

THE NEW AGE IN ACTION (1) The Historical Perspective

"Pius the Ninth's pastoral care showed itself in his activity in opposing the errors and dangers which undermined the Faith and Christian life in a century which saw the maturation of ideologies which exalted the creature at the expense of distancing him from his Creator. In this field, the Pontiff, as a good shepherd, perceived the dangers for the Faith and Christian life implied in these ideologies and reacted to them decisively - fearlessly calling errors by name and indicating remedies with equal clarity." H.E. Cardinal Stickler, May 13th 1992, Rome.

INTRODUCTION

The quotation above seems very appropriate for our situation today, even though it refers to events which were happening nearly one hundred and fifty years ago. Much of the reign of Pope Pius IX was lived out against a background of fierce attacks on the Church. Today we face a similar situation. The words *in the Church* should really be added to the title *New Age in Action* because of the spread of New Age ideas, beliefs and practices within the Church. Of course, it is true also that New Age activity outside the Church - in our secular society - bears significantly upon the lives of all Catholics as they go about their daily duties. Therefore, it can affect the way in which they regard their Faith. In fact it can be a very real - if unrealised - obstacle to the way the Catholic Faith is lived out. For this reason, if for no other, it is an enemy of the maintenance of a truly Catholic culture - or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, the restoration of a truly Catholic culture.

For the purposes of this leaflet we will concentrate our attention on some of the ways in which New Age beliefs and attitudes have most effectively infiltrated the Church to the point where they seem to completely disorientate their followers with regard to the True Faith. My proposition is simply that, where such activities, beliefs and attitudes **have** surfaced, the basic question - in fact the only question - to be asked must always be: *Is the Authority of the Church accepted or rejected in this particular situation?*

DIVINE MANDATE

This is really what it boils down to ... acceptance or rejection of the God-given Authority of the Church. It is clear, as it has been from the outset, that the authority by which the New Age operates is that of demonic forces - those forces which are in direct opposition to Divine Revelation and strongly rooted in the occult, in theosophy, in freemasonry and in secular humanism.

The Church - the Mystical Body of Christ - has a Divine Mandate to teach what God has revealed for the Redemption of mankind and, in so doing, She refutes error and falsehood. That is why General Councils down the ages have dealt with heresies clearly and firmly - declaring anathemas whenever necessary. These heresies were, in the main, capable of clear definition. But, when we look at the New Age Movement, such clear definition is virtually impossible. All we can do is to isolate those beliefs and practices which are more easily identified and defined - and then to look at their influence on the Church and the extent to which they conflict with, or undermine, the Truths of our Faith.

THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

Are these beliefs and practices we are speaking about considered to be the new policy and direction of the Church? Are they part of what we hear referred to as the *spirit of the times* or the *signs of the times*. Or, on the other hand, if they are clearly in conflict with the Authoritative Teaching of the Church, should they not be regarded as anathema? That is the question which must be addressed - though, obviously, with such a wide subject we can deal here with only one or two aspects of the problem. First, we will look at the historical context within which these developments have been nourished and brought to maturity. Secondly, we will look at a few specific examples then thirdly and finally - but perhaps most important of all - we will consider what can be done . . . what action we might be able to take in our own parishes and neighbourhoods. With the help and support of equally concerned priests and religious, the laity can start to heal the wounds which are being inflicted daily on the Mystical Body of Christ. As we consider the symptoms of dis-ease in the Church we find that many of them, if not of them, are directly or indirectly the result of influences, ideas and beliefs associated with what we have now come to know as the New Age. If we highlight some of the major events and statements of the last one hundred and sixty years we are conscious of the background of liberalism and rationalism against which these ideas and beliefs have developed. So, now to the historical context and what we might learn from some of the events that have taken place.

POPE PIUS VIII, POPE GREGORY XVI and POPE PIUS IX (1829-1878)

For the purposes of this survey I have separated the various events and statements into the Pontificate in which they occurred - starting with Pope Pius VIII whose short reign ended in 1830, just one month after Our Lady had revealed the design of the Miraculous Medal to St Catherine Laboure on the eve of the first Sunday of Advent. Two years later under Pope Gregory XVI the first 20,000 Miraculous Medals were ordered and worldwide distribution commenced. Before the Pope died in 1846 two notable conversions had taken place: in 1842, Alphonse Ratisbonne - a conversion attributed to the Miraculous Medal - and in 1845, here in England, Newman converted to the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, it was said that John Henry Mary Newman was wearing a Miraculous Medal for some months before he was received into the Church. Meanwhile, in 1844, the Baha'i faith started in what was then Persia. The beliefs of the Baha'i faith correspond to those of Theosophy and to the New Age.

