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FIFTH EPOCHAL FELLOWSHIP
for readers of The Urantia Book

S P E C I A L C O N F E R E N C E I S S U E I

1990 GENERAL CONFERENCE

**WALKING
WITH GOD**

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About this issue...

This is the first of two planned special conference editions of *The Journal* to include some of the talks presented in the first half of the 1990 International Conference held at Snowmass/Aspen, Colorado from June 30-July 5, 1990. The next issue of *The Journal* will include talks from the second half of the conference.

The opinions, views, and/or conclusions presented in these talks are based wholly upon each author's understanding and personal religious experience. Therefore, the Fellowship is unable to respond to questions or comments received from readers on any of the talks presented. However, upon written request, the Fellowship will forward invitations for exchange of information or further dialogue on any of the topics contained in this issue of *The Journal* directly to the author(s) concerned.

1990 International Conference "Walking with God"

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Welcome Address at Fifth Epochal Fellowship's 1990 Urantia* Conference

Aspen, Colorado – June 30, 1990
by David Elders, President

Jo Ann Brummett made a comment yesterday at the social which struck me as particularly powerful and inspirational. She observed that each of the details you see around here from the signs and decorations down to each individual cookie that was homemade for the social, is an expression of love...that it is an expression from a person who wants to serve other people. I was moved deeply by that powerful statement!

This is, as John Hay said, the largest gathering of *Urantia Book* readers that we have ever had come together for a conference. Think for just a moment about the number of Adjusters in this room...one thousand! Think of the number of angels and other beings that are here with us just outside the range of our vision. Think about the souls that are developing minute by minute. Think of the Supreme who is coming into existence by virtue of the work each of us is doing internally and externally. Think about what it means in particular to be conscious of these realities, to actually know what is going on, to be a conscious participant in that process. As we sit here we can literally sense these things, we can sense the meaning and value of the other people sitting around us.

This week is not about organization, politics, division. This week is about unity, the unity we share with each other because of our SONship with our common Father. This week is about fellowship and communion, about study, learning, teaching, sharing, being, about relationships. This week is to focus on the "of" experience, not the "about" experience. We each come here as an individual, as a unique son or daughter of our common spirit Father. In this setting and for this week let us put aside any issues, personal or otherwise, which separate us from one another and come together as a limited but wondrous expression of "Supreme Oneness." For these five days, let us seek to unify the *insidedness* and the *outsidedness* of our experience with the God who makes our very existence possible. And, simultaneously, as we enter into this experience of unity, let us celebrate the diversity of expression, the distinctive nuances of creativity, and the uniqueness of personality as it is multiplied a thousand-fold in this time and in this place.

This week was intended to be a balanced blending of truth, beauty, and goodness—matter, mind, and spirit—and of personality relationships, of love between perSONS. At a conference we had in the Northeast a

couple of weeks ago, one of the speakers, Leo, made a comment which I wrote down because I thought it was very thought-provoking. He talked about "unity of relationships." That the way in which we unify our existence is by virtue of unifying relationships; that everything else is a tool or step in that process. It sounded to me like an expression of Supremacy. That was what I understood John Hay to have meant when he spoke of the power of love as the way that all reality is pulled together.

We didn't come here to find God, to find our Heavenly Father. Rather, because God lives in each of us, we bring him here with us to share with each other. God is present with us today in a thousand unique expressions. That is an awesome thought! God is present expressing himself through a thousand different perSONalities here today. And as two, three or more of us gather together in Michael's name, he is here with us as well. Although our senses limit our vision of the beings here present, we can be certain that our Father's personality circuit, the Son's Truth Spirit, and the Mother Spirit's mind circuits are even now broadcasting our fondest spiritual and mindal aspirations upward and inward to our local universe fellows and on even to the shores of Paradise.

It is true that this conference was facilitated by Fifth Epochal Fellowship and I welcome you on the organization's behalf. But, to say that really obscures the fact that the organization's name is simply shorthand for the cooperative effort of men and women determined to serve their fellows in a way which ultimately brings forth good. The name is the identity for the mechanism of group effort. Its being, its soul is the network of living relationships between the perSONS who willingly populate its activities; and its collective personality is one small expression of the Supreme, comprised here today of a thousand unique and sparkling facets. We hope that you enjoy this week with your fellow readers of *The Urantia Book*. We are certain that you each will bring much to our collective experience and in so doing will take much with you when you leave.

Thank you for being a part of this historic gathering and for bringing with you the God who dwells within.

*In this context, the word "Urantia" refers to our planet and to *The Urantia Book*.

Walking with God

by Steve Dreier, Keynote Speaker

Each of us is involved in a dual relationship to God — in the inner-life and in the outer-life. The walk with God in the inner-life concerns the personal relationship with God; the walk with God in the outer-life involves everything else.

Let us begin by considering the inner-life. The possibility of the inner walk with God is founded on the presence of two cosmic realities. One is the Thought Adjuster; the other is personality. The concept of the personal walk with God requires that both we and God are present together. Unless this condition is satisfied the concept of walking with God would be a beautiful poetic sentiment, but would have no basis in fact.

As we know, both of these realities are present with and within every normal human being. Each of us is a person; each of us has received the gift of personality from the Universal Father. Also, for the last two thousand years, every personality on this planet has received from the same Universal Father the gift of the divine Thought Adjuster — the literal and factual presence of God within us. It is on the presence of these two cosmic realities that everything else rests. Each of us is present, and God is present with each of us. The inner walk with God involves the evolution of the relationship between the two.

