saints, **and** to overcome them” (Rev. 13:7; Dan. 7:21,25). In fact, far from us enjoying *dominion*, Christ went on to say that Christians shall suffer “great **tribulation** ... And except those days should be shortened, there would **no** flesh be saved” (vv21-24). This is somewhat at odds with Nicky's assurance that we have cause for “**great optimism**”¹ about enjoying a huge future harvest.

The scriptures actually indicate that only a “remnant” (a very small minority) will remain faithful to biblical truth and will therefore avoid “falling away”. These are the ones the last Antichrist will attack. He will “make war with the **remnant** ... which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17; see also Dan. 8:24).

24:5 REVIVAL IS COMING This section, while encouraging bold, God-directed preaching, confirms that Scripture speaks of only a ‘remnant’ being saved - just as in Ezra's day, or Elijah's, or Noah's, or Lot's... This is proved, for instance, by citing the Lord's words in Luke 17:26-28:

“[A]s it was in the days of Noah, **so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man** ... [for, apart from a few faithful souls] the flood came and destroyed them **all**. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot [where again only a handful were saved and where all the rest were corrupt, so God:] ... destroyed them **all**.”

What we have written in these sections is often dismissed as being ‘pessimistic’. But the true test is whether or not it is *biblical*. Because of the coming apostasy and persecution, Christ had to wonder whether He would still find the true Faith in existence *at all* on His return (Luke 18:8).

The section terminates by commenting that the word ‘revival’ means the reinvigoration of something *already alive* - and that the purifying effect of the end-times ‘troubles’ will indeed serve to revive us believers (Rev. 7:13-17; Eph. 5:27).

24:6 SIGN OF THE TIMES The Guide then looks at the ongoing, but conspicuous, restoration of the physical nation of Israel that has taken place over the last century or so. Firstly we make known how strongly the “God of Israel” feels about having His great Name profaned among the nations through Israel’s dispersion (Ezek. 36:22-24; 1 Sam. 12:22) but how He is glorifying His Name by fulfilling various miraculous restorations He promised physical Israel, including...

The regathering of her people *from many nations* (Isa. 11:11-12) to her *original place* (e.g. as per Ezek. 20:41-42); the restoration of her *statehood* (as per Jer. 3:18 & Ezek. 37:21-22) in a *single day* (Isa. 66:7-9) as *one nation instead of two* (Ezek. 37:21-22; Jer. 3:18); the restoration of her *capital* (Zech. 8:7-8 & Luke 21:20-24); the restoration of her (once dead) *language* (as per Isa. 19:18 & Zeph. 3:9); the restoration of her *environment* (Ezek. 34:13-14; Ezek. 36:8-12) including the restoration of *viniculture* (Jer. 31:4-5 & 31:10-12) and of *fruit export* (Isa. 27:6 & Ezek. 36:30); and the restoration of her dilapidated, or “waste”, *cities* (e.g. as per Isa. 61:4).²

“I will **not** utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD. ... I will bring again [from] the captivity of my people of Israel, ... and they shall **no more** be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God” (Amos 9:8-15; see also Jer. 24:6 & 31:38-40).

“Zion ... shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of **many** generations” (Isa. 61:3-4).

Each of these remarkable restorations - which are indeed happening after **many** generations (Isa. 58:12) and cannot therefore apply to previous exiles - is *precisely* prophesied in Scripture. Over fifty references to clear, literal, Bible passages are given to verify all this, such as Isa. 11:11-12; Ezek. 11:16-17; and Jer. 29:14.

Our text continues by questioning the standard arguments used to repudiate the idea that God would physically restore the nation of Israel. For instance, although there is certainly no distinction between Jew and Gentile *in Christ Jesus* (Gal. 3:8), nevertheless Romans 9-11 makes it plain that God *does* have a special end-times purpose for the nation of Israel and does *not* see her as being just like any other nation. Some believers may not like this, and Nicky himself tries to divorce Romans 9-11 from Israel,³ but - as Isaiah 55:8 says - our ways are not God’s ways.

(If the reader is so upset by the above that they are about to discard this book, we would urge them instead either to check Bible chapters like Jer. 30-33; Ezek. 36-39; Rom. 9-11; and Zech. 12-14, or at least to jump straight to Part Five.)

Although God has certainly forsaken *individual* generations of Jews, He promised never to forsake physical Israel *in perpetuity* (see Psa. 94:14; Jer. 31:35-37; Isa. 54:5-8 etc).

“And yet for all that [i.e. despite all of Israel’s transgressions, v42], when they shall be in the land of their enemies, I will **not** cast them away, **neither** will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them: for I Am the LORD their God” (Lev. 26:44).

“But Zion said, ‘The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me’. **Can** a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have **compassion** on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I **not** forget thee” (Isa. 49:14-15).

Note that the Bible still identifies the Lord as the ‘God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’ *after* the cross (Acts 3:13).

24:7 AN OLD OBJECTION The Guide confronts a favourite excuse (championed especially by Rome) for rejecting physical Israel, viz. that “the Jews killed Jesus”. From numerous standpoints we show that:

- (a) this statement is inaccurate - for it was Roman soldiers, at the insistence of the false ‘*leaders*’ of God’s People, who crucified the Lord (Matt. 27:20; Matt. 21:37-39, 45) - and besides, it was *all* mankind’s sin that led Him (deliberately) to lay down His life (John 10:17-18);
- (b) it does not constitute biblical justification for not loving the Jewish people - we should feel the same way about Israel that the Lord does (Luke 23:34) and Paul did (see Rom. 9:1-3); and
- (c) this excuse actually assists the enemy in his efforts to minimize the fruit from God’s end-time plan (Matt. 23:37-39; Rom. 11:15).

We must be careful not to reject Israel just because of a tiny minority of bad apples. We Gentiles were *given* our Saviour through the nation of Israel (Luke 2:32; John 4:22), and the Lord’s return is inextricably linked to her (Matt. 23:39).

One only has to look at how much the false church (including its ‘New Age’ arm) detests the modern state of Israel, and how this fallen world has treated the Jewish people over the centuries, to know that Israel is hated by Satan - but still matters to God. Our manual lays bare some of the falsehoods about Israel propagated by the enemy through the world’s media and we provide some astonishing facts about her modern history which seldom get reported. Among them:

- Britain promised (back in 1917!) to give the Jewish people a homeland, in return for the crucial role a Jewish scientist played in Britain winning WWI. (Britain totally reneged on this agreement.)
- More than thirty years (plus a Holocaust) later, the U.N. finally allowed a tiny sliver of land the size of Wales (and less than 18% of the area promised by Britain) to become Israel.
- Even after the horrors the Jews suffered under Hitler, their new country was attacked within one day by the armed forces of *five* Arab nations.
- The present refugee crisis is the *direct* result of surrounding Arab nations warning all Arabs living in the land to get out before Israel was invaded.
- The surrounding Arab nations could easily have absorbed their Arab brothers who left the land, but their governments chose instead to keep them in camps and use them as political pawns.
- For years, even Arab nationalists admitted that ‘Palestine’ was just “Southern Syria” and thus that it had no claim to statehood. (Perversely, Nicky calls Christ’s first disciples “Palestinian”⁴ despite them all being Jewish. The name ‘Palestine’ was derived from the word ‘Philistine’ and was invented - after the disciples had all died! - by Israel’s *enemies* to dissociate the land from its God.)
- The ‘occupied territories’ are lands miraculously won by Israel (the only true democracy in the entire Middle East) after she was grievously provoked and pushed into a war she never asked for. (See Ramon Bennett’s awesome book *Philistine: the Great Deception* for proof of these points and for much other stunning, fully documented information that the god of this world wants hidden - and about which HTB also stays extremely quiet.⁵)

Incidentally, because the Jewish people are not yet spiritually restored, some commentators feel that the ongoing restoration of the modern state of Israel is a satanic counterfeit of a future restoration. But we should remember several things:

Firstly, the Jewish people have suffered appallingly through the centuries and yet have shown a degree of godliness by withstanding unbelievable pressures to assimilate into the world. Many survivors of this ‘sifting’ have tried to remain comparatively faithful to their veiled understanding of God’s laws, and they are now displaying a real, if rudimentary, faith in the God of Israel by returning to the land He gave them for all time (Psa. 105:8-11 etc).

Despite what the world's media would usually have us believe, and given that very few nations of the world offered any haven to Jews while Germany was trying to exterminate them all 'in the name of Christ' during WWII - and that her neighbours have been bent on her annihilation since before a single 'Palestinian refugee' existed - Israel's behaviour has frequently been remarkably restrained.

Besides, a degree of physical restoration sometimes precedes spiritual restoration (Ezek. 37:11-14; Gen. 42:25) and Israel's promised spiritual restoration will apparently be fulfilled when Christ reveals Himself to His physical brethren - just as Joseph made himself known to the sons of Israel who originally rejected Him. See Gen. 45:1-8 & Zech. 12:10, 13:1-2,6. Only after this will the physical restoration be completed.

*Our main Guide offers numerous further justifications. If any readers reject these arguments, then we would beseech them at least to look inside their hearts and ask themselves if they love the Jewish people to begin with. The spirit of anti-Semitism is very powerful and will certainly colour one's attitude to Israel. If we do not care for them then we are badly out of step with our merciful God who has loved the nation of Israel with an "**everlasting** love" (Jer. 31:1-3) and His mercy towards her "endureth for **ever**" (Ezra 3:11).*

As an aside... As we have seen, the Church has not replaced physical Israel. So what is the true relationship between them? Two remaining possibilities exist, and the reader must decide which one is most in harmony with God's eternal Word. (This decision is crucial because the two positions lead to completely different doctrines - and radically disparate interpretations as to what proportion of the spiritual principles and non-symbolic instructions listed in the Bible have relevance to believers today.)

Either the Church and physical Israel are *completely* distinct (the much more popular view), or there is a *middle* position where God's spiritual nation and His physical nation are *different but related* (akin, in some sense, to the way in which believing Jews were obviously related to unbelieving Jews before the New Covenant came in) - as is indicated by Rom. 11:18-24; Gal. 3:6-9,29; 6:16; and Eph. 2:11-22. (But either way, the Church certainly cannot afford to spiritualize, or to appropriate for herself, *any* physical promises to physical Israel that have yet to be completely fulfilled!)

The Guide draws attention (because Nicky doesn't) to the Church's indebtedness and responsibility toward the Jewish people. Finally we record the multiple blessings that accrue from getting this whole topic right - and how the correct understanding of many Christian teachings are dependent on us doing so.

24:8 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? Although Jesus Christ can certainly be thought of as the King of all *Christians* (i.e. He rules in the spiritual realm over those who are spiritually alive to Him), His *earthly* Kingdom will not start until He comes back. Nicky equates the *spiritual* Kingdom of God to Christ's future *physical* Kingdom; he talks of "the Kingdom which Jesus **inaugurated**",⁶ and even says:

"There is also a **present** aspect of the Kingdom ... [T]he **dawning** ... of the Kingdom ... The future Kingdom has **broken into history**."⁷

But Christ's temporal, earthly Kingdom has *not* begun yet. The main Guide describes some of the serious exegetical problems that result from Nicky's claim that Christ is already ruling the nations, especially:

- (a) Christ indicated that His Kingdom would not be set up straight away, but only when He returned (Luke 19:11-15),
- (b) He is supposed to reign here for one thousand years (this period is stated six times in the very literal verses of Rev. 20:2-7) - a period of time which elapsed a very long time ago if one takes Nicky's view, and
- (c) The things that are scripturally due to be reinstated at that time can *only* be achieved by a restored *physical* Israel (e.g. as per Isa. 66:20).

Nicky's 'post-millennial' stance (i.e. his teaching that the world is already under the Millennial reign of Christ) causes people to have a rose-tinted view of every development in the Church (and in the world). The idea that things will inevitably get better and better discourages folks from checking weak conversion testimonies, or questioning 'unorthodox' preachers, or testing spiritual occurrences, or mourning the increasingly depraved state of the nations... because post-millennialists are convinced that everything is going to work out beautifully *before* Christ Jesus comes back. As we have seen, this is the very opposite of what God's Word says. See also Dan. 7:21-22; Rev. 13:8; Mark 13:9, 13:12-23 etc.

24:9 FINALLY... We urge all readers who disagree with any material in this chapter to triple-check that their counter-arguments *really* reflect Scripture as a whole. (As we will see, an erroneous outlook has truly dreadful ramifications.) We end by quoting Paul's very relevant end-times insight in 2 Timothy 3.

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RECOMMENDED READING

We then proffer brief reviews of fine books on 'False Ways', 'Doctrine', 'Ecumenism', 'The Word-Faith Movement', 'Rome' and 'Israel'. We also list five excellent websites and three specialist ministries that can give more help.

Please Note: For those readers who are interested in adaptations of the Course, we will be looking at the whole question of Alpha's adaptability later in this book.

PART FIVE

SPIRIT MATTERS

CHAPTER 25

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

25:1 INTRODUCTION Before exploring the dramatic Alpha testimonies of manifestations, Part Five of our main Guide takes a momentary look at the subject of the ‘end-times’. Our material briefly considers fourteen biblical indicators that mankind is in the final years before Christ’s return (such as the prophesied increases in ethnic clashes, homosexuality, freakish weather and drug abuse) - and we note that this is the first time in history they have all coincided.

25:2 WHAT DO THE LAST DAYS HOLD FOR US? The Guide sketches how Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 all quote Christ’s urgent warnings to His followers about the powerful deceptions that would characterize the last days:

“**Take heed** that **no** man deceive you. For **many** shall come in **My name** ... and shall deceive **many** ... [A]nd **many** false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive **many** ... [T]here shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and

shall show great signs and wonders ... Behold I have told you before[hand]" (Matt. 24:3-25).

Consider too that:

"Satan ... deceiveth the **whole world**" (Rev. 12:9); "[I]n the **last days** ... evil men and seducers will wax **worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived**. But continue **thou** in ... the holy **scriptures** which are able to make thee wise..." (2 Tim. 3:1,13-15).

We warn readers that it *is* scripturally possible to believe in vain (1 Cor. 15:2) and even to worship God in vain (Mark 7:7).

The section then offers further evidence that none of us is immune from deception, just as no-one is immune from sinning. We have all been deceived at some time or another in our Christian lives; we will only be safe from this when we go to be with the Lord. If this is not true then many Bible passages are meaningless, including 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Pet. 2:1-2; 1 John 2:18,26; as well as the Lord's words to His disciples in the three chapters, commonly called the Olivet Discourse, referred to at the start of this section.

25:3 HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND? We all need to obey Christ and to "take heed" - i.e. to be alert at all times and on the lookout for false doctrines and false spirits rather than to imagine our churches are exempt from the enemy's crafty ways. (Nicky too admits that evil forces are "cunning".¹)

We exhort readers to test *everything* in Christian meetings by the Bible (including all activities in the spirit realm, since the true *Spirit* of God will never contradict the *Word* of God).

Finally the Guide asks whether the vigilance encouraged in Scripture about these things (e.g. in 1 Pet. 5:8 and Gal. 1:8) is being reflected on Alpha. As we have seen, this is particularly important in these days.

"**Not** every one that saith unto Me, **Lord, Lord**, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. **Many** will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied **in Thy name**? and in **Thy** name have cast out devils? and in **Thy** name done **many wonderful** works? And then will I profess unto them, I **never** knew you: **depart** from Me..." (Matt. 7:21-23).

Plainly these people were sincerely convinced - wrongly - that they had previously been dealing with the true Jesus. We must learn this dreadful lesson...

25:4 HOLY TELL-TALES Our Guide describes the ways in which Christians can tell whether it is the Spirit of God or *another* spirit that is active in a particular situation. The discussion starts with a proof that miracles are no guarantee of the *Holy Spirit's* operation (Rev. 16:13-14; 2 Thess. 2:8-9; Rev. 19:20) and continues by observing that any spiritual experience which does not glorify Christ cannot be from the Spirit of God (John 16:14).

Christians can determine the character of the *Spirit* of Christ by examining the character of Christ Himself as revealed in the Gospels (Isa. 11:2). Thus the Guide concludes that spiritual manifestations not lining up with Christ's character must be from another source. If a spiritual experience is not graceful and holy then there must be a false spirit behind it - since God's Spirit *is* graceful and holy. Indeed, Nicky himself states that "God can't act in a way that is inconsistent with his character".²

25:5 COMPARING THE SPIRITS We move on to the principal signs that indicate *another* spirit is at work - initially pointing out that a demonic spirit will often appeal to the *flesh* whereas this is not true of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:17a; Rom. 8:5-8). We then note the ability of false spirits to produce fleshly versions of the love, joy and peace that God brings.

Love The enemy is easily powerful enough to generate a mental (or "soulish") feeling of 'love'. The Guide quotes New Agers both feeling 'loved' and experiencing love towards others as a result of their *un-Christian* spiritual activities.

Joy Unholy spirits can cause a shallow, often short-term, version of this gift from God.

Peace Similarly, where the *Holy Spirit* brings the peace which requires true faith to know (Rom. 15:13), an *unholy* spirit may bring a misleading feeling of peace - which requires no discipline to obtain. New Age practitioners *often* experience "**Ecstasy, bliss and intervals of tremendous joy, love, peace and compassion**".

This sort of comparison can be made with *all* the different blessings that the Spirit of God bestows. We subsequently contrast the fruit of the true Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24) with that of the false (2 Tim. 3:1-5) marking that verse 5 of the latter emphasizes the 'anointing' that comes from living a genuinely godly life. Although Nicky explicitly denies it,³ the true Spirit of God is only given to those who are *obedient* to God (Acts 5:32; John 14:15-16). The Guide asks if Alpha is encouraging proper discernment about such matters, given testimonies like: "During the Holy Spirit weekend on Skye I was tingling and I **knew** that I'd met Jesus".⁴

After this, the Guide quotes a delightful (if non-Alpha) testimony from an ex-New Ager which reminds us of the things that the true Spirit of God does at conversion - and how a person should be able to explain *why* they feel any love, joy and peace that results. This is contrasted with the following:

“Nicky invited us all to say a prayer ... It was one to welcome Jesus into our lives ... As I said the prayer, I had this feeling like a **gold Catherine wheel hitting me in the chest** and then **shooting all down my arms and legs**” [HTB’s *UK Focus*⁵].

Conversions recorded in the Bible always occur when confronted by Christ and His cross rather than as a result of talks concentrating on the Holy Spirit - but this is not so with Alpha:

“On the **Holy Spirit Day**, I prayed a prayer to **accept** Jesus ... and I was powerfully touched by the Spirit” [*Alpha News*⁶];

“On the **weekend away** ... I prayed the prayer [of commitment] and **something** very profound happened to me. I **know** I was filled with the Holy Spirit” [*Alpha News*⁷].

Just as we saw in section 16:1, the focus in these ‘Holy Spirit day/weekend’ testimonies is very rarely on Christ at all, even though that is precisely the ministry of the true Holy Spirit.

25:6 THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS SELF-CONTROL Another important test of a spiritual experience is whether or not it is *forced* upon the recipient...

Nicky speeds past the fact that the fruit of the *Holy Spirit* includes self-control (Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 14:32), whereas we specify that although God urges, commands, even threatens, He will never *force* a true disciple to do anything - but that many Alpha participants speak of *compulsion* to do certain things regardless of whether they personally agree to do those things or not. We list several instances, such as:

“I just **couldn’t** move from the chair. I sat there until the group leader realized I had been affected and came over” [*UK Focus*⁸]; “I felt this **amazing pull** towards [the minister]...” [*Alpha News*⁹]. (We shall see more examples shortly.)

Unfortunately, Nicky misleadingly refers to the Holy Spirit as a “compelling” Spirit,¹⁰ and even as a “controlling spirit”.¹¹ The Guide looks at this matter further, giving examples of being ‘taken over’ in this way in New Age experiences, while finding nothing of this sort among disciples in Scripture. God does *not* take

away a follower's self-control, although according to Scripture He *does* sometimes force His will on those who are *opposing* the truth (e.g. as per 1 Sam. 19:20-24 and 1 Sam. 18:10 where God *forced* opponents to prophesy).

25:7 THE ECSTATIC The Son makes us free (John 8:36) so the recurrent Alpha testimonies of *loss* of freedom (e.g. of having experiences that not only *start* on their own but also cannot then be stopped at will) are alarming:

“**[S]uddenly** a feeling of joy came over me and I began to laugh **uncontrollably...**” [*Alpha News*¹²]; “I **couldn't** work out **what** was going on ... I **couldn't** stop it...” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *The God Who Changes Lives*¹³]

“I started laughing ... I **didn't know why** ... [Later] my knees started to buckle and I **collapsed** into my chair ... [I] began laughing **uncontrollably**” [*Telling Others*¹⁴]

25:8 FAITH AND PRACTICE The main Guide then debates the relationship between Word and Spirit:

The Word We submit that God's clear commandments in the Epistles concerning the running of Fellowships are all too often replaced by traditions of men - which is exactly what Christ rebuked the Pharisees for. (Little wonder Fellowships today do not have the same effect on the world as the Acts Church did; they do not share the same devotion to the scriptures.)

The Spirit Here the Guide considers the suggestion that we must 'move on' from Scripture because “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6), and concludes that Paul is *not* rejecting the Bible - since elsewhere he says “**All scripture** is given ... that the man of God may be **perfect**” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Our manual explains that Paul is referring to the letter of *the law* - i.e. the old Covenant laws given to Moses (see vv7, 11, 13 & 15) - not the *whole* of Scripture. (The fuller significance is not that we should think the law which God gave to Moses is unhealthy and should not be read, but that it convicts of sin and drives us to the cross where we are to die. According to Galatians 3:24 the Mosaic law was given to bring men to Christ.)

Any spirit which leads us into contention with God's finished Word cannot be the *Holy Spirit*, since it was He who gave us the scriptures in the first place. The Guide supplies various other proofs that God's Word and His Spirit are entirely compatible and that Paul's true concern was about the *twisting* of God's Word (2 Cor. 4:2). The Psalmist was no Pharisee and yet was devoted to the scriptures (e.g. see Psa. 19:7-11; Psa. 119:9-11 & vv138-144). The holy scriptures, far from predicting their own redundancy, say they will stand “for ever and ever”

(Psa. 111:7-10; Psa. 119:43-48, 89, 160; Matt. 24:35 etc). In fact, we are *warned* of the time when professing believers turn away from the Bible:

“[T]he time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ... [T]hey shall turn away their ears from the truth...” (2 Tim. 4:3). (See also Amos 8:11.)

We must not imagine that God’s Word kills! Indeed if we sincerely ask the Lord to speak to us through the Bible by His Holy Spirit then it will bring us light and life (Psa. 119:105; Php. 2:16; Prov. 3:1-2 etc). Besides, if we have no objective basis for truth then how can we, for example, prove that a New Ager’s spiritual experiences are not from God?

Nicky helpfully says that the Bible is “a love letter from God”¹⁵ (although it is much more, of course). A loving bride-to-be who was given a letter from her Betrothed would read it frequently and carefully and avidly. That is very much our condition. As we clearly saw in chapter 1, we should be profoundly suspicious of anyone who would discourage us from loving and studying God’s Word.

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CHAPTER 26

ALPHA'S EXPERIENCES

26:1 FEELINGS OF HEAT AND WARMTH This chapter of our main Guide evaluates the testimonies of unnatural heat experienced by Alpha participants. (These are abundant despite the lack of scriptural precedent.)

“[O]n the weekend away ... He [Nicky] put his hand on my back ... It felt like there was a **bar heater** against my back.” [*Alpha News*¹]; “When I received the Spirit, it felt like my feet were **burning**” [*Alpha News*²].

“I just felt this **huge heat** coming out from the centre of my chest, just radiating out. **Massive**. Absolutely **massive**” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.³]; “As the prayer over me continued, I became hotter and hotter to such a degree my clothes were **wringing** wet. My thoughts were, ‘**Please** hurry up and finish. **I cannot take any more**’” [*Alpha News*⁴].

Our book reflects on the fact that there are no reports of the NT Church feeling supernatural heat, but that, on the other hand, New Age ‘Reiki’ Therapy causes identical experiences to those described on Alpha:

“[The Reiki Master’s] hands seem to get **hot**, and I **actually feel heat**, I could feel energy going through my **body** and out my toes.”

