

## **‘ALPHA NEWS’ - ‘ DELIGHTING the DEVIL**

The devil takes great delight in blinding men and women to the truth of the ‘good news’ of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He blinds minds according to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:4. He takes people captive by his deceptions according to 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:26. He perverts the scriptures as we see in Matthew 4:6. He hinders the true servants of God as we read in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:18. He and his dupes can deceive by appearing to be angels of light as we read in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:13-14. He is a liar and the father of lies according to John 8:44.

I have just received the latest issue [November 2009 – February 2010] of **ALPHA NEWS** and the devil must be absolutely rubbing his hands with glee as he surveys what has been published in the name of Christianity – truly this issue deserves an oscar for spiritual deception.

The front page sets the tone straight away for what will follow – here’s what I’m referring to –



So, headlining the front page of **ALPHA NEWS** is a photo of Tony Blair, who is not a Christian but is a Roman Catholic and a victim of the soul-damning ‘sacramental system of salvation’ propagated by Rome.

Inside the paper are extracts from an interview given by Tony Blair to Nicky Gumbel in front of 1200 people at Holy Trinity Brompton, London in July 2009. Nicky Gumbel somewhat enhanced an event early in Tony Blair’s life when he posed this question – ***‘I think you talked about having a kind of *spiritual awakening* when you were ten years old. Did you have an experience then of some kind?***

In his reply, Tony Blair said ***‘my father was and is a convinced almost militant atheist... My father suffered a stroke during the night. He was only forty at the time... the head teacher called me in... He said to me “We’re going to say a***

***prayer for your father”... And we knelt down and we prayed together... After that I wouldn’t have described myself as particularly religiously inclined’.***

Not quite the ***spiritual awakening*** that Nicky Gumbel had alluded to in his question!

Something approaching a ‘word of testimony’ was made by Tony Blair when referring to his time at Oxford when he said ***‘I started to read about religion. I went back and I read the Bible. I started to ask questions. If you’d asked me I would have said even before this “Yes of course I’m a Christian” but I wouldn’t have explained what it meant in my life at all. He [An Australian Anglican vicar at Oxford called Peter Thompson] gave it that meaning. I got confirmed [sacramentalism] in the college chapel and that really set my life on a different course’.***

That ***‘course’*** eventually led Tony Blair to embrace Roman Catholicism, the religion of his wife Cherie, shortly after he resigned as Prime Minister and I wrote about that on [http://www.takeheed.info/pdf/December-2007/Tony\\_Blair\\_Poodle.pdf](http://www.takeheed.info/pdf/December-2007/Tony_Blair_Poodle.pdf)

As for reading the bible it would appear that ‘reading it’ is one thing for Mr Blair but ‘understanding or explaining it’ is quite another thing. Nicky Gumbel posed this question to Mr Blair – ***‘Anthony Seldon says in his biography of you “Whereas some politicians turn to drink, Tony Blair turns to prayer and Bible reading”... How do you find time for that?’***

In his reply Tony Blair said ***‘Sometimes I will read bits of the Gospel sort of separated out as you would in a church service. Sometimes what I do is I go and re-read the Gospel all the way through just to get the sense of it... The passage I always go back to in a time of difficulty is the parable of the sower. The absolute heart of it is that you are given certain abilities and gifts and it is an obligation, it’s a duty to use those’.***

Taking a totally uncharitable view of Tony Blair’s answer I could say that he has totally misrepresented the meaning of ***the parable of the sower***. This parable was told by the Lord to demonstrate the very differing effects upon humanity when the Word of God is preached to them – it has absolutely nothing to do with an individual’s responsibility to use their personal ***abilities and gifts***. The Lord’s own explanation of this parable is clearly set out in ***Luke 8:11-15***.

Taking a charitable view I believe that perhaps Tony Blair meant to refer to what is known as ***the parable of the talents*** as found in ***Matthew 25:14-30***. In his Study Bible footnotes to this parable John MacArthur wrote ***‘The parable of the talents illustrates the tragedy of wasted opportunity... Faithfulness is what he [Christ] demands of them [believers].’***

Now anyone can have a slip of the tongue but was it right, as it would appear, that Nicky Gumbel didn’t at the time gently correct Mr Blair’s mistake and why, in printing this version of the interview in ***ALPHA NEWS***, was some corrective comment or footnote not made to alert any unwary reader to this misrepresentation of God’s truth.