The personality half of this association gives each of us our existence. We are personality. Since personality is unique, it gives each of us a unique existence. Each of us is one of a kind; no two are identical. In addition, personality gives us a self-conscious awareness of our existence; we not only exist, but we are aware that we exist. Even more, personality endows us with the awareness of awareness itself; we are aware that we are aware that we exist. Such a level of self-realization begins to touch upon the divine; the gift of personality incorporates potentials for Godlike levels of self-realization. Each unique personality is endowed with the ability to sustain relationships with all other personalities — including prepersonalities and superpersonalities, but these relationships are not automatic; they are entirely subject to another inherent attribute of personality — freewill choice. Finally, the additional gift of the Thought Adjuster, the literal presence of God, completes the factual basis for the inner relationship with God.

There are some interesting matters associated with the bestowal of both personality and the Thought Adjusters which are worthy of consideration. In our section of the cosmos, in the seven superuniverses, the Universal Father rarely does anything directly. Virtually every function is delegated, redelegated, and still further redelegated — but not in these two cases. Both personality and the Thought Adjuster are bestowed directly by the Universal Father. There are no intermediaries of any kind.

When functions are delegated, some degree of control

may be lost. The agent may not carry out the work as had been intended. On page 382 is this observation: "The Urantia peoples are suffering the consequences of a double deprivation of help in this task of progressive planetary spiritual attainment. The Caligastia upheaval precipitated worldwide confusion and robbed all subsequent generations of the moral assistance which a well ordered society would have provided. But even more disastrous was the Adamic default in that it deprived the races of that superior type of physical nature which would have been more consonant with spiritual aspirations."

Both our social environment and our physical mechanisms, our bodies, have been received through a delegated task. Those entrusted with these areas of responsibility did not act as planned. Serious problems resulted and we have to live with these problems. But in establishing the basis of walking with him, the Father apparently decided to allow no chance for error or default to interfere. He has given us both our self—personality—and himself—the Thought Adjuster—directly. The integrity of the inner-life relationship with the Father is unassailable. No person or power has the ability to interfere with the development of the inner relationship between God and any willing freewill personality.

There is more. The Father's presence within is not a generalized presence, but one which is individualized to each unique personality. It is true that the Thought Adjusters are equally divine, equally God; we each possess the same divine presence of God. Yet each Thought Adjuster is also individualized to the unique personality with which it is in association. Perhaps that is why we call them "Adjusters." Each is the same divine presence, but adjusted to accommodate the unique potentialities of a unique personality.

Time-space relationships are also of interest. In the superuniverses time and space usually condition everything; they must always be reckoned with. For example, there are about 1000 of us gathered here in this room this morning, and each has had to deal with time-space issues to bring this about. We have each had to traverse space, and that process required time. We were all aware, in advance, that this would be necessary, and we each made appropriate plans and, too, appropriate actions. Perhaps some of our fellowship are not present here today because their time-space requirements were too great a barrier to overcome.

The inner walk with God is one of those rare instances in which time and space are not limitations. In this case the Father has overcome the usual barriers of time-space — neutralized or even transcended them. By placing himself within us the Father has established a situation which guarantees that he is always and everywhere with us. There is no moment and no place in which God is not with each of us. Time is not a factor in conditioning or limiting the direct relationship with God; he is always

with us. Nor is space a limiting factor, for wherever we are, God is also there with us. We are always and everywhere in the immediate presence of God. The usual limiting functions of both time and space have been eternally overcome.

The inner walk with God thus involves remarkable cosmic circumstances. God is not merely with each of us; he is with each of us always and every place. He is with each of us divinely, and divinely adjusted to the uniqueness of each personality. All external potential barriers to the inner relationship with God have been overcome. Reflective consideration of this situation leads to an inevitable conclusion. It is clearly the Father's desire — the Father's will — that we walk with him. We were made to walk with God; it is the basic fact and fundamental purpose of our existence.

The Universal Father has given each of us an invitation to walk with him. This invitation is not one expressed with words, but with life itself; it is inherently expressed by the structure of the cosmic situation in which we find ourselves. Everything has been taken care of; all barriers have been overcome. The only remaining barrier is the willingness to accept the Father's invitation to walk with him. We are created by God as beings of freewill dignity and choice. We must consciously and willingly accept the Father's offer to be what he created us to be. We must choose to walk with God.

The acceptance of that invitation leads quickly to a discovery about the nature of God. We discover that God is love. It is an experience which is difficult to describe in language. A Divine Counselor, on page 40, says: "At times I am almost pained to be compelled to portray the divine affection of the heavenly Father for his universe children by the employment of the human word symbol 'love.' This term, even though it does connote man's highest concept of the mortal relations of respect and devotion, is so frequently designative of so much of human relationship that is wholly ignoble and utterly unfit to be known by any word which is also used to indicate the matchless affection of the living God for his universe creatures! How unfortunate that I cannot make use of some supernal and exclusive term which would convey to the mind of man the true nature and exquisitely beautiful significance of the divine affection of the Paradise Father."

