

Chapter 5

Ritual and Religion

IF we are to discern the significance and value of ritual in religion it becomes necessary to trace that ritual back to more primitive times and people and learn what it originally meant. For, without exception, these rituals are merely modifications of practices handed down from an age in which the priest followed the same type of ceremonial as the sorcerer, except that the magic of the priest was directed to disperse evil spirits and benefit people rather than to harm them.

The ceremonials of the various churches not only are derived from the practices of white magic in ages gone, but they still perform the essential functions of ceremonial magic.

These functions, as set forth in a preceding lesson, are three-fold: 1. Through arousing the emotions of those present to furnish an energy supply sufficient for magical purposes. 2. To direct that energy into the proper channels to perform the work desired. 3. To contact intelligences of the inner plane who will assist in the work.

As an illustration of white magic performing these three functions, I turn to newspaper reports. March 1, 1932, the baby of Colonel Charles Lindbergh and Anne Morrow Lindbergh was kidnapped, and up to March 7 it had not been discovered that the child had been murdered. In the Los Angeles Examiner dated March 7, 1932, there is the reproduction of a photograph of school children kneeling before a shrine, and the following inscription below it,

Two hundred Youngsters of old St. Stephen's School, Chicago, praying at shrine for Lindbergh baby. Youngsters knelt in earnest hope that son of national hero was unharmed.

Other quotations from the same newspaper on that day read: "Supplications Offered Up In All Churches. Hopewell Residents Turn Out En Masse For Services to 'Soften Kidnapers' Hearts.'" Hopewell, N. J., March 6. "Fervent prayers were offered up today in Hopewell's six churches for the safe return of Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Jr., 20-month-old son of Colonel and Anne Lindbergh, who was kidnapped last Tuesday night.

Virtually all residents of this small, sleepy town that nestles in the valley under the Lindbergh Surland Mountain estate turned out to pray for little Charlie.

White Magic Today

Further headlines in the same paper: "Los Angeles Implores Divine Aid for Child." "Britons Pray for Safety of Lindbergh Baby."

It is apparent from the above quotations that people believe that their prayers are more efficacious when they congregate in a church or kneel before a shrine. Such a ceremony, simple as it is, does heighten the emotional element; and it gives collective force to the energy so released.

The energy is directed by the ceremony to the accomplishment of a definite purpose, in this case to "Soften Kidnapers' Hearts."

The ceremony does not, however, merely direct the thoughts of those present; but also solicits Divine aid in the undertaking; that is, it directs the mind to an intelligence, or intelligences (angels) on the inner plane who are asked to assist in the accomplishment of the work thus undertaken.

Religious ceremonies make use of the same principles for benefiting others, and aiding in cosmic progression, that the black magician uses to block progress and injure mankind. And even the witches' sabbat has its counterpart, although directed into constructive channels instead of those destructive, in contemporaneous religion.

Anyone who has ever attended a revival meeting of the old-fashioned "Shouting Methodists" will find it difficult to believe that even the witches in their sabbat became more excited. And this enthusiasm, like the olden epidemics of witchcraft, often swept a whole town or countryside. Each night, after an hour or two of singing and praying, the spirit had hold of numerous new converts, and they then realized, between hallelujahs, that they were saved, and as such they came forward and knelt before the altar.

In the conduct of such a meeting, it was common to interlard the enthusiastic mass vocal efforts of the congregation with the most pathetic and soul-stirring songs obtainable, sung by a trained singer who could render, "Oh, Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight", and "Tell Mother I,11 Be There, with unusual pathos. The more efficient the leader in stirring the congregation to emotional abandon, the more successful became the revival.

In these religious seances, which called upon Deity as a guiding power, the efforts of mass hysteria, instead of being directed into channels of iniquity, were turned to converting the individual to a better life, or to something helpful. They were designed to arouse a frenzy of emotion directed to some beneficial end.

Probably the closest present-day approaches to the witches, sabbat principle, yet directed constructively instead of destructively, are some of the Pentacostal meetings. Here it is the common thing for those most devout to expect the "power" to descend and take possession of them. Some, in this state, fall to the floor and roll about, hence the term, "Holy roller." Others "speak in foreign tongues." Some go about healing those who are ill by laying on of the hands.

Anyone who thinks that some of these people, who often are simple in faith and quite illiterate, are unable to do rather remarkable healing in this manner has certainly never investigated them thoroughly. After all, they are merely following, according to their conception, the precedent of the healing and talking in foreign tongues of the early apostles.