Later in response to a question about his working with people of ***‘other faiths’*** Mr Blair stated – ***‘we can work together and there are points at which we can at least understand some of our common heritage through the Abrahamic faiths’*** – here we see Mr Blair parroting the Vatican line of Interfaith thinking and I dealt with this in my previous article on – [http://www.takeheed.info/pdf/December-2007/Tony\\_Blair\\_Poodle.pdf](http://www.takeheed.info/pdf/December-2007/Tony_Blair_Poodle.pdf)

Finally, in this section I want to refer to where Nicky Gumbel said to Mr Blair – ***‘Dealing with these issues like global poverty and preventable disease... I know that Bono has been one of the people that you’ve been linked with’.***

In his response, Tony Blair said ***‘He came to see me in Downing Street some time ago through the global poverty movement... there is that humility there with Bono, who is of Christian faith’.***

In a portion of an article found towards the very end of this link <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-march-2007/> I wrote this – ‘In an interview **Bono** commented on the Roman Catholic Church and a meeting he had with the late Pope and he said – ‘Let’s not get too hard on the Holy Roman Church here. The Church has its problems, but the older I get, **the more comfort I find there...**The Pontiff was about to make an important statement... During the preamble, he seemed to be staring at me. I wondered. Was it the fact that I was wearing my blue fly-shades? So I took them off in case I was causing some offence. When I was introduced to him, he was still staring at them. He kept looking at them in my hand, so **I offered them to him as a gift in return for the rosary he had just given me.** Not only did he put them on, he smiled the wickedest grin you could ever imagine. He was a comedian’. The papal Antichrist is many things but not ‘a comedian’.

Any supposed ‘Christian’ newspaper like **ALPHA NEWS** that portrays Tony Blair and his Roman Catholic religion as being ‘Christian’ is quite simply **‘Delighting the Devil’.**

Next, we move to the headline picture spread across pages 10-11 of **ALPHA NEWS**





In the text of the report of this event we read the following – **‘Around 24 Roman Catholic archbishops and bishops attended an ALPHA conference jointly hosted by The Catholic Latin American organisation ITEPAL in Bogota, Columbia in October. The conference was led by Nicky Gumbel and speakers included Bishop Sandy Millar** [previously Nicky Gumbel’s ‘boss’ at Holy Trinity Brompton] ...

**Three [RC] Archbishops attended the conference... Archbishop Luis Augusto Castro said “The ALPHA course helps us not only to meet, love and follow Jesus but also to help others, especially those who are lost** [particularly ironic coming from the lips of someone ‘lost’ in the religion of Roman Catholicism] **or that have never heard about Him”...**

**‘Father Gleicon Da Silva from Brazil said “ALPHA has transformed my community”** - presumably it has entrenched that community even deeper into the errors of Rome’s ‘sacramental system of salvation’ as these comments from **Manuel Saraff** of the Dominican Republic – **‘When I started co-ordinating ALPHA I started studying and seeing. The Eucharist started recovering its sense. The adoration to the holy sacrament started getting meaning’** and these comments from **Shirley Diaz** of Colombia clearly illustrate – **‘We were Catholics by name... but we had not been married by the church. We are parents of two children and they had not been baptised. I had not been confirmed... The course made us feel really close to Jesus... Five months ago we were married, we baptised our children and I was confirmed’.**

Any supposed ‘Christian’ newspaper like **ALPHA NEWS** that portrays Rome’s ‘sacramental system of salvation’ as being ‘Christian’ and leads people even deeper into its deceiving clutches is quite simply **‘Delighting the Devil’.**

Moving on we find this headline on page 29 of **ALPHA NEWS** –



## First Orthodox Alpha Conference in Bulgaria

THE FIRST Orthodox Alpha conference was held in Sofia, Bulgaria, at the end of September.

Fourteen priests and lay people attended the two-day conference that was held in the Pokrov Bogorodichen parish church in the centre of Sofia. The majority of the lay people came from Orthodox churches from in and around Bulgaria.

