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# The Psychology of Prayer

BY MARY LOUISE STRONG

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# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PRAYER



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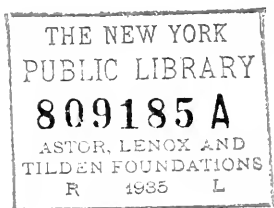
ANNA LOUISE STRONG

CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1909

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Published August 1909

Printed By  
The University of Chicago Press  
Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A.



TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER,  
FROM WHOSE LIFE AND SPIRIT I KNOW MORE OF THE  
REALITY OF PRAYER THAN ALL ANALYSIS  
CAN EVER TEACH.



## PREFACE

“We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer; and many reasons are given us why we should not pray, whilst others are given us why we should. But in all this very little is said of the reason why we do pray.”—So wrote Professor William James nineteen years ago. The temper of the age has changed much in the past score of years and perhaps in nothing more than in its attitude toward religion. Twenty years ago the question was insistently and even clamorously asked: Is religion true? Today we have tacitly concluded to let this question rest while we ask two other questions that seem to need answering first, namely, What is religion? and, What do we mean by “true”? Nothing might seem less in need of investigation. Surely religion is too well known to require any description, while to inquire what we mean by “true” sounds like willful sophistication. And yet both these questions are proving most fruitful in stimulating investigation and reflection. With the second of these we have nothing to do here, directly. That may be left, for the time being, to the Pragmatists and their critics. But we may dwell for a moment on some implications of the first question, as showing the reason for studying the psychology of prayer which includes among other subjects “the reason why we do pray.”

There are some few parts of what we know and feel and do that seem to require only a world of things, on the one hand, and a mind capable of sensing and responding to them, on the other. But by far the most interesting and most important parts of life involve relations to other persons. Language, the means of communicating with others, is an almost if not quite indispensable tool for all thinking. In cooperation or in competition with others we carry on our work, build the structure of home and state, and in short, transform bare existence into a genuine life. Personal relations evoke largely the emotions which give value alike to thought and to action.

Religion, whatever else it may signify, belongs to the social aspects of our experience. It is relation to some other. It matters not that the other is not seen. The man of faith lives "as seeing him who is invisible." He finds terms for this other in language borrowed largely from human society. God is Father, Lord, King, Redeemer, Friend, the Great Companion. As implying social relation religion belongs therefore with other parts of life which involve this adjustment to others, this union with others, to produce and become what would be impossible for any one by himself alone. Whatever we may think of religious experience, it takes its place in human life and human history along with science, morality, and art, as a sphere in which man has developed a personality, a self, of peculiar range and quality.

These aspects of human life as being in themselves most significant have repeatedly invited attention. The eighteenth century made brilliant investigations in this field. The nineteenth century turned its interest largely to chemical and biological problems, and we reap the results in our industries, and in our control over disease. In its closing decades, a measure of scientific activity was directed upon the mental life, attacking at first chiefly the simple problems which could be studied in laboratories. But now with some of these more elementary problems on the way toward solution, interest is naturally turning again to what is after all of deepest interest—the world of personal relations. We have as yet scarcely made a beginning in applying to the more complex and more vitally important fields of life the scientific spirit and method which have disclosed new meaning and value in the world of nature. We are seeking to understand more fully what mind and spirit mean in those capacities and activities due to social forces.

To study in this spirit the meaning of religion and prayer does not, of course, answer all questions. A philosophy of religion has still its task. But the first step toward a true philosophy is as full a knowledge as psychology can give of just what religion is as a matter of personal experience. If we study religion and prayer in this manner, we shall better know how to distinguish the lower from the higher, the transient from the essential. And perhaps as we explore the life of the spirit in its pro-

founder sources we may come nearer than we think to the answer to our postponed question, Is religion true?

JAMES H. TUFTS.

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

In June, 1906, as the result of a general study of the psychology of religion with Dr. Ames of the University of Chicago, I wrote a short paper on "The Relation of the Subconscious to Prayer," which was published the following year in the *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*. This was the first definite expression of my growing interest in the effect, upon the conceptions of religion, of results and methods of modern psychology. It was followed the next year by "Some Religious Aspects of Pragmatism" in the *American Journal of Theology*, April, 1908. A year later, with the end in view of making a more thorough and detailed psychological study of prayer, I took up some special work with Professor Mead on the subject of Social Psychology. To his suggestions I owe much in the general statement of point of view. To Professor Tufts my thanks are due for suggestions in the arrangement of the book and the preparation of its final form for the press.

ANNA LOUISE STRONG.





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# PSYCHOLOGY OF PRAYER

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## I.

### THE ESSENTIALLY SOCIAL NATURE OF THE SELF.

Man begins as a social being; he does not acquire society. This fact, which seems from one point of view a recognized commonplace, has many far-reaching consequences which are not always considered. Moreover, the fact itself has not always been taken as self-evident. According to an older school of philosophy, man began with himself. The self with which he began was a simple, unchangeable substance, dowered with certain inalienable attributes, among which a most important one was a craving for philosophic explanation of the universe. Apparently he knew all the essential facts about this self before he knew anything else; he then proceeded to deduce the rest of the world from the certainty of his self-knowledge. According to this view, man's religion originated as a direct and conscious attempt to solve various theoretical problems, which were supposed to cause great perplexity to the mind of primitive man. Why did certain natural forces act irregularly? How could he himself be in one place in his dreams when his companions assured him that

he had passed the night in another place? A supernatural explanation was obviously the only thing in order.

The older view of the self on which this explanation of the origin of religion is based, may have some possible meaning for metaphysics, which deals with the ultimately real constitution of things. Even in this field, however, it has been shown to have its inconveniences. And when we deal with the matter from the standpoint of psychology, that is, from the standpoint of the material which consciousness actually presents to view, we find no use which we can make of such a conception of the self. The self—any self which we can know and distinguish from other facts of experience, is as much of a growing construction in experience as are those other facts. The self of today is not the self of yesterday; this is true, not in a figurative sense, but literally. Neither is its environment the same. The same experiences which have changed the one have changed the other. And if we are speaking from the standpoint of psychology, which includes as “states of consciousness” such knowledge as we have, both of ourselves and of the rest of the world, we must recognize the fact that any self which we know and distinguish from other things is not something which *has* consciousness—as the older philosophers spoke of the self as “having states”—but something which arises *in* consciousness.

Moreover, the consciousness in which it arises is of a social type. We do not begin with a conscious-

ness of a physical world and infer personalities; we begin just as truly with social phenomena. In fact, in a sense we begin more truly with social phenomena than with physical. Consciousness of any kind begins in the child only when the unconscious life-processes meet with some disturbance, some problem that demands solution. The most common disturbance is probably that of hunger or of pain. Whatever it be, the point to be noticed is that the need and the satisfaction alike relate the child to some person. At the very dawn of consciousness he is in a vaguely social world, in which his own self gradually comes to be distinguished from the other selves that make his environment. He attains self-consciousness through personal relations.

This is not something which happens once for all, somewhere back in the life of primitive man or of the child. Self-consciousness is not attained at any given period in the history of either the race or the individual. Rather, as life goes on, we are continually attaining self-consciousness, and each time it is the consciousness of a slightly different self. This new self is not a self which, although we have indeed just come to the knowledge of it, has existed all along, deliberately choosing to enter into relations with other selves and coming out of them essentially unchanged. It is a self which became what it is as the *result* of the personal relation. It will enter into new relations and the resultant of those will be again another self. Thus it is that a small and narrow self develops into a larger self, through what we

shall call—following Cooley's admirable discussion in "Human Nature and the Social Order"—the "Imaginative Social Process":—social in that it is a relation of selves, imaginative in that the selves concerned in this relation are "personal ideas," imaginative compilations and interpretations of certain parts of experience.

For the selves which enter into relation are in no case physical facts. They are mental facts, states of consciousness. It is an idea of myself and an idea of you which relate themselves in such a way as to produce a new self. The reality of the personal idea does not consist in any physical object to which it may refer, but in the result which it produces. Milton or Shakespeare may have more social reality for me, may produce more results in my development than a man on the next street who passes my door daily. It is the personal idea that has "social" reality—that is real in relations of selves. The process by which a self grows is *always* an "imaginative" social process, whether the personal ideas concerned are referred to physical accompaniments or not. The question of this objective reference is indeed an important one, but it is a different question and one which will be taken up later.

This imaginative social process is, we repeat, the means by which a relatively narrow and confined self changes into a larger self. In using the word self, we must again guard ourselves very carefully from the supposition that we mean any underlying substance or activity to which all this association



of personal ideas "belongs" as a state of consciousness. We mean, and shall mean throughout by the term self, simply the mental fact which we can observe from moment to moment, which we observe constantly entering into relations with other selves, out of which relations there emerges, on our next observation, a self which was not there before. We maintain that this succession of personal relationships, this imaginative social process, is the means by which a self develops, by which all self-conscious life manages to go on. Prayer is one form, one very important form, of this imaginative social process.

In the case of the child or of the primitive man, the imaginative social process is employed indiscriminately to attain all kinds of ends. There is no clear distinction between personal and impersonal. The child will kick a chair over which he stumbles, "to punish it," not because he reasons that punishment will hurt the chair, but because his immediate unreasoned reactions toward everything are vaguely personal. Difficulties he cannot solve for himself are solved for him by persons. We see the signs of this in the mythological expression of the world of primitive men. Science and the scientific temper is a very late development, and there are even now few people for whom it possesses the importance of the world of personal relations.

The science of the adult grows by abstraction out of the less manageable world of personal ideas. Even the most abstract reasonings show traces of their

original form, which was that of a social relation. Thinking is in its very nature a conversation, dependent on language symbols. Until we take the trouble to observe very carefully the workings of our minds, we are unaware of the extent to which we use this form of imagery. "The imaginary dialogue passes beyond the thinking aloud of little children into something more elaborate, reticent and sophisticated, but it never ceases." "The mind lives in perpetual conversation."<sup>1</sup>

But ideas which are frequently used, and used in just one connection and for one purpose, have a tendency to lose in richness of content what they gain in definiteness. By this loss the personal ideas which make up the consciousness of the child become abstract and de-personalized as they become more manageable. They are no longer endowed, as is the fairy, with wings and wand and golden hair, and a lot of other perfectly irrelevant things. They have only the amount of complexity necessary for the performance of the one function for which they are required. And though the distinction between personal ideas and ideas of another kind is only a distinction of degree, not of kind, yet the adult does succeed in making such a distinction. Certain changes—the more complex and less regulated—are felt as real changes of the self, and the relation of ideas out of which they grow as a relation of personal ideas. Other changes, the more mechanical, the more definitely regulated, are not felt as changes

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<sup>1</sup>Cooley: "Human Nature and the Social Order," p. 52.

in the self, and the ideas of which they are the result are not felt as personal ideas. When an idea has only one function and performs that function with perfect and regular adequacy, we are no longer conscious of it as a personal idea. And in our consideration of prayer, we shall see how the social relation, normally present in prayer, may, by the loss of concrete content in one or other of the selves involved, pass into an aesthetic satisfaction or a moral action, which, while social in origin, is no longer social for consciousness. That which becomes habitual becomes impersonal. When we make one definite, unvarying use of a friend, and always succeed in making it, he no longer exists for us as personal.

In speaking of the imaginative social process as a relation of selves or personal ideas we have hitherto spoken as if all personal ideas were essentially the same in function, as if an idea of myself were not different, as a mental fact, from an idea of you. In one sense this is true. Both are imaginative combinations of certain mental facts under one idea. Both, moreover, are equally essential to the production of the future self which is to be the result of their present relation. But there is one very important difference, the distinction between subject and object. As long as life goes on in an habitual routine, there is no such distinction made; indeed, in a very real sense, there is no definite consciousness at all. Consciousness arises as the result of a disturbance, and takes immediately the form of a dis-

inction between a purposing activity and the means through which this activity can attain its end. The purposing activity is felt as subject; the conditioning means as object.<sup>1</sup>

When this object is not made a part of a larger system, when it is not resolved into a collection of abstract qualities and relations, but remains a rich complexity, unanalyzed and not completely explicable, then it tends to take on a personal form, and to be given the value, not only of an object, but of a personal object, a self. In this case, the relation in consciousness is a relation between two selves, one of which we shall call the *me*, or self of immediate purpose and desire, and the other the *alter*, the objectified self. Both of these selves have arisen at the same moment of disturbance in consciousness. Before the disturbance, there was consciousness neither of the one nor of the other. The normal result of their relation, is the production of another self, which will again take the position of "me" in still other social relations, but which is a wider and more efficient self than the *me* which preceded it.

Prayer is one form of this imaginative social process. Prayer is the direct interaction of two selves arising simultaneously in consciousness, as the result of a need, a lack, a disturbance which demands the presence of a completer and more adequate self before it can be overcome. Prayer re-

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<sup>1</sup>See Stewart's "Valuation as a Logical Process," in Dewey's "Studies in Logical Theory."

sults normally in the attainment of this completer self—born out of a social relationship. One of the selves concerned in this social relationship is the me, or self of immediate purpose and desire; the other is the objectified self, which we have called the alter. Prayer is a distinctly social relation and aims at a social end. That is: It is a relation of selves, and aims at the production of another self.

In children's prayers, primitive prayers, and a small percentage of the prayers occurring among adults, no distinction is maintained between personal and impersonal means and ends. The growth of this distinction marks a stage in the discrimination of the use of prayer. And this discrimination may take place in either or both of two ways. The use of prayer in certain fields may cease because it is not found to "work", or because there is a gradually growing sense of shame in connection with such a use. These two methods of discrimination we shall call the scientific and the ethical.

The child and the primitive man do not make such distinctions. The prayers they use are not, from our standpoint, the most effective means to the end desired. Yet even here they are perhaps as efficient and direct a means as any means present to the consciousness of the child or the primitive man. His science is as indiscriminating as his religion; he has as yet no thorough correlation of means and ends. And even for the adult the distinction between personal and impersonal is not at all completely made. There are fields which are still

claimed for both concepts,—especially the field of therapeutics. In fields of this type we occupy much the same position as that occupied by the primitive man in regard to all his activities. We try now one means, now another; prayer is sometimes efficient, sometimes not; and we do not know precisely when or how it is going to prove efficient.

Meantime another form of discrimination is constantly going on with regard to prayer. Certain needs are seen to be the needs of a partial self, others of the larger, unlimited “social” self. And when, as in the case of an ethical religion, the alter is given the value of the highest, most inclusive self conceivable, there arises a sense of shame in the employment of a relation with such an alter for the attainment of trivial ends. We shall trace the gradual growth of this discrimination in the next section.

