1935

Prayer: its psychological and philosophical aspects.

Yeramian, Arsham George

Boston University

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/19817

Boston University
BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

PRAYER: ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL
AND
PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS

by

Arsham George Yeramian

(A.B., Apostolic College, 1916;
B.B.A., Northeastern University, South
Dakota State College, 1929;
B.D., Princeton Seminary and Gordon
College of Theology and Missions, 1932;
S.T.B., Boston University, 1934.)

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

1935
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART I
An Analysis of Prayer in Terms of Some Structural Factors

### CHAPTERS

I. A Brief Discussion of the Development of Prayer in Relation to the Development of Religion  
A. Prayer is Impulsive  
B. Some of the Psychological Aspects of Worship and Prayer in the Armenian Apostolic Church  
II. Prayer and Projection  
III. Prayer and Confession  
A. Prayer and the Phenomen Known as Rapport  
IV. The Role of Attention in the Act of Prayer  
A. The Function of Attention: the Act of Prayer in Relation to Religious Experience and Values  
V. Prayer and Suggestion  
A. Reverse Efforts and Suggestion  
B. Unconscious Teleology and Reserved Efforts  
C. Faith in Relation to Suggestion  

## PART II

I. Prayer as an Attempt to Solve Problems  
A. Discrimination Regarding the Object of Prayer  
II. Efficacy of Prayer  
A. Place and Value of Prayer in Regard to Sickness  
B. Relation of Faith to Prayer  

(Continued on Next Page)
PART III

I. Definition of Prayer
   A. Prayer as Central Experience of Religion

II. Philosophical Aspects of Prayer
   A. Classification of Prayer
   B. Object of Prayer
   C. Nature of Prayer
   D. Reality and Power of Prayer
   E. Prayer in Relation to Universal Prayers

BIBLIOGRAPHY
The reality and the power of prayer and the possibility of communion with God has been questioned and sometimes totally ignored by many. An astounding number of my compatriots have lost faith not only in the validity of prayer but also in the existence of God due to their experiences that God with all His might was unable to stop—the wholesale massacres that were so cold-bloodedly carried on in the presence of His everlasting love and compassion.

The Christians of the Near East are now facing an entirely new devastating evil, namely materialism. It is not the Mohammedanism nor the dagger of the Turk that constitute the greatest obstacle to the growth of the Christian faith but the universal obsession of mankind with the material and non-religious. It is the utilitarian and the humanistic interpretation of life that dominates the thought and the conduct of Christian masses.

One of the strongest causes for this obvious declension in religious faith is that the genuine nature and character of God has been misconstrued and misinterpreted.

The immediate aim and purpose of this thesis is to discuss some of the psychological aspects of the experience of prayer, and secondly to provide an easily comprehensible interpretation of the relations existing between God and man.

This work was projected during the Second Semester of 1935 and
investigation was carried on in the Boston Public Library, Chelsea Public Library, Congregational Library, and General Theological Library.

Impressions received, experiences gained, phrases heard or read, questions which stimulated thought, suggestions offered toward the explanation of ideas are closely knit and interwoven in the stream of one's consciousness; therefore in the formation of this work.

Especially am I indebted and grateful to Prof. Francis Lorette Strickland of Boston University School of Theology for his most kind and unfailing encouragement and guidance in the preparation of this thesis.

March 28, 1935
Watertown
Mass.
INTRODUCTION

The immediate aim of this thesis is to discuss and interpret the meaning of prayer. It can not be denied that prayer is as old as the human spirit, but its significance for each age varies according to the individual religious experience and the expansion of the human intellectual horizon. Therefore its inner secret must be interpreted in the light of the ever deepening knowledge of its nature and of life. In our approach to the study of prayer, of course, a great deal depends on our specific interest and purpose.

The tremendous changes in life, the conflicting depressions in our moral, spiritual, and economic life, have raised the question of prayer with a vivid poignancy. Nations, endeavoring to exterminate one another, pray to the same God, each invoking His Divine aid against the other.

But, what is prayer? Unless we answer this fundamental question, it will be quite impossible for us to investigate and analyze the psychological nature of prayer. The scope of this thesis depends upon the satisfactory answer to this question. Viewed as a psychological process, we find in prayer a complex uncertainty upon which logic or philosophy can throw some light; nevertheless, the mere solution of this chaotic situation may be found only in the depths of personal experience, for the soul that communes with God becomes at once active and passive, makes
an assertion of individuality, at the same time completely surrendering itself to the whole of which it instinctively believes itself to be a part.
PART I

CHAPTER I

A Brief Discussion of the Development of Prayer in Relation to the Development of Religion

In the history of the religious exercises and services prayer has been one of the most striking and important parts for the fact that it has revealed the various views of the divine nature conceived by different races at different stages of their development. We may base this statement on historical facts or traditional material supplemented by evidences gathered from lower levels of culture. Careful observation indicates that the religious practices of primitive people were closely blended and tinged with prayer.

The question as to the origin of prayer is of profound significance for the history and philosophy of religion as it involves matters concerning the relation of magic to religion and concerning other aspects of religious ceremonials and rites.

The prayers of the primitive and the savage man lacked the conception of a moral and righteous god. Scientific investigations indicate no ground for belief that all races have prayed, as it appears to be common for the savage people to regard their god as too remote to be addressed for any practical purpose. The savage learned from his personal experience that he could project his will-power by magic spell and subdue the minds of his associates and fellow members of the herd. He then, undertook to experiment with similar methods upon mysterious powers and spirits conceived as surrounding him. The difference between
magic and prayer is distinct... The magic worker attempts to approach the superhuman powers by a self-confident, self-sufficient, compelling and commanding attitude. The technical name for such exercise of the will upon another person is suggestion. The fact that the savage man could exercise his will power upon another person through suggestion led him to believe in the potency of a similar method upon divinities and higher powers. In later stages of development, he could convince and win the good will of his fellow men through soothing, flattery, and endearing addresses. Then, why could he not approach and win the good will of the divinities in the same fashion? As we see the process of the development of prayer is based upon a crude form of logical thinking and discrimination.

It would be quite reasonable and legitimate to draw a parallel between the history and psychology of prayer and the history and psychology of religion. This we can say on this basis, that religion deals primarily with values, and prayer is the channel to reach the reservoir of these values. This dealing involves a personal feature; therefore prayer becomes a personal conversation with the God—the very center of religion. This conversation, however, does not necessarily involve an audible speech, for the prayer of a mystic—sometimes called "silent speech"—takes the form of contemplation, or concentration of attention. Among primitive peoples prayer is always accompanied by sacrificial offerings. We have some accounts to show that in ancient Greek religion prayer and sacrifice went side by side. In the history of religion of Israel it is obviously seen that prayer and sacrifice are separate. In the entire stream of prophetic movement there are striking
cases of personal communion with Jehovah independent of all sacrificial rites. It is true that sacrifice occupied an important and distinct place in the religious life of Israel; nevertheless the prayer of the great prophets was personal fellowship with God apart from any connection with sacrifice.

With the acceptance of Christianity as a state religion of Armenia, the prayer of personal religion freed itself from traditional sacrificial ritual. The devotional life of prayer in the Armenian Apostolic church excludes every material offering because prayer itself is seen to be the purest and most perfect offering. Prayer has been recognized as such among Protestants throughout the world.

The Armenian Apostolic church has contrived and practiced a long series of vocal formulae which are repeated during sacred ceremonies with the firm belief that the formula has an efficacy in itself. Effects are really believed to be enjoyed by constant repetition, provided the name of Christ is reiterated. The early history of Armenia, 1500 B.C., distinctly indicates that sacrifices and such vocal formulae sprang out of anthropomorphism, now still lingering on although with gradual decrease in vividness. In the Armenian history of religion, prayer in its very beginning was a naive emotional expression to some superhuman powers or objects. At later stages of development it became a means of helping the gods in some divine activities. All Armenian gods possessed physical bodies.

When, in response to their prayers, they failed to get adequate rain for the crops they offered sacrifices in order to meet the needs and the physical requirements of the hungry divinity. The gods became
visible and audible. The worshippers' anxious interest for a satisfactory response from the gods was fulfilled by attention-compelling natural phenomena. Rains, storms, abundant crops, lightning, thunder were recognized as divine language. Through a similar mental process objects in the form of human figures were personified and deified. This tendency still exists among the Armenians and Greeks in Asia Minor Turkey. By way of association with some emotional experience, huge stones and trees in the human form are thought of as possessing powers that constitute the attributes of the divinity. This tendency may be traced to the fact that anthropomorphism still exists among many Christian races in Turkey. Armenian and Greek churches are richly decorated with images and sacred articles which are believed by naive believers as possessing superhuman power for their daily needs.

In the year 1912, in Ada-pazar, a little town located within a distance of a hundred miles from Constantinople, Turkey, a little stone image was unearthed. The image, which according to the local priests represented the prophet Isaiah, was displayed for two months in the church yard. Thousands of Christian worshippers, including Turks and Kurds, poured in from distant and nearby towns and villages, just to touch their thirsty lips to the divine image. The conception of God underlying primitive prayer is always connected with natural objects of sense which are spheres of their activity. It would not be right to say that those objects were wholly identified with gods since those latter ones were always conceived as supernatural. For the primitive man all nature is governed by spirits. As he personifies all lifeless and living objects, he speaks with them as with his fellow men. God and demons are
beings who have power and make man feel this power. It is not the transcendental character of the divinity but his superhuman power that primarily and essentially occupies the mind of the primitive man. Mana is the mysterious and magically powerful spirit, the source of blessing and vital vigor that can also work harm and destruction.
Prayer Is Impulsive

In examining the religious rites of the primitive races, which are at low levels of civilization, we learn that they have admitted the existence of spirits, but are not positively known to pray to them. This is due to the scarcity of data relating to early animistic belief. These primitive races admitted the existence of spirits and they conducted some crude sort of magical performances, something which we need not hesitate to call incantations. A tribe of Africans, namely, the "Zulus," in their religious rites do not use words in their prayers. It is the language of gesture, not audible speech, that they use. We cannot hold such wordless communions with the spirits or God as a proof that the primitive races did not pray and adapt it as a weapon against the universality of prayer. Speech or audible words are not fundamentally necessary for a genuine prayer. Prayer is the expression of the content of the soul sometimes beyond expression.

When the soul is in extreme emotional state it becomes silenced but strongly expressive in a mystic way. Many persons pray without the use of a single word. Their desires, their cravings are so intense that their vocabulary becomes inadequate for the expression of them.

Through scientific investigations in the field of sociology and history of religion, we have discovered that religion is a social phenomenon and prayer a social need. Religion is not exclusively individual. All religions and cults are unifying forces of the tribes
or nations. The stronger the religious belief, the stronger becomes the unifying force.

Armenians have suffered more than any other nation for the last fifteen hundred years for the cause of Christianity. The more they were persecuted and tortured the more they were united. The Turkish and Persian persecutions and the wholesale massacres were powerless to destroy their name from the pages of history. Why? Their faith in their religion, in God, in Christ. This is an astounding fact.

In dealing with religion, we must consider the basic elements of human behavior that are motivated by the instincts. Among these is the gregarious instinct which impels man to find delight in the company of his fellow beings. A highly developed society is the consequence of the satisfaction of this instinct. There are certain influences which work for or against the satisfaction of the gregarious instinct, and in proportion to the strength of these influences, the social instinct develops or atrophies. This social influence is traced in religion; if not in religious worship then in the articulate conception of the relationship with God, though most frequently in both ways. As Fairbank points out: "The religious man hears God's voice in the command of duty as he hears it in the revelation of truth, but both the command and revelation, and the power to apprehend them come through his share in social life."¹

All religions have been essentially anthropomorphic, and prayers bear unmistakable traces of the general attribution of social relationships to the Divine. To what extent this attribution of human

¹Fairbank, Introduction to Sociology, 108.
associations to a superhuman realm is justifiable is a question which will be answered in chapter two, namely, "Prayer and Projection."

