

**"STANDIN' IN THE NEED OF PRAYER"**

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Remember that in early Christian times, to write a letter you'd buy from the stationer a standard-length scroll, then either fill the whole scroll (which seems to have determined the length of some pieces in the NT) or cut off & save what you didn't use? That's what happened to #2483, my notes in response to your request for help toward your article on prayer in a secular magazine. The length was determined by 29¢, ie my determination to stay within 1 oz., which is five sheets (so my Thinksheet-letter was  $9\frac{1}{2}$  pp. +  $\frac{1}{2}$  p. for address).

But I was frustrated, even ashamed! I don't know that I said the most important thing I have to say about prayer. I don't even know if I can say it, but I'll continue to try for a couple more pages. And throw in a few more names-&-places.

1 An AP release appearing in today's newspapers is headed **God passes greed in survey of U.S. values** (good health being next, then a happy marriage, & [at the bottom of the list, only 2% of respondents] a well-paying job. Either we're facing a major cultural shift away from materialism-consumerism-positivism, or America's God-primacy is stable through the decades & surveys have not asked the comparative question. Some of both, I suspect. But since this survey is just now in the public eye, your article might piggyback on it (through Roof or McKinney or....).

Yes, there can be a gap between objectively considering God one's highest value (in the intellectual mode) & prayer (in the actional mode, the action of practicing the Presence of God). But the gap should not be given too much weight: there's a dynamic correlation between what we think & how we behave, & not to live that correlation takes more attention & energy than to live it.

2 **Theological education** tends to be stuck in yesterday or infatuated with today, either being easier than to prepare clergy & laity for the so-little-knowable tomorrow. In America it's not in quite so bad shape as one would gather from reading the Dec/90 ATLANTIC's "The Hands That Would Shape Our Souls." Writer Paul Wilkes is criticizing seminaries not from below, cynically, but from above, hopefully: seminaries are failing to do what they should, viz "help us to find that voice deep within us which is not our own, but calls us to do what is right" (88). Not that he thinks seminary leaders unaware of the situation: they "see a moral vacuum and numbing secularism in American society," & "feel shame" that they have "squandered a [spiritual] legacy" (59)...Wilkes describes spirituality at Jewish Theol. Sem. under Ab. Heschel's influence as "coming closer to God." But now, he says, in the mainline seminaries--Jewish, Catholic, Protestant--it's been reduced to human services. That split is antibiblical. In biblical spirituality, you cannot get closer to God except by getting closer to humanity, & drawing closer to humanity will surprise you with the discovery that you are closer to God. I have looked into the eyes of Ab. Heschel (& some other biblical saints) while speaking about human needs, & I have seen the impossibility of being honest to Scripture while splitting spirituality off from human services or romantically describing human services without God as spiritual.

But it's demonically, tragically true that one can flee this spirituality wholeness into mysticism or biblicism or liberationism. My point, for your article, is that biblical prayer is a corrective to these & other fragmentations. The Bible is often quoted in favor of some fragment that's pretending to be the whole, some part that doesn't know it's not the whole. The fact is, people often do (unbiblically) start with God & not make it to the world, or vice versa. It's specifically the Bible that calls either program pathological. (Hinduism & its offshoots, except where influenced by Christianity, teaches that having made it to God, one shouldn't even try to make it back to the world. And the American Humanist Association preaches that we should begin with the world & not even try to make it to "God.")

Where are the seminaries here? Some try to keep the biblical balance (one being, of course, N.Y.Theol.Sem.). On the right, some are dug into biblicism. A few of the some 200 U.S. seminaries are mainly into mysticism. And some are into liberationism. (As to the last, Wilkes mentions a course in "Genealogy of Race, Sex, Class Oppression." I taught an STM course in "Race, Sex, & Class in the OT," the

students including Orthodox, Conservative, & Reform rabbis as well as Catholic & Protestant clergy: I believe in consciousness-raising, but *within the sphere of the biblical vision*. But is the biblical vision clear & broad enough to embrace such a wide range of students? Yes, for the huge difference between Jewish & Christian theology is still small in comparison with the difference between either & any other way of seeing, & living in, the world.)

3 Prayer is the heart of **spiritual formation**, to which Catholic seminaries have given more attention than have Protestant. Now, many Protestant seminaries have professors of spirituality (eg, Western, Portland, OR: Francis E. Whiting, 11005 S.W. Summerfield Dr. #10, Tigard, OR, 97224.3540, phone 503.620.0589--data on him because he & I have been spiritual partners for 56 years). Francis rejoices that, though his doctorate is in pastoral psychology, spirituality in many Protestant seminaries where it was captive to psychology is no longer so. When I mentioned your project, these books popped into his head: Wm. Johnston, **BEING IN LOVE: THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER** (H&R/90); "of course" Friedrich Heiler's classic **PRAYER**; Jn. Main, **THE HEART OF CREATION: THE MEDITATIVE WAY** (Crossroad/89); Thich Naht Hahn, **THE MIRACLE OF MINDFULNESS: A MANUAL ON MEDITATION** (Buddhist; Beacon/75/87), & **THE SUN MY HEART: FROM MINDFULNESS TO INSIGHT CONTEMPLATION** (Parallax/88); Kathleen Healy, **ENTERING THE CAVE OF THE HEART: EASTERN WAYS OF PRAYER FOR WESTERN CHRISTIANS** (Paulist/86); & Wilkie Au, SJ, **BY WAY OF THE HEART: TOWARD A HOLISTIC CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY....** The Protestant college & seminary Whiting & I attended together were prayer-bathed, daily public bathings as well as group & private. Which leads me to remark....

4 Prayer & **celibacy**. I oppose the imposition of celibacy on clergy, I suspect a personally chosen life-long vow of celibacy, & I appreciate the values of personally chosen & for-the-time-being celibacy....In my case, "celibacy" meant never even having had a date till the week I was graduated from seminary (age 22). (I was into intellectual & spiritual formation; many of my fellow-students were into family formation.)

4 America is asking the question whether our lower classes are educable: have the subcultures so broken down as to provide more negative than positive incentives vis-a-vis formal education? It's an appalling, & less & less evadable, question. A parallel: Can seminaries provide adequate intellectual & spiritual formation for students so involved elsewhere, ie "in the world," as to have little time/energy for seminary? As publicschool authorities are touchy about the first question, so seminary authorities about the second. Materials from seminaries, as I see them in the NYTS library & elsewhere, reflect this touchiness & present their defense in the form of stories of students who are "making it," "getting it together," indeed (the claim is) are better seminary students because of their worldly & churchly involvements. I'm not entirely unconvinced by this line of argument. We use it at NYTS. Andover Newton Theological School's current **TODAY'S MINISTRY** makes excellent use of it, profiling some student who made it in the world & therefore come to seminary with a world-begotten confidence combined with the conviction that the world is not enough. Another & overlapping category is the deeply wounded--by divorce or bereavement or some profound disappointment: these are in some ways more ready for theological education (as I found in my "second-career" & "midlife" programs at NYTS) than those fresh out of college. Too, now many seminary students do not intend to become clergy: "More and more come simply seeking a deeper understanding of God and grounding for their ministries as lawyers, nurses, financial analysts or social workers" (p.9, **TODAY'S MINISTRY**; the subhead, p.1, is "Churches Reflect News of a Spiritual Hunger in the 1990s").

5 In special conferences, seminaries are seeking to promote "Prayer &...." Eg, ANTS cosponsored (with U.Mass. Med. Center & Mass. Generaal's Dept of Pastoral Care) a conference on "Health and Spirituality: The Abundant Life"--relaxation response" Herb. Benson on the physiology of prayer, Maya Angelou, "road less traveled" Scott Peck, "secular city" Harvey Cox, even "creation spirituality" Matt. Fox (because of

whom the local RC bp. forbade priestly participation). Benson was surprised that when he asked the 400 to choose each a word or phrase to meditate on, "80% chose prayer" ((ibid., p.5). Such meditation, said he, not only improves health: "This open door seems to enhance spirituality."

6 Prayer & the **hunger for meaning**, which has risen to consciousness almost everywhere at every level in the American society. Where money is a problem, so is meaning: where money is not a problem, meaning is. My great teacher on this, Viktor Frankl, in three of Hitler's death camps discovered the prayer/meaning correlation in himself (memorizing the Psalms, which a Lutheran had given him, a Jew) & in others. In *THE DOCTOR AND THE SOUL* & many subsequent books & pamphlets he explained why prayer is the one sphere in which freedom can never be taken from a human being & consequently the one sphere which can never be sucked dry of meaning. No monster, outer or inner, can deprive me of choosing the attitude I take toward what is happening to me, & prayer is the activity that gives me the distance & dignity to choose soul-freedom. The intensive week I spent with him in 1952, taping him, was soul-strengthening. And I believe that today, flabby souls are looking for strength through prayer....Frankl had Freud's chair at Vienna Polytechnic but is now in Calif. ...Again, *TODAY'S MINISTRY*, p.1: "A generation of young adults seems caught up in a search for meaning, often inspired by the realities of parenthood, accentuated by economic stresses and the chaos of war. For many, 'getting an education, finding the right job and living in the right community have not provided the answers....People are seeking a source for truth and inspiration to deal with the day-to-day ambiguities and crises of living in America,' [and] the trend cuts across lines of age, race, culture and class."

7 "Take time to be holy, / The world rushes on" says an old hymn. Rushes on indeed, & it's hard to "find" time for friendship (horizontal **conversation**) or prayer (vertical conversation). What's dead (in this cartoon, television) seems live, & what's most real (prayer & conversation) is absent. My point: Conversation & prayer are a tandem bike, neither seat really real without the other. Some spiritual communities are based on this truth--eg, Corymeela ("mountain of harmony"), for prayer & conversation across the Protestant/Catholic divide in Northern Ireland. (Said a child after a retreat there, in which his companion was a child "from the other side": "God answered the Jews in Egypt, so maybe He will answer us.")....In our country, spiritual centers more & more are crossing the lines--Jew/Christian, Black/Jew, Buddhist/Christian, Muslim/Christian, et al.



8 Praying the **newspaper**. Barth is remembered for "the Bible in one hand & the newspaper in the other." On retreats, I've often had both on the altar. Biblical prayer is in & for this world, & the newspaper is this world daily hitting us in the face with its cries for justice, peace, & joy right alongside of good news of things going right (Jesus' "Weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice"). And of all books, the Bible best illumines this world & uniquely calls us to pray, through this world, for "the Kingdom of God."....Accordingly, with students at all levels from college to the doctorate, I've negotiated the discipline of "praying the newspaper"--for reading aloud in class, actually writing the prayers on the newspaper alongside

specific articles. (It's hardest for doctoral students!) "History belongs to the intercessors who believe the future into being" (Walter Wink at Kirkridge; but I worry about "prayer power," a phrase with an idolatrous tinge, as though the action of prayer has an in-itself, magical potency).

9 Prayer & **personality**. So far, three books have been written to correlate the sixteen Jungian personality types with each its natural-normal praying (intent, content, form, meaning). Illumining. At NYTS, Wm. Weisenbach uses them in a course (phone 532.4012).

10 Many denominations have prayer-fellowships. Eg, the UCC Spiritual Network....In Catholicism, doctorates in spirituality are common (eg, Matt. Fox's is from Louvain), but they're rare in Protestantism. NYTS set one up with Wainwright House, Rye, NY....Some centers formerly having "pastoral counseling" or "family counseling" in their name have now changed to some name with "spiritual" in it: time was when "spiritual" would frighten people off more than "counseling," but no more. The former is seen as inclusive of therapy, the latter is not seen as inclusive of education....Some old spiritual stumps have sprung fresh shoots. In UCC, the Order of Corpus Christi (Harry Royer, E.Peterburg, Penn.), has sprung up out the the grand Mercersburg tradition of theology & life....Some who started out in therapy have expanded into prayer. Eg, Andrew Atwood (616.363.9327) did his doctorate in family counseling but now spends much time studying the Christian mystics & leading retreats....Someone I trust suggests checking with F. Hal Weideman, North Carolina Center for Prayer and Spirituality, U. of N.C....Prayer & **wonder**. Monk & telescope-inventor Jn. Dobson goes about the streets of our cities inviting people to look & wonder & be delivered from the illusion that merely measuring is knowing.

11 Prayer & **death & dying**. Because my wife is a Hospice chaplain, this correlation is a daily discussion with us. There's already been a national conference on death & spirituality, & Sally Steenhusen Bailey's CREATIVITY & THE CLOSE OF LIFE (The Conn. Hospice, Branford, CN/90) is one outgrowth of that....Interesting spirituality conferences at The Oratory, Box 11586, Rock Hill, SC 29731....**Occasions** of prayer. Q: What do you do no matter what else you're doing? A: Pray. But five daily events remind me to pray: rising, three meals, & retiring. Islam's custom of prayer five times daily is an inheritance from Christianity (Mohammed's uncle, very influential in M.'s early life, was a Christian). Prayer can be impulsive, compulsive, or habitual; with me, it's all three. (I'd feel like an animal if I were to attack my food without saying grace, even in a restaurant.) If prayer is not pegged into one's day, how else will one be consciously & continually practicing the presence of God? With its rule of prayer five times daily, Islam gives people something to do, not just something to believe; & this is one reason for the current success of Islamic missions. Too, the year, secular as well as sacred, provides occasions of prayer. ("Saw the New Year in on my knees" say many an old diary of mine.)....**Postures** of prayer. Biblically: standing or kneeling, arms up or out. And I like joining hands for grace before meals even though one guest, unfamiliar with the practice, said "Pass the germs."....Prayer & **prophylaxis**. Prayer is anti-allergic--allergens being causes of overreaction, hypersensitivity. Prayer is drug-free mood-altering, nonaddictive though it should become habitual....Prayer is for **anytime-anywhere**. (No child's speech to the altar, "Goodbye, God, see you next Sunday." For children & the rest of us, Etan Bartizer says, "You can just close your eyes anywhere and think about that feeling of God" [WHAT IS GOD? Firefly/91].)....When they saw Billy Graham on CNN walk out of the White House Jan.16, some Muslims "knew" Bush was on the 11th Christian Crusade in the holy Mideast. But while BG had prayed "three times" the previous day & night with Bush (BG said on "Larry King Live"), he gave him no political advice: "I learned, and have given no political advice to either Pres. Reagan or Pres. Bush." "We prayed for a short war with few casualties." "War is evil," but sometimes "the lesser evil." King (uncharacterically respectful): "Billy Graham always examines himself." Should Graham have refused Bush's invitation? Till I heard him with King, I thought so. No Christian Crusade though, or Bush would not now be letting Saddam slaughter his own people....Prayer & **prisons**. Chas. Colson's Prison Fellowship is amounting to much more good than I thought it would....**Scientific** studies of prayer's

influence on plants, animals, people. If such studies were successful, they would fail. But the fact that the media pay so much attention to such studies is more than hunger for sensationalism....I seldom glance at GUIDEPOSTS, but--when I do--I notice how much focus on prayer there is in the lives of those whose testimonies this little magazine exists to convey. It'd be interesting to know what effect Peale's retirement has had on this publication of his. If 90% of Americans pray (Gallup), the subscription list is probably not small....The **Taizé** liturgy & prayers continue to have quite a vogue in our country. Cofounder Roger Schutz came out with a book of his daily free prayers in community a few months ago. (The only ecumenical monastery--altars for the three main branches of Christendom--begun by Protestant monks.)....Losing energy: **TM**, the Maharishi's pseudo-"Science of Creative Intelligence." But it's to be noted that because every session begins with (Hindu) guru devotion & prayers to a fistful of deities, TM seems to be slightly more effective than purely secular parallels (such as Herb. Benson's "relaxation response"--a claim I grudgingly accept. Some Christian monasteries--Spencer, Mass., for one, I hear--have adapted TM by substituting Christian opening devotions. (I've no objection to religions learning from one another: I'd object if they didn't. Emerson's then-scandalous 1837 Harv. address, "The American Scholar," begins by versioning the ancient myth that the gods "divided Man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself." Humanity is "present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and...you must take the whole society to find the whole man." After the Fall, we were fragmented, individuals being reduced to things. The scholar is no longer "Man Thinking," but only "a mere thinker, or, still worse, a parrot of other men's thinking," "the bookworm." But what about wholeness, putting the whole "Man" back together? I think of Hannah Smith's classic A CHAIN OF PRAYER ACROSS THE AGES [which is Christian ecumenical] & Herman Bavinck's recent daring [for a Dutch theologian] IMAGES OF GOD as collectives: God distributes the different aspects of the divine likeness to different cultural groups, which then receive different assignments for developing their several aspects of the image of God; & the final ingathering of tribes-tongues-nations [Rev.21.26] will reveal the fullness of this collective divine image--a view that may be seen as overlapping, rather than contradicting, human diversity as divine punishment [Gn.11]--punishment leading to riches as well as to confusion & conflict.) (\*My add.)

12 **Ecstatic** prayer, esp. glossolalia, continues on the increase in America, not just among our rapidly increasing Hispanic population but also in charismatic mainline-church & parachurch groups. Some of it's real enough, but (in my opinion) none of it has much evidential value, or at least the evidential value (the "proof" of God's Spirit's presence & power) is easily overrated by those overanxious for spiritual evidences.

13 Some comments on the **sounds** of praying. Most of us Protestants say "God" as in "awe," & indeed have a sense of awe about the word. Most Catholics say "God" as in "odd," & the experience of oddness, otherness, is indeed a note in religious experience (but in "God" sounded as "odd," I hear cursing: I grew up in a suburb so Protestant that we assumed anybody sounding God that way was [1] blaspheming & [2] a Catholic! My inherited profile of a Catholic was a Ford owner who frequently took the name of God "in vain" & who had sexual mores instead of morals. Prejudice? No, observation: The Catholics we knew were laboring-class, culturally lower & less self-disciplined than we. Upon leaving the suburban nest, I was pleasantly surprised to find many Catholics "just like us," & some of them culturally superior to us. Like the shock of northerners upon meeting their first highly cultured Southern Baptist.)....Now that the Catholic/Protestant wall is coming down (except where, as in Northern Ireland, nontheological factors are maintaining it), we are facing a more serious divide in the sounds of praying, viz in the **inclusive language** controversy. Check out some of the new hymnals & you'll find some classics--eg, "Dear Lord and Father of mankind"--set off the alarm when they tried to pass through the hymnal committee for flight. Not to worry for the future of the "Our Father": the revisionists are few & are in churches that are declining in membership, or at least not growing. I am a feminist in that I believe in equal opportunity for women & men & in that I practice inclusive language in my own discourses. But I'm not a revisionist, one who campaigns to rewrite Scripture, hymns, & theology with the singleminded intention of eliminating male initiative (wrongly included under "patriarchy").



14 **Ups & downs** in prayer, wet & dry periods. A financial magazine pictures Adam & Eve holding a snake that's as crooked as the line graphing the history of a stock: sex has its ups & downs, so why shouldn't stocks? Prayer is the Vertical Relationship, & relationships have their ups & downs. But where there's mutual dedication to make the relationship "work," more will be learned from the lows than the highs. Sometimes it's not just oneself but one's whole group. Shoa-Holocaust was the Jews' lowest low in 18 centuries. Because of it, some gave up on God & others learned their way through to a maturer, richer faith. When they saw the Crucifixion coming, Jesus' disciples "forsook him and fled," but not all of them stayed fled: some came out on the other side into the Resurrection. They found a third way--not collaboration with, nor violent resistance against, Rome, but--a deepened, more loving adherence to their Lord crucified & risen & in the Spirit forming them into the church, which in its turn had, continues to have, its ups & downs. (The Gospel of John is an exposition of this third way.)....The **origin** of religion? Says Rudolf Otto (DAS HEILIGE, trd. as THE IDEA OF THE HOLY), in the experience of awe; but says Martin Buber (S. Dan. Breslauer, MARTIN BUBER ON MYTH: AN INTRODUCTION, Garland), in the I/Thou encounter, the vertical meeting, prayer, out of which springs the holy story ("myth"), out of which springs the cult (worship), which nourishes private-family-group devotion. Otto is not wrong, but Buber ("All life is meeting.") combines the passive experience of awe with the active experience of prayer....My suggestion here is that today's praying will body itself forth in tomorrow's religion, & the quality of the former will determine the quality of the latter.

15 How is talking to/with God to be distinguished from talking to/with oneself? The Jungian metaphysics of the collective self-Self (1) sees, in practice, an extensive overlap, & (2) makes probable that Jungian analysts will, taking the easy way, suck "God" into "Self"--as Jung himself sucked his pastor-father's church into his own soul (a cosmic legitimation of hyperindividualism)....Any panentheism--Chicago process-theology or Matt. Fox's "creation spirituality"--has this same tendency to obscure the difference between prayer (talking to/with God, outside & within one's skinbag) & **soliloquy** (conversation within one's skinbag, mysticism dissolving the skin, ie the individual).

Why is the God/self metaphysical distinction important? It isn't unless you value individual identity & responsibility. The reason that solitary confinement is so cruel a punishment is that, in removing the prisoner from society, it destroys one of the sides of the **communication triangle**, viz human-human conversation, leaving only prayer & soliloquy, which tend to collapse on each other as do the two sides of a triangle when one side is removed. Sick is a human being who can't talk with other human beings, with self, or with God--"can't talk" with one of more or these; "can't talk" because of some volitional, neurological, or social reality (solitary confinement being an instance of this last). A society weak on prayer will be weak on soul. It's members will be weak in personal identity & responsibility--in identity, being undefined by the divine-human conversation; in responsibility, having no sense of accountability to God (v. what I came upon in my Greek-Latin NT in devotions this morning: "Each of us will be accountable [ $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  *ratio*] to God," Ro.14.12). Can a humane ethic, & thus a truly human society, emerge & be maintained without the practice & products of prayer? It never has, & I think never will. The issue is at the heart of America's cultural crisis. On PBS I see furrowed brows on talking heads endlessly worried about our public schools, social deterioration, etc., but narry a word about the prayer side of the communication triangle, no reference to prayer as the gate of the divine sanctions, through which God's promises/rewards & threats/punishments come. If anybody gets close, somebody shouts or whispers "separation of church & state" (a nonconstitutional, Jeffersonian phrase: J. thought the First Amendment, which only restricts Congress from setting up a federal church or interfering with religion, did not go far enough). I'm not talking about "denominational prayer," though biblical prayer has been through all our American years a strong support for our way of life, which stresses identity & responsibility-accountability. The prayer question can be addressed nonsectarianly, in the public sphere. But the possibility is so little grasped by the intellectuals that we do not yet have a language to speak of it.

16 Efforts to explain prayer away are symptomatic, & promotive, of our sick hyper-

individualism. I mentioned Jung, who used psychology. Julian Jaynes (THE ORIGINS OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE BREAKDOWN OF THE BICAMERAL MIND) uses neurology. He sucks prayer inside the skinbag by defining it as an intracranial activity, the left brain-hemisphere interpreting certain right-brain-hemisphere signals as from a deity. (He jazzes his theory up with juicy historical references: Abraham's R-brain told him to go to Canaan, Jesus' told him to preach the Kingdom of God.) Leaders claiming revelation/inspiration are (1) misinterpreting R-brain signals & (2) are inclined to do so by their desire to define & control their world. (The intrabrain signals, however interpreted, are electrochemical; but physical analogies are at hand--eg, the sympathetic sound-vibration of the tuning fork, & light-vibration of the slavey photoflash [my analogies].)....Jaynes is so egregiously unscientific in his thesis that he has little respect among his peers. But because he provides a way of eliminating God & prayer, both of which embarrass the public schools, one finds him quite in vogue among publicschool teachers, who thus are teaching antireligion in the name of science.

Your article should, I think, remark that in the light of all the **antiprayer** forces in our society, the prayer revival is as strong as it is.

17 One reason for the strength is the spread of the "Higher Power" doctrine in **12-step support groups**, AA & the myriad woes using AA as model. There's even RECOVERY RESOURCE: A CATALOG OF INSPIRATION AND INFORMATION IN THE TWELVE STEP TRADITION (Winter 1991 Edition; Hazelden Educational Materials, Pleasant Valley Rd., Box 176, Center City, MN 55012-0176). We have here some clues toward a public-sphere way of talking about prayer (which is something worrying atheists far more than "sectarian prayer" does). On the catalog cover is a photo of the latest book in the "Hazelden Meditation Series," IN GOD'S CARE\*: DAILY MEDITATIONS ON SPIRITUALITY AND RECOVERY (\*As We Understand God). "Concepts of a Higher Power are explored from many religious and cultural perspectives. Page 2." One p.2 of the catalog one discovers that the book was written to answer inquirers & critics of the "Hidden Power" component, & to provide various resources, with alternative languages, so support-group members can advance in their understanding of their own "Higher Power" (&, by implication, thus be better able to communicate in the group). I take this very seriously. Tens of thousands of therapy-oriented groups in America are "doing theology" toward a public way of speaking of prayer. The sky hung low enough over the ancient world so that heaven could be heard (revelation) & each could respond (prayer & heaven-guided life). Once again the sky is hanging low, & we are trying to hear God but also each other across all divides. The incentives? Love (reach out or die) & pain (every therapy support-group is a fellowship of pain, open to all who are willing to let God & fellow-sufferers into their pain [2Cor.1.3-7]). (The blurb on IN GOD'S CARE includes this: "The authors help us open our hearts to our own Higher Power, nurturing our spiritual growth. They focus on issues such as letting go, trusting, giving, humility, and unconditional love.")....Further, pain peels away the outer world, leaving you with nothing but the inner world, which soon goes poof unless in com-munity with the Other world. Imprisonment is a form of pain, & my guess is that Noriega is no "rice Christian" but sincere: "Before Christ came into my life, the realities of the materialistic world had the priority in my daily living" (GUIDEPOSTS; & 1Apr91 NW 13)....And one more pain, viz existential anxiety, David Tracy's "finitude, contingency, and transience." There's a prayer-cure for it. True prayer is walking, here & hereafter, into the arms of God.

18 The God who is with all sufferers, all in any pain, is most with those who suffer most. (This psychospiritually sound statement is, from another angle, theologically suspect; but there's truth here that theology needs to hear.) My experience of those working with the poorest of the poor is that there's a prayer quality in their lives as they do their serving & theologizing **from below**. Everybody thinks of Mother Teresa. Another I think of is one I've supported by presence & gifts through the years, David Kirk, whose "Emmaus House" is in Harlem (& unlocked: anybody can wander in anytime--a vulnerability I stand in awe of but couldn't possibly hack). You might buzz David & ask what prayer has to do with what he's been doing all these years in Harlem?

19 While prayer can be perverted to promote **violence**, it's naturally violence-dampening. I chuckle when remembering the gradeschool playground admonition to "Count to ten before hitting anybody!" Always, when I got hit, I forgot to count. My simple point: Such counting, & prayer, provide space between impulse & action. That's valuable on the negative side. On the positive side, prayer sizes you down from god-size (the size at which most violence occurs), because God will just not put up with your competition. Too, inflicting unnecessary pain on another creature inflicts pain on the Creator, whose nervous system runs into every creature: prayer increases compassion as well as humility....While prayer tends against doing violence, it may open one to being violently treated--as Sadat was murdered by Muslim fanatics after praying with Carter & Begin (thus the vicarious suffering of the martyrs, & atonement "through the blood of Christ").

29 Prayer is **revolutionary**, undermining a false order of the world & revealing the true order (Heb. *emunah*, Gk. *δικη*, Skr. *dharma*). Peter Brooks' six-hour PBS '91 presentation of the Hindu bible, "The Mahabharata," makes this dharma point magnificently & with just enough gore to keep our violence-sated television audience glued to the tube. And the point is so pertinent to our anti-order, chaotic society: the Order (however metaphysically conceived) will get you if you don't watch out. (At the end of the Brooks' extravaganza, our hero finds his family in hell & the in-his-eyes bad guys in heaven!)....This theme runs through Ken Burns' eleven-hour PBS '91 "The Civil War," Lincoln's preserving the national order used as a metaphor for the victory (to put it in terms of Greek gods) of Cosmos over Chaos....And earlier, "Star Wars" saw cosmos brought out of chaos not by violence but rather by Luke Skywalker's remembering that the Old Man, metaphor for the Order of the world, had repeatedly said to him, "The Force is with you." (Nothing so profound as the Mahabharata: in "S.W." we have a sky-level western, the good guys in white & the bad guys in black--confirming us in moralism, legalism, culturism, & jingoism.)

30 Prayer & **social roles**. I've spoken above of prayer & personality types. One way of viewing biblical prayers is to push the "Social Role" button & see what comes out. Eg, mother prayers: Hannah's, Mary's. Political-office prayers: Solomon's. Some sets of spiritual disciplines correlate with social roles: soldier (eg, Ignatius Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises"), sage, & saint (a more ambiguous role than the other two)....Dorothea Söelle's political prayergroups....Maritain's prayer & the poets....Popular prayer-monks: Merton, Nouwen....Shalem Institute, Wash., DC (Tilden Edwards, Episcopal priest; Gerald May, evangelical psychiatrist)....A columnist wryly commented, on somebody who'd just announced to run for President, that the politico did so "after much thought and serious, two-way communication with his Maker." As prayer gets more serious among Americans, what direction will prayer-&-humor take? It'll be entwined with gallows-&-graveyard humor with social conscience, eg "Who dies with the most toys, wins."

31 A heady conference with heavy implications for prayer will be 10-11 May 91 "Reconstructing the Philosophy of Religions," U. of Chic. Div. School. The prospectus would lead me to think there'll be more referencing to prayer than in prior such conferences I've attended or read about, in Chicago & elsewhere.

31 Prayer & the **authentic voice**. (1) As a biblical scholar, I hunger for Jesus' *ipsissima verba*, his exact words, & (if some audio-time-warp machine could only make it possible!) his tone of voice throughout his exact words. I believe that in the Spirit through the Gospel he makes himself available to believers, & that this process is even a factor in Gospels-formation....(2) Hugh Missildine forty years ago helped me to hear "the child of the past within" me: he's the father of the now "in" phrase....(3) Fritz Perls almost a quarter c. ago helped me to distinguish, when speaking, "the real me" from personae, roles-me. (Va. Satir put M. & P. together & taught Jn. Bradshaw, who's now using authentic-voice techniques so effectively on PBS it's almost become a cult.)....Prayer is the vertical expression of our hunger--vertical, internal (personal), & horizontal (social)--for the authentic voice. To the extent that personal & social sickness is distance from reality, the authentic voice is redemptive, healing....Prayer & **music**: 22Apr 91, Menuhin will premier Soviet (!) composer Rodion Shchedrin's "Prayer" (in London).