



THE
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THE INNER CONVERSATION: UNBROKEN COMMUNION WITH GOD

The *URANTIA Book* asserts that the heart of religion is a living relationship with God. Such communion must not be limited to religious services or peak experiences. It should be habitual, an ongoing moment-to-moment process of inner sharing. One of the revelation's most startling pronouncements is that such Father-child communion can be constant. Continuous communion is attainable. Indeed, it is a methodological key without equal, a "secret" of great spiritual leverage.

"The secret of his [Jesus'] unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God; and he attained it by intelligent prayer and sincere worship — unbroken communion with God—..." (*2089:1)

"...the divine bestowals may flow to the hearts and souls of those who thus remember to maintain unbroken communion with their Maker through sincere prayer and true worship." (*2066:1)

The method is remarkably straightforward. While it takes persistent effort to form the habit, it involves simply an ongoing conversation, an internal dialogue with the Father. In every situation we can "talk" continuously, inwardly, with the very best listener. And we in turn can listen — pause to be attentive to the Father's constant communication to us, his nourishing love and wise guidance. When we are conversing with God, it is easy to remember that he is actually present.

One of the most effective proponents of the spiritual value of habitual inner conversation was Brother Lawrence, a Carmelite monk living in France in the late 1600's. A little volume of his thoughts, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, has become a devotional classic. The book's preface comments, "No conceited scholar was Brother Lawrence; theological and doctrinal debates bored him, if he noticed them at all. His one desire was for communion with God."

Brother Lawrence suggested "that we might accustom ourselves to a continual conversation with Him, with freedom and in simplicity. That we need only to recognize God intimately present with us, to address ourselves to Him at every moment." He was adamant about

the remarkable power of the method. "There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. Those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it. Were I a preacher, I should, above all other things preach the practice of the presence of God; and were I a director, I should advise all the world to do it, so necessary do I think it, and so easy, too."

Brother Lawrence was quite correct in placing such singular emphasis on this practice of "conversing" with God. The *URANTIA Book* indicates that the doing of the Father's will is synonymous with such inner communion. "The doing of the will of God is nothing more or less than an exhibition of creature willingness to share the inner life with God..." (*1221:3) The more we fellowship with the Father, the more our lives can reflect his will. We grow God-like through such constant inner contact. "Sooner or later we all become aware that all creature growth is proportional to Father identification." (*1174:8) Perhaps we can best accomplish Father identification — doing God's will — through the communion of inner sharing.

Unbroken communion is a habit. It takes persistent effort at first to develop it, but eventually it becomes automatic and relatively effortless. Brother Lawrence observes, "In order to form a habit of conversing with God continually, and referring all we do to Him, we must first apply to Him with some diligence; but after a little care we should find His love inwardly excites us to it without any difficulty... We should not wonder if, in the beginning, we often failed in our endeavors, but at last we should gain a habit, which will naturally produce its acts in us, without our care, and to our exceeding great delight... Thus, by rising after my falls, and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of God as it was at first to accustom myself to it."

This is good news. While we may have to work at developing an inner conversation with the Father, eventually it flows effortlessly, affording us great joy and comfort in the press of life. Rodan observes, "These practices are difficult and time-consuming at first, but when they become habitual, they are at once restful and

time-saving. 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." (*1777:4) Perhaps Rodan and Brother Lawrence would agree that living in constant communion with God is the paramount spiritual habit.

While it can be habitual, inner conversation with God is varied, creative, and ever-experimental. If mortals can communicate in a thousand and one ways, then the shadings of inner dialogue possible between God and man must be well-nigh infinite. Prayer, worship, thanksgiving, reflection, adoration, inspiration, guidance, contemplation, support, and clarification are but a few of the communication paths which wind their way through the vast inner regions of companionship with God. Brother Lawrence describes the options with such sweetness. "God requires no great matters of us; a little remembrance of Him from time to time; a little

adoration; sometimes to pray for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, and sometimes to return Him thanks for the favors He has given you, and still gives you, in the midst of your troubles, and to console yourself with Him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to Him, sometimes even at your meals, and when you are in company; the least little remembrance will always be acceptable to Him. You need not cry very loud; He is nearer to us than we are aware of . . . Accustom yourself, then, by degrees thus to worship Him, to beg His grace, to offer Him your heart from time to time in the midst of your business, even every moment, if you can."

