



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

“Another ploy in ecumenical evangelism”



A sermon preached by Rev. Brian McClung, minister of Newtownabbey Free Presbyterian Church.

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-7).

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The “Power To Change” (PTC) campaign is an expensive, media-driven, so-called presentation of the Gospel. By spending considerable amounts of money, upwards of a million pounds, on billboards, newspaper and cinema advertising, the organisers hope to ‘spread the news of the Gospel’. The adverts encourage people to phone for a free book and CD. Local meetings, where a video presentation is made, have been advertised. Churches are also requested to register. Organisers had hoped that a 1000 churches would register with PTC; at present they have over 1000 registered churches. The PTC campaign originated in Canada during the 1990s with Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. Three businessmen from N. Ireland went to Canada and heard about the success of ‘Power To Change’ and were challenged to bring it back to Northern Ireland. The concept was taken back and shared with a group of businessmen in the Republic of Ireland with a view to making PTC an all-Ireland initiative. Two committees were established, one for Northern Ireland, the other for Southern Ireland, with a varied group of business people and Christian organisations ‘to support Church, Parish or Prayer Group leaders as they reach out to the community with the Good News of God’s love’. We are commanded by the Lord in His Word to try the spirits. Not everyone who claims to be presenting the gospel is actually doing so. There are many false prophets abroad in the world. Paul, writing to the Galatians, warned against those who would pervert the gospel and preach another gospel which was a different, and not the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The PTC campaign is not a true presentation of the gospel. It is another attempt at ecumenical evangelism. As Ecumenism has no love for sound doctrine it has many faults.

1. The Ecumenical Tendencies of “Power To Change”

From the commencement of this campaign the aim has been to bring the churches together and have them work together in the so-called spread of the Gospel. The ecumenical tendencies of this campaign are easily observed. Bill Bright commenced the PTC campaign in Canada. Bright is a committed ecumenist. In 1994 he signed up to the document: Evangelicals and Catholics Together. The document was presented as revealing how the Church of Rome and Evangelicals would work together in evangelism. Bill Bright also accepted the Templeton prize for progress in religion. He received this in Rome in the presence of Cardinal Edward Cassidy who worked for Rome in drafting the Evangelicals and Catholics Together document. Bright claims to be an evangelical; he also accepts Rome as a Christian Church. Other recipients of the Templeton prize have included ecumenist Billy Graham and



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the Roman Catholic nun 'Mother Teresa'. registered list On the PTC website there was a list of registered Churches in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. At present there is only a registered list for the Republic of Ireland. The list of Northern Ireland registered churches and organisations was removed because some Churches which originally registered with the PTC movement withdrew when they realised the ecumenical nature of the campaign. Further, the original book, which forms an important part of this so-called presentation of the gospel, had to be reprinted because two Loyalist ex-prisoners, who had been converted to Christ, withdrew permission for their testimonies to be included when they realised the part Rome was going to play in this campaign. Instead of the two prisoners' testimonies, the testimonies of two ecumenists were included those of the TV presenter Paul Clark and the athlete Jonathan Edwards. A number of advertised meetings on the PTC website are running the Alpha Course. The ecumenical character of the Alpha Course is well known. Nicky Gumbel, with whom the Alpha Course originated, revealed his intentions: "We need to unite . . . there has been some comment which is not helpful to unity. Let us drop all that and get on. It is wonderful that the movement of the Spirit will bring churches together. He is doing that right across the denominations and within the traditions . . . we are seeing Roman Catholics coming now . . . Nobody is suspicious of anybody else . . . People are no longer 'labelling' themselves or others. I long for the day when we drop all these labels and just regard ourselves as Christians with a commission from Jesus Christ" [Renewal, May 1995, page 16]. The ecumenical centres of Fisherwick Presbyterian Church and The Christian Renewal Centre in Rostrevor are wholly in favour of PTC. The leaders of the four main churches in Ireland, north and south, have endorsed it. A joint message of support was issued: "We are happy to endorse PTC as a potentially significant North/South Initiative for evangelisation and reconciliation at this critical time in our country and in our world. PTC will facilitate local congregations to share the Good News with all the people of this island, who all matter to God." Signed: Archbishop Sean Brady, Catholic Archbishop of Armagh; Archbishop Robin Eames, C. of I. Archbishop of Armagh; Rev Harold Good, President, Methodist Church in Ireland; Rt. Rev. Dr. Alastair Dunlop, Moderator, Presbyterian Church.