Experience and historical facts strengthen our belief as to the universality of religion and prayer. The universal utterance of the human heart is heard everywhere, something which has been characteristic of man in all ages. God exists and this universal phenomenon, religion, is man's natural search for Him. Judging from the surviving traces of man's early culture, we are inclined to conclude that even primitive man had his religious cult and crude form of prayer. It is quite probable that during the epoch in which there was no religious cult, the human spirit was being prepared unconsciously for receiving the light—the vision which was to arouse the first religious emotion. It will not be fair to demand historical facts as to the validity of any phenomenon which is entirely universal in nature and character as the universal cannot possibly be completely contained within historical institutions.

The religious act cannot completely reveal its fundamental characteristics under limitations of the historical circumstances in which it functions. It is prayer that vitalizes religious institutions. Prayer is the sole power that maintains the life of our institution. Extinguish the flame of religious consciousness and you will reduce prayer to a meaningless formula, and in the course of time the temple of God will become a social club.
Some of the Psychological Aspects of Worship and Prayer in the Armenian Apostolic Church

As I stressed in the beginning of this paper, the herd instinct occupies a prominent place in our religious life. Religion involves a consciousness of social values, and this consciousness is powerful in determining the form of religious rites. Religious cultus is the reflection of certain important group interests. The recognition of the universal and binding force of custom is essential for our task. Habit determines the behavior of the individual and habit does exactly the same to the society. When this tendency receives religious sanction it becomes even more binding. A further element in shaping the forms of worship is man's desire to give some visible form to the object of his belief and reverence. This is seen in image worship as well as in the visible and material accessories of worship among peoples of higher culture, as the Armenians, among whom the ideal of worshipping in spirit and in truth is recognized and pursued. There is a constant tendency to incline toward more material forms.
the past to religious acts. The mere form supplies something that is needed, and witnesses to the power of habit in the highest as well as in the lowest human activities.

Objective worship comes out the more distinctly in the Armenian Apostolic Church, although there is felt a slight touch of subjective worship. The Armenian Church seems to consider the direct worship of God as much a part of its duty as the salvation of souls or the preservation of national spirit, customs and traditions. By the ecclesiastical authorities systematic efforts are directed constantly toward making sure that the sacrament is being adored by the pious believers. A considerable part of the service is used by the congregation as a means of confession of sin before the crucifix. This produces a subjective effect upon the worshipper. The sad, melancholic chant, in the minor key, is sung by the chief priest, the congregation joining in the chorus. The general belief is that God is pleased with this chorus of prayer and praises rising to Him in unison by the entire group of worshippers.

The Armenian Apostolic Church in Jerusalem has a remarkable architecture designed for the purpose of stimulating emotions. The church...
finding it, she realizes that the building is a common place for people to get moral instructions from a professor with an ecclesiastical gown. But when she goes to her church she feels absolutely sure that God dwells in there; therefore she takes off her shoes with fear and deep reverence. In the Apostolic Church God is present everywhere in general, but He is also present in the altar in particular. No one else, no other minister can go in the altar except the Armenian priest. God is the central and the only essential object of worship. The candles, the incense, the music, are not for the congregation but only for God. This is true whether these things are offered to God officially or privately. The saintly mother who places her candle before the shrine of Virgin Mary has no thought in her mind of the effect it may possibly have on other worshippers. All she is anxious about is whether or not Saint Mary will be pleased by it. She is not a Pharisee—has not the slightest desire to show her acts to others. She will place her candle just the same if no one is ever expected to enter the church.

The priest may mean that God shall hear the chants, but he also means that the people shall hear. He prays in a loud voice, that all may hear, as he stands facing the audience. Then he turns his back on the congregation, faces the altar where he firmly believes God is, and slowly whispers his prayer in a voice too low to be heard by anyone, and in a tongue unknown to all. The service is conducted in the ancient language now almost dead. I have known a few priests who do not even understand what they read. To the Armenian priest, the number of the people present, the absence of the choir or the severe cold makes no
difference. There you see the old saintly priest, during a winter morning, shivering from the terrible cold, holding his shoes in one hand and the crucifix in the other, enter the church with eyes fixed on the altar. He looks neither left nor right for the audience. He starts his "Alleyoujah" exactly the same way whether the church is packed or he is alone in the building. In the old country they held services three times a day, and the church was open from morning till sunset. Here in America things are changed, rather Americanized. We are too busy with thousands of things to attend so many services.

The mass occupies the most important place in the worship. It is viewed by the people not as a means for producing an effect but as something objectively worthwhile in itself. The mass is an uplifting reality. It is the very center of the Armenian worship and the heart of their belief. The High Mass has a noteworthy significance for its unique impressiveness and production of deep religious emotions. To the unsympathetic intellectual Protestant this seems magic, but for the Armenian Gregorian who enters sympathetically and imaginatively there is a sense of the Divine presence. The whole ceremonial is saturated with emotion. The intellectual aspect of the worship, the rational element, is almost absent during the mass. And emotions, feelings, and imagination are important elements of religion. The devotional state is essentially emotional. Will, the effort of the will through rational process, may initiate a prayer, but fundamentally it is the emotions that give rise to prayer and determine the activity of the soul. The intense worship experience is charged with a high potential of emotion.
It is the emotions which tend to swoop one from the rational and to prostrate the self before the presence of the Divine. Psychologically, when the emotions control the personality, the soul, so to speak, judgment and reason are held in abeyance and the person is in a condition of extreme suggestibility. Emotions tend to narrow the field of consciousness. Corrective elements are ignored when intense emotions dominates the self.

The Sacraments play a great part in the more emotional life of the church. One who has become familiar with the experiences of the communion directly or indirectly, i.e., through a sympathetic study of the experiences of others, will obviously see that it is right here that we find the most typical and most exalted religious emotions. The Lord's supper, for almost seventeen centuries, has been the central act of public worship included in the high Mass. It is at the Communion that the central idea of Christian religion, redemption, is brought out most forcibly. It makes almost a sad impression as reflected by the tone and manner of the officiating head priest. The Scripture reading, and the old oriental chants are chosen to remind and impress the listener with the compassion of Christ, whose portrait is conspicuously displayed on the altar with candles dimly shining around it. Thus is aroused one of the strongest, deepest, and most humanizing emotions. The place of worship, which makes a mysterious and sublime impression with its most solemn atmosphere, the sacred symbols, the pictures of Biblical and national saints upon the walls, the melancholic chants of the officiating priests, the fumes of the incense on the altar—all these influences
serve to heighten the impression, and by holding the mind away from distracting ideas, the emotion is allowed to increase to the maximum. Then one could almost feel the presence of God in all those ceremonials. There is no room for rational or logical thinking at the height of emotional activity. If one attempts to analyze all these by rational process, he cuts the very sweetness and nerve of religion. "The Lord is in His Holy Temple." He is there, you could feel His presence, comfort, courage with an inner satisfaction. "My soul is athirst for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Yes, the mysterious element in worship is the very thing which the human soul craves. A number of our Protestant churches are deprived of this emotional element, they are dry like a rock. No wonder our pews are almost empty, while the Catholic churches are overcrowded with worshippers.

In worship we usually have: (1) the mental content, (2) the emotional accompaniment, and (3) the immediate expression and the permanent effect of the first two. How the task of the church should be to control this emotion and direct it toward value yielding ends. Of course this is the task of Religious Education. All the factors employed in worship, whether intellectual or emotional, have their place and significance. The effective employment of symbolical usages must be preceded by some educative process that shall make them intelligible and meaningful.

We must not underestimate the importance of the intellectual element in worship, because through it we are able to form an intelligent basis for our religious sentiment which eventually leads to the formation of ideals that are effective. But we must fully admit that feelings play a
more primitive role. The necessary motor force which makes the service effective is created through the working of the feelings. In our churches where I am preaching, it is the emotional rather than the intellectual effect of worship that holds the people together. The existence of the church is directly due to the emotional effect.

Prayer is the appeal which is offered with the Sacrifice. Sacrifice and prayer constitute the sum total of worship. Of course, it is understood that sacrifice is always something offered to deity. During the worship man unconsciously heightens his attention, focusing it right on the object. During the time, sometimes the consciousness is disengaged from the surroundings. The main object on which the attention is concentrated becomes vivified, real. The intensification of this may lead the worshipper into a mystical experience.

The more rationalistic and intellectual an attitude, the less emotional an experience is. The more emotional the less rational. Rituals unify the group, thus worship becomes a group activity. Ritual thus becomes unnecessary during private worship. A critical attitude is destructive to emotional types of worship. The Armonians, being emotional in their religious life, are much dependent upon outside help such as symbols, crosses, candles, images, and ecclesiastical gowns. The worship of prayer, confession, praise are still lingering in the Armanian Church. In the Protestant (Arminian) Church the scene is entirely different. The emphasis is laid entirely on the sermon. The people listen to the minister to satisfy their intellectual craving. Worship is almost a passive matter. We might call the congregation a
group of listeners. The people are quite satisfied as far as their rational convictions are concerned, but there always seems to the Armenian Gregorian something real lacking. What is this lack? A genuine realization of the presence of God, an intense emotional realization of the superhuman cosmic power. We enter the church dry and come out dry. We do not feel that inner sublime satisfaction.

My funeral sermons have done more good to the people than my other sermons. There I have a fine opportunity to appeal to the emotional attitude of the people. Why? The mysterious element in death, the thing we do not fully understand. There, facing the casket, we find ourselves face to face with the silent forces which lie beyond our comprehension and control. It is this mysterious element that makes our religion sublime and worshipful. The solution of this mystery by way of any logical or rational process will reduce this sweetness into bitterness. If we abandon on scientific grounds this realization of our dependence on the mysterious superhuman power, and yet become successful in satisfying the eternal, then the history of our religion, theology, philosophy will take a different direction. "My thoughts are not your thoughts" saith Jehovah. We need a good religious atmosphere in our Protestant church in which the emotional nature of man may find satisfaction. We can not do away altogether with the traditional, as this makes a strong appeal to our religious emotions and sentiments. This does not mean that we ought to disregard the demands of modern thought and need. Catholic and Protestant churches, I believe, make a good combination of subjective and objective worship. The Protestant Church is extremely subjective and
the Catholic church is objective. The first stress the subjective and
the latter the objective validity of religion. Yes, the development of
the objective side of the worship is essential for our Protestant Church.
We should see to it that the Sunday service may bring to the worshippers
an atmosphere of prayer, and a sense of the real presence of the Divine.
The Arnonian Gregorian Church has given a kind of inwardness, a sense of
vital reality of spiritual things, a feeling of need for spiritual
reinforcement to the people, and it is just for this reason that it has
been a very strong factor in the preservation of the Christian faith
despite the most terrible persecutions and wholesale massacres since the
establishment of the Church in the fourth century.

Of all different devices designed to increase the effectiveness
of worship in the Arnonian Church, the most important is the Altar. While
people worship, their attention is concentrated upon the altar, which
prevents the attention from wandering. The function of attention in
worship is extremely important. Attention is the selective process which
makes some things prominent and neglects others. We might say that
attention is not creative. It merely sifts the ideas already present in
the mind. Their presence is determined by the operation of the laws of
association. The Arnonian worshippers do not close their eyes to exclude
distraction but they do concentrate their eyes on the altar. This means
practically the same thing. Worship has its genesis in an original
state, and emotions render the personality highly suggestible. Prayer
during the act of worship tends to continue itself by the momentum of
habit. The old people use the rosary as a stimulating device.
This arouses mental images of religious importance out of which prayers may be constructed. They usually repeat continuously "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory. Blessed be Thou who art come and art to come in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the Highest."

