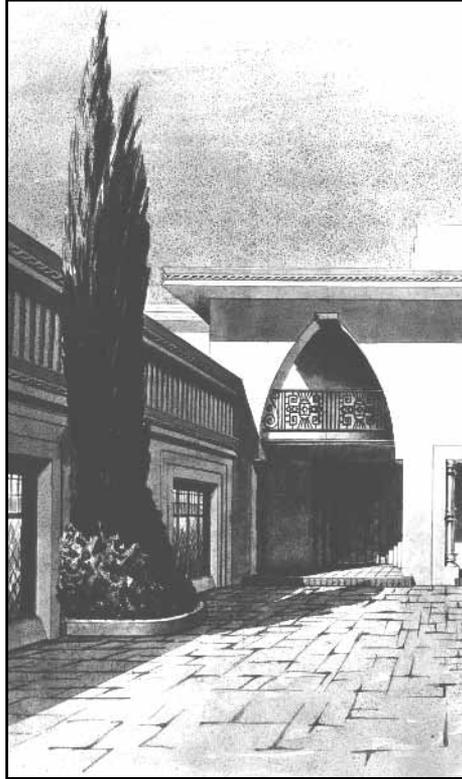


THE LECTURE NOTES OF MANLY P. HALL



LECTURE NOTE 182

PRAYER AS A MYSTIC RITE

BUILDING INTERNAL RESOURCES

by Manly P. Hall

Lecture Note 182
PRAYER AS A MYSTIC RITE:
Building Internal Resources

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PRAYER AS A MYSTIC RITE

Building Internal Resources

There is probably no religious observance as universally distributed as prayer. There is no nation of the world which has not for the greater part of its history felt the need for a deep and sincere relationship with a superior power of some kind. Occasionally we have materialistic governments which rise and fall with time, but the need for spiritual consolation continues and is as strong now as it was thousands of years ago. Human beings have prayed to almost everything that they held sacred, and at various times nearly everything in the world has been held sacred by someone. We know that primitive man prayed to the spirits of his ancestors, the ghosts of his dead, and the demons who were the embodiments of his enemies. He prayed to trees, the earth beneath his feet, and worshiped animal totems. Man recognized the sacredness of birds, he lifted up his eyes unto the mountains and he venerated the sky with its clouds. He worshiped fire, water, the earth, rocks, and made all kinds of fetishes in the likeness of himself.

Nearly all worship has been toward an Unknown God. In Peru, the ancient Incas worshiped the air and kissed it as a salutation to Deity. This Unknown God has been worshiped in many ways, some cruel, some horrible to think of, some gentle, and some so mystical that it is beyond our comprehension. Some have tied little messages to trees for the spirits to read, others have written them on little strips of cloth for the wind to carry to heaven. Everywhere man, isolated in this strange material universe, has sought the consolation of the presence of invisible and eternal good.

A survey and thoughtful contemplation leads to the inevitable conclusion that Akhenaton in Egypt realized over three thousand years ago that prayers were answered before the altars of all gods. Those who pray to one spirit do not seem to be more successful than those who pray to a different one. It seems to be the very fact of prayer, and probably the fact that behind all symbols which man has created is the same great archetype of the Unknown God which

our hearts and minds reach out to touch. In the present generation we are beginning to recognize the physical power of prayer. We realize that it has something to do with the well-being and completeness of the person. The very act of prayer does something to him and in him, and it is not entirely impossible to rationalize the values involved. We cannot be dogmatic but there seem to be certain truths that are valuable. When we speak, sound is a rate of vibration, and vibration is life. When we think, thought is a rate of vibration, part of the same mystery of life, and the attitudes of our hearts and minds are living forces in themselves. Anger moves atoms and peace soothes the troubled surface of the intangible atmosphere in which we live.

