

THE PERSONAL REALITY OF PRAYER AND BELIEF

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PREFACE

People have differing degrees of importance to one another at various times. Strangers' lives intersect, and then move off in new directions. These momentary contacts often allow us to tell about experiences or exchange information; we then use that information for personal development. The discussion presented in this paper is prepared for those whose life-path, for whatever reason, has intersected with mine. This monograph concerns some observations and discussion about prayer and methods of praying. Although you may have different beliefs, these things are true in my experience. I thought this material out a bit, and invested some time in writing, so I ask that you delay judgment until you read the whole thing. I want to share these thoughts for what is essentially a selfish reason, as will become clear later.

It is a commonly accepted belief that anyone will engage in some type of prayer when faced with a sufficiently great crisis. I believe prayer is a skill that can be learned, developed, and practiced so as to lead towards greater mental and spiritual abilities. The word prayer is used to mean a mental process that stimulates various aspects of the human mind. This stimulation can cause information to flow into the conscious awareness. Prayer can also stimulate a response external to human thought. In addition, prayer is a means of request or supplication on the behalf of, or for the benefit of, other fellow beings. This holds true independent of spiritual beliefs, or lack thereof. Prayer may even be directed, as my Unitarian friends joke, "To Whom It May Concern."

MY EXPERIENCE

I once worked as a police officer in a large metropolitan city. I noted that my mere presence was often sufficient stimulus to incite someone to violence. My basic observation was that my reaction to another person's behavior was the most common factor in precipitating violence. I was not attacked merely because I existed, but violence resulted because of something that I or another police officer did. This had certain negative aspects, but fortunately I learned both how to defend myself physically and how to not create a situation in which violence could occur. (As opposed to creating a situation in which violence would not occur.) I learned that much turmoil would be avoided if I altered my reaction to my emotional interpretation of events. I will repeat that idea in a different way: We cannot readily change our emotions, but we can change our reactions to our own emotions.

One method that I used to change the personal reaction to my emotions was to force myself to pay attention to one event at a time. I worked to not become overly concerned with the feelings surrounding the totality of the situation. By doing this, situations could be evaluated logically, and I could make

decisions based on something other than pure emotion. The emotions were always there, but it was as if I was watching them rather than living them. This procedure became very effective in situations where I had no great personal involvement. In the face of personal tragedy and crisis, however, something else was needed.

My personal concept of God is that of an all-loving and patient parent. I have never been able to conceive of a god who is a parent that would provide an easy and carefree life. If there were no challenges in life, no growth would occur. Primarily for this reason, I do not believe that prayer will be answered spiritually unless and until I first exhaust all of my mortal and mental resources for handling a situation. With these beliefs in mind, and recalling past successful experiences at controlling situations through an awareness of my own psychology, I reasoned that much of my personal anxiety in crisis and tragedy situations came from a reaction to interpersonal events. By controlling my behavior so that I would not effect other persons in a negative fashion, I could avoid starting the vicious cycles of anger, anxiety, and doubt between individuals. This did little, however, for developing an ability to control my inward personal anxiety. I knew, based on my success with a logical approach to emotions, that the key might be in the area of accepting the reality of each situation.

Even though this seemed like a good idea, I was at a loss as to how to accomplish anything further. My decision was to not continue to ruminate on the problem, but to pray for guidance so that I could develop the information that would allow me to solve the problem. (As will be discussed later, prayer has both a spiritual and an associated internal psychological component. I have no opinion as to whether one or both were working in the development of my solution.) The answer to my question came when I found that if I viewed a situation from the standpoint of an observer rather than as a participant, my anxiety was lowered. Obviously, this is a modification of the process of watching emotions rather than experiencing them. I am not, however, espousing the philosophy of the Stoic cults; rather, I am suggesting something of greater import than the mere acceptance of events without comment.

After working on these practices of analyzing one event at a time, watching emotions rather than experiencing them, and viewing situations as an observer of my participation, I suddenly was able to see the truth of the statement that the physical world is a great school. Lessons are presented to each of us in various hidden ways. It is up to each of us to observe our participation in the events of our personal life, and to draw meaning and wisdom from these observations.

