

Prayer and Healing

by Alvin Boyd Kuhn

FOREWORD

"The more I think of it", said Ruskin, "I find this conclusion more impressed upon me - that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way." In the pages which follow, the scholarly mind of Dr. Kuhn tells us a few of the things which it has seen; things which every thinking mind should look at and consider.

Every adult might well distinguish between "religion" and "theology"; we need to separate the two in our minds and realize that many of the doctrines and beliefs we have inherited were formed centuries ago for the purpose of strengthening and perpetuating the powers of the priesthood. The real Truth hurts, but it is time we seek it, for, as has been wisely said, "there is no religion higher than Truth."

Behind the universe with its multitude of suns and worlds and underlying all the cosmic activities, guiding the evolution of life itself, is a Power, Force or Mind which is recognized as First Cause. This "Supreme Being" is spoken of as "God". Philosophers in all ages have pondered the problem and have come up with the conclusion that "God" is "unknowable".

Yet theology teaches that if one will pray, entreat, solicit or beg to this "God" vigorously enough and with sufficient

"faith", "He" may be persuaded to grant one's requests, irrespective of their merits. But this "God" whom the priesthood claims to represent is not a God within human reach. That Infinite Power and Mind must reside in the center of creation, no one will doubt. It touches all forces and all life flows from It. But man has no communication with it, i.e., none that can be initiated from this end. Dr. Kuhn makes it clear that the assumption that prayers are heard and answered by a Cosmic Divine Power is entirely groundless and should be abandoned for a saner hypothesis. He provides us a clue to such hypothesis.

Within each individual is a "spark" or unit-share of "God's" own life. This inner spirit is "nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet". That is the "God" with whom man can communicate. Both the human and divine elements are within each person's range of cultivation. This inner spirit resides within each individual person giving it life and consciousness. Call it "soul", "subconscious mind", "superconscious mind", "ego" or by any term you wish. When we address "Our Father in Heaven" we address this inner spirit-life of ours, which is the only Divine Spirit with which we have any communion, and as Dr. Kuhn illustrates, may be said to be "talking to ourselves". To the extent that the prayer is wholesome and serves to "suggest" to our inner-self certain desirable conditions which our own conscious efforts might aid in bringing to fruition, it is harmless and may even be "answered"--if we do our individual part and duty.

A prime point in this recent work by Dr. Kuhn emphasizes the value of righteous action and self-reliance. As Arnold Bennett once wrote (in effect)--what the human individual needs most is to take himself aside and give himself "a few swift kicks in the seat of the pants" and make something of

himself; we would also add--"instead of begging to God to do his work for him and save him from his own ignorance and errors".

Dr. Kuhn's remarks concerning religious beliefs will no doubt displease many pious readers. Yet any thinking person must conclude that there is much truth in what is said. It is not the purpose of this work to undermine any form of religion but rather to point out that the only true form of religious-living is the individual development and perfection of one's own life. A major error of theology has been the teaching that one may obtain blessings for the asking (in prayer), with insufficient emphasis upon the obvious fact that no other person can do the work of life-development for you; each person must do his or her own soul culture.

"BE YE NOT DECEIVED", said Paul, "GOD IS NOT MOCKED: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7). In his attempt to avoid the troubles which his own mode of living has brought upon him, man has fondly held the belief that an appeal to Divine Power will result in a better and happier state. But whether such state arrives depends, in the last analysis, upon what the man himself does to improve his mode of life.

That this is a universe of precision, of "cause and effect" cannot be denied. In its physical operations, Nature responds with exactitude. In its spiritual operations it likewise has no clumsy habits. No act nor deed, be it good or evil, but receives its just reward or punishment in due season! If we want the blessings and "rewards", the guide books of all major faiths say we must earn them by the kind of a life we lead. It's as simple as that! They do not come to

us by any other method - not by prayers for forgiveness, not by any request of ours asking that universal laws be suspended or set aside for us, nor by any later gracious act of a "saviour", for even He taught--"then shall he reward every man according to his works."

The Law plays no favorites; the only "fate" one ever encounters is the one he has made for himself. It's time we snap out of our hypnotic-trance-state and do some straight thinking; but don't take my word for it - continue reading the following pages.

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PRAYER AND HEALING:A RATIONAL EXEGESIS

In his fine History of Christianity Dean Milman speaks of "the tyranny exercised over the human mind in the name of religion." This tyranny has taken a wide variety of forms, imposing upon the collective mind of the race a vast agglomeration of conceptions, beliefs and persuasions as to the relation between man and deity which have proved to be psychologically disastrous. Outstanding among these tyrannous impositions have been such ideas as the existence of a personal devil forever working to defeat a

divine plan for mankind; an anthropomorphic creator and deity; the doctrine of the fall of man and the consequent innate sinfulness of his nature; the total helplessness of man to effectuate his own "salvation," and the necessity therefore of his attaining that end by throwing himself on the tender mercies of his creator, and accepting the provision by the latter of a way of escape through the sacrificial blood of his own son, who volunteered to be the scapegoat for man's sin; the belief in the soul's eternal future existence in a heaven or hell, following a post-mortem judgment, with its enjoyment of everlasting bliss in the one region or agonizing torment in the other; and a thousand major and minor idiosyncrasies of tortured theology which wrought on the Occidental consciousness for two thousand years an unconscionable stultification of the reason that must in the total of its consequences, if ever its colossal ineptitude be recognized, be rated as the most devastating psychological plague and scourge of human sanity to sweep the race in all its history. Since at least the third Christian century this besom of theological dementia has swept on through age after age, blinding the eyes of the childhood of every generation with its fatal dust and gripping the old age of every period with a mental palsy that was thus made the unbroken heritage of every people. Its morbid obsession of demoniac influence and sin consciousness settled like a pall of evil portent over the souls of millions, driving them out of the very sunshine of life into the darksome cubicles of convent and monastery. Not even the body of man escaped the impact of gruesome conviction, for it was proclaimed the very instigator of evil impulse, the archenemy of the spirit, the vile tempter, the foul denier of God, full of a lecherous concupiscence that would seduce the very soul. So deadly was its subtle enticement to sin that no color of a garment sufficed to cover its raw indecency but the somberest black.

From the list of fateful hallucinations enumerated above one has been withheld momentarily, to be adduced now as the theme of the brochure,--the cult of prayer. There is reason to speculate whether, in the full range and force of its universal vogue, it has not proved to deserve rating as the most pernicious of the lot. Perhaps it has not inflicted greater injury to the valiant natural spirit of the race than has the spell of sin-consciousness. It stands so close in kinship of mental affinity with the later that the power of the one is essentially the power of the other. But it has been and eternally continues to be the most active and persistent force in daily consciousness of the masses, never permitting the soul of life to escape from its darksome shadow to bask in the open sun and air of the world. Where religion has fixed its routine habitudes, with reminders of a morning, a noon and an evening bell, it refastens its droning spell upon pious devotees perpetually thrice daily. Lest flagging piety fail in its count, there are the beads to certify to deity how faithfully the loyal soul has whipped itself to devotion.

A searching probe into the roots of the human prayer cult would be an investigation of the most revelatory character. It would take the mind into the profoundest recesses of the human consciousness far back in its primitive development and would reveal man to himself in the most intimate and elementary aspects of his being. Such an investigation, we are prone to believe, would furnish intelligence today with abundant reason for completely reversing the general view of prayer from its commonly accepted status of a most exalted religious virtue to something approaching the most abject and degrading human ignobility.

That such a sweeping revolution in the estimate of the

prayer feature of religion has not been suggested or undertaken hitherto is due to the fact that it is an element in the general cultus of religion toward which the human mind has forever oriented itself in a special and extraordinary manner. Religion can be not inaptly defined as that department of human sensibility in which the mind, to apprehend the values sought or to gain the experiences believed attainable, lifts out of its ordinary posture towards reality and strives to project itself into a quite other world wherein a completely different order of phenomena will manifest themselves. The faculties by which the human mind evaluates its normal experiences in the world are set aside and consciousness is opened to another mode of experience approached through the media of a special and quite extraordinary set of perceptive modes and psychological reactions, by which one is believed capable of receiving intelligence and becoming susceptible to influences emanating from what is deemed to be a higher world. This is commonly expressed by the statement that religious experience, to be properly such, must have a transcendental character and source; that is, it must elevate the sensibilities into a realm of consciousness of a totally different character from that of our commonplace daily posture of realism.

Almost universally religion has been challenged to lift us out of the world of normal things into a domain of miracle, magic and the supernatural. Therefore neither the ordinary norms of reality nor the ordinary laws of nature, are held to be the decisive criteria of experience in this exceptional field. These are believed to be set aside, abrogated or "transcended" by other modes and norms consonant with another coefficient of consciousness, another grade of being. Religious experience has for this reason always been categorized as "irrational," as transcending the rational. In

religion one steps out of the rational into the mystical, and in that province of experience the spirit rises free of the conditions that govern conscious recognitions in the commonplace everyday world and roams in joyous liberty in a world where events of a supernatural character can supervene at any time. Hence the great field of religion has in every age sprouted its abundant crop of the phenomena of miracle, marvel and magic. And the prime key that has been believed and utilized as the sesame to open the portals of entry into this wonderland of magic and mystery is the divine efficacy of prayer.