2. The False Methodology of "Power To Change"

PTC is essentially an attempt at promoting the gospel. It is an attempt at spreading the Gospel using the methods of marketing that the business world employs. Mr Basil Good, chairman of the Southern PTC Committee, in explaining where the PTC campaign came from, declared that "the idea originated in Canada where business people stated that if they were going to 'promote a product', this is the way [by advertising] that they would do it and so they felt that they could apply the same method in promoting 'the cause of Christ'." It is not the calling of the Church to employ the ways of the world to spread the gospel. Not only has the Lord revealed the gospel in His word but He has already revealed how that Gospel is to be spread among the world. Paul did not preach the Gospel using the wisdom of man, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. The all-Ireland media campaign ran from 23rd September to 20th October 2002. It was, however, meant to start earlier than this, in the springtime. It was delayed for a number of reasons. One has already been referred to in the need to republish the book. Another major reason for the delay was that the marketing conditions were not right to go ahead. There were too many other issues to contend with.



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The organisers of PTC felt that an upcoming debate in March on abortion in the Republic of Ireland would adversely affect the impact of their planned, and heavily financed, advertising campaign. Then apparently in April and May it would have run foul of the likely run-up to a General Election. In June it would have clashed with the football 'World Cup' in Japan and then of course July and August are the traditional holiday months. The launch would have to wait until September/October. The thinking behind this initiative was that the 'marketing conditions' must be just right in order to obtain the best possible results. This is not the Scriptural way of presenting the Gospel. PTC is employing a methodology not known in the Word of God. The power of the Gospel is not in its presentation or marketing, to use the terms current with PTC. Those in charge of PTC obviously believe that the means used in promotion of the message of Christ is more important than the message and that it can change lives. They fail to recognise that the power is in the message and more importantly in the person at the centre of the message, our Lord Jesus Christ — Rom 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The methodology of PTC is wrong and destined to fail. When would the conditions ever be right for the gospel to be preached? Eccl 11:4, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." Is there ever a time when men and women are more inclined to give thought to the things of God? It would appear that the Apostle Paul didn't really understand evangelisation, when he wrote to Timothy, in 1 Tim 4:13, "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." He didn't tell Timothy to give attendance to when the right marketing conditions existed nor did he when he wrote in his second epistle: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season," 2 Tim 4:2. Paul did not live by the methodology which governs the PTC campaign. The New Testament way to spread the truth is not to co-operate with error but to confront it. The PTC campaign is cooperating with the error of Romanism instead of confronting it, which would be done if there was a real, genuine presentation of the gospel. The example given to us in the New Testament is of the Church challenging falsehood, speaking out against it, and separating from it. All a far cry from what is taking place in PTC! God's chief means of spreading the Gospel is not a slick marketing campaign but the simple preaching of the gospel. Advertise by all means but it is a means to an end. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," 1 Cor 1:21. In times when there were great evangelistic campaigns, the formal preaching of the gospel was paramount. This is God's ordained means of making men and women aware of their need of Jesus Christ as Saviour. The primacy of preaching is nowhere to be seen in PTC. Individuals are more likely to be invited along to watch a film called 'The Jesus film'.

3. The Questionable Message of "Power To Change"

We are not to take at face value all those who would claim to be spreading the true gospel. Not everything that shines is gold. We are to try the spirits. In 'trying' PTC, there are grave questions to be answered about its message. There is no question that we are living in an age when many words appear to have lost their historic meaning and this is particularly true of words associated with Christianity. Words like 'Evangelical' and 'Born Again' are widely used within professing Christendom but vary greatly in their meaning, as you move



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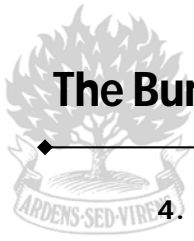
from one group of professing 'Christians' to another. We have even Roman Catholics calling themselves by these terms. They call themselves 'evangelical Catholics'. A contradiction in terms if there ever was one! Their use of these terms is no indication of orthodoxy and adherence to the Scriptures. In experiencing PTC, there are four essential principles:

[1] God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.

[2] All of us are sinful and separated from God. Therefore we cannot know and experience God's love and plan for our life.

[3] The third principle explains the only way to bridge this gulf. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Him we can know and experience God's love and plan for our life.

[4] It is not enough just to know these three truths . . . we must individually accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our life. Not much wrong with this some would think. This is not the gospel. Rome has no problem accepting these four principles whatsoever. That immediately should start the alarm bells ringing. If this is salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, Rome would repudiate it. She has not rejected PTC. That can mean only one thing. This is not what it appears. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent Session vi, Canon 10, has this to say about the Biblical doctrine of salvation by faith alone: "If any one says that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in the divine mercy, pardoning sins for Christ's sake; or that it is by trust alone by which we are justified; let him be accursed." Whatever PTC teaches it is not Justification by faith alone. The language of these points is purposely banal so that it will mean one thing to one group and another thing to another group. The gospel PTC advocates is one without repentance. They talk about sin and the need to believe on Jesus: "Accepting Jesus means first believing that Jesus is who he claimed to be, then inviting him to take the control of our lives and make us into new people. " This is not the gospel. This is easy believism, which is the curse of professing Christendom. They speak about making a commitment. Come to Jesus and believe on Him may be the gospel believed in by many but it is not the gospel of saving grace. A gospel that has no repentance in it is not the gospel at all. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom 10: 9-10. Faith and repentance are both necessary. Paul, summarising the substance of his preaching to the Ephesian elders, said: "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts 20: 21. This is why so many empty professions of faith are made today. There is no genuine repentance. The right marketing conditions must be in place before they will launch their PTC campaign. However, they are not so keen on having true doctrine in place before they commence. The organising Committee are on record as saying that doctrine is not important. Mr Basil Good said that PTC would not interfere in the area of doctrine but would leave that entirely to the discretion of the participating churches. This is contrary to the Word of God. "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," 1 Tim 4: 13. Doctrine is important. Go wrong here and everything else is wrong. Doctrine is the superstructure upon which Christianity stands. Ecumenists and Romanists have no love for the truth; it is therefore not surprising that doctrine is avoided.



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4. The Unscriptural Compromise which spawned “Power To Change”

The PTC campaign is the product of an unscriptural viewpoint. It has not come about by chance. There is something which has spawned this campaign and others like it in times past, and no doubt more to come in the future. The compromise which lies behind PTC, although unscriptural in nature, is one which has found an acceptance among those who profess to be evangelical in mainline Protestant Churches. The name given to it is Neo/New Evangelicalism. This title was coined by a Boston minister, Harold Ockenga in 1947. It was a title for evangelicals who among other things had repudiated the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation from apostate churches and advocated something entirely different. It is from this compromise that PTC originates. Their basic tenet is infiltration. Harold Ockenga said: “New evangelicalism has changed the strategy from one of separation to one of infiltration.” These so-called evangelicals now believe that they should not separate from apostasy but rather stay in and seek to do some good from within. This position is devoid of any Scriptural support: Rom 16: 17-18: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” 2 Cor 6: 14-18: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” 1 Tim 6: 3-5: If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.” Eph 5: 11: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” To remain in apostasy ultimately leads to the toleration of falsehood and error. Rejectors of separation have to exist alongside, and accept as brethren, those who teach error. This in turn leads to acceptance of these false and heretical views. These so-called evangelicals end up accepting Romanism and working with it in a campaign like PTC. They join up with Rome to present a joint message using a form of words acceptable to both groups. The Ecumenical Movement needed a way whereby they could involve the evangelicals in those denominations associated with the World Council of Churches who were initially suspicious of this movement. The plan they came up was evangelism or a better term would be ecumenical evangelism. Efforts were made to spread the gospel which would involve all the churches in the ecumenical movement. The PTC campaign is exactly in keeping with this viewpoint of new evangelicalism. In the light of these observations PTC must be rejected as being another ploy in ecumenical evangelism. All who love the truth must turn away from it.