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About Those Self-Styled Traditional Catholics —

A Logical Conclusion

Fr. Francis E. Fenton

Several years have now passed since I came to the conclusion that John Paul II is not — and could not possibly be — a valid Pope. While that conclusion may have originally been but a strong opinion of mine, it has long since become a profound conviction. Indeed, if there is, strictly speaking, such a thing as degrees of conviction, there is nothing in the natural order of which I am more deeply convinced than that John Paul II is an impostor, a bogus Pope masquerading as the Vicar of Christ. The evidence is overwhelming that he is a formal heretic and, therefore, cannot possibly be an authentic pontiff. Without any reservation or qualification, then, I am a sedevacantist.

(Such statements as the above are familiar to those who have been regular readers of this newsletter for the past several years. They serve, however, as a proper and necessary introduction to what follows.)

If I and many other Roman Catholics are thoroughly committed to the sedevacantist position, why is it that the overwhelming majority of self-styled traditional Catholics (both clergy and laity) ignore or reject that position? How can the true identity of John Paul II be so crystal-clear to the former and yet not to the latter? How can this be? I have asked myself that question countless times but, of the several possible answers, I have found all but one to be unacceptable — and that one is anything but complimentary to the "traditionalists" in question. (The term, "traditionalists," when written in quotes in this article — and of whom there are umpteen varieties — refers to all of those organizations and societies and groups and individuals who describe themselves as traditional Roman Catholics while at the same time acknowledging John Paul II as a true Pope. As I have occasionally noted in past issues of *The Athanasian*, the only authentic traditional Roman Catholics today are, I contend, the sedevacantists. It does not follow, of course, that all sedevacantists are truly and fully traditional Roman Catholics. They are not.)

[1] Are sedevacantists in general simply more perceptive, more intelligent that the "traditionalists" and thus able to comprehend the problem of John Paul II? Hardly. Did the sedevacantist priests in this country and around the world receive a more thorough theological training in the seminary than their "traditionalist" counterparts and so were better prepared to see through the falsity of John Paul II? I have no reason to think so. Those priests, for example, who were ordained in the 40's and 50's received substantially the same seminary education I received and yet those among them who are today sedevacantists are, to the best of my knowledge, almost nonexistent. The factor of mental capacity or intelligence (presuming, of course, that one has a normal supply of it) is not a consideration in attempting to explain why some priests and laymen are sedevacantists while the vast majority remains a part of the Conciliar Church and accepts its head as a valid Pope. Assuredly, it takes no brilliance of mind for a person to determine that he belongs in the ranks of the sedevacantists.

[2] A more plausible but, to me, inadequate explanation as to why the position of sedevacantism has not to date been embraced by a far larger number of "traditionalists" is that the generality of them simply have not done their homework sufficiently. They are not aware or are but more or less vaguely aware of the reasons which have prompted an increasing number of Roman Catholics to take the sedevacantist

position. If this particular category of "traditionalists" (so this explanation goes) were to make it their business seriously and open-mindedly and prayerfully to study the matter thoroughly, then they too would be sedevacantists. But, while this may well be true in some instances, it is not, in my opinion, an explanation which would apply to the vast majority of "traditionalists." And why not? Because the subject is really not as involved or difficult as some make it to be. One does not have to be a theologian nor possess a keen mind nor devote endless hours to studying the matter to determine that John Paul II is not a valid Pope. His record during his tenure as "Pope" to date eloquently speaks for itself — and that record convicts him. To hold otherwise flies in the face of common sense. Indeed, some of those who are convinced sedevacantists are people of simple faith and devoid of any comprehensive Catholic education. They just *know* that John Paul II is not the Vicar of Christ.

And so, what is the explanation as to why the vast majority of those who call themselves traditionalists are members of the non-Catholic Conciliar Church and acknowledge its head as a true Pope? The division of such "traditionalists" into two groups is, I think, necessary for a satisfactory explanation.