Are there any new ideas contained in the preceding paragraphs? No, of course not; everything I experienced was something I already knew and that many others had written about. The difference was that the ideas changed from mere words to something that was now an intimate part of my experience. Like many lessons learned in life, the full impact of this cannot be transmitted in anything less than an experiential component. In other words, I can tell you about it, but you may not really get it. My mental

machinations were, for the most part, inner-directed and selfish. I worked out an answer to a problem, and this answer or methodology allowed me to live more comfortably and interact more effectively. There are other situations and personalities, however, where it is inappropriate or impossible to discuss matters such as this without meeting terrific mental resistance. The way around this resistance, which is also a way into the more receptive mind, is to try to induce a calming, passive influence into one's total life situation. The techniques for doing this incorporate numerous factors of personal knowledge, role-playing, self-hypnosis, divine supplication, and faith. I will continue, however, to designate this method by its more common name: prayer.

A digression is necessary here for a better grasp of what follows. There are certain assumptions that one must make before any complete discussion of spiritual development occurs:

- 1) It is impossible for one person to prove the existence of God to another person;
- 2) It is impossible for one person to prove that another person does not know that God exists;
- 3) If there is a god who is a single Father-Creator, then we are all members of a Universal Family;
- 4) Man must believe in God by faith alone until sufficient evidence presents itself to prove the actuality of God.
- 5) If God is a Father-Creator, and exists perfectly in Eternity, then we are being led ever Godward towards perfection.

One theory of existence is that we are simultaneously perfect and imperfect. We are perfect in that from the Creator's timeless viewpoint we already have attained perfection since we have the potential for perfection within us; imperfect in that we are still developing as creatures who have not yet become beings on an eternal level.

If one can accept any part of the foregoing, it might also be possible to accept that our mind (not to be confused with the electrochemical brain) is indwelt by a fragment of the Creator, placed there to function as a force leading us through Eternity, nudging us towards some manifestation of perfection.

Unfortunately, emotions can function to control our actions in ways that either hinder or help our development. By learning to control the reactions to our emotions, we then can be in a better position to evolve personally and spiritually. I am not saying we should strive to be totally free of emotional involvement with Life; in fact, life without emotions would be very barren. Seasoning makes food interesting, but too much salt is overwhelming.

My definitions and viewpoints about prayer differ from the usual religious meaning. I believe that a divine-directed request first functions on a purely mental level, with much the same dynamics as auto-suggestion or self-hypnosis. It is my belief that prayer is not answered on a spiritual level unless the individual doing the praying has exhausted all the available means possessed at that time in solving the

problems at hand. We must learn to be resourceful in confronting life. The human brain can store and examine large amounts of information; much of this data is stored on levels not readily available to the conscious mind. Often, certain mental processes have to occur before this data can be organized into a coherent plan for life action. Solutions that are not readily apparent often spring forth when least expected. I am in no way denying the spiritual validity of divine supplication; I am merely differentiating between a mental process functioning on a mental level and a mental process that causes spiritual results. The two processes must be identified so that effective prayer on a spiritual level can be better recognized. In no way is the designation of one process as mental and the other as spiritual meant to take value away from either. Both are interrelated for effective growth, and both have tremendous value.

TECHNIQUE

Although we are speaking here generally about solutions, another result that cannot be overlooked is the curative effect of that mental process known as Faith. This is not necessarily the faith that we speak of in relationship to a god, but is the type of faith or confidence that occurs regarding a particular medicine, procedure, belief, or person. The placebo effect is well known in medicine: a person's physical condition will improve merely because they take a harmless substance (such as milk sugar) but are told that it is an effective new drug. Quite obviously, something happens within the mind that causes a physical result. I am suggesting that there are limitless resources possible through the proper use of the mind, and that access to these resources can be increased through use of the technique of prayer.

In speaking of the technique of prayer, I am referring to direct requests and supplications made to a concept we give the name of Spirit or Divinity. There are, however, dual components of prayer being answered through both mental processes and spiritual revelation. I need to emphasize that I am speaking about both activation of a mental function and resource based on conscious thought and an external process of divine assistance as a result of these mental activities. Again I emphasize that neither form of growth or assistance is better than the other. Since information, strength, and the potential for change can be obtained in many ways, an individual has the opportunity to be continuously able to derive mental and/or spiritual benefit in the most direct way important for existence and growth at the time.

