

REVIEW: The Casting of Spells: Creating a Magickal Life Through the Words of True Will by Christopher Penczak

Magic is a way of using unknown occult forces - forces that you cannot understand - to cause events to happen or to happen in the way you demand. Magic involves spells which are attempts to program how things will happen. Instead of leaving things to chance, you play God and take control.

Magic workers seem like they are crudely superstitious but some actually are quite smart. One of the best books on the subject is the following which we are reviewing.

The book is called *The Casting of Spells: Creating a Magickal Life Through the Words of True Will*. Prolific author Christopher Penczak identifies as a Witch. He is the founder of the Temple of Witchcraft tradition and system of magickal training based upon the material of his books and classes.

Let us choose the best lines from the book and consider them.

QUOTATION: Will with a small “w” can also be equated with want or desire, or even need on a personal level. It is originating from the human self, the personality or ego, or from base functions of the body. It is neither good nor bad by itself. We have desires, and magick is a path of fulfilling desires.

Hopefully with good magick, this desire leads us to Will with a capital “W,” the desire of our Soul, or Higher Self. Crowley was known to call it either your Holy Guardian Angel, as it is the part of you that is most like an angel, or the Bornless One, the part of you that is never born into the world and thereby never dies. It exists eternally outside of space and time, ever wise and guiding those who will let it and listen. In my own tradition, we call it the Watcher...

COMMENT: It says the will is not good or bad by itself but what if you think it can be used for good or bad? Then it follows it is just a faculty and is not about morality. It is like how a stick is not for hitting the cow but can be used for it. Clearly, this set up means that our will and body are just there and there is no purpose but what we make for them. This is fundamentally what atheism is all about!

The idea of Will or the true will – living up to what you are truly about – is linked to self-development and self-improvement. For many this will be about becoming a more virtuous person.

There is a contradiction in saying the will is not about good or bad or how you use it and then to talk about the true Will. The Will is really what many mean by God. They mistake it for God. It shows God is an extra and not needed. God is inherently about self-oppression and this bears fruit in you becoming part of a religion so that you can get others to oppress themselves too. Your children are the most obvious casualties.

QUOTATION: Magick done for the highest will is continually pointing you to your True Will, your soul’s purpose. It is sacred and holy. Magick done without this intention, this essential element, is hit or miss at best in terms of evolution on a spiritual level. True Will has correspondences in other traditions as well. In Christianity, it’s the real secret behind the phrase, “Thy Will be done.” Magicians rile at that phrase, feeling it is sacrificing the will/Will to a distant creator’s will, but in essence it means the part of you that is like God that is the will to be done, not the personal or flawed self’s will.

COMMENT: Thy will be done is indeed about giving in to the will of the creator. He confuses “Thy Will be done” with, “My Will be done.” His logic only makes sense if he is pantheistic - pantheists think God and us and all things are one are ultimately the one entity.

QUOTATION: If you do magick from an ethical win-win posture, it will lead you to your True Will, whether you know it or not.

COMMENT: Empirically false. Very spiritual people and magicians are no better than anybody else and do harm just as much as anybody. There will be times your spells and prayers seem only to be followed by you becoming a worse person.

Aleister Crowley said that magic was a science. That takes us to the next point.

QUOTATION: She [Dion Fortune] said, “Magick is the art of causing changes in consciousness in conformity with Will.” She left out the science, used far fewer capitals and most importantly added the words “in consciousness” to the definition. The importance of that part is to realize that to really be effective in magick, you must change something within your own self, your own consciousness, before you can ever change it outside of yourself. The change must come from within.

COMMENT: Gives a full proof excuse for believing magic works even when there are no results. The spellcaster is victimised by being blamed.

The implication is that prayer is bad for prayer is about not changing but asking God to help you change.

QUOTATION: The difficult part about it is that a good magickal teacher will tell you that if you cannot already feel the results of the spell before you begin, you will have a hard time having success. If you want to cast a love spell, you must feel love already in yourself. If you want to cast a good-fortune spell, you must feel lucky or successful when you do.

COMMENT: This is a recipe for disappointment. People who pray get relief by feeling the good results of the prayer before they even happen. A parent feels her baby will get better and he does not. Is that what we want to encourage? And it will surely lead her to get careless with the things that really need to be done?

QUOTATION: Ritual techniques can put you in a space of possibilities and connect you to the very thing you wish to create, thereby creating a change, even momentarily, in consciousness. If you can create your magick from that moment of change, you will be an effective magician.

COMMENT: Again you are to feel connected to what your spell is expected to do as if it has succeeded already though it has not.

QUOTATION: You must have an intention, a desire, and an outcome in mind before you can cast a spell. I had a healing teacher who said intention is the seed of all development, and intention rules everything. Your intention is the most important thing, as it's the impetus of all that follows in your life. It overrules everything else. While I agree with the sentiment, there is one thing more important than intention – clear intention.

