

Catholic Mysticism Infused into Society

By Richard Bennett

The strong influence of Catholic mysticism has helped immensely to transform the New Age movement from being merely a counterculture subculture, to becoming embedded into ordinary society. Catholic mysticism has very effectively and subtly invaded many facets of life without being recognized or critically examined. This has been actively promoted through self-help medical, educational, and psychological programs that employ methods such as meditation, philosophical programming, and self-hypnotic contemplation. In mixing Eastern subjective spirituality with Western self-assurance, Catholic mysticism has done much to influence the core spiritual beliefs and values of the West. In the September 05 issue of Newsweek, the feature article was called "Spirituality in America." It stated that,

"Americans are looking for personal, ecstatic experiences of God." The article began showing Catholic use of a Buddhist's teachings...Father Thomas Keating, the abbot of St. Joseph's Abbey, couldn't help noticing the attraction that the exotic religious practices of the East held for many young Roman Catholics. To him, as a Trappist monk, meditation was second nature. He invited the great Zen master, Roshi Sas'aki', to lead retreats at the abbey."

After this, the magazine devoted nearly 20 pages to explain just how Catholic mysticism is permeating America. The same priest, Thomas Keating, writes,

"In the mystical life one passes from one layer to the next in an inner or downward journey to the core of the personality where dwells the great mystery called God.... This is the never-ending journey which is recognizable in the mysticism of all the great religions. It is a journey towards union because the consciousness gradually expands and integrates data from the so-called unconscious while the whole personality is absorbed into the great mystery of God"¹

This falsehood, called a journey to "the great mystery called God" can further lead a person into the whole mystic plague that Papal Rome is launching into society. Likewise, the Catholic monk and priest, Basil Pennington, is a major proponent of pagan practices and Gnostic mysticism. He writes,

"In the course of the years, sitting in silent prayer, beyond where words can interfere, men and women of many diverse traditions have come together. In that deeper place a oneness is experienced that gives assurance and heart to our feeble ecumenical efforts and interreligious dialogues. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has said that if one percent of the people would meditate we will have peace. Jesus spoke of the leaven that will leaven the whole."²

Unfortunately, what Pennington advocates is the dangerous stupidity of silent meditation plus false ecumenism. He also expressed total ignorance of what the Lord meant by "leaven." Christ Jesus did not recommend using leaven but rather warned His disciples to beware of it. The same false ecumenism and lying mystical pestilence of Basil Pennington are officially endorsed by the pope of Rome. For instance, the late pope John Paul II wrote,

¹ The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion p.127 (1981)

² M. Basil Pennington, *Finding Grace at the Center: The Beginning of Centering Prayer*, pp.10, 11 Co-authored with Thomas Keating, and Thomas Clarke

“Is it not one of the ‘signs of the times’ that in today’s world, despite widespread secularization, there is a widespread demand for spirituality, a demand which expresses itself in large part as a renewed need for prayer? Other religions, which are now widely present in ancient Christian lands, offer their own responses to this need, and sometimes they do so in appealing ways.... The great mystical tradition of the Church of both East and West has much to say in this regard.”³

Called by different names, this Catholic mysticism, i.e., “contemplative prayer,” “mantra meditation,” or “altered state of consciousness,” is permeating the world. The key factor of Catholic mysticism is the claim that there is an element of the divine in each human person. This assertion was officially proclaimed in 1965 at Vatican Council II in Rome. The claimed divine element in mankind makes it possible for the Papal system to create a so-called brotherhood, with other religions. The exact words of Papal Rome’s intent to influence mankind are the following,

“This is the reason why this sacred Synod, in proclaiming the noble destiny of man and **affirming an element of the divine in him**, offers to co-operate unreservedly with mankind in fostering a sense of brotherhood to correspond to this destiny of theirs.”⁴

Pagan Paraphernalia Paraded as Christian

The Emerging church movement is working together with the Papal system to change society. A conference in March '09 was planned for this purpose.⁵ Thus, a follow up to the conference states,

“The Post-Conference option envisions a think-tank approach that might lead to new insight and the creation of a space where all can learn together while ‘con-spiring’ to expand the emergent conversation across the widest possible array of Christian life.”

