PART IV

What Do We Want the Other to Teach
About Our Prayer and Liturgy?
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Conference in Rome, Italy

On March 13–15, 2002, the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding (CCJU) of Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut, sponsored a conference at the Dionesian Center at Villa Piccolomini, Rome, entitled, “What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Our Prayer and Liturgy?” The conference began with remarks by Dr. Anthony J. Cernera, president of Sacred Heart University, and Rabbi Joseph H. Ehrenkranz, executive director of the CCJU. Rabbi Reuven Kimelman, professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts; Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Archbishop of Milan; and Sheikh Professor Abdul Hadi Palazzi of the Cultural Institute of the Italian Islamic Community, Rome, presented papers to an audience of more than 200 people. Papers included philosophical, theological, and liturgical considerations from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faith traditions on “What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Our Prayer and Liturgy?” At the end of the lectures, each presenter was given the opportunity to respond to questions.

The format for the following day of the conference included responses to the papers by noted scholars followed by discussion, critiques and suggestions by a group of 30 scholars and participants from Europe and the United States. Graduate students from several universities in Rome,
as well as representatives from the Sisters of Sion and the Focolare Movement joined for each of the sessions.

On one evening of the conference, the film, *Desperate Hours*, directed by Victoria Barrett, was shown. About 40 people joined the conference participants at the Villa Piccolomini, and several representatives from the Italian press attended. The film documented how the government and the people of Turkey helped to save the lives of European Jews by giving them citizenship papers as well as places to resettle during World War II. At a public reception that followed, Dr. Coppola facilitated a discussion that lasted two hours.

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Introduction to Part IV

What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Our Prayer and Liturgy?

To understand the prayer life of a vibrant religious tradition, one would have to read about, experience, and understand the two narratives of public prayer and individual spirituality. Of all the topics in this volume, prayer and liturgy is the most difficult to understand and to teach about the other. This difficulty is not due to an unwillingness on the part of believers to share prayer or to pray for each other, nor is it that Judaism, Christianity, or Islam practices incomprehensible, esoteric rituals. Rather, the experience and reality of prayer and liturgy is only completely known by the “insiders,” those who know and believe what they are praying from an intellectual, emotional, cultural, and moral perspective. These complex and beautiful layers of encounter with God individually and in community impel people to choose with whom they share their lives and what direction their lives take. The papers that follow in this section are helpful for setting the stage for further exploration into the mystery of prayer, but much more joint study needs to be pursued in the areas of prayer, and liturgy, aesthetics and the Scriptures of each religion. Several additional themes emerged from the conference.

First, in one sense, prayer and liturgy are a conversation, a relationship and relating of God’s people to God, the world and others. This conversation asks about and reflects an individual’s and a community’s destiny and meaning in response to God’s revelation. Participants during the conference on prayer and liturgy critically examined how ideologies have separated us from seeing the other as someone who conscientiously prays
with God. In the past, by acting as if God did not listen to the prayers of the other, or was only focused on one particular group, this has diminished a fuller experience of the presence of God’s apprehension in every worshipping community. Instead of worshipping God as the One who is above all, the effect of claiming God exclusively for one community’s prayer has had the unfortunate result of seeking to domesticate and control God and God’s capacity for revelation.

Second, in addition to inspiring faith, liturgical symbols can also prevent us from praying more deeply, especially if those symbols evoke feelings and actions that are immoral, such as anger, prejudice, haughtiness and violence. The cross, for example, is a paradox and a stumbling block to some, as well as the central symbol to inspire prayer in others. One participant said, “Symbols, images, art, music, beauty, are beyond the rational. They are visceral and are lodged in our marrow.” The worship setting and the liturgical context of symbols are powerful remedies to counter the secular abuses of religious symbols throughout history and at present. Also, it was noted that the placement of a building within a community as well as its specific architecture are symbols that speak to the hearts of believers. The participants agreed that prayer is fostered through a building’s attention to sanctuary, holiness, reflection, community, hospitality, liturgical movement, pilgrimage, beauty, transcendence, light, and educational elements (statues, stained glass, inscriptions etc.). However, it was also pointed out that historical circumstances have led to many places of worship being built as fortresses and overbearing monuments to particular leaders. Such symbols remain, but contemporary religious symbolic communication to the community has the opportunity for a renaissance. For example, when a religious community builds a house of prayer in conversation with the other religions of a city, rather than proceeding with the intention of “outdoing” or overwhelming the other houses of prayer, then all will benefit from such cooperation.

Third, the Shema Israel: “Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4–5), can be a starting point for prayer. This prayer helps the person in prayer to focus on the proper relationship of humans to God in a God-human partnership to repair and perfect this world. The Abrahamic faiths all believe in the oneness of God and God’s desire for unity and peace among all people.
Such belief has potential for praying for each other as well as coming together to pray.

Fourth, Catholics need to pay attention to the visceral impact of liturgy on Christian formation, especially since the Mass is the context in which most Catholics are able to engage their faith tradition most regularly. Christians have often asserted the dictum lex orandi, lex credendi. However, it is also important to remember that the Church’s lex credendi (rule of belief) may require changes in the lex orandi (rule of prayer), especially as Christians have come to understand their relationship with others and God more deeply. This is particularly important in the growth of the Church’s relationship with the Jewish people, which was articulated in the corrective and reformative efforts of the 1965 Vatican II document, Nostra Aetate. The document calls Christians to celebrate their “intrinsic bond” with the people and faith of Judaism and their respect for Muslims. “Sounding the depths of the mystery” that is rooted in these “spiritual ties,” Nostra Aetate (# 4) suggested that Catholics revisit their liturgy in this new light. Some of the Catholic participants noted that it was probably a fair criticism that Catholic liturgical documents are slow in coming to reflect this deeper understanding of the Catholic-Jewish relationship. Without adequate catechesis in the Catholic community, for example, the traditional “Reproaches” employed in some Good Friday services, the “O Antiphons,” some liturgical hymns, as well as the liturgical usage of polemical New Testament texts, such as Matthew 27:25 or the Apostolic speeches in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, may be construed as a denigration or supersession of the Jewish people. While acknowledging the differences in the leadership structure of Catholics from Jews and Muslims, the participants of the conference agreed that it would be of great value to furthering the dialogue process if additional efforts, suggestions and encouragement also came from Jewish and Muslim faith communities.

Fifth, several people raised the importance of each person’s being nourished in his or her own community of faith. When or if guests join a congregation to pray together, it is not appropriate to tinker with that faith community’s integrity and traditional worship by watering it down. Certainly one’s sensitivity is heightened and an authentic sense of hospitality is rightfully extended but the presence of the other serves as an
invitation to be authentic in one's worship of God. When we are secure in our commitments, we can be open to those of other faiths. For example, at the start of the World Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi in October 1986, Pope John Paul II said that he was "a believer in Jesus Christ and in the Catholic Church, the first witness of faith in Him, but... it is in fact, my faith conviction which has made me turn to you."

Sixth, one participant said that there is a rich Christian liturgical heritage that needs to be cautious about misappropriating Jewish celebrations or creating syncretistic rituals. This is especially difficult for Christians who grew out of a Jewish milieu and Jewish prayer tradition. The challenge remains for Christians and Jews to neither cloud their differences nor overreact by objectifying each other by placing the other on pedestals. At the same time, numerous points of connection between Jews, Christians, and Muslims were raised, particularly with regard to prayer, piety, fasting, wisdom, the unknowable mystery of God, and prophecy as a gift. Also, liturgical expressions that are common to all cultures and religions—processions, preaching, times of silence, chanting, music, art, gestures and body movements, liturgical vestments, liturgical environment, incense, light, dance, bells—have different meanings depending on the context of the prayer, but they are all "dialects" in the human vocabulary used to worship God that may be shared.

Seventh, the three Abrahamic traditions share a substantial common Scripture. In Judaism and in Islam, the Word of God is primarily revealed in the Torah and the Qur'an, while in Christianity that same Word is understood in the person of Jesus Christ. There is the natural predilection towards the metaphysical when explaining the Word, whether as eternal, preexistent ruah, dabar, Wisdom, prophecy, or the Word made flesh, or the Word made Book. These understandings surface the need for a more textured theory of revelation in relationship to the ways we teach about each other's prayer and liturgy. In particular, interreligious dialogue might uncover more points of concurrence by focusing on the response of the faith community in prayer and social justice, more than on the Word, per se. This proper response to God of the community could, in turn, lead to deeper prayer and enlivened liturgy.

Eighth, a further opportunity for study and prayer is the cooperative exploration of a more extensive interreligious theology of one's life as a journey or pilgrimage of prayer. The conference participants noted that
prayer and pilgrimage are enduring themes for all three faith traditions and a common theological backdrop and religious experience leading to God. At Jerusalem, Rome, Mecca, and many other destinations, one leaves his or her place of security, journeys to a sacred place, despite danger and risk, and experiences a feeling of equality with other pilgrims. The pilgrim comes before God's presence in a new way and performs a sacred duty or celebration that transforms him or her. It was noted by the participants at the conference that Psalms 120–134 are hymns of pilgrims walking up to Jerusalem where they were greeted by the residents, "Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord!" It was also suggested that Torah is a pilgrimage, belief is a pilgrimage. For the Christian participants, pilgrimage is also a model for life and the Christian journey focused on Jesus. Prayer and contemplation is a pilgrimage towards God, whether God's Holy Mountain, or internal Seven-Storey Mountains, or the journey of prayer that one may take on one's prayer carpet. Finally, it was pointed out by one of the participants that for many people, pilgrimage becomes real in their witness of social justice and serves as a remedy for exaggerated, overspiritualized faith.

Ninth, one participant reminded the group that it was God's presence that challenges all religions to show profound respect to one another. As such, God's presence challenges us to seek further understanding on many important questions that still remain. Examples include: Does the wideness of God's mercy call into question our own narrowness? Because the Abrahamic faiths take history seriously, there are often strong connections between culture, faith, and civilization. Can we begin to eliminate the elements of supersessionism in our prayers and liturgies while remaining faithful to our beliefs? Can prayer unite us? How many ways are there to the One and only God? Does God distinguish between our prayers? Is there still a place in our faith traditions for prophetic prayer? Is there a unity that transcends our particularity that can be expressed in prayer and liturgy? Do we gather together and pray, or gather to pray together? Whatever we decide in our local and universal faith communities, have we forgotten in our newness of this relating, the time and place for silence and contemplation together? Can we allow time to reflect, to be quiet, to listen to inspired readings, to sing?

Finally, it is clear that individual prayer is a necessary preparation for authentic dialogue and study to take place, especially if one's prayers are
fundamental individual and communal processes that remember and celebrate who an individual is and who we are called to be as people of faith. As such, prayer is about responsible relationships. Through prayer and meditation, we open ourselves to God and each other. Prayer and meditation help to bring to the surface transcendental values, which can inspire ethical action for justice and peace that counters materialism and disrespect for life. Prayer leads us to recognize the other as an equal, perhaps even a sibling. In short, there is a divine dimension to the dialogue process and if entered with reverence and respect, dialogue can be a sacred encounter pleasing to God.
What Do We Want Others to Teach About Jewish Prayer and Liturgy?

Jewish prayer is marked by its multitude of blessings, its understanding of the body and soul, its advocacy of the love of God, and its vision of redemption. With regard to the body, it underscores the religious significance of the workings of the body and its relationship with the soul. With regard to the love of God, it works out the relationship between the love of Torah and the love of God. With regard to redemption, it presents a three stage development starting with the individual moving to the community or people of Israel and ultimately incorporating all of humanity. All three themes appear in the daily liturgy in this order respectively.

The Body and the Soul

The following blessings are recited upon awakening and after all body eliminations. Its regular recitation spurs awareness to what degree we are at least our bodies. It states:

Blessed/praised are you, Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who with wisdom has fashioned the human, creating within him openings and closures. It is well-known to you that were one opening to close down or one closure to open up one could not exist in your presence a single moment. Blessed/praised are you, Lord, healer of all flesh who sustains our bodies in wondrous ways.
This blessing is juxtaposed to one expressing gratitude for being granted a pure soul. It goes as follows:

My God, the soul you gave in me is pure. You created, you formed it, you breathed it into me; you keep body and soul intact. And you will in the future take it from me and restore it to me in the hereafter. So long as the soul is within me I thank you, Lord my God, God of my ancestors, Master of all creation, Lord of all souls. Blessed/praised are you who restores souls to lifeless exhausted bodies.

The first blessing helps us experience our body as a delicate assembly of divine marvels. Its intricate assembly of portable plumbing manifests an ingenious design attributable only to the great Designer. Its recitation after urination and defecation makes us aware that the delicate balance between well-being and illness is a function of a well-operating body. Precisely at the moment of greatest vulnerability we become aware of its great viability. The blessing reinforces the idea that the body partakes of the wisdom of God. Indeed, through it one realizes that the divine image exceeds one's soul. On the contrary, it is the interplay of matter and spirit that places us on the borderline of the divine.