26:2 SPIRIT INVOCATION We then explore the common act in Alpha of inviting, or praying to, the Holy Spirit - puzzling as to why, if this is a sound practice, there is not a single Bible passage recording that the early Church did it or was supposed to do it. We carefully examine the idea that “the communion of the Holy Ghost” (2 Cor. 13:14) means *talking* to Him - and we uncover five serious flaws in this belief. (For instance, the underlying Greek word does not mean ‘converse with’ but ‘to experience something with others’ - i.e. other believers, just as indicated by the rest of the verse.) Scripture conspicuously omits the Person of the Holy Spirit when it says “**truly** our fellowship is with the **Father**, and with His **Son** Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

Further, the Guide demonstrates that even the commandment to “try the spirits” (1 John 4:1, which is dangerously misquoted by Nicky as reading “try the **Spirit** [singular]”⁵) does not justify us talking to the Holy Spirit, since the passage is referring to the *spirits of living people* - as the remainder of the verse, and the surrounding verses and chapters, make very clear. In other words, John is teaching that one of the indicators of whether a person is “of God” or not is whether they will consistently and happily confess the Deity of Christ when challenged. We list a dozen scriptures to prove this, including 1 John 2:19-26 and Heb. 12:23.

We then explain some of the very real dangers of attempting to invoke the Holy Spirit directly. As others have written, petitions in *all* kingdoms are always addressed to the *throne* (Heb. 4:16) but unlike the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is *never* described as being a king or wearing a crown or being on a throne.

The Guide identifies four more reasons why ‘Spirit invocation’ is biblically unsupportable. (For example, Christ instructed us to pray “Our Father...”, and the *Father* - not *us* - is the Person who directs the Spirit, so why should Christians disobey Jesus and bypass the Father?). We entreat readers to relate only to the spirit realm in the ways God has ordained, because He punishes those who do not seek Him “after the due order” (1 Chr. 13, 15). Significantly, Saul’s punishment for approaching God wrongly was to be sent *another* spirit (see 1 Sam. 13 & 16).

26:3 WHITE LIGHTS The Guide then looks at the ‘white or bright light’ often experienced by Alpha participants. One such person stated: “My head was full of brilliant light”,⁶ and other Alpha testimonies report likewise:

“[A man, doing Alpha in prison,] agreed to let two Christians pray with him ... ‘I held my eyes **tightly shut**,’ he wrote. ‘After a couple of minutes a **bright light** came in’”.⁷

“[The woman] put her hand on me and said ‘**Come Holy Spirit**’ and the most incredible thing happened. I felt as if someone took two torches and

put them **into** my eyes. I saw this **incredible white light** and my whole **body**, from my head to my toes, was bathed with bright white light. Liquid love..." [*Alpha News*⁸].

The Guide compares these experiences with that of a famous, unrepentant non-Christian who had *commanded* God to show Himself, and who had also seen a "great white light".

26:4 MORE LIGHT Here we report some of the many instances of supernatural light experienced during events such as: Reiki sessions; 'Near-Death' experiences; and New Age 'Kundalini awakenings'. The similarities between the following New Age descriptions and Alpha's testimonies are obvious:

"I felt a stream of **liquid light** entering my brain ... The illumination grew brighter and brighter..."; "When the Kundalini awakens, it is a dramatic transformational force, a **white**, quicksilver, **fluid** light ... Those who are very sensitive can actually feel and even **see** the light force rising **in** the body."

Then we list some of the many differences between these accounts of light 'in the head' and the light *from heaven* that Paul saw *optically* on the road to Damascus (where there was a clear point to his 'enlightenment', as well as a world-changing result).

26:5 TINGLING, SHAKING, ELECTRIC SHOCKS We go on to publicize three other manifestations common on Alpha:

"It started like a **tingle** and then I felt waves of power starting to flow through me" [*Alpha News*⁹]; "While they were praying for the gifts [of the Spirit], my **left hand** started **tingling** ... It got more and more **painful**. It was **absolute agony** ... I didn't know what to do about it and it kept going all evening" [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.¹⁰].

(It is important to consider that, while Scripture refers to the 'tingling of ears' - notably in connection with God's judgment - it is not possible to find biblical references to physical tingling caused by the Holy Spirit.)

"We had a day when the Holy Spirit was going to be **invited** to visit us ... During the afternoon we were singing a song '**Holy Spirit, we welcome you**', when I felt an **incredible tingling** in the back of my neck ... During the course I had been talking to people who were Christians and I had wanted them to prove their beliefs had meaning. And now suddenly I had had this **instant conversion**" [*UK Focus*¹¹].

“In the afternoon he [Nicky] **asked the Holy Spirit** to come. I was thinking to myself, ‘What’s going on?’ ... I began to feel tingling in my left hand. It was like little **electric shocks** ... Then suddenly I got **all hot** ... [Next day] **the Holy Spirit was asked** to come again. I was just standing there and it came quickly this time. First I had **all this tingling** in my left hand and up my arm. Then my leg started **shaking**. They laid hands on me again ... I was also **boiling** hot again...” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.¹²].

(Our manual additionally reports the ‘Holy Spirit weekend’ experiences of a notorious British politician, which included each of the manifestations alluded to in this section, but whose subsequent behaviour seemed most worldly.) It is crucial to remember that the testimonies we quote in both Parts 3 *and* 5 of this book are not dredged up from some strange corner, but are considered so exemplary as to be put into Alpha’s own publications.

The Guide catalogues all the reactions to hearing the gospel that are laid out in the Book of Acts, verifying that not *one* of them mentions the things described in these testimonies - although they *are* to be found within Eastern mysticism. Again the Guide details how New Age Kundalini initiation causes the selfsame manifestations.

N.B. We Christians may well tremble before God through fear (Jer. 5:22; Heb. 12:20-21) but that is markedly different from isolated parts of our bodies jerking of their own accord with no accompanying hint of godly fear. In Scripture, uncontrollable shaking (or ‘palsy’) is associated solely with *apostasy* (e.g. see Acts 8:7; Matt. 4:24; and Psa. 69:23-24), and the only electricity in the Bible is “lightning”... not something one would wish to be struck by.

Similarly, feeling *unnatural* ‘pins and needles’ appears more akin to being notionally pricked by darts or arrows than to receiving *helpful* gifts. In the Bible, having lightning or arrows directed at one represents being *scattered* from God rather than reconciled to Him (as in 2 Sam. 22:15 & Psa. 18:14). Some people might feel justified in pointing out that being on the receiving end of darts is never a sign of blessing in Scripture, but the very opposite (as in 2 Sam. 18:14 or Eph. 6:16).

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CHAPTER 27

WORLD-CLASS EXPERIENCES

27:1 WHAT IS KUNDALINI? This chapter of our main study begins with a quick (and safe) overview of the occultic Hindu concept known as ‘Kundalini’.

“Kundalini **Energy** is typically described as a powerful energy source lying dormant in the form of a **coiled serpent** at the base of the human spine. When freed it reputedly has the capacity to effect **great** physical **manifestations** and **healings**.”

(Kundalini yoga seeks to awaken this “serpent energy”, as do other New Age activities.)

27:2 LYING SIGNS It is vital to realize that not all false prophecies, false words of knowledge, counterfeit attempts to heal etc will necessarily fail (Deut. 13:1-4). The enemy is more than capable of producing such deceptive miracles if they will convince people that, despite utilizing unbiblical practices, they have ‘tapped into’ the true God.

27:3 VISIONS AND VOICES There are true visions and false ones, but visions in the spirit from God (as opposed to *dreams* from Him) are scripturally only given to people who already serve Him diligently. And visions which act-

ually *portray* the Lord are only given to firm disciples. This is not the case in Alpha - as we will see below.

(Paul's 'road to Damascus' experience, described in Acts 9 and elsewhere, was a *physical* phenomenon visible to everyone present. Paul did *not* see the Lord on that occasion, but rather during the three years he later spent walking with God in the wilderness - see Gal. 1:16-18. Visions from God are either physically seen or else are seen in the spirit. A vision 'in the head' has no scriptural precedent and is a soulish counterfeit, as per section 26:3-4.)

Likewise we look at the subject of supernatural *voices*. Again, we note that *God's* voice is either heard by the physical ear in the normal way, or is 'heard' *in the spirit* - in which case it registers as a sort of 'inner knowledge' or impression. The enemy's counterfeit of God's true voice heard in the spirit, is a voice heard 'clairaudibly' as a 'voice in the head' by New Agers and others. Examples are then supplied of these unbiblical 'head voices' being heard by Alpha participants, e.g.:

"One business man ... had awoken with the words, 'Buy *The Economist Magazine*' ringing **in his head** ... **Surely** this was ... from **God**.'"¹

Weeping Tears easily move us but they still need careful testing since they are also common in New Age awakenings, where "The nature of the cleansing process creates strange behaviour that might make the person **weep** and laugh within minutes". The Guide suggests that people who cry before God ought to know *why* they are crying, and we quote an Alpha testimony that includes visions, 'inner' voices, and inexplicable crying.² We are obliged to raise some concerns about it.

Our Guide gives several examples of participants seeing 'visions' of Jesus Himself, each of which could easily be counterfeit - especially since these visions never seem to engender a sound testimony. After one such vision, the recipient said: "Every time the name Jesus was mentioned, I would **just** weep. I suppose **that was my conversion**" [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.³].

These are compared with various Kundalini episodes which are indistinguishable from Alpha's in this regard. For example, during a *pagan* event, one New Ager experienced:

"...an almost blinding **golden light** and a soothing **presence** that filled [me] with peace ... [This individual then saw a vision of a man:] 'When I first saw him, my own initial thought was, He looks **just like Jesus Christ**...'"

27:4 MORE WEeping Our Guide again calls believers to be discerning over tears because they can be the product either of the Holy Spirit *or* of pagan, New Age, spirits - as here:

“People find themselves **beset** by **inexplicable** emotional states ... The emotional roller coaster may **swing** from feelings of anxiety, guilt and depression, through to compassion, love and joy, with accompanying bouts of **uncontrollable weeping**.”

We would be thrilled to find testimonies where participants had cried because they recognized the filthiness of their lives and the extent to which their sins had offended God - but none of the “weeping” testimonies say anything like this. We have already seen examples of Alpha guests weeping *for no reason* and we quote more of them: “The Saturday morning following the first Alpha talk, I woke up and I was crying ... **I didn’t know** I was going to say it but I said ‘God, **why** am I crying?’” [*Alpha News*⁴].

The Guide follows this up with an important statement about the raising of hands in either a submissive or begging style and we stress the necessity of ensuring that one does not act in this way toward any spirit other than God’s...

“[W]hile standing, I raised my hands and started praying that the Holy Spirit would come to me ... I felt **tears** ... I experienced a **wave** of overwhelming love, deep down within me. This was **followed closely** by peace, joy and total happiness [Note the lack of any explanation for these feelings]” [*UK Focus*⁵].

“I wanted a positive **sign** ... Then on the **Holy Spirit day** we were talking in our discussion group and I **suddenly** started to **cry**. I **kept on** crying and the group prayed for me. And **then I stopped** crying and I knew **I believed from that moment**. I felt **intensely** warm. I had wanted to believe for so long and suddenly I did [But believed what?]” [*Alpha News*⁶].

27:5 WHAT THEN? We castigate Course leaders for their blind trust regarding such things. We also chide Nicky for encouraging acts like visualizing Jesus “standing in front of you”⁷ and for talking positively about “electric shocks of love”.⁸ We then note that no participant ever questions the source of their experience, despite scriptures such as 2 Cor. 11:4 & 11:13-15 (which make plain that other spirits *can* be received), and verses like 1 Tim. 4:1 that expose these “seducing spirits”.

“Since evil spirits **can counterfeit** God as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, the believer needs also to know very clearly the **principles** upon which **God**

works, so as to detect between the Divine and the Satanic workings ... He needs knowledge ... [K]nowledge to detect the subtlety of ‘teachings’ bearing certain infallible indications that they emanate from the pit, while **appearing** to be from God” [Penn-Lewis].

27:6 KUNDALINI MANIFESTATIONS In this section is provided a more comprehensive list of Kundalini’s physical effects which reveals over thirty ways in which they mirror the officially-endorsed Alpha testimonies we have come across. (They include many superficially ‘good’ and ‘spiritual’ changes but they represent a counterfeit of true salvation.)

27:7 KUNDALINI TEACHING The chapter ends with a brief synopsis of the ‘doctrine’ behind Kundalini, thus establishing its obvious satanic nature and its true agenda. These are the final sentences of the five paragraphs offered:

“When the inner Kundalini is awake it turns us inward to our **soul** and to our source - the **Divine** ... It is ‘the beginning of the spiritual journey’ that enables us to ‘experience the inner, spiritual world’ [But God dwells in our *spirit*, not our soul!]...

“As the inner Kundalini is awakened, it uncoils and ascends like a snake, so that is often why it is called ‘**serpent-power**’. This bulb of Kundalini can be awakened through intense devotion to God [but which ‘God’?], **repetition of mantra** and various **yogic** practices, and, in my case, **shaktipat**, the **Guru’s touch**.”

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CHAPTER 28

“THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH”

28:1 THE HOLY SPIRIT? This chapter of our main Guide looks at Alpha’s concept of the Holy Spirit:

“Mr Gumbel led a session entitled ‘How Can I Be Filled With The Spirit?’ ... Mr Gumbel asked us to **put our hands out**. He prayed: ‘Fill us with your Spirit’, then described what he saw - ‘The Spirit of God has come and is filling people all around this room. Some people are **shaking**. Some of you **feel a great weight** on your hands. Others, tears are rolling down your face and you are thinking ‘**Why** am I crying?’ This is the Spirit of God, don’t be embarrassed. **Don’t resist** the Spirit. Some of you **feel** waves coming **over** you. **Waves and waves of liquid love...**”¹

Nicky’s words are, once again, significantly out of line with Scripture. This is odd, given that - in a much earlier talk - Nicky says we must *not* be led by physical feelings and that our “relationship with God ... is based on facts and **not** on feelings, that’s **very** important”.²

28:2 THE PRESENCE OF GOD A lot of Alpha participants speak of physically sensing the presence of God in the room. We examine the likely cause of this, and begin by checking which Person of the Godhead is presenting themselves:

God the Father The Father is in Heaven (John 12:28; Matt. 23:9; Luke 11:2, KJV; Mark 11:26 etc). Although it is true that the Father's "heart" and "Name" and "glory" were said to "dwell" in Israel, none of these is His *Person* - even the "heaven of heavens" cannot contain the Person Himself. We thus show that the "Presence" being felt 'in the room' on Alpha cannot be that of the *Father's* Person.

God the Son Although the Son did manifest on Earth in various forms in the Old Testament, our Guide proves (via eight references) that, ever since His Ascension into Heaven, the Son of God has been situated at the right hand of the Father where He will *remain* until it is time for His Second Coming (Acts 3:21) - and that His return will be evident to all.

The Guide also shows that Christ's statement in Matthew 18:20 about being "in the midst" means (as the preceding verse indicates, and as the Greek confirms) not that He is in the *room* with our *physical* bodies, but that He is in the midst between the *Father* and the gathering - i.e. in the middle, 'interceding' for us (1 Tim. 2:5; Matt. 18:19-20; Rom. 8:34). *We* are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6); *He* is not located in physical places with our bodies. We can simply be assured of a special degree of Christ's intercession when we make the effort to pray with others, just as happens when we make the effort to pray with fasting.

The Guide thus concludes that the Alpha "Presence" cannot be the Person of Jesus and that, when Nicky says "Jesus is **here** ... [H]e's **right here**",³ he is not teaching correctly. Matthew 24:23 is worth bearing in mind over this matter!

God the Holy Spirit While we sympathize with those who assume that the thing they can feel in the room with them must be the Person of the Holy Spirit, we ask readers to consider the following sections...

28:3 LOCAL PRESENCE The book maintains that the Holy Spirit dwells in *us*, not in geographical locations such as rooms (Rom. 8:9-11; John 14:17) and therefore that any spirit from whom we can alter our physical distance cannot be the *Holy* Spirit (Psa. 139:7-10).

(God certainly said to Moses, in Exodus 33:14, "My presence shall go with thee [singular], and I will give thee rest", but the Hebrew word translated "presence" here just means "face". Thus Moses could relax in the knowledge that he would have God's special attention during this arduous journey through the wilderness; God would 'watch over' and 'look after' him in every sense; God's eyes

would be on him and His ear inclined to his prayers. The OT *geographic* ‘appearances’ of God were meant as physical depictions of *spiritual* truths.)

The manual challenges Benny Hinn’s stated belief that the Holy Spirit can be “left behind” in a room or that He literally “walks beside” us, and notes that the only spirits which manifest like this are ‘familiar’ spirits such as the one in Job 4:13-15. Worryingly, several Alpha testimonies indeed refer to a *localized* presence: “I could sense a great presence **in the room...**” [*Alpha News*⁴]; “[The] Spirit came **into the room**” [*Telling Others*⁵].

28:4 PHYSICAL PRESENCE Biblically, the presence of God’s Spirit is discerned *spiritually* - rather than felt physically as Alpha participants report:

“As I opened the church door, I thought I was going to be knocked flat. I **felt a physical** presence I had never felt before in my life. I **had** to grab hold of both doors to stay upright ... I couldn’t believe it. I **felt** the Spirit of God and it was incredible...” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.⁶]

But what of the wind in Acts 2 that filled the house where the disciples were gathered? Surely that was a physical, tangible, geographic presence? Here is a powerful illustration of the importance of double-checking what our Bible actually says, for not only does the passage in question never say that the wind *was* the Holy Spirit, but neither does it say there was *any* wind *at all*:

“And suddenly there came a **sound** from heaven **as** of [i.e. as *if* of] a mighty rushing wind, and it [i.e. the **sound!**] filled all the house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2). (Likewise the “cloven tongues” of fire in verse 3 were only said to be “**like** as of fire” in *appearance*. The text never says they were physical flames, nor that they were felt physically.)

Our book faces up to the very few such scriptures that appear to speak of the Spirit physically manifesting to geographic locations and shows how these references differ fundamentally from Alpha manifestations (e.g. because the passages never mention “feeling” the Spirit, and always have the *sign* of the Spirit symbolically alighting on *people* rather than having Him ‘enter’ a room).

“Our pastor asked if there was anyone who would like to receive the Holy Spirit. Some people went up and he prayed over them and you could **feel something** start to **enter** the room, this amazing peaceful **presence...**” [*Alpha News*⁷].

Regrettably, Nicky again promotes this thinking. One person he prayed for reported “an overwhelming **presence** of goodness ... [A]fter a while he [Nicky]

said, ‘I **feel** a very strong presence of God. Have you **felt** it?’” [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.⁸]. Nicky also quotes approvingly from the following ‘healing’ testimony:

“While they were praying for him, he was cast down to the ground as if someone had **hurled** him **violently** to the **earth**; groaning and sobbing, his whole body shaking so that he could not speak.”⁹

God does not “hurl” His obedient children about - but He does sometimes allow demons to throw around those in the *apostasy* (e.g. in Acts 19:16 & Matt. 17:15). Nicky should explain that *if* this was a God-given healing, rather than a similarly real but counterfeit one, then the man was being delivered of a devil in the process, and that it was a *devil* doing the hurling - on its way out (otherwise Nicky’s audiences may well suppose that this is what *God* sometimes does to His servants).

28:5 PERSONAL PRESENCE Here the Guide distinguishes between being ‘in touch with’ someone, e.g. via a telephone, and being in their actual company. *We* may come *spiritually* into the ‘holy of holies’ and the presence of God, but His personal presence or ‘being’ does not visit our locality. Yet:

“I **felt** as though **someone** had put **their hands** on my shoulders. I turned around to see if it was a lady I spent a lot of time talking to, but she was too far away to have touched me...” [UK Focus¹⁰].

28:6 WHAT IS POURED OR GIVEN? The Guide then turns its attention to the idea that believers should expect, *physically or mentally*, to sense the Person of the Holy Spirit inside them.

We deal with the question of whether there is a distinction between the *Person* and the *power* of the Holy Spirit. We reiterate that the Holy Spirit in us is only ever sensed *spiritually* (1 Cor. 2:14) and that a spirit detected in any other way within us must be demonic. (Man is made in God’s image and is therefore triune, having a body, soul and spirit - as per Heb. 4:12 and 1 Thess. 5:23).

Regrettably, Nicky constantly says that the Holy Spirit “comes to live within us”¹¹ (or similarly misunderstandable phrases) - which must encourage confused Alpha attendees to allow spirits to enter their bodies or souls. Indeed, Nicky happily includes the following Alpha testimony in one of his current talks:

“I **felt** the Holy Spirit **enter** me. I **felt** full of the Holy Spirit.”¹² (In Scripture, the only foreign spirits we can find described as unambiguously “entering” people’s bodies are unclean ones, à la Judas and King Saul.)

28:7 A DEMANDING MATTER This section expresses concern at the way Alpha participants are given such an ineffective gospel message that they have to seek physical *sensations* of God before they will believe:

“It was quite fun ... but I still needed some **physical** evidence of the existence of God...” [*Alpha News*¹³]; “I just needed ... something I could **feel** in the **physical sense**...” [*Alpha News*¹⁴].

We have no warrant from Scripture to demand such things. The Lord actually condemned those who did so when He was on the earth (Matt. 12:38-39, 16:4).

“I prayed for Jesus to **show himself** ... I can’t **describe** what happened. I just had my **soul ripped inside out**. An unbelievable **feeling**. ... **[E]very** time I pray I get a **feeling inside me**” [*Alpha News*¹⁵].

“The first great effort of evil spirits is directed toward getting the man to accept their suggestions, and workings, as the speaking, working, or leading **of God**. Their **initial device** is to counterfeit a ‘Divine **Presence**’, under cover of which they can mislead their victim as they will ... [I]t is **never** safe in **any** case to *feel* God’s presence with the physical senses” [Penn-Lewis].

28:8 THE SPIRIT ON THE UNSAVED? Lastly the Guide establishes that unbelievers cannot receive the Spirit of God (John 14:17; 1 Cor. 2:14; Gal. 4:6) since they are spiritually dead to God. Any manifestation experienced by an unbeliever must therefore be due to another spirit.

We give several examples of this from Alpha:

“On the weekend away, the Holy Spirit came and I felt moved ... **I wanted** to become a Christian [but hadn’t!]. It was an emotional **and physical** sensation ... It is difficult to describe the experience ... You cannot buy the **buzz**...” [*Alpha News*¹⁶]. (See also the testimonies quoted in section 14:2 of this Overview plus the testimony at the end of 15:7. Note also that the first testimony of section 28:4 was from a non-Christian journalist.)

(Of course, Alpha effectively teaches that these manifestations are directly related to the point of conversion; i.e. that they are the “assurance of salvation” that the Bible promises the Holy Spirit will bring. Thus *Alpha News* is overrun with testimonies where the participant has assumed that their strange experience *was* their conversion. See sections 25:5, 26:5, 27:3-4 and 28:7 for examples.)

Nicky Gumbel refers to Cornelius' baptism in the Holy Spirit, as described in Acts 10. But, by not explaining that Cornelius was already a very faithful, God-fearing man who was thoroughly obedient to the scriptures, Nicky causes hearers to think that being filled with the Holy Spirit is something which people can experience *before* they show any real commitment to God.

The Guide ends this chapter by querying how participants can possibly discern which spirit they are encountering given that the Course leaves the subject of Satan and "How to resist evil" until *after* the 'Holy Spirit' talks! Even then Nicky doesn't do a sound job:

- ⇒ He claims that we "don't know" Satan's origins.¹⁷ By omitting the details in Ezekiel 28:12-20 (a passage telling us things about the enemy that should make us very alert) Nicky ends up gaining a free hand to dispense the Alpha spirit without fear of challenge.
- ⇒ He also avoids describing Satan's final destination (see Rev. 20:10 for it). If he were to reveal the truth, perhaps his horrified hearers would put more effort into avoiding the enemy's clutches.
- ⇒ Because of the Temptation in the Garden of Eden, Nicky characterizes Satan as somebody who "concentrates on the prohibition".¹⁸ This suggests that those people who warn of God's prohibitions are satanic, whereas concentration on the prohibitions is *not* Satan's usual tactic (see the Wilderness temptations for example). Indeed, it is *God* who says "thou shalt **not**" over 200 times in Scripture - including ten times when laying down the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20:1-17).