The most important step in developing the habit of unbroken communion is to begin, and begin often. Start expressing yourself inwardly at every opportunity. You will forget repeatedly; but each time you recollect, plunge in again. Speak simply, as a child. Ask questions and listen inwardly for response. Share the events of your life with the Father, from the large and pressing questions and challenging relationships, to the small happenings of the day. Pause; allow him to show you his view of them.

When you are alone, it is often helpful, at first, to talk out loud to God; it aids in developing the mental focus necessary for effective inner dialogue. Practice maintaining the inner conversation while in the midst of outer activities, and even during conversations with others. Life activities and relationships take on a new shine, a value lustre, when you share them inwardly in unfolding friendship with the Father.

The URANTIA Book is clear in stressing the priority of developing our inner relationship with God. "I cannot but observe that so many of you spend so much time and thought on mere trifles of living, while you almost wholly overlook the more essential realities of everlasting import, those very accomplishments which are concerned with the development of a more harmonious working agreement between you and your Adjusters. The great goal of human existence is to attune to the divinity of the indwelling Adjuster . . ." (*1206:3) "The great challenge to modern man is to achieve better communication with the divine Monitor that dwells within the human mind." (*2097:2)

Brother Lawrence, in his humble, human way, utters the same call. "Pray remember what I have recommended to you, which is, to think often on God, by day, by night, in your business, and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave Him not alone.

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You would think it rude to leave a friend alone who came to visit you; why, then, must God be neglected? Do not, then, forget Him, but think on Him often, adore Him continually, live and die with Him; this the glorious employment of a child of God. In a word, this is our profession; if we do not know it, we must learn it."

—Marvin Gawryn
Boulder, Colorado

The following talk was presented at the Midwest Regional Conference, October 11-13, 1985.

SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE WORK-PLACE

When asked to give a presentation at this year's Midwest Conference, the idea of talking about the workplace in conjunction with spiritual perspectives almost immediately entered my mind. Consider the person who works a 40-hour work week. Add to that 40 hours the time spent preparing for work, getting to and from work, and any extra meetings and conferences. In a typical week you have spent at least 45% of your waking hours in work-related matters. If you are self-employed, work overtime, or bring your work home, it is easy to approach 60% or more. The workplace occupies such a significant portion of our lives that I feel it to be quite worthy of discussion.

As it was for Rodan of Alexandria, so it remains for us today. Rodan said, "The two major problems of life are: making a temporal living and the achievement of eternal survival. And even the problem of making a living requires religion for its ideal solution." (*1778:4) The daily problems we encounter in the workplace will be most easily solved if we can maintain a spiritual perspective or, as Webster defines perspective, "a view of things in their true relationship or relative importance."

We all have put a great deal of thought and effort into career planning but we read in *The URANTIA Book* that "It is not so much what you learn in this first life; it is the experience of living this life that is important. Even the work of this world, paramount though it is, is not nearly so important as the way in which you do this work." (*435:7) How is it then, that we should conduct ourselves in the workplace? How can we maintain our spiritual perspective while dealing with the daily challenges at work?

A Matter of Will

According to *The URANTIA Book*, "That which the enlightened and reflective human imagination of spiritual teaching and leading, wholeheartedly and unselfishly wants to do and be, becomes measurably creative in accordance with the degree of mortal dedication to the divine doing of the Father's will. When man goes in partnership with God, great things may, and do, happen." (*1467:6) The guidelines have been set, the assistance is available and is given according to how willing we are to cooperate with the divine.