Nor, in this mention of the functions of ritual in religion, do I discountenance the belief that these people, or those who pray at a shrine for the safe return of a kidnapped child, actually contact beneficial intelligences on the inner plane. God is an abstraction, or, if you will, the intelligence that permeates all nature. But when the devout person offers up a prayer to God, he has

in mind a much more definite image of attributes which are beneficent. And this prayer penetrates the concentric layers of the astral region, and reaches a realm corresponding to its vibratory rate. And the fact that it is directed to an image, or even a quality, of high beneficence, increases its carrying power in this direction.

Just as the black magician with his sign and symbol and inversive evocation, calls up the telephone number, so to speak, of some unknown gangster, and asks this crook's aid in his undertaking; so the devout individual, by his prayers and religious ceremonies, calls up the telephone number, so to speak, of some benign intelligence of a higher and better plane. And some intelligence occupying the plane to which his devout thoughts connect him will be reasonably sure to get the message. If the ceremony and prayer are unselfish and of high aspiration, and not directed to some restricted lower circle, he need have no fear that the message will be received by a gangster. The gangster is unable to tune in on any high-frequency rate, because his own rate is too sluggish. Furthermore, the high-plane intelligence thus contacted will be quite apt to do what can be done, under the circumstances and in all justice, to render the help desired.

Right here, however, another element enters that must be given full consideration. It is the influence of organization.

Even as the gangsters in the astral slums have organizations, so also the churches of earth, and the various religious sects, are quite as completely organized on the inner plane as on this one. Of course, when the individual belongs to any organized religion, and becomes more enlightened than the others of its membership, he resigns from it and joins something more progressive. Or, at least, he severs his association with the organization.

But if the organization on earth is narrow in tenet, and manifests doctrines that are wholly unsound, those who remain faithful to the organization on the inner plane will still cling to these outmoded notions. For if they have outgrown them they will no longer remain members of it.

As is explained in Chapter 2, Course 20, *The Next Life*, those of fixed belief, especially when there are many of the same thought, often build up an artificial environment on the astral plane that quite vindicates—until they awaken to the true condition—all their preconceived ideas about what the next life is like, how the universe is run, and the appearance of God and the angels.

It is necessary to understand this in order to recognize how religious ceremonies under certain conditions may greatly benefit an individual, but at the same time place him within a wall through which little enlightenment can penetrate; and how such ceremonies, by specifically directing his thoughts and prayers to a preconceived and limited region, prevent their rising above, or recognizing a response from, other than this restricted area of the inner world.

I believe in this place no proof need be advanced that religious organizations, as a rule, offer to their followers the idea that they are each the one and only avenue of mediation between man and God. Each holds forth the doctrine that salvation is assured in its own fold, but is doubtful or quite unobtainable to those belonging to other denominations. They are like political parties, which commonly proclaim that the country will be saved if it adopts the platform and candidates they advocate, but will certainly go to ruin if any other candidates are elected, or any other platform accepted.

And like political organizations—for religious heads are the modern rep-

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Essential Information**

representatives of the priest-king ruler of old, and of the medicine man who counseled the chief in still more primitive society—religious groups are jealous of rivals, and those in authority are keen to retain their station and power. The essential ceremonies are only efficacious when performed by the Brahman caste, for instance; which gives them power, prestige, and an easy and ample income. Or, in America, the burial services can only adequately be performed by a priest-in certain organizations—otherwise the body cannot be placed in sacred ground, and the soul will probably have a hard time of it. And although the laws of the country make a civil marriage ceremony legally binding, in order for it to be a real marriage, and not just prostitution legally authorized, one church holds that the ceremony should again be performed by the proper religious official.

What I am trying to bring out here is that those possessing religious authority have, from the earliest times, set themselves apart as a favored caste, and have neglected no possible means to maintain their caste and enlarge the scope of its power. I am not implying that religious leaders do not endeavor to benefit their followers. But I am pointing out that they have so invariably “rationalized” their desire for authority that they have deluded themselves into the belief—as political leaders also often do—that the salvation of the world depends upon them retaining power and assuming still more authority.

From such a “wish fulfillment,” motive, comes the doctrine, for instance, of Apostolic Succession. This doctrine holds that only those who have been duly ordained by the Church can perform spiritual ceremonies; which really means that those already in power in the Church reserve to themselves the right to appoint their successors and other religious officials. And to maintain this right they pretend that the Holy Ghost is thus passed on from one to another.

