



THE  
**URANTIA®**

Journal of **URANTIA®** Brotherhood

*The following was the Keynote Address given at the 1983 Intensive Study Seminar.*

**PRAYER, WORSHIP, AND COMMUNION**

"Jesus did not require of his followers that they should periodically assemble and recite a form of words indicative of their common beliefs. He only ordained that they should gather together to actually *do something*—partake of the communal supper of the remembrance of his bestowal life on Urantia." (\*1091:10)

"The characteristic difference between a social occasion and a religious gathering is that in contrast with the secular the religious is pervaded by the atmosphere of *communion*. In this way human association generates a feeling of fellowship with the divine, and this is the beginning of group worship. . . . The atmosphere of the communion provides a refreshing and comforting period of truce in the conflict of the self-seeking ego with the altruistic urge of the indwelling spirit Monitor. And this is the prelude of true worship—the practice of the presence of God which eventuates in the emergence of the brotherhood of man." (\*1133:1)

"Worship is the highest privilege and the first duty of all created intelligences. Worship is the conscious and joyous act of recognizing and acknowledging the truth and fact of the intimate and personal relationships of the Creators with their creatures." (\*303:6)

"But prayer need not always be individual. Group or congregational praying is very effective in that it is highly socializing in its repercussions. When a group engages in community prayer for moral enhancement and spiritual uplift, such devotions are reactive upon the individuals composing the group; they are all made better because of participation. Even a whole city or an entire nation can be helped by such prayer devotions. Confession, repentance, and prayer have led individuals, cities, nations, and whole races to mighty efforts of reform and courageous deeds of valorous achievement." (\*998:5)

The experience of worship is a very basic part of the human religious life. Private and individual worship is

an essential part of our lives. Public and group worship has often been a part of our experiences at conferences and in study groups. In this process, all of us have occasionally encountered controversy and mutual misunderstanding about the nature, quality, and significance of the group experience.

It is possible that we have not properly or fully applied the teachings of *The URANTIA Book* to understand and interpret the significance of these experiences. An educational program could be helpful in this area. Not merely a formal program directed at those of us who attend a summer workshop; but a general thread of thought and discussion that could flow from this to penetrate our study groups and "the movement" as a whole. Worship should be the arena in which we acquire and share the knowledge and experience of human brotherhood to its fullest, where we are not constrained or bound or influenced in any way by differences of race, creed, or philosophy.

**Growth in Three Areas**

The evolution of religious practice and the concomitant growth of spiritual consciousness on Urantia has been characterized by growth in three related areas— theological knowledge, personality development, and spirit receptivity. In the traditions of our planet, in the religions of evolution, even those religions which have been informed by an epochal revelation, such as Machiventa Melchizedek or Michael, all have required the proselyte to be formally instructed in the theology which underlies the teachings of the religion before admitting him to the full social and spiritual communion of the believers' fellowship.

In particular, Christianity has followed this pattern in restricting access of individuals to the formal communion of the group. Many sects of Christianity have gone even beyond this to virtually eliminate formal communion from their worship activities. In some sects, worship services consist primarily of intellectual discussion of the theological beliefs of the sect and of the prophetic and social implications of these beliefs.



Exclusionary religions, sects, and cults have reasons for doing this. It is to assure that the communicant, the person who joins their members in the practice of the presence of God in fellowship with the Spirit, will interpret that experience intellectually in a way consistent with the dogma of the group. As readers of *The URANTIA Book*, we know that all groups who worship the Father worship the same God, and that of these groups the spiritual reality, the spiritual experience, and beneficial spiritual consequences of the group experience must be equivalent. If a formally structured religion, a religion of authority and evolution, were to admit people to this fellowship experience without first instructing them in its formal and theological basis, that religion would risk change in its dogmatic systems and potential disruption of the formal organization supported by those dogmas.

As readers of *The URANTIA Book*, however, we know this need not be a concern. We are told that any religion which permits its communicants full creedal freedom can admit any person to full fellowship and communion without formal theological instruction. Acting on this promise, in faith, immediately removes the many intellectual barriers that have been constructed

through the years—barriers that divide religionists all over the world one from another. Acting on this promise will permit realization of the communion of all mankind and will support the emergence of the brotherhood of man.

Spiritual communion is an experience in the human personality which is perceived as real in proportion to the individual's God-consciousness of the reality of the fellowship of man with God. The theological systems of belief that we attach to this experience add nothing of spiritual value. They only permit us to have a shared set of symbols, a set of word terms that we can use to describe to each other this common, but very personal, spiritual experience.

Group functions among readers of *The URANTIA Book* are characterized most notably by discussions of the cosmology, philosophy, and theology presented in the book. Also well known and recognized are the debates on administrative, political, and organizational aspects of "the movement." And, of course, third, and most beloved by all of us, is the communion of human fellowship. In addition, we have, on occasion, seriously practiced some form of spiritual communion as a formal part of these activities.

As our group grows in its understanding of the significance of spiritual experience, as the group grows in its desire for the worship experience and its appreciation of the values contained in the worship experience it is important for us to understand the way in which worship is performed. We are told in *The URANTIA Book* that, for the individual, the desire to worship is essentially the willful assent to worship, and that it enables the Thought Adjuster to conduct worship on behalf of the personality. This event is registered in the presence of the Father on Paradise immediately.

We are given less specific information about the role of group worship and its overall cosmic significance. True group worship, we are told, is the practice of the presence of God. It is an actual spiritual experience. It grows out of the spirit fraternization of the group with the Father-Son. We are further told that spiritual communion is the prelude to true worship, and this sense of fellowship with the divine grows out of the experience of human association for a religious purpose.

