



MASTER MONOGRAPH

ROSICRUCIAN ORDER
AMORC



NEOPHYTE SECTION

Atrium 3 Nos. 1 - 3

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Published by the Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc.

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Third Atrium No. 1

CONCURRENCE



This Week's Consideration of a Famous Opinion

In the following excerpt, former Emperor Ralph M. Lewis clearly explains how magic is rooted in primitive thought and how this way of thinking did not disappear with the advent of our modern age. Many today still give some credence to the practice of magic which characterized the behavior of our remote ancestors.

Primitive reasoning is considered to be related to a society of a lower intellectual level. However, anthropologists and psychologists point out that primitive reasoning also persists among a vast number of people in our so-called sophisticated, advanced civilization. It is a contributing factor to superstition and ignorance. Incongruous as it may seem, a general education does not always eradicate the tendency toward primitive reasoning.

Man had early observed what to him seemed to be a conflict of natural phenomena. The forces of nature were often unleashed in gigantic struggles against each other. Seas lashed the shores and eroded the coast; lightning struck down great trees; the ground trembled and convulsed from earthquakes and belching volcanoes. Everything seemed to have an innate force or power. Behind all this must exist still greater powers as first causes. To the primitive mind these forces of nature appeared ruthless as they often took man's life. If man could but alienate these powers from himself, it would not only provide protection but endow him with a sense of superiority. It would remove the feeling of helplessness he had when confronted with the furies of nature.

Specifically then, magic is the belief that man can invoke supernatural forces to direct actual natural phenomena and imagined powers to do his bidding. The supernatural is conceived to be an underlying unifying spirit by which all things exist and have their individual powers. This unifying force is given many names. There are several distinctive ways in which it is thought the supernatural can be invoked. These are general categories which are related to primitive reasoning. In each category there are numerous rites, rituals, ceremonies, and methods varying with the different tribes and cultures. In the primitive reasoning of modern society, these same categories for invocation of magic powers still persist.

—RALPH MAXWELL LEWIS, 1904-1987
"Primitive Reasoning and Magic" • *Rosicrucian Digest*



322nd Day of the R.C.
Sun on the Path

*Under the Auspices of the Rose-Croix
Salutem Punctis Trianguli!*

Respected Member:

After studying the subjects of spirit energy in the First Atrium and the Vital Life Force in the Second Atrium, what remains for you in this Neophyte Section is to learn about the basic laws governing the actions of the Soul. I use the term *basic* merely to indicate that this subject will be studied in greater detail in an upcoming Temple degree. You will find that the Neophyte Section is but an introduction to those teachings you will be receiving in the future. Consequently, the knowledge you received in the last Atrium, like that you will receive in this one, will be developed in greater detail as you progress through the Rosicrucian studies. As you already know, this progress has a purpose because it corresponds to the gradual awakening taking place within you between each sanctum period. Therefore, be patient and live every moment of your affiliation with our Order to the fullest.

When examining a subject such as the Soul, it is difficult, if not impossible, not to talk about God and, consequently, religion. This is why the studies of the Third Atrium will begin with a general examination of the major religious currents that have marked human history and which still exist today in diverse forms. We have included this subject in our teachings because our Order, even though it is not religious in nature, has always been interested in the evolution of human consciousness, particularly its approach to the Divine. Moreover, I am convinced that such a topic, when viewed from a philosophical and mystical perspective, cannot help but

intrigue you. Of course, other subjects will also be brought to your attention during this third and final Atrium of the Neophyte Degrees.

You have now been studying Rosicrucian philosophy for nearly one year. With all my heart, I hope that this past year in our Order has brought new happiness into your life and that it has brought you a little closer to the God of your Heart.

With all best wishes for Peace Profound,

Sincerely and fraternally,

Christian Bernard

Christian Bernard

Imperator

NOTE: *The new symbol that appears in the lower corners of each page in this monograph traditionally denotes the Third Atrium of AMORC's Neophyte Section. Two triangles are included in this composite symbol. The one pointed downwards symbolizes spiritual perfection. The upward-pointing triangle represents material perfection. The three characters and the cross inside are mainly decorative. The sword between the triangles is the emblem of the battle a mystic must fight to defend truth and justice on both the material and spiritual planes. You will note that the sword is pointed upwards, that is, towards the source of cosmic inspiration.*

Dear Fratres and Sorores,

You will notice that the studies of the Third Atrium contain fewer experiments than the two preceding Atria. This is because the Third Atrium is concerned particularly with the Soul and the laws relating to its nature, attributes, and functions. Since this is essentially a spiritual subject, it is easy to understand why, at this point in your Rosicrucian studies, there will be fewer experiments. However, over the coming months you will want to return as often as possible to those experiments you received in the First and Second Atria. There are two reasons for this: first, most of these experiments form the basis of mystical practices you will be taught later—especially in the Temple degrees. Second, they will enable you to awaken certain faculties for helping you to master your life. Therefore, delve into them more deeply and practice them as often as circumstances permit in the weeks to come.

ORIGINS OF HUMANITY: Having made these preliminary remarks, we will now begin our study of the Third Atrium by thinking about how the concept of God arose in human consciousness. Such a study, of course, thrusts us back to the very beginnings of humanity and requires that we travel far back in time, to an era when humans had finally reached a state of self-conscious superiority to animals. Most anthropologists now consider humans to have appeared on Earth with *Homo erectus* (“man who walks erect”) about 500,000 years B.C., and that the more evolved human species appeared with *Homo sapiens* (“man who knows”), approximately 100,000 B.C. Among the best-known *Homo sapiens* are the Neanderthals, to whom the first cults of the dead have been attributed; the Cro-Magnons, known for their rock paintings; and *Homo sapiens sapiens* (“man who knows he knows”), considered the first specimen of a modern human. *Homo sapiens* is thought to have appeared around 30,000 years ago. In this monograph’s Practical Application you will find a table illustrating the family tree of humanity as defined by the majority of anthropologists.