One can suppose that the cult of prayer arose out of, and therefore simply bespeaks, man's sense of dependence upon his creator as naturally as a child turns with utter confidence to the parental power that brought it into being and asks desirable gifts from it. So man, as the child of his great Father, turns with the same confidence to the power that gave him life and seeks all good things from that source. But that pertains, not only by analogy, but by strict actuality, to childhood. Is man never to emerge out of his childhood? "When I became a man," says St. Paul, "I put away childish things." Prayer might be considered to have a natural appropriateness when the race was in its childhood. But childhood passes and adult man learns to stand on his own feet and discards the spirit and the temper of his childhood. Perhaps the one vindication of the prayer motif consists in the fitness of its usage in childhood. It can be argued that man never ceases to be the "child of God," and that therefore the prayer motif is ever fitting and appropriate to his humanity.

But surely man's psychological motivation in childhood is destined to give place to a different posture and course of action in his racial adulthood. The child would pray, if at all

formally, out of the simple need of aid and protection in its complete dependence on creative power, with no rationalization of the relation. On the other hand, the adult humanity, if it felt that formal expression of its sense of dependence on cosmic power was necessary, would pray in the frame and aura of intelligent recognitions, certain of which indeed might even cause it to question whether any overt and formal petitioning was either necessary or in any way productive at all. If prayer was ever pertinent to an elementary stage of racial development, it would be just as natural that the habit should long ago have given place to the sense of self-reliance and the habit of self-help, this transition being as natural and necessary for the unit race as for the unit individual. Obviously the persistent clinging of the religious world to the cult of prayer bespeaks, therefore, the race's failure as yet to have emerged from its childhood stage. We still must run to our heavenly Father with all our little problems and perplexities.

Prayer is not too simply to be defined. Its meaning is certainly to be allocated to several different levels of mental understanding. If the ordinary child was asked for a definition he would quite likely say that prayer is asking God for something. A somewhat older child might venture: prayer is beseeching God to grant you blessings. The answer of a still more reflective child might be: prayer is pleading with God to make you better than you are. These forms of the definition come close to expressing what the word commonly connotes in the general mind. In this form it certainly can be correctly stated to be man's petitions to God for blessings.

But a definition of quite another sort emanates from the side of mystical religion. Grounded on the subjective experience of the human consciousness in its loftiest reaches of

exaltation in meditation, this definition makes prayer something far beyond the mere asking God for benefits. From the heights of mystic rhapsodies and saint's ecstasies, this view holds that prayer in its purest form is the human soul's rapturous delight in its experience of a full free communion with the spirit of God himself. Rather than an asking anything of God, it is in fact the soul's free and joyous giving of itself wholly and unstintedly to God. It is the breaking down the last barriers between its separate existence and the allness of God and the finding of its own completeness and bliss in the recognition of its total unity with the cosmic Soul of all. In this sense prayer, in what is considered its truest definition, is not a pleading for favors from deity, but the soul's elevated communion with deity.

It is at this point that an analytical critique of this subject should present some considerations in the strongest possible terms. The need of a vigorous critique springs from the confusion of two things that should be kept separate, or the inclusion of two separate things under the one and the same term, or the failure to institute a sharp distinction between the two, giving each of them its proper and distinctive designation. The two things referred to are prayer and mystical contemplation. In religious ideology the definition of prayer has been extended so far afield as to be made to embrace the most enraptured ecstasies of mystical exaltations. It is contended here that this is illegitimate, because the two things are so utterly different that there is no warrant for their identification, or their summation under the same name. Surely the resources of language are adequate to the task of giving to each its properly distinctive term. Prayer is an asking for favors from deity. No denial of this can be successfully maintained. Mystical contemplation does indeed rise above this level so far that no element of petition taints the stainless purity of its enchanted spirit.

Therefore the two have almost no elements in common. Hence it is wrong to subsume them under the same one name,--prayer.

It is necessary that this distinction be clarified at this point, so that no ground is left on which to base the charge that our critique constitutes an attack on one of the most sacred aspects of man's religious nature. It is hardly likely that any soul of deep sincerity, or any mind sensitive to the more exalted mystical values, will register a protest against the high rating, the genuine evaluation of the near-divine character of the run of spiritual experiences that have been enjoyed by saintly souls from Buddhist monks through medieval contemplatives like Tauler, John of the Cross, Ruysbroeck, St. Martin, Madame Guyon, Jacob Boehme down to modern devotees of Yoga, whether Eastern or Western. Such edifying and sanctifying experiences are phenomena occurring to many individuals in the higher stages of their ascent toward their divinization. For is it not said that we are all to become gods? No single word shall find utterance in this treatise derogatory to whatever mystic capabilities manifest themselves in man's progressive unfoldment of his divine nature. Those who are susceptible of such upliftments of consciousness record them as yielding the most real experience of man's communion with the soul of deity. To those blessed by their incidence they present their own unmistakable credentials of authenticity and they therefore carry their own certification of real value. This essay makes no attack on man's higher intimations of his own soul's identity with the divine soul of the world.

But what is contended here is that it is quite wrong to expand or stretch the definition of the word "prayer" to include these lofty ranges of experience. For this word has long since lost the right to be considered generically as their

proper designation. It must be insisted that generations of common usage have fastened irrevocably upon the term "prayer" the connotation of a pleading with deity for objects of human desire, gifts, favors, salvation, blessings. Let mystical raptures bear their own appropriate descriptive nomenclature. By dictionary definition prayer denotes the suppliant's humble solicitation of benison from deity. Only by an outrageous and unwarranted stretching of its meaning can it be made to include the sanctified enchantments of a true communion with inner deity.

So it is to be set forth at the outset that the dissertation on prayer here presented deals with the word in complete disseverance from its claimed reference to high mystical communion with God and strictly in its common definition as an asking of good things from a cosmic power conceived as the giver of all good things to man. As taken in this sense and so accepted in the common understanding of the word, the treatise here undertaken will advance the case against prayer as perhaps the most fatal and crushing thralldom of the human mind by a fatuous hallucination in all the long cycle of history.

The first and most forthright count in the accusation against prayer is that it is infinitely degrading to the human ego. As it springs out of the ego's profound sense of his inferior and dependent status, out of the recognition of his base and helpless nature in relation to the power prayed to, these basic assumptions in the case and the posture and habit of mind bent to conformity with them inevitably tend to strengthen and more deeply ingrain on the subconscious life of the individual so conditioned the dominant obsession of one's lowness and unworthiness. The prayer consciousness thus endlessly renews and sharpens the self-infliction of a most injurious psychological trauma upon

the human psyche. In the simplest form of statement prayer thus constantly beats down the human spirit. It throws over it a heavy pall of depression, of negative cast of consciousness, of self-accusation and self-depreciation. It in effect pleads with God to accept man's rating of his own abject and wretched nature and condition. In a mood that incessantly re-emphasizes it even begs of God to certify to himself this condign misery of the pleader, as the latter's only justification for presuming to address the purity and majesty of God at all. Not the least modicum of worthiness can it urge, but only the complete unworthiness of the suppliant; and this alone provides the presumptive right of the sinning human soul to bring its lamentable plight to the notice of deity. In the paroxysms of this self-condemning mood it is expressly stipulated that the suppliant asks not for justice. For a sinister theology has beaten the human spirit into the persuasion that if God were to deal justly with the miserable worm groveling at his feet, the case of the latter is lost from the start, his best righteousness being as "filthy rags" in the sight of God. The self-damned soul in effect expostulates: O Lord, I can not face justice; I am irremediably stained with sin; my only hope of escape from the deserved fate of sinners is your boundless mercy. If you insist on strict judgment, I am undone. Unless my pitiable condition touch your heart with infinite compassion, I am lost. Have mercy on me, a miserable sinner!

And then follows the droning chant of the litany: We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord - as if there was not too much certainty that God was even listening.

It has been the eternally reiterated claim of Christianity, advanced at every opportune juncture, that it has presented a code of principles and a humanizing influence that have operated to enhance the "dignity of the human individual"

beyond any other faith in the world. It bolsters the claim by the specious logic of intimating that out of its benign influence in this respect democracy was born, and that in democracy the individual has come into a position of freedom to express his personal prerogatives to a fuller degree than was the case under all antecedent religions. It claims to have liberated the spirit of men from previous bondage to priestcraft and sacerdotal tyrannies, so that now under its beneficent aegis the human ego is able to approach God boldly and present its credentials to full sonship with God, the eternal Father.

