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Toward a Program of Worship Experience for
Primary Grade Pupils in the Reform Religious School

by

Jeffrey B. Lazar

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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DIGEST

Within this thesis entitled, Toward a Program of Worship Experience for Primary Grade Pupils in the Reform Religious School, there are three chapters, a conclusion, and two appendices.

The first chapter, "Worship for Primary Graders: What Has Been Done," contains two parts. The first section involves five interviews with Christian clergymen and education directors. It was believed that these people would be able to provide some insight in dealing with this particular age group. This they did, but revealed that they were not altogether satisfied with what they had already done and with the materials available to them. In the second section, I took what I considered to be a representative sampling of Jewish materials which had been published, and evaluated their contents. Although only eight books were actually cited, there were others that I had read which helped provide a point of departure.

The second chapter, "Worship for Primary Graders: What Needs to Be Done," contains excerpts from the five interviews. The answers cited came in response to questions such as: What do you think should be and can be done to improve the quality of children's prayer book literature?, and: If you had unlimited funds with which to develop a sound primary curriculum dealing with God and prayer, how would you use the money?

The third chapter, "Development of a Worship Approach for Children," contains four parts: 1) an examination and evaluation of some psychological opinions of the young child with regard to God and prayer, plus some citations and criticisms of a number of existing approaches; 2) the development of a God concept in a ten-point formulation; 3) the development of a worship approach in a five-point formulation; and 4) sixteen pieces of advice for parents who would employ the philosophy contained in parts two and three.

The conclusion ties together the key ideas presented in the first three chapters, and provides a springboard for the appendices which contain an illustrated prayer book plus a workbook, and some random thoughts of primary-age children regarding God, prayer, and thankfulness.

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CHAPTER 1

Worship for Primary Graders: What Has Been Done

Like scientists who came before them, today's researchers have learned from the mistakes of their predecessors. The same is true in the area of modern religion, its educational processes, and its materials. We learn through trial and error which teaching method is effective, which combination of words and ideas makes the greatest impression on the child. Thus, in order for there to be progress, there must be some failure. This first chapter does not represent a testimony to failure, but gives credit instead to those clergy and laymen who cared enough to want to contribute to the development of children. At the same time, recognition of the difficulty involved in introducing youngsters to worship and to a God they cannot see is a pre-requisite of this investigation. It is precisely because of these people and their endeavors that the second, third, fourth, and fifth chapters are possible.

This first chapter is divided into two parts:

1) interviews I conducted with Christian ministers and education directors, and 2) Reform Jewish materials related to our study and goal of producing a workable approach to prayer for children of primary age.

I

I put this chapter title in the form of a question,

and then posed it to ten different clergymen and educational directors. Their answers were pretty much the same. Very little has been done. Some were convinced that much needs to be done, but others were "satisfied" with the status quo. There were other priorities worthy of attention.

Before we examine the reasoning behind their replies, it might not be out of place to mention the people with whom I discussed these questions, and the method I used. Six were Christian, and the remainder was Jewish. The former I interviewed using a tape recorder; I corresponded with the latter. In all of the interviews, I found the clergymen to be sensitive to the question. It was my understanding that they would be much more advanced than Reform Judaism in the materials they had at their disposal. However, I found this not to be the case. And I could sympathize with them quite readily when they threw their hands up in the air or shrugged their shoulders when attempting to answer: How does one go about instilling an attitude of prayer in a little child? As difficult as this was to answer, there was a general lack of agreement concerning the age when an individual is capable of responding to prayer.

The first interview I conducted was with Reverend Robert F. Berger, the pastor of Roselawn Lutheran Church. We were discussing the manner in which the gap separating man and religion is sometimes bridged. The following is a portion

of that interview.

INTERVIEWER: When people come up against something bigger than they are, then they come to religion?

PASTOR: Then I think they begin to listen. For instance, and I'm afraid of sweeping generalizations and emotional stories, but in the course of time, we have people who die, who have children in third grade. I always notice that those children are more responsive to serious talks about religion. In catechism, in talking about our beliefs about the dead or something in that area, I notice that the children who have lost somebody are listening real well, whereas the children who haven't experienced it are bored silly. Of course I am stating something quite obvious; you listen to the things that interest you...

(At this juncture the Pastor presented a very serious and thought provoking opinion)

...I don't think our society leaves any room for God or for a necessity of God. And so nobody's ever taught it, and they don't get it through their milk. But when they themselves have certain problems or circumstances which American society is unable to meet, then they start listening to something else. I guess what I'm saying is getting back to this (primary grade) group you're talking about, I almost feel like we're fighting a rear guard action in which, even at the worst where we're teaching prayer by rote, where they kneel, and fold their hands, and say

a canned prayer, at least we're conveying to them that there is such a thing as prayer. And we're conveying to them how you pray and when you pray. Whether we're able to show them that this is important or necessary, I don't know. The theory being that some day when it does become important, they're not completely out in left field. Whether this works or not, I don't know.

I: Don't you run a risk when you teach kids to pray by rote?

P: Are you saying that if they learn by rote, it's an immunity shot, that it could very well block its effect later on when they need it?

I: Not exactly. I don't have any quarrel with learning anything by rote, so long as the purpose is included. Because to learn something, and not know why you're learning it is ridiculous.

P: Nonsense syllables.

I: Right. What would happen to a person who hasn't been taught the importance of prayer? What will happen to him later on in life when he confronts something bigger than himself, and he needs to pray or to turn somewhere, and up until that instant every avenue of approach to prayer or turning outward for help has been shut off from him, what's going to happen to him?

P: I agree with you that it's ridiculous to teach somebody without trying to get them to realize why it's important.

When I say learn by rote, that's what I mean. I don't say, Here kid, memorize these nonsense syllables. However, how the dickens are you going to teach a child the concept of something bigger than you are? What I'm saying is that I'm very pessimistic about your ability even to teach them why they're being taught it.

The Pastor went on to describe the materials he had at his disposal and showed some of them to me. I asked him whether or not it was sufficient, and if not, had there been any pressure to produce anything new. He replied that the devotional resources in his study demonstrated that a need in this area existed, but that it was adequate to the amount of requests for aid. He elucidated this point by way of an example. A teacher had come to him not so long ago, seeking help. He gave the teacher a book but aside from being read, the ideas contained therein were not brought up within the religious school and the book was never returned. To order new books would merely present the illusion that an adequate job was being done. But if the need for different material was demonstrated, then it would be taken care of.

He mentioned one very interesting fact. That of three books used by pre-schoolers, one book did not contain the word "God", "Jesus", "Lord" or any synonym once. Another included such a reference only twice. It was beyond him how the Sunday School could seriously make use of a text

which never contained the word God. I see some basic problems underlying this. How does one go about introducing the concept of God to the little child? What concept should be employed? When is the little child capable of understanding a God concept?

The books he showed me did not have fancy illustrations, although some of the poems were quite good. I mention the art work for an important reason. During the course of research, I spoke to a number of teachers and rabbis. It was their considered opinions that while the ideas the words conveyed should be significant, in the instances where bright pictures were included, the latter made the deeper impression. I shall speak of this in greater detail later on in the chapter.

One interview does not provide a total picture. Thus, to obtain a greater insight into what actually exists, I visited another clergyman, Reverend William Noyes of Roselawn Community Baptist Church. He was so considerate that he sent me some small reading materials prior to our appointment. They not only provided a fine point of departure, but furnished me with information regarding God and prayer in the life of a child which I might not have even seen.

Because our inquiry deals with prayer, and what has been done so far in this realm for children of primary age, the article he sent me by Mary Alice Jones, "How to Help

Children to Pray" really got me started in the dynamics of worship. In her article she makes the following statement:

It seems also to be true that acceptance of the authority of a power other than ourselves is essential in prayer. One is seeking the source of security, of fullness of life. One is seeking insight into the purposes of God, and the strength to make them his own. Early prayers that acknowledge the wisdom of God help children to sense and to accept His authority. "God plans for day and night," "God plans for seeds to grow," "God plans for us to help each other." Such summaries of the child's experience in terms of God's wisdom may lay the foundations for teaching children to pray for understanding of God's way rather than for triumph of their own way.¹

Let us consider her ideas. Certainly, in most standard forms of prayer, there is some object of worship to whom are directed personal thoughts, petitions, or gratitude. Why? Because most individuals who engage in this activity feel that there is a Being who hears prayer - God. To carry this a step further, these people feel that there is efficacy in prayer. So there are prime indispensable elements: a belief in a God who hears prayer, and a belief that this doing provides beneficial results. What are the consequences if the individual loses faith in either one of these prerequisites? If one begins suffering doubts concerning the Deity's ability to hear prayer, in all likelihood, there could not be any serious effort put

into worship. Also, if such is the case that God does not in fact hear prayer, what useful purpose will be served, or what useful end realized by going through the motions? Then there is the other element to consider. If God does hear prayer, but does not act upon it, where is the utility in such an enterprise? Certainly there is a motive involved on the part of the worshiper. He wants to benefit. He feels that although God does not always answer his prayers, the possibility always exists that he shall be the blessed recipient of a Divine response. His faith that such an event could occur lends reason to his actions. This alone is enough to provide him with some reasonable sense of security. Even though the worship experience will be different from one time to the next, he feels justified in believing that each time adds extra dimensions of fullness to his life.

One more important point concerning Mary Alice Jones' remark about understanding God's way in deference to that of the child. I consider this to be an extremely insightful, as well as meaningful idea to retain. Even if the individual discovers, much to his dismay, that both prerequisites of prayer are no longer valid, the one thing to retain, regardless of this, is that he is not the center of the universe. To initiate this type of thinking in the child's mind is very necessary. It would lead to friendly relationships with others and it would develop the values

of sharing and respecting the rights and opinions of others.

Mary Alice Jones correctly points out that when one approaches prayer, he has different feelings which he desires to express: love, thanksgiving, awe, joy, and forgiveness. Of course, not all of them simultaneously. She feels that it takes awhile before the little child is able to comprehend and appreciate these emotions, as well as seeing the connection between the things they do and their consequences. We shall have more to say on this last notion later.

In the same article she rhetorically asks whether or not there is any efficacy in prayer. She says:

One of the strongest affirmations of our faith is that prayer for the suffering, the troubled, and the tempted is a channel of God's love. We want our boys and girls actually to experience prayer as spiritual discipline to bring their own lives into harmony with God's purposes and as the supreme act of loving one's neighbor.

The phrasing and spirit of such prayers recognize the love and wisdom of God and our human lack of understanding. As one prays, there is the earnest intention to do all one can do to help. There is the taking upon oneself the need, the suffering, and the helpfulness of someone else. This outpouring of love releases healing forces that would not be available without it. It changes the environment of a patient or a person in trouble. Something new has been received into the situation. So prayer for others does make a difference; but it does not make demands on God.

Prayer changes conditions within persons, among groups, and in the world beyond them.²

There is much here upon which we may comment. Prayer to the author opens up the channels of communication between man and God. It directs the "heart" towards a lofty purpose. Even if one meditates rather than prays, there is an extremely useful activity taking place. I make the following distinction between meditation and prayer: the direction of both many times is identical. The mind and the heart are directed toward God, but in meditation there is no answer expected from another source. Furthermore, there is an element of introspection involved. During the course of prayer there is an active attempt to receive some kind of Divine response. Even after the prayer has been completed without any noticeable effect, a person very frequently will remain attuned to his purpose, i.e., remain available to witness some sort of beneficial end to his activity, while simultaneously being aware of it. In any case, both actions represent a turning either inward or outward from oneself. The individual finds it necessary to "escape," to look beyond himself in order to arrive at some worthwhile solution. But to initiate such an activity requires an admission by the individual that something is wrong, and that he does not have the cure at his disposal. Once he acknowledges this, then he may begin his quest, but only then.

Most of us, at some time or other during our lives, have reached some particularly unpleasant or uncomfort-

able state of affairs. The most annoying aspect is that sometimes we do not know why we feel the way we do. Once we are able to pinpoint the cause, we give ourselves a fighting chance to ameliorate or to change the status quo. Of course, there must exist within the individual some desire to do something. Once there is a willingness, it is amazing how quickly all extraneous thoughts are shoved aside, and replaced by a single resolve.

The author is so right about prayer having the capacity to engender a change within people. Recently, a friend of mine was rushed to the hospital, and placed in an intensive care unit. The chances of his ever coming home were quite remote. I, as did others, said a few prayers for him. He did come home a few weeks later. The prayers themselves did not restore his health. However, the fact that he knew people were concerned about his well-being, and were directing their thoughts toward him did, I think, make a difference. He knew he had something to live for.

When a person prays, his mind should not be cluttered with stray ideas. And in many cases, a person will succeed in purifying his intellect. To this extent, prayer changes the immediate human condition. The individual becomes quite earnest. He wants to succeed. Otherwise, he would not engage in this enterprise.

Mary Alice Jones goes on to state that it is by observing others pray, rather than by formal instruction,

that the little child can begin to absorb some unarticulated but meaningful concepts.³ She does not rule out guidance. Through evocative questions, the parent or teacher can start the thought processes working. This is necessary if prayer is ever to have any significance for the child. He has to know what he is saying and why.

In another small pamphlet sent to me, L. Harold DeWolf says in his article, "How to Help Children to Know God," that the first step in teaching a God concept to little children is to establish Him in a father image, even though this falls short of the Deity. "Why then must we compare God to a human parent? Because there is no other bridge of meaning from the child's experience to God which can serve so well as this imperfect analogy."⁴

More often than not, the God concept of Western civilization is one of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent being. As L. Harold DeWolf puts it:

As Christians we want our children
to know God as dependable, faithful,
and just...

We want our children to know God
as wise...

We want to share with them our
Christian knowledge that "God is
love." The word "love" needs to
carry a meaning as pure, holy, and
wonderful as the best love that
can ever be experienced.⁵

In Judaism, as well, this is the God concept which is championed, especially within Orthodox and Conservative circles. Even Reform Judaism until recently was

basically a monolithic structure in this regard. The past several years have witnessed the emergence of a number of new systems of thought. But for the most part, it has been this particular notion of God which existed and still does prevail in a substantial number of households. This may be corroborated through an examination of the liturgy and through an observance of the type of people who attend worship services on a fairly regular basis. Recent surveys have shown declining attendance to be more of a phenomenon within Reform Judaism than within Christianity, which has suffered losses as well.⁶ This shall be a subject of consideration later in this thesis.

As was mentioned earlier, the idea of God is of prime importance when dealing with a standard worship environment. And when little children are being introduced to prayer, there is inevitably some attempt to deal with God. Just exactly how one would go about doing this was one of the topics discussed when I met with Reverend Noyes.

INTERVIEWER: Since we are limited by words, it almost seems impossible to describe a being beyond our comprehension. How does one justify that idea with trying to introduce God to a little child?

REVEREND: Good question. Our basic approach is that we feel we have a responsibility to begin the process of nurture. In other words, the child will begin developing some understanding doubtless being before God. Your

point is well taken that words are limiting, and we feel this is a risk we take in trying to teach the child about this being we call God. I have wrestled with this a little bit in terms of situations in which I have ministered, and they have both been middle class or upper class, primarily white family situations: good home, styles of life, the children are well cared for, and they feel secure. And in this particular setting, I think it is valid to use the concept of God as father. This does strike the children on a given level which they can understand. They can understand parental love, and from this we try to suggest something about Divine love.

