

In his home at midnight last night, Rabbi Chaim Stern gave me a copy of the new prayerbook for Reform Judaism, GATES OF PRAYER: THE NEW UNION PRAYERBOOK, of which he's the editor [Central Conference of American Rabbis/75]--inscribed "To Willis--with deep affection and respect, for a friend and fellow-pilgrim on the way." This morning [29 Sept 75] the seminary's '75-'76 Doctor of Ministry Integration Seminar begins, and the two integration notes in that inscription are reverberating in my heart: We Jews and Christians are "on the way" in the specific sense of sharing a common stream of history-making which we believe best illumines existence and enables truly human life, and in the general sense that our common species is continuing its eons-long exploration toward a beyond that is more than we were and more than we are. In both senses, we Jews and Christians are "friends" and "fellow-pilgrims." To celebrate this, let's use two of Chaim's compositions (p.232 and p.174, respectively) and sing the latest, fresh version of the Yigdal (pp.732f):

*Liturgist, then liturgist and people:* Let me hear You, Lord, when I hear my spirit soaring in prayer. May I sing because I love, not afraid to waste my sweetness upon the void, but reflecting in my soul's flight the universal God who sings through me.

*Liturgist:* You are the world's beginning: this world / bears witness to / You --alone, apart, / the Only God, / the Mind we glimpse in all-- / Hills wrenched from earth / and skies spread out before our humbled eyes. // Inexhaustible God: You flow, burst out, overflow: You have poured Yourself / into universes beyond thought / and they cannot contain You. / You fill the endless worlds. / Deep beyond our guess, the Deep itself, / hidden, hiding, abyss, shadow, friend, "illusion":.../ How shall we speak to You? / We are lonely, afraid to hope:/ Is the ground firm under our feet? / ...even for the pure the light is dim. / Our ears hear sounds from afar-- / music is it? Lifeless noise? // Is there--surely there is?--an echo of love? / We look, and listen, and struggle / to gaze upon Your world / in joy in awe in love in praise: / holy, holy, holy: / the hidden God /the One who speaks-- / and there is light!

*All sing:* [Christians know this as "The God of Abram, praise" or "Praise to the living God."]

We praise the living God,  
For ever praise His name,  
Who was and is and is to be  
For e'er the same;  
The One eternal God  
Before our world appears,  
And there can be no end of time  
Beyond His years.

[\*Printed:  
"Our hopes, and our pains.]

Without a form is He,  
Nor can we comprehend  
The measure of His love for us--  
Without an end.  
For He is Lord of all,  
Creation speaks His praise.  
The human race and all that grows  
His will obeys.

He knows our every thought,  
Our birth and death ordains;  
He understands our fervent dreams,  
Our hopes, our pains.\*  
Eternal life has He  
Implanted in our soul.  
We dedicate our life to Him--  
His way, our goal!