Jesus taught his followers that the will of God can be done in any earthly occupation, that all things are sacred in the lives of those who are spirit led, that is, subordinated to truth, ennobled by love, dominated by mercy, and restrained by fairness-justice. Jesus instructed Ganid that if we know God, our real business on earth is so to live as to permit the Father to reveal himself in our lives. In this way, God-seeking persons see the Father and ask for our help in finding out more about the God who finds such expression in our lives. Think of the many people you encounter in the workplace, all potentially spiritual brothers and sisters in the kingdom. Are truth-seekers drawn to you by the way you conduct yourself in the workplace, or do you easily lose sight of the spiritual perspective when bogged down by deadlines, quotas, under-staffed departments, and the multitude of daily problems?

One aspect of the workplace that makes it difficult to maintain our focus on the spiritual is the mood that is created today by the dominance of the profit motive. Many of us find our work environment adversely affected by others who are driven to attain increasing amounts of material possessions while they give little attention to working to maintain spiritual value. From the paper called "Development of the State" I quote: "Present-day profit-motivated economics is doomed unless profit motives can be augmented by service motives. Ruthless competition based on narrow-minded self-interest is ultimately destructive of even those things which it seeks to maintain. Exclusive and self-serving profit motivation is incompatible with . . . the teachings of Jesus." (*805:6)

How well the celestial personalities know us, for they go on to say, "But the profit motive must not be suddenly destroyed or removed; it keeps many otherwise slothful mortals hard at work." (*805:7) So, if we are sincerely dedicated to doing the Father's will — if we wholeheartedly apply ourselves to trying to maintain our

focus on spiritual perspectives — we will become increasingly more creative in finding solutions to our work-related problems. This is definitely a challenge, one that requires great effort if we are to accept it and progress.

Other people discussed work-related problems with Jesus. His replies are just as relevant for this discussion today. For those of us who find ourselves in vocations that involve providing a service to individuals whose behavior is far from spiritual, we can find inspiring words in Jesus' discussion with the mistress of a Greek inn in which he said, "Minister your hospitality as one who entertains the children of the Most High. Elevate the drudgery of your daily toil to the high levels of a fine art through the increasing realization that you minister to God in the persons whom he indwells. . . ." (*1475:2) Even the smallest task performed when thought of as a service to God, an offering to the Lord, will be performed in the best possible way, with the greatest care and attention. Looked at from the spiritual perspective, every action becomes, potentially, an act of love — a work of art.

A young Greek in the shipyards asked this question of Jesus: "If the Gods are interested in me, then why do they do not remove the cruel and unjust foreman of this workshop?" (*1430:3) Jesus replied with these words: "Since you know the ways of kindness and value justice, perhaps the Gods have brought this erring man near that you may lead him into this better way. Maybe you are the salt which is to make this brother more agreeable to all other men; that is, if you have not lost your savor. As it is, this man is your master in that his evil ways unfavorably influence you. Why not assert your mastery of evil by virtue of the power of goodness and thus become the master of all relations between the two of you? I predict that the good in you could overcome the evil in him if you gave it a fair and living chance. There is no adventure in the course of mortal existence more enthralling than to enjoy the exhilaration of becoming the material life partner with spiritual energy and divine truth in one of their triumphant struggles with error and evil. It is a marvelous and transforming experience to become the living channel of spiritual light to the mortal who sits in spiritual darkness. If you are more blessed with truth than is this man, his need should challenge you. Surely you are not the coward who could stand by on the seashore and watch a fellow man who could not swim perish! How much more of value is this man's soul floundering in darkness com-

pared to his body drowning in water!" (*1430:3) I'm sure this discussion with Jesus helped the young Greek view his problem from a more spiritual perspective.