The second blessing underscores that the soul implanted in us is in mint condition—any marks on it are our own. This awareness often inspires a lifelong sense of gratitude within us and maybe even longer since the mini-reunion of body and soul upon awakening in the morning anticipates the great awakening that awaits us in the future.

Why, one may ask, does the liturgy begin with a prayer for the body followed by one for the soul? Why two separate blessings as opposed to integrating the two into one? Apparently, each has its way of helping us to become aware of ourselves. Together they present us with a sense of self that includes both coordinates. We are the juncture between body and soul, not the battlefield. In saying both prayers, we feel no hostility between matter and spirit, only polarity. Never quite sure whether we are more an ensouled body or an embodied soul, we are happy to be trustees of two gifts, caretakers of both. Reciting both blessing reminds us that our personhood evolves out of the interaction of body and soul, just as water is the combination of hydrogen and oxygen, for a body without a soul is a corpse and a soul without a body is a ghost.
As all official blessings, the first blessing begins "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe." This beginning reinforces the idea that in prayer, one's sense of self has three coordinates: God, community, and humanity which can be charted as follows:

"Blessed are you" = self - God
"O Lord our God" = community - God
"King of the universe" = humanity -- God

Judaism seems to have a blessing for everything. Many people find that blessings evoke in them the awareness of living in God's world. The blessings serve to awaken their consciousness to see the world as God's temple. According to the Bible, it is sacrilegious to appropriate objects from the Temple for personal use. If the whole world is the Lord's Temple, one might fear that all is off limits. Judaism teaches otherwise. When we utter a blessing, we become a resident of God's Temple and within the precincts of the Temple, we may partake of all its objects. If my mind and my lips are in the right place, nothing is off limits.

Blessings help Jews to see ourselves as guardians rather than landlords of the universe. With this in mind, we realize that reaping benefits from the world without proper acknowledgement is similar to an act of stealing. Acknowledging God's Lordship grants us entrée to his entire domain. No aspect of the world is devoid of spiritual resonance. As Elizabeth Browning invited us to see: "Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God; But only he who sees takes off his shoes, the rest sit round it and pluck blackberries." By taking off our shoes we are able to see.

Further, "See and thou shall praise" is the leitmotif of the blessings. As Isaiah urged us, "Lift high your eyes and see who created these." (40:26) Is not the divine handiwork visible if one were but to lift up one's eyes? Does not all creation rhapsodize its Maker. Through blessings, creation is both noticed and exalted. Indeed, it is sanctified, for what is sanctification if not the perception of the connection with the divine? Thus, we are to recite 100 blessings a day to satisfy minimum daily spiritual requirements. Some say that the number corresponds to the hundred sockets that held together the structure of the ancient tabernacle. By reciting daily a hundred blessing, the spiritual structure of creation becomes transparent.

These blessings take note of good smell and taste, rising up and lying down, the intake of food and the elimination of waste. Blessings
also celebrate the spectacle of lighting, falling stars, majestic mountains and stretches of wilderness. The roar of thunder has its praise, the sight of sea and rainbow its response. Beautiful animals, indeed beautiful people, elicit blessings as do trees in blossom, the new moon, new clothing, new houses (some even say the first taste of legitimate sexual delight) and on and on. Indeed, we will be held accountable, says the Talmud, for forgoing those pleasures that God would have us relish.

"For the sake of making life as superlatively polished as the most sublime work of art," advised Henry James, "we ought to notice the ordinary." Through diurnal blessings, the common, the mundane become permeated by the extraordinary and the sacred, and the routine becomes special.

The Love of God

The second blessing is the morning recitation of the Shema ("Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one") which makes the case for the election of Israel as an expression of God's love. The argument is contained in the first half and last part. The conclusion is encapsulated in the peroration:

1. With everlasting love have you loved us, O Lord our God
2. With great and exceeding compassion have you cared for us.
3. Our Father our King, for the sake of our ancestors who trusted in you
4. As you taught them the statutes of life
5. So grace us by teaching us.
6. Our Father, merciful Father, have mercy upon us
7. By making our hearts understand, discern, listen, learn, teach, appreciate, do, and fulfill all the words of your Torah in love.
8. Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah and make our hearts cleave to your commandments.
9. Unite our heart to love and to revere your name.

...............10. You have chosen us from among all peoples and tongues
11. You have granted us access to your great name.
12. [To praise/acknowledge you and declare your unity] out of love.
   Blessed are you, God, who chooses his People Israel out of love.
The version that opens with the declaration of the beloved, "With everlasting love have you loved us, O Lord our God" inverts God's profession of love in Jeremiah 31:3—"With everlasting love have I loved you"—in order to serve as Israel's acknowledgement of divine love. The liturgy, following Jeremiah (31:3) grasps revelation as God falling in love forever with Israel. Such love is attested to by the gift of the Torah pointedly called "the statutes of life," in which God is entreated to grace Israel by teaching them as he taught their forefathers. By presenting the Torah and its teaching as gifts of love, the blessing promotes its conclusion that God "chooses his people Israel in love."

The addition of the love motif to that of the Torah distinguishes this blessing from the standard blessing on the Torah. The latter opens with blessing God for having "chosen us from among all the nations and given us His Torah," and closes with blessing God for "giving the Torah," without any mention of love. Moreover, in contrast to presenting the Torah and its commandments as obligatory accompaniments of the covenant, they appear here as expressions of God's beneficence.

The parallel blessing of the evening service also stresses the link between love and teaching. Adhering to the syntax of the Hebrew, it translates as follows:
1. With everlasting love the house of Israel, your people, have you loved.
2. Torah and commandments, statutes and laws, us have you taught.
3. Therefore, Lord our God, when we lie down and when we rise up,
4. we shall speak of your statutes and rejoice in the words of your
   Torah and in your commandments forever,
5. for they are our life and the length of our days,
6. and we will recite them day and night.
7. May your love never depart from us.
8. Blessed are you, O Lord, who loves his people Israel.

The parallel syntax and Hebrew rhyme scheme of lines 1 and 2 converge illustrating that God's election-love is expressed through teaching Torah and commandments. Lines 3 and 4 reinforce the idea that God's everlasting love (olam), as expressed through such teaching, is reciprocated by a commitment on Israel's part to rejoice and study the teaching and commandments forever (le'olam). As with the morning version, so
the evening version presents the loving God as a teaching God. The appearance of a pedagogical relationship as a metaphor for love is quite remarkable. One would have thought that the appropriation of Jeremiah's use of "everlasting love" would have triggered off analogies of connubial or parental love to express the relationship of God to Israel as does Jeremiah himself. The absence of other expressions suggestive of the connubial relationship found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, or the Song of Songs is clear evidence that their love metaphors are not those of the blessing. Even those of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah, which do provide much of the language of the blessing, lack the pedagogical image. Whether or not the metaphor of God as a loving teacher is of liturgical coinage, it achieved its most prominent expression through the liturgy.

Why did an educational metaphor gain pride of place over a nuptial one? The deployment of a pedagogical image instead of a marital one for the language of love is all the more perplexing in view of the significance of the marriage metaphor for the biblical covenant. For our purposes, the relationship between God and Israel undergoes three major developments. In Deuteronomy, the relationship is primarily described in terms of ancient suzerainty pacts or treaties. In the prophets, the marriage metaphor predominates. In the liturgy, the theme of reciprocal love is presented through a teaching metaphor. Since God becomes Israel's loving husband long before becoming a loving teacher, it is surprising that the teacher metaphor won out notwithstanding the availability of both marital and pedagogic metaphors for the revelation on Mt. Sinai.

The absence of the marriage metaphor may be attributed to its difficulty in serving effectively as an analogy for both love and sovereignty. Teachers more easily command fealty, exercise mastery, and elicit love. Moreover, the image of the beloved as student may be responding by anticipation to the command that the love of God be reflected in the instructing of children/students as found in the first two biblical sections. If love is reciprocated by teaching, then it might well have been initiated by teaching. To quote Wordsworth's Prelude: "What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how."

Finally, the idea of portraying revelation as an act of teaching Torah confirms the rabbinic idea of teaching Torah as an extension of revelation. The biblical books helpful in tracing the image of God as a loving
teacher are Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Psalms: In Deuteronomy, Moses is the teacher and God is the commander. In Isaiah and Psalms, God is also a teacher. A midrashic treatment of the verse from the Psalms (119:68)—“You are good and beneficent, teach me your laws,” exemplifies the type of teaching that led to the liturgical image.

David said to the Holy One, blessed be he, that God was good and beneficent to them [Israel] in every matter and he taught them his Torah and commandments and laws as it says, “I am the Lord your God, teaching you for your own good, guiding you in the way you should go. If only you would heed my commands.” (Isaiah 48:17–18) The statement of David from Psalm 119:68, “You are good and beneficent, teach me your Torah;” along with the citation of Isaiah (48:17), “teaching you for your own good,” epitomize the ideology of our blessing. By rereading the revelation as portrayed in Deuteronomy through the prisms of the Psalms and Isaiah—with their idea of a beneficent, teaching God—the blessing opens the way to perceiving the teaching of Torah as an expression of divine love. After all, if God’s beneficence entails teaching Torah, his love can do no less.

Having established that God’s love entails teaching Torah, let us look at the terms for the Torah in the next line. Line 2 consists of four curricular subjects: Torah, commandments, statutes, and laws. These four appear as a unit four times in Scripture. Their order here matches that of 2 Chronicles 19:10. Their context of revelation, however, matches that of the other three, namely, 2 Kings 17:34, 37, and Nehemiah 9:13b, all of which refer to the revelation of divine law. Indeed, Nehemiah 9:13b is preceded by the telling phrase, “You came down on Mt. Sinai and spoke to them from heaven” (9:13a), which is exactly the backdrop of the blessing. Similarly, a Genizah version of the festival liturgy, which could easily double for the second blessing of the Shema, cites the same verse from Nehemiah after stating, “You chose Israel . . . and brought them close in love around Mt. Sinai.” The order of the four also points to the practice of linking Torah with commandments, and statutes with laws, a practice that turns out to be an inversion of the way they are paired in 2 Kings 17. The inclusion of all four terms reinforces the Sinaitic setting of the blessing wherein the giving of Torah was first grasped as an expression of love as well as the position of Deuteronomy (4:14) that other statutes and laws were promulgated along with the Decalogue.
The other innovation of the blessing consists in orientation line 5—"for they are our life and the length of our days"—to the study of Torah as well as to the commandments. In Deuteronomy 6 and 30, this phrase refers to observance of the commandments alone without any mention of the study of Torah. Moreover, Deuteronomy 30:20 predicates residence on the land upon the keeping of the commandments, saying: “By loving the Lord your God, heeding his commands, and holding fast to him, you shall have life and length of days upon the land. . . .” In contrast, the blessing omits any reference to the land while underscoring the significance of Torah study by affirming that “we will recite them day and night.” The idea of reciting the Torah day and night alludes to Joshua’s admonition to keep the Torah constantly in mind—“Let not this book of Torah cease from your lips, recite it day and night” (1:8), and the description of Psalm 1:2 of the man who delights in the Torah by reciting it day and night.

In rabbinic parlance, the term “recite” became the technical term for the articulation of the Shema. By associating “they are our life and the length of our days” with the twice daily recitation of the Shema, line 5 confirms the rabbinic position of fulfilling the biblical mandate of constant involvement in Torah study through reciting the Shema day and night. By excluding any reference to the land and by introducing the study of Torah, and the love of God as expressed through the teaching of Torah, the unit of verses was formulated to sound fully biblical while accommodating the Torah-centered agenda of the Rabbis.

Both morning and evening versions of blessing advocate the study of Torah and the heeding of its commandments as the means of disclosing divine love. The juxtaposition of the request for enlightenment in the Torah and for help in cleaving to the commandments with the request for the unification of the heart in the love of God is not without significance. By so linking the two, the morning version presents both study and observance of the Torah as paths leading to the love of God. The Torah and the commandments serve the dual function of expressing divine love and of providing the means for its reciprocation. It is through sensing divine love that its human counterpart is sparked. God gave us Torah and commandments out of love. By complying with them, we can come to requite that love. The repetition of “love” in the morning blessing, fairly evenly distributed among the beginning, middle,
and end, weaves its way through the whole passage. Indeed, the first and last word is "love." These ubiquitous glimmerings of love are also refracted in what appears in some versions as a nuance of Psalm 86:6—
"Unite our heart to revere your name"—to "unite our heart to love and to revere your name" (line 9). The inclusion of love here underscores the love of God in contrast to the oft-mentioned love by God elsewhere in the blessing.

