



# Catholic Family NEWS

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## The Reality of Purgatory

Turn to page 6



## John Cotter on Syncretism

Turn to page 9



## Catholic Church in China

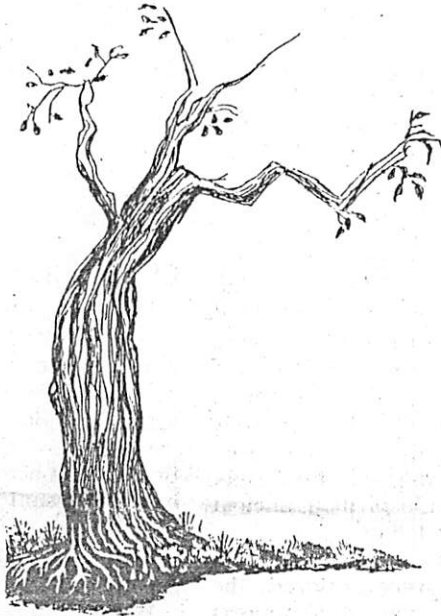
Turn to page 13



“... Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

# RENEW: A Tree Rooted in Modernism and the New Age Movement

by: Cornelia R. Ferreira, M.Sc.



The tree used in RENEW has no connection with centuries of Catholic tradition. According to Cornelia Ferreira, this symbolism has ties to occultism.

RENEW is a program developed under Newark's Archbishop Peter Gerety, in 1978, in order to renew parishes by involving parishioners in church and community. Extending over three and one-half years, RENEW offers "formation in prayer, community-building, justice, liturgy and evangelization".

Spreading through North America and abroad, RENEW has been used in Ontario, Canada, from the start. Montreal endorsed the program in 1986, but according to the Vice-Chancellor, although "permitted" in Toronto, there is "no Archdiocesan sponsorship or mandate for all parishes". Cardinal Ratzinger has indicated that Rome is studying the program.

RENEW raves about its

success in building a more communal parish; taking "liturgical and homiletic preparations to new levels"; "calling forth unparalleled prayer" — "very possibly more than at any previous point in time"; and returning droves of inactive parishioners to church. Further claims are that the program will develop new leaders for "parish ministries" and will be "a unifying force promoting compatibility between young and old, liberals and conservatives, and peoples of different cultures and languages". Renew will heal family relationships and make people more concerned about social justice. It will also provide "a strong sense that the diocese is moving forward". Not only will "Church devotions

sharply increase" — but so too will Sunday collections.<sup>1</sup>

Such ambitious claims make one interested in studying the program's philosophy and methodology before commitment. However, RENEW publications are not forthcoming. Neither the Canadian office of RENEW nor the Toronto Coordinator could provide me with materials and I eventually obtained them from the publisher. Parish priests seem to sign up on the basis of "witness talks" whilst ignoring criticisms pouring in from priests and laity. These question RENEW's lack of Catholicity and promotion of Modernist errors as well as its tampering with the Liturgy of the Mass.<sup>2</sup> Examples given

Continued on page 17

## RENEW

Continued from page 1

include the re-writing of Mass prayers; encouragement to stand during the entire Eucharistic Prayer and to receive Holy Communion under both species at all Masses; and the incorporation of dance into the Liturgy.

### Criticisms and Critique

Critics also note RENEW's promotion of Modernism and Marxist-leaning socialism which seem incongruous in a program of spiritual renewal. They also disapprove of RENEW's methodology as it involves Values Clarification and Sensitivity Training, techniques which lead to a loss of moral absolutes.

