

MYSTIC LIGHT

Meditative Prayer

TO PRAY MEANS to reach out to a higher level for assistance. To meditate means to think at two levels; for instance, considering the surface or ordinary meaning of a word or concept and contemplating its deeper or more specialized applications. In this respect, *meditate* is closely related to *mediate*, which means to harmonize two different points of view or two aspects of a situation. In meditative prayer it is the spirit of man which acts as the meditator, seeking to establish a closer, better understood and better regulated relationship between the spirit's physical expression and the higher forces influencing it. Man is a spirit occupying a set of vehicles comprising the physical body, the vital forces, emotions, and mind. The spirit is focused in and operates through its physical body and is aware of its other vehicles as forces which act on and through its physical form. In order to function optimally in the physical world, the spirit must understand and control the forces on the vital, desire, and mental planes—hence the need for meditative prayer.

The first set of forces contacted by the spirit is that of the vital or etheric plane, which includes its own vital or etheric body. Our physical bodies are related to the physical earth and our vital (etheric) bodies are similarly related to the vital (etheric) envelope of the earth. The etheric plane is so closely linked to the physical plane that both these planes are considered part of the physical world. It is largely the manipulation of the ethers which concerns the meditator operating at this level.

Etheric forces are of four types, two of lower



Freedom to Worship, Norman Rockwell, oil on canvas, Saturday Evening Post February 27 1943, Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge

vibration (chemical and life ethers) and two of higher vibration (light and reflecting ethers). If the physical body is regarded as corresponding to the solid state, then the lower ethers correspond to liquids and the higher ethers to gases. The body itself and the lower ethers (until refined) tend to gravitate or get pulled down to earth, while the higher ethers tend to levitate. Controlling the vibrations of the higher ethers brings about various "psychic" phenomena, from personal levitation to levitation of external objects. In the physical body a continuous stream of physical matter, through absorption of nutrients and excretion of wastes, flows in and out of an etheric matrix, and it is this etheric matrix that gives the body its shape.

The higher ethers are capable of being separated from the lower ethers. The separated lower ethers can then be retained in the body to keep it in a trance or sleep state, and the higher ethers can be

used to form a separate second matrix in which the spirit can function, giving rise to bi-location, astral travel and similar phenomena. Chasing after “siddhis,” as these phenomena are called in Hinduism, has always been condemned by their holy men and termed by them “siddhi traps.” They are meant to weed out the material minded, as they hinder true spiritual development.

Yoga and similar “exercises”; “meditations,” transcendental or otherwise; repetitious chants, including the mechanical use of the Christian rosary, achieve their effects by strengthening the etheric forces within the body. The danger in all these methods is that they tend to reduce or inactivate the forces of the mind, first leading to a state of mental stupefaction (mistaken for a state of tranquillity), and secondly weakening the spirit’s link with the mind, which invites the unfortunate condition of obsession by an outside parasitic entity. This is especially so when any of these methods is used for the definite purpose of obtaining personal benefits or exploiting others.

The picture changes from negative to positive when etheric manipulative techniques are acquired for constructive purposes. A constructive purpose can come only from activity on the emotional and mental planes—intense, dedicated, altruistic activity at those levels that produces conditions for safe, simple etheric control. Constructive emotional and mental attitudes have a magnetic effect on the ethers, refining the lower layer and increasing the volume of the higher layer. Under these conditions, bringing about the separation of the two layers has been compared to natural childbirth, as against forced development through “exercises,” which has been compared to instrumental delivery or even abortion.

One of the phrases used in Christian mysticism to describe the correct separation of the higher etheric-matrix is the “birth of the Christ within.” It is also referred to as the “resurrection of the body” in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. The two-fold etheric composition of the higher matrix has been described as the “body and blood of Christ,” with the implication that it is this etheric Christ-assisted process which is symbolically expressed in the rite of Holy Communion.

