

"...I caught the sweet voice of the blind muezzin from the mosque reciting the Ebed - a voice hanging like a hair in the palm-cooled upper airs of Alexandria."

-JUSTINE
(Durrell 1961:25)

"Maybe, Toad decided, a little prayer wouldn't hurt. He didn't bother the Lord often, just checked in occasionally to let the man -or woman- upstairs know he was still down here kicking, but now he thought, might be aggod time to put in an e4arnest supplciation from the heart.

Dear God, don't let anything happen to Rita."

-THE RED HORSEMAN.
(Coonts 1993:354)

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INTRODUCTION:

Regardless of which religion, faith or cult^{1} one examines, prayer will be found in some form. Supplications^{2} addressed to supernaturals are always present in the religious life of any group. One is tempted to interpret this as strong, though perhaps only circumstantial, evidence that mankind uniformly:

- (a) acknowledges the existence of supernatural powers and
- (b) understands, or perhaps hopes, that a formal ritual of some sort directed at these supernaturals may rebound to his advantage.^{3}

SMD is no different. Prayer is a major aspect of the faith which is supposed to be exercised multiple times during each day. One should open the day with a private prayer, family units should pray, all meals should be preceded by a prayer over the food and the day should end with private prayer. Then in all meetings of the congregation, prayer is always invoked at the start and end of the meeting.

This topic will be treated like the Holy Ghost^{4} in that a set of questions will be asked in a fairly random order. Perhaps as time passes these items will fall together into some sort of order. For now, you can supply your own answers and think up more questions. We will eventually want to fit them within the

¹These distinctions are ultimately trivial ones.

²We note, however, that in some religions the supplications may take the form of offerings of various types. Brazilian Macumba, voodoo-type religion, utilizes offerings of slaughters roosters, unused lace handkerchiefs, brandy, meat, meal, fabric, etc. These are placed in certain locations for their effect to be manifested. Invocations are minimal, consisting as much of incantation and song as formal 'prayers.'

³Joseph Campbell's works, like those of Sir James Frazer, and the Murdock files in major libraries, provide copious documentation of the range and types of offerings and propitiations that have been practiced around the world as part of the religious experience.

The point of these rituals varies, but ultimately they can be summarized as being intended to intervene or intercede with forces and powers, both white and black, for the purpose of improving the lot of those who engage in those rituals. Indeed, the rituals may be perceived more as magic than religion:

"Drawing in primitive societies may be of magic intent, to make come true what the artist represents as a *fait accompli*...This first dawn of pictorial expression, between 40,000 and 5,000 B.C., was the art of the hunters who depended for food and clothing on the great herds of beasts that roamed Europe in the post-glacial age. This is an art magical, rather than aesthetic, in purpose, intended to give the tribe power over, and possession of, the animals drawn by artists dedicated to this cult of hunting magic." (Rowland 1965:15)

Whether it be termed 'magic' or 'religion', the point of the rituals and offerings was the securing for the participants advantages that would be granted by the spirits or powers being supplicated, which benefits would otherwise not be obtained. This conception obviously entails a belief of some sort in powers that have control over the affairs of the natural world, which conception is the foundation for true prayer. Without such a belief, prayer is either impossible at all, or perceived as a waste of time otherwise.

⁴See Chapter 29 for details. These topics are difficult to develop into coherent arguments that flow from one into the next, hence this admission of failure.

mechanical model, and have some general ideas already - which you, by now, can probably also guess.

First, what is prayer?

Second, how does it work?

How is its effectiveness affected by the state of the mortal mind and the state of the spirit - or is there no difference?

What allows an effective prayer to activate the priesthood?

How does the Holy Ghost interact or intervene in effective prayers?

How does faith fit into process of prayer?

Who hears the effective prayers?

Do oral prayers have any difference from mental prayers?

Does closing the eyes make any difference?

Is there anything that is illegal to pray for? i.e. bless a car or a fence?

How does physical health interact with prayer?

How does one know what way a prayer has been answered?

Do routine prayers, with the same words daily, have any effect?

Why is a set prayer needed for certain ordinances? And why is the wording so critical that they must be repeated?

Is there any real effect to the use of the name of Christ, or is its use simply a formal recognition of his role?

What is the effect of effective prayer on our spirit?

What is relationship of length of a prayer to its effectiveness?

How does fasting interact with prayer to increase its effectiveness?

Does one need to kneel and bow the head and close the eyes to have optimal prayer? Or can one lay in bed and pray with eyes shut and get same result?