This lack of adequate terminology is unfortunate. We sometimes try to express the difference between God's love and human love by saying that God's love is a divine love. We also distinguish between human love and God's love by saying that God's love is a fatherly love, while human love is a brotherly love. The outer world is the domain of human or brotherly love; the inner-life is the domain of divine and fatherly love. The first great discovery of the inner walk is the realization that God loves us as a father, divinely, each of us, one at a time.

Divine and fatherly love is much different from human love. Divine love is constant; it never varies. God's love is infinite, and remains infinite; it never increases or decreases. God loves each of us in this present moment with the same infinite and divine love with

which he has always loved us, and always will love us. When we find God on Paradise, he will love us with the same divine and infinite love with which he now loves us. God's love is, like the Father himself, divine, infinite, eternal, and changeless.

The Father's love originates in the freewill decision of his own divine nature. The Father chooses to love us. His love cannot be earned, nor can it be lost. It is not dependent upon anything we do, or anything we do not do. It is simply the free and unconditional gift of God to each of his children.

The Father loves all his children equally, with the same divine affection. He is no respecter of persons. We are told, on page 138, that "[t]he love of God strikingly portrays the transcendent value of each will creature, unmistakably reveals the high value which the Universal Father has placed upon each and every one of his children from the highest creator personality of Paradise status [the Eternal Son?] to the lowest personality of will dignity among the savage tribes of men in the dawn of the human species on some evolutionary world of time and space." There is no favoritism whatever with the Father. Each is loved equally.

Divine love takes some getting used to. Often, the experience of love in the outer-life does not prepare us to realize the love of God in the inner-life. Human love is often highly conditional and very fragile; it is here one moment and gone the next. Almost instinctively we come to expect our human love to be highly conditional, subject to a great variety of limits and restrictions. Failure to accommodate these conditions often results in a lessening or complete withdrawal of love. Sometimes love is even replaced by hate. Few of us have not experienced the fragility of human love at some points in our lives.

God's love is not at all like such human love. God's love has no conditions; it is a free and unconditional gift. God's love never varies; it is constant, infinite, eternal, and divine. But our experience with human love may cause us to expect God's love to be similar in character to human love. We expect his love to be conditional, fragile and variable. We expect it to come and go. We imagine a God who loves humanly, not divinely. We find it hard to accept God's love as it is; it seems just too good to be true.

Faith is the only means of escape from this situation. Faith alone will allow us to accept divine love fully and unconditionally. Faith alone can silence all the doubts and fears which may lead us to believe that we are unworthy of God's love. Faith allows us to come to the full realization that God loves each of us with the fullness of his love in each moment, unconditionally, as we are and where we are.

The incomprehensibly great gift of the Father's love must be accepted without questioning. Perhaps this is why Jesus so often said that entrance to the kingdom would require the faith and trusting dependence of a little child. It often does require a childlike consciousness to fully and unquestioningly accept the divine and unconditional love of God.

The attempt to discuss God's love with word symbols is subject to the same problems which are encountered in attempting to describe the nature of God. Our best attempts to discuss the nature of God utilize expressions such as "I AM." Perhaps the best we can do to express the nature of divine love is to say "IT IS." It remains only to be faith realized in personal experience.

The personal realization of the love of God produces profound changes in the inner-life. New standards of divine love begin to replace older standards of human love. The inner experience of being loved by God provides a new pattern for loving others. We seek to love others as we ourselves experience being loved by God. We strive to imitate God. We seek to love unconditionally, infinitely, eternally, and divinely.

One can develop a taste, a genuine enthusiasm, for loving others as God loves. It is a great adventure, and a great challenge. Attention is routinely directed to the experience of divine love in the inner-life, for it is that experience that provides the model for loving in the outer-life. The inner and outer domains are thus reciprocally related, the experience of each leading to augmented realization of the other.

The divine plan appears to provide that God's love should completely surround us, both inside and outside, but by different techniques. God takes full and direct responsibility for the presence of his divine love in the inner-life; but the presence of God's love in the outer-life is a delegated function. Each individual who attains the inner realization of the Father's love is assigned to the great collective effort to achieve the outer realization of divine love.

God's love appears in the inner-life through the direct action of God; it provides the pattern for love in the outer-life. Having provided each of us with this pattern, the Father then delegates the actualization of his divine love in the outer-life to us. He has given us everything we need to carry out the assignment. Our contribution is the willingness to accept and wholeheartedly seek to accomplish it.

It is interesting that the new commandment — "Love one another as I have loved you" — was first given to us two thousand years ago at the conclusion of the bestowal mission. It would not have been fair to give such a command before that. The new commandment really requires us to love others as we ourselves experience being loved by God. But experience of being loved by God is founded on God's factual presence in each person — the Thought Adjuster. For the last two thousand years every normal human being has automatically received a Thought Adjuster, and has therefore been equipped to personally experience the Father's love in the inner-life. However before Jesus the Thought Adjusters were not automatically bestowed; some people had them, some did not. It would have been unfair to ask someone who did not have a Thought Adjuster to "love others as God loves you." Without the inner presence of God persons cannot directly experience the love of God, cannot really know how God loves them.

Prior to Jesus the highest commandment required

"loving your neighbor as yourself." This is another way of saying that we should love others according to our highest concept of love, that we do the best we are capable of doing. Those who had Thought Adjusters would love as God loved; those lacking Thought Adjusters would love according to their highest philosophical standard of love.