Such information is valuable, but it is only concerned with the evolution of the human physical body taking place over many thousands of years. Yet such information is only approximate, especially the proposed dates for the appearance of each type of hominid. For example, some scientists believe that *Homo erectus* populated our planet



as much as a million years ago, while paleolithic peoples with Magdalenian-types of high culture have thus far been traced back to only 18,000 B.C.*

The discrepancies are even more evident when trying to identify the ancestor of *Homo erectus*—that is, the actual ancestor of humanity—because we then run into several currents of thought, including three main currents among scientists. One group believes that humans descended from *Homo habilis*, himself descended from a missing link as yet unidentified. A second group think humans descended from *Ramapithecus*, who is also the ancestor of the great apes (gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and gibbons), thus making these apes our distant cousins. A third group feel that *Homo erectus* is the result of a long chain reaching far back to the primitive lemurs, thus making humans direct descendant of the first apes. Countering these three major scientific trends is the position of the theologians who consider that humanity was created in the image of God and, as such, has always been humanity.

Archeologists are aware of the inadequacy of the existing framework of thought, and prehistorians have been seeking a new paradigm—a wholly new way of looking at the early world that would accommodate the growing number of contradictions to the present point of view espoused by many in today's scientific community.

From a mystical viewpoint, the evolution of human consciousness is of most interest to us. Even though we may think that this evolution is closely related to that which occurred in the human body, it is impossible to pinpoint in what era early peoples became conscious of the fact they were human, no more than we can define at what time in prehistory they had their first thoughts. From a philosophical standpoint, it is our opinion that the history of humans considerably surpasses the history of their bodies because it began at the instant their soul personalities were created in Divine Thought and then projected into the material world. Since that instant, human beings have evolved physically and spiritually according to Cosmic Laws established at the beginning of time. It should also be noted that what scholars teach us about human evolution concerns only recorded history—that is, what can be defined based



* In the 1980s, digs in Iran uncovered the presence of established upper paleolithic culture, perhaps the roots of the earliest Zoroastrianism or Aryan culture (10,000 + B.C.)

on anthropological and archival discoveries. There is no doubt, however, that when prehistoric civilizations were at their peak on some continents, other human races, infinitely more advanced—such as the Atlantean, Egyptian, and Sumerian—were present at other places on the globe. All mystical traditions agree on this fact.

Although we cannot pinpoint the exact moment in recorded history that early humans became capable of thinking, it is certain they had to confront numerous phenomena beyond their understanding and, consequently, their mastery. Of these phenomena, birth, death, and life itself were the first major enigmas they tried to solve, and we must admit that nothing has really changed today. But there were other mysteries just as intriguing to early humans: the force of the wind, the flowing of a river, the rising and setting of the sun, the unceasing renewal of vegetation, the movement of clouds, tides, lightning, etc., were for them daily occurrences that defied their intelligence at the time. When the forces of nature were unleashed, the human's admiration for them changed into fear. So it was that storms, earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, and many other life-threatening phenomena filled early humans with limitless terror and made them feel totally helpless.

Very early on, early human beings associated movement with the presence of a spirit. In other words, to their limited understanding, everything that moved did so of its own accord. To return to the examples cited earlier, the wind, rivers, sun, etc., were considered entities animated by a spirit which imbued them with movement, strength, heat, and all the other characteristics attributed to the elements of nature. Depending on the situation, these characteristics were judged to be good or bad, favorable or unfavorable. This is most important because our distant ancestors believed that all phenomena with which they were confronted were driven by the desire to either harm or help them. They assumed that when a volcano erupted, its spirit was showing its anger and punishing them for some wrongdoing. The same was thought when the sea roiled or the ground shook. Inversely, when a gentle breeze came to cool off the day's heat, it was seen as an act of mercy from the spirit of the wind. In like manner, when the sun reappeared after a violent storm, they thought that the spirit of the sun had conquered the spirit of the rain clouds.



Such ideas may seem rudimentary to us, and they are in fact, but they are bound to arise when the mental faculty is incapable of comprehending the phenomena to which it is subjected. Based on the principle that all things are inhabited by a spirit driven by the desire to harm or help them, people eventually conceived of practices to appease the anger of evil spirits and attract the help and support of good spirits. Thus were born archaic forms of magic and religion which, for thousands of years, contributed to the evolution of human consciousness.

PRIMITIVE MAGIC: Our early ancestors thought that magical practices would duplicate the effects that they themselves had experienced, or attract to them the virtues attributed to certain spirits. This fact has been clearly defined by anthropologists, who are of the opinion that primitive magic was based on two distinct practices that they called respectively *magic by similarity* and *magic by contact* or *contagion* (also called *sympathetic magic*).

According to the first law, early peoples thought they could provoke certain negative or positive effects by imitating their natural causes. For example, when a person wanted rain, he or she spent hours imitating rain by shaking a water-filled vessel perforated with tiny holes. When a person wanted an animal—or even an enemy—to die, he or she made a wooden effigy of the intended victim and pierced it in several places. Using such a likeness, early humans believed their victims would succumb to wounds corresponding to the punctures. Whether applied to animals or people, it is obvious that magic by similarity is completely ineffective and has no inherent power. In this respect, it is one of the superstitious beliefs that we discussed in the First Atrium.