[3a] The first consists of those who have a closed mind on the subject. They firmly believe that John Paul II is a valid Pope and adamantly refuse to consider or even to listen to arguments to the contrary, a "don't confuse me with the facts" mentality. Even to begin to get through to this type of person seems virtually impossible. Perhaps it is because the issue is such an emotional one with individuals of this kind that they have developed what amounts to an impenetrable mental block to avoid facing up to it. To them it is just totally inconceivable that "His Holiness" could possibly be anything else than a true Pope — and that's it. Were John Paul II publicly to declare himself to be, say, a top-level Freemason, I sometimes wonder if even that would have any real effect upon the "traditionalists" I have here in mind.

[3b] And then there is that category of "traditionalists" who know well the arguments put forth by the sedevacantists in support of the stand they take relating to John Paul II. These "traditionalists" — I refer to both priests and laymen — are intelligent individuals and they are, I repeat, well-informed on the subject in question. How, then, can they possibly fail to see through the utter phoniness of John Paul II. How can this massive deception be so strikingly evident as such to the sedevacantists and not equally so to the "traditionalists"?

My response has long been merely to remark something to the effect that I do not understand or it escapes me or it defies common sense. But I think a more positive answer is now in order. If *I know* beyond all shadow of doubt the stark truth that John Paul II is a bogus Pope, the "traditionalists" *must likewise know it.* Without discarding all logic and reason, there cannot be, I contend, any other conclusion.

It would seem to follow, then, that, if Conciliar Church "traditionalists" under John Paul II (and particularly those well-informed individuals) really know better, the reason why they do not unequivocally repudiate that Church and its "Pope" is that *they lack the will to do so.* As reluctant as I may be to come to that conclusion, it is, I believe, a fair and logical one. It is very fervently to be hoped that, by the grace of God, they will soon admit the grave error of their ways, openly proclaim their acceptance of sedevacantism and take whatever steps are necessary to return to the One True Church. †

"The unholy trinity":
George Bush
Mikhail Gorbachev
John Paul II

Spirits Of The New Age

John Kenneth Weiskittel

From time immemorial people have searched for the answers to life's great mysteries: Who is God? Why was the cosmos created? What is the purpose of life? What awaits us beyond the veil of death? These and other like questions provoke a sense of awe in us as much today as they did ages ago.

As Catholics we believe that the answers have already been revealed to us by God in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, expanded upon by the Holy Ghost through the Apostles and preserved by Our Holy Mother, the Roman Catholic Church. We are assured of these truths by Sacred Scripture and Holy Tradition.

There has been, however, another approach that can be seen throughout history, one that runs counter to Christian assurance in God's workings. This approach proposes a counterrevelation, maintaining that spirits are ready to teach humanity a secret wisdom that will lead it to enrichment, fulfillment and its ultimate enlightenment and salvation. This forbidden practice is now a major part of the pagan and pantheistic New Age Movement (NAM). Before surveying NAM's spirit contacts and their messages, a brief summary of the Church's teaching about the subject and some background as to its prior appearances are in order.

Believe Not Every Spirit

In the first Epistle of Saint John we find the Apostle exhorting us: "Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. By this is the spirit of God known. Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God: and this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in the world... We are of God. He that knoweth God, heareth us. He that is not of God, heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (I John 4:1-3,6)

The dangers of involvement with spirits (*spiritism* or *spiritualism*) are evident from the above passage of Scripture, as is the fact that it is essentially a sin against Faith, an unwillingness to take God at His word. The 1961 *National Catholic Almanac* gives the following definition of spiritism:

> A system of religion that attempts communication with spirits and departed souls by means of seances, table tapping, ouija boards, etc. Spiritism is condemned by the Church. It is a sin against the First Commandment. (Felician A. Foy, Ed., *Saint Anthony's Guild*, p. 324)

The condemnation came many years before when the Vatican, on April 24, 1917, issued the following statement:

> In full plenary session it was asked... whether it was permitted through a medium, as they are called, or without a medium, with or without the use of hypnosis, to watch any spiritualist manifestation, even presented with honesty and piety... The most Holy and Reverend Fathers have replied "No" to all points. (Cited, Douglas Hill & Pat Williams, *The Supernatural*, Hawthorn, 1965, p. 134)

Note the language used here; the faithful are forbidden to even *attend* such a gathering, much less take active part.