The completely discriminating forms of prayer vary almost infinitely. But they may be conveniently classified according to the predominance in them of one or the other of the two tendencies in every social relation. One of these is a tendency to take into consciousness the largest amount of social content possible, to rest in the experience itself; the second is the tendency to hurry as quickly as possible into action. The first of these we shall call the contemplative or “aesthetic” tendency; the second the practical or “ethical” tendency.

Prayers of adoration, of meditation, of joy in the greatness of God, come under the first head. “Thou, O Lord, art from everlasting to everlasting”, is a

form of adoration in which the narrower finite self finds joy in the contemplative sharing of a wider, a mightier, an infinite life. In prayers of this type the me aims to lose itself completely in a sympathetic participation in the life of the alter, in such a way as to give up entirely all thought of an activity or problem of its own. This form is seen, at its extreme, in the Buddhist meditations, the aim of which is complete forgetfulness of the finite self. It is seen in less extreme forms in all types of religious-æsthetic absorption; it is seen when the psalmist<sup>1</sup>, after mentioning with much lamentation his own trials, finds comfort in the fact, not that Jehovah will deliver him, but that Jehovah is mighty in Israel, and will ultimately win the day in the succeeding generations. Such prayer finds its chief end in the prayer-state, in the enlargement of the self through the contemplative sharing of a wider life, and in the peace, rest and joy therefrom resulting.

At the other extreme from this type is a form of prayer-relation which is more exclusively practical. Prayer is sought for assistance in some moral aim, either for the sake of giving enough incentive to carry the action through, or in order to furnish an ethical test in the decision between various possible lines of action. Kant illustrates this ethical emphasis in prayer when he declares that religion is useful chiefly as giving divine authority to the moral imperative. Just beyond the position occupied by

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 102.

Kant we reach the extreme at which prayer ceases to be a recognizably social relation, and hence ceases to be prayer as such. We reach this extreme, as we have previously suggested, by a loss of social content in the alter. A similar extreme may also be reached in the case of the "aesthetic" type of prayer, by loss of content in the me.

The prayers of the typical religious consciousness vary between these two extremes. At the limit either of aesthetic contemplation or of moral action, there ceases to be any mentally recognized relation of selves, and we find accordingly that the average religious person will deny religious content to these extremes. Yet they are merely the limiting forms of the same relationship observed in prayer, and result from the exclusive emphasis on one or the other of the two tendencies in any social relation.

We have seen, then, that prayer is a social relation arising in consciousness, and that the result of this relation is the establishment of a wider self. We have seen that as the growing consciousness learns to distinguish between personal and impersonal means and ends, and between the needs of a partial self and those of a completely social self, these distinctions are applied in the use of prayer. And we have seen, finally, that even in the completely discriminating type of prayer there are manifest two tendencies, leading respectively to two extremes between which prayers may vary infinitely. We shall proceed to take up a general survey of the different forms of prayer, beginning, in section two,



with the indiscriminating reactions of the immature consciousness, passing, in section three, to types of prayer in which gradual discrimination is at present taking place, and finally, in the remaining sections, to a consideration of the completely social forms of prayer.

## II

UNDISCRIMINATING FORMS OF PRAYER. THE CHILD AND  
THE PRIMITIVE MAN

Prayer is, then, as we have seen, a social relation which has as aim the attainment of a wider, less partial self,—a more confident self, a self more strong to endure, a self of larger sympathies, a more truly ethical, more completely social self. This is the need, the “problem” of the religious consciousness.

But in the beginnings of religion, as we should expect from the vaguer, less discriminating type of earlier consciousness, there was no marked division between religious needs and needs of any kind. Irving King has shown this in his thesis, “The Differentiation of the Religious Consciousness”. All activities might partake of the religious character; none were religious in the modern sense of the term. Ceremonies which might be called either religious or magical or artistic, and which have indeed been classed as all three, were performed at the recognized crises of life. Birth, the attainment of maturity, marriage, and death, were the recognized crises in the life of the individual; while seed-time and harvest or the expeditions of hunting and warfare marked tribal crises which demanded ceremonial preparation of a religious nature.

What is true of primitive races in this connection is also true of the child. The child who attaches

any really vital meaning to the term God, makes use of that meaning in order to satisfy any need that can possibly occur to him. This fact is somewhat obscured, as might be expected, from the way in which religious education is given to children. The child may learn to repeat the conventional formula that we must pray to God "to make us good". But any one who attempts to discover just what the child means in this connection, finds a striking blankness of content. The words are words and are seldom exchangeable, even for other words, unless the teacher himself has furnished one or two handy synonyms. The child does not distinguish his religious needs from other needs. He has therefore no specifically religious needs. He wants something, and he makes use of any and every means he can think of; prayer is one of those means. And prayer is a means not very alien to the general content of his mental life, which is made up largely of personal ideas, to be influenced in "personal" ways. He will use in prayer the same kind of whining entreaty, or the same attempts at bargaining, which mark his attempts to control other personal forces. "Please, God, *please* let" such and such a thing happen, or "I won't ask for anything else for a long time if I can just have this", or "I'll do thus and so, if you will do thus and so", are types of entreaty which the writer has heard in the spontaneous parts of the evening prayers of several children. The child in the tale who said: "Please, God, take care of cousin Ann now, but we don't need you any

more here, for mother's come home'', showed the exact kind of need which he felt, and the exact kind of a being which he posited to satisfy that need. God as a person had for him the same function that other persons, more especially one other person, had; there was as yet no distinction between religious needs and the other needs of life.

Nor is this state of mind confined to children. It finds a very dogmatic expression in a certain type of adult religious consciousness. It is here sometimes due to a rather disorganized feeling that God should pervade all the life; yet it must not be confused with the more organized, rational expression of that same feeling which will be treated later. There is a difference between the conscious application of ethical and religious values to common experience, which comes after an analysis of consciousness and is the result of a will to *make* experience ethically and religiously valuable; and the unthinking confusion between religious needs and any other kind of needs. It is only such confusion which could lead to the attitude of mind of a revivalist whom I heard relate the manner in which God gave him, in answer to prayer, a particular suit of clothes which he wanted but could not afford. He saw the sample in the store; he haggled over the price; he decided that he could not get it; he went away and prayed about it; he came back and found that a suit of the same material had just been returned and that he could have it for a price well within his means; he tried it on and "by the Providence of God" it fitted.

In hearing this tale as an example of the "way in which God provides for all the wants of his children", a religious person of the more completely social type is conscious of a feeling of disgust at what seems to him irreverence; while the psychologist notes simply the indiscriminating childishness of the position.

There is, then, for the immature consciousness, no clear distinction of the field in which prayer shall be considered both effective and appropriate. So that from the standpoint of the adult we are apt to wonder at a blindness which could find the means employed effective,—at least effective enough to warrant its continued application.

We must, however, notice one thing at once, looking at the matter from the standpoint of the consciousness which made the prayers.

If prayer did not always prove an adequate means to the attainment of the desired end, neither did anything else. The primitive man's science was not more efficient than his religion. He had no definitely organized system of means and ends; if the need was urgent he tried every kind of means he could think of, until one of them apparently "worked." If he distinguished between the personal and impersonal at all, he did not distinguish so carefully but that he felt himself able to use impersonal means to accomplish directly personal results, and *vice versa*. Thus, on the one hand, he might use a potion to procure the love of his hesitating mistress, or on the other hand, he might use verbal petition

as a means of obtaining rain. The distinctions between personal and impersonal, material and spiritual, are distinctions which do not exist at all levels of consciousness. They have been slowly evolved and are even now not made with definiteness. Or perhaps it would be more exact to say that in the case of some problems we have reached a fair degree of organization in the use of these differences, while in the case of other problems we either do not choose to raise the distinction, because other distinctions are more fruitful for our purposes, or else we are unable to raise it, and make it adequately definite. The discussions constantly going on with regard to the amount of effect which faith may have on bodily ailments, and, from the other side, the amount of relief which physical means can "minister to a mind diseased" prove that even the most thorough generalizations of science have given us as yet no final system of means and ends, completely organized.

With a more primitive type of consciousness, the organization of cause and effect was of course even looser. When a man wanted a thing, he went through all kinds of contortions, mental and physical, to obtain it. And if he got it, he felt it necessary to go through as many of those contortions as he could remember, every time he wanted it again. The omission of the most trifling accompaniment of his first success was held to vitiate the whole performance. Thus, in the snake dance of the Moqui Indians, designed to bring rain, the slightest variation

from the prescribed ritual, a ritual extending over many days, makes necessary the repetition of the ceremony. And if the rain does not come, the most natural conclusion is that there has been some unnoticed omission of an important element. This is the immediate conclusion in all cases in which an expected sequence does not occur; the scientist in his laboratory, failing to get the expected reaction, inevitably assumes that the means he used in this case, though apparently the same as the means used in the case when the reaction *did* follow, must in reality have varied from it in some unnoticed but important particular. He repeats the sequence with increased care; so did the Indian. And the discrimination which the scientist consciously seeks and the Indian gropes for, comes gradually to both.

The primitive lack of discrimination appeared in many views of the cause and effect relation. Frequently it is quite possible to trace the line of association. Thus, as Josiah Tyler relates:<sup>1</sup> "One of the first missionaries to the Zulus was accustomed to take his overcoat to the religious service whenever there was a probability of rain. A drought having come he was importuned by no means to leave behind his 'rain-producing garment' ". Frequently, moreover, the various activities associated with the attainment of a given end, contained one or more elements which were really significant. The Malay preparation for an elephant hunt, which consisted in smearing the body with four kinds of aromatic

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<sup>1</sup> Josiah Tyler, "Forty Years Among the Zulus," p. 106.

leaves and uttering a charm in the process, *was* efficacious in destroying the scent of the approaching hunters.

The same thing is true of the prayers of the child. Prayer is one of many means he employs toward the desired end. If he gains the end, he is not likely to try the experiment next time of leaving out any of the factors in his previous success in order to satisfy a theoretical curiosity as to which factor produced the result. The theoretical curiosity is not so strongly developed as this would imply. And the child usually does succeed,—in time, and after he has tried enough variety of means. If he does not succeed, it is because his attention has wandered off to fields and pastures new. In other words, the times when his prayer preceded a success remain in his mind more than the times in which his prayer preceded a failure, and this for the reason that the problems which were important enough to hold his attention were important enough to hold his efforts, and thus eventually to reach a satisfactory solution.

So prayer is, for the immature consciousness, one of many elements in an indiscriminating attempt to solve a problem. It is used to obtain the satisfaction of many kinds of desires. Sometimes it works; sometimes it does not; for some things it works especially well, and for others not so well. But how is the child to know the cause of its working when it works, and the cause of its failing when it fails, analyzing in each case the psychological ele-



ments which make the prayer efficacious for some things and not for others? Such isolation of the elements of a causal sequence, is one of the highest achievements of an advanced science, and even as yet has proved possible only in a limited sphere, which sphere becomes for us, it is worth noting, *our* sphere of the impersonal.

The beginnings of this scientific discrimination come when the causal relation between the prayer and the result is broken in one of two ways. Either the prayer does not bring the result or the result comes without the prayer. The latter of these two events is likely to occur only in matters of little importance. For in important matters, the experiment of omitting any elements of a hitherto successful sequence is not likely to be tried. But occasions come, in these important matters, when the desired result is not forthcoming. And on such occasions different sorts of experiments are tried. The sequence may be repeated more carefully, as in the case of the Snake dance already mentioned; or the sequence may be varied. The gods may even be deliberately changed, if they have not given the desired result. Thus in the case of the tutelary deities of China, "when the sacrificial victims are perfect, the corn in the vessels pure, the sacrifices at their proper times, and yet there arises drought or flood, then the tutelary spirits may be changed".<sup>1</sup> This is a beginning of a discrimination which takes

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<sup>1</sup> Faber, "Mind of Mencius," p. 72.

the form of a restriction of the place in which certain gods may be effectively used.

A similar limitation of the power of the gods is found in the tribal nature of many of the deities. Thus, among the Ewe-speaking peoples, the gods are supposed to be completely "indifferent to acts of sacrilege on the parts of Europeans, which they avenge with death when committed by natives".<sup>1</sup> Some such assumption has been found necessary to account for the fact, evident enough in their experience, that the Europeans *do not* suffer from these acts of sacrilege, and cannot be made so to suffer, either through fear of the god, or through fear of the vengeance of the priest.

A similar discrimination between the things which God is likely to perform and those that he is not, took place in the experience of a small boy of my acquaintance. He had been brought up with a sense of the extreme closeness of the relation of God to the minute events of daily life. One day, in a fit of exasperation he uttered the word, "Damn". He ran into the house, terror-stricken. When he grew calm enough to tell his tale to his mother, he added: "I thought God was going to strike me dead, as he used to do with people in the Bible. But he didn't". He had begun to discriminate, and to set certain spheres of life aside as not exposed to direct divine interference. Such an experience, if the incident in question involves a large enough part of life to make a strong impression, might easily lead to a total

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<sup>1</sup> A. B. Ellis, "Ewe-Speaking Peoples of the West Coast," p. 81.

rejection of the hypothesis of any God at all, unless he is furnished by some older person with a ready-made distinction which answers his purpose.

But such a rejection is not likely to happen at once. It takes an event of great emotional significance to upset the habits already formed. There are so many possible ways of explaining exceptions; and their number is multiplied a hundred-fold when personal factors enter into the problem. Moreover, it is a psychological commonplace that that which we expect to see is much more easily taken into our minds than that which we do not expect, and that which accords with our habitual methods of classification is much more easily held there than that which does not. So it usually requires many instances of God's non-interference to induce the child to make radical changes in his point of view.

Then, too, both in the case of the primitive man and in that of the child, there are certain types of problem in which prayer has a very real effect. They are the types which, partly on this very account and through this very means, are distinguished later as the social and personal problems. A Zulu exercises certain charms against the life of a certain man; he lets the man know of it; and the man actually does die. For the Zulu, and we must confess for the anthropologist also, though in a different way, the death is the result of his enemy's prayer. Ceremonies for the sake of healing may also be classed with those for the sake of destroying.

Besides those religious rites which produced their effect through their influence on the mind of another person, there are those which reached the desired end by affecting the mind of the worshipper himself. And here the result is even more certain. We find accounts of it especially, in dealing with primitive society, in the preparations for war. By ceremonies which were as religious as anything else the tribe did, and religious too in the same sense, however far a war-dance may seem from religion to the twentieth century mind, the tribe worked itself up to a pitch of frenzied self-confidence which made failure almost impossible. Naturally the other tribe might do the same. But in this case, fate was on the side of the most "religious", granting that the numbers were fairly equal, since they were the most fearless and ferocious.