Such contemplations of the attributes of God, His power and majesty, create in the man a desire to adore and worship. Awe and reverence arouse the attitude of worship and are themselves intensified by the devotional mood. Worship then becomes a response of the self to the consciousness of the presence of the Lost Holy God. The public worship should create an atmosphere in which it is easy to commune with the unseen God. The architectural appeal, the subtle influence of music, the ritual and the internal sacred decorations in the Armenian Church tend to reduce the minds of the congregation to the mood of worship and its expression in the devotional prayer. The Armenian Church has its one defect—lack of rational and intellectual thinking. The people are extremely ignorant so far as religious education is concerned. They stick to the old decayed traditions. I ought to say that very little progress has been made. The church authorities close their eyes before the dawning horizon of science and education. They do not realize the fact that we are living in a changing world where new circumstances and conditions require readjustment and new adaptations. I hope that they learn the art of controlling and directing their religious emotions toward some value yielding ends. Naturally this requires the adoption of the principles and methods of religious education.
CHAPTER II

Prayer and Projection

The conception that projection is a universal process must be assumed as valid. It plays a very important part in all human effort to arrive at mental harmony. The Projective impulse is a constitutive element in our mental life. It can make a contribution to knowledge when a relatively perfect balance is attained between the operative factors in the mind. But our knowledge as a whole is progressive and mediated by our personality. We see reality through mental media. Religious knowledge is relative and without this relationalness it would be beyond our ability to conceive any knowledge of reality. Illingworth, in his book, Personality, Human and Divine, writes: "Personality is thus the gateway through which all knowledge must inevitably pass. It follows that philosophy and science are in the strict sense of the word precisely as anthropomorphic as theology, since they are alike limited by the conditions of human personality and controlled by the forms of thought which human personality provides."

Our knowledge is colored by and expressed in terms of social and economic conditions of our age. This fact is indicated by examples of anthropomorphic thought. It would be improbable that the savage would think of God in terms reasonable and true to life, as would civilized and more philosophical minds. It is likely that there is a tremendous

---

1 Illingworth, Personality, Human and Divine, 25.
difference between the prayer of an ignorant peasant and that of a highly cultured person. We express the nature of God in terms of our own social experience.

We need not worry upon hearing that prayer is characterized by projection, as projection is the normal method of human thinking when we seek to grasp super-sensuous reality.

This discussion, if carried on further, would lead us into the consideration of epistemological and metaphysical problems. One of the most important constituents of the structure of our prayer experience is belief in God's real and immediate presence. The Christian conception of God is not based on a purely mechanistic view of life. We firmly believe in a God who is a personal, ethical, infinite and Self-revealing Being. He is conceived as a Being transcendent and yet immanent. His existence can not be proved by reasoning. Any logical approach will be inadequate to demonstrate His existence. God can be reached by rational faith. This is the best means through which we may succeed in relating the facts of experience to a unifying principle. Such faith is a power which leads us to look for a meaning in life, and eventually to the reality. The channel by which we approach reality is most probably that which will give us real knowledge of it. As Hodge points out: "The prayerful consciousness has volitional, cognitive and affective elements within it, and the harmonious relationship and balance of these factors enables the religious man to apprehend values which are really existent and constituent for an ultimate reality which he regards as God."¹

Religion is the conservation of values and in God those values such as vision, goodness and beauty are conserved. Scientific knowledge reveals just a fragment of the ultimate reality.

Prayer does involve the mental process called projection. This does not invalidate it. Of fundamental importance to prayer is the conception of God as immanent. Prayer is based upon belief in this accessibility. We have faith in the immanence of God with whom we can enter into prayerful relationship and enjoy real intercourse.

I am concerned primarily with the structural analysis of the experience of prayer and secondly with its function based on facts. Psychologists have followed this method. Starbuck's study of conversion was primarily a study in the structure of the religious consciousness and so also was the analysis which Leuba made of mysticism. I have endeavored briefly to interpret the values of the experience of prayer with a scientific observation of the religious behavior which was as objective and subjective as possible. It would be a violation of my subject to expand the study in the experience of prayer further into philosophy or theology of religion. The purpose of this discussion would be to put an effective instrument in the hands of people for culture and control of their religious mind. I avoided dogmatizing upon the ultimate nature of the Divine Being contemplated by religious consciousness because this

(Continue on to next page)
would mean a deviation from psychology, the prescribed field, and a plunging into philosophy. Of course, philosophical theories have their right place in human thought. The psychology of prayer or religion has no scientific warrant for becoming a defender of idealistic philosophy. The same may be said to be true for theology, since theology is in reality a specialized kind of philosophy. It cannot be denied, however, that this discussion in general has an indirect bearing upon philosophy, since I have pointed out the value of prayer and since philosophy deals primarily with human values.

God, as revealed and taught by Jesus Christ, is our Father. We are His sons and share His true nature; therefore a communion between God and man is an essential requirement for attaining perfection. A genuine prayer is a genuine contact with a creative spirit that makes all things new.

God is the ultimate reality and perfection. He is the supreme value and is fully apprehended by the highest standard of values. Christ, through His sinless, most innocent, and fearless life, proved His apprehension of the nature and will of God to be uniquely true. The more we conform to this peerless example, to this sacred life, the more we experience God in His divine nature.

"I am the way. Those who hath seen me hath seen the Father."

The closer we approximate to perfect personality as it is found in Christ, the fuller will be our knowledge in the truth, and the more will the revelation of God in Christ prove the absolute reality and purpose of God's redemptive purpose and love.
We have endeavored to touch upon some of the essential features of prayer in the light of its psychology and philosophy. Any final solution cannot, of course, be attained through a psychological consideration. Whatever the psychological and philosophical background of our faith in the reality of prayer, we cherish a great truth. For prayer is nothing less than the acceptance and working out of the great possibilities of fellowship with God. We have sought to understand the nature of spiritual intercourse with God and to identify human activities with His purpose therein revealed in man. It might, in fact, be maintained that our twentieth century stands in special need of prayer. The human soul must learn the art of looking both in and beyond itself for inner growth, aspiration, deeper spiritual insight, and self-realization.

END
CHAPTER III
PRAYER AND CONFESSION

It seems to the writer that the need of communion or communication is fundamental in its basic nature. The desire to share emotions may not be or perhaps is not dependent on a rational belief in the possibility of response. We may fail to get any response but despite this we will feel the need of communication none the less. Any thought tends irresistibly to take on the form of communication. This may be regarded as a normal demand. Behind every vivid thought there lies a certain amount of emotion or perhaps psychic energy. If there is not a listener, if persons are entirely indifferent to our appeal, we will talk to ourselves in front of a mirror just for the sake of getting rid of the emotion. This means to provide the emotion with a channel for its flow.

Confession: Confession may be brought under this classification. Through confession we invite others to share with our sorrows and perplexing situations.

Confession experience, which is the core of psychoanalytic treatment, has received scientific study and application. Prof. Freud, through his exhaustive investigations has come to the conclusion that neurotic disorder is due to repressed conflicts. The irritating impressions and experiences linger actively in the subconscious region of the mind and seek to emerge into clear consciousness. These incompatible forces
tend to create a pathological disturbance and finally result in the disorganization of the physical organism. The patient cannot surrender himself to its attacks nor can he completely expel it from his mind, hence it casts a terrible spell upon him. When the distressing memory is brought into the conscious region with its original emotional quality, then its devastating spell may be broken. Thus the symptoms may perish and the personality be integrated and restored. This process of restoration or integration will be quite impossible without an act of confession on the part of the patient. A confession of intimate details of the patient's private life may afford the analyst a clue in psychoanalysis. The confession of our sorrows and difficulties will result in a great relief.

The Roman Catholic confessional may offer us a good illustration of its therapeutic value. The officiating priest gives the confessing sinner two things: the first is absolution and the second is obligation in penance. Having heard the confession and being satisfied with it the priest affirms, "I absolve thee." The sinner firmly believes that the priest is vested with authority to forgive sins, therefore psychologically he finds great and sometimes complete relief.

For centuries this confessional has survived and afforded the adherents of the Catholic church a release from inner tension and mental conflicts. Although the system has degenerated to the curse of indulgence, and has been a strong factor in the perpetuation and repetition of sins, nevertheless it would be advisable for the Protestant Church to provide its constituency with a confessional, of course without
assuming all the powers and prerogatives which the Roman Church claims. The confessional in the Armenian Apostolic Church, founded 420 A.D., has done untold good as a purifying and hygienic process. Through confession the person unburdens himself, rehearses vividly and with emotional excitement the details of the experience and thus finds relief and equilibrium.

Prof. Josey writes: "Prayer may also be effective when used as a means of bringing peace to an individual oppressed with the weight of his sin. Whoever knows that he has been false to his God or that he has offended Him otherwise feels the need of making a confession. In this respect relations between him and his God are not different from those between two individuals where the one who has injured the other can not expect the old relations to be resumed until he has confessed. Prayer is a means used by the sinner to confess his sins and beg the forgiveness of God."¹

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This means absolute surrender to him who has been able to win the confidence of millions. Christ, the Master psychologist, knew the underlying principles of this soothing, relieving, restoring, and comforting process. By surrendering ourselves, we put all our responsibilities, the causes of our deficiencies, on the person who speaks with authority. Psycho-physiologically, this process is the abandoning (in the deliberate activity of the mind) of the strain of conscious choice, and the reliance on the habitual activities of the organism. We

¹ Josey, The Psychology of Religion, 301.
simply further the achievement by giving up the too strenuous endeavor for that achievement. Our complex problems and mental conflicts, which become the main causes of weariness and despair, are turned over to habitual activities, and thus result in rest. The complete relinquishment of the consciousness is not the case but rather the shifting of the attention to another field.

Prayer and the Phenomenon Known as Rapport

There seems to be some close relation between the functions of prayer and that of the phenomenon known as rapport. The term "rapport" was originated in France, and practiced upon persons under the influence of hypnosis. The absence of a critical attitude is of great importance. "O, Lord, I surrender to thee. Thy will be done" explains the absence of such critical attitude. Resistance will set up inhibition and result in failure. An attitude of passive state conducive to a mental state of suggestibility is a favorable ground both for prayer and rapport. "Absolute surrender to the will of omniscient and omnipotent Allah" as taught in the Koran is quite illustrative of this attitude of a prayerful spirit.

Rapport is a process of submission to another's personality. This dominance of submission will accompany devotion and obedience. The man who practices rapport must possess personal magnetism. External or surrounding conditions make the process more effective. For instance, during ceremonials, the priest with his ecclesiastical gown and solemn
appearance will no doubt influence greatly and induce the worshipper into a mental state of submission and suggestibility. He becomes a vehicle for establishing a firm relation of confidence between the prayerful mind and the object of worship. An intellectual cooperation between the priest and the worshipper is also important to secure a smooth process for the transference. In all successful psycho-therapy, as in most medical treatment, an emotional relation exists between physician and patient. This is known as "rapport." This relation exists in all close relations such as may occur between priest and worshipper, between teacher and pupil, between leader and follower.

The first step in the process of rapport is to bring to the surface trains of thoughts (stream of consciousness) which are automatically or consciously repressed and which bear painful effects in the long run as Freud believed. Timidities, fears, and aversions are given immense relief. The patient being very sensitive to criticism is comforted by finding in the physician one who shows equal interest and tolerance for both strong and weak, good and bad features. The patient begins to realize that he is not any different from other people. Thus, burdens of inferiority become lightened, he feels hope and his attitude toward the analyst becomes that toward which one has long been looking. As a matter of fact it is a justification of his present level of adjustment for which he strives. The main problem in therapy is to substitute for this latter procedure a more constructive reorganization of functions.