The most immediate and inevitable of our atmospheres is the magnetic field of our own body. We are surrounded as in the old Greek vision story with a luminous vestment of energies, and all the principles of our lives live in these energy fields rather than the physical body. These energy fields therefore constitute a source of nutrition and well-being for the bodies which they nourish and sustain. Some of our nutrition comes from physical sources, but most of it comes from the vibrations within ourselves. An example is the banquet of the Olympian Doris in which men found nutriment in gathering and communing together. Here they found that friendship was food and kindness the most nourishing of all substances. This seems to imply that our attitudes and moods have an effect upon the intangible atmosphere which emanates from us and surrounds us. In this atmosphere is an artistry beyond our comprehension containing thought forms which change with every attitude of the mind, and emotional patterns which rise and fall like great musical symphonies with the qualities and refinements of our feelings. These vibrations create form, pattern and structures which become in a sense an invisible world in which we live. The psychic form of the sublimity in ourselves is the living temple, and it is more beautiful than any structure built by the hand of man. It rises like a magnificent cathedral in the subtle atmosphere of ourselves and I strongly suspect that this is one of the answers to the mystery of religious architecture.

If it is true that religions also have their keynotes or doctrinal patterns, which permeate the structures of worshipers whether they be near or far, then wherever the believer goes the magnetic field of his

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belief is with him. Perhaps this in itself explains how the archetype of a religious belief arising in man himself during the course of time, be externalized from his own subconscious or unconscious thus projecting the material world into a great and noble edifice to the Unknown God.

If we begin to think carefully we will recognize the tremendous importance of a kind of religious hygiene, and that we cannot afford psychic pollution of ourselves. We assume that a temper tantrum is just a passing mood in the mind and it makes no difference to anyone and anything. If any explanation is necessary, it seems to be a letting off of steam and possibly getting over a grudge or a grievance. But that is a temper fit in the magnetic field of the human body, in the subtle energies where the balance is not only health but sanity? Is this temper fit like a terrible tempest bursting within ourselves? Clairvoyants have described such storms which seem more terrible than anything that can happen in the outside world. The gathering of the murky clouds of our hatreds, and the strange gray loneliness of our fears create scenery in our auras. They do something to change the beauty of our internal complexions.

The colors in the magnetic fields of the human body, although sympathetic to those which we see here, are not the same. These colors are of themselves beautiful. Every color is clear, pure, and rich in all the wonders of harmony, a part of the magnificent breaking up of the solar spectrum upon the human soul itself. While we abide in the light, we are lighted wonderfully, but it is the disturbances that we cause which are the reasons for the building up of a series of negative thought and emotion patterns. Only we can allow the constant pollution of the aura, for nothing can pollute it but ourselves. It is not subject to the difficulties of environment, sanitation, hygiene and smog; it is above and beyond their reach. The only thing that can affect the aura is the chemistry of human conduct and the consciousness behind it.

If we occasionally have an off moment and our spiritual field becomes clouded, the colors lose their brightness and murky hues begin to appear. Nature then becomes as resourceful as with pollution of rivers and oceans, and the magnetic field can neutralize or even alchemically transmute a normal amount of man's indignation, ill feel-

ing, grudge and grievance. But if this process becomes habitual, and the individual continually re-infects himself with his own negative reaction to things, if he leaves his temperament undisciplined, his tongue unguarded, his heart unprotected by his own integrity, gradually the magnetic field is no longer able to care for and transform this destructive situation. By degrees it is devitalized, and every individual with a bad disposition is sick. He starts out by not feeling well and ends by being desperately, probably fatally ill; and never knows why. We live on energy, and if we pervert, corrupt or pollute that energy, the physical body must face the consequences.