Now the question that I would have would be, What approach would I use if I were in a ghetto church, or an inner city church? One of the books that we use with kids at different times is a book written by a chaplain at a juvenile home, and he relates that when he first went there, he used the old concept of God as father. And one kid said, "Look. If God is like my father, I don't want to have anything to do with Him. He beats me up. He comes home drunk. He abuses my mother. He runs around with other women. Now what kind of a God is that?" So Burt was saying that he had to go about it in a different way. He had to use different analogies, different symbols, and different concepts. But in our given situation, I still feel that the concept of father is valid with the child-

ren, provided that it is in a setting which would be productive.

INTERVIEWER: Say, for instance, the child does encounter evil. What I mean by evil here is something that goes counter to what the child is seeking. Hopefully, the parents will have the foresight and honesty to say that when you ask God for something, that does not necessarily mean that He is going to grant his every wish. And yet the child is faced by two conflicting ideas: that God is all-powerful, but that he has asked God for something and cannot get it. How do you go about rationalizing this?

REVEREND: My first thought on that is that the child of primary age is becoming aware of the process of right and wrong, and the general idea of death, hate, frustration, this type of thing. The approach we generally use is to try and talk out the different feelings that we all have. For example, we have a set of pictures that we use with the primary class that depict emotions, such as compassion, love, and anger. And there are questions and a story that go with it. And then there are leading questions which the teacher uses with the children, or she may even ask questions of her own. She might ask a question about the picture depicting compassion, which has a little girl caring for a kitten with a broken leg. She might say, How do you feel about Susie taking care of the kitten?, or, Have you ever done anything like this?, or,

What would you do in a situation like this? Another picture was love showing a mother and a child. Another picture was anger showing a boy fighting with another boy. And another one was fear showing a boy in bed with a storm outside. So we encourage our teachers to try and talk these things through with the children in order to do a couple of things: to help the child realize that these types of emotions or feelings or questions are not unexpected, to raise them in an atmosphere of security and warmth, and love; and also so say something about how all of this fits into the family situation. And also how in joy and in sorrow, and in life and in death we are in the hands of God or in the presence of God. Naturally, these words would not be used, but the idea would be conveyed to them. That we can turn to God in times of sorrow, and in times of fear, and in times of other personal troubles, and that we do find a strength in hope...

In talking with the children about God, we try to suggest that God is good. And then we try to expand on this what we mean by God is loving, that God cares for us, that God watches over us. We are trying to get away from the notion that God is all-powerful. The reason for this is that several psychologists have reported that in talking with children, their concept of God years ago was very similar to their understanding of Superman, because the children normally think of this. They would watch

Superman during the week, and then they would go to church on Sunday, and somebody would talk about God doing this and God doing that, and they would put the two together. So we try to get away from this notion. Later on when the child develops some more, the approach we use is the idea of the orderliness of Creation, that things work together. I do think it's wrong to pass off the question of evil by saying that God takes care of everything, and we shouldn't ask questions about it. So often, I think, the kids are hung up on the idea of reward and punishment. And we have an obligation to see beyond this, to help them see that life is a gift, whether we live to a ripe old age or whether a person is tragically struck down as a child, we still find ourselves awed by this, frustrated by this, angered by this, but we still find ourselves in the presence of God.

My next point of inquiry dealt specifically with what actually had been done in the field of prayer books for children. He replied that there were several volumes dealing with this enterprise. He enumerated some works by Mary Alice Jones, and described them for me. More times than not, they were stories with a central message involved. But to his knowledge, there was no book of prayers, as such, which Protestant churches used. However, there were books which did contain the element of prayer. The reason for this is because in their tradition

they do not follow any formal program of worship. Theirs is basically an unstructured and spontaneous approach. There are suggested prayers to be said when children are present. Reverend Noyes added that his church attempts to do creative things with the concept of prayer, but within the prayer book field itself there is very little which has been done.

Thus far, in one regard, Pastor Berger and Reverend Noyes were in complete agreement. There had been little done in the area of children's prayer books. But if we may go back to what the Pastor said, he felt that what has been done is sufficient, but that there has been no crying need for children's prayer book literature, because the youngsters were not yet ready for it. The Reverend agreed, and then said that in addition to the unstructured program they had, there was no fixed time for prayer. Instead, when a child was moved to say something, he did so. To my way of thinking I would concur. To think that when a certain time arrives that a person will automatically open up to prayer is a dangerous estimation to make. This shall be a point of discussion in chapter three.

The next interview took me to the Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church. There I met with two education directors, Mrs. Jean Pendleton and Reverend Richard Todd, who was the youth minister as well. Thus far I had conversed with two extremely competent clergymen. The opinions I would now

receive would come from a different perspective. The purpose of this interview, as well as that of the preceding and subsequent conversations, was to introduce me to the world of children's prayer book literature, and to create an awareness of just what was available. At the same time, I gained an appreciation of how difficult a subject this is to deal with, and that not every individual or church places an equal amount of stress on presenting and teaching prayer to little children.

Almost immediately I learned from Mrs. Pendleton and Reverend Todd that very little had been done in the way of prayer in their own church school. One reason for this was the fact that little material was available. Perhaps the overriding consideration, though, was their realization that worship for primary-aged children was such a difficult subject with which to deal. They had just shelved one set of textbooks in favor of another in order to begin implementing a new curriculum. But getting down to the actual consideration of prayer, I asked Mrs. Pendleton why she felt there had not been much work done in this field.

MRS. PENDLETON: So far as I know in our primary area, which has been grades one, two, and three, the teachers have used prayer at the time of offering. And I think they talk about Grace at the table at home, and thanking God for things. Up until then I do not know that they have talked

much about prayer in the way of helping or asking for God's help or forgiveness of things, because up to that time I don't think they thought that the children were too much involved with this kind of thing, or in any way were directing their lives through prayer. I think it would be hard for me to answer your question, because I don't sit in the classroom. And I am sure that many times this is up to the individual teacher and her own prayer life. If prayer is a very important part of her life, she will probably do more with prayer in her classroom. As far as what our curriculum does in that area, I don't think it has ever been done a lot. I think this was true even in the curriculum we are no longer using. But I think the thing that has concerned me, and I saw this happen in our daily vacation church school last year, was that at one point a teacher asked a child to say a short sentence-long prayer at the time of offering. Now this child was very outgoing, so it wasn't a question of shyness, but he simply said that he didn't know how to pray. And he isn't a timid sort of person. So, during the next week they did talk about prayer even more than I've ever known them to on Sunday morning. I think they did see the need. So we asked for an evaluation sheet from the teachers, and one teacher even went further. She had her children write down at the end of the week what they had gained more from than anything else. And this one little child who

had had such a difficult time with his prayer that morning said that he had learned how to say a prayer.

She went on to state that there was not sufficient instruction in prayer, and illustrated this by way of a personal anecdote. She substituted for a fourth grade teacher one morning, and inquired if one of the children would say a prayer to open the class. They all refused. She felt that there was a difficulty in expressing oneself through a prayer medium, and asked Reverend Todd for his opinion.

REVEREND: I think it is not easy at all. When you finally realize what prayer is all about, it's difficult for a child of that age (primary) to feel like he can simply speak in conversational style to someone who does not seem to be there. And certainly this is what we have to start talking about in terms of prayer.

He then added that in the present curriculum, there was a suggestion made to the teachers encouraging them to elicit thankful ideas from the group, and ultimately to have them write a prayer. But he was quick to point out that while this might be helpful, it held little instructional value. There was no explanation of what prayer is. He said that most of the primary children had not gone beyond the bedtime formula of "God bless Mommy, Daddy...."

Both Mrs. Pendleton and Reverend Todd presented incisive thoughts worth reviewing. She said that in her

opinion, the concept of prayer would be taught in direct proportion to the importance that worship played in the teacher's life. I would also add that were their religious school so inclined, they would teach prayer in direct proportion to the priority this subject held in their estimation. The Reverend's point about speaking with a Deity who is incorporeal is a very real problem. Hopefully, this shall be resolved in chapter three.

It was a month later when I conducted the fourth of my five interviews. This was with Reverend David Sammons of St. John's Unitarian Church. I found him to be a very enlightened individual who was not inhibited when it came to offering his own opinions. Before we even got started he said that in its present forms, he felt that organized religion was dead. Now it was a question of either renovating old forms or coming up with new ones which would be meaningful today. The existing materials, he said, were terribly inadequate. With this as a point of departure, Reverend Sammons went on to describe an interesting phenomenon concerning his church's composition. Within the membership rolls were hard-core atheists and many agnostics who did not feel particularly Christian. Nevertheless, he explained, St. John's has the freedom to deal with problems of worship in any manner it sees fit. It is not tied to a power structure which hands down policies concerning various phases of church life and administration,

not to mention liturgy. If they do not wish to use their prayer book, they can discard it.

I asked him to describe the materials he employed and to evaluate them.

REVEREND: The kindergarten unit we have is called "Who Am I? See How I Grow." It is the process of self-identification that the materials deal with, and always the premise is you begin on a level that the child is at that time in his emotional and physical development. And at about the five-year old level, the great words are "me," "yes," "no." They are all very personal introspective things.

The first grade unit deals with "Who Are My Friends?" It is the beginning of the extension of the circle from inside the person to others. Also the friends, the relationships that the children have outside of the human relationships, the world of nature, the beginning of exploring life as a larger context.

The second grade unit is called "Who Is My Family?" The analogy here is not just with family and the process of growth, birth, which most small children experience in the context of their own family, but also the larger human experience with that, for example, What is the human family? What are other cultures? What are children like in other cultures?

All this leads eventually to the third grade unit

which is called "The Human Heritage." How did I begin? Am I as old as the universe? Have I lived? Evolution. It is a kind of unit where the children really begin with a family tree of themselves, and then move backwards, all the way to the beginning of Creation. There is kind of the parallel telling of the naturalistic story of evolution, and all of the mythology that men have used to explain this, the same kind of process going sort of backwards that went from Exodus to Genesis, you know, when you have to explain your beginning.

The aim here is to help in the development of the child. Although there is no structural prayer here per se, the experience that the child receives is very much akin to prayer. The standard model is a human talking with God. But it seems to me there would be richer consequences to his encounters. The child raised in this way can respond to his environment, perhaps in a spiritual way. By imbuing him with a sense of humanity and some degree of decentralization (he is not the only one in the world), his appreciation for most things that we take for granted, even people, will be more acute. At least, this is a result which I envision from such an educational process. The Reverend's evaluation of this program was that in the four years it has been in use, it has been highly successful.

Reverend Sammons informed me that because Unitarians

do not believe in a personal God, their searching or meditating during a period of silence acts as prayer. They do have a service book which enables them to go through a witnessing process. Their basic theology or philosophy is a humanistic one. They just do not believe in a personal Deity. Thus, their prayers are not theistically oriented. The name of one of their hymnbooks, We Sing of Life, reflects their basic outlook. It is precisely because of this philosophy that Reverend Sammons' group does not share the same problems of prayer common to the three previous churches I visited. They had a theistic, personal Deity to grope with. Does that mean that the Unitarians are unable to receive the same benefits as the Lutherans, the Baptists, and the Presbyterians because of the nature of their theology? On the contrary, it appears that Reverend Sammons' search for a God is not hindered by daily occurrences which might lead him to reject, rather than affirm the existence of a Deity (understood in the conventional sense). Then the Reverend reiterated his method for introducing an awareness of God to little children.

REVEREND: We are more interested in creating the experiences for kids in which they can feel the presence of God, the emotion of closeness, of positive closeness to another person, to the kind of awe and wonder of life, and the mystery of birth, the transition points like death.

Their commitment is to living as wholly and as fully as they can in a community of people that includes not just Unitarians who are "the saved ones," but everyone, and that no one is saved in the sense of having a whole of the truth. Different people come up with different answers to meet their own questions.

I conducted my last interview with Reverend Wesley Wasdyke, an Episcopalian minister at downtown Cincinnati's Christ Church. He is instrumental, there, in formulating religious school policy, even though he has been there a little more than one year. He had had prior experience at another church.

When I asked him whether or not there was an organized children's worship program, he informed that there was not. The policy was that the church school, grades one through nine, attended the family worship service, which is like an abridged morning prayer. Afterwards, they go to class. He felt that there was a positive value to be gained by having the children in attendance at the adult service: learning some of the tradition, and having it become a part of them. On the other hand, he recognized that this system had its drawbacks in the sense that it was basically an adult service. He also questioned the extent to which it was capable of speaking to the children and providing them with an opportunity to pray.

While this is going on, the children of pre-primary age have individual services in their own classrooms conducted by their teachers. Mrs. Pendleton and Reverend Todd at the Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church were inclined to have the teachers elicit components of prayers from the children. The same was the case at Reverend Wasdyke's church. He wanted the children to be aware that there were things for which they should be thankful. Getting into the actual elements involved in prayer, I asked him how he would go about teaching or introducing the child to a concept of God.

REVEREND: I think of the assistant in my last parish whose little daughter came running home and said to her mother, "Mama, Mama! We drew a picture of God today!" And she said, "Oh, really?" And she played along and tried to find out what was going on, but couldn't. During the week she went shopping, and in the supermarket ran into her daughter's teacher, and said, "I understand your class drew a picture of God. Tell me about it." And she said, "Oh, no. We didn't draw a picture of God. We drew a picture of the rector (who is the pastor)." And here is this man wearing a cassock, a robe, and this was God to the little girl. That is the difficulty. We talk about the Creator and His Creation, and try to get at the meaning of creation which is very difficult with younger children.

I think we try to get at an understanding of who God is by explaining what God has done in history as we know it through the Scriptures, and by what kinds of things God could be doing now in our relationships, by what is happening in this classroom. Are people caring for and about each other? On various levels, we can get at God through these means.

I pursued this a step farther and inquired if he and the church school attempted to paint a picture of God in the children's minds. Not a physical image, but one which described the Deity by His works and by what He stood for. Reverend Wasdyke affirmed this, and added that the school was using flannel graphs to help illustrate a story that is being told. The child might then be asked how the idea of this picture applies to his image of God. The object of the lesson would then be to demonstrate God at work, rather than God, Himself.

The Reverend felt that adult attitudes toward prayer would account for relatively little being done for children in the field of prayer book literature. He said that for too long a period of time prayer has been merely a nice convention for kids, an easy formula to be said before going to sleep. At the same time, he thought that the parents were very indifferent to prayer. After a while the child would recognize the lack of emphasis towards his prayer life, and this part of religion would cease to

function for him. For the experience to be meaningful, the parents would have to participate with their children. They would have to want for their children what they would want for themselves.