Since the bestowal all are endowed with Thought Adjusters. God is literally present in each of us. Each of us is fully equipped to directly experience the love of God in our inner-life. It is now consistent and fair to universally require that we love others as we ourselves directly and personally experience being loved by God. The "New Commandment" really announces the universal bestowal of the inner presence of God, and indicates the presence of new capacities and new and divine possibilities for all people. All persons are equipped to love others as they experience being loved by God. One aspect of divine love is its eternal nature; God loves eternally. If we are to love as God does, our love must also reflect an eternal nature. What does this mean? How is it accomplished? How can a person love eternally?

There are no simple answers to such a question, but here is a possibility. In this room there are over one thousand of us. Between some of us deep and intimate personal friendships have developed. Between others relationships have begun, but may not have progressed very far just yet. Among still others there has not even taken place a first meeting; they are still unknown to one another.

The consciousness of being a child of God, of being loved by God, includes the consciousness of eternal life. Whoever has personally experienced the love of God knows that they will exist eternally. Given an eternity, everyone in this room will eventually meet everyone else. Deep and loving personal relationships will develop between all of us. We will all come to know each other, we will all work together, live together, laugh together, experience joys and sorrows together, and know each other literally as brothers and sisters — every one of us to every other. It may happen on this planet, or on the mansion worlds, or the constellation, or some other place; sooner or later, however, it will happen. Everyone will come to know everyone else.

The consciousness of eternal life gives each of us the ability to project forward into the potentials of the unactualized future, and to bring the reality of that future into the experience of the present moment. The future and the present become unified in personality experience. We are living in eternity, and in eternity there are no strangers. A person that you meet for the first time is a future intimate and beloved associate. When that eternity realization is incorporated into the present moment it adds new meaning and value to all relationships. One can choose to live in eternity, and to love eternally, as God does. Canid once asked Jesus why he spent so much time with strangers. Jesus replied that to one who knows God no person is a stranger. Perhaps, in this statement, Jesus was referring to the ability of all God-knowing individuals to recognize eternal life, and

choose to live in eternity. Thus the experience of attempting to love others as God loves us begins to free us from the limitations of time. The past and future are brought together in the present moment to constitute one unified reality — the everlasting now.

Much more could be said about the inner walk with God, and we have all week together to do that. Let us now turn our attention to consideration of the outer walk with God.

It is in the attempt to love others as we experience being loved by God that we cross the boundary between the inner and outer lives. The inner and the outer worlds are very different places, and it is important to distinguish clearly between them. Paper 15 is entitled "The Seven Superuniverses"; it is the paper which describes the physical and governmental organization of the seven superuniverses. It begins with this statement: "As far as the Universal Father is concerned — as a Father — the universes are virtually nonexistent...he is the Father of personalities." (*164) This statement is interesting not only for its content, but also for its location. It begins the paper in which the revelators present a detailed discussion of the superuniverses, and they apparently wish to make it very clear this outer level of universe reality is very different and distinct from the inner level of the personal relationship with God. The inner-life is the domain of the Father. The outer-life is the domain of the Supreme.

The Father—as a Father—recognizes only individual personalities. The Supreme recognizes only the collective whole. The Supreme—as Supreme—does not recognize separate individuals. The Supreme recognizes only the collective association of individuals, the unified and integrated whole. The Universal Father is concerned with the perfecting of the inner-life of each separate and distinct personality. The Supreme is concerned with the perfecting of the outer-life of the collective assembly of all beings—the integration of all Father (and other) perfected personalities, along with all things and energies, into one finite and evolutionally perfected whole.

The inner-life, the life with the Father, is characterized by grace and faith. Our only contribution to the development of the inner-life is faith; God does everything else, provides everything else which is required. The conditions of the outer-life, the life with the Supreme, are much different. In the outer-life virtually nothing is a gift; everything is earned. The inner-life is only concerned with being—being a child of God. The outer-life is additionally concerned with doing. The opening lines of Paper 115—the paper introducing the Supreme Being—make this difference clear. "With God the Father, sonship is the great relationship. With God the Supreme, achievement is the prerequisite to status—one must do something as well as be something."

The inner-life is private, strictly private. It consists of a unique and personal relationship with the Father. The outer-life is public. There are no secrets; everything belongs to everybody. Anyone can find God in the inner-life. Any ONE, and at any time and any place. No ONE can find God in the outer-life. Only together, collectively,

can the God of the outer-life be discovered. The inner-life is time-and-space transcended. The outer-life must constantly adjust to the barriers of time and space. The inner-life is characterized by peace, certainty and security. The outer-life often involves uncertainty, bewilderment, struggle and challenge. The inner-life is existential; it simply IS. The outer-life is entirely experiential. Most of it remains to be.

This appears to be our situation. The Father creates us and endows each of us with a unique personal existence. He places himself within us, unassailably, individualized to our own unique nature. He loves us divinely, infinitely and eternally. Sooner or later we personally experience God's love, and as a consequence we are endowed with the possibility of loving others as we experience God loving us. This having been accomplished, the Father presents us to the Supreme for assignment. Once the inner-life is secure, the work of the outer-life begins.