It is much the same in physical living. We can have a number of indiscretions and survive them, or they may seem to vanish away; but if we develop bad habits and indulge them long enough they in turn will be transformed into their psychic equivalents and return to plague us. If we are aware of such facts, we can understand some of the psychological drawings that arise in the analysis process of Jungian psychology. We notice how the unhappy person chooses drab, dismal, mixed, dark and dirty colors, and as his condition improves, chooses the colors that please him. The choices become more pleasant, until finally in a state of normal happiness he paints the thing as he truly sees it. As Kipling says, "... for the good of things as they are." So we see how the sick symbolize their own problems by the drabness of the color vibrations in and around their own magnetic fields.

A great many legends, myths and wonderful stories have arisen about the shining ramparts of the human soul including those of how great cathedrals rise with their beautiful interiors and their stained glass windows through which the sun's light shines in a million glorious shades. These windows are something of the way in which universal light breaks up to make luminous the inner life of man. If these windows are dirty, we are in -trouble. If we have permitted these great windows to be turned into ruins and the cathedrals to be neglected and fall, we lose a living link with light. We lose a way in which we can release light through beauty. The artist tries to release it by capturing pure light in his picture. While I am not an enthusiast of Vincent Van Gogh, I realize the beauty with which he was able to capture light on a field of wheat. These are magnificent things. Man

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everywhere is looking for light which is hope, faith, kindness, and love. Light is a way of life because it moves into the mind to intellectualize things. When the light is there, we say the person is enlightened which does not mean schooled, but that the light of eternity is shining in the life of that person, making all other things futile.

Man's relationship with the invisible part of himself is through symbolic rituals and there is no faith in the world that does not have some way of intimating how the human being can come into closer contact with light and also hold it more beautifully within the energy fields of his own need. We may assume that all prayer is alchemical. Some of the great alchemists like Henry Khunrath, Roger Bacon, Basil Valentine, and Paracelsus realized that the transmutation of man's attitudes is the great mystery of alchemical philosophy. It is this transformation taking place within the glass retort of his own aura by which all base substances are transmuted in the pure gold of light. Everything that we do has a meaning in terms of transformation, and this transformation is deeply involved in the Christian mystery of transubstantiation in which symbols become ensouled with the realities which they represent.

Prayer has many very unusual remedial possibilities and everything depends upon machinery involved in the act of prayer. Obviously nominal worship in which the individual simply repeats from memory a series of words has perhaps only very slight meaning and certainly produces no vast enlightenment within his own inner life. However, even in this simplicity if the prayer words are associated with convictions, and restatement of them causes the individual to be mindful of his dependence upon the Infinite, then the words are merely reminders of his own beliefs. In this sense they have greater authority and greater meaning, and perhaps they cause a little flicker in that wonderful aurora borealis of names moving from ourselves and around within the structure of our auric bodies.

If this prayer is, however, a voice of the ultimate sincerity of our lives, and the simplicity of its wording is the total dedication of ourselves to the love of God and the service of each other, and each prayer is merely a restatement in full of the integrities we hold sacred to the degree of such complete intensity, then we have a wonderful spiritual catharsis. There is no doubt that this type of situation

arises in both Christian and non-Christian healing shrines which exist everywhere. Probably the most famous one to us is the shrine at Lourdes. There is ample testimony of miraculous cures but all who go are not healed. There seems to be something else that is necessary and that is a tremendous living faith that transforms. If there is a synonym in all the world for prayer it is this faith, this total giving of oneself to the infinite mercy of the Infinite. Faith is a statement of complete atonement with the concept of universal good. In it there is no place for doubt or reservation. It is no longer a matter of hoping, wishing, or even trying through intellectual processes to strengthen believing. Prayer is the total acceptance of the presence of God. It is something within ourselves, the quality of which determines its effect upon ourselves. If this effect is complete, if our devotion is utterly sincere and receives with itself the tremendous uplift of complete dedication of self, or renunciation of self, or the ultimate subjection of self to the infinite in a clear and perfect statement, "Let Thy Will, not mine, be done."