Blessing holds that experiencing the grace of guidance provided by the commandments leads to the conclusion that they were given in love. In contrast to the position that compliance with the commandments expresses love for God, blessing maintains that compliance with the commandments engenders such love. Nonetheless, blessing goes beyond noting the typical reciprocal love between God and Israel as found in the following midrash: "Israel says: ‘You shall love the Lord your God,’ and God says to them: ‘With everlasting love have I loved you.’" The priority of God's unconditional love is thrown into relief when contrasted with an example of God's conditional love such as the following midrashic statement: "Whoever loves God and complies with His commandments and teachings, God also loves him." By positioning this blessing about God's love before the Shema's demand to love God, the point is made that we are to love the God who loved us first. As love is best aroused by the awareness of being loved, the commandment to love God becomes liturgically an act of reciprocity—"the love of the lover," to use Rosenzweig's expression. It is God's love of Israel that produces a God-loving Israel. Thus, the blessing goes on to entreat God to render one capable of returning the love. Clearly, the experience of being loved nourishes the capacity to love.

The second section of the Shema and the second blessing both seek to bring about compliance with the commandments. Their approaches, however, diverge. What the former achieves through threats of punishment, the latter achieves through assurances of love. The punishment motif is entirely absent from the blessing framework. Positive reinforcement alone serves as its motivation. Through such motif conversion, a pact of loyalty became a covenant of love, thereby transforming a biblical affirmation of fealty into a liturgical expression of ardo.
Redemption

The theme of redemption permeates Jewish liturgy. As above, the example below derives from the daily liturgy. It is taken from the Amidah, where a form of this prayer appears in every Jewish statutory service. The primary theme of the Amidah is redemption. The focus is on blessings 17 and 18 which complete the drama of redemption, the former through God’s return to Zion and the latter through his universal acknowledgement. Blessing 17 concludes: “May our eyes behold your merciful return to Zion. Blessed are you, O Lord, who restores his presence to Zion.” It is followed by blessing 18’s theme of God’s universal acceptance. Together they conform to a motif that recurs throughout the Prophets and the liturgy, especially on the High Holidays; namely, that the precursor of the universal recognition of divine sovereignty will be God’s return to Zion.

The argument of blessing 18 on the subject of God’s universal recognition deserves special attention. It begins: “We praise [modim] you,” followed by a listing of examples of divine beneficence that elicit thrice daily praise. The central part of the blessing goes as follows:

1. We will thank you
2. and tell of Your praise
3. for our lives which are in your hand
4. and for our souls which are entrusted to you
5. and for your miracles which are daily with us
6. and for your wonders and kindnesses at all times.

Strophes 1 and 2 lay out our intention; strophes 3–6 state the reasons why. The whys are divided into two categories: strophes 3 and 4 express gratitude to God for our lives and souls; strophes 5 and 6 enunciate praise for God’s miracles and wonders. Thus, 1 is to 3–4 as 2 is to 5–6, making for an a-b-a-b structure. According to this construction, the blessing says: We will thank you for our lives that are in your hand and for our souls that are entrusted to you. And tell of your praise for your miracles which are daily with us and for your wonders and kindnesses at all times. The blessing concludes, saying: “For all of these [i.e., strophes 3–6] may your name be blessed, exalted, and exulted, O our King, continually and forever,” followed by the expectation that “all the living shall worship you.” What began as “we praise/acknowledge you” culminates in “all the living shall praise/acknowledge you.” God is exalted
threefold: at all times, for all time, and by all. As a bridge between the particular and the universal, the blessing pointedly lacks any reference to distinctively Jewish grounds for thanks and praise of the divine. Its inclusive perspective invites all to share in recognizing the divine margin common to all human life.

Some even extend the "all" of "all the living" forward in time to include the resurrected and others extend it vertically in space to include heavenly beings. But it is precisely the extension of the "all" horizontally to all humanity that lets the Amidah share in the common liturgical climax of the universal acknowledgement of divine sovereignty. The shift from our acknowledgement of God to his universal recognition frames much of the eschatological core of the rest of the liturgy. The best-known example is the linking up of the Aleynu-Al Kain sections of the Rosh Hashanah kingship liturgy which, as the Modim of the Amidah begins with Israel alone bowing in worship (modim) and concludes with all humanity following suit upon their realizing the sovereignty of God. The shift from us to everyone is reflected also in the rabbinic midrash of the Shema verse: 'The Lord is our God,'—for us; 'the Lord is one,'—for all humanity. 'The Lord is our God'—in the present period; 'the Lord is one'—in the future period, as its says, 'And the Lord shall be king over all the earth, on that day the Lord shall be one and his name one.' Unlike non-eschatological liturgies that tend to move from the universal to the particular, eschatological liturgies, such as the Amidah, tend to move from the particular to the universal.

In sum, the Amidah as a whole advances from personal through national to universal redemption, each stage involving the progressive realization of divine sovereignty from self to community/people to humanity. This process of progressing from self to humanity through the people/community is such a liturgical staple that it frames some of the most prominent elements of the liturgy such as Psalm 145, the Shema verse, and the blessing formula.

In conclusion, it might be said that it is precisely our awareness of ourselves as body and soul which enables us to love, and be loved by God and look forward to redemption.
Response to Rabbi Reuven Kimelman

The paper presented by Rabbi Reuven Kimelman is extraordinary. Of course, there is always more to add and inevitably, a basic Jewish approach to anything, especially prayer, must emphasize certain themes, the ones which lead to deeper questions. On the one hand, when people articulate their spirituality through their theology, there tends to be an emphasis on the distinctiveness of traditions. On the other hand, when people talk about the human situation or spiritual experience that provokes the desire to do something positive, they then talk about the human situation. Rabbi Kimelman’s talk was on the public communal prayer, which is found in liturgical classical texts. My presentation will focus on the private spiritual life. I believe that in order to understand the prayer of any religious tradition, one would have to include both the public and the private aspects of prayer, and one understanding of the tradition would be inadequate without the other. In sum, Jewish liturgy and the Jewish spiritual life are two complementary expressions of Jewish prayer.

To begin, while public religion proclaims and talks about the sacred texts, the language and content of private religion is more about anecdotes. When Jewish people get together, they often told stories of sages and saints. I understand saints in all traditions to be those who make the traditions alive to their members. It is these stories of spiritually unique people that help keep the tradition living and vibrant. Traditions, by virtue of being traditions, are always receding into the past. It is the lives of sages and saints that help make our traditions real and present to us.
The renewal of interest in Jewish spirituality that began about 30 years ago was heavily focused on scriptural text study. It also had a misguided overemphasis on Jewish mystical texts as an alternative to rabbinic Judaism. By now, of course, much of this emphasis has passed away. The renewal that is most powerful now has to do with the rediscovery of the spirituality available in traditional Jewish sources and their use in non-orthodox settings, for example, traditional religious meditation, song, and dance. Today, there is a conscious Jewish search for spiritual experience.

Perhaps the center of all prayer and the center of all human life (because life can become prayer) is Kavannah—mystical intention. In later Jewish piety, the notion of spiritual intention is re-understood as purity of motive. For example, there is a story about a very holy man, the founder of Hasidism, an 18th-century religious movement. He traveled with his disciples, and they came to a synagogue when it was time for the afternoon prayer. They were about to enter when the master stopped and looked into the room. The disciples watched and wondered what to do. Why was he waiting? Why wouldn't he go into the room? After some time passed, he said to his disciples, “I cannot go in. It is too crowded in there.” He somehow knew the words of prayer that had come out of the mouths of the congregants who had been in the room. They had been thinking about a business deal or how to saddle a horse or what they were going to say to their spouse. These prayers filled the room, but because of the wrong Kavannah, there would be no place for these prayers to go. Hence there was no room left for the master. This focus on intention lies at the heart of teaching about Jewish prayer. It has to do with purity, and in the end, the task is somehow to find a way in which one transcends the demands and concerns of the present situation and gives one’s heart fully to God.

Here is another story about pure intention: Imagine that a king, that is God, gave two tasks, one to one servant and one to another. The first servant’s job is to cut precious stone. The king said, “If you cut these stones, be very careful of how you do it. And, when you have finished cutting these stones, I will give you as your reward whatever extra is left over.” To the second person, “Your job is to clear out the king’s storage rooms. Get rid of all the rubble I do not need. At the end when you finish, you will get as a reward whatever is left over from your job.”
Ordinarily one would think the stone cutter is the lucky one. He finished the job and received gems as payment. And, the other poor guy, he has to clean out the storage rooms and what does he receive as a reward? He gets the junk. And yet, this is a mistake. The person cleaning out the junk knows that he will receive nothing and has nothing to look forward to. The only reason he is doing his task is because the king asked him to do it. The person cutting the precious stones will probably spend all of his time thinking about the reward of leftover gems. The "junk cleaner" becomes a model for ideal spiritual prayer. Prayer is an activity that purifies because the person learns not to desire the reward of precious stones, but instead to "get rid of the junk." The "junk" inside the human being is to be transformed by what is left over when it is gone, namely, more room for God.

In Judaism, private prayer has the ability to improve the world through the transformation of the self to serve God alone. Jewish prayer emphasizes purity of motive and intent, a striving to avoid complicating the activity of prayer by having ulterior motives. We teach: beware false promises that your prayer will reward you with an enormously successful life. The heart must sincerely love God without ulterior motives. The object of prayer is God and God alone.

This is not easily done. Most people come to prayer for mixed motives. Of course, we prefer to come to prayer by enjoying the desire to serve God in a positive way. But prayer in pain and tears is also acceptable. If a person is afflicted by trouble, suffering, poverty, or pain, bear in mind that what has happened is a powerful reminder to pray to God who is present in the world and engages with the human condition despite all of its poverty and pain, despite its exile from the Garden of Eden. If one can come to prayer for love of God alone, that is best. But many people cannot do so. They need to begin with pain, then search to move from their pain to love of God. Purity of heart is not necessarily something with which one needs to begin. One can also begin with motives that are less noble and animated such as, "This hurts, and I want it to go away," or "I feel lost for a moment or separated, and I need to reconnect with others."

During prayer, people sometimes think about doing something that is wrong. The more they think about it, the more interesting the sin becomes. They get lost in the thought, and the next thing they know,
they snap out of their thoughts at the end of prayer and discover that the experience has actually been sinful. People can respond to it by telling themselves to repress sinful thoughts. And yet, the Jewish tradition of prayer is not fundamentally about repressing one’s thoughts. Ultimately, one cannot expect to deal with human nature without embracing the physical. Rather than driving one’s evil impulses away during prayer, the tradition encourages one to allow all thoughts into prayer and then slowly and gently stop from giving them the power that comes from our curiosity and confusion. We need to stop investing in these sinful thoughts and transform them by “resting them” in God’s presence.

Take as an example a man daydreaming about a woman. What is he going to do with this daydream in prayer? As he is thinking that the woman is beautiful, he may slowly allow it to become clear that if God created this woman and she is beautiful, then God must be even more beautiful because God is the source of all beauty. This classic Platonic reflection moves away from a particular instance to the general idea of beauty as a whole, from fragmentation or distraction to wholeness and focus. An alternative is to take the erotic and the idea of beauty and then refocus it upon one’s wife. Certainly, the erotic and the mystical go together, in most traditions. A Jewish emphasis is to take the erotic and then to embody it in one’s wife so that, for example, sexual relations between husband and wife on the Sabbath become an affirmation of the divine-human unity. We do not seek to overcome the body. Rather we embrace the physical in order to experience the spiritual. Some have suggested the example of a candle inasmuch as the wick cannot burn unless there is wax, and the wax is the body. The body is a necessary element to achieve spiritual enlightenment. (This is not easy to do, but if one has a loving spouse it may be possible; of course, without such love, it is disastrous.)

So we can see that even erotic attractions are a piece of the greater whole. One of the advantages of prayer, that attempts to connect directly to the presence of God through the search for wholeness, is that our heart gradually develops the kind of methods of contemplation that move towards purity. Instead of assuming that we start with purity, we assume that we are going to journey towards it, but not without contemplation. Contemplation takes our lived experience and forms it into a loving and beautiful reality. In prayer, one can know that he or she is having an experience of God’s presence and one can experience the
removal of boundaries that gives way to a wholeness—something that can no longer be recognized as temporal. I suggest that Christians and Muslims are also no strangers to this experience.