The Supreme is engaged in the literal perfecting of all finite reality — all things and beings — into a single integrated and organic whole. Our relationship to the Supreme is functional, not personal; it is a matter of doing, not being. The Supreme delegates functional responsibility. Power control beings are assigned the task of distributing and directionalizing energy. Seraphim are assigned transport duties; they carry beings from one place to another. These assignments are not entirely optional. We, for example, will never be assigned to do the work of power control beings. We were not created for that function; we do not possess the abilities required to execute such assignments. Nor will we ever be assigned to enwrap beings in friction shields and carry them across space. We are not made for that function; only the seraphim can do that.

So what are we made for? What is our function in the outer-life domain? What is our role in service to the Supreme? On page 558 an archangel makes this observation: "The mortal survival plan has a practical and serviceable objective; you are not the recipients of all this divine labor and painstaking training only that you may survive just to enjoy endless bliss and eternal ease. There is a goal of transcendent service concealed beyond the horizon of the present universe age. If the Gods designed merely to take you on one long and eternal joy excursion they certainly would not so largely turn the whole universe into one vast and intricate practical training school, requisition a substantial part of the celestial creation as teachers and instructors, and then spend ages upon ages piloting you, one by one, through this gigantic universe school of experiential training."

Apparently it is not to be eternal bliss and endless ease. What then is it to be? From page 557: "There is a definite and divine purpose in all this morontia and subsequent scheme of mortal progression, this elaborate universe training school for ascending creatures. It is the design of the creators to afford the creatures of time a graduated opportunity to master the details of the operation and administration of the grand universe, and this long course of training is best carried forward by

having the surviving mortal climb up gradually and by actual participation in every step of the ascent."

What's this? — "to master the details of the operation and administration of the grand universe?"

From page 342: "Before spirit mortals reach Havona, their chief study, but not exclusive preoccupation, is the mastery of local and superuniverse administration." Additionally, from page 348: "...these surviving creatures have been trained to the limits of their capacity respecting every detail of every divine principle of the just and efficient, as well as merciful and patient, administration of all the universal creation of time and space." And again from page 348: "It seems evident to us that the present assignments of the perfected evolutionary creatures partake of the nature of postgraduate courses in universe understanding and superuniverse administration; and we all ask, 'Why should the Gods be so concerned in so thoroughly training surviving mortals in the technique of universe management?'"

Why indeed! It would appear that our basic function with respect to the outer-life, the domain of the Supreme, has to do with matters of universe management and administration. This came as a complete surprise to me, a true revelation. It is not really what I had imagined. My ideas of the ascent to Paradise have been highly conditioned by the traditional views of this subject, and those do not project a functional destiny of management and administration responsibilities. Nevertheless, that seems to be the basic assigned role for mortal ascenders.

The initial reaction to the realization of this situation may not be one of exuberant enthusiasm. In the description of the fifth mansion world, on page 537, there is this observation: "At about this point the average mortal ascender begins to manifest bona fide experiential enthusiasm for the Havona ascent." The major work of the first four mansion worlds appears to involve overcoming mortal objections to the cosmic assignment.

We have considered two principal ways in which we walk with God — the inner-life, and the outer-life. They are very different experiences, and are, at least initially, relatively independent of one another. One does not have to participate in the functional realities of the outer-life in order to experience the personal truths of the inner-life. Of course, sooner or later these two phases of walking with God must be unified in personal experience, but that does not seem to be required in the beginning.

The inner-life with God is freely available to anyone who sincerely desires it. No conditions apply to the realization of the Father's love except personal faith. The inner-life has been separated from the rest of cosmic reality. The Thought Adjusters come and go independently of all other cosmic administration. They are not subject to the administration of the Master Spirits, or the Ancients of Days, or any other administrative unit. The bestowal of personality also lies outside the domain of the supreme administrators; it is given directly by the

Father. The Father has separated the possibilities of the inner-life from everything else; he has structured reality to insure that the relationship with him shall be subject to no condition other than the personal choice of each of his children. The Father's love is experienceable, fully experienceable, at this moment, at any moment. It is a reality unto itself.

The outer-life is entirely different. There is no relationship to the Supreme except through the acceptance of functional responsibility, including the willingness to learn to work together with other functionally responsible personalities, in ever enlarging associations, and associations of associations, until eventually there is one enormous, integrated and perfected community embracing all finite things and beings. Teamwork is the method of Supremacy. Remember the statement on page 311: "One of the most important lessons to be learned during your mortal career is *teamwork*. The spheres of perfection are manned by those who have mastered this art of working with other beings." We need to get used to the idea of constantly enlarging teamwork; the Supreme is engaged in the development of one unified team which includes all things and beings.

Our program this week provides opportunities to discuss both of these ways of walking with God. Some presenters have chosen to focus on the inner-life, others on the outer-life. This happy balance was not specifically structured; it has the character of an eventuated development. We seem to have inherently recognized the realities of the inner and outer lives and spontaneously arranged ourselves to give attention to each.

I would like to conclude these remarks with some prayerful thoughts. I hope that each of us, individually, and all of us, collectively, will use this week to fellowship with one another and enjoy the outstanding natural beauty of this location. I hope that each of us, myself included, will leave this place with an enriched and enlarged capacity to personally experience the Father's love, and consequently with an enriched and enlarged capacity to love others as we experience God loving us. I hope that the experience of this week will leave each of us with a clearer perception of our relationship to the Supreme, and with an augmented enthusiasm for the functional and collective responsibilities of supremacy. Finally, I hope that we will each return home with the clear realization that all of this, as magnificent as it is, is just the beginning of the beginning, the first faint realization of the infinity and eternity of our relationship with God, both inside and outside.

