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Chapter 8

**THE CURATIVE POWER OF PRAYER:
HAPPY SCIENCE DOCTRINE AND THE THEORETICAL
AND THEOLOGICAL BASE FOR PRAYER-BASED
HEALTH INTERVENTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Recent decades have witnessed a tremendous increase in scientific interest regarding the relationship between religion, or spirituality, and health. This trend may be viewed as part of a larger movement to investigate the efficacy of prayer on health in the field of complementary and alternative medicine. In particular intercessory prayer, or prayer offered for the sake of others, has been the subject of a number of critical scholarly reviews which identify this latter as having been practiced by many faiths and among the oldest and most commonly used interventions to alleviate illness. Such research is ongoing but, to date, the findings have been equivocal. While results from some individual studies suggest that intercessory prayer may have a positive effect, the majority of studies do not, nor does the evidence they present support a recommendation either in favour of or against the use of intercessory prayer. Cochrane Committee reviews and other reports in the literature have suggested that heterogeneity of trial procedures, followed by the heterogeneity of prayee illness types treated, are the two most significant factors preventing the medical field from properly acknowledging the efficacy of prayer-based health interventions. Moreover, a major difficulty here may be that the prayer literature provides no unified theoretical or theological basis from which to make such claims. Thus, firstly, this paper reviewed the diverse existing articulations of a theoretical

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base for prayer intervention in the medical field from the standpoint of physiological and psychological mechanisms. Secondly, in preparation to address that gap, we introduced the doctrine behind Happy Science, a religious movement founded by Master Ryuho Okawa in 1986 that has since grown into one of the most influential religious organizations in Japan, with a global membership base as well extending to more than 100 countries worldwide. Thirdly, we then directly addressed the gap in the literature on intercessory prayer by proposing the following set of five theological factors, taken from Happy Science theory and said to determine the effectiveness of prayer interventions: (1) strength of faith, (2) a becalmed state of mind, (3) readiness to pursue self-help measures, (4) a wish likely to be approved by guiding spirits, and (5) a positive spiritual environment. We have also reported several outstanding cases in which those with severe disorders were reported to have been miraculously cured, thanks to the use of Happy Science prayers. Finally, we suggested reasons why the efficacy of prayer intervention on disease differs statistically among different scientific research groups located worldwide. Undoubtedly, further research will be needed in order to fully corroborate our suggestions. It is nonetheless hoped that this first report will make those future steps easier to take.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, the connection between religion and medicine has been a strong one (Koenig, 2012). In the West, it was the church that built the first public hospitals, as early as the fourth century, and it was religious orders that trained and registered doctors, right up to the time of the Reformation. Beginning in the seventeenth century and the time of the Enlightenment, however, a nearly total separation developed between religion and medicine, as evidenced by the widespread cultural turn to science and technology for explanations of disease and its healing. From this time, there was a major focus on the physical management of disease, which left spiritual or psychological approaches to be considered as at best alternative or complementary forms of medicine. Nonetheless, in more recent times, the perception of this separation has undergone a swing of the pendulum. Outside the medical profession, the healing benefits of prayer are, in many countries, widely held and frequently reported in the press. Likewise, in some parts of the world, such as the United States, “prayer” has increasingly become the object of scientific investigation as well (Olver, 2013). The two erstwhile solitudes are, for many, becoming reacquainted once again.

The term “prayer” is from the Latin “*precari*,” meaning literally “to entreat.” Prayer is commonly viewed as a religious practice involving communication between a person or a group of people and one or more divine beings (Gill, 1987). Alternative views include the notion that prayer amounts to hearing the self as it speaks, or that it can be a preconscious state not mediated by an external deity. The existence of such views notwithstanding, however, we proceed in this paper with the most common religious concept, that of prayer as human communication with a god (Olver, 2013). For instance, Master Ryuho Okawa, Founder and President of Happy Science, defined prayer as “conducting ourselves correctly before God and express[ing] our wishes (Okawa, 2011a).”

In recent years, a number of prayer typologies, briefly summarized below, have been proposed within the field of healthcare more generally, providing further confirmation of the recognition, even within the medical field, of the potential efficacy of prayer on alleviating ill health.

1) Prayer as a Complementary Therapy

The term “complementary” derives from the broader term “complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)” and refers to forms of treatment used in addition to standard or conventional therapies. This is distinct from alternative medicine per se, where conventional therapies are disregarded and replaced outright by alternative modalities alone.

Prayer has been classified as the most widely used of all complementary therapies particularly when the focus is on promoting overall good health and well-being (Tippens et al., 2009). Indeed, Master Ryuho Okawa has drawn attention to the complementary relationships that can and do exist between modern medicine and religion, publishing indications such as follows (Okawa, 2008a):

“How should we understand the relationship between modern medicine and religion? This is a challenging issue. I do believe that modern medicine is guided by the divine spirits. Here, let us call the angels of light in the field of medicine, ‘Gods of Medicine’. When you trace the roots of the gods of Medicine, you will eventually discover the god Hermes*. Eastern medicine sometimes conflicts with Western medicine, having originated in the classic philosophies of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu, and Buddhism. There are actually many past examples in which monks taught medicine. The divine spirits are also providing ample guidance to religions that heal people’s illnesses. From time to time, the divine spirits perform miracles to deepen people’s faith. So, what is important is the cooperation and collaboration between medicine and religion. Physicians with religious faith should be able to heal more illnesses by effectively using the power of the mind. They should be able to miraculously cure even the most deadly illnesses by combining positive words and medicine. Likewise, people of religion should be capable of expanding the number of souls they save by cooperating with the positive side of medicine. The goal is people’s happiness; therefore, cooperation is ideal.”

Paloma and Gallup, after observing American prayer practices (Paloma & Gallup, 1991), described the following four part typology of prayer:

1. Conversational prayer: speaking to God as you would to a friend;
2. Ritual recitation: reciting ritualized prayers, from both written texts and from memory;
3. Meditation: making nonverbal communication with God;
4. Prayer of petition: requesting of God something for oneself or for others.

In this enquiry it is the last type, prayer of petition, otherwise known as intercessory prayer or prayer for others, which the authors have made their subject of study. By this definition, prayers for others can be offered either with or without the knowledge of the person to whom they are directed, and can be conducted with the person present (either making physical contact with the person or not doing so), or at a distance, with the prayee located elsewhere.

* Hermes: A God believed to have resided in Greece 4,300 years ago. Hermes brought prosperity to the Mediterranean area and laid the foundations of Western civilization. Well-known as the god of commerce, prosperity, the arts, travel, and communications, among other endeavours, Hermes is also the God of Healing. The Staff of Kerykeion (also known as the Caduceus Staff), which Hermes is often seen holding, is used even today as a symbol of medical institutions worldwide.

2) Studies of Intercessory Prayer

Three sequential Cochrane Collaboration literature reviews have been conducted on studies of the use of intercessory prayer to alleviate illness. These reviews were published in 2000, 2004, and 2009 (Roberts et al., 2000; Roberts et al., 2007; Roberts et al., 2010) and acknowledge that intercessory prayer is one of the oldest and most common intervention types used by many faiths to alleviate illness. In the review by Roberts et al. (2010), the authors searched ten databases and analyzed ten trials with a randomized sample totaling 7,646 people. The authors determined that these findings are equivocal and, although some results from individual studies suggest a positive effect, the majority do not, nor does the evidence support a recommendation either in favour of or against the use of intercessory prayer.

Likewise, the reporting of data on clinical outcomes was deemed heterogeneous and equivocal, suggesting that what the studies assumed to be the object of intercessory prayer varied significantly and was open to different interpretations. One of the problems here is that few scientific methodologies were used that included standard published scales, thereby leaving the reliability and validity of outcomes unknown (Olver, 2013). Another problem identified by Cochrane authors is the evident heterogeneity of prayee illness types treated (Roberts et al., 2010). More problematically, intercessory prayer literature lacks a theoretical or theological basis, prompting some researchers and review boards to insist that no further funding should go to these studies (Master et al., 2006; Roberts et al., 2010).

This review article, therefore, aimed to clarify the theoretical or theological base not only concerning putative physiological and psychological mechanisms but also from the standpoint of the “Happy Science” prayer theory.

2. PRAYER AND PHYSICAL THEORY (NON-LOCALITY)

One barrier to a scientific understanding of prayer offerings for prayees located apart from the person praying has been the perceived difficulty of explaining how the prayer could be “transmitted” over distance (Olver, 2013). The problem here is that conventionally-speaking at least, no form of energy can be expected to do this, given the still common assumption that energy forms must diminish as the distance increases from the person praying. If a form of energy were confined to the speed of light, there would still be a considerable time delay between the “sending” and “receiving” of a prayer. Nevertheless, there are many documented instances of instantaneous “connections” made between people, particularly close relatives, who are otherwise separated physically from one another over a great distance.

On the other hand, in the seemingly unrelated field of quantum mechanics, physicists and mathematicians accept a version of non-locality of action, a form of apparent connectedness between distant objects that is maintained at a non-visible sub-atomic level. Quantum theory suggests that the observation of an event changes a series of probabilities of outcomes into a single event which actually occurs. Einstein first described what is called the EPR (Einstein Podolsky Rosen) paradox. In a challenge to the uncertainty principle that only the position or momentum of a particle, but not both, can be known with certainty, they devised a thought

experiment in which two systems that initially interact with each other or are entangled with each other are then separated. Subsequently what happens to one system simultaneously affects the other, although no signal has passed between them.

In 1964 John Bell put forward a theorem to explain this phenomenon. He suggested that the particles were interconnected, essentially proposing that remote particles were not totally isolated but still remain a part of a larger integrated system so that a change in one causes an immediate change in the other, irrespective of how far the two remain apart (Barbour, 1997). This concept has been tested many times by experiments which demonstrate that individuals can influence the polarity of particles produced by random event generators (Hyman, 1987).

The concept that the mind is nonlocal (as opposed to the brain which is physically localized) would allow for a distant effect on other systems including living organisms or random number generators (Dossey, 1993).

Drew Leder has suggested four models to explain both parapsychological transfers of information over a distance and prayer (Leder, 2005). One of Leder's models confirms that while an energy transfer does occur it does so in an unknown energy form and with no decrease in intensity as distance increases, in contradistinction to the commonly held inverse square law. A second model of Leder's proposes a nonlocal entanglement paralleling entanglement as understood in quantum physics whereby human-like particles behave as one system. This is akin to the idea of an interconnected consciousness with distant correlations existing separated by space (Campbell, 2003).

In a third model, Leder borrows a concept from quantum mechanics regarding measurement and puts forth a model of actualization of potentials. In quantum mechanics, measurement results in waves of probabilities becoming one actual outcome, raising the possibility that a conscious intension to heal can result in healing as a single event from amongst a range of other possibilities. (This model makes *prima facie* sense, in that for a person with an illness there exists a range of possible outcomes from which one result does eventually emerge.) Lastly, in a fourth model, which Leder refers to as path facilitation, the author takes up a concept from the general theory of relativity, that of gravity and its ability to fold or warp space/time to facilitate movement over a great distance. The implications are that consciousness may in fact fold the fabric of the physical world around it thereby allowing itself to follow a particular pathway.

Thus, if consciousness is thought of as non-local, then prayer over a great distance could have an immediate effect. When theories of non-locality and prayer are advanced, the question is raised as to whether a divine being or God needs to be in the loop, or whether the mechanism of nonlocal prayer could simply be a form of psychokinesis (Rhine, 1997). In the section below on "Happy Science and Prayer," we discuss the "law of same wavelengths attraction" which attributes the positive effects of prayer to a form of psychokinesis derived from the prayed-for intercession of a divine being. Master Ryuho Okawa has defined this phenomenon as "the Physics of the Light of Buddha" (Okawa, 2011b), and has indicated that it is based on three specific theses:

"The first states that the Light of Buddha is amplified when it comes into contact with something with which it finds an affinity, whereas it avoids contact with all objects that are opposed to it.

The second thesis states that creation and destruction occur through the process of condensation or diffusion of the Light of Buddha.

The third thesis states that the Light of Buddha has wave-lengths – higher frequencies are attuned to other high frequencies and the lower frequencies are attuned to other low frequencies.” The implications of these theses are elaborated below.

3. PRAYER AND PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY (UNIVERSAL UNCONSCIOUS)

Psychotherapy is a way of healing mental illness and distress by applying techniques rooted in a rational understanding of the mind’s structure and dynamic state.

It occupies an important position in modern psychiatric medicine and clinical psychology. A classic book on the history of psychotherapy in the West is *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, by Henri Ellenberger (1970). Its subtitle – *The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* – refers to a method of psychological therapy that uses the concept of “the unconscious” and which seeks a scientific understanding of the mind by directing attention to its hidden depths and to the dynamic relations that exist between the unconscious and consciousness.

While psychotherapy is largely associated with Sigmund Freud, Pierre Janet, Alfred Adler, and Carl Gustav Jung also established their own forms of dynamic psychiatry at approximately the same time historically. For Ellenberger the Catholic exorcism, understood as ordering a demon to depart from a person in whom it was held to be causing illness, marks the first historical emergence of dynamic psychiatry.

Considering the relationship between prayer and psychological theory, the “Universal Unconscious” (or “Collective Unconscious”), as described by Jung in his investigations of the archetypes, is particularly germane here. This universality has sometimes been interpreted as the expression of a kind of neo-Platonic world-soul and/or as the center of all psychic energy (Ellenberger, 1970). In contrast, Master Ryuho Okawa refers to “Universal Unconscious” as proof that all human beings are connected not only with guardian and guiding spirits but even God as well as with other people in this world, in what he calls a “great spiritual university” (Okawa, 2009a). Furthermore, Master Okawa has confirmed that all human beings as well as plant and animal life originated from one single source, God, and that love is based on the understanding that we and others are not separate but are essentially one, and that loving others is exactly the same as loving ourselves (Okawa, 2011c).

Thus, we might have a positively strong impact on other people by making a prayer on their behalf and thereafter relying on the spiritual power of higher spirits to intercede.

4. HAPPY SCIENCE AND PRAYER

1) What Is “Happy Science?”

Happy Science, originally established in Japan as “Kofuku-no-Kagaku” (lit., the Science of Human Happiness”) in 1986, has grown into one of the most influential religious organizations in Japan, and now includes a global base with members from over 100 countries across the world. The founder and leader is Master Ryuho Okawa who, as of

January 2015, has presented more than 2,200 lectures and published over 1,800 books. His body of work covers a large range of genres and topics including spirituality, health, science, relationships, business, politics, and education (Happy Science, 2015).

The basic tenets of Happy Science, constituting the core of the teachings, are known as “The Principles of Happiness,” which consist of the fourfold path of “Love”, “Wisdom”, “Self-reflection”, and “Progress” (Okawa, 2009b). Indeed, based upon these principles, Happy Science has already developed a novel religious/spiritual group psychotherapy and reported its efficacy with various mental disorders in randomized controlled trials (Chida & Kim, 2011; Chida et al., forthcoming). Happy Science believers receive a sutra book, “The Dharma of the Right Mind,” and a set of prayer books. “The Dharma of the Right Mind” was inspired by Shakyamuni Buddha’s consciousness and therefore has the power to purify minds with the light of Buddha. This prayer has been described as possessing 10,000 times more power than the Lotus Sutra or the Heart Sutra of Buddhism (Happy Science, 2015). Happy Science members’ spiritual life, of which prayer constitutes a central component, revolves around the recitation of the sutras and prayers contained in these books.

Happy Science has a unique cosmology. It is believed that the universe reveals a multi-dimensional structure. Within this structure, the material world is three dimensional, whereas the other world, the spirit world, refers to the fourth dimension and above. The spirit world of planet Earth continues to the ninth dimension, which is the highest limit of personified spiritual existences. Happy Science believers believe in the existence of the Supreme Being, known as El Cantare, the same existence which many religions such as Christianity and Islam refer to as God. El Cantare is the leader of ten ninth-dimension spirits which include Jesus Christ, Confucius, Zeus, and Moses (Okawa, 2013). Indeed, Master Ryuho Okawa has offered many teachings on this fact including the following (Okawa, 2008b):

“It was I who was guiding Jesus. He referred to me as ‘Father’, and prayed to me every day. [...]. Some 2,500 years ago, I sent one of my brother souls, Shakyamuni Buddha to earth. I also sent Mohammed, the founder of Islam, to earth. Then, I created a band of more than 40 angels, who were directed to give Mohammed guidance. [...]. However, standing behind this band of angels and directing their communication was in fact El Cantare, who appointed Archangel Gabriel to be the communicator, and it is Gabriel (Jibril) who was largely responsible for the transmissions. In short, it was I who provided guidance for Buddhism, Christianity and Islam – every one of them. I also guided Moses. [...]. I can summon any deity, high-level spirit or angel. [...]. However, if I summon any high spirit, whether they are the saints and sages of Christianity, Shinto, or Buddhism, they cannot deny me. I am capable of receiving spiritual messages from all factions of religions. This is the position of El Cantare. In other words, I am their “Master,” and I am in the position of directing them. [...]. Consequently, Happy Science must logically and inevitably grow larger into a world religion. We have the mission to unite all the world’s religions into one. It is, by reason and logic, our duty. [...]. I am not using it in the sense of the “Master of Japanese people.” Rather, it is in reference to my mission to lead all humankind in unity.”

In the Happy Science cosmology, human souls repeat reincarnation for the purpose of spiritual evolution. The material world is considered to be the training ground for souls. As they evolve and reach higher dimensions above the seventh dimension, or the world of angels, they begin to act as guiding spirits.

2) Prayer in Happy Science

When one prays, a response is received from guiding spirits of a particular spiritual group defined by one's religious affiliation. For example, a Christian prayer is heard by Christian guiding spirits. Thus it can be said that spiritual affiliation is one of the conditions for a prayer to be effective. Spiritual affiliation is defined by one's faith. By the same token, Happy Science is blessed by a large number of guiding spirits who provide support and guidance to Happy Science believers. The question arises as to whether prayers made by non-believers have any effect. There are always some number of spirits who may recognize prayers made by nonbelievers, but it is uncertain whether a response could ever be expected from them and, if so received, which type of spirit could be expected to respond.

For Happy Science faithful, the spirit world is the world of thought, and thought is the form of existence of souls in the spirit world. Since the three dimensional world is a uniquely material world, our physical existence is not compatible with the form of existence in the spirit world. However, thought is communicated between these two worlds. Prayer, in essence, can be seen as a form of thought transmission, which is received and responded to by guiding spirits in the spirit world. Happy Science doctrine makes an illuminating differentiation among types of thought and emotion according to the respective frequencies they maintain. Joy, gratitude, anger and hatred, for instance, are each held to maintain a different frequency. While each thought and emotion has a different frequency, if one repeatedly emits the same sorts of thoughts and emotions, these develop a certain tendency of the soul and subsequently each soul may come to partake of his/her individually characteristic frequency.

Happy Science further expounds an important law said to be operating in the spirit world. Known as "the law of same wavelengths attraction," thoughts successfully communicated to the spirit world are said to do so only when there is a "match" of frequencies. As a result, the spirit world is thought of as a huge conglomerate of realms divided by differentiated wavelengths of collective thoughts. This distinction is held to occur in both a vertical and horizontal manner. In the vertical aspect, spirits are divided into dimensions in accordance with their spiritual development, whereas in the horizontal aspect, they are divided into homogeneous communities defined by belief, taste, personality, and so on (Okawa, 2012a).

In principle, spirits who belong to different dimensions cannot communicate with one another because their frequencies are not compatible. However, thoughts of a living person in the material world can communicate with other dimensions, and the frequency of thoughts determines which dimension or realm they are able to connect with.

As further defined in Happy Science doctrine, frequencies vary from the realm of Hell to the ninth dimension. Therefore, if one has a hellish thought, that thought is instantaneously connected to Hell, while a heavenly thought is connected to Heaven. People who carry over and maintain a hellish tendency in their thoughts are destined for Hell, which Happy Science holds is located in a corner of the fourth dimension and is made up of a collection of multiple realms of different negative frequencies. Therefore, a negative thought connects with a corresponding realm according to the wavelength. When one's soul is attuned and connected to Hell, what is known as possession occurs. In Happy Science, possession is considered to be the cause of problems such as physical and mental illness and misfortune (Okawa, 2008c).

Given that prayers are responded to by guiding spirits who belong to a higher dimension, a prayer, understood as a thought transmission, requires a frequency that is compatible with

the guiding spirits' frequency. It therefore follows that the quality of thought is considered as one of the requisites for prayer to be effective. In general, negative thoughts and wishes such as curses and egotistic desire are said to be rejected by guiding spirits, whereas positive prayer such as expression of an altruistic wish is likely to be responded to by high dimensional spirits (Okawa, 2011a).

5. MAJOR FACTORS THAT MAKE PRAYER EFFECTIVE

Another key characteristic of Happy Science doctrine is the unique set of factors it identifies as determining the efficacy of prayer-based health interventions. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no review of such factors exists elsewhere in the literature, and so a summary is provided below in some detail.

(1) Internal Factors

If one's state of mind and quality of thought affect the effectiveness of prayer, it is necessary to know the conditions in which thought can be attuned to the frequencies of guiding spirits of high dimensions (Okawa, 2009c).

First, there is faith. Faith makes one pious and devoted, so faith sits on the opposite end of the spectrum from an egotistic state of mind. Devout faith has the power to direct and redirect one's thoughts toward frequencies of the higher dimensions. As regards Happy Science, having faith means that one believes in El Cantare and is devoted to living the tenets. Guiding spirits of Happy Science are united under El Cantare's command. Therefore, faith gives believers a bond with El Cantare and the guiding spirits, who will hear their prayers through this bond. Furthermore, the strength of belief influences the outcome of prayer. The stronger one's faith, the more likely one's prayer will be answered. Therefore, we can say that the effectiveness of prayer can be anticipated by considering whether one has faith or not, and if so, the strength of one's faith.

Second, negative thoughts are generally incompatible with the wavelengths of higher dimensions. Therefore, praying with a negative state of mind has little effect. Negative thoughts are caused by attachments. Attachments are, according to the Buddhist philosophy of six worldly desires, often categorized into the six types of greed, anger, foolishness, conceit, doubt and wrong views (Okawa, 2003). Guiding spirits are those who have disciplined themselves to free themselves from attachments, and so it is necessary for one to make efforts to remove attachments in order to be attuned with those spirits. In Happy Science, self-reflection is the method to remove attachments. Believers are taught to practice self-reflection to monitor and check negative thoughts and behaviors. Daily practice of self-reflection is needed to make prayer effective.

Gratitude is considered particularly important as a requisite for effective prayer. Gratitude resonates with the frequencies of guiding spirits. Furthermore, altruistic thought is essential for a believer to pray effectively. Egotistic prayer never earns the attention of guiding spirits. It is recommended that when one prays, he or she resolves to make contributions to the

happiness of others'. Altruistic thought connects one with the frequency of higher dimensions.

Thirdly, a self-help attitude is regarded as an important condition determining whether guiding spirits will agree to answer one's prayers. It is often thought that prayer is an act of requesting divine existences for help, but in Happy Science it is believed that prayer without self-help has no effect. It should be noted that while the "utmost effort" is expected, the actual degree of effort to be exerted is defined individually since maximum levels naturally vary from person to person.

Finally, while faith, state of mind and self-help commitment are important factors which together allow one's prayer to reach the spiritual existences of the higher dimensions, it must, in the end, be left to the guiding spirits' discretion whether support will be provided. In *The Golden Laws* (page 14), Master Ryuho Okawa defines the criteria which determine whether one's prayer is worthy (Okawa, 2011b).

1. If your ambition were realized, would it lead to the happiness of the people around you, to the happiness of all the people in the world?
2. If you succeeded in realizing your ambition, are you sure that it would not cause unhappiness to others?
3. If your ambition were to be achieved, would it improve you as a person?

It can be assumed that guiding spirits may judge whether to answer prayers by reference to these conditions. Supposing one does pray with altruistic intention, it does not always promise the happiness of people. For example, if one prays that his/her country defeats an enemy nation in war, the prayer is based on the altruistic wish for their fellow people, and yet it desires the annihilation of the people of the other country. Therefore, in order for prayer to be effective, it not only requires one to fulfill conditions that are well attuned to the higher dimensions, but the goal or wish itself must satisfy criteria to convince guiding spirits to be supportive.

(2) Environmental Factors

Spiritual environment is another important factor that determines the effectiveness of prayer. While space itself has no innate capacity to have a frequency, as individuals or a group of people regularly emit positive or negative thoughts in a particular location, an accumulative effect is exerted on that place which comes to manifest a positive or negative vibration. Accordingly, the spiritual environment where prayer is performed may become a boon or barrier to the effectiveness of prayer (Okawa, 2012b).

For instance, if a person is always angry, worried, depressed, greedy, and so on, the spiritual environment of his or her residence is likely to be filled with negative frequencies. To create a positive spiritual environment, one is required to make disciplinary efforts to maintain his or her positive state of mind by removing attachments through reflection, and having gratitude and compassion. Indeed, the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882, has suggested that the spiritual ability of mystics in a number of the spiritism sessions drastically changed by several environment factors like participants' attitude and the atmosphere of the room (Blum, 2006).

Devout believers of Happy Science receive what is called “Gohonzon,” a devotional object which represents El Cantare. Gohonzon is regarded as a sort of spiritual portal connected to the consciousness of El Cantare (Okawa, 2000). By praying in front of Gohonzon, one can have direct connection with El Cantare, and therefore the higher dimensions. It is believed that the spiritual light is constantly flowing out of Gohonzon, thereby gradually filling the surrounding environment with heavenly vibration. A special environment such as a prayer room of a branch temple or Shoja (spiritual training facility) has accumulated heavenly vibrations over time so that the spiritual environment is highly refined to partake of the frequency of the higher dimensions.

Placement of Gohonzon has a palpable effect on creating a positive spiritual environment. Therefore, believers are recommended to place Gohonzon in their homes to establish a spiritual environment suitable for effective prayer. Whether or not Gohonzon is present in a given location provides a significant criterion for judging the quality of spiritual environment and the likely effectiveness of prayers offered at that location.

(3) Who Offers A Prayer, and for Whom a Prayer Is Offered

As described to this point, we have seen that faith, state of mind, self-help, a prayer offering worthy of approval by guiding spirits, and a prayer offering’s spiritual environment are major factors in determining whether a prayer is ultimately effective. In other words, prayer’s effectiveness can be understood with reference to these determinants, and so according to the law of cause and effect (Allen, 2006).

When offering a prayer, one prays either for oneself or for someone else. When one prays for oneself, he or she only need examine his/her own faith, state of mind, degree of commitment to self-help, the worthiness of the content, and the immediate spiritual environment, in order to determine the likelihood of the prayer being effective. When one offers a prayer for another person or people, we need to consider these determinants relative to both the one who prays and the person or persons for whom the prayer is offered.

Circumstances where prayer is performed are classified as follows:

(1) Prayer for oneself.

Potential prayer effectiveness can be assessed according to the person offering the prayer and their strength of faith, state of mind, worthiness of the prayer’s content, and the prevailing spiritual environment.

(2) Prayers for another person or persons

As mentioned, when one prays for another person, it is necessary to consider these determinants for both parties involved in the prayer. We need to examine whether both parties maintain a strong faithfulness, whether the state of mind on both sides is auspicious, whether both parties have self-help spirits, whether their wish can be approved by guiding spirits, and whether a suitable spiritual environment prevails on both sides. When a prayer is offered directly in front of the person for whom the prayer is offered, the spiritual environment for only the one location requires checking.

The assessment of these factors is not a simple matter. But their consideration can help clarify how to compose a new prayer effectively and assess an existing prayer for effectiveness.

(4) Books of Prayer in Happy Science

Happy Science believers are given a set of prayer books for recitations done daily or periodically for some specific purpose (Happy Science, 2015). There are two membership categories in Happy Science: “member” and “devotee (or disciple).” Members receive an introductory version of “The Dharma of the Right Mind,” which contains only three prayers: ‘The Dharma of the Right Mind,’ “Prayer to the Lord,” and “Prayer to Guardian and Guiding Spirits.” When they have learned the teachings of Happy Science sufficient to gain conviction, they may decide to devote themselves to “The Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,” which derives from the traditional Buddhist initiation ritual. By thereby becoming a devotee, they would receive “Buddha’s Teaching: The Dharma of the Right Mind,” “Prayer book I” and “Prayer book II.” Each prayer book contains seven to ten different prayers for specific purposes. For instance, “Buddha’s Teaching: The Dharma of the Right Mind” contains seven sutras, of which “Words of Truth, The Dharma of the Right Mind” is the most important. Believers recite daily from these Prayer Books which contain prayers such as “Prayer to the Lord,” “Prayer for Recovery from Illness,” “Prayer to Exorcise Evil Spirits,” and “Prayer for Success.” Happy Science believers recite these prayers daily in order to demonstrate their faith in El Cantare.

In addition to the private daily recitation of prayer, believers can also participate in ceremonial prayers held periodically at Happy Science temples, where the believers may choose a more specific type of prayer such as ‘Prayer for Doubling My Courage,’ “Prayer for Defeating Infectious Diseases,” “Super Strong Prayer for Dieting,” “Prayer for Traffic Safety,” and “Prayer for Recovery of Energy.”

(5) Ceremonial Prayer (Kigan)

(1) Private Prayer and Ceremonial Prayer

In Happy Science, prayer that is performed in private is distinguished from a prayer performed ceremonially by a designated priest in a designated place. In Japanese, the latter is called “Kigan,” which we will refer to here as “ceremonial prayer.” Ceremonial prayer is held in a religious facility of Happy Science, where a Happy Science religious professional performs the role of priest. Priest in Japanese is “Doushi.” There are many types of prayers that are performed only in ceremonial prayer. All prayer scripts are divine revelations written down by Master Ryuho Okawa. Each prayer is directed by a particular guiding spirit or guiding spirits. Believers expect salvation to be received from those guiding spirits.

When one prays privately, supposing he/she upholds a strong faith and self-help spirit, the prayer’s effectivity is still liable to be affected by his/her state of mind and the condition of the spiritual environment. On the other hand, when a ceremonial prayer is conducted, the state of mind of the priest and the spiritual environment of the prayer room are diligently

maintained, and therefore there is more certainty regarding the efficacious results of prayer. Therefore, even though one has a good faith and self-help spirit, state of mind and spiritual environment are variables that affect the effectiveness of prayer. In this respect, ceremonial prayer can be said to be more reliable than privately made prayer.

Moreover, ceremonial prayer is specifically designed for particular purposes such as overcoming illness, success in business, academic achievement, marriage and relationships. Guiding spirits who are specialists in each field are assigned to support prayers. But such specialist spirits are not assigned to each individual at home. The difference between private prayer and ceremonial prayer may be illustrated by an example of someone who seeks legal assistance. Praying privately to request help is compared to tweeting on the Internet to seek legal advice, while attending a ceremonial prayer is analogous to visiting an attorney's office.

Master Okawa explains that the greatest difference between Happy Science and other religions is that Master Ryuho Okawa, who is the incarnation of El Cantare, has first-hand knowledge of guiding spirits. Master Okawa constantly communicates with those spirits as if telephoning them. Because of his extraordinary abilities, he is capable of channeling the full range of spiritual existences, and he has published several hundred books which record the conversations or interviews that occur during such channeling. Therefore, it is believed that Master Okawa assumes the authority that commands guiding spirits in high dimensions while he remains in this material world. He indicates that this is the source of the spiritual power afforded ceremonial prayer in Happy Science and what distinguishes Happy Science from other groups (Okawa, 1997).

Happy Science's guiding spirits include spirits from various religious backgrounds such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Shintoism, as well as many outstanding spirits including business people, politicians, scientists, academics, and artists, each of whom have made great achievements while living on earth and have returned to high dimensional realms.

An applicant of ceremonial prayer writes down his/her wish on a designated form, which is inserted into a special envelope and placed in front of the altar of the prayer room. Applicants make offerings as tokens of their gratitude for spiritual support from heaven. The duration of ceremonial prayer is generally 20 to 30 minutes and consists of several stages:

- (1) Recitation of The Dharma of the Right Mind
- (2) Giving thanks to El Cantare and to the designated guiding spirit
- (3) Reading aloud the applicant's name (may or may not occur depending on type of prayer and location)
- (4) Recitation of the main prayer script
- (5) Gratitude and Resolution

Prior to the start of the ceremony, applicants are instructed to calm their minds and deepen their concentration. The ceremony is held either individually, or collectively. After the ceremony, each applicant receives a special charm designed for each respective prayer. Applicants retain their charm for one year and bring them back the following year to the same temple where the ritual was performed.

Every person who attends a ceremonial prayer is instructed to have pure faith, gratitude, self-help spirit and attitude and to completely entrust the results to the will of heaven. Regarding the last point, applicants for prayer are advised to put the wish out of their minds once they have made their request to El Cantare or to the guiding spirits and to avoid setting

any deadline for the prayer's realization or attempting to prescribe the way it should be realized.

Prayer requests are made in many ways. Believers may visit a Shoja and attend a prayer ceremony in person for realizing his/her wish. Alternately, a believer unable to attend in person may request that the Shoja perform a ceremonial prayer for them *in absentia*. Likewise, a believer may apply to have a ceremonial prayer conducted for someone other than him/herself. Religious professionals at every Shoja advise that having all parties involved in the prayer attend the ceremony is the most reliable way to ensure a prayer's effectiveness, although those professionals can and often do conduct ceremonies and offer intercessory prayers with one or more party absent.

(2) The Work of Priests

A ceremonial prayer is conducted in Happy Science's religious facilities such as a local branch temple or Shoja (Happy Science, 2015). A local branch is similar to a local church or temple, where a service is regularly held for local members. The Shoja is a temple where believers visit for special occasions and may stay overnight to attend specific training programs, in which they receive lectures and instruction for reflection, meditation, and contemplation. Both the local branch and Shoja maintain a highly refined spiritual environment connected with the higher dimensions of the spirit world. In particular, the spiritual environment of Shoja is carefully upheld by Happy Science's religious professionals who possess a calm mind and manner and continuously endeavor to remove worldly attachments.

Among Happy Science's religious professionals, those who are qualified as lecturer and priest are allowed to perform the role of priest in ceremonial prayers. The priest's role includes ceremonial prayer, funerary rites, memorial services ("Kuyō"), and commemorative services.

When performing a ceremonial prayer, a priest wears either a black suit or a designated garment with a special stole on his/her shoulder and beads in his/her left hand. It is imperative that the priest concentrates to attune his/her mind to the guiding spirits of higher dimensions, filling his/her heart with feelings of gratitude to El Cantare and the guiding spirits and with compassion to all applicants and attendees of the ceremony. During the ritual, a priest uses specific ritual implements such Devil Quelling Sword, Keryukeion Staff (Caduceus staff), and Holy Bell. A priest is required to undergo training in their proper use and in how to maintain correct posture and movements.

(3) When a Prayer Does not Work

When all conditions satisfy the requirements, prayer leads to results according to the law of cause and effect. While ceremonial prayer is more reliable than private prayer because of the priest's state of mind and the spiritual environment of the Shoja, the outcome of prayer is still affected by other variants such as the applicant's faith and effort.

Furthermore, as discussed above, whether prayer is effective or not is in the end determined by a decision which only the guiding spirits can make. Therefore, guardian spirits may decide that the applicant's wish should not be granted because it will not benefit the applicant's spiritual growth, or because it may have undesirable consequences unanticipated by the applicant. Therefore, believers understand that no result is an arbitrarily given answer by the guiding spirits and try not to become attached to the results. Consequently, in the event

their prayer is not granted, believers undergo self-reflection to determine whether there are any negative causes such as attachment which have prevented the prayer from materializing.

(4) Types of Ceremonial Prayer

Happy Science offers various ceremonial prayers, which total over 150 types (Happy Science, 2015). The prayers can be classified into categories such as success and prosperity (e.g., Prayer for Prosperity, Prayer for Economic Prosperity), business success (e.g., Prayer for Success in Business, Prayer for Successful Management), healing (e.g., Prayer for Recovery from Illness, Prayer for Removing Stress), academic achievement (e.g., Prayer for Academic Achievement, Prayer for Improving Academic Abilities), spiritual progress (e.g., Prayer for Accomplishing Spiritual Discipline, Prayer for Making Progress in Enlightenment), relationship improvement (e.g., Prayer for Harmonious Relationship, Prayer for Harmony of Husband and Wife), exorcism (e.g., Prayer for Exorcising Evil Spirits, Prayer to Seal Evil Spirits), utopia creation (e.g., Prayer for Peace of the World) and other self-realization (Prayer for Success in Missionary Work, Prayer for Marriage). Among them, healing prayers are particularly popular and miracles are often witnessed. Many cases are reported in which a tumor disappears after ceremonial prayers, eye sight is recovered, a crippled person is able to walk again, and so on.

The different prayer types reflect the individuality of guiding spirits. As stated above, in the case of Shoja's ceremonial prayers, each prayer is guided by specific guiding spirits. So, there are a number of resembling prayers but their effects are different because of the different associated guiding spirits.

Furthermore, each Shoja receives support and guidance from different guiding spirits, which help account for the distinguishing characteristics of individual Shojas including their unique and varying spiritual environment.

(6) Happy Science's Perspective on the Relationship of Mind and Body

As mentioned, the most popular type of prayer among Happy Science believers is the healing prayer. In order to illustrate the process by which illness is cured through prayer, we explain Happy Science's perspective on the relationship between mind and body.

In Happy Science, the true nature of the physical body is likened to a flowing stream; every cell in our body is constantly in the process of being replaced. Our bone matter is changed – with the passing of time, every part of our body is continuously being renewed. Not only are we not the same now as when we were born – we are still in the process of changing. Each and every day, new cells are being born while old ones die. Our hair, scalp, eyes, nose, mouth, arms and legs, and even our internal organs, undergo change on a daily, moment-by-moment basis, like a flowing river (Okawa, 2008d).

How can we maintain our identity amidst this constantly changing body? It is in fact our mind that defines the self-image that creates our physical state. For example, if we want to strengthen our muscles, we can make them stronger by working out. But the determination, or thought form, to strengthen our muscles by training them must come first. The same thing can happen to internal organs as well. For example, if we are trying to live a healthy life to overcome our visceral problems, our condition will gradually improve.

However, if you have negative thoughts, and are continuously thinking, "I am always sick, and I am unhappy. I am dying. I have to live seeking the sympathy of others", then these kinds of thoughts will make themselves manifest.

A human being is not just the flesh that we see with our eyes, but actually a multi-structured spiritual being temporarily resident in the physical body. The far outer layer of this spiritual structure is called the "astral body." The astral body actually has exactly the same shape as the human being, with eyes, nose and eyebrows, heart, liver, kidney and other essential organs. A spiritual being with exactly the same shape resides in the physical body. In line with this theory of a multi-structured spiritual being, early Egyptians also believed a person consisted of a physical body ("khat") and a soul. The soul consisted of three parts: the ka, the ba, and the akh. The "ka" was thought to be an exact double of the person and was the life force that animated the body, which is quite similar to the astral body. The ba was separate from the life force (ka), and survived after the body died. Given the right circumstances, the ka and ba would unite after death to form the "akh." The akh "was the transfigured spirit that survived death and mingled with the gods." It was thought to survive in the afterlife only if the person had lived a good and worthy life (Wisseman, 2003).

The mind is the main controller of everything. Thoughts create the state of the astral body, which in turn determines the state of the physical body.

When negative thoughts such as anger, hatred, dissatisfaction, excess desire, pessimism, and a sense of inferiority become concrete in one's mind, those thoughts will form a thought energy cloud. If those thoughts are only temporary, the negative energy will soon dissipate and vanish. However, when this energy continues to exist for a certain length of time, it materializes and results in some form of illness. Those who suffer from illness have a part in their mind that is afflicted with negativity.

Those negative thought clouds prevent spiritual light from coming into one's soul. When those clouds are removed by self-reflection, meditation and prayer, and the light of God starts to shine into one's soul, he/she will be able to be one with God. When one rebuilds his/her body every day by being one with God, his/her illness can no longer exist.

(7) Happy Science's Theory on Disease

In Happy Science theory, seventy or eighty percent of diseases are caused almost exclusively by the state of mind (Okawa, 2008c). Master Ryuho Okawa has, in greater detail, indicated that almost all modern diseases are caused by three factors –what we eat, lack of exercise, and stress (Okawa, 2008d), which thus indicates that our psychological factors might have a much stronger impact on the etiology and prognosis of illness than do any physical, environmental or genetic factors per se.

One of the illness-causing psychological factors is our subconscious mind by which we seek refuge in sickness. The truth is that we can't heal illness because we don't wish to heal it. We can blame sickness on our feelings of dissatisfaction and disappointment and make excuses for the things we have failed to achieve. In short, all can be forgiven if we are sick. For example, our incompetence can be forgiven if we are sick. Our income is not increasing; this is forgiven if we are sick. We are not good at raising children; this is forgiven if we are sick. The sick person can be ourself, our children, other members of our family, and other acquaintances. Anybody can be afflicted. Therefore, we need to understand that it is not just a

coincidence, but that in some cases sickness can be a chosen form of escape from our lives. This factor includes our subconscious mind in which we want to be sympathized with and paid more attention to by other people, because we feel so unsatisfied with the love received from other people in our non-illness situations.

Another psychological factor is aggressive emotions directed toward others or, alternately, feelings of remorse. For instance, if we were to look inside the hearts of those who had suffered from cancer, we would almost invariably find them filled with hatred and anger or with self-reproach. If we are sick, then reflect on our own mind. Is there anybody against whom we hold a grudge? Indeed, anger and hostility have recently been reported to be associated with coronary heart disease outcomes both in healthy and coronary heart disease populations (Chida, 2009).

In the case of incurable diseases like autoimmune diseases or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, there are three main causes which carry spiritual significance: (1) possession from evil spirits, (2) karma engraved onto the soul before it's birth on earth, and (3) a physical disability consequent on the soul's decision to inspire in others' feelings of courage, joy, and a sense of life's purpose (Okawa, 2008c). The first factor, that evil-spirits' possession leads to various illnesses, has long been recognized by both Christianity and Islam. For instance, the Qur'an and Islamic theology refer to humans, angels, and jinn as the three beings created by God who can feel, perceive, and be conscious. Jinn are thought to inhabit the unseen world, and can be good, bad, or neutral, and may be associated with mental illness (Islam & Campbell, 2012). Bad jinn are probably akin to demons as these are understood in Christianity.

(8) Influence of Evil-Spirits Possession

Possession is a state where a spirit in Hell, or an earth-bound spirit who fails to depart to the other dimensions, influences the mind of a person in the material world. This occurs because the negative mind of a living person attracts those spirits who have the same negative mind according to the laws of same wavelengths' attraction. Suppose a human mind is a radio and thought is a radio wave; under normal conditions, the radio receives and plays the owner's thoughts. However, when possession occurs, the radio picks up noise or "static" representing the thoughts of other spirits. Possession is, so to speak, a condition where negative thoughts are mixed up between a living person and a hellish spirit. As a result, the living person's negative feelings and thoughts are enhanced and uncontrollable desire and emotion may cause them to ruin their own life. In the case that one is possessed by a spirit who died with an illness such as cardiac disease and begins to develop the same symptoms, as soon as the possession is removed, the symptoms disappear. Illnesses such as rheumatism and collagen are believed to be caused by spirit possession.

Possession takes place when the wavelengths of your mind are attuned to those of a spirit. There are numerous examples of negative mind; for instance, an envious mind, a mind that is full of dissatisfaction and complaint, a mind that is always abusing others, hurting people with negative words, a cynical mind, a mind that suffers from a persecution complex, and so on. Those who are susceptible to spiritual possession generally suffer from a persecution complex. They believe that people are always bullying them, that they are being hurt or injured, and that they always lose out. They do not assume responsibility for the awful

situation that they are in and continue blaming others. Spirits in Hell find it very easy to approach people like this who tend not to take responsibility for their own life.

Another kind of negative mind is anger. People who are always angry, who are filled with unreasonable rage, will attract spirits from Hell. People who easily lose their temper, who say and do terrible things, who complain, or who have a persecution complex and are always blaming others for their misfortune, will be approached by spirits from Hell.

There is also the opposite type of mind. People with low self-image, low self-efficacy, low self-esteem, people who think that they are no good, a complete failure, that they are beyond help, and that they should have ever been born, will also attract evil spirits.

When illness is caused by possession, medical treatment does not provide the needed solutions and so the possession still needs to be removed. While medicine may remove symptoms, their true cause lies in one's spiritual condition, in which his/her mind is attracting evil spirits like a magnet. Therefore, unless the possession is removed, the symptoms recur over and over again.

Mental illnesses such as depression and schizophrenia are also considered to be caused by possession. However, contemporary medicine is unable to explain the phenomenon of possession scientifically. Doctors can only search for a physical cause and they tend to treat possession as a problem related to some kind of malfunction of the brain. That is why if somebody says that they can see or hear spirits, and if they claim that some spirit is affecting them, they are treated as psychiatric patients. Many people are sent to psychiatric hospitals, but fundamentally, these hospitals are unable to cure people of spiritual possession. The only solution to cure the patients with mental illnesses is to remove the possessing evil spirits (Okawa, 2012d).

9) Happy Science Prayer Dealing with Possession and Illness

(1) The Evil-Spirit Exorcism Prayers of Happy Science

When one is possessed by evil spirits, the quickest way to solve the problem is through prayer. The "Prayer for Exorcising Evil Spirits" (available from Happy Science) is commonly used and often performed at home. When the condition is serious, a ceremonial prayer at a Shoja is performed, involving a specific ritual action called "El Cantare Fight." The logic of exorcism here is that when one recites the prayer, he/she is given assistances from El Cantare and guiding spirits which, together with the "El Cantare Fight" ritual, exerts the power to drive evil spirits away. There are other types of exorcising prayers but only a few which involve "El Cantare Fight."

However, it should be noted that possession is after all caused by one's tendency of thought. As flies come back no matter how hard you chase them away, the possessed person will keep attracting evil spirits unless the person changes his/her mind-set and attitude. Yet, a temporary removal of possession gives him/her a good chance to reflect and realize his/her mistakes and so can be a necessary, if intermediate, stage in recovery. When one is possessed, his/her negative thoughts are enhanced and it is extremely difficult to learn any lessons whatsoever. Therefore, in order ultimately to overcome possession, it is vital for one to make self-help efforts to improve habits of thought.

(2) Healing Prayers of Happy Science

The healing prayer that is regularly used by Happy Science believers is “Prayer for Recovery from Illness” (available from Happy Science), which features a ritual called “El Cantare Healing.” “El Cantare Healing” involves a specific action. It is believed that when a believer recites this prayer and performs the ritual, the healing light of El Cantare is sent down to heal illnesses. The power of faith is of course essential to this practice. If you have a believing heart, you will become one with El Cantare and light will begin to enter your heart. Faith is the power to overcome the laws of this world. It connects you to the higher dimensions, and as a result, you will be able to receive healing energy from those dimensions.

Recitation of “Prayer for Recovery from Illness” dispels evil spirits. This ritual can repel such spirits to improve the condition of the patients.

One concrete method is to chant next to the sick person. Another method is healing from a distance. This method heals even those who are several hundred miles away (Okawa, 2008d; Okawa 2012c).

Healing power will be multiplied if the sick person receives assistive energy, the strong energy of prayer from family and friends who share the same faith with the individual. The illnesses will heal themselves if other people also think, “I want him to be cured. He is most definitely a necessary and important person,” and if the person himself has some mission to be achieved and if he is cured, this occurrence of a miracle meets the conditions necessary for actual proof of the Truth (Okawa, 2011d).

(3) Anecdotal Case Studies

The following are cases in which healing prayers proved effective. Three case studies are introduced, each featuring an individual who experiences a recovery. In the first, an individual recovers from subarachnoid hemorrhage with the help of prayer. In the second, the individual recovers from a physical injury and brain damage. In the third, the individual is able to overcome schizophrenia.

Case 1: Recovery from Subarachnoid Hemorrhage (To be published in Happy Science Monthly, 2015)

Shinji Matsubara (Male, 54) works for Happy Science as a staff member of its regional headquarters in Minami-Kyushu, in the southern region of Japan. On the evening of May 27, 2014, he experienced disabling vertigo after taking a bath and lost consciousness. When the paramedics arrived, they found that his pupils were dilated. He was immediately transferred to a nearby hospital, where he was diagnosed as suffering from a subarachnoid hemorrhage. An operation was quickly started to insert a catheter into an artery of his thigh in order to close off a blood vessel in his brain and stop the bleeding. Although the operation was successfully done, a large clot of blood formed on his brain and he remained unconscious.

Members of his family as well as many Happy Science believers prayed wholeheartedly if privately for his recovery. Some of the believers participated in a prayer service held in the nearest Shoja and took part in ceremonial prayers such as “Super Strong Prayer for Recovery from Illness” and “Super Vega Healing.” After three weeks, during which time believers continued to offer prayers, Mr. Matsubara regained consciousness and learned that the clot in his brain had completely disappeared.

Even though he was in an unconscious state for three weeks, Shinji clearly remembered certain visions he had had in which his soul was in the other world leaving behind his

physical body on the hospital bed. He saw transparent shining images of his friends and family members appearing one after another in front of him to give him the energy of light. Mr Matsubara believes that those were images of the people who participated in the ceremonies and offered prayers for his recovery. Mr Matsubara indicated that the more light he received from those participants' prayers, the more he felt his spiritual body becoming energized and activated. At the same time, he sensed that his physical body in the hospital was also growing stronger. He explained that for the first time, he realized that it is the great power of love which allowed him to live again. Indeed, each and every one of us is spiritually connected through invisible strings to our divine-nature. He was so moved to learn how much he had been loved and supported by so many people. Before he came back to this world he made a strong resolution to achieve his mission on earth and spend his remaining life without any regret.

When Mr Matsubara emerged from a coma, he quickly regained his health after only a few months of rehabilitation. The attending physician who examined him was stunned to witness such a rapid recovery and with no adverse after-effects.

Case 2: Recovery from Brain Contusion and Skull Fracture (Happy Science, 2010)

In November 1, 2002, Toru Idera (Male, 18) fell off a skateboard and struck his forehead harshly against the concrete roadway. When Toru was found by the owner of the guest house where he was staying in Nishi-omote Island, Okinawa Prefecture, he was lying prostrate, unconscious, and covered in his own blood due to profuse bleeding. The owner immediately arranged Toru's transfer to the general hospital on Ishigaki Island by a helicopter of the Japan Coast Guard. During the transfer, Toru's pupils were found to be dilated and his heart occasionally stopped beating only to restart again.

When Toru's mother, Kunie, living in Fukuoka, received a phone call from the guest house owner informing her of Toru's accident, the worst-case scenario went through her mind. After she had reserved a seat on the earliest flight from Fukuoka to Ishigaki Island next day Kunie, a member of Happy Science, called up Yufuin Shoshin-kan, a Happy Science Temple, to request an emergency prayer service for her son. It was almost 11:00 pm in the evening when the prayer entitled "Prayer of Grand Victory" was conducted by a ceremonial priest in the Yufuin Shoshin-kan.

By the time Toru arrived at the general hospital, his condition was critical. A CT scan and MRI data showed that his frontal cortex was severely damaged. Doctors had to prepare for a craniotomy procedure because bleeding in the brain still continued. To their surprise, however, at 5 o'clock in the morning, six hours after the "Prayer of Grand Victory" had been performed at Yufuin Shoshin-kan, the bleeding in the brain suddenly stopped. Accordingly, the craniotomy procedure was canceled and doctors determined they would take a wait-and-see approach.

When Kikue arrived at the hospital, the doctor explained to her that her son's condition was serious, saying, "He is suffering from a brain contusion and skull fracture. From our experience, it will be very difficult for him to survive this level of brain damage and, even if he does, we must be prepared to expect that he will live in a vegetative state. Even in the best case scenario, it is hard for us to imagine, the doctor concluded, that your son could ever live an ordinary life again. Despite this prognosis, however, Kikue did not lose hope. She placed earphones in Toru's ears and played recorded lectures by Master Ryuho Okawa from a cassette player. She encouraged her comatose son, saying over and over again, "You will

absolutely be alright. A miracle will surely happen. I am very confident.” She applied for ceremonial prayers in many different Happy Science temples across Japan and continued to pray daily for her son’s recovery at the Yaeyama Temple on Ishigaki Island.

Then, three days after Toru’s accident, Kikue was praying at the Yaeyama Temple when she saw a vision of golden bubbles spreading outward. She interpreted this vision to mean that Toru’s brain cells were now being regenerated. Then, the next day when Toru’s father, Hisayuki, came to visit Toru in his room, Toru suddenly opened his eyes and turned his head to the right and left, looking around the room. Toru had regained consciousness.

On November 7, the seventh day following the accident, Toru got up from his bed, started walking around the room, and took his first shower in a week. The attending physician was shocked to witness Toru’s miraculous recovery from brain contusion and skull fracture without any surgical intervention. One month after the accident, Toru was permitted to leave the hospital and returned to Fukuoka. Later he visited a local university hospital in Fukuoka and underwent medical checkups to assess brain waves and motility function. The results indicated no abnormality, and Toru’s family was told there was no need to come back again. Kikue believed that the power of faith and prayer saved her son and thanked El Cantare for this miracle.

Case 3: Recovery from schizophrenia (Happy Science, 2010)

Misako Kugue (Female, 78) had been suffering from a schizophrenic disorder for many years. Twenty-five years earlier, something strange had happened to Misako. One day, she had suddenly started mumbling incomprehensibly. Even when her own daughter Sayuri had asked her what happened, Misako only continued her monologue as if she were talking to someone invisible.

Sayuri had no other option but to take her mother to the hospital, where Misako was diagnosed with schizophrenia and prescribed some medication. Misako heard voices in her head, a symptom known as auditory hallucination and typical of patients with schizophrenia. Misako’s condition sometimes improved only to worsen again, and she was repeatedly hospitalized and released. Medications did nothing to reduce her auditory hallucination; rather, the situation got progressively worse, and so a stronger medicine was prescribed. At that point, Misako passed her dues in a stupor because of the medication and finally became unable to talk.

Sayuri joined Happy Science in 1991 and from that time eagerly studied the teachings of El Cantare. She came to know that almost all schizophrenic syndromes were caused by possession by evil spirits. This information reminded her of how frequently her mother had participated in certain religious ceremonies in the past, visiting Okinawa to meet with shamans called “Yuta,” joining memorial services for ancestors, and travelling to numerous Buddhist temples across Japan. Sayuri grew convinced that during one of these visits, her mother had been possessed by evil spirits. She thought this might be the reason why Misako developed schizophrenia.

Sayuri encouraged Misako to join Happy Science and she agreed. Together, they recited the sutra, “The Dharma of the Right Mind,” and studied the teachings. Although Misako continued recitation of the sutra and her studies for a period of time, she soon gave up, indicating she saw no direct benefit from the practice. Her condition continued to wax and wane for the next ten years.

After Sayuri's husband passed away, Sayuri decided to take her mother into her home, believing that she would feel happier to be surrounded by her beloved granddaughters.

Misako continued to suffer from occasional auditory hallucinations even after moving into Sayuri's house. A few years thereafter, Misako suddenly stopped eating anything other than vegetables. She wasted away and became austere. Sayuri speculated that her mother might be possessed by a lost spirit who had previously undergone severe ascetic practices when living on earth.

When Sayuri consulted with a minister of her branch temple of Happy Science about her mother's condition, he advised her to participate in ceremonial prayer at the Shoja with her mother in attendance. "If you bring your mother with you, evil spirits will surely leave her. Why not use this as an opportunity to test the strength of your faith?" Inspired by the minister's words, Sayuri decided to cure her mother's disease through ceremonial prayer.

However, when she made up her mind to go to Shoja for the prayer, known as Kigan, her mother started to act out very violently against her and other family members. Misako kept up her monologues all day long, sometimes became very angry for no apparent reason, uttered a string of abusive words, then suddenly broke down in tears. Sayuri was obliged to send her mother to the hospital again. The doctor told Sayuri, "It is almost impossible to cure a patient who has suffered from auditory hallucination for more than twenty years."

Yet Sayuri never gave up. She obtained permission from the doctor to take her mother out temporarily and brought her to a Happy Science temple to attend a ceremony for "Prayer for Exorcising Evil Spirits." Though little change in her mother was evident, Saori continued to bring her to the temples a number of times each month.

At length, Sayuri consulted with a lecturer of a Shoja temple for advice. The lecturer encouraged her saying, "It is not a single evil spirit that has possessed your mother, but rather several different spirits are responsible. They are, one and all, possessing her. Nonetheless, if you patiently continue dispelling them by attending repeatedly to the Kigan prayer ceremony, the haunting evil spirits will surely leave, each and every one of them. Therefore, it will be a battle of patience, so to speak, against those possessing evil spirits."

Sayuri was again convinced by these words of encouragement and resolved never to give up no matter what.

Two months after her first trip to the Shoja temple, one of her friends advised her to try a prayer known as the "Prayer for Doubling Good Health"; her friend's reasoning was that you need to increase your physical power and get in shape first in order to defeat evil spirits. So, Sayuri took her mother to a nearby Shoja temple called Hakone Shoja, and attended a prayer ceremony for the Prayer for Doubling Good Health. Sayuri was surprised to see her mother Misako shedding tears when the ceremony priest started to recite the prayer script in front of the altar. When all the participants came out of the prayer hall Sayuri was astonished again to see her mother walking with her head held high and without her cane. When she asked Misako, "Where is your cane?" Misako answered, "Oh, I forgot it in the prayer hall." Misako had been unable to walk without a cane for many years.

A miraculous change had occurred in her mind as well. On the way back to the hospital, Misako repeatedly said to Sayuri and the driver giving them a ride, "It was wonderful to participate in this prayer ceremony today. I am so grateful to you all. Thank you very much."

A few weeks later, Sayuri took her mother again to the Hakone Shoja where they participated in a ceremony for the "Prayer for Exorcising Evil Spirits." When they left the prayer hall following the ceremony, Misako said to Sayuri, "I don't hear spirit voices

anymore! How wonderful to enjoy silence again! It feels so good.” Misako showed her smiling face to Sayuri.

From that day, Misako no longer suffered from any auditory hallucinations. After a time, Misako was told by her doctor that she could leave the hospital and return home. It had only been three months since they had first visited the Shoja temple for the prayer ceremony. Now, after 25 years, Misako’s schizophrenia was finally cured. After returning home, Misako was able to eat all foods and regained her previous weight. Her gloomy expression also lifted. Her face shines brightly now.

CONCLUSION

In addition to the physical and psychological views, the present article introduced the Happy Science doctrine and clarified the theoretical or theological base for prayer-based health intervention. In particular, the authors suggested that major factors to make prayer efficacious may be (1) strong faith, (2) a positive state of mind, (3) a commitment to self-help, (4) a wish that is worthy of approval by guiding spirits, and (5) a positive spiritual environment. Unfortunately, almost all hitherto published prayer trials not only revealed heterogeneity of trial procedure and prayee illness types treated, as discussed in the Introduction, but were also unlikely to respect these major factors determining prayer efficacy.

In contrast, we have just completed a randomized clinical trial which considers these major factors directly. In this study, approximately 400 Japanese outpatients were enrolled in order to investigate the effect on depressive symptoms of Happy Science distant intercessory prayers (DIP), specifically, “Prayer for Recovery from Illness” and “Prayer for Exorcising Evil Spirits”. In this DIP trial, the double-blinded design was utilized as a trial procedure and all of the enrolled patients suffered from only major depression, thereby substantially decreasing the heterogeneity of trial procedures and that of prayee illness types. More significantly, employing the double-blinded design meant that none of the enrolled patient-prayees (individuals who were the object of prayer) knew whether they were being prayed for or not. Nor were the prayees in any way apprised of the major factors that make for prayer efficacy. As shown in the above-mentioned anecdotal cases, however, even when prayees were unaware that they were being prayed for, prayee illnesses were surprisingly ameliorated or cured so long as the major factors to make prayer effective were satisfied at least on the part of individuals offering the prayers. Thus, our DIP trial results might be expected to confirm the statistically positive effects of prayer on depressive symptoms.

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