What is the Church's rationale in issuing such a warning about these practices? Father Charles E. Sheedy, C.S.C., STD, explains:

> ...when taken seriously they imply some contact with the devil. God knows the future events of our lives, but He does not reveal them to us for our good. Now if we go to some fortune-teller to find our these things, or if we employ a spiritualistic "medium" to "bring back" our dead aunt to tell them to us, it is obvious we are not seeking this knowledge from God, and must therefore be seeking it from the enemy of God, the devil himself (and we are wasting our time at that, because the devil does not know free futures). This thinking about contact with the devil may not be actually present in the mind of the person who "goes to the fortune-teller," but it can be there implicitly, and it is bad, and foolish, and dangerous... (*The Christian Virtues*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1959, p. 287)

He goes on to write:

> It is a mortal sin to conduct a spiritualistic seance, to pass oneself off as a "medium," or to consult "mediums." Even to attend a seance merely as a passive spectator, out of curiosity, without grave reasons (investigation approved by the Bishop), is mortally sinful if there is present the appearance of approval, scandal of others, or danger of perversion to oneself. (p. 288)

Such activity would be venially sinful *only* "on account of the ignorance and stupidity, and lack of seriousness, of those who take part in them." (*Ibid.*) The fact that many engaged in spiritism have been shown to be frauds or that others may be merely dredging up subconscious thoughts in no way changes the sinfulness of involvement with them.

One valuable recollection of attempted communication with spirits comes from the celebrated British convert to Catholicism, G. K. Chesterton. As a young man, years before entering the Church, he dabbled with the planchette ("a small board holding a pencil rested on casters which, with the medium's hand placed lightly on it, would write spirit messages or draw spirit pictures" — Hill & Williams, p. 114). Chesterton observes in his autobiography:

> I would not altogether rule out the suggestion of some that we were playing with fire; or even with hellfire. In the words that were written for us there was nothing ostensibly degrading, but any amount that was deceiving. I saw quite enough of the thing to be able to testify, with complete certainty, that something happens which is not in the ordinary sense natural, or produced by the normal and conscious human will. Whether it is produced by some subconscious but still human force, or by some powers, good, bad, or indifferent which are external to humanity, I would not myself attempt to decide. The only thing I will say with complete confidence about that mystic and invisible power is that it tells lies. The lies may be larks or they may be lures to the imperilled soul or they may be a thousand other things; but whatever they are, they are not truths about the other world; or for that matter about this world. (Cited, Maisie Ward, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton*, Sheed & Ward, 1943, p. 45)

Chesterton confided to his close friend, Monsignor John O'Connor, that he engaged in the planchette frequently for a while but gave it up after it caused headaches and "a horrid feeling," something described in fine Chestertonian fashion as "a bad smell in the mind." (Cited, *ibid.*) Like the smell of brimstone, perhaps?

Messages From The Other Side

Mediums have existed from antiquity. The word comes from the Latin root *medius* (middle) and, in the sense being used here, denotes one who is used as a go-between to transmit messages from the spirit world into our own. Other terms have been used to describe those who claimed to be able to communicate with "gods," spirits or the dead: oracles, shamen, medicine men, and (to the ancient Hebrews and early Christians) diviners, witches and false prophets.

