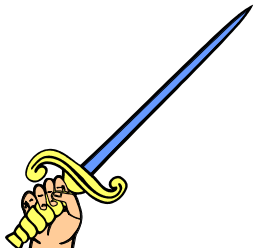


Sword of Light & Truth

“Speak the truth to one another...” Zec 8:16



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From the Publisher

*Fall/Winter
2005*



Dear Friends in Christ,

In October of 2004, the Lord put on my heart to start this ministry to keep myself and others informed of the false spiritualities that are being presented in our culture today and in Christian Churches as well. He also inspired me to write on the riches of our Catholic faith, especially the Eucharist. I want to thank all of those who have given generously to the cause. Please continue to help me in this endeavor by passing this newsletter on to others. The New Age Movement is widespread and is leading our relatives, friends, and fellow parishioners into spiritual dangers. Thank you for helping me to spread the truth. May God bless you.

Anne Feaster

Centering Prayer Teaches Occult Techniques

In the last two newsletters, we addressed some of the problems of the Centering Prayer Movement as taught by Fr. Basil Pennington and Fr. Thomas Keating. We will now address the practice of **unleashing energies, which is an occult technique. Since occult power is from the Evil One, it poses many spiritual dangers.** For example, Fr. Basil Pennington wrote an article on Centering Prayer entitled “Love Is God’s Being” from *Contemplative Prayer Online Magazine*. Clare Merkle, a former New Age healer and yogi practitioner, has exposed CP as occult meditation on her website, crossveil.org. She quotes Pennington in his article and places in BOLD print the New Age statements. He said, “When we go to the **center of our being** and pass through that center into the **very center of God**, we get into immediate touch with this divine creating **energy.**” Then he says, “When we dare with full assent of love to **unleash these energies** within us surprisingly the initial experience is within a flood of **chaotic** thoughts, memories, emotions and feelings.” A few lines down, he says, “But it is this release that allows us all of this chaos within us with all its imprisoning stress to be brought into harmony so that not only there might be peace and harmony within but that the **divine energy may have the freedom to forward the evolution of consciousness** in us and through us, **as a part of the whole, in the whole of creation.**” Merkle then explains these statements. She says, “Typical of New Age meditative practice, the soul becomes the “center,” energy replaces grace, God actually becomes a pantheistic energy, and the unleashing of this “energy” leads to chaos and then, mysteriously, an evolution of

consciousness.” Then she says that New Agers believe that the “evolution of consciousness leads to the awakening of the “Self” as God.” She describes CP as a mixture of Buddhist meditative practice and kundalini yogic practice.

Centering prayer is also being taught to children in some Catholic schools. A ten-year old girl was greatly harmed by CP. Her story is told by Fr. John Dreher, who wrote the article entitled, “The Dangers of Centering Prayer”, posted on the website of Catholic Answers. The girl was taught to do CP by a nun at school, and began to do it every night before bed. When she closed her eyes, she would see something scary, and it would laugh at her. “Laughter is very characteristic of evil spirits” said Dreher. Centering Prayer often opens the door to evil spirits. He also states in his article “Many people assume centering prayer is compatible with Catholic tradition, but in fact, the techniques of centering prayer are neither Christian nor prayer. They are at the level of human faculties and as such are an operation of man, not of God. The deception and dangers can be grave.”

What are the errors taught by Fr. Basil Pennington?

Fr. Pennington’s teachings are similar to those of Fr. Keating. He speaks of “physical vibrations that are helpful” (*Centering Prayer*, p. 234). He also refers to energies flowing up and down the spinal system, in his book, *Awake in the Spirit*, p. 97. This is a reference to what New Agers call chakras, which they believe are energy centers. This concept is from Hinduism and has nothing to do with the Catholic faith.