As a second step, the patient begins to experience his past memory traces in his subconscious which become reanimated. With this,
what Prof. Freud calls a "Transference"... develops. This means that for the time being the subject shifts some of his conflicts.

According to Freud, this general tendency to transfer is an absolute necessity for the psycho-physiological mechanism. All men have a need for understanding, for sympathy, and support. These needs are never wholly met in ordinary social relationships. There is a subtle, constant reaching out for more and fuller satisfaction. These universal needs and longings always furnish a foundation for much of the religious tendency of mankind. The neurotic is under the pressure of undeveloped emotional needs which are thwarted in normal adult life. These arrested emotional needs of the neurotic, being very conflicting, result in a disintegrated and unbalanced personality. Here, two forces work against one another in opposite directions. The one force satisfies, the other violates. Under this conflicting situation the individual is forced to a continual state of repression and inhibition. The significance of rapport is quite the same in religion. It indicates some harmony of mind and feeling between subject and object, between man and God. We might call it an intense desire on the part of the worshipper to identify himself with the supreme object of his worship. In its more extreme types, mystical experience is essentially quiescent rapport by which the subject becomes anesthetized, entering the hypnotic trance. Both in psychoanalysis and religion the working of the essential elements is the same.
CHAPTER IX

The Role of Attention in the Act of Prayer

The role of suggestion in the domain of sensations is another matter that deserves our attention in this brief study of the religious experience called prayer. Suggestion can create imaginary sensations or hallucinations. There may be a series of sensations from which we may select consciously or unconsciously those that correspond most closely to the main image in our mental background. During an emotional state, when mind is isolated from external influences, there takes place a process of identification between the sensations and the image. Thus when we come to a service with the expectation of hearing a divine voice, come with extreme anxiety and longing, the sweet melody or the chant of the priest beyond the altar in the far distance may be mistaken for the voice of angels or God. This case may illustrate the phenomenon to some extent. Mrs. Yester Boghosian, a member of the Armenian Evangelical Church, Lynn, Mass., tells me her experience. During the world war she experienced unspeakable tortures in the hands of the Turks in Asia Minor, Turkey. There under the shadow of death she prayed day and night for her physical and spiritual salvation. Through some miraculous means she was saved and sent to France by French authorities. Soon as she left the boat she went to a Catholic Church and there she gazed upon the altar with tearful eyes and thankful heart. There she saw Christ coming down the altar toward her and talking to her face to face. The result was that she underwent an immediate change in her inner life. Now she goes
around to tell people of her experience with Christ. God answered her prayer, as she is absolutely comforted and happy. In the above case she certainly had an obsession both by an affective state and by an image. Under the influence of objective sensitiveness, the image—the crucifix—so intimately related to her actual state of mind, was vivified. Psychologically this was a normal method of discharging concentrated energy aroused by extreme desire during past years. St. Francis had a similar experience. The excessive type of desire, inner longing, is the basis of the entire psychic process. Psychologically we see what we expect to see. The result depends upon our general attitudes and established beliefs. The reason for this is to be found in the mind as a condition of attention. Some lines forming a hidden figure in a puzzle picture stand out much more conspicuously than before upon fixation of attention. The notes of one's instrument in an orchestra seem to stand out when one hears an orchestra play.

Laws of Attention by Hollingworth:

I. "The process attended to becomes clearer and more distinct than others.

II. The process attended to becomes more intense.

III. The process attended to rises more quickly into consciousness."¹

Observations and beliefs are influenced by desire. Desires arising from some need play a prominent role in any successful operation of prayer. The Armenian lady was dominated by all-intense desire to see her savior. Her indestructible conviction that physical appearance of

¹ Hollingworth, Advertising and Selling, 53-54.
the living Christ would be someday possible, fused with an intense desire became the foundation of her religious experience. I must mention the fact that her conception of God is purely anthropomorphic. Now she is some kind of mystic claiming daily visible and audible communion with the Savior. Another Armenian lady from the Chelsea, Mass., church, who passed through the same terrible stages of life has told me that through her prayers she has seen Christ and talked to him. Mystics had similar experiences through many years of hard work, toil, and discipline.

Early Christians resorted to such methods that produced desirable states. The process worked upon psychical principles. Long periods of abstinence, lacerations upon the body, diminished health and psychic concentration through prayer made autosuggestion more powerful. Any kind of experience, however, that does not vitalize the moral and spiritual life must be discontinued. If prayer does not energize the mental health then it is a pathological phase of life. If any inward emotional state aroused by prayer fails to lead men in to some value-yielding end, then it is hopeless. The function of prayer is to organize our lives and control the instinctive tendencies—to create a harmonious mental state. The naive worshipper may not know anything about the scientific character of this mental process but just the same he arrives at the desired goal—he feels the presence of God. In fact, this supposed divine presence increases the far-reaching effect of the mental exercise. The energy is no longer dissipated in fruitless yearning or in conflicting situations. Sources of energy until then dormant or unknown or inhibited are aroused to activity. Thus the aspirations are fulfilled and their claims granted.
The hypnotic trance is quite similar to the religious trance. The presence of the hypnotizer acts in the same way as does the sense of the presence of the Divine. Individuals, however, differ in general emotional responsiveness. There are the calm individuals and on the other hand there the excitable ones. The two Armenian ladies are of this latter type. In them the emotions are usually intense. Therefore joy comes like an explosive with an immediate effect. Persons with such excessive emotional tendencies are easily converted. A few members of my church, being of such type, were dissatisfied with intellectual sermons. They left the church to join the Pentecostal Church—the very hotbed for emotionally inclined people.
The Function of Attention: the Act of Prayer in Relation to Religious Experience and Values

As indicated previously, the role of attention in prayer is extremely important. According to Hollingworth, "Attention is an act of adjustment, a state of consciousness. This attentive state is characterized by the dominance of an idea or image, or a set of these and the subordination of the others. Consciousness has always a focal point, and this focal point is always occupied by the thing which we are attending at the time." ¹

We can not react to all impressions at the same time; therefore we become compelled to make selections. Attention, then, is a selective mental process through which we make something prominent and neglect others. Attention merely sifts the mental content.

Attention is prompted by interest. The human mind deliberately selects those ideas which it considers of importance for the satisfaction of some need. The root of attention to prayer may be found in our interest in some religious values. Attention impelled by religious concern makes prayer prominent and surpasses matters of lesser importance. Thus, through this process our religious needs become vivid and clarified. As a result, the prayer becomes urgent and gives rise to an emotional tone which by way of practice intensifies the desire for spiritual gratification. Attention is the main spring of power and activity and without it prayer will be out of gear.

Prof. B.P. Bowne has strongly emphasized that "Human purpose

¹ Hollingworth, Advertising and Selling, 46.
and volition are perpetually playing into the system of laws, thereby realizing a multitude of effects which the system, left to itself, would never produce, yet in such a way that no law is broken. Natural law of itself would never do any of the things which men are doing by means of it. The work of the world is done by natural forces under human guidance. It is the outcome at once of law and purpose.  

Isolation of the individual promises safety against distractions. This was rather Christ's way of praying. The Master prayed alone, free from all distractions, free to concentrate upon the eternal reservoir of religious needs. Isolation is essential for private prayer—meditation—self-realization—an inward turning—self. It is a voluntary and conscious attempt to analyze our individuality and its content, and to understand the principles of the will. It is very beneficent to formulate our desires and ideals, to examine the underlying psychological motives, for without this we cannot appreciate our own worth. The whole thing may be subjective, but even so its benefits are worthwhile. Such self-examination which is a form of prayer is quite essential. A prayer of confession which essentially involves a subjective process will clarify the consciousness and strengthen the will of the believer.

Freud, Jung, and their followers have strongly emphasized the subjective effect of prayer. And as a matter of fact various psychic and neurotic disorders have been cured simply by discovering the nature of the complexes. Unveil the mystery and the fear will evaporate. The subjective effect of prayer is so sure and unmistakable that even an

atheist will be benefited if he continues to pray. The reflex effects of prayer upon our own minds and character will inevitably result in some good. I have known a few Armenian atheists who still continue the use of petitional prayers merely for their subjective influence as a powerful means for self-culture and self-recognition. Prof. James B. Pratt writes, "Though the more 'advanced' Jaina monks have given up prayer altogether for meditation, very many of them continue to pray, because experience has shown them that prayer, though inconsistent with their theory, is helpful in practice."¹

"Attention is an ordained deliberate aim, is a behaviour-cycle directed to a specific end, and this it is that marks out the real and fruitful quiet of the contemplative from the non-directed surrender of mere quietism."²

The quiet mind in a state of receptivity holds that idea which is the central point of the mental activity and upon which the attention is fixed spontaneously. The power of the absorption is in proportion to the transforming power derived from it. The more the interest wavers the more suggestion loses ground.

Here we deal with another character of effective suggestion. When the idea is vitalized with education there becomes a surer possibility for its realization.

The effort of the will strengthened by way of rational thinking may initiate a prayer but often it is the emotions that give rise to prayer and determine activity of the will. The majority of Armenian and Greek people are highly emotional in their acts of worship and prayer.

¹Pratt, Relig. Consc., 334. ²Underhill, Life of the Spirit, 142.
states are heavenly bliss, hell-fire, exaltation, or self-consciousness of guilt. This extreme suggestibility of the foreigners in America may be ascribed to their lack of judgment and reasoning. However, we may not be justified in criticizing severely this emotional element as something useless for this reason, that it has really done some marvelous work in increasing the energy of the idea. The cool and intellectual type of belief and rational faith prevalent in Protestant churches possess little transforming power for the naive foreigner. A revivalist will stand on a strong ground among the Armenians if he appeals to their emotions. The human soul instinctively seeks to satisfy emotional needs and gain stability in life. This seeking process is expressed in acts of worship. Prayer, of course, is concomitant with worship. Prayer thus becomes the impulsive utterance of our religious life.
CHAPTER VI

Prayer and Suggestion

Fear has been expressed by religious, pious people that any attempt to apply the laws of suggestion to prayer will create an apparent danger of reducing religion or prayer to a mere subjectivism, and of identifying faith with suggestibility. There is no reason whatever to be alarmed. Bodily health, which is a condition of well-being and of a normal functioning of the psychophysical organism, can be improved and developed by suggestion. Why? Because suggestion is a strong means through which we may control and integrate our lives to some extent.

During meditation and prayer we subject ourselves to auto-suggestion. Suggestion has been the foundation of modern psycho-therapeutics. The belief that suggestion was merely the presentation of an idea has been discarded by modern psychologists. William McDougall says, "Suggestion is the alogical production of conviction."\(^1\)

"Suggestion is a process of communication in the acceptance with conviction of the communicated proposition in the absence of logically adequate grounds for its acceptance."\(^2\)

Tansley agrees with McDougall when he says, "Suggestion is the acceptance by the mind of a proposition independently of the rational faculty."\(^3\) Thouless defines suggestion as "a process of communication

\(^1\)Encyclopedia Britannica, XXVI, 49.
\(^2\)McDougall, Social Psychology, 100.
\(^3\)Tansley, The New Psychology, 301.
resulting in the acceptance and realization of a communicated idea in the absence of adequate grounds for acceptance."¹ Charles Baudouin defines suggestion as "a media which subconsciously transforms itself into a corresponding reality."²

Suggestion is the mode of activity dominated by some teleological principle. It represents a continuous adaptation of means to the attainment of a desired end. Autosuggestion plays a prominent role in private prayer. It is a process through which we seek to realize an idea originated in the mind itself. In heterosuggestion the suggested idea originates from a source external to the mind. Autosuggestion has been given a prominent place in mental life by therapeutic practice. Heterosuggestion is induced suggestion. The induced idea is given sufficient intensity to make autosuggestion possible. Great emphasis must be laid upon the cooperation of the mind of the subject in any process of autosuggestion. The effect of suggestion depends in great measure upon the energy liberated by the subject. But this does not mean that all suggestion is essentially autosuggestion. The truth is that suggestion as a process may involve different kinds of mental activities on the part of the patient. There could not be any wholly and purely intra-mental process--there could not be a case of pure autosuggestion. There is always an external influence involved in the process.