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CHAPTER 29

MAJOR OUTPOURINGS RELATED TO ALPHA

29:1 ALPHA, TORONTO, PENSACOLA This chapter of our main Guide begins by highlighting the especially close relationship between Alpha's first edition videos and the 'Toronto Blessing' (TB).¹ (The newer videos no longer contain any *overt* references to TB. This change has enabled Alpha to be accepted by many churches that felt TB did not line up with God's Word. Note however that *Alpha News* still prints adverts for meetings held by John Arnott of the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church,² so the links remain.)

After this, the text pinpoints the central role that Toronto *and HTB* played in Steve Hill's anointing - an event which led directly to the Pensacola outpouring.

29:2 THE 'BLESSING' COMPARED WITH SCRIPTURE Churches have been forced to justify the Toronto/Pensacola (T/P) manifestations mainly on the basis of 'fruit' because of the lack of scriptural precedent. The Guide documents the extremely heavy editing required to make the writings of 18th century revivalists appear to endorse these manifestations and supplies substantial, and telling, quotations from Jonathan Edwards - even beyond his insistence that "we are to take the *Scriptures* [emphasis in original] as our guide". Our text shows the true cause of the bodily occurrences seen during the 'Great Awakening':

"[T]he phenomena in Edward's day did **not** occur through the laying on of someone's hands, **or** from repetitive chorus singing and chanting, but from

the **preaching** of the **Word of God** [as per Acts 10:34-44] ... The shrieking and tears were the result of the **conviction of sin and terror at the possibility of going to Hell**. The rejoicing followed the assurance that **sins were forgiven** ... [F]aintings came about in both instances” [Judd].

George Whitefield too demanded that *all* experiences are to be tested against “the unerring rule of God’s most holy Word” and are, if found to be without scriptural support, to be discarded as “diabolical and delusive”. Finney and Wesley agreed.

29:3 FRUIT ACID TEST The book exposes the folly of judging ‘moves of the Spirit’ by their fruit, since identical-looking fruit is produced by many other religions. In fact, the *authentic* fruit of the Spirit (including gentleness, patience and meekness) has *diminished* in many T/P churches. (And, as others have noted, the fruit of the Spirit is actually singular, thus *all* of the ‘features’ or ‘flavours’ of this one fruit must be exhibited for it to be God’s Spirit.)

Increased love for the real Jesus would manifest itself in *greater obedience to His Word* (John 14:15,23) but this is the opposite of what is seen in T/P churches today.

Next the Guide focuses on the *roots* of TB, providing a thirteen-point proof that the source of the TB/Pensacola spirit is the ‘Word-of-Faith’ movement (whose own roots lie in “Christian Science” and the occult) of which Rodney Howard-Browne (‘RHB’) is a member. We also pinpoint Benny Hinn’s substantial role in the ‘Faith’ movement. (Hinn has even said that “Those who attack **Kenneth Copeland** are attacking the **very presence of God**”). We go on to supply a litany of appallingly heretical statements from three central promoters of the theology that led to T/P. After each quotation, we record the many scriptures that clearly refute the heresy in question.

We uncover more than a dozen such statements from Kenneth Hagin (including: “Christ’s physical death on the cross was **not** enough to save us” - for which we offer seventeen passages like Col. 1:14-22 in rebuttal). We cite many such pronouncements from Kenneth Copeland (including: “**Satan conquered Jesus** on the cross”) and a full dozen from Benny Hinn (including: “**I am a little messiah**”).

We then query the likelihood that God would honour such a movement by making it the source of a huge blessing - the obvious implication being that T/P does not represent a genuine blessing from God.

29:4 GREATER WORKS Here the Guide considers the claim that T/P manifestations are an example of Christ’s promise that those who “believe on Me”

will do “the works that I do ... and **greater** works”. We question the idea that T/P churches *are* performing the same works that Christ did, and we refute the suggestion that staggering drunkenly or lying on the ground for hours is a “greater work” than, for instance, healing a man born blind. Among other points, the Guide also shows how - unlike T/P manifestations - the stunning exploits of the New Testament apostles shared the same *character* as those performed by Christ.

29:5 OTHER ARGUMENTS The chapter continues by probing the soundness of other ambiguous verses used by T/P’s supporters. These include the idea that sceptics of those involved in T/P should, as Gamaliel put it, “**let them alone**, for if this counsel or this work be of **men**, it will come to nought” (Acts 5:38). The Guide demonstrates that this advice was only sensible in the unique situation being faced in Gamaliel’s day - i.e. where a group of people (the Lord’s first disciples) were preaching that a man who had died was the promised Messiah of Israel.

We must reject the application of Gamaliel’s advice to other developments among the People of God. Not all activities undertaken in the visible Church are initiated by God or man; the enemy starts plenty of them. Can anyone really imagine telling Moses that he shouldn’t have opposed Korah (see Num. 16:1-35), or that Elijah should have “let alone” the false prophets (in 1 Ki. 18:17-40), or that Christ Himself should have “refrained from” denouncing the Pharisees, or that Paul should not have spoken out when he saw Christ’s sheep being led astray?

29:6 “DECENTLY AND IN ORDER”? This section protests that the *Holy Spirit* will only lead believers to do the sort of thing that they would do if they were bodily in the presence of the Lord. We summarize all such behaviour in Scripture as reverential, sober, and self-effacing, and we contrast this with the barking, pogoing, giggling etc of T/P which does nothing to honour Christ (and, in reality, dishonours and takes attention *away* from Him).

The book then turns to the allegation that the disciples were acting drunkenly in Acts 2. We examine the passage with care, recording six major problems with this argument - including the fact that it was only the “**mockers**” (v13) who suggested anyone was acting so. (They were using exaggeration, the prime tool of mockery, in order to explain away the disciples’ unusual boldness; see Php. 4:5.) Note also the way in which Peter was able to give a clear, biblical speech - something all too rare in T/P meetings - and the fact that a drunken appearance directly contravenes commandments like 1 Thess. 5:22.

The Guide also examines the other standard T/P ‘proof-text’, viz. “Be not drunk with wine, **wherein is excess**; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). Certainly boldness, and a form of joy, can come from both alcohol and God’s Spirit but the analogy was never designed to be taken further. Paul is actually *con-*

trasting the two (hence his comment about “excess” - which Nicky conspicuously omits when he quotes this passage³).

Our Guide records that the general excess, jesting, and lack of circumspection condemned by Paul throughout this chapter, are the very things that the T/P spirit causes, and we contemplate some of the many scriptures which exhort believers to be *sober-minded* (e.g. 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Thess. 5:7-8; and 1 Pet. 1:13).

The manual goes further and (on the basis of passages like Eccl. 7:2-4; Matt. 5:4; and Jam. 4:9-10) echoes the call of our Lord to mourn for the state of the world rather than to ‘visit the house of mirth’. (For some reason, Nicky wants to spend precious time insisting that Jesus “laughed”⁴ even though the NT never says this and despite there being very little for Him to laugh *about* as He grieved for mankind. The Bible calls Jesus a “Man of **sorrows**”.) Lastly the Guide observes that any causeless ‘drunkenness’ is *always* a mark of *false* religion in Scripture (see, for example, Isa. 29:9-10; Jer. 48:26; and Isa. 51:21).

29:7 A TICK OR A CROSS? We go on to discuss the jerking ‘ticks’ which are so common to T/P but which are hardly appropriate behaviour before a Monarch. Biblical proof is presented that those whom God deprives of bodily control, whether in the form of ticks, inability to speak, or anything else, are not being *blessed* (Matt. 4:24; Matt. 9:32-33; Mark 9:17 etc). The world reproaches Christians because it can see through these foolish manifestations which have beguiled so many churches (Jer. 44:8; Ezek. 5:14-15; Psa. 80:6-7). Once again, Christ is dishonoured.

29:8 PASS ‘IT’ ON The Guide then remarks on the ‘infectiousness’ of the T/P ‘anointing’ that has enabled it to span the globe so swiftly. (As soon as a person has received ‘it’ from someone, they are able to transfer ‘it’ to others and so on.) We show that this ‘catchability’ is not a feature of the *Holy* Spirit but of an unclean one (Hag. 2:11-14); hence Paul’s warning that the ‘laying on of hands’ can transfer impurity if a person is not ‘right with God’ (1 Tim. 5:22).

We relate ‘Old Testament’ pictures of the transfer of uncleanness through touch, and remind readers that this whole matter is so important that Paul apparently considered it *foundational* (Heb. 6:1-2). The true Holy Spirit is a gift from *God*, not from men. Sadly, Alpha does not emulate Paul but instead encourages us all to ‘**catch**’ the fire - as if it is a disease.

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CHAPTER 30

THE NEW AWAKENING

30:1 WHY WERE THEY DRY? This very final chapter of our main Guide begins by observing that T/P was especially popular because of the widespread spiritual “dryness” that many ‘leaders’ had been suffering beforehand. Our Guide laments the way in which such believers preferred to organize a ‘quick fix’ from RHB rather than *seek the Lord* over the cause of the dryness He had brought.

According to Scripture, such dryness is indicative of moving away from the Lord (Jer. 51:36; John 4:14), so the godly response would surely be to go to the Bible and check how one had strayed from God’s truth - rather than fly to man for a solution (Isa. 40:31).

We quickly summarize more than a dozen ways in which many churches have indeed strayed from the scriptures and have allowed error to come in (not least over the NT principles for church operation and over doctrines regarding how to understand - and relate to - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). These errors would certainly explain the dryness seen.

We reject the idea, however, that the T/P manifestations do not appear in Scripture. They *are* explicitly present - but as indicators either of apostasy (a.k.a. ‘Babylon’) or of worldliness (a.k.a. ‘Egypt’). We then invite readers to see this for

themselves. (Note that practically all of the following manifestations have been seen at HTB, and the majority have occurred on Alpha too.)

Roaring like lions Although Jesus Christ is certainly called “the lion of the tribe of Judah”, every scripture referring to men ‘**roaring** like a lion’ is applied to those who have rebelled against the Lord. We supply seven examples, including Isa. 5:25-30; Zeph. 3:1-4; and Ezek. 22:25-28.

Behaving like dogs Dogs, wolves and jackals are greatly looked down upon in Scripture. We cite thirteen passages which say this, e.g. Rev. 22:14-15; Php. 3:2; and Deut. 23:18. Barking like a dog is one of the results of the T/P spirit, but Psalm 59 verses 1-6 & 12-15 shows the true, and very unpleasant, significance of this activity.

Other Beast-like Behaviour Whereas God has given His disciples the spirit “of a **sound** mind” (2 Tim. 1:7), some T/P meetings have seen uncontrollable mimicking of snakes and assorted other animals. The Guide identifies, from seven passages (including Isa. 13:19-22; Psa. 73:22; and Ezek. 5:14-17), that this is always a mark of *judgment* in Scripture.

Burning Sensations Here the Guide reveals that the uncomfortable bodily ‘burning’ feelings common to both T/P and Alpha meetings is invariably a sign that the people involved have forsaken God’s ways. Eight scriptures are given as evidence, including Isa. 47:1,14; Hos. 7:4-8; and Jer. 21:10.

Falling Backwards God may indirectly cause a believer to collapse due to *emotional trauma*, but one will search fruitlessly for precedents in the NT church of being “slain in the spirit”. We conclude that only those who are *opposing* God “go backwards” or fall for no reason in this way (see, for example, John 18:6; Isa. 1:4; 28:12-13; and Jer. 7:24).

Saints in Scripture always fall *forwards* whenever a direction is specified. They fall “on their **faces**” (e.g. in Ezek. 3:23; Matt. 17:6; and Rev. 11:16). And they only ever fall for *good, understandable reasons* (e.g. through terror before a holy God), not because some unseen force knocks them over. (Nicky Gumbel’s ‘Holy Spirit’, in contrast, so controlled a man that he “**found** himself flat on the floor”¹ - i.e. for no apparent reason.)

‘Carpet Time’ Once again this lengthy, involuntary sleep is not found in the New Testament Church. It *is* found among the lists of judgments on apostasy though (e.g. in Isa. 56:9-11; Jer. 51:57-58; and Isa. 29:1-10).

Inappropriate laughter Some T/P adherents have laughed scornfully while being read the Word of God. Laughing derisively at righteousness is a biblical sign of *ungodliness*. Among the dozen scriptural evidences given here are 2 Chr. 36:16-17; Job 12:4-5; Psa. 119:50-51; and Matt. 9:23-24. Men of God are, in contrast, called to be sober, grave and temperate (Titus 2:2). (Passages like Eccl. 7:3-6 and James 4:8-10 show God's real view on mirth in this sinful, doomed world.)

Disrobing Christians are not to go around dressed in a way that provokes lust (1 Tim. 2:9,15; Rom. 14:13), yet some T/P churches are allowing increasingly inappropriate clothing in meetings. There is a distinct absence of 'revealing' apparel in the early Church - but a growing amount of it in the world today. We reference ten illuminating scriptures (including Isa. 47:1-5; Nah. 3:5; and Lam. 4:21) which show that disrobing is another pointer towards a rebellious and shameless people.

"Holy" Vomiting The book directs readers straight to the Word of God over this horrible activity - e.g. passages like Jer. 48:26; Hab. 2:16; and Jer. 25:27 (each of which notably refers to other T/P phenomena too).

Perhaps the reason Alpha's manifestations are generally less severe than those of TB is because the latter was primarily poured out on believers rather than on *prospective* believers (who are therefore treated more mildly because they cannot be expected to know much better). However, we have also found anecdotal evidence that HTB simply prefers not to publish the more extreme, and hence more 'off-putting', testimonies emanating from Alpha.

30:2 A WORD ON LEVITATION The Guide then debates the growing activity of levitation which has occurred in 'churches' at the forefront of T/P. We do not claim it to be a mark of judgment, but instead an act of self-exaltation (whereas it is God alone who should be glorified).

Being physically lifted up off the ground in a meeting (rather than simply receiving a lift to our *spirit*) is something witches and yogis do and is an ungodly practice. The Guide likens 'lifting ourselves up' in *pride* to being lifted up bodily, and the text therefore draws the reader's attention to warning verses on this like Isa. 2:10-17; Jer. 51:1-3; and Ezek. 31:10-11 (along with half a dozen others).

The only time people are *ever* levitated by God is when He is taking them home to Himself (e.g. as per Enoch or the 'Rapture'). The section closes by mentioning Kenneth Hagin's boasts about occurrences of levitation in his meetings.

30:3 THE BOTTOM LINE The book then overthrows any notion that all the 'judgment' verses in section 30:1 are just coincidental. We do this by identifying

that *every* T/P manifestation can be found in just two adjacent Bible chapters about Babylon (see for example Jer. 51:35-39; 51:51-58; & 50:43-44).

The Guide testifies that there is much more that could be said from all sorts of angles to prove that T/P is false - and that we will later recommend numerous books that do exactly this. We then lament the way that those involved in T/P seem to have been blinded by its spirit and how they adamantly refuse to go to God's Word but instead maintain that their manifestations are simply the authentic version of the counterfeit ones experienced by pagans. (We have already seen how topsy-turvy this notion is.)

Next the Guide quotes some more New Age testimonies that describe *identical* bodily effects to those seen in T/P meetings, and we remind readers that T/P experiences affect the soul and/or body - whereas God deals with the *spirit*. For example: God makes us *spiritually* "wise as serpents", but Satan's counterfeit is just to make people slither like serpents; God gives us *spiritual* warmth in our hearts, but Satan can only manage physical warmth; and God makes us *spiritually* bold as lions, but Satan's pathetic imitation is to make men roar like them.

(Incidentally, many folks who were spiritually uncomfortable about T/P were told to 'move out of their comfort zones', even though things which bring discomfort to a believer's spirit are never from God - see John 15:26; 2 Cor. 1:3-4 etc!)

30:4 ALPHA The Guide then ponders another interesting aspect of Alpha and T/P. Alpha participants are encouraged to pray for the Spirit but have been given such an inadequate and misleading impression of God that He is, in reality, excluded. Members of T/P churches, however, are often told *not* to pray while they are having hands laid on them (in direct contradiction to commands like 1 Thess. 5:17 and Luke 18:1). Thus the true God is left out again.

After this, our Guide alerts people to the fact that false ways lead to idolatry - which eventually leads to a God-given inability to see, hear, or perceive the truth (see Psa. 135:15-18; Isa. 6:9-10; Ezek. 12:2 etc).

The Lord has even supplied some scriptures which are ambiguous, when foolishly taken on their own, to enable those to whom He has sent a "strong delusion" (2 Thess. 2:10-12) to imagine that they have biblical justification for their erroneous ways. (In all sorts of areas, the Lord has allowed a tiny percentage of the available data to appear to superficially support a false view so as to test our commitment to the (whole) truth.) Our book goes on to stress the great humility, honesty, and determination that is required to escape such a grave condition.

N.B. For any readers who feel that a person is not qualified to discuss the T/P spirit until they have experienced it personally, we would say the following:

- ◆ Where does the Bible say this? In fact it doesn't. It would be bizarre if the only test for a false spirit was to receive it. (Note, however, that Nicky Gumbel too claims you won't "understand" until you've received the Alpha spirit.²)
- ◆ You do not have to put your hand in a fire to know it will burn you. So it is with T/P. Simply compare the evidence with the Bible and the truth is plain.
- ◆ From this argument, a Christian also cannot expose things like the "burning in the bosom" of Mormons, or the dangers of visiting a spiritualist, until he has actually 'been there'.

(Thankfully this is all academic in our case. One of us was, for several years, a member of churches full of both T/P and Alpha and was the 'head steward' at one such Fellowship before being rescued - and has also attended *every* part of an Alpha weekend.)

30:5 TORONTO COMPARED WITH KUNDALINI YOGA The Guide reinforces the point that Alpha and T/P manifestations are the same as those seen in the Eastern mystic practice of Kundalini yoga. We reference three Christian articles demonstrating this and we uncover the telling fact that New Agers recommend T/P too, as in the New Age quote below:

"The 1970s fall short when compared to the ten thousands of people who came into contact with the Kundalini **energy** since 1994 **in the so-called Toronto Blessing...**"

It is alarming that this 'energy' is even dispensed using the *same methods* as T/P, including the tap (or pat) on the forehead - the "shaktipat" (see the end of section 27:2) - and by hands placed on, or hovering near, the body. Without any clarification, Nicky even uses the term "an **energy** within" to describe *his* Holy Spirit!³

We also make the important point that, just because some of the more extreme T/P manifestations have subsided does not mean that the 'Blessing' was merely the latest fad that has now run its course... for Kundalini proponents reveal:

"After one or two years, **the symptoms** gradually **disappear**, because the body is then **adjusted** to the higher level of bioenergy and **calms down.**"

The Guide also publicizes the seemingly little-known fact that, just four years before Toronto went 'international', John Paul II shockingly predicted "a **new injection** of life for the Church in **the next few years** would come from **the**

East". Finally, various Kundalini writers are quoted explaining that this 'awakening' is supposedly a "collective developmental leap in human consciousness" designed to help mankind "attain **Godhood**".

30:6 BORN AGAIN? Here the manual unveils New Age claims about the *mental* effects of Satan's Kundalini - effects that are exactly mirrored on Alpha.

For example, Kundalini makes people "aware of who they are, and better adjusted to their environment, with an **enhanced faith in the divine**". It also "expels the darkness of the past, **unknotting any traumas** that are caught in the memory of the body" and "often includes expanded ... **dedication to being of service for the greater good**".

The Guide therefore enjoins Alpha leaders not to be misled into thinking such signs guarantee that salvation has occurred. Kundalini yoga can 'rescue' people from the streets, or even from lives of crime, but it is *spiritual* poison. In other words, all the 'good' and 'spiritual' changes which are seen on Alpha occur in New Age initiation too and are not the proper test for genuine salvation. See section 27:6 for more.

30:7 GOD OR TAO? Next the Guide dismantles the belief, promoted by Nicky,⁴ that mere use of the phrase "Holy Spirit" when dabbling in the spirit realm means that any response will be from the true Holy Spirit. (As we saw in section 25:3, it certainly doesn't hold for the name 'Jesus'.) We quote New Agers who can use the selfsame terminology and who admit that "the name you give to it [i.e. this spiritual power] is **irrelevant**". This section also refutes the idea that there is such a thing as *Christian* Kundalini - Eve may have been deceived by a serpent, but *we* should not be (Psa. 58:3-4).

Readers have now seen the spirit behind Kundalini described as a powerful "**force**", a "transformational **force**" and a "**light force** rising in the body". We have heard of this "unseen **force**" on Alpha which has *forced* people to do things. We have also determined the true spirit behind the 'Faith' movement's "**force of faith**". Can it be a coincidence that one of Satan's names is "the God of **forces**" (Dan. 11:38, KJV)?

30:8 THE FOCUS HAS CHANGED We agree with Nicky Gumbel that the Church has often downplayed the Holy Spirit, but we reject his swing to the opposite extreme.

Our material then warns of the way in which a false 'Holy Ghost' could subtly lead Christians into accepting pagans as being saved because they share the same spirit (a spirit that tells them to see the Antichrist as their leader). Later the

Guide notes several ironies about Alpha's excessive focus on the Spirit, e.g. the fact that the *true* Spirit would have us concentrate on *Christ* (i.e. the Person who sent the Spirit), and the fact that Alpha gags the *true* Spirit (by demanding the Course be run without adaptation) but allows *false* spirits to operate.

The Guide also highlights the way Nicky labels *the Spirit*, rather than Christ, "the **most** wonderful and exciting subject",⁵ along with HTB's astonishing admission that the Course does not 'work' without the Holy Spirit weekend.⁶ (What does this tell us about the efficacy of Alpha's gospel message?)

30:9 SATAN'S PLAN The Guide then offers a superb quote which puts all of the pieces together. This contends that the enemy "wants to manipulate us into counterfeit spiritual experiences that will lead the unsuspecting into delusion and ultimately, eternal damnation with him". The quote also lays bare the difference between a proper "experiential **relationship** ... based upon objective truth (that is, the Word of God)" and "the seeking of an experience". A part of it is reproduced below:

"In Christianity, spirituality is not essentially spiritual *experiences*, but the development of character and integrity. And that is why it's so hated, because while spiritual **experiences puff up** our **pride**, knowledge of sin deflates it ... [If someone's] Christianity veers off into being a mere experience-based religion, that is the day it will cease to exist. It will become just another form of cultic Gnosticism..." [Clasen]

30:10 NEW AGE CHRIST This penultimate section reiterates our contention that the very things claimed by Alpha and T/P as proof of baptism in the Holy Spirit, although not to be found in Scripture, *are* evidence of initiation into the New Age.

(Nicky Gumbel is unusually familiar with the New Age movement - as can be seen from his lengthy chapter on it in *Searching Issues*. It is a shame then that his discussion avoids pointing out the many deliberate, if superficial, similarities that exist between the New Age movement's terminology/beliefs and those of true Christianity.)

It is surely very revealing that the New Age 'guru' Benjamin Crème is a firm supporter of the spirit behind the TB:

"Benjamin Crème was recently asked what he thought of the TB. His response was that he thought the TB was a **good** thing: it is, according to him, the method being used by his spiritual Masters to **soften up Christian Fundamentalists** to accept the **New Age Christ** when he appears" [Needham].

(Crème's stated aim is to 'remove' the "people of the book" - apparently through violence if necessary. Remember too that senior New Agers have acknowledged their movement to be *Luciferian*.)

30:11 CONCLUSION The body of our Guide ends by quoting another disturbing report from a 'Holy Spirit' weekend (of which the following is part):

"That evening, he [Nicky] **asked** for **the Holy Spirit** to **visit** the congregation ... One member of my group [said] ... 'I **felt** like I was a **balloon** being inflated, that I was **absorbing** a supernatural experience. There was a swirling **in my mouth** and I **felt** myself **engulfed** by the Holy Spirit'" [*UK Focus*⁷].

We compare this with the sweet, non-Alpha, conversion testimony of an ex-New Ager:

"My New Age background made me think I had been in the 'presence of God' all my life ... My eyes lowered. Tears fell to the ground as I was overcome by a **sense of shame** before God. I remember praying, gently confessing that I was a wretched sinner. I believed that Christ died in my place on the cross - for my sins. I was overwhelmed by **His unwarranted love** for me through this act. There were **no bright lights or tingling sensations**, only **remorse** mingled with **gratefulness**, a sense of peace in **reconciliation** and assurance of security."