In the same book, p. 81, Pennington speaks of our “process of deification”. In *True Self False Self*, God is the Divine Energy or Divine Love Energy throughout the book and references the “**Godself**” on p. 43. He states, “..it is totally within the Divine Discretion and Freedom to decide when and how the Loving God will reveal **Godself** to us.” Pennington does not explain. Since God is our Creator and Judge and we are sinners, what is the meaning of “Godself?” How could anyone possibly believe they themselves could be God? This is the height of arrogance! It is also the sin of Lucifer!

In the same book, on p. 44, he says, “I now know that I am, existing within and ever flowing forth from the divine Creative Energy of the I AM.” This is New Age language. It has nothing to do with Catholicism.

Pennington also endorsed Transcendental Meditation “without hesitation” in his book, *Daily We Touch Him*, on p. 68. Transcendental Meditation is from Hinduism and it is listed as **NEW AGE** in the Vatican document, *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age*.

In his book, *Awake in the Spirit*, p. 44, he recommends praying the rosary. However, he suggests that the person praying just HOLD the rosary, with no imaginings and

no thoughts! As Catholics, we know that the whole purpose of the rosary is to meditate or think about the life of Christ. So if you cannot have any thoughts, why even HOLD the rosary? Also, on the back cover of his book, *True Self, False Self*, Pennington claims to have integrated his spirituality with the humanism of Teilhard de Chardin and the contemplative wisdom of Thomas Merton. Teilhard de Chardin’s books were condemned by the Vatican. He had New Age ideas and wanted a one-world government. Thomas Merton embraced Buddhism and Hinduism toward the end of his life. He is also listed in the Vatican document as one of the people who had the most influence on New Agers.

Did Meister Eckhart teach New Age concepts?

‘In 1329, Pope John XXII condemned twenty-eight of Eckhart’s sentences as heretical or dangerous, namely, ‘We are totally transformed into God and changed into Him,’ according to Fr. John Hardon. He then said, “Investigation of his doctrine has since indicated Eckhart’s personal orthodoxy, while admitting indiscretion in language and the fact that his writings have been used by persons unfavorable to the Church.” New Agers use his quotes to their advantage. (*Catholic Replies*, James Drumme p. 430-431.)

What are the false teachings of Matthew Fox?

Matthew Fox is a former Dominican priest who taught Creation Spirituality which de-emphasizes original sin in favor of ‘the original blessing’ of creation. He identifies St. Augustine and the theology of humanity’s fall into sin and the need for redemption as the prime culprit behind today’s problems. He wrote several books. Among them was the *Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. The Cosmic Christ, according to Fox, is the “I AM in every creature.” He rejects patriarchal religion in favor of maternal ancient religions. His writings have been very popular with liberal feminists within the Church, and he had the witch, Starhawk, on his staff. **His writings have been condemned by the Vatican.** (More on Fox in future newsletters)

What did Pope John Paul II say about the New Age?

He said “New religious groups, including the New Age movement, sometimes find their way into preaching, catechesis, workshops, and retreats. They influence Catholics who may not be aware that they are incompatible with Catholic teaching, the Pope said. “The new movements pay little heed to revelation and instead try to come to God through knowledge and experience based on elements borrowed from Eastern Spirituality or from psychological techniques. They replace personal responsibility to God for our actions with a sense of duty to the cosmos, thus overturning the true concept of sin and the need for redemption through Christ.”

Why is the New Age spreading? According to the Vatican document, *“People feel the Christian religion no longer offers them – or perhaps never gave them - what they really need.”* It says they are looking for a deeper spirituality, for something that will touch their hearts. There are also believers who think it is permissible to mix New Age beliefs with Christian beliefs. The document states that its *“influence is clear from the rapidly growing numbers of people who claim that it is possible to blend Christian and New Age by taking what strikes them as the best of both. It is worth remembering that deviations within Christianity have also gone beyond traditional theism in accepting a unilateral turn to self, and this would encourage such a blending of approaches. The important thing to note is that God is reduced in certain New Age practices so as furthering the advancement of the individual.”* It goes on to say, *“...given the underlying vision of New Age religiosity, it is on the whole **difficult to reconcile it with Christian doctrine and spirituality.**”* There are people who insist on incorporating New Age practices into their Christian spirituality because they are looking for power or a forced experience. They wish to bypass the struggle of attaining a life of holiness, taking a shortcut. They want spiritual experiences without carefully discerning the source of the experience. The New Age is very seductive and is fooling many people who have been devout Christians. They are being deceived and we must pray for them!