Heterosuggestion could be made very effective through the cooperation of the mind determined to receive the suggestion. Although the term "autosuggestion" is applicable to cases where there is no direct

¹Thouless, Psychology of Religion, 19.
²Baudouin, Suggestion and Autosuggestion, 50.
external agent responsible for the communication of the realized idea; Nevertheless some external influence is necessary for its successful operation. Man is a social being and is dependent in some way or other upon others. Now there arises the question, "Is prayer a mere process of autosuggestion?" What is its psycho-physical relation with suggestion as a whole?

It can not be denied that autosuggestion plays a great part in the religious thought of the individual. We must bear in mind that religious thought does not differ from secular thought radically as far as their direct relations with autosuggestion and the psychological principles in the mental process are concerned. Mental processes are the same whether in religious life or in ordinary life. Therefore, all acts, whether religious or secular, must obey the laws of the mind. All mental processes or activities are subject to the same laws. It makes no difference whether the process is subjective or objective, we are primarily concerned with the results. We must be scientific in our observation based on fact--regardless as to whether or not we can substantiate the religious man's claim for the experience of prayer. Here is the main question: "Do we get the same result through autosuggestion as we would have expected to get through prayer?" If yes, then we are absolutely justified in claiming that God answers man's prayers through His laws--Truth: "Learn the laws--the truth--and it shall make you free." Free--from what? From mental disorders, ailments, disintegrating forces, from unhappiness, from pathological tendencies, from psychic pressure, etc.
Autosuggestion will operate well and efficiently when the mind is free from mental stress. When there is present in our supplication an element of emotional strain, then autosuggestion will not be operative to any appreciable extent. This also is a part of the laws of God--God's will, so to speak. If we take pains to study these laws through scientific observation, then, by adjusting ourselves to them we integrate our inner life and thus derive both physical and psychic values. God hears our prayers in this remarkable scientific way. There are men who do not know how to self-suggest--to pray well. Such cases necessitate the cooperation of external agents. "Teach us how to pray."

But what is the basic nature of suggestion? It is quite difficult to give a satisfactory answer to this question. An attempt to describe suggestibility as an emotional attitude acquired by the race through fixation of repressed libido upon the primal herd-leader may indicate something of suggestibility as having an historic connection with the social relationships of men.

Trotter and McDougall seem to throw light upon such a view in that the former finds in suggestibility the gregarious instinct proper, and the latter invokes the "submissive instinct" as distinct from, though closely related to the gregarious.

Suggestion, no doubt, plays a great part in the strengthening of religious bonds. Public worship increases the suggestibility of the worshipper who becomes conscious that he is one of the group. Suggestion operates strongly in religious, political, and social gatherings.

Normal accompaniments of worship are conducive to heightened
suggstibility. The organ prelude, the anthems and different musical selections possess great psychological significance and serve to increase suggestibility of the worshipper in such a way that the religious ideas associated with the service are readily accepted.

Any theory of a gregarious origin of suggestibility may be strengthened in view of the fact that the protection of the herd and its welfare depends partly upon its responsiveness to the fear experienced by one or more of its members.

Suggestion in itself is a normal condition, although it may become abnormal in its extreme forms as in hysteria, fatigue, and insanity. A very small percentage of subjects treated by psychologists have been found to be hystericiaL Hypnosis is an increased form of suggestibility, but this does not necessarily mean that suggestibility is a morbid symptom.

As McDougall points out: "Greater degrees of suggestibility are due in main to conditions of four kinds: (1) abnormal states of the brain of which the relative dissociation obtaining in hysteria, hypnosis, normal sleep, and fatigue is the most important, (2) deficiency of knowledge or convictions relating to the topic in regard to which the suggestion is made and imperfect organization of knowledge, (3) the impressive character of the source from which the suggested proposition is communicated, (4) peculiarities of the character and the native disposition of the subject."¹

Abnormal states of the brain are often indicated in extreme forms of mysticism or religious hysteria. This may be said to be true to

¹William McDougall, Social Psychology, 98.
the ecstatic stages that are deliberately and systematically invoked in Yoga practice.

Autosuggestion is self-suggestion—a mental process which eventually becomes the realization of an idea originated in the mind itself. Autosuggestion is distinguished from hetero-suggestion. In the latter the suggested idea originates from sources external to the mind. Hetero-suggestion is induced suggestion—a process whereby the induced idea is given a sufficient intensity to make autosuggestion possible. In autosuggestion there is no external agent responsible for the communication of the realized idea. But if we accept the origin of suggestibility, then we must also accept its racial significance derived primarily from herd suggestion. All human thought bears the inevitable imprint of external forms and influences. This, of course, will lead us to the conclusion that there is no absolutely pure autosuggestion. Our manners and thinking are ordinarily patterned by social forms—and sanctions. If the root of suggestibility is found in the gregarious instinct, then autosuggestion may be considered as a reproduction of the initiations of the herd-leader. The response of the individual member of the herd to such suggestion of the leader is shared and stimulated by the rest of the members of the group. As we see, autosuggestion involves a series of suggestions in which is dominant the operation of intra-mental processes only indirectly initiated and affected by external elements.

All prayer contains a large element of self-suggestion. The action of self-suggestion as an element of prayer cannot be denied. When we stand face to face with our highest ideals and believe in the possibility of their realization we offer ourselves strong suggestions of victory and normal improvement.
Reverse Efforts and Suggestion

The working of the reverse efforts is another important matter in our spiritual life. When our unconscious mind has been charged by a suggestion, any conscious resistance on our part to arrest the functioning of the idea, will intensify it. The thing that we need is not struggle but persuasive power. We all have experienced the working of this law. For instance, any struggle to sleep will keep us awake. Likewise a deliberate struggle to keep attention fixed in prayer will tend to frustration. Theologians explain this in another way. They state that regeneration does not come through voluntary struggle but only by surrender—by yielding to the will of Almighty God. That is, man must be passive and God active in the whole process. To my mind it makes no difference as long as the old saint gets the results by conforming himself unconsciously to the psychological laws and principles of suggestion. The surrendering of ourselves to the Holy Spirit is an unconscious process of seeking abandonment of efforts and struggles.

Of course, this does not mean that we shall give up every moral effort and put the entire burden upon God. Our activities must form an integral part of full human experience. St. Augustine ran away from the temptations of the city life and found refuge in the wilderness but according to his confession there he found more deadly temptations.

Relaxation: Periods of relaxation possess positive therapeutic value in cases of nervous tension, insomnia, neurosis, and in other similar disorders. Relaxation, according to psychological experiment,
begins as a physiological process and it gradually becomes mental and muscular tension includes mental tension. Then, if a man is nervous, he is not relaxing. When muscular tension is reduced emotional excitement is also reduced. This application of principles of relaxation to prayer is valuable. Relief from tension enables the mind to strengthen itself through its own resources of energy. As Jacobson points out: "Analysis of the conditions for which it is generally prescribed indicates that rest (1) repairs fatigue or exhaustion, thereby increasing the general resistance of the organism to infection and other noxious agents; (2) decreases the strain on the heart and blood vessels; (3) diminishes the energy output and thus also the required caloric intake; (4) quiets the nervous system, thus tending to relieve excitement, heightened reflexes and often spastic states; and (5) diminishes the motion of the affected part of parts, thereby averting possible strain and injury."\(^1\)

The law of relaxation especially concerns the sick who is suffering from miseries of mental and physical tension. A man who is suffering from neuroasthenia will not be able to pray in accordance with the law of concentration, because the very faculties involved in the act of praying are disturbed, and the effort of mental concentration becomes quite difficult and sometimes an impossible task.

Nervous patients have confessed that they are unable to pray, and that this situation has been a great source of despair and morbid imaginings. "God has forsaken us because we have been guilty and morally deficient" has been their tearful confession. Of course, an attitude or

\(^1\) E. Jacobson, *Progressive Relaxation*, 2.
or conception such as this is entirely wrong. The reason for our failure may be due to the fact that we put an insupportable strain upon our psychic energies, with consequent increased disturbance and mental turmoil.

A most restful and relaxed condition of the body, and lack of muscular tension are prerequisite to successful prayer.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He leadeth me beside still waters, he restoreth my soul." This type of prayer lacks negative aspect. It is the prayer of affirmation. "God is here, within us, as a healing, guarding, and uplifting power." Such a prayer repeated slowly and quietly is at once prayer and suggestion and has healing power. Insomnia, high temperature, worry, fear, and anxiety may be relieved by this simple method of prayer.

In the quietude of mind and calm of bodily feelings which are possible in the state of relaxation, we may experience a spiritual exaltation, a feeling of inward rest and satisfaction, which plays a great part in our restoration to normal self-control.
Unconscious Teleology and Reserved Efforts

A better understanding of the nature of our religious experience necessitates a few more remarks in regard to unconscious teleology and reserved effort.

Through the working of the law of unconscious teleology we learn that the unconscious mind tends to work toward the realization of the idea after it has been effectively suggested. In psycho-therapeutics in general, a suggestion for good health is often enough. After the suggestion is made for the cure of the sickness, the recovery is hastened as the necessary changes and adjustments required for its realization are made unconsciously under the influence of the dynamic idea. This inner process is something which reason may not comprehend, but the deeper mind may eventually realize it provided the intellect does not interfere by introducing some resistance to the process. Is this not true in spiritual spheres? Obedience, humility, and a state of suggestibility are true requisites for the reception of grace for the healing of the troubled soul.

Danger: Here there may arise a tendency for the suggested idea to direct the mental content toward destructive ends within the unconscious mind. We must guard ourselves against such psychological tendencies. For instance, the old theological doctrines laid much stress upon the original sin—upon the weakness of man. Such suggestion may be adverse to the health of the spiritual life. Pratt makes a quotation from Ramakrishna, the Indian teacher, which is quite illustrative of such unconscious transgressions. Ramakrishna finds out to his surprise
that books of the Christians insisted too exclusively on sin:

"Some one gave me a book of the Christians. I asked him to read it to me. In it there was one theme, sin, and sin from the beginning to the end. The fool who repeats again and again 'I am bound, I am bound' remains in bondage. He who repeats day and night 'I am a sinner, I am a sinner' becomes a sinner."¹

The Indian teacher is justified in his criticism, as most of our hymn books are almost saturated with such sinful, destructive, and devitalizing suggestions as they make the naive believers pessimistic.

The tendency of repeating "I am born a sinner" has been one of the mortifying wounds in the Armenian Protestant Church which has done havoc to the possible growth of a desirable healthy and normal spiritual life. I feel myself always surrounded by a group of pathological personalities intensely dominated with perverted conceptions of the Christian life.

¹Pratt, The Religious Consciousness, 132.
Faith in Relation to Suggestion

One of the conditions for suggestibility is faith in the friendliness and good will of the object of worship. All autosuggestion without any exception presupposes a faith in the determiner of destiny. Faith has psycho-therapeutic significance for psychologists. It is of vital importance to establish confidence in an optimistic interpretation of life. Paul says, "Be of good cheer, as I believe in God." The inculcation of general confidence is an indispensable prerequisite to autosuggestion. Absolute confidence and trust in God is indispensable. God's person is our refuge theologically--the laws of nature will be responsive to our prayers if we live in conformity with them. The universe is fundamentally friendly and will give a healing response psychologically. Here we have a prayer which is almost saturated with autosuggestion.

