



# Prayer: A History

*Philip Zaleski, Carol Zaleski*

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## **Prayer: A History** Philip Zaleski, Carol Zaleski

"This is the most stunning book on prayer that I have ever read. It will become the benchmark for every other work on the subject, present or future. The Zaleskis' massive scholarship, catholicity of interests, and clarity of presentation make this a volume to hold close to both the heart and the head." -- Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Divine Hours*

This landmark book presents prayer in all its richness and variety throughout history, across traditions, and around the globe. Focusing on extraordinary stories of lives changed by prayer and on great works of literature and art inspired by it, Philip and Carol Zaleski map the vast world of prayer from the sacred pipe to the rosary, from Paleolithic cave art to Pentecostal revivals. They reveal the fascinating experiences of such great and sometimes surprising figures as Emily Dickinson, Bill W., Teresa of Ávila, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Samuel Johnson, and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Examining prayer as petition, thanksgiving, adoration, contemplation, ecstasy, magic, and sacrifice, the Zaleskis probe the language of prayer, the fruits of prayer, its controversies, and its prospects for the future.

Prayer is an informative, accessible, and entertaining narrative that will appeal to an audience of all faiths. The Zaleskis have created a work that will be the standard for years to come.

Philip Zaleski is the editor of the Best American Spiritual Writing series, author of *The Recollected Heart*, and coeditor, with Carol Zaleski, of *The Book of Heaven*. He is a senior editor at Parabola and a research associate in religion at Smith College.

Carol Zaleski is the author of *Otherworld Journeys* and *The Life of the World to Come*, and coeditor of *The Book of Heaven*. She contributes a monthly column to *Christian Century* and is a professor of religion at Smith College.

"Prayer: A History is not only a fabulous, very readable, immensely informative and (I would even say) 'inspirational' volume. It is, to my mind, simply unmatched in the vast literature on what lies, after all, at the heart of the religious life. The Zaleskis range over history (even prehistory), art, literature, theology, and comparative religion -- a real tour de force. But throughout, they engage any reader -- specialist or not -- and never flaunt their impressive learning. They help us understand the unending human quest for meaning at its deepest level." -- Harvey Cox

"Prayer is simply a wonderful book -- intelligent, beautifully written, important, inclusive, and completely useful. I wish every world leader would read it word for word today. We'd all be better for it. Carol and Philip Zaleski have been making extraordinary contributions to religion and spirituality for many years, and now they have outdone themselves." -- Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul*

"Everybody prays. Whether with faith-filled discipline or in the unanticipated aspiration, prompted by despair or ecstasy, calling out to the Unknown, everybody prays. Everybody who is serious about prayer will be grateful to the Zaleskis for this inspired and inspiring book." -- Reverend Richard John Neuhaus, editor in

chief of First Things

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