No doubt some influence stimulating a sense of the dignity of the human ego has come from the historical working of the elements constituting Christianity. In two thousand years it was inevitable that Western humanity would have made progress toward more liberal mores under whatever religion might have dominated it. Yet the advance in this regard has undeniably at the same time been counterbalanced and rendered weak and often been completely nullified by the endless reiterations of the abject spirit of the prayer strain. So that as a matter of simple factuality, the Christian system has done more to beat down that very dignity of the individual which it claims to have so immeasurably elevated than any other faith on earth. It will be hard to find in any other religion's literature expressions so unconscionably deprecatory of the status and the cosmic worth of the human soul as are to be found prolifically advanced in Christianity. As long as it sends that soul groveling on its knees at the feet of deity, abjectly pleading to be considered entirely devoid of merit in its own right, and brow-beaten to the point of making a virtue of its own destitution, its own poverty, its own forlorn and hopeless condition, so long it is gross impertinence, an outrageous falsity, for Christianity to go on flaunting its

arrant claim that it above all other religions exalts the dignity of the human soul. No other faith could possibly trample it down to more supine and humiliating degradation.

Not even is it content to have hounded the soul of its people to shameful self-degradation; it will not let it rest there, but drives it on to the further and deeper humiliation of proclaiming its own outright and complete depravity. It shouts its own total sinfulness and its inveterate and unmitigated obduracy in error and evil. "We have continually done evil in thy sight, O Lord, and our hearts are continually evil. In us there is no soundness nor health. If thou shouldst deal with us according to our deserts, O Lord, who should stand? Nay, not one." So runs the professional testimony of the Christian faith to the actual depravity of the Christian mind, under the influence of a prayer habit generated out of the twisted mentality of sixty generations of a frightfully perverted theology, itself based on a disastrously contorted literal and historical interpretation of its so-called "sacred Scriptures."

That this perversion of human sanity and unsettling of human balance has dismally stultified the human mind that was subverted under its influence is shockingly attested by over fifteen centuries of a record of man's grossest inhumanity to man ever chronicled, a record of idiocy, bigotry, superstition, hatred, war, persecution and red-handed butchery that stain the pages of Christian history with the black horror of inhuman savagery let loose from the right hands of warriors whose left hands carried the cross. With the sweet love of the Christ on its lips, Christianity carried in its hands the bloody sword, or the consuming firebrand, and sought fatuously to advance the one by the power of the other. And ever does it bend the knee to its God in sycophantic pleadings to increase its zeal for conquest,

the gentler restraints of love being lost in the fury of its zest for worldly wealth and power.

All this gives the world ample ground to bring against Christianity an authentic indictment of the most serious character. It can be charged with thus having exalted to the dignity and nobility of a sacred science two of the meanest and most ignoble traits of human nature, never in their own character recognized or rated as virtuous. These two low expressions of base character are begging and wishful thinking. One must confront Christianity - as well as all religion that exalts the prayer motif - with the stern challenge: when has begging ever been held to be noble or sanctified in ordinary human society? Is it not, on the contrary, universally regarded as base and degrading, beneath the accepted standard of common good breeding and social ethics? The beggar has always been looked down upon with pity, as having failed to measure up to the standards of social competence and self-respect. Beggary is looked upon as the unfortunate necessity of people of low grade, either the unlucky victims of hard circumstance, or so improvident that dire destitution has driven them to the sad state of dependence upon charity. The beggar is the subject of pity and contempt. To the beggar one tosses a coin in a momentary spirit of bartering for the appeasement of one's own half-guilty conscience.

One has therefore to ask by what ruse of insincerity does religious pietism justify the exaltation of the base motivation of beggary in prayer to the category of the noblest virtue in religious ethics? By what hypocrisy, by what sophistry does the unctuous religious spirit transfigure this wretched trait of common dishonor into the supreme virtue of a supposititious spiritual science?

More flagrant and more calamitous for the soul of man is the companion transformation of wishful thinking into the role of a principle of religious science. By what course of development has come the common belief that the mere inclination to address oneself to (presumably) listening deity and present a pious wish gives one the presumptive right to expect assured fulfillment? On what ground of plausible natural warrant does the praying soul build its fixed presumption that some Power is either willing or cosmically obligated to give ear and respond with appropriate action? If there is some degree of legitimate warrant for it in the analogy of the human child pleading for benefits from its earthly father, is it by any means certain that the analogy will hold in its higher application?

To the last question there is to be found some part of a legitimate answer in the psychology of childhood, already discussed. Naive religionism will long cling to the simple feeling that man does stand in the relation of the child to its heavenly Father. And the instincts arising out of the child's dependence on the creative Parent will ever tincture the religious mind with the natural fitness of the begging attitude on the child's part. But, as said before, is man never religiously, psychologically, to outgrow his infancy? There comes the time when the human parent grows weary of the child's begging and adjures him to go out and win the good things he desires - as he himself has had to do - by active exertion instead of begging. The cycle of begging ends for the child, the child eventually coming to realize that he must create his own world, and then the cycle of resolute and prideful self-exertion begins.

It has to be wondered, therefore, whether man, the child of his cosmic Father, has as yet come of age. Until this consummation is achieved religion will remain impotently

bound in the natural helplessness of childhood. It can well be imagined that the heavenly Father impatiently wonders when his earthly children will realize their divine birthright of creative self-activity and, standing in the might of their own recognized divinity, relieve him of the burden of hearing and "answering" their eternal pleadings. "I have given them," he might be thought reflecting, "all germinal powers necessary to their carrying on their whole future evolution to the highest glory. God they cannot be until they deploy all these mighty potencies and exercise them in full self-conscious direction. When will they cease bombarding my ears with their incessant bleatings and begin to utilize the miracle of power I have placed in their hands?"

It will be perhaps forever impossible to calculate the full extent of the psychological disaster wrought upon the mentality of the Occidental world over the centuries by this stultifying persuasion that begging and wishing are the two highest forms of the mortal's communion with the cosmic creative Power. The prime and certain objective of evolution being the self-development of innate divine powers by the creature himself, anything that delays, diverts or blocks that unfoldment must be catalogued as detrimental, injurious and calamitous. But as long as the individual makes no gains by its own effort (the preachment of Christianity), and that its sole recourse in its helplessness is to run to the predicated higher Power with pleas for constant help and eventual salvation, so long will a total paralysis of human effort afflict the entire personal initiative. The creed of begging and yearning will but prolong the siren chant of the seductive Circe and keep luring the sailor on life's main ever closer to the reef's of destruction. The psychological damage inflicted by the prayer illusion arises not only from its power to bind the devotee to a wholly inane and fruitless expenditure of vital energy, but it courts disaster also by damming back the

healthful outflow of the positively creative energies. Stagnation and corruption inevitably are generated whenever life's powers are unused, unchallenged or impeded by sheer failure to call them forth in response to outward need.

For centuries the religious mind has been obtuse to a discernment that should have come to change the spirit and tone of its entire functioning. This is the recognition that as long as the human individual, by ingrained habit and want of better incentive and knowledge, calls upon a power outside himself in all contingencies of pressure or difficulty, so long will his potential for inner realization of his own strength and resources continue to lie fallow and produce nothing. To call unceasingly upon God's help is surely to perpetuate, nay to constantly deepen, one's own helplessness. If help were truly given in response to inveterate pleading, God would himself be accessory to the crime of fastening the sense of helplessness ever more indelibly upon his own children. By precisely as much as he continues to bless them in response to their pleas, by just so much does he perpetuate their forlorn wretchedness. If they are ever to be torn loose from supine dependence upon him, he must at some crucial point let them go unaided to fend for themselves, and thus profit by the first occasion to learn their own surprising capabilities. Never is his supporting and sustaining power withdrawn from any of his creatures; but it is a matter of vast psychological consequence whether the individual man acts consciously on the knowledge that infinite divine resources have from the start been made available to him within the deeper recesses of his own nature; or whether, failing such knowledge, the man can only run in childish affright to cast himself upon a Power believed to lie outside himself, and to be cajoled to help only by a bleating cry.

The evolutionary necessity of the individual's soul breaking the bonds of its dependency upon outside help and staking its further growth stoutly upon its own effort has been amply and unequivocally stated in the literature of wisdom. Emerson puts it with positive directness: "Man is weak to the extent that he looks outside himself for help. It is only as he throws himself unhesitatingly upon the God within himself that he learns his own power and works miracles. It is only when he throws overboard all other props and leans solely upon the God in him that he uncovers his real powers and finds the springs of success." And from the pen of our age's most eminent psychologist, whose opinions rest mostly on actual clinical demonstration, the psychoanalyst Carl G. Jung, come these words of truly epochal significance: "The Imitatio Christi will ever have this disadvantage; we worship a man as a divine model embodying the deepest meaning of life, and then out of sheer imitation we forget to make real the profound meaning present in ourselves. If I accept the fact that a god is absolute and beyond all human experience, he leaves me cold. I do not affect him, nor does he affect me. But if I know, on the other hand, that God is a mighty activity within my own soul, at once I must concern myself with him."

It is a matter for consideration whether these two statements, both from men who fully merit the title of greatness, do not constitute the essence of the greatest practical wisdom available to man. For they embody the basic principle of the most challenging factual truth that man can know: what man does not use, as faculty or function or organ, he will lose. This moral adage is so well illustrated by the parable of the talents in the Gospels: the man who did not put his endowment out to use lost it. While the devout soul is praying to an outside power for help or

benefit, his own powers are atrophying. The transcendent ancient wisdom which the world is happily resurrecting from desuetude at the present time, set forth in the clearest terms that myriads of souls, residents of a divine empyrean, were despatched to earth expressly for the purpose of putting them on their own initiative, that so they would perfect the evolution of the spiritual nature implanted germinally in their constitution. The befogging of their minds by such religious obsessions as the prayer cult blunts the pointedness of the whole incarnational effort.