Another question arises: "Does this process involve any religious element?" The answer is in the positive, for this one fundamental reason that we have there confidence, trust, faith, hope, and love--the very heart of the Christian Gospel. Therefore we have a genuine religious prayer not merely autosuggestion. The beneficial effects of autosuggestion substantiate the validity of prayer. Repose and confidence of mind, in the absence of which abortive fears may prevail and storm the citadel of our personality, have been responsible for the cure of many psychic ills and maladies. The psycho-therapeutic value of religion has not been denied by psychologists. They have almost identified psycho-therapeutic process with religious faith process. As in both cases the same principles are involved, this is understandable.
Dubois of Berne, the well-known agnostic says, "Religious faith would be the best preventative against the maladies of the soul. Feeling himself upheld by God, he fears neither sickness nor death...he remains unshaken in the midst of his sufferings."¹

Psychology does not invalidate the claim of religious faith for the reality of an objective God. It, on the contrary, strengthens the probability of its truth. Suggestion of any kind is concerned principally with the subconscious activity of the mind, and prayer is concerned primarily with the activity of the soul. But who knows the difference between soul and mind?

Let us assume that there exists an objectively real Being and one willing to influence human life under some specific conditions. Now, will it not be highly probable that such influence would be most easily communicated in the act of prayer since we are subjected to increased suggestibility? This means cooperation with God. God will not dominate our hearts unless we open them for His admittance. The close connection between the mechanisms of prayer and suggestion is apparent. In both mechanisms there is a spontaneous throwing open of the deeper mind to influences which tend to manifest themselves. These two acts, prayer and autosuggestion, are fused in such a way that they become one single act of communion—the gateway to self-realization.

¹Quoted by Hadfield, The Spirit, 114.
PART II
CHAPTER I

Prayer as an Attempt to Solve Problems

Looking at the matter from the standpoint of consciousness, one thing we ought to notice. If prayer fails to prove an adequate means for several times, to the attainment of the desired end, it is apt to be discarded. The primitive man tried every kind of means available to satisfy an urgent need, until one of them gave actual results. He then kept on using exactly the same means. The most trifling omission from the process responsible for this first success was believed to vitiate the whole performance. For instance, if a ritual or ceremonial for an abundant crop resulted in actual rainfall, then the same ceremony was repeated with utmost care and detail. If at other times rain failed to fall, the most natural conclusion would be that there had been some omission and therefore the next time the performance was repeated, it would be done with increased care.

How the little child follows exactly the same mental process. If he gains the end, he will carefully watch himself not to leave out any of the factors directly responsible for this previous success. If he becomes unsuccessful in attaining the desired goal then he consciously or unconsciously seeks the cause of his failure. It is obvious that prayer becomes for the immature consciousness both of the child and of the primitive man a crude attempt to solve a problem. This we may call the beginning of scientific discrimination, which appears when the causal
relation between the prayer and the result is broken. Then occasion for scientific discrimination appears when the desired results are not attained. This opens the door for different sorts of experiments. The child's mind is extremely sensitive and keen to such discrimination.

Despite our efforts to present God as as a Loving Father we have been very little successful. The destructive event of last year has been responsible for this failure of ours, namely, the assassination of the Armenian prelate in the Holy Apostolic Church of New York in the Christmas morning of 1934. "Could the children of a Loving God be so cruel?" our boy has asked us over and over again. If the earthly fathers are so cruel, the Heavenly Father also must be cruel, has been the conclusion as a result of his discrimination.

He prays for a thing aloud in order that we may know of his desire. I told him that he should not say his prayers so loud since God could hear him even if he whispered softly. "It is true," he said, "but then you cannot know what I need." He very well knows that we do our best not to disappoint him in his requests of God.

The writer has seen students of Princeton Theological Seminary pray just before taking the examination. Now this particular case does not involve any scientific criterion of efficiency but rather an ethical criterion. The Princeton Seminary Students really believe that God gives them wisdom even at the eleventh hour. But students of the School of Theology of Boston University, who are incomparably more scientific and intellectual than the Princeton Seminary students, know very well that any possible success attained through such prayers is directly due to the
calmness and assurance of the mind produced by prayer.

Here we will consider a type of case in which the effect of
the prayer relation is not a general expansion of the self, but an
increase of the power of the self along some specific line. The relation
arising between the self with its immediate urgent desire and the
objectified self which is a temporarily dissociated part of the stream
of consciousness, brings to the solution of the problem some associations
which the self was incapable of arousing. The following incident will
show the type of prayer here meant. A young, naive woman of extremely
orthodox and conservative faith, who is a member of the Chelsea Armenian
Evangelical Church, had a remarkable experience of prayer. She had been
working and living under most severe psychic and physical pressure for
many long years. Her only child, a fifteen-year-old daughter, was
hopelessly ill in bed from acute tuberculosis. The poor helpless mother
had to work in shoe factories for a bare living. Her husband, an atheist,
with a most irritable temperament, had been giving her much trouble. The
woman was almost exhausted from nervous tension and worry. One noon she
hurried home from the factory to prepare dinner for her husband. The she
was compelled to do in order to avoid any possible trouble with him. On
arriving home she failed to find the boy. She only had thirty-five minutes
to prepare lunch and hurry back to the factory. The more she tried to
remember the more she felt herself hopeless. Her mind was like a tempestu-
ous sea with many conflicts all working at opposite directions at the
same time. The daughter suffering from a terrible, incurable disease, the
irritable husband, financial difficulties, physical exhaustion. The memory associated with the location of the key was lost in the midst of these conflicts. She came to me full of joy on her face and said, "Pastor, God answered my prayer this noon. All my efforts to locate my key were futile. I then knelt down and prayed God. O, the answer came immediately like the suddenness of lightning." Now what happened is this. The memory of the key had been latent all the time in the subconscious part of her mind potent enough to induce action, but not strong enough to come to the stream of consciousness in the shape of definite recollection. What was her prayer? It was simply the relinquishment of the conscious striving which led into a subconscious action. It was like remembering a name by giving up the strenuous efforts for it, or it was the attainment of sleep by ceasing the arduous pursuit of it. The strenuously striving self of momentary desire and the self of long-established habit are the two selves concerned in this relation. In other words, she threw her sorrows and difficulties upon the Lord, and as a result the stormy condition in the stream of her consciousness became calm and the main object—the key—became noticeable.
Discrimination Regarding the Object of Prayer

Discrimination varies according to the ethical insight of a person and his knowledge as to the efficacy of prayer. Children do not hesitate to pray for trivial things. Even adults with undeveloped mental capacity have thought of prayer in terms of some temporal benefit. But as religious understanding and consciousness deepen prayer becomes a necessity for only spiritual blessings. The tendency to pray for insignificant things is sharply emphasized in polytheistic religions. The power of their lesser deities was confined to such matters. Experience has shown that the efficacy of prayer does not extend to the procuring of physical goods. Men have prayed continually for material goods and were finally convinced by repeated failures that prayer was not the way to obtain them. But this has not undermined their expectations, as they have vigorously adhered to their mistaken belief by projecting the causes of their failures upon the will of God: "God knows what is best for me."

The understanding of physical principles and processes involved in prayer may be a source of greater discrimination in selecting the ends at which to aim.

The matter of responsiveness of the object to which the petition is addressed holds an important place in the continuation of this process called prayer. The object must be responsive; otherwise the use of prayer will cease gradually. Here we come to the method of discrimination which is more or less scientific in its nature. The self is capable of making
such discrimination through introspection after it has developed its field of experiences to a higher level. The primitive man as indicated in the history of religion did not make any such discrimination because of the fact that he lacked the ability of discrimination both in science and religion. All objects with which he came into contact were personified and deified. The fundamental motive for this deification or personification is, of course, found in a direct or indirect satisfaction of needs. The use of magic by primitive people seems to have been generated by the belief that any particular type of action causes a corresponding response by the objects or persons around him. This is psychologically quite true. In the summer of 1928 the writer watched a boat race between Harvard and Yale universities. The Harvard students on the banks of the Charles River impulsively ran faster than the college boat in a vague expectation of increasing the latter's speed. In this particular case there is an automatic bodily response increased by one's own desire. Man contemplates the transfer of his energy in this way to another outside object. Now if this kind of transference from man to an object is possible, the reverse is possible also, i.e., the transference of energy from the object to man by certain magic and ceremonials which were some crude antecedents of prayer.
CHAPTER III

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER

Exaggerated and liberal claims have been made as to the power of prayer. Many of these claims, no doubt, upon a scientific examination will be dismissed as unreasonable or non-scientific. The claim that through prayer there has been produced rain may be unwarranted. I have known an Armenian village in the district of Nicomedia, Asia Minor, where rain is scarce. But the people know the secret of getting their rain. After a long period of many dry months the people of the village go in most solemn procession to the Holy Mount to offer their sacrificial offerings. They are so sure about the result of their prayers that they all take their rain coats with them. It is claimed that for twenty-five years they have never missed the mark. I have witnessed their ceremonials several times and felt the cold rain on my skin. How has this happened? We do not know. And how much do we know about the relation between natural and spiritual laws? The people referred to know practically nothing about weather conditions, about the nature of prayer. One thing they know--God is a responsive, anthropomorphic, Almighty Being.

The general conception of cultured and educated Christians is that such claims are hard to base upon reasonable grounds.

The efficacy of prayer lies not in possessions obtained but in new stores of courage and energy, also in moral insight. The highly developed man seeks first of all the Kingdom of God which comes within us.
Prayer may be efficacious and helpful in sickness. Through prayer the patient gains confidence and courage. This means the enlistment of his latent spiritual and physical energies to combat the sickness. The medicines prescribed by the physician may be of more help to the prayerful than to the prayerless man.

Conditions indispensable to the efficacy of prayer may be briefly classified thus:

1. Intense desire.
2. Proper fixation of imagination and attention.
3. Continuation of the exercise for a reasonable length of time.

The importance of desire in prayer has not been fully understood, although it is assumed that we desire the thing for which we pray. We cannot, however, make any positive statement as to the validity of this. A wealthy capitalist who has exploited his fellow creatures may pray for purity of heart, righteousness, and justice without desiring to live a pure life or act justly. For this reason his prayer may be hypocritical. It would require an extremely poor mind to believe in the efficacy of such an insincere prayer. If the aim and purpose of the prayer is to have a spiritual growth then the man who prays must truly and inwardly desire the thing prayed for. Desire is absolutely prerequisite to an unrestricted process of prayer, more prerequisite than faith, as it is quite possible to pray without faith that the thing asked for will be granted. External factors, such as conventions, social pressure, or the audience, may force some one to pray.

The importance of imagination must be stressed. In order to
make our prayers successful it is absolutely essential to visualize the object desired. If our prayers are for purity, health, wisdom, courage, or any other moral virtue, those things which pertain to them must be visualized so vividly that they may as strong stimuli arouse our emotions (psychic energy) for the operation of the nervous system and the entire mechanism.

The time element is also of great importance for the efficacy of prayer. Prayer is a real spiritual exercise which requires time and effort. To neglect the daily exercise in meditation and yet to expect spiritual growth is contradictory to both natural and spiritual laws. Intense desire, proper fixation and continuation of the exercise have been recognized as indispensable for the efficacy of prayer by all great religions of the world.

A true Christian should continue to pray and engage in constant meditation, with the sole purpose of keeping his soul in contact with God. It is essential for us to blend and interweave our wills with His; to be amalgamated with God in mind, in purpose, in will, and in spirit through prayer. These are the conditions required to have the object of our prayer realized in us.

Another explanation of efficacy of prayer is that by prayer inner channels are opened through which divine power flows more freely and abundantly, thus making its functioning more effective. This divine energy may have similar significance as the terms "mental" or "psychic" energy as James and Tansley call it, the "libido" as Jung and Freud and their followers call it, and the "elan vital" as Bergson calls it.
Practically, most true Christians contemplate this power as related to God and regard it as manifestation of Him. Both psychologists and theologians are right in their conceptions. The trouble is that they do not understand one another.