All religions have recognized the significance of the common meal as a form of social communion and as a symbol of the fellowship of the group. Jesus adopted this custom himself when he established the remembrance supper, which we know is the only sacrament or ceremony associated with his life on Urantia. The au-

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thenticity of the remembrance supper as a form of communion with the Creator by the group is unquestioned. "...upon all such occasions the Master is *really present*." (\*1942:5)

The reality of communion is fully understood by those who are Son-believing and God-knowing. The spirit-conscious person perceives the presence of the Son through the ministry of the Spirit of Truth and the Thought Adjuster. To the believer, the remembrance supper is symbolic of his rendezvous with Michael.

These thoughts suggest a number of areas that merit further study. There are no answers to the questions I will set before you—simply viewpoints, degrees of understanding, ways of explanation. I think it is important to remember that there is no right answer but the answer which lies within each of our hearts; that the experience we each have is the same experience that each of our fellows has; and that this experience has the same value for each of us, even though we may use totally different and incompatible words to describe it. I can give examples of the areas we need to study, but the list is not exhaustive:

- Is communion, as described in *The URANTIA Book*, a prototype of group worship, the essential part of group worship, the only correct form of group worship, or, what is communion? Is the remembrance supper the only prescribed form of shared communion; if there are others, what are they?
- Are there any particular aspects of either social or spiritual communion that are essential for a successful experience? What does it mean to have a successful worship experience? Does it mean anything even to ask the question? What elements of the remembrance supper are necessary for communion, for worship, to be effective?
- In particular, are there elements of our prayer and group worship experience that we can learn to share spontaneously with our neighbors and friends who do not share the theological basis that we have in *The URANTIA Book*? Can we be truly universal in our attitude toward group worship and communion as opposed to simply being universally accepting toward other people's spiritual beliefs?

Recently I became aware that people have many views of group worship, its importance, and significance. It is

the consequences of the worship experience that become important factors in shaping the individual's attitude. We know that worship makes the worshiper increasingly like the being who is worshipped. When the individual worships a God of truth, beauty, and goodness, integrated in love, then that individual's worship evolves the individual towards God-likeness. But a group is not a person, and cannot evolve towards Father-likeness, so what evolutionary effect can worship have on the group?

We are told that worship eventuates in the emergence of the brotherhood of man. In the group, this means that the ideals of harmony and unity are developed through the group worship experience. This represents the development of the group towards the trinity unity represented in the Supreme Being. The trinity unity of the Supreme is the God-likeness towards which the group grows through harmonization and unification.

When we truly worship we seek nothing for ourselves. We worship the Father because we adore him, and our adoration makes us more Father-like. This process of evolution of the self is highly beneficial to the individual. It is also highly beneficial to the group. The practice of worship within any group, such as URANTIA Brotherhood or any portion of the "Urantia movement," will surely result in that group learning increasingly to display the fruits of God-likeness—faith, trust, love, service, harmony, and, above all, unity, spiritual unity—in all that is undertaken. We will always worship God because he is God, but we can know that, when do we worship God, the fruits of that experience will be good.

#### Love one another

The greatest fruit that we may derive from that experience is surely to be able to fulfill Jesus' commandment to his disciples that they should love one another even as he has loved them. And he promised that this love, this harmony in the group, would relate to their ministry—that by this will "...all men know that you are my disciples." (\*2042:1) And then Jesus said, "If you will only love one another as I am loving you, you shall be my friends, and I will ever speak to you of that which the Father reveals to me." (\*1945:1)

The practice of group worship is an effective way by which a group of Son-believing and God-knowing mortals eventually will grow to exhibit the fullness of love, harmony, and unity of true friendship with Michael.

Such experience is appropriate to all groups of believers. If we provide a broader exposure to and discussion of these ideas among readers of *The URANTIA*



Book, we may help our fellows become more confident in the worship experience and provide an avenue for their development toward expression of the ideals of human brotherhood, both inside the "movement," and, particularly, outside the "movement."

Let us begin to take a spiritual initiative in our work together in two ways. The first is very challenging and has even greater benefits than the second.

First, let us study and understand the teachings of *The URANTIA Book* as they apply to the experiences of group worship and spiritual communion. Let us adopt, through our shared experiences, through our discussion of educational method, through our examination of worship technique, an individual and group development program which includes spiritual experience, includes applied worship, and includes the practice of communion, all in addition to theological discussions and training in cosmological theories of *The URANTIA Book*, with which we are so familiar. Let us learn to adopt real spiritual communion as an accepted part of every phase of our activities, including the administrative functions of our organizations. By these actions we will experience the growth of group harmony and unity that will enable us truly to love one another as Jesus

loves us and more fully to understand our work here in his name.

The first initiative will have profound effects on our organizations, on the "Urantia movement." But as we come to understand how these concepts and ideals relate to our work, we can be led to accept a greater challenge, which I hold out for the future, although we can be assured that it will be gradual, progressive, and integrated with all other aspects of our work.

For this second initiative, let us begin to share our experience of spiritual communion directly with our fellows, without regard to their theological beliefs. Let us invite people to share the worship experience with us without requiring them to understand or accept the theology or cosmology of *The URANTIA Book*. Let us share our emerging group experience of the practice of the presence of God with all persons, without attempting to present the book or even attempting to "bootleg" its teaching. Let us choose to present the Creator Son's chosen approach to the hearts and minds of men. Let us dedicate ourselves to do all these things in order to hasten the full emergence of the brotherhood of all men.

—Dan Massey  
Sherborn, Massachusetts

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*"The worship experience consists in the sublime attempt of the betrothed Adjuster to communicate to the divine Father the inexpressible longings and the unutterable aspirations of the human soul. . . ." (\*66:5)*