In the case of the child, also, discrimination comes slowly for the same reason, namely, that prayer seems successful in many of the cases in which he uses it, and hence justifies itself for him. He prays for a thing and lets his parents know of his prayer; he gets what he prays for, as they do not want to disappoint his faith. Or he goes to school and comes to his first examination. He prays that he may not fail. The calm of mental assurance produced by such a prayer is of course the best possible guarantee of success. So entirely does prayer seem to justify itself in such matters as these that I have even known many college girls who confessed, although with a little shame, that they always prayed

for success in examinations. Prayer for such things is so efficient that when discrimination finally comes, as it usually does in the higher types of the religious consciousness, it is likely to be based, not on the scientific criterion of efficiency, but on the ethical criterion of value, which we shall next proceed to consider.

So far, then, this much seems evident: that for the immature consciousness there is no clear distinction between the ends for which prayer and other religious means may appropriately be employed, and those for which it may not. Nor is there any such discrimination in the case of any other means. And since the use of religious ceremonies seemed to justify itself as much as the use of any other means known, scientific discrimination, that is, a discrimination that would restrict the religious means to a certain type of problems on the ground of recognized inefficiency in other types, came very slowly.

Another form of discrimination was, however, also taking place. Irving King, in his thesis "The Differentiation of the Religious Consciousness", speaks of it as the discrimination between magic and religion. But this seems only one aspect of the entire distinction between activities necessary for the attainment of the widest, most social self, and those necessary for the attainment of some partial self.

Certain needs are found to be especially important for the tribe as a whole. The ceremonies for their attainment are performed by the entire group,

or later by a priest or medicine man representing the group. And these ceremonies receive the authority and social reinforcement of the group. They are group-activities. The gods to whom they appeal are the "high gods" of a tribe, and care for the tribe's interests. The members of the tribe have, however, desires which do not concern the good of the group and which may even be hostile to the welfare of some other member. In these desires they do not receive the authority and social reinforcement of the group. In other words, they cannot appeal to the gods who care for the tribe; they cannot make use of the ritual and prayer in which the tribe takes part as a whole.

Thus there arises a distinction between the wider social ends, attained by the religious rites of the tribe, and the narrower ends of individual desires. The former of these are the ends which with later discrimination come to be known as ethical and receive the authoritative sanction of the ethical religions. For the latter there are two ways open. They seek their fulfillment either through performances which become recognized as "magical" and so inimical to the purpose of the more "social" religion, or through the creation of lesser gods who are not so indifferent to individual desires as are the gods of the tribe, and who may therefore be bribed for individual ends. These methods run into each other; "magical" practices of all kinds are carried on in connection with the lesser gods; and on the other hand, one religion is apt to stigmatize as

“magic” the dealings with gods of other religions. Thus the early Christians did not deny reality to the gods of Greece and Rome, but considered them demons whom it was unlawful to worship.

These two methods of supplying the individual with satisfaction for his more partial ends, while not absolutely distinguished, are yet in some particulars different. The use of magic has always implied a distinct conflict with the religious authority of the time. The attitude of the author of I Samuel toward Saul’s consultation of the Witch of Endor<sup>1</sup> and that of the Middle Ages toward the black art are examples of this. Saul could no longer obtain the favor of the god of his people; he resorted to magic. And magic was a distinct affront to the religion of his nation.

The second method, the method of polytheism, is found in connection with less ethical religions, and does not imply a moral affront to the chief gods of the people. It seems more a matter of economic convenience that the gods who care for the interests of the whole tribe should not be bothered with small affairs. Thus Hirata, the exponent of Shintoism, writes:<sup>2</sup>

“The gods are not to be annoyed by greedy petitions, for the Mikado offers up petitions daily for his people, which are far more effectual than those of his subjects.”

Many religions contain the conception of a god

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<sup>1</sup> I Samuel 28.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Griffis, “The Religions of Japan,” p. 87.

too high to be of use in the affairs of men, supplemented by a host of lesser gods who serve the needs of the day. Such is the Shang-Ti of the Chinese, who is worshipped by the emperor alone, but who is supplemented by local deities, ancestral spirits, domestic gods, and gods of particular callings. Such is also Mawu, the chief god among the Ewe-speaking peoples on the west coast of Africa, who, A. B. Ellis declares,<sup>1</sup> is ignored by the natives as too great and distant; for "to the native mind, a god that works no evil to man and is indifferent to his welfare", as this high god of the sky is supposed to be on account of his greatness, "is one that it would be a work of supererogation to appease, while there are so many others who either work evil and have to be appeased or are special guardians and have to be lauded". It is worth noting that the natives commonly identify the new god of the missionaries with this Mawu, and take the message of the missionary as meaning in essence that Mawu does really interfere in the affairs of men and hence requires worship. When this claim is apparently contradicted by the results of their experience in trying to get certain favors from Mawu, they are apt to relapse into their former belief in his indifference. They have simply added a god to the number of gods they must placate, and then dropped him again after due trial. They have not in such cases reached any more developed stage of

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<sup>1</sup> A. B. Ellis, "Ewe-Speaking Peoples of the West Coast," p. 34.



religious consciousness by any careful distinction of the place of God in experience.

Psychologically, a religion of many gods for the many different desires gives extreme emphasis to the element of difference in the selves constantly arising in the stream of consciousness, but fails to give any emphasis on the side of unity. Psychologically it is correct to say that there is a different self for every new locality and every new kind of crisis. Whether it is equally correct to give a religious value to all of these selves is a matter of ethics rather than of psychology. Ethically the criticism of such a type of religion would be that it focussed attention on and gave religious value to activities indifferent or even hostile to the highest social ends.

For these lesser deities are not, in most cases, used for moral support and encouragement; they are used for all sorts of trivial ends, even less worthy than the afore-mentioned coat of the revivalist. But they are so used with more logical justification than in the case of the revivalist. For the conception of a God universal enough to be vitally interested in the fate of all men, would naturally operate to exclude foolish and irrelevant petitions. It may, as in the case of the Ewe-speaking peoples already noticed, entirely remove petition to and interest in such a god. Or, if the idea of God has sufficient vitality, the prayer may remove for the time being the desire for the trivial things for which the petitioner feels it foolish to pray. But, at any rate,

such a conception identifies religion with the ethical side of man's nature, the more inclusive social side.

But in the case of the lesser gods of a polytheistic religion there is no such ethical appeal. And this is just because they are identified with the needs of a small particular self out of the many selves which make up the individual. Hence while the so-called ethical religions change their conception of God with the developing conception of society, always striving to find the highest unity, the most inclusive social self, the worship of many minor deities misses the powerfully compelling ethical force of a wide social self and finds in its connection with immediate desires an emotional and psychological compensation for this loss.

In the case of a child brought up under the influence of an ethical religion, this discrimination arrives more easily, being given to it largely ready-made. It may even come so early that the other kind of discrimination, the scientific, never arises at all. Thus the child may cease to pray for "material" objects not because he finds that his prayer is useless, but because even before making that discovery he comes to have a sense of shame in "bothering God with such little things". This is the explanation of the shame felt by the college girls already mentioned in their prayer for success in examinations. The prayer "worked" beautifully; the criticism of its use was not scientific but ethical.

Other girls have told the writer that they sometimes prayed for success in athletic contests. But

here the ethical criticism came still more forcibly into play. They were demanding, at least implicitly, the defeat of another. And they had not the sublime confidence of David which could assume that the god of battles was inevitably on his side. As one girl said: "I don't dare ask any more that the other team may be beaten, but I ask that our team may play its best, and," with a slight laugh, "I guess I rather hope the other team will forget to ask."

The same attitude of ethical discrimination came out in a discussion with another girl concerning the efficacy of prayer. "I have asked for all kinds of things," she said, "and I have usually got them, as far as I remember, but I always feel so horribly ashamed afterwards to think that I bothered God with such trifles. I don't do it much now." Discrimination had apparently come in her case, not because of a recognized inadequacy of prayer in any department of life, but because with moral growth there came a sense of shame in the use of a social relation as means to a trivial end.

St. Teresa admirably illustrates the attitude taken by the developed religious consciousness towards such trivial petitions,—trivial from the ethical point of view: "I laugh and grieve," she says, "at the things people come to ask our prayers for. They should rather beg of God that he would enable them to trample such foolery under their feet."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless she finds a value in their turning to God, even under such circumstances. So her convent accepts

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<sup>1</sup> St. Teresa, "The Way of Perfection," p. 4.

the prayers and offers them, though "I am persuaded our Lord never heard me in these matters,—for persons even request us to ask His Majesty for money and revenues".

With this ethical distinction between the things which may properly be asked and those which may not, we naturally pass to the consideration of the more discriminating types of prayer. Ethically, this attitude points to a clearer and higher conception of the moral ideal; practically, it undoubtedly means the loss of a certain power which might produce results. For the ethical and the scientific discriminations do not exactly coincide here. Practically, prayer and the confidence resulting therefrom would be of very distinct use in the winning of a basketball game; but the ethically developed consciousness would be very careful in making such a use of it. This loss of practical power may doubtless be compensated by a growth in self-confidence due to a more intimate and organized knowledge of the means needed for the desired result;—in the examination, by a conscious realization of the value of calm and confidence and by a consciously acquired self-control, and in the game, by a conscious realization of the need of courage and self-reliance and the application of that knowledge.

Whether the loss is made good or not, the fact remains that in all cases in which a desired result may be obtained by an effect on the individual concerned, prayer is a means of decided efficiency. And this leads to the discussion of the more discriminat-

ing types of prayer, in which the use of prayer as a means is gradually limited to just this kind of an effect.

## III

## INTERMEDIATE TYPES. THE GROWTH OF DISCRIMINATION

We have said that prayer is a social relation between two selves arising simultaneously in consciousness, having for its end the establishment of a wider, more complete self. This definition has not seemed to hold entirely in the case of the immature consciousness, because, with more mature discrimination, we no longer identify our "selves" with the type of things there prayed for. There has been a progressive limitation of the field to which the imaginative social process may apply. Yet, even for the adult consciousness, the line between the personal and the impersonal is a shadowy one. So, although as we saw at the close of the last section, prayer is gradually confined, as the worshipper becomes more discriminating, to the establishment of a completer self, yet there are several types of prayer more or less widely employed at the present day, which lie on the border between the primitive prayers and the completely social prayers. Some of these were mentioned at the close of the last section, but they are varied and numerous enough to deserve special consideration before we turn to the prayers which confessedly aim at the development of a self. For the prayers to be next considered do not, from one standpoint, aim at such a development. They are rather prayers for so-called "objective" results. Among them may be counted the prayers

of those supplicants already noticed, whose material petitions St. Teresa bewailed, declaring with a scientific skepticism rather remarkable in a woman noted for her reliance on prayer: "I am persuaded my Lord never heard me in such matters."<sup>1</sup>

In an article by F. O. Beck,<sup>2</sup> dealing with the results of a questionnaire on the subject of prayer, only five per cent of the respondents, all of whom habitually prayed, claimed that "objective" answers to prayer, that is, answers which affected conditions outside the subject, were possible. This is very instructive, as showing the extent to which the religious consciousness is willing to confine the results of prayer to an effect upon the individual who prays. If the respondents had been children, without doubt a greater proportion would have been observed. Yet this doubt in the objectivity of prayer-answers is not due to a general decrease of belief in the efficacy of prayer, on account of numerous trials which have failed. For most of the respondents, to judge from the answers given, were people of strong religious conviction. The doubt represents rather, as we have maintained, a gradual distinction of the field in which prayer may appropriately be applied as a means.

Even in the cases referred to as objective answers to prayer, we shall see that there was a social relation employed as means and a social end attained. But while the social nature of the means was recog-

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<sup>1</sup> "The Way of Perfection," p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Amer. Jour. of Rel. Psych. and Education*, I, 1906, p. 107.

nized, the social nature of the end was not so recognized. The result was said to have taken place in the world "outside the self". We shall see, however, that this supposition is due to lack of psychological analysis. The result took place first in a social form, producing a new self, which had therefore inevitably a new environment.

We have already noticed, in the case of the examination and the basket-ball game, one division of such prayers,—those in which a more confident self was established. There are other cases which come under this head. And we must notice that in the attainment of any end, the part played by confidence is enormous. First in its effect on the person concerned, next in its effect upon others. We call to mind the case of George Müller,<sup>1</sup> and others like him, who let the Christian world know of their needs, of the missionary character of their work, and of their complete dependence on prayer to furnish all their necessities. The fact of their trust makes the strongest kind of an appeal,—not only their trust in God, but also in the willingness of the Christian world to help. Such confidence it is almost impossible to disappoint. Even in cases in which the external knowledge of the prayer is lacking, confidence, in its direct effect upon the person concerned and its indirect effect through him on others, is the strongest assurance of success.

In addition to the fact that prayer induces a sub-

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<sup>1</sup>"The Life of Trust: Being a Narrative of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller." New Amer. ed., Crowell, New York.



jective attitude well qualified to bring about new objective results, it also induces an attitude ready to interpret to its own end those results which it did not bring about. Sensations from without can only come into a consciousness prepared to receive them and can only be arranged in the forms which that consciousness furnishes. This is of course a commonplace both in philosophy and psychology. Events which to one mind will be interpreted in scientific terms will to another be interpreted in aesthetic, to another in religious terms. Thus Robert Lyde, an Englishman who lived in the good old days when God was a god of battles and favored individual parties, makes a religious statement of events which a modern writer would relate from an entirely different standpoint. He tells of an encounter with two Frenchmen in which one of them lifted a weapon against him:<sup>1</sup> "Through God's wonderful providence it either fell out of his hand or he let it drop. And at this time the Almighty God gave me strength enough to take one man and throw him at the other's head,"—thus effectually disposing of both. A perfectly coherent account of an incident, in terms which, however foreign to our method of organization of the same facts, are nevertheless true for their own particular purpose,—that of giving an account of exactly what happened to the consciousness and experience of the man Robert Lyde.

But it is not only in the terms used that the sub-

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<sup>1</sup> Arber's English Garland, Vol. 7, p. 440.

jective attitude affects the material received into consciousness. There may be a vital difference in the effect and use of the same material. To a person confidently expecting the intervention of a good God in certain difficulties, and a person expecting the worst possible outcome, or merely doubting what the outcome may be, the same objective stimuli may be productive of widely differing results. When a person goes through the world, as does the character in a modern novel, "The Dawn of a Tomorrow", in the confident expectation of "Good's coming, good's coming", and the firm determination to interpret whatever happens *as good*, or at least as possessing the potentialities of good, if she can make use of them; her prayer for "good things" is certain to be answered, as far as her own interpretation of her life is concerned, and that is, in the last analysis, all we have to deal with here. He who can say with Marcus Aurelius: "Oh, Universe, all that Thou wishest, I wish," is quite certain to obtain his wishes. But this is carrying us away already from the use of prayer for definite external objects into the conscious application of it in the attainment of a larger self.