Such activity is condemned by God in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 18:11) and it is also there that we find the narrative of King Saul and the Witch of Endor. (I Kings 28:7-20) Saul, disobeying the divine injunction, visited the sorceress to have her summon the ghost of Samuel. Although she was powerless to do so, God allowed the prophet to appear and to tell of Saul's bitter fate. There are also examples found in the New Testament, such as the incident in the City of Philippi where Saint Paul exorcised "a divining spirit" from an unidentified girl. (Acts 16:16-18)

When the Catholic Church finally emerged triumphant over pagan Rome in the fourth century mediums all but disappeared; this pattern was repeated in every country that embraced the Faith. Those who persisted in the practice were forced to do so in secret. Ironically, it was not until the so-called Age of Enlightenment, that era whose promoters claimed had brought the final victory of reason over the powers of superstition, that spiritism began again to be openly performed. And the man who was responsible for its rebirth was once considered the epitome of the Enlightenment.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a most unlikely sort to have claimed spirit contacts. Born in Stockholm, the son of a Lutheran bishop, Swedenborg was regarded in his day as one of Europe's leading scientists. He earned his Ph.D. at the age of 21 and produced 60 learned books and pamphlets in all scientific fields but, when he turned 55, he "abandoned science to produce 29 volumes in Latin which described the spirit world in detail and presented his own peculiar version of the gospel. He recounted his spirit conversations with Saint Paul, Luther, infidels, angels, Popes and Moslems." (William J. Whalen, *Separated Brethren*, Bruce, 1958, p. 148) Like Mormon founder Joseph Smith, who also claimed to have talked to angels, Swedenborg taught an eternal marriage in heaven and that "God is a man." (*Ibid.*, p. 149, and, cited, John Selwyn Gummer, "*Swedenborg*," *Man, Myth & Magic*, Vol. 20, Marshall Cavendish, 1970, p. 2740) He told of an after-death state, from which one could either rise to heaven or sink into hell, and expounded embryonic New Age doctrines, such as extraterrestrials of intellect superior to man's who have received from God a "more direct" revelation, and the idea that "the Atonement did not reconcile God with man, but made it possible for man to relearn the way to union with God..." (Gummer, p. 2741) Swedenborg did not evangelize or attempt to establish a religion. Some of his followers started a church after his death but it has few followers today.

If Swedenborg did little as far as creating an acceptance of mediumistic phenomena by mainstream society, he did — thanks to his previous reputation — give it a kind of "respectability" it had not enjoyed for centuries. In so doing he sowed seeds that would grow to maturity a century later. It was across the Atlantic, in New York State, that two separate happenings would provide the needed stimulus. The first of these were the messages that the 18-year-old Andrew Jackson Davis of Poughkeepsie said he received while in a trance from the spirit from none other than Swedenborg himself, "(who) told him he had a mission to mankind." (Hill & Williams, p. 113) Unlike his ghostly sponsor, Davis had little education, yet in 1847 his transcription of the discourses was published as

The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind, the first of 26 books he would write. He has been called "not only the Thomas Aquinas of modern spiritualism but also its John the Baptist." (Robert Somerlott, *"Here, Mr. Splitfoot": An Informal Exploration into Modern Occultism*, Viking, 1971, p. 77) Davis' writings, which even spiritists concede make for tedious reading, are today almost unobtainable but an inkling of their opposition to Christian dogma can be drawn from the following description of *Principles of Nature*, given by one member of the Swedenborg Society to another: "a kind of new Koran to one section of the Unitarians." (Cited, Alan Gaul, *The Founders of Psychical Research*, Schoken, 1968, p. 49n)

