

Science of Mind Magazine
submitted April, 2007
2,742 words + 59-word quotes

SPIRITUAL LAW, “THE SECRET”, AND YOU

“One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.”
—Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “In Memoriam”

“When Moses in Horeb struck the rock,
And water came forth out of the rock,
There were people who were annoyed with Moses
And said he should have used a fancier stick.”
—Howard Nemerov, “On Certain Wits”

The term “spiritual law” has a big, carillon peal to it, yet it’s really just a balancing assurance against spiritual randomness and unpredictability. Any reputable law should do that: guarantee a subsequent outcome that corresponds to whatever the input. Do this, that happens. Run a red light, and you get a ticket, or more accurately, you place yourself in position to be ticketed if you are seen by law-enforcers. In my city they are now installing traffic-light cameras to catch scofflaws. Some find this unsporting, as it closes the margin by which someone may get away with something. In exactly this respect, spiritual law diverges from the rules of society. With Spirit, sooner or later, you always get what’s coming to you, because it is yours “by right of consciousness.” There is no place to hide. Spirit has jurisdiction everywhere.

There is no consensus on how many spiritual laws there are, and what exactly they may be. The Campus Crusade for Christ offers four, Deepak Chopra seven, [kriya yoga](#) 12, and [weeklyhoroscope.com](#) 22, although many of those overlap, such as the Laws of Abundance and of Prosperity — with a little editing, they boil down to a dozen or so. In [The Science of Mind](#), our textbook, Ernest Holmes mentions several; most of the time when he speaks of the Law of Attraction he slyly adds, “and Repulsion,” because by the same principle as we gather so may we spill. Whenever we choose, that which we have chosen steps forward, while all those options not chosen recede. With all due respect to Holmes and the other teachers before and since, it is not overly simplistic to say there is one Law, and an infinite number of elaborations, variations and to-do list items that issue from it. That one Law is this: consciousness assumes form for a while, then returns whence it came. We may observe consciousness taking form (as effect), and tinker with it how it does so (as a cause producing that effect). We cannot prevent consciousness from “enforming” itself, neither could we compel it to, if it weren’t already so inclined. The latest results of our tinkering on the side of cause may then be

chronicled in the newest self-help book as freshly-unearthed shortcuts to the effects everybody seems to want. Old, venerable tinkering results were long ago accumulated as sacred scripture. One never creates, said Ernest Holmes, but discovers and uses.

While human laws don't possess much capacity for reward or positive reinforcement, being instead directed toward maintaining order, spiritual law spends as much of its cosmic time handing out presents as summonses, since to it order is immutable, and need not be defended. Spiritually, there are no actual punishments or rewards, only consequences, and a consequence can shift category from apparent punishment to real reward depending on the light in which it is seen. For instance, while not getting what we prayed for could deter us from future use of prayer, at least until the next time we'd exhausted our material options, it can instead pull us into a deeper exploration of who we really are and what we really prefer, so that we see that if it had delivered the goods the first go-round, we would have been settling for a reality less complete and satisfying than that which ultimately arrived..

But doesn't the very admission that prayer may not always seem to work drag us into the argument of are we using a real law here or not, and if so what about that immutable and automatic nature it's supposed to have? In an earlier article I came up with four reasons why "treatment" (affirmative prayer) sometimes seems to not be successful. Notice that all four have nothing to do with the process, and everything to do with the person. The first was that, "what we thought we wanted isn't it at all," meaning that our thoughts are going one direction and our feelings another. Thus we are giving spiritual law mixed signals. Next it was that, "we changed our minds along the way, redirecting the creative process." This is similar to the first, though here thought and feeling are united; they've just suddenly veered off together in a new direction. The third reason was, "what we've treated about did in fact show up," and we've overlooked it, because it arrived naturally without fanfare. The final reason was that "what we've treated about is now showing up," so our task has become patience and perseverance.

Watching the highly popular documentary film, "The Secret," one of first things to strike me was how the obtaining of a new automobile was brought up repeatedly by the speakers as a symbol of life's goodness and an example of the efficacy of spiritual law. You can have that car, each in turn enthused to the viewer, the car of your dreams. You ought to have it; because it's there for you and you deserve it because the universe wants you to be happy. Just picture yourself behind the wheel, breathing in that new car smell, with the top down and the wind in your hair. Without fail, your perfect car will find you.