In December 1986, the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Doctrine issued a critique of RENEW. They too noted its "generic Christianity" — the lack of Catholic content; its presentation of the Church as a collection of faith communities rather than one structured, hierarchical community bound together by a faith based on Scripture and interpreted by the Magisterium; its promotion of lay ministries and downgrading of the priesthood; its "emphasis on experience as the locus of revelation", thus posing a threat to orthodoxy and unity; and its "preoccupation" with the Eucharist as a community meal, to the exclusion of its sacrifice and worship aspects. These errors are the tenets of Modernism, a heresy condemned by Pope Saint Pius X, that seeks to alter the Church.<sup>3</sup>

### RENEW and Christ's Divinity

Looking for the reasons for the bishops' criticisms, we find that, amongst other errors, RENEW indirectly denies Christ's divinity by

Further, re-interpreting Jesus' mission, RENEW's liberationist slant makes solving our problems by ourselves a Christian duty:

The mission of Jesus was to free from whatever threatened ... humanness. Where people were oppressed ... the Kingdom had to come ... Our responsibility

### RENEW indirectly denies Christ's divinity by portraying Him as struggling to solve problems.

ity is to change that which stifles the human spirit.<sup>6</sup>

To be a follower of Jesus ... means to act with great concern for others, especially the needy, and to call on His Spirit to empower us for the task.<sup>7</sup>

Note, firstly, the request for power, not assistance. Secondly, Christ came to liberate us from sin, not from human oppressors. Thirdly, He said that being His follower entails carrying one's cross and suffering with Him (Mk. 8:34-35). There seem to be only three fleeting references to the cross in RENEW, however, and even these are more in the context of the Resurrection than in the redemptive value of suffering.<sup>8</sup>

Christians must, of course, practice charity, helping one's neighbor, but this flows out of the love of God, which comes first. This love is shown by **obedience to His will**. "Concern for others" is not necessarily **charity**, as illustrated by the Small Group introduction which says: "The atmosphere should be ... warm and friendly. Ambiguity and difference of opinion should be accepted. There should be an openness to new ideas ..." True concern for the welfare of **souls** involves teach-

ers with the commission, "go out and bear fruit that will last".<sup>10</sup> The coordinator is enjoined to keep RENEW moving forward when problems arise.<sup>11</sup> Since opposition is a "problem", is this why critics are often ostracized for being "negative" — in spite of the open-mindedness the program supposedly generates?

### RENEW and the Parish Priest

#### Guideline Thoughts:

**The Priest and RENEW** outlines how the parish priest can become redundant.<sup>12</sup> First, the busy pastor is recruited by promises that RENEW will create "many new ministerial workers" to "relieve the already overburdened staff" and his contribution will return many to the sacraments. Then he is used as a salesman. A day's training motivates him to "communicate enthusiasm" to parishioners. After the program starts, everyone will "understand" if he is too busy to attend all events. At meetings he "need not feel the pressure of being an expert in Scripture or prayer" or of offering "verbal leadership". He should be an "ordinary member" rather than an "answer man" because **"RENEW is not so much a matter of determining the right and wrong of a series of theological questions, as much as it is an experience of sharing the faith"**. (emphasis added)

Small groups will supposedly convince the priest to cooperate in making himself less necessary as he will see "how effectively people can minister to one another". Further, in "relating" to group leaders, he will be able to multiply his presence ... Even with the priest shortage ... and with even leaner years coming ... the Spirit has not abandoned us. A new plan is emerging in which the parish can be a community of small communities with even greater vitality and ... spirituality ...

With such a golden carrot dangled in front of him, it is not surprising if an overworked parish priest is tempted to relinquish his authority.

RENEW's Large-Group pseudo-liturgical rituals can also help reduce the priest's importance. Theatrical lighting and music and the use of symbols such as oil, bread, wine and (home-made) ashes in ceremonies that include blessings, anointings and processions can make parishioners feel they are experiencing "authentic" liturgies without a priest.

