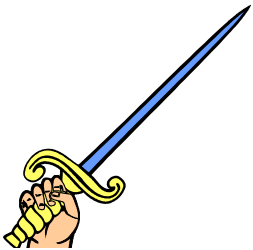


# Sword of Light & Truth

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



## *From the Publisher*

*Spring  
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, so that Catholics might realize the great spiritual treasures or truths that have been passed down to us from the Apostles through the centuries by our Popes and Bishops. There is no treasure on earth greater than the Catholic faith. Please help me in this endeavor by passing this newsletter on to others. Thank you and may God bless you.

*Anne Feaster*

## New Age Spirituality Invades our Culture

In the past thirty years, a false spirituality has swept through this country, deceiving many and infecting millions of souls. It has contaminated television shows, high-grossing movies, best-selling books, popular personnel-training programs, and some non-traditional medical practices. It has destroyed or damaged the faith of many people.

It is called New Age spirituality and it would have us looking inside ourselves to find a Higher Self or True Self, to discover our divinity or “god”-power. It is the belief that “god” is deep within each one of us. (This is not in reference to the Holy Spirit)

To connect with this “god within” New Agers use mantras (repetitious words or phrases) or yoga to empty the mind in order to reach altered states of consciousness or pure consciousness, whereby to discover their own divinity.

Their beliefs are based on three major heresies. The first one is Monism, the belief that “all is one”. The second is Pantheism, the belief that “everything is god”. It identifies God as being the same as the universe or the same as nature. The third heresy is Gnosticism, the belief that salvation comes through secret knowledge. This knowledge is accessed through various techniques that come

from a variety of sources. Some of these practices come from the occult, and others come from the Eastern religions. Examples of these practices are guided imagery, visualization, energy work, transcendental meditation, the use of crystals, sound and color healing, channeling, séances, psychic readings, astrology, polarity massage, dream work, out-of-body experiences, Reiki healing, Silva Mind Control, yoga, and Tarot card reading. Some of them practice wicca (witchcraft) which is the worship of Mother Earth or nature.

Other techniques and practices would be *A Course in Miracles*, the utilization of mediums and fortune tellers, spirit guides, ascended masters or avatars. Spirit guides are often described as angels. (Ascended masters or avatars are thought to be highly enlightened souls who appear on earth during evil times.)

Most New Age beliefs come from Hinduism. However, New Age comes from three main streams of thought: Eastern Oriental Mysticism, Western Occultism, and the Human Potential Movement. It is very syncretistic and borrows from other belief systems as well. Fr. Mitch Pacwa give this definition: "NAM (the New Age Movement) is highly eclectic; borrowing ideas and practices from many sources. Meditation techniques from Hinduism, Zen, Sufism, and Native American religion are mixed with humanistic psychology, Western occultism, and modern physics." (*Catholics and the New Age* by Fr. Mitch Pacwa, p. 14)

Although the NAM mixes beliefs, there is a common thread that runs through them all. They all tap into the universal energy force or the power within themselves. Common terms used are "altered levels of consciousness" and the channeling of power or "energy". They believe they can manipulate this "energy" for

healing. They believe in energy centers called chakras, a belief that originates from Hinduism.

Unfortunately, some of these concepts have made their way into Christian Churches, and Catholic circles as well, especially in retreat centers or parish programs. How could this be when they are in direct opposition to what the Bible teaches as well as basic Christian teaching? The answer is that when truth is mixed with error in a subtle way, many Christians do not recognize the error. Also, the average Christian is not knowledgeable on the subject of Hinduism, the occult, or witchcraft. So when the shiny apple is presented, it looks quite appealing and it seems harmless just like it did in the Garden of Eden. In fact, the three lies of the NAM are the same as the three lies in the Garden of Eden: you will be like God; you will not die (reincarnation); you will have wisdom and knowledge.

The Pope has warned Catholics about the spiritual dangers of the New Age in the Vatican document, *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age*. This document identifies many of its practices. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in Paragraph 2112 and 2113, it warns us about idolatry or divinizing what is not God. Therefore, to consider ourselves to be a manifestation of God or a god, as New Agers do, is idolatry. Paragraph 2116 condemns divination, which is consulting horoscopes, astrology, fortune-telling, etc. Paragraph 2117 condemns all practices of magic or sorcery, by which a person attempts to tame occult powers. These practices are also condemned in Deut. 18. and are considered to be very grave sin.

I want to address in more detail some of the New Age practices that are very popular now in the Atlanta area. They are the Centering

Prayer Movement, Labyrinth Movement, Reiki Healing, and Yoga. Let us take a closer look at these practices.

**Centering Prayer Movement** –The CP movement taught by Fr. Thomas Keating and Fr. Basil Pennington introduces the reader to mind-emptying techniques used in the Eastern religions and also by New Agers. In fact, they are the same as the techniques used in Transcendental Meditation. A sacred word or mantra is repeated over and over again until all thoughts and feelings disappear in order to reach altered levels of consciousness to find the god-center or True Self.