But the event that really propelled spiritism into its "Golden Age" happened in Hydesville, a village in western New York. In a modest frame house, which already had the reputation of being haunted, a Methodist farmer, one John D. Fox, and his family began hearing strange noises at night. On March 31, 1848, only months after the knocking started, they grew louder and his daughter, Katie Fox, then age twelve, suddenly called out the words that were to mark the beginning of spiritualism: 'Here, Mr. Splitfoot, do as I do!'" (Somerlott, p. 74) A system of communication through rapping was developed and the spirit identified itself as that of a peddler who had been murdered there by a previous tenant. Katie's sister Margaretta, 15, found that the spirit would answer her as well. Their story was spread quickly with the support of *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley (who lived awhile in the house to publicize it) and showman P. T. Barnum, who turned the sisters into professional mediums. Though they were discovered to be frauds by three doctors who attended a seance in Buffalo in 1851 (the raps were nothing more than the cracking of knee and toe joints), the match had already been lit that would start a wildfire. "Spiritualism reached epidemic proportions," writes Somerlott. "Within three years after the Hydesville sensation there were more than a hundred mediums in New York City and between fifty and sixty seance groups assembling regularly in Philadelphia." (p. 75)

The craze didn't stop there. During the Civil War President Lincoln allowed seances to be conducted in the White House. Some of the interest that he and his wife had in this area came from the grief they felt over the loss of their son, Willie, who died at the age of 12 in 1862. (Some spiritualists claim that a few of Lincoln's decisions concerning the war, as well as his Emancipation Proclamation, actually came from otherworldly advice he received.) Other prominent Americans who expressed interest included novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe; lawman "Wild Bill" Hickok; Robert Hare, professor emeritus of chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania; J. W. Edmonds, a judge on the New York Supreme Court; N. Talmadge, former Governor of Wisconsin; and philosopher Henry James, Sr. The spirits were talking in Europe too. In France a medium calling himself Allan Kardec published a collection of their messages, *The Book of Spirits*, in 1857. This work has had great influence in many countries; Hill and Williams write that "in 1957 the Brazilian Government issued five million stamps protraying Kardec with the legend: 'Brazil — Correio — 1957 — 1st Centenary of Organized Spiritism.'" (pp. 107, 109) Kardec had his rivals. The Scotsman D. D. Home's feats astonished audiences from New York to Moscow (once, during a sitting with three British aristocrats, he is reported to have fallen into a trance, levitated, floated out of one window and into another across the room — a room *seventy feet from the ground*). Home held seances for Napoleon III, Czar Alexander II, poetess Elizabeth Barrett Browning and other leading figures of the day. Italy had Eusapia Palladino who held seances where tables rapped and moved, objects floated, and the hands and faces of spirits were seen. In 1882, a number of English professors formed the Society for Psychical Research to study such phenomena, and an American branch was established three years later. In the early twentieth century Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the lapsed Catholic and Freemason who wrote the Sherlock Holmes stories, became such a promoter of the movement that he has been called "the Saint Paul of Spiritualism." Illusionist Harry Houdini spent years exposing phony mediums (but was a believer nonetheless) while Thomas Edison attempted to design a machine that would facilitate communication with spirits. In the 1960's, defrocked Episcopal Bishop James Pike employed a medium to contact his son who had committed suicide, and London housewife Rosemary Brown made headlines by producing musical compositions she claimed were dictated to her by the spirits of Beethoven, Liszt, Chopin and other masters.

Oops! ...Wrong Channel

Spiritism has taken on a different garb in the past two decades, being performed under the New Age label of *channeling*. The term medium was discarded in favor of "channeler." This change was made not only because the earlier expression had the taint of fraud attached to it but also to indicate an expanded agenda.

In the past the spiritists usually were bereaved family members who used a medium in the hope of contacting a departed loved one and the messages they received were such as dealt with mundane, personal affairs. The kind of thinking found in these groups is demonstrated in this passage from a pamphlet printed by the Psychic Press, a British publisher of occult books:

> The dead come back to guide, help, cheer, sustain and inspire us with glad tidings of another life where injustice

> is redressed, where rank and station no longer hold sway, where mankind is given a second chance. And so they come back, not a privileged few, not the haloed saints, but human beings, men and women of all colors, classes, races, of all creeds or none. (Cited, Hill & Williams, p. 104)

There are obvious theological errors here (that the dead — any and all dead — can freely communicate with the living via mediums, that souls can work out their salvation even after death, that the "spirit world" is one, big, happy pluralistic community where the sainted dead regularly rub ghostly elbows with the worst examples of unregenerate humanity) but the tone is sentimental, directed at the vulnerable emotions of grieving relatives. This is the sort of religious level that is to be found in the spiritist churches, some of which still exist.