Kings also, throughout the past, pretended that they were appointed by God, and that the Divine power to rule and exploit their less fortunate brethren could be passed on only through heredity. If present day politicians could formulate some plausible theory by which they could convince their constituents that it was the intention of God that they should select their successors and all others who should hold office, how much more secure they would be, and how relieved of the responsibility of serving the people efficiently!

Religious potentates, themselves, have propounded numerous cunning explanations why they should be allowed to pass divine power to those who later prove, by their acts, to be even unworthy of any esteem of decent men. But it remained for the most subtle, and yet manifestly self-seeking, theory to be advanced under the guise of occultism:

If the faithful had to institute an exhaustive inquiry into the private character of a priest before they could feel certain of the validity of the Sacraments received from his hands, an element of intolerable uncertainty would be introduced, which would practically render inutile this wondrously-conceived device of the Christ for the helping of His people. He had not planned His gracious gift so ineptly as that. To compare great things to small, to attend a celebration of the Holy Eucharist is like going to a bank to draw out a sum of money in gold; the teller’s hands may be clean or dirty, and assuredly cleanliness is preferable to dirt; but we get the gold all the same in either case. It is obviously better from all points of view that the priest should be a man of

noble character and deep devotion, and should thoroughly understand, so far as mortal man may, the stupendous mystery which he administers; but whether all this be so or not, the key which unlocks a certain door has been placed in his hands, and it is the opening of the door which chiefly concerns us.

First, only those priests who have been lawfully ordained, and have the apostolic succession, can produce this effect at all. Other men, not being part of this definite organization, cannot perform this feat, no matter how devoted or good or saintly they may be. Secondly, neither the character of the priest, nor his knowledge or ignorance as to what he is really doing, affects the result in any way whatever.

We might just as well claim that Thomas A. Edison was incapable of inventing anything useful because he was not a college graduate; or that Henry Ford could not succeed in manufacturing because he does not belong to a trade union. And we might just as well say that any ignorant man, if he were but sanctioned by certain people in authority, could build automobiles or invent useful machinery.

But, while wealth and social station can be conveyed through inheritance or gift, ability in any line—and religion is no exception—cannot thus be conveyed. An Abraham Lincoln is not made through the favor of a political party; otherwise we should have more Lincolns; and spirituality, as well as the ability to transmit any real spiritual energy, lies within the character of the individual, and cannot be passed about like so much gold and silver.

This does not signify that those who attend the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, or other religious ceremonies, do not receive a certain amount of benefit. Such benefit as they derive, however, with a bloated, dissipated religious factotum officiating, is due to the elevation of their minds by the ceremony. If their emotions are energized, and the vibratory frequency raised sufficiently, they tune in on truly spiritual regions, or at least on realms of the higher astral, where kindly disposed beings dwell. Yet, as the ceremony, and therefore the thoughts of those present, revolve around the one who conducts the service, as a center, the character vibrations and the temporary vibratory rate of this individual tend to tune all in on entities and forces of his rate. Thus, because those present are somewhat in rapport with him, they are influenced, in their rates and in their contacts, by him.

If the one conducting the ceremony is noble of character and spiritually minded, he assists those present to contact regions and entities of like spiritual power and beneficence. But if he is gross and lustful—in spite of any apostolic succession or other folderol—such influence as he possesses to determine the vibratory rate of the congregation is toward bringing them into contact with unseen entities of licentious proclivities. As much so as the influence of a corrupt ward-heeler is to besmirch the honesty of all those over whom he gains an influence.

It is certainly true that the church itself becomes a center which collects and conserves the vibratory-rates that are tuned in on under the emotions of those who participate there in praise and worship. It becomes saturated with the astral influence thus contacted. But this influence is of the grade of spirituality, or lack of it, of the thoughts, aspirations and desires of those who habitually come there; and these vibratory rates, in their quality, are determined in large measure by the officiating priest. To the extent that he has

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influence, he exercises a controlling influence over his audience and synchronizes their thoughts and vibratory energies to those which he holds. And if his vibratory rates are gross, those who attend such a service, influenced by the prevailing vibratory rate even as are those who attend a mediumistic seance, are brought into contact with lower entities, and are anything but benefited by it.

