

## The Sentiment that Invites Us to Pray: The Religious Aspect of Charles Peirce's Philosophy

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*"Prayer is religion in act; that is, prayer is real religion."*  
—William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*<sup>1</sup>

*"Religion begins and ends with prayer; where there is prayer, there is religion;  
where there is religion, there is prayer."*  
—John Caputo, *After the Death of God*<sup>2</sup>

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One of Peirce's ongoing aims was to reconcile religious life with the practice and spirit of science. Given the great differences between religion and science—in both practical and theoretical terms—this may have seemed like a fool's errand in his time, and even more so in our time. The spirit of science is one of progress and fallibility, an open community whose only heresy is an unwillingness to seek the truth, while the spirit of religion includes a tendency towards conservative closure of inquiry and of membership. While Peirce acknowledged these distinctions, he nevertheless maintained that religion was not *necessarily* opposed to science. Certain aspects of religious practice—and especially the act of prayer—exemplify elements of inquiry. Rather than causing thought to contract and community to become less important, as is often supposed, practice in prayer may be a creative act, like poetry, that can in fact lead to greater understanding of the world and of one's place in it. At its best, prayer arises from an instinct or from a sentiment, and it affords comfort, strength, and—perhaps most importantly—insight into the nature of the world.

### I. Religion in Peirce and in American Philosophy

Religion has been subjected to a number of criticisms, and the last two centuries have provided some of the strongest of these criticisms. Even religion's philosophic friends—James, Kierkegaard, Lessing, Tolstoi, Lévinas—acknowledge the problems it causes. More recently, it has been criticized as irrelevant, irrational, and even dangerous by Daniel Dennett and other critics. Susan Haack argues that religion is not necessary (and even dangerous) for

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<sup>1</sup> (New York: Collier, 1961), 361.

<sup>2</sup> (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 53.

epistemology,<sup>3</sup> and both John Stuhr<sup>4</sup> and Richard Rorty<sup>5</sup> argue effectively that religion is not needed for ethics or for politics. It is increasingly obvious to us that in some ways religion is not necessary. Most of us function perfectly well as private individuals and as professionals without making much reference to religion or making much use of it.<sup>6</sup>

In light of all this, it might reasonably be asked why American pragmatism—which otherwise has such a healthy interest in fostering reason and science, in advocating revisable notions of truth and morality, and in attention to process, experience, and transaction over against a fixed metaphysics—is so consistently interested in religion.

Gail Hamner, in her excellent book on pragmatism and religion, suggests that the development of American philosophy is connected to our religious culture and to the persistence of certain elements of Puritanism throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> While Hamner is probably right in tracing some of the genealogy of religion in pragmatism, even this does not get at all the reasons why Peirce's philosophy is shot through with religious concern, and it does not give us much help in distinguishing Peirce's religious views from those of James, Dewey, or Royce.

Peirce, as we know, wrote about religion quite a lot. At the same time, Peirce was evidently not a very religious man. His life does not appear to be marked by very much outward concern with the practices of religion, nor with affiliation with a religious community.<sup>8</sup> Why, then, did Peirce write about religion? Possibly he was attempting to respond to his community's affection for God-talk. Possibly religion offered a kind of solace, and the hard-headed Peirce

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, chapter ten of her *Defending Science—Within Reason: Between Scientism and Cynicism* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> See his "Life without Spirituality, Philosophy without Transcendence," *The Hedgehog Review* (Fall 2001).

<sup>5</sup> In *Radical Interpretation of Religion*, ed. Nancy K. Frankenberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), e.g., and also in his dialogue with Gianni Vattimo in *The Future of Religion*, ed. Santiago Zabala, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Rorty has described religion as a "conversation-stopper," and he points out that in its ugliest forms it spawns a breed of priests who would consume the freedom the rest of us would enjoy. Though this is somewhat indirect, see what Rorty says about Peirce in "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," in his *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982): "His contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James" (161). Rorty writes, adding that Peirce "remained the most Kantian of thinkers," adding the implication that Peirce continued to embrace the worst ideas of the Platonists and the Christians, including attempting to evade the contingency of life by "becoming attuned to the voice of God in the heart" (166). Nevertheless, Rorty is attracting the attention of some philosophers of religion in the USA, notably Jacob Goodson and Brad Stone, who are currently editing a volume of essays on Rorty and religion.