Prayers which reach their end through the establishment of a strongly confident self will be taken up again in the consideration of the more highly ethical prayers, where the confidence is in matters purely ethical. Here we will next consider a type of cases in which the effect of the prayer relation is not a general expansion of the self in the manner just

considered, but an increase of the power of the self along some very specific line. The relation arising between the me, or self of immediate desire, and the alter, which is in this case a temporarily dissociated part of the stream of consciousness, brings to the solution of the problem associations which the me was incapable of arousing.

One incident will show the type of prayer here meant. A college girl related this experience to the writer: She had lost her physics note-book and the time of examination was approaching. She let it go till the last minute, hoping to find it. Then being in some concern, she made it a matter of prayer, saying: "If it is Your will that I try the examination without this book as a punishment for my carelessness, very well; I will do my best that way. But it would make things much easier if I could find it." She immediately felt an impulse to go to a certain store in the village. She reasoned with herself, saying: "I haven't been there for over a month. I remember distinctly the last time I was there and that was before I lost the book." The impulse continued, and taking it as an answer to her prayer, she went. As she entered, a clerk approached her with the book, saying: "You left this here ten days ago, and I could not send it, not knowing your address." Then and not till then the memory of a special visit made to the store by an unusual road, flashed across her mind. But that memory had been latent all the time in the subconscious activities of her self, potent enough to induce

action, but not strong enough to come to consciousness in the shape of definite recollection. The fact that the impulse appeared with the relinquishment of the conscious striving is also significant as showing a characteristic of subconscious action. It is like the remembering of a name by giving up the strenuous effort for it or the attainment of sleep by ceasing the arduous pursuit of it. These latter achievements are not given a religious sanction, but the psychological process is the same. The strenuously striving self of momentary desire and the self of long-established habit are the two selves concerned in this relation. But the two selves are not completely connected, hence the appearance of mutual isolation. In this case, however, a conscious and reflective connecting of the two selves as part of one self followed in the recollection which came after the girl had entered the store. Such a conscious establishment of connection does not always occur.

In the history of prayer there are probably many cases of the kind just described, in which a mere reliance on the laws of subconscious activity does the work, and in which the alter is not necessarily of any higher ethical value than the me. For the self to which petition is made for specific objective ends of a material kind is not necessarily the highest moral self. It is never, in fact, upon its high moral aspects that the emphasis is being laid at the time of petition. It is merely a more powerful, more adequate self upon which the me relies. It is, in

the cases just mentioned, the self of organized habit in relation to some particularly desired event. We should hesitate to call it "the subconscious self", lest we should seem to postulate some continuously existing being containing in itself all organized habits and containing them all equally. It is rather a self made up, not of all organized habits, but of certain particular organized habits. Which habits these are, which part of the subconscious activities here function together as a self, depends on the particular problem in hand.

One more large department of prayer must be noted, before we pass to a consideration of the completely social type,—the use of prayer for the cure of disease. We might indeed consider this use of prayer as coming under the completely social type, in which prayer is recognizably used for the establishment of a wider self. In that case we should be considering disease as an affection of the "self", and the end to be achieved through prayer as perfect "wholeness" in every particular. But there is in this field so much confusion between the use of "self" to designate the entire psycho-physical organism and its use for an organization of purposes and desires quite sharply discriminated from the "body", that it seems best to treat these cases by themselves, as cases in which the distinctions of personal and impersonal means and personal and impersonal ends are not yet clearly made.

Prayer for the cure of disease has been almost universally practised in primitive religions. This

is not remarkable, since prayer, including under this head ceremony as well as verbal statement, was used for every variety of crisis. Nor is it surprising that prayer should have been used for this purpose long after its indiscriminating application to many other kinds of problems ceased; for this is a more unusual problem and one less susceptible, in the state of primitive science, of coming under uniform treatment. But that prayer should have continued to our own day as a recognized means of treatment for physical ills, is somewhat more remarkable, and would seem to indicate some closer causal connection than one is apt to assume at first sight. Luther<sup>1</sup> believed in prayer for the sick; he reports that it had in his own experience saved three lives, his own, his wife's and a friend's, at a time when they were "nigh unto the very gates of death". St. Augustine<sup>1</sup> reports the cure of a toothache. Almost every religious leader who has, as all religious leaders have, lived a life of prayer, reports cases of the cure of disease through its means.

Andrew Murray tells of the progress of healing by prayer.<sup>2</sup> "At first it took him eighteen months of much prayer and labor before the final victory was gained. Afterwards he had such ease of access to the throne—that when letters came asking for prayer for sick people he could, after looking upward for a single moment, obtain the answer as to whether they could be healed." While we may quite easily

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<sup>1</sup> cf. *Amer. Jour. of Rel. Psych. and Edu.*, I, 1906, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> "With Christ," p. 126 et seq.

doubt the basis of this extreme confidence in each particular case,—this apparent sureness of knowledge,—it is nevertheless quite true that cures were effected. It is important to note in these cases the growth of self-confidence by the habitual use of prayer for healing, and the growth of the confidence of the people who came to be healed. The first case took him eighteen months; afterwards he did not need so much time. The growth of confidence, of “faith”, is an important part of all such phenomena of prayer and faith-healing.

Torrey relates an experience of cure by prayer.<sup>1</sup> A fit of illness came upon him when alone in his study. He was in such pain that he was unable to arise and seek help. Fearing lest he should be left alone and unaided for an entire night unless he secured the strength to care for himself, he prayed, and in a few moments was greatly relieved. Cases of this type are common, not only in the printed biographies of religious leaders, but in the lives of some of the friends of most of us, sometimes confessed, sometimes not. The writer knows personally half a dozen people who habitually make use of prayer in this manner. The success of such a use rests of course only on the testimony of single individuals and is extremely subjective in nature, yet that testimony occurs with sufficient frequency to give it weight.

There are also more “objective” cases, cases in which the prayer was for another individual, who,

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<sup>1</sup>Torrey, “How to Pray,” p. 18.

however, knew that he was being prayed for. (There are very few cases mentioned in which such knowledge was not included in the preconditions of recovery.) Father John Sergieff, a Russian priest, relates such occurrences as a matter of course. In "My Life in Christ", phrases of this kind are frequent: "Paul and Olga, in accordance with my unworthy prayers, have been cured of the infirmity with which they were attacked."<sup>1</sup>

The examples hitherto given have been taken from the lives of people who laid no especial emphasis on faith-healing as a part of their creed. They show that for the typical religious consciousness of the past the healing of disease has been a use of prayer frequently taken for granted, even when not emphasized as a particularly and peculiarly appropriate use.

But when we consider the tremendous emphasis which this use of prayer has been receiving within the last few years, in various types of religious movements from Christian Science down,<sup>2</sup>—and up; when we realize that for many people and many sects it has become the most vital issue in religion at the present moment; then we see that this form of prayer is more fundamentally connected with the social forms which we shall discuss later, than is the totally indiscriminating use which we have al-

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<sup>1</sup> Father John Sergieff, "My Life in Christ," p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> The Emmanuel Movement, beginning at Emmanuel Church, Boston, is the most widespread movement taking place within the church itself, and in connection with a recognized "orthodox" religion. See "Religion and Medicine," Emmanuel Church Publications, Boston.



ready discussed. The exact limits of its application are yet to be determined. Yet here also our thesis holds good: that the end of prayer is the establishment of a larger self. The unsolved question is not so much with regard to the ultimate aim of prayer as with regard to the types of diseases and disorders which shall be considered affections of the "self". And here we find, psychologically and therapeutically, a live issue. There has probably never been a time when this use of prayer has aroused more public discussion than at the present day, because the world has never before passed through an era like that of the last fifty years, in which all dependence on mental and spiritual means in the cure of disorders was so rigorously excluded. Up to that time those who used prayer used it as a matter of course and with little discrimination, in connection with other means. Now the whole matter is under strenuous discussion, a discussion which will probably result in more adequate distinctions than have as yet obtained concerning the employment of prayer in this field.

The value of prayer for certain parts of this field is not at all hard to find. Indeed it is rather surprising, in view of the great use which has been made of prayer in disease and the greatness of its success when compared with the use of prayer for other "material" ends; in view moreover of the closeness of the connection between the organism to be cured and the consciousness in which the prayer or the faith in another's prayer arises;—it

is surprising that more deductions have not been made from these two facts concerning the essential nature of prayer as a means arising in consciousness for the sake of the development of that consciousness.

Three things must be briefly mentioned in considering the psychological connection between prayer and health. First, that an attitude of confidence towards the universe, an absence of worry, is an element in all perfect health, and tends to produce health through a right functioning of the psycho-physical organism. The poisonous effect of the depressing emotions is too well known to need comment. The healthy mood is the mood of confident action. The removal of perplexing inhibitions makes the processes of life move more easily. The main thing for health is that these processes shall be let alone, undisturbed by the worries which arise, more in some temperaments than in others, unless held in check by some positive confidence. Confidence in almost anything would do. Thus we find diseases cured by prayers and religious ceremonials in religions which we should characterize as completely non-ethical. And we find cures produced by other types of confidence than the religious.

Closely connected with this negative effect of prayer in producing a confident self, is the positive stimulation resulting from the contemplation of a pleasurable idea. More especially the sympathetic sharing of a completer, more wholesome, more adequate life, has an effect like that of a stimulant or

tonic. "The object is to absorb the consciousness in the thought of the divine presence, since no other realization is therapeutically so effectual."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the purely general psychic accompaniments of the prayer-state, we must notice the perfectly definite effect which suggestion of all kinds has in the removal of certain diseases. It would not be in place here to discuss the extent of that power. In fact, we should hardly have gone at all into this brief consideration of the physiological effects of mental states, if those effects had not received so much recent emphasis in connection with religious movements. The relation of prayer to health is as yet incompletely determined. Any disease at all affected by the nervous condition comes of course well within its province. That is to say, any problem which is "social" in nature, which demands for its solution the establishment of a different self, is a problem which comes within the field of prayer, as we have defined it.

Yet we have not included this form of prayer among the completely developed forms for the reason that neither the scientific nor the ethical discriminations discussed in the preceding section have as yet succeeded in placing it there. From the standpoint of the scientific discrimination, the exact limits of the efficiency of prayer in this field are undetermined. And from the standpoint of the ethical discrimination we must notice the fact that this particular type of prayer does not of necessity posit a

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<sup>1</sup> H. W. Dresser, "Health and the Inner Life," p. 203.

self of higher ethical value than the me. We have already seen that a confidence of almost any sort will do the work. For the result depends principally upon the extent to which the immediate self of depression, anxiety and low vitality can be given up. "To lose self that we may find it is, in fact, the essence of spiritual healing; for invariably there is too great consciousness of self whenever there is illness and trouble."<sup>1</sup>

Yet it must not be inferred that the nature of the alter in the relation does not in any way affect the result. The more strongly joyous, the more potent, the more confidently healthful the life thus shared through contemplation or suggestion, the more will the resultant self possess those qualities, and the greater will be the tonic effect upon the nervous organism. And for an ethical religion there has been established in the minds of a majority of people an intrinsic connection between the morally ideal self and the ideally powerful self. Due to this association at least, if to no more fundamental connection, the relation with the morally and religiously ideal self has a peculiarly important place in the field which we have been discussing. It is also due to this association that prayers for the cure of disease frequently result, in the case of an ethical religion, in moral and religious gains. Thus Torrey, in the incident quoted above, concludes: "The joy

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<sup>1</sup> H. W. Dresser, "Health and the Inner Life," p. 203.

of the healing was not so great as the joy of thus meeting God.”<sup>1</sup>

This leads at once to the consideration of the fully discriminating type of prayer.

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<sup>1</sup>Torrey, “How to Pray,” p. 18.

## IV

## THE COMPLETELY SOCIAL TYPE OF PRAYER. ITS GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

“It would be,” says Herrmann, “a shameful misuse of prayer, if trifles which have really no significance for our inner life were to be made the objects of our prayers.” This is, as we have seen, the attitude taken by the discriminating religious consciousness toward any other use of prayer than the social one of establishing a wider self. This attitude is not, as we have already indicated, the result of a definite removal of prayer from certain well defined fields in which it was formerly employed; the earlier forms of prayer were indiscriminately social; but with greater discrimination has come greater definiteness in the content implied by a completer and wider self.

The imaginative social process, of which prayer is an example, is the one means to this enlargement of the self. “There is no possibility of being good,” says Cooley, “without living, imaginatively of course, in good company.” “Mankind needs the highest vision of personality, and needs it clear and vivid, and in the lack of it will suffer a lack in the clearness and cogency of moral thought.”<sup>1</sup> The end of all personal association is just this—the establishment of a larger self. Emerson’s criterion of friendship holds throughout: “The only joy I have

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<sup>1</sup> Cooley, “Human Nature and the Social Order,” p. 371.

in his being mine is that the not-mine is mine.—There must be very two before there can be very one.” The self lives and grows only through this continual incorporation into itself of new selves. “The ideal persons of religion are not fundamentally different, psychologically or sociologically, from other persons. So far as they work on life, they are real, with immediate social reality.” For “the immediate social reality is the personal idea”. “The vaguely material notion of personality, which does not confront the social fact at all but assumes it to be the analogue of the physical fact, is a main source of fallacious thinking about ethics, politics, etc.—It is the mental fact that we love or hate and that influences us.” “All our conceptions of personality are one in kind, as being imaginative interpretations of experience,”<sup>1</sup> in the form of selves arising in consciousness.

The value of the association with the morally ideal self has been felt so intensely by religious writers that many of them have sought to limit the imaginative social process to this one relation, by shutting out other companions. “Desire to be familiar only with God and His angels,” says Thomas à Kempis, “and flee the society of men.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Teresa mentions three things as necessary for obtaining perfection in prayer.<sup>3</sup> First, love for one another; second, “disengagement from every creat-

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 281, 89, 98.

<sup>2</sup> “Imitation of Christ,” ch. 8.

<sup>3</sup> “The Way of Perfection,” p. 23 et seq.

ure"; third, humility. More admirably efficient means from the psychological point of view could hardly have been devised. First, create a need for companionship by emphasizing the social nature of the self; second, deprive this need of its usual satisfaction, that all the energy of desire may go into the outlet which is allowed. Third, determine the outlet which this companion-seeking shall take by assuming an attitude of mind which could only admit as alter a self great enough to inspire "humility".

