

***Inscape* May 2016**

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

May you always be consciously aware of the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love and mercy of God the Father, and communion with the Life-Giving Holy Spirit dwelling within your heart!

A CHRISTIAN NEW AGE CONSCIOUSNESS

Today, May 1, 2016, we are celebrating the most beautiful and glorious Feast of Feasts—Pascha! We have chanted that Christ is truly risen from the dead and has conquered sin and death in our lives by giving us a share in His new creation. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a new beginning which brings to an end the domination of sin and selfishness in our historical time and space. And yet His resurrection happens within the orbit of earthly time and space. God mysteriously has now entered into the history of humanity and from inside is setting about to destroy sin, corruption and death, “And the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26).

This is done completely in Jesus Christ (the Only-Begotten Son of God), but gradually through His risen presence living in His living members (all are alive in Christ; breathing or not breathing), who become His leaven. God seeks to raise all of humanity into a sharing of Jesus’ new life. Because Jesus risen now possesses in His humanity the fullness of the Father’s Spirit, we human beings can now receive Jesus’ Spirit. Jesus, by His resurrection, is now the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15). Begotten of the Father (the Un-originate Source) before all ages, He is now the center and goal of the entire universe, which will totally fill and complete the Body of Christ at the end of the ages of ages (parousia).

This new life in Christ, is already yours in Baptism and grows and matures each time you “put on Christ” by dying to selfishness and rising to a new oneness in Him. This new life is “not yet” in its fullness (pleroma). Your bodily life, your total personhood consisting of the relationships of the body, soul and spirit, is still in the process of being baptized at each moment in Christ. This life is hidden with Christ in God and will only appear with the manifestation of the fullness of Christ in God in His Parousia (second coming). Yet we are already living in the New Age!

A fitting topic chosen for this month and next month’s *Inscape* teaching is: A Christian New Age Consciousness. Let us explore this subject and see what a Christian New Age would be.

A CHRISTIAN NEW AGE CONSCIOUSNESS

If you were a historian at the end of the 21st century, writing a description of the most important event that happened in the 20th century, what would you list? Would it be the ability of nuclear physicists to split the atom and hand the world nuclear energies? Would it be the wonders of computers and cellular phone communications and all the effects such has to transform the world of instant information but also home conveniences and outer-space travel?

A learned American engineer, scientist and futurist, Dr. Willis Harman, in his *book: Global Mind Change*, believes that in the 20th century there began a revolution through a quiet emerging view of reality that has radically changed our views of reality just as revolutionary as Copernicus’ discoveries in astronomy 400 years ago. Copernicus shook the then world of science and even of religion when he proved that the earth is not the center of the universe.

The Age of Enlightenment burst forth with the exaltation of the scientific methods of deduction and induction.

Rene Descartes in the 17th century believed that the key to all understanding of the universe lay in discovering its logical order through the human mind and scientific observation. Religion and the priestly caste no longer held the answer to true knowledge about the world's reality, but only scientific observation did. Since the human mind creates reality, therefore one's experience is what determines the truth.

A NEW VISION

The static world of Newtonian physics has exploded out of its static view of reality through the exacting experiments of modern nuclear physics. In 1905 Albert Einstein published his theory of relativity and "slew a beautiful theory with an ugly fact," in the words of T. H. Huxley. Einstein proved that Newton's absolute space can no longer be considered as an independent absolute. Space and time are interrelated and atoms are not the basic, self-contained building-blocks of the universe. Energy rearranges itself in new forms by creating new relationships with the surrounding environment in which it is released. In some sense the universe, God and we human beings are living in interrelationships. God and we are no longer scientific observers of a static world but are in vital, active synergistic relationships.

Einstein spoke for all modern nuclear physicists about an inner, experiential knowledge of reality, a higher consciousness than Newton's physics and scholastic theologians gave of God and His universe when he wrote: "The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness."

We have moved in the latter part of the 20th century from the Age of Science to a New Age of Consciousness. The former age before nuclear physics gave validity only to what science could observe, measure and explain. Now we have entered into a broader view of knowledge as embracing that which science presents to us as objectively observable and testifiable, but also that which comes out of the more subjective worlds of intuition and spirit.

Einstein presented this latter area of knowledge as a wedding of true science and true religion when he wrote: "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." Both science and religion have for centuries created world views of reality that have left us today with terrifying problems.