### RENEW'S Socio-Political Outlook and Trend

The political agenda mentioned by critics is intro-



"RENEW is not so much a matter of determining the right and wrong of a series of theological questions, as much as it is an experience of sharing the faith". As a result, the Ten Commandments and the Christian moral law end up to be falsely viewed as "praiseworthy but not mandatory".

duced in RENEW's green Leadership training manual. The Church "stands at the end of an age," it proclaims, and Vatican II brought it in to a "new age". "The revolution is upon us and old ways of thinking and acting will no longer do." "Old age" characteristics include: "rugged individualism — every man for himself; power belonging to a minority."<sup>13</sup>

Now, individualism, the social theory underlying democracy, advocates the rights or free action of the individual, but the word "rugged" is used by its enemies to denigrate American democracy<sup>14</sup> (which is built on Judeo-Christian principles). The opposite of individualism is collectivism, which denies the divinely-ordained right to private ownership and leads to a collectivist theory of morality.<sup>15</sup> Further, power inescapably belongs to a minority in every group or society — even Christ established a hierarchy for His Church — so disapproval of "minority power" actually is an attack on authority, giving significance to the word "revolution", used several times in this RENEW section.

RENEW's third semester ("Empowerment by the Spirit") develops the Leadership Book's non-spiritual agenda: the involvement of participants in political activism against perceived "injustices". One such "injustice" is women's "inequality" in the Church, so RENEW supports feminism. For example, mini-seminar topics "to heighten

awareness which may result in ... an interest in ... changing unfair systems" include "Women's Rights" and "Sexual Minorities" (homosexuality?).<sup>16</sup> A Prayer of the Faithful "experience"

Continued on page 18

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### Critics also note RENEW's promotion of Modernism and Marxist-leaning socialism which seem incongruous in a program of spiritual renewal. They also disapprove of RENEW's methodology as it involves Values Clarification and Sensitivity Training, techniques which lead to a loss of moral absolutes.

portraying Him as struggling to solve problems.<sup>4</sup> Like Him, we must solve our problems by ourselves: "Our desire to be relieved of ... tensions causes us to create an image of (God) as a miracle worker who will come down from Heaven if we cry loud enough and solve all the problems ... (Jesus) understood that it was His responsibility to grapple with (tensions) and try to shape a vision of a better world ... **We must believe that we can shape our times** ..."<sup>5</sup>

ing the truths of the Catholic Faith — which are unambiguous and unchanging!

#### Packaged Selling

RENEW is "sold" to parishes much like vacuum cleaners sold door-to-door. As described in the green Leadership Book,<sup>9</sup> at an overnight training session the "sales staff" (Core Group) sign a "Sacred Contract", pledging "to carry through the renewal program". Contracts are offered up with the gifts at Mass, then returned to sign-

# RENEW

Continued from page 17

asks, "That development is being stunted, due to sex or race discrimination, bring us to a greater realization of our Gospel mission," ... with the response, "Give us the strength to make the church (*sic*) a model of equality."<sup>17</sup>

Further, RENEW's list of ninety-three organizations to help one "strive to live justly" includes militantly pro-feminist groups like the Center for Concern, the Quixote Center, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), the National Assembly of Women Religious, the Global Education Associates and NETWORK.<sup>18</sup>

The first five groups have actively supported all the radical Christian feminist conferences. The LCWR has also publicly supported the nuns who signed the 1984 pro-abortion *New York Times* advertisement, whilst NETWORK, an LCWR lobbying arm, has been promoting the political involvement of nuns as agents of social change. The Jesuit-sponsored Center for Concern and its spinoff, the Quixote Center, heavily promote women's ordination and other peace and justice issues, such as disarmament, "economic alternatives" and "social theology".

## RENEW'S Supposed "New Age" for the Church

Besides supporting radical Christian feminism, RENEW also attempts to restructure the Church by presenting sought-after changes as a *fait accompli*. The green Leadership Book says the Church in the "new age" is "changing in its understanding of dogma and structure". Seemingly, it no longer sees itself as an "organization"; its structure is changing to "authority as

ture. The Council document, *Lumen Gentium*, affirmed this position; re-confirmed the Church's divinely-instituted hierarchical nature; and re-stated that the episcopate only has authority if united with the Pope (no structural change in authority).<sup>21</sup> The Church's mission is actually "proclaiming and spreading the Kingdom of Christ (already present in the Faithful) and serving "as an instrument for the redemption of all" — redemption from *sin*.<sup>22</sup>

Further, *Lumen Gentium*

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says holiness consists in obeying God.<sup>23</sup> Since this is done through His Church, those who disobey God's Magisterium cannot achieve holiness — is this why holiness gets redefined as "striving for justice and peace"? The dissident feminist movement, which claims a "justice-based spirituality",<sup>24</sup> illustrates how, if "striving for justice" involves disobeying God, it generates discord, not holiness; furthermore, this striving can never be equated with the duties of the ministerial priesthood.