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RECOMMENDED READING

Part Five is suffixed by a list of books on 'Discernment', 'The Holy Spirit' and 'The Toronto Blessing' (plus a series of videos on "The Word-Faith Movement") along with the reasons we endorse these items. We also identify excellent internet articles and six helpful websites on the topics covered in this Part.

If you are thinking of recommending this book to someone who is seriously pro-Alpha, we would urge you very strongly indeed to suggest instead that they read the main volumes. From our experience, such people can seldom cope with the 'Overview'.

If you have generally agreed with this book, we would encourage you to read its three Appendices. They are absolutely crucial sections for those who wish to get to the heart of Alpha.

APPENDIX A

THE BRIDGE

Please Note: Unlike the earlier portions of this book, the ‘end-note’ references for all the Appendices are listed by individual section number.

The body of our main *Unofficial Guide* is followed by an appendix which seeks to ‘round off’ the whole work. We begin with a variety of complimentary quotes about Alpha from the *secular* press. (As the reader will see, these are all quotes seized upon by HTB to promote Alpha among church leaders.)

“British Christianity has stumbled across the big idea that has eluded it” [*The Times Magazine*, quoted in *Alpha News*¹]; “There is no denying Alpha’s success...” [*The Independent on Sunday*, quoted in *Alpha News*²].

“The Rev. Gumbel has a hit on his hands...” [*The Sunday Telegraph*, quoted in *Alpha News*³]; “Alpha is an unqualified triumph ... long overdue” [*The Daily Telegraph*, quoted in *Alpha News* and in an HTB booklet on how best to run Alpha⁴].

But we review scripturally how unreliable the wisdom and discernment of the world is when it comes to spiritual matters (see, for example, 1 Cor. 1:18-23,

27-28, 2:14; John 7:7; Psa. 1:1a; and Luke 6:26). If something is loved, rather than hated, by the world then that thing is not of Christ:

“If ye were **of the world**, the world would **love** his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world **hateth** you” (John 15:19). See also John 17:14.

A:1 WALKING LIKE AN EGYPTIAN? In the Bible, the act of turning to the world and its ways rather than following *God’s* ways is termed “going down to Egypt” (Isa. 30:1-2, 31:1 etc). We mourn the way the Alpha organization does not hesitate to “go down to Egypt” to ensure that the Course is ‘acceptable’ to the world and successful on the world’s terms.

Our book exposes several examples of Alpha’s preoccupation with image and entertainment. This is contrasted with the attitude of the NT apostles and disciples who did not consider the Gospel they preached to be any less effective because it wasn’t ‘professionally’ presented (2 Cor. 10:10). The Guide then furnishes readers with scriptural reasons why we ought to look to the Bible rather than to the unbelieving world for the correct, God-ordained way to evangelize.

A:2 BE YE POPULAR? A series of quotations is then presented that make this point very clearly. The essence of their message is:

“We who preach the gospel must **not** think of ourselves as **public relations agents** sent to establish goodwill between Christ and the world ... We are not diplomats but **prophets**, and our message is not a compromise but an **ultimatum**” [Tozer].

“Alpha is packaged for a Christian world that does not want to work too hard for its religion. A world that is conditioned with neat packaging ... A world that is happy with religious shallowness ... that will lead all the unwary into the World Church” [Cook¹].

The Appendix follows up with this quote from Alpha: “The Devil’s tactic is to take us on a path that leads to destruction ... [H]e doesn’t tell us that at the beginning”.² How poignant a statement this is, coming as it does from a Course which acts likewise.

We then remind readers that each Part of our book has revealed Alpha’s systematic use of *man’s* ways rather than God’s ways, and that Scripture warns: “There **is** a way which **seemeth right** unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of **death**” (Prov. 14:12). The Guide quotes other similarly unmistakable verses along the same lines, including Jam. 4:4; Rom. 12:2a; Psa. 127:1; and Luke 6:39.

Alpha's fans accurately claim it to be a "bridge" between the Church and the world but, as Philip Foster has said, it is "a bridge **too far**".

A:3 HAVE WE APPROACHED HTB? At this juncture we deal with the question of whether HTB is aware of the concerns expressed in this book. (It is!) It seems that the "old paths" given us by God in Scripture have no interest for HTB - but see Jer. 6:16.

A:4 WHAT IF I'VE ALREADY DONE THE COURSE? The Appendix then offers advice for those readers who have attended the Course and who want to know how to remedy any spiritual damage they have suffered through it. We detail a five-point solution based firmly on God's eternal Word. (We believe that the most important step is for the person to *fully* renounce and repent of their involvement - and then keep entreating God to cut them off from its effects until they sense in their spirit that He has done so.)

A:5 FINALLY, A PURE BRIDE After thanking readers for persevering through the book, we end it with a most uplifting and inspiring testimony about a group of believers who lived circa 150AD. Folks are encouraged to compare it with their own church life and determine whether any change is needed.

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APPENDIX B

THE DEEP

Please Note: The remaining appendices are unique to this volume. The material in them is considered far too strong (or 'deep') to appear in the main volumes, thus it is not included there. Only those folks who have generally agreed with the rest of this book should proceed any further.

(Incidentally, the 'end-notes' associated with the remaining appendices are felt to be particularly valuable - and definitely worth looking up.)

B:1 THE BIBLE The best gauge of Alpha's soundness is how God's Word is treated on the Course. Nicky Gumbel does use Scripture, but not in a representative fashion. He often omits parts of verses or passages which would clarify the context, and he paraphrases other passages to make them support his erroneous ideas.¹

By talking about "the spirit behind" a particular portion, or by failing to identify the verse in question, or simply by being highly selective in his choice,² he is able to misapply Scripture without challenge.³ He misses some wonderful opportunities to promote Scripture⁴ and he teaches that, after we have passed the 'primary stages' of our walk and we 'know' the Lord, the written Word loses its importance.⁵ (Could this be why Nicky keeps choosing the ambiguous word 'primarily' when he says that God "primarily" speaks to us through Scripture?⁶)

After fair early comments about the Bible, Nicky later implies that even patently literal passages cannot be trusted as anything more than “pictures”,⁷ and he says “**common sense** [i.e. not the Bible at all!] is the way in which God will direct us over most of the ordinary day-to-day decisions of life ... [**and**] the **main** - the **big** decisions”.⁸ As noted in section 10:6, he also questions the reliability of the Bible. To Nicky, it is more a “**guide** book”⁹ than God’s *commands*. Nicky is therefore not averse to giving extrabiblical teachings.¹⁰

B:2 THE FATHER Like Rome and the New Age movement, Nicky Gumbel often mentions “the Father” but rarely *describes* Him - and gives a very one-sided view when he does.¹ Although there are three talks devoted to the *Holy Spirit*, not a single one is devoted to God the Father...

It is worth thinking about that for a moment. Nicky’s response to this criticism is to call it “far too superficial” and to claim that other talks cover “our relationship” with the Father.² But the whole point is that Alpha doesn’t tell us what the Father is truly like, thus making it far harder than it need be to *have* a right relationship with Him. For example, Nicky’s failure to communicate the unimaginable holiness of God (and to communicate what the word ‘holiness’ *means* - i.e. separation) leaves him unable to properly answer the question of why God allows suffering, calling it an “acute problem” which no-one has ever adequately solved.³

Nicky Gumbel believes his style of evangelism is in the same tradition as that of Paul’s at Mars Hill, and that it has similar results.⁴ In fact, he *ignores* the pattern of evangelism seen there - and the pattern seen on every other occasion in Scripture where unsaved Gentiles are preached to. The Father has to be accurately and adequately described (i.e. as Creator and then Judge) for the rest of the gospel to make sense.

Further still, Edition 2.2 of Alpha never appears to mention the phrase “God the Father” in combination with a categorical statement that He is a “**Person**”! The New Age movement preaches a “Father” but describes ‘Him’ as an impersonal force. It is therefore astonishing to hear Nicky teach that “God is **beyond** personality”.⁵

B:3 NO DEFENCE Both Sandy Millar and Nicky Gumbel try to sidestep the suggestion that the Course does not communicate important truths. They do this by arguing that Alpha is merely a “practical **introduction**” to Christianity...¹

(As an aside, the Church has no scriptural authority to evangelize in such a way, for it is surely pointless to try to teach the principles of Christian *living* to people who are spiritually dead. Either we will be casting our pearls before an

audience incapable of appreciating them, or we will have to fudge the truth and end up short-selling both the Lord and any believers present.) Alpha comprises *fifteen* long talks, so Nicky has ample time to deal with the things for which he is criticized. Anyway, it is still no excuse for misrepresenting God or His commandments, and no excuse for not recommending books which would fill in the gaps.

B:4 NEW AGE Just how *New Age* is the Course as a whole? Apart from the plainly New Age spirit being manifested by participants, let us briefly review the rest of the evidence.

- Nicky Gumbel's position on other religions is in line with the New Age movement. (See chapters 2-5.)
- The continual deference to Rome's beliefs is New Age. (See Parts 1-2. A few New Age writers have 'criticized' Rome, but the movement also admits that it inserts such "deliberate blinds"¹ into writings to put investigators off the scent.)
- Nicky's support for baptismal regeneration is New Age. (See section 9:2. That section of the main 'World' exposes more on this.)
- He undermines the inerrancy of Scripture - this is consistent with the New Age. (See sections 10:6 & B:1.)
- Alpha's reliance on Hegelian dialectic and group consensus techniques rather than on the bringing of God's Word, is shared by the New Age. (See section 16:2 - especially in our main 'World' volume.)
- Alpha's heavy espousal of "process" evangelism (i.e. the belief that salvation is not an event but is, in Nicky's words, "a process ... a journey"² and that men can be in a direct relationship with God *before* they are saved) is thoroughly New Age - as is Nicky's 'easy believism'. (See Part 3.)
- Nicky Gumbel's view of Jesus Christ, and molestations of His Deity, are in agreement with the New Age. (See section 20:3 plus end-note³.)
- He uses, and promotes, a Bible version which has demonstrable New Age leanings. (See section 10:3 plus end-note⁴.)
- Gumbel's emphasis on visible unity over doctrinal purity is very New Age. (See sections 12:1; 18:2; 20:6; 23:2-5; 23:7 etc.)
- Alpha's support for metaphysical techniques (e.g. regarding prayer, healing, and prosperity), and for the people propagating them, is very New Age. (See sections 19:5-8 & B:6 plus Part 5.)
- Alpha's doctrine that the Church *is* Christ is very much in keeping with the New Age. (See section 20:5.)
- Alpha's post-millennial views and its unbiblical position towards the Jewish people are shared by the New Age. (See sections 20:5 & 24:4-8, plus end-note⁵. See also the remainder of Appendix B, esp. B:10.)
- Gumbel's neglect of the Father and over-emphasis on the Spirit is New Age. (See Part 5 plus section B:2 and the later portions of Appendix B.)

Furthermore Sadly, there are more parallels that were not appropriate to discuss in any detail earlier in this book. For instance, the way in which experience often leads to explanation on Alpha (rather than the other way around) is very New Age - as Nicky admits!⁶ The wide-ranging doctrinal confusion on the Course is New Age, as is Nicky's continual failure to differentiate between spiritual and non-spiritual things...

Beyond this, the substantial credence Nicky Gumbel lends to the "General Theory of Evolution" is an error fully consistent with the New Age,⁷ as is the way in which 'the end justifies the means' on Alpha. But there is more still:

- Nicky's undermining of the biblical order with respect to the roles of men and women, and of the proper God-ordained relationship between the sexes, is very New Age.⁸
- The suggestion from Nicky Gumbel that we are not saved by grace *alone* through faith *alone* is very much in line with the New Age.⁹ (The idea that we can do work to help make atonement for our sins implies that we have a divine part inside our souls - just as the New Age teaches. This leads to self-worship and hence idolatry.)
- Nicky's promotion of psychology and "high self-esteem" agrees fully with the New Age.¹⁰ (HTB's "Marriage Course", which was developed out of Alpha, was described by a friend of ours as "pure [i.e. total] psychology".)
- Nicky's position with regard to the sinfulness of sin is New Age. For example, he is often quick to condemn anyone who would "judge" sin, but much slower to preach the full truth about things like homosexuality and fornication.¹¹
- Alpha's emphasis on *group* consciousness and *group* experience is New Age.¹²
- Nicky's repeated intimation that Satan can operate outside of God's will is Dualist - which is very New Age.¹³ (God is all-powerful, thus nothing happens beyond His control. Any suggestion otherwise is Dualist, and Nicky suggests it so often that he has been obliged to include an amazing denial on his videos - but the ambiguous wording used there allows his Dualism to spread.¹⁴)
- Nicky Gumbel uses New Age terms (e.g. "We live in the **Age** of the **Spirit**";¹⁵ and "the age to come has begun ... [T]he **new age**"¹⁶). Further, Nicky's utilization of the phrase "The Old Covenant God"¹⁷ - implying that a different 'spiritual master' is now in charge - is very New Age.
- Nicky favourably quotes New Agers,¹⁸ and HTB sells New Age books.¹⁹

This list may be exhausting but it is not exhaustive. We have been overrun with examples, so much so that we have been obliged to write a whole extra *book* to cater for all the evidence.²⁰ Indeed, after a thorough analysis of all the Course materials we can confirm that, if one considers the *complete* body of Alpha's teaching on any given issue, *every single one* of its doctrines is *significantly* slanted towards the New Age position.

If, after checking the end-notes connected with the above points, any readers still doubt our shocking claim, then the rest of this book should fully convince them; and our main volumes obviously offer many more corroborative quotes associated with the earlier chapters of this book.

Perversely, if you read Gumbel's own summary of the New Age movement (in Chapter 4 of Searching Issues) you rapidly realize that most of it reads like a description of the Alpha Course.²¹ Note that precisely the same New Age pattern is seen in HTB's post-Alpha resources too.

Clearly, just omitting the 'Holy Spirit weekend' is not a sufficient response by churches tempted to use Alpha. The entire content is steeped in error and thoroughly leavened, thus it *cannot* safely be adapted.

B:5 ACCIDENTAL? Can this constant promotion of the New Age worldview be accidental? Again, let us consider the facts:

- ▷ Nicky Gumbel knows his Bible. He claims¹ to have been reading it daily since 1974 and so cannot have failed to notice that most of it is irreconcilably opposed to what he is doing and teaching.
- ▷ From comments he makes, Gumbel is clearly well-informed. He knows a quantity of Greek and Hebrew and is generally knowledgeable enough to bring up formidable topics like the many shades of Dispensationalism.² He therefore has no excuse for teaching wrongly.
- ▷ Nicky Gumbel also knows about Church history and must be well aware that Alpha's doctrines and conversions bear no resemblance to those, for example, of Wesley's day.
- ▷ Gumbel and Millar admit to having received "hundreds" of letters of criticism, "literally **thousands**" of questionnaires back and a "wide range" of "comments" and "suggestions" from "theologians and others" about how to improve Alpha,³ and Gumbel reputedly reads every article written on it.⁴ Since HTB has had years to correct the Course, why do the deceptive teachings remain?

▷ Crucially, as we have seen, Nicky is very well versed about the New Age movement. He therefore knows what he is doing.

From the above it is plain that Christians and non-Christians alike are being inexcusably led into the Babylonian New Age movement - which, as we saw in Part One of this book, is ruled by the enemy.

Gumbel's Course is condemned by his own words, for he states that the New Age movement is "a mixture of Eastern **Mysticism** and **occult** practices" and that "**many** of the New Age teachings are derived from ... **Hindu** and **Buddhist** doctrines"...⁵ This would also explain why Alpha is able to be used openly in many places where the *true* gospel is gagged.

B:6 IMAGE CONSCIOUS Another prominent feature of the New Age movement is the use of visualization and images. As we briefly saw in section 19:6, there are places where Alpha teaches visualization too. But Nicky Gumbel sanctions it in other important ways we have not yet studied...

Gumbel works alongside two of the most extreme champions of 'Christian' visualization (namely Robert Schuller¹ and Paul/David Yonggi-Cho²), both of whom are firm favourites within 'Faith' movement circles and who clearly realize that Alpha supports their New Age theologies.³ (Gumbel's relationships are hugely influential to most people involved in Alpha, since he is the speaker for all of the talks, the author of all of the books, and the front man on practically all of the TV & radio coverage. His choice of associations will encourage many Alpha fans to believe that people like Schuller and Cho are to be followed.)

But perhaps the most illuminating example of Nicky's enthusiasm for images is in regard to Holman Hunt's famous portrait of 'Christ' entitled *The Light of the World...*

Drawings or statues of living things - especially ones that supposedly portray 'deities' - have a peculiarly powerful effect on the human soul, and all too often tempt men to revere those images - to their own destruction (Deut. 4:15-19, 5:8-9; Exo. 20:4-5). Thus the enemy frequently uses images in false religions. They were a feature of every apostasy in the Hebrew scriptures and God warns us again and again to avoid images, or "likenesses", of things that men worship (Deut. 16:22; 2 Ki. 23:24 etc) since they could prove a snare to those around us even if we ourselves feel immune.

The Bible deliberately omits any description of the Lord's "similitude" (see Deut. 4:15-18), surely so that we could not be easily deceived by any demon mimicking His visage. The Bible tells us to rid our lives of all icons. It is

therefore extraordinary to see Hunt's painting of 'Jesus' being shown in a positive way during the Alpha video talks. In the event that a church wishes to present the talks 'live', the *Administrator's Handbook* says "Make **sure** a copy of 'The Light of the World' is available".⁴

The *Admin. Handbook* reinforces the importance of this by giving the telephone number of a bookshop that stocks the picture. HTB doesn't stop there though. The same manual supplies this hard sell, plus the full ordering information, at TWO different points⁵ - and then suggests obtaining *postcards* of the image so that participants can have such banned objects in their own homes!

This issue raises two other significant features of Alpha. Nicky uses Hunt's painting during his discussion of Revelation 3, written to "the **church** of the Laodiceans", where Jesus says "I stand at the door, and knock" etc. The Lord is saying that He has been excluded from this church and that it is therefore "blind" (v17) and is near to being spewed out of His mouth (v16). He is urging the *believers* to re-open the door of their lives to Him...

But Nicky wants to use this passage to suggest to *unbelievers* that friendship with God can be obtained merely by saying "come in, Jesus". (By way of a digression, Nicky also exploits the passage to encourage Christians and non-Christians alike to invite a spirit to 'come in' to their *bodies*.⁶) Thus the original videos hid the fact that this scripture was only written to a *church*.

From the changes in the new version of this video talk, Gumbel patently received complaints about his misrepresentation. But instead of correcting the error, he just chose to imply that *unbelievers* can be part of the Church and that the passage applies to *anyone at all*. Salvation requires us to turn completely away from our past life and cry out to God for mercy, not just to "open a door" or open ourselves up to the spirit behind Alpha.

The second problem is this. It would be bad enough if Gumbel's errors were inserted just to lure as broad a range of 'churches' to use Alpha as possible; but in the case of *The Light of the World*, Gumbel reveals that his true aim is the promotion of apostasy - rather than just acceptance of the Course by many Fellowships. No apostate church, no matter how corrupt, would reject Alpha just because it didn't recommend postcards with prohibited images on; yet Nicky markets them anyway.

B:7 NICKY'S TRICKS The great percentage of those folks running Alpha Courses are absolutely sincere believers, so how is it that Alpha is able to propagate all manner of New Age teachings without people spotting them? Even if most Christians *are* scripturally illiterate today, it is remarkable how many 'evan-

gical' churches have had the wool pulled over their eyes. Here are just some of the techniques that Gumbel uses to beguile us all:

- α When he *first* broaches a subject, his comments are usually much more biblical than when he returns to the issue at greater length. From Gumbel's *initial* statements on a matter, his Christian hearers thus assume him to be sound on it, and so his later - contradictory - statements go unchecked. (Many examples appear in our main volumes.) Unfortunately, any non-Christians will almost always latch on to the comments they find most comforting.
- α Some churches are more knowledgeable on certain topics than other churches - and Nicky always caters for this. Where this forces him to state a truth that he doesn't want to promote, he makes the necessary comment as brief as possible and often wraps it in language that will go over the heads of those churches lacking knowledge of the topic (and, of course, the unsaved).¹
- α By the frequent use of ambiguous wording with no clarification, or by placing contentious statements at the border between two topics (often causing non-Christians, plus those in deception, to apply his words to the wrong topic), Nicky can again teach error without being detected.²

Here is a particularly important example. Alpha never explains that operating '*in*' Christ does not just mean operating '*for*' Christ. Gumbel can therefore tag the phrase "in Christ" onto otherwise false teachings to 'qualify' them and make his words potentially correct yet thoroughly misleading.³

(Many people do things 'for' Christ - including running Alpha Courses - but that is a world away from doing things *in* Christ - see Matt. 7:21-23. To be operating *in* Christ demands that we are both a believer *and* obeying the Lord's *specific* will for us for that particular time. This is very different from doing something just because it appears to be right or seems like a good idea. Note also that God's will is always biblical and gives a witness of peace in one's *spirit* as per Php. 4:7 and John 14:27.)

- α Nicky uses language to its fullest extent to find ways of making everyone hear what they want to. This includes omitting (or disconnecting) key words and phrases in the knowledge that 'churched' hearers will subconsciously add (or reconnect) them,⁴ It also includes adding qualifying words to make deceptive statements far less easy to expose.⁵

(We really must *not* allow ourselves to be fooled into thinking that what gets communicated to us is the same as what gets picked up by *non-Christian* hearers. Non-Christians will interpret *many* unclarified comments wrongly

through lack of a biblical perspective and regenerate mind, whereas Christians can usually extrapolate such statements to fill in the gaps.)

- α Gumbel also uses the age-old trick of setting up ‘straw men’. In other words, he *misrepresents* the arguments of those who would oppose his teachings so that he can appear to completely demolish the arguments.⁶ A favoured way of over-simplifying or exaggerating a truth that Nicky wants to undo is to use loaded, or emotionally-charged, words that have very different definitions from the biblical terms they supposedly reflect. We have already noted several examples of this (e.g. “attack” - see section 5:5, or “squabbling” - section 23:3). Others include: “monochrome” - Nicky’s description of Christians who believe the same things;⁷ and “cynicism” - the term he uses to deride any desire to weigh teachings or manifestations etc against God’s Word.⁸
- α If Gumbel cannot avoid using a challenging biblical term, he simply redefines it. For example, “righteousness” apparently no longer means godliness or sinlessness but appears much less demanding now that it merely means “right relationships”.⁹ To overcome the offence of the cross, unbelievers also learn from Nicky that “salvation” just means “freedom”¹⁰ - which enables him to keep references to Hell to an absolute minimum. And anyway, “Hell” is re-defined on Alpha as an “**empty** town ... smaller than one pebble”.¹¹
- α When Nicky has to ‘push the envelope’ and say things that run especial risk of being recognized as false or inconsistent, his usual solution is to quote someone else.¹² Not only does this make the viewpoint appear more reasonable - since it comes from another, often seemingly reputable, source - but it makes Nicky less of a target if the error is noticed. (Nicky rarely passes any comment about the quote he gives. As such he lends strong *tacit* approval to the falsehood without giving an *explicit* endorsement that could be directly challenged.)
- α Another method for keeping seriously erroneous teachings undetected is to slip false statements into otherwise sound (or at least biblically-supported) material. Nicky will sometimes quote Scripture to justify various comments - apparently to get hearers conditioned into believing that he possesses proper backing for *everything* he says - thus he is still trusted when he ‘forgets’ to supply any evidence for a subsequent, unjustifiable comment.¹³
- α Knowing that it is much easier to read a short book than to sit through fifteen long videos, Nicky has made the core Alpha volume (*Questions of Life*) significantly less corrupt (and rather more subtle) than the actual talks. This means that most watchman investigating Alpha, and most elders who are considering running it, are presented with a substantially ‘tighter’ version than *participants* who are shown the videos will receive.¹⁴

α To minimize problems in the event that any participant develops doubts about Nicky's teachings after completing the Course, the final talk roundly condemns any "grumbling" or "complaining" or "scepticism".¹⁵

B:8 OVERALL How would we summarize matters? Alpha is a brilliant exercise in presenting just enough of the gospel to satisfy most of today's believers (unaware as they frequently are about doctrine and Church history) and to attract many searching unbelievers - while failing to put the gospel across in a way that brings any true conviction of the sinful nature.