This all sounds very theological, as though it might have come from any of a hundred doctrinal works under the imprimatur of dozens of archbishops or popes, but the fact remains that the transformation is in ourselves. Mystics have realized that this is the universal medicine by means of which the person is internally purified. Now if this purification actually takes place, not only does energy flow into the individual more perfectly and more completely because there is no resistance of his own mind or will, but this energy having reached him, remains pure like the waters of a mountain stream. This pure material feeds every part of our mental, emotional and physical lives with the most perfect nutrition, not for the body only but for those forces and powers which must control the body. For between the invisible and the visible there is a machinery of functions, processes, organs and structures of which perhaps the most obvious is the endocrine chain in the human body, the ductless glands which are bridges with the magnetic field. All of these different parts of man, therefore, function more perfectly. A man's physical fuel comes from the physical world and his spiritual fuel comes from the invisible world and is distributed through the magnetic field.

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Through the magnetic field, man is tied to the sun, the moon, the stars, the constellations, the cosmic system, and the innumerable worlds which make up the Milky Way. He is also tied to all the criss-crossing fields of rays and vital radiations for space is not as we see an emptiness but a fullness of splendor, radiant with what Plotinus called "the effulgent blossoms" that shine like vast chakras or snowflakes, filling all space with a wonder world of orderly geometric, harmonic beauty. Man touching into this through the elevation of his own consciousness achieves what to Western man has always been regarded as his highest possible spiritual accomplishment: he comes into harmony with the rules of life, he becomes the good and faithful servant of the plan which fashioned him.

It can happen that as this magnetic field builds up, strengthens and becomes purified that we may find as Anton Mesmer found, that the radiations of this field are available in spiritual healing. In old times men prayed for the sick. The Yehbichai and the Navaho Indians utilized the great rituals of the sand paintings. They had rites and ceremonies in which by the laying on of hands they sought to share their lives with others. In another faith each friend, in an inward dedication, gave a year of his own life to his sick friend. Some among the Buddhists and Shintoists of Japan and China went on pilgrimage from shrine to shrine, making their journey and offering their prayers, not for the personal merit but for the good of another. This sounds rather superstitious and far fetched but we wonder if it really is. Perhaps this very sincerity changes itself within our inner lives into pictures of beauty, and of wonder. The kind word may be like a bird or a snow-flake, an unkind word like a reptile to bite us. All kinds of symbols appear to us in dreams, and most of these symbols are psychic embodiments of our own attitudes, moods and psychic complexions. Therefore it is quite possible that we can store up in our hearts a love that can be shared with another.

We are also beginning to recognize many forms of telepathy and extra sensory perception which years ago only a few accepted. We recognize that there are sympathies between similars and across these intervals of sympathy energies can pass and if we can send a thought, we can send a hope; if we can project a ray of mental energy, we can also project a ray of psychic strength. We also observe the

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effect of prayer upon non-human things. It is pretty well established that prayer makes flowers grow, that prayer will heal sick animals as well as humans, that prayer will change the color of flowers and that when we come into heart to heart communion with life, there is a sympathy in which, as Paracelsus said, "...there is an exchange or a communication, or a flowing of life forth" which he called a mumia. We know that Burbank was successful in having heart to heart talks with plants, and the great Indian scientist Sir Bose was able to tell and prove with great conclusiveness that the plants had hearts to know what Burbank said.

Minds as we know them are not necessary to thought. Thought can go where vibration wills and thoughts can help. Rather than hold indignations against corruptions of all kinds, it would probably be better to find a way by which we can transcend our own indignations. We can have real faith that there is a power in life that is moving all things and bringing them to the fulfillment of a purpose beyond our comprehension. Prayer is the transmuting power of a faith that tells us that beyond the things which defend and disappoint us is a plan, which is working eternally for the good of all that lives. In this way we comprehend that which appears as a terrible catastrophe is really a way in which the great values of life are forever protected, whether we realize it or not. The more our faith grows, the more our inner communion strengthens, the more we can pacify and organize our attitudes toward environmental pressures. This does not mean that we shall become like Pollyanna and refuse to see anything that is not favorable. We do not close our minds to the things we do not like. We do not accept them but we do not disturb the inner life. If we do not believe it is right, we do not perform the action, but we do not dramatize our disbeliefs or our unbeliefs because the moment we do, the clouds begin to gather inside ourselves and something happens. Those against whom we turn our antagonisms do not feel this nearly as much as we do, although there is no doubt that mass attitudes do affect individuals and ultimately will help bring about the ends which are desired in the face of the Divine Plan.

We also recognize the power of spiritual healing as to the ailments of the flesh. That it is perfectly conceivable and possible for one individual to strengthen the inner resolution of another, not per-

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manently but for that moment necessary to assist that other person to gain or regain possession of his own integration. We can help him, though not cure him because we must all cure ourselves, but because we cannot cure another person we do not leave him in his misery. We do what we can hoping that we shall give him that extra moment in which he can take over his own life triumphantly. We hope he can see something of his own need in our friendship, our faith and our love.

All over the world today, people are praying, and many of their prayers are inconsistent, and many are in conflict. When nations war both sides pray to the same God for Victory. But the value of prayer lies in its effect upon the person who in his emergency turns to God rather than to despair. As long as we are capable of inwardly experiencing the mysticism of an over-self, we can do something to help make it beautiful. Franz Schubert, the composer, once told a friend that he really never composed a piece of music; he always heard it first in the air. Schubert was born into this life to be a musician. Once when someone asked Stradivari how he came to make violins, the great violin maker replied, "God made Stradivari to make violins." And it was the same with Schubert. These harmonies that seemed as though they might have come from some celestial choir came from the auric field of his own inner life. For just as light shines, so likewise beauty is heard in the soul. The beauty in the soul gives us music, the beauty in our mind gives us wisdom, and the beauty in our heart gives us love. Every phase of the inner field is transformed not only into bodily functions but into bodily achievements and the genius of man arises from the sublimity of a highly specialized stratification of his own aura. The reason this is true is because this aura is the record of himself and within it are all the records of all that has gone before through other lives. The records of previous embodiments are not in the fragile structure of physical cells, they are in the over self - the being, the person who inhabits the body. In a sense, the person does not inhabit the body as we think, because this magnetic field cannot be crowded into a physical structure; rather the body inhabits that field. Just as truly as a man dwells within the structure of a Divine Power inhabiting life, man is a dweller in an aura. He is a spirit made flesh. The spirit never completely enters into this flesh, but surrounds it, vitalizes it and ensouls it and bestows all its functions upon the body through a kind of mystical induction.

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Men are beginning to understand all these qualities. The Old Seer of Poughkeepsie, Andrew Jackson Davis, had many visions of these things. Hindu writers have seen the splendor of man's invisible bodies. The nimbus and halos of the saints are a dramatic presentation of the beauty of the life behind the form. Many religions have surrounded the bodies and heads of their saints with glorious aureoles of light. We think these are purely imaginary, but nearly everyone who is at all sensitive has seen something of them in the course of a lifetime. He has seen that moment when apparently someone seemed to shine. This shining, perhaps, is the real beauty that we recognize internally. This kind of beauty is reported of a man like Socrates. And yet, someone who met Socrates was asked afterwards, "Wasn't it a surprise to see such a homely man?" And the disciple replied, "I never noticed that he was homely."

We have something of this feeling about Abraham Lincoln. He did not have the face and structure of a matinee idol, but we have come to know him as beautiful. There was something in his heart and mind which shone through and made many love him who hardly knew him. But also many hated him who feared love, so that it is very difficult for us to fully appreciate this internal thing. The Gnostics called it "anthropos"—the one that is above the one, the being that is above and beyond the being. In most religions this "one beyond and about" has been represented by a spiritual symbol, a magnificent figure, a wonderful device of some kind. In very ancient times it was suggested simply by creating huge images that were so much larger than man that they seemed to cause him to experience a veneration for something stupendously beyond himself. He knew he fashioned them but he also knew that they told him something in his own heart beyond anything he had fashioned. They were ensouled by his own veneration.

Prayers belong to many nations and each prays their own way. The Moslem, five times a day faces Mecca, and pays homage to Allah, the Great and the Merciful. He spreads his little prayer rug and wherever this is spread, he is on holy ground; and to him this is a refreshment. This is a continuous strengthening of his convictions, a forever remembering of the principles of his faith. Throughout the East the simple people, who have no part in higher politics except to

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suffer, find their one great security in a God they have never seen but whose need has made Him the greatest reality in their lives. Others like the Greeks, like to worship with rejoicing. Some of the old Greek philosophers and mystics simply did not believe in burdening God with human grievances. They wanted everyone to realize that they had the faith to be happy. We some times figure they must have been pretty weak minded people to be able to be happy under some of the conditions they went through. As one person said today, "Perhaps they did not fully appreciate their difficulties." But the fact is they did. And they produced hundreds of the worlds most enlightened thinkers who have guided much of the destiny of humanity ever since. We have taken from them nearly everything, except the joy of life as a religious ritual. This we seem to have carefully avoided.

When our lives are our daily prayer and each deed is done for the love of God, then verbalization or intellectualization is less significant. Dedication of our efforts to works of beauty in the name of Truth are very, very positive in their effect upon the magnetic field. All these things, like the labors of Hercules, perform miracles. And all of these things help to reduce the interval between ourselves and enlightenment. When the world got a little too heavy some pilgrims expressed their religion by the prayer of long walking by the side of the sea or through the mountains. They worshiped by visiting sacred places and as they walked along they sang songs of rejoicing, peace, or insight, and of eternal questing after greater truth. It was easier to see the wonders of life by the side of a waterfall or in the presence of a great towering glacier covered peak. It was all sublime, stupendous, and the heart of man lifted up in rejoicing and joined its own small note with the symphony of the Infinite.

We are all seeking to know, and in order to achieve knowledge we must refine or cleanse the organisms that we possess. Refinement is the creation of bodies, minds and hearts capable of response to ever more sensitive messages from within ourselves. Perhaps we are like a television set. Television, by the way, has probably done more to advance belief in extrasensory perception than any mystical experience. Television revealed to the individual that the invisible was real; that vibrations could go around the world in a second, be captured, reformed and reorganized so that we can see them and hear them. This

enables us to appreciate that the vibrations within ourselves can move through our structures, be received by certain broadcasting systems, and distributed throughout our lives - mental, emotional and physical. We are enabled to comprehend that visible good is the visible form of invisible energy; and that in the archetype of our aura are the real images which we see later in emotion and thought.

One thing seems to be distinctly and definitely true: as we purify the source of our life's supply, as we cleanse the material from which the mind's emotions, vitalities and bodies are fashioned and by which they are sustained - these bodies or forms become more finely tuned. They become better receiving sets giving clearer images, more perfect tones and are superior in all respects. Cultivation of the superior potentials of all sensory perceptions and all organic structures contribute to our enlightenment. They make it possible for the light to shine through until finally illumination is the experience of total light. It is the removal of all obstacles between human behavior and the eternal plan. To attain this is a gradual process. We would like to assume that we shall wake up some morning illuminated, but this is not the way it happens unless we have already come very close to earning it.

If in some previous embodiment we have reached a high degree of purification in the magnetic structure, then we come to another interesting fact: this aura carries our body within it as the embryo is carried in the womb. When this little body is born from the parent and in its own magnetic field, it is comparatively helpless. In the intervening periods between then and maturity, it is gradually perfecting the instrument which it has fashioned. It is building the body into the fullness of its own archetype, it is revealing all of the vibratory maturity it has already attained; and when it reaches the end of that attainment, inevitable growth ceases and painful growing begins. What has not been accomplished must be experienced, must be understood in the light of the most that is available of inner resource and the work of nearing greater perfection must continue. For some there are only a few barriers left, and as soon as the body is sufficiently mature to release all of the former attainment there is only a little journey further and the light can come. For others it is a long journey and the hour of enlightenment, no man knows. No man can hasten it

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beyond the rate of his own attainment, nor bring it sooner than he has attained the maturity that it requires.