Spirituality, or any inpouring or downpouring of spiritual force, is not like gold handed out by a bank teller. If it were like gold our wealthy class could buy their way into heaven, as some attempt to do. Nor is real spiritual force like rain, which falleth on the just and the unjust alike. Instead, it is like education, and must be gained. Money can be passed from hand to hand, but spiritual energy can not. No one can acquire an education for another; but a competent teacher can assist a student to acquire an education. No one can acquire spiritual energy for another, but a competent spiritual instructor can assist the individual to raise his vibratory rates to the spiritual frequency, and can assist the individual in making contacts with spiritual beings.

I do not say that a gross man cannot assist people in a material way; for even evil sorcerers are able to heal the sick and help people acquire wealth, when they are so inclined. The handling of astral energies to gain physical results is not dependent upon morals. The witch performs deeds that if accomplished by a priest would be deemed miracles. But a gross man cannot impart spirituality; for his vibratory rates are so low he cannot contact spiritual planes or spiritual beings.

One might as well say that it makes no difference if a college professor knows nothing; for he is quite able to instruct others efficiently because some college has given him the title of professor. Thus the illiterate man, by being ordained a professor, should be able to teach students higher mathematics and the classic languages.

It is true that a student in a college with an illiterate professor might by his own efforts make considerable attainment. But it would be in spite of the teacher, and not because of his help. And also, those who attend religious rituals conducted by corrupt and licentious officials may, through the uplifting influence of the ceremony, gain in spiritual power. But such gain is made in spite of the tendency of the priest or minister in charge to attract low entities.

Aside, however, from the influence of the one conducting the service—who often is really a spiritually minded person, and therefore helpful in tuning up the emotions and minds of his congregation to a higher level—there are two other features of religious ceremonies, and of lodge ceremonies also, which should receive recognition. One of these features is usually very beneficial, because it arouses emotions of a higher vibratory rate, elevating the fundamental and the transitory vibratory rates. The other, through directing the mind to make specific contacts and walling it off from other contacts, sometimes is beneficial, but more often, at present, curtails and limits the budding spiritual powers.

I shall consider this latter first.

The Ceremonial Wall

The majority of those belonging to a political party have certain beliefs in common, to which they are firmly attached. Fraternities and occult organizations usually are grouped, likewise, about certain definite principles and ideas. And the most obvious thing about a religious sect, or church, is usually the fanatical manner in which it holds to certain tenets, even though

they are disproved completely by experimental science and the developments of philosophy.

These religious bodies, as well as the chief fraternities of an occult nature, exist also on the astral plane, and are there constantly recruited from members on the physical plane who pass from the physical body. And so long as they belong to this group on the inner plane, they must continue faithful to the doctrines it propounds. Because of the thought-building power of the mind on the astral, they live, until such time as they receive new light and abandon the organization, in just such an artificially created environment as their religion describes. As is more fully explained in Chapter 2, Course 20, *The Next Life*, they cling to the same beliefs they had on earth, and reject every effort to bring to their notice any evidence that contradicts the notions they held on earth.

Their leaders continue to lead them on the astral plane, and they are still bound into an organized group working for the spread of their religion. And because they have not yet discovered its fallacy, whenever opportunity affords, they exert what pressure they can to confirm this belief to those on earth, and to influence them to hold fast and refuse to permit any other conceptions to be received.

The ritual of the church on earth, the vestments, the various paraphernalia used, especially those bearing symbols, the consecrated water, the magnetized incense; each and all are devices to concentrate the mind on the one particular religion and tune in on those belonging to it on the inner plane. They are, in fact, instruments of ceremonial magic which, instead of the instruments of the sorcerer which place him in contact with invisible gangsters, are instruments to place the congregation in contact with the invisible brethren of the particular church.

Usually such religious ritual begins with hymns of praise. This singing in unison tends to give a common mental swing to the whole congregation, so that lesser vibratory rates are suppressed, and the unified force dominates to a point where the chief thought-vibrations of all are completely synchronized. At later points in the service, oral responses are required of the audience or some part of it, tending still further to unify the vibration.

Amen, for instance, is a word of endorsement. When the leader says something, and the response is Amen, there is a thought interchange, and the leader has the dominant influence. Thus the swing of the music, and such responses as are called for, unite the audience in a common strong vibratory rate, and enables the priest or leader to direct the frequency of the rate, and the type of invisible influence to which all are tuned.