In view of the emphasis already given by modern psychologists to the social nature of the self, we hardly need to state further that the self lives only in companionship, and that prayer is one expression of the constant social intercourse through which consciousness goes on. The shadowy beginnings of such a social intercourse, in the consciousness of a woman who had spent most of her life in the automatic performance of "impersonal" tasks, is admirably expressed by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps:<sup>1</sup> " 'I see it now,' she said aloud to the only consciousness she could address on so intimate a topic.—By degrees, very quietly but very plainly, it had become apparent to the denied woman that *something* answered; not always, not explicitly, but sometime and in some way. She had begun to be aware of a soft encroachment upon her loneliness, a movement of spirit toward her own. She did not go so far as to call it an interchange of intelligence; she was chiefly

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<sup>1</sup>"His Soul to Keep," in *Harpers*, 1908, September, p. 501.



conscious of it as a delicate blender of feeling blurring the outlines of her solitude.”

But the religious consciousness does not stop with this indefinite “blurring of solitude”. It goes on to a much more definite social relation with a much more definite alter. Its “method of forming an ideal of God is to take the highest and most purified affections, and the noblest moral sentiments, and conceive of the Divine nature through them.” And with the self thus conceived, it enters into communion. “Confession, supplication, thanksgiving and praise all go and blend to form the great whole.”<sup>1</sup> “I can imagine some to object,” says Granger, “that God can never be so realized by us as to be the object of love in the same way human beings are. The reason is plain; such persons regard God as an intellectual ideal.”<sup>2</sup> And the answer is equally plain; the religious consciousness *does* actually succeed in regarding God, and in making use of him, as friend, judge, inspiration, companion in every sense.

A few of the ways in which this social relationship is used must be noticed. Augustine finds comfort and strength in suffering through the thought: “Thou didst know what I was suffering and no man knew. Thou findest pleasure in us and so regardest each of us as though Thou hadst him alone to care for.”<sup>3</sup> Browning makes David bring Saul back to the uses of life by promising him:

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<sup>1</sup> Beecher, “A Treasury of Illustration,” pp. 241, 383.

<sup>2</sup> Granger, “The Soul of a Christian,” p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, “Confessions,” 12:7; 3:11.

“A face like my face that receives thee; a man like to me  
Thou shalt love and be loved by forever; a hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee.”

Oates, in a devotional book entitled “The Sorrow of God”, lays great stress on the fact that “He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities”, and asks “what the practical value of such a truth is”. He comes to the conclusion that it is “the essence of consolation”. It changes the whole situation “to know that God is not indifferent to the tragedy but is involved in the suffering”.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the psalmist in one place<sup>2</sup> finds his chief consolation in the fact that God is *untouched* by his sufferings, because so infinitely greater than they. This latter type of attitude will be taken up in greater detail later. But the difference between the two may be briefly noticed here. In the former case, the suffering self, the me, which may mean simply a narrowly individual pain or a wider sense of all the tragedy contained in human existence, is prominent enough in the conflict to color the finally resulting self very strongly. God must overcome the suffering not simply by blotting it out of the realm of facts worth noticing,—the me is too insistent for such a result to be possible,—but by sharing it and still overcoming it in a large reality. Yet the desired comfort is obtained in both cases through a participation in a life greater than the suffering, because capable, in the one case of ignoring it, and in

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<sup>1</sup> Oates, “The Sorrow of God,” pp. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 102.

the other of containing it without being overwhelmed by it.

The fundamental desire to share an emotion is not even entirely dependent on a rational belief in the possibility of response. A man who believes that there is no response may cease, and must, as a rational being, cease, from the overt attempt to communicate; but he will feel the need of communication none the less, and times of crisis may become too strong for his rational processes. As Voltaire said: "If there were no God, we should have to create one." For "thought, especially vivid thought, tends irresistibly to take on the form of communication".<sup>1</sup> This is its normal outlet. A man will talk to an utterly indifferent listener merely for the sake of working off the emotion which is bothering him. Prayers of confession could frequently be brought under this type of classification—the alter furnishing a mere listener. But in an ethical religion a prayer of confession usually passes over into another type of relation in which the alter serves the function of moral authority and judge.

For the relief thus experienced in mere self-expression is by no means continuously satisfying to the normal human being. As we have remarked, he craves the response of a genuine social relationship. So when Cooley, in his discussion of the reality of personal ideas, says that "a favorite author is more with us in his book than he could have been in the flesh; we therefore do not desire intercourse

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<sup>1</sup> Cooley, p. 57.

with him”;<sup>1</sup> he overlooks this desire for response which is, for some temperaments at least, an integral part of a personal relationship. It is true that as far as getting a definite contribution of new ideas, actual intercourse with the author might give us nothing, yet there is in the minds of most of us a feeling of being a little cheated if we are compelled by an author’s books to feel a really personal love for him, because we realize the impossibility of making him feel the same for us. There is a recognition of our own private selves, our own particular point of view, which we want and do not get. The best we can do is to share our enthusiasm over the author’s brilliant passages with some other friend, and we feel lost indeed if this consolation is denied us. This fact indicates the character of any social relation in which the me is a noticeable factor and is yet not self-sufficient. There is a demand for response. So in a letter recently sent to a theological school in answer to a circular describing the course of study, a man enumerated as chief among the things on which he desired to know the best modern thought, the question “Whether there is any answer to prayer other than that supplied by the individual’s own imagination”. If there is no belief in such a response, a vast number of individuals cease to pray, in spite of the numerous spiritual advantages which they know will accrue from the practice.

The religious consciousness posits a real social

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

relation, and for that relation it finds many uses. We have noticed several, none of which has, except by implication, demanded an ethically ideal self as alter. Such a demand is, however, a very prominent one. A recent writer in the *Congregationalist*<sup>1</sup> expresses the need of the religious consciousness for such an ideal self. "If the meditations of my heart constitute the one place where I may deal inclusively with my life, is there any one great test to which I may subject my meditations? I cannot test them by the judgment of my friends, even the most intimate. I want some authoritative, searching, just and vastly compassionate test;—objective in that its standards are without and above me; subjective in that it reaches depths deeper than my own self-knowledge." Such a test is found in the judgment passed by the morally ideal alter.

A few more prayers expressive of this need of companionship may be noticed, before passing on to a more definite inspection and classification of the prayers of the developed religious consciousness. I will take three characteristic examples from Mrs. Tileston's collection of prayers.<sup>2</sup>

"O Thou Author of all good,—may Thy mercies be our daily song and may the light of Thy countenance in this world of power and beauty move our hearts to great thankfulness and a sweet trust." In this the joy of social intercourse is touched also

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<sup>1</sup> *Congregationalist*. 1908, Sept. 12, G. G. Atkins.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Tileston, "Prayers Ancient and Modern," p. 203, R. Ellis: p. 207, Christina Rossetti; p. 215, George Matheson.

with the delight of æsthetic contemplation. In the following prayer of Christina Rossetti's, the need of companionship is more unmixed: "O Lord, show forth Thy loving kindness, I entreat Thee, to all persons who in this world feel themselves neglected, or little loved, or forgotten. Be Thou their beloved companion, and let communion with Thee be to them more dear than tenderest earthly intercourse." And the following prayer by George Matheson: "Lord, I thank Thee for Thy constraining love. I thank Thee that Thou art not repelled by my bitterness, that Thou art not turned aside by the heat of my spirit. There is no force in the universe so glorious as the force of Thy love; it compels me to come in."

The Hymns of the Veda express some of this joy in personal association, in a poetic fashion which is yet marked by some of the earlier, more materialistic conceptions of worship.

"O Indra, lover of the song; our chants have strengthened thee." "Indra, whose succour never fails, accept these viands thousand-fold, wherein all manly powers abide." "Come, Indra, and delight thee with the juice at all the soma feasts." "Take pleasure in our friendship and drink-offerings." "Him, him we seek for friendship, him for riches and heroic might."<sup>1</sup>

There is no need to repeat examples of this type of prayer; they can be found everywhere. In fact, the use of prayer for the sake of a pleasant companionship enjoyed as an end in itself, has been

<sup>1</sup> Griffith, "Hymns of the Rigveda," V, IX, X.

almost too exclusively recognized by certain psychological writers, notably in the discussion of the relation between sex and religion. Such exclusive emphasis on the closeness of that relation overlooks not only the fact that every existing type of personal association finds some type of prayer as correlate, but also the fact that a very large department of prayer is made use of, not as an end in itself, but solely to emphasize the moral judgment and to further moral action.

To conclude: in the cases here mentioned we have seen how prayer is a means in the establishment of a larger self, a self more strong to bear suffering, a self more open to the beauty of the universe, a self more widely "social". This self has arisen, as all selves arise, out of a social relation between a me and an alter, the me representing a need and a desire, and the alter the means of its satisfaction. We have called this type of prayer a completely social type, because in it the conception of what we mean by a self has developed at least as far for the prayer relation as it has developed for the other personal relations of life. We have a distinctly social end proposed and a social process as means;—the normal means for the end desired.

We will next consider more closely the different tendencies which may be distinguished within this completely social type.

## V

THE TWO TENDENCIES IN THE COMPLETELY SOCIAL TYPE.  
THE CONTEMPLATIVE OR "ÆSTHETIC"

In every social relation there are two tendencies. One is the tendency to enjoy all the possibilities of the relation, to obtain the largest emotional expression; we shall call this the contemplative or æsthetic tendency, since it rests content with the appreciation of an object without attempting to employ it for a definite end. There is also, however, a tendency to use as little as possible of the social content and to pass on into action; this we shall call the practical tendency. In prayer, as in every social act, these tendencies are present: one to make prayer an end in itself, and the other to make it a quick bridge to moral action.

Herrmann says: "In the struggle of a prayer that really comes before God, joy in God necessarily pushes into the place that was at first filled with passionate desire, and so such desire is moderated. The natural desire that is born of the passion of the creature and the joy in God and His will which He Himself awakens, must be blended together in a Christian prayer.—But no advice, however careful, can direct us how to balance the two in any individual instance."<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that in the case of the prayers we are considering, the desire

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<sup>1</sup> Herrmann, "Communion with God," p. 341.



is an ethical one, and that the question then becomes how to maintain the proper balance between the æsthetic and emotional enjoyment of the prayer-experience itself, and the strictly practical employment of prayer as an aid to action. The proper proportion of worship and service is an old problem in religion.

We notice at once this psychological distinction. When the me is relatively exhausted, possessing no very definite desire save possibly the desire for rest, the prayer is apt to pass into an æsthetic absorption, a contemplative enjoyment. We find this type very strongly in the mystics, and in men and women who have retired from the world and who consequently do not feel the pressure of the immediate life of action with its demands and desires. The me seeks only to lose itself in the alter, and no definite course of conduct need be the result of the prayer. Peace, rest and recuperation are sought and obtained.

When, however, the me brings to the relation a strongly defined desire, asking only moral evaluation, sanction and encouragement for that desire, prayer merges almost immediately into action. This is the type of prayer found among the more self-reliant characters, or at least in the more self-reliant moods. And these two types of prayer seem about evenly divided. Out of a number of respondents examined by Coe,<sup>1</sup> thirty-seven named the results of prayer and the religious life as consisting of "vari-

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<sup>1</sup> Coe, "The Spiritual Life," p. 254.

ous kinds of satisfactory feeling'', while forty mentioned "help, invigoration of the will or something connected with duty". It is these forty who, as we saw in the last section, are almost entirely left out of account by those writers who make a too exclusive correlation of religion and sex-feeling.

These two types must not be taken as mutually exclusive or even as rigidly exact divisions. The prayers mentioned in the last section might many of them belong to either type. The question is rather a question of degree, consisting in the relative emphasis on the two tendencies in any social act, the æsthetic and the practical.

We will take up here a consideration of the first of these two types of prayer, reserving the second for the next section. And we shall notice how each of the types passes, at its extreme, altogether out of the social relationship, in the one case by giving up the self of desire, and in the other case by passing so quickly from desire to action that a real social process can hardly be said to take place. Thus in one direction we reach a pure æsthetic contemplation, in which the me is lost; in the other a mere moral action, in which the alter is lost.

From one point of view the æsthetic satisfaction may not appear altogether social in nature. One may obtain this kind of satisfaction, it is argued, from a beautiful flower or a lovely sunset, or any "impersonal" object. The relationship need not be a social one. But, as is being pointed out by the "*Einfühlings-theorie*" at present agitated in Ger-

many by Lipps and others, the satisfaction we get in such a case is not a satisfaction in the object as impersonal, as dead object; it is rather a satisfaction produced by the reading of some specialized fragment of our own life into the object, and an enjoyment of the harmonious organization of the self thus projected. Harmony, order, unity in difference, are social categories, applicable only in relations in consciousness, that is to say, as we have already pointed out, in relations of selves. Even the appreciation of the sublime, as Kant shows, is an appreciation of a social relation, an appreciation of the transcendent magnitude of the "rational" self as over against the "sensible" self. It is "pleasurable to find every standard of Sensibility inadequate to the Ideas of Understanding".<sup>1</sup> This "respect for our own destination" we attribute "by a certain subreption" to the objects of nature.

Even that scientific-æsthetic pleasure in the organization of the universe which is quite consciously disconnected from any religious significance and which may make a deliberate attempt to get rid of social meaning altogether, delighting solely in the accuracy of measurement and the beauty of definite calculation and rejecting any such practical conception as that of design and designer,—even this does not succeed in getting rid of the social aspect of æsthetic enjoyment. The satisfaction reached is a satisfaction in the order and harmony which the scientist has himself succeeded in creating out of

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<sup>1</sup> Kant, "Kritik of Judgment," trans. by J. H. Bernard, p. 119.

the mass of facts hurled at him; a satisfaction in the completeness of his organizing power. For however little we may take any idealistic interpretation of the nature of material facts as facts, the world which the scientist points out and in which he takes satisfaction is a world produced by consciousness, the result of a very complex organization of numberless past selves of the scientist into a coherent whole. His "purposiveness without purpose",—for that is indeed the proper characterization of his world of organized law without definite design,—is not something foreign to the purpose he rejects, but rather a highly conscious and highly specialized development out of that very category.

If the æsthetic satisfaction is thus so personal when put consciously in the "impersonal" form, it is much more so in the average religious consciousness. For the religious person even the enjoyment felt in a sunset may contain a conscious reference to the activity of another self. This may vary all the way from a crudely material objectification of the other self, as of the child who thinks, as the writer has been told by two children, that God, represented as a man above the sky, makes cracks through the floor of heaven whenever there is lightning, to the "subjective" attitude of Berkeley, who thought of the physical universe as an impression given directly to our spirits by the spirit of God. Or the concept of God may be a more immanent one than this view of Berkeley's suggests, and the satisfaction experienced more like that of the above-mentioned scien-

tist, a satisfaction in the sudden expansion of a narrower self into the larger self of creative perception and imagination. In any of these cases the satisfaction is a social satisfaction, an enjoyment in the increase of life through contemplative sharing in the life of a wider self.

