

--vs. the biblical conviction that we don't have it in us (Torah, grace, Holy Spirit, baptism).

Last Friday [15Sept78], at the very time I was involved in a doctoral examination in which the difference between meditation and prayer was a factor, Rabbi Chaim Stern was preaching in his temple on prayer. As tonight in our garden--only two days later, and high from the ecstasy of that experience--he told Loree and me and his wife Susan that the moment was for him a flowering of fourteen years of work on prayer (including the production of four prayerbooks now in use in synagogue and home), what stood out for him was not what he had written in preparation for the sermon but what came out of the depths as a gift of God in the moment of inspiration. The unplanned beginning and ending: "Third best is to discuss prayer. Second best is to pray. Best is to be prayer....In prayer, you cannot fail unless you fail to pray."

This thinksheet meditates on the antiposition of prayer and "the human potential movement." The former assumes religiously, and demands philosophically, two positions denied by HPM: (1) God is so other as to stand over against in potential/actual relationship; (2) The center of being-energy-potentiality is "not in ourselves, O Lord, not in ourselves, but in Thee." Somebody oughta do a book on this dieresis, laying out both the metaphysical options and the historical dynamics of the paradoxical polarity and relating it to psychodynamics (without pop-resolving it into anything like Carl Sagan's pseudohistorical "bicameral mind," or reducing it [Feuerbach-Marx-Freud] to a projective syndrome).

Now, in the context of worship, Rabbi Stern had made a passional-poetic fusion: "Best is to be prayer." The fact that the sentence is linguistic-analytic nonsense shocks, koan-like, into realization that the heuristic splits we figment out of our left-brains [as the medieval *ens pura / acta pura / mens pura*--"pure" being, doing, thinking] should function analytically only, and not take life over, as has tended to happen wherever the philosophers come into power-in-psyche (e.g., in the Western university). Note that I said "in...worship," the only private/public activity designed to point to the Center as, in the biblical story/paradigm, "not we ourselves" but the Creator-Redeemer of Heaven and Earth. Within the sphere and frame of this world-and-self-understanding, our "being" is our "being-under-and-in-God-and-God's world"; and the answers to the four questions on #1192 are radiantly clearly theistic....so that, elliptically expressed (i.e., with theism assumed), statements about our "being" can be made which in any other context would be read Easternly or HumanPotentially as ego(self)centric.

Chaim mentioned what I'm using here as a parable of the problem, the decision, in this thinksheet's title. 2nd-c. Rabbi Levy, faced with the need to resolve the apparent contradiction that the earth's the Lord's [Ps.24.] and ours [Ps.115.16], said the former's true till we say grace before eating and drinking. In and under grace--to use now a Christian expression, 1Cor.3.23--"everything's yours, you're Christ's, Christ's God's." Not in ourselves, but in God we possess ourselves and our potential: there is no other "human potential," under and in the biblical Story, but these alternatives: (A) The daily gift of energies from God in-through-beyond our genes; (B) Infusions of demonic-destructive energies ["evil spirits," in the Persian imagery]. Now, the biblical God loves us enough to give us freedom and even to benefit-grace us anonymously and even to let the demons, including ourselves-free-from-in-rebellion/amnesia-against God, take credit for God's work. But "the human potential," in rebellious-Western or in Eastern garb, must be seen and named by biblical people as antibiblical. "Name the demon, and you are free." Including free to work with the many beautiful people in HPM, and free to use HPM discoveries-techniques. And free not to be used! Free also to see "the human potential" as a myth-story now in our culture viewed not so but as bio-psycho-fact [e.g., in Gardner Murphy's classic HUMAN POTENTIALITIES (Basic/58), on book in HPM's bible]. The psych sections of bookstores are full of paperbacks hawking this under various slogans: just today I read Everett Shostrom's pastiche of HPM, FREEDOM TO BE [Bantam/74], the variously sanctioned message that we have it in us--