Under these circumstances this congregation vibratory rate may be really spiritual and uplifting; but at the same time, because the signs, symbols and tokens of this religion are used, it contacts only the members of this particular religion on the inner plane. If these members are liberal minded, and searching for further information, this will have no restrictive effect. But if the members of the organization on the inner plane — which is the case of a religion of narrow ideas — have a fixed faith that the universe is run according to their preconceived ideas, their influence will all be toward confirming the congregation in these narrow concepts.

Among the western nations the most universally used ceremony is that of the Eucharist. Primitive man believed that by eating some of the flesh and drinking some of the blood of a slain creature it was possible, by means of a magical ceremony, to cause the attributes of the creature to pass to the charac-

ter of the man thus partaking of it. Cannibalistic practices were not due to a taste for human flesh; but were magical ceremonies, in which eating a fragment of the body and drinking the blood of the slain enemy was supposed to transfer the bravery and energy of the one slain to those partaking of the feast. Cannibalism today, wherever practiced, is well known to be chiefly for this magical purpose.

The using of wine for the blood of the god, and a wafer of bread as a substitute for his body, was practiced in Mithraism and other cults long before the Christian era. It was a magical process, conducted by the priest-magician, by which the quality of the god was supposed to be conveyed to those who took part in the ceremony.

Some western denominations conduct the ceremony of the Eucharist with great pomp and splendor. And, of course, the more impressive it is to the eye, the ear, the nose and other senses, the more it tends to arouse emotion and impress its suggestion upon the unconscious minds of those present. But even when the ceremony is merely the offering up of a prayer, followed by the ceremonial partaking of the bread and wine, it is a ritual which tunes in the minds of those present on the members of their denomination on the inner plane. And while these invisible intelligences no doubt exert an influence to help their members follow the straight and narrow way, as outlined by their religion, and therefore tend to give moral benefit, they also wall them about with as much influence as they can to keep them from accepting anything not taught by their leaders. So, while an uplifting influence is often present in religious ceremonies, all too often such rituals imprison the mentality of those subject to them.

Of course, if the ritual is that of some organization which does not limit the thoughts of its membership, but encourages them to research and investigation, such a limiting influence is not present. On the other hand, it places those on earth in closer contact with their invisible brethren who have advanced further along the path of knowledge, and who are able to do something to assist in broadening their mental horizon. It is not that the religious ceremony, as such, stunts mental growth; but only that it ties the individual closely to a particular organization. If this organization is narrow in belief, this makes it far more difficult for him to form broader conceptions; but if the organization is progressive and alert for new truths, this aids him through unconscious contact with those on the inner plane who likewise are striving for real knowledge and real spirituality.

Raising the Vibration Through Ritual

Now, the rather elaborate services and rituals conducted by some denominations are very effective, through appealing to the various senses, in arousing emotion. The solemn procession, the unusual and symbolic garments of those conducting, the chants, the colors, the banners, the incense, the gorgeous settings; all tend to fire the imagination. The whole process is laid out along efficient psychological lines for releasing emotional energy. It has been handed down from times most remote, unknowing the term psychology, but nevertheless psychologically sound, as determined by the effects upon the participants as observed by a long line of priests, and by the pagan medicine men that preceded them.

More commonly, in these religious rituals, the minds of those present are directed to higher levels of aspiration. In the sense, therefore, of tending to raise the fundamental vibratory rate of the individual, they have a spiritualizing effect. It is only when some corrupt and debased leader dominates the

trend of the vibratory rates with his own vile thoughts that there is apt to be thought-contagion spreading unwholesome desires.

But whatever gain in fundamental vibratory rate is made under the influence of present-day orthodox rituals, is usually more than paid for by the loss at the same time due to shackling the mental freedom. Not merely do those on the physical plane who lead such services discourage any thought or investigation which might reveal facts which would upset their creeds, but the ritual serves habitually to tune the mind in on invisible regions where only those holding to this creed abide. The ritual, therefore, under such circumstances, becomes an invisible instrument to hold the minds of those who attend its performance in a set and predetermined groove.

Yet until the mind is free from the fetters of such narrow conceptions, and is willing to accept a progressive conception of life, in which the soul does not merely attain a stationary heaven, or sink into a permanent hell, the amount of spiritual progress it can gain is quite limited. A ritual, therefore, to be of high spiritual advantage must not only arouse the desire for high endeavor and an unselfish life, but also must tune the mind in on regions whose inhabitants are not walled about by ignorance of nature, but are seeking out new facts, and themselves are making true spiritual progress.

