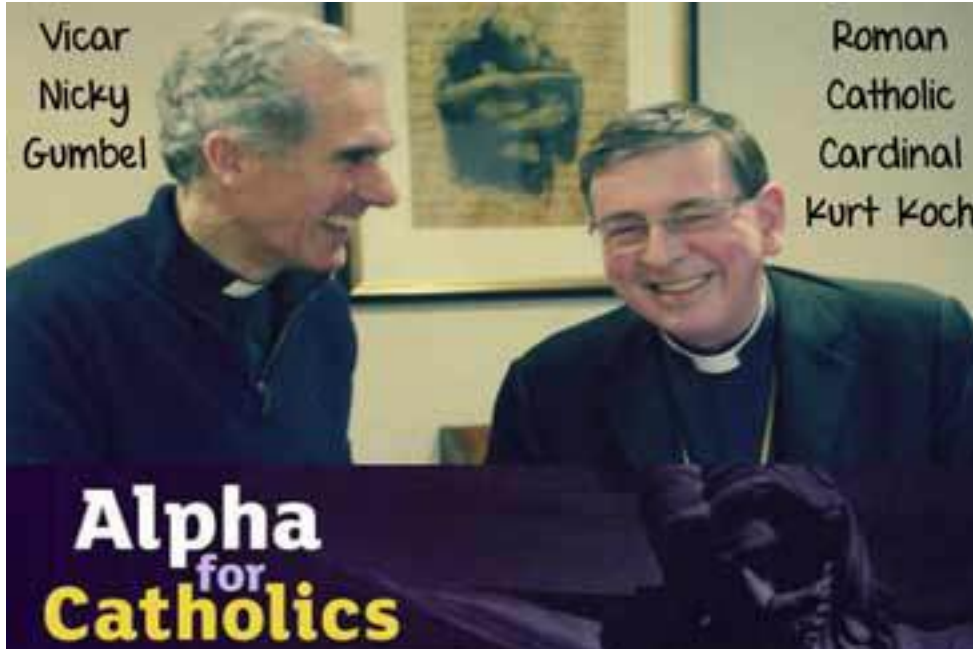


RICK WARREN PROMOTING THE ALPHA COURSE WITH ITS MYSTICISM AND SINFUL ECUMENICISM

“WILLOW CREEK BEGINS THE SINFULLY ECUMENICAL ALPHA COURSE”

By Rev. Ken Silva, Southern Baptist pastor-teacher, Feb 5, 2014



In [J.I. Packer And Tim Keller Endorsing The Alpha Course](#) here at [Apprising Ministries](#), as far back as two years ago, I attempted to show you that the hyper-charismatic [The Alpha Course](#) (TAC)—marred by [Contemplative Spirituality/Mysticism](#) (CSM)—is making another comeback within the mainstream of the visible church.

Another example might be found in [John Piper Approves Of The Alpha Course?](#) There I showed you that among the featured speakers for the [2013 Conference for Pastors](#) put on by the Desiring God ministry of John Piper we found Tope Koleoso. Pastor Koleoso is “the lead elder of Jubilee Church,...in London, UK.”¹

You may also find it interesting that charismatic blogger Adrian Warnock attends Koleoso’s church.² And the fact is, Koleoso’s church does promote TAC:

What is Alpha?

The Alpha course is an opportunity for ANYONE to either explore or revisit the basics of the Christian faith in a relaxed setting over 8 thought provoking weekly sessions.

Over 2 million people in the UK and 11 million worldwide have now attended the Alpha course.

To sign up for the course or to receive more information, [please click here and fill out the form.](#)

([source](#))

To be clear, I'm not saying that John Piper endorses TAC himself because I don't know. However, his friendship with Tope Koleoso makes it hard for me to believe Piper's not at least aware of Koleoso's use of TAC. Then there's the following recent announcement by [Willow Creek Community Church](#) (WCCC).