Each and every interview revealed something new. To this extent I would consider them to have been highly successful. I think that the clergymen and education directors involved expressed one idea in common: because it is so difficult to acquaint the children with a notion of God, little has been done in the field of prayer book literature for this particular age group. We shall consider their suggestions for ameliorating the situation in the next chapter. Now we shall examine what has been written by Jewish authors, and evaluate the material. It should be understood that what follows does not represent an exhaustive study. Rather, the number of volumes we do look at shall serve, hopefully, to provide us with an indication of what is currently available, and the individual strengths and weaknesses.

II

While the spoken word may convey a great deal of meaning, the old cliché, "a picture is worth a thousand words," could never be understated more when it comes to the minds of young children. I know that when a friend of mine was young, he never used to read the comic strips. Instead,

he would look at the pictures for hours on end, fascinated by the bright colors. Amidst my wife's teaching experiences, she has encountered many a youngster who has been more pre-occupied by the illustrations than by the story he was supposed to be reading.

Perhaps there is a problem with the colorful and exciting drawings, especially when they overshadow the word content on the same page. In my opinion, illustrations can provide a continual avenue of approach for the little child who is either pre-literate or who has just begun to read. Eventually, this child shall want to know what the words say, and how they relate to the picture. Our consideration, then, shall be bound up with the word and idea content, how the author says what he or she says (its style), and the value of the illustrations.

One more item should be mentioned. While every book we examine is written by a Jew, not every volume has Jewish content.

Mira Brichto, in 1958, wrote a child's garden of prayer entitled, The God Around Us. In her forward she says: "Children love to pray. They pray naturally, spontaneously, and gracefully - if adults let them - and how much the more if parents help them. For prayer is the expression of our deepest emotions (joy, sorrow, desire, wonder, gratitude) in the meaningful context of a God around us."⁷ My reaction to this is that before children

can pray, they must have some sort of guidance (parental or otherwise) to introduce them to prayer. They should understand how one prays and why. Children may love to pray after they begin to know what it is all about. If there is no encouragement forthcoming from the parents or from someone close to the youngster, his prayer life, in all likelihood, will not develop. I feel that this type of activity must be nurtured if there is to be a significant impression made. I shall comment briefly on the author's theistic approach after we look at some of her prayers.

The contents of her book contain the occasional prayer. There is no sustained service involved. Concerning this I have mixed emotions. I have found myself, in the past, more responsive to a service than an individual prayer, although my reaction has not been equally sustained throughout it. However, it would be highly dangerous to make a generalization from my own immediate experience. More important is the fact that the attention span of a primary-age child is considerably shorter than an adult's. There is even the possibility that after two prayers, a good deal of the spontaneity in the youngster will have been dissipated.

At any rate, the basic format is a four-line verse designed to exhort the individual to prayer. This is followed by the actual prayer in English and in Hebrew.

Let us look at three different examples.

A mountain, high, a falling star,
These things to me a wonder are.
The lightning sky, the desert sand,
Let's praise the work of God's own hand.

And then the English prayer

Blessed art Thou - Lord God our King,
Who has created the wondrous universe.⁸

I feel that the rhyme is rather contrived and limiting. Even more, I feel, may be said in free verse, not to mention prose. However, the idea is basically a sound one. To create an appreciation within the child for things he normally takes for granted is indeed laudable. The hortatory verse in contrast to the prayer is striking. The rhythm is very swift in the first part and subdued in the two-line expression of thanksgiving and awe.

In many instances when children have listened to rhymes or have been asked to memorize them, their understanding has been impeded by the actual rhythmic sounds.

Indian boy with reddish skin,
Black and brown and white are kin.
Whether our color be dark or fair,
The same red blood alike we share.

And the prayer

Blessed art Thou - Lord God our King.
Who makes His children different.⁹

If the verse and the prayer seem to be contradictory, it is probably because they are. The only justification I am able to supply is that it would be a dull world if everybody was identical. Today there is a peculiar tension existing in society. There are some elements who feel that there is a difference, and who simultaneously expect and clamor for equal rights. At the same time, there are others (fortunately their numbers are dwindling) who feel that the difference demands inequality. Both attitudes are unhealthy from a humanistic perspective. Clearly there was no harm intended in the verse-prayer combination, but the possibility for misinterpretation is very real, especially now when people are more acutely aware of and disturbed by racial slurs.

This last idea is somewhat better.

Ofentimes we wonder why

All lovely living things must die.

We grieve and try to understand

Both life and death are in God's hand.

Now the difficulty

Blessed art Thou - Lord God our King,

Who justly gives and justly takes.¹⁰

There is a praiseworthy effort here either to introduce or to deepen the awareness of physical limits to the child. Death is a very difficult subject which cannot be avoided, especially at the outset when penetrating questions

are being asked. As for an evaluation of the book, I have comments to make. First, I feel the sing-songiness of the rhymes would have been more of a negative than a positive effect, unless I were to place a premium on memorization. Second, the illustrations leave much to be desired. The colors are rather dull, and the pictures are unimaginative. I do not think that a pre-literate child would be eager to come back time and again to the book until he could read it. Third, the God concept is a theistic one which is the most difficult one to accept, especially in Reform Judaism. Finally, the author does exhibit imagination in the different choices of prayer she offers. I personally would not wish to make use of this book because of the first three reasons. The last conclusion does, however, provide us with some kind of nucleus to develop new materials.

Sophia Cedarbaum tackles a very difficult subject - The High Holy Days - and achieves a fair measure of success in her little book, Rosh Ha-Shono / Yom Kippur. She does two important things while telling her story: she provides the reader with the symbolic elements connected with this ten-day holiday, and she supplies some simple appropriate prayers. Here are some excerpts.

Rosh Ha-shono is the very beginning of the Jewish year.

It is a time to thank God for the good things of the past year.

It is a time to pray for happiness for the coming year.

Debbie and Danny dress in their best clothes for the Rosh Ha-shono children's service.¹¹

The author continues in this same straight-forward manner. But notice how terse she is. Even though we were introduced to Debbie and Danny earlier, there is not one time during the entire narrative when both are described. All we are told is what they wear, what they do, and what they say. The above paragraph serves as a perfect illustration of the manner in which Cedarbaum achieves her success. She presents one fact right after the other. Even though it is written simply, I do not think a child reading or listening to this the first or second time would be able to digest all this material. Because the characters are shallow, there is not much of an opportunity to identify with them.

LET US PRAISE GOD AND THANK HIM
FOR ALL THE GOOD THINGS WE
ENJOYED DURING THE PAST YEAR.
LET US THANK HIM FOR OUR GOOD HEALTH.
LET US THANK HIM FOR THE LOVE OF OUR
PARENTS AND FRIENDS.¹²

The prayer said by the rabbi represents a positive accomplishment.

After this, Cedarbaum goes on to describe the rest of the service which moves pretty quickly. She says that the time has arrived for blowing the shofar. Most little children, unless they have ever been to a Rosh Ha-shono service would not even know what a shofar is. But even more conspicuous by its absence is the reason why the shofar is being blown. There are just too many whys unanswered. There is no build-up of emotion to involve the

reader. Once again a prayer comes to the rescue.

DEAR GOD,
HELP US TO BE GOOD CHILDREN IN
THE COMING YEAR.
HELP US TO BE KIND TO PEOPLE.
HELP US TO BE FRIENDLY.
HELP US TO BE FAIR TO OTHERS.¹³

To be sure, there is a theistic God operating throughout the book. Nevertheless, it is played down effectively rendering this particular concept palatable and reasonably tenable. At the conclusion of her first story, there is a scene in the Social Hall with the children and the refreshments. The refreshments, apples and honey, get mentioned to the exclusion of the children.

In the beginning of the Yom Kippur story the same two children, Danny and Debbie, go through a terrible scene. Debbie, in looking at one of her brother's models, accidentally drops and breaks it. Naturally she is very sorry for what she has done. Danny is so angry that he does not want to talk to her. Of course this increases Debbie's feeling of guilt. When she runs crying to her mother and explains what has happened and asks what she can do, her mother replies that she feels sure that Danny will not want to remain angry much longer because the following day is Yom Kippur. Then she says, "Yom Kippur is the time we say we are sorry for the mean things we have done.

"We ask our friends to forgive us. And we forgive them.

"We promise ourselves not to be angry."¹⁴

Yom Kippur may very well be the time we are sorry for the mean things we have done, but to classify Debbie's act as mean suggests that it was deliberate, and that, to me, is outrageous. The predictable results are that the two children effect a reconciliation. Once again the author proceeds to list fact after breathless fact.

Yom Kippur is the next holiday after Rosh Ha-shono.

Rosh Ha-shono is the first day of the new year.

Yom Kippur is the tenth day of the new year.

Yom Kippur is a very special kind of day.

Many people do not eat or drink on Yom Kippur.

They pray in the synagogue all day.¹⁵

Why is Yom Kippur so special? Why do many people fast on Yom Kippur? Why do they pray all day? These questions remain unanswered. Cedarbaum mentions Kol Nidre, but she does not explain what it is, either.

She had the same misfortune as Mira Brichto - the same illustrators. There are two positive things to be said about the book. First, she presents most of the salient facts, and secondly, her prayers are good. However, the book fails, in my opinion, because of all the unanswered questions, the lack of warmth, and the absence of character development, all important to impress a young reader.

We now come to a book called Good Shabos by Jane Bearman. For the classical Reform Jew this book may still

be useful. But for today's breed, I do not think so. It was written in 1950, but this does not disqualify it. Interestingly enough this book represents the first picture publication in English dealing with the Sabbath. There is no comparison between the illustrations found here and those of the previous two books. These are bright and colorful, and approach a sense of normalcy. The writing is something else altogether. The book deals with the Sabbath and some of its symbols. Even some prayers are included (over the candles, the bread, and the wine). There is a combination of rhyme and prose throughout the book with an emphasis on the former.

"It's always such a cheerful sight
To see the cloth so sparkling white.
The silver shines, the candles glow-
No wonder we love Shabos so!"¹⁶

In a home where the Sabbath is observed, this is a very nice description. Most probably this would be one impression the child would remember. However, in a home where the Sabbath spirit does not abide, or where the Sabbath is observed differently, this book would have little practical value. The author is successful to the extent that she paints a joyous picture of Sabbath for those who are inclined to observe it in this manner.

In Jeremy Learns about God by Libby Klaperman, there is a certain charm which comes through in spite of an

apparently disjointed beginning. She speaks of green sprouts, lightning, and different zoo animals which Jeremy saw, and from these observations comes the profound remark, "I know who made all these things. It was God."¹⁷ At first we might be rather skeptical of the authenticity of this conclusion. But as we follow Jeremy, we notice that he is an active participant in prayer, whether it be during Yom Kippur or saying the Sh'ma at night or praying for Uncle Dave. He is aware of the dynamics involved. He knows how to pray and to whom he is praying. One can wonder quite easily, given all these considerations, how likely is it for a little child to make the connection between the object of his prayer and the idea of creation? To justify this, the only possible answer would have to stem from the different prayers he has said, and one other thing: what he has been taught. Toward the end of the book there are children standing before the rabbi who says, "Each man is like a brother."¹⁸ This to me is the most significant statement made by the author. This is the only example of teaching we encounter. There is a mother who is available for warmth. But there is no father. Has Jeremy received most of his spiritual training from the rabbi or from his parents? This is an important consideration if a parent is to read this to a child. Love, warmth, comfort, and friendship should all have their source in the home. Provided with these

conditions, a sturdy foundation for prayer can be developed.

Once again the notion of an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God is employed. This is a standard concept which reflects the beliefs and attitudes prevalent more than a decade ago. There is a great deal of questioning going on now within Reform Judaism which would preclude such thoughts for many. Still, the illustrations are colorful. This book possibly could be used as a teaching device, but only if it is not made out to be an authority.

Ben Aronin in 1966 wrote Daily Prayers for Children, and even included a thought for leap year. That is a lot of prayers! This book represents one written by a Jewish author, but with no apparent Judaic content. Like Mira Brichto's prayers, his are for the occasional situation, and are written in rhyme. After reading through some of them, one might think he had just finished an introductory course in writing friendship cards for Gibson. There is a sing-songiness which is not to be believed. Nevertheless, Aronin is able to articulate some worthwhile ideas. We shall look at only three prayers and then move on to another book.

"January 9

I know, dear God, why tears were made;

They were not made in vain.

They cleanse us of our troubled thoughts,

They wash away our pain."19

This is a very deep thought which few children, unless highly motivated, would bother to take the time to understand. This prayer would be handled best by an adult gently probing with evocative questions. Once the desired response was elicited, the possibility of it being internalized would be just that much greater, and well worth the effort.

"August 31

I'd rather lose the game, dear God,
Than win by lies or cheat;
For if I've done the best I can
To lose is not defeat."²⁰

In a society which has become so possessed by the idea of winning, this is indeed a refreshing change. The attitude and thought are laudable and deep. To get the point across, I would suggest parental guidance. In some instances, parents could learn a valuable lesson from this prayer. They would be quite unfit to teach this, if they were not committed to it themselves. The idea of encouraging one to do his best, despite the results, is well worth remembering.

"November 19

Mother and Daddy work so hard all day
While I'm at school and all the while I play,
When evening comes they really ought to go
And visit friends or maybe see a show.

And so, dear God, I never want to be

The kind of child who says, "Stay home with me!"²¹

Unlike the first two prayers, the most effective results would be achieved if the child were to read it. A decision like this should come freely from the child, and should not be induced by the parents. Perhaps the most important element, here, is the concept that the little child must learn at some stage of his life that he is not the center of the universe.

As is to be expected, there are some prayers which do not come across as well. Suffice it to say that the book does contain some very fruitful thoughts which are worth repeating. There is a theistic God involved to the extent that He hears prayer. Unlike the other volumes we have cited, this contains very few illustrations. Hence the format is not as appealing for the little child.

Morris and Lenore Kipper's God's Wonderful World takes a pantheistic and theistic approach in dealing with God. A little bit of God is contained in everything. He is responsible either directly or indirectly for all that we see. The story is interesting enough, and centers around two neighbors, Joey and Debbie, and their nature discoveries. It all begins with a dream Joey has one night about an orange seed. Joey carries on a conversation with the seed, and learns that it is a representative of God's ability to make things grow. The seed, named Ossie,

teaches him a valuable lesson, that everything has a purpose and is supervised by God; and that, we should not take anything for granted. At the end of the first chapter, we read:

Joey picked up his glass of orange juice. It tasted very, very good this morning. He thought about Ossie the seed in his dream. Ossie wanted to grow into a beautiful orange tree and grow oranges. Then the seeds in the orange would grow into more orange trees. He remembered what Ossie had told him, that all of this is a miracle of God.

Joey's mother and father heard him say: "Be praised, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the tree."²²

This is a nice conclusion which helps reinforce the chapter's purpose. The prayer seems a little contrived. Joey, prior to his dream, took orange seeds and other "negligible" things for granted. To suggest that he would be moved by one dream to prayerfully express his gratitude for a glass of orange juice is stretching the point. I do not propose for a minute that the authors were wrong in their thinking. I merely suggest that they rushed the growing-up process in Joey by a chapter or two. It would be more convincing if all of this were to sink in slowly: and then have Joey respond to the weight of his learning.

As the book progresses, Joey and Debbie become more aware of God's role in nature. In one chapter, a tree in which they played had to be cut down because it was

diseased. With the help of Debbie's father, they discover that the tree was actually alive, and that it was older than either of their grandparents. Debbie's father told them that there were trees which dated back to the time of Abraham. The authors then have the children realize that God again is responsible for the life of trees and life in other living things. All this reminds Debbie of the prayer she had heard on many occasions, "Praised be H_is Name Whose glorious Kingdom is forever."²³

Joey and Debbie learn about the miracle of birth, and gain an appreciation for their eyesight after meeting a blind child. Throughout the work, God is depicted as a Creator as well as being ubiquitous. Whether or not I agree with this idea is not vital now. What is important to recognize is that the story is told simply. It contains many ideas which should be discussed during and after its reading. These ideas are not presented in as concentrated a fashion as Sophia Cedarbaum's book. The children and the other people are very much alive. There is some depth to them. The prayers which do occur, while contrived at times, are occasional. Fortunately they do not rhyme. The events as they occur are believable enough. What is difficult to accept is that two young children would in almost every situation attribute what happened to God. The illustrations are not too inspiring. They are secondary from the standpoint that the story is the most important

element. This story could be read to or by second or third graders.

The last book we shall examine comes in two volumes, entitled My Book of Prayer. The first volume deals with the Sabbath and weekdays; the second with holidays and holy days. While we shall look at the word and idea content very briefly, the main thrust of this examination shall be devoted to Leonard Weisgard's beautiful illustrations. Unlike any of the other works, the pictures are not relegated to a secondary role. They are just as important as the words, that is just how good they are.

The prayers themselves are written both in English and in Hebrew. Some of them rhyme, but the majority do not. The theology and the approach are more traditional than the others we have seen. The page numbering goes from right to left and the Birkat Hamazon is included.

On page 37 of the first volume Weisgard's simple picture of houses shrouded in darkness does more than convey an image. The trees stand solitarily beneath the silver crescent of a moon. Just the perspective of all of this seen from a clearing is enough to make one realize how grateful he should be for a warm bed to sleep in at night. This provides a real sense of comfort. This is complimented by the prayer.

"God never sleeps.

He watches over us always."24

The pictures depicting the welcoming of the Sabbath are truly a sight to behold. The lighting of the candles and the blessing over the wine are done tastefully. The illustrations inside the synagogue with the Torah reading and all of the other notable elements are vivid.

The authors had the foresight to write a parental guide to My Book of Prayer. Included in the section, "Worship in the Home," is a very interesting statement: "Frequently the parent will find that while he is engaged in reading the text aloud, the child seems wrapt in the magic spell of the illustrations. No matter. Wondering about God and His many blessings is a deep worship experience which the parent may well encourage. The words will come later."²⁵

The illustrations in the second volume are no less spectacular than in the first. The English prayers are written very nicely. They are simple so that the child can read and understand them.

To summarize, the interviews as well as the books we have examined provide me with two conclusions. First, the material which is available demonstrates that a need exists for it. And second, the responses of those whom I interviewed, as well as the contents of the books, indicate how difficult it is to introduce a child to prayer and to God. It is my dissatisfaction with what has been done, as well as my desire to do something about it, that

provides me with all of the justification to continue this thesis. Once again, I wish to make it perfectly clear that the interviews and materials are not exhaustive but representative. Practically every book contained some desirable element. My frustration lies in the fact that no one volume was the possessor of all these desirable elements. I was not particularly pleased with the approaches to God. They were all basically the same, theistic. In the next chapter, the same clergymen and education directors I interviewed, will give their recommendations, and I, in turn, shall respond to them.

CHAPTER 2

Worship for Primary Graders: What Needs to Be Done

Today's youth represents a different entity than that of a generation ago. This can be witnessed most readily in the areas of personal hygiene, life styles, morality, and values. More and more, the same exasperated refrain may be heard from the parents, "When we were your age, we didn't do things like you are doing. We obeyed our parents." The one item noticeably deleted is, "We knew when to keep our mouths shut. We didn't ask too many questions." Therein lies the big difference between the two generations. The status quo is not taken for granted. It is questioned. The children of today are more easily dissatisfied because they are not meek, innocent lambs. They are always asking, Why? The affirmative response is heard less and less.

Within organized religion this is especially the case. What was once described as a cyclical pattern by the sociologists, i.e., the religion of the great grandparents' was rejected by their children, whose children in turn, rebelled against the new form, and accepted their great grandparents' ideas, has virtually become extinct. This did not use to be a hard and fast rule, but the fact that these sociologists saw fit to mention it is indicative that there was some truth content.

Organized religion is now at a vital stage where it must evaluate its position and its goals. This is especially true within the more liberal denominations. Something appealing, as well as important and true must be introduced. The interviews in the previous chapter pointed to fundamental weakness existing within their own establishments: the lack of good primary level prayer book literature. Cognizant of this, the following conversations will allude to, at least, some palliatives and, hopefully to some solutions.

During my interview with Pastor Berger, he revealed to me his distress over some of the modern forms which are providing answers for the unanswerable, for example, astrology. He was unable to see how something like that could be so successful with apparently nothing going for it. At the same time, something like religion was faltering, although he felt that there was some real substance to it.

PASTOR: Maybe the kids are not looking for the hard cold approach. Maybe we are imposing on religion a standard which alienates the children.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe there should be something which they can believe without being under duress, something which they can accept freely.

PASTOR. I do not think that proof means too much to them. I think that maybe astrology gives them the convenient

answer for the unknown, the irrational - one that does not demand too much of them. You know, I play with the problem. Will religion die? I'm sure this has crossed people's minds. I have the feeling that religion will not die simply because religion proceeds from certain, elemental necessities of living which are going to go on. These basic needs are going to continue irrespective of our secular society. And whatever satisfies those needs is going to survive. Somehow or other the form of religion which at one time did meet these needs, has, somehow or other, lost it...

But getting back to these (primary-age) children, I think most of the attempts to get down to them has the effect of cancelling out religion. If, without cancelling out religion, we, at least, spoke in their words, in forms that they understand, not in terms that adults think they understand, then we might succeed... Our national group said to us, "You really don't know what your young people are thinking. Now we thought we knew, so we gave this group of children this test, and we were quite surprised. There was quite a difference between what we thought they were thinking and what they were really thinking." So, just to be the devil's advocate, I took the same test and gave it to our kids. And they didn't even approach what the boys in Philadelphia said they would. The thing that crossed

my mind was, Did Philadelphia really take that test? Or did they give it with the loaded idea of what they were going to get out of the test? Because we sure didn't get the same results that they did.

INTERVIEWER: What were your results?

PASTOR: Well, there were something like fourteen statements or questions, and the children were to mark the four or five which were the most important to them. Then they were to mark the four or five least important to them. Now there were a certain number which fit a certain style like, Who am I? Well, we had the same problems when I was a kid, only we didn't call it Who am I? But a second or third grader would be lost with this. He wouldn't even begin to understand the significance of such a question. Another question or statement was, I would like to have one or two close friends. And the correct answer was how they were supposed to be yearning for personal relationships.

It occurred to me after Pastor Berger had finished that a tool like this questionnaire just might provide a key for getting into a child's mind. They would have to be worded simply calling for YES or NO responses; for example, Is there a God? Provided that the youngster answered affirmatively, this could be followed by a question relating to the nature of the Deity: Is this God good? Perhaps for the kindergarten and first grade

groups, the questions could be administered orally. Also, these might be given twice a year to determine the extent of the child's maturation process, and the degree of his impressionability by his parents, his teacher, and his friends. Finally, if this could be done to some mass extent, i.e., throughout the country with other groups of Reform children of primary age, some real starting point might be achieved.

There were two interesting answers which I received from Reverend Noyes to the question, What needs to be done in the area of children's prayer to make it more effective? This was not specifically concerned with the literature, itself, but with methodology for the immediate future and in the long run.

The first reply dealt with how he and his wife were nurturing their young daughter, introducing her to prayer and to a concept of God.

REVEREND: One of the first things we did was to introduce her to our custom of Grace at the table. We explained to her why we did it, and why we were thankful for the food we were eating. We did the same thing with bedtime prayers. Also, we talked with her concerning what prayer is all about, why we did this type of thing, what we meant by praying to God, who God is. Basically, what I am saying is that we began working on the foundation, so that as she matures, she would find this to be a meaningful and natural thing

to do. And as she grows older, we will answer questions as they come up.

There is one very important item to consider. This explanation is applicable to those families who place prayer at a premium. But even if prayer comes hard, there are ways of getting around it. The very first thing Reverend Noyes mentioned was Grace at meals. While the words themselves have value, it is the thought underlying them which contains the real message - the idea is thanksgiving, realizing that things could be a lot different. Whether this is verbalized is not of ultimate concern. If it is even considered, then a substantial and worthwhile process has occurred. Thanksgiving carries with it the notion that we live in a dependent state, to an extent. We need the help of others. And if this realization makes us a little more humble, it is all for the better.

The Reverend's last answer carried with it long term consequences. Given that the worship experience is not only a productive one, but an important one, these are the steps he would take to implement an effective program of prayer. First, he would talk with experts on child psychology and learn how the youngster's mind functions in given situations. The second step would be to set up a control group. From this, observations could be made. And the children's answers to questions dealing with prayer

would be compared to those not in the control group. After gathering and collating the results, the third and final step would be implemented - familiarizing the religious school teachers with the results of the study and training them to function within the system suggested by the data.

This to me seems rather cogent. However, in comparison with the questionnaire suggestion, this seems much more cumbersome. This study to be informative as well as more accurate would have to be conducted in many places. The result of one locale would not provide sufficient information to warrant any sweeping conclusions, except for that area. What I am suggesting would not necessarily lead to a standardized method of worship instruction, although it might be ideal. I feel more knowledge could be gained immediately through questionnaires. Because they would be given twice during the year over a sustained period of time, there would be some reasonable basis for arriving at the conclusions. The control group could corroborate the findings of the other study.

Reverend Todd made an interesting observation during the course of our conversation. He noticed, as did Mrs. Pendleton, that most of their primary children had a God concept which included the idea of an incorporeal Deity. The trouble which occurred as they grew older was their questioning the existence of such a being. As a

suggestion, he threw out the idea that perhaps more could be gained through the child's groping for God, rather than blindly accepting the glib assurance that He was there. Mrs. Pendleton agreed. I then asked them what they would like to see (or what they thought needed to be) done in the area of primary worship.

REVEREND: I would first like to see teacher education programs in churches, whereby teachers could understand prayer themselves, and feel so free to talk with God in the presence of the kids, and to identify with them, helping them to communicate with God what thoughts might be in their minds. A youngster learns, I think more than anything, by what he sees other people doing. And as Jean (Mrs. Pendleton) said, we do not have any teachers in our school who can say, "Hey kids, let's just stop a minute and talk with God," and then just talk with Him. In all of this instruction, it all gets back to whom you have teaching. We are tremendously weak in teacher education. Many churches do not make any effort at all. Our efforts are minimal, simply because we don't get teachers out when we offer educational training. We have tried every conceivable time of day and week, and they said yes to a Sunday morning hour, but that's all. Now this doesn't apply to all, but to about half. We have some pretty dedicated people who know what they are going, and yet they come out anyway. If we could predict that those

who are skilled would come regularly, we wouldn't have to spend so much time on basic things, and go beyond what we are offering in training. And there will not be any change on this until the whole church across the board, wakes up to the importance of Christian education, and the church gets support from the pulpit, and there is some publicity emphasizing that our religious school is falling apart, which means our church is falling apart. Until there is that kind of strength where we can say, "You can be a teacher if you meet these qualifications," when we get to that point we have something going, but we are a long way off...

I would like to have a situation in which we don't break our necks getting teachers; we don't allow a teacher to teach who isn't really qualified; and then the kids come to Saunday School and there is nobody there, and we simply usher them into the sanctuary, and have them sit down in there for the hour. And then we would make it known from the pulpit that the reason the kids are there is because we don't have any teachers to teach. I think it takes that kind of a drastic measure to resurrect some depth and some quality into a Sunday School program.

But I really think, getting back to your question on prayer, I don't think we are going to get anywhere until teachers can do it. You can talk all day about how prayer works, but if you can't show a kid prayer in action... I

just don't understand why we have to be so secretive about prayer. We ought to be able to let go at any time and express how we feel without being afraid. I remember shortly after I met my wife, we were walking together after something good had happened, and I said, "Hey God! Thanks a lot! That's really cool!" And my wife thought that was really great that I had said it out loud.

If God and prayer are ever to hold some kind of position of respect or importance, the ability and desire to converse freely within this context must be encouraged. How can one talk to or about God if there is a hesitancy to do so out of an unfamiliarity or a feeling of discomfort? Children as well as adults need this or a similar kind of release.

The teacher training idea represents a useful suggestion. It is hard for me to conceive of anything worse within a religious school than a staff of teaching personnel that really does not understand the basics of communicating with the students. If there is to be any worth to a Sunday School's religious commitment, it must have qualified people who want to perpetuate their beliefs.

Closely related to this is parental involvement. If the adult membership enrolls its children merely to give recognition to a convention, or as a convenience, the religious school, as Reverend Todd suggested, might as well close its doors. To reiterate what was said earlier, the

parents have to want for their children what they want for themselves. This involves commitment on their part.

Finally, the Reverend's uncompleted statement, "You can talk all day about how prayer works, but if you can't show a kid a prayer in action...", says so much. Teachers not only have to know what they are talking about, but to be really effective, must have a deep commitment to and belief in their product. To perpetuate it they must be able to sell it, to make it look attractive.

The idea of there being something which could or should be done now in the area of worship was not of primary concern to Reverend Sammons. If we recall what he said earlier, the Unitarians traditionally are not a praying people. As a matter of fact, a recent survey revealed that approximately only three percent of their group subscribes to a personal Deity.

Instead, the prevalent theology or non-theology is humanistic. Their salvation does not lie in speaking to a supernatural being Who will act as a guardian for them, or Who has endowed them with immortal souls. They believe that they only have one life to live, and that is here and now. Their salvation stems from how they live their lives, their character and the quality of their living.

All this can be demonstrated inductively, according to him, through the examples of other people's lives and enabling children to pass through these experiences. They

begin to understand a little of what life and salvation are all about. According to the Reverend, there is even a place for prayer. His thoughts not only describe this particular role, but also the future of worship within his church as it might need to be realistically or idealistically.

REVEREND: I don't think it (worship) is any different for children than it is for adults. The ingredients and techniques have to vary because of where the development of the person is. But it is the same search. Worship is kind of a microcosm of life. It's not something apart from life, at least not in our perspective. And there is as much need to stimulate as to console...

Maybe what we need if we were to think about a prayer book, if it were at all appropriate to us, would be a loose leaf prayer book, one that we could build, that might start with materials. It might start with a whole explanation or exploration, really, of the use and context of prayer in the life of a child, and it would deal not only with written kinds of things, but how we can pray.

There is a very intriguing possibility which I can see emerging from this loose leaf prayer book. The fact that it would be in such a perpetually unfinished condition would leave its potential wide open. As long as creative minds continued to function, the prayer book could be expanded. The latest innovations plus an evaluation of

their effectiveness would supply a fresh, vital approach. The minds of its participants would be stimulated.

There are two things to keep in mind regarding this, however. First, feedback would provide the only barometer to gauge its efficacy. And second, expanded too frequently, there would be the danger of removing whatever depth the current worship program could provide. If the child is given an opportunity to gain a familiarity with the material and to digest it, then he may be introduced to new concepts successfully. Instead of being a superficial feature of the youngster, the ideas may become deeply ingrained.

I asked Reverend Wasdyke whether or not the lack of commitment to prayer within the ranks of his congregation might suggest that a reworking of their basic worship forms would be in order. He responded that this might be true. Thus the next questions flowing out of our discussion was, How would he go about establishing an organized program of worship for primary graders? In other words, what needed to be done. He thought for nearly a half a minute before answering.

REVEREND: First of all I think it's very helpful to them to have models of what prayer is. And I think just learning some prayers that children learn, and that are expressive of what children feel and say is very helpful. And yet I would not want to stifle them in terms of their expression. I think it's basically helping children understand that

God cares what happens to them, and that we share our whole life with Him, in this sense, like that child would share his life with his brother or sister, or mother and father, much the same kind of way. And when your mother feels sorry for you when you fall down and scrape your knee, and in that kind of way God feels sorry for you. If you hurt, He cares about it; when you are happy, He is glad you are happy. And what happens to other people is important to Him as well.

So much depends on realizing what children can understand at the appropriate age.

The Reverend went on to suggest that when prayer is mentioned, it is thought of as concomitant with action rather than contemplation. But he felt there most definitely was a time and a place for worship as understood in this latter context, and that children should be made aware of this.

While I personally do not share his approach to God, I do agree with his thoughts on teaching prayer forms. I believe this represents a positive activity toward developing a depth in the little child. When he is confronted "spiritually" by a demanding situation, given that he has had some degree of exposure to the process of turning outward or inward for help, he will be able to cope with it, and not be conquered by it. How invaluable this is to his emotional maturation and peace of mind.

These past two chapters only begin to hint at how difficult it is to work with the child in the realm of religion, prayer, and God. In every interview there was a long period of silence following the question, What needs to be done to improve children's prayer book literature? or How would you go about establishing an organized program of worship for primary graders? This indicates either one or two things: first, that the problem is extremely formidable, and/or secondly, that very little thought has been concentrated in this direction. I suspect that it is a combination of both. Given this particular age group, it is easy to see why communication of these deep concepts would pose such a problem.

Nevertheless, I feel that there were some very good ideas which emerged during the course of and after the five discussions. I list them here as recommendations and possible solution:

- 1) Have detailed, but simply - worded, questionnaires answered twice a year (once at the beginning and once at the end) over a sustained number of years. These would be evaluated to determine how simple or how sophisticated the child's mind is in responding to abstract questions.

- 2) Have teacher training clinics. If the teachers do not appreciate or understand prayer and its dynamics, they are unfit to communicate with the child. Given that worship is a worthwhile enterprise, only qualified and

sensitive personnel would be capable of transmitting its immediate and long-term values.

3) Develop a loose leaf style prayer book. This would leave it open for expansion. Also, the development of a clearing house to duplicate new materials and to circulate them would be invaluable. Clergymen and education directors could be kept abreast of the latest developments.

4) Have the teachers present and explain prayer forms to the children. Once they are able to see and understand what is involved, there is a much greater possibility of them making this activity a meaningful part of themselves.

5) Solicit parental support. The child's values and beliefs should have their source in the home, not in the religious school. It is the responsibility of the latter to supplement and to enrich. There should be complementary processes taking place. Once the parents become disinterested, it is only a matter of time before the children follow suit.

CHAPTER 3

Development of a Worship Approach for Children: Advice for Parents

I recently had a discussion with some of my religious school students about religion in their homes. The sad situation was that for the majority of them, this particularly important element of life was non-existent. Furthermore, a goodly number of them were attending my class due to parental desires, and in some cases, even coercion. Naturally, I was appalled but I was not surprised. I know that when I was growing up the same or very similar circumstances prevailed. And there are two very basic reasons for this. First, little emphasis or value is being placed on religion within the home. (Why is this the case? Because, as was mentioned before at the beginning of Chapter 2, the parents rejected whatever spiritual life their parents had to offer. Of course, we cannot make sweeping generalizations, but the reduced numbers of people in attendance at worship services may not always be directly or indirectly attributed to inclement weather. Now, what we have here is a situation which may snowball with irrevocable consequences. Two generations ago after the parents had rejected the life style of their parents, they replaced the outdated religious forms with new, meaningful ones. But, whereas this activity used to take place, it is not occurring too frequently. Instead of replacement, there is a large gaping void.

And the tragedy is that, unless something radical is done quickly, this condition will be proliferated among today's young people, until perhaps, not even a remnant shall remain. I believe it is just this serious.) The second reason is that the number of teachers who have the capacity to convey to their students the love they have for, and the value and importance they place upon their religion is far too minimal. Still less is the number capable of inspiring these same feelings within the classroom. Between these two reasons those who care have all the justification in the world for being discouraged.

In an earlier paper entitled, "Injecting Greater Relevance into Religious School Instruction," I arrived at some conclusions, the substance of which is worth repeating.

1) The home has to serve as the initiator and the encouraging agent while the religious school is providing the material with which a child may build a religiously significant world for himself. Both must work hand in hand, not in opposition to each other.

2) The parents have to be made sensitive to the role they should play in their children's religious education. They not only should encourage, but should reinforce, as well.

3) The parents ought to make it their business to know and understand just what it is that their children

are being taught.

There were several other conclusions reached which dealt specifically with the religious school context. It is not our purpose to swell on that area. Rather, the chapter proposes to do two things: first, to provide a system of introductory worship for the primary-age child which parents themselves might find attractive, and second, to provide instruction and helpful hints to the parents for introducing their children to the God and prayer concept which shall be articulated.

Thus far, we have made an investigation into the field of currently available children's prayer book literature and evaluated it. We have also made some recommendations for proposed changes. Nowhere, as yet, within the body of this thesis, have we taken a careful look at the child, the one for whom the following prayer book has been written. I think it is crucial for there to be some basic understanding of the young child's growing up process, and his relationships with his parents and with others if we are to understand how he fits into the worship setting.

Since we are concerned with prayer and its effect upon the very young, it might not be out of place to mention a piece of mimeographed material sent to me by Reverend Noyes, because it has a direct bearing on the outcome of this chapter.

Ethel Smither, in her excellent little book on the Use of the Bible with Children, tells of a parent reading the Christmas story. The older children are attentive and absorbed in it. The nursery child sees a candle flickering and smells the greenery and the cooking. He is moved by the rhythm, the feeling of security, the joy of sensory stimulation, and the fellowship of love. The Gospel speaks, but the words are not understood, and yet the child responds.²⁶

Even if we put aside the actual content of the reading (Christmas Story), there are a number of things worth discussing. The interviews revealed a total disagreement concerning when the child is capable of responding to prayer. Reverend Todd told me of some teenagers who recently discovered for the first time, the meaning and worth of prayer during a youth retreat. Pastor Berger said that most of his devotional resources did not really begin to approach God and prayer until the fifth or sixth grade level. Reverend Sammons indicated that his church begins working with the children while they are still in the crib-stage. So we can see the different viewpoints. I believe the quote provides us with a clue. If we may understand the prayer experience not in its limited sense of actual verbalization of words and ideas with a purpose behind it, but as a physical as well as an inner response to the immediate environment, then we are provided with more possibilities. The nursery child's feelings then

would constitute a prayer of sorts. How so? The child through his senses receives the various impressions. While he is unable to translate all of them, he understands that the whole constitutes a pleasant experience, and he actually feels a sense of joy and security.

Elizabeth Manwell and Sophia Fahs in their book, Consider the Children - How They Grow, maintain that mental and spiritual health are intertwined, and are quite important in the little child's growing-up processes. Connected to this is the idea that a spiritual and loving home-life is necessary to provide him with a feeling of warmth and security.²⁷ This should be continuous.

While this foundation is being laid, the two authors state that the growth of the child should be increased through his introduction to the out-of-doors. They feel that a great deal of learning can take place via nature. At the same time, provided that the young child is supplied with the proper evocative questions, he cannot help but arrive at a belief in a cosmic God.²⁸ Through his exposure to nature he begins to sense the relation between cause and effect. This provides a perfect opportunity for his parents to reinforce his experiences through pictures of familiar scenes.

By the same token, if the parents do not believe in a cosmic God, they need not supply their child with the leading questions. They may, perhaps, desire to instill

him with a feeling of awe, thanksgiving, and an appreciation for beauty. Yet, if this feeling is to have any meaning, it must be spontaneous, not forced, required, or suggested. Under the informal and relaxed conditions of a family picnic or a Sunday stroll, virtually anything may be etched in the child's impressionable mind by his mother and father. The one thing that will confuse him is if his parents seriously attempt to teach him two conflicting ideas. As there is a harmony within nature, so there must exist a consistency in the information which he absorbs.

Manwell and Fahs point out that our attitudes as adults shape young children's feelings toward situations and events which could have a profound effect on their lives, for example, the dark or a thunderstorm. Our task is to develop positive attitudes in the child so that he will be able to face a difficult problem. It is when the parents display anxiety in relation to ordinary occurrences that the seeds of fear are sown in the child's mind. The child has a sensitivity to his parent's emotions. He has the uncanny ability to sense when something is wrong. Thus, to inspire positive attitudes in dealing with a problem represents a fundamental building block in his mental and spiritual growth. Furthermore, during the period of questioning, the youngster is not as concerned with the substance of the answer as he is with its directness or honesty. He can sense when he is being

evaded. Concerning the answers, they should be geared to his age level but not differ in their substance or truth-content. In other words, what the child is told at five years old should be valid when he is twenty-five. Also, there is no need to supply more of an answer than the child is seeking.

Another necessary part of his maturation is his introduction to people outside of his family and home environment. Through his interaction with children the same age, he gains a new self-awareness as well as a feeling for social responsibility. He learns quickly that the universe does not revolve around him. He glimpses new ideas for creating and constructing, and he learns how to live without the near presence of either parent. He has the joy of meeting new friends with the possibility of his mother's arranging to have him know them better by having them visit. Thus, he becomes a person of importance.

This briefly covers one phase of the young child's development. With ingredients such as warmth, love, security, and honesty provided by his parents, the chances of him growing up with a solid foundation are promising indeed. Earlier there was a reference to a particular God concept. We shall now briefly look at some opinions of a couple of psychologists and some other interested people to see how they approach God and worship. Their thoughts shall represent the point of departure in form-

ulating our own worship approach.

Ronald Goldman in his book, Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence, mentions that Christianity basically considers the Deity to be personal and thus, uses anthropomorphisms to describe the relationship, e.g., Father. The same is true in Reform Judaism and may be seen quite frequently within the passages of the UPB. In addition to the parental reference, God within standard Reform Jewish prayers is called Savior, Protector, King, Shepherd, and Master of the Universe, to name a few. Although not speaking to the Reform Jewish understanding of its God, he makes an informative statement:

The tendency to attribute human form and personality to God is known as anthropomorphic thinking. Some have asserted that Christianity is essentially an anthropomorphic and materialistic religion, in the sense that the spiritual and the material are inseparable. We have already seen that other investigators, especially Piaget, have noted the tendency in young children to anthropomorphise the deity. This is a natural result of egocentric thinking where only human and childhood experiences are known. It also stems from what Bovet describes as the need of the child to "parentalise the deity," once he discovers that his human parents are not infallible nor possessed of divine qualities, as he had previously imagined. Piaget's examples of what he calls artificialist*

*Artificialism is defined by Piaget in The Child's Conception of the World, as the youngster's inclination to attribute everything he sees as having its origin as human. God is pictured as a mighty human capable of doing great things. He also sees other humans as having divine powers.

explanations of the natural world illustrate this tendency. The sun's beginnings are caused by God lighting a fire in the sky with a match and the clouds originate from God's breath.²⁹

Goldman goes on to caution the reader not to make an elementary mistake of distinguishing between anthropomorphic concepts as if one would be childish and the other more mature. He states that even though the former become more sophisticated as the child grows older, they are still carried forward into adulthood. The level on which the distinction can be made is the one where God is depicted as possessing all the physical attributes of man as opposed to the one where the Deity is the possessor of the most perfect and respected qualities of man.

Eight years earlier, Rabbi Max Machtei wrote a more facile book entitled, This is My God (a primer for an abiding and sustaining faith). Goldman's book represents a scientific approach to a difficult topic. He gathered a significant amount of data from certain questions he asked. Unfortunately, his treatment of God is virtually confined to the Bible. It has little to say about the children's belief in today's Deity, what His qualities are, and what He does. These are questions which demand more than ever to be answered. Machtei's purpose is to provide answers for children of primary age. He feels that in order to build a good foundation, he must start at the beginning with names, i.e., definitions. One of these

is God. Because his style is almost conversational (as though he is talking to little children), he asks many rhetorical questions. "...I ask you to look at the word God and to tell me what word it looks like. Yes, my dear, if you put one more "o" in the word, it reads Good. You are right. God means Good. Remember that always. God is good."³⁰ Just before he closes out the first chapter, he mentions two attributes of God. These are to be noted by his two pre-literate grandchildren to whom the book is dedicated. What he says is no different than the theological position of the literature we examined in our first chapter, that the Deity is omnipotent and omniscient-only he does not use those words. He then pleads for his grandchildren and others their age to ask questions when they are unable to understand something. They should not be afraid or ashamed to seek the truth. In this case, dealing in matters of religion (specifically God), the one they would turn to would be Rabbi Machtei. At first glance, it would appear that the questions would be funneled toward one unavoidable answer, his own. Yet his plea for truth does have merit. Coincidentally, truth and his ideas as synonymous. The clue lies in his dedication in which he depicts his grandchildren as thinking that even though their grandfather does not know everything, he knows all about God! Since our purpose right now is confined to an approach rather than a critique,

let us advance our investigation of this particular volume. In the chapter called "God," Rabbi Machtei points out a sophisticated truth: word pictures provide us with a better understanding of what a thing is. If we do not have a word picture, the chances of our comprehending the object are reduced. So it is with God. Hence, that is why many theological descriptions are anthropomorphic. But he cautions the reader:

These, and many other phrases found in religious writings, are what are called "figures of speech." They should not be taken word for word as written.

God is not a body, has no body, has no shape or form. God is a Force. God is Spirit. God is Power. God is Goodness. You cannot clothe or confine Him to any one place.

The definitions of God which you read all limit Him. By speaking of God in terms of human powers of functions-no matter how lofty and regal-you take away from His true greatness.³¹

Really! Is a little child reading this going to be able to understand it? These are deep thoughts. Another one which he adds is that he likens us to television sets. When the set is turned on we receive a picture. When we turn on to God (think about Him) we partake of His goodness. This thought is worth retaining, to some degree. The Rabbi mentions in his primer that God is eternal, immanent, and transcendent, a symbol of progress, a protector, just, love, cause par excellence, and the Creator.

God is a multi-faceted being. Whether or not He is one was not discussed.

Mildred Moody Eakin in Your Child's Religion describes a visit she had with some fourth graders. They were in a religious environment, and Mrs. Eakin decided to take advantage of the situation to get across the point of tangibles and intangibles. It was explained that intangibles existed but could not be seen or felt like a bicycle. An example of an intangible was Spring. The children agreed that it would not be possible to touch it, but could sense that it was there. Another example was love. Mrs. Eakin felt that this kind of feeling could be developed in eight-year olds and would be valuable in introducing youngsters to the world of God.³² My feeling is that she is right. I think that once parents or teachers begin playing around with physical attributes in connection with the Deity, the children will develop an incorrect understanding which they will have to unlearn later on.

So she gets into the question of how a child learns about God. She makes a distinction between the name and the meaning, and points out that little children become familiar with the name and with many ideas associated with it simply through listening to others talk about Him. Then their own mental images of God are formed according to the impressions they received. She indicates an elemental danger because the child only has limited

experience on which to draw his conclusions. More times than not, he will place the Deity in the role of either a heavenly policeman or a personal protector whose territory is earth. Since no family is immune to some kind of suffering, the little child's reliance upon God might very likely be destroyed or injured. On the other hand he might rationalize everything in order to maintain some kind of belief. She rejects both results, and seeks instead, a more effective approach. She arrives at two basic characteristics which may conveniently be found in the Bible. God is good and God is unseen. The first, she suggests, is vital. According to her pupils, God would not be God if He were mean. The latter refers to the discussion of intangibles. God may be experienced, but not literally seen. Whenever possible, the child is to look for the good in different things. From these searchings, one finds God.³³

At the forty-eighth Union of American Hebrew Congregations Biennial, there were a number of papers presented which dealt with God and prayer. Some of the questions to which the talks were directed were, Must God be personal for prayer to be meaningful? What kind of Deity does prayer require? The following are some excerpts:

"I can only pray to something I can address because it addresses me. And, since something is not very likely to address me, we had better come out in the open and

admit that we are referring to someone."³⁴

This statement came from a traditional point of view.

Let us hear what the existentialist had to say.

We cannot conceive the God of Biblical faith; we cannot define Him conceptually in a neat, dogmatic formula or in an elaborate theological system. To say of Him that He is omniscient, omnipotent, and all-good - and apply to Him literally our human understanding of the categories of knowledge, power, and goodness - is to falsify Him. We cannot say this is what He is precisely in His own essence and nature. Once we do this, it is no longer the living God of whom we speak but an ideal or an ...idol of our own making.

A God who is truly God...cannot be expressed but only addressed.³⁵

Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn as a representative of the naturalist view said that "God is to be found within nature, not acting upon nature from outside itself."³⁶ He adds that, "it is precisely the person who insists on talking about God within a human vocabulary and in terms of human analogy who is belittling God."³⁷

Finally, Rabbi Levi A. Olan representing an organicist view says, "The God we worship, above all else, must be real."³⁸ Then he provides us with the first really different statement we have seen thus far concerning the Deity: "...there is no need for God to be absolute in power to be God. God is better understood as a becoming even as is the universe and man. God struggles against

evil and learns to overcome it. Man can help God and God can help man."³⁹ The first part of his second statement we shall keep in mind as significant.

As I stated earlier, we shall briefly look at some approaches toward an understanding of God only for the purpose of providing ourselves with a point of departure, not an analysis. We shall briefly look at some sources on prayer for the same reason, thereby enabling us to formulate a worship approach.

Mrs. Eakin in Your Child's Religion relates an anecdote of a family that was living on a farm. The two children, ages eight and six, were familiar with prayer and knew the purpose behind it. One day they walked into the barn with Belle, their pet Scotch terrier, and she was kicked in the head accidentally by one of the horses. The two children prayed to God for Belle's recovery but to no avail. The whole incident shattered their complete faith in prayer.

She tells another story about a mother and her nine-year old son (George), and a very special conversation they had one evening. It seems as though George had temper tantrums every so often, and was working hard at controlling them. He and his mother discussed the one that he had had that afternoon with a boy his own age. Through the mother's careful prodding, George was able to understand why things had happened the way they did.

After George had resolved to control his temper, his mother kissed him good night and left the room. This is what followed:

"Oh, mother," George called after her, "I forgot to say my prayers."

"Why, I thought we had a fine prayer time," his mother said, coming back to the door.

"No, I forgot to say them."

"But wasn't that a good talk we had? And didn't we decide about mistakes we'd made and things we'd do and wouldn't do?"

"Of course. But you don't call that praying, do you?"

"Yes, I think I would. We were communing together with the best that is in each of us. Isn't that communicating with God?"

George said it was a new idea to him.

His mother, smiling a little to herself, stood by her kneeling son and listened as he "said" his prayers. A child with head bowed in an attitude of reverence is an appealing sight. George's mother liked to see him in that attitude, liked to hear him repeat the simple petitions she had taught him long ago. Was not such prayer obviously real? Tonight she knew the answer. The talk had been real. The prayer was a form, a habit. "I have a job cut out for me," she said to herself as she went down the stairs. "I've neglected it too long. A nine-year-old boy shouldn't think of prayer as meaning only words spoken night by night at one's bed to God in the skies."⁴⁰

Mrs. Eakin, in concluding her chapter on prayer arrives at some conclusions which are worthwhile to note. Spoken word prayers, unless accompanied by some kind of idea or

intensity, are practically worthless. The important idea is to reach outward for goodness. "Real prayer for the child will come through his experiences, especially experiences which bring with them a sense of failure or success, which arouse aspirations, which call for choices, decisions. Only as they are connected with such experiences are spoken prayers likely to have worthful reality."⁴¹

At the UAHC Biennial mentioned earlier, a number of rabbis expressed their reaction to the nature of prayer for them. Some of their thoughts follow.

"Prayer is supposed to help me do God's will, not cajole God into performing my will."⁴² This is a worthwhile statement, especially following Mrs. Eakin's anecdote about the accidental death of the Scotch terrier. At the same time, however, it does leave open the question, Does God hear prayer? Rabbi Gittelsohn goes on to state that prayer can and does have a profound effect on his life.

...God is a Spiritual Power in the universe and in myself. He operates the same way whether I pray or not. In the life of a tree it makes no difference whether the tree is aware of God's existence; in my life it makes an immense difference, for prayer is my way to activate and utilize a Power which otherwise remains dormant.⁴³

We shall give credence to this belief later. The idea is a sound one.

Rabbi Olan feels that "Worship is the experience of God"⁴⁴ and that "Prayer is an address to the God whom we

have experienced."⁴⁵ This helps to define the prayer or worship experience. As we shall soon see, Rabbi Daniel Silver makes a sharp distinction between prayer and worship. If we are speaking of prayer, it should be understood that it occurs in many forms. In an unpublished book, Let's Say Our Prayers, by Rabbi Sylvan D. Schwartzman, Professor of Jewish Education at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, he enumerates most of them: prayers of thanks to God, prayers of praise to God, prayers asking God's help for ourselves and in behalf of others, daily and holiday prayers, and prayers for special occasions during one's lifetime. Thus, to reduce prayer to petition would be a mistake. Rabbi Olan feels that morality has a place within religion but falls outside the sphere, as well, because God is not addressed or experienced. At the risk of taking him literally, I would disagree. This shall be explained later.

Rabbi Joseph Klein, who attended the Biennial, said that all people need to and do pray.

Every wishful thought is a prayer, as is every verbalization of human emotion. When people say they have no need for prayer they may have in mind the formalized type of worship found in a synagogue or a church. It is this which they reject....But in truth, prayer is as much a part of their life as the air they breathe. They are just too insensitive to the realities of life to be aware of this.⁴⁶

If we are to take the Rabbi at his word, the people

he criticizes, I would suggest, have narrow viewpoints, and never even considered prayer to possess this added dimension because they have limited backgrounds. Rabbi Klein feels that the prayer of gratitude represents a more mature prayer than one of petition. He is of the opinion that an individual is rather poor if he is unable to express or even think of thankfulness.

Rabbi Leonard Kravitz, a Biennial participant, stated that "Prayer, seen in the most neutral terms, expresses some kind of relation between man and God, some kind of outpouring from man to God, and some kind of response from God."⁴⁷ This shall come to provide us with the basic mechanics toward the development of a worship approach.

Rabbi Silver, mentioned earlier, establishes some clear differences between prayer and worship. To the average layman, the two would be practically synonymous. The Rabbi makes us aware that this is not the case.

The rabbis did not set out to create a prayer hour. Those who say "I do not need to come to the synagogue to pray" or "I do not need a prayer book to pray" are absolutely right. Prayer is a spontaneous release of tense or exalted feelings. President Lincoln put it this way: "I often find myself down on my knees when I have no place else to go." Prayer is agnostic; worship is monotheistic. Prayer is elemental; worship is organized. Prayer is spontaneous; worship has a set calendar. Prayer is a release; worship is a commitment.⁴⁸

After pointing this out, he proceeds, unjustly I feel, to reduce the value of prayer vis a vis worship.

Worship is far more inclusive and far more civilized than prayer, and unlike prayer, unequivocally monotheistic...Prayer begins in need; worship begins in reverence. Prayer is a measure of man's anxiety; worship is a measure of man's commitment. Prayer springs from the convulsed heart; worship begins in the reflective soul. Prayer is half-formed, a thing of the moment; worship is sculpture, a thing of beauty. Prayer is an urgency; worship is consecration. We pray when life is too much for us; we worship the better to live.⁴⁹

Rabbi Silver's evaluation of prayer I find narrow and constricted, at the very least. It is precisely because worship is sculpture, a thing of "poetry," that people are not coming to the synagogue. If the Union Prayer Book had something more worthwhile to say, and if the structure of the Sabbath service were less geared to one of performance by the rabbi and audience passiveness on the part of the congregation, there just might be a rise in involvement in the Reform Jewish community.

I find his condemnation appalling and unjustified, especially since I have been able to experience the exact rewards of both. At this time I shall posit my approach to the worship experience, noting beforehand that the only difference I see between worship and prayer exists in length. Indeed, prayer may or may not be an individual part of worship, while the latter represents an entire

process. Yet, in its own way, prayer can be a complete activity.

Rabbi Schwartzman, mentioned earlier, wrote a preface to his Teacher's Manual for Orientation to God, Prayer and Ethics. Included therein are four considerations, two which bear repeating for they suggest the nature the following prayer book is to take. "First, nothing should be taught the child which, in later years, would require correction or abandonment. Second, the information given should lead to certain broad understandings capable of becoming the foundation for a later more mature approach to Judaism."⁵⁰ To this I would add a third and fourth consideration: the concepts of God and prayer which are to be articulated are not authoritarian. Their use and belief (acceptance) are not mandatory. Finally, while the format is geared for primary graders, the approach may be used by parents as well, especially since the world environment can create difficulties in developing a useful belief in God and prayer. The idea is to avoid a double standard, i.e., teaching the children to affirm one thing while they believe another.

Because Rabbi Schwartzman found the results of his Teacher's Manual to be favorable, he conveyed to me the idea that God and prayer could be taught at such a young age (to children of primary age). More than one hundred Reform religious schools are presently using his approach.

I think that this makes a strong case for introducing the God and prayer ideas to the little child, rather than deferring it.

This refutes Rabbi Stanley Brav's contention that

there need be no formal theology introduced into the curriculum before the adolescent age when the child has learned to think in abstract terms. The idea of God might enter into the primary curriculum at many points, but a consideration of this larger subject must be postponed for another occasion.⁵¹

There is a very real possibility that a faulty God concept could be nurtured within the home. By the time the child has reached his adolescence, he might very possibly have to unlearn what came before. And if this is the case, there is the very real possibility that he may reject any subsequent theological systems.

Let us establish a God concept...now.

1. GOD

1. Many of the aforementioned opinions incorporated the idea of good being a part of God. This we shall include in our own understanding, too. What is good? Certainly the philosophers loved to play the game of determining just what the word encompassed. We all have our own notions of what the word and its concept imply. To make a generalization would be irresponsible. The experiences of our lives convey to us what goodness is. It is an intangible of which we are very much aware, as we

are aware of truth, love, and compassion. By understanding good as being part of God, the mention of Him automatically triggers in our mind the association of good. The same is true for the three other intangibles just mentioned.

2. Often when we speak of the Deity, we are unconsciously referring to a Superman concept. Reform Judaism in this day and age will not support such a notion. What do we exclude? We exclude His omnipotence and we reject His omniscience. God is not our bodyguard who will suspend the natural order to protect us. God does not have knowledge, He is knowledge. Knowledge is a part of God. The world of ideas and thoughts is part of Him. Does that mean when I think I am contemplating God? Not necessarily. If I think a good thought, then God is involved. If I think of the love I have for another, then God is involved. If I think of what I may do for my friend, then God is involved. But if I am trying to figure out a mathematical problem, or how I can gain revenge, God is not involved. Whenever deep human thoughts and emotions are even glimpsed, we may begin to understand the real idea that is God. Rather than understanding God as an active being, I understand God as an Active Attitude. What is meant by this? If we were to place ourselves in a human situation in which what we said or did had an influence over others, and, if we weighed the alternatives and arrived at a solution which effected a positive result, then God understood as

an Active Attitude was involved. That is to say, if I were to ask myself, What would God do if He were in my place?, the subsequent answer and its result would represent God's influence in our lives. He has no control over evil. This rests squarely upon the collective shoulders of humanity. But He is the one who ennobles human life.

3. Where may God be found? He may be found in every human being. May He be found in the evil person? Yes, God is merely dormant in that individual. When he, or anyone else for that matter, is able to ask the question, What would God do if He were in my place?, then he has awakened the God within him. God as Active Attitude lives within us to the extent that we are able to ask that question, to the extent that our conscience prods us, and to the extent that we are able to empathize with others. Thus, God is immanent, not transcendent. He is as active as we permit Him to be. Does that mean that we have dominion over Him? No. The fact that many of us are unable consistently to ask the question, What would God do if He were in my place?, indicates our inability to make ourselves one with God. The only dimension that each one of us controls is the extent to which God is part of our experience, and that represents His activity.

4. A consideration of the creation of the universe or its eternality is not essential to this God concept. However, my own feeling is that the universe is eternal,

and the life forms that populate the earth are the result of evolution. We find it much easier when speaking of the world as being infinite in time to extend the infinity forward. It would be just as logical to project it backward. Thus, I do not believe that God created the universe.

5. To glibly say that God is the author of life and death is dangerous. The quality of life which animates an object (whether it be human, animal, or plant) is a mystery. Certainly man does not have the power to create life. It would be very easy and convenient to attribute all or many of the unexplainables to the Deity, and as a matter of fact there are many who do. I myself find that to do this solves nothing, and is very unconvincing as well as unsatisfying.

6. As Rabbi Levi Olan said earlier, "there is no need for God to be absolute in power to be God," so, I feel, there is no need for Him to be infinite. He is infinite in the sense that He is the highest good and exemplifies the most noble values. He is finite in the sense that he lives as long as man exists.

7. The fact that we have never seen the embodiment of the infinite good or most noble values means that we do not even begin to have complete knowledge of God. If one accepts the six previous points, then one may find comfort in the belief of God's existence.

8. Concerning the Bible, I believe that it was

written in its entirety by many men. Because I do not believe that a revelation occurred at Mount Sinai, the Scriptural contents are not binding upon me. Does this in any way offend God? Yes, if we are speaking of the God of the Old Testament. But this system of theological concepts does not bear much resemblance at all to the Divine qualities and attributes of which we read in the Bible. Is the Bible literally true? I do not believe it is. Its value lies in the rich allegories, stories, parables, and wisdom connected with the human experience, and in many cases, the experiences have a real validity.

9. I believe that God is incorporeal, but His effects may be felt by each of us. For example, we have experienced the gratifying feeling which either accompanies or follows something we have done for someone else; or we have felt the security of a warm blanket and people around our beds when we have been sick. The first example represents God acting in us, the second, God acting through others for us.

10. Understanding God according to the preceding statements, nothing is pre-ordained. We have free will. God does not know our actions. Hence, there is no traditional Divine reward and punishment, and there is no heaven and hell. The only life we have is right now.

11. PRAYER

Now that we have a God concept with which to operate,

let us relate it to the enterprise of prayer and formulate some principles. Like the above section, what I am about to set down represents personally meaningful thoughts.

1. As was alluded to in the initial chapter, attendance at Sabbath services has been declining for a number of years. It is not our purpose to state why, but perhaps what follows will indicate some areas in which prayer can be made worthwhile not only for the little child but for the parents as well.

Have you ever noticed, if you pray, that the time at which you are engaged in it, as well as the length of it, is usually the same? Have you also noticed that the formula which is recited is rather consistent from one time to the next, and is beginning to or already has lost its fulfilling value? There is a very sound line of reasoning behind both questions. To the first, it would seem that habit more than anything else is operating. And to the second question, both habit and familiarity have reduced this activity to an empty exercise. For some people these two points are not applicable. But I would most strongly suggest that one reason why prayer has ceased having significance for many people is because it has become an exercise of the memory rather than the heart. I think that once we are not bound to a fixed time or hour for prayer, the desire to express prayerful thoughts mentally or verbally will come more freely and spontaneously.

There will also be a greater variety in the subject matter.

2. There is a very fundamental problem we must answer: Does God hear prayer? We mentioned earlier that God lives within us, that He does not actively do anything but inspire us to seek improvement in ourselves. This only begins to answer the question, but another one arises almost simultaneously: If God does not hear prayer, is there anything to be gained in praying? Because I understand God by the ten aforementioned points, He would be incapable of hearing prayer from the standpoint that He would act on it. For example, I do not believe that the prayers I may say for others will effect a Divine action. In this sense God does not hear prayer. On the other hand, if the words I say in the presence of others evoke a changed situation, the God in them has been addressed, and thus my prayer has been heard. If the thoughts I think engender a positive change in me, then God has heard my prayer. The idea that we address ourselves to the Capacity of self-improvement means that we can speak to God. If the result is positive, then God has heard us.

3. There is more to prayer than merely asking for something. To my way of thinking, every emotion we have is a religious experience. If the emotion is directed toward someone, then this is a form of prayer. For example, the gratitude we receive from others can make us tingle inside. The love we direct to another is a form

of saying, Thank you for being an important part of my life; thank you for making my existence beautiful. The thoughts we direct toward others in times of their distress or sorrow is another form of prayer. Our contemplations do not have to be verbalized to fall under the category of prayer. Mrs. Eakin's anecdote (see above page 79) concerning the conversation between a mother and her son is a perfect example of an "unstructured" prayer. There was no formula involved, just some deep probing for answers and an exchange of ideas. As the mother said, "We were communing together with the best that is in each of us. Isn't that communicating with God?" And later she added that we "shouldn't think of prayer as meaning only words spoken night by night at one's bed to God in the skies." Another important consideration is that prayer helps us to do God's "will," not vice versa. The human experiences we have teach us how to cope with situations when they recur. The thoughts we put into making a decision and the results which occur make us aware that we do not have a mastery over life. Thus when we apply thought to a previous situation or experience, there is a basis for a meaningful, verbalized prayer. The empathy we may have for others represents another form of prayer. We not only put ourselves in another person's place, but we include our own feelings as well. There is an interaction between two sets of emotions, one passive and one active. For example,

a very dear friend of mine was married not too long ago. As he walked down the aisle I could see the emotion in his eyes, and I shared the moment with him (the passive set). In addition as a spectator, I had my own emotions which were manifested. It was quite a religious as well as prayerful experience. The joy and best wishes I mentally (and later verbally) extended to him were a very real and powerful form of prayer. I do not feel that there must be a direct address or reference made to God for the prayer to be valid.

4. The last example mentioned was a very intense form of prayer. I would suggest that if prayer is to be meaningful it must be deep and intense. There must be no other thoughts cluttering the mind or else it will be distracted. Duration is not important, but depth is. I would say that the child's ability or capacity to worship, i.e., extend the prayer experience beyond one or two individual thoughts, will grow as his attention span increases. What does his attention span have to do with it? Everything. This is the period of time he is able to concentrate. When he has exhausted his particular thought or finished saying what he feels, he may be brought out of his contemplative mood. If what he is thinking or speaking has personal relevance, his experience remains intact.

5. The parents should never set a double standard for their children. Nothing is more confusing to the

youngster than when he is told that he should not do something because it is wrong, and then witnesses one or both of his parents in violation of their word. The same is true conversely. The child will wonder why he is encouraged to pray when simultaneously his parents do not. Although he may not verbalize his feelings, he is a witness to a lie. This, more than anything else during his formative years, will devastate any positive feeling toward God and prayer. The acceptance and confidence of a child toward prayer can grow by leaps and bounds when it is a shared experience. This is not a guarantee, but at least the odds for success are far greater with this approach.

iii. ADVICE TO PARENTS

There is, perhaps, nothing more difficult and at the same time more rewarding than raising children. The child's joys and sorrows, pleasures and heartaches, and triumphs and defeats are felt very deeply by the parents. Learning how to deal with this is a full-time occupation. And just when you think you have all the answers, another problem arises to undermine your confidence. Don't let it get the better of you. Be the master of the situation.

The same applies for answering their naive and not-so naive questions. Answer them honestly so that they understand.

Other than sex-oriented questions, the area which seems to give many parents a great deal of trouble is religion,

specifically God and prayer. When should I tell my child about God? What should I tell him about prayer? These are very real problems which need to be addressed. Keep in mind that the God and prayer concepts which have been articulated are my own. They work for me. They are not incumbent upon you. Let us see whether we can come up with some guidelines.

The first seven pieces of advice are basically sound, but are not my own. Still, I want to share them with you. They appeared in Redbook Magazine in 1961, and are still applicable. The remainder of the list consists of my own recommendations.

A little child has a simple capacity for drawing close to God and in our adult clumsiness we often spoil it. Parents who understand this are haunted by the conviction that they ought to be doing something spiritually for their children which they are not doing, that they are somehow giving them religion which does not help them.

Here are several "don'ts" to keep in mind as you help your child to become aware of God.

1. If you have doubts, don't share them with a small child. Don't tell him that maybe God is and maybe He isn't.

A parent's questions are the result of a lifetime of experience. A child's question needs to be answered with honesty but not in a way to inhibit the child's religious nurture.

2. Don't tell a little child that "God is watching him to see whether he is good."

Such a view makes God into a policeman and confuses the child as he develops, with parental guidance, and understanding of love and responsibility.

3. Don't tell your child that God is a magic solution for all his troubles, a benevolent benefactor who gives us whatever we ask for.

The danger is that God becomes Someone with whom the child may bargain - so much believing, so many goods, and then the reward.

4. Don't tell your child that the (temple) is God's house.

"I can't talk to God," said one little three-year old as his mother suggested they have an evening prayer. "God isn't here. He is in His house." Such is the problem when God seems to be confined to one place.

5. Don't tell your child that (temple) doesn't matter; and don't tell him that it doesn't matter what he believes as long as he believes in something.

A child needs an accumulating of belief which comes from regular participation in (temple) events.

6. Don't tell even a small child that "God's in His Heaven; all's right with the world."

Even a small child cannot help knowing about pain and death, loneliness and fear. These realities need to be explained as best they can by the parents to the child.

7. Don't give your child a God too small to believe in when he grows up.

What we tell children about God should serve as a foundation for a more mature understanding as the child grows and develops.

In the end, religion is not a series of answers to questions. It is an experience of wonder and gratitude, of sorrow and joy, of reverence for God and of love for our fellow men.⁵²

8. If religion plays a significant role in your life, I would suggest that as soon as your child is able to speak begin nurturing the feeling of God and prayer within him.

9. You are going to have to want for your children what you want for yourselves. The enterprise of prayer is not merely a nice thing for little children to do.

10. If you want religion to be meaningful for you but you have been encumbered by a useless God and prayer concept, search until you find one that satisfies your needs. Don't put yourself in a state of limbo in which part of your concept works and part does not. It should be all or nothing.

11. If you find prayer rewarding, share this enthusiasm with your child. Make the prayer experience something he looks forward to sharing with you. If you do not find prayer meaningful, do not impose it upon him.

12. Don't make prayer a tiresome habit or routine. Let it be spontaneous, exhilarating, and above all fulfilling. Show your child that prayer is not limited to a formula but can be a wishful thought, an emotion, a discussion, or an evaluation of what you did during the day and how you will try to do better tomorrow.

13. If you have atheistic tendencies but feel that you want your child to feel some kind of affiliation with Reform Judaism, then open up to him the possibilities which exist. Don't shelter God or prayer concepts from him just because they have no validity for you.

14. For those of you who liken God to a heavenly father, don't overemphasize this idea. The first time your child sees that you as parents are prone to error, the parental or father image will be destroyed.

15. Don't let God be the answer for everything you are unable to answer.

16. The ideas you give your children about God and prayer should be ones that will not be destroyed later in life or that will have to be unlearned. A solid foundation must be established if God and prayer are to have any abiding worth.

* * * * *

I am sure that some of these ideas will be helpful. They may inspire you to come up with or devise some solutions of your own. If they are able to do that, then we shall have achieved a small measure of success.

CONCLUSION

During the course of my research I was able to learn a great deal from two very different kinds of sources: 1) clergy interviews and 2) books. From the discussions arose some interesting conclusions. The clergy whom I interviewed were Christian. My pre-supposition was that because they were more attuned to the problem of teaching God and prayer to little children, they would have more answers, more materials, and more insight for dealing with this than Reform Judaism. My thought proved to be an over-estimation. Although they have been dealing with this area for a longer period of time, they too have found it difficult to come up with workable solutions. Nevertheless, they provided me with a wealth of information.

Another conclusion I arrived at was that the emphasis toward God and prayer varied from place to place. What I had assumed was that this particular area was central to the spiritual maturation of the child within the church school. I believe that the difficulty in finding viable answers was partially responsible for determining how prominent this subject matter would be within the individual church. There is a certain, sad practicality here. How can you teach something with limited resource material and limited approaches, especially when the knowledge connected with this subject is limited? This is the reason, perhaps, why Rabbi Brav (see above page 85)

arrived at his conclusion, the idea of which was articulated in the Book of Exodus when the Jews complained that without straw they could not make bricks. Without teaching materials or the development of approaches for teaching God and prayer to your children, such an undertaking might seem impossible. The fact that these clergy had books, and that I was able to obtain a substantial amount of material proves that the area is not inaccessible for probing and that a genuine need exists.

To be sure, God and prayer are difficult to teach to a child whether he is a Jew or a Christian. This the clergy told me. The fact that nearly every book I examined contained the same God and prayer concepts told me the same thing. What needs to be developed are different approaches and methods. Not all of them will be practical, but experimentation and evaluation are necessary if Reform Judaism is to grow. Alternatives must be made available to the individual so that he will know that he has made a correct and meaningful choice.

Rabbi Schwartzman's Teacher's Manual referred to earlier (see above pages 84-85) contains basically the same God and prayer concepts as the other books I examined. Yet it makes a valuable contribution since it provides us with a test case. More than one hundred Reform religious schools are presently employing the Teacher's Manual, and have enjoyed success in teaching God and prayer to

primary grade pupils. This, in my judgment, dispels any notions that God and prayer should be deferred in the curriculum to a higher grade level. If the children are taught about these things at an early age in a proper, logical manner, and if their questions are answered truthfully, then the chances of having to unlearn these concepts at a later time will be reduced significantly. This is so important. A traumatic experience could do irreparable damage to a child's simple theological system, and could alienate him from a meaningful and deep-seated belief in God and the efficacy of prayer for the rest of his life. Partial truths can be just as destructive as lies. An early start and honesty can help provide a healthy, spiritual development.

We have also mentioned that many difficulties exist in rearing a child. A foundation of love and security is primary if there is to be a development of communication. Then it is important to know the age at which he will respond to various attempts of instruction, and to be able to recognize signs of learning and acceptance. This is especially true when the parents desire to imbue their child with a positive feeling for God and prayer. All too often the subject is either totally avoided, deferred, or thrust upon the religious school. Many times this is the case because the parents have weak backgrounds and are unable to teach, and/or God and prayer do not play

significant roles in their lives. Additionally, the parents may not realize the value of spiritual nurturing having its source in the home. This is a tragedy. To rely solely on external sources for child development spiritually as well as physically is not only misguided, but also represents a shirking of parental responsibility. In my opinion most kinds of learning should begin in the home. I feel that a great mistake lies in placing absolute faith in the religious school. Both the home and the religious school should interact harmoniously in order to promote the greatest development in the child. At no time should it be one-sided.

The Reform religious schools now bear a tremendous burden precisely because the home is not doing its share. Perhaps when parents realize that the true function of the religious school, that it alone is incapable of fulfilling parental expectations, especially since it has only one day per week to do it, maybe then will they begin to shoulder more of the responsibility. Hopefully, the spiritual upbringing will be viewed as desirous and essential, rather than as an odious task.

The prayer book and its accompanying workbook represent a new approach in presenting God and prayer to the child. To my knowledge, the God and prayer concepts I have articulated are new, and should be examined and utilized to determine their worth and even the direction

such instruction and future materials should take.

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE PRAYER BOOK

For Elise

When I stop and think about it, God,
I feel that You're inside me. I feel
You when I do something wrong. I know
because I don't feel so good. When I
do the right thing I laugh inside. I
guess that makes You happy. It makes
me happy.



BOGEN PHOTO CORP.
ENGLWOOD, NEW JERSEY
MADE IN JAPAN



Sometimes i like to be alone. it gives
me a chance to think about a lot of
things. i close my eyes and think about
my mom and dad. i think about how i
would feel if they weren't here. i love
my mom and dad.

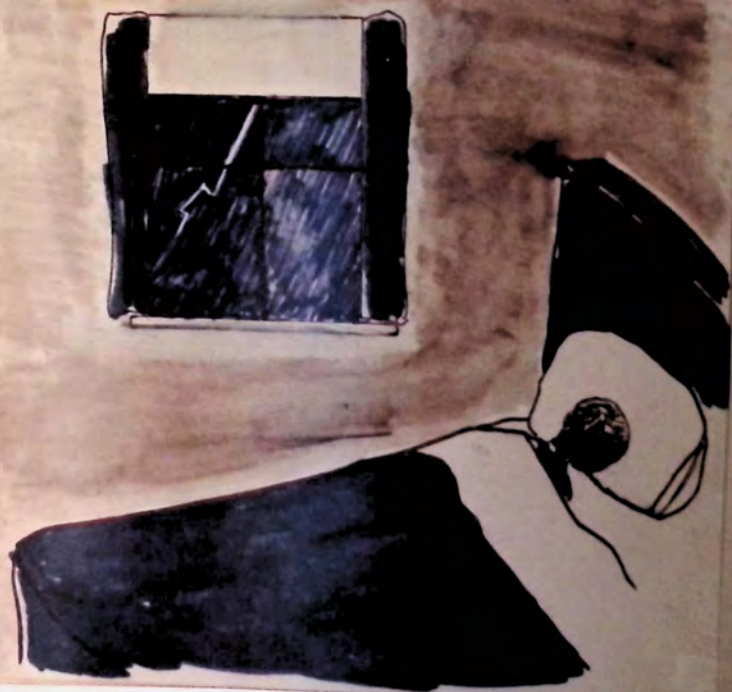
When I think of good things, things to do that will help people or make people happy, I feel that God is with me. I think God likes us to think good thoughts. It makes Him happy and it makes other people happy. I feel good too!



I've got some really nice friends. I like to be with them, and I know they like to be with me. We play and share our things. And even if we don't talk or play, just being with them makes me feel good.



Last night there was a storm. I could hear the rain against the windows. There was thunder and lightning too, but I wasn't afraid. My mom and dad were in the next room, and I was in my nice, warm bed.





I feel happy when I see people laughing
and smiling. But I feel sad when I see
them cry. I'm glad when I've made someone
happy.



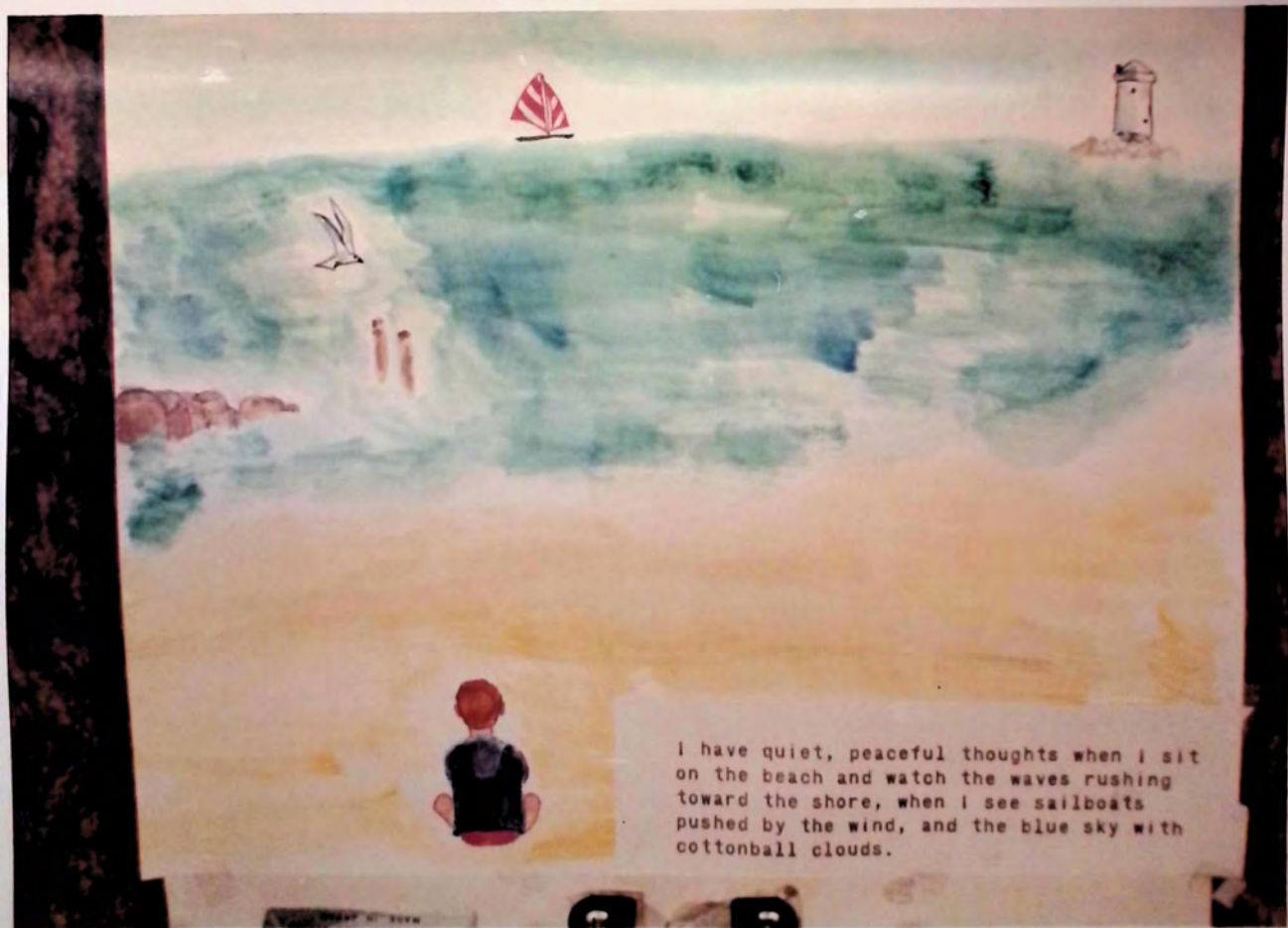
I love Spring. It makes me feel so good.
The snow melts, the grass turns green.
The leaves on the trees are brand new,
the flowers bloom and smell like perfume,
the birds sing, and everything starts all
over again.

My team lost today and I was kind of sad.
But when I stopped to think about it, I
really had a lot of fun playing. Maybe
wee'll win tomorrow.



Sometimes I get very angry when mom or dad scolds me for doing something wrong. But when I stop and think, I realize that some kids don't have people to care about them and scold them. Mom and dad love me enough to do it. They show their love other ways too. They take me places and kiss me.





I have quiet, peaceful thoughts when I sit on the beach and watch the waves rushing toward the shore, when I see sailboats pushed by the wind, and the blue sky with cottonball clouds.

Why did Grandpa die? I don't think God made him die. He wasn't a bad person. He was good.. I'm sad because I'll miss him. I guess all of us have to die sometime. I'm going to try to be a good person like he was.



It's fun to go to the zoo and visit the animals. They are all so interesting, especially the giraffe. Sometimes I wonder whether they would like to be back home in the jungle. Then they could go wherever they wanted.



One of my best friends is Duke. I wouldn't do anything to hurt him, and I wouldn't trade him for anything in the world. When I come home from school, he jumps all over me to say, "Hi! I missed you!" We trust each other and I tell him secrets.



I like it when people do things for me. Then
I know they care about me. But I feel real
good when I do things for others because it
makes them feel happy.



Every morning I wake up early and get dressed and ready for school. On the way I try to guess some of the things we'll do today. At the end of school, the teacher asks us what new things we learned today. I can always think of at least two new things. Our teacher is so smart because she can answer all our questions. School's also fun because I get to see my friends. We talk and play together.



Boy, i'm tired! We did a lot of work at school. I can't wait to get home. Mom'll be waiting there to ask me how my day was. It's so good to see her at the end of a hard day. Maybe she'll have a snack waiting for me. I wonder what it'll be?



Happy Birthday, Dad!



We have some very nice neighbors. They're very old. They seem to know so much about everything. I guess that's because they've lived for such a long time. Every time we go over and say, Hi, they always smile and seem happy. It's fun being with them and doing things for them.



What prayer would you write for this picture?



SAMPLE WORKBOOK

1. Do you always try to be good?_____

What are some ways of being good?

Why is it important to be good?

Do you think God is good?_____

2. Do you have a special place to go when you want to be alone?_____

Where do you go?_____

What do you think about when you are alone?_____

How would you feel if your mom and dad weren't with you?_____

Why?_____

3. What do you do that makes people
happy? _____

How do you feel? _____

Do you believe that there is a
God? _____ Do you ever talk to God? ____
What do you say? _____

Does God talk to you? _____

4. What is a friend? _____

Why do you think your friends
like you? _____

Why do you share? _____

Is God your friend? _____ Why?

5. What frightens you?_____

Do you feel safe when your mom
and dad are with you?____Why?_____

How do you feel when you are in
bed when you are sick?_____
when it is raining or snowing out-
side?_____when you are
tired?_____

6. What makes you happy?_____

Are you happy when you see people
laughing and smiling?____Why?_____

Are you sad when you see people cry-
ing?____Why?_____

What have you done today that made
someone happy?_____

Did it make you happy?____Why?_____

7. Why is Spring so different from Winter? _____

When you think of Spring, what things do you think about? _____

What does it mean when we say, "Spring is a new beginning?" _____

8. Why do you like to play games? _____

In a game, someone must win and someone must lose. If you are the winner all the time, how do you think the loser will feel? _____

Is it important that we lose as well as win? _____ Why? _____

9. To me mom and dad mean a lot of things. What do they mean to you?

Do you love your mom and dad in the same way your friends love their parents? ____ Why? _____

Mom and dad show their love in many ways. What are some of these ways?

Is there a difference between your parents and God? ____ What is the difference? _____

10. Some people like to be by themselves sometimes. Why? _____

What do you do when you are by yourself? _____

11. Why do you think we have to die?

What does death mean to you? _____

Has someone dear to you died? _____

How did you feel? _____

What things do you remember about
him or her? _____

Do you think God causes death, or
does something else cause it? _____

12. When you think of the zoo, what
do you think of? _____

Before the animals came to the zoo,
where did they live? _____

Why do they need cages? _____

Bad people are put in jail. Are the
animals at the zoo bad? _____

13. Do you have a pet?____Why is
your pet important to you?_____

Why wouldn't you hurt your pet?____

14. Why would you want to do some-
thing nice for someone?_____

How would that person feel?_____

What kind of nice things could you
do for your friends?_____

For your family?_____

For a neighbor?_____

What does, "Do for people as you would
like to have them do for you," or
"Giving is better than receiving,"
mean? write your answer on the back

15. What things do you like to do
at school?_____

Why do you like going to school?__

What is a teacher?_____

Why do you think school is so impor-
tant?_____

16. How do you feel after a day at
school?_____

Why is it nice to have your mom home
when you get home?_____

Why do you think mom likes to be home
after school?_____

17. Why is dad so special?_____

What makes a birthday important?__

Do you think God has a birthday?_____

What can we do to make someone happy
on his birthday?_____

What could we do to make God happy?

18. Do you know any old people?_____

Why do you think they like you?_____

Why do you think it is important to
be nice to them?_____

Do you think God is old?_____

19. When you are sad do you tell
anybody about it?____Who do you
tell about it?_____
Why?_____

How do you feel after you have told
somebody?_____

What do your mom or dad do when you
tell them that you are sad or that
you have hurt yourself?_____

What would happen if you were sad or
you had hurt yourself and you didn't
tell anybody?_____

Would you want to tell somebody?_____
Why?_____

APPENDIX II

The following responses were elicited from both Jewish and non-Jewish first and second graders.

Why do we pray?

We pray because it's in the Ten Commandments.

We pray to show love.

You pray to tell God you love Him.

You pray so your country is free.

We pray because we like to talk to God.

We pray to please God.

We pray to God to help us.

We pray to bless God and to show Him we love Him.

We pray to God because we worship Him. God made us and He is yours and my true father.

We pray because we want it to happen like if someone is dying, you want him or her not to die, so you pray.

We pray to God because we thank Him for things.

I think everybody should pray to God, not statues. Statues don't do a thing for us. God hears us pray silently.

We pray because a prayer is something to be thankful for, something good that happens.

When we pray we are quiet.

A prayer is something nice to do, night and day.

A prayer is something special, a way of speaking to God.
God is very special.

Concerning God

God is a great man Who has great power. No one knows how God was made. He made people. He sends stuff for man to make things.

God is a spirit. He helps us and we pray to Him.

God is with you all the time. God loves you all the time.

God is right here beside you. You must trust God.

If I were God I would be able to hold the world in my hands.

Dear God, thank you for summer, winter, spring, and fall.
Thank you God for everything.

I love God. He will live forever.

God is our friend. We wish that we could see Him.

We are His children. God is part of us.

God is someone Who you can't feel or you can't see Him or hold Him. And God made us.

God is invisible.

God means love and peace.

God can hear everything we say.

God means happiness.

He made the world, rain, sun, universe. God is all things that are good. He makes light and dark.

God is something in my heart.

The earth is God's creation. God wants people to live.

I don't know what God is.

God is an invisible man up in the sky.

God is the king of the universe.

God gives you good luck.

God gives you food.

God makes you smart.

God is everywhere.

God is an idea.

God is an angel.

God is a myth like witches and goblins.

God takes care of animals and people.

God is like a doctor.*

Concerning Thankfulness

I am thankful for everybody in the world.

We're thankful for our birthday.

We're thankful for life.

We're thankful for toys.

We're thankful for God.

We're thankful for our clothes.

We're thankful for our mothers and fathers.

We're thankful for our sisters and brothers.

We're thankful for schools.

We're thankful for friends.

We're thankful for food.

I am thankful for the sun.

I am thankful for hospitals.

I am thankful for NASA.

*The little boy's father is a doctor.

I am thankful for the birds that eat insects because the insects eat the pretty flowers that grow.

I am thankful to have a mother and father because they care for me, and on a rainy day they might drive us to school.

I would be thankful for a silent night so I could read. I would like to read at night. I would read all night if I could. I would probably read five books, and maybe more than ten.

I can say lots of things but there is one I think is the best of all and that is being alive. Sometimes I think it is very important having a mom and dad.

I am most grateful for stars. I like them because they light up the sky and they are pretty. They decorate the sky.

I am thankful for books to read. The one book that I love is the Bible, it tells the truth.

FOOTNOTES

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- 35 Rabbi Bernard Martin, "An Existentialist View," op. cit., pp. 38-39.
- 36 Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, "A Naturalist View," op. cit., p. 44.
- 37 Ibid., p. 46.
- 38 Rabbi Levi A. Olan, "An Organicist View," op. cit., p. 56.
- 39 Ibid., p. 59.
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- 43 Ibid., p. 51.
- 44 Olan, op. cit., p. 53.
- 45 Ibid., p. 54.
- 46 Rabbi Joseph Klein, "A Response," op. cit., pp. 72-73.
- 47 Rabbi Leonard S. Kravitz, "A Response," op. cit., p. 83.
- 48 Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver, "Prayer and Worship," op. cit., pp. 110-111.
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