The holy water, which is used in some denominations, is water that has been prepared according to usage; that is, according to magical formula. In its preparation, therefore, it has been thoroughly magnetized for its purpose. This purpose is to carry the will—the thoughts—of the priest using it.

Water is one of the most readily magnetized of substances. As it is sprinkled, or cast, so the astral energies which the priest has brought to a focus are directed. The drops of water thus act as carriers of his magical power. They are usually used in the ceremony for purifying something or someone. And as thus prepared and used they are quite effective instruments for driving out and dispersing other entities or vibratory rates than those sanctioned by the priest. That is, the vibratory rates of the priest are conveyed to the object or person so sprinkled, which tunes the thing or person in on his vibratory rates strongly; and this, of course, cuts off any other vibratory rate which has been present. Very similar methods are used by native witch-doctors to drive out evil influences; and are quite as successful. Both modern priests and native witch-doctors make use of the same principle to attain similar objects.

It was the duty of the exorcists in the ancient Church to cast out devils, to warn the people that non-communicants should make room for those who were going to communion, and to pour out the water needed in divine service. The book of exorcisms was handed to him with the words: 'Take and commit this to memory, and receive the power to lay hands on demoniacs, whether they be baptized or catechumens.' The candidate was admonished that as he cast out devils from the bodies of others he should rid his own mind and body of all uncleanness and wickedness lest he be overcome by those whom he drove out of others by his ministry. For then only would he be able safely to exercise mastery over the demons in others, when he should first have overcome their manifold wickedness within himself.

Thoughts-Forms in Motion

This driving out of devils is mentioned in the Bible, and is occasionally practiced by a modern priest; but has mostly fallen into disrepute. It is an inheritance of the Church from the period of the witch-doctor. Nevertheless, even in modern times, it has been known to cure cases of obsession.

But before discussing further either the influence of the Church, or the effects upon devotees of healing relics, baptism, or the absolution of sins, a few words must be devoted to the creation and attributes of thought-forces.

Any image clearly held in the mind and vitalized with energy actually builds an astral counterpart of the thing so envisaged. In this manner houses are built in the next life; and in some detail I have discussed in Course 20, *The Next Life*, how the environments which are visualized by religious enthusiasts on earth are thus artificially constructed on the inner plane, and afford a place of occupancy for those who pass over with a fixed belief in such a heaven or hell. And I there also indicated that even a being with some semblance of intelligence could thus be constructed to act the part of God or devil, until a more thorough conception of things revealed the source of its construction and apparent intelligence.

But in addition to this, it should be understood that a strong and vivid thought sent out with a given work to perform not only possesses power to influence, but also a certain amount of intelligence to accomplish the purpose for which it was formulated. I do not mean that it is a living thing, possessing living intelligence. It is an automaton. Nevertheless it can perform a rather complex function, and make a variety of adaptations to accomplish its ends.

A torpedo sent out to attack a ship travels directly toward the ship. Yet even if the ship change its course and maneuvers about, this does not prevent the torpedo from finding its mark; for it is so constructed that it will follow the ship until it strikes it. And an aeroplane loaded with bombs can be sent forth, with no human being aboard, to be steered, it is said, to a city a thousand miles away, there to drop death-dealing missiles. Calculating machines now do the work of many accountants, and do it accurately. Sorting and tabulating machines exercise uncanny ingenuity in accomplishing the work for which they are created. And new mechanical robots are coming into existence every short while, exercising the ability to adapt themselves to a wide variety of circumstances and yet perform their function as if endowed with human intelligence. They do have intelligence of a sort; but this intelligence is that used in their construction, which enables them to do a definite thing under any circumstance that is likely to arise.

In a very similar way a thought-form sent out to accomplish a definite mission exhibits quite an uncanny appearance of intelligence. It does not have the kind of intelligence possessed by a living thing, but the kind of intelligence that a torpedo has in finding its target, or a sorting machine has in discarding certain things and retaining others, or a tabulating machine has in analyzing a report. It is a mechanical device constructed of thought energy and endowed with the ability to accomplish a definite thing under almost any circumstance that may arise. It does apparently exercise intelligence in the performance of its set task; but has no intelligence of its own, nor does it exercise intelligence about other matters.

In addition to the faith engendered by its reputation, a holy relic becomes saturated by the thoughts of those who have faith in it; and after numbers have witnessed its power to heal, and have projected their thoughts toward it, a healing thought-form may be gradually built up around the relic that has a surprising power to heal.