Beginning today WCCC will now twice a week be having [Alpha – Wednesdays \(Winter/Spring 2014\)](#) and [Alpha – Sundays \(Winter/Spring 2014\)](#):

Alpha – Wednesdays (Winter/Spring 2014)

South Barrington

February 5 – April 9

(10 sessions)

Location: *Blue Sky* 2 room at Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington Campus ([source](#))

Alpha – Sundays (Winter/Spring 2014)

South Barrington

February 9 – April 13

(10 sessions)

Location: *The Garage* room at Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington Campus ([source](#))

This is another illustration of evangelicalism losing its belief in the all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture and continuing its descent into charismania and silly superstitions a la the CSM of [Quaker](#) mystic [Richard Foster](#). Now, please understand here that I'm using the term charismania in reference to hyper-charismatic excesses.

With this understood, let me show you that in [Chris Hand On The Alpha Course](#) he informs us that:

Many people have been greatly impressed by the Alpha course. Designed to be an introduction to the Christian faith through talks, video presentations, small-group discussions and a special weekend-away, lots of churches are now employing it as part of their outreach.

In the eyes of many it has been a run-away-success and its fame has spread far beyond the UK, and Holy Trinity Brompton, the London church where it originated.

It is no exaggeration to say it has spread right across the world and is now finding friends in several continents. It has been adapted so as to be accessible to young people and has also proved versatile enough to be used in prisons, schools and places of work. ([source](#))

It's also important to know that TAC is marred by spurious CSM, which is itself, rooted in Roman Catholic mysticism. This Counter Reformation spirituality flowered within the anti-biblical monastic traditions of apostate [Roman Catholicism](#), so we shouldn't really be surprised to find that TAC is sinfully ecumenical.

TAC, as we know it now, was shaped by Nicky Gumbel who is "Vicar of [Holy Trinity Brompton](#) [HTB], the largest Anglican Church in Britain."³ Another questionable issue concerning TAC is the influence of John Wimber upon Gumbel. In an open letter to Gumbel, Dusty Peterson and Elizabeth McDonald remind him:

You cite John Wimber and his 1982 ministry team as being "very significant" in your life. You quote Wimber regularly and glowingly, and you recommend his books. Do you not feel that such strong endorsement legitimizes the people whom he cited as being influential on him?

These include: Morton Kelsey, Agnes Sanford, Kenneth Hagin, and John & Paula Sandford. Would you not agree that, in each case, their teachings are dangerous, and that they have admitted deriving aspects of their doctrine from New Agers? ([source](#))

Lately you've seen me discussing a resurgence within mainstream evangelicalism of the [New Apostolic Reformation](#) group [International House of Prayer](#) (IHOP) extending from [Mike Bickle](#) of the nefarious Kansas City Prophets.⁴ Following is John Wimber's connection to all of this:

The IHOP movement...is part and parcel of [C. Peter Wagner's New Apostolic Reformation](#) and, in fact, helped to spawn the NAR and its [foundational doctrines for Dominionism](#). Here is a brief synopsis of the IHOP/NAR history:

- IHOP is just one arm of a multi-faceted group (with many names, entities and offshoots) known as the “Kansas City Prophets” that has been around since the mid-1980s.
- These Kansas City “prophets” are leaders who track a direct lineage back to the old Latter Rain cult.
- **John Wimber became an overseer of the KC group** in the late 1980s when their cult excesses became public and controversial, and set them up under his Vineyard denomination.
- **John Wimber was a mentor to C. Peter Wagner** and vice versa,[4] and the two of them have a history that tracks back into the mid 1970s at [Fuller Theological Seminary where they concocted doctrines](#) together.
- C. Peter Wagner’s “Third Wave” movement, the predecessor to the NAR, was founded on **Wimber’s signs and wonders mysticism**.[5]
- C. Peter Wagner’s “New Apostolic Reformation” was founded on the convergence of **the mystical streams of John Wimber**, the Kansas City group, and Fuller Theological Seminary. ([source](#), emphasis mine)

Here’s some guilt-by-endorsement for you; with respected evangelical institutions like WCCC of Bill Hybels now promoting TAC, all of the above will move another step closer to your evangelical church. Returning more specifically to Nicky Gumbel; from his bio at the TAC website, we also find out that:

he took over the running of HTB’s Alpha Course and promoted the course as one primarily for non-churchgoers. It became increasingly popular, attracting hundreds of young people who had previously had no interest in Christianity.

Since 1993, more than 19 million people have completed the Alpha course in 169 countries around the world. There are over 9,000 courses running in the UK and over 60,000 world-wide in all denominations.