Peter Blaginov, the Alpha coordinator for Bulgaria said, 'Those who were a little bit sceptical at the beginning changed their minds during the training and many friendships were formed.'

Father Josef Archimandrite was one of the speakers at the conference. He told the guests of his experience with the Orthodox Alpha course.

The Alpha course has recently been translated into Bulgarian. Resources for the country include manuals and DVD's.

The write-up for this conference stated *'The First Orthodox ALPHA conference was held in Sofia, Bulgaria at the end of September. Fourteen priests and lay people attended the two-day conference that was held in the Pokrov Bogorodichen parish church in the centre of Sofia... Father Josef Archimandrite was one of the speakers at he conference.'*

In the 1990's I was privileged to co-operate with a solid evangelical missionary society that had worked for decades in countries where **Orthodox** 'Christianity' had held sway in the realm of religion. I can assure you that by its strident and often militant opposition to those missionary efforts **Orthodoxy** showed itself to be no friend of genuine biblical Christianity.

In his analysis of **Eastern Orthodoxy** David Cloud wrote -

**'Orthodoxy refers to that branch of sacramental Christianity which broke off from the Roman Catholic Church in 1054 A.D... The main point of contention between the eastern and the western divisions was the papacy. More important than doctrine was the issue of power and authority. The Eastern Orthodox rejected the pope, while retaining Rome's sacramental system and most of Rome's unscriptural doctrines... The Roman Catholic Church and its twin, Eastern Orthodoxy, were formed by a spiritually adulterous relationship between the political empire and apostate church leaders... Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy both claim direct descent from Christ and the Apostles, but that this claim is bogus is evident in their non-apostolic doctrines and practices. As a result of the split with Rome, Eastern Orthodoxy is not united under one head. There are many groupings of Orthodox, all having the same basic doctrine and practice with some minor variation: Russian Orthodox, Albanian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Bulgarian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Antiochian Orthodox, etc... In addition to rejecting the papacy, with its doctrines of supremacy and infallibility, Eastern Orthodoxy rejects purgatory and the doctrine of indulgences. Like Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy has a consecrated priesthood and seven sacraments which only the priests have authority to perform--baptism, anointing, communion, penance, holy orders, marriage, and holy unction (Handbook of Denominations in the United States, 9th ed.). Infants and adults are baptized by threefold immersion. Sacraments are believed to be channels of grace, as contrasted to the New Testament ordinances of baptism and the Lords Supper which are simple memorials rather than actual means of grace. Orthodoxy practices the mass or the "Holy Eucharist" [eucharist means praise] whereby Christ supposedly is**

sacrificed anew and the bread and wine of the “eucharist” becomes the actual body and blood of Christ. Orthodoxy worships Mary as the Mother of God. Prayers are offered for the dead, who also are believed to pray for those on earth. Justification is attained through faith and works... Orthodoxy preaches a false gospel. According to Orthodox teaching, baptism (even of infants) is the means whereby an individual is born into Christ and becomes a Christian... The Orthodox Church also advocates prayers to and for the dead, and the false, wicked idea that the living can aid in the salvation of the deceased through good works... From these quotes, it is obvious that the Orthodox Church is entirely apostate. It holds the same basic set of false beliefs as the Roman Catholic Church from which it broke away in the ninth century.’

In a paper written by Paulus Farmer, a former adherent of Greek Orthodoxy, but now an evangelical Christian evangelist witnessing in particular to the Greek Orthodox community in London we learn the following –

‘For those who are familiar with Romish Mariolatry, the following Orthodox addresses to Mary should not come as a surprise. She is called “All Holy One”, “Mother of God”, “Mediatrice”, “Immaculate”, “Pure One”, “the True Vine”, “Jacob’s Ladder”, “Burning Bush”, “Rod of Aaron”, “Bride of God”, “Daughter of the King” amongst other titles... In the liturgy for the veneration of Mary, she is asked to “redeem and save us”... Another strange practice is to make a waxen effigy of the part of the body, which needs healing, and offer it to a saint just like ancient Greeks would to temple gods and goddesses... In a little chapel in Guildford I witnessed English people [converts to Greek Orthodoxy] bowing down in front of icons, kissing them and lighting candles... There is an atmosphere of awe, which is almost hypnotising as the priest and choir chant their liturgy... We [Paulus and others] work under the umbrella of the local church providing the Greeks with the opportunity to listen to the gospel preached in their own language. Our main obstacle is the fact that Greeks think they are Christians already having been baptised as babies into the Orthodox Church. Please pray that God will pour out His Holy Spirit... and that many will turn from their blindness into the True Light.