In prayer we are attempting also to participate in the kind of experience that transforms whatever stands in the way of God’s Will. Prayer can move us beyond notions of being trapped in our ego and its sense of personal suffering, loneliness, or in a desire for personal gratification. Through prayer we can get past these traps to see suffering as something that we share as part of the human condition, as part of the world condition. We may even see this connection in prayer as something that completes, corrects and repairs the world. God becomes present in the world in something akin to a feminine presence (Shechinah). Of course, there is holiness and wholeness in all creation, but sometimes God appears to us to be at least as “self-divided” as we are. Prayer allows us to put those seemingly divided parts back together. God appears to us as both mercy and judgment, and in prayer both mercy and judgment are brought together.

We all come to life with the most primitive theology: God is a large parent who always loves us, always takes care of us, always smiles on us, and thinks we are terrific. For most human beings, that infantile theology of childhood stays in place until they experience their first profound loss. Then they become enraged that someone important has been taken away from them.

In Hasidism, in Jewish mysticism, a person works through this anger by beginning with it. One imagines at some profound level the imago, the image of the parent can never be eliminated. But the individual must return to this image constantly and transform it. We want to please our parents. We want them to smile and to love us. But, everyone has parents and everything one sees—even the birds and the trees—everything has a source, “parents” so to speak. And moving outward in contemplation, the world as a whole, also has a source, “parents.” Gradually one moves from the desire to please one’s biological parents, to the desire to unify that which is separate in the world and thereby, “please” the whole human family, even God. In this case, one’s search is to unify that which is fragmented on both the levels of intellect and of meditation. In Hebrew, these are yichudim, contemplative unifying of apparent opposites.
But Hasidic prayer is not simply that a person thinks these thoughts. The person experiences and deeply feels in his or her entire being the exile of humanity and God. They experience unification, and the desire to provide satisfaction. This kind of spiritual movement is about the entire person being drawn together with others to God, leaving behind one's individual being and coming to recognize ecstatic joy. In Hasidism, for example, there is often singing and dancing and in the end, the participants are full of joy. Why is this important? I once attended a Pete Seger concert in New York. Everyone was singing and I was together with my friends singing along with this great American folk singer. We were all having a terrific time, and we really saw and felt a kind of peaceful unity. Similarly, in mystical prayer, we begin by being caught up in the experience of singing and dancing together, and for a moment we leave our individual selves, our egos behind. For a moment, the boundaries between things that make us seem separate are gone. For a moment, the need to be restricted to one's personal biography is gone, although one's personal biography still finds a place in the larger biography of the universe as a whole. For a moment, one does not think about community as an interesting idea, but as an actual experience of ecstasy with God. It is momentary, but it is real.

There is more than this community unity. I think Muslims and Christians have no trouble identifying with the need for being solitary and seeking solitude as part of their prayer experience. Similarly, in the Jewish tradition there is a belief that it is important for humans to talk to God every day in the vernacular by themselves, individually, telling God everything that is on their minds, seeking God and asking help from him. This is not a contemplative act. This is not an attempt to gain ecstasy by understanding the universe in a more profound way. In some Hasidic traditions, one goes off alone, outside the city, in an attempt to seek God in solitude. Once there, the person sits and pours out his or her heart to God using his or her native tongue. Speaking in the tongue that moves you, one will experience feelings that are beyond formal language. This is an intimate kind of personal prayer that is not ritualized prayer. In fact, it is deliberately deritualized and deliberately "deautomates" the self. In essence, it attempts to annihilate the self by stepping into a situation of dialogue with God where one discovers that dialoguing with God leaves the person profoundly changed, the way all good dialogue changes people.
Although good interpersonal dialogue starts with the condition that nothing about the other must be changed, nonetheless as we truly come to understand another, he or she will change us. And if one has not known this wonderful experience, then get married and watch it happen. When we begin to talk with others without fear, there is no way in any intimate relationship that the participants can remain the same, unless he or she is incredibly rigid—a person that rigid would not be interested in dialogue to begin with. Similarly, when we talk to God and pour out our hearts to God, we also change. Of course, the criticism of this kind of prayer is that it is nothing more than free psychoanalysis where one talks to God for an hour every day and there is no bill. Unlike your psychiatrist who supposedly knows the truth and will one day review with you the "true interpretation" of yourself, God says nothing. Nonetheless, I believe that there is a transformative process active in constantly reaching out to another who, in this instance, is seen as a personalized God. Only in solitude and solitary talk with God, our creator, can we abolish all our lost and evil traits to the point where we completely negate our material existence and become reabsorbed into our elevated spiritual roots. Of course, there is always prayer beyond talk. I do not know of any religious tradition that does not cultivate the capacity for silence as preparation for prayer as well as an active expression of prayer. Many prayers focus upon liturgy and many of us can suffer from too many words, but the ultimate praise to God is through silence.

To conclude, being devoted to God through a purity of intention is a starting point and also an ending point to the place where one is going, namely purity of heart. One achieves purity of heart through contemplation and the search of ecstasy by understanding fully what the universe is actually like—the condition of exile and separation that brings us to prayer. This begins with one's own life, body, feelings, worries, desires, and is transformed gradually into a larger picture. This can happen in two ways—either by directly contemplating a religious theory, which in prayer becomes more than a concept, that becomes one's life direction. Or this can also take place by direct and unmediated conversation with God in a solitary and secluded place, which also transforms an individual. In all of these things, do not trust me. Seek the face of God to test these things for yourself. Test these ideas by checking the traditional sources, but more important, by trying, using, and seeing the ways in which these
reflections could be an integral part of your personal prayer life. The more profoundly it resonates with parts of your own tradition, the more profoundly we will discover that understanding the other, understanding those people we thought were different from us, is just as much a way of connecting to others—and it is truly possible to connect on the deepest levels—as it is a way to distinguish ourselves from others. This is not a totally imaginary world. It is only once removed from the real world, and finding the imaginary world may turn out to be the salvation of the real one.
Thank you very much for your warm reception and openness to grow in understanding. I greet all of you with peace. I feel privileged and honored to be able to participate in this effort by a Catholic university to promote interreligious dialogue and understanding. But, I also have to confess that I feel somewhat inadequate to speak about this topic. Of course, I love prayer and liturgy and I have some practical experience of Catholic and Christian prayer and liturgy, but I am neither a theologian nor a liturgist. I am a simple bishop who has served God through and in the experience of daily prayer and liturgy.

I am enthusiastic about the topic and I understand the title, "What Do We Want The Other to Teach About Our Liturgy and Prayer?" in the most simple way. I feel this is a very important topic and an excellent approach. I will begin by recommending some sources on Catholic prayer and liturgy, followed by some misunderstandings that I would like the other not to commit. I will conclude with some simple and foundational ideas concerning prayer and liturgy.

I would like to indicate some readily available sources through which a member of another religious community could gain simple and clear ideas about Catholic prayer and liturgy. First of all, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) is still the best summary available on the liturgy. It was promoted in 1963. A second document I would suggest is the Catechism of the Catholic Church in the sections dedicated to liturgy. Especially on the Eucharist, I recommend numbers
1135 through 1209 and from number 1345 through 1419. Also, I think the sections devoted to Christian prayer, numbers 2559 to 2865, which includes an explanation of what is called the Lord’s Prayer are the best pages written in recent times about Christian prayer. And, finally, I would suggest one other document, a letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued in 1989 called, “A Letter on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation.” In these documents, one can find a true and simple explanation of what I will now summarize by emphasizing a few ideas, which I consider from my experience to be important points to avoid misunderstandings and to promote accurate mutual knowledge. I shall emphasize five items—two on liturgy and three on prayer.

First, liturgy constitutes a vital part of Catholic experience and consists of rites and prayers which are in themselves noble and simple, and therefore, accessible to ordinary people, especially after Vatican II when local churches began to celebrate liturgy in the vernacular. Nonetheless, liturgy remains always a deep mystery. A profound understanding of what is going on in liturgical action is achieved only gradually and partially in the course of one’s entire life. In other words, I am not sure that I understand exactly and completely what is going on in a Eucharistic service. I have still to learn a great deal with God’s continual direction. A reason for this mystery is that liturgy in the Catholic understanding is not primarily a human action, but is a response to the risen Jesus Christ in his Church and through his Church. In other words, I would say that Jesus, during his life, experienced and offered prayers, including praise of God with deep joy and exultation. In a similar way, today his community is assembled around him and united with him in his glorious life praying, rejoicing, and thanking God. Although he remains invisible, he is present through signs such as bread and wine. Therefore, Christian liturgy is intentionally simple and visible, but remains mysterious and, in a sense, inaccessible.

A second point: The Eucharist, the Real Presence of Jesus present in the form of bread and wine among his people gathered in liturgical worship, is the source and summit of Christian life. The Eucharist is where we draw our strength and courage as well as our inspiration and hope as we journey towards the heavenly banquet. I will not go further explaining the Eucharist as such, which is the center of Christian liturgy, nor would I desire that it should be explained in a first attempt to show what
is Christian liturgy. I understand Eucharist as something so mysterious that it can be grasped adequately only by living a fully Christian life. Therefore, to avoid misunderstandings, I will not go further but to say that the Eucharist leads Christians to the heart of God and it is a love that is immeasurable.

Third, similar to Christian liturgy and worship, prayer is a great mystery. I think I have prayed all my life, but I find it difficult to explain exactly what happens when I pray. When I pray, there is certainly an activity of body and mind, an activity of speaking and thinking. But, at its deepest levels, prayer is an action of God's Spirit in us. In prayer, we become one with the Risen Lord through his Spirit who moves the heart and tongue to prayer. Also, we do not readily or frequently experience the deepest levels of this action.

Fourth, prayer may be understood as an elevation of the mind to God or as a request of something from God. In this second sense, prayer is a request where a Christian believes that his or her prayer is effective, is working in a mysterious way, but that the effect may remain unknown. And this causes anxiety or suffering for many Christians who pray because it is impossible to understand the ways of God, even by earnestly-praying Christians. Nonetheless, Christians who pray trust that God accepts their prayers and responds to them, giving to them what is best for the body and soul, and for those for whom they pray. But Christians are often not sure what would be best for them or those they are praying for. So prayer becomes an exercise of faith and hope without any expectation of an immediate reward.

Fifth, Christian prayer should not be understood or confused with a kind of psychologically deep experience. Christian prayer is offered through a human mind and body, but transcends them. Prayer requires giving oneself to God's mystery and requires surrendering to God's action without the pretension of controlling what is experienced. In this sense, prayer is an exercise of pure faith and hope, not of intellectual or psychological human achievement. The latter may be good and fruitful, but there is not the same sense of satisfaction or deep fulfillment as when one comes into contact with a direct and conscious experience of God's love and action.

I have mentioned these five points to help avoid misunderstandings about Christian liturgy and prayer. However, by mentioning these possible
misunderstandings, I have already alluded to some positive aspects of Christian liturgy and prayer, but I will limit myself to a few remarks, first on prayer and then on liturgy.

Christian prayer is manifold and can assume many forms. I dare to say that there are more types of prayers in the world and in the history of Christian spirituality than types of leaves on all the trees of the world. But one form of prayer that is particularly important to Christians comes from the influence of the Hebrew Bible, notably the Psalms. To understand Christian prayer as it was and as it is, one must consider the examples of prayer contained in the Bible, especially the Psalms. Christians are very grateful to our Jewish brothers and sisters for the treasury of the Psalms, which we have gratefully received from them. Christians pray psalms at every Eucharistic liturgy, and every time they pray the Liturgy of the Hours, for example, at Morning and Evening Prayer. The Psalms have also given great comfort to those at wake and funeral services. For prayer to be Christian prayer, the person praying must be in some union with Jesus Christ, which is why even the Psalms are read in light of the risen Jesus Christ who is the fullness of revelation for Christians.

The 1989 document on Christian meditation which I mentioned earlier, summarizes some further characteristics of true Christian prayer. First, Christian prayer is founded and dependent upon Christian revelation, and therefore, with the revelation of God’s glory shining through Jesus Christ. All the teaching of the Church about God and Jesus Christ and human salvation should be mentioned in order to understand Christian prayer. But, this goes beyond the scope of this paper. In any case, I would emphasize that Christian prayer is always performed in union with the Church, the faith of the Catholic Church, and in the midst of the Communion of Saints and their understanding of Christian life. Further, a central line of Christian prayer is the request, “Thy will be done,” which is part of the Lord’s Prayer and is the prayer of Jesus before his Passion began. Every Christian prayer has to be measured with this rule: Is this bringing me to a real identity with God’s will? We say from and through the heart, “Thy will be done.”