The conference website recommends the use of icons in order to bring a person into communication with God. The actual words are the following,

“The purpose of icons is first to create reverence in worship and second to serve as an existential link between the worshipper and God and bring communion. Icons have been called prayers, hymns, sermons, in form and color. They are the visual Gospel. As St. Basil said, ‘What the word transmits through the ear, the painting silently shows through the image, and by these two means, mutually accompanying one another...we receive knowledge of one and the same thing.’”⁶

In this type of imaginary knowledge often lays a foundation for a pantheistic concept of ‘god’ in society. It is no wonder that civilization is being ravaged by such forbidden representations of Christ.⁷ And following the use of icons, society is inundated with cultic imaginations such as “Harry Potter,” “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” and “Sabrina the Teenage Witch.”⁸ The “Icon

³ OFFICIAL APOSTOLIC LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II “NOVO MILLENNIO INEUNTE”

⁴ Vatican II Document No. 64, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 Dec. 1965 in Flannery, Vol. I, Sec. 2, 3 pp. Emphasis added

⁵ See: <http://www.cacradicalgrace.org/conferences/emer/1/8/2009>

⁶ <http://www.cacradicalgrace.org/conferences/JB/post/icons.php> 1/28/2009

⁷ The Scripture makes clear that God forbids a representation in art of what is divine (Exodus. 20:4-6). Making images to represent God corrupts those who use them (Deuteronomy 4:13, 15-16). Images teach lies about God (Habakkuk 2:18-20). God should not be represented in art, and all who practice idolatry are commanded to repent (Acts 17:29-30). In the New Testament, as in the Old, the Holy Spirit orders, “*little children, keep yourselves from idols.*” (1 John 5:21).

⁸ 2003 Reuters Limited 6/20/03

Studio” is an example of how such icons can be obtained in modern society. For instance, the Icon Studio states,

“To help your faith community, honor and celebrate Jesus Christ, the ‘Word made flesh,’ by providing you with the highest quality icons for your worship space and house of prayer.⁹ The Icon Studio’s purpose in worship is exactly what the Word God declares corrupts a person.¹⁰ Subsequent to icons, one has the marketing of statues, candles, and labyrinths for religious worship. For example, “Group Publishing” sells, “The Prayer Path: A Christ-Centered Labyrinth Experience.” Where it is advised,

“Open your eyes...open your ears...open your heart...encounter God.... Participants will ‘journey’ through the labyrinth guided by a CD that soars with provocative, devotional narration set against a worshipful music backdrop. Eleven stations on their journey will lead them to ‘let go’ of busyness, hurt and distractions that can spoil relationships, ‘center’ their lives on God and spend time with him, and reach out to the world with Christ’s love.”¹¹

Walking a labyrinth, in fact, or with the help of a marketed package, is pagan spirituality. The Word of God has been replaced with subjective feelings and a pagan practice.¹² An investigation into how such practices have affected society has been made. The Agape Press reports,

“As researchers probed deeper, what they found should shake churches to the core. Barna, for example, after noting that 86 percent of teenagers claimed that they believed in God, asked, ‘But what is the nature of the God they embrace?’ He is a strange god indeed, as it turns out. In his book, *Third Millennium Teens*, Barna revealed this stunning fact: 63 percent of church-going, supposedly Christian teens said they believed ‘Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews and all other people pray to the same God, even though they use different names for their god.’ In other critical areas of Christian doctrine—e.g., the divinity of Christ, the resurrection, the reality of absolute truth—the majority of church-going teenagers simply do not hold to views that are orthodox.”¹³

Not only teenagers many believers could be lulled into a mystical ecumenical fantasy world. St. Peters in Rome, Notre Dame in Paris, Rick Warren in the Saddleback Church in California, and the multitude of Emergent churches are really like a Disney World in the field of religion. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are meant to be set apart from the world, while in the world, but not of it.¹⁴ If there is no true repentance and forgiveness, serious chastisement on the people of God can be expected in the form of increasing spiritual stupor and blindness. The Holy Spirit strongly warns of the apocalyptic consequences of these deceptions and of the judgment of those who promote lies in the name of God.¹⁵

⁹ <http://www.theikonstudio.com/welcometo.html> 1/28/2009

¹⁰ “And he declared unto you...even Ten Commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake...**Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure...**” (Deuteronomy 4:13, 15-16)

¹¹ http://store.grouppublishing.com/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpItnDspRte.jsp?item=14191§ion=16883 1/27/2009

¹² <http://www.letusreason.org/Nam30.htm> 1/28/2009

¹³ <http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/11/152005a.asp> 1/28/2009

¹⁴ John 17:14-15

¹⁵ II Thessalonians 2:5-12

International Political Ramifications

Anglican Alan Jones, Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, California is influencing society and politics. He speaks to a generation to whom moral relativism, irrationalism, and Roman Catholic ecumenism have become the dominant forms of thinking. This generation has no moral absolutes. Rather imaginations and images based in the lusts of the mind have become a predominant mode of teaching. In such turbulent waters Alan Jones has written a book called, *“Reimagining Christianity: Reconnect Your Spirit without Disconnecting Your Mind.”* Alan Jones has had a worldwide influence, as a quick perusal of the Internet will confirm. However, his influence does not stop with lecturing world wide to ordinary individuals. Much more serious is the political and international recognition that Alan Jones has received. What is critical in Jones’ effort to influence the world community is his endorsement of the United Religions Initiative (URI). The purpose of URI is to create a United Religions, a world parliament of religions,

“a permanent assembly, with the stature and visibility of the United Nations, where the world’s religions and spiritual communities will gather on a daily basis, in prayerful dialogue and cooperative action, to make peace among religions and to be a force for peace among nations, to address urgent human need and to heal the earth.”¹⁶

This “peace among religions” is to include the acceptance of Islam, something that the papacy has already officially done.¹⁷ URI has two hundred and two chapters throughout the world, called Cooperation Circles. It is designed to evolve into a United Nations for Religions. While the whole emphasis is supposedly “spiritual,” a desire for legal power is evident in URI documents. For example, according to the Preamble to the Charter, URI plans a Worldwide Movement,

“...to support freedom of religion and spiritual expression, and the rights of all individuals and peoples **as set forth in international law.**”¹⁸

Alan Jones also has influence with militant feminists. For example, on June 2, 1994, hundreds of women staged San Francisco’s “Renaissance of the Sacred Feminine Conference” at Grace Cathedral where Alan Jones is dean. Alan Jones not only participated but he “shared his delight in our ‘post-traditional’ culture and ‘the new ways and forms to express the spirit’. A worldwide sisterhood of angry, militant feminists is rising to power.”¹⁹ Alan Jones’ global impact in both religion and politics did not start on its own. Its launching pad was the Emergent Church movement. Where the movement ultimately leads is a horrible rejection of the Lord’s Gospel. For example, Alan Jones rejects what is central and pivotal to the Gospel message. He brazenly declares, “The Church’s fixation on the death of Jesus as the universal saving act must end, and the place of the cross must be re-imagined in Christian faith. Why? Because of the cult of suffering and the vindictive God behind it.”²⁰ Jones goes on to say, “Penal substitution was the name of this vile doctrine.”²¹ In spite of what Jones says, Jesus Christ the Lord came with the

¹⁶ <http://www.scp-inc.org/publications/journals/J2204/Penn1.php> 1/28/2009

¹⁷ *The Papacy and Islam* on http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles_new.htm

¹⁸ http://www.uri.org/About_URI.html (Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.)

¹⁹ <http://www.crossroad.to/Books/TwistofFaith/1-Father-Mother.html>

²⁰ Alan Jones, *Reimagining Christianity: Reconnect Your Spirit without Disconnecting Your Mind* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005) p. 132

²¹ Alan Jones, p. 168

express purpose of dying as a substitutionary atonement for sin.²² Jones's attempt to thwart the Lord's mission is truly Satan's work!²³

New Age Practices Overtake Society

One Emergent Church leader who is especially popular in Christian high schools and youth groups is Rob Bell. He is the author of *Velvet Elvis*. He is also the creator of mini-film series called Noomas (from the Greek word pneuma) meaning spirit or breath. Rob Bell is very open about his affinities towards the mystical. For example he states, "We're rediscovering Christianity as an Eastern religion, as a way of life." A news story in *The New York Times* on June 16th, 2007, highlighted meditation in colleges and schools, illustrating how serious this matter is. The New Age is overtaking society, with children as a prime target. Unsuspectingly, a whole generation is being taught by such as Rob Bell on how to enter dangerous demonic realms through practicing New Age meditation remarketed as Christian meditation. How successful he is in human terms has been outlined,