Meditative prayer involving the emotional plane is the special field of the devotional Christian or Muslim. All our activities in life are more or less completely governed by our emotions. The more enthusiasm or desire we bring to any activity, the more forceful and purposeful it becomes. Unfortunately, our strongest, most powerful emotions are often negative, such as fear, anger, hatred, revenge, greed, lust. Being negative, these emotions weaken the spirit’s control of its vehicles, again inviting obsession or some degree of outside interference. Emotional plane meditative prayer seeks to develop and strengthen positive emotions so they may be more powerful motivating factors in our lives than negative ones.

One of the investigative methods on this plane is the use of the power of visualization. Here again, visualization can be either negative or positive. In the negative phase, visuals or images are self-generated to build a fantasy world for personal satisfaction or glory. Conspicuously absent is the reasoning process, resulting in a lack of any rational basis for the projections. Irrational beliefs are tenaciously and defiantly held for the emotional satisfaction they bring. Because critical evaluation interferes with the emotional need for the acceptance of these beliefs, thinking is put in abeyance or enlisted to support the feelings, and the mind becomes the “devil’s workshop.” In the positive phase of visualization, the visuals are creative, rational projections of present possibilities, building up inspiring models capable of arousing strong enthusiasm for their fulfillment in both the visualizer and others.

The final level of meditative prayer involves the mind and figures prominently in both Buddhism and science. Buddhism, as popularized through its various sects and schools, has strayed widely from the operational levels of the original teachings, probably because it is difficult for the average person to link emotional satisfaction to mental activities and thus find fulfillment at this level. Science has stuck doggedly to the intellectual plane and has developed its own meditative techniques, taking great pains not to label them as such to avoid confusion with “religious” teachings. Scientists call their method “framing the question,” which when correctly done gets its own “answer.” They

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Showing how it fully meets the needs of all the seven human principles

(INTRODUCTION) "OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN"



The Lord's Prayer may be considered "an abstract, algebraical formula for the upliftment and purification of all the vehicles of man." It contains petitions for the three-fold body, the link of mind, and the three-fold Spirit. "It gives Adoration first place, in order to reach the spiritual exaltation necessary to proffer a petition representing the the needs of the lower vehicles."

demonstrate that if a concept or "question" can be "framed" or set up mentally, forces from this plane illumine the concept, thereby providing the practitioner with an "answer." Such a technique has been used by the writer to obtain material for these articles. All real scientific progress is made through these means, sometimes referred to as "hunches" or "inspired guesses," but actually the result of a deliberate, organized, precise technique. This technique is a well-known, routine, scientific procedure on the physical plane. For example, if a doctor "frames a question" through a physical concept, a clinical thermometer, the "answer" comes from the physical environment—in this case the patient's body—and the exact body temperature is known. Scientific research on the physical level consists largely in devising physical means of "framing questions."

The danger in pursuing intellectual concepts alone is that they get isolated from moral values of right and wrong, good and evil, and build up a formidable arsenal of destructive ideas. The mentally dependent scientist makes emotions his enemy, giv-

ing them the dreaded name of "bias," which characterization could ruin any scientific reputation. He steadfastly holds on to the opinion that a good scientist is one who can make either a polio vaccine or a napalm bomb. Emotions and biases play no part in his discoveries. After a long estrangement, the call of humanity to balance emotions and mind is bringing about a new synthesis between the two, making for scientific metaphysicians and religious scientists.

True spiritual development must provide the spirit with effective control of all its vehicles. This cannot be done by negative methods, which are self-limiting and mutually antagonistic. It is only the positive methods that can continuously expand and combine together for mutual enrichment. They operate within and not against the evolutionary pattern and so receive environmental assistance, unlike the negatives which always meet environmental resistance. Discrimination is the grand lesson to be mastered on all planes, the spirit learning to recognize and choose the difficult, self-effacing positives and to avoid the easy, self-boosting negatives. □

—C.E.S. Gunasekera