Nicky Gumbel often makes true statements; indeed significant parts of the first few videos are relatively fair - thereby lulling churches into a false sense of security regarding the more dangerous subsequent talks. Indeed, portions of these first few are reasonably accurate as far as they go. They just never go far enough.

Nicky relies on humour and endless non-confrontational anecdotes rather than on Spirit-inspired preaching of the Word (but see Eph. 5:4). He also presents his material in an unhelpful order (e.g. see section 28:8), and many of his analogies are quite inappropriate.¹ He also wastes valuable time relating lengthy stories and whole *sets* of jokes (despite Prov. 26:18-19), when he could be bringing people the precious Word of God. For example, he devotes only a few seconds to the persecuted church but spends ages on various sporting yarns.²

Gumbel appeases Christian hearers by making brief reference to most of the crucial points about the Faith, but he does so in such a throwaway or abstruse style that they go straight over the heads of the unbelievers - the people who urgently need them.

He often concentrates on lesser matters while barely hinting at the more pivotal aspects of Christianity. (For example, in Edition 2.2 he slips in a *solitary* reference to God's wrath - and only towards the end of the very *final* talk - but he does so merely in the context of the Christian's response to 'enemies'. In a (compromised) translation of Romans 12:18, he says "leave room for God's wrath". The topic is ignored everywhere else. God is never described as being "angered" by our sins.)

The result of all this is that the most important doctrinal elements do not register with Nicky's hearers, but he can always defend himself against criticism by pointing to the moments when he *does* touch on these elements. Similarly, by consistently failing to clarify his highly ambiguous statements, and by using loaded or redefined words, he can mislead people while keeping an escape route for himself.

Alpha is *full* of confusion. (A wonderful book by John Fairhaven, called *Proven Alpha Course Tips*, exposes this.) Indeed it is interesting to note that, even among Alpha's most ardent supporters, *very* few have claimed the Course to be "clear". The one thing Alpha clearly *is...* is a gateway into the New Age. (If, after considering the rest of this appendix, any readers still doubt this claim, they will find much extra evidence in our special book *7 Deadly Dangers With Alpha* which is designed for sound, knowledgeable people who have *very* little time to spare or who seldom read large books. Note that, as with all our materials, there is *very* little overlap between that book and any other item we have written.)

B:9 A HARD PROBLEM The New Age religion requires global religious unity, in order, so most of its adherents imagine, for the world to attain "Christ consciousness". (In truth, the movement is designed to lead everyone on Earth to worship themselves and to serve the Antichrist.¹)

This has led the movement to promulgate Eastern religions like Hinduism in Western countries, and stealthily to inject the New Age spirit into many areas of Western life through such things as 'complementary' medicines, and lifestyle/leisure/fitness practices like Feng Shui, yoga and martial arts.

In order to spread its beliefs, it has infiltrated the worlds of pop music, film, television and the press, not to mention the advertising industry. The result is that this pernicious, false spirituality is now unimaginably widespread. And the Church is far from immune...

The desperate need for unity means that New Agers will do whatever is necessary to assimilate all Christians into their belief system, including calling the New Age religion "Christianity", calling themselves "Christians", and making their corrupt doctrine appear as biblical as possible. Any genuine Christian who refuses to join this unscriptural unification will not be tolerated by the false Church and will have to be converted by force.

The Lord prophesied all this when He explained that the persecution which true believers are due to face in the end-times will mainly be the result of the appalling depth and breadth of deception among people who claim to be - and even think they *are* - Christians (Matt. 24:9-12; Luke 21:16).

(N.B. The end-times "falling away" [Greek: *apostasia*] foretold in 2 Thess. 2 and 1 Tim. 4 does not mean that people will stop having *any* faith, but that they will be deceived into serving a *false* 'God'.)

As we touched on at the end of Chapter 4, Christians are not to attempt to further the truth by violence. *False* believers, however, were only too happy to

treat the Lord Jesus violently (Matt. 26:65-68 etc) and we have seen that *Rome's* spirit has frequently directed Catholics to do absolutely brutal things to those who choose to remain faithful to the whole of Scripture rather than submit to Rome's false ways and false leader...

We have also seen how the spirit behind the 'Faith' movement has led its kingpins to rage against - and threaten - anyone who puts the Bible before 'Word-Faith' teachings. There are reports of 'stewards' at apostate church meetings angrily assaulting peaceful protestors, while those who speak out against apostasy are receiving hate-mail and even death threats from those they are trying to rescue.

New Agers admit that the "Kundalini" spirit can indeed cause "seemingly **unprovoked** or **excessive** episodes of ... **rage**". The Bible prophesies that this will become more and more common among the deceived (2 Tim. 3:1-5, 3:12-13).

This uncontrollable spirit of anger is under Satan's God-permitted authority and he therefore has some ability to keep it below the surface and only activate it in his (unwitting) servants when he needs it. Nevertheless, if the spirit behind Alpha is the same false one then we should still expect to find at least a threatening undercurrent...

Astonishingly, Nicky Gumbel's unwarranted tale in Talk 14, about one Christian pushing another off a high bridge for supposed heresy, implies that he thinks violence is an appropriate course of action should someone ever meet a believer they consider to be a true heretic. (Needless to say, the only heretics in Gumbel's economy are those few souls who will ultimately follow the Bible rather than the unified World Church for which Alpha stands. Nicky elsewhere uses a very odd choice of phrase about any such "deluded" Christian. He says "the sooner ... [they are] **put out of that**, the better".²)

Although a charming atmosphere pervades Alpha meetings, we also find this ill-tempered spirit apparently rearing its ugly head in Alpha testimonies:

"Part of the Course was the Holy Spirit weekend ... [My group was] being powerfully touched by the Spirit and I began to feel **angry**" [*Alpha News*³].

"I was touched by the most amazing rush of heat through my feet to the top of my head. I **stormed** off" [Elsdon-Dew, Ed.⁴]

We have found a real spirit of rage (as well as a spirit of confusion) among those who have received the T/P 'anointing' dispensed by Alpha. The level of fury they display - on learning that we have *any* concerns about T/P or Alpha - goes well beyond righteous anger. Indeed, a document partly written by HTB on how to

behave when the ‘Toronto Blessing’ is ever questioned, actually has to warn against showing the anger that will frequently arise - even though T/P would lead to patience and gentleness if it was the *true* Holy Spirit.⁵

B:10 UNTHINKABLE? As we have seen, despite passages like Dan. 7:21-22, Nicky Gumbel believes Christ’s worldwide Kingdom (and thus ours) is already in operation. He even says:

“There is also a **present** aspect ... [T]he **dawning** ... of the Kingdom ... The Kingdom is something which can be discovered and experienced *now*, in *this* age ... [T]he ‘**age** to come’ has begun. The ‘old **age**’ goes on but the **powers** of the **new age** [!] have erupted into this **age**. The future Kingdom has **broken into history**” [Italicized emphases in original¹].

One by-product of this erroneous idea that Christ is already ruling the nations is that Christians will expect to see the world becoming more and more Christian. Nicky spurs us on by saying that God is “concerned **not only** with individuals but with the **whole** transformation of **society**”² and that we should be expecting such a *societal* transformation because “**that** ultimately is what it’s about”.³ But the Bible says this world is doomed - and that God will personally have to destroy it (plus the vast majority of its inhabitants) just as He did in Noah’s day (2 Pet. 3:10-11; Luke 17:26-30 etc).

Thanks to Gumbel, and others like him, many Christians are likely to put a great deal of their time and resources toward an end-time “transformation of society” that God has said will never come. Thus believers will have their energies directed *away* from true discipleship (e.g. studying God’s Word and diligently seeking and waiting on Him, doing His specific will and growing steadily in maturity and wisdom). People would be saved and made into disciples as a natural outworking of such a walk with God; this will not happen if we attempt to circumvent God’s ways.

But the *most* disastrous outcome of Gumbel’s teaching is that his hearers may well be tempted to enforce the harsh principles that only apply to the time *after* Christ’s return. The Lord will rule the nations with real severity:

“Out of His [i.e. the Lord’s] mouth goeth a **sharp sword**, that with it He should **smite** the nations: and He shall rule them with a **rod of iron**; and He **treadeth the winepress** of the **fierceness** and **wrath** of **Almighty God**” (Rev. 19:15).

Not only does Nicky claim that the Church is ‘Christ on earth’ (thereby insinuating we can rule in the same manner that Christ will) but he even employs a

diagram teaching that the closer we get to Christ's return, the more 'Kingdom principles' apply (and that *most* will apply *prior* to the Lord's arrival).⁴

Believers today who misinterpret OT scriptures like Isaiah 65:12 and Ezekiel 9:2-6 (which are simply physical pictures of *spiritual* principles for the Church) will think that they must, if necessary, use *violence* against any brother who disagrees with their false Church. This dreadful scenario exactly lines up with Christ's own prophecies regarding the last days (e.g. in John 16:2 and Matt. 10:21), so Gumbel's words about the Kingdom suddenly take on a chilling new perspective:

"[T]he Church **will be unstoppable**";⁵ "The **mopping up** operations are underway";⁶ "[W]e **can't** settle for **anything less** than the **visible** unity of the Church"⁷

"May the Kingdom come **in this land**";⁸ "Your Kingdom come. That's God's rule and reign ... **in society**";⁹ "We **cannot rest** until the **whole universe** is subject to his reign".¹⁰

This harsh spirit spreading through the professing Church also explains the growing militarism within Christianity in recent years. (In our main 'Church' volume we recommend some excellent books exposing the whole issue of 'Kingdom-Now' belief and its fierce attendant spirit.)

Isaiah 61:2 prophesies that the Messiah will "proclaim [i.e. 'herald or summon the arrival of'] the acceptable year of the LORD, **and the day of vengeance** of our God". However, the second half of the verse is only due to happen at Christ's *Second* Coming, which is why Jesus deliberately left these words out when He quoted this passage during His *First* Coming (see Luke 4:18-19)...

Amazingly, Gumbel not only re-inserts these words (as well as other Millennial ones following), but he conceals the fact that the passage is Messianic. He gives the strong impression that it was the prophet Isaiah who did all these things and that "**we** are able to do what the prophet here did".¹¹ But it is *not* yet the 'day of vengeance', and the ramifications of believing that it *is* are obvious and horrible.

"This know also, that in the **last days perilous** times shall come. For men shall be **lovers of their own selves** [Gumbel indeed says "Jesus sets us free ... to **love** ourselves..."¹²] ... **incontinent** [i.e. *unable* to control themselves - see sections 25:6-7], **fierce** [remember the "fierceness" of Christ in Rev. 19:15] ... having a **form** of godliness but denying the power thereof [i.e. maintaining a vaguely 'Christian' *exterior*, but rejecting the idea that God's *genuine* anointing stems from authentic, biblical godliness]" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

These end-time apostates will make it an extraordinarily dangerous period for Christ's real disciples (2 Tim. 3:1-13). These misguided people will actually think that they "doeth God service" by betraying and persecuting (and even killing) those who refuse to follow their false ways and their false leader (Matt. 24:3-13).

Those who are unswervingly loyal to God's written Word are already being branded as "extremist bigots", "fanatical fundamentalists" and "narrow-minded separatists" - in short, "evil". (Gumbel has stated that "people who criticize Alpha are ... **extreme**".¹³) The true Church will need to go underground (and should seriously be seeking God about this *now*).

Incredibly, Nicky Gumbel reinforces the notion that we are to engage in *physical* warfare for the sake of the faith. From his choice of language, and his studious lack of clarifying comments, he must leave many immature listeners picking up the wrong message. All the following quotes emanated from just one talk:¹⁴

"There is a **conflict** in the **world** between good and evil [but Scripture says our 'battle' is in the *heavenlies*]; "[T]here is, the **Bible** tells us, ... **physical** warfare"; "Jesus ... did **battle** with the Devil"; "[T]he apostles used to **expel evil** [note the replacement of 'devils' with a far wider word]"

"We **fight** with prayer **and with action** [but prayer *is* action!] ... Everywhere that Jesus went he **removed evil** [He expelled *devils*, but Nicky broadens the definition, thus hearers may include the 'removal' of *men also*. (New Agers use the euphemism 'removal' too)]. He **destroyed** evil **whenever** he found it. [He *exposed* it, but that is not the same thing at all] And that's what **we** are called to be. **That's** the exciting thing. [Is it not exciting to walk with our wonderful God and learn about Him?]"

Combine this with Gumbel's suggestion that the only true *unbelievers* in the world are those people who are not baptized in the spirit behind Alpha,¹⁵ and the danger becomes clearer still. The persecution of sound believers will get worse still when the ultimate manifestation of Antichrist is revealed as per 2 Thess. 2:3-12 and Dan. 9:27 etc. (The term 'antichrist' means 'in place of Christ' - see sections 7:8 & 12:5 - and many deceived Christians will take the final instance to be the real thing. See Matt. 24:24-31; Dan. 11:21-32; and Mark 13:14-20.) His arrival will, in their eyes, obviously mean that *every* Millennial Kingdom principle applies, even if there was a question mark over any of them previously.

The final Antichrist will have both technological *and* supernatural power. The Bible says he will even be able to call down fire from the sky (Rev. 13:13), but the true Christ was at pains to let us know exactly what form His Second Coming

would take, so that we would be able to spot an imposter (Luke 17:24; Mark 13:24-26). Perhaps Nicky's 'crowning' falsehood is to confuse this, both by changing what Jesus said here,¹⁶ and by obscuring the fact that His Second Coming will not take place until the ultimate Antichrist has appeared. Thus Gumbel smoothes the way once again for acceptance of the "Man of Sin".

B:11 BUT...! After all we have said about Alpha, there may still be pressure brought upon your Fellowship to support the Course because, despite everything, "at least it brings people into our church". If the above material has failed to cut much ice, the reader may want to consider employing some of the following points when defending its non-use:

- 1) The most important issue is not how full our Fellowships are, but whether we are in God's will or not. If He is not calling us to use Alpha then we must not use it. We do not gain ANY reward in Heaven for doing things our way. As a matter of fact the reverse is true.
- 2) Every time we run the Course we legitimize Rome and we spread other errors. We also end up lending credibility to full-blown Alpha Courses, even if we ourselves have stripped out the corrupt elements of the weekend away and thus do not dispense the Alpha spirit.
- 3) We are not to do evil that 'good' may result. Nor are we to fill our Fellowships with people who are still unsaved. If people start attending a church after taking an Alpha Course then they will discover that they have been led there under false pretences - i.e. through a false gospel. This is not going to impress them, nor encourage them to stay, which is probably a major reason why they drift away in such large numbers.
- 4) Quite apart from the plainly spurious 'conversions' that we saw in Part Three, the overwhelming majority of newcomers, after being presented with Alpha's confused view of Christianity, understandably choose *not* to follow up the faith.¹ (As a result, they also become gospel-hardened and much tougher to reach since, in their eyes, they have checked out the Christian belief-system most comprehensively.)

B:12 COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS When Nicky teaches about ministering to those who need physical healing, he says there is "**no technique involved**",¹ yet suddenly when we come to the question of *spiritual* healing (i.e. salvation) we just have to plug in a formula...

But *all* evangelism must be *Spirit-led* because only God knows how, and when, to reach the heart of a given individual. Formulaic outreach, rather than out-

reach that is specifically directed by the Lord on each occasion, will not result in proper fruit, nor in God getting His rightful glory, but in men's souls being used as guinea-pigs to test out formulae. We need to remember that even Christ waited on His Father for each move and that the Holy Spirit only ever utters what the Father decrees. It is infinitely more effective to *pray* than ever to go out in our own strength or in our own way (the latter will inevitably end up *hardening* many hearts because we were not truly being directed by God).

Neither Alpha nor any other mechanical system of outreach was needed for the early Church to grow, so why is a technique considered indispensable now? The excuse given by many is that unbelievers today are fundamentally different from unbelievers in the past and that God neglected to cater for this in His Word (but see Eccl. 1:9; Psa. 119:160 etc)...

Surely the real answer is that most churches refuse to walk as biblically with God as the early Church did, so they have to search for other sources of fruit. A church should realize that without walking closely with the Lord it *cannot* produce good fruit (John 15:4-5). A church's first priority must therefore be to get itself right before it tries to disciple anyone else!

(Obviously most churches already imagine themselves to be as leaven-free as reasonably possible, yet if they were to look *comprehensively* - e.g. at the lyrics of their songs, or at the Bible versions they use, or at the variety of doctrines among their members, or at their disciplinary arrangements - they would soon recognize that things could be a lot better. For instance, practically *no* church seems set up in a way that enables it to obey ALL the NT ordinances for Fellowships.)

HTB repeatedly suggests that *numerical* growth/momentum, rather than *spiritual* growth, is the main issue.² Again this is a very New Age view, as can be seen from the "hundredth monkey" concept whereby numbers alone will, New Agers claim, magically cause the remaining unbelievers to see the light. (This superstition appears to be shared by Gumbel when he says that "'if Christians were for **one day** what they ought to be, the **world** would be converted **overnight**'".³)

But putting numbers first inevitably means we drop our standards and make our churches less spiritually challenging places to be - whereas our primary job is to be *disciples* and to bring our Fellowships to *maturity* (however small those Fellowships might be). Once a church has put its own house in order - by walking in the fear of the Lord and "purging out the leaven" - then, and only then, can it expect God to add to it (Acts 5:1-14). We wouldn't let our children swim in a polluted river; likewise God will much more willingly place newborn babies into *unpolluted* churches.

Many of Alpha's "small group" discussion leaders are very limited in understanding. Some have probably never read their Bible through even once. (They certainly can't be familiar with the scriptures we've cited in this book.) The *Lord*, on the other hand, gave the "Great Commission" to *mature* disciples who were already conversant with the Hebrew scriptures and who had spent serious time learning of the Kingdom and were afterwards filled with the *real* Holy Spirit...

Unless a Fellowship is already grown up, e.g. in terms of fear of God and knowledge of His Word, then the most evangelistic thing it can do is to disciple its current members *to the sort of level Christ did* (remembering that the Lord said "make **disciples**" not converts), so that they can disciple people themselves and so on as per 2 Timothy 2:2.

(A lot of teaching needs to be communicated in order to create a mature disciple. It is not a one-meeting-a-week task (see Acts 2:42-47). New converts in the early church were thoroughly immersed in the apostles' teaching (i.e. the scriptures); they did *not* 'devote themselves to outreach initiatives'. We must train up believers as the Lord and His apostles did, else we are sending *children* into a spiritual battlezone.)

We will produce fruit, not as we strive, but as a natural outworking of us abiding in the Lord (Luke 10:39-42). We will see souls won as God uses us surgically, not when we decide to go out *indiscriminately* - which is the system Nicky advocates.⁴ *If* God is calling someone to evangelize in a particular situation, then He will give them the opportunity, AND the words, for that unique occasion. It may seem harsh, but we believe we have shown that a church which thinks a formulaic course is a sound way to have people added to it... is a church biblically *unready* to have people added to it.

B:13 STILL UNCONVINCED Any reader who still supports Alpha by now presumably does so because, despite all the deadly problems we have revealed, they know people who have made real commitments to God through it. If these souls *have* actually been saved then we are sincerely delighted; however there are a few very important questions that need to be asked of any such convert:

(1) **What is the nature of the person's *commitment*?** If a person claims to have "fallen in love with Jesus" then we must be careful to ask "**Which** Jesus?" because Alpha teaches a significantly different Jesus from the one described in Scripture.¹ Romanists, New Agers, even Moslems can have *very* strong feelings of love for *a* Jesus.

Just experiencing a feeling of love for Jesus does not mean a person is necessarily saved - even assuming it is not merely a soulish feeling caused by a

false spirit (John 14:15,27; Deut. 5:10). The person may be very excited about their new, and ‘powerful’, faith; they may be very changed; they may be better behaved than other members of your church, but unless they meet the criteria in 1 John then they are not saved. Even zeal for the true God is not proof of salvation (Rom. 10:1-2).

- (2) **What is the nature of the person’s *change*?** They may well have more peace and contentment and joy, but again this can result from a sense of psychological well-being engendered by the Course itself. (This would also explain why the Course gets more praise than the Lord in Alpha testimonies.)

The ‘convert’ may well know a deep calmness and a new compassion towards others, but - as we noted in chapter 30 - this is equally seen in New Age testimonies. (New Agers too report ‘total transformation’ after their pagan initiation.) The person may be living a much cleaner life, but this does not necessarily mean they are saved; many pagans have high standards too.² They may even be operating in gifts of the spirit, but is it the true Spirit or a counterfeit one (as per Matt. 7:21-23)?

- (3) **What is the nature of the person’s *testimony*?** You might be shocked at what your new convert’s definition of salvation and Christianity really is. They may report feeling sorry for their sins but, as Judas Iscariot showed (and despite what Gumbel thinks³), remorse is not repentance. (Even asking God to forgive a selection of sins is not conversion. We have to renounce and hand over our *entire* lives.) If the person has experienced a miracle, is it definitely one that the enemy could not have achieved?

But if their conversion *has* been so biblical, despite the seriously deficient gospel given by Alpha, then one would expect HTB to snap up the details and make them available to other churches running Alpha so as to encourage and edify and inspire. HTB’s publications sorely need such testimonies. Has this happened? Besides, could this person not have been saved any other way but through Alpha?

[N.B. We here need to revisit an important lie, introduced by Rome many centuries ago, which pervades a large proportion of churches today and which causes many people not to examine testimonies too closely: viz. the false but prevalent “post-millennial” idea that the Church is going to subdue and subsume the world’s population. This expectation alone necessitates the production of colossal numbers of ‘believers’, whether or not their testimonies really measure up. We must remember that God’s Word says this ‘dominion’ will not begin until after the final Antichrist has been removed by the true Christ - and we have absolutely no mandate from Scripture to start ‘practising’ or physically ‘preparing for’ this dominion beforehand.]

Even if we *do* know a few people who have unquestionably been saved during an Alpha Course, it still does not mean Alpha is of God and that He wants us to keep using it. If the Bible references we give in this Overview are checked, this will be thoroughly confirmed. Consider the terrible harm that the Course is doing to the great bulk of unbelievers *and believers* taking part in it. Does it not matter how many enemies of the gospel are being created by it? We think it matters enormously.

B:14 BOTTOM LINE The enemy wants to subvert churches, and there are a number of ways he does this - especially now that he has, by various means, 'dumbed down' almost all Fellowships so that they are relatively ignorant of God's protective Word. Satan's thinking seems to run like this:

One major method for subverting a church is to seduce it into compromising on the truth for the sake of 'unity'. Once this is achieved, further error can be injected with ease. (This injection will happen quite naturally, for example, as churches mingle socially - or evangelistically or on humanitarian ventures that some person has dreamt up. Alpha is a major catalyst for all these types of intermingling, and HTB strongly encourages running '*interdenominational*' Alpha Courses.) Another powerful subversion tool is to inject a false *spirit* into churches. Such an unclean spirit can greatly help to blind and corrupt a church even further.

But *how* do you go about injecting an ecumenical attitude or another spirit into a Fellowship - especially one that has so far avoided the worst excesses of these things? Such a Fellowship would almost certainly not be interested in adopting a set of books or talks on discipleship written by a different denomination...

The answer is so simple. By exploiting the desire of every Christian to spread the gospel, you can introduce false teachings (*and* a false spirit) in the guise of an *evangelistic course*. (In order to justify a significant proportion of the Course being devoted to *ecumenism* rather than evangelism you obviously need to extend its remit by calling it an introduction to the Christian life as a whole.)

To maximize the spread of the false *spirit* you must thoroughly blur the clear distinction between being born again and being baptized in the Spirit. You must also put massive emphasis on the importance of *everyone* involved on the Course receiving spirit "ministry",¹ plus you must teach that the '*Holy Spirit*' portions of the Course (rather than those talks focused on 'Jesus') are the "**vital**"² and "**crucial**"³ ones. While telling Course leaders that they must not exert "**any** kind of pressure"⁵ when they bring the '*gospel*', be sure to put *substantial* pressure onto Course attendees not to resist "**the Spirit**"⁵ (e.g. as seen in section 28:1) and be sure to brand "a cynic"⁶ anyone who questions "it"...