"This energy is stored within us ready for action. When we abide in our own selves and take hold of it then I have a conviction that answers to our prayers will be available and the efficacy of it more realized.

"Prayer establishes the contact between the ordinary self and this reserved supply of spiritual energy in such a way that it becomes effective for us in every day life."1

This process of readjusting of our inward conditions has been regarded by most religious teachers as very essential for the reception of divine influence in to us. But my own conviction is that this energy comes from within. Emergency cases sometimes reveal spectacular scenes. The human body under extreme emotional excitement is readjusted in such a way that it provides for unprecedented muscular strength and endurance. This brings us face to face with the "Emergency theory of Emotions."

"The sympathetic system is conceived as an elaborate check and drive mechanism that is thrown into gear by events which demand immediate and energetic action."2

During the World War, at the Dardanelles where I was serving as an officer, wounded soldiers who were unable to move and were left to

---

2 A.I. Gates, Elementary Psychology, 190.
die, jumped to their feet and ran about over a mile before the advancing British troops under the heavy fire of machine guns and exploding bombs, a phenomenon for which German officers could give no explanation.

There is the possibility of exploring all these inner resources. The religious idea rightly received into the mind and reinforced by the suggestion of regular devotional exercises always tends to realize itself.

Here we have the key to that marvelous experience called regeneration--self-realization--the crowning glory of religious experience.
The Place and Value of Prayer in Regard to Sickness

Prayer for the cure of physical diseases has been universally practiced even among the primitive people. The fact that prayer continues in our own days as an accepted means of treatment for physical ills is quite remarkable. The growth of confidence, "Faith," is an important factor in faith healing.

The psychological connection between prayer and health must be carefully considered in order to understand some of the basic causes that underlie the process of cure.

The attitude of absolute faith and full confidence will result in an absence of worry and fear. This condition will eventually become a powerful factor in the creation of good health. This calmness of the mind tends to produce health by way of right functioning of the psycho-physical organism. The poisoning effect of the depressing emotions is very destructive to the healthy and smooth functioning of the entire organism. Remove the poisoning inhibition, and the process of life will move on more easily. The remembrance of the comforting and the encouraging presence of God in a mood of depression, and a sense of feeling of the divine guidance in perplexing situations, tends to raise prayer to a higher degree of efficacy.

The sickness of our beloved ones is instinctively felt to be a matter about which we are induced to speak to God. We do not know the psychic causes of this; we only know that the sufferings of our brother touch our feelings and disturb profoundly our peace, both in mind and soul. In what degree does our prayer overcome the forces of disease and
turn back the ebbing tide of sorrows? Men, whose prayers have knocked in vain against the restrictions of natural order, have in sore disappointment given up the act of praying as a waste of energy. We, in most instances, forget that prayer does not include a supernatural power of changing the structure and the laws of the universe. Nevertheless, within some limitations, prayer for the sick, according to scientific minds, will contribute to recovery and therefore it should be encouraged as a therapeutic measure. According to my observation, patients, for whose recovery prayers were offered, had a better chance of recovery than those who ignored this spiritual help. Psychology affirms the fact that hope and confidence tend to the right functioning of the psycho-physical organism. This is an empirical fact as to the healing power of prayer under certain conditions. Men in the face of the failure of all medical methods and aids, by the attitude of the mind evoked by prayer, have won success. Some people believe that prayer belongs only to the spiritual and ethical realm and therefore its effect must be of this order and not psycho-physical. Therefore, it must not have any effect upon the nervous system and brain cells. Now, this objection appears to overlook the profound unity of human nature. Man is both spirit and body. Scientifically, for every phenomenon in the compartment of consciousness, there is a corresponding phenomenon in the nervous system and vice versa--for every change in the nervous organism, there is a corresponding echo in the mental realm. The human thought is a living power that tends to find expression in corresponding physical states. Even our own ability to pray depends upon our nervous condition. Our spiritual life is
conditioned by psycho-physical processes. If these are disordered, why should we not seek contact with the Creative Life and Power for their right functioning? If our sickness becomes a barrier between us and God, the ethical thing is to pray to God for its removal.

All diseases are physical or mental, but some are more physical than mental and others are more mental than physical. The cure of both can be achieved only by accord with Divine Laws and therefore we must go back to the healing energies that issue from the source of life. Fresh air, food, and rest for a person suffering from tuberculosis will do more good if the value of peace and hope, which are inspired by prayer, is not ignored. The time will come when it will be quite hopeless to rely on medical treatment without prayer in its broader and deeper sense, just as it would be if we put the entire burden of healing on prayer and ignored medical treatment. To link scientific treatment to spiritual power, to the creative and health-giving God, is the thing that God desires man to do. God uses man to perform good for man. In other words, He makes use of all things in this world, be it man, matter, or force, for a specific end, without violating His universal laws.

It is impossible to understand how my prayer offered for the health of my friend will prove of any benefit to him, as we do not know the laws which connect my soul with the soul of my friend and all souls with the Universal Soul—God. But we believe that there are such laws—we cannot doubt it. To pray for the health of a friend is the act of putting selfishness from our souls and inviting the presence of the Divine. Such prayers are in harmony with the Divine Will of God,
therefore they become veritable channels through which spiritual force may be transmitted to help and heal.

But our intercourse with God should not be a means. It must positively be an end, as when we strive after a spiritual experience for getting rid of mental obsessions or bodily discomforts, we simply confound the temporal with the eternal, the superficial with the essential. To pray for recovery apart from any purpose of consecrating the result to the highest end, is a degradation of spiritual powers to the level of magic. The primary function of prayer is to unite us to God. In praying for others or for ourselves, our object must be to forward God's purpose of good towards them and towards us. Even the greatest handicaps such as permanent diseases offer the greatest opportunity for the display of prayer's triumphant power. The malady in such instances is not removed but is eliminated in a great glory. Thus the Divine Grace becomes perfect even in the face of extreme weakness. This is the triumph of the mind over the body; of the soul over suffering. Through prayer, pain and evil are transmuted into good. The history of thousands of saints in the first century is a remarkable illustration of this great phenomenon. All their tortures and troubles were swallowed up in the triumph of concentrated prayer to God.
Relation of Faith to Prayer

The relation of faith to prayer deserves at least our brief consideration. Faith has been recognized as a dynamic in prayerful life. But is faith a prerequisite in any form of prayer? It is hard to answer in a positive sense. At revival meetings many are brought down to their knees in spite of the fact that they lack faith. When faith and fixation of attention go hand in hand, the result may be more effective.

Coe, in his book The Psychology of Religion, writes, "The function of prayer is a way of getting one's self together, of mobilizing and concentrating one's dispersed capacities, of begetting confidence that tends toward victory over difficulties. It produces in a distracted mind the repose that is power. It refreshes the mind deadened by routine. It reveals new truth, because the mind is made more elastic and more capable of sustained attention." ¹

Through prayer we make our experiences social. We begin to realize that our private sorrows are shared by another, that our troubles are not exclusively ours but also another's. Faith is greatly responsible for the creation of such changes both in body and in mind. Jesus makes faith an essential condition to the efficacy of prayer.

"Whatchoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing ye shall receive." ²

Christ is the most supreme testimony to the power of faith.

²Matthew 21.22.
He never thought to prove this reality by cold logic any more than he thought to prove the reality of God. He did something more helpful and impressive, however. He believed with straight faith. Faith and prayer were the entire course of his ministry. His whole life was lived in constant communion with the Father.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you: He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do."1

The above text has been used as an authority in faith healing.

The climax in the silent process of faith is surrender. The aggressive attitude is terminated in full reconciliation. There is a complete change from positive to negative position—from self-assertion to self-surrender—from tension to relaxation. When our self-sufficient disposition is inadequate to face our difficulties, we at once yield to the higher powers. The best way to recall a difficult name is to abandon effort.

"Faith as activity of the will initiates a subconscious process in the right direction. Since our deeper-lying self is often wiser than our working self, to attain the desired end the subconscious activity may deviate somewhat from the initial tendency given by the will."2

Faith is confidence not only of our own but in things beyond us available for men. These resources are believed to be of superhuman power. The active side of faith searches grounds of reasoning. Faith is not wishful thinking or an unchecked imagination. Wishful thinking

1 John 14:2.
2 Karl R. Stoltz, Psychology of Prayer, 85.
does not create ideals as ideals are values that come from experiences. Faith in professional men, in friends, in parents, or in moral values are matters of every day experience. Yet we know relatively little of the characteristics of such faith states.

Our efforts to discover the nature of faith states reveal a confusion with other terms which may be illuminating. There has been a tendency to use faith synonymously with belief and trust and confidence. There are, however, differences of quality or of intensity between these terms. Faith, of course, can not be thought of as independent of belief. Belief may be experienced without the characteristic features of faith. Faith in God presupposes belief in God. Faith must be looked upon as an attitude which includes belief. "A faith attitude can best be thought of as composed of a belief supplemented by a large pattern of action tendencies, which when completed are revealed to be harmonious. Without faith prayer is but the utterance of words. If we conceive the soul to be surrounded with a stream of spiritual energy, then faith is that attitude or disposition of mind which draws in from this stream vitality and strength. It is through our best and noblest inspiration that the divine activity achieves its purpose within us and this very achievement is the answer to our prayer."¹

Our prayers are often without result for the fact that the divine activity is inhibited in proportion as we indulge in emotions that are incompatible with that trust which gives our prayers its dynamic value. When our minds are under the dominance of fear or jealousy or when

¹Worcester and McComb, Body, Mind, and Spirit, 328.
they are distracted by worldly passion, they do not become capable of real prayer. As long as such mental states dominate the mind, it can not yield itself to God. All negative thoughts and feelings must be dismissed, and their opposite must take place, thoughts and feelings that unify and enlarge the soul.

Faith and desire are almost interwoven. If we desire faith then we have faith. If we do not get faith, it is because we do not really wish it. Faith comes not by argument but by inspiration. Without a deep conviction as to the existence of a responsive God prayer becomes hardly possible. Faith awakens and regulates the subconscious powers and attention as a co-adjutor of faith directs that power toward the desired goal. God, theologically speaking, thus manifests Himself creatively in the subconscious as a response to the appeal of faith.
PART III

CHAPTER I

Definition of Prayer

What is prayer? In answering this question, it may be of some value to know what great thinkers have said as to what prayer essentially means.

August Sabatier: "Prayer is the movement of the soul putting itself into a personal relation and contact with the mysterious power whose presence it feels even before it is able to give it a name."¹

Amiel: "We dream alone; we suffer alone; we die alone; we inhabit the last resting place. But there is nothing to prevent us from opening our solitude to God. And so what was an austere monologue becomes dialogue."²

These different conceptions expressed by different distinguished thinkers are in fact remarkable for they mark the culmination of a long history. The struggles of primitive man to influence the will of higher powers by magical spells and the silence of the mystic who forgets his self-centered being in the vision of the Eternal are motivated by prayer.

A Modern Definition: Prayer is an address uttered or an inaudible speech to a divino power conceived as Spirit or God, in order to obtain material, moral, or spiritual blessings. Prayer contains words of homage, adoration, confession of sin, statements concerning the

²Amiel's Journal in Time, Tr. by Mrs. Humphrey Ward, 289.
beneficent operation of the divine powers. It also carries with it self-assuring utterances of confidence in divine protection.