Guidelines for Action

While at the Green Lake conference my wife attended the study group entitled "As Jesus Passed By." It focused on Jesus' spontaneous interactions with his fellow mortals and indicated that Jesus showed a high degree of preparedness in his personal encounters. A list of the skills or techniques that Jesus possessed, which enabled him to minister to his fellow mortals so effectively, can serve as an excellent guideline in our efforts to maintain our spiritual perspective.

Through studying various passages the group concluded that, when dealing with individuals, Jesus was:

1. very perceptive, sensitive to the person's inner thoughts and feelings. We can show increased sensitivity and perceptivity by developing good listening skills, taking the time to be aware of body language;
2. conscious of the individual's level of spiritual and intellectual development, always making sure to address them at the appropriate level;
3. always interested in what they were doing while he seldom offered them advice unless they asked for it;
4. cautious in not directly pointing out another's flaws but would rather, through a series of questions, lead them to recognize those flaws themselves;
5. never drawn into conflicts that could be adequately dealt with when directed to the appropriate channel. As we are not personally able to deal with every problem that arises we should make an effort to become knowledgeable in the services that are available for dealing with conflicts;
6. always able to provide words of comfort. He looked for the good and praised it. He left his fellows with some suggestion that was practical and immediately helpful. And he would always include in his discussion some message of the love of God and the truth that they were loved children of the Most High.

Opportunities for Service

To Ganid Jesus said, "To become acquainted with one's brothers and sisters, to know their problems and to learn to love them, is the supreme experience of living." (*1431:1) Later he also taught Ganid that he should "Become interested in your fellows; learn how to love them and watch for the opportunity to do something for them which you are sure they want done." (*1439:1)

Although some of us may be employed in high tech professions where opportunities for intimate encounters and personal service to one's fellows are limited, we are currently undergoing a shift in the American job scene. The following is a quote from *Jobs of the Future* by Marvin Cetron. "Service occupations steadily have grown to become the economic roots of the U.S. work force. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than two-thirds of the nation's employment growth during the past twenty years has come in the service sector. By 2000, it's predicted that as much as 90% of the U.S. labor force will work in service occupations."

Jesus spoke the following words to the apostles in his farewell discourse. "You have not merely chosen me, but I have also chosen you, and I have ordained you to go forth into the world to yield the fruit of loving service to your fellows even as I have lived among you and revealed the Father to you. The Father and I will both work with you, and you shall experience the divine fullness of joy if you will only obey my command to love one another, even as I have loved you." (*1945:2)

The midwayers who authored the Jesus papers commented on the farewell discourse with these words. "If you would share the Master's joy, you must share his love. And to share his love means that you have shared his service. Such an experience of love does not deliver you from the difficulties of this world; it does not create a new world, but it most certainly does make the old world new." (*1945:3)

"Keep in mind: It is loyalty, not sacrifice, that Jesus demands. The consciousness of sacrifice implies the absence of that wholehearted affection which would have made such a loving service a supreme joy. The idea of *duty* signifies that you are servant-minded and hence are missing the mighty thrill of doing your service as a friend and for a friend. The impulse of friendship transcends all convictions of duty, and the service of a friend for a friend can never be called a sacrifice. The

Master has taught the apostles that they are the sons of God. He has called them brethren, and now...he calls them his friends." (*1945:4)

Further in the paper they also add; "The old religion taught self-sacrifice; the new religion teaches only self-forgetfulness, enhanced self-realization in conjoined social service and universe comprehension. The old religion was motivated by fear-consciousness; the new gospel of the kingdom is dominated by truth-conviction, the spirit of eternal and universal truth. And no amount of piety or creedal loyalty can compensate for the absence in the life experience of kingdom believers of that spontaneous, generous, and sincere friendliness which characterizes the spirit-born sons of the living God. Neither tradition nor a ceremonial system of formal worship can atone for the lack of genuine compassion for one's fellows." (*1951:2)