"No matter how much of God you may attain there will always remain much more of him the existence of which you will not even suspect. And we believe this is just as true on transcendental levels as it is in the domains of finite existence. The search for God is endless." (*1169)

Thank you for your very kind attention. Have a wonderful week.

Cooperation with the Supreme— The Role of Conscious Choice in Value Development

by Dan Massey

About sixteen years ago I received and began seriously to study *The Urantia Book*. In the passing years, I have often spoken to groups of readers, both large and small, about my understanding of certain parts and teachings of the book. Since presenting a talk at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, twelve years ago on "Science and *The Urantia Book*," I have frequently been asked to review and extend my ideas in public. Although I have often expressed my feelings on the philosophical and cultural aspects of the relationship of science and religion, I have never directly addressed the exact role which scientific and rationalist thought plays in unifying my personal religious experience around the teachings of *The Urantia Book*.

There are several reasons for this omission. I know that sincere statements of personal religious faith by one person, when expressed to another, often seem superficial or unpersuasive. I anticipate that many of the things I will say to you this afternoon will seem quite strange. Although I find my viewpoint of these matters wholly persuasive, I accept that, because of differing viewpoints, experiences, and patterns of thought, not everyone will find my views convincing. In spite of these natural reservations about opening my personal spiritual attitudes and thoughts to public examination, I know that the time has come for me to express these ideas plainly and clearly to receptive persons.

Although I have often spoken of such matters as the physics and the astronomy of *The Urantia Book*, I am relatively disinterested in these matters of interpretation of the cosmology of the book. I am an armchair hobbyist in both these fields. My actual, personal interest—the interest through which the book has profoundly affected my life—lies in deductive logic, the formal reasoning by which man seeks a direct knowledge of the Absolute (without the apparent benefit of revelation). There are a few parts of *The Urantia Book* in which mathematical methods and results are discussed, but it is not my purpose today to examine these. Rather, I invite you to explore, with me, the further reaches of spiritual understanding and faith which may be reached by inference from the teachings of the book.

God the Father has given a mandate to all finite creation, "Be you perfect, even as I am perfect." *The Urantia Book* holds out to us the example of human perfection in the mortal life of Jesus of Nazareth. The procedures to achieve such dynamic perfection are clearly expressed many times. Jesus lived his entire life as if in the presence of the Father. Jesus' life was wholly dedicated to doing his Father's will. And this is surely a most desirable state of being, for we are told that "...what a son desires and the Father wills will certainly come to pass." (*1300/10) How liberating from the partiality of human existence to know with certainty that one can contribute, even in this

life, something of eternal value in the Supreme!

Between the thought and the deed falls the shadow... How is the wholehearted commitment of faith to be motivated? Here is paradox. How can I know that I am doing God's will? How can I know that my wholehearted commitment of faith will not engage my energies in some delusion of desire from which I would have been protected by a more reserved approach? Or would my prudent reservation condemn my supreme effort to fruitless dissipation? Shall I fail through unwise overcommitment or through overly cautious undercommitment? And will not the potential failure, which now seems increasingly inevitable, further disprove my belief and weaken my will to act upon it?

The Urantia Book does not specifically unravel this paradox for its readers. It provides a great deal of information about the mechanisms of belief, faith, spiritual insight, prayer, providence, and so forth, and unifies all of its commentary into a single statement of absolution, "The act is ours, the consequences God's." We all desire to do right, but we must not fear to act because we might do wrong. To act rightly is to do good. To act wrongly may do evil. To fail to act does nothing. Wisdom advises us of the action which is truly good. Fear of evil-doing prevents action and denies us the opportunity to grow in wisdom. This fear is, in fact, a denial of the individual's faith in the infinite goodness of God and the infinite ability of God to adjust the consequence of our actions and to forgive us the errors of our ways. By cultivating a forgiving nature, we are able to accept God's forgiveness for error. Our will to action is thereby freed from fear.

As I retrace the steps in my thinking for you, I feel like a mountaineer leading a friend across a sheer rock face he has traversed alone many times. I know the way well, and, at each step my hands and feet reach out to find the familiar holds which bear the weight of my argument. Yet each new step brings me a thrill as I wonder "Is it still there? Can I encompass it in my imagination?" From time to time I anchor myself in place and hold the rope taut as you follow my route. Will your reach equal mine? Will you find the ideal holds? Will they bear the weight of your viewpoint, so different from my own? Or will you lose your footing and fall away from belief in my vision? And will the shock of your fall pull me down, too? We would not be here today, hanging between heaven and earth, had I not conquered my reservations. And my victory over these is of the same nature as my victory over all things.

How shall I know and knowingly do the Father's will? First, I must honestly desire the ideal of knowing and doing his will. I must place this desire above all other desires of my being. In time this desire will encom-

pass and supplant all other, lesser desires, and my specific desires will become, through practical wisdom, more perfectly aligned with the Father's will. But how am I to know his will? What (if any) moral or ethical, legal or logical principles will guide me in its discovery? Or is this viewpoint erroneous?