Likewise, those who make the pilgrimage to Mecca to kiss the kaba stone, perform a magical rite. They expect to gain in spirituality by their toilsome journey and the great sacrifice it entails. This has an affect upon their minds. And when they approach the sacred stone in reverence, they add to the accumulated energy of the thousands who have kissed it, and give it a little more potency to influence future devotees, because of the addition of their thoughts to the thought structure with which it is enshrouded. Because of their reverence and aspirations! they do benefit by having their vibrations raised.

About such a stone, or about a church in which ritual is conducted over a period of time. there accumulates an enveloping and penetrating mass of thought-forms. The thoughts of the priests usually are the dominant forms, and the thoughts of the congregation furnish additional energy. Those who enter this thought-edifice cannot help being influenced by its strong vibratory rates. And these may mostly be spiritual and uplifting.

But commonly those who dominate the ritual or service send out imperious thoughts that those attending shall remain faithful in all details to the belief and creed of the Church. That is, in such an edifice, or place, long used for ritual or service, there are usually present energetic thought-forms which have been sent out during the process of ritual, which have the definite mission to perform of compelling the members of the congregation to remain faithful to its tenets and creeds.

It is not surprising, then, to find numerous instances of those who withdraw from membership in such an organization who believe they are being persecuted by the Church. They find that they are unaccountably emotionally and mentally disturbed; that a seeming pressure is exerted by invisible forces to compel them to discountenance the findings of their reason and return to the fold. As a matter of fact, no one in the Church may even be aware of their change of views; but the thought-forms of the Church, like faithful robots, are at work endeavoring to keep them in line.

Baptism is a ritual of considerable importance in many churches. It is essentially 2 magical ceremony, using symbolism to impress the purport of the change on the mind, and by other portions of the service tending to tune in all present, as well as the one baptized, on the invisible brethren of the denomination. The person realizes that his life has been far short of what he desires in the past. But he has determined henceforth to do differently. To commence with a clean slate, as it were, he goes down into the water, where his "sins are washed away. His conscience need not bother with past derelictions. Only the future need now be considered, and he is tuned in somewhat on forces, perhaps on strong thought-forms, which help him keep his resolution.

The conflicts within man's mind between the standard of conduct which he has set for himself, or which his religion has set for him, and what he actually does, leads to inefficiency and unhappiness. If he believes the priest has the power to absolve him, he has a means of reconciling these conflicting forces within himself, and starting a new day also with a clean slate. Confession and absolution of sins at times have been used by the Church as destructive agencies; and have aided the Church to retain its temporal advantage. But they also have been of benefit to those who believe in them, because they have enabled them to release mental disturbances and quiet inner conflicts. Believing they were no longer sinful, it became easier for people to tune in on high-frequency energies.

Like almost everything that is powerful, when used strictly for a construc-

Invisible Persecution

Effective Prayer

tive purpose, religious ritual accomplishes much that is of great worth; but when used to restrict the minds of others, or to exploit them, it is equally powerful as an agent to retard human progress.

Prayer as well as progressed aspects affords the thought-cell groups within the unconscious mind with additional energy for use as Extra-Physical Power. And although these thought-cell groups have intelligence of their own, and as witnessed in their response to progressed aspects, know how to bring physical events to pass, prayer, through the directive power of thought, may divert the activities of thought-cell groups to performing a new and desired type of work. That is, prayer may not only furnish the energy for work on the inner plane, but may also effectively direct the intelligence of a thought-cell group to performing the job required in the answer to the prayer.

In other words, prayer may cause the same thought-cell groups which are responsible for the events attracted into the life when progressed aspects are operative, to exert themselves to bring to pass other conditions and events which are sought.