Let us first consider self-directed prayer. By this I mean a request for personal assistance. Properly formulated prayer will request assistance in areas of growth and knowledge, and will not be concerned with the alteration of physical reality beyond the control of individuals. In other words, prayer is for a mental or spiritual change, and not for a social result. It is true, however, that a slight mental change will often result in major alterations of personal reality. I hope you will perceive that prayer aimed at influencing an event -- such as praying for a good grade on a test or praying for wealth -- is not

effective. What is highly effective, however, is to pray for an increased ability to study that would lead to passing the test, or to pray for a means of earning the money necessary for the achievement of some project.

If we are spirit-led beings, propelled and pulled ever Godward by a Perfected fragment of the Father indwelling us, we must hold the thought that God's Will is going to get us to a better situation much faster than our own will. Far too many people pray with the intent that it is their will that God's will be done if it is their will also, and not otherwise. The real names for such mental processes are fear, selfishness, and lack of faith.

Inner directed prayer, as mentioned, can function on both mental and spiritual levels. In fact, it is probably necessary that the prayer function mentally before it can achieve the desired spiritual effect. The spiritual level of functioning occurs when a person has exhausted the mental resources available for the solution of the problem, and on the mental level when the person still has resources available (not necessarily consciously) that can be of assistance. This also leads to the supposition that both mental and spirit-led thought processes can cooperate to form new ideas for understanding or action that are neither wholly the result of mental nor spiritual guidance alone.

The method of inner-directed prayer can take almost any form that a person desires. A loving Father-Creator God would not require us to bow our heads in humility or stoop to bent knee before He will listen. These are the ideas of Man viewing God as another mortal being, and in many cases such ideas are remnants of the times when church leaders and political rulers were the same.

Even the language format of prayer is relatively unimportant. Prayers may be silent, spoken, sung or written. Some individuals have perfected the technique of praying through concepts rather than words. The format or manner of the prayer is not as important as its intent. Both the spirit-fragment and the human mind are quite capable of understanding the reason, intent, and sincerity of prayer. Just as one cannot hide from God, it is impossible to hide from your own Mind.

No matter what communication format you choose, the intent should be for guidance. By praying for the increased ability to know or learn how to better handle the human situation, areas of both the subconscious and the super-conscious are stimulated. The guidance requested should be in the context of a spiritual request, with the sincere intent that the resulting knowledge be used to further God's Will or to gain a clear vision of your proper path. In this way, subconscious data that is not necessarily spirit-provided can be organized by the spirit-fragment-possessing-super conscious mind into a formulation that will be of divinely guided intent.

To summarize up to this point: By making a conscious mental request for assistance, the subconscious mind is mobilized into organizing memories and knowledge that, in conjunction with the spirit-led super-conscious, can lead to an awareness of particular courses of action. If the ability to

provide information is totally within the subconscious and super-conscious, then the Indwelling Fragment might only function to coordinate this data. If the ability to handle the circumstance is not present at the time of the supplication or request, then the Indwelling Fragment gives data to the conscious mind through the super-conscious that will allow the individual to handle the situation in a way that is most effective and proper for them at that time. Yet, the individual may reject any or all the leadings of the Indwelling Fragment; most of us quite often do.

The disparity between the electro-chemical brain and the world of spirit is separated by multiple layers of reality and awareness. The road to overcoming this separation and increasing spirit led communion is through prayer. By praying for the ability to gain increased spiritual awareness, and wholeheartedly desiring to achieve greater conscious communications with the Indwelling Fragment, the same mechanisms as in other prayers will occur, with the subconscious and conscious minds orienting themselves to a greater attunement with the voice of the super-conscious. Simply stated, you can pray to pray better. Prayer is never a wasted mental effort; it functions on beneficial personal mental and spiritual levels.

What we have not considered is prayer on a social level: prayer directed to assist others. As discussed, individual-oriented or personal prayer is effectively aimed at somehow providing information that will allow one to pursue a life that functions towards the fulfillment of God's Will, rather than the individual's will. It is possible to conclude that the proper manner of praying for other people is also to ask that they be given the guidance to live according to God's Will.

What does "Doing God's Will" actually mean? While I would not presume to know God's Will, I do know that the Indwelling Fragment will eventually lead me to live according to God's Will. If I can attune my mind to this voice inside, I have faith that all will be as it should.

Following God's Will seems to mean living through a reasoned choice of actions. We all can make unlimited choices about our behavior and can decide to follow whatever path our lives take without concern for others. We can also choose to devote our mortal career to assisting our fellow beings to find that which was never lost.