### New Age Movement and Global Revolutionary Stirring

There is a deeper dimension to RENEW's political agenda, made evident by its use of the term "new age" in the context of "revolution". In existence today is a growing revolutionary global stirring called the New Age movement because of its continual references to an

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collegial"; its mission is "holiness, striving for justice and peace". This striving "must be equated with preaching the word (*sic*) of God and administering the sacraments"<sup>19</sup> (the priest's duties).

Pope John XXIII and Vatican II supposedly ushered in these "new age" changes,<sup>13</sup> although Pope John, in his opening message to the Council, declared, "Under no circumstances may the Church turn away from the sacred patrimony handed down by our ancestors."<sup>20</sup> i.e., change dogma or struc-

enlightened New Age. Rooted in the occult and using sophisticated methods of mind control, it seeks the total destruction of Christianity and representative democracy and the establishment of a Luciferian world religion and a new world order — classless, except for its self-appointed rulers. It promises a just and peaceful world. Also known as futurism, the movement includes the tenets of secular humanism.

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## RENEW an Experiential Religion

Preaching that inner reform precedes social reform, New Age leaders use psychological "self-help" groups to facilitate their followers' entry into the occult. **Experiential religion is vital to the movement.** (Recall that RENEW uses group therapy-like techniques and, as the bishops' critique noted, promotes experiential religion.) Operating through a network of organizations, the movement recruits unsuspecting Catholics by using Christian-sounding language whilst also seeming to be very concerned with helping the poor and oppressed.

The following lines from a New Age brochure are startlingly similar to RENEW's Leadership Book statements:

"We are moving out of an age characterized by idealism, devotion, separatism and the development of the individual. The emphasis shifts from individual to group endeavor. (Cf. RENEW's "old age" characteristics; also, RENEW operates through small groups and forms Faith communities that diminish individualism).

"The Antichrist is an energy which destroys the old attitudes, preparing the way for the creative energies of the Christ. (Cf. RENEW: "Do we want to hold on to our ... old ways of thinking ... and so become pallbearers for the old age or do we ... abandon ourselves to the ... challenge of the Spirit, and joyously usher in a new age?"<sup>19</sup>).

The destruction of old attitudes equals their death, which, of course, is the necessary antecedent to pallbearers.

### For The New-Age "Christ", Justice and Freedom Alone Suffice

Appealing to Christian sentiments, the brochure reports that the New Age "Christ" (not Jesus) says he will "show men that the way forward requires only the acceptance of justice and freedom".

His primary concerns are the economic, political and social imbalances. His first priority will be a **call to action** to save the (starving) millions ... He will then show humanity ... how to create a civilization based on cooperation and goodwill, leading to world peace (emphasis added).

This "Christ" will "appear" when we "demonstrate our willingness to rebuild our world along more just lines through sharing and cooperation on an international scale".

The phrase, "a call to action," provides a RENEW-New Age linkage as in 1976



Shown here an artistic depiction of satan, who will be bound at the end of time. Since RENEW is tied to the occult-based New Age Movement, it is not surprising to find it tainted with occultism — thinly-disguised as "Christian".

the American bishops sponsored "A Call to Action" conference (quoted by RENEW<sup>25</sup>) which sought to create a democratic, classless Church in five years. One of the organizers of this conference was Archbishop Peter Gerety whose RENEW "process" was born two years later. The conference recommended women's ordination and married priests and the acceptance of abortion, homosexuality and Marxism. Considering anti-Communist statements "too negative", it yet blamed the Church and the United States for the world's problems.<sup>26</sup>

### RENEW and Promotion of New Age Groups

Besides sharing New Age terminology and philosophy, RENEW also promotes several well-known New Age groups through its organ-

*Christian Lifestyle*,<sup>29</sup> is quoted extensively in Semester 3. Finnerty supports Fidel Castro and commends Red China's collective systems. He tears down American governmental policy and the Christian Churches, blaming them for the world's ills; his solution is a global world order. Strangely, neither Finnerty nor RENEW mentions Russia's flagrant violations of justice and peace — which **Our Lady of Fatima said, would be the cause of the world's problems** if Her requests went unheeded.

Finnerty aligns himself with New Age leaders and organizations. He devotes a whole chapter to the World Servers, a pivotal New Age group, whom he describes as "catalysts" of the global justice movement who "challenge institutions like the Church". Not surprisingly, this brand of social

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izational list, including the very important Bread for the World (BFTW). New Agers urge Christians to support BFTW, so half of the radical 1986 "Women in the Church" Conference's offerory collection went to this organization. However, BFTW is not involved in hunger relief but only in creating global reserves and agencies to control the distribution of world assets to effect a new world order. Although aware of BFTW's real goal,<sup>27</sup> RENEW nevertheless heavily promotes it as an example of its own agenda to move Catholics from "direct action" (the volunteer work characteristic of Christian charity) to "social change" (political action "to change unfair systems").<sup>28</sup>

### Adam Finnerty: RENEW Contributor

One formally-acknowledged RENEW contributor is Adam Finnerty, a Quaker who was part of the Sixties' hippie/activist scene. His book, *No More Plastic Jesus: Global Justice and*

justice appeals to Christian feminists and so arch-radical feminist Rosemary Ruether praises Finnerty for showing Christians how to commit themselves "to creating a new world order".<sup>30</sup>

Finnerty hopes his book will be "a call to action" (that phrase again), bringing in "a multitude of new adherents to our movement". "To facilitate this", he co-authored "The Shaker Pledge", named after the Shaker sect which worshipped a bisexual God and believed in lives of "creative simplicity". RENEW furthers Finnerty's futurist goals by including the Shaker Pledge in Semester 3.<sup>31</sup> Amongst other things, signers commit themselves, as Finnerty tells us, to give their wealth to groups working for "better standards of living for the deprived"; to **personal renewal** through any type of spiritual discipline; to participation in a **faith community**; and to change economic systems.<sup>32</sup> The

Continued on page 19

# RENEW

Continued from page 18

New Age aim, promoted by Finnerty, is that We must "live simply", preferably commune-style, donating our money to organizations (seemingly) working for the poor; the Church should become propertyless.<sup>33</sup> RENEW seems partial to this idea.<sup>34</sup>

## RENEW Tainted with Occultism

Since RENEW is tied to the occult-based New Age movement, it is not surprising to find it tainted with occultism — thinly-disguised as "Christian". Without mentioning All Saints' Day, RENEW implies that a Holy Hour "activity" from 11 p.m. to midnight on "All-Hallows Eve, October 31st", is a "vigil for an important feast".<sup>35</sup> No such vigil exists in traditional Catholicity — but All-Hallows Eve is a very important occult feast day. In a "Healing Prayer", participants are led step-by-step into the trance state to visualize themselves "healing" relationships.<sup>36</sup> Mastering the technique of visualization is a necessity for those wishing occult success, according to *Psychic Experience for You* by Rodney Marsden, but since it involves the trance state, visualization opens one to hypnotic suggestion and mind control. New Agers use this method to recruit self-improvers, teaching that our thoughts create our world (thus deifying man).

This leads to the occult doctrine of "wholeness", central to belief in the evolution of man toward his own deification. In a "Reconciliation Service", RENEW states: "Personal hurts must be healed to free the disciple for his/her journey towards greater wholeness. This journey requires

overcoming the fear of change in our lives ..."<sup>37</sup> Compare this with New Age leader David Spangler's sentiments on lucifer:

"The true light of lucifer cannot be seen through sorrow ... (or) rejection ... (Cf. RENEW's "personal hurts")."

"Lucifer comes to give us the final gift of wholeness. If we accept it, then ... we are free. That is the luciferic initiation ... into the New Age, (involving) leaving the past ... shedding our ... fears ... and becoming whole ..." (emphasis added).<sup>38</sup>

Thus, acceptance of the doctrine of wholeness is one's initiation into the luciferic New Age, called by Spangler, "the age of man's wholeness".

## RENEW'S Hidden Intent: Our Answer

As RENEW itself states, the revolution is upon us.<sup>13</sup> RENEW has the potential for making the vision of "The Call to Action" Conference a reality, producing a neo-Catholic Church that is independent of Rome. It is thought that replacement of objectionable material by correct doctrine would make the program acceptable. However, even if it were possible to completely launder a program fraught with error from beginning to end (in which case it would no longer be RENEW), the hidden intent of RENEW should make the program inadmissible.

But why do we need RENEW? Our Lady of Fatima gave us God's precise plan for achieving world peace and ending world hunger, a plan involving "sound theology based on tradition ... absolute union with the Pope ... and deep interior devotion to Mary".<sup>39</sup> Could

a man-made program, inimical to Her Son's Church, ever be superior? We can indeed help transform the face of the earth — by embracing with humility the Queen of Peace's program for the conversion of self, Russia and the world.

### Footnotes

1. Introduction, *RENEW: Large Group Activities*, page 7; *Seven Questions about RENEW*, page 6 and promotional pamphlets.
2. Forbidden by Vatican II in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 22:3.
3. His encyclical, *On Modernism*, is explained, with his approval, in J.B. Lemius, OMI, *A Catechism of Modernism* (Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1981) (reprint).
4. "Empowerment by the Spirit", *RENEW: Home*, pages 26-31. This is the heresy of Nestorianism.
5. *Ibid.*, page 26. This is the heresy of Pelagianism. Pope Pius X called Modernism "the synthesis of all heresies", so it is not surprising to find several heresies in Modernist RENEW.
6. *Ibid.*, page 30.
7. "Empowerment", *Small Group Sharing Option 1*, page 13.
8. *RENEW: Pastoral Staffbook 2*, page 26; *Large Group*, pages 69 and 108.
9. There are two Leadership Manuals, one red, the other green.
10. Page 41.
11. Page 21.
12. See especially pages 1-4, 7-8.
13. Page 5.
14. See "individualism," *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5th ed. (1964).
15. *The Catholic Catechism*, page 387.
16. *Large Group*, pages 148-49.
17. *Ibid.*, page 155.
18. *Ibid.*, pages 168-74.
19. Page 6.
20. *The Catholic Catechism*, page 219.
21. In 1, 18, 22; also see *The Catholic Catechism*, page 223.
22. See 2, 3, 5, 9. Cf. Heb. 2:17 and 7:27.
23. See 41.
24. Diann Neu, SP, "Our Name is Church: The Experience of Catholic-Christian Feminist Liturgies", *Concilium*, No. 152 (1982), 75.
25. "Empowerment", *Small Group Option 1*, page 27.
26. Vincent J. Miceli, SJ, "Detroit: A Call to Revolution in the Church," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 6 (March 1977), 27-32, 47-48.
27. "Empowerment", *Ibid.*, pages 23-24.
28. In "Empowerment", *Home*, pages 10-25 and in other parts of RENEW.
29. *Maryknoll, N.Y.*: Orbis Books, 1977.
30. *Ibid.*, rear jacket.
31. "Empowerment", *Small Group Sharing Option 7*, pages 20-21.
32. Finnerty, pages 200-203.
33. *Ibid.* and pages 113, 168-170.
34. For example, see "Empowerment", *Small Group Option 7*, pages 9, 20.
35. *Large Group*, pages 255, 259, 273.
36. *Ibid.*, pages 144-45.
37. *Ibid.*, page 207.
38. Constance E. Cumbey, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* (Shreveport, Louisiana: Huntington House, Inc., 1983), pages 139-40.
39. The Bishop of Fatima, as reported in Francis Johnston, *Fatima: The Great Sign* (Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1980), page 93.