A Psychological Definition: "Prayer from the functional point of view is a process of communication between the narrow egoistic self and the socialized self through which an ever completener and more adequate self emerges."¹

The main purpose and the aim of prayer is to obtain blessings or to satisfy needs by establishing closer contact with spiritual agencies or to enjoy the presence of the object to which prayer is directed. This explanation does not include incantations of primitive peoples. Since their aims were to compel rather than to persuade, they should be classified as rites and magic. Prayers that are uttered mechanically may be excluded also for the fact that they have degenerated into magic. In the Armenian Apostolic and Greek Orthodox churches praying frequently goes on so excessively and in a form so mixed with ritual as to become little more than mechanical and magical.

The origin of prayer is inaccessible to historical investigation; therefore it must be approached by psychological inquiry. How did men ever come to pray at all, and why did they continue to pray, in ever changing forms and ceremonials through all stages of civilization? If we seek a motive, universal, supreme, perpetual, it will be found in the impulse to self-preservation—the inspiring and directing principle of all human activities. We call it impulse, rather than instinct, to emphasize its comprehensive and active character. The same is true of

¹A. Louise Strong, Psychology of Prayer, 24.
religion and the very heart of religion is prayer. Religion is in a broad sense the conservation of values, and prayer occupies a unique place in man's quest for higher values. An immense number of men of prayer withdraw from the presence of earthly things, concentrate their mental and psychic energy upon the main object of their devotion, pour forth their yearnings and aspirations, bow down in deep reverence, and arise answered with peace and power.

The tendency to pray would have been atrophied if prayer, even the crudest one, had not resulted in some good to the person who prayed.

It is very difficult to define specifically the true and genuine nature of prayer. Prayer, for instance, is sometimes defined as "loving fellowship with God." But prayer may be possible for the crudest savage in whom the sense of the Divine presence is not developed, perhaps does not exist. Others declare that prayer is "petition"; the presentation of needs and the asking of some definite means for the spiritual and material gratification of those needs, but it is quite possible to pray without seeking any specific good or gift. Tolstoi has written, "I have prayed to God, but if one defined prayer as a petition or thanksgiving, then I ceased praying. I asked and, at the same time, deeply felt that I had nothing to ask. I thanked Him, but not in words or thought."1

Prayer as the Central Experience of Religion.

We must accept the fact that while religion is concerned with the transcendental, and its goal is the ideal realm, it is nevertheless essentially human and its appeal and characteristic urges are manifested in terms of human thought and conduct. Though our belief is inborn and

1 A. Haude, Life of Tolstoi, I, 63-64.
presupposed by religion, though it is deep rooted in the human soul and is highly responsive to the human emotional nature, yet it can not be separated altogether from the rational mind, no matter how sublime the faith-postulate may be. Religion is a matter of human experience mediated and expressed by human conduct and thinking process. Religious experience must differ from secular or other experiences in its content. A fair comprehension of prayer in connection with religious experience will necessitate the use of both rational thinking and spiritual feeling, as rational process alone is inadequate to demonstrate the truth of religious experience. Feelings and emotions may misguide us in our searchings.

Psychology, to my mind, is a great channel through which we may come to an intellectual understanding as to the activities of the prayerful mind, at the same time knowing to what extent the modern thinkers invalidate prayer as involving an objectively real Divine relationship. Prayer is the central experience of religion. Without prayer religion becomes atrophied. Wherever there is prayer relationship with the Divine, there is action and activity in religion. Prayer is con-comitant with religion. Have you a religion? If yes, then you have prayer as its direct expression, as it is the natural, instinctive utterance for religion, so to speak.
CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF PRAYER

Classification of Prayer

Prayers may be classified according to aim or purpose, or in respect to the object invoked. From the standpoint of purpose, prayers may be divided into two groups, namely, petitional and aesthetic. Petitional prayers aim to attain a gift or personal growth. The act of cooperation by the individual is usually expressed in the prayer.

"Aesthetic prayers may be forms of worship and of giving thanks. They may also usher in the consciousness of feeling and enjoyment of the Divine Presence."¹

Prayers may also be classified in terms of the object to which an audible utterance is directed. Imagination comes to the aid of the praying mind before which the image of the object is portrayed. Aesthetic prayers may also be classified in terms of the image held vividly before the praying mind.

The conditions that prompt men to engage in aesthetic prayer are of a higher order and indicate a more highly developed personality than those that lead us to the use of petitional prayer. They are the great sources of mysticism. In advanced religions the content of mystic experience consists frequently in an immediate awareness of God's presence.

This content is a directly obtained and felt spiritual reality. It is the Love for God and for moral perfection that urges the individual to seek closer bonds of accord between himself and God. This urge may be identified with a consuming desire to live in the Divine presence. "My soul is athirst for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Highly developed and keenly reflective personalities have often felt this loneliness of the soul and have earnestly sought God as their real companion.
The Object of Prayer

The object of prayer may be spiritual or material. There is no limit to prayer. Both are promised by Jesus to all men provided the requirements of genuine prayer are met. Our physical needs are basic. They are of primary importance as far as our temporal life is concerned.

Some confine their prayers only to spiritual blessings but this is not in accordance with the teaching of Christ. The Master himself asked for temporal blessings as He knew the urgency of bodily wants. "Give us our daily bread" includes all material needs such as clothing and shelter, etc., and "deliver us from evil" includes both physical and moral evil. All of these needs are within the sphere of the physical world, but the life of the soul destined to continue beyond the grave is more important than the body including its maintenance and health. Spiritual wants are as urgent as the most dominant urges such as hunger or thirst. Material needs ought not to absorb the whole of prayer.

The consciousness of our transgressions becomes a living torment in our souls. How are we going to reconcile this situation with the heavenly Father who has been offended? Through prayer only. Through prayer peace and quiet gradually come in to soothe our disturbed and confused hearts.

Material things in nature afford us some degree of enjoyment, but the satisfaction derived from such enjoyment becomes transient and the final result disillusionment. Then where shall we seek perfect
satisfaction? Above, in the invisible and spiritual realm only. Philosophy and science have proved to be ineffectual before our sufferings. Christians kneel down in prayer submissive and hopeful, for they discern the channel of eternal energy, power, and life that extends between our souls and the transcendent God.

The Nature of Prayer

Prayer is not merely a petition—although for practical purposes it may be so considered—that is the seeking of the prevention of some approaching undesirable event or the production of some desirable condition.

There are three main elements involved in prayer:

1. God—from whom action is sought.
2. Man—the petitioner who seeks action.
3. The environment—in which the expected action has to take place.

The early Hebrew conception of God was one of holiness and power. Gradually through the centuries the prophets appreciated other attributes. As Dean J. Mathews of Chicago Theological Seminary points, the conception of strength, power, and might was changed by Christ to one of love, mercy, and long suffering. God's omnipotence became the omnipotence of love and goodness.

The function of prayer cannot be to persuade God to grant us what is good. We cannot pray to change His mind about us. He knows better than we do about our own needs. He is always active and more ready to give than we are to receive. This being the case, one may ask himself—why does not God give to us without our prayers? We must not
forget that God's power is for moral ends and therefore must be exorcised in a moral way. But this power is not autocratic. Its expression depends partly upon our will. Our more desire cannot be satisfied unless it is accompanied by the determination of our will. This is necessary to show that we are qualified for the granting of the petition. Briefly, we ask with absolute sincerity God's cooperation in bringing about the desired state.

The world is governed by laws—all natural processes are orderly, governed, regulated. A comprehensive survey of all conditions will show that the direction, intensity, and duration of the destructive blasts are perfectly orderly effects of causes. All international conflicts, economic depressions, and political entanglements are fruits of previous practices and are brought about by the violation of principles of universal moral or spiritual laws. Laws have their part in the production of all results and those laws are unchangeable. No honor is done to God when we claim that He can and has violated the laws upon which He has framed the entire creation. This idea does not exalt God's freedom.

All these laws were originated in perfect wisdom. To discard them is to discard God's perfection. God's perfection involves an abiding eternal purpose. To ask God in our prayers to violate or suspend these laws is to ask Him to overthrow His stability. It is an attempt to destroy the security of all things.

We cannot pray for something, the granting of which would violate the universal laws, because the nature and the character of such prayer is against the moral nature of God and, therefore, not in accord
with His will.

The regulation of God's universe cannot and ought not to be changed. It is man that ought to change. The responsibility of prayer rests upon him. By simply praying, we cannot escape the necessity of action for the fulfillment of the request. True and genuine prayer implies strenuous action. The answer of prayer is always in us. God does none of the actual work for us. He helps us to do our own work for ourselves. He acts in such a wise way that at the right moment we do what is wanted quite naturally—sometimes so naturally that we do not even realize that our prayer is answered.

The Reality and Power of Prayer

The discussion of the reality of prayer will necessitate the relinquishing of the theoretical and the accepting of the practical. This is obvious, since we have to deal with facts. Prayer has not always been the helpless cry of the finite to the unknown infinite as some have supposed; and raised havoc in the sanctuary of the Christian faith. There have been derived practical results so numerous and so astoundingly authenticated that their significance remains as a solid indestructible rock before the vision of the unbelieving world.

But merely to declare that prayer produces actual results is not sufficient. The main thing is to prove that there is reasonable probability that man will obtain results as an answer to his prayer. Assumption of the reality of God and prayer is inadequate. And exhaustive investigation of prayer, both in the past and present, will bring us
to the conclusion that answer to prayer does not depend solely on the life and faith of the individual, but that it also depends on the operation of the spiritual law, so to speak. If man procures methods to unearth the secrets of the operation of this spiritual law, he will succeed in getting similar results as recorded in the Scripture. There is the same law unchangeable for all ages past and to come. All the miracles performed by Jesus were due to the fact that Jesus knew the underlying principles of all spiritual laws. He could produce the desired results because He was absolutely familiar with the law and had thorough knowledge of God. Likewise the immediate followers of Christ were familiar with the same law and therefore produced similar results.

If at present, despite the huge organization of our churches and the elaborate systems of our ecclesiastical machinery, we fail to get corresponding responses to our whole-hearted prayers, it is because we have failed to obtain exact knowledge of God and the operation of the spiritual law.

**Prayer in Relation to Universal Prayers**

If prayer has the first place in individual life it will take its place in the corporate life of the world, thus raising the standard of life, both national and international. All aims and ideals for which the whole human race stands can be helped in this way. Obviously the most successful nation or race must be the one the individuals of which rely on prayer for the working out of all the national or racial problems.

This rule will also apply to the church. All Christian churches give great importance to prayer, both in services and thought, but most of
them have not yet fully realized what a marvelous power a true prayer represents. Until recently the scientific world knew very little about that tremendous force which is called electricity except to know that it works in accordance with definite laws. We set our machinery in accord with those laws and got astounding results. Infinitely greater, however, is the power that can be generated through the remarkable experience called prayer, provided it can be set in right relation to the spiritual laws that control it. This is beyond doubt, as prayer represents the vital connection between God and man.

Once we have gained this experience and its real values and have proved that it works in accordance with spiritual law, we pass from belief to actual knowledge in the reality of God. National ideals represent a nation’s conscious or unconscious seeking of God, the highest sense of good will, the totality of all individual goodness that the nation strives to attain and actualize. The more fully all individuals open their minds to God, the clearer becomes their vision of the nation’s highest good. Thus the world’s moral progress becomes the progress of men toward God. There can be no real progress since our perfection is the perfection of God and His perfect spiritual creation. That is the coming of men more and more into harmony with God. This is the exact function of true prayer. Therefore prayer is of most practical value in the realization of national ideals and world brotherhood when all men shall see God face to face. That is the true relation of God to men in His Glory and in His Kingdom.

END
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume XXVI.

Fairbank, Introduction to Sociology.


Herman, E., Creative Prayer, The Religious Press, 1921.


Maude, A., Life of L. Tolstoi, Volume I.


Watson, James B., Psychology from the Standpoint of Behavior, Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1924.