I understand why they chose cars to make their point, just as why there was also mention of using spiritual law to manifest a parking place, as a way of working up to using it for an actual car. A car, or place to put one, is a tangible outcome. You can see it, and show it off to others. It's not like, say, inner peace, which is completely subjective and intangible, and a more advanced assignment. Speaking of assignments, the first Science of Mind course I took, in the fall of 1976, actually gave us the homework to go out and manifest convenient parking spaces! I have spoken of this to some and now feel vindicated by "The Secret": I was not making this up. The exercise was intended to build our faith that the material world could be manipulated to our advantage by the use of spiritual law, starting small and with something that is usually taken for granted or written off as coincidental, so that we would learn to stay alert and ascribe things to law

rather than coincidence, because there really isn't any, just "God acting anonymously." Nor was the exercise seen as too self-serving, because in a limitless universe there have to logically be enough parking spaces for everybody.

Anyway, we went from conjuring up parking spaces to hitting a string of green lights to new cars and then new houses to wrap around them, as well as mates to install in those houses, and careers to go off to each day, and so on. Each new demonstration of spiritual law in the form of people, places, and especially things, was applauded by the class, while those who had a little difficulty manifesting right and left were clucked at sympathetically and thought of as "stuck." As I look back, I could think this was just so Seventies, if I didn't see the same superficiality in some of the ways we communicate spiritual themes today. It can be scary to go deeply into the self and its Self, to court and then arrive face-to-face, as it were, in true communion with our Source. It can be scary and it is vitally necessary, and it is the thing we long for with all our hearts, and that will endure when the demonstrated temporal and material things have gone to dust.

Nevertheless, I'm sure they highlighted practical, financial gain throughout "The Secret" because the attention span of the average Western consumer has been characterized as gnat-like, and so trigger phrases like "new car" and "great wealth" stand the best chance of holding the viewer's gaze to the screen long enough to make a few of the greater points, such as disseminating the idea that we each shape our own destiny by the management of our thoughts and feelings, which together comprise beliefs. There may be places a car can't take us, but the principle by which it and everything else took form certainly can.

Hand off the suggestion of direct access to the power of creation to somebody and you have changed a life, just as mine was changed when I first heard this expressed, even if I didn't believe it all right away. I never could quite shake it off. Blaming others and the world started to feel a little silly; looking outward for my good began to seem fruitless. So there were some sacrifices of sorts, such as letting go of how I believed the rest of the world should show up for me and bend to my will. But never again would I have to feel utterly without recourse, or hope. Better than any angel in my pocket was a crisp and automatic law at my disposal. As I used this law, I shared about it too, because it's one secret that ought not be kept. Implanting in one another the awareness that, "There is a Power for good in the Universe greater than we are, and we can use It," and that at the same time this Power using us — as focal points of Its intelligence, or ways It shines through into the human condition, or experiences It is having of Itself through us, or however we prefer to style it — we may be certain that at some point this awareness will come in handy, be a real lifesaver, or even lead the individual into complete transformation.

Teachings such as ours take the position that spiritual law — such as the Law of Attraction that forms the showpiece of "The Secret" — runs smoothly day and night, age after age. The person using that law, however, does so in an entirely subjective way, which can make it look like the law itself has seized up in mid-delivery. But if the electricity in your home blinks out, let's say, the last thing you're likely to think, because it's ridiculous, is that the principle of electricity has universally ceased to operate. Rather, you will understand that somewhere along the chain of its delivery to you a link has weakened, and by tracing back its path that link can be found and remedied. We never

doubt the consistent existence of electricity because it's well documented, plus we get a bill for it every month.