There is possibly something of great importance in this factor of choosing. Our minds have the ability to choose among numberless courses of action. The major choice is to follow or not follow God's Will. It would seem reasonable to conclude that something remarkable occurs when the personality chooses to follow the lead of the Indwelling Fragment.

Obviously, our mortal mind is just that: mortal and not spiritual, however it exists to manifest our spiritual nature. The Indwelling Fragment is pure God, not mortal in any sense that we can understand. If something is mortal, it will not directly transcend to the spiritual. If something is purely spirit, it was not by the mortal body. The something in between we can call the soul, which is the manifesting spiritized

portion of the mind resulting from making choices to follow the leading of the Indwelling Fragment. Through prayer, through decisive and sincere choice, we can develop the ability to gain awareness of Universe actualities that will make certain our eternal life. Through prayer we can be guided in everyday decisions towards a less emotion-controlled existence into a more love-based reality.

SUMMATION

What I have attempted here is to discuss levels of awareness and mental control that can be of progressive benefit. First, there was the psychological factor of not being “at cause” to another person’s negative behavior. This is accomplished by avoiding an overly emotional interpretation of events. Next, the idea was presented that we cannot change our emotions, but we can change our reactions to our emotions, which may result in altered behavior. Over time, this may even result in a change in our emotional response because events have a changed meaning. The techniques of personal control were not explored to any depth. Exploration on an inner-personal basis of the spiritual belief system led to an interpretation of the world and my life experience as first alluded to previously where I chose to see the observations of my participation in life as being more important than any particular events.

OTHER FACTORS

An unexplored factor in this discussion is the development of the ability to induce a calming effect into situations and persons through mental effort. There are three factors I see as important in developing this ability: Role-playing, psychological awareness, and Spirit-Love awareness.

Role playing is just that: acting out a particular role or script in a social or inter-personal context. If someone is angry, and one responds with anger, nothing is accomplished. If proper personal actions are maintained, however, the anger can be controlled or dissipated. Similarly, certain behavior is expected from individuals in certain situations. Inappropriate social responses can cause anxiety to develop. Role-playing is also somewhat related to the situation mentioned where I found that my actions regarding someone else’s actions resulted in negative reactions towards me, which forced an even greater negative event to occur. When I learned that my proper role was more often that of an independent arbitrator rather than as an individual personally involved in the situation, events changed for the better. A psychological awareness of the mechanics of human interaction and mind-processes can be used to manipulate both the self and situations for a positive benefit. The entire field of psychology provides methods for dealing with many types of inter-personal situations that are quite obviously beyond the scope of this paper.

The prime factor for consideration at this time relating to the ability to introduce tranquility into a situation is directly concerned with awareness of the Indwelling Fragment. Once an individual becomes

cognizant of the fragment in their own mind, the next step is an awareness of the universal presence of this fragment in other human minds. This awareness can lead to the development of feelings of the universal brotherhood of humans, which are most properly manifested by feelings of love for all other beings. Not necessarily love in the emotional-biological sense, but a type of love relating to the awareness of the commonality of source, to the overall unity of the Universe. If we are all possessed of a fragment from the same Father, then we are all eventually heading towards one Eternal destiny, unrevealed and incomprehensible to our mortal minds. Awareness of, and a faith in, this eventual destiny should make one cognizant of the need for cooperation by all beings towards fulfilling God's will in our mortal journey. Our overall intent should be to live the Divine Life, meaning a life led to function in harmony with the Father's Will. The difficulty in doing all of this is astounding given the troubled planet on which we live and the resistance of our mind. Within each of us, however, is the ability to achieve great wisdom and provide comfort and guidance to our fellow beings in this adventure.

This all sounds very nice and philosophical, but of course overlooks the fact that many individuals do not wish (or care) to make the effort at leading the Divine Life. I am not suggesting that one has to love all individuals for what they do -- since we all do many unloving things -- but I am pointing out that all beings can be loved for what they can be. They can be loved for the potential inherent in the Indwelling Fragment. A continuous, conscious, intensely personal awareness of the latent potentialities in other individuals, coupled with feelings of brotherly love brought about by the sure knowledge that we are all in reality partners in the life-struggle, somehow seems to mobilize an internal calming effect on the believer's personality. Whether it can be because of other introduced factors or unconscious role-playing or psycho-manipulative skills, this awareness and love can direct itself outward onto persons and situations, creating a subtle but growing tranquility.