Our concept of a detached God up in heaven who cannot have a real relationship with us, His creatures, has limited our view of God as a loving active Father who is concerned with every aspect of our lives. He is not a far-away God, but He lives within us and is immanently present in all His creatures through His uncreated energies of love. He is the Orderer of the universe, inside of even the least sub-atomic particle, moving His created world into greater consciousness, loving unity and toward its perfection in God. God's perfection does not have any limit nor is bounded by any boundary! Saint Gregory of Nyssa expounds that all humanity will progress from glory to glory in an unending ascension toward the very heart of the Holy Consubstantial Undivided Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Science has been exploited to be used by the technical countries of the West to make huge profits by raping nature of its harmony and making the poor and oppressed more dehumanized and destitute. Modern technology without the feminine intuitional insights that lead to harmony amid initial chaos has produced its own Frankenstein. It has produced its own

demonic force that is blanketing the universe with a destructive power that propels itself toward a universal cataclysm at an alarming rate each day. The earth's deposits of natural resources are rapidly being consumed, leaving slag heaps in oceans of garbage. Fumes from man's machines rise up to cloud the atmosphere with a gaseous curtain that may throttle eventually any green life on planet earth.

We human beings, made according to God's very own image and likeness, stand frightened before such apocalyptic visions of an impending doomed planet earth. There is an ever growing consciousness, however, at least among five to ten percent of thinking and reflective persons to seek a sharp change. A radical change in direction is needed—a metanoia.

Carl G. Jung saw the need for human beings to know themselves and the inner working of the human psyche: "We need more understanding of human nature, because the only real danger that exists is man himself. He is the real danger, and we are pitifully unaware of it. We know nothing of man—far too little. His psyche should be studied, because we are the origin of all coming evil."

The rebirth of modern society can only come about by a rebirth experienced in the deepest reaches of each individual "person." Personhood exists only for relationships and these relationships must lead to communion and union with the created and uncreated—that all may become unique in the oneness within the eternal and perfect Plan of the Creator. Unless we change our interior world, our outside world will continue to reflect the disturbed world within us. Birth is the most fitting image Jesus used (John 3:3,5) to express the interior transformation of our human psychic powers so that we become a radiating force to build a community of love and peace and joy on this earth.

NEW AGE THINKING

Today, we can only look back to the 1980's to observe the historical beginnings that are still exerting an influence upon us. Marilyn Ferguson in her book that became something like a bible for "new agers" (*Aquarian Conspiracy*, 1980) calls it a conspiracy without a political doctrine. It is a *benign* conspiracy that is rapidly triggering a new thinking. It is a "new mind" that gathers into its nebulous framework both human potential psychologies, nuclear physics and ancient wisdom systems from Far Eastern religions as well as healing and channeling to make contact with spiritual entities to receive new power through esoteric revelations from the "other side."

Time magazine (December 7, 1987) describes this "new age harmonies" as: "So here we are in the New Age, a combination of spirituality and superstition, fad and farce, about which the only certain thing is that it is not new." The high-priestess of a religion that is against any established religion of authority, dogmas and rituals, Shirley MacLaine, insists she is God. But so are you also God, if you only would attend her costly seminars and read her best-selling books.

It is very difficult to define the *New Age*. It is so vast in its tolerance of anything and everything that will allow persons to become autonomous and "creative" and even divine! There is a vague relationship to some aspects of Hinduism, a bit of Christianity, much of gnostic sects, reincarnational religions and a bit of occult sorcery. *Time* summarized this popular *New Age Movement* that is growing annually in huge profits and members who pick and choose what they wish to embrace and live by. "The underlying faith is a lack of faith in the orthodoxies of rationalism, high technology, routine living, spiritual law and order. Somehow, the New Agers believe, there must be some secret and mysterious shortcut or alternative path to happiness and health. And nobody ever really dies." Each individual alone can determine

his or her truth, and live by that so-called truth. Truth is what “you” want it to be. No one has any authority to suggest any other truth beyond that which “you” determine it to be.

A CHRISTIAN VIEW

Let us briefly critique the more popular “beliefs” of the New Age Movement by relying on God’s revealed teachings in Sacred Scripture and in the teachings of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The first point to make is that nearly everything brought forth in the New Age thinking is not so new, but it has roots in past religious systems that we find condemned in the Bible and in the Orthodox Christian Church in the early centuries and communities of Christianity.

1. **WE ARE GOD.** Coming out of a scientific man-centered world, New Age thinkers usually reject obedience to a supreme, personal God, who gives commands and demands obedience and punishes those who violate His laws. God is, for such thinkers, the Absolute Ocean of all being, not a personal, but an impersonal Energy. We human beings are supposed to be a part of God, but we have fallen from our true state of divinity and have been imprisoned in matter. We do our *karma*, or re-education on this earth in order through various physical deaths and reincarnations of our soul, we can ultimately return to our true divine state by our efforts.

As Christians guided by God’s revelation, we can see that God is a personal God, three persons in the one nature of God. God has freely willed to create each of us individually as unique persons, made of body, soul and spirit relationships. We are born and exist for the first time in time. We live to become transformed into our true selves in and through the Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God incarnate. We die and will never return to begin a new earthly existence in a new material form.

The Church adamantly rejects as heresy any reincarnation or any theory of pantheism that would hold God as the impersonal force hidden in the illusions of material creatures. All true reality is God!

