

READERS' QUESTIONS

Does Prayer Actually Work? The Charismatic Movement

QUESTION: This may be a bit of an odd question but I was hoping you could answer. How is prayer a useful thing and can it actually help, in terms of material matters? It seems illogical that prayer alone could actually do any good. Is it just a matter of superstition or does prayer actually work?

Answer: Perhaps, in answering your question, we might ask you, Can thinking help? If you think(!) that thinking makes possible or facilitates achieving results on the material plane (why else do you make plans, schedule your day, re-remember yourself to do things?), what then may be said of prayer, which may fairly be called God-thinking? As commonly understood and practiced, prayer is a petition to God for the purpose of obtaining a certain result. While Scripture tells us that if we ask we shall receive, the asking must be in faith, that is, doubting nothing, in full confidence that our heavenly Father always knows our needs and will grant what we both earnestly desire and what our self-created destiny permits. In a shallow sense, we are praying much of the time, not to God but to the universe to grant us our heart's—or more likely, our liver's—desire, that is, respond to our worldly, selfish, and bodily wants. Thus the saying, be careful what you pray for, you might get it. If we contend that we were not *praying* for what we got, a retrospect will show we were *thinking* about it, dreaming about it, desiring it, and petitionary prayer is desire prayer, *I want* prayer.

Prayer in its highest form is adoration, which enables us to affirm that the Creator is ever attuned not only to our personal needs and existence, but to all facets of creation, leaving nothing to so-called chance. When we affirm not only God's omniscience and omnipotence, but His operation in our individual lives to our spiritual advantage, both with and with-

out our cooperation, we can with assurance live more committed, effectual, productive lives, knowing that we shall receive as we give, shall reap as we sow.

Prayer is the highest form of mind and heart control, where soul-infused consciousness is focused on the Source and Center of all being: As you think in your heart, so are you. A supreme irony is that that which is most truly present, is often that which is least acknowledged, for while in God we live and move and have our being, our senses, particularly our eyes, seem to set limits on what exists. Prayer makes contact with this Being in which we have our being. God is always in contact with us, but only with conscious intention and unremitting earnest seeking do we begin to realize our contact with Him.

Question: Would you please give your opinion of the charismatic movement, now popular here—that is, being prayed over with the hands and passing out due to being touched by the spirit.

Answer: “Charisma” means a special divine gift, which, in practice, seems to be distinguished most prominently by glossolalia, or speaking and praying in tongues. In order to investigate thoroughly and understand clearly just what is taking place in the “charismatic movement,” it first is necessary to know something about man's invisible bodies and the invisible worlds in which he lives.

Occult philosophy teaches that man, the individualized, indwelling Spirit, is threefold, corresponding to the triune nature of God: The Father (or Will Principle); the Son (or Love-Wisdom Principle); and the Holy Spirit (or Activity Principle). This threefold nature of man, the Spirit, is correlated to his several vehicles as well as to the invisible worlds about us. The dense or physical body is correlated to the Will Principle and the material world; the vital, or

etheric, body is correlated to the Love-Wisdom Principle and the Etheric Region of the Physical World; and the desire or emotional body is correlated to the Activity Principle and the Desire World.

During man's past evolution, he was given various religions to assist in his spiritual development, each race being provided with a religion suited to its particular needs. All race religions are of the Holy Spirit, and the Race Spirits (mighty members of the archangelic life-wave) govern all things concerning their respective races.

In *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* it is stated that race religions have been given to help humanity to overcome the desire body and prepare it for union with the Holy Spirit. The full operation of this help was seen on the day of Pentecost. As the Holy Spirit is the Race God, all languages are expressions of it. That is why the apostles, when fully united and filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke with different tongues and were able to convince their hearers. Their desire bodies had been sufficiently purified to bring about the wished-for union, and this is an earnest of what the disciple one day will attain to—the power to speak all tongues.

The true union with the Holy Spirit, or the conscious ability to speak in other tongues, represents a very advanced stage of evolution, and one which is not attained until many initiations have been accomplished. Anyone who has reached such a high stage of unfoldment has the ability to speak all tongues, since the Holy Spirit (Jehovah) is the Lord of the Race Spirits, the authors of the race languages.

However, there is another means of speaking in unknown tongues, and that is by being mediumistic or subject to control by invisible discarnate entities or spirits. A medium is a person whose dense and etheric bodies are loosely connected and subject to control by discarnate spirits in the Desire World. He or she corresponds to the subject of a hypnotist in the Physical World. This is a negative condition wherein the person's activities are not under the control of his own will. Any activity not under the control of one's will is of a questionable nature and usually is wholly undesirable because it may lead to complete obsession or control of one's dense body by another entity.

The phenomenon of "passing out due to being touched by the spirit" appears to be a similar manifestation, in which the individual's act is beyond the

control of his own will. It would be hard to picture the apostles, for instance—who, as said, attained their abilities through positive development—as passing out during their moments of revelation. The person who develops positively will retain full consciousness and will be able to utilize his new powers beneficially and in complete awareness of what he is doing.

Emotions are intensely active during the various manifestations of the charismatic program. To the occult student this is quite significant, because when a person is in a highly emotional state, he is most easily affected by superphysical forces over which he has no control. To allow another entity to direct one's actions on the spiritual plane is even more dangerous than permitting such direction on the physical plane.

As far as "being prayed over with the hands" (which we assume refers to the practice of "laying on of hands") is concerned, this, too, can lead to negative occurrences. No matter how sincerely the person praying may be motivated to the good, he does, in a sense, impose his own will on the person upon whom he is laying his hands. This again could lead to external direction of that person's activities and development, a practice, from the occult point of view, to be shunned.

Certainly, we believe in praying for other people, but such prayers always should be offered in the context of "Thy will be done," for who are we to know what lessons must be learned by, or what destiny awaits, another individual? Only the higher Powers know this and safely can deal with the matter. We can pray for other people from a distance as well as when we are next to them, and, indeed, we do not believe that the personal contact of "laying on of hands" is desirable if the prayer is to be a petition that "His will be done" on the other individual's behalf.

As evolution proceeds, the bodies of men are becoming more and more refined and responsive to superphysical forces. The dense body and the vital body are generally becoming more loosely connected. Hence it is obvious that there will be increasing evidence of response to these forces. However, people should not allow themselves to become passive enough to be dominated by others, no matter how honest, upright, religious, and well-meaning they may be. Our task is to keep our will active, our hearts pure, and our lives directed by our own Higher Selves. □