Magic by contact was based on the principle that things once in contact with each other retain a relationship. It was thought possible, by using this law, to attract to oneself the qualities of the spirit which animated a living thing or being. We find the most current example of this practice among

certain peoples who, even today, wear necklaces made of the claws or teeth of wild animals. They believe that the spirit of the killed animal continues to live on in the teeth or claws and that such items transfer to them that particular animal's attributes. Thus, a necklace of lion's teeth is supposed to give the strength of a lion to its wearer.



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Similarly, a necklace fashioned from pieces of snake skin is supposed to confer the snake's power to conceal itself.

Magic by contact is as powerless as magic by similarity. The only effects it can possibly have are limited solely to those ascribed to it. However, vestiges of this primitive practice still remain today in the behavior of some of our contemporaries, particularly among people who wear good luck charms and amulets, believing that they actually contain a certain power or protection. Here again, it is only superstition.

Magical practices performed by primitive humans were usually accompanied by incantations, chants, and cries. They actually believed that spirits were unable to read their thoughts but could hear them. Such a belief led more intelligent people to invent magical formulas which, they felt, allowed them to contact these spirits and speak to them. Gradually, clans of primitive humans formed around an image, shaman, or sorcerer that was supposed to serve as an intermediary in communicating with invisible forces. Over time, these shamans and sorcerers used the powers ascribed to them to increase their authority and dominate their fellow tribesmen. Under the care of the other members of their tribe, some of them devoted themselves wholeheartedly to penetrating the mysteries of the unknown. Anthropologists believe that this was how primitive religions and the first priesthoods came into being.

We will continue this discussion in the next monograph and see how the first religious cults arose from the magical rites of primitive peoples. This will not surprise you because the intent of both religious cults and magical rites was to establish contact between human beings and the spirit world.

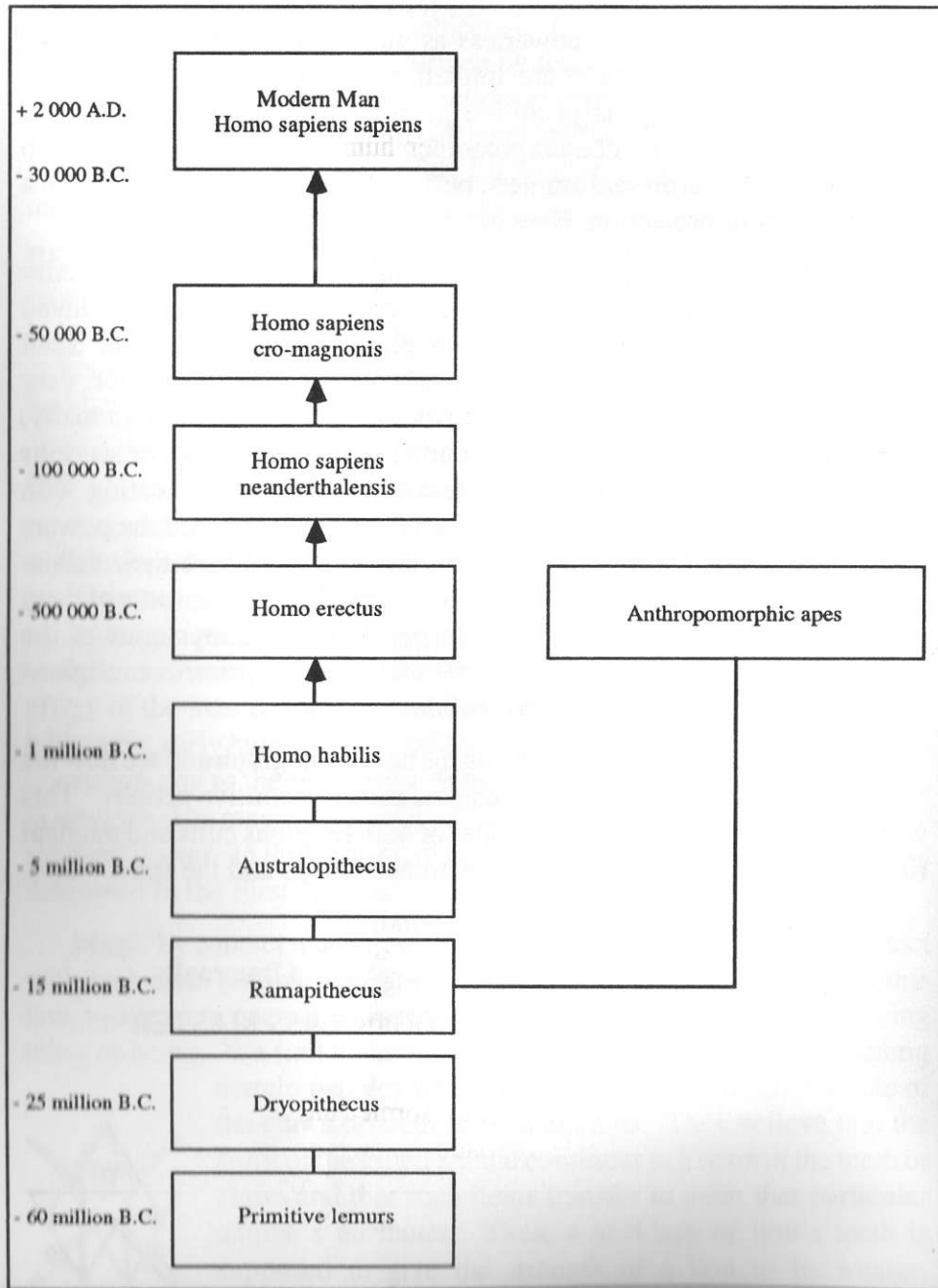
With all best wishes for Peace Profound,

Sincerely and fraternally,
YOUR CLASS MASTER



Practical Application

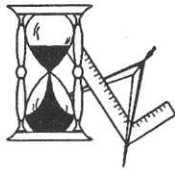
Whatsoever thou resolvest to do, do it quickly. Defer not till the evening what the morning may accomplish.—Unto Thee I Grant



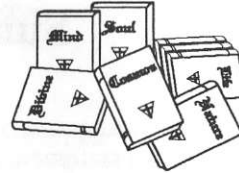
Summary of This Monograph

Below is a summary of the important principles of this monograph. It contains the essential statements which you should not forget. After you have carefully read the complete monograph, try to recall as many as you can of the important points you read. Then read this summary and see if you have forgotten any. Also refer to this summary during the ensuing week to refresh your memory.

- ¶ Most anthropologists now consider humans to have appeared on Earth with *Homo erectus*, about 500,000 B.C., and that the more evolved human species appeared with *Homo sapiens*, approximately 100,000 B.C.
- ¶ Not all scientists agree on the origins of humanity. A minority think that humans are direct descendants of the first apes. Others believe that humans come from Ramapithecus, who is also the ancestor of the great apes, thus making them our distant cousins. Yet others affirm that modern humans are descendents of *Homo habilis*, himself coming from a missing link, as yet unspecified.
- ¶ From a mystical viewpoint, the evolution of human consciousness is of most interest to us. It is impossible to pinpoint in what era early peoples became conscious of the fact they were human, no more than we can define at what time in prehistory they had their first thoughts.
- ¶ Very early on, early human beings associated movement with the presence of a spirit. In other words, to their limited understanding, everything that moved did so of its own accord.
- ¶ Our early ancestors thought that magical practices would duplicate the effects that they themselves had experienced, or attract to them the virtues ascribed to certain spirits.
- ¶ Primitive magic was based on two distinct practices: *magic by similarity* and *magic by contact*. It is quite obvious that these two forms of magic were completely ineffective and had no inherent power.
- ¶ Gradually, clans of primal humans formed around an image, shaman, or sorcerer that was supposed to act as an intermediary in communicating with invisible forces. Anthropologists believe that this was how primitive religions and the first priesthoods came into being.



Third Atrium No. 2



CONCURRENCE

This Week's Consideration of a Famous Opinion

This monograph explains how the earliest forms of religion sprang from primitive magic because the original purpose of both was to communicate with natural forces. Paul Radin, an authority on comparative religions, clearly illustrates how magic practices evolved into religious cults and how, during this evolution, the first priesthoods came into being.

To understand the beginnings of religion we must try to visualize as accurately as we can the conditions under which man lived at the dawn of civilization. Manifestly he lived in a variable and essentially inimical physical environment and possessed a most inadequate technological preparation for defending himself against this environment. His mentality was still overwhelmingly dominated by definitely animal characteristics, although the life-values themselves—the desire for success, for happiness, and for long life—were naturally already present. His methods of food production were of the simplest kind—the gathering of grubs and berries and the most elementary type of fishing and hunting. He had no fixed dwellings, living in caves or natural shelters. No economic security could have existed, and we cannot go far wrong in assuming that, where economic security does not exist, emotional insecurity and its correlates, the sense of powerlessness and the feeling of insignificance, are bound to develop.

—PAUL RADIN, 1883-1959

Primitive Religion—Its Nature and Origin

Dear Fratres and Sorores,

It is difficult, if not impossible, to say exactly when primitive forms of magic were transformed into the earliest forms of religion. They were both closely related for centuries and, in some countries, they still exist side by side. However, with the appearance of *monotheism*—that is, a belief in the existence of One God, Creator of all that is and Master of all natural phenomena—magic and religion started drifting apart. Previously, religious and magical practices had basically the same forms and goals. In other words, the purpose of both was either to appease the anger of the spirits or gods who were supposed to be the driving force behind all of nature, or to attract their protection and aid. From the moment humanity imagined that the spirit entities were but agents of a single Supreme Spirit—in other words, a Single Divinity—such knowledge gave new direction to their cults.

Theologians believe that religion finally superseded magic when the Divinity was assimilated into a God of Love or the Mother of God, motivated exclusively by positive qualities. Such a concept of the Divine meant God was now considered to be Goodness itself. The individual now sought the favor and love of God through prayer, thus leaving little room for magical practices whose purpose was to appease the ire of the spirits. At this point priests started to vehemently oppose magicians, accusing the latter of blasphemy. The magicians claimed to command God and God's invisible creatures, while the clergy believed that the individual can only ask for favors from God, never to demand that God fulfill them.

EARLY RELIGIONS: The earliest forms of religion, as we have just stated, had much in common with magic as it was practiced in the earliest ages of humanity. The first form of religion, called *animism* by anthropologists, was characterized by religio-magical practices by which our earliest ancestors attempted to subjugate the forces of nature. In other words, they performed rites aimed at bending the forces of nature to their will. This type of religion is perpetuated in shamanism, in which the male or female shaman—a combination of priest, magician, and sorcerer—tries to force spirits to obey his or her commands, using various means that include conjuring, chants, trances, etc.



The second major type of early religion, called *anthropomorphism*, embodied both polytheism and monotheism. In its purest form, it is no longer based on polytheism, the belief in a multiplicity of spirits in human likeness, but rather on monotheism, a belief in a single God, the Creator and Master of all nature, to whom were attributed human qualities and shortcomings. God was considered to be a Supreme Being who, exhibiting a dual temperament, was either good or bad, merciful or vengeful, peace-loving or violent, etc. Such a god was greatly feared as well as loved. Worshipers believed they could solicit God's mercy and elude God's wrath through cult sacrifices which originally included not only animal but also human sacrifices. However, no religion is purely monotheistic, that is, believing in a single deity, if it recognizes a superhuman rival to God. Orthodox worshipers who today accept the idea of Satan are not truly monotheistic in their beliefs.

A third major type of early religion, termed *mechanism* or *determinism*, involves a faith in which our ancestors felt connected to God by some kind of mechanical process beyond their control. Determinists were convinced that, regardless of what they thought, said, or did, they could not escape God's Will. This type of religion is not related to fatalism, which purports that every aspect of human existence is predetermined. In fatalism people are considered to be puppets, manipulated by the destiny God has prepared for them. It is noteworthy that mechanistic thinking has characterized human consciousness for many centuries and forms the basis of a system of philosophy even today.

On the other hand, monists are also considered to be determinists, that is, they believe that all that exists proceeds by the determination of the One Actuality—called God, Absolute, or Cosmic. Their "mechanism," however, is closer to the earliest formalized monotheism proclaimed by Akhnaton in the 14th century B.C. rather than to the widespread theistic conceptions of God still current today.



The three major forms of primitive religion coexisted for millennia, and there was no one specific epoch when people were exclusively animistic, anthropomorphic, or mechanistic. Most early cults contained a mix of these three tendencies and, depending on circumstances and needs at the time, subscribed more to one than to the others.

Prehistoric humans were driven by a need to understand the invisible forces around them which they could not see but whose existence they suspected. This is precisely why they created an infinite number of cults to contact, communicate, and converse with the source of these forces. In this respect, it is noteworthy that prayer is a practice that significantly antedates all existing religions, since it dates right back to our earliest ancestor's attempts to seek protection, help, and pardon from the God or gods of their faith.

CULT OF THE DEAD: Anthropologists are still unable to pinpoint exactly when in prehistory the cult of the dead appeared. As we pointed out in our previous monograph, most feel that it was during the time of Neanderthal man. However, others believe that Cro-Magnon man was the first to turn the cult of the dead into a true religious institution. Whatever the case, we can confirm that its appearance was a fundamental step in the history of religion. It gave proof that humans, no matter what their conception of God, felt there was something more than just the physical body. Their interest in the dead and the great care with which they prepared the bodies for burial formed the basis of a belief in an immortal human soul. In their primitive thinking, early humans began to conceive of an afterlife and inquire into its nature.

From this point in the dim past, primitive religions became increasingly interested in life after death because humans sought to understand what became of their soul, or spirit, after they died. How and in what form did it live in the great beyond? In this great beyond were there forests, fields, rivers, animals, and everything else that exists on this earth? Would they find husband, wife, children, friends, and enemies there? Would they still experience cold, hunger, thirst, fear?

As you may well imagine, this contemplation of the immortality of the soul, even in a rudimentary way, constituted a major awakening. We can even say that it was at the root of humanity's spiritual quest. Ultimately, communication with nature spirits became a minor pursuit, since humans were now more interested in contacting the souls of the dead. The certainty also gradually arose in their minds that they were creatures formed in the image of God, and a desire for deeper understanding became the foremost purpose of existence.



When analyzing today's great religions, we learn that most of them contain principles borrowed from the animistic, anthropomorphic, and mechanistic religions that are stages in the evolution of the concept of God. This is because human beings are at once causal and final by nature. In other words, since the dawn of conscious mind, we have always attempted to identify cause-and-effect relationships among the events in our daily life or the phenomena surrounding us. To accomplish this, we usually proceed from the known to the unknown. To put it another way, we try to explain what we cannot understand in terms of what we theorize as truth so as to transfer our knowledge of the known to our ignorance of the unknown. This innate tendency has driven humans from time immemorial to devote considerable effort to penetrating the mysteries of their own nature and trying to approach the God of our imagining. This tendency is still guiding our spiritual and scientific quests today.

The curiosity of modern persons is not much different from that of our earliest ancestors. The basic difference is that we presently have greater means at our disposal to reach and push back even further the limits of the unknown. The development of science has played a large role in this because it has explained and demystified many phenomena which formerly were attributed to supernatural forces. Yet the God our ancestors were striving to understand is the same one we ourselves are trying to understand and experience today. In other words, only our concepts of God have evolved over time. The majority of people no longer see God as an anthropomorphic being, driven by the same thoughts, emotions, and feelings typical of every human being. Many also no longer consider God as a supernatural force acting blindly and arbitrarily, but rather as a Universal Intelligence endowed with Absolute Consciousness. This process will continue, and it can be safely stated that the way in which most major modern religions define Divinity will certainly appear very archaic to future generations because of the continuing evolution of human consciousness.



Nobody can deny that a constantly growing number of individuals are aspiring towards a new definition of God because they are no longer satisfied with those espoused by their religion. We firmly believe that mysticism is currently the preferred means to realize this aspiration because, as it

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is based on truly traditional and initiatic principles, it is a synthesis of the best of what philosophy, spiritualistic science, and religion, in its noblest sense, have to offer in response to modern humanity's questions about God.

With all best wishes for Peace Profound,

Sincerely and fraternally,

YOUR CLASS MASTER

Practical Application

Whatsoever thou resolvest to do, do it quickly. Defer not till the evening what the morning may accomplish.—Unto Thee I Grant

We suggest you spend a few hours this week studying works devoted to primitive religions. Encyclopedias are particularly invaluable because they contain a summary of all the research conducted by anthropologists in this subject area. You will notice, however, that it is virtually impossible, even for specialists, to pinpoint exactly when magical practices spawned the first religious cults in prehistory. The same problem also arises when we try to determine when mysticism finally became distinct from religion.

From a Rosicrucian viewpoint, we consider the shift from primitive magic to religion, and then from religion to mysticism, to be a positive step in the evolution of our awareness of the Divine and the laws enabling them to manifest in the universe, nature, and humanity itself. We might then, naturally, ask ourselves this question: Will mysticism, in the relatively near future, be replaced by a new approach to God? We feel we can answer this question by saying that mysticism is probably the last phase of the process earthly humans can follow so as to gain a sound understanding of the Divine. As we explained at the end of this monograph, mysticism is a synthesis of the information that religion, philosophy, and science place at our disposal to explain the mysteries facing us on this earthly plane. It is thus a veritable Way of Knowledge.

We will have occasion to return to this subject before the end of this Atrium. However, during the coming days, we would ask that you reflect and meditate on it. This will serve as your inner preparation for the teachings we will be presenting you in this section. Such contemplation will then lead you to ask the following question: *What is mysticism?* Consequently you will then be able to answer this question that is essential for all Rosicrucians.

Summary of This Monograph

Below is a summary of the important principles of this monograph. It contains the essential statements which you should not forget. After you have carefully read the complete monograph, try to recall as many as you can of the important points you read. Then read this summary and see if you have forgotten any. Also refer to this summary during the ensuing week to refresh your memory.

- ¶ It is difficult, if not impossible, to say exactly when primitive forms of magic were transformed into the earliest forms of religion. They were both closely related for centuries and, in some countries, they still exist side by side.
- ¶ Theologians believe that religion finally superseded magic when the Divine was assimilated into a God of Love motivated exclusively by positive qualities.
- ¶ Animism, anthropomorphism, and mechanism are the three primitive religions that coexisted for millennia.
- ¶ The appearance of the cult of the dead was a fundamental step in the history of religion because it proved that humans, no matter what their conception of God, felt there was something more than just the physical body.
- ¶ Over time, primitive religions became increasingly interested in life after death because humans sought to understand what became of their soul, or spirit, after they died.
- ¶ Since the dawn of consciousness, humans have always attempted to identify cause-and-effect relationships among the events in their daily life or the phenomena surrounding them.
- ¶ The God our ancestors were striving to understand is the same one we ourselves are trying to understand and experience today. In other words, only the human concepts of God have evolved over time.
- ¶ Mysticism, when based on truly traditional and initiatic principles, is a synthesis of the best philosophy, spiritualistic science, and religion, in its noblest sense, have to offer in response to modern humanity's questions about God.



Third Atrium No. 3

CONCURRENCE

This Week's Consideration of a Famous Opinion



Below we give a definition of the word *God* that is found in the philosophical dictionary of Gerard Legrand. In reading this definition, you will find that the concept of the Divine has always intrigued the greatest thinkers, but few of them have been able to define God in a way accessible to ordinary people.

GOD: in Greek, theos, a word of unknown origin; in Latin, deus, akin to an Indo-European group designating "luminous day." Supreme and supernatural object of the thoughts, beliefs, and practices which constitute religion. The formation of the idea of God was attributed by certain religions to the primitive revelation of God's existence; by scientific critique, to the fear of man facing nature, to the nocturnal or dream-generated apparition of the souls of the dead, to the worship of the stars, notably the sun, or to natural phenomena as a whole.

For the Greeks, founders of philosophy, the gods or demons were everywhere. The locution of theos usually designates "a god" not named otherwise, a sort of individuality both supernatural and natural. This notion is not integrated especially in philosophy, but it entails those notions of a "sudden apparition" like a luminous aura, and of an evidence which calls for contemplation. A few Greeks professed to be atheists; some, more numerous, derided popular beliefs and proclaimed monotheism. But the piety of antiquity never was a faith in the modern sense. The annexation of philosophy by Christianity displaces the notion of god. From then on it is on a God both omnipotent and endowed with a complex dogmatism that one must decide. In the abstract, the proofs of God's existence are reclaimed from Hellenistic and Roman (Cicero) philosophy. God is Creator (Descartes), Providence (Leibnitz), in a manner more or less consistent with metaphysical teachings. The validity of this reasoning elicits a famous protestation from Pascal: "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers or of scholars."

Against traditional proofs, Kant raises a series of formal objections which no longer leave anything remaining but the sentiment of the sublime,

already outlined by Rousseau. But it is a disincarnate God who lacks any sublimity which Kantism bequeaths to pragmatism, while Hegel conceals under the mask of God the "thought of the Absolute." Feuerbach tries to reduce theology to an anthropology and Marxism renews materialistic atheism. Nietzsche declares that "God is dead" but adds that "His shadow continues to dominate Western culture." Other thinkers (August Comte, Durkheim) see in God only the "sublimation" of society. Psychoanalysis detects there a "projection" of parental solicitations, and perhaps of sexuality in its essence.

This historical review enables one to ask the question: How does the purely philosophical concept corresponding to the notion of God present itself today? One can always define it as the unique and supreme principle of all existence, of all causality, of all finality. But this definition entails only the position of the principle, not that of association of ideas which are ordinarily associated with it. God has become, through Christianity, an object of faith to which are attached the peculiarities of a moral person and not a pure articulation of thought. It is legitimate to annex to a sociological abstraction the God of religion. But it is also illegitimate to apply the name of God to the Being in itself, to the Absolute of metaphysicians who do not claim it, or who even positively reject it. Even transcendent, the Absolute does not need to be a person. To a philosopher-believer, God is part of religion first, then of his philosophy later: He does not prove himself.

—GERARD LEGRAN

Dear Fratres and Sorores,

The subject of religion is extremely complex, as it is linked directly to the evolution of human consciousness and to the efforts it has made during the millennia to know the Unknown—or rather, the Unknowable. Even today this subject arouses numerous controversies, and theologians often disagree when they try to define the religious beliefs which have marked the stages of human history. Such a state of affairs is to be expected, for these beliefs are above all the reflection of the emotions experienced when humans have tried to comprehend the Divinity they venerate, sometimes out of love, often out of fear. It is difficult to explain intellectually what these emotions may have been and even what they still are. Consequently, it is practically impossible to define all the religious dogmas in existence, as they are seemingly as numerous as the men and the women who, since the origin of thought, have elevated their hearts toward the God they were trying to know.

We will continue by considering only those religious currents which issued from the three great religious movements we studied in the previous monograph. Our definitions will be brief, because an exhaustive study of this subject would be inappropriate to our current work. However, if you wish to probe more deeply, you may want to conduct your own research by consulting some reference works. We must point out that, for the reasons just mentioned, these definitions must not be taken literally for, in the area of early religious thought, they can only be general. In other words, they constitute only an intellectual approach to the thoughts and emotions which the concept of God brought into being within our earliest ancestors—those thoughts and emotions being necessarily linked to the education, life experience, evolution, and beliefs unique to each person. This being said, the definitions presented below are practically accepted by a consensus of anthropologists and theologians. Therefore, we may consider these definitions to be accurate in their essence.

MAJOR RELIGIOUS CURRENTS:



Theism: Theistic conceptions consider the universe to be the work of a personal God behaving toward His creation as a father would toward his children. In other words, God is not apart from it and continuously watches over it. In

fact, most of the major current religions are theistic in essence. Judaism and Christianity, for example, preach that God acts as a father to the bulk of humanity.

Pantheism: Pantheistic religions consider God to be an impersonal Intelligence which is behind everything that was, is, and will be. Also, God the creative Intelligence is ever present and therefore not removed from all that is created. For pantheists, all things are the work of the Divine, and the Divine permeates everything. In that sense, the Divinity is as present in a blade of grass as in a human being. Further, the human body and soul are integral parts of the same cosmic actuality. In summary, it can be said that pantheism defines God as an omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent Cause which continues to work on both the visible and invisible planes.

Monotheism: Any monotheistic belief is based on a belief in the existence of a sole God, most frequently a personal one, creator of both visible and invisible worlds and of all that which is part of them. Depending on the monotheistic religion considered, the Divinity is or is not distinct from its creation. In recorded history, the first person to have founded and institutionalized this form of religion was Akhnaton, in the 14th century B.C., at a time when polytheism prevailed over the entire face of the Earth. Akhnaton made the sun the visible symbol of the unique God in whom he believed and who, according to him, lived in the body and soul of every human being.

Polytheism: Most historic religions of the major ancient civilizations were polytheistic—that is to say, they were based on a belief in several gods, each one having a role to play in a special realm of creation. A good example of this form of religion is Greek polytheism, which exhibited a whole pantheon of gods and goddesses. Polytheistic religions are almost always anthropomorphic in character, in that their deities are usually represented with a human body and human psychological traits. Two examples are Mars, the god of war; and Venus, the goddess of beauty. The earliest forms of polytheism were animistic, in that the spirits of nature were assimilated into gods.

Monism: Supporters of monism consider the visible universe to be a coherent and organized whole which can be reduced to a single invisible Principle, called God. In other



words, monists are convinced that the Deity, whom they deem personal or impersonal depending on individual cases, is the only actuality worthy of interest. From this standpoint they tend to take no interest in the material world, considering it to be only an objective illusion. Some of the great Oriental religions are strongly influenced by this concept of the Divine.

Dualism: The dualistic concept of existence promotes a belief in a benevolent God who is constantly opposed by a malevolent entity. As explained earlier, the first popularized religion which supported this principle of duality was the Zoroastrianism of Zarathustra, which have been perpetuated by the Parsi sect in India. The earliest forms of Zoroastrianism were Monist. The benevolent God of Zarathustra was designated by the name of *Ormuzd* or *Ahura Mazda*, Supreme Principle of light and goodness, while the Spirit of Evil was represented by *Ahriman*. Between these two influences a permanent conflict unfolded for the possession of human souls.

Pluralism: According to pluralistic religions, God is not a unique Principle, but a collectivity of principles, each having equal importance. In other words, pluralism does not consider that a single Cause created the universe, but rather several distinct causes which, when combined, gave birth to the world as we know it. According to this conception of existence, the soul, consciousness, and matter are three totally independent factors of equal influence which, when united, express God in totality.

Deism: Deists admit the existence of a sole God who, after having created the world, totally separated Self from it, leaving the world to its own devices. In other words, deists consider the manifested universe to be the work of a Deity who exists thereafter in a totally independent manner. That is why they are more interested in creation than in its Creator. According to this concept, humans are subject to the environment in which they evolve and to which they are forced to adapt themselves. This belief is akin to determinism, in that its supporters admit that all events are the result of a blind and arbitrary application of natural laws. From that standpoint, deism is the form of religious thinking which most surely reflects the mechanistic ideas mentioned in our previous monograph.



Such are the major currents of religious thinking found at present in the world. As can be seen, it is sometimes

difficult to grasp the nuances distinguishing them. Also, some of those major currents combine characteristics found in some of the others. We should also note that these ideas have evolved over a period of time and that various trends exist within each of them. For example, two major trends currently exist in deism, which are termed *materialistic* and *spiritualistic*. The adepts of the former consider God to be consistent with the definition given to deism in this monograph. The supporters of the latter believe that an anthropocentric Deity is in fact distinct from Its creation but that It is not independent of this creation. In other words, in spiritualistic deism, God is an Intelligence which, after having created the universe, parted from it while continuing to work through it by means of Divine laws.

It should also be kept in mind that the method of defining the characteristics of these major religious currents varies according to experts studying them. To take a simple example, most theologians consider Christianity to be a monotheistic religion, but a minority of them state that it is polytheistic in that, like Hinduism, it is based on a triple Deity manifesting as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Others still consider it to be a dualistic religion, for Christian doctrine speaks of a benevolent God opposed to a malevolent God symbolized—or more exactly, incarnated—by the Devil. Finally, some even go so far as to say that it is a monotheistic religion with anthropomorphic tendencies, for the anthropocentric Christian Deity is often assumed to be a superman having virtues which the best of human beings can never possess.

What we have just said about the Christian religion also applies to other major religious movements of our times. Some theologians, for instance, state that Judaism is a form of anthropotheistic monotheism, as the God of the Hebrews is venerated as a unique Father having the qualities and faults of humans.

Despite the complexity of this subject, we hope that this quick voyage through religious thinking has been of interest. You may wish to study this monograph again several times, for a single reading will be insufficient in helping you to understand and remember each of the definitions. You will want to be familiar with these definitions, in that they will help you to form a clear notion of the numerous religious concepts which presently exist. This study also constitutes a good preparation for the



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examination we will undertake in an upcoming Temple Degree of the major religions currently existing in the world, particularly Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. We will then see how each one is linked in essence and corresponds to the innate desire of all people: *Knowing the God of one's Heart, the God of one's Realization; and living in harmony with the laws of the Cosmic.*

The next monograph will be devoted to an examination of the materialistic and spiritualistic concept of human existence. This examination will lead to an interesting topic—that of the human soul—and to consider what mysticism teaches on that subject.

With all best wishes for Peace Profound,

Sincerely and fraternally,

YOUR CLASS MASTER



Practical Application

Whatsoever thou resolvest to do, do it quickly. Defer not till the evening what the morning may accomplish.—Unto Thee I Grant

Rosicrucians have always felt that each person's conception of God is a very private one and that it must not become the pretext for any discord with others. In this respect, if all those who believe in God behaved according to what is best in their religious beliefs, wars would no longer exist and peace would be an ideal experienced here on earth. Since this monograph is devoted to the study of major religious currents which have marked and still mark the comprehension each individual has of God, it would be worthwhile, at this stage of your Rosicrucian studies, for you to reflect on your own conception of God. Try to discover as simple a definition as possible, with the idea that you may be called upon to express it someday to another person.

While engaged in this exercise, try to discover to what extent your understanding of God has evolved over the years—especially during the time you have been a member of our Order. Also, if you wish, determine which religious current mentioned in this monograph best corresponds to your present beliefs. In other words, would you consider yourself to be a theist, pantheist, monotheist, etc.? You may find that pantheism best defines the beliefs of a Rosicrucian. But that definition is incomplete, for the Rosicrucian teachings are based on the certainty that the individual can experience a close communion with the Universal Intelligence. Consequently, can we say that we are, generally speaking, pantheistic mystics? What is your opinion?

Summary of This Monograph

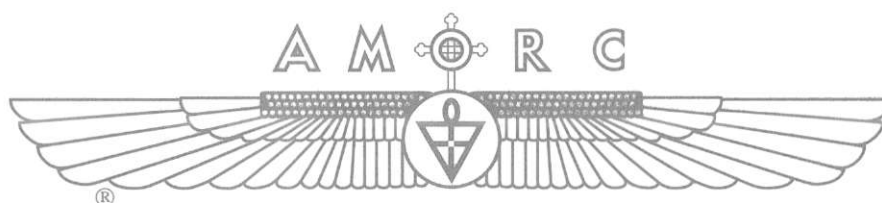
Below is a summary of the important principles of this monograph. It contains the essential statements which you should not forget. After you have carefully read the complete monograph, try to recall as many as you can of the important points you read. Then read this summary and see if you have forgotten any. Also refer to this summary during the ensuing week to refresh your memory.

- ¶ Religious beliefs which have marked the stages of human history are above all the reflection of the emotions experienced when humans have tried to comprehend the Divinity they venerate, sometimes out of love, often out of fear.
- ¶ Theism consider the universe to be the work of a personal God behaving toward His creation as does a father toward his children.
- ¶ Pantheism considers God to be an impersonal Intelligence which is behind everything that was, is, and will be. Also, God the creative Intelligence is ever present and therefore not removed from all that is created.
- ¶ Monotheism is based on a belief in the existence of a sole God, most frequently a personal one, creator of both visible and invisible worlds and of all that which is part of them.
- ¶ Polytheism is based on belief in several gods, each one having a role to play in a special realm of creation. Most of the gods and goddesses are anthropomorphic.
- ¶ Monism considers the visible universe to be a coherent and organized whole which can be reduced to a single invisible Principle, called God.
- ¶ Dualism promotes the belief in a benevolent God who is continuously opposed by a malevolent entity.
- ¶ Pluralism considers God to be not a unique Principle, but a collectivity of principles, each having equal importance in the manifested world.
- ¶ Deism admits the existence of a sole God who, after having created the world, totally separated Self from it, leaving the world to its own devices.
- ¶ Most religious currents expressed presently in the religions of the world combine characteristics found in some of the others.

MEMBERSHIP COUNSEL

We wish to remind you that this Third Atrium contains fewer experiments than the previous degrees. However, this should provide an excellent opportunity for you to review earlier exercises, by practicing them and noting all progress attained. We further suggest you maintain a notebook of your studies as an aid to learning.

*Consecrated to truth
and dedicated to every Rosicrucian*



Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc.
Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California, U.S.A.

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