2. **JESUS CHRIST, ONLY AN ENLIGHTENED HUMAN BEING.** For many New Ager devotees, Jesus Christ is the same as we. He is God, not by nature, but through enlightenment attained by His efforts while He lived on this earth. He was God, one with the absolute God, so His way of enlightenment can help us discover that we, too, are God, if we move from ignorance of illusions to return to our true state.

We Christians hold unwaveringly that He is God the Son by nature and not created. He assumed a human nature in order to be God’s image in human form, through suffering and dying, of the perfect and eternal love God has for each of us human persons. We can become truly children of God by being reborn through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Yet we are not God by nature and we will always remain “other” than God, namely human creatures, even though by the merits of Jesus Christ and our cooperation (synergy) to be converted away from sin and selfishness we can be divinized by God’s grace, the very gift of Himself and His loving presence in our existence.

3. **THE MATERIAL WORLD.** Against New Age teaching that matter is the source of evil and is an illusion (*maya* in Hinduism) Christianity preaches the goodness of God’s created material world. God saw matter and all material creatures as very good (Genesis 1:31). God is not far from His creatures, “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

God is immanently present and actively working to bring His creatures to fulfillment in, by and for Christ (Colossians 1:16). Thus the Christian Church has always, since the Son of God assumed matter, met God in the sacramental use of material signs or symbols to allow us to encounter the risen Jesus Christ in all places and time in our world.

4. **SALVATION.** The relics of some form of Gnosticism, an ancient philosophy that held salvation to consist in knowledge of our true, divine self, are the foundation of New Age ideas about salvation. For Christians salvation consists in God's loving mercy to condescend, especially in His Son, Jesus Christ, to take away our sins and guilt and heal us of our fears. In Jesus' death and resurrection we have absolute assurance by faith that God loves us as Jesus does unto death. Such perfect love drives out all fear (1 John 4:18) and we can with confidence call God *Abba*, because we really are now children of God (1 John 3:1), all because of what Jesus has done (Ephesians 1:5).

5. **THE INVISIBLE WORLD OF THE SPIRIT.** In current New Age thinking God has not really created the material world. He is Spirit and can have nothing to do with matter. This of course denies God's revelation in the Old and New Testaments where we profess: "I believe in one God...Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." It is not evil in itself but an illusory distraction produced by the *ego* as an escape from turning within to abandon its illusory guilt over its imagined separation from God.

Therefore, the invisible world of the spirit is beyond the material world which must be transcended by living interiorly, centered upon our true divine selfhood. For Christians, spirit does not oppose matter. God is spirit: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are not pure spirits or God by our created nature. Yet we live on different levels of body, soul and spirit relationships. We hold God as Spirit, immanently working in us and in His created world. He has created also angels as His instruments to help us on our journey to life in the Trinity or the Heavenly Kingdom.

Human beings die and yet live as spiritualized beings for whom we can pray and they can intercede for us. We believe in evil spirits, both fallen angels and evil human spirits who have power to attack us and draw us away from loving obedience to God. For New Agers, as Dostoevsky said, anything is permissible if there is no God. But anything is also permissible if everyone and everything is God. Once we consider ourselves to be God, there is no higher moral Absolute. This creates ultimately in New Age thinking an ethical anarchy. *I* determine what is good or evil, since *I* am always beautiful, creative, no sin in me, only ignorance of my divine nature. The only sin is ignorance of my personal divinity!

Thus many occult practices are in vogue, such as ways of knowing the future through channeling through a medium to make contact with the dead "spiritual entities," use of Ouija boards, astrology and even "black" witchcraft where one surrenders to the power of Satan in order to attain power over other human beings or "white" witchcraft or "wicca" to contact benign spirits to lead us to true and ancient wisdoms.

The Church as from the earliest times of Christianity encouraged the "communion of saints" and the praying for the departed ones, those who have "fallen asleep" (words of Jesus Christ concerning the death of a little girl), who may be in the state of needed healing therapy as God determines through His providential care. Our contact with such departed human and angelic spirits is done, however, in prayer and for motives, not of selfish gain, but of fulfillment of God's goals and commands revealed to us. "Be joyful always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18).

A NEW AGE FOR CHRISTIANS

Karl Rahner insisted that the Christian of the future will have to be a mystic or she or he will be nothing at all. They will have had to experience SOMEONE! In our contemporary world, so exploding with enticing riches in the material order, we are being called to become more

personalized as we stretch out for meaningful relationships in an I-Thou intimacy of love, both with our dearest friends and above all with God.

Our Christian faith can be challenged by many of the values in our modern society, and also from the New Age thinking. We can be challenged to enter into a new age of Christian consciousness that has always been in the Body of Christ, yet we have not always perceived the possibilities.

Next month's teaching will be devoted to developing a New Age for Christians.

Father John Michael Zboyovski