Illumination to the mystic is the full use of faculties. It is the fact that each faculty has attained the quality of the glass of one of the great stained-glass windows at Chartres, or the beautiful tulip bulb windows that we find in the Sainte Chappelle in Paris, a magnificent living flower of glass. Because of this exquisite skill of the workman, this perfect work allows the light to enter in absolute symphony of color and form and drench the person below in holiness. Even if he is not inclined to be religious, he will stand in silence, bare-headed in the presence of a beauty that brings him humility. When man's own inner mental and emotional structure can build a window of this kind through which God can shine into his own heart, he beholds the magnificence of the Celestial City. This is the mysterious city of light from which we all came and to which we all return. To prepare for that city we labor for the maturing of our inner lives.

We cannot make this the sole object of life because it is not directly the sole object. Our primary impulse and purpose is to extend growth. We must continue to grow by experience but at the same time we must keep our contact with the internal. Therefore, we can set aside certain times that do not interfere with the responsibilities of living, to be used regularly and wisely for continual spiritual refreshment. If we can make one little link that endures between the level of our present doubt and the faith that surpasses that doubt, we have achieved much. In this way we free ourselves not only from certain fears but certain evils of the flesh that must otherwise be the karmic consequence of the misuse of resource.

Prayer now becomes more and more mystical, not so much a verbal thing but a part of experience itself. We learn outwardly from experience the laws of nature, and learn inwardly from experience the laws of God. The experience with which we achieve this is the temporary elevation of consciousness towards identification with the truths we know to be true but for which we grope because even while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. We are grasping for something and in prayer we give more and more strength to this search, more and more we build a bridge of light between the outer life we live and the inner life for which we hope.

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In this way we experience, step by step, the revelation of the Divine in ourselves. We perhaps experience it first in a moment in which something shows us the reality. The great neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus says that only on a few occasions was he lifted up into union with his God, and then only for an instant, but that instant was all eternity. And having had this experience it became the ineffable foundation of all future life. We know that many mystics like Boehme have had seconds, just an instant when the tremendous Seal of Heaven was stamped upon them. This is the mystical experience which is the fruit of prayer, meditation and of good works. Only by the cultivation of this inner life can the individual attain final victory over circumstances. He can never battle his way through to peace, nor find happiness by destroying his adversaries, nor raise his hand successfully against heaven; but he can gradually allow the spiritual potential to grow in himself. The Christ in him which is the Hope of Glory can become the Lord of his heart and mind, not by mere affirmation but by a strange in ward communion which is the very essence of prayer and of which all prayer itself is but a verbal symbol.

This link between the outer and the inner-most for most people may still be partly intellectual, partly something they believe could be but they are not quite certain. This belief is not going to change to certainty in a moment; but if this belief is true, it will gradually lead further towards certainty. As soon as we begin to build foundations in principles, we begin to preserve ourselves against the corruptions of material processes and procedures. The more we shift the weight of life toward beauty, truth, love and friendship, the stronger we will be in every emergency; and to our experiencing mind will come an unfolding revelation that these attitudes do work, that there is a kind of peace that does not come from closing out the world but from releasing the inner life that will reveal to us the true majesty of the world.

There is also a facet of life that we have to bear in mind, perhaps especially now when the world is giving us so much concern. We do not really appreciate the fact that this planet is alive, a living thing. If it was not alive, how could it sustain an infinite diversity of life? It is not a mass of rock and dirt and molten lava whirling through space. Our ancestors knew this, but we have forgotten that it is a being. And

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this being just like ourselves is a body in the midst of a magnificent field of light. Streaming from this planet far beyond any conception that we have is a radiant vestment of incredible beauty. Just as we have our own little magnetic fields that have to be nourished from energy, these fields are nourished from the sun through the magnetic field of the earth. There is a certain cross-pollution possible. If a number of persons destroy the purity of their own inner lives, certainly the inner life of the planet is weakened. There is more waste for it to carry away. We're having trouble enough now trying to find ways to preserve it from the physical pollution of life.

What would we do if we could see what is necessary to preserve the magnetic field of the planet - which is its life - from man's own mental and emotional pollution. How do we explain a great many phenomena that disturb us: plagues, pestilences, earthquakes and tidal waves. These within ourselves are due to the magnetic fields which we have disturbed. Is it possible that the ancients were right in believing that man could quell a storm because it was man and not the elements that had caused the storm. There are many old beliefs about the possibility of these things and to the effect that our prayers, our meditations, and our constructive thoughts also help to preserve the total environment of mankind, whether we know it or not. Perhaps just as a little prayer in a local church makes a geranium grow a little faster, so the prayerful, cooperative attitude of three and a half billion human beings may help the life of all of us to grow by giving the planet a supply of energy - perhaps not entirely new - but giving it a thorough washing before we return it again to the invisible from which it came, cleansing ourselves so that the emanations of our own consciousness, our own thoughts, our own emotions will not build a strange purgatorial substratum somewhere in the magnetic field of the planet.

Man is more powerful than he knows, and all his power is seeded in his capacity for virtue. His power lies in the continuous unfolding of the strength of his faith. It is his constant additions to the strength of the good in himself which manifests through a constantly improving social structure. For, just as self-discipline protects the body of the individual, so the self disciplined person protects the body of collective society. There are no reforms apart from the im-

provement of living things, and for man improvement must be earned by his own labor. If we wonder sometimes whether some of these mystical things are as meaningful as our ancestors thought they were, perhaps one way we could test it all would be to give it a chance. It might be possible through the correction of our own errors to discover that wars are the illusion and peace is the inevitable end of human improvement. We have very little time, and when we are grateful it is usually for the wrong things. We are grateful for that which we will lose tomorrow, and are unmindful of that which would give us the wealth of peace forever.

We have to live through these experiences and we need something and need it badly, and it would not be fair to assume that the remedy is not present. There is no indication or evidence that the Infinite has ever placed upon man a burden too heavy for him to carry, but it has given him burdens that challenge him and will become very heavy if he does not accept them. Nature has given him not only the burden but the magnificent privilege of growing by carrying the burden with dignity. There has never been a problem beyond man's capacity, but many problems beyond his inclination. The time has come now to think more of capacity and less of inclination. One of the ways that we can do this is by finding again that stream of spiritual consolation that has made fertile the fields of humanity since the dawn of time. Men have sought inner strength in prayer and have found it; they have sought inner wisdom in prayer and it has been given unto them; they have sought the Kingdom of Heaven in its righteousness and all else has been given unto them.

It is the seeking of reality which not only helps us to grow but makes this growth possible by the wonderful chemical change it works in the invisible part of ourselves. It is here the miracle is wrought and the darkness gives place to light. If we will understand these things and think more about them and feel in our thoughts not an intellection but a strange, quiet gratitude, we will discover that this gratitude itself is perhaps one of the most beautiful prayers in the world. For being forever grateful, we forever grow. There is only one direction in which any of us can grow and that is toward the light, and all that will help us to do that is a blessing and a benediction.



Lecture Notes of MANLY P. HALL

The basis of many of Manly P. Hall's books and pamphlets were the many lectures he delivered over the decades. The Lecture Notes for many of these have been kept in the PRS archives and are available to the public. For a full list of available lectures, please visit www.prs.org.