Clearly such a closing prayer is not going to be helped by ALPHA recognising those of adherents of the various branches of Orthodoxy, such as the Bulgarian, as being their fellow ‘Christians’.

Any supposed ‘Christian’ newspaper like **ALPHA NEWS** that portrays Orthodoxy’s ‘sacramental system of salvation’ as being ‘Christian’ is quite simply **‘Delighting the Devil’**.

Finally, I want to make a few brief comments on something I referred to in the ALPHA section of my book called **‘Try the spirits: Volume 1’**. In my book I quoted some comments from a report by Tim Chapman an Anglican who used to lead ALPHA courses and also cited my own observations –

Tim Chapman wrote: ‘The lack of focus on Jesus is seen very clearly in the testimonies people give – testimonies which Alpha quotes with approval in its literature.’...

When I spoke publicly on Alpha in 2000, I made exactly this same point and I cited several examples. I mentioned the TV presenter Diane Louise Jordan. In the March – July 2000 *Alpha News* there were three pages devoted to her ‘testimony’. In those three pages, there was not one reference to *sin*, *Christ* or *Calvary*. The major influences in her ‘claimed conversion’ were her emotional reaction to a visit to Lourdes and an encounter with an apparition of her dead sister in a hotel room in Argentina.

Since then, in the March – June 2003 *Alpha News* in two pages of ‘testimony’ by former female spiritualist Sam Ryan, yet again there was no reference to either *sin* or *Calvary*. In the July – October 2003 *Alpha News* in two pages of ‘testimony’ Leila Bagnall makes no reference to *Calvary*.

Sadly, this disturbing trend can yet again be seen the current issue of **ALPHA NEWS** where little or any reference to or understanding of ‘conviction of sin’, ‘the cross of Calvary’, or ‘conversion to Christ’ appears in several stories/testimonies that are included. They contain no clear biblical gospel presentation or explanation and instead we end up with expressions such as –

**‘The Alpha Course and the programme changed the way I looked at life and the relationships with people around me. For me God is everything now. My friends and family are tired of me talking about Alpha if not a little concerned too’** [Surely any faithful biblical course would make the Lord Jesus Christ the focus of attention and not the course itself].

**‘At the end of his talk, the clergyman [Nicky Gumbel] read out a prayer which we could repeat quietly if we wanted to become a Christian. I thought, yes, I’m on for this, and said the prayer... gradually that prayer which I had said at the Alpha supper gained more meaning. I prayed it at every opportunity’** [Why repeat this ‘prayer’ if it means someone becomes a Christian the first time they pray it?]

**‘We became friends with Nicky and Pippa who were leading our group... We used to talk and talk into the night... So then we both jumped in and church became a big part in both our lives. We started leading Alpha groups... If we think about what is at the core, at the very heart of the Christian faith, it is love for God and love for each other and those are the things we’ve put at the heart of Alpha’** [The ‘we’ is the person who regularly repeated ‘the sinner’s prayer’ as already mentioned and her husband whose ‘conversion’ is nowhere spelt out in the article. The ‘core’ of Christianity is not what we must do but rather what Christ has done – I deal with this false, devilish man-centred emphasis in an article I wrote some years ago about the Queen’s Christmas message in 1999 – it can be viewed on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-march-2000/>]

Any supposed ‘Christian’ newspaper like **ALPHA NEWS** that focuses prime attention upon a Bible course and upon what man must do rather than on Christ and what He has done is quite simply **‘Delighting the Devil’**.

This is not the first time that **ALPHA NEWS** has contained a plethora of items that are quite simply **‘Delighting the Devil’** and sadly I am fully persuaded that it will not be the last time either.

Cecil Andrews – ‘Take Heed’ Ministries – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2009