It has been particularly supported by the Roman Catholic Church where senior archbishops and bishops recommend it to their clergy. It is now also beginning to grow in Orthodox churches in Russia, Greece and North Africa. ([source](#))

Leaving aside the apostate Orthodox churches, as a former Roman Catholic, I'm going to zero in on TAC being "supported by the Roman Catholic Church where senior archbishops and bishops recommend it to their clergy." With this statement we now have another serious problem here concerning TAC and the Church of Rome.

What's being lost today is that at the very heart of the Protestant Reformation was the Gospel itself, which the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) condemned at their Council of Trent. As you'll see in [Has The Roman Catholic Church Really Changed?](#), from official RCC sources, this condemnation has never, ever, been rescinded.

This is why the later theologian Carl F. H. Henry is dead-on-target when he writes in [Justification by Faith](#) that:

evangelical-Catholic dialogue must now begin with Trent. Trent cannot be bypassed as merely the time-bound echo of one spectrum of influential Catholic dogmatics, since it expresses church doctrine that Rome identified as authoritative and irreformable. ([source](#))

Check the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) and you'll see that it regularly appeals to Trent for authority in its teachings.⁵ With this understood, now you're properly positioned on the battlefield as I begin to introduce you to TAC's [Alpha For Catholics](#):

Welcome To Alpha For Catholics

Alpha is a practical tool inspiring Catholic renewal by answering the call to the New Evangelization, the call of Christ and His Church to "go and make disciples of all nations". Alpha is proven to awaken faith in lapsed Catholics, those on the fringe of parish life and those outside the faith. It gives faithful Catholics a path and a language to fulfill their baptismal call to evangelize. It is a proven method of introducing people to a living relationship, a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Alpha for Catholics uses the original Alpha talks, given by Rev. Nicky Gumbel, an Anglican priest, in a Catholic setting. We encourage the opportunity for guests to celebrate Reconciliation and Eucharist during the retreat. Small group discussion after dinner and the talk is the best opportunity for discussion from a Catholic perspective. Alpha for Catholics offers two optional talks given by Fr. James Mallon that can be substituted for the original talks; "How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit," and "What about the Church." Alpha helps people in that first important step on their continuing journey of Catholic conversion. Alpha is an invitation to "drop your nets" and become an intentional follower of Jesus.

([source](#))

There you have it, TAC is already ecumenical enough for the RCC to even use as is. Under [What Is Alpha For Catholics?](#) we're told how great a tool TAC is to help with the New Evangelization of the apostate RCC:

What Is Alpha For Catholics?

Alpha answers the call to the New Evangelization as one of the most effective, efficient and affordable methods of evangelization today.

- Barna Research shows that 50% of the guests that come on an Alpha course have an initial conversion or reversion, entering into a deep and personal relationship with God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Alpha can be lay-led so it does not tax our over-extended clergy.
- Alpha is affordable; everything needed to run the course for a minimal one-time investment.

Alpha for Catholics is a practical introduction to creedal Christianity over a 10 week course. Unique in its adult learning approach, Alpha meets participants where they are, starting with their questions.

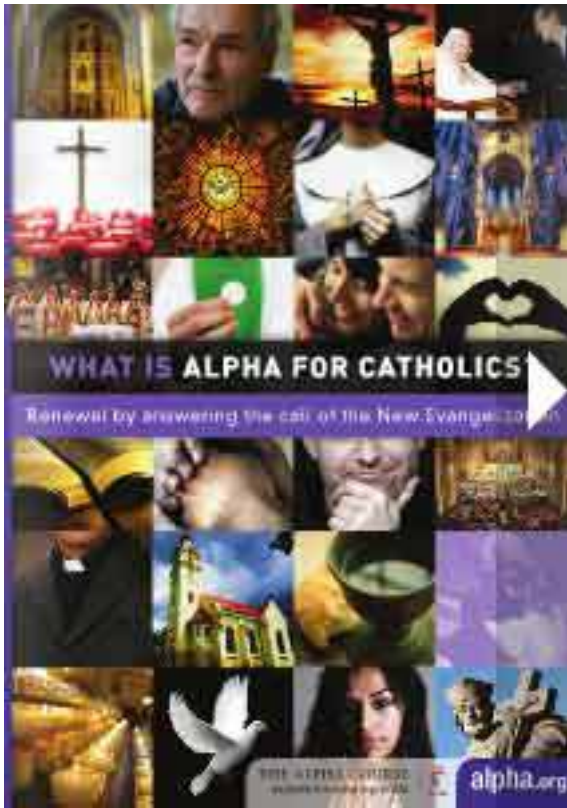
Designed for those on the fringes of their faith and those outside the Church, Alpha creates a non-threatening environment of hospitality allowing people to explore the claims of Christ against the backdrop of our culture. Alpha provides an opportunity to encounter the love of God in a personal relationship through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Alpha focuses on the kerygma and the basic tenants of Christianity.