Of this particular type of relation, taken in the field of religion and of prayer, the Buddhist contemplation gives the most extreme example. Many classifications of religions deny that Buddhism has, strictly speaking, any prayer connected with it; the place of prayer being taken by what is termed "meditation". Even in the so-called "prayer-wheels", the particular phrase most often used is simply a phrase of adoration: "Om, Mami Padme, hung", translated by W. Simpson as "Adoration to the Jewel in the Lotus, Amen", a sentence of highly mystical, symbolic meaning. And in the Buddhist Suttas this type of exercise is prescribed for the man who would be religious: "Let him be devoted to that quietude of heart which springs from within, let him not drive back the ecstasy of contemplation, let him look through things, let him be much alone."<sup>2</sup>

If prayer is to be confined to a definite asking of particular benefits, or even to a consciously assumed relationship between two selves, this type of religious exercise cannot be classed as prayer. It seems as anti-social as the Nirvana of the Buddhist seems

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<sup>1</sup> Simpson, "Buddhist Praying Wheel," p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Max Müller, "Sacred Books of the East." XI, The Buddhist Suttas, p. 211.

anti-conscious. But the contradiction of terms involved in an "enjoyment of nothingness" has been pointed out too often to need further discussion. Unconsciousness can only be experienced and enjoyed as a state of relative peace after the weariness of a conscious being. In the same way, the Buddhist contemplation is no transcending of social relationships. The alter is a more highly abstract self, but it is still a self. The end sought is rest, that rest which comes to the self of immediate desire through appreciative sharing in a self which symbolizes the movements of infinite ages of time, —the self of widest æsthetic contemplation. For, as we have remarked above, the Buddhist form of meditation is the type of "prayer" which most resembles the æsthetic experience, and like that experience it is best interpreted as a social relation, by means of the doctrine of *Einfühlung* already discussed.

This type of prayer-relation is not confined to Buddhism. It marks the completion of the mystic ecstasy in any form. It is what St. Teresa calls the "stage of contemplation". It is a stage which has passed beyond the strife of selves.

For the time being, the alter completely dominates the consciousness. If the me, the self of definite purpose and striving, is sufficiently given up, there ceases, for the time being, to be any distinction of objective or subjective. For as we saw above,<sup>1</sup> this distinction only arises when the activities of on-

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<sup>1</sup> Section I.

going consciousness meet some check which calls out a dualism between a purpose and a conditioning means. In the mood of æsthetic contemplation there is no such check. The extreme of this mode of consciousness is the mystic trance, or unconsciousness, due to a complete absence of the conflict which is essential to conscious life. Thus this type of prayer reaches its final limit first in æsthetic contemplation and finally in complete absence of consciousness. We shall find a similar limit reached in the other type of prayer which we shall consider later.

Consciousness returns again after the mystic trance as soon as the life-activities meet with a check. This may be due to some external interruption or to needs of the organism. The self which finally issues to meet the next conflict is determined, not by the fact that there has been a trance or a sleep, but by the nature of the last two selves and the relations sustained by them. It follows that any ethical value which may be attributed to the mystic trance is to be accorded to it on account of effects produced in the resulting self, rather than on the ground of the trance itself. Neither is it to be condemned on that ground.

There are many prayers which do not go to the extreme of the mystic trance which are yet to be classed as belonging to the æsthetic type of prayer. All prayers which lay stress on the peace to be attained by the giving up of the individual self, rather than on any resultant efficiency in action, come under this head. Adoration, rather than petition, is

the keynote of prayers of this kind. And when there is petition, it is for deliverance from weakness, weariness and sin—the result again of a wish to abandon the old self. In the Vedic prayers we find examples of this type, which recur again throughout the history of prayer.

“Hail to thee, mighty Lord, all-potent Vishnu!  
Soul of the Universe, unchangeable,  
Holy, eternal, always one in nature,—  
Whether revealed as Brahma, Hari, S’iva  
Creator or Preserver or Destroyer,”—<sup>1</sup>

and thus for several pages of pure adoration, concluding,

“Lord of the Universe, the only refuge  
Of living beings, the alleviator  
Of pain, the benefactor of mankind,  
Show me Thy favor and deliver me  
From evil.”

Then, after six lines of descriptive adoration, this statement follows:

“I come to Thee for refuge  
Renouncing all attachment to the world,  
Longing for fulness of felicity,  
Extinction of myself, absorption into Thee.”

This adoration is *not*, as Ellis says it is with the African tribes he mentions,<sup>2</sup> and as several of the narrowly utilitarian writers have assumed it to be in the case of all such prayer, a lively sense of benefits to come, and a method of placating the deity in order to obtain them; there is a distinct

<sup>1</sup> Monier Williams, “Indian Wisdom,” pp. 518, 520; Puranas.

<sup>2</sup> A. B. Ellis, “Ewe-Speaking Peoples of the West Coast,” p. 80.



satisfaction found in the adoration itself. For satisfaction always accompanies the solution of any conflict in consciousness, and here the solution means giving up the weary and dejected me and obtaining in place of it a share in a wider and completer life, through that projection of feeling which we have known as *Einfühlung*. All emphasis on the infinite character of that other life brings increased satisfaction, since it is a life in which the worshipper has at least a contemplative share.

This type of prayer is found in all religions. A more modern example of it, essentially the same in tone and even in words, is the following from George Matheson: "In that light let me lose myself, O Lord.—Not the unconsciousness of self which comes from emptiness, but that which comes from deeper fulness.—Not in death, not in apathy, not even in self-depreciation, would I forget myself, but only in Thee."<sup>1</sup> This is again an example of that activity of the social self which we have called *Einfühlung*, the process of living in a life which you recognize as in a sense not your own, but which for the moment at least you live more intensely than you are living the life which you call yours. It means a weariness on the me side of consciousness, and a consequent transfer of emphasis to the alter side.

St. Teresa thus describes the completely passive state of the "finite" self, in her account of "perfect contemplation": "The Divine Master stands teach-

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<sup>1</sup>"Times of Retirement," p. 272.

ing him without the noise of words, and suspends his faculties, because should they operate they would rather hinder than help him. They enjoy without understanding how they enjoy. The soul is burning with love, yet does not understand how she loves. She understands sufficiently that it is not an enjoyment which the understanding obtains by desiring it. It is a gift of the Lord of Heaven, who gives like Himself.”<sup>1</sup>

Prayer literature is full of prayers of this kind, in which the need is not a narrowly practical need of any particular external object, but a need of refuge and rest in a larger experience. This is accompanied, as we have seen before, by frequent expression of weakness and sin, and by a desire, partly to receive new energy, though such desire takes us over into our second division, and partly to have the past self blotted out, to lose it, to find rest from it,—the kind of rest which Schopenhauer declared was only to be found in temporary forgetfulness of desire through æsthetic contemplation. Many of the psalms are of this order, hardly asking for any individual comfort, but taking refuge in the contemplation of a power that is untouched and unmoved. Thus the one hundred and second psalm begins with a description of the psalmist’s miseries: “My days consume like smoke, and my bones are burned as a fire-brand. My heart is smitten like grass and withered and I forget to eat my bread,” and so on for eleven verses. Then there follows no

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<sup>1</sup> “The Way of Perfection,” p. 142.

request for individual blessing; there is no adoration for the sake of the benefits to be obtained by such praise of the deity; the psalmist finds his own comfort in remembering the greatness of Jehovah. "But Thou, O Jehovah, wilt abide forever, and Thy memorial name unto all generations. Thou wilt arise and have mercy upon Zion;—This shall be written for the generation to come; and a people which shall be created shall praise Jehovah."

This same mood is expressed in the lines of Clough:

"It fortifies my soul to know  
That though I perish, Truth is so."<sup>1</sup>

It is suggested also by the classic test of our fathers which demanded that a man should be willing to be damned for the glory of God. Assertion of such willingness must be regarded, not as bravado, nor as a sneaking attempt to get something out of God by being so subservient, but, at least in its purest form, as a very real tribute to the triumphant power of *Einfühlung*, resulting in a desire to contribute to the glory of the greater self even at the cost of tremendous expense to the lesser one.

The ritualistic form of prayer, as against the "individualistic", may also be classed with the æsthetic type. It is again a relation of selves, but this time it is the community-self which takes the place of the me, and enters into relation with the ideal alter. For the individual participant, the re-

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<sup>1</sup>Page, "British Poets of the Nineteenth Century," p. 702.

sult is of the type already noticed in the prayers we have been considering.

His private desires, even his private sins,—his private self, in other words,—is lost in the larger community-self which needs help and regeneration. The needs of this community-self are more constant in character; hence we find the use of set forms of prayers. There is less emotional stress, except in times of great public need. Under ordinary circumstances the ritualistic prayer is not a prayer of high tension. Any emotion attending it is not of the violent kind which attends a crisis in the emergence of a new self, but rather the steady and cumulative type which attends an emphasized repetition of some part of a chain of habit. The constant repetition by an entire congregation of the refrain "We beseech thee to hear us, O God," has undoubtedly an emotional accompaniment, but not the cataclysmic accompaniment which occurs in an ethical revolution within the self of immediate desire.

To completely carry out the discussion of the ritualistic type of prayer, it would be necessary to go exhaustively into the subject of group-psychology. The influence of a surrounding religious "community" gives great reinforcement to the religious strivings of the self. "When we live in the midst of Christian people, the sense is awakened by which we may see God."<sup>1</sup> We have ranked the ritualistic prayer, however, under the æsthetic type, because the individual loses himself and his own desires in

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<sup>1</sup> Herrmann, "Communion with God," p. 190.

a wider self, and emerges, not with a strong incentive to any particular action, but calmed and soothed by the momentary forgetfulness of his narrower self in the face of a wider reality. The difference between this type and the other æsthetic type we have been describing is that the me loses itself, not directly in the perfect alter, but first in the larger but still finite alter which we have called the community-self. In this connection we note that the ritualistic form of worship flourished most in times and communities in which the possibility of individual access to God was not so emphasized and individual responsibility to God not so insisted upon.

Moreover, the efforts of the ritualistic churches aim at securing conformity with the religious life and habits of the community, through confirmation and religious education, rather than at any individual religious experience of the type emphasized by the churches which insist on conversion. We shall see later, in connection with prayers for conversion, the intensely emotional nature of the crisis attending the sudden formation of a practically new self. In times of revolt, of non-conformity, of democratic insistence on the rights of the individual soul, that soul's personal relation to God assumes an importance which for other times and other temperaments may seem egoistic in the extreme. The personal nature of prayer-meeting "testimonies", the common assumption that all the powers of good and evil in the universe were intensely concerned in the outcome of the fight, and that God would have suf-

ferred a permanent lack if victory had not been attained,—these things are usually regarded with decided aversion by a more ritualistic temperament. For him the individual is but one member of a community, and it is God's care for the community which is the important thing. The part of the individual is to learn, gradually and without violent upheaval, through the processes of training, confirmation, and a regulated form of worship, the duty of conforming to the tradition which the community has found to be of value. This is the significance of the ritualistic type of prayer. Although it aims ultimately at a practical result, we class it under the æsthetic form, because the end is, for the individual self, a cessation rather than an accentuation of striving.

Prayers of thanksgiving also come under this general classification. They belong to a form more like ordinary social intercourse, but verging on the æsthetic type of prayer in their contemplation of ideal beauty and goodness. But the *me* is here more prominent; it has a definite part to play; it does not merely lose itself.

Prayers of the æsthetic type, the type we have been considering, aim then at a definite social end—the widening of the self, not necessarily through ethical activity, but through the contemplative sharing of the life of a larger self. The need of prayer of this kind is felt at moments of depression and despair; this fact has led Guimaraens to claim that the “prayer-mood” is at twilight, when the bodily

need for rest and recuperation is felt.<sup>1</sup> And in the attainment of the desired end, the one thing emphasized by all religious teachers is the giving up of the individual will. St. Teresa<sup>2</sup> says, as we have already seen, that the Divine Master “suspends the faculties, because should they operate they would hinder rather than help him.” The religious person, according to her, is to give up all striving, even the striving to control wandering thoughts. “The understanding torments them, running after worldly things; let it go and laugh at it. He who strives to gain much, loses all at once.” In another place she describes the mood of prayer as one of such quietude, such suspension of the individual’s faculties that “they would not have the body move because they think that they should lose that peace and therefore they dare not stir. Speaking is painful to them,—they do not wish even to breathe.” Prayer is for St. Teresa “the settling of the soul in peace.” As an instructive contrast to this mood we might notice an extreme example of the other form of prayer which we shall consider in detail later—taken from the revivalist Finney: “The burden of his soul was so great that he was unable to stand, and would writhe and groan in agony.”<sup>3</sup>

Returning to the form of prayer which we have been discussing, we notice as an example of the condition of mind attained the statement of the psalm-

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<sup>1</sup> “Le Besoin de Prier,” *Revue Philosophique*, liv. 291.

<sup>2</sup> “The Way of Perfection,” pp. 142, 182, 176.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Torrey, “How to Pray,” p. 117.

ist: "I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is Thou, Lord, that makest me dwell in safety."<sup>1</sup> And as an account of the way in which such peace is attained, take George Matheson:<sup>2</sup> "In the hour of perturbation thou canst not hear the answer to thy prayers.—The heart got no response at the moment of its crying,—in its thunder, its earthquake and its fire. But when the crying ceased and the stillness fell, when thy hand desisted from knocking on the iron gate,—then appeared the long-delayed reply.—It is only in the cool of the day that the voice of the Lord God is heard in the garden." In other words, the results desired by this kind of religious consciousness,—peace, confidence, and the "sweetness of God in the soul"<sup>3</sup>—are obtained by the relinquishment of conscious striving.

Surrender—the giving up of the feeling of responsibility—is a fundamental form of human experience. Put in psycho-physiological terms, it is the giving up of the strain of conscious choice and concentrated action, and a reliance on the habitual activities of the organism. This brings with it the needed rest and peace. This mood may also have a practical function to play in furthering achievement simply by giving up the too strenuous endeavor for that achievement. As Clough adds, in the poem already quoted:

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm, 4:8.

<sup>2</sup> "Times of Retirement," p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Father John Sergieff, "My Life in Christ," p. 26.



"I steadier step when I recall  
Howe'er I slip, Thou canst not fall."

The removal of too great concern for one's own slipping is often the surest way to prevent that slipping.