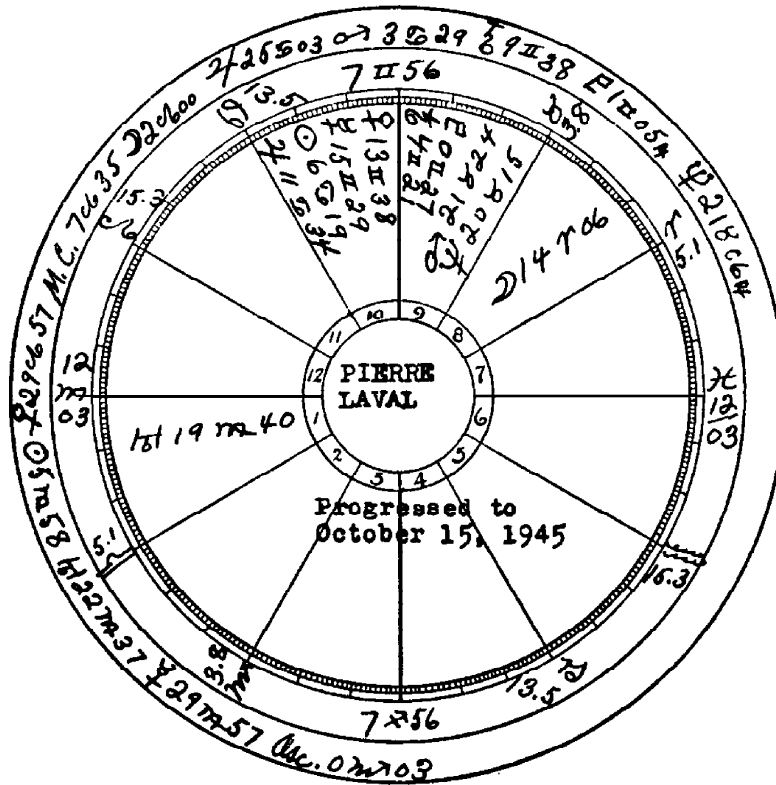
Yet in bringing about the condition sought through prayer, man need not depend upon the intelligence of the thought-cell groups of his unconscious mind. Each level of inner-plane existence is inhabited by intelligent entities, and these respond to the earnest desires of those of similar aspirations who can contact them. In the physical world we do not rely entirely on our own abilities and efforts. There are friends and associates with similar interests who give advice and who cooperate in various ways. And through the avenue of prayer, which is a deliberate effort to enlist the aid of a superior power, we more or less contact intelligences occupying some level of the inner plane. And we more or less contact the all-pervading intelligence of Deity.

How much, in any given instance, the all-pervading Divine Consciousness responds to prayer, how much inner-plane intelligences give their aid, and how much of the results obtained are due to the activities of thought-cell groups within our unconscious minds, is determined by a variety of conditions. But however much one or all of these three contribute to the answer to prayer, the result is effected through the Extra-Physical Power brought into play, Extra-Physical Power which in principle is similar to that which brings other events, including those not desired, into the life coincident with appropriate progressed aspects.

Such Extra-Physical Power may be directed from any inner-plane level. Under proper conditions, even the brutal prayers of bestial men gain a force which brings their answer. But the brutal prayers of bestial men can only reach and bring a response, if they bring a response at all, from the bestial levels of the inner plane. They only have a force which operates with intellectual cunning on the gross and selfish levels of the animal world.

It is only those prayers which are motivated by the unselfish desire for the welfare of others which have a vibratory frequency that extends the consciousness to those basic levels of the inner world where dwell those who have once lived on earth, and other entities which have never had earth experience, but which work for all that is good and true, and which are willing to assist the beneficent purposes of man.

If the dominant mood engendered by the act of prayer exalts the soul in noble unselfishness, if the thoughts and supplications are chiefly for the benefit of others, the inner-plane level contacted will have a similar vibratory rate, and such intelligences as there reside will be unselfish and devoted to being as truly helpful as possible to all.



PIERRE LAVAL

June 28, 1883, 10:00 a.m. LMT. 3E. 45:45N.

Data from Mr. Scott's War Commentary.

- 1914, Socialist Deputy for Seine (France): Sun conjunction Mercury p.
- 1925, Minister of Public Works: Venus sextile Saturn r
- 1926, Minister of Justice: Jupiter sextile Uranus p, sextile; Man r.
- 1930, Minister of Labor: Sun square Mars r, semi-sextile Jupiter p.
- 1931, Prime Minister: Venus sextile Venus r.
- 1934, Minister of Colonies: Venus sextile Mercury r.
- 1935, Prime Minister: Sun sextile Mars p.
- 1940, Deputy Prime Minister, when France surrendered he collaborated with Nazis: Sun square Pluto r, Mercury conjunction Uranus p.
- 1945, Oct. 15, executed for intelligence with enemy: Neptune conjunction Mars r, Asc. sesqui-square Mercury r, Venus sesqui-square Moon r and semi-square Mercury r.

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