Finding the True Self is the belief that the human soul is God, and we must discover this “god within”. (This belief is not in reference to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) It is the concept that the soul is the same thing as God. As Christians we know that God created the human soul, that it is sinful, and it will be judged by God. This belief of the True Self originates from Hinduism. The Hindus believe that the self is none other than Brahm or god, that the True Self is god. Shirley MacLaine presents the same idea in her book, *Going Within* on p. 83, calling it the Higher Self. The Vatican document on the New Age has identified mantras, altered levels of consciousness, and the concept of the True Self as New Age. (For more detailed information, read my article “A Closer Look at Centering Prayer” in the October 2004 issue of *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*)

**Labyrinth Movement** - A design of a labyrinth or maze is placed on the floor of a building. A person is supposed to walk this labyrinth to the center where he or she is supposed to reach the center of his/her being and then meet the “Divine feminine or goddess within” and find healing and self-knowledge. This project is also called Verditas, based out of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. The Labyrinth Project has been on the Peter Jennings ABC News, the front page of the

New York Times, and on the ‘Remembering the Spirit’ segment of the Oprah Winfrey Show.

**Yoga** – This very popular practice is thought by many people to be only an exercise program. However, the truth is that it is part of the Hindu religion and the word “yoga” means “union with god or yoke with god”. The god they refer to is an impersonal energy force that they call Brahm. They believe that through the practice of yoga, they can free themselves from the bondage of karma. The purpose of yoga is not exercise, but to reach altered states of consciousness to discover the True Self or reach “enlightment”. In fact, Webster’s Library Dictionary gives this definition: “Yoga is a system of Hindu philosophy, strict spiritual discipline practiced to gain control over the forces of one’s own being to gain occult powers but chiefly to attain union with the Deity or Universal Spirit.”

Hatha Yoga is the most common form of yoga practiced in the U.S. It is believed to be salvation through physical exercise. It is the “physical manipulation of one’s body to create an altered state of consciousness which occurs as a result of the effect of the exercise on the central nervous system.”(*The New Age Counterfeit* by Johnnette Benkovic, p.11) There are many types of yoga. Kundalini Yoga is believed to be salvation by the serpent.(This involves the energy centers, or chakras.) Tantra Yoga is salvation through sex. **The Vatican has identified yoga as New Age, and has asked retreat centers to stop New Age teachings.** ( *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age, #2.1& # 6.2* ) Clare Merkle, a former Yogi practitioner and New Age healer, who appeared on EWTN, gives stern warnings about any type of yoga. After repenting and turning her life back to Christ, it took her five years to be completely free from the effects of it. (See her website, crossveil.org)

**Reiki Healing** – This is a type of occult/New Age healing being done in some retreat centers and hospitals. The following information is from

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](http://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

Clare Merkle's article "Reiki and Tantric Magic – Healing or Hell". The article states "Similar to acupuncture and yoga, Reiki posits that "unseen" energy paths exist throughout the body that need only be charged with positive energy to restore each network of pathways and to restore health to the body." It goes on to say that "Reiki is actually a form of Tantric magic". (Using magic is very grave sin according to Deut. 18). It goes on to say, "Like most New Age healing techniques, practitioners and school of Reiki vary their technique and combine with other practices such as the use of crystals, magical incantations for protection, "psychic surgery", group energy channeling, and spiritualism that includes the taking over of the body by one's "guide".

This has been an overview of New Age concepts. In the next newsletter we will explain where Christians run into the New Age, and name the writers who brought the New Age into our culture and our Church. During my ten years of study on the New Age, I have encountered good people who have fallen into its traps. Please join me in prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays for these people. Please pray, "Jesus, please send forth your truth into the minds and hearts of your people, and bring them safely into your kingdom."

### The Benefits of the Eucharist

Perhaps if Catholics understood the benefits of the Eucharist, they would not dabble in other religions. There are many fruits or spiritual benefits from the reception of the Eucharist. These are as follows:

1. An intimate union with Christ
2. An increase in sanctifying grace.
3. Forgiveness of venial sins
4. Preservation from mortal sin
5. Reception of the special grace of Holy Communion, which is an increase in the supernatural virtue of charity

We also receive the bodily effects of Holy Communion. These are a corporal union with Christ, the weakening of concupiscence, through a growing mastery of the passions, and an increase of one's title to eternal happiness after the resurrection of the body in heavenly glory. Of course, these effects depend upon the disposition of the recipient. (*The Question & Answer Catechism* by John Hardon, p.259,260) and (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1392-1396)

In my next newsletter, we will look at revelations on the Eucharist by St. Faustina.

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"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