How widespread is New Age thinking? In the early 90’s, Fr. Mitch Pawca, author of the book, *Catholics and the New Age*, stated that the New Age was a serious problem among the clergy, feminist nuns, and the laity in the Catholic Church. Today it is more widespread than ever. According to Clare Merkle, the former New Ager, and Johnette Benkovic who appears often on EWTN network, we are now in a crisis situation. They stated that it is difficult to find a retreat center that is free of New Age teaching. They also said that New Age practices are **more widespread** than they were in the 90’s with more Catholics and other Christians doing yoga, CP, and Reiki healing. In the secular world, many are being seduced into New Age by specific exercise programs, some alternative medical practices, “relaxation” tapes and CD’s, television programs, books, and even children’s literature and cartoons. In 1993, a survey was done of 12,000 Prodigy members. In this group, 21% had many New Age beliefs and 31% had some New Age beliefs, giving a total of 52% of the sample who have been influenced by New Age thinking. (*The New Age Counterfeit*, by Benkovic, p.109)

What can we do? It is important that we, who know Jesus in a personal way, share how Jesus has touched and changed our lives. We must tell people how He has answered our prayers and given us peace and joy in our lives, and the strength to go through trials. We must

keep ourselves focused on the True Faith by daily prayer, daily scripture reading, studying the Catechism and knowing our faith, having a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, receiving the sacraments often, and being faithful to the Magisterial teachings. In addition, we can go and encourage others to go to a Life in the Spirit Seminar, or a Cursillo weekend in order to encounter Christ in a personal way and **experience** His love. Perhaps we can bring the Truth to those who are seeking a spiritual experience. Let them know they can have authentic religious experiences through surrender to Jesus Christ. We can also encourage people to make the Consecration to Jesus through Mary, according to St. Louis De Montfort, and to pray the rosary daily. Living a devout Christian life will lessen our chances of falling into New Age traps. We must also listen to the little voice within (our conscience) that helps us to discern or to know if some teaching or practice is not quite right. In addition, we need to become informed of New Age trappings and inform others.

In regard to the epidemic of the New Age spreading in our culture, SILENCE IS NOT GOLDEN. Silence on this issue allows it to spread like a cancer to unsuspecting people. In fact, St. Paul tells us in Eph. 4:25, “Therefore, put away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members of one another”. He also states in Eph.5:11 **“Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them....”**

We also need to pray for HUMILITY for ourselves and others. We cannot turn away from New Age unless we recognize and admit our sin and repent. We need to put away our pride, our wanting to be right, so that we can renounce the New Age and be delivered from these dangerous practices.

May We Say the “s” word? In our society, cursing is OK, but do not DARE to use the “s” word, which is **SIN**. Do we, as Catholics, believe in **SIN**? Or has the world’s view blinded us to the reality of **SIN** and its consequences – the loss of eternal life. Let’s remind ourselves of the wonderful graces of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It might be helpful to review some of the serious sins listed in an Examination of Conscience Booklet: missing Mass on Sunday or Holy Days, practicing contraception, pornography, abortion, sex outside of marriage, involvement in occult practices such as witchcraft, ouija boards, séances, palm reading, tarot cards, divination, astrology, black magic, and sorcery. Some leaflets include involvement in or adherence to New Age or Eastern philosophies, false or pagan worship, agnosticism, atheism, or apostasy. Others are willful drunkenness, invalid marriages, taking or selling illegal drugs, serious slander, flagrant immodesty in dress, etc. Although these sins are commonplace today, many Catholics rationalize and placate their conscience and do not feel compelled to confess them. What a tragedy this is! Jesus died for these sins.