<sup>6</sup> In an opinion article in the *New York Times* of June 25, 2010, Noah Feldman writes about the nomination of Elena Kagan to the U.S. Supreme Court. Noting that if confirmed there will be no Protestant on the Court, Feldman adds, "It is cause for celebration that no one much cares about the nominee's religion." <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/28/opinion/28feldman.html>

<sup>7</sup> "I attribute the American quality of Pragmatism to an insistent, nondoctrinal Puritan legacy that operated in the mid- to late nineteenth century" (*American Pragmatism: A Religious Genealogy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 4). Her view is supported in various places, by William Dean, Douglas Anderson, and John E. Smith. As Dean puts it, "If in philosophy there is an 'American grain,' its center is, in part, religious. Religious thought has germinated much that is indigenous to American philosophy and much that differentiates that philosophy from, for example, most European philosophy" (*The Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy*, ed. Armen T. Marsoobian and John Ryder [Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004], 325).

<sup>8</sup> While he sometimes attended religious services, and sometimes prayed, the little we know of his life does not suggest that he was particularly devout.

became soft when he was in his worst depressions. But I think that there are several other reasons why Peirce wrote and thought so much about religion.

First, Peirce was responding to bad thinking. Transcendentalism and mysticism both came under regular criticism in his writings as examples of poor logic. Peirce said of one writer that "his mind was too much in the attitude of prayer and of preaching to see the necessity of proving what he advanced."<sup>9</sup> So, for Peirce, writing about religion provided a chance to correct what he saw as a religious person's tendency to reason badly, as though preaching and praying could be substitutes for giving evidence for one's beliefs.

Second, Peirce saw that those ways of knowing the world that emphasize the natural sciences or logic are incomplete and therefore inadequate to address the whole of human existence. As Peirce wrote in his "Seven Systems of Metaphysics," "Bad poetry is false, I grant; but nothing is truer than true poetry. And let me tell the scientific men that the artists are much finer and more accurate observers than they are, except of the special minutiae that the scientific man is looking for."<sup>10</sup> If religious thinkers fail to give evidence for their conclusions, scientific thinkers often fail to acknowledge the ways in which the whole of their research is bounded by the methodological exclusion of sources of data. To put it differently, the theologians trust their hunches too well to test them, and the scientists trust their tools for testing hunches too well to examine the way they arrive at the hunches and what that says about the world. These two methodological oversights animate Peirce's interest in understanding the relationship between feeling and thinking, an interest that remains a consistent feature of his thought from his "Private Thoughts" in 1870 through his "Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" in 1907.

Third, Peirce saw in religion a vague representation of the way the world really is.<sup>11</sup> Religion does not guarantee knowledge without error, but certain practices are also practices in abduction and, as such, may perform an important service for inquiry.

## II. God, Philosophy of Religion, and Prayer

Traditionally, the philosophy of religion has asked how we have access to God through natural reason. The main approach to talking about God in Peirce's writings is quite the reverse

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<sup>9</sup> 78 (14 April 1904) 298: Lectures on the Logic of Arithmetic.

<sup>10</sup> Charles S. Peirce, "The Seven Systems of Metaphysics," in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol. 2, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian J. W. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998 [1903]), 193.

<sup>11</sup> I want to be careful to distinguish here between Hegel's idea of religion as a *Vorstellung* of spirit and Peirce's idea that some religion apprehends dimly but accurately the way things really are, for instance triadicity, agape, growth, and real relations. For Peirce, religion does not provide a representation of the world, but it affords unique opportunities for abductive inferences.

of this: Peirce is more interested in how we have access to reason and to truth, and it is obvious to him that religion provides some answers—tentative answers, at least—to this question.<sup>12</sup>

Notice that I have not said that the philosophy of religion provides these answers. The answers come more in practice than in theory. Where does the practice of religion manifest itself more than in prayer? As William James says toward the end of his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, there is no religion without prayer, and where there is prayer, there is religion.<sup>13</sup>

Is it not strange, then, that for so long we have been content to examine religion with so little examination of prayer? The strangeness of this point of view has only recently occurred to me. When I speak to my students about God's existence, they are generally not concerned about it. But many of them do in fact pray. Since prayer relates to God, we have assumed that the legitimacy of prayer is a question entirely subordinate to the question of God's existence, which has led us to the philosopher's conceit that we can have more direct access to the truth of religion through an analytical evasion of religion's lived experience.