It has been said that "prayer is the soul's sincere desire." It is the soul's divine nature to yearn for deeper satisfactions and higher exaltations. But what is here subjected to critique is the universal pious presumption that mere wishing and yearning constitute the elements of a divine science that carries the certainty of precise answer. How the wild and wanton, the wilful and whimsical desires of the human being, ranging over all levels from base to saintly, can be formulated into the canons of a strict psychological science is beyond the power of thought. Yet the basic persuasion that prayers are heard and answered postulates a scientific status underlying the whole operation. One's mere wish, if only it be pious enough, sets in motion the wheels of the cosmic prayer mechanism which must turn out the answers. Pietism holds that prayer can be rated as a science of exact calculability. Inject into the hopper of the psyche a given quantum of unction and a certain beneficent resultant can be looked for, is the belief. Every desire will generate a measurable cosmic response. It is established in common human experience that it is almost childishly fatuous to claim that every wish and prayer is bound to bring good results, for the most excellent reason that, as experience proves, many of our desires lead us directly into evil consequences. How often we wish and pray for things that

prove not to be good for us at all! In our ignorance we often pray for the wrong things! Need we ask for more positive demonstration of the illegitimacy of erecting prayer into a positive science? It is the last degree of irrationality to assume that sheer piety of wishing will guarantee its goodness or its answer. To elevate wishful thinking into a dependable science is nearly the last mile on the road to folly.

The likely truth, if it could be known, is that human prayers have probably not in a single instance ever induced "God" to deviate one step from the orderly course of his universal operations. What would we have to think of a cosmic deity whose ordained course of creative procedure would be subject to alteration a thousand times every day at the behest of millions of praying children? Infinitely more than answer to prayer, that which should rejoice the heart of humanity would be the assured knowledge that our praying can not change the running of the universe. For any thinking mind is confronted with the reflection, horrendous when fully realized, that if the divinely prescribed course of cosmic operation could be altered by the sheer verbal or mental expression of human wishes, there would be constant chaos in the universe!

The prayer cult is indictable on grounds of the most fantastic and grotesque irrationality. It seems impossible to conceive that pious devotees of prayer have never exercised imagination enough to sense the utter ridiculousness of the spectacle of millions of earth's citizenry incessantly running up and tugging at God's coattails with pleas and instructions to modify the order of his creation to conform to their momentary whims. It presents a picture so inanely ridiculous that it might be presumed that both the imps of Satan and the gods of Olympus must have reveled in

rollicking hilarity at the sight of it. If unctuous pietism had not submerged both reason and imagination, the preposterous fiasco would have been ended long ago.

It has definitely been proved that humans constantly desire and pray for things that are not good for them. If, therefore, many prayers are bad prayers, a law of cosmic justice and balance would have to see to it that they are not fulfilled, or man's fulfilled wishes would ruin him. If there is any efficacy in prayer, we should pray that deity should shield us against our own prayers. From the point of sheer fulfillment it must be an almost certain fact that the prayer exertions of billions of mortals over many centuries have gone wholly for nought. It is doubtful if any prayers have ever been answered, in the literal sense. It is in itself an arrant presumption that God, considered in any sense as a unit mentality, could have the patience and restraint to go along with the farce. If the deity can be thought of as an intelligence that listens, investigates, weighs and responds with appropriate action, it is simply unthinkable that even an infinitude of divine love would not lose temper at the endless chorus of pleadings assailing his ears from this one planet alone! Likewise it has never been a matter of rational concern to "believers in prayer" to explain how the cosmic mind can pay attention to all the intricacies, involvements and moral balances needing to be taken into account for a just decision in the millions of different supplications addressed to it at one and the same time every day. But - would be the "explanation"--God has the "miracle wand" lying always at his hand. It might be conceived that he would grow tired of picking it up.

The stolid stupidity of the prayer assumption also comes to glaring view in the failure to observe that if Providence gave to mortals any such power to gain their objects of desire by the simple matter of asking, the human race would in a

short time entangle itself in such disorder that, like King Midas with his golden touch, it would indeed pray that nature and law take the reins in hand and disregard the human interference. This reflection alone reduces prayer to chimerical hallucination. A universal factual answer to prayer would spell colossal world catastrophe.

The common mind even of the uncritical masses catches a sense of the clash here indicated between the assumptions of prayer and the order of cosmic law. For the two things are absolutely incompatible. If prayers are answered, as piously believed, the universe can not be held to be operating under a system of inviolable law. No law can be held inviolable which is subject to alteration by human whimsies. If sanity had ruled in both the philosophy and psychology of religion - and their history reveals that it has not been so - humans should positively rejoice in the knowledge that, beyond its effects upon the person praying, prayer is and must be a total futility. Hypnotized by the allurements of miracle and magic, the human mind under religious influence has been divided in its allegiance, paying homage on the one side to the undeviating rule of natural law, but on the other side bowing down to superstitious belief in the supernatural. Under the lure to human weakness and gullibility held out by religion, with its promises of pardon, forgiveness and immunity through the operation of a miraculous divine grace, human concern has been massively focused upon the magical possibilities flaunted so constantly in this field. Religion has always aimed to hold forth to believing humanity a prospect of some easier path to glory than that indicated by the natural law, which seemed always to impose terms hard, cruel and stern. It has invariably promised appeasement of the inexorable rigors of the law; it told of an easy way, a path of escape, a happy solution of all life's ills, infirmities and hardships. The natural

law was the order of bondage under the old dispensation; religion dangled the promise of liberty in a new dispensation under the power of love and divine compassion.

Into this primrose valley of refuge and consolation flocked the uncritical millions of religious innocents, swept by the besom of a pitiable mass moronism. But it is in reality a valley of illusion, its false glories emanating from the ignis fatuus of Scriptural promise and theological fantasy. In this enchanted valley prayer was the magic wand that would bring all wistful dreams to reality. The direful consequence has been that the history of religion is the record of one pitiable delusion after another. The prayer persuasion kept feeding the psyche of the masses on fantastic hope when that psyche sorely needed the straight lessons of real life.

Had religion held fast to its ancient basis in sage philosophy, it would have stamped ineradicably upon all intelligence down the ages the precious truth of the beneficence of the reign of natural law. It would have inculcated indelibly the sense of the real miracle in the natural law itself, and saved man the calamitous mistake of looking for miracle outside or in contravention of the natural law. When religion shunted the mind from spontaneous marvel at the magic of natural phenomena over to the expectation of wondrous occurrences transcending or flouting the natural law, it opened the door to the well-nigh universal hallucination of earth's millions. At one stroke it undermined man's surest guarantee of his cosmic security and his chance at happiness, which lay in his perfect trust in the inviolability of cosmic law. This confidence should have been at all times his greatest and most joyous boon. It was the one steadfast thing he could anchor to. Miracle was contingent upon faith, and faith might prove too feeble. The natural law was

dependable. With inexorable impartiality and justice it metes out its dispensations. Man's greatest interest was to be exercised in learning how to meet its terms, for to meet them was to reap happiness. The reward of obedience to law should have been seen as far more real and genuine than any roseate expectations from miracle. But man was swept off this firm rock of his potential felicity by his infatuation with the glitter of Biblical promises. From his eternal safety in dependence upon the salutary provisions of law, out into the hazardous hope of miracle, mankind has been carried into the treacherous shoals and quicksands of reliance upon the whimsical motivations of a deity pictured in the Scriptures as capable of love and mercy one moment and vengeful wrath the next. How sadly the evident divine intent for man has miscarried can be seen in the spectacle of millions cringing with plaintive cries of helplessness at the feet of deity, when instead of this chant of misery their voices should be sending up to the throne the paeans of joy and gratitude in the words of the Psalmist: "O, how I love thy law, O God! In thy law do I meditate day and night!" For an all-wise Providence has made provision for his children's happiness when he declared at the outset: "I will write my laws in their hearts and in their minds will I write them." Again and again he utters his assurance for blessedness of his children "if they will obey my law;" and summary and condign retribution if they disobey his commands.

Prayer has thus lured man away from his wholesome contact with reality and led him off into a gay but tragic dance with the iridescent forms of illusion.

While man prays to God to do his work for him, his own innate powers atrophy. This has been touched upon, but needs further emphasis. Prayer takes man's concern outside himself and away from the inner arena where it

should be focused. It is his own inner potential that needs development, not his supposititious relation to a power outside. Life furnishes the occasion for the exercise and unfoldment of divine potential. But prayer injects itself as a sedative and narcotic and lulls the soul into a false relaxation of initiative. It throws a stupefaction and palsy over the natural sense of urgency to make headway with the major task of achieving the divinity that lies before us. How can man attain his glorification if he never ceases to appeal to God to do the work that his own evolution demands? Not even God can save his creatures from the necessary labor of saving themselves, for self-initiated effort is the inescapable price of salvation.