Finally, I shall say a few words on the liturgy. Although liturgy is celebrated every day in the Christian community, a most special and sacred day for Christians is the day of Sunday, which recalls for Christians the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Sunday is the Sabbath, the
main day of the week for the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. Christian liturgy invites active participation and celebration by the entire community, although there are different functions within the Christian community. There are ministers who have special functions as leaders to act in Christ's person for the service of all members of the Church. But liturgy is not private prayer or devotion, but is the participation of an entire community praying together. The liturgy is celebrated by people who have received the Sacrament of Baptism in union with Jesus Christ, and it is connected with the offering of one's life and one's intentions to God's glory. As such, there is a strong union between liturgy and the everyday life that people lead according to the law of love. Both liturgy and the challenges and blessings of everyday life go together. If there is a disconnect, then the liturgy has become too removed, as if an abstract, unrelated drama, or the Christian community has failed to respond appropriately to the conversion called for by the Word of God proclaimed in the liturgy.

The liturgy is filled with symbols, words and actions that refer primarily to Christ's saving actions when he lived among us. Christian liturgy uses various forms to express or mediate prayer, such as music, dance, and sacred icons as means and ways to represent the invisible and ever-present God. But, even with the use of these mediations, honor and glory and adoration are given only to the invisible God. The Eucharistic meal and the proclamation of the Word of God in the Scriptures are the center around which these other noble forms gather.

The liturgy is also celebrated according to different times of the year, which is called the liturgical year. There is a liturgical calendar, which may have differences according to different rites or traditions within the Church. For instance, in my dioceses of Milan, we do not follow the Roman rite, the Roman calendar. We follow another rite called the Ambrosian rite (from St. Ambrose), and so is done in many different churches, especially in eastern Christianity. In any case, this calendar reflects the Christian view of the history of salvation and especially reflects on the events of the Jewish people in the Hebrew Bible and the saving acts of Jesus Christ as they are recounted in the Gospels. Throughout an entire year, the main facts of the People of God and of Christ are recalled in the course of the Christian liturgy. The liturgical calendar also remembers especially Mary, the mother of Jesus, and many
Christians who are considered to be martyrs or saints. They were human beings, but in them we honor God who has sanctified them with the grace of his Spirit, and we see in them an example of life according to the teaching of Jesus.

I have presented a few points that I believe will help others teach about Christian liturgy and prayer. I think that dialogue among religions is more vital than ever, especially in order to show that religion is opposed to every kind of violence. An effective dialogue requires time, listening and understanding in order to be sure that we have grasped truly what the other thinks. Therefore, I consider this theme to be of the greatest importance and relevance. Ultimately, however, our efforts will only bear fruit if they are motivated by the love of God and authentic respect for the dignity of our neighbor. This means that we—all God’s people—must pray tirelessly for each other to follow God’s will in our lives.
What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Christian Prayer and Liturgy?

Jesus Christ: The Center of Christian Prayer and Liturgy

At the heart of all Christian prayer and liturgy lies a mystery: the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, Son of God and risen Lord of history. To begin to understand Christian prayer, one must see it as both an expression of and response to God’s self-revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and the fullness of Christ’s Body, the Church. In their prayer and liturgy, Christians are joined to Christ and in Christ. Like Saint Paul, they proclaim that it is the “Christ who lives in me” who offers praise, worship, and supplication to God.

God’s Self-Revelation in Human History

For Christians, as for Jews and Muslims, God is the Creator of the universe and is actively involved in the lives of human beings. God has revealed wonderful things, acting in human history in significant and meaningful ways, and this same God continues to communicate to humans through events, or revelation, to this very day. This divine activity transforms human history and encourages people to live lives of integrity, courage, and love.

Christian prayer and the substance of living the Christian life is based on an openness to the ever-increasing revelation of God at all times and
places. Christian prayer begins and ends in a relationship with the Trinity: one God, three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity is fully God in a coequal, coeternal, infinite, and indivisible relationship with each other. This mysterious, loving relationship is described in Church teaching as *perichoresis*, a “dancing” in and around the table and returning to the starting place, wherein all three persons of the Trinity mutually share in the life of the others, and none is isolated or disconnected from the actions of the others.

Christians are drawn into the loving relationship of the Trinity in prayer and liturgy. A Christian’s prayer arises in response to gifts that God has given, and the liturgy is the community’s participation in the Divine Liturgy, the “dance” of the Trinity. As Father, God calls forth the creation of the universe. Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father before all time, is the Word become incarnate, who walked among humanity and shared the good news of salvation. Jesus prayed that his followers would be one: “. . . as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.” The Holy Spirit, the Comforter and Counselor, illuminates the mind and enkindles a Christian’s desire to pray. In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul talks about the Spirit who “. . . helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.” An example of the revelation of the Trinity is found in the gospel according to Matthew:

> And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

One of the most fundamental prayers of Christians, called “The Sign of the Cross,” is both a reminder of the ignominious death that Jesus suffered for the redemption of the world as well as an attestation to the full revelation of the Christian God: One uses one’s right hand, lightly touching the forehead, the heart, and the two shoulders, to trace a “cross” on oneself while saying, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This simple, yet profound gesture, is used both publicly
and privately to begin liturgical celebrations and times of individual and communal prayer.

The Christian’s Response to Revelation: Prayer and Ethical Living

The revelation of God’s Trinitarian life of love calls the believer to respond by living a life of holiness, a life of faith, hope, and love in ever-deepening relationship with God. Christians are invited to live in covenantal community, faith, law, love, justice, and witness. Individual believers create space and opportunity for prayer as they seek to repair the world by their words and good deeds. Liturgy and worship are the response of the community of believers to God’s gift of life and God’s overtures of love.

Similarly to Jews and Muslims, Christians look for signs of God’s presence in their daily lives. Whether God’s revelation is experienced through the Scriptures, Tradition, leaders, holy persons, liturgy, nature, or the critique of unjust situations or structures, prayer remains an essential activity that helps believers continue on their journey toward holiness.

Holiness is not solely the work of an individual’s disciplined meditation and prayer, although setting time aside for prayer and meditation inevitably opens one to God’s will. Christians are called by God to holiness through the community of faith, the Church. The pilgrim People of God have the responsibility to follow God’s will in their time and, as appropriate, to support and challenge members of the community to live lives worthy of their calling by Jesus. Christians also have a special responsibility to work for social justice and to care for the poor and the outcast. As such, social justice and apostolic work can also be seen as a form of prayer, doing God’s work of redeeming and improving the world. The Christian’s mouth and hands become God’s vessel to speak truth and work for the good. To discern the proper course of action to take in the world requires constant prayer—communication with God and openness to God’s word.

Jesus, the Source and Center of All Christian Prayer

For Christians, the person of Jesus of Nazareth was God’s perfect self-revelation in a particular time and place. Just as those who walked and talked
with the Jesus in first century Palestine came to know God's love through their personal experience of the historical Jesus, the Christian comes to know that same God through the person of the risen Jesus Christ.

As a devout Jew, Jesus had a deep relationship with God whom he called Abba, "Father," a relationship marked by personal prayer in solitude as well as public prayer in the synagogue. Faithful to the teachings of his religion and conscientious in fulfilling his responsibilities within it, Jesus prayed in the synagogue often and was actively involved in the discussions and arguments about the religious issues of his day.

Little is known about the early life of Jesus, suggesting that his life was that of a normal, working-class Jew living in Palestine at a time when the Romans ruled. Later in his life, Jesus was led by God to become a public preacher, teacher, and healer, and was often called "Rabbi." He preached a simple message: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." One summary of his teaching is known as The Beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
    for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.⁴

Jesus gathered followers around him, and he taught them by word and deed. When they asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray," Jesus gave his disciples what is probably the most recognized Christian prayer. Followers of Jesus pray the "Our Father" or "Lord's Prayer" often in their private individual prayer, and they recite it together at almost every public worship service:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen

This most privileged of Christian prayers also illustrates the deep Jewish roots that Jesus drew upon in his relationship with God as well as his strong focus on forgiveness.

After Jesus was put to death by crucifixion by the Romans and was raised to new life, his early followers gathered in community to pray. Although they experienced adversity and even persecution, these early followers drew their strength and inspiration from Jesus who sent them his Holy Spirit to guide them on their journey. Fearlessly, the disciples of Jesus preached about he who had been raised from the dead as the one to whom all could look for redemption. Most, if not all, of these early disciples were Jewish, and they continued their Jewish practices with the additional distinction of believing in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ ("anointed one"). They participated in the temple services, shared the stories of his life and teachings, and gathered together for meals during which they commemorated the "breaking of the bread" (now known as "Eucharist"); they also shared their material goods with those who were less fortunate, especially widows and orphans.

The stories and teachings of Jesus were initially spread by word of mouth. Along with some Jewish liturgical and synagogue practices, these stories and teachings became the basis for public worship for Christians. Eventually gathered together in collections resulting in four classic texts—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—, the gospel places Jesus at the center of a follower's life as the source and inspiration of that life. To this day, Christians look to Jesus as their model, doing as he had taught and acted, even to turning the other cheek to an aggressor and praying for one's enemies.

One traditional way to summarize the ways that a follower of Jesus should act is articulated in what are known as the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The corporal works of mercy are to 1) feed the hungry; 2) give drink to the thirsty; 3) clothe the naked; 4) visit the imprisoned;
5) shelter the homeless; 6) visit the sick; and 7) bury the dead. The spiritual works of mercy are to 1) admonish the sinner; 2) instruct the ignorant; 3) counsel the doubtful; 4) comfort the sorrowful; 5) bear wrongs patiently; 6) forgive all injuries; and 7) pray for the living and the dead.

Christian Liturgy—The Prayer of the Church, the Body of Christ

In his thoughtful reflections included in this volume, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, SJ, emphasizes that Christian prayer, especially within the liturgy, is profoundly mysterious. In order to begin to grasp the nature of Christian liturgy, one must approach another of the great mysteries of the Christian faith: the Church as the Body of Christ.

As Christianity matured with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the community gradually discerned deeper meanings about the mystery of Jesus, the Word of God become flesh, who has “pitched his tent among us.” By the fourth century, Saint Augustine was preaching and teaching about Christ in three ways: as the eternal Word of God, Second Person of the Trinity, in and with the Father; as the Word Made Flesh, the incarnate Son of God; and as the Totus Christus, the Whole Christ in the fullness of the Church. Christians respond to God’s self-revelation in Jesus not only by prayer and good works, but also by participating in the mystery of Christ as members of his Mystical Body, the Church, which unites head and members, both on earth and in heaven. This mysterious union of Christ and his Body is source of the Christian mystical prayer and the Church’s rich liturgical and sacramental life.

The early Christian prayer forms were deeply rooted in the Jewish prayer tradition and Scriptures. Over time, prayer, liturgy, and sacraments developed to reflect the central place of the Paschal Mystery (Christians’ belief in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus). The Christian Sabbath became Sunday in remembrance of the day of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Christians gather on Sunday each week for the celebration of the Eucharist to recall the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

For Catholic Christians, the sacrament of the Eucharist both signifies and, at the same time, causes that which it signifies: the Body of Christ—the Christian community and its unity. Just as many grains of wheat make one loaf and individual grapes are pressed to make one cup of wine, so
individual Christians become one living body—the Whole Christ, his Mystical Body. By their participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, Christians become all the more that which they already are, the Body of Christ. This understanding of Eucharistic participation reflects a theology that sees the Eucharist as both the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Church. Christians offer themselves along with Christ. A recent articulation of this theology can be found in the theme of the 2005 Synod of Bishops: The Eucharist—source and summit of the life and mission of the Church.

Often publicly celebrated in the Christian community, the sacraments are privileged rituals that both celebrate and affect the Christian's relationship with God and with the other members of the faith community. The sacraments of initiation into the Christian community are Baptism (welcoming the new member, often infants, into the community), Eucharist (coming to the table of the Lord), and Confirmation (assuming the responsibilities of a full, adult member in the community). Other sacraments in some Christian churches include Reconciliation (asking for God's pardon for sins), Matrimony (the covenantal commitment between a couple, the Church, and God), Holy Orders (public ordination to ministry and leadership), and the Anointing of the Sick (to strengthen members of the community struggling with their health).

The central role of the Jesus in the life of the believer, as well as in all of human history, may be best captured in the concluding phrase of many of the prayers of the liturgy and sacraments, where the prayer is made "through Christ our Lord. Amen." This centrality of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was also reflected in the evolution of holydays and liturgical seasons, e.g., Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. A feature of Catholic liturgy and its calendar is the remembrance as well of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the saints—human beings who lived exemplary lives of prayer and good works and who continue to inspire Christians to see God's presence shining through their humanity. A traditional prayer, part of which can be found in the Gospel of Luke, recalls the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Savior:

Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Christian Community’s Life of Faith

It is safe to say that one cannot be an individual Christian—at least not for long. At its core, Christianity has a conviction that God’s revelation is best experienced in the faith community. Communal faith statements or creeds appeared as early as the second century. One of the first codified statements of Christian belief is known as the Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day he arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting, Amen.