Nevertheless, prayer is not a popular subject among philosophers, and it is not hard to see why. As Peirce says in his "Neglected Argument," the danger is that we will take comfortable doctrines as truth and so bring an end to inquiry. Prayer thus would appear to be, ironically, a kind of bad faith, a practice that assumes the reality of the unknown. Furthermore, when prayer is a communal affair, it may subsume the individual into the community and train the individual in a habit that could impede reflection and genuine inquiry. Prayer may be an acceptable practice if it is kept private,<sup>14</sup> but otherwise it only advances conservative tradition rather than progress in politics and in scientific inquiry.

I wish to offer an alternative view of prayer by examining what Peirce says about the instinctive origins of prayer and about the possibility of prayer as offering nutrition both to inquiry (as a training in abductive inference) and to the community that inquires (through its sustenance of traditions of inquiry). Peirce's position is one that, I think, deserves more attention: in some ways, the most important question about which philosophers of religion ought to concern themselves is the practical—and pragmatic—question of prayer. Peirce argues that prayer arises instinctually and naturally as a response to our world; that it offers not just consolation but both beauty and explanation; and that it holds the seeds that could germinate into ideal community.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 1.654, hereafter *CP*: "Common sense, which is the resultant of the traditional experience of mankind, witnesses unequivocally that the **heart** is more than the head, and is in fact everything in our highest concerns, thus agreeing with my unproved logical theorem; and those persons who think that **sentiment** has no part in common sense forget that the dicta of common sense are objective facts, not the way some dyspeptic may feel, but what the healthy, natural, normal democracy thinks. And yet when you open the next new book on the philosophy of **religion** that comes out, the chances are that it will be **written by an intellectualist who in his preface offers you his metaphysics as a guide for the soul, talking as if philosophy were one of our deepest concerns**. How can the writer so deceive himself?" (All emphases mine.)

<sup>13</sup> To put it differently, we should not fail to notice that an argument like Anselm's begins not with an elucidation of first principles, but with prayer; or look at Augustine's argument, which takes place in the midst of a conversation that is chiefly characterized by questions. God-arguments have been stripped of their context in recent centuries—both by skeptics who want to analyze them and by proselytizers who want to exploit them—but their native environment is in the midst of the praying community.

<sup>14</sup> This is Rorty's "Jeffersonian" view, for instance.

Since “prayer” is a vague term, it would be helpful here to make at least some tentative distinctions. Merold Westphal distinguishes five types of prayer: praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, and intercession. The last four are, Westphal says, fairly easy to understand as expressions of gratitude or as requests, but the first one, praise, calls for closer attention. He describes praise as “disinterested delight” in God, further suggesting that this disinterested delight is the perfection of both worship and of prayer.<sup>15</sup> Peirce writes something similar to Westphal’s view: “Worship is the recognition of any being as him to whose will, as such, we ought to be entirely submissive. Therefore, we cannot worship any but the one true god (to others we only pay honor), and the first commandment means we shall hold the truth which we do know in recognition.”<sup>16</sup> Peirce thus defines worship as proper recognition of the truth—*inasmuch as we know it*—and a submission to it without interest in advancing our own position. Taken together with Westphal’s taxonomy of prayer, an act of thought that leads to the disinterested recognition of the truth in this manner would appear to be a kind of prayer.<sup>17</sup>

On this basis, I submit that the more interesting and more important question for the philosophy of religion is not whether God is dead, but whether prayer is a live possibility.