COMMENT: Intention leaves too much scope for interpretation. Vague spells and prayers will seem to work even if they do not and even if things are worse. You get blinded or your vision gets blurred.

Clear intention is a recipe for disastrous disappointment.

The notion that intention comes first suggests that it is the prime mover not the prayers or spells that it gives rise to. This amounts to you praying for x and x getting better and you thinking your intention saved that person. It turns intention into the real God or the real magic. It turns you into a god. No wonder people like prayers and charms – its crafty self-adulation.

QUOTATION: Whenever doing any spellcraft, I find an important question to answer to clarify my intention is, "How will my life be different when this spell succeeds?" How will it tangibly and quantifiably be different? Imagine going through your next day as if the spell were a total success. From getting up in the morning to going to bed, what would you be doing differently? Where would you be? How would you feel? Is there any noticeable difference? If the answer is "no," or "I don't know," your intention is probably not very clear and you need to refine it before you do any spell crafting.

COMMENT: People who pray may do that too. You do not have a crystal ball so how can you be sure that say winning a million dollars will really improve your life? All that makes you more self-centred and materialistic and stupid than before.

QUOTATION: It is hard to do magick for someone else. We usually don't want things sufficiently for other people in the way we do for ourselves.

COMMENT: Prayers and magic for others then because you have to bring your real self to them mean in essence, "Heal x but heal me more if I get sick." A prayer or spell like that is really asking for another to be helped enough to make you look good but not too much. It is love with a BUT. It is asking not for the best good for another but for good to come on them tinged with evil. Evil is in your heart.

If we prioritise ourselves then who can be expected to believe us when we act altruistic? Altruism can seem to happen but is it not best seen as misdirected selfishness? The person who blows himself up to save his friends has no time to think clearly so his action though seeming selfless should be seen as misdirected selfishness. Its a "mistake".

QUOTATION: Prayers are done in supplication, often with a sense of unworthiness. Some pray as if they are begging. When you enter into a relationship feeling unworthy and having to beg, your spell is generated with that energy. People who do such prayer often bargain with the divine. I'll give up something if you give me this. Or I'll take on something harmful if you take it away from a loved one. How often has a parent asked to take on a child's illness instead of simply praying for the cure alone?

COMMENT: Good! If prayers and spells have some results then bargaining and wanting to take something bad on yourself

to spare another makes them dangerous for you and those who have to look after you.

QUOTATION: It is said by magickal practitioners that the magick always takes the road of least resistance. So while your intention is most important, make sure you say what you mean and mean what you say.

COMMENT: So praying or casting a spell for you to pay your bill could mean killing Auntie Jane with a heart attack so that you inherit.

The reality is that naturally praying or casting a spell for something means by default asking for the path of least resistance.

QUOTATION: I have a friend who ends all her spells with, "I ask for this or something better for my highest good." None of her spells work, showing a certain disconnect between her true purpose and her conscious mind, but she always gets something great within the month.

COMMENT: Does this author believe in casting well-intentioned spells and praying? Her great things cannot happen every month. She has to take a month in which she dies.

QUOTATION: I myself have no problem with "cursing" a murderer or rapist to be caught or a liar to be exposed. I'm not cursing them to be hit by a train or die of cancer, but intend for the natural mechanisms of justice in our society to get their chance to protect my community.

COMMENT: Nobody gets justice but law. It is luck not justice if things work in your favour. Karma says that dying of cancer is a natural mechanism of justice. Even if it is random it has to be okay to wish that it would strike a rapist for what is the alternative: wishing it might or will (there is a difference!) happen to an innocent person?

QUOTATION: Practitioners argue that whatever you do, you spiritually open yourself to experiences under similar circumstances. Feri elder Victor Anderson said you must be "free of the sin" that you wish to punish someone for committing. Otherwise, you open yourself up to the same fate. So such magick should not be done lightly or without thought to the consequence.

COMMENT: This attempts to explain why spells intended to do harm will come back on you. It seems Jesus said something similar about prayer for he warned what you would do to others will be done to you. It follows that if prayer is the most important thing that any abuse of it will bring terrible results on you. You would be safer committing murder.

APPENDIX: Occultists have been known to sacrifice animals. Many groups practice this and lie about it. Most occultists say that sex magic is a good replacement for sacrifice. The occult that orgasm can substitute in magical ritual for an animal sacrifice is ludicrous. An animal fighting for its life is giving into the strongest instinct of all which is survival not sex. Sex energy cannot compare to that. And surely the fact that they are still saying animal sacrifice is effective should raise serious alarm bells? They cannot be serious so we can blame occultism as a whole for animal sacrifice even if they disapprove.