Concentrate all the talks about ‘the Spirit’ into one weekend so that people have minimal time to check what is being said. Make any testing even harder by getting the people away from home - and in a relaxed, “party” atmosphere. Then schedule the relevant “small group” discussion to occur *after* the “ministry” time to help ensure that no-one can ask awkward questions beforehand that might lead others to start thinking - or even to look at their Bibles.

Once a ‘team’ within the church has had “ministry” and received the false spirit (e.g. from one of the regular - and heavily promoted - Alpha training courses) these people can quickly pass “it” onto everyone else in their church through any prayer meeting or “ministry time”. This should pose no problem, especially since the Alpha team is likely to consist of the more influential members of the church.

To make certain that the false doctrines and false spirit are quickly disseminated within the church, *all* existing congregants must be encouraged to go on an Alpha Course whether or not they will ever be remotely involved in future courses.⁷

To guarantee that the Course is taken up widely, it must appear to produce fruit. This is achieved by pandering to unsaved attendees and not offending them. Put all the effort into things that will attract their flesh: the lighting, the food, the smooth running etc (rather than directing your energies toward seeking God about whether He wants your church to run the Course at all, or what He wants preached to a particular group)...

Ensure the discussion groups are places where the unbelievers will *not* hear God’s Word plainly set out. Charm participants with smiles and jokes and finally lead them into receiving spirits other than the Holy Ghost and tell them that this experience means they are saved and that they can have more of this pleasing spirit, and more of the friendly Alpha atmosphere, if they will join the Fellowship. Some people are sure to respond ‘positively’ to this.

Then publish free newspapers that trumpet a handful of ‘testimonies’ - preferably with a ‘signs and wonders’ element - to reinforce the notion that good fruit is being produced elsewhere, even if most Fellowships aren’t seeing many joiners from their own Courses yet.

But the injection, through Alpha, of numbers of *still unsaved* people into a Fellowship is almost an accidental bonus for the enemy. The *primary* purpose of the Course is to undermine the existing assembly. (Nicky proves that his true target is the *believers* when he assumes Bible knowledge that the average unbeliever today would certainly not possess.⁸)

Even people well disposed to Alpha have been forced to concede that the Course “assumes **too much** prior knowledge” and that “those outside the faith (and some inside) **often** simply do not understand what is being put across”⁹ - and even that “it’s focus ... [is] largely to those **already convinced of their faith**”.¹⁰ It is almost a *secondary* benefit for Satan that this Trojan horse disgorges *human* enemies of the cross (i.e. unsaved people) as well as spiritual and doctrinal enemies.

Early versions of Alpha were aimed at some of the least sound churches - presumably because these are usually the largest and were therefore bound to grow (through letting people in willy-nilly). Such sizable churches were also bound to throw up at least a few usable ‘testimonies’. Once the Course had gained a reputation for bringing people in, sounder churches felt obliged, or pressured from congregations fed up with fruitless past evangelistic ventures concocted by men, to accept it. Make the Course more and more subtle and this snowball picks up more and more churches.¹¹

The bottom line of the bottom line? All the evidence says that this is not an evangelistic course and was *never meant* to be one. That is just a front. It is a vehicle for the enemy to introduce New Age beliefs and a New Age spirit into all parts of the professing Church that are not already fatally leavened.¹²

It infiltrates churches by taking advantage of the sincere wish of Christians to reach the lost. Ultimately it is designed to help lead as many believers as possible into the unified, but apostate, World Church - and thence Hell. Ironically, far from *bringing* the gospel, this course is yet another tool in the enemy’s hands for *banishing* the true gospel. No wonder John Wimber called it “ingenious”.¹³

[N.B. It is often difficult for honest, devout Christians to believe that anyone would deliberately oppose the true God; but Judas and the Pharisees did, and the Bible prophesies that many false leaders will indeed arise in the end-times, so we must accept this truth no matter how unfathomable it is to our God-fearing ways and outlook..]

Indeed, the very fact that God’s Word says only a “remnant” of end-time believers will stay obedient to God’s commandments means that the overwhelming majority of professing Christians today are deceived - and that the overwhelming majority of church ‘leaders’ are, at best, terribly deceived too. That this is true is evidenced by the deafening and glowing endorsements Alpha has received from so many of them and the speed with which the Course has overtaken the globe. In terms of teaching, we must learn to trust no-one except God and His complete written Word.]

Satan is far more subtle than even the most intricate and cunning hoax or deception a human has ever dreamt up. We need to be alert towards *everyone*.

B:15 YOU ARE SPECIAL Congratulations on getting to these final pages of this uncompromising analysis. Few people are open enough to such challenging material (or in enough agreement already with the things we have written) to be able to do so. The great majority of those in the professing Church today would certainly not cope with much of this *Overview* volume - assuming they were prepared to continue beyond the Preface. Hence the very patient style of the *main* volumes.

There are some excellent books around today which lucidly and powerfully expose all sorts of deceptions that have entered the Church. A few of those books dealing with Catholicism have been written by ex-Catholics and are, in our view, by far the most effective in reaching those in deception - because the authors not only understand the thoroughly skewed mindset of their quarry but also know how graceful and careful one needs to be in order to keep such people from 'pulling up the drawbridge' and becoming harder still to reach. It is an *exceedingly* delicate task to rescue such a soul, and the would-be rescuer may well only get one 'shot' at it. The Lord impressed upon us the need for a book that was especially designed to be read by those tangled up in apostate churches.

These folks are not only desperately deceived and (generally) very closed to correction, but they have also been spiritually *blinded* such that they are actually unable to discern the unvarnished truth when it is clearly presented to them. Beyond this, these sincere but deluded folks already possess a worldview that, to them, seems very consistent and reasonable. Their 'other gospel' even comes complete with supernatural manifestations and other 'signs and wonders' to (seemingly) confirm it as the truth.

These people also feel threatened because they do not know the Word well enough to argue their case and would be embarrassed if this fact were known. Furthermore, because their post-millennial doctrine predicts great revival - which they think Alpha is generating - the Course has become a *central* part of their paradigm. These people would therefore have not the slightest interest in a book which overtly admitted it was going to criticize the Course. Thus ours does not do so...

B:16 OUR RESPONSE Edition 2 of Alpha is a very clever creation that has proved acceptable to a huge variety of Fellowships. (HTB has actually brought out multiple versions of the 'Edition 2' videos, but they are *very* similar to each other.) Any biblical examination of Alpha therefore needs to be similarly well thought out if it is to reach the same breadth of people.

This is exactly what we have tried to achieve with the main *Unofficial Guide*. We work hard to keep as many folks with us for as long as possible, endeavouring to make the 'slope' of any correction as gradual as possible.

The book also steadily builds up a replacement foundation for their faith so that they are not faced with leaping into thin air when they realize that their previous foundation was useless. (Otherwise more than a few would either refuse to jump off their doctrinal sandcastle or would lose faith in Christianity altogether.)

By meeting such folks where they are (i.e. highly pro-Alpha) and gently leading them step-by-step out of darkness into the light of God's Word *without forcing them to pre-judge issues*, the book is eventually able to reveal many of the dangers with the Course. (N.B. All of this has only been managed with the Lord's *tremendous* help!) Exceedingly tactful writing slowly helps to open the eyes and unclog the ears of the deceived. Notes at the bottom of each page are judiciously employed - in order to service those more serious readers who are prepared to make extra effort to find the truth.

Further Features There are further features of the main *Unofficial Guide* than we have yet alluded to. The text on both front and back covers is designed to interest and inspire *all* prospective readers, and the book opens with a very gracious and helpful Foreword from the Director of Reachout Trust - an organization mainly devoted to evangelizing those in the more obvious cults and in the occult. Because of its area of work, Reachout Trust is appreciated by a very broad spectrum of the professing Church and is thus ideally suited to supplying a Foreword for a book of this type.

The 'Introduction' to the main Guide is no less sensitive. It avoids saying anything which might put off the very people for whom this material has primarily been written; quite the opposite in fact.

Each Part of the Guide additionally includes scores of other remarkable quotations from the Course (and its participants) than we have been able to provide here, and dozens of other significant problems with Alpha are exposed in each of the two volumes. They also give our firsthand accounts from attending Alpha meetings and obviously provide fuller versions of many quotes which appear in this *Overview* volume.

Finally we supply a carefully-worded 'Cross Reference' to assist navigation through the Guide where topics cannot easily be tracked down via chapter titles and section headings. The numerous topics include: 'Alpha Quotes' (grouped by Alpha talk number and HTB publication), 'Babylon', 'Character of God', 'Criticism', 'Deity of Christ', 'End Times', 'Fear of God', 'Gospel', 'New Age

Movement', 'Trinity', 'Truth' and 'Word of God'. (As such, we are convinced that the main volumes also act as a 'one-stop-shop' reference work enabling readers to prove numerous crucial points of doctrine in *any* meeting or conversation in which they may be involved - i.e. whether or not it is about Alpha.)

As a result of all this, we believe the main Guide to be suitable for a terrific range of believers. The first volume is ideal for those who are pro-Alpha or who do not revere the Bible or who do not understand the dangers of 'interfaith' activity or cults or Rome or ecumenism or social gospels. The second volume is targeted at those who are familiar with these dangers but who are still involved in compromised churches - e.g. those with cultic elements or 'Faith' teachings or restorationist views or any other unbiblical trends, as well as those which have allowed the spirit behind Alpha and T/P to enter them.

(Note, however, that our experience has shown that *very* few Christians today know the information in the 'World' volume. It is not even known by many within the 'Remnant'. Note also that, whatever book is used, we cannot overstate the importance of praying for all aspects of the situation - e.g. from seeking God over His will and timing to asking Him to speak through our work. If the relevant book fails to impress them, then you may like to consider visiting our website for further ideas and information.)

Important Note: For supremely pro-Alpha friends, especially those who do not yet know you are opposed to Alpha, we strongly recommend supplying them with a different work altogether. The book Proven Alpha Course Tips by John Fairhaven is absolutely perfect for gently 'softening up' fans to the idea that Alpha is simply not as wonderful as they suppose. It is very short and is also cheaper than our Guides and will ultimately direct its readers to our 'World' volume - probably saving you the need to be involved in organizing a copy for them yourself. It will also insulate you from direct criticism of Alpha, thus keeping the door open for any future approaches should they ever be necessary. The book can be ordered by visiting John's website (www.alphacourse.us).

Help you can give The information in our 'Unofficial Guide' is desperately needed by the Church. We would therefore encourage readers to think of everyone they know who could benefit from this material. Again, we receive nothing from sales of the Guide except satisfaction that souls are being rescued from the lake of fire.

Most Christian bookshops make a large slice of their profits from selling Alpha resources, or other deceptive material exposed by our books, and will therefore not stock our work. It is down to believers who trust God and who serve Him alone to get the information in this book known.

(N.B. If you do plan to lend or give the main volumes to a deceived person, we recommend only handing over the second one after ensuring that the person already knows the material in the first one, so they have the necessary foundational knowledge - and are not overwhelmed with paper. We also advise suggesting that the recipient discuss the content of each Part (or even each chapter) of the book with you before they move on to the next - in order to 'nip in the bud' any outstanding problems. Certainly the recipient needs to be urged to read each volume from the *start*. Note also that most believers seldom read large books these days, so you may well need to make a special effort to encourage people to read the main Guide all the way through.)

The Overview If you can think of any brothers or sisters in the Lord who are open enough to correction to be able to cope with the much more concentrated *Overview* volume, then please consider following this up. However, please encourage them to check the 'Introduction' and to read the book *from the beginning* - as the work is far more satisfying when approached in this way - and to read as far as they possibly can.

You can print flyers and leaflets advertising the *Overview* from the 'Better than Rubies' section of our website (www.bayith.org). These can obviously be used (with permission from the relevant people) on church noticeboards or information tables or on seats at conferences and in a variety of other ways.

(Note that some people who read the earliest editions of the *Overview* found the going a bit hard - especially if they 'skimmed' the work or just 'dipped into' it. They can be reassured that a great deal of effort, plus astonishing extra material, has been added since those rudimentary versions. They will appreciate reading this new edition from page one.)

Three final thoughts occur. Firstly, if you have noticed any flaws in this *Overview* volume then we would really love to hear from you. Secondly, if you are connected with a ministry which you think ought to promote, or even stock, this book, then you are very welcome to approach them. If you would like to discuss this with us first then please do contact us (via our website or publisher). Thirdly, if you have found this book to be a serious blessing and would be prepared to send a gift to help our ministry (for there are many other articles and books we would like to produce on a variety of Christian topics) that would be wonderful. Please send any donations via our publisher. May God bless you.

In Closing There is so much more we could say in this Appendix, and so many other examples we could give, but we hope that what we have squeezed into these pages has sufficed and has communicated the terrible dangers of Alpha.

Between the two *main* volumes we cover most of the basic paradigm accepted by so much of the professing church; thus we believe the material is very valuable even for those folks who have no association with Alpha. Ways of obtaining the ordering details for the main Guide are given at the back of this book.

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the **truth**, and one convert him; Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from **death**...” (Jam. 5:19-20a).

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APPENDIX C

THE OPEN 'C'

Please Note: This material does not appear in the main volumes and should only be read after Appendix B has been completed.

There is one last piece to the jigsaw. On the one hand we have claimed that Rome is 'Mystery Babylon', the mother of the false church. On the other, we have claimed that Alpha's over-arching problem is that it is slanted wholesale towards the New Age. We clearly need to reconcile these two points, and that is what this very short appendix will endeavour to do. We will need to begin with a few sentences of background.

C:1 NEW WORLD ORDER The 'New World Order' (NWO) can be thought of as the socio-political dimension of the New Age movement. It will come as little surprise to learn that Alpha's teachings in this area are closely allied to those of the New World Order...

We have already hinted that Alpha's views on *social action* are New Age, but this trend is also evident in Nicky's comments about politics, economics, the environment, globalization and so on. (A booklet focusing on this aspect of the Course, and provisionally titled 'Alpha and the New World Order', was in the pipeline at the time of writing. Please see our website for details.) Additionally, the New Age movement condemns the separatism from the world of Jews and of true Christians, calling it 'materialistic' and 'selfish' - and Gumbel appears to agree with them.¹ (Just as Gumbel discourages any serious investigation of the New Age movement, so he likens books exposing the New World Order to dabbling in the occult.²)

C:2 ALL ROADS LEAD FROM..? The idea that the many arms of the New Age / New World Order movement have each materialized *independently* is

common. Nicky insists that the movement is simply a “ground-swell”, and that “It has **no** leader, **no** organization, **no** structure, and **no** headquarters”,¹ but is this right? Each of the institutions or individuals listed in bold type below is a central player in the New Age movement or its New World Order arm. Let us see if a pattern emerges...

The “most widely read” New Ager is **Teilhard de Chardin** - a Jesuit. The founder of the Jesuits, **Ignatius de Loyola** (whom Gumbel quotes very favourably²) is a hero among New Agers. (The ‘spiritual exercises’ he used, including his ‘Ignatian meditation’ which Gumbel encourages, are totally New Age.) The **Bilderberg Group** is the European counterpart to the Council on Foreign Relations (see later) and was created by Joseph H. Rettinger, a Jesuit.³ The **Club of Rome** was co-founded by a Catholic (also on the board of **Planetary Citizens**) and is replete with Catholics.⁴ The ‘papal representative’ at the Club of Rome is a Jesuit.⁵

Despite their extreme secrecy, Jesuits (plus other Romanists) are known to have played a pivotal or primary role in many other New Age developments,⁶ including corrupting many modern Bibles.⁷ The **Alumbrados** (the *Spanish Illuminati*) came “especially” from Rome’s “Franciscans and Jesuits”.⁸ The *Bavarian Illuminati* was “organized along Jesuit lines”⁹ and founded by Adam Weishaupt from Rome’s Society of Jesus, surely to serve that society.¹⁰

During the 19th century, Jesuits took over commanding positions within **Freemasonry** and (via the Illuminati) added extra tiers above it, making Masonry another ‘front’ and tool of Rome.¹¹ This claim will amaze some readers, for Rome tells its *lower*-level initiates that Freemasonry is incompatible with Catholicism. Of course, Rome is obliged to do this in order to appear Christian. The fact is, however, that both are thoroughly Babylonian and are thus fully compatible - hence the strong links between, for instance, the Catholic organization **Opus Dei** and Masonry. In fact, *many* senior Romanists have been shown to be Masons. The July 1976 *Bulletin de L’Occident Chrétien* Nr. 12¹² identified well over one hundred Catholic prelates who were Masons. These included:

Cardinal Bea, who was Secretary of State for **Pope John XXIII** and **Pope Paul VI**; Cardinal Baggio, the head of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops - i.e. a *Mason* decides who is to be appointed a Catholic Bishop!; Cardinal Cacciavillan, another Secretary of State; Cardinal Casaroli, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Cardinal Laghi; Cardinal Lienart (a Grand Master within Masonry); Cardinal Pappalardo; Cardinal Pellegrino; Cardinal Poletti, Vicar of Diocese of Rome; and Cardinal Villot. The list goes on and on, involving many other archbishops, Papal Nuncios, and heads of numerous Vatican institutions. At least three of these men have held the highest position in the Roman Church next to the Pope.

*(One other senior Catholic on the above list, the late Cardinal Suenens, is worthy of special mention. Yes, the head of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement for much of its life was a Freemason. His New Age credentials are strong, for he co-authored a book with **Dom Helder Camara** - a firm favourite among New Agers. Camara is a fellow Catholic - indeed, a Roman 'archbishop'. Suenens is linked to HTB in several ways, not least because he worked with, or has otherwise been endorsed by: Tom Forrest, Bill Burnett, Francis MacNutt and David Pytches - all of whom HTB promote.)*

The very close relationship between the Vatican and the 'P2' Masonic Lodge in Italy (of whom Tony Blair's friend Silvio Berlusconi is a member) are well exposed in books covering the murders of John Paul I and Roberto Calvi. (Incidentally, it would be a mistake to imagine that Romanists have only very recently become Masons. Cardinal Lienart became a Mason in 1912. Cardinal Rampolla was a Mason - and very nearly became Pope in 1903. It was a Jesuit (Francisco Calvo) who introduced Freemasonry in Costa Rica.¹³ The relationship between the Jesuits and Freemasonry can actually be shown to date back at least as far as the founding of America.¹⁴)

Suddenly it becomes very relevant to us that the New Age leaders **Helena Blavatsky** and **Annie Besant** were both 'co-Masons' (female Masons).¹⁵ Co-Mason **Alice Bailey** set up the **Lucifer** Publishing Company, later named **Lucis Trust**. Members of the U.S. **Council on Foreign Relations** are usually Freemasons, or are very closely connected to them, as are members of the **Trilateral Commission** and the aforementioned Club of Rome.¹⁶ The same people are frequently members of multiple such groups.

C:3 THERE'S MORE The New Age movement may not look like Rome *physically* (although they use many of the same symbols) but when viewed from a *spiritual* perspective both are thoroughly Babylonian. No wonder Catholics have embraced the New Age movement far more readily than evangelicals.¹ No wonder too that **Marian apparitions** preach the New Age worldview (see section 6:4). And no wonder that the majority of the most quoted figures among New Agers were *Catholic* mystics (many of whom are cited approvingly in Richard Foster's book *Money, Sex and Power* - which Gumbel recommends in a central Alpha resource²).

(Note that some New Age infiltrators into the Christian Church attempt to claim that Catholic mystics from past centuries were not New Agers because they did not use the term 'New Age'. As Ray Yungen points out, it is not the terminology but the beliefs which matter. These beliefs were in perfect harmony with the modern manifestation of the New Age movement, which is why today's New Agers all revere these Catholic mystics and see them as their forebears.)

For centuries Rome has kept her New Age machinations fairly quiet. But in recent decades Rome has *openly* allowed her sons to help bring in their ‘New Age’, e.g. **Matthew Fox**, (who claims to have left Rome but was certainly not excommunicated); **Thomas Merton** and **Henri Nouwen** (volumes by whom can be purchased from HTB’s bookshop); and **Hans Küng** (a favourite of Gumbel³ - and of Tony Blair,⁴ who is frequently involved in New Age activities and approves of a change to the 1701 ‘Act of Succession’ which currently prohibits Catholics from ascending the British throne).

As we saw in the opening chapters of this book (e.g. in section 3:2), Romanists have long been in the vanguard of the New Age agenda to encourage Christians to respect pagan religions and to collaborate with them. Romanists were in charge at yet another major syncretistic event in October 2003. The “annual interfaith congress” (entitled ‘*The Future of God!*’) was held in the Paul VI Pastoral Centre in Fátima and was presided over by the Catholic Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon. One of the principle speakers was, surprise, surprise, a Jesuit. Among other unbiblical statements, he claimed that “the Holy Spirit is ... present in Buddhist, Hindu and other sacred writings”.⁵ (Anyone who reads the Old Testament, or even just the book of Lamentations, will soon see that the very last thing Christians should ever do is to join together with pagans.)

Benjamin Crème has stated that the antichrist will be on “the throne of **St. Peter in Rome**”. Many people imagine that George Bush was the first world leader publicly to proclaim the New World Order, but the **Pope** of Rome easily preceded him. In June of 1990, the ‘Pope’ called for “a **new world order**”.⁶

C:4 EXPLOSIVE CONCLUSION Why it is that senior Romanists are equally happy to work with Masonry, the New Age movement and Alpha is a deeply challenging point for most people to accept. For that reason, we have made our answer slightly less conspicuous by placing it in end-note number¹ for this section (C:4).

Let us allow these appalling facts to spur us into drawing closer to our glorious, victorious Saviour, for there is salvation in no-one but the Lord Jesus Christ who said “These things I have spoken unto you, that **in Me** ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). If we fear God then we need fear nothing else. Amen.

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REFERENCES

Basic primary source information is given below for every *Alpha-related* quotation in this Overview. Fuller documentation for *all* quotations is available in the main Guide.

Key:

- AN** is short for *Alpha News* (an official Alpha newspaper)
QL means Gumbel's *Questions of Life* (Kingsway, 2001)
SI means Gumbel's *Searching Issues* (Kingsway, 2001)
TO means Gumbel's *Telling Others* (Kingsway, 2001)
30D means Gumbel's *30 Days* (Alpha Publications, 2001)
LWL means Gumbel's *A Life Worth Living* (Kingsway, 2001)
TGWCL refers to the HTB books *The God Who Changes Lives*
Ref. x-y means 'please refer to endnote number y of chapter x'

Notes: (1) All newspapers and all citations of "Alpha News" refer to *UK* editions unless otherwise stated; (2) All quotations from Alpha talks refer to the video transcripts released by HTB in the Summer of 2000 unless otherwise stated; (Gumbel has modified his Edition 2 talks but still calls them "Edition 2", thus "Edn. 2.1" below refers to the original Edition 2 video set); (3) As with the rest of this book, no quotation should be construed as necessarily legitimizing the source of that quotation, and no recommendation of a book or article should be interpreted as an endorsement of other material by the same author; (4) These are the titles of the fifteen talks:

Talk 1 "Christianity: Boring, Untrue and Irrelevant?" **Talk 2** "Who Is Jesus?"
Talk 3 "Why Did Jesus Die?" **Talk 4** "How Can I Be Sure of My Faith?" **Talk 5**
"Why and How Should I Read the Bible?" **Talk 6** "Why and How Do I Pray?"
Talk 7 "How Does God Guide Us?" **Talk 8** "Who Is the Holy Spirit?" **Talk 9**
"What Does the Holy Spirit Do?" **Talk 10** "How Can I Be Filled with the Spirit?"
Talk 11 "How Can I Resist Evil?" **Talk 12** "Why and How Should We Tell
Others?" **Talk 13** "Does God Heal Today?" **Talk 14** "What About the Church?"
Talk 15 "How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?"

Chap.

- 1-** **1** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **2** [Talk 5, Edn. 2.1] **3** [Talk 1, Edn.2.1]
2- **1** [Talk 12, Edn. 2.1] **2** [SI, pp26-28] **3** [Talk 5] **4** [*Christian News*, 15:Apr:96] **5** [SI,
pp28-31] **6** [SI, p31] **7** [SI, pp28-30]
3- **1** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **2** [Talk 2] **3** [SI, p31] **4** [SI, p25] **5** [SI, p56] **6** [SI, p55]

- 4- 1 [Talk 14, 1st Edn.] 2 [E.g. Camus, Freud and Hammar skjold] 3 [AN #16, p16]
4 [See the footnotes in chapter 4 of the main ‘World’ volume for details.]
- 5- 1 [LWL, p70] 2 [SI, p34] 3 [Talk 5]
- 6- 1 [AN, Mar - Jun 2000] 2 [Nicky does not correct the idea that, even centuries after the Lord’s birth, Mary was still “the Virgin” - see SI, p38] 3 [Talk 6] 4 [Both quotes taken from Roger Oakland, *New Wine and the Babylonian Vine*, (Understand the Times, 2002), p311] 5 [Talk 7] 6 [Talk 7] 7 [UK Focus, Mar 1999]
- 7- 1 [Talk 12, Edn. 2.1] 2 [Talk 12] 3 [Talk 7]
- 8- 1 [QL, p94] 2 [Talk 14] 3 [Talk 3, Edn.2.1] 4 [30D, pp29-32]
- 9- 1 [E.g. in Talks 4, 6, 8, 10 & 11; Nicky avoids describing believers as having “submitted their lives to God” or “made Jesus their Lord” but prefers, in every talk, just to say they have come to “faith in Christ”] 2 [Talk 2, as shown in the UK TV series *Alpha: Will it Change Their Lives?*, broadcast by ITV1 on 26:Aug:2001, where Nicky teaches that the “criteria” for salvation is faith *plus works* (i.e. how we treat the Lord’s followers) rather than faith alone. A slightly tighter version, but which still claims that Matt. 25:40,45 represents a *basis* for salvation rather than a proof of it, can be found in QL, p30.] 3 [Talk 14] 4 [Talk 4] 5 [Neil Richardson, *Vanguard* magazine, Issue 2, p31] 6 [Talk 9, Edn. 2.1] 7 [AN #15, pp10-11] 8 [Catholic Alpha Office website (currently at members.iinet.net.au/~nosnikta/alpha/index.html), *Alpha in a Catholic Context*, as at 01:Jul:2001] 9 [RC Bishop Griffiths, *An Introduction to the Alpha Course*, (undated HTB booklet), p17] 10 [Catholic Alpha Office, *Post Alpha Catholic Teaching*, CatholicAlphaOffice.org/pact.htm, (as at 01:Jun:98)] 11 [AN, Mar - Jul (sic) 2000, p17] 12 [Catholic Alpha Office website (see ref. 9-8), *Questions and Answers, B: Theological Issues; Q6: Is its emphasis too individualistic?*, as at 01:Jul:2001]
- 10- 1 [Talk 5, Edn. 2.1] 2 [Talk 12] 3 [Nicky undermines biblical inerrancy, for example, in Talks 2 & 13, plus when he says “Only in Jesus Christ do we find infallible truth”, SI, p30. Is the Bible not infallible too?] 4 [Talk 2, Edn. 2.1]
- 11- 1 [AN #15, pp10-11] 2 [AN #16, p10] 3 [Talk 14] 4 [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1]
- 12- 1 [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] 2 [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] 3 [Talk 9, Edn. 2.1] 4 [Talk 9] 5 [TO, p146] 6 [Vanguard Issue 2, p31] 7 [NEWS!, CatholicAlphaOffice.org/news.htm, (as at 01:Jun:98)]
- 13- 1 [Church Times, Letter to the Editor, 15:Jan:99]
- 14- 1 [The Good News, Advertisement, *Aberdeen Evening Express*, Summer 1998, p5] 2 [AN, Mar - Jun 2000] 3 [AN #16, p14] 4 [AN #15, pp12-13] 5 [Report by Julia Llewellyn-Smith, *Daily Express*, 16:Nov:98, quoted in *UK Focus*, Dec 1998, pp4-5] 6 [AN #14, pp12-13] 7 [AN #16, p7] 8 [AN #15, p4] 9 [Mark Elsdon-Dew, Ed., *TGWCL*, Vol 2, (Alpha Publications, 1998), pp183-184] 10 [Quoted in Chris Hand, *Falling Short?*, p88] 11 [Ruth Gledhill, *The Magnet of Alpha*, *The Tablet*, June 1998] 12 [AN #14, p5] 13 [Newsroom South East TV Interview, UK, 09:Apr:98] 14 [AN #17, p5] 15 [UK Focus, Jan 1999, p6] 16 [RC Bishop Ambrose Griffiths, quoted in *New Christian Herald*, 04:Oct:97] 17 [Youth Alpha Leaders Manual, (Nov. ’97), pp5-7] 18 [AN #16, p10]

- 15- **1** [AN #16, p6] **2** [*Why Jesus?*, (HTB Publications, 1997), p18] **3** [Talk 3, Edn. 2.1] **4** [E.g. Talk 13 & *Why Jesus?*, p11 where he strongly implies that, for the unsaved, the end is merely death] **5** [TGWCL, Vol 2, pp132-133] **6** [AN, Mar - Jun 2000, p7] **7** [*Why Jesus?*, p18] **8** [AN #16, p4] **9** [UK Focus, Jun 1999, p6] **10** [TGWCL, Vol 2, pp184-5] **11** [AN #15, p4] **12** [TGWCL, Vol 2, pp191-2] **13** [TGWCL, Vol 2, pp37-38] **14** [Chris Hand, *Alpha: The Last Word in Evangelism?* (a CRN leaflet)] **15** [AN #17, p16] **16** [Talk 3, Edn. 2.1] **17** [John Richardson, *What's Wrong with Alpha: A Comment*, at: www.episcopal.org/efac/alpha.htm as at 12:May:99] **18** [UK Focus, Jan 1999, pp4-5] **19** [UK Focus, Feb 1999, p4] **20** [AN #16, p5] **21** [TGWCL, Vol 2, p38] **22** [Talk 8, Edn. 2.1]
- 16- **1** [AN #13, p17] **2** [AN #16] **3** [UK Focus, May 1999, p5] **4** [Philip Foster, *email on file*, 28:Nov:98]
- 17- **1** [See, for example, AN, Mar - Jun 2001, p17] **2** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **3** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1]
- 18- **1** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **2** [Nicky Gumbel, 'The Spirit And Evangelism', *Renewal*, May 1995, p16] **3** [Talk 9] **4** [Talk 5, Edn. 2.1] **5** [Talk 5, 1st Edn.] **6** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **7** [AN #16, p10] **8** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **9** [See secn. 12:1, plus Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **10** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **11** [Here is a worrying indicator of how closed to correction Nicky can be: During a meeting lasting "several hours" - consisting almost totally of *constructive* criticisms being offered by a bishop accompanied by an evangelist who was writing an MA dissertation about Alpha - Nicky accepted zero actions, was "defensive" throughout, and took not a single note. (See ref. B:11-1.) Bear in mind too that these people were very pro-Alpha and were both from Nicky's own (or *professed!*) denomination.] **12** [See ref. 14-11]
- 19- **1** [Talk 11; see also Talk 1, Edn. 2.1] **2** [Talk 4, Edn. 2.1] **3** [Nicky promotes visualization in places such as Talks 1 & 3 of Edn. 2.1 and in *30D*, p83. In Talk 2, during a discussion about a child drawing a picture of God, Nicky quotes Jesus saying "If you want to know what God looks like, *look at me*. Anyone who has seen me has seen God". Nicky has changed the tense and produced a misleading paraphrase of John 14:7-9; Christ was talking about His *character*, He was *not* encouraging people to imagine His facial features or look at pictures purporting to show His visage.] **4** [Talk 4, Edn. 2.1] **5** [Talk 9, Edn. 2.1] **6** [Talk 13] **7** [Talk 13] **8** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **9** [Talk 3] **10** [Talk 6, Edn. 2.1] **11** [Talk 9, Edn. 2.1] **12** [Talk 15, Edn. 2.1] **13** [Talk 6, Edn. 2.1] **14** [Nicky seemingly forgets the principle of walking in God's will in Talk 12, where he says you can join a particular HTB social action group "if you *want*" rather than "if God tells you to". See also *30D*, p87]
- 20- **1** [Talk 5] **2** [Talk 11, Edn. 2.1; see also Edn. 2.2: "[Adam was] afraid [of God] ... [T]hat was **the** aim of the **devil** ... and that's **not** how it's meant to be"] **3** [Nicky insinuates that Jesus was 'born again' - and therefore must have died spiritually - e.g. in Talk 9. Likewise in Talk 14 of that edition - where Nicky says "*whatever* happens to Christ, happens to you"] **4** [Talk 11] **5** [Talk 13] **6**

[Nicky unnecessarily distinguishes between Jesus and God in numerous places including Talks 1, 4, 7 & 8; and he several times employs the phrase “God was *in* Christ” (Talk 3) even though this only occurs once in Scripture (and the context differs markedly from Nicky’s). Jesus is said to be “*not* identical to God” in *SI*, p100] **7** [Nicky hurts the Lord’s pre-existence e.g. in Talk 5, when He is likened merely to a piece of architecture. See the main ‘Church’ volume of our Guide for much more on this and on related topics] **8** [Talk 6, Edn. 2.1] **9** [*TO*, p146] **10** [*Renewal*, May 1995, p16] **11** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **12** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **13** [Talk 14] **14** [*Renewal*, May 1995, pp14-16]

21- **1** [Talk 14] **2** [*AN* #16, p10]

22- **1** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1]

23- **1** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **2** [Wallace Boulton, Ed., *The Impact of Toronto*, (Monarch, 1995), pp82-3] **3** [*Renewal*, May 1995, pp14-16] **4** [Talk 14, 1st Edn. (It is fair to quote some doctrinal statements from Alpha’s 1994 videos since they still came out several years after Alpha started and HTB personally assured us that Alpha’s doctrines had not changed in any way between Editions 1 & 2.)] **5** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **6** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1; *QL*, p205] **7** [Talk 5, Edn. 2.1] **8** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **9** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1] **10** [*Why Jesus?*, p20] **11** [Talk 7] **12** [*TO*, p146]

24- **1** [*SI*, p33] **2** [Israel’s restorations will continue into the Millennial reign of Christ, and therefore a few of the passages we quote here include restorations that will only begin when the Lord returns] **3** [Nicky steals Romans 10 from Israel in Talk 7; he also says “The first eleven chapters of Romans are *all* about what God has done for *us*” (Talk 15)] **4** [Talk 12] **5** [Bennett is unclear on Rome, and after writing *Philistine* he fell into other serious errors, but we still recommend that particular book. Our main volumes also recommend other excellent books on this fundamental matter, including Reginald Oduor, *To The Jew First*] **6** [Talk 13] **7** [Talk 13, Edn. 2.1]

25- **1** [Talk 11] **2** [Talk 6] **3** [Talk 10, Edn. 2.1] **4** [See ref. 14-1] **5** [*UK Focus*, Jan 1999, pp4-5] **6** [*AN* #16, p4] **7** [*AN* #17, p7] **8** [*UK Focus*, Mar 1999, p2] **9** [*AN* #15, p12] **10** [Talk 7] **11** [*QL*, p113] **12** [*AN* #13, p9] **13** [*TGWCL*, Vol 2, pp222-223] **14** [*TO*, pp122-4] **15** [Talk 5]

26- **1** [*AN* #14, p7] **2** [*AN* #14, p7] **3** [*TGWCL*, Vol 2, p78] **4** [*AN*, Jul - Oct 2000, p36] **5** [Talk 7] **6** [*AN*, Jul - Oct 2000, p36] **7** [*The Times Weekend*, 14:Dec:96, pp1-2] **8** [*AN* #15, pp12-13] **9** [*AN* #17, p15] **10** [*TGWCL*, Vol 2, pp114-115 & 120-121] **11** [*UK Focus*, Mar 1999, p2] **12** [*TGWCL*, Vol 2, p149]

27- **1** [*The Times Weekend*, 14:Dec:96, p1] **2** [*AN* #14, pp12-13] **3** [*TGWCL*, Vol 2, pp111-2] **4** [*AN* #14, pp12-13] **5** [*UK Focus*, Jan 1999, p6] **6** [*AN*, Mar - Jun 1999, p6] **7** [Talk 3, Edn. 2.1] **8** [Talk 9]

28- **1** [*The Times Weekend*, 14:Dec:96, pp1-2] **2** [Talk 4] **3** [Talk 3] **4** [*AN* #14, p10] **5** [*TO*, p152] **6** [*TGWCL*, Vol 2, p132] **7** [*AN* #17, p15] **8** [*TGWCL*, Vol 2, pp223-224] **9** [Talk 13] **10** [*UK Focus*, Mar 1999, p2] **11** [E.g. Talks 7 & 8, also 3 times in Talk 6,

4 times in Talk 4, and SIX times in Talk 9] **12** [Talk 8] **13** [AN #13, p9] **14** [AN #14, pp6-7] **15** [AN #13, p9] **16** [AN, Jul - Oct 1999, p11] **17** [Talk 11, Edn. 2.1] **18** [Talk 11]

29- **1** [Talk 9, 1st Edn.] **2** [AN #24, p18] **3** [Talk 14, 1st Edn.] **4** [Talk 2, Edn. 2.1]

30- **1** [Talk 9, Edn. 2.1] **2** [Talk 9] **3** [Talk 8] **4** [See ref. 23-2, p83] **5** [Talk 7, Edn. 2.1] **6** [See AN #14, p8; plus AN Mar - Jul 2000, p9; and Sandy Millar's intro. to Talk 1] **7** [*The Express*, 16:Nov:98, reproduced in *UK Focus*, Dec 1998, pp4-5]

Appx:Secn.

A:0- **1** [*The Times*, quoted in AN #16, p3] **2** [*The Independent on Sunday*, quoted in AN, Nov 2001 - Feb 2002, p2] **3** [Gyles Brandreth, 'Review' section of *The Sunday Telegraph*, quoted in AN, Nov 2001 - Feb 2002, p2] **4** [*The Daily Telegraph*, quoted in AN #17, p9, and on the front cover of Tricia Neill, *Maximising the Potential of Your Alpha Course*, (HTB Publications, undated booklet)]

A:2- **1** [Ian Cook, *email on file*, 26:Sep:98] **2** [Talk 11, Edn. 2.1]

B:1- **1** [E.g. in Talk 10, re: the issue of *simultaneous* tongues, where Nicky says "the *spirit behind* what Paul is getting at here..."] **2** [Examples of Nicky twisting Scripture through paraphrase (even of his own corrupt version!) includes: his allusion to 1 Cor. 10:15b (in Talk 7), where he obscures the importance of testing what teachers say when he changes Paul's words from "judge for yourselves what I say" to "*Think over* what I say"; also, in Talk 5, "You *shall not* commit adultery" (Exo. 20:14) becomes the substantially weaker "Don't commit adultery"; and he changes Christ's words in John 13:8 crucially from "you have no part *with me*" to "you have no part *of me*", see Talk 6. In Talk 5, Nicky creates a *non-existent* scripture by referring to a verse from John's gospel but quietly combining it with a verse from John's first *epistle*. This alone changes the meaning, but Nicky then paraphrases both portions to even worse effect!]

3 [An example of Nicky omitting a Bible reference, allowing him to paraphrase it dishonestly, is in Talk 2, when he refers to the 'sheep and goats' prophecy. Two examples of him being dishonestly *selective* are found in Talk 5 alone, where he teaches *five* times that salvation merely involves "calling on the name of the Lord", and a five further times that it simply requires "coming to faith in Christ".] **4** [Gumbel fails to take advantage of natural opportunities to promote the Bible e.g. in Talk 6, where he mentions "our daily bread" without explaining that God's Word is our spiritual daily bread. Also in chapter 6 of *SI* about science and the Bible, he could have revealed many amazing scientific facts in Scripture but doesn't. His book *30 Days* is supposed to be a "practical introduction to reading the Bible" and is only going to be read by people who are keen to learn about it. This would thus be a fabulous vehicle through which to extol the beauty and depth and value and

purity of Scripture, but Nicky fails badly in this (e.g. see p16). Even on page 90, where he talks about the need for “roots” when discussing the parable of the sower, he hides the fact that the our roots are obtained from *God’s written Word.*]

5 [Gumbel downplays the importance of Scripture for those already walking with the Lord in Talk 11, and also when he likens the Bible merely to a “car manual” (Talk 5) - hardly a document worthy of deep and frequent study! Gumbel uses this analogy to mock the idea of anyone memorizing portions of Scripture or bothering to look into the Hebrew or Greek behind it] **6** [Talk 5; see also secn. 5:8 plus *30D*, p13] **7** [See Talks 11 & 14] **8** [Talk 7] **9** [Talk 5] **10** [Examples of Nicky’s extrabiblical statements include (in italics): “the Holy Spirit also brings an inner experience of God ... This experience is *different for everyone*” (*QL*, p63); “Paul was ... *hungry for the blood of Christians*” (*30D*, p47); “There is just an *endless variety of gifts [of the Spirit]...*” (Talk 9); “When the devil condemns us it is *just this nebulous feeling*” (Talk 11); “All Hell ... is smaller than *one atom...*” (Talk 11)]

B:2- 1 [Nicky misrepresents God continually. For example, not once during the whole of Edition 2.2 does Nicky ever call God “omnipotent”. The word “Almighty” is extremely rare on Alpha and only ever occurs in quotations from other people - quotations which anyway are not about God’s power! Nicky seems to prefer focusing on things God “can’t” do - e.g. see Talk 6] **2** [*Letter* (in response to the report in ref. B:11-1) from Gumbel and Millar to Mark Ireland, 12:Dec:2000, p3, point d] **3** [*SI*, p10; see also pp18 & esp. 20] **4** [Talk 1] **5** [Talk 6]

B:3- 1 [Talk 1, Edn. 2.1]

B:4- 1 [See Constance Cumbey, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow*, (Huntington House, 1983, revised edition), p113-4. Sadly, Cumbey is very ecumenical so we cannot recommend her material.] **2** [TV series in ref. 9-2, broadcast on ITV1 on 18:Nov:2001. Non-Christians are *not* part of the Church; should we *really* be *inviting* them to non-evangelistic meetings unless the Lord specifically directs us to in each case? Nicky’s support for a type of ‘process theology’ is clearly seen in chapter 1 of *LWL*.] **3** [Although there is one reference in his book *SI*, at no stage in *any* of the Edition 2.2 talks does Gumbel call Jesus Christ our “Saviour”, nor is there even a specific reference, when he describes people as being “saved”, to *Christ* doing the saving. Nicky gives the Lord Jesus the New Age name “the teacher” no fewer than three times in Talk 12. For an exhaustive treatment of Alpha’s many mistreatments of Christ’s Godhood please see the ‘Better Than Rubies’ section of our website (bayith.org).]

4 [Examples on Alpha of the NIV’s bias towards the New Age are *legion*. God becomes the genderless New Age term “the One” when Gumbel quotes

the NIV rendering of Rom. 10:14 (see Talk 7); also the clearly defined word “fornication” becomes the relative idea “immorality” (e.g. when quoting Mark 7:21 in Talk 3); see also the translation of 1 John 4:19 (quoted in Talk 14) which removes the word “him” from “we love *him* because he first loved us” - thus weakening the Deity of Christ; also the Lord is referred to as “the holy One” in places like Luke 1:35 (as quoted in Talk 8) - whereas He is almost *never* just called this in the Hebrew or the Greek; also John 1:42 (quoted in Talk 12) where the important fact, in regard to the ‘papacy’, that “Cephas” merely means “a stone” is totally lost. Numerous other examples applying to Alpha as well are given in the main volumes. Gumbel is also very happy to use the GNB (e.g. in *QL*, p198) & the ‘Living Bible’ (e.g. see the green *Alpha Manual*, (HTB Publications, 1995), p26).]

5 [Regarding Nicky’s unbiblical view of physical Israel: he denies the unfulfilled literal prophecy for Jerusalem in Ezek. 47 (see Talk 8), thereby denying Christ’s Millennial reign from there; he also seems to lump *all* forms of Judaism in with religions derived from Babylon - see *SI*, p25; he also says “the Universal Church is all God’s People” [Talk 14] which tends to obscure the place of Israel in God’s purposes. While calling for unity with groups like Rome which add works to grace, Gumbel calls Jews “*filthy*” if they preach circumcision among believers (*LWL*, p70). See also the entries in ref. 24-3. The main ‘Church’ volume contains more examples, as does an article in the ‘Better Than Rubies’ section of our website.]

6 [*TO*, p37] **7** [In *SI*, pp91-92, Nicky devotes *eleven times* as much space to supporting the ‘macro-evolutionary interpretation’ of the Bible as he allows for describing the Creationist position. Additionally, he favourably quotes John Polkinghorne’s decidedly ‘macro-evolutionary’ stance (*SI*, p88). See Henry Morris, *Science and the Bible*, for a solid introduction to this topic, plus *The Answers Book* by Ken Ham et al for a truly fabulous treatment of this foundational subject. (Please note that we would disagree with our UK publisher’s sincerely-held belief in a long-age Earth.)]

8 [Nicky often undermines the biblical pattern for gender roles. For instance: when we are supposed to *respect* our men, Nicky uses the episode in the Garden of Eden to put all men down, saying sarcastically “The male sex really comes out well from this!” (Talk 11); see also the special mention he gives to Deborah (the only female Judge out of all the Judges he could have chosen) in Talk 8, where he calls her a “leader” even though the Hebrew doesn’t. Nicky fails to mention the importance that God attaches to men being manly and women being respectful, esp. in the chapter on homosexuality in *Searching Issues*. He also says that “*everything* is shared” in a marriage - presumably including *leadership* - see Talk 14; Further, Gumbel

ignores the pivotal verses 22-24 when he refers to Paul talking about “the marriage relationship” in Eph. 5 - see Talk 14. (Nicky even denies that this passage is talking about human marriages at all.)...

Note from Elizabeth: The husband should always be treated in a respectful manner even if he hasn't 'earned' it - just as the wife expects to be loved regardless. Many marriages today would be saved if women did this more. All too often we try to overturn God's perfect order and wonder why our emasculated menfolk are confused and not like the men of God in Scripture. Let us desire to adopt the attitude of the righteous women in the Bible that God so treasures. See, for instance, 1 Sam. 1:12-18; 1 Pet. 3:1-6; and Eph. 5:33. This does not mean we must always *agree* with men in authority over us, but we *must* always disagree *in a respectful way*. (We will all fail at times, but it is very rewarding when we succeed.)]

9 [Nicky only mentions God's “grace” *once* in the whole of the Edition 2.2 videos, and only at the very end of the very final talk when he says “How will he not also ... *graciously* give us all things” - even here it is worded such that it could refer to the *manner* in which God gives us things. Although Gumbel offers mixed messages, he never categorically states that we are saved by grace *alone* through faith *alone*. See also ref. 9-2, and *section* 9:2. One stunning ambiguity is the way he recommends using the scene in the film *The Mission* where “Robert De Niro has a huge weight of armour cut away” to explain 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]

10 [Alpha, like psychology, is ‘me-centred’. Gumbel endorses some secular psychologists, especially Freud (Talk 2, & *SI*, p50), and various ‘Christian’ psychologists (e.g. James Dobson, Robert Schuller and Richard Foster). Gumbel's ‘Christian’ psychology comes out clearly in *SI*, pp110-111. and in *QL*, p223, and his idea that Christianity frees us to “love ourselves” is taught in *30D*, p64. Regarding high self-esteem, see *30D*, pp75-76; c.f. Prov. 16:18; Php. 2:3; Rom. 7:18 etc. The ‘lifting of the head’ is through joy, not pride as Gumbel suggests.]

11 [Regarding homosexuality, Nicky fails to reveal the spiritual dimensions of both cause and effect. Regarding fornication, Nicky says: “You know how it is, when people talk about Christianity ... They concentrate on this tiny list: ‘Oh, you know, if you are a Christian, ... It's so miserable! You can't be *promiscuous!*’” (Talk 11). Anyone mocking the morality of the Christian faith would highlight its prohibition of ALL fornication, not just *promiscuous* fornication. The suggestion communicated by Gumbel here is

that less ‘promiscuous’ forms of fornication (e.g. occasional adultery?!) are not a serious problem and needn’t “spoil our lives”. New Agers would agree! For Alpha’s position on other sins, see our book *7 Deadly Dangers with Alpha*.]

12 [Gumbel seems fixated with ‘group’ consciousness and experience. Consider this quote: “[I]n the book of Acts we see ... *groups* of people ... The first category is a *group* ... Second category ... was a *group* ... [S]omething amazing must have happened to this *group* ... So that was a *group* who were receptive ... And again, that *group* of people, at the moment they heard and were prayed for, the Spirit of God came and filled them” (Talk 10); and this: “we are changed by *shared* experience” (30D, p138). This supposedly stems from one episode: “Nicky made a discovery which transformed the church’s *whole* approach to the course ... [W]hen the *group* went away on the *weekend*, all 10 announced their Christian conversion *together*” (ref. 9-9, p5)]

13 [Gumbel almost never describes God as being all-powerful. Among his numerous Dualist statements, he says: “Satan is the ruler of this world apart from God” (30D, p94); “There is a conflict in the *world* between good and evil” (Talk 11); and “Jesus ... destroyed evil wherever he found it. *And that’s what we are called to [do]*” (Talk 11). In Talk 11, Gumbel also compares our situation to living between D-Day and V-E Day during WWII. In other words, he thinks the cross of Christ was more of a “decisive moment” than the actual victory.] **14** [Gumbel says “we don’t believe that God ... and the devil ... are *kind of* fighting it out” (Talk 11). The issue is whether or not the devil can ever work outside of God’s control. Merely saying that the devil is “part of the created *order*” (*Ibid*) does not answer that.]

15 [Talk 8; see also 30D, p143. (For New Agers, Aquarius represents the spirit, thus they would readily agree with Gumbel that we should ‘move on’ from being *Christ*-centred to living in the age of Aquarius, the spirit)] **16** [Talk 13] **17** [Talk 8] **18** [Among the more recent New Agers that Gumbel seems to see as reliable sources of wisdom are: John Ruskin (*QL*, p56), Dag Hammarskjöld (30D, p72); Carl Jung (Talk 2); and Jürgen Moltmann (Talk 9). But Gumbel seems just as much at home citing early gnostics and/or mystics who were progenitors of the modern New Age movement, such as Origen (Talk 13), Richard of Chichester (30D, p69), ‘St. John of the Cross’ (Talk 14), and Francis of Assisi (Talk 14).] **19** [Blatantly New Age books stocked by HTB include ones by Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, and Meister Eckhart. Complimentary biographies of New Agers like Julian of Norwich and Francis of Assisi are also held. One book on HTB’s shelves is called *Colours for the Soul* and favourably quotes a whole host of New Agers.] **20** [The extra volume is called *7 Deadly Dangers with Alpha*. Details are avail-

able from our website and from our publisher.] **21** [See the volume in ref. B:4-19 for a complete analysis]

B:5- **1** [Talk 5] **2** [Talk 14] **3** [AN #13, p1; plus the intro. to Talk 1; plus the letter in ref. B:2-2] **4** [John Woods, *Christian Herald*, 07:Apr:2001, p15; see also footnote 76 of ref. B:11-1] **5** [SI, p55]

B:6- **1** [AN, Nov 1998 - Feb 1999, p4] **2** [AN #14, p3] **3** [AN, Mar - Jun 2001, p4; Robert Schuller wrote the Foreword to Cho's book *The Fourth Dimension*. For an excellent analysis of Schuller's New Age views, see *Beyond Seduction* by Dave Hunt] **4** [*Alpha Administrator's Handbook*, (HTB, undated, spiral bound), p43] **5** [Ref. B:6-4, pp19 & 44] **6** [Nicky thoroughly abuses Rev. 22:17 (see Talk 9) saying that it refers to the way in which we can obtain the Spirit. He says it "is an invitation ... given by the Spirit and by Jesus" yet the passage plainly says "the spirit and the *bride* say 'Come'". Clearly the invitation is not to *us* but to the bridegroom - i.e. Christ! Logically, *He* is the "water of life" referred to at the end of the verse, not the Holy Spirit. (Nicky actually corroborates this in Talk 8.) Somehow Nicky further twists Rev. 22:17 into a call for us to say "Come *Holy Spirit*"]

B:7- **1** [Nicky constantly refers, in the videos, to phrases like "in Jesus' Name" (e.g. Talks 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13) without *ever* explaining that this is a Hebraism referring to Christ's *character*. Many hearers will assume that we simply need to attach the word "Jesus" to something in order to be doing it "in Jesus' Name"] **2** [We saw an example of this in section 17:6. Alpha-related materials are riddled with ambiguities, and we have seen numerous instances in this book. Another quick example is that, according to Nicky, "Jesus accepted *everyone*" (*LWL*, p62); this may come as news to the Pharisees! Examples of misteaching by placing statements at the border between two topics are given in sections 17:6 and 9:2.] **3** [For examples of Nicky using the phrase "in Christ" wrongly or misleadingly see *LWL*, p90; or the ref. to "human potential" in Talk 9; or "the potential we have in Christ" (*30D*, p52); or the "inheritance" we have "in Christ" (Talks 9 & 15). "There are so many riches to be enjoyed *in Christ*" (Talk 15), but because Nicky never explains what "in Christ" *means*, many hearers will inevitably misunderstand.]

4 [A very significant example of Gumbel omitting key words is in relation to Christ's ascension. New Agers accept that Christ ascended *from Hell*, but not that He ascended *into Heaven*. So it is that Gumbel's videos *always* omit the suffix 'into Heaven' when saying Christ 'ascended' (e.g. see section 20:5). Instances where Gumbel unnecessarily disconnects statements, (thereby allowing erroneous interpretations) include *30D*, p75, where the empty "grave" is not linked to Christ; plus editions of *Searching Issues*, where

Lucifer's identity as the Devil is needlessly weakened. (E.g. p67 of the 1994 edition. The reference to "Lucifer" was dropped altogether from here in the 2001 edition.)]

5 [Examples of Gumbel adding qualifying words to mislead in a defensible way include turning "selfish" into "purely selfish" (Talk 6), and changing "impersonal" into "impersonal, abstract" (*SI*, p62). See also the quote in secn. 2:8] **6** [One example of a straw man argument is Gumbel's pretence that emotionalism merely means preparedness to express felt emotion (Talk 10). Another example of misrepresentation through exaggeration occurs when Gumbel (via Watson) mocks the idea that God is totally holy and thus hates sin (*SI*, p13). A third example is Gumbel's mocking of people as being "super-spiritual" if they seek to obey God in as much of their lives as possible (Talk 7)] **7** [See ref. B:2-2] **8** [Talks 11, 13 & 15] **9** [Talk 11] **10** [Talk 11; Nicky even thinks the extremely common word "saved" is outmoded (and needs redefining as "finding freedom") - see *30D*, p45]

11 [Talk 11] **12** [Nicky often hides behind the words of others. For example, the quote from *Private Eye* magazine in Talk 1; or the one from John Stott in *SI*, pp50-51; or the one from David Watson in *QL*, p208. Dozens of other examples could be given, e.g. of Alister McGrath, Lesslie Newbigin, Augustine, John Wimber, C.S. Lewis and Michael Green.] **13** [E.g. Nicky says "The Holy Spirit wants to bring *new* things to the church", Talk 8 - suggesting the Early Church *lacked* some spiritual things] **14** [For instance, *QL* says "Jesus ... lived a perfect life" (p49), whereas the videos do not; *QL* says "To the writer of Proverbs, 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'" (p109), whereas the videos do not; the videos say "Jesus had evil thoughts" (Talk 11), but *QL* does not; the videos say that the Church is "growing very fast" (Talk 14), but *QL* does not. For many other examples, see the book *Proven Alpha Course Tips* by John Fairhaven. There are dozens of such discrepancies, even though the videos are supposed to be based on the *whole* of *QL*.] **15** [Talk 15]

B:8- 1 [Inappropriate analogies include the way Nicky likens becoming a Christian to adding an aerial to a television set (Talk 1), and to a game of football *with* rules rather than without (Talk 5). But life is no longer a game once you are saved. The whole *purpose* of your life changes, not just the laws governing it.] **2** [Talk 14, Edn. 2.1]

B:9- 1 [There are some valuable Christian books that cover this subject, including Dave Hunt's two volumes *The New Spirituality*, and *Occult Explosion*] **2** [Talk 1, Edn. 2.1] **3** [*AN* #13, p9] **4** [*TGWCL*, Vol 3, pp33-4] **5** [See ref. 23:2, p115]

B:10-1 [Talk 13, Edn. 2.1] **2** [Talk 12] **3** [Talk 12] **4** [Talk 13, Edn. 2.1; the diagram also appears in *QL*, p191; Nicky also tells us to "copy God" (*SI*, p102)] **5** [Talk 12,

Edn. 2.1] **6** [Talk 11, Edn. 2.1; see also *QL*, p168] **7** [Talk 14] **8** [Talk 6, Edn. 2.1] **9** [Talk 6] **10** [*30D*, p52] **11** [Talk 8] **12** [*30D*, p64] **13** [Peter Burden-Teh, *Christianity and Society* magazine, April 2000, p10] **14** [Talk 11; Nicky also writes “Jesus fought against suffering wherever he came across it” (*SI*, p23); and “let us fight for all the freedoms” (*30D*, p65)] **15** [Instead of being satisfied with the biblical test that only those who submit to God’s commandments are Christians, Gumbel says “If people have the Spirit of God living within them, they are Christians” (*QL*, p137) - which presumably is discerned by whether or not they experience uncontrollable manifestations (hence pagans qualify). Again, the unbelieving world is not defined on Alpha as comprising those who do not obey the Bible, but those who have “shut God out” (Talk 15) - presumably determined by whether or not they can feel a spirit operating in their bodies or souls (just like people can on Alpha).]

16 [Regarding the Second Coming, Nicky doesn’t say “it will be obvious to all because it will be even more spectacular and visible than lightning as per Matthew 24:27” or “because He will return as He went, as per Acts 1:11”, but: “When he returns it will be obvious to all, because history, as we know it, will end” (Talk 13), yet the final Antichrist himself is due to change history, and even “times” (Dan. 7:25), and will dramatically alter the world. (Besides, history will not end at that point.) Nicky also smooths the way, in Edn. 2.2 of the videos, for the arrival of this Antichrist by never warning of him, even though Alpha is supposed to be an introduction to Christianity as a whole rather than just the gospel. Nicky’s only reference is to the phrase “anti-Christian” which tends to obscure the fact that “anti-Christ” means replacement Christ or counterfeit Christ - see Talk 4]

B:11-1 [Mark Ireland, in his thesis *A Study of the Effectiveness of Process Evangelism Courses in the Diocese of Lichfield, With Special Reference to Alpha*, Oct 2000, found 80% of participants rejecting Alpha’s message, but he acknowledges that the true figure is even higher because his statistics include people who were already Christians and who simply took Alpha as an Anglican “confirmation course” or as a church “commitment course”. The book *Anyone for Alpha?*, by Stephen Hunt (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001), suggests a high rejection rate too. (N.B. Nicky seems to want unbelievers either to receive the TB spirit or (if they refuse) to be put off Christianity permanently. For example, he tells people that if they become Christians they will live “forever” - even though God lives outside of time - most thinking people would therefore opt for the speedy annihilation that Gumbel supports. He also presents Christianity as confused, inconsistent, and unable to explain both the Bible and the world we see. He fails to stand up against the movements that have disgraced Christianity over the years, and he bans follow-up when people drop out of Courses.)]

B:12-1 [Talk 13] **2** [HTB's fixation on numbers/momentum can clearly be seen, for example, in Nicky's reference to "the *biggest* youth group in the area" (Talk 8); also in ref. B:6-4, p6; also in the booklet cited in ref. A:0-4, p22; likewise on the *Alpha Supper Initiative 2001* video Diane Louise Jordan says "the *essential* thing is to keep the momentum going [rather than to keep the praying or discipling going?!]"; also in Sandy Millar's Intro. to Talk 1, 1st Edition; and in the worldwide Course statistics which have been placed on the front page of so many issues of *Alpha News*]

3 [30D, p137] **4** [Nicky encourages *indiscriminate* evangelism in Talk 12. For example, he delights in a believer who was "off telling *everyone*". Likewise in Talk 8, and without supplying any correcting comment, he quotes one believer saying "I am telling *everybody*. You can't stop me now ... I am telling *everybody* ... You don't need an excuse..." No, we don't need an excuse, but we most certainly do need God's guidance, and unless He tells us what to say, and when, and to whom, then we are acting in our own strength rather than in God's wisdom.]

B:13-1 [See the main 'Church' volume, or the 'Chapter and Verse on Alpha's Jesus' articles on our website, for many more details] **2** [See the main 'Church' volume, or the 'Powers Behind the Alpha Course' articles on our website, for many more details] **3** [According to Gumbel, King David merely felt "*remorse*" when his sins regarding Bathsheba were exposed (30D, p101)]

B:14-1 [HTB's drive to make sure the Alpha spirit has been injected into as many people in a Fellowship as possible is ever-present. See, for instance, ref. B:6-4, pp13, 24, 62, 69 and esp. 27; plus the booklet in ref. A:0-4, pp9-11 (where Neill says things like "it is *essential* that ... *each* member of your Alpha team [is refilled with 'it' through the "ministry training session"] ... *every time* you run the course"; and "It is *vital* to give the guests the opportunity to ... be ministered to during the weekend"). Four of the "seven steps to a successful Alpha Course" are directly related to 'anointing' people with the Alpha spirit. This is apparently much more important than living godly lives and seeking God's face as to whether or not He wants you to run a Course. Again, the "Holy Spirit" weekend is considered more important even than the talks devoted to the Lord Jesus, which would explain why the order of the talks was changed for Edition 2 of Alpha so that churches HAD to buy the 'Holy Spirit' talks even if they didn't want them. Likewise HTB's Copyright statement browbeats many wavering churches into using those talks.]

2 [Ref. B:6-4, p76] **3** [Ref. B:6-4, p7; or see AN #7, pp10-11.] **4** [Talk 12] **5** [In Talk 9, Nicky effectively teaches that "if anyone doesn't have [an *experience* of]

the [Alpha] Spirit” then such a person “does not belong to” Christ.] **6** [E.g. Talks 13 & 15; see also ref. B:6-4 pp63, 71 & 77]

7 [See ref. B:11-1, p13. Further proof that Alpha is actually aimed at existing believers comes from S. Hunt, *op. cit.*, pp68-73, which concludes that the “majority” of participants are “*already in the church*”. If one bears in mind that the recommended size of a “small group” is 12 people - 4 of whom are supposed to be from within the church - and that HTB admits to a 30% drop-out rate during the Course (S. Hunt, *op. cit.*, p116), it becomes obvious that even in the case where most initial participants are unsaved, the bulk of those present will still be from within the church (although they are still obliged to defer to the unbelievers in the small group discussions!)]

8 [Nicky’s occasional mental ‘slips’ show that he is targeting the *Church*. This is made obvious several times in Talks 3 & 12, plus *four* times in Talk 2 - including the statement “*You’ll remember the High Priest tore his clothes*”]

9 [S.Hunt, *op. cit.*, p65; see also p119. Although Stephen Hunt is an agnostic, he is “fairly well predisposed towards Alpha” (p118). He did 18 months of research and his book is very observant.] **10** [S.Hunt, *op. cit.*, pp98 & 117; in the same book, on p95, a participant said of the Alpha videos that “*A lot of it was not relevant*”. S. Hunt has recognized that Alpha is not primarily an evangelistic tool at all, but that it “amounts, in *many* respects, to an *ecumenical initiative*” (p48) and that one of the “*principal functions*” of Alpha is “to spread the beliefs and practices” of HTB to other churches (p15) rather than to spread the gospel to the lost!]

11 [Stephen Hunt admits that Alpha is not converting the unsaved but that its “net effect is in extending [HTB’s brand of] ... Christianity to the churches, including those previously untouched by the Renewal movement”, *Anyone for Alpha?*, p118; this book also demonstrates (on pp60-61) that Alpha is often being surreptitiously forced on churches (either by a section of the congregation or by a section of the ‘leadership’) for the very purpose of changing the *outlook of that church*, not for changing the eternal destiny of the unsaved souls in the locality.] **12** [While insisting that Alpha’s content is sacrosanct, Gumbel readily ignores this principle if it means he can get Alpha’s false spirit into American baptist churches. Why does HTB break its own rules here but take action against other churches if not to undermine evangelical Fellowships?] **13** [AN #11, p28]

C:1- 1 [Gumbel praises the New Age movement for what it has to say about “materialism” - *SI*, p54; see also the reference to being “self-centred” in *TO*, p40]

2 [Nicky writes: “[Regarding] the devil ... Many fall into the ... danger of having an excessive and unhealthy interest in him ... A new Christian recently showed me a couple of *supposedly* Christian books where the whole emphasis was on the work of the enemy [viz. New World Order (‘NWO’) developments toward a World government, as prophesied in Scripture] ... The Bible *never* has this kind of focus. The spotlight is *always* on God” (*QL*, pp160-1). Nicky should try reading chapters like Revelation 13, 17 or 18. The Lord, in contrast, commanded all believers to ‘watch’ and they therefore need to keep abreast of end-time developments. Thus we strongly encourage readers to find out what is really going on and just how advanced and widespread the NWO is. We recommend several books on the subject in the main ‘Church’ volume.]

C:2- 1 [*SI*, p54] 2 [*LWL*, p82] 3 [Sadler, *op. cit.*, p262; Secret Societies, www.trunkerton.fsnet.co.uk/bilderberg_group.htm (as at 26:Sep:2002)] 4 [www.cacorca/clubrome.html (as at 08:Oct:2002)] 5 [G.A. Ripplinger, *New Age Bible Versions*, (A.V. Publications, 1993), p134]

6 [For example: the New Age thinker *Carl Jung* (who worked with co-Mason Alice Bailey and who is quoted happily by Gumbel in Talk 2) was heavily influenced by a Jesuit; *Mesmer* (a Freemason) worked with a Jesuit to develop his New Age hypnotic powers; Blavatsky’s primary aide was *C.W. Leadbetter* - a Catholic ‘prelate’; Rome’s *Paulist Press* (who have also published work by Suenens) “publishes, among their host of New Age books, *Toward a Human World Order*, promoting the ‘mark of the beast’” (*New Age Bible Versions*, p134); Planetary Citizens is chaired by a Catholic (*Ibid.*) and its co-founder, Norman Cousins (who was a president or member of at least ten other NWO organizations), has worked directly for the ‘Pope’ on multiple occasions (Cathy Burns, *Billy Graham and His Friends*, (Sharing, 2001), pp252,432). There are many other examples we could provide. See our book on Alpha and the New World Order, due out in 2005, for more.]

7 [“[A] Papal encyclical ... called for an ecumenical bible ... Subsequently, Jesuit scholars moved on to editorial positions in the previously Protestant *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Their work on the UBS/Nestle’s text and influence in biblical scholarship has biased so many ‘new’ readings that the recent Catholic *New American Bible* was translated directly from UBS/Nestle, rather than the traditional Catholic Latin Vulgate” (*New Age Bible Versions*, p498). Gumbel’s Bible is based on this same Greek. The editor was *Cardinal Martini* (*Ibid*, p141).] 8 [*Encyclopedia Britannica*, ‘Alumbrados’] 9 [*Ibid.*, ‘Illuminati’] 10 [Des Griffin, *The Fourth Reich of the Rich*, (Emissary, 1979), pp42-57; I.A. Sadler, *Mystery, Babylon the Great*, (1999), pp192-194. This book is available from its author, 6 Aston Close, Pangbourne, Reading, RG8 7LG, UK.] 11 [Sadler, *op. cit.*, pp192-199. A letter dated 22nd Jan 1870 still exists from Mazzini to Albert Pike the ‘Grand

Pontiff' of Freemasonry which spells out the creation of these overarching levels: "Through this supreme rite, *we will govern all Freemasonry* which will become 'one international centre', the more powerful because its direction will be *unknown*" (Lady Queensborough, *Occult Theocracy*, as quoted in www.biblebelievers.org.au/pike.htm as at 05:Oct:2002). This takeover explains why there are now nine secret levels of Freemasonry of which even 32nd degree Masons are not told. This is one reason why it is so foolish to have a hierarchy in a church. Jesuits, or their minions, just have to infiltrate the top layer and the whole church is undermined.] **12** [Data courtesy of "The Enddays" Ministry] **13** ['Famous Freemasons', www.acts2.com/thebibletruth as at 28:Nov:2003] **14** [Sadler, *op. cit.*, pp188-9; 191-2] **15** [Gary H. Kah, *The Demonic Roots of Globalism*, (Huntington House, 1995), p42] **16** [Kah, *op. cit.*, p159]

C:3- 1 [E.g. See Kah, *op. cit.*, p148 re: the Catholic Health Association] **2** [*SI*, p51] **3** [Gumbel calls Küng "great" in Talk 15] **4** [K.B. Napier, [www.christiandocctrine.net, article #00106](http://www.christiandocctrine.net/article/#00106) as at 11:Aug:2002] **5** ['Fatima to become interfaith shrine', *The Portugal News*, online edition, 01:Nov:2003] **6** [*Orange County Register*, June 6, 1990, p1, as cited by Dave Hunt]

C:4- 1 [Revelation 17 & 18 tells us that Rome is the head of the false church. Most Catholics genuinely believe they are Christians. This is *not* true of the *highest* levels within Catholicism, however. The topmost echelons of the Roman Church pretend to be sincerely trying to follow Christ, but are actually Dualist. In other words, they *know* they are not Christians (and that the Church they lead is not Christian). They believe that Lucifer and Adonai are *both* gods and that it is possible to break Holy Writ and give overall victory to Lucifer. They believe that Lucifer is good and that Adonai is evil. This is a deception foisted on them by Satan and is the way in which he is able to lead Rome to do his bidding. The upshot is this: because Satan rules Rome, her top leaders do not *genuinely* care about her rituals and dogmas but only about corrupting true churches - ideally by making their members believe they are saved when they are not. Since this is what both the New Age movement and Alpha achieve, it should be no surprise that Rome supports them. Some people imagine that the Vatican is at odds with the likes of Hans Küng. But if we view the whole scene as an organism, then every part is helping towards a single overall goal. In the same way that a thumb opposes the forefinger so that a hand can grip and manipulate objects, so parts of the New Age movement may appear to oppose other parts, but this is no more subtle than a spy who sometimes has to work for the 'other side' in order to gain its trust. Similarly, the final 'Pope' may well oppose aspects of traditional Romanism, but the underlying spirit and nature will remain Babylonian.]

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For further copies of this 'Overview' volume, or to obtain either the "WORLD" or "CHURCH" volumes of the *main* Unofficial Guide, the first ports of call are: St Matthew Publishing (whose address is given at the front and back of this book); CWM Australia (see below); or our own website (www.bayith.org). Below are some of the other ways in which readers should be able to obtain these volumes - or at least ordering details for them.

(N.B. The above sources should also be able to advise of other materials, including translations and 'indexes', available under our "Unofficial Guide" banner. Please note that, while we are *extremely* grateful for the help of all the ministries listed on this page, their inclusion here does not necessarily mean we agree with everything they teach or sell.)

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This book is not really designed to be 'dipped into'. When this book is read through *from the start*, people write things like:

"Thanks so much for your excellent book" (*J.P., New Zealand*)

"You bring up so many good points that no-one addresses"

(*M.R., Colorado, U.S.A., Emphasis in original*)

"I have thoroughly enjoyed your book" (*G.C., England*)

"I thank God for people like yourselves" (*A.W., England*)

Please don't be tempted to 'skim' through this book or jump in part-way through. The authors' material has been very carefully organized to flow logically, and many of the arguments depend on the reader having seen preceding points. Furthermore, the *style* of the writing too will best be appreciated if the book is approached from the beginning.

If the reader feels they *definitely* need to 'dip', then they are urged to see the 'Introduction' page beforehand. One very knowledgeable reviewer, who originally just skimmed the book, later read it through from the start. This is what he had to say afterwards:

"[This book] needs to be made available to as many as possible. In reading through the material in detail I have learned a lot and been challenged by some things which I had never before considered. The book is well researched and argued and obviously written with love and concern ... I think the book is an excellent piece of work"

(*C.H., Scotland*)