Long lost has been that inestimable knowledge that God has from the start implanted within the constitution of every one of his children an agency of his cosmic purpose, a veritable part and portion of his own universal mind, to be that very presence of himself at the heart of all conscious being, instant to respond to every beck and call, eager and vigilant to be the saving power in every exigency. The genius in man, says Heraclitus, "is a deity." To this deity within, not to any supposed power outside, religion should have unfailingly taught man to turn. To ignore it, to pass by it to appeal to another power believed to be watching from the summit of the universe, is simply to miss the aid made immediately available to all creatures.

The cultivation of the relation between the outer mind and this indwelling capability constitutes the true "science of the soul." The yearnings of the personal outer self to awaken and enjoy communion with this divine immanence would be the real "prayer" that should be dignified by a worthier name. God has sent this divine guest to share our house of flesh and our mortal natures with us, to help us set

both our house and our lives in order and beauty. This is the arm of deity extended down to us from heaven above. In Galatians 4 St. Paul says that when we were yet children in evolution, not knowing the presence of this ray of divinity within our own natures, we "were in bondage under the elementals of the earth" and "of the air," powers that "are no gods." But now, he adds, we are no more children, but full-grown heirs of God, and we have knowledge of our sonship with God through the growing power of the Christ within us. Man's constant communion with this celestial visitant in his bodily temple needs no begging or pleading. It comes as a spontaneous and joyous recognition that attests to man his own divinity.

Prayer assumptions run into asinine unreason, which only escapes recognition because of the incredible mesmerism of pious credulity. What could be more illogical than pleading for blessings from a cosmic Father who has already, both in the obvious order of nature and in the Scriptures attributed to his authorship, given positive assurance that he is wholly committed to bestow upon his children all the wealth of blessedness they can appropriate and utilize? God does not waste his energies. Not even he can pour benefaction upon his progeny which they have not as yet developed the capacity to receive. He can not cram into a small vessel what only a larger one can hold. Ancient systems of sapient wisdom - more particularly the great Greek philosophy - steadily insisted that no creature in God's universe was ever deprived of the full measure of the Father's bounty; but that each was allotted his due portion in strict accordance with his measure of capacity. To lower creatures flowed a tinier stream of life's dynamic; to the higher one went a more copious voltage, but always a just measure to each.

This being so, is it not supreme folly for man to think that

anything can be gained by incessant bombardment of the divine ear with pleadings for special exertion on God's part to enlarge the current of beneficence flowing down upon the pleaders? Such praying carries the tacit assumption that God is flagging in his attention to his business, is dozing on his throne, is shirking his stint, and needs to be prodded to be kept "on the job." In this light prayer must be seen as too stupid for words.

Prayer likewise implies that God's intelligence, too, is inadequate and that suggestions from the human side will help him decide what were best to do. It presumes that such suggestion may save God some labor by passing up to him useful information. Prayer seems to assume that God will appreciate the convenience of having a list of good things and the names of deserving faithful put into his hands. It seems to be thought that God will be pleased to note his children's zeal in pressing him for blessings.

But the climactic imbecility of mind and failure of reason is exhibited in the inherent implication that the earthly child knows better than God himself what blessings ought to be forthcoming. Many prayers expressly include the confession that God already knows infinitely better than we what is needed, or what is best. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him" (Matthew 6:5, 8). In his famous *Life of Jesus* Renan, quoting the Lord's Prayer, follows it with the statement: "He [Jesus] insisted particularly upon the idea that the heavenly Father knows better than we what we need, and that we almost sin against Him in asking Him for this or that particular thing" (page 131).

That so obvious and significant an implication has not in seventeen centuries been able to introduce a note of sanity

into the praying habit of the world is testimony enough to the devastation of rationality superinduced by religious infatuations in uncritical minds. It adds cogent force to our contention that most values and motivations in the religious sphere are held in flat defiance of reason and logic. Faith has usurped the field, and faith takes no account of rationality. If logic had been given play in the counsels of historic religion, the constant pressing God with requests for favors would have been dropped as egregiously puerile.

The implicit belief that God hears and answers prayers has already been catalogued as a very rash assumption. It is almost demonstrably fatuous. The best philosophic wisdom of humanity has affirmed that deity is simply cosmic intelligence in the most abstract sense, though a reality. It is asinine to conceive or hypostatize "him" as a being personalized in such form as to be capable of hearing a human voice or "reading" a human mind. The idea of God as a being listening to millions of uttered prayers is so infantile as to shame any adult that would hold it in literal sense. Yet all common prayer rests on that childish assumption.

Nor has any thought been given to the factor of time in the presuppositions on which prayer rests. Consideration of the part which it would have to play in the factual hearing and answering of prayers makes a further mockery of the prayer addiction. It is tacitly believed that God, who could not answer prayers unjustly, will look into the minutiae of all cases presented, will go over a rapid review of the past history of the persons prayed for and then weigh carefully the elements of justice involved. It must be asked what magical type of consciousness that is which could thus investigate and judge millions of complex cases every hour of every day! How could God equitably be judge, jury and executive to try thousands of cases every hour if his mental

processes required any time? The stock answer of course is that God's consciousness is timeless. Even at that his decisions reached by a timeless process have to be implemented to man in a three-dimensional time measure. The answer must again invoke "miracle." And if deity gave all his "time" to answering endless prayers, when would "it" have any time to do anything else! Christians and Buddhists, Mohammedans and Taoists tie their God down to slavish drudgery on their petty behalf; they give him no rest. His chief cosmic business is to attend to their wants. One could not be accused of irreverence in suggesting that it would be only natural if such a God would lose patience and be disposed to shout down to his people: "Cease pestering me with your little cares and prayers; learn to look after yourselves; I have work to do."

It must be narrated as a most singular circumstance that after the last sentence above was written in first draft, attendance at a Methodist church brought to notice precisely such an utterance of deity in the Scriptures. In this church one can count on hearing prayer fervent and soulful, intimate and unctuous. Imagine, then, our delighted surprise at hearing the minister in his sermon make the positive statement that while he wholly believed in prayer, he also realized that there come times when, under the stress of special circumstances, prayer ceases to be appropriate, becomes in fact entirely useless, and must give way to action. And, quoting from the 15th verse of the 14th chapter of Exodus, he cited the Lord's evident irritation in his rebuke to Moses over the panic into which the sight of the pursuing Egyptians had thrown the children of Israel: "Why criest thou unto me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward." We humbly recommend this as an exemplary shibboleth for all religionism. Why, indeed, will religionists not cease their eternal pleading, their endless complaints of their helplessness

and go forward in the spirit of divine adventure?

The god within us is not challenged by lip begging; but he must respond when the human goes forward with action. When man acts the immanent god must exert himself to readjust the balance which action disturbs. Though acts are determined by thoughts, it is the acts rather than the thoughts that engineer the run of destiny. The seed of deity is in man for the very purpose of having it grow in response to the experiences of the personality in which it is housed. The Zohar, Kabbalistic work of the ancient Hebrews, emphasizes the point that the divine soul of man's higher nature will not respond in blessing until the lower personality challenges it by overt action. In this situation the realization that the divine potency subject to call resides within instead of somewhere outside is itself the most forceful spur to the energization of unawakened divinity. When man realizes that he is himself both the pleader and the source of response, he will stand in far greater possibility of receiving a downpour of spiritual unction. The release of such dynamic from within is so wonderful an experience that it has through ignorance been mistaken for an influx from an external source. Man never knows what he can do, or what the infant god within him can do, until he tries and thus challenges the god to try. The only ultimately true prayer is action.

It is the lesson of religious history that whenever the abstruse conceptions of cosmic truth and the highest realizations of mystical experience are purveyed to the masses for their presumed edification, they pass through a mill of stupid literalization and gross misconception that render them substantially untrue to their real connotation. This has egregiously been the case with the prayer message. From being originally experienced as a mystical communion

of the human with the divine part of man's own constitution, it has been weirdly caricatured into the belief that a mortal may talk to an enlarged personality of essentially the same order as himself. This being an absurdity, does one risk untruth in asserting that the historical run of the prayer motive has been the most colossal hoax in all the world? What is there to disprove that all prayer directed out beyond the theurgic power immanent in man himself has been the expenditure of so much empty breath, completely wasted upon the praying individual himself?

This essay does not aim to assert that prayer is totally devoid of psychological value. The thesis advanced, however, is that whatever psychic value it may have, is generated through the operation of forces all of which are present in the nature of man himself. If it is an exercise aimed to relate man harmoniously with both the physical reality of his outer world and the spiritual reality of his inner potential of consciousness, it is to be accorded the rank of a genuine psychic science. But the crux of the matter, and the criterion of its final value, centers in the mode of understanding by which the individual apprehends the mystical experience. It is a matter of crucial difference whether we believe that we are calling to awaken a power slumbering within ourselves, or calling out to a forever nondescript Intelligence ensconced somewhere above the cosmos. The assurance that it is the former and not the latter must in the end supply the dynamo of power that gives the only efficacy the practice engenders. Certainly a far better result will be achieved when the intelligence of the operator knows precisely the forces he is endeavouring to manipulate. The cosmic deity must remain forever unknown to mere man; but the deity within himself can come to be known intimately. To work at a problem of the sort on principles utterly erroneous must be eternally futile; to work

with knowledge of the forces at play will promise glorious success. The wrong conception must lead to a misdirection of effort. Man pays penalties for proceeding on false premises. Thought is creative in the life of the being endowed with it; and if it is not in full harmony with the principles of the larger Intelligence of which it is an element, there will be clashing and discord until harmony is attained. The smaller unit of world consciousness must in the end fall into perfect accord with the will or law of the more inclusive whole. Only suffering corrects the damage done by erroneous thinking.

That prayer is a ferment in the elements within the human and not a communication with infinite cosmic deity is endorsed by a very high religious authority indeed, the dean of the great New York Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the Very Rev. James A. Pike, reported in the New York Times. Speaking on the festival of Rogation Day, described as the "season when prayers are offered for rain and the fruits of the earth, and the planting of a tree . . . 'is a symbol of our dependence on God and our co-operation with his creation,'" the eminent dean declared that "people who doubt that prayer changes things have never really tried it. If they had, they would know that at the least, prayer changes the one doing the praying." The burden of his address was that prayer changes, not things, but the people praying. It is from this angle that prayer is to be competently studied. In this purview it could be brought within the pale of a strictly human science of psychology. If it is known to be an affective relation between the elements composing the total human psyche, and not a supposititious relation between the total human and some cosmic consciousness completely aloof from our estate, then we must, as Jung so keenly notes, give it due attention as a full-fledged branch of our own humanistic science. Dean Pike corroborates this view

when he added that "psychosomatic medicine suggests real relationships between physical condition and mental and spiritual states." This concedes that both elements concerned are within man, not one in him and the other somewhere aloft in heaven.

If this is not so it can be asked pointedly in what way the prayer cult of modern "intelligent" man rises above the habitudes of primitive tribal religionism, in which prayers, incantations and other forms of magic were invoked to influence powers outside and above man. We now hold those things to have been "primitive superstition." Yet the dean admitted that the motive of prayer for rain was still considered an element of the Rogation Day ceremonial. Prayer to influence gods is now taboo, yet the tacit assumptions of it still lurk in today's praying. When will it be made an exercise of spiritual self-culture?

The deleterious influence of prayer reaches perhaps its climactic point of disservice in its disastrous inhibition of man's impulse to overt action in all contingencies in which resolute action is crucial. It strikes at man's truest interests when it persuades him to pray instead of acting. When prayer steps in to paralyze the spirit of resolute self-exertion and causes him to stand as an impotent beggar when prompt action alone will save, it is of all things most damaging. Cromwell's "Ironsides" prayed before they went into battle, or prayed as they charged the enemy. How much the praying contributed to their victories must be left to conjecture. But what would have been the altered course of history if they had not fought but only prayed? It is the contention here that the prayer habit leading men to substitute prayer for needed action is the cause of untold evil, wreckage, defeat and tragedy in the run of history. Prayer puts a specious value on cowardice, or offers a

tempting resort to it. And mankind suffers the consequences of its failure to act.

There are tides in the affairs of men which they must ride to a fortuitous outcome, or lose the opportunity forever. It spells disaster when prayer palsies spiritual initiative and inhibits action. And deferment of decisive action only makes more desperate action necessary later. In the end the man who will be content to pray when he ought to fight must fall under the moral condemnation of all the more heroic instincts of our nature. The soul is sent to earth to profit by meeting the exigencies of experience. If it seeks to dodge the trying ordeals by prayer, it misses and wastes the very essence of its instructive experience. Revelation promises its seven rewards to "him that overcometh," not to him that prayeth. No prayer or sanctified wishing can obviate for souls the necessity of learning and obeying the laws ordained for their evolution. Prayer operates at the level of the mental or the psychic. In fact life attaches penalties to failure to bring ideal conceptions out into their final form of concrete actualization. The mere dreamer, the idealist, the visionary suffers the fate of negation and eternal futility. Continuance in such a state will lead to a life of unreality, to neurosis and finally to disease. Verily, affirms the Baghavad Gita, action is better than inaction, than dreaming and wishing.

The lesson wrapped up in this survey is indeed a challenging one. It carries the realization that health, balance and happiness can flow only from a life of endeavor to make visions, hopes, ideals come true in concrete form. The soul that eternally teases itself with wishes and dreams - with prayers - and does not go to the limit of active exertion to actualize them will forever be penalized by missing those wholesome influences that flow in only from positive

resolute action. It will never revel in the satisfaction of reaping the due reward and enjoying the rich fruits of endeavor. He will have created nothing to look upon and pronounce good. He who prays and does not act is not in line with the creative spirit of the universe.

Then if performance is the final criterion of success, the question arises: can prayer have any value whatever? If action is the final determinant, prayer can have but incidental and minor value, to be studied by psychology. All conscious experience of the race testifies to the crucial value of action and to the indecisive value of prayer. The happy repercussion from vigorous exertion is infinitely more satisfying than the pious wrestling in prayer. Can it be expected that God will be moved to utter his final "well done, thou good and faithful servant" if the servant has done nothing beyond praying? Is God likely to reward a man for what not he but God himself had done for him?

The intelligent ancient Egyptians called the human body "the crucible of the great house of flame." The mingled fires of the four grades of consciousness, sense, feeling, mind and spirit flare up in a constant "burning" in the body of man, and the product is as certainly determined by the nature and properties of the mixture as is any chemical compound in a test-tube. The true science of the psyche would be that which gives a knowledge by which one would mingle the proper elements in proper proportions. It is therefore as idle for a mortal to pray for results other than the one which the law of divine chemistry inexorably prescribes from the mixture, as it would be for a chemist to pray that certain combinations should give a result different from the known one.

Religion has ever tended to persuade that the forces of faith

and prayer will override the laws of chemistry and physics and work miracles. Phenomena without end have been claimed and reported to substantiate the claim. Some of this appears formidable and carries conviction to many. It is bluntly contended here that it would be tragedy if special forces of faith and pietism, of thaumaturgy or sorcery, or any sort of psychological mummery could alter, negate or modify the laws of nature.

That such forces seem to be released to contravene the laws of nature poses a problem for which a surprising solution lies readily at hand in a phenomena well known but never evaluated in its full significance. General world opinion supports the conviction that the laws of nature can not be overruled or nullified by faith, credulity, extravagant hope or intense yearning. Therefore it must be guessed that there operates some power that induces the belief that these marvels have taken place. There must be something that engenders the persuasion that these extraordinary things do happen. Is such an agent of conviction anywhere discoverable? Startlingly it can be declared that a power exercising this very function has been in open operation and widely used. This amazing power is hypnotism. It is so "magical" in its efficacy that it can take a mind out of the world in which it normally functions and project it into another world in which the mere suggestion of the presence of an object makes the object a thing of full reality! A power which can so hallucinate the human psyche must be suspect as the real deceiver in such things as "miraculous" cures, providential healings and religious phenomena of spectacular sort. It is passing strange that this power, which is most readily activated by gullible faith, has not been recognized as the common denominator, causal factor and universal solvent of the whole catalogue of religious prodigies.

In all likelihood hypnotism is the continuing function of a faculty of consciousness evolved by life away back in the animal stage of human evolution, apparently to render the weaker species preyed upon by more powerful enemies insensible to the pain of physical destruction when nature was "red in tooth and claw with ravin." The bird that confronted the beady eyes of the stealthy snake, or that found itself helpless in the paw of a cat, or the mouse that saw its feline devourer at hand, were driven by the overpowering force of sheer terror into a state of superconsciousness beyond the normal, were in fact transited to the realm of death consciousness in advance of their actual demise, a condition which was dubbed "going fey" (dead) by, particularly, the Scottish people. In this exalted grade of consciousness they were taken through the death agony with not only full insensibility, but almost certainly in orgiastic ecstasy. Thus generated in the psychic development of the body, it lingers still as an underlying potentiality in human consciousness, and may be superinduced to render us insensible to pain, and so deceive those so affected into the belief that their pain or disease has been cured.

Truer knowledge of the seeming miraculous potential of the psyche will spell a fatal refutation of all pious belief in this field. What will come out of it as a great boon will be the certainty that no real victory can come to the individual through hypnotism. There can be no fulfillment, no gain, no real advance for the individual ego until in full consciousness it itself becomes the master manipulator of all its psychic forces. Until man makes a gain under his own power, by his own intelligent self-mastery, he makes no real gain. No one can profit ultimately through the exertions or at the expense of others. Nothing is won that is not gained by

the unit ego in its own right. No one will reap where he has not sown, cultivated and watered. Hypnotism and hysteria can superinduce the impression of many things not real. Only the obfuscations of religious abnormality have prevented sane human intelligence from discerning this vital truth. Even the Scriptures affirm that not one jot or tittle of the law shall be abated until all be fulfilled.

Man needs no further demonstration of God's power, for it is the marvel of every day and night. The ever important crucial necessity is that man should see his power unfold in greater degree. Prayer keeps this mighty power hidden, unexercised, untapped. Evolution is only a slow blind drifting until the stage of self-initiated intelligent action is reached in every life. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," the Christ figure in ancient drama reminds us. The Father works in his cosmos - when not interrupted by prayers- in which we are cell units. Imitating him, we must work in our microcosm, and no unit can do the work of another.

If the millions of prayers addressed to deity to save us from a Third World War are "answered," the influences that will have determined this happy outcome will have been generated by the physical exertions of thousands of men on battlefields. Treaty makers do not settle terms on the basis of prayers. They make adjustments on faits accomplis by valor in action. George Washington is said to have prayed at Valley Forge, but it was his two sudden thrusts at Trenton and Princeton that turned the tide of events. He did not substitute prayer for action. Prayer without action would have left his cause open to defeat. Law and action call the tune to which events dance. All sound religion has sharply distinguished between the "prayer on the lips" and the "prayer that is lived" in action. Praying must be integrated in living.

This survey presents the case against prayer. It is necessarily incomplete. It would appear strong enough, however, to suggest the cogent need of a revision of a religion that has held its votaries for centuries in the grip of the spirit of beggary. With growing insistence it is being proclaimed in the domain of psychology that religion is predominantly an "escape mechanism." How true is this? Earth has been pictured in religion as a place of tribulation and suffering. By contrast heaven has been universally conceived as a "place," more properly as a state, in which consciousness is buoyant, exultant, ecstatic. If these views have taken form and color as a result of the soul's subconscious memory of its antecedent happy celestial life and its unhappy present experience on earth, there may indeed be some unconscious ground (for we are now finding grounds for our motivations in an "unconscious" region of our psyche) for the yearning to escape the hard grind of bodily existence by resort to prayer, to miracle and magic. The fairy-tales of a wonderland where the waving of a magical wand creates delectable enchantments must be a dramatization of our unconsciously remembered heavenly life. And if, as is intimated here, this longing is born of a remembrance of our former hypnotization so magically and so blissfully experienced in our past animal stage, there is at least a basis of understanding the inveterate propensity to perpetuate the irrational and unworthy cult of prayer.

It becomes then a matter for psychology to determine how far this is in line with evolutionary plan and purpose; whether man's advance has brought him to the point at which the hypnotic activation is to be resisted and overcome. It is for philosophy to decide the issue as between psychic escape from life's realistic rigors through retreat into the hope and yearning for divine surcease, and the possible

victory to be won by the soul's meeting the challenge of hard actuality at the level of ordinary consciousness. The wisest of philosophies have given the verdict on the side of facing the rigorous world in full realism and shunning the avenues of escape into the unconscious. St. Paul says that he has fought a good fight, has finished his course and has kept the faith, and through it won the crown of immortal life. The Greeks called this life the "Cycle of Necessity." If its function of beneficence is to be performed, its experiences and its issues must be met in full realism and in open consciousness, not evaded by retreat into the unconscious. To seek escape by resort to prayer must be considered both anti-evolutionary and - futile

Aberrant as religion is thus seen to be in the feature of prayer, perhaps even more grave is the indictment that can be brought against it in respect to its position on healing. Healings and "miraculous" cures have held as high a place of significance and value as has prayer. Indeed demonstrations of healing have been made almost a de facto evidence of divine endorsement of the cults that could produce them. Any leader, group or system of religion that could cite a run of healings and cures stood demonstrably accredited in the general mind. If a religion could, a la Christ, heal the sick, make the lame walk, cast out demons and restore sight to the blind, it was held certified of God. Attach a healing to any given cult philosophy and it became cosmically authenticated.

Unquestionably the vogue of this illogical hypothesis sprang from the supposed record of Jesus' miracles in the Gospels. But it has gained further acceptance from the numberless phenomena of similar character claimed in the history of religious cultism in every age. Passing over the demonstrable fact that these so-called "miracles" of the

Gospels have been traced in the great researches of Massey and some others to old Egyptian allegorizations and are in no sense history, but depictions of potential spiritual history for all men, there would seem to be enough veridical factuality in religious cult history down to the present to have given the human mind some warrant for the presumption of reality in the phenomena.

Protagonists of healing cultism may argue that it should be a function of religion to heal people. Let it be assumed that this may be true. The question then is - show? By miracle? Or by the natural result of the operation of a Christly consciousness in the heart and mind of the individual? Much in human life and destiny hinges on the true answer. Our earlier dissertation has ruled out miracle. The miracle that man needs to recognize and effectuate in his own life is the miracle, perpetually enacted, of nature and divine law. Any "miracle" that comes through the subversion of natural law is a calamity,--if such can happen. Strange and extraordinary things, apparently flouting natural law, may happen. But they happen under law. Man may not know the law, and so calls them miracles. And facing us is the realization, if we would but heed its implications, that strange and extraordinary things also happen under hypnotism.

With this pronouncement there enters into the discussion perhaps the most unexpected and significant clue to the solution of the age-long mystery of extraordinary religious phenomena. It is an odd circumstance that almost complete similarity between the phenomena of religion and the processes of hypnotism has so far seemed to escape notice. It is fairly safe to say that nearly all the "miraculous" cures of religious history have been duplicated by hypnotic agency. But the religious world has been slow to accept the

hypothesis that the two things may be operations of one and the same power.

Much has been made of the statement attributed to Jesus in the Gospels to the effect that the dynamic agency in his marvels of healing was the faith of those healed. "The faith hath made thee whole." On the strength of this declaration of his, faith has been virtually elevated, in the books of spiritual cultism, into the great central principle of religious science. It is only necessary to believe long and hard enough, and the intensity of the psychic force thus generated will materialize the thing desired. If we had faith enough we could move yon mountain, affirm the Scriptures.

The answer to this is the same as that advanced in the case of the claims for the efficacy of prayer: if either all prayers could be actually answered, or all afflations of faith could reify the things hoped for, there would be chaos in the world. For millions of differing objects prayed for would clash in endless confusion. Unfortunately for spiritual cult philosophy, but fortunately for humanity, both prayer and faith - which are really two facets of essentially the same thing - are circumscribed and largely negated by inviolable natural law. For God to answer all prayers and entify all the projections of faith, would be tantamount to his abdication of all his rulership and his turning the world over to the capricious desires of humans in the mass. Both the prayer and the faith philosophies practically assume this as a real possibility, or at any rate logically risk it. Prayer expects God to dance as we pipe the lay. We virtually dictate to him and make him our lackey. So in the tacit implications of both these dynamics of religious schematism man is introduced in two quite opposite and certainly inconsistent characters: he is at one and the same time both the worthless worm groveling at God's feet and the presumptive dictator to God

as to the terms on which God should bless him. Here must be seen the basic absurdity of these religious hypothecations. Children do at times get their way with parental authority by whimpering and begging; a weak character dominates at times through the aggravated protestation of its helplessness. Religion still builds on this analogy in man's relation to God. Is it not time to put away childish things?

If religious healings are indeed a form of hypnotism, and faith proves to be the dynamic element in the case, it would seem demonstrated that faith is a hypnotizing power. If this is found to be true, we will have discovered the nexus between the phenomena of religion and true psychological science. This is a task for modern psychology. It presents the chance to humanity to bring knowledge and sanity into the counsels of age-old religious superstition.

The crux of the prime accusation that is to be brought against the healing cultism in religion is its obvious disregard of the principle of karmic justice, the great law of compensation and balance, announced in the great Scriptures of the world: "As ye sow so also shall ye reap." The religious devotee, enthralled by the spiritually romantic idea of being healed by a miracle or a direct touch from God's hand, considers that any person needing a healing is eligible to receive it, completely irrespective of his deserts. As it could be expected to do, healing, considered as a miracle, holds in contempt the law of justice in correlating cause and effect, indeed takes no reckoning of it whatsoever. It is glowingly assumed that God's reservoir of goodness is so superabundantly charged that it will flow out in utter prodigality upon all wretched sufferers. In this spirit it will be considered most rudely profane to introduce the question of merit at all. Scripture is quoted to show that Jesus invited

all to come and be healed. Indeed it might be claimed that he seemed partial in bestowing his magical benefactions upon those least likely to have been worthy. The more lowly and miserable the suppliant, the greater and more copious the benefaction.

If this mental chicanery is accepted - and ecclesiastical history evidences that it is nearly universal - then it distinctly places divinity in the role of flouting its own expressly announced principle of morality, the assurance of an inviolable moral order in the world. Said Kant: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the longer we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within." If the moral law is thus found conclusively sanctioned in the consciousness of the human, such authority must spring from its being the counterpart in man of the same universal law of the cosmic mind. If the moral law is sacred to man, it must be infinitely more sacred to God, and therefore inviolable. Logically it can not be assumed that God can break, ignore or set aside his own invincible principle of cosmic justice. He can not vouchsafe benison indiscriminately. He can not permit any to reap where they have not sown. He can not out of the compassion of his heart, flout the laws of chemistry. He can not lavish blessings upon some and leave others unnoticed. We simply can not think of deity as being so passionately compassionate that it showers blessings without good judgment based on some principle of right.