But this general statement, which is the explanation frequently given to cover this type of prayer, is not adequate for two reasons. In the first place, prayer may give up conscious striving for the particular end hitherto desired without thereby giving up consciousness altogether. The problems and conflicts which were causing weariness and despair are turned over to the habitual activities, and rest ensues; but this is done, not by the complete relinquishment of consciousness, but by the shift of attention to another field. And, second, even in the case of the trance, in which consciousness is entirely given up, we do not depend on subconscious activities in general. We must again emphasize the fact that we do nothing "in general". The subconscious activities do not always act to the same end, because they are not always given the same kind of material to start with. Hence the results obtained in prayer are not necessarily the results that would be obtained by any and every kind of self-surrender. The strivings of the individual self may be given up on account of hopeless despair in face of an overwhelmingly hostile environment; the subconscious activities of the organism keep life going in this case also, until the consciousness is sufficiently restored in energy to take up the fight again. Un-

der such conditions rest and recuperation undoubtedly take place, but hardly "peace"—not at least that highly enjoyable state of peace accompanying the self-surrender of prayer,—although even in the extreme of despair there may sometimes be a kind of negative enjoyment resulting from the cessation of effort.

Thus the result which will issue from self-surrender depends upon the nature of the alter to which surrender is made. This fact gives especial point to the admonition of Torrey to pray "after all great achievements", or, as another writer puts it, "after an exhausting series of duties when body and mind are tired". At such a time some relinquishment of conscious striving is sure to come through sheer exhaustion; a surrender to some sort of organized subconscious activity will occur. Whether this surrender is to be pleasurable or painful, whether it is to bring moral uplift or merely the despair of exhaustion, depends on the direction given to the associative processes by the last conscious contribution. If prayer be the form the surrender takes, then it is a surrender to a "self", not only wider and of surer action,—the subconscious self is always that,—but also higher and of more ideal action. The result is not simply rest and recuperation, but also a heightening of the moral tone.

There are, of course, in the contemplative types of prayer, many "prayers" which lay little stress on this moral aspect, and in which surrender to the contemplation of an æsthetic ideal or even to a

sheer "unconscious" rest from striving, is the end attained. The Buddhist search for Nirvana is the most perfect example of the surrender of the individual me to a completely generalized form of subconscious activity. There is not even an attempt on the part of the me to give a suggestion around which the subconscious associations shall gather; the subconscious "self" in this case is the most generalized one possible. In the perfect type of this contemplation, there would be no moral or æsthetic emphasis whatever; simply absolute rest on subconscious activities. A result analogous to this is attained for a part of the mystic's trance of ecstasy,—in the complete blotting out of consciousness. But there is this difference in the case of most at least of the Christian mystics, that the self to which surrender is made is, up to the last moment of consciousness, a moral ideal, and appears again as this ideal as soon as the moments of unconsciousness are over. Thus a moral reinforcement may take place as ultimate result which would not have been possible in the other case.

So we see that in the prayers in which the æsthetic ideal is prominent moral reinforcement may or may not occur. The result obtained depends on how far the individual in question identifies the perfectly sublime and perfectly beautiful with the perfectly good.

In an ethical religion, this identification is made. Hence the normal prayer of such a religion includes not merely peace and rest but moral uplift; the

prayer finds its justification, for that religious consciousness, not only in the enjoyment of the presence of God, as an end in itself, but in the practical consequences of that presence in the furtherance of moral action, which, however long delayed, must at last follow. This will take us over into our next discussion. We conclude our survey of the æsthetic type of prayer with the description given by Herrmann, which, though taken from the religious point of view, makes use of almost the same terms which we have employed in our psychological analysis: "Prayer is an inward conflict, which should normally bring the Christian up to a higher plane of the inner life; the sign of the attainment of this goal is the dying away of the storm of desire into stillness before God."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herrmann, "Communion with God," p. 338.

## VI

THE TWO TENDENCIES IN THE COMPLETELY SOCIAL TYPE.  
THE PRACTICAL OR "ETHICAL"

We saw that in any social act there are two tendencies, the æsthetic and the practical, one aiming to include as much social content as possible in consciousness, the other to pass as quickly as possible into action. We saw that the æsthetic type of prayer was one in which the emphasis was laid on the experience itself, rather than on any ethical results to be obtained. Bunyan remarks: "I had two or three times, at or about my deliverance from this temptation, such strange apprehensions of the grace of God that I could hardly bear up under it, it was so out of measure amazing, when I thought it could reach me. I do think, if that sense of it had abode long upon me, it would have made me incapable for business."<sup>1</sup> But the prevailing religious sentiment declares against any form of prayer so extreme as to make a man "incapable for business". The prevailing religious sentiment of our day, that is; for the dictum of the Middle Ages on this matter was less authoritative. But no normal type of mind, unless it be the Oriental, desires repose and inactivity for any permanent stretch of time. It is only in moments of weariness and weakness, comparatively speaking, that the western mind is content with this loss of his individual striving; the

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<sup>1</sup> Bunyan, "Grace Abounding," par. 252.

prayer which is mere adoration is a recurring but not a continuous phenomenon in any life. And it is not merely a question of satisfaction with such an experience; it is a question of the impossibility of a consciousness without the recurrence of the conflict of selves. Without this conflict consciousness would quickly sink into the activities of habit; in other words, it would become unconscious. It is literally and psychologically true that the absorption into another life, unless that life were also a changing one, changing as ours does by conflicts of selves, would mean, as the Buddhists claim that it does, unconsciousness.

So we find that the more active religious leaders give constant warning against a type of prayer which tends to absorption in the experience itself. "If faith is not to be a mere play of words concerning God," says Herrmann, "it must pass into the form of prayer; and if prayer is not to be a play of fancy or an unmeaning travail, it must be the application of faith to the affairs of the moment." "The moral activity of the Christian forms part of his communion with God." "Religious experience must come to its natural completion in the moral will."<sup>1</sup> Fénelon also closes his admonitions to prayer by adding: "I assume that you will always proceed to make some practical resolution, ending with an act of self-abandonment to God, and of thanksgiving for the help he has given you."<sup>2</sup> For, as Cooley says,

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<sup>1</sup> Herrmann, "Communion with God," pp. 336, 298, 309.

<sup>2</sup> "Letters to Men," trans. by Sidney Lear, p. 63.

“the vital question in leadership or personal ascendancy is not, What are you? but What do you enable me to be? What self-developing ideas do you enable me to form?”<sup>1</sup> This is true of all forms of social relation. It is especially true of that phase of the religious life in which emphasis is placed on the results of prayer for character and action.

Those who make this emphasis, who pass as rapidly as possible through the social imaginative process to the stage of action, realize that in so doing they are sacrificing a fullness of emotional satisfaction and æsthetic enjoyment which they might otherwise obtain. But they not only make this sacrifice willingly; they frequently demand it as imperative for true religion. Thus Fénelon says: “Accustom yourself to seek God within you; it is there you will find his kingdom. Men delude themselves into seeking it far away; aiming rather to taste the sweetness of holiness than to submit reason to faith and their own will to that of God.” And again: “Prayer is not at all the same thing as the conscious pleasure which is often its accompaniment. St. Teresa observes that many souls give up prayer directly that they cease to find sensible pleasure in it, whereas this is to give up prayer just when it is in the way to be perfected.” And still again he warns against a judgment of religion based on the amount of enjoyment it yields. “The chief thing is the love of God. It is not a question of warm sensible love. You cannot win that for yourself and it is not nec-

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<sup>1</sup> Cooley, p. 313.

essary. God oftener gives it to the weak as a support than to stronger souls whom he proposes to lead by a purer faith. Indeed, men are apt to deceive themselves in such love, to cling to its enjoyment instead of to God only.—True love of God often consists in a dry firm resolution to give up everything to him.”<sup>1</sup>

Herrmann also takes deliberate issue with the advocates of mysticism: “Life in the Eternal is laid open before us when we understand moral necessity, and we share that life in the Eternal when we choose with joy, and so of our own free will, to do what is morally necessary. The power that helps us to do this is our God.—Whether in this case the inner life is richer than one lived in blind devotion to the Infinite, and whether it means more to men to live in the Eternal or to disappear before its presence,—these are questions on which we shall never agree with the advocates of mysticism.”<sup>2</sup>

We do not need to resort to the assertion of the Epistle of James that “faith without works is dead,”<sup>3</sup> nor to the insistence of Paul that spiritual ecstasy such as that described in “the gift of tongues”<sup>4</sup> should be tested by its contribution of good to the community, nor to the constant ethical emphasis of Jesus,—to prove our statement that an ethical religion always demands that a life of prayer shall justify itself, not only by the peace and joy

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<sup>1</sup> Fénelon. pp. 70, 78, 144.

<sup>2</sup> Herrmann. p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> James 2:17.

<sup>4</sup> I Corinthians 14.



it gives, but by actually lifting "men out of the life according to the flesh".<sup>1</sup> And although the average religious person asserts that while the joy of the prayer life is not its supreme test, yet such joy is to be expected, there is, nevertheless, frequent insistence in prayer literature that a truly religious life "will have nothing to do with strained emotion, or with the working up of feeling for its own sake".<sup>2</sup>

The extent to which religion is limited to the producing of an ethical result varies enormously with different temperaments. The prevailing modern tendency has been to so limit it. This may reach the denial of man's right to any other kind of religious or even philosophic satisfaction, as in Santayana's

"Amid the world's long striving, wherefore ask  
What reasons were or what rewards shall be?  
The covenant God gave us is a task."<sup>3</sup>

And Kant, with his tremendously developed emphasis on the ethical demand, feels that religion adds nothings to morality other than the sense that the commands of duty are vested with a divine sanction. But with this statement of Kant's we reach the farthest limit to which we may go, while still retaining a *bona fide* social relationship in consciousness. It is a question, indeed, whether we have not already passed that limit. When the entire social

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<sup>1</sup> Herrmann, p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Churchill King, "Theology and the Social Consciousness," p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Santayana, "Sonnets and Other Poems," p. 12.

content of the alter is reduced to a mere emphasis on a certain aspect of the me, the imaginative social process passes so quickly into the next stage, either of action or, in case the details of action are as yet undetermined, of reflection, that it is hardly given, mentally, the value of a relation of selves. A development of this kind is very common with the passing of the intensely emotional life of youth, which is, as Cooley suggests, preëminently "the time for personal ideals. Later, the personal element in these ideals, having performed its function of suggesting and vivifying them, is likely to fade out of the consciousness and leave only habits and principles whose social origin is forgotten".<sup>1</sup> The result is, of course, as it always is when any activities are passed over to the control of habit, a loss in emotional and social content in those activities, but an increase in regularity and certainty of action. The social imaginative process may change its storm-center to other problems which are still felt as emotionally vital, or it may pass almost entirely out of consciousness, leaving an efficient automaton instead of a growing person. There are "innumerable people of much energy but sluggish intellect who will go ahead, but what direction they take is a matter of the opportune suggestion.—At some epoch in the past, perhaps in some hour of emotional exaltation, something was printed on their minds to remain till death, and be read and followed daily".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cooley, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Cooley, p. 43.

At this limit of the religious consciousness, then, prayer passes, through loss of social content, first into moral action and finally into unconscious activity, just as at the other limit it was seen to pass in a similar way into unconsciousness, through the stage of æsthetic contemplation.

As long, however, as prayer remains prayer, it is a social process, aiming, as we have constantly said, at the establishment of a wider self,—in this case a self of greater ethical power and enthusiasm. Examples might be indefinitely multiplied. For in ethical religions the object of adoration and the “great companion” has always been the embodiment of the ethical ideal, the supreme judge of conduct. And from this combination of characters it is but a step to the demand for assistance in the moral conflict. The fixing of the ethical ideal and the giving of strength to attain it,—this is the office of the alter in this type of prayer. God “makes no offer to take the soul out of the storm. Indeed, it is in the furious center of the storm that He is to be met. He knows and shares all.—He believes in what the soul may become. He believes that He can restore the ruin.—This is the soul’s safety, the pledge of ultimate victory”<sup>1</sup>

Several prayers may be briefly noted as characteristic examples of this type. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”<sup>2</sup> “We beseech Thee that our hearts may be so kindled

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<sup>1</sup> Vance, “The Rise of the Soul,” p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 51:10.

with heavenly desires and Thy love so shed abroad in us that we may continually seek the things that are above.”<sup>1</sup> “O Lord God, in whose hand are the wills and affections of men, kindle in my mind holy desires, and repress sinful and corrupt imaginations.”<sup>1</sup>

“Unite your soul to God by means of hearty faith, and you will be able to accomplish anything,”<sup>2</sup> says Father John Sergieff. On investigation, what he means by “everything” is found to be the “conquest of invisible enemies, of passions, of sorrows, of despondency”. In other words, moral reinforcement is the thing demanded, and according to his testimony obtained, through prayer. Prayers for the more specific virtues also come under this head. St. Francis prayed for the “active virtues”. Practically all who make much use of prayer employ it in preparation for special crises, for which they ask strength or patience, or the particular virtue that seems to them most necessary for the coming trial. We even find certain magazines of the “New Thought” offering, in return for prayer, not only an ethical advance in the narrow sense but the most seductive promises of “remarkable ability, extraordinary talent and rare genius”!<sup>3</sup> “The attitude of conscious prayer places the mind in such close touch with Supreme power that it actually feels that power, and when the mind feels Supreme power

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Tileston, “Prayers, Ancient and Modern,” pp. 262, 302.

<sup>2</sup> Father John Sergieff, “My Life in Christ,” p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Eternal Progress*. Published by C. D. Larson, Cincinnati, 1908, August; p. 28, article on Constructive Imagination.

there is a decided increase in capacity, ability and efficiency." "Whatever the conditions or circumstances of a person today, he can steadily, through the use of real prayer, cause all things to steadily change for the better.—Real prayer is the direct path to the heights."<sup>1</sup>

Prayers for conversion come also under this general type. The social conflict is often a very acute one in such prayers. The end in view is not simply a wider self, but an almost completely new self. The old self must be given up; the old will must be "broken down". This is not a surrender of all willing, as in the æsthetic type of prayer, though if the conflict becomes unbearably intense it may pass through very weariness into that type; it is, essentially, a change of one form of willing for another—the fiercest kind of conflict known. Add to this the fact that the alter and the me are by the very nature of this relation set over against each other as antagonistic, and the greatness of the tension is immediately seen. Torrey, speaking of Finney, says: "The burden of his soul would often be so great that he was unable to stand, and he would writhe and groan in agony."<sup>2</sup>

A frequent experience in prayers for conversion is that the lower will must be broken down at some particular point of resistance, which may be in itself ridiculously insignificant. The essential nature of it in the experience is simply that it has become iden-

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<sup>1</sup> Eternal Progress. Published by C. D. Larson, Cincinnati, 1908, August; p. 28. article on Constructive Imagination.

<sup>2</sup> Torrey, "How to Pray," p. 117.

tified in the mind with the old unyielding, "lower" self; around it the resistance focuses. When this occurs, the point must always be yielded, however insignificant it may intrinsically be, if the conflict is to result in the formation of the desired higher self.

Thus at the time when Finney's preaching was making many converts, it became a custom for those who were "struggling with the Spirit of God" to go up into the woods to pray. They usually came away rejoicing and with things completely settled. One young man, Finney relates, was unwilling through pride to be seen going into the woods for this purpose. Gradually that unwillingness came to be the point of tension in his experience. He prayed, but could not persuade himself that his prayer was heard. One night he prayed all night in his parlor, but in the morning was more distressed than ever. Once, in order to convince himself and God that it was not through pride that he kept out of the woods, he actually knelt in a mud-puddle to pray. After weeks of this struggle he gave in, went to the woods and found peace immediately.<sup>1</sup> The conflict of selves was resolved.

Finney recognizes quite fully the immaterial nature of the particular obstacle in this case; other evangelists are not always so sane. Thus Torrey relates<sup>2</sup> with an almost triumphant glee the story of a man who obtained no relief in prayer till he

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<sup>1</sup> "Autobiography of Finney," p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Torrey, "How to Pray," p. 51 et seq.

brought himself to say the words "For Jesus' sake." This he would not do at first, having had Unitarian antecedents, and this one reserve became the point of tension and separation between the two selves, preventing their union.

When the new self has finally been established, succeeding conflicts are less intense. The habit of yielding to a certain moral ideal has been formed. There may even ensue a complete cessation of all further social growth, as in the type of person already quoted from Cooley, upon whose mind something was "printed to remain until death and be followed daily". This will occur unless some new situation brings up again a significant problem of ends, or unless the person is of the sensitive religious nature which sees in the most trivial events questions of value involved. Persons of this type make moral problems out of a small amount of external material; hence the social nature of their prayer does not suffer from the difficulties usually attending the habitual use of prayer in an uneventful moral life. For their moral life is not uneventful.

These are the people who "sweep a room as by God's laws". Often this may mean a waste of mental energy,—this constant use of the most inclusive social ideal for purely minor ends. That consciousness may succeed in relating the widest ideal and the most trivial details of life is not here questioned. But the old problem of the relation of means to ends comes up here again on a different

level. We have already noticed that the immature consciousness makes use of prayer for any kind of end, because religious ends are not yet clearly defined. At this stage those ends have been defined and then emphasized in such a way as to make evident the possibility of their connection, by means of the will, with every aspect of life. The actual truth of such connection for a strongly religious consciousness is undoubted. Its economic utility is not so certain.

This again raises the old problem of the two tendencies: one to rest content with an experience, the other to pass quickly into action.

From the standpoint of the former, the giving of religious values to every action is undoubtedly an enrichment of consciousness. From the standpoint of the latter it might occasionally prove less wearing, to one's self and to others, to "sweep the room" by habit.

A consciousness which demands a frequent and an emotionally rich renewal of the social relationship of prayer, and which does not succeed in "making moral problems out of everything", inevitably meets with severe discouragements. Father John Sergieff records the great difficulty of habitually attaining the mood of ardent prayer.<sup>1</sup> "The evil spirit tries to scatter prayer as it were a sand-heap; to make it without fervor of heart; such prayer brings no profit." And again, "even during prayer there sometimes occur moments of deadly darkness

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<sup>1</sup>"My Life in Christ," pp. 14, 11.



and spiritual anguish, arising from unbelief of the heart." And he concludes that "we can pray only through the strengthening of the Holy Spirit".<sup>1</sup> All religious leaders have recognized these periods of "dryness" in habitual prayers. They attribute them to differing causes. Psychologically they are due to the nature of habitual activity, which when it becomes actually "habitual" in the technical sense of that term, becomes unconscious. The attention cannot keep the morally ideal self in consciousness as long as it is the same morally ideal self. The nature of selves is to pass and change. And if there is not enough event in the life to keep the ideal self constantly changing in content, it begins to fade from consciousness, and "unbelief of the heart", as Sergieff distinguishes it, sets in. Thus it happens that hermits and men of intensively religious but otherwise inactive lives, have suffered most from the pain of this "dryness". They suffer from the pain of trying to hold an object in consciousness by sheer effort of the attention, while the object changes insufficiently to make this feat possible. It is an attempt to force a relationship which can arise in consciousness only out of the needs of an actual problem.

To sum up the characteristics of this type of prayer, we find that it, like all the other types discussed, is a social relation and has a social end. As opposed to the types of prayer which we have called undiscriminating, this type gives clear recognition

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<sup>1</sup>"My Life in Christ," pp. 14, 11.

to the fact that the relation is a relation of selves and that the result is a result in a self. As opposed to the other completely social type of prayer, the æsthetic, this type lays emphasis, not on the amount of content which can be taken into the social relationship, but on the capacity developed for moral action. It does not rest in prayer as an end in itself, but makes use of it as ethical reinforcement.

From the standpoint of the experiencing consciousness, this reinforcement seems to come in two ways, which may for convenience' sake be distinguished. There is the additional strength which comes to the moral life from the mere idea of a mighty ally. "To work with the universe is the most tremendous incentive that can appeal to an individual will."<sup>1</sup> Religion holds forth such an incentive. "To seek the truth, wherever it leads, to live the life of love, whatever it costs,—this is to be the friend and helper of God."<sup>2</sup> Closely connected with this incentive, religion brings the encouragement of inevitable ultimate success. "God believes in us," says Vance. "He believes in what the soul may become. He believes that He can restore the ruin."<sup>3</sup> This is a powerful reinforcement for the fainting strength—simply this belief, taken apart from any experience in which renewed strength seems to come directly, in answer to the prayer.

But cases of prayer are not lacking in which the experience seems to be more intimate than this,—

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<sup>1</sup>Perry, "The Religious Experience," *Monist*, xiv, 752-766.

<sup>2</sup>Gladden, "Where Does the Sky Begin?" p. 334.

<sup>3</sup>Vance, "The Rise of a Soul," p. 113.

is less traceable to the conscious use of an idea of confidence. Father John Sergieff says: "By our own experience we know that during our communion with God, our mind is enlightened in an extraordinary manner, and acquires the widest scale of action."<sup>1</sup> Torrey urges the need of prayer especially "when one is particularly busy", since the prayer "gives greater efficiency in work".<sup>2</sup> This direct increase of power and capacity, in addition to any conscious accession of confidence, is noted by many writers beside these.

The causes for this are various, differing as the nature of the particular selves into which consciousness has divided may differ. Before the prayer, various conflicting tendencies interfered with each other. Thus when, as Torrey notes "one is particularly busy", or when one is especially puzzled, the interference of differing tendencies makes effective action very difficult. The religious person desires "in place of clashing passions, one supreme passion", and he obtains it, at least for the time of the prayer and immediately following. The unifying of aim resulting from this, and the better organization of all work and problems in the light of a controlling purpose, contribute to greater efficiency and bring about "the manifestation of unusual power to accomplish ends".

Moreover, if the prayer be of the type which serves to relieve the individual of some of the press-

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<sup>1</sup> "My Life in Christ," p. 474.

<sup>2</sup> Torrey, "How to Pray," ch. 10, 5.

ing weight of responsibility, and there are few prayers, even of those most definitely employed to obtain increased strength for the struggle, which do not have in them some element of "casting the burden on the Lord" and removing the too intense strain from the individual at least for the moment,—if the prayer have in it this element, there is yet a further way in which it may make accomplishment easy. There are many things, as we noticed in connection with the æsthetic type of prayer, which can be accomplished better by giving up the strain of conscious choosing and allowing the subconscious and habitual activities to work out the end unhampered by the efforts of the mind, which only serve to confuse action. Aside, then, from the indirect effect which prayer may have through the growth of the individual's confidence in himself because of his belief in another's confidence for him, prayer may give greater efficiency in the accomplishment of moral ends in two ways: first by the reorganization of the conflicting aims of consciousness in accordance with the highest moral ideal, and second through the additional ease of action which comes from giving up the worry of conscious striving and relying on the habitual life-activities to carry out the course in which they have once been started.

Prayer of this type is then, to repeat, a social relationship between two selves arising in consciousness. And the end attained is a wider, more efficient, more truly ethical self. In contrast to the quotation given at the end of the last section in illustra-

tion of the æsthetic type of prayer, we might describe this use of prayer in the words of Vance:<sup>1</sup> "What is a man's God but his faultless and inspiring ideal? What is religious aspiration but the cry of the soul for life's completeness? Will there ever come a time when there are no higher heights for the soul to climb? If not, God abides as the lofty and inspiring goal of the soul's eternal quest."

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<sup>1</sup> Vance, "The Rise of a Soul," p. 237.

## VII

THE TYPE OF REALITY AND THE OBJECTIVE REFERENCE  
INVOLVED IN PRAYER

Three questions remain in our consideration of the subject of prayer. What type of reality can we posit, psychologically speaking, for the selves engaged in this relation? Second, what psychological warrant have we for any objective reference? Third, in case we find some kind of objective reference, what content can be given to the object?

Taking up the first of these questions, "the personal idea is", as we have maintained all along, "the immediate social reality". "Society, in its immediate aspect, is a relation between personal ideas." "Corporeal reality has nothing to do with the reality of the personal idea."<sup>1</sup> There is no separation, as far as personal ideas go, between real and imaginary people. All are imaginative interpretations of certain parts or aspects of experience which we succeed in organizing into one concrete whole for the purposes of a given problem. Both the alter and the me possess this type of reality,—that of an imaginative organization of certain phases of consciousness for the purpose of the ongoing of that consciousness.

Moreover, the alter is an organization of content not included in the me. Thus when the statement is made, as it often is, that there is no assurance of

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<sup>1</sup> Cooley, p. 57.

any result in prayer beyond that arising in the individual himself; that, in other words, "God" makes no contribution that can be scientifically known,—the statement is inadequate. It is true in one sense and in another sense not. From outside the total process of experience there is indeed no proof that anything enters. Nevertheless, on retrospect, we see from the psychological analysis that the process itself consisted of two selves, each of which made a contribution to the final result. Prayer existed as a real communication between them. It is not as though there were one self, which *had* the consciousness, which contained within itself the entire process. In this case it would be necessary to place any other self outside the process and then to inquire whether the process gave any sure sign of the existence of that other self. This it would clearly be impossible to obtain; from the time of Kant it has been recognized that the process of experiencing must find its criteria within itself. So if we posit first a self which *has* this process of experience,—a tendency from which few even of the newer psychologists have altogether escaped,—it is, of course, necessary to state that this process gives no sure knowledge of any other self. But if the self is, as we have said before, itself a construct in experience, the alter has, from the standpoint of that experience, the same kind of reality as has the me, namely, a "social" reality.

In one sense, of course, the only self which can be said to be real is the final self which arises out

of the conflict, since that alone becomes "realized" by taking part in the construction of the world. Yet this is a matter of emphasis, for, as we have seen, that self becomes again the starting point of a new problem, a new "problematic" self, and out of the new conflict arises still another "realized" self. But both the me and the alter have the type of reality which belongs to the stage preceding the constructing stage of experience. Both contribute to the final result, which is a self expressed in act. The self which finally issues has not existed throughout, deliberately choosing to be influenced by certain ideas of its own; it has only arisen out of the relation of those personal ideas and has become realized as actual only through them. This is the common function of both the me and the alter.

The me and the alter do, however, differ in one vital respect. As we have seen, when consciousness arises as the result of a tension, a distinction between subject and object, which has hitherto not existed, also arises. This distinction is between some form of purposeful activity and the means through which that activity must reach its end. The conditioning means is the "object" for consciousness. That this is the typical form of all objective reference has been shown by Stuart in his paper in Dewey's "Studies in Logical Theory". And this is also the type of objective reference which is given the alter in the prayer relation—that of necessary means to an end. The criterion of that objective reference is the same as in all other cases: does the



means actually produce the end for which it was employed? We have seen that in many of the cases of prayer of which we have been treating the means did produce the end. *Some* reality must then be posited, objective in the sense in which we posit anything as objective, in that it is outside the self of immediate purpose. This does not necessarily mean that it is outside of the subconscious activities connected with that self of immediate purpose; in fact, a connection of *some* sort with the purposing self must inevitably be assumed; but it does assert, for the particular moment of experience of which we are speaking, the same essential type of psychological fact to which we give objective reference under any circumstances. An "object", as psychological fact, is a conditioning means in the fulfilment of a purpose, which purpose is always given a *subjective* reference.

But we have seen that the alters in the various prayer relations are not always the same alter; that, in fact, the alter is, strictly speaking, a different one for every particular relation. So also do other "objects" differ for every problem in which they are used as means. The poet who says "I have the same blue sky as God, I have the same God as the saint",<sup>1</sup> was equally wrong in both of his assertions.

So we come to our final question: just what content and how much coherence and unity can we

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<sup>1</sup>Frederic R. Torrence, in "American Anthology," compiled by Clarence Stedman, p. 753.

assert of the alter. And this depends on the amount of organization which we are able to make in consciousness. At first the alter is disorganized; so is the me. With further organization there may be some connection maintained between the alter, confidence in which cures disease, and the alter to which recourse is had for moral evaluations. If so, the term "God" will probably be used to include both realities; if not, the two realities will be treated as fundamentally different and designated as different gods, or else ascribed, one to science, the other to religion.

Thus, in a real sense, God is becoming progressively more organized by the process of consciousness even as the individual me is. The end which a philosophical soul usually desires most ardently is a complete organization which shall make unity of the widest, most infinite variety. This unity once attained can be called God, the universe, or any other name desired. But as a matter of fact, it would include the me's as well as the alters and would throw us back upon the same problem.

Any final solution cannot, of course, be attained through a psychological consideration. What is the nature of this "consciousness" in which the self as we know it arises? What is the significance of this continually changing relation between a me and an alter,—this process by which consciousness goes on? These are problems for metaphysics. But in their consideration one very important factor must be psychological data of the type we have been

considering, data so complexly social in character that they would seem to indicate the futility of any easy-going mechanical attempt at ultimate solution. So much at least we would seem to have discovered: that both the me and the alter are real as having a part in the final result; that both of them, while varying in different situations, may be unified and called "one" to as great an extent as connection and association can be established and maintained for experience. This organizing and reorganizing is constantly going on and the limits of me and alter are constantly shifting. Yet since both originate in consciousness, and since consciousness, whether essentially unified or not, at least furnishes material for continual attempts at unifying, we seem justified in the statement that some sort of dynamic unity can be maintained in the alter as in the me.

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