Spiritual law can be a harder sell. But in essence it's comparable to principles of electricity, gravity, polarity, harmonics, and so forth, which is why the ancients used such physical and organic laws as they knew about to allegorically discuss and teach spiritual law. Way back when, they didn't often come right out and announce about spiritual law for reasons of safety, freedom of religion and especially freedom of speech about religion being fairly recent innovations. This allows "The Secret" its motif of secrecy-finally-exposed, as the film informs us that throughout history powerful forces have deliberately withheld the knowledge of spiritual law from the common masses. Meanwhile darting, borderline subliminal, candlelit Inquisitorial scenes frame these opinions in suitably creepy atmosphere. Graphics and titles reminiscent of "National Treasure" convey the impression that filmmakers and viewers are joining hands in a perilous and critically important undertaking, on a quest to reclaim a lost inheritance, symbolically anyway...in the form of that new car or perhaps home.

Now, I have no doubt that the principles that make up the thrust of the modern human potential movement were suppressed in earlier times, and remain under wraps in parts of the world. Just the fact that what a school of Greek philosophers stumbled onto 2,500 years ago, and which was explored in India much earlier than that, today travels under the name of "New" Thought, indicates a long and probably forced absence from the front of the collective mind. There's ample evidence that the Hermetic laws (of which the Law of Attraction is a contemporary derivative) and the whole philosophy surrounding them burrowed deeply underground in the West sometime between the Fall of Rome and when the library at Alexandria burned for the last time. There's also plenty of evidence that certain intrepid souls were always able to find that underground stream of consciousness, bring up bits of its wisdom, and pass them around, disguised in alchemical or astrological attire, or enlaced in the designs of the Tarot deck, for instance. Maybe those souls shouldn't have had to be all that intrepid, but one contention put forth by esoteric schools of all ages has been that the digging for the truth as an initiatory practice — and the overcoming of opposition, particularly the interior kind — builds a depth of character crucial for wisely wielding the power that truth imparts.

Of course, personal growth, paced achievement, and steady character development have always been unpopular pastimes among devotees of immediate gratification, as well as those whose livelihood was to provide the gratifying. New Thought and "The Secret" do both assert that everybody is entitled, no holds barred, to everything, as long as what one desires doesn't bring harm, or belong to, anybody else. But a closer examination of how spiritual law actually works in anyone's life reveals that while what we are entitled to may be everything, what we wind up with is what we have prepared and conditioned ourselves to receive, in thought but especially in our emotional realm. We must meet our good halfway, by becoming that which we desire to manifest. So when "love comes to town," we either accept and embrace that love by having become lovely ourselves, or it is absolutely invisible to us. Prosperity is all around us, in the form of creative ideas — are we ready to listen to them, to work with them, to boldly act on them? If so, what we achieve is magic...not sleight of hand, mind you, but real magic.

"The Secret" line of merchandise has met with some criticism for being too

ecumenical and allowing God (or as it more usually refers to deity, “the Universe”) to be all things to all people, without a rock-solid doctrine that separates us into the blessed or the damned. It has been questioned for directing its enthusiastic coaching and urging banter into an insatiable marketplace where most people have pretty much everything they want, and too much of it at that, with a “then let them eat cake” sort of arrogance dismissive of everybody else. It has been challenged for offering a panacea (“just be happy!”) that does not take into account the varieties of mental states among people, that may render such blithe happiness unattainable without psychological help or medication. Yes, “The Secret” is a conversation starter, that’s for sure. Whole conferences are being organized to debate its premises and promises. It has already affected millions, and millions more will no doubt come to it in due time, just as it took me years to pick up on Harry Potter.

Early in my ministry, a student said about Religious Science: “This is hard.” I thought he meant I was being unclear in my teaching of it, and reached for words to simplify and summarize. “No,” he said, “That’s not it. I get what you’re teaching. I mean really living it is hard because it takes everything I’ve got.” As those future millions join the present ones in their fascination with “The Secret” and the next body of work that will say the same things, and then the one after that, I would offer this. Living “The Secret” will surely take all you’ve got. Then it will give it all back to you, but turned inside out.

You and I may think we are merely using spiritual law to land a car or a house or a spouse, but the joke’s on us. As soon as we even allow for the possibility of spiritual law, and first dabble in or tinker with the forces that shape creation, we are swept up into a journey of profound self-discovery from which we never turn back. We get what we went after, because the attaining of specific goals is not the hard part, it is by far the easiest. We are just no longer who we were when we went after things. Acknowledging — and thereby evoking — the One, we are reborn.

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