For me, the knowing and the doing of the Father's will is an ontological reality, an experience of being and doing. And here I must draw a distinction between *conception* and *intention*. In my mind I can conceive of many possible actions which may or may not be consonant with the Father's will. I can endlessly analyze and examine, categorize and classify these potential actions without actually doing anything (much less the Father's will). But when an intention forms and takes finite expression in action, the synthesis of the consequences of that action with the circumstances of the occasion form an event in finite reality. I have done something—and God will pick up the pieces.

In the final, finite analysis my *conception* of action is irrelevant. The only act of will which finally matters is the singular act through which I form my *intention*. Though the immediate or local value of that intention may depend on the conceptual framework in which it is grounded, the final value of the act can only be to have done or not to have done the Father's will. All qualifications and variations are finally seen to miss the point.

The question of doing the Father's will is not, therefore, a matter of specific content so much as a matter of method. It is not a matter of knowing *what* the Father wills, but rather of understanding *how* the Father wills. The specific facts of the divine will are usually undiscoverable. The dynamic truth of the divine will is an intimate part of my very being through the Spirit of Truth. At the moment of decision, at the formation of the intention, the Spirit of Truth declares: "This is the way." Submission of my will to the divine will originates at this occasion. My desire for this submission of will is necessary to be able to do the Father's will.

But is this willful submission sufficient? Sufficiency is achieved when the direction and formation of intention is freed from the conflicting currents and impulses of the self-will. And here it may be helpful to utilize the processes of spiritual communion to reduce these conflicts and to help perfect the intentional process. I can pray; I can give thanks; I can worship; I can commune with the divine personality. I can pray to do the Father's will; and such a prayer will be effective, for it is the Father's will. I can give thanks to the Spirit for those ministries of mind and circumstance which enable and guide my doing of the divine will; and such thanks will be relevant and meaningful, for it is the Spirit's purpose to enact that will. In total awe of the functional majesty of this process, wherein the desire of the creature is united with the will of the creator through the recognition of these inevitable relationships, I worship the divine person who ordained it. And in the fullness of our communion my self-will relaxes from its struggle with the divine.

Having come to such a position of peace and assurance, my intention is formed and I act. What can it

now mean to ask if my action accorded with the Father's will? The question is meaningless. When I have exhausted human capabilities of spiritual preparation, when I have acted in a timely fashion in accordance with an established inner peace, then I have no real right to question whether I have done the Father's will. I have prepared myself for the moment of decision in accordance with my highest understanding of truth. I have formed my intention within a circle of peace established in my mind by the invited action of the Spirit. I have sought to do the Father's will in accordance with the self-defining nature of the divine will, so my act must accord with that will. When my preparation has been sincere, afterthoughts become irrelevant. I have done the best possible for a creature of my standing, and that is exactly what was expected of me.

And so I find that the Father's will is doable even when it is not explicitly knowable. At times it may be necessary to know in order to do; however, the details of our actions are usually closer to the guidance of our spiritual guardians than to the will of the Absolute. In any case, if I believe *The Urantia Book*, then I can be certain of knowing what I may need to know and of doing what I must do when I must do it. But there is more to this line of thought than just a path or right action. By extension of the same process I cocreate spiritual realities which are effective beyond my own local sphere of action. But first I must clarify the path that you may join me in ascending to these further considerations.

When I told you that it was the Father's will for his individual mortal children to be able to form their intentions and to act in accordance with his will, I stated an obvious, true proposition. In a larger sense, however, this is one of those propositions which is true in a timeless and spaceless, hence absolute, universe. As stated, the proposition takes no account of the factors of time and space in limiting the divinely willed answer to the prayer of faith. A cloud of doubt sweeps across our outpost on the high cliff of reasoned faith. How do I know the action of the Father's will to form my intention will be effective at the time the intention is formed? Perhaps the Father wills for me to not do his will! Such a position recognizes the relativity and multiplicity of the divine wills as they manifest in time and space.

Yet, in a larger sense, the fact that the divine will is, at the occasion of my intention, multiple and conditioned by the quality of my communion with the divine, the degree of submission of my will to the divine will, does not prevent my act from according with the Father's will. Rather, this multiplicity of possibilities assures that there is available to me an ideal intention that is optimized for my current state of understanding and/or attunement to the divine. If I sincerely desire to do the Father's will, I *will* do the Father's will, and I *will* accept the consequences of my actions as the Father's will. My faith must encompass both the sincere desire for the act and the sincere acceptance of the result. My choice of the Father's will is *assured* by the desire and *validated* by the acceptance.

After sincerely doing the Father's will, I have no right to reject the results of my action. The consequences are the Father's will, and must be accepted as such. If I do not like the result, it is not because I failed to do the Father's will. It may be that a result more to my liking could have been obtained had I better understood or more fully attuned to the fullness of the divine will. However, this is not always the case. *The Urantia Book* makes clear that the prospect of a violent death, his mission rejected by virtually all who knew him, was an outcome definitely not to Jesus' liking. On the other hand, the book also makes clear that this was the inevitable result of Jesus' perfect choosing of the Father's will, as it converged on and combined with the defective and evil purposes of those around him.