### III. Some of Peirce’s Writings on Prayer

One might conclude from the books authored by Raposa, Corrington, Deuser, and Ejsing (*inter alia*) that Peirce’s writing on religion has received adequate attention. Nevertheless, a brief survey of the literature shows that remarkably little has been written about Peirce on prayer.<sup>18</sup>

Peirce did in fact write a good deal about prayer. What did Peirce have to say about it? Many of the references to prayer concern the question of whether prayer can be tested scientifically. For now I would like to ignore those passages and to draw our attention to some passages that are concerned with Peirce’s understanding of the practice and meaning of prayer. Without pretending to offer a comprehensive list of Peirce’s writing on prayer, let me point out three documents worth noting. First, in his “Private Thoughts” of 1859 and 1860, Peirce wrote a variant of the Lord’s Prayer:

I pray thee, O Father, to help me regard my innate ideas as objectively valid. I would like to live as purely in accordance with thy laws as inert matter does with nature’s. May I, at last, have no thoughts but thine, no wishes but thine, no will but thine. Grant me, O God, health, valor, and strength. Forgive the misuse, pray of thy former good gifts, as I do the ingratitude of my friends. Pity my weakness and deliver me, O Lord; deliver me and support me.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> “Prayer as the Posture of the Decentered Self,” in Bruce Benson and Norman Wirzba, eds., *The Phenomenology of Prayer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 14-15.

<sup>16</sup> MS 891, “Private Thoughts,” XXXII, dated 1859.

<sup>17</sup> If space permitted, it would be worth pursuing the connection between “Musement” and prayer here.

<sup>18</sup> Perhaps we regard Peirce’s thoughts on prayer as being like his thoughts on food—a matter of personal taste, best left to biographers and best ignored by philosophers.

<sup>19</sup> MS 891, “Private Thoughts,” XLVI.

In the first sentence, Peirce petitions God for help in regarding his instinctive ideas properly, that is, as “objectively valid.” On the one hand, then, he regards those ideas as valid, while on the other hand he is inclined to believe the opposite. A solution to this apparent contradiction appears a little later in the same journal, where Peirce connects prayer with metaphysics and reason. The intellect rejects prayer as a means of changing the world; but we are not always confident in the intellect:

Metaphysics has no practical bearing. Thus, the efficacy of prayer, a man's intellect, perhaps, would not endorse, but then when intellect has the ascendancy we do not wish to make use of her. When we feel no confidence in her we pray.<sup>20</sup>

This could be a criticism of religion, saying, in effect, that we only pray when we can not think, but I think Peirce's point is more subtle, suggesting that prayer is not a substitute for thought but the place to which thought retreats when it cannot make progress. Prayer provides another means of considering the facts with which nature presents us. It differs from deductive reasoning in that it does not lead to necessary conclusions. Prayer offers an opportunity for contemplation that can lead to new insight and that also produces habits of thought.

It was evidently with these habits of thought in mind that Peirce, probably in the mid-1890s, wrote some lessons for priests concerning the Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*.<sup>21</sup> As Henry Johnson points out, this manuscript offers a suggested revision to the *BCP*.<sup>22</sup> The *BCP* provides a uniform structure to the worship of the Episcopal Church. Its prayers and rubrics form a rule of worship and so form the habits of prayer of that church. Peirce writes that when the minister leads the congregation in prayer, he is to do so bearing in mind “the law of mind, the association of ideas.”<sup>23</sup> When we pray as a community, the words we pray matter because they will “tend to spread continuously and to affect certain other [ideas] which stand to them in a peculiar relation of affectability...los[ing] intensity...[and] gain[ing] generality.”<sup>24</sup> Peirce further notes that the liturgy takes advantage of an “instinctive capacity” and improves upon it: by “feigning” devotion, the sentiment actually increases.<sup>25</sup> As Johnson puts it, “Through association...action develops feeling. Those in attendance, Peirce claims, bring with them a deep awareness of their ‘base sentiments,’ but want instead to bring up ‘the one’ which is deeper—by which it appears, he means the religious sentiment.”<sup>26</sup> In all this, Peirce affirms the suspicions of religion's critics, namely that prayer has the capacity to affect our thinking. The effects of prayer may, however, be precisely what a community needs.

Peirce confirms this in a third document concerning prayer. Peirce was sent a

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<sup>20</sup> MS 891, “Private Thoughts,” LVI.

<sup>21</sup> MS 1570.

<sup>22</sup> See Henry C. Johnson's article “Charles Sanders Peirce and the Book of Common Prayer: Elocution and the Feigning of Piety,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 42, no. 4 (2006): 552-572.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, 559-560.

<sup>24</sup> Peirce, “The Law of Mind,” in *The Essential Peirce*, vol. 1, 313.

<sup>25</sup> As does Johnson, 560.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, 560.

questionnaire about his religious views, which he took as an opportunity not just to speak of his own private views but of how a pragmatist should view religion. One of the questions asks, "Do you believe in the efficacy of prayer?" Peirce replied, in part,

What business is it of mine whether my prayers are to be efficacious or not? We, one and all of us, have an instinct to pray; and this fact constitutes an invitation from God to pray. And in fact there is found to be not only *soulagement* in prayer, but great spiritual good and moral strength. I do not see why prayer may not be efficacious, or if not the prayer exactly, the state of mind of which prayer is nothing more than the expression, namely the soul's consciousness of its relation to God, which is nothing more than precisely the pragmatistic meaning of the name of God; so that, in that sense prayer is simply calling upon the name of the Lord.<sup>27</sup>

This is an important shift from his earlier writing about how prayer might be verified empirically. The question is no longer whether prayer changes natural facts, since prayer plainly changes the one who prays. To pray is to "call upon the name of the Lord" which, in turn, is to express a particular state of mind. That state of mind is the pragmatistic meaning of the name of God. This much is obvious to the pragmatist: the meaning of the sign "God" can only be the sum of the consequences of that sign, and to the particular inquirer, this is limited by his conception of those consequences. In his "Logical Critique of the Essential Articles of Religious Faith" (*MS* 854), Peirce notes that "[t]he 'Object' dog causes us to think of is such a dog as the person addressed has any notion of. But the real Object includes alternatively other dogs which are not known to the party addressed as yet but which he may come to know."<sup>28</sup> Reflection on this sign, and so on the object to which it is related, thus has the effect of reminding us of what we do not yet know. Our instinct is an "invitation" to pray, because one of our instincts is to find out what we do not yet know. If prayer is contemplation of God, then prayer is also the contemplation of the limits of thought itself. This contemplation disrupts the stagnation of thought, and it does so

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<sup>27</sup> Peirce's whole reply to this question:

The only thing connected with that that I am quite satisfied about is that the clergy do not believe in it. I mean the influential clergy. The conclusive proof of that is that when Tyndall proposed to put the matter to the test of experiment, although they had the record of the somewhat similar proposal of the king of Samaria; and Elijah's perfectly frank response, they backed down and pretended that it would be blasphemous. So it is blasphemy to inquire into the truth of religion, is it? No living man thinks it disrespectful to inquire into the authenticity of his signature; and the higher clergy are far more sensitive to their own dignity than God's, and very justly so, since it is quite possible to be disrespectful to an ecclesiastic, while it is absolutely impossible to *really* think of God without awe mingled with love.

But what business is it of mine whether my prayers are to be efficacious or not. We, one and all of us, have an instinct to pray; and this fact constitutes an invitation from God to pray. And in fact there is found to be not only *soulagement* in prayer, but great spiritual good and moral strength. I do not see why prayer may not be efficacious, or if not the prayer exactly, the state of mind of which prayer is nothing more than the expression, namely the soul's consciousness of its relation to God, which is nothing more than precisely the pragmatistic meaning of the name of God; so that, in that sense prayer is simply calling upon the name of the Lord. To pray for specific things, not merely for the ἐπιούσιον bread, but that it may be better baked than yesterday's, is childish, of course, yet innocent (*MS* 845.45-47 [CSP's numbering: A49-51]).

<sup>28</sup> It seems more than a coincidence that Peirce refers to "dog" here, since that is an anagram, in English, for "God."

in a way that reopens inquiry into the object under consideration. Prayer is efficacious precisely because it has this creatively disruptive effect.

#### IV. Abduction and Prayer

In order to show how this insight might be relevant for our time, let me turn to some religious meditations written by the philosopher A.C. Grayling. In his *Meditations for the Humanist: Ethics for a Secular Age*, Grayling argues against a position that Peirce strongly held, namely, that the scientist can be a theist. In fact, Peirce went so far as to say that most people, including those people of a scientific inclination who claim not to believe in God, actually believe in God. Grayling argues that such belief is the fruit of poor reasoning:

Some scientists, amazingly, are religious, and they are apt to say that the best argument they can give for having religious beliefs is the so-called “argument to best explanation,” which in this case says that, given the inconclusiveness of our state of knowledge, the best account we can give of the world is that there is a God. This argument is famously weak.<sup>29</sup>

But Grayling thinks it is weak because he misrepresents it and because he fails to make the connection he makes so fluidly elsewhere, namely, that our instinctive sentiments may guide us correctly. His misrepresentation of the argument seems to arise from his failure to recognize both the importance of abductive inference and its uses.<sup>30</sup> Abductive inference is not proof, but it is nevertheless a powerful tool for the advancement of knowledge. Grayling's dismissal of abductive inferences depends on his treating them as deductive inferences and then finding that the results of abduction are not as firm as the results of deduction. If, however, we treat abductions as abductions, then we may put them to the test. What he says elsewhere is quite helpful in making this test:

Our moods are like tunings on the wireless, picking up truths at different frequencies, so that if we do not know the gamut of human feelings, neither can we know the gamut of truth.<sup>31</sup>

In other words, our sentiments are literally attuned to truth. It might help to give some context: Grayling makes this argument in order to foster compassion for those who suffer from depression, arguing that in fact the range of emotions are to be embraced because they are epistemically valuable. Perhaps despite his best intentions, Grayling's statement comes

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<sup>29</sup> A. C. Grayling, *Meditations for the Humanist: Ethics for a Secular Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 123.

<sup>30</sup> And not merely some cheap version of “argument to best explanation.” The difference is that “Inference to the Best Explanation” (IBE) is frequently regarded as a mere guess, whereas Peirce's analysis of abduction suggests (abductively, of course) a connection between the operation of the intellect that performs the abduction and the universe that the abduction concerns.

<sup>31</sup> Grayling, 93.

remarkably close to Peirce's position when Peirce argues that one may come to belief in God in a scientific spirit. Peirce, in his "Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," reminds us several times of the importance of performing any inquiry into the reality of God in what he calls "Scientific singleness of heart." This is a phrase Peirce has evidently borrowed from the Anglican liturgy and, in turn, from the book of the Acts of the Apostles. In other words, it is a phrase in which Peirce has taken the language of prayer and shown how it is relevant to science. Theological thinking should not take presuppositions as our unquestioned guides, but rather it should allow meditation and contemplation to lead where they will. The "Neglected Argument" is not an attempt to prove God's existence but to examine how, in a certain spirit of scientific inquiry, instinctive sentiment emerges from a kind of prayerful contemplation into novel belief.

### V. Why Should a Community Encourage Its Members to Attend to a Sentiment?

I began by saying that in American pragmatism there is a constant strain of religion. We must not forget that this always accompanies a second strain, namely a strong interest in community. The American Puritans had the idea that, practically speaking, religion is always an affair of the community, indeed it is the founding principle of the community.<sup>32</sup> Certainly the transcendentalists and that strain of pragmatism exemplified by James, Dewey, and Rorty all emphasize freedom and the individual as well, but even they all do so for the sake of life together, echoing (perhaps unwillingly) Peirce's point that the individual does not exist solely as an individual.<sup>33</sup> Peirce does not make as strong a case for the community as Royce does, perhaps, but plainly without the community there is no real inquiry, since science is not the work of the solitary individual.<sup>34</sup>

Peter Ochs, in his book on Peirce and scripture, connects these strains to the practice of communal prayer through his reading of Franz Rosenzweig. Ochs optimistically conflates the Jewish principle of *tikkun olam* with the communal practice of prayer while remaining clear-eyed about the dangers of tradition and communal religious life:

To pray is...both to trust that help will come from the very tradition in which one suffers and also to complain that that tradition has caused one's suffering. In prayer, the I is no longer mere I, but also [an] individual member of a tradition, retaining its individuality as sign of that tradition's own inadequacies. Community is the place where the inadequacies of a particular tradition become the subject of a dialogue among an assembly of individuals, each of whom knows what it means both to live with that tradition and to

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<sup>32</sup> Gail Hamner makes this point nicely in her work cited above.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *CP* 7.570 (c. 1892): "Nor must any synechist say, 'I am altogether myself, and not at all you.' If you embrace synechism, you must abjure this metaphysics of wickedness. In the first place, your neighbors are, in a measure, yourself, and in far greater measure than, without deep studies in psychology, you would believe. Really, the selfhood you like to attribute to yourself is, for the most part, the vulgarest delusion of vanity. In the second place, all men who resemble you and are in analogous circumstances are, in a measure, yourself, though not quite in the same way in which your neighbors are you." (Note what he says in the next paragraph in *CP* about "the Spirit of prayer": "Inasmuch as we perform our 'role' in the world, we identify ourselves with its 'Author.'")

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *MS* 1334.

suffer in it. To repair tradition is “the common labor” of such an assembly, and dialogue is the engine of repair. For the individual who prays, love is a symbol of community; for the individual in community, love is a symbol of reparative work.<sup>35</sup>

Here it becomes obvious why we may allow tradition, instinct, and sentiment to lead us to pray:<sup>36</sup> praying together is not uncritical affirmation of tradition but the opening of both dialogue and contemplation that may “repair tradition.”<sup>37</sup>

I mentioned earlier that Peirce berates one writer for his “attitude of prayer,” but this must be brought together with what Peirce writes elsewhere, that “all communication from mind to mind is through continuity of being,” to which he adds that this is the “Spirit of prayer.”<sup>38</sup>

Peirce acknowledged that the best communities are those that pursue the ideals of science. In our day these ideals are often taken to be the opposite of those pursued by religion. If we understand religion to be a set of unquestionable doctrines coupled with an unchallengeable authority, and science to be a set of conclusions derived from natural inquiry, it is easy to see that religion and science can only come into conflict with one another. If, on the other hand, we agree with the insight of William James that religion is, at its heart, prayer, and if we agree with Peirce when he says that science is at its heart a desire to find things out, the apparent conflict between the two dissolves.

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 298-299.

<sup>36</sup> As Peirce points out repeatedly, inquiry often begins with feelings, which also constitute objective facts. Peirce writes, “Common sense, which is the resultant of the traditional experience of mankind, witnesses unequivocally that the heart is more than the head, and is in fact everything in our highest concerns...and those persons who think that sentiment has no part in common sense forget that the dicta of common sense are objective facts, not the way some dyspeptic may feel, but what the healthy, natural, normal democracy thinks” (*CP* 1.654).

<sup>37</sup> Jürgen Habermas writes, “Secular morality is not inherently embedded in communal practices. Religious consciousness, by contrast, preserves an essential connection to the ongoing practice of life within a community and, in the case of the major world religions, to the observances of united global communities of all the faithful.” Habermas concedes that he does not know that this will continue to be the case, but it seems unlikely that this will change any time soon, given the persistence of ideas embedded in a community (Jürgen Habermas et. al., *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, trans. Ciaran Cronin, [Cambridge: Polity, 2010], 75). This helps us to understand what Peirce means when he says that prayer offers “*soulagement*, spiritual good, and moral strength.” Such an indefinite description of prayer’s benefits are not enough to make the *public* case for prayer, even though they may be precisely the goods that we seek in prayer. For the ordinary praying person who seeks these things, no further reward is needed than to receive them. But this same person must find her way in the context of the community, and communities are held together by their shared ideals, not by privately discovered and privately held ideals.

<sup>38</sup> *CP* 7.572.