But this has changed in NAM, the channeler claiming to have a broader range of potential contacts. In a New Age "consumer guide" to occult practitioners the following explanation is given:

> Today the term medium has been replaced by the word "channel," "channeler," or trace channeler," which implies the ability on the part of the psychic to assess not only the spirits of those who may have been close to the client but all forms of spiritual energy, including spirit guides," "guardian angels," the spirits of great religious leaders such as Jesus and Buddha (not to mention those of rock stars and political leaders), beings from other planets and even, in some cases, animals such as whales and dolphins. (Frederick G. Levine, *The Psychic Sourcebook: How to Choose and Use a Psychic*, Warner Books, 1988, p. 44)

In addition, the discarnate entities being channeled by NAM are using their "air time" to further the errors taught by the New Age leaders. The following examples of channeled teaching are "tried" according to Saint John's admonition.

Christ: Our Lord once asked: "Who do men say the Son of Man is? (Matthew 16:13) The spirits of the New Age teach that He is only a man who tapped into a spiritual power supply that is equally available to all of us. "John," a spirit channeled through Kevin Ryerson and who claims to be the Apostle John, lumps Christ with personages from false religions as a "master," declaring, "always seek that which is deep within, for the true master of self is within the self. You will find this pattern in the other masters, in Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed and all others who have ascended to higher levels of consciousness in their service to reveal God upon this plane." (Kevin Ryerson & Stephanie Harolde, *Spirit Communication: The Soul's Path*, Bantam Books, 1989, p. 148) Some channelers, such as Elwood Babbitt, go further by introducing "Jesus Christ" to their listeners. Babbitt's "Christ" states:

> I am the Christ force, God-energy, the expression of all humanity, the expression of all nature. Christ force is the flow of energies that vibrate through all of nature and, if you will but harken in your humility, you will see and hear the full expression of those creative waves that prove the Force to be the Spirit... I am not the Savior. I am not the Star in the East. I am not the second coming to this planet. I am here, and have always been so, in Energy. You see me not, but you shall see me, for to see me remember I am the Light of your eye, I am the hand that rocks the cradle of the newborn understanding; I am the Force that pervades your being, I am your fullness, your expression. (Cited, Levine, p. 232)

Such distortions of Our Lord's Person and His character have long been a staple of New Age thought, from the writings of its precursors (like Theosophy's H. P. Blavatsky, the "channeled" 1911 *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ*, Alice Bailey of the Lucis (nee *Lucifer*) Trust, the 2,100 page *Urantia Book*); to trance mediums like Arthur Ford and Edgar Cayce; up to the present-day messages like the 622-page *Course in Miracles* (given by "Jesus" spirit and popular in Conciliar "Catholic" New Age circles) and the numerous "Seth" books of the late channeler Jane Roberts. Cayce, for instance, ties reincarnation into one of the "readings" in his blasphemous life of Christ:

> Q.: When did Jesus become aware that he would be the Savior of the world?
>
> A.: When he fell in Eden. (Jeffrey Furst, Editor, *Edgar Cayce's Story of Jesus*, Berkley Books, 1968, p. 23)

The theme underlying all NAM's spirit contacts is that Christ was simply a man who achieved "cosmic consciousness" and that His mission on earth was merely to teach others that they could find "salvation" through the same means used by Him and other "ascended masters."