In addition to official communal statements of belief such as creeds, Christians understand their communal prayer or liturgy as an attestation of their belief. The ancient Christian principle, “What the Church prays, the Church believes” (lex orandi, lex credendi) highlights the importance of communal prayer as a form of catechesis and transformation. Therefore, much time and attention is paid to the preparation of the Christian liturgy. Those involved in the different ministries or roles during the service (hospitality ministers, presiders, readers, eucharistic ministers, preachers, musicians, etc.) often view their part as a sacred service or prayer to God on behalf of the community. Care is also taken to prepare the worship space in the proper seasonal environment, symbols, art, etc.

Despite the propensity of Christianity to codify its public prayers into official books and translations, there is a remarkable diversity in the
celebration of public prayer. On the local level, communities celebrate their faith through their own unique expressions of common prayer and celebrations of faith: Days of Reflection and Renewal, blessings, Morning and Evening Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours), Scripture sharing groups, prayer meetings, parish songfests, festivals, processions, and retreats. Additionally, in the Catholic Church the many spiritual traditions practiced by communities of religious men and women (Augustinians, Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, etc.) offer deep and refreshing wells of prayer and resources for the Church. It should also be noted that, as Catholics and the Churches of the Reformation continue to grow closer together in their understanding of theology as it relates to the Word, their forms of prayer and liturgical celebration continue to evolve based on this new relationship of mutual respect.

As a final note on communal prayer and worship, Christians believe that Jesus Christ came to redeem the whole world. As such, there is often an emphasis placed on the salvation of souls during communal prayer, with Jesus as the sole agent. The salvation of souls is seen as the way that God's reign of peace on earth will be accomplished.

The Individual Prayer Life of Christians

Having explored Christian liturgy as the prayer of the community, we will now focus briefly on the more individual and private prayer life of the Christian. Note that we are avoiding the use of the phrase "personal prayer" because one's person is deeply involved in both communal liturgy and private individual prayer. Whether one prays as an individual or as a member of the community, authentic prayer is always personal.

The depth of one's unique personal relationship with Jesus is known only to God, and the path to which he or she is led by God is most sacred. A person's conscience is his or her most sacred core and sanctuary, and it is in this sacred space that God speaks. There are innumerable paths to holiness, but what is clear is that they all have times of solitude, retreat, reflection, renewal, and prayer as part of the journey, treasured times which, in turn, lead one back into the world to help to repair it.

Christians are encouraged at a young age to pray informally to God, asking for guidance and protection. This intimate and direct form of
communicating with God helps adults also as they seek to recenter their daily lives in the world in God. As a Christians mature in the faith, they also learn traditional prayers and devotions, exercises that have inspired countless generations of Christians before them. Examples of traditional devotional forms of prayer include: grace (or “blessing”) before and after meals, quiet meditation, devotional reading of the Scriptures, family prayers, bedtime prayers, Stations of the Cross (recalling the journey of Jesus on the way to his death), rote prayers, spontaneous prayer, Eucharistic devotion, the rosary, novenas, meditation walks, retreats, sacred music/hymns, and pilgrimages. All of these devotions may be practiced in the company of others. It is also important to note that the concerns of one’s personal faith journey and home life are always included in the community’s public worship.

To conclude, we would like to leave the reader with a prayer. Recorded in Luke’s gospel, “The Magnificat” is a beautiful prayer of praise whose Jewish roots are evident. Placed on the lips of Mary as she awaits the birth of her son, these words inspire the Christian to follow God’s will in humility and courage, trusting that God’s reign of mercy, justice, and peace will dawn.

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.15
Notes

1. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" [Galatians 2:19b–20a]. NOTE: All scriptural passages in this paper are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, © copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.


5. Mark 1:15.


8. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. . . . All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people." Acts 2:42, 44–47a.

9. The literal meaning of gospel is "good news."

10. See immediately preceding chapter by Cardinal Martini: What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Catholic Liturgy and Prayer?

11. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us; and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." [John 1:14] Literally, "and pitched his tent among us."

12. The earliest teachings on the "Body of Christ" can be found in the letters of Saint Paul (Corinthians 1 & 2, Ephesians, Romans, Galatians). The term "Mystical Body" did not appear until the Middle Ages and became especially popular in the last century as a result of Pius XII's encyclical on the Church, Mystici Corporis (1943).

13. "The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church, which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire." Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1368.


What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Islamic Prayer and Liturgy?

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: Peace, God's mercy and his blessings be upon all of you. I want to thank the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of the Sacred Heart University of Fairfield, Connecticut, for arranging this distinguished interfaith conference, and the Centro Dionysia, Rome, for hosting all of us in this marvelous place.

What I find particularly significant in our meeting is the idea of focusing our attention on how the other sees and teaches about us, on how the members of other religious traditions understand and interpret the sense of our methodology of worship. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, used to say, "Prayer is the cornerstone of Islam," and I think this can also be extended to Judaism and Christianity, and to many other religious traditions. Inside the Catholic tradition, for instance, we find the idea of the deep connection between the way of praying and the contents of belief, between lex orandi and lex credendi, and in general, one can say that prayer is exactly the context in which our belief is changed into action, in which the believer puts himself in touch with the One who is the object of his faith and the inspirer of his actions.

The first obstacle one finds in trying to explain the role of prayer and liturgy in Islam is connected to language. Normally one translates "prayer" with two concepts in mind which, in Islam, are quite different from each other; i.e., the ritual prayers (salah in Arabic), which must be
performed in Arabic, according to detailed rules of purity, at appointed
times with fixed formulas and a specific orientation of the body; and
spontaneous prayer (\textit{du'a}), which is not dependent on particular rules
and by which the creature can ask his Lord whatever lawful things he is
in need of and in whatever languages he likes. With a certain percent-
age of approximation, one could translate \textit{salah} as "service" and \textit{du'a} as
"supplication." This would permit us to say that by his supplications, a
Muslim is offering to God a praise that is human and fallible, while by
his daily service he is offering God the praise through which God praised
himself in the glorious \textit{Qur'an}. The recitation of \textit{Qur'an}, and in partic-
ular of its opening chapter (\textit{al-Fatihah}) is in fact an essential part of each
service, while the conditions of purity and the positions which the wor-
shipper takes during the service are also prescribed in it.

By mentioning this point, we are referring to what is common to the
three Abrahamic faiths. The central rites of each of the three religions—
tefillah in Judaism, the liturgy in Christianity, and \textit{salah} in Islam—
includes the idea of offering to God not only our actions, our hopes, and
our submission, but mainly his own Word, to the point that the service
is not exactly a gift to him, but rather a restitution to him of the Word
through which he created the whole universe. In Judaism and in Islam,
the Word of God is essentially manifested in the form of the Torah and
of the \textit{Qur'an}, and this is the reason why their recitation has such a cen-
tral point in Jewish and Islamic services, while in Christianity that same
Word is not understood as transcendentally manifested in a revealed
Book, but rather in the person of Jesus Christ. So, the liturgy of the
Word in a Catholic Mass, for example, has a role that is preliminary to
the Eucharistic liturgy, which is conceived as the offering of the Word of
God on the altar as a sacrifice. The common point between the three
religions is in understanding the service as restitution to God of the
Word of God, which implies a participation of the creature to the same
divine nature, but the manifestation of the Word is not understood by
Christianity in the same way as it is understood by Judaism and Islam.
Consequently, a Jew and a Muslim find no difficulty to immediately
understand the similarities between their respective daily services, but
they could find some difficulties in understanding the similarity which
nevertheless exists between those services and a Catholic Mass. In the
same way, a Catholic could be inclined to see in Jewish and Muslim
services the mere repetition of words and prayers, without a palpable nature of offering, and even less of offering to God his own divinity.

This also explains how the passage from one language to another does not alter the nature of the Mass, as demonstrated by the Liturgical reformation and the introduction of vernacular languages after the Second Vatican Council, while the attempt to use languages different from Hebrew or from Arabic would necessarily alter the nature of the services in Orthodox Judaism and in Islam. This brings us to another difference: in Orthodox Judaism and Islam, the language of revelation is itself part of the revelation, which involves both the letter and the meaning of the Holy Book. A targum of the Torah in Aramaic or in any other language is not the Torah itself, but rather a human interpretation of the revelation. In the same way, Muslims believe that the Qur'an cannot be translated into another language, and that a so-called “translation of the Qur'an” is not a real translation, but rather an explanation of the meanings in a language that is different from Arabic. Islam also teaches that the Qur'an has seven levels of understanding, each of which is disguised by the level that precedes it. A translation of the meaning necessarily concerns the literal level only, which is the most external of the meanings; i.e., the one that is understood by every person who reads the Qur'an while knowing the Arabic language.

There have been some cases where the Muslim communities of Europe found some difficulties with non-Muslim editors of the translations of the meanings of the Qur'an in French, German, English, etc. From one point of view, printing an edition of the meanings of the Qur'an with the Arabic text was too expensive, and not conceivable for a publication intended for the general public. But from another point of view, the Muslim communities refused to give the title “the Qur'an” to a book that did not contain the original Arabic text, and insisted on the title, “Translation of the Meanings of the Qur'an,” which the editors did not find palatable for the public, and considered it as a sort of eccentric and pedantic fixation. The issue was not so simple. In most of cases, the editors were not able to understand that, according to Muslims, a text including the translation of the meaning of the Qur'an in another language was not “the Qur'an” at all, but only its fallible interpretation. In the same way, the attempt of Mustafa Kemal to compel the Muslims of Turkey to read “the Qur'an in Turkish” during their services was a total
failure, since not only the theologians, but also the laypeople understood that by doing so, one would lose the offering to God his Word, of praising God by the praise through which he praised himself.

This helps us to understand how the same notion of revelation is not identical in Islam and in Christianity. Christianity understands revelation as the divine inspiration of human authors, who wrote in their language, from their culture and with their intellectual background. Translating the contents of Christian revelation into new languages has no tragic consequences, and neither does the introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy. Latin was neither the original language in which the New Testament was written, nor the language spoken by Jesus or by the early Christian community. Latin was not a sacred language but rather, a liturgical language introduced at a certain stage of the development of the Church and in a period in which it was the lingua franca of Europe. At a time when this language is not spoken widely anymore, and the number of those who understand it is limited, the introduction of native languages could sensitively increase the participation of the believers to the liturgy. On the contrary, in Islam (similar to Hebrew in Orthodox Judaism), Arabic is not only a liturgical language, but a sacred language. Revelation is conceived as a communication, not only of the meanings, but also of the grammatical form. It is through the revelation of the Qur’an that one of the many dialects spoken by Arabs became a language that is spoken and understood from Morocco to Iraq. The revelation changed Arabic into the language of a nation, and its nature as language of the revelation of the Qur’an also prevented Arabic from evolving into different national languages.

As for the opening chapter of the Qur’an (al-Fatihah), it contains a synthesis of the whole book, and as noted earlier, its recitation marks the beginning of every daily service. It has a role in Islam that is analogous to that of the Shema’ in Judaism and of the “Lord’s Prayer” in Christianity, and is divided into two parts. The former contains a mention of the divine names, while the latter is a request of guidance and of protection against deviance. Its words mean:

1. In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate
2. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,
3. The Merciful, the Compassionate,
5. Thee we worship and Thee we ask for help.
6. Guide us to the straight path,
7. The path of those whom Thou hast favored, not the path of those who earn Thine anger, nor of those who go astray.

Abu Hurayrah, one of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, narrated that he heard him say: "God, mighty and sublime is he, had said:

I have divided the service between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for. When the servant says: "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds," God says, "My servant has praised Me," and when he says, "The Merciful, the Compassionate," God says, "My servant has extolled Me." When he says, "Master of the Day of Judgement," God says, "My servant has glorified Me." When he says: "Thee we worship and Thee we ask for help," God says: "This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for." And when he says: "Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast favored, not the path of those who earn Thine anger, nor of those who stray," God says, "This is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for."

This mention of divine answers to the recitation of the creature leads us to understand in which sense the service is considered an intimate colloquium between the creature and his Creator. After completing the reading of al-Fatihah, the worshipper adds other verses from the Qur'an, and then bows, to show that he has not added anything to the praise which Allah gives to himself, but as only manifested by means of his created tongue, the uncreated Word which—according to Islam—is one of the divine attributes. After bowing, the believer stands again, and while coming back to the erect position says what means, "God listens to the one who praises him." This is a further clarification of the intimacy with the Divine Essence that is reached by means of the service, since God is not actually listening to the words of his servant, but rather to his own Word, which descended upon the tongue of his servant. As a consequence of this divine epiphany, the same individuality of the creature is temporarily abolished, and the worshipper prostrates with his forehead to the ground, symbolically coming back to the earth he came from. No
individuality can stand in front of God, and the prostration represents a condition of extinction (fana' in Arabic) of the created nature, which is like a temporary mirage, like a contingent shining which made God’s light manifested. Even so, extinction in God is not conceived in Islam as a permanent condition, but as the first stage, which in the Islamic terminology is referred as “the journey from the creation toward the Truth.” It is immediately followed by subsistence in God (baqa’); i.e., by the “journey from the Truth toward the creation.” After being extinguished in God, the creature is sent back to himself, and this is represented by the seated position, which follows the prostration. That subsistence through God, the coming back to one’s createdness while remembering the precedent, relative union with God, is itself transitory, and is followed by the stage in which the creature is again extinguished through the “extinction of the extinction” (fan'u-l-fana’), which is represented by a second prostration.

These changes of status are obviously symbolic only for the wide majority of the believers. They represent the spiritual journey from the creation to the Truth and from the Truth through the creation, but this does not mean that each Muslim actually performs a spiritual journey during each of his daily services. Even so, Islam admits that the spiritual journey during the service has an ontological reality for the awliya’; i.e., for that category of beings that basically corresponds to the tzaddikim of Judaism and to “saints” of Christianity. The same idea of a magic carpet in the folklore of the Islamic world and in popular Islamic literature (for instance, in “One Thousand and One Nights”) hints at this same truth. The carpet stands for the place where the worshipper stands for the daily service, and the notion that someone can fly on a carpet is a sort of materialized transposition of the notion of spiritual journey.

These hints lead Muslims to seek the “secrets of the service” which should limit the tendency of those orientalists who deal with Islam as a mere “legalistic religion,” as a religion which knows no priesthood, no rites and no sacrifice. In reality, by referring to salah as mere “prayer,” and not as a Dominical service, its specific ritual depth is greatly undervalued. Probably this undervaluation of the ritual nature of the Islamic service depends on how differently ritual is conceived in Catholicism and in Islam. A Catholic Mass is centered on the Eucharistic sacrifice, but has plenty of accessory elements that concur with its celebration, such as
special garments for the priest and for the deacons, incense, hymns, physical postures during the service, etc. From a technical point of view, the Islamic service has complex conditions, prerequisites, rules, etc. Each of the classical treatises of Islamic law opens by a series of chapters dedicated to the water with is used for the ritual washing and for the ablation which precedes the service, to the different daily services, and to their compulsory or optional constituents. On the other hand, Islamic rituality is concentrated in the person of the worshipper himself. His body, his mind, and his heart are all that are necessary for the service, which can take place in a mosque, a room, or even in an open space. Even the carpet is not an essential element of the service, but is only conceived as a means to ensure the ritual cleanliness of the place were the worshipper puts his forehead.

Strangely enough, those same orientalists who tend to reduce the role of the daily service to “prayer” and who, in general, completely ignore those symbolic aspects of the service to which we have referred, are nevertheless inclined to describe Islam as a “legalistic religion,” and tend to limit Islam to its legal system, the Shari‘ah. On the contrary, the Shari‘ah is only one aspect of Islam. It is a religion that is formed by Shari‘ah (law), Tariqah (path), and Haqiqah (truth). While the Shari‘ah deals with those external deeds that a believer performs with his body, the Tariqah deals with the inner disposition in performing those same deeds, and the Haqiqah deals with that knowledge of God that is the goal of both Shari‘ah and Tariqah. Tariqah is also known as Tasawwuf, i.e., Sufism, which is, in respect to the Shari‘ah, the kernel of a nut in relation to its nutshell. Shari‘ah without Sufism is incomplete and mutilated, in the same way that Sufism without Shari‘ah is. None of them—if isolated—represents the totality of Islam. One can say that all the deviations which historically took place inside the Islamic world arose from attempts to isolate one of those elements from its necessary complement. One of the early jurists of Islam, Imam Malik Ibn Anas, used to explain this reality by saying, “Whoever abides by Sufism without Law becomes a libertine, and whoever abides by Law without Sufism becomes corrupted, while whoever studies Sufism and Law together finds the Truth.”

Another of the early jurists, Imam Muhammad Ibn Idris as-Shafi‘i, clarified this same principle in one of his quatrains:
"Don't be exclusively a jurist or exclusively a Sufi: For God's sake, I am giving you sincere advice. The Law-only man lacks sincerity, while the Sufism-only one is ignorant. How is it possible for someone who is ignorant to prosper?"

The Shari'ah without Sufism is like a corpse without a soul, and Sufism without the Shari'ah is like a disincarnated soul which suffers from its separation from the body. The one who knows the Shari'ah without knowing Sufism will only perform void rituals, whose significance is inaccessible to him, while the one who knows Sufism without knowing the Shari'ah will not even know how the daily service must be correctly performed. That is the reason why, from the beginning of Islam until today, Islamic scholars have repeatedly dealt with the complement between "the science of the exteriority" and "the science of the interiority." In many cases—the most famous of which was Imam al-Ghazali—those whose authority was in matters of Law were also among the most outstanding representatives of Sufism.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a region of Arabia called Najd saw the emergence of Wahhabism, a puritanical and literalist sect which considered Islam "degenerated," and proposed a "reform" to be imposed on Muslims by means of coercion, terrorism and indiscriminate massacres. One of the goals of the Wahhabi movement was to reduce Islam to a mere formalism, bereft on any spiritual depth. The alliance of the Wahhabis, originally a gang of semi-illiterate desert marauders, with the British Empire in its war against the Ottoman Sultanate, led to the creation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to the appointment of the descendants of those marauders, the royal House of Sa‘ud. The belief of the Wahhabis’ official religion of the Saudi Kingdom was so primitive and narrow-minded that it did not spread outside of Arabia. The situation started to change with the discovery of oil, which made the House of Sa‘ud one of the richest families of the world and a financial power in the worldwide economy. Saudis massively invested in Wahhabi propaganda, first in the Arab world, then in the Indian subcontinent, and finally, in the West. Paradoxically, the existence of the Soviet Union prevented the spread of Wahhabism to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, to the point that in the Arab world of today, the influence of
Wahhabism and modernism has considerably spread while Islam in the Soviet Muslim Republic survives in its pristine form.

Wahhabism has many of the features of Islam as conceived by the orientalists: is literalist, legalistic, rejects every form of Sufism, and reduces the practice of religion to the passive assimilation and mechanical application of rules. Nevertheless, in the eyes of Muslims it has a main defect: it is not "Islam" but rather an anthropomorphic cult which started three hundred years ago, and was rejected by the most eminent Muslim theologians. The orientalistic prejudices associated with the Wahhabi propaganda are preventing many Westerners from understanding traditional Sunni Islam, and from realizing the role Sufism has played in Islam since its beginnings. The consequence is that, apart from a very restricted group of specialists, most Westerners completely confuse Islam with Wahhabism and attribute to Islam those attributes that are notions of the Wahhabi belief.

With the constitution of al-Qa'idah and of the Taliban regime of Hamas, Wahhabism has returned to its primitive methodology. Like terrorism and indiscriminate carnages permitted the Wahhabis of old to occupy the Holy Places of Islam in Mecca and Medina, so the neo-Wahhabis of today are conceiving the idea of conquering the whole world by the same means. And they invest in the international network of terror by applying their profits derived from oil trade. If the Wahhabism of old was a menace for the Muslim inhabitants of Arabia, contemporary Wahhabism has become a menace for humanity as a whole. In front of that menace, in front of pseudo-religious legitimation of violence, bloodshed and terror, an increase in interfaith dialogue—especially among the Abrahamic faiths—is the best answer which can be given to those who plan to abuse the truth of Islam and to legitimize murder and terrorism "in the name of God." An interfaith dialogue that does not include the need for a joint defense of a common front against the menace of the pseudo-religious legitimation of terrorism is destined to be reduced to a mere scholastic debate; and the serious risk is that representatives of pro-terror extremism may find a way to get involved, even in interfaith dialogue, thus getting legitimized as authentic "religious representatives."

While I have dedicated most of this paper to clarify the distinction which exists in Islam between service and supplication, between ritual
prayer and spontaneous prayer, I want to conclude by hinting at another form of prayer, *dhikr*, the continuous mention of the Divine Names. *Dhikr* in Arabic has the sense of “remembrance,” and remembering God, being aware of his presence in all the circumstances of our life is what Islam considers to be the goal toward which all the acts of worship and all the religious practices are finalized. In this sense, one can say that the *dhikr* of God is the quintessence of worship: the daily service is not prescribed because of the positions which the body assumes, because of its fixed times but because of the remembrance of God which it causes. The same applies to fasting or to the pilgrimage to Mecca and to every other Islamic prescription. When a Muslim walks, sits or lies down, and then starts remembering God by mentioning his names in a low or in a soft tone, he abides by the ritual which includes and substantiates all the other possible forms of worship. Every other form of worship is subjected to rules and limitations, but the *dhikr* is not. One can go on making *dhikr* while walking, working, while performing any other of his daily activities, and without any need to stop them. This excellence of *dhikr* in respect to other forms of worship—even in respect to the service—is clarified by the Qur'anic words which mean:

Recite what is revealed to thee of the Book and raise the service. Verily the service restrains from shameful and unjust deeds, but nevertheless the remembrance of God is surely the greatest form of worship, and God knows what ye do. And dispute ye not with the People of the Book except for the best, unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong. Say to them: 'We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is One; and to Him we submit. (29:45–46)

Significantly enough, this proclamation of the excellence of the remembrance of God upon all other forms of worship is immediately followed by instructions concerning the Abrahamic dialogue. Useless disputes and diatribes must be avoided, and emphasis must be put on what unites us, our common faith in the Divine revelation, on the awareness that the God of the Jews, of the Christians, and of the Muslims is One God. Thus remembering God immediately means remembering the deep link which unites us. Moreover, remembering God also means to remember that he is
a God of peace, and that He is peace. *As-Salam*, peace, in Arabic is both the common greeting and one of the ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God. When we greet each other by saying "peace be upon you," this does not simply mean wishing that the other lives safely and is safeguarded from war, but also wishes that God be upon him, inspire peace into his heart and make his milieu an abode of peace. In this spirit, I would like to end by reciting one of those supplications which the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, used to repeat after each of his daily services, and which many Muslims go on repeating after their services until today:

O God,
Thou art Peace and Peace comes from Thee,
And Peace cometh back to Thee.
Let us enter,
Our Lord,
In the abode of Peace
And grant us access to Heaven.
Thy abode is an abode of Peace,
May Thou be blessed and exalted,
Thou art the Owner of Majesty and Generosity.
Amen.
Sufism, the Inner Dimension of Islamic Spirituality

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Imam Qushayri, the author of the great Sufi compendium Rasa’il, understands Sufism in the sense of purity (safa); i.e., the purity of inner and outer life, and says that “purity is something praiseworthy in whatever language it may be expressed and its opposite, impurity (kadar), is to be eschewed.” In support of purity he cites a tradition (hadith), which explains the meaning of Sufism and affords proof for it: Abu Hujaifa told us that once the Holy Prophet Muhammad visited us and his face showed us that he was deeply perturbed. He said: “The best part of this world is gone and only its kadar (impurity) remains.” Consequently death is now a boon for every Muslim.

Imam Ghazzali, under the heading “On the Way of the Sufis” in his book, Al-Munqidh min-al-Dalal (Rescuer from ‘Error) states: “When after acquiring proficiency in these sciences, I turned my attention to the methods of the Sufis. I came to know that their method attains perfection by means of theory and practice. The gist of their knowledge is to mortify the self and acquire freedom from baser passions and evil attributes so that the heart may get rid of the thought of anything save God and to embellish it with Divine remembrance.”

During the days of his academic fame and glory, Imam Ghazzali gave up his literary pursuits, and the job of judge (Qadi). Adopting the ways of Sufis he wandered alone in the forests. During this period of his asceticism, someone met him and asked for a legal decree on some problem.
He said to him, "You have reminded me of the false times. Had you approached me when I was engaged in literary pursuits and was a Qadi, I would have issued a decree in the matter." The eminent imam now considered the lessons of the schools as worthless and he viewed that period as false and a time of destruction. Such truth is expressed by the words of the Persian Sufi-poet, Rumi:

O heart, thy high-prized learning of the schools,
Geometry and metaphysic rules,
Yea, all but lore of God is devil's lore:
Fear God and leave this lore to fools.

In explaining Sufism, Abu'l Hasan Nuri says, "Sufism is the renunciation of all selfish pleasures." A Sufi is usually free from greed and lust and knows that, as long as he is a victim of lust, he is imprisoned. He must make himself subservient to God's will, thus his greed and lusts will be annihilated. He is well aware that following the dictates of desires and lusts is misleading and is destructive. As a translation of the meaning of the Qur'an says, "And follow not the lusts, for they will mislead thee from the path of God." [Qur'an, 6:19] Similar good advice was offered by Bayazid Bustami in this couplet:

Listen to a good word of the Sage of Bustam
Spurn the lure of the grain if thou carest not to fall into the net.

Abu Muhammad al-Jurayri writes, "Sufism is the building up of good habits and the keeping of the heart from all evil desires and passions." To Muhammad bin al Qassab, "Sufism is good manners which are manifested by a better man in better times before a better nation." Muhammad b. Ali has expressed the view that Sufism is goodness of disposition; he that has the better disposition is the better Sufi.

It is clear, then, that according to these Sufis, Sufism is the purification of the senses and the will. It is the effacement of one's desires in the will of God. It is the building up of a solid wall between the pure self and the lure of passions and desires. It is, in a word, "self-discipline," beyond the avoidance of what is forbidden and the performance of what is ordained.
Al-Kalabadi thus sums up their “doctrine of the duties imposed by God on adults.” [The Sufis] are agreed that all the ordinances imposed by God on his servants in his Holy Book and all the duties laid down by the Prophet (in the hadith) are a necessary obligation and a binding imposition for mature adults, whether he be a veracious believer (Siddiq), or a saint or a gnostic, even if he may have attained the furthest rank, the highest degree, the noblest station, or the most exalted stage. They hold that there is no station in which a man may dispense with the prescriptions of religious law, by holding permissible what God has prohibited, or making illegal what God has declared legal, or legal what God has pronounced illegal, or omitting to perform any religious duty without due excuse or reason, which excuse or reason is defined by the agreed judgment of all Muslims and approved by the prescriptions of the religious law. The more inwardly pure a man is, the higher his rank and the nobler his station, so much the more arduously he labors with sincerer performance and a greater fear of God. In this sense, Sufism is at the highest aspect of Islamic discipline, which builds up the character and inner life of the believer by imposing certain ordinances and duties, obligations and impositions, which may not be abandoned in any way by any man.

The Prophet Muhammad was sent to “instruct” humankind “in Scripture and wisdom and to sanctify them.” The Sufis keep these “instructions” before their eyes; strive their utmost to perform what has been prescribed for them to do and to discharge what they have been called upon to do, subsequent to that prescription. The Qur’an says; “And those who fight strenuously for us, we will surely guide them into our way.” And again: “Oh ye who believe! Do your duty to God, seek the means of approach unto him and strive with might and main in his cause: that ye may prosper.” Believing in these exhortations, the great Sufi Sidi Yahya said; “the spirit of gnosis will never reach thy heart, so long as there is a duty owing to God which thou hast not discharged!” Thus, Sufism, in the words of Abu’ Ali al-Rudhbari, is “giving one’s lust the taste of tyranny” and “journeying in the pathway of the Holy Prophet.”

From another perspective, Sufism means building one’s inner life. Junayd has defined a Sufi as “dead to his self and alive in God.” He passes away from what belongs to himself and persists through what belongs
to God. When he is dead in relation to his own self, he becomes alive in his relation to the self of God. Husayn b. Mansur al Hallaj thinks that a Sufi is, “singular in his being, he neither accepts anybody nor does anybody accept him.” He feels the immediate presence of God alone within and senses the presence of God without and his mental faculty gets rid of the thought of anything save God and is totally captivated by God: The eye does not see anything except God! Predication of everything is of Him only. When 'Amr b. 'Uthman-Makki was asked the meaning of Sufism he replied: “A Sufi is alive to the value of time and is given every moment to what that moment demands.” As another Sufi-poet, Ahmad Jami, says,

O votary of earthly idols feign,
Why let those veils of flesh enwrap thy brain?
Tis folly to pursue a host of loves;
A single heart can but one love contain!

Abu Muhammad Ruwaym described Sufism: “Sufism is nothing else save submitting one’s own self to the will of God. A Sufi becomes dead to his self-will and God Almighty’s will alone enters in him and as a consequence of it, he has no wish of his own, neither does he want, desire or yearn for anything. In the words of Shaykh al-Ghawth al-A’zham Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, a Sufi is “at rest in body, contented in mind, and broad-chested. His face beams with the light of God, with an enlightened heart and he is oblivious of all things due to his nearness with God.” In calamity and in affluence, he considers God Almighty alone to be the real agent, the real doer, and does not accept any other being as cause or instrument. Shibli says: “A Sufi is severed from the world (khalq) and connected with God (Haqq) alone, as God Almighty had said to Moses, “I have chosen thee for Myself (for service) and have disconnected thee from others.” Later addressing Moses He said: “By no means canst thou see Me.” And so, the end and aim of a Sufi’s life is God alone; he loves God alone; his thinking, meditation and prayer are for God alone. He is ever ignorant of everything except God and when he thinks of God alone his mind is purified. In this sense he finds himself attached to God and disconnected with everything except God. He is totally captivated by God alone! When people see him involved in acts
of charity toward other human beings, animals or plants, he is simply contemplating God's creation for God's sake. Again Rumi says:

Of my soul's union with this fleshly frame,
Of life and death thou art the end and aim.
I pass away: thou only dost endure
When I say "mē," it is "thee" I mean to name.

All the above definitions of Sufism lead us to conclude that its teachings are not limited to purification of the will and senses, but that it also confers on us nearness to God, as a consequence of which a Sufi being lost his sense of self subsistence loses himself in the self subsistence of God. He feels the immediate presence of God in all things that exist. His knowledge and actions are guided by God alone.

The first step of a Sufi is to teach a traveller on the path how to be released from the clutches of desires or lusts (hawa), how to emerge out of his own individual sphere of knowledge and enter into the knowledge of God. This part of Sufi teaching could be expressed in these words: God alone is our deity (ilaha); i.e., God alone is our master, Lord, and our Helper. We worship God alone and to him we ask for help in all our wants and desires. (Qur'an, 1:5)

From the viewpoint of worship, we are cut off from everything except God and we express our humility and surrender before him alone. This conviction in the supremacy and lordship of God almighty purifies man of all the baser attributes and embellishes him with all the other nobler qualities—his heart is freed from unbelief, idolatry, hypocrisy, heresy, and sin, and is filled with faith, monotheism, truth, and virtues. Sufism means a sanctification of heart and when the Islamic faith imparts to us the knowledge that God alone is our deity, that him alone should we worship and that he is the One we should ask for help, the question then necessarily arises in our minds, "Where should we seek this God whom we worship and before whom we express our humility and subjection?" Sufism offers a reply to this question in the light of the Qur'an and the Prophet's hadith, and it is also called "the knowledge of the nearness of God" (Ilm-i-qurb). The Sufi who is conversant with the knowledge of nearness knows the secret of the relation between the Truth and his creation, God and the phenomenal things, the secret of
nearness and proximity, immanence and transcendence, firstness and lastness, outwardness and inwardness of God. Not only does he know this secret, but he feels the immediate presence of God within his own self. Now he is dead to his self and consequently we can call him the one whom God has drawn near to him (muqarrab).

In chapter 56 of the noble Qur'an, men are sorted out into three classes: 1) The Companions of the Right Hand (Ashab-al-Maimana); 2) The Companions of the Left Hand (Ashab-al-Mash'ama); and 3) Those nearest to God (Muqarrabun). The Companions of the Right Hand are “Those who believe in the Unseen,” are “steadfast in prayer,” and “have assurance of the hereafter” in their hearts. The Companions of the Left Hand are “those who reject faith and go after false gods.” The Qur'an describes them as “Those who bartered guidance for error” and “have lost their true direction.” This classification is, thus, according to the knowledge out of which spring their actions, knowledge of the right path and knowledge of the wrong path. But who are the “Muqarrabun?” They are not simply the Companions of the Right Hand only, otherwise they would have not been in God and he, by his Spirit, lives in him. Because God is, the Muqarrab is, without Him, he can do nothing and is nothing. Realizing his innate nature and being confirmed in the knowledge of his “poverty in spirit” (faqr), the Sufi regards all created beings as dead and thus “total disappointment from what is in the hands of people” is created in his mind. He regards God Almighty alone as the doer and submits himself to the will of God.

The goal of Sufism is thus the realization of the immediate presence of God. As you have seen, the sources of these teachings in the Islamic tradition are contained in the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (God's blessings and peace be upon him). Sufism is never merely a theory, but is always a presence. And even learning about it, by hearing a preliminary explanation such as this, is regarded as the first step along the path. This is said to happen even when the listener does not fully realize it, even when he only supposes to be listening to a lecture, a conference or a similar academic program.

In Sufism knowledge is identical to the object to be known, and this is the reason why the one who teaches the basic principles of Sufism and the one who listens are considered as already being in the company of all the Sufi Shaykhs of the past. Moreover, because of the argument, when
this level is reached, the angels come down from heaven and God’s presence (Sakinah) surrounds all of those who are present encompassing them. This now causes me to be silent in your company and to listen for a message from Heaven, which is normally covered by the many sounds of ordinary life. May God bless us all.
PART IV ~ WHAT DO WE WANT THE OTHER TO TEACH ABOUT OUR PRAYER AND LITURGY?

For Further Discussion and Study

What is prayer? How would you describe both its public and personal characteristics? Does each religion encourage the balance of public liturgical prayer and private prayer as part of the whole of religious life, or are people drawn in excess to private revelations and rituals or to unconscious public practices?

Acknowledging the intrareligious nuance of each religion, describe the central rites of each of the three religions. How should a person prepare his or her inner self for prayer? Is there any physical or spiritual purification to be performed before prayer? In what ways do these three religions understand prayer as a process of purification?

What are the primary sources for prayer and liturgy in each religious tradition, e.g., Scriptures, tradition, prayer books, religious life, law codes, etc.? Does public worship emphasize more the scriptural texts and traditional rubrics, while personal prayer tends to be more informal, anecdotal, and inspirational through human stories in each of the religions? How important are the Scriptures to prayer? Is study of Scriptures also prayer?

How important is the remembrance of holy people in the prayer of each religion; e.g., prophets, saints, sages, etc.? What are the principal feasts, celebrations, and commemorations in the liturgical calendars of each religion?

What are the daily prayers for each religious tradition and what is the general purpose of the prayers? Does the one who prays expect an immediate response or reward in any of the faith traditions?

What is the importance of blessing in each religion? What is the importance of redemption in each religion's liturgy? In addition to the
experience of public worship, what are the educational components of prayer in building faith and identity?

What is the importance of a specific language in mediating God’s presence and revelation in private or public prayer; e.g., Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, etc.? What is the proper place of translations of the Scriptures for personal reflection and prayer?

Does each religion describe the experience of prayer akin to a spiritual journey where individuals go from one spiritual place to another?

In what ways can prayer be understood as the heart’s reaching out to God in love? What is mysticism? What is meant by surrender or self-emptying to God in each religion?

Are there renewals of prayer and spirituality occurring in each religion? How are they manifested: meditation, contemplation, ecstasy, song, dance, Scripture study, prayer meetings?

What is the relationship of the body to prayer? How does each tradition understand transcending, transforming and living in one’s body at the same time of prayer? What are the appropriate contexts for asceticism, dancing, spontaneous song, prostrations, etc.?

Describe the various spiritual traditions practiced by communities of religious men and women in each religious tradition. Do men and women have a different way of praying privately and publicly?

How would each religion describe the divine dimension of prayer; i.e., how much of it is God speaking through the one who prays? Does God’s Presence/Spirit within us speak through us, making us one with God? Does each religion teach that God listens and answers one’s prayers even before the prayers are asked?

Holiness is more than a learned theory or prescription of actions to achieve. How would each religious tradition describe and encourage holiness through prayer? Does prayer necessarily lead to the renunciation of
all selfish pleasures and the apprehension of the absolute presence of God?

For Action in the Community

What are appropriate ways for us to pray together? When are appropriate times and who can be respectfully invited?

How can we support and participate appropriately in the different kinds of prayer and approaches to prayer for stages in an individual’s faith life, such as birth/initiation, maturity/responsibility, repentance/forgiveness, marriage, leadership, illness, death?

Visit a local place of worship other than your own. Afterwards, ask about the significance and importance of the rites and prayers with someone from that synagogue, church, or mosque.

What are your personal prayers or devotions of your home/family? Explain to the other why they are important to you. How do these prayers relate to your religion’s public, communal worship?

Where and how can we teach that those who pray in God’s name for violence that violence is not central to that religion’s teaching? How can we support ourselves or others to stand up and speak against injustice committed in the name of religion?

Is it possible to promote in each religion a public prayer that is more compassion-oriented than justice-oriented for those who have committed crimes? Why or why not?

How can Jews, Christians, and Muslims work together to highlight the importance of Sabbath and marking sacred time and space? Is it possible to plan local calendars so that the principal liturgical seasons and central high holidays of each religion are respected? What would those seasons and holidays be?