The next Pontificate was the longest in the history of the Church. Pope Pius IX reigned for thirty-two years during which time the following events were recorded: The Children of Mary received Papal approval, with St Philomena as Patroness; the Roman Catholic hierarchy was re-established in England and Wales; the dogma of the Immaculate Conception became an article of Faith; Our Lady appeared at Lourdes; opium imports from China were legalised; Darwin published *The Origin of Species*; the Pope published his *Syllabus of Errors* and reiterated his ban on Catholic participation in Masonic associations; Anglican bishops held the first Lambeth Conference; the First Vatican Council took place and issued the Decree on Papal Infallibility; the Papal States were overthrown; the Theosophical Society was founded and aged its programme which was to be carried out in secret for one hundred years.

POPE LEO XIII, POPE ST.PIUS X and POPE BENEDICT XV (1878-1922)

In 1878 Pope Leo XIII received the mantle of the Vicar of Christ. Major events in his Pontificate were: the World Parliament of Religions meeting in Chicago which was widely regarded as the beginning of the syncretist movement; the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* was published; Anglican Orders were declared null and void; Pentecostalism was born in the United States and, of course, it was Pope Leo XIII who received the vision of the spirits of hell converging on the Eternal City and who instituted the prayer to St Michael at the end of Mass as a result of that vision.

From 1903 until the outbreak of the first World War Pope St Pius X was the Supreme Pontiff. During that period the Pope published his encyclical *Pascendi Gregis* condemning Modernism. Also: Catholicism in Britain was removed from the Congregation *Propaganda Fide* as no longer a mission; the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace was founded and the Pope introduced the rule permitting children to make their first Holy Communion at an early age.

In 1917, in the Pontificate of Pope Benedict XV, Our Lady appeared at Fatima calling for the Rosary and prayers for the conversion of Russia; the Bolshevik Revolution took place; the Lambeth Conference called for Christian Unity and, the following year, Frank Duff started the Legion of Mary in Dublin. 1922, the final year of this Pope's reign, saw the Council on Foreign Relations in America endorsing the concept of World Government.

POPE PIUS XI and POPE PIUS XII (1922-1958)

From the commencement of the reign of Pope Pius XI in 1922, during the seventy-year span up to the present time, we see a gathering momentum of events - some of which clearly threaten the Church, and some of which uphold it. Here we summarise just a few of those events: the World Fellowship of Faiths was formed; H.G. Wells predicted a world religion; the Lateran Treaty established the Vatican City State; in 1924 the *gay liberation* movement started in Chicago. (Incidentally it was Chicago which later became the first American city to repeal the laws against Sodomy). The Lambeth Conference approved contraception and by doing so broke nineteen hundred years of Christian tradition; the Communists predicted that the peace movement would 'ensnare the West'; the Pope instituted the Feast of the Kingship of Christ into the liturgical calendar.

The reasons the Pope gave for instituting this Feast are interesting to note - they were threefold: To counter the heresies that deny the Authority of Christ, to make reparation for the public honour denied to Christ and to proclaim loyalty and devotion to Him and to the spread of His Kingdom. Also during this Pontificate: the League of Nations was described as the first attempt at a New World Order; Our Lady appeared first at Beauraing then at Banneux in Belgium; the first Humanist Manifesto calls for the synthesis of all religions; Alice Bailey - widely regarded as a New Age prophetess - claimed that 1934 was the beginning of organising men and women to build a New World Order. Two years later the World Congress of Faiths was launched in London with the French Jesuit priest Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin as a founder member. 1939 saw the end of Pope Pius XI's reign and the outbreak of the Second World War.

During the reign of Pope Pius XII: the United Nations Charter became effective; a draft World Constitution was published in 1948 with England incorporated into a European Federation; the World Council of Churches was formed in Amsterdam; Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* which became the manifesto of the feminists; the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was declared an article of Faith; in 1953 the Pope declared a Marian Year to mark the centenary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception.