"Rob Bell is currently traveling around the country delivering a message titled 'The Gods' Aren't Angry.' Mr. Bell said, he will present an 'anthropology of religion,' looking at where humans first got the idea of gods, goddesses and deities and why people often feel that 'some god or goddess somewhere' is angry 'and needs to be appeased,' he said. I have no idea what Rob Bell is saying in these messages...but what I do know is that every venue on his tour is sold out except for New York. Further 56,000 people download his sermons every week, 1.1 million people have purchased his NOOMA videos, and 500,000 copies of his two books have been sold. I am not exactly sure how influential the emerging church is right now, but if Rob Bell is any indication, its influence isn't going away any time soon."²⁴

Another example occult mysticism permeating life is given in the writings of Mike Perschon from Alberta, Canada. He wrote in his *Disciplines, Mystics, and the Contemplative Life*,

"I started using the phrase 'listening prayer' when I talked about my own experiences in meditation. I built myself a prayer room, a tiny sanctuary in a basement closet filled with books on spiritual disciplines, contemplative prayer. In that space I lit candles, burned incense, hung rosaries, and listened to tapes of Benedictine monks. I meditated for hours on words, images, and sounds. I reached the point of being able to achieve alpha brain patterns, the state in which dreams occur, while still awake and meditating."

Mike Perschon may call it prayer but, in fact, it is the same practice used in eastern religions to achieve union with other gods. He instructs on how to have feelings of euphoria with one's common sense overwhelmed. A person may believe he has made a connection with something spiritual, as "alpha brain patterns" have allegedly broken through. In fact, it is simply occult mysticism sugarcoated; deadly poison which is typical Catholic mysticism, and now, the Emerging Movement.

²² John 12:2

²³ Matthew 16:23 When the Lord called Peter 'Satan' because Peter attempted to stop Him from going to the cross.

²⁴ <http://electexiles.wordpress.com/2007/11/14/the-cultural-thermometer-millennials-an-emerging-pastor-on-tour-feminist-cavemen-teen-sex-and-genocide/> 1/28/2009

The Emerging Church leader, Erwin McManus, states that his “goal is to destroy Christianity as a world religion and be a recatalyst for the movement of Jesus Christ.”²⁵ In McManus’ book, *The Barbarian Way*, he talks about being “awakened” to a “primal longing that...waits to be unleashed within everyone who is a follower of Jesus Christ.” McManus says that the “greatest enemy to the movement of Jesus Christ is Christianity.” Mark Yaconelli is another voice of the Emerging Church. His work, called “*Ancient-Future Youth Ministry*,” claims that ancient practices can bring life to youth ministries. Yaconelli is the director of the *Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project* at the Presbyterian Church USA. Youth ministry leaders are trained at the *Project* to meet regularly for faith sharing, contemplative prayer, and communal discernment. They are then encouraged to begin forming young people in contemplative understanding through silence, solitude, and a variety of contemplative exercises and spiritual formation tracks. National news services such as the Wall Street Journal, Knight Rider News Service, CBS radio, and ABC World News Tonight have all featured news stories on various aspects of the *Project*. The self-styled “Jesus Christ” of McManus and Yaconelli turns out to be a highflying image in their co-called enlightened mysticism.

The well-known Rick Warren, by endorsing Catholic contemplative prayer techniques, further assists mysticism to infiltrate society. For instance, Warren in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, quotes from the Catholic mystic, Brother Lawrence.²⁶ He also cites, approvingly, the famous Catholic mystic, Madame Guyon.²⁷ He approves of the basic, mystical teacher of Catholicism, St. John of the Cross.²⁸ He agrees with, and quotes from the Catholic priest mystic, Henri Nouwen.²⁹ He also highly approves of “Mother Teresa” who taught there are many ways to get to God.³⁰ With Warren having a deep influence on society across the world, we see Catholic mysticism propagated in ways that we would have not deemed possible.

Culmination and Application

What has been shown in this presentation regarding the outright invasion of Evangelicalism by Catholic mysticism and its commandeering of New Age verbiage and paraphernalia, should cause serious individuals to examine carefully the foundation upon which their hopes are built. The wicked love darkness, but God’s people love the Light! Mystics have unscrupulously equated the true God with “the god within.” They have thought to divest themselves of God Himself by turning to inward self-realization and enlightenment. Their values are set on personal inner feelings that are often incapable of reasoned explanation, and they have not assessed the depths of their own wickedness.

By public demonstration, by official sanction, in countless books and seminars, as well as websites with broad ecumenical support, the papacy has set a mystical agenda that the world loves and accepts. The Emergent movement has gone the limit to go where no movement has gone before—into “inter-spirituality.” They want to generate new thinking, new discoveries, with new ways to do things. They say it is justified because we live in a new world, and we have

²⁵ Christian Examiner, March 2005

²⁶ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002) Page numbers only in succeeding citations.

²⁷ Ibid p. 193

²⁸ Ibid p.108 Ibid p.108

²⁹ Ibid p.108, p.269

³⁰ Ibid pp. 125, 231

to be futurist thinkers to survive the changes that are taking place. However, we know, as the Scriptures tell us, that sorrows shall be multiplied upon those that hasten after another god. This is the destiny of those who run into apostasy.³¹ The doom of those who hasten to reinvent Christ and His cross, as they eagerly crave for mysticism and all the lusts of the mind, bring upon themselves judgments from the true God and His Christ. They that multiply mystical ways increase anguish and pain for themselves, both in this life and the one to come. The Scripture explains the reason for their ruin: “*Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*”³²

Aligning itself with Papal Rome, Emergent Movement with its mission is really nothing more than the rebirth of the liberalism that blighted the Christian World in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is simply an extreme form of that liberalism with a re-imagined Christ and His sacrifice, a re-imagined way of influencing people with Papal and pagan mysticism slapped on top of it. Irrationalism is substituted for the new birth. The cultivation of imaginations and images has taken place of God’s gifts of grace and faith. False ecumenism substitutes for complete dependence on God. The carnal mind and human reason have been attracted and charmed by many rites and rituals, but they lack any conviction and leading of the Holy Spirit of truth. The spirit of the Emerging Church is basically that of boasting and glorying with the lusts of the “mind for mysticism” and the “heart for rituals.” The achievements of man, i.e., his development and improvement, greatness and self-sufficiency, are the shrine at which leaders of the movement worship.

However, the mighty thundering of the Lord’s Word proclaims, “*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*”³³ In face of all of this apostasy, the grace of God still conquers, redeems, and saves. The Scripture explains grace as power. Grace not only makes salvation possible but it is also efficient and all-powerful to that end. The Lord God’s astonishing grace still breaks the arrogance of the papacy working hand-in-hand with the Emergent Church apostasy. Catholic mysticism, through the soul-destroying voices of the Emergent Church, is demolished by the direct work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. The Gospel alone remains the power of God unto salvation. We see His power as we boldly proclaim His graciousness. Every individual who is saved is “*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”³⁴ In the face of subjective, irrational speculations, it is objective, rational, consistent, and all-powerful. The Gospel of Christ stands firm. The absolute sovereignty of God is a great battering ram against human pride and the doctrines of men that we have documented. By nature, we were “*dead in trespasses and sins,*”³⁵ and in practice, rebels against the All Holy God. We were justly exposed to the curse of the Law. Yet, the love of the heavenly Father, in the Gospel of grace, rescued us from the fiery indignation. By His grace, we turn to Him in faith alone for the salvation that He alone gives, by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, based on Christ’s death and resurrection for His own, and believe on Jesus Christ the Lord alone, “*for by*

³¹ Psalm 16:4 “*Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god.*”

³² II Thessalonians 2:10

³³ Revelation 19:6

³⁴ Romans 3:24

³⁵ Ephesians 2:1

*grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*³⁶ Such grace and love melts our hearts in adoring gratitude as we proclaim, *“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake.”*³⁷ *“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”*³⁸ ♦

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³⁶ Ephesians 2:8, 9

³⁷ Psalm 115:1

³⁸ Romans 11:36