When I pray for other persons, I ask that they be given the guidance to follow their indwelling Fragment, so that God's Will may be done in their life. When I pray for myself, I ask that I be given the guidance to utilize all of my resources to the fullest, and only when I have no present resources to proceed, do I ask for divine intervention that will give me the skills to grow more fully. All of this is done in the context of doing God's Will, knowing that I have within me the perfection of all Eternity, struggling to communicate with my mortal mind for the development of an everlasting Soul.

EXAMPLES

As promised, I will illustrate various kinds of prayer, formulated to complement the points previously mentioned. The following illustrate general formats or texts for inner-directed prayers. As mentioned, the intent is to mobilize both the mental and the spiritual.

(a) My Father, giver of the Indwelling Spirit, grant me the ability to better contend with the problems of my everyday existence. Help integrate my being so that I may more gracefully go forth upon the Earth as your representative creature. Please allow me to develop the ability to follow your guidance, so that we may one day exist in loving harmony. Please allow me to learn the ways of dissipating my anger so that my fellow beings do not suffer from my emotional outbursts.”

(b) “Father-God, knowing that I am greatly troubled by my inability to not feel doubt about the motives of my fellows, show me the way to greater trust and understanding. Give me the knowledge to find peace and to see Your Way in this troubled world.”

(c) “Indwelling Spirit, gift of my Father, having the sure knowledge of my every intent, guide me to a greater understanding and patience with my fellow man. Give me the knowledge to conduct my life in accord with your guidance and the Father’s will.”

(d) “My Father, if it is your will for me to succeed with the task at hand, please give me the knowledge and guidance necessary. Provide me with the understanding to know the difference between my desire and your Will, for it is my sincere wish to fulfill your Eternal plan.”

(e) “My Loving Father, knowing that I am experiencing great pain and discomfort as a result of this physical illness, give me the ability to withstand this suffering with great fortitude. Please grant my body the ability to withstand every painful assault to the maximum of its ability.”

(f) “Beloved Father, Creator of the Universe, creator of my flesh, hear my plea for increased ability to follow the guidance of your indwelling Spirit. Guide me in living the Life obtained by following your Will. Make me an instrument of reality as I joyfully submit my mortal experience to the fulfillment of Truth.”

Praying might also take the form of thinking or visualizing concepts. Consider the following:

(g) (Idea of a Father) (The huge Universe) (Earth as small part of Universe) (Individual on Earth) (Gift from Father) (Eternity) (Love) (Brotherhood) (Guidance) (Statement of problem at hand in form of a concept) (Faith in God-Father as a child’s faith in a parent) (Knowledge at hand) (Knowledge to be gained) (Love) (Gratitude)

Praying may also take place through singing, or in poetry. Most hymns are prayer-poems. Music can be formulated to express individual concepts organized into a prayer-composition.

Outer or other-directed prayers can take the same format as personal prayer. The most important factor in prayers for others is that the person being prayed for should be made aware of the fact that he is being prayed for in order to receive the greatest effect. The sure knowledge that another being cares enough to pray for one, mobilizes strong social, psychological, and spiritual meanings. The efficacy of an individual praying for increased spirit-guidance of another, while that person is praying for himself, has the obvious factor of increased focus. Both individuals praying for spirit-guidance in doing the Father's will increases the mortal socialization and the spiritual concept of Universal Brotherhood founded on Love. It is inconceivable that one person could sincerely pray for another and not love them in a Universal sense.

CONCLUSION

The final comment to be made regards other individuals. If we are all Spirit-indwelt and Spirit-led creatures, it is then to our benefit to make all human contact a form of divine worship. By being aware that the other person to whom we speak is indwelt by a personal fragment of the same God, the same Father, whose fragment indwells us, one can truly speak from the heart with Love and affection, realizing that we are all truly united in spirit, and that we live in a friendly Universe.

This article has come full circle. I admit to selfish motives: Your increased spiritual development will, somehow, cause an increase in mine. Because you know that I regard you as a member of the Universal family of beings, you know that at least one other being loves you, and that you are not alone on this Earth.

And, perhaps, having the knowledge of my feelings, you will decide to pray, and that you might pray for me.

Palo Alto
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