For the person who is sincere of heart, in no case can a materially bad outcome to a moral action be interpreted as a personal failure to choose the divine way. By the same token, a materially good outcome should not be interpreted as a sign of great success. I am convinced that the spirit ministers of our everyday life do their very best (within the limits imposed by material reality and by the freewill choices of those around us) to achieve the best material results from our efforts; however, their inability to do so in a particular situation does not indicate moral failure. Success in moral choice is achieved through focused sincerity and recognition of the spiritual influences which facilitate our moral choosing. We do our best and we accept the result.

As I said before, there is more to this process than simply doing the Father's will. Having accepted the premises that lead to understanding the inevitability of a perfecting moral choice, I find these same principles extend to the domain of effective prayer, of cocreative communion. Let me explain.

"What the true son desires and the infinite Father wills is." (*1639/21) What an exhilarating statement! What an amazing promise of freedom from the apparent limitations of a finite material being! What a wonderful opportunity to join with the Father in the creation of permanent universe realities! What an incredible liberation from the relativity of values of finite existence! Through this single principle, I, a mere mortal, can change not only myself but also the universe! My desires, when aligned with the divine will, engrave the tablets of universe history! My contribution, no matter how small, becomes both *real* and *permanent*!

To perform this purest, most spiritual work, I begin with prayer, the expression of my desire to God. If I am now to consciously formulate this desire within the scope of my spiritual intention, I must conceive of a thing which accords with the scope of the Father's will. I do not know this scope, although I may rely on revelation to disclose some possibilities. While autorevelation may be so effective, it is usually peculiar to the individual. *The Urantia Book*, on the other hand, discloses a range of possibilities for my desire which must accord with the divine will. Anyone can work in total confidence within this range and be assured of the effectiveness and power of their work.

The prayerful desire to know and to do the Father's will, to have greater knowledge of that will, is always consonant with that will. The certainty of divine response to this petition lies at the foundation of the principles of spiritually guided right intention and right action which I have explained and illustrated in the first half of this paper. There are other true and right desires. For example, the desire for others to grow in understanding of the Father's will also surely accords with that will. In fact, the unselfish character of such a petition may make it preferable to the prayer for one's own enlightenment. Viewing one's own need for wisdom and insight in the context of similar needs shared by a group of related persons may yield a higher quality overall result, better focused on the critical *interpersonal* component of Supreme reality.

Let us suppose that I find myself in conflict with a fellow creature personality. How can I assure that I do not needlessly perpetuate or prosecute this conflict, while assuring that my fellow has every opportunity for self-correction if such be needed? In the final analysis, such conflicts amount to differences in value systems between the individuals involved. My own growth in values is achieved through my personal dedication to doing the Father's will. But there is something else that I can do here to help my fellow creature. I must unselfishly share my inner world of prayerful desire with the needs of my fellow. There can be no doubt that it is the Father's will for each of his creatures to grow steadily in value towards perfection, to receive at each supremely important occasion the addition of value they require in order to know and to do his will. And whether they choose to accept the needed values or not, the supreme harmonization of circumstance with inner spiritual ministry can actualize these values for their adoption.

When I pray for the growth of another in spiritual values, I know that my prayer is consonant with the Father's will. I also know that it is capable of effect in a relevant finite frame of time and space, even though my own intention may have been formed elsewhere and elsewhere. The spiritual ministries by which the circumstances of finite reality are coordinated are able to transcend both time and space. In addition, the specific form of the intention emitted by my mortal mind will be, if I desire, reformed and perfected through the volitionally ubiquitous action of the Master Creator Son. For did not Jesus promise his disciples: "If you do not know what to pray, then pray *in my name*..." and does not the book tell us that "...on all such occasions the Master is really present..."?

The range of such spiritual power is great. The very probabilities of potential factualization are subject to personally mediated spiritual control. The chains of causation which trace the habits of God are well understood by the spirit ministers of our life's circumstances. The reactions of the mortal soul-mind lie open to the ministry of the Thought Adjuster, which ever perfectly coordinates its work with that of the spirit deflectors. Volition brings this vast spiritual process into operation. Not all things that could happen actually do happen.

Not even infinity can encompass the actualization of all alternative potentialities. A process of sorting and selection must occur and my volitional expression of my desires contributes to the specification of that selection process.

Naturally, the scope of my thoughts and desires is very much like that of other mortal will creatures. For the most part, my acts of volition are anticipated and already accommodated by the universe based on the natural tendencies of the species, the established peculiarities of my person, and the divinely ordained plan of the occasion. In the domain of personality, however, and especially in the interactions of diverse personalities, the incommensurable nature of personal values and the unpredictable nature of free will choice create an arena in which the determinations of my personal volition are most likely to be of supreme significance, lying beyond the routine functions of the spiritual universe. Within this sphere of action my desires, my attitudes, and my prayers have their greatest effect on my experience. Here, where the overall program of reality is least mechanical, I have the greatest power to shift the probabilities of events, to establish the program by which my experience will harmonize with or become disjoint from the experience of my fellows.

When I choose that others should grow (according to their own freewill choice) in values related to our united personal experiences, I cocreate with God a field of attraction into which I and those who sincerely share my dedication to the divine will are drawn together through the harmonious unity of shared values similarly illuminated. At the same time, those persons who will not share in this harmony of values experience no such attraction, and those who attune to the occasion while opposing the divine will propel themselves away from our unity.

This situation places on me a considerable responsibility. Through the workings of this process I may be drawn to unexpected unities and draw unexpected visitors into my own. At the same time, I may find myