



PRAYER AND THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Expressions of prayer have taken many different forms over the ages. Prayer is, essentially, an act that seeks direct communication with a being of worship. In the far distant past, prayer was directed mostly towards some god or deified ancestor. Over the course of time, objects of worship changed as the consciousness of humanity evolved through the development of mind. Notwithstanding differences in language and spiritual traditions over the ages, it might be fair to say that the quality of prayer, in whatever form and in whatever age, is ever dependent on the stage of evolution or development of those who pray.

In ancient times of animism and ritual, the pre-egocentric stage of human development, human beings chanted prayers to propitiate nature spirits and the hovering spirits of the dead. In a later egocentric stage, prayer was directed to Pharaohs and Caesars who saw themselves as a kind of god. Developing over time and through experience into more social human beings, we entered what is now seen as a more traditional stage of prayer. Human beings began to pray to a God transcendent, obeying the dictums and encyclicals of those who prescribed the ‘spiritual formulas’ for prayer.

The prevailing present-day worldview is to accept the ideas of the 17th century European Enlightenment and its scientific method of obtaining knowledge. This view encourages human beings to reject all forms of spirituality and beliefs in a supreme deity or God. Over the last few centuries, many have come to accept the idea that the cosmos is created by a chance collision of material atoms, and have tended to view religion as *‘the opiate of the masses.’*

In the postmodern age, emerging in the 1960’s, the material universe is often seen as a construct among a number of possible constructs. Many began to adopt the view that all religious traditions are equally valid, arising from a variety of socio-cultural perspectives. Minority religious groups fought hard for the acknowledgment of their validity. Each of these groups propound a form of prayer or spiritual practice, whether it be a version of Buddhism or Christianity, nature mysticism, or a secular health-oriented mindfulness.

Consciousness Beyond the Body

Presently, as humanity enters a new stage of spiritual awakening, it is interesting to observe an evolutionary development taking place. Many people are now crossing an invisible bridge in consciousness formed by a growing awareness of the indwelling soul, which becomes linked to

the outer personality by means of light. In Transpersonal Psychology, there is the concept of a Second Tier consciousness, in which the soul is acknowledged as the witness of all that takes place in the world of human activity. This new stage of human development is also described in Ken Wilber's integral theory and other schools of thought regarding spiritual development. The essential idea is that we are no longer "prisoners of the planet," or captives of the forces of the material universe, as there is now a spiritual dimension to the human being.

In this newly awakening stage of consciousness, humanity is discovering that the Soul is the true identity of the human being. Existing on a subtle plane prior to physical manifestation, it can also be contacted while in physical manifestation. We are beginning to understand that human consciousness evolves and expands into the awareness that the Soul exists in every human being, and that we can learn to express its higher qualities on the material plane through the directed use of the mind, brain and physical body. For many, prayer has been replaced by meditation and invocation of Higher Realities, directing the energies of light, love and the will-to-good into the world of human activity. Countless thousands of people from around the world gather online these days, joining together in global groups with the intention of lifting the individual and the planet out of the present state of crisis into right relations, harmony and peace.

The Chain of Being

An ancient dictum states: *'Take the hand stretched out from above and offer your other hand to someone below.'* Many are becoming aware of the presence of 'something greater' that exists beyond the ordinary state of human awareness. We're learning there are Those Who help humankind to transcend the limitations inbuilt by the laws of evolution until this time. If we accept the possibility of this premise—that there are Beings in the cosmos more advanced than ourselves, with faculties of mind and consciousnesses far more evolved than ours; greater Beings who desire to help, elevate and expand the consciousness of human beings—then we can be lifted by the higher vision and find great hope at this time of world upheaval.

Throughout history, humanity has been given insights into the existence of Those Who dwell on higher planes. These evolved lives are called, in different traditions, the Elders, the Disciples of Christ, the Hierarchy, the Spiritual Ashram or Sangha, or simply, Masters of Wisdom. Ideally, we can see with objectivity that all spiritual and religious paths contain some vital truth. Many of us are likely to be involved in an aspect of the interfaith movements that appear to be evolving toward a universal approach to religion. We can sense this as we join in group meditation for the benefit of the human race, and as we invoke together those centres of higher consciousnesses for the betterment of the whole world.