Man is God. The serpent, tempting Eve, declared: "...you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5) NAM has taken Satan's deception a step further: humans are not just like God, they *are God*! If this is hard to believe, hear what "Ramtha," a 35,000-year-old warrior from the lost continent of Atlantis, said on the "Merv Griffin Show" through housewife channeler J. Z. Knight: "What is termed God is within your being... And that which is called Christ is within your being... And when you know you are God, you will find joy." (Cited, Ruth A. Tucker, *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement*, Academie Books, 1989, p. 338) Ryerson's false Apostle "John," counseling on meditation, explains that the "higher" consciousness is "the rediscovery of the point of focus which indeed dwells within the self, which is God" and concludes: "The impersonal aspect of self, which

is God, never judges. It is always present, seeking to draw each of you up to the higher dimension of the self." (*Op. cit.*, p. 144) George Anderson, a self-described "spiritual Roman Catholic" and "psychic medium" (he prefers the latter title since he deals with deceased family spirits), blends reincarnation, religious indifferentism and universal salvation on his cable television show, "Psychic Channels." What do the spirits tell him about God? "They constantly say that on the other side they are part of God and they praise God...," answers Anderson. "God is a force, God is light, God is energy, God is everything. God is us, God is animals..." (Joel Martin & Patricia Romanowski, *We Don't Die: George Anderson's Conversations with the Other Side*, Putnam, 1988, p. 262. Sounds like George sat in on Father Matthew Fox's catechism classes!) Hence we have scenes like the one in the television adaptation of actress Shirley MacLaine's New Age memoirs, *Out On A Limb*, where Shirley and her Guru stand on Malibu Beach, arms stretched open to the sky, shouting, "I am God! I am God! I am God!" The consequences of such a belief system are frightening: socially, the New Ager trends towards extreme libertarianism and ethical anarchy ("I'm God; I make the rules; I can do whatever I please!") and, spiritually, runs headlong toward ruin. Ultimately, no act is sinful; any, therefore, is permissible. And "Ramtha" says just that: "Contemplate the love of God; how great this Entity-Self is that is all-encompassing; that will allow you to be and do anything you wish and hold you judgeless. God has never judged you or anyone." (Cited, Elliot Miller, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement*, Baker, 1990, p. 172)

There is no death. This echoes the second lie of Satan in the Garden of Eden: "You shall not die the death." (Genesis 3:4) NAM's doctrine of reincarnation flies in the face of Catholic truth regarding the human personhood (integrity of body and soul), the resurrection of the just and that the individual has but one life in which to work out his salvation, as Saint Paul teaches: "...it is appointed unto men once to die and after this, the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27) The message here is clear that *now* is the time to make one's peace with God; to think otherwise is to entertain false and dangerous hope, to play Russian roulette with one's salvation. When the New Age spirits teach that death is not real they aren't disputing the obvious separation of body and soul, but rather are suggesting that it does not entail a radical division of a person and judgment. It is merely a transition to a fuller experiencing of one's "transcendant" nature. A spirit identifying itself as "Jesus," speaking through California channeler Virginia Essene, affirms:

> ...death is an automatic and nearly immediate entrance into a greater sphere of learning, growth and service to which you are well-accustomed already. You then simply live at that higher level of purpose, joy and understanding.
>
> ...As you join daily with the greater YOU of God's expression, you will stop thinking of death as a catastrophic event and can assist others to cope with their fear or even terror of death. (Cited, Miller, p. 172)

This notion is exemplified in the very title *We Don't Die*; the reader is led to believe that the dead enjoy an existence not that far removed from the living. The fatal attraction of spiritism is the illusion that the dead have the same free range of activities as the living and can communicate with them as easily as one can dial a 1-800 number.

Spirits Of Darkness

The need to compare the message of spirits against the light of Christ is self-evident. It is the only way to "try" an entity whose identity is veiled. "For Satan," writes Saint Paul, "transformeth himself into an angel of light." (II Corinthians 11:14)

One man who was shown many wonders in the spirit world warns:

> When spirits begin to speak with a man, he must beware that he believe nothing that they say. For nearly everything they say is fabricated by them, and they lie: for, if they are permitted to narrate anything, as what heaven is and how things in the heavens are to be understood, they would tell so many lies that a man would be astonished. (Cited, Gary North, *Unholy Spirits: Occultism & New Age Humanism*, Dominion Press, 1986, p. 396)

Such a statement is a solid argument against participation in such ungodly endeavors. Regrettably, the man who made it did not learn from it. His name? *Emanuel Swedenborg*.

If one reads the Bible and Church history, he will find many instances of angels or saints *sent by God* to earth for a purpose, but nowhere will one find the servants of God seeking to *summon them*. When God wishes, he sends them, but to attempt to bypass Him is to show lack of trust. Hence the Church's absolute opposition to spiritism and its claims.

The teachings set forth by the spirits of the mediums and New Age have consistently been contrary to the revealed word of God. Far from divine messengers, they are diabolical sowers of destruction. In the inspired words of Saint Paul: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Galatians 1:8) †

The Particular Judgement

Fr. Oswald Baker (England)

What inevitably most concerns us individually, and with some apprehension, is the particular judgement we shall each undergo immediately after death. The state of our soul at death determines the attainment or loss of our destiny, the possession of God in heaven, and our success or failure will be made known to us immediately after death. (A definition of this doctrine has never been solemnly propounded. One was in preparation at Vatican I.)

In the early Church it was widely believed that the sentence passed at the particular judgement is not carried out until the end of the world, that souls do not actually go into heaven or hell until after the last day. An exception was made for martyrs. They, it was held, do go straight to heaven. That is why all the recognized saints in the first three centuries are martyrs. The view that all others have to wait till the last day before entering heaven was put forward by a Pope, John XXII, in a famous sermon he preached in France (1331). His sermon aroused such dispute and speculation that he called a special learned assembly to discuss the matter, and promised to abide by its finding. He died before it closed but not before drawing up a declaration in which he abandoned the view he had preached. His successor, Pope Benedict XII, settled the question. The sentence passed at the particular judgement is carried out at once.

When we leave this life we shall go stripped of everything, even our body, and completely alone. Married or single, priest or layman, each will go alone, to the scales of judgement. As nothing else can, death individualizes all of us. The soul will stand naked before God, seen at last as it really is. Our guardian angel will certainly be there, at the conclusion of his task. We shall be called to account for all that we have done — the irregularities, the follies, the inexcusable forgetfulness, the serious matters that we accounted mere trifles. No doubt all that we have done will assume a changed aspect. There will be no lawyers to plead our case. No psychiatrists to argue that we were not in our right mind when we did wrong. There will be only one voice. It will be the voice of conscience, which will strip away all illusion and reveal just what we really are. We shall have our memory, the storehouse of habits, good and bad — prayers said, kindnesses performed, self-control practised, Sacraments received, as well as violations of conscience, sins of neglect, sins of lust, sins of pride. We are likely to present a sorry spectacle. In treatment of schizophrenia, an electric shock is sometimes applied to the head of the patient. The schizophrenic is so alarmed, feels so threatened that, in order to escape what seems like the end, the mind puts off its fantasy and the patient is jerked back into reality. To think of our death and judgement can have a similar effect on our soul. It can break the spell under which we think and act as if our self-satisfaction were the purpose of life.

We come into this life with our fists closed, all set to be aggressive and acquisitive. We have a tendency to retain that disposition. This is an innate defect. It is not poverty, as Communism alleges, that makes men quarrelsome and unhappy, but an overfondness of material possessions. Even when poverty is relieved, men still, constantly and persistently, want more. There is no limit to man's demands, once the earth is made the be-all and end-all of living. When we leave this life our hands are open. We neither take nor need anything of earth. We take only a balance of merit and guilt, which will reveal where our deepest love has lain. When we have proved our love for God above all else, and proved it by detachment from all that could keep us from Him, then we are prepared to stand before Him. †

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