Alpha also serves as a refresher course for practicing Catholics and a point of re-entry for lapsed Catholics.

([source](#))

So, instead of giving these lapsed Roman Catholics the genuine Gospel of Jesus Christ, we're further informed that TAC is great to actually win them back to the counterfeit gospel of the RCC:

In fact, TAC even makes it easy for Roman Catholics to find materials concerning this apostate organization that long ago anathematized the very Gospel of Jesus Christ itself. Under [Explore Alpha](#) in the [Alpha USA Store](#) we click on [What is Alpha Catholic Edition](#) and come to this:



([source](#))

You'll see that it's billed as a "denominational" resource, which would mean that, contra the Protestant Reformers, Nicky Gumbel et al do consider the Church of Rome to be a part of the Christian Church:

Denominational Resources/Booklet

This informational brochure offers an overview of the Alpha Course, describes how it can work within the parish, gives some personal testimonies from guests and priests, lists some impressive endorsements from influential Catholic Church leaders, and answers some frequently asked questions about how to get started with Alpha, running the course, and how to make the most of the course within your parish. An excellent resource for any priest, reverend, or parish member who is thinking about running Alpha within a Catholic context.

([source](#))

In closing this out, for now, in [The Alpha Course Director's Handbook](#) we find:

**The Alpha Course
Equipping the Church for
Evangelism**

"Alpha is more than another program. It's about people coming to Jesus Christ, being filled with the Spirit, getting excited about Jesus, and spending the rest of their lives serving Him. Therefore, it's about **churches growing — churches being filled and churches being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.**"

Nicky Gumbel

Senior Pastor, Holy Trinity Brompton



However, as we return to [What is Alpha Catholic Edition](#), inside that publication on pg 9 Nicky Gumbel informs us TAC assists “the New Evangelization” and then changes the last sentence for the benefit of Roman Catholics:

The Alpha course answers the call to the New Evangelization

"Alpha is more than another program. It's about people coming to Jesus Christ, being filled with the Spirit, getting excited about Jesus and spending the rest of their lives serving Him. Therefore, it's about **parishes growing – parishes being filled and parishes being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.**"



–Nicky Gumbel

Senior Pastor, Holy Trinity Brompton

Obviously Gumbel is referring to growing Roman Catholic parishes and sharing his Alpha mythology that God the Holy Spirit will transform their spiritually bankrupt gatherings preaching a false gospel. As you'll see in [What Catholic Leaders Are Saying](#) that they're very pleased with TAC.

For example, there's Archbishop Rino Fisichella, *President of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization*, who tells us, "Alpha Course is a new way of announcing the gospel." Really, mister Fisichella; and which gospel would that be? Remember now, the RCC placed its anathema on God's Gospel centuries ago.

Then we have Walter Cardinal Kasper, *Pontificium Consilium Ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam*, who says, “John Paul II encouraged us as Christians... not to relent in the task of the new evangelisation... The Alpha course sees itself as committed to exactly this task.”

However, it needs to be understood that those who adhere to the counterfeit gospel of the RCC are not Christians in the first place. Therefore, they aren't even involved in the evangelization of anyone for Jesus Christ. Faithful Roman Catholics are actually leading people away from the only Gospel there is.

And finally, for our purposes here, consider His Eminence Sean Cardinal O'Malley, OFMCap, *Archbishop of Boston* shares:

Many of our Catholic parishioners have benefited from the Alpha program by way of its building on their initial interest in the Church, as a pre-catechumenate experience, or for others, a renewal of their desire to more deeply understand and live their Catholic faith...

Should pastors of our parishes wish to utilize the Alpha program as part of their religious education curriculum they can do so with my approval. ([source](#))

That O'Malley approves of TAC is more reason to reject it. Also, notice that in typical RCC fashion he speaks of parishioners' “Catholic faith” as opposed to the Christian faith. The fact is, if we love Roman Catholics for whom Christ died then we don't want them left in the bondage of the corrupt religious system of Rome.

As far as I'm concerned, I wonder why in the aforementioned [The Alpha Course Director's Handbook](#) we find respected evangelicals like J.I. Packer and Tim Keller endorsing TAC:

WHAT ARE MINISTRY LEADERS SAYING?



"The Alpha course is a most engaging way of passing on the basics of Christianity. It is a **tool for evangelism and nurture that I highly recommend.**"

Dr. J.I. Packer
Reverend/Theologian



"In recent years Nicky Gumbel has **helped millions of people consider the claims of Jesus Christ in fresh and stimulating ways** through a course he put together called Alpha. Very few people alive have done this much to help people far from God draw nearer to Him — and many find Him."

Bill Hybels
Senior Pastor, Willow Creek Community Church



"The Alpha format is definitely a huge improvement and **right for our time**, because process is involved instead of a quick presentation, and it is more communal."

Dr. Tim Keller
Senior Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church



"I know of many people whose **lives have been transformed through the Alpha course.** I rejoice at how God is using it so powerfully to renew many churches both inside and outside prison walls."

Charles W. Colson
Prison Fellowship Ministries



... we need a **new evangelization that**, while being open to all the fullness of the truth and the Christian life, will be simple and basic. This is the reason why I look with interest and appreciation to the Alpha course. It seems to me that it answers precisely this need of ours. The very name shows this: It is not called "Alpha and Omega course," but simply "Alpha course" because it doesn't claim to lead people from beginning to end in faith, but only to help them get acquainted with it; **to foster a personal encounter with Jesus**, leaving it to other church departments to develop the newly rekindled faith."

Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa
Appointed Preacher to the Papal Household by Pope John Paul II



"Alpha is a well-designed, implementable **program that addresses the basic questions of life for the church and unchurched alike.** The course meets the vital test of being both open and faithful — welcoming of all, while presenting the gospel message with clarity and power."

George Gallup Jr.
Chairman, The George H. Gallup International Institute



"Alpha is a tool for mobilizing men and women to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost."

Joyce Meyer
Joyce Meyer Ministries



"One of the most effective evangelism tools for the 21st century."

Dr. Rick Warren
Senior Pastor, Saddleback Church

"Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory." Proverbs 11:14 (NASB)

There are those who'd say such as these aren't endorsing the Roman Catholic version of TAC; but this is to miss the point. For you've already seen that the Roman Catholic version of TAC varies very little from the supposed Protestant version;⁶ the difference is adding in a little mythology from the Church of Rome.

Do these pretending to be Protestants seriously mean to tell us that there's not a genuinely Christian course on apologetics out there? Really; so instead we have to use the hyper-charismatic and ecumenical TAC, which is hostile to the proper Christian spirituality of sola Scriptura? Well, here's the question you should be asking:

Why are these ostensibly Protestant leaders lending their name, as well as their considerable credibility within mainstream evangelicalism, to help support a program that is specifically designed to be sinfully ecumenical in the first place?

Further reading (on these links):

- [RICK WARREN PROMOTING THE ALPHA COURSE WITH ITS MYSTICISM AND SINFUL ECUMENICISM](#)
- [THE ALPHA COURSE: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO NICKY GUMBEL](#)
- [IN A SENSE, NO HELL IN THE ALPHA COURSE](#)

Endnotes:

1. <http://bit.ly/1fMMQOt>, accessed 2/5/14. ↵
2. <http://bit.ly/Lw8CLk>, accessed 2/5/14. ↵
3. http://www.alphausa.org/Articles/1000091299/Nicky_Gumbel_Bio.aspx, accessed 12/5/12. ↵
4. <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/kcp.html>, accessed 2/5/14. ↵
5. For example, the footnotes concerning Rome's wrong view of justification here: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P6Y.HTM#\\$24G](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P6Y.HTM#$24G), accessed 2/5/14. ↵
6. <http://bit.ly/1eyJJPd>, accessed 2/5/14. ↵