That this view of spiritual or "divine" healing will fall upon the minds of millions conditioned to the sacredness of all such things like a frightful sacrilege, shocking to pious sensibilities, is a strong index of how completely religious inculcations have beclouded the mental skies of gullible

mortals. Many would indignantly ask: Why should Jesus stop to consult the merits of the poor suffering people who followed him in multitudes? Healing power swept forth from his divine dynamo and engulfed all. If so, then we have to be told what becomes of the also Scripturally sanctified great and inviolable moral law that God established to mete out absolute justice, with the abatement of not one jot or tittle from its strict operation. There is involved here the question that is of nothing less than stupendous import for all mankind - does divine love at any time override the moral law? If religion would have us believe that it does so, then all principles both of justice and of logic are flouted. For if divine love can violate divine law we have a clash between two equally sanctified aspects of divinity, love and law, and both logic and human reverence revolt at this possibility. If divine love and divine law can not fall completely in sweet accord, there is again chaos in the courts of the mind. Is it not as vital to the welfare of humanity that our reverence for the moral law be held as sacred as our reverence for the principle of love?

It has to be insisted that if love can step in to inhibit or abrogate the law of cause and consequence, the moral law is at once wholly nullified and rendered incapable of performing its proper function. If some supposed superior power can interpose between an act and its legitimate consequences, gone forever is the possibility of life's holding its activities under the reign of order and justice. Chaos is unchained once more. Life, law, justice and eventually love itself stand powerless to bring their purposes to fruition. At any stage the arbitrary impulses of love could step in to break the chain of consequence.

Would pious religionists uphold the proposition that in any realm the violator of beneficent law should escape penalty?

How could even a divine providence maintain order in its universe if it held no whip hand over disobedience? The rabid endorsement of indiscriminate healings commits one logically to the sanction of lawbreaking. It approves the principle that the evil effects of years of wrongdoing or wrong living are of no consequence and can be wiped completely off the slate of life's record, if only a healer with magical touch chances to come by the village. The doctrine of the forgiveness of sins carries similar connotations.

To bring the issues involved into clearer light, the matter can be illustrated with more concreteness. If people are to be healed it is necessary that they should be sick, diseased or crippled. The pious zeal for healing reckes little of the past life that has brought people to evil condition; the magic of love, or the love of magic, sweeps all that away. Let us consider a person who has got himself tied in knots with rheumatism, arthritis, high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, diabetes, cancer or other bad state. Obviously this is not just chance, evil fate or divine wrath, but directly the result - in a vast majority of cases - of wrong eating, intemperate indulgence, or at any rate some violation of the laws governing the delicate balance of forces in the human bodily economy.

It is critically imperative here that we break through the walls of pious infatuations surrounding this situation and face the real issues involved, which requires the asking of the question - which again will be resented by pietism: what right does the person suffering from the direct consequences of law violation have even to ask to be healed - by some external magic - with no reference whatever to any change of action or cessation of his evil habits of lawbreaking? Concomitant with this is the other question equally repugnant to pietistic feeling: what right would a

divine personage, as Jesus, have to step in and inject his supernatural power into the life or the body of such a violator of the laws of right living? His assumed right would make him accessory to law violation, an abetter of wrong living, intervening to save a lawbreaker from the just consequences of his action. He would be helping and encouraging law violation. This makes an anomaly of the whole healing code of so much religion, one that has in fact driven millions away from the temples of such illogical faith.

It is probably true to say that wrong habits of eating and the distorted attitudes of mind that are thereby superinduced - the two now constituting the psychosomatic basis of disease - cause ninety percent of human ills, both of the body and its psyche. How aberrant must then be the mode of human thinking which continues to look to the intervention of some "divine" power or person to "heal" the abnormalities produced, instead of working to eradicate the root cause, wrong eating? In our effort to cure those ills we commit ourselves to the absurdity of actually going into the world where their cause is not to be found. We seek a healing through an extraneous force that has no connection with the matter at all. If this is not as outrageous a form of religious superstition as ever could be found in "primitive" society, it would be hard to find one surpassing it.

The great basic issue in all this must be faced and it will not be squarely met until we throw off the false persuasions of the religionist and bluntly put the hard question: what right does the human violator of life's good laws have to expect healing from sources outside himself? Life has remarkably equipped its creatures with self-healing powers. The exigencies of existence are designed to develop the creature's power to use those resources. If religion persists in its protestations of the right to be healed extraneously,

then we must sadly bewail the wreckage of the moral balance in the life of the world. We have eventually to make our choice between these two positions. Are we going to learn to love the law and seek happiness in obedience to it; or insist on our right to violate the law and then run to the miracle-man to evade its consequences? If by miracle we can dodge the consequences, the moral order of life is shot to bits. Happily for man it must be true that no law of life can be violated with impunity. If mortals can commit crime against nature and then run to deity or his self-constituted trustees and beg off, or pay off, the just consequences, where would be the equity of the universe?

That was the issue that was genuine and robust enough to inspire and embolden the Protestant Reformation. Is it not time that Protestants themselves - and all others - rise to protest the sly, subtle, insidious continuance of the same treacherous influence masked behind the disguise of prayer and healing? The great physician sent to heal the ills of mortal man is the God-power in man himself. Man must heal himself, through the Godhood that is in him.

The next count in the case against the overweening assumptions of the healing cult is the fact that, if such healing were possible, life under law would be deprived of its educative power and function. This would spell infinite tragedy, again upsetting the moral stability of the world. Life can not take us ahead unless it can teach and enlighten us. Only by burning it upon our consciousness the consequences of our thinking and our action can life instruct us in finality. If any influence interposes to cut the link between action and consequence, nature can not educate us. Her pedagogical power is snatched away from her hands, her rod of discipline is stolen. She can not make her demonstrations to us. She loses control of her school

and her pupils riot in disorder. They find they do not have to obey her. Again chaos supervenes.

But nature can not resign her teaching prerogative and stay in command. Is life to surrender to the caprice of human nature and a fictitious religious magic? It is unthinkable; yet the temple of all religious faith, prayer and healing rests on this impossible foundation. Never has there been enough competent mental power exercised in the counsels of cult religion to discern the logical anomaly of holding up the claims made for prayer and healing beside the doctrine of strict justice in the cosmic realm. Justice and true healing can not be thought incompatible; yet they have been set almost in opposition to each other. What must be seen is that healing, if it comes truly and is not sheer mesmerism, must come in ways that are wholly in accord with natural law. Nature must be made healing's ally, and not be put in the position of an enemy to be overcome.

It can be counted on as next to certain that a cure which is superinduced from without registers no victory, spells no gain, records no progress for the individual concerned. There can be no real vicariousness in the world of life. (The popular idea of vicarious atonement is only an exotericized distortion of the true esoteric sense involved.) No unit of life can perform the work of evolution for another, for only the one undergoing the strains and stresses can reap the instruction. If an individualized center of life's energy does not register its own gains, they simply are not made. Partiality and injustice would ride in on the life economy if it were otherwise. If one be "healed" by the offices of another, it will fade out and a true healing will still have to be made by the entity itself. It is admissible to think that others may help us to learn how to make our own gains. But only the unit itself can do the work.

Modern psychoanalytic understanding and technique have now gone far to introduce into this vast field the principles of a definite psychological science. The good effect already has been to bring the whole range of what were heretofore considered special religious phenomena out into the open world of purely secular character. There is nothing distinctly religious about them. They can be subsumed under the laws governing the operation of consciousness. It is to be hoped that the further perfecting of knowledge and technique in psychology will diminish the area still persistently allotted to religious magic and increase the area of known secular science. The gains registered in the decrease of hysteria and belief in angelic or demoniac supernaturalism and in the increase of sanity and balance in religion will be incalculable.

There is, of course, a spiritual healing that is the thing religion should have inculcated instead of the hybrid and spurious cult persuasions that have hallucinated the masses. But this genuine cult achievement demands the knowledge and technical skill of a stout-hearted and confident humanism, a sound faith in man himself as the agent plenipotentiary of all the divine power needed for his salvation. From the human standpoint the procedure is elementary enough; it involves simply the development of sufficient intelligence to cease violating beneficent law and disciplining oneself to obey it. It means learning how to live properly. The tacit implication in religion that any other shorter or easier way than this is available is an empty delusion and must give way to growing knowledge. A religious science that is built on knowledge of the forces operative within the human psyche, without the injection of magic from some extraneous source, is indicated as the true spiritual science of an enlightened humanity.

For this science envisages the presence within man's own constitution of a seminal power of divinity. It was sown as seed of God's own essence in the garden bed of man's nature. It must be reared from seed stage to maturity under the tutelary influences of earth experience, which bring its mighty faculties to function. As this principle is gradually unfolded in the individual life, it begins its ministry of healing. Magical enough is its potency to cure our ills and make us whole. All the "miracles" of the Gospels and other ancient Bibles of revered authority are allegories dramatizing the potency of the indwelling Christ power to heal all man's ills. Sensational discoveries in scholarship now authenticate this statement. When man ceases his childish praying to God to perform miracles for him and turns to cultivate the divine powers slumbering within his own temple of consciousness, he will find at last the help, the comfort and the victory he is intended to have.

If prayers were answered as believed and healings performed as claimed, there would be perpetual chaos in the life of the world. Happily life's beneficent laws prevail.