



THE URANTIAN®

Journal of URANTIA® Brotherhood

THE ART OF RELAXATION

"How shall we induce men to let go of God that he may spring forth to the refreshment of our own souls while in transit outward and then to serve the purpose of enlightening, uplifting, and blessing countless other souls? . . . Look to your Master. Even now he is out in the hills taking in power while we are here giving out energy. The secret of all this problem is wrapped up in spiritual communion, in worship. From the human standpoint it is a question of combined meditation and relaxation. Meditation makes the contact of mind with spirit; relaxation determines the capacity for spiritual receptivity." (*1777:3) Rodan of Alexandria.

When we observe the words which Jesus chose in his admonition to "Let your life so shine . . ." we see that we are to let, to allow our lives to shine with the Father's presence within us. I take this to mean that we need very much to learn to relax into the presence of the Spirit. Modern life is filled with the need to meet various situations with vigorous and courageous good will, with the need to put a guard on our tongues, with the need to find forgiveness through forgiving others, with the need to be of service. Perhaps, with all these needs to be met, we forget to remember to relax, to be still enough to commune with the spirit. I wonder how brightly our light might shine if we were to become centers of calm in this troubled world; how well might we whet our loved one's curiosity by the possession of truly God-centered calm and conscious peace?

The cool and tranquil appraisal of life and its many experiences can be the one great gift which we may give as bearers of the living God. Not that we are to be aloof and imperturbable, and present to others an icy calm composed of rigid emotional control, not at all; simply that we have received the gift of revelation, and that we are imbued with a spirit which is equal to the challenge of life, which fills us with real gladness that we are alive. This type of relaxed living can spread to others wherever we are, in whatever situation we may become involved. It prevents tempers from rising, it is a powerful aid to rational appraisal of life situations and relationships, and, best of all, it brings sincere seekers to ask for your

source of loving, peaceful vibrations. Then, without confusion and evangelistic do-goodism clouding the issue, the religion of Jesus may be described and discussed, briefly or in depth, in response to the desire of the person or persons asking for the information.

All of us have at one time or another experienced the awful encounter with the fact that we have not been adequate representatives of the supreme truths which the religion of Jesus embodies, that the fruits of the spirit are not particularly on full-time display in our lives. Yet we know that the "conspiracy of spiritual forces, a confederation of divine powers . . ." is working in and through events and our personal awareness to effect our "final deliverance from material bondage and finite handicaps . . . That you may be strengthened with power through His spirit in the inner man." (*381:3,4) We know that our loving Father's forgiveness is always there, therefore it helps all of us to truly relax; to forgive ourselves and others for shortcomings, to hear the inner wisdom gained through worship, to realign our lives with the joy of living a calm and centered life, filled with the power of our infinite spiritual heritage.

What a superb experience it is to share such inner awareness with other faithers in group worship! Then the combined power of fraternizing souls and spirits lifts us to renewal and re-creation of our spiritual perceptions whereby we are cleansed of fears and anxieties, of the need to continually rush the living of our lives. We become representatives of the infinite perspective of the eternal God, power centers of the peace that passes all our understanding, not only for our own health and well-being but for the enhancement of the religion of Jesus in the world. We need to relax together, to let our spiritual progress be a mutual achievement, to provide from our solid basis of faith and common love a source for those who shall come seeking truth for their lives in the "cyclonic upheavals" of the times to come; we do this not on our preaching soapbox or in well-meant exhortations, but in honest good will toward brothers and sisters. We shall be serving them as children of one loving Father, and living among them as centers of living peace, possessors of the calm of spiritual character, faith-fellows of Jesus in the world.

PRIORITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

It has been man's elusive goal throughout his history to learn the art of living. Throughout the ages men have felt there must be some secret technique to control circumstances so that they might live an ideal life. Only relatively seldom has it been discovered that the art of living lies not in the control of external factors but in one's personal basic orientation toward spiritual priorities and a universe perspective.

Reordering our lives around spiritual priorities places persons rather than things as most important. We are about our Father's work when we are genuinely relating to other personalities. Placing first priority on persons naturally leads to spending time with our families, our friends, other people (especially those who need help) and with spiritual persons—in meditation, prayer, and worship.

Centering our lives around spiritual priorities can still result in a distortion of the ideal life if we fail to attain a universe perspective—unity. We are travelling from the outer regions of the grand universe where the material, intellectual, and spiritual appear to be most separated, but our direction of travel is toward God and unity. We need to experience that truth, beauty, and goodness are all aspects of God. Material creation displays his beauty. Intelligence recognizes and interrelates grains of his

truth. Spirit expresses his goodness. Living our mortal life demands balancing the material, intellectual, and spiritual. We have a unique opportunity to grapple with the puzzle of balanced growth and to discover how we may unify the three in our own beings as our Father unifies all matter, mind, and spirit in himself.

In our search for the art of living we may discover to our surprise that if we organize our lives around spiritual priorities, keep a universe perspective, and then go on about our business, our lives will inherently express their highest artistry and dignity.

—Kaye and Bill Cooper

THE ART OF LIVING

The URANTIA Book teaches that the universes are created for an "eternal and divine purpose" (*364-5) and that the purpose of "mortal creatures of animal origin," including all mankind, is to become ascending sons of God. (*448-9) Rodan, the Greek philosopher from Alexandria, saw mortal man as fulfilling his basic purpose in the divine plan through mastering the "art of living." (*Paper 160)

Man shares with his primal ancestors the animal urges of survival: sustenance, safety, shelter and sex. But with the added endowments of the spirits of worship and wisdom (*708-9) man also responds to the human desires of greed, social recognition, self-aggrandizement, and self-importance. As a human animal, man is constantly lured by those things which gratify himself.

But physical man has been given the potential to become a spiritual personality by choosing to do the will of the Father. (*1295) This man can accomplish by converting his *natural* drives inherited from his animal ancestors into *spiritual* drives through attuning himself to his spiritual forebears. This is described by Rodan as developing a spiritual counterpart of man's animal urges, desires and lures until he is only driven by those things which gratify the Father, reflected by concern for others.

The "art of living" is the *process* by which man develops his spiritual character. In a sense it is the technique by which one masters one's physical self by achieving one's spiritual potential. It is the method by which one rises above the mundane existence bound by finite reality and enjoys a sublime living among the expanded horizons of cosmic truth, universe beauty, and divine goodness. It is man's *pathway* on his journey toward God.

—Duane Fair

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Warmest regards — the editors.

RELIGIOUS HABITS— LUXURY OR NECESSITY?

Jesus had the habit of going off alone to commune with his Father in heaven. In speaking of this spiritual communion, or worship, which Jesus so often engaged in, Rodan said, "The more complex society becomes, and the more the lures of civilization multiply, the more urgent will become the necessity for God-knowing individuals to form such protective habitual practices designed to conserve and augment their spiritual energies." (*1777:3)

Never before has man been faced with the possibility of doing so many things in such a short period of time. The average person is required to respond to myriad situations and personalities beginning early in the day and ending late. From the "Today Show" to the "Tonight Show" we move through our day at what would seem a frenzied pace to our not-too-distant ancestors. Our challenge is not how best to escape this rapidly advancing sociological monster, the technological age, but how to tame it and make it serve mankind's purpose—finding God and becoming like him.

Before we can begin taming we must be in the position of a tamer. To me this means we must first find balance for our own lives in the midst of our present environment. We must survey our lives every so often to determine if the requirements of spiritual growth are being allotted time in proportion to the requirements of making a temporal living. Are our religious habits which favor spiritual growth in proportion to our habits of maintaining our earthly existence?

Specific religious habits will vary from person to person. I like to think of religious habits which foster spiritual growth as falling into three general areas. The first religious habit may be called receiving inspiration from within. Meditation, prayer, thanksgiving, and worship can be included in this area. By taking quiet time alone to commune with the spirit realities within we allow inspiration for enhanced religious living to flow outward through us. Obviously this is most important because out of this will come the guidance for all subsequent religious habits and expressions.

We all want God to work through us but we may not stop to think that we need to take time to listen to God: to be receptive. We are regular in eating, sleeping, and working; why not be regular in communing with God as a separate planned experience?

Second in this list of religious habits is what may be called inspiration from without. Included in this is inspiration which comes from scriptures, as well as inspiration

derived from the appreciation of all forms of truth, beauty, and goodness as they manifest around us. Some of us may even have a favorite scriptural text. By taking the time to read scriptures daily we create and open channels of spirit expression. We renew in our conscious mind values which we choose to guide our actions and we create a mental channel through which spiritual influences can reach us and our brothers and sisters as we carry out daily activities.

This leads to the third area of religious habits which may be called intimate personal contact. This religious habit enhances the value of the first two experiences and is essential to stabilize and actualize them in our consciousness. I do not believe we can really know the full meaning and value of inner and outer inspiration without this loving social interaction. Really this religious habit is the most natural and springs forth spontaneously with new values when inspiration from within and without become religious habits for us.

Rodan recognized that as civilization advances man has an ever-increasing need to take time to relax and spiritually re-energize himself. I do not think we need to wait for society to become more complex before beginning to develop protective habitual practices which are spiritually regenerative.

—A Urantian Friend

LIVING WITHIN THE CHURCH

In the beginning of our study group the more evangelistic members soon found out the perils of talking too much to people not interested in having their religious viewpoints changed. A few unhappy experiences caused us to seek better ways to approach our friends. To this end we began studying the life of Jesus to find out how he did it.

One of the first lessons was that we needed to be very careful about our own reasons; we had to remove ourselves from the focus point. Jesus reached out to people with a positive attitude. Beginning at the level of the person's understanding he led them gently and lovingly into higher concepts, so that they rejoiced at having been touched and never felt bruised or manipulated.

We found that by using this kind of method we could enter creatively into the church's activities. We took to heart such lessons as "The Positive Nature of Jesus' Religion," and "The Future." (*1769, 2084) Inspiration from The URANTIA Book has enabled us to continue our work in the church. We wanted to keep this relationship, which has always meant so much to us, because of our many friends there and because of our own need for a worship center. Even though there may be some

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limits to the content of our sharing with our church friends there is no limit to the reality of the love and caring that we feel for each other. Life would be so much narrower without this connection.

Some study group members questioned a continuing of such church participation especially in such sacraments as the Eucharist, explaining that they felt like hypocrites. But as we studied this sacrament and its true meaning, we found that we could enter into the spirit of this ceremony knowing that though others might place a slightly different interpretation on it the end result is the same: a deeper dedication of self to God, a recognition and repudiation of our undesirable weaknesses and failures, and a sincere belief in God's everlasting love.

A really amazing discovery has been to find how far above the general church congregation is the understanding of our church's (United Methodist) highly educated clergy. Only since finding the teachings of The URANTIA Book have we realized what a spot the clergy is in in trying to change the outmoded beliefs of their congregation. More and more we realize it cannot be done from the top down.

Even so there is hope. With a few progressive lay members, a rightly oriented clergy could begin to make progress. The spirit is there. Out in the field are many sheep looking for the good shepherd. Dedicated workers are needed at all levels. This is not a job for clever manipulators, but for true believers, dedicated to the kingdom of God and the brotherhood of mankind.

—Alice Clark

THE ART OF GROWING SPIRITUALLY

To the degree that our will is to have God's will be done in our life, to be taught, led, filled by his spirit, to that degree we are receptive to the work he would do in us. Whatever small impulse one may have to learn about and from God will be our beginning. We ask, we learn

and on the basis of our new knowledge we ask from a more informed position and learn more. As we proceed we become more adept in asking and learning, stronger in ability to live what we are learning, and our curiosity and sense of adventure are piqued more and more! As long as we so choose, the process is self-perpetuating.

This learning is not intellectual or emotional response to information read or heard, but experiential realization of the truth, of the relationship of cause and effect in spiritual matters, of the value of spiritual qualities, of spiritual reality. For example, one learns the far reaching and reciprocal effects of kindheartedness when one feels such an impulse, expresses it and experiences the inner transformation as well as the outer response from others. Even if one's ability to show kindness is poor, one knows the goodness and nobility of having felt and tried to express a kindhearted impulse. Implementation will improve with practice, and the tendency to kindheartedness will be amplified so that greater and more subtle aspects of kindheartedness can be shown us by our divine teacher.

This process involves mind, emotions, and physical action under the direction of will—the whole man—and by this process we complete ourselves, our soul grows.

The willingness to continually seek and do God's will at higher and higher levels is our part in the process. Our heavenly Father provides the rest, the world as it is with all its opportunities to learn, our greatest living laboratory, and a conspiracy of spiritual influences to teach and aid us. Not only the Father himself, and his beloved son, Jesus, and his wondrous Holy Spirit, but innumerable and diversely talented angels are all working constantly to support our progress. All that is needed has been provided for an almost incredible ascension from weak creatures pulled this way and that by physical, mental and emotional storms into creatures directed single-mindedly toward Paradise by an unswerving and dedicated will to the Father's will.

—Ann Cole

*"And then last, but greatest of all, we attain the level of spirit insight and spiritual interpretation which impels us to recognize in this rule of life the divine command to treat all men as we conceive God would treat them. That is the universe ideal of human relationships." Jesus to the Apostles. (*1651:3)*