To order articles and fact sheets on the New Age, call Sword of Light & Truth Ministries at 770-921-1634.

Articles are available on Centering Prayer, Labyrinth Movement, Yoga, Reiki Healing, Pantheism, Enneagram, Jungian Catholics, Feminist Movement, Wicca, New Age in Business, Education, Children's Literature, Homosexuality, and the New Age in general.

All articles, tapes, and publications from *Sword of Light & Truth Ministries, Inc.* are free. Donations are appreciated.

For further information on the New Age Movement, go to Clare Merkle's website, crossveil.org. Videos on Merkle also available at EWTN 1-800-854-6316 or Living His Life Abundantly- 1-800-558-5452

Recommended Books

The New Age Counterfeit, by Johnette Benkovic. To order, call Living His Life Abundantly 1-800-558-5452. Also available is a tape series on New Age.

Catholics and the New Age by Fr. Mitch Pacwa
To order, call EWTN
1-800-854-6316

At a parish of 10,000 people over the age of seven, only about 30 will go to confession each week. Where are the other 9,970? We can all play the part of John the Baptist by reminding our family and friends of the wonderful graces we can get in the sacrament of Reconciliation and how important it is to be in the state of grace since none of us knows when we will be called home. Let us resolve today to change our ways and avail ourselves of this great sacrament.

What about those who dabble in New Age unknowingly? – According to Fr. Edmund Sylvia and Johnette Benkovic on EWTN network, there is no sin involved because of ignorance. They explained that even though a person gets involved with an occult practice thinking it to be harmless, the practice can still produce some bad effects because a bad tree produces bad fruit. Therefore, it was suggested that the person go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation because they may need healing and deliverance after exposure to the occult practices. Fr. Sylvia suggested that the person go to a Charismatic priest for Confession and prayer because these priests have often had experience with this problem.

Should we debunk the DaVinci Code? – Yes. Every Christian should be prepared to defend the faith against the blasphemies and grave errors presented in this book. Many people have been deceived by this book, and have lost their faith. Since the movie on it will be out soon, I suggest that every devout Christian become familiar with the major errors, and be ready to refute at least FIVE of them in conversation. (The book, *The DaVinci Deception* can be ordered by calling 800-376-0520 or visit www.DavinciOutreach.com. It contains 100 questions and answers and sells for about \$7.00) The *DaVinci Code* is widely read and will be the topic of conversations everywhere. We can use this situation as an opportunity to defend the faith and also to evangelize. We can tell people what a beautiful faith we have passed down from Jesus to the Apostles, and how this faith has changed our lives.

How can we share the power of the Eucharist? – We can simply share how the Eucharist, is the real body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, clearly stated in John 6. We can tell them how it gives us strength to go through trials, how it wipes out our small or venial sins, and how it helps us to love others. We can share the words Our Lord said to St. Faustina about the Eucharist. *“Oh, how painful it is to Me that souls so seldom unite themselves to Me in Holy Communion. I wait for souls, and they are indifferent toward Me. I love them tenderly and sincerely, and they distrust Me. I want to lavish My graces upon them, and they do not want to accept them. They treat me as a dead object, whereas My heart is full of love and mercy. In order that you might know at least some of my pain, imagine the most tender of mothers who has great love for her children, while those children spurn her love. Consider her pain. No one is in a position to console her. This is but a feeble image and likeness of My love. (1447)* (These revelations can be found in the Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska)

In future newsletters, we will explore the radical feminist movement, Wicca, Harry Potter and children's cartoons and TV programs, and New Age in education, business seminars, classrooms, in some aspects of Holistic Health, in some exercise programs, polarity massage, books and tapes that promote color healing, sound healing, and astral travel. We will also explore the Human Potential Movement, the Course in Miracles, and New Age Music.

“Proclaim the message, insist on it, in season and out of season, refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience, but do it all with patience and sound doctrine.” 2 Timothy 4:2