

*Absurdities of Prayer
to the Metaphysical Absolute*

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ILLUSTRATIONS: JOHN SNYDER

The conflict between Greek absolutism and Hebrew personalism has plagued Judaeo-Christian theology since the conflagration of the two diametrically opposed traditions in the first centuries of the Christian era. On the one hand, theologians have claimed that God must be absolute in order to be the adequate object of faith.¹ If God were conditioned in any sense, and thus a finite being, he could not be trusted unconditionally. In the words of Charles Hartshorne, "What is relative to conditions may fail us if the conditions happen to be unfavorable."²

On the other hand, if God were absolute, in the Greek philosophical sense, he could not possess a single attribute that would count as personality. By definition, the absolute possesses the qualities by which it is characterized unconditionally and perfectly. Traditionally, the absolute is "unrelated" and therefore cannot enter into a relationship, "impassive" and therefore cannot love, "immutable" and therefore cannot change in response to our genuine needs or petitions, "pure act" and therefore cannot be influenced, "timeless" and therefore can neither act nor be acted upon. Such a being could not be the adequate object of faith because it is impersonal, unaware even of our existence. Indeed, as Paul Tillich has insisted, faith in such a being could make no difference one way or the other.³

The conflict between absolutism and personalism becomes most apparent in the moment of prayer. For, notwithstanding numerous attempts by Judaeo-Christian theologians to understand the living God of Sinai in terms of impersonal absolutes inherited from Greek metaphysics, one attempting to communicate with, to petition, to influence, in sum to enter into a relationship with God cannot consistently maintain that God is absolute in the traditional sense—as the one first cause, unconditioned, unrelated and nontemporal basis of all Being.

The tenuous union of Greek metaphysics and Hebrew religious experience was attempted by early Christian apologists for polemical purposes. The notion of God in early Christianity, an inheritance from Hebrew experience rather than a definition of philosophical thought, was an embarrassment to the sophisticated Greek converts who had to defend their beliefs against the neo-Platonism that saturated the world of early Christianity. "Biblical scholarship is unanimous," declares

Edmond Cherbonnier, "in confirming . . . that the God of the Bible is a personal Agent with a proper name. . . . From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible conceives of God in the same terms that are peculiar to human beings, such as speaking, caring, planning, judging, and taking action."⁴ The personal, anthropomorphic and temporally involved God of the Hebrew canon was the object of much pagan ridicule in the first two centuries of the Christian era. According to Sterling McMurrin,

The personal concept of god set forth in the Hebrew scripture is not the result of metaphysical . . . speculation or disputation. It is rather the product of a sense of living involvement with a God who more than anything else is the sovereign of the moral law and the Lord of History. . . . But the metaphysics of Platonic and Aristotelian origin that permeated Hellenistic thought became a permanent threat to the concept of divine personality. Given the confluence of cultures that were brought together by the Greek and Roman empires, it was inevitable that the biblical religion and the Greek metaphysics should confront one another.⁵

However, the conflict of Hebrew personalism and Greek metaphysics was not as much a confrontation as a wholesale abandonment of the personal God concept. Ironically, the ultimate defense of the Christian position was no defense at all; rather, it was a retreat to "the citadel of Greek philosophy."⁶ An early Greek critic, Celsus, maintained that the Christian idea of God as a loving father having the likeness of man was nonsense. Origen, the foremost Christian theologian in the ancient world next to Augustine, countered that Celsus misunderstood the Christian concept of God. God is not really a corporeal being having the likeness of man, Origen explained to Celsus; such a belief was "an old wives' tale" accepted only by the more ignorant Christians.⁷ In reality, Origen said, revealing his education in neo-Platonism, "God is not to be thought of as being either a body or as existing in a body, but as an uncompounded intellectual nature."⁸ Minucius Felix, a contemporary of Origen, responded similarly to the pagan critics of Christianity circa 210 AD: The vulgar speak of God as a person, but they are wrong. The philosophers, on the other hand, held nearly the same opinion of God as we do, Origen insisted. Plato's opinion especially is virtually identical with our own.⁹ Justin Martyr, a neo-Platonist convert, described God circa 165 AD as "that which always maintains the same nature and in the same manner, is the cause of all things—that indeed is God . . . as

Plato said, and I believe him."¹⁰ When Justin's pupil, Athenagoras of Athens, described God, he did so in terms that were borrowed in every instance from the pre-Socratic philosophers but which were foreign to the Hebrew understanding. "We acknowledge one God, uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable, who is apprehended by the understanding only."¹¹

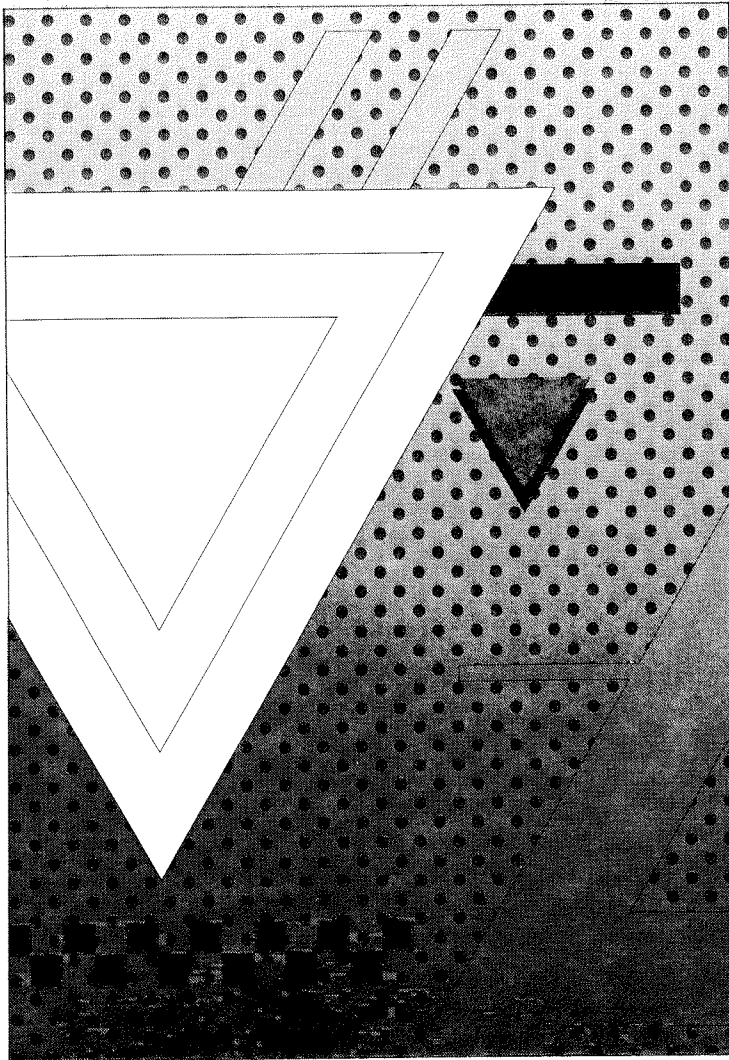
Following the precedent established by the Christian neo-Platonists, later Christian theologians sought to refine the Christian understanding of God by enumerating attributes consistent with the thesis that God is the unconditioned basis of Being. For example, St. Augustine elucidated God's role as the creator *ex nihilo*. If God is the absolute Being, Augustine reasoned, he must be self-existent, timeless, immutable, and the source of all else that exists.¹² For Augustine, God could not possibly be limited, conditioned or related to temporal realities.

God is Himself in no interval nor extension of place, but in his immutable and pre-eminent might is both interior to everything because all things are in Him and exterior to all things because He is above all things. So too He is in no interval nor extension of time, but in his immutable eternity is older than all things because He is before all things, and younger than all things because the same He is after all things.¹³

Later, Thomas Aquinas recast Christian thought in the mold of Aristotle. Aquinas termed God as "pure act," since if God is perfect there can remain nothing for him to actualize in his nature. Further, as a perfectly sufficient being, God would not act, for any action would imply a need.

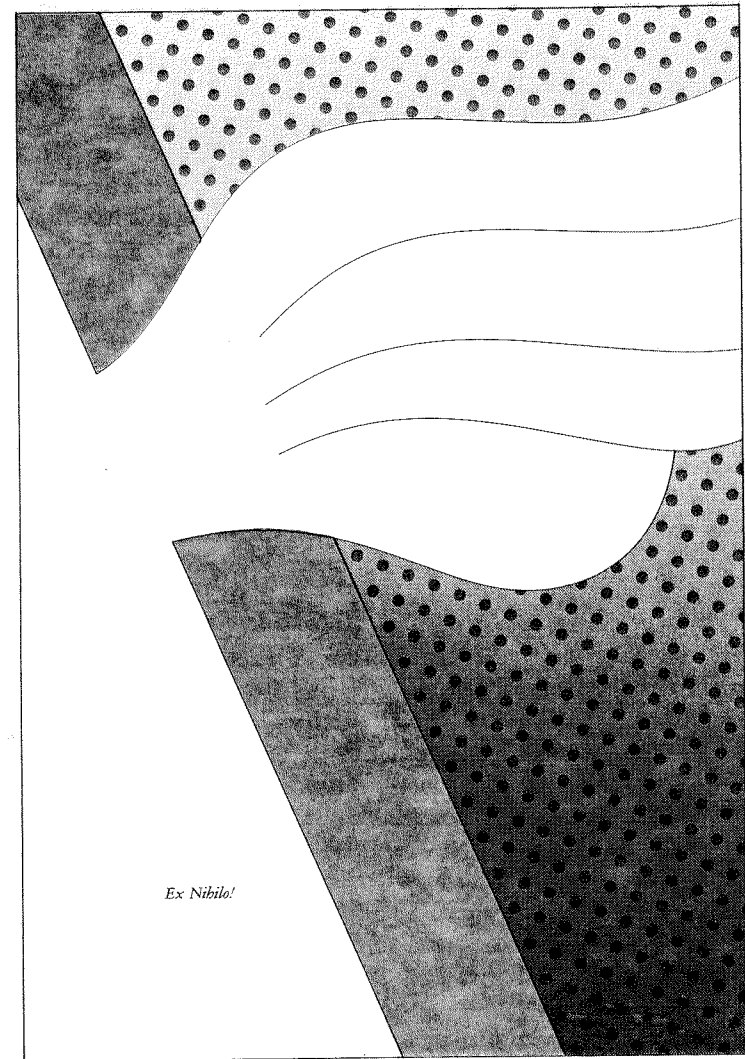
There is some first being, whom we call God, and that this being must be pure act, without the admixture of any potentiality. . . . Since God is infinite, comprehending in himself all the plenitude of the perfection of all being, he cannot acquire anything new, nor extend himself to anything whereto he was not extended previously. Hence, movement in no way belongs to Him.¹⁴

Still later, Anselm of Canterbury defined God as "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived."¹⁵ Since Anselm, Christian theologians have insisted that God is the being who possesses all great making attributes to their fullest perfection. This concept has come to be known as classical theism. Thus, as a logical extension of Anselm's definition of God, classic



theists assert that God is (1) one, (2) infinite, (3) self-existent, (4) incorporeal, (5) timeless, (6) immutable, (7) impassible, (8) simple, (9) omniscient, (10) omnipotent, (11) transcendent, (12) immanent, and that (13) God creates *ex nihilo*.¹⁶

Although traditionally popular, the classic theist's concept of God is philosophically unsatisfactory and religiously inadequate. First, the concept of God proposed by Judaeo-Christian theists



Ex Nihilo!

does not constitute an absolute being. Only pantheism—the identification of deity with whatever is real—is truly absolute. Nonetheless, in order to insure the absolute status of God, theists have pushed the concept of God as far toward the ideal of pantheism as possible; yet they have shunned pantheism *per se* because it contravenes the obvious teaching of Hebrew scripture that God is distinct from the world and involved socially

with man.¹⁷ Theists have asserted that God is both absolute and personal, when in truth what they propose is neither absolute nor personal. Thus, the acceptance of two ideas of God that are mutually exclusive has led to a logical dilemma: a god that is both conditioned and unconditioned, related and unrelated, temporal and timeless.¹⁸

In effect, the theistic description of God is not self-consistent because not all great making attributes are compossible. For instance, the idea of a timeless creator is inconsistent with the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. If something is created then it begins to exist in time, but a timeless being could not affect any state of affairs that begins in time.¹⁹ Further, philosophically a timeless being could not be omnipotent; indeed, a timeless being is necessarily impotent. If X is omnipotent, then X can bring about any logically possible state of affairs. But to *bring about* a state of affairs entails temporal relation to that state of affairs. Thus, X could not be timeless and bring about states of affairs.²⁰ Further, if X is impassive, then X cannot love, for love is a passion.²¹ If X is perfectly sufficient, as an absolute being must be, then X cannot manifest a need by seeking to acquire something yet unacquired or complete an action yet uncompleted. Thus, X would not do the sort of thing that the biblical God is said to have done such as create, forgive a sin or listen to a prayer.

Further, some attributes do not admit an absolute. For instance, omnipotence is problematic. If X is omnipotent, X can bring about any logically consistent state of affairs. Thus, if X is omnipotent, X could bring about a state of affairs that X could not subsequently control. But if X cannot subsequently control a state of affairs, X is not omnipotent. This paradox, which Mackie calls the Paradox of Omnipotence, cannot be objected to on the grounds that it is meaningless, for it makes perfectly good sense to say that a human mechanic could make a machine that he could not subsequently control. If there is a problem, the problem is with the notion of omnipotence.²²

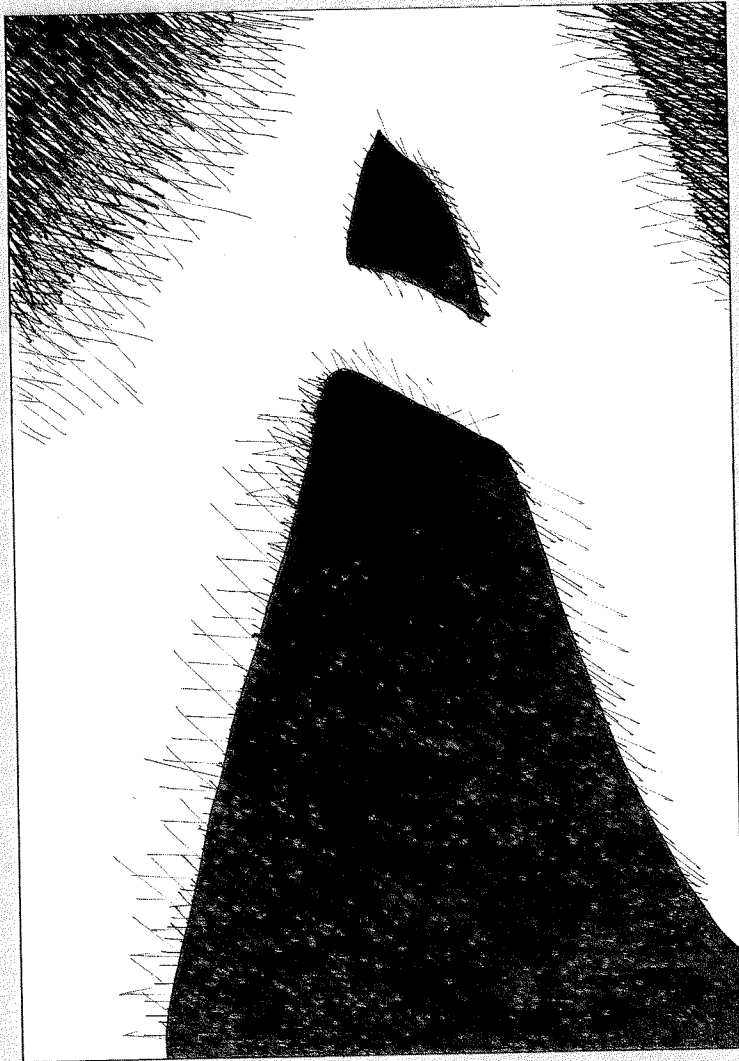
Similarly, if X is omniscient, X knows all realities. If X knows all realities, then X knows all possible integers. But all possible integers cannot be known because there is no greatest possible integer. Thus, X is not omniscient. Again, some may complain that the term "greatest possible integer" is meaningless. However, if the realm of truth is infinite, as surely it must be,

then truth has the same properties as the greatest possible integer, and therefore cannot be known. The problem remains that power and knowledge may not admit of an absolute level.

Most importantly, an *a priori* theology, that is, a theology that is developed on the criterion of reason alone without the admixture of experience either with deity or otherwise, rests upon a misconception of what it means to be an existing individual. *A priori* theologies seek to establish a set of criteria which God must emulate in order to merit worship. Such a position purports to define God from the perspective of his own throne. Indeed, Augustine asserts that although for us all is temporal, from God's perspective all is timeless. Anselm asserts that while for us God is passionate, from God's perspective there is no passion.²³ Such theological arrogance based on the sophistic doctrine of *Homo Mensura* (that man is the measure of all things) attempts to define God in the image of man's emotional need for absolute security and then rejects the personal deity of scripture because he is not adequate to resolve man's conflicting requirements that deity must be both personal and absolute. To attempt such a theology is to forget, nay, to deny that we are existing, experiencing individuals and to try to exalt our reason to the status of God's perspective.

The God of Judaeo-Christian tradition was conceived pre-eminently in social terms that included divine personality and interpersonal relationships in contrast to the impersonal of classical theism. In fact, Origen, Augustine and Anselm all perceived a tension between the Hebrew religious belief—a belief which assumed a person capable of interpersonal response—and the Greek idea of an impersonal God. Historically, the tension was first recognized by the pagan philosophers who had chided Christians for believing in an anthropomorphic deity. When Origen asserted that the Christian God was actually identical with the God of the philosophers, the pagan critics countered that it was not possible, for Christians *prayed* to their God.²⁴ Origen's critics argued that if God is omniscient and immutable then prayer would be vain.

What use is it to offer prayer to One who knows what we need even before we pray? For our Heavenly Father knows what we need even before we ask Him. It is reasonable that the Father, since He is the Creator of everything, loves all that is . . . should govern as a savior the destiny of each apart



*How art thou compassionate,
and at the same time passionless?*

ANSELM

from prayer. He does this like a father who defends his children and does not wait for them to ask him, either because they are quite unable to ask or through ignorance often wish to receive what will contradict what is to their advantage and profit.²⁵

Origen's critics concluded, "First, if God foreknows what will come to be and if it must happen, then prayer is vain. Second, if everything happens according to God's will and if what He wills is fixed and no one of the things He wills can be changed, then prayer is vain."²⁶ Origen admitted the problem, and proposed that his critics misunderstood the nature of prayer, not that he misunderstood the notion of God.²⁷

Augustine was also perplexed by the seeming contradiction between the assertion that God is timeless and yet God experiences process, such as listening to prayer: "Lord, since eternity is Thine, art Thou ignorant of what I say to Thee? Or doest Thou see in time, what passeth in time? Why then do I lay before Thee so many relations? Not, of truth, that Thou mightest learn them through me, but to stir up mine and my readers' devotions toward Thee."²⁸ Thus, the answer to the problem of God's social nature is not to refine the notion of God's attributes, but to realize that prayer affects man and does not influence God.

St. Anselm attempted to reconcile God's passivity with the idea that God cared enough to listen to a prayer.

How art thou compassionate, and, at the same time, passionless? For if thou art passionless, thou doest not feel sympathy; and if thou doest not feel sympathy, thy heart is not wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this is to be compassionate. . . . O Lord, unless because thou art compassionate in terms of our experience, and not compassionate in terms of thy being.²⁹

God's answer to Anselm was that He did not answer prayers. Thus, Anselm answered the problem posited by this conflict between God's social nature and his absolute otherness in a manner similar to Origen and Augustine—the purpose of prayer is not to instruct, ask or seek to influence God, but to align one's will with his immutable will. Neither could God disclose his will in prayer, for disclosure involves process and time while God is purely actual and timeless. For classical theism, then, the purpose of prayer is to provide the intellectual insight necessary to see reality from God's perspective.

In effect, acceptance of the deity proposed by orthodox Christianity necessitates that the traditional nature of prayer be abandoned. The notion of *petitional prayer* inherited by Christians from the Hebrew experience of God assumed that God experienced or heard prayers and that God could respond to prayer in such a manner that states of affairs would be brought to pass that would not have occurred had the prayer not been offered. The Hebrew term for prayer meant literally "to cause another to intervene or arbitrate in one's case." This implied that prayer was endowed with efficaciousness in the sense that it influenced God and obtained desired ends. The Hebrew term was translated by the Greek "*προδέχομαι*." The Greek connoted basically the same sense of *prayer* as the Hebrew. According to Robert Girdlestone, "This word conveys a very objective idea about prayer. It shows that men were not in the habit of praying merely as a relief for their feelings, but in order to ask another being, wiser and mightier than they, to take up their cause."³⁰ The English word *prayer* is derived from the Latin term *precatio*, meaning to seek favor of deity by means of petition.

There is another type of prayer in Christian experience which is related to mystic meditation. Such *meditational prayer* entails turning one's thoughts inward and reflecting totally on the self. As R. C. Zaehner has pointed out, the concept of such a meditational encounter with the infinite assumes pantheism, that reality is God, and "the One" and God are the same.³¹ However, such meditational prayer can be atheistic, and indeed it is in Buddhism. Ninian Smart has demonstrated that "the mystical experience has a distinctive connection with more 'impersonalist' doctrines such as those of Advaita Vedanta and of certain forms of Buddhism."³²

Most Christian theologians have shunned both petitional and meditational prayer in favor of *devotional prayer*—a prayer which offers thanks, and praises and recognizes the sovereignty of God but asks nothing of God. For example, Origen asserted that only the ignorant would ask that God change reality, given the fact that reality is predetermined in God's foreknowledge. In response to criticism that such a concept of prayer rendered prayer vain, i.e., inefficacious, Origen retorted that devotional prayer was not vain because it benefited independently of God the one offering the prayer. For example, Origen proposed that

one could not pray without composing a frame of mind willing to acquiesce to God's immutable will and, in so doing, experience purification of the mind through emotional catharsis. However, Origen also admitted that the emotional relief sought in prayer depended in part on the mistaken idea that God was listening and could be influenced.³³

Devotional prayer as an exclusive means of communicating with God is inadequate for two major reasons. First, devotional prayer is logically inconsistent even with the absolute theists' concept of God. While theists assert that God is timeless, devotional prayer implies that God can experience prayer and therefore must be involved in process. Indeed, for X to experience any particular Y, X must be able to contrast experience of Y from experience of not-Y. But if X is timeless, the experience of X is necessarily uniform or one undistinguishable whole. Thus, X could not distinguish experience of Y from experience of not-Y, and, therefore, cannot experience any particular Y. Further, while theists assert that God is impassive, devotional prayer implies that God cares enough to be conscious of prayer. Although obvious, the conflict between the object of devotional prayer and the personal God of Christianity is demonstrated by contrasting the ideal of impassivity—characterized by Aristotle's Unmoved Mover that is purely actual and entertains cognizance of only itself—with the jealous God of the Old Testament who cared so much He could be made angry or pleased, provoked or placated by the ritual prayers of his prophets.³⁴ Again, while theists assert that God is unrelated, devotional prayer implies that God is relative to temporal individuals in the sense that God stands in relation to and is distinct from those individuals.

Second, devotional prayer is inadequate as a means of developing a genuine interpersonal relationship with the God proposed in Hebrew/Christian scripture. For example, the Lord's Prayer is a model of intimacy between two personal beings, each of whom *responds* to the other. While theists would limit the relationship of man to God to that of two clocks keeping identical time—a mere Leibnitzian pre-established harmony that is not really a relationship at all—the relationship of man to God revealed by the Lord's Prayer is that of a son to a loving father. The intimacy of prayer is underscored by Christ's address to his father, considered so important by the Greek

disciples that it was left untranslated from Christ's mother tongue of Aramaic: "'Abba.'" Christ did not apply the common liturgical term "'abinu,'" 'our Father,' by which God was addressed in the synagogue, nor even the more personal "'abi'" 'my Father'; rather, he used "the domestic word by which a father was called within the affectionate intimacy of the family circle."³⁵ Christ also taught his disciples to address the Father in such an intimate manner. In the Lord's Prayer, Christ petitioned "'abba'" no less than six times.

The Bible provides numerous instances in which existing individuals genuinely interacted with God. For example, Moses is portrayed as having influenced God to *change his mind*. At the time the children of Israel made a golden calf as an image, God told Moses, "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation" (Exodus 32:9). In effect, God had spoken his intention to destroy the children of Israel and to raise up a nation unto himself from the seed of Moses. However, the compassionate intervention of Moses turned the Lord's wrath:³⁶

11. . . . LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12. Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out [of Egypt], to slay them in the mountains. . . . Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. . . .

14. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

(Exodus 32:11-14)

Thus, petitional prayer was not an embarrassment to the prophets of the Old Testament, and apparently their petitions got results. The Hebrew prophets were completely uninterested in defining God in theological terms (such as "purely actual" or "anthropomorphic"); their object was to impart the message from and their experience with deity. In this way, the Hebrew notion of God may have been philosophically "unrefined," but the concept of God suggested by theologians is overrefined—refined, in fact, to the point that Friedrich Nietzsche would claim that Christians have made their God "the deification of nothingness."³⁷ Indeed, the negative definition of God employed by many orthodox theologians has defined God in terms of nothingness.

If a theology were to be developed *a posteriori*, literally from the ground up beginning with one's knees instead of one's head, God could be affirmed through divine-personal interaction, affirmed in a manner that it would make a difference whether or not He is there. Faith in God and his very existence should and does make a difference in one's life. Thus, petitioning deity from one's knees tacitly acknowledges a God who can be influenced and can respond, who can care, and, therefore, cannot be purely actual, immutable, or timeless. Petitional prayer implies that God could alter his will to bring about states of affairs that would not occur otherwise, and that God is powerful enough to bring about such states of affairs consistent with his righteous intents, or even to place stumbling blocks in the paths of our inordinate desires. Therefore, if God can respond to our requests, then we must assume real responsibility for our requests. Further, we assume as much responsibility for establishing a genuine relationship with God as he assumes for us. If God responds to our petitions, in a genuine relationship we respond also to his.

One may as well pray to the law of gravity as to the law that sustains all beings, for both have equivalent personal properties. Although the God of Christian tradition may have adopted the Greek philosophical description, the God of Judaeo-Christian experience is diametrically opposed to the theoretical explanation that the Greeks called "God" for lack of a better term. The God of Judaeo-Christian experience does in his power and glory listen and care, so that prayer to this God is not absurd; such prayer matters.

NOTES

1. See for instance: *Prologium* II, in *St. Anselm, Basic Writings Prologium*, trans. S.N. Deane (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1966); H.P. Owen, *Concepts of Deity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 1-34; J.N. Findlay, "Can God's Existence Be Disproved?" in *The Ontological Argument from St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers*, ed. Alvin Plantinga (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1949), pp. 111-22.
2. Charles Hatshotne, "The Divine Relativity," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William Rowe and William Waiwright (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1973), p. 86.
3. Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 172.
4. Edmond La Baume Cherbouner, "In Defense of Anthropomorphism," in *Reflections on Mormonism*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center Monograph, 1978), p. 160.
5. Stedling McMurtin, *Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965), pp. 128-29.
6. Keith Norman, "Ex Nihilo: The Development of the Doctrines of God and Creation in Early Christianity," in *BYU Studies* 17 (Spring 1977): 304.
7. Origen *De Principiis* II.iv.3, in Henri Crouzel and Manilo Simonetti, *Origene, Traite des Principes* (Paris: Edition Cerf, 1978), p. 287.
8. Origen *De Principiis* I.i.6, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 9 vols. (1867-72; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), 4:243.
9. *The Octavius of Minucius Felix* 18, 19, in Roberts and Donaldson, 4:183-84.

10. Justin Martyr *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judeo*, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, ed. J.P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris: n.p., 1857-68), 6:481 (hereafter cited as PG).
11. Athenagoras *Legatio pro Christianis* 10, in PG, 6:907. Also in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. (1979 ed.), 2:133. Compare the description of God given by Athenagoras with that of various pre-Socratic philosophers: Anaximander (547 BC), "The first principle is one and moveable and infinite," p. 39; Xenophanes (565 BC), "Mortals suppose that the gods are born, and that they wear man's clothing and have human voice and body. But if cattle or lions had hands . . . they would paint their gods and give them bodies like their own. . . . God is one, supreme among gods, and men, not like mortals in body or mind. The Whole [i.e., god] sees, the Whole perceives, the Whole hears. But without effort he sets in motion all things by mind and thought. It always abides in the same place, not moved at all, nor is it fitting that it should move from one place to another," p. 87; Parmenides (500 BC), "That which *is* is without beginning, indestructible, entire, single, unshakable, endless; neither has it been nor shall it be, since *now* it is," p. 93; Melissus of Samos (444 BC), "Nothing which has beginning and end is either eternal or infinite, it is one; for if being were two, both parts could not be infinite, but each would be limited by the other. But being is infinite. . . . So then, the All is eternal and infinite and homogenous; and it could neither perish nor become greater nor change its arrangement nor suffer pain or distress. If it experiences any of these things it would no longer be one," p. 107. (All quotations from Milton Nahm, *Selections from Early Greek Philosophy* [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964].)
12. Augustine *De Trinitate* V.ii.3, V.xi.12, VI.iv.6, X.xliii.22.
13. *De Genesis ad Litt.* VIII.xxvi.48, as quoted in Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8 vols. (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1959-66), II.i, p. 87.
14. Aquinas *Summa Theologica* I.ix, in Rowe and Waiwright, p. 85.
15. Anselm *Proslogium* II, in William P. Alston, *Religious Belief and Philosophical Thought* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Co., 1963), p. 26.
16. Owen, pp. 11-45.
17. Sterling McMurrin, *Philosophical Foundations of the Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1959), p. 131.
18. Cheronnier, p. 164.
19. Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 107.
20. Pike, p. 97.
21. Hartshorne, pp. 88-89.
22. J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in Rowe and Waiwright, pp. 214-15.
23. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. Edward Pusey (New York: Random House, 1949), XI, pp. 243f; Anselm *Proslogium* VIII, in Rowe and Waiwright, p. 83.
24. Origen, *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, ed. Richard J. Payne (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), Origen *On Prayer* V.1-2, trans. Rowan A. Greer, pp. 90-91.
25. Origen *On Prayer* V.2-3, p. 91.
26. Origen *On Prayer* V.6, p. 92.
27. Origen *On Prayer* VIII. 1-2, pp. 97-98.
28. Augustine *Confessions* XI, p. 243.
29. Anselm *Proslogium* VIII, p. 83.
30. Robert Giddestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament: Their Bearing on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 219.
31. R.C. Zaehner, "Nature Mysticism, Soul Mysticism and Theistic Mysticism," in Rowe and Waiwright, pp. 280-86.
32. Ninian Smart, "Numinous Experience and Mystical Experience," in Rowe and Waiwright, p. 286.
33. Origen *On Prayer* VIII.2, p. 97.
34. McMurrin, *Theological Foundations*, pp. 130-32.
35. F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1980), pp. 170-71.
36. Ex. 32:8-14, KJV. The Joseph Smith Translation amends the phrase "God repented" to "the people will repent of this evil." However, Joseph Smith also added a more explicit recognition that God changed his mind: "The Lord said unto Moses, 'If they will repent of the evil which they have done, I will spare them. . . . Therefore, see thou do this thing which I have commanded thee, or I will execute all that which I had thought to do unto my people.'" (JST Ex. 32:14; italics added).
37. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Twilight of the Idols," in *Approaches to Ethics*, ed. William Thomas Jones et al. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977), p. 334.
38. This article brought to you by the letter "A."

Melodious Sonnet

Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above.*

While waters sleep and thirst in cold mirage
After the months of cricket-summer streams,
The northern tribes return in calumet
To flicker snow in vertigo designs.
Deliberately refining paths, the flakes
Forgive bold footprints, line the evergreens,
And risk awakening the fasting birds.
Then wind and wingtips murmur foreign words
With tongues of flame because the sky-line leans
And melts the hexahedron stars. Light breaks
Shivering in the world that glints and shines
As spirits sing who turn to bless the day
In frost with grace: "Forget the blizzard dreams;
Love re-creates us in His own image."