POPE JOHN XXIII and POPE PAUL VI (1958-1978)

Pope John XXIII succeeded to the Chair of Peter in 1958 and four years later he convoked the Second Vatican Council. In the same year the Findhorn Community was founded in Scotland - destined to become a major spiritual centre of the New Age Movement. In the Pontificate of Pope Paul VI the Second Vatican Council was concluded; an academic conference was held on the origins of Gnosticism; the Pope published the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in spite of strong opposition; the Club of Rome was founded; Nelson Rockefeller supported the creation of a New World Order; the Temple of Understanding held its first multi-faith World Spiritual Summit Conference in Calcutta. As we come into the Seventies, the first World Conference on Religion and Peace was held under the auspices of the United Nations; Humanist Manifesto Two was published predicting a secular system of world law and order and demanding freedom of choice in matters of birth control, abortion, divorce and sexual exploration. The year 1975 is generally regarded as the year during which the New Age was introduced to the public - exactly one hundred years after the Theosophical Society plan was formulated for establishing a universal brotherhood, a one-world religion and the development of the psychic powers in man.

POPE JOHN PAUL I and POPE JOHN PAUL II (1978-2005)

And so, after the thirty-three days reign of Pope John Paul I, the Chair of Peter passed to Pope John Paul II - and his Pontificate was dedicated to Our Blessed Lady. Most of the events of the following years are still fresh in our memories so we will not review them here other than to pinpoint just two events which could be regarded as being of particular interest. First, it was reported in 1986 that representatives of some of the major multi-national companies such as IBM and General Motors met in New Mexico to consider how occultism and Hindu mysticism could help executives face international competition more effectively. Secondly, in 1991, the Club of Rome (which now comprises one hundred influential individuals representing fifty-three countries) issued a publication entitled *The First Global Revolution* in which it stated: *In searching for a new enemy to unite us we came up with the idea that pollution, the threat of global warming, water shortages, famine and the like, would fit the bill. These phenomena do constitute a common threat which demands the solidarity of all peoples . . . the real enemy is humanity itself.* It is perhaps not surprising that, following such a statement, the slogan *Think Globally - Act Locally* was promoted in order to motivate and involve ordinary mums and dads and children in their own neighbourhoods, schools and churches.

We cannot end this short survey without recording some of the lowlights of the year 1992. Aids Prevention Teaching was included in the National Curriculum; a member of the Catholic Womens Network was appointed as Assistant General Secretary to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales; the Bradford Conference on Education launched *Here I am* (see separate leaflet - More in Sorrow); the political spearhead of the New Age Movement, the Natural Law Party, was launched with a pop concert at Wembley Stadium and a manifesto based on transcendental meditation; the General Synod of the Church of England approved the ordination of women and Channel Four Television screened a documentary series under the title *Catholics and Sex*.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This summary of events and statements must be presented largely without comment to avoid falling into the trap of manipulating the facts to fit the theory. So, the facts can speak for themselves. For the same reason I refrain from comment on the chronological coincidence of some of these events and statements as a reflection of the spiritual battle of which we are all only too well aware. Nevertheless, it cannot be disputed that many of these facts of recent history bear the imprint of the enemies of the Church and, as such, should be *anathema* to us. But, as we know, their influence has been allowed to infiltrate the Church as part of the *spirit of the times* - which seems to permeate the thinking of some theologians as well as many clergy, religious and lay-people. The enemy is often cleverly camouflaged and is therefore difficult to detect but, provided our Catholic formation is sound, we can recognise the tactics and the terminology which reveal the presence of the enemy. Having put the problem into its historical perspective I now want to look at one or two specific examples of what we might call the relentless infiltration - but without going into too much detail because I think we are all-too-familiar with the difficulties we are facing. This will be really by way of a recapitulation before coming to the final part of this presentation which deals with the vital question: *What can we do?* and how we can all participate in what I refer to as the measured response. For the moment I leave you with this thought from Pope Pius IX: *'If the Lord wishes that other persecutions should be suffered, the Church feels no alarm; on the contrary, persecutions purify Her and confer upon Her a fresh force and a new beauty.'*

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