Through the example given to us in the life of Jesus and through the further teachings of *The URANTIA Book* I have quoted here, the message rings quite clearly that we have a tremendous task before us. To shift our attention from the material to the spiritual in order to better deal with the daily struggle of the workplace will take a very conscious effort. It is a lesson that may take more than our earthly lifetime to learn for we are also told that from the transition ministers on the first mansion world "...you will learn to let pressure develop stability and certainty; to be faithful and earnest and, withal, cheerful; to accept challenges without...fear...If you fail, will you rise indomitably to try anew? If you succeed, will you maintain a well-balanced poise — a stabilized and spiritualized attitude...?" (*555:4) From them you will also learn "...to suffer less through sorrow and disappointment...by accepting your lot when you have faithfully performed your duty." (*555:5)

"You will learn that you increase your burdens and decrease the likelihood of success by taking yourself too seriously...nothing equals the importance of the work of the world in which you are actually living. But though the *work* is important, the *self* is not. When you feel important, you lose energy to the wear and tear of ego dignity so that there is little energy left to do the work. Self-importance, not work-importance, exhausts immature creatures; it is the self element that exhausts, not the effort to achieve. You can do important work if you do not become self-important; you can do several things as easily as one if you leave yourself out." (*555:6)

Dealing with Problems

Last Spring I attended a weekend retreat entitled "Pathway to Wholeness — Understanding Stress and Our Crazy Extremes." The presentation was very insightful and I came home with many practical guidelines for dealing with daily problems. I learned that stress is the individual's response to finding himself in a situation in which he has not developed adequate coping resources. We're all aware that two different individuals put in the same predicament will probably respond differently. While one may become anxious and begin to show the classic symptoms of stress the other may efficiently deal with the situation without any difficulty at all. The difference is the result of one having had adequate resources to cope with the problem. He may have been through a similar situation in the past and had some experience in dealing with the problem. He may have had a better sleep the night before or may have been in better physical health. Whatever the reason, he felt adequate — he felt good enough about himself that he knew he could handle things.

Throughout the weekend we continued to talk about ways to improve our coping resources in order to avoid stress. There are seven aspects of ourselves which need to be fostered in order that we grow into a well-balanced, adequate individual. We should strive to develop 1) optimal physical health, 2) rewarding family life and relations with primary others, 3) opportunities for mental stimulation and growth, 4) the ability to express one's emotional experiences, 5) job satisfaction, 6) the ability and the time to have fun, and 7) an ever deepening and enriching relationship with your creator.

We should be striving to develop adequate coping resources in order to better deal with the problems we are faced with on a daily basis. We need to progress to that

level from which we can maintain our focus on the spiritual perspective and avoid conflict and stress by wholeheartedly believing in the power of God's goodness and its eventual triumph over evil.

The effort to maintain a balance in our time and energies will continue throughout our long sojourn toward Paradise. Even on the local system headquarters the activities are of three distinct varieties: work, progress, and play. Stated otherwise they are: service, study, and relaxation.

Jesus set the perfect example once again. He knew the importance of regular quiet time for prayer and worship, a time to revitalize oneself, to return our focus to the spiritual perspectives in order that we might return from our meditations with a stronger dedication to doing the Father's will.

We are taught in *The URANTIA Book* that one's vocation can be utilized as an effective "reflector" for the dissemination of the light of life. We are admonished to let our light so shine that our fellows will be guided into new and godly paths of enhanced living. To help us maintain our focus on the spiritual perspective let us remember Jesus' words to the Alpheus twins in one of his resurrection appearances. "Never forget that, when you are a faith son of God, all upright work of the realm is sacred. Nothing which a son of God does can be common. Do your work, therefore, from this time on, as for God. And when you are through on this world, I have other and better worlds where you shall likewise work for me. And in all of this work, on this world and on other worlds, I will work with you, and my spirit shall dwell within you." (*2049:4)

—Gayle and Jim Moravec
Eagle River, Wisconsin

"Service—more service, increased service, difficult service, adventurous service, and at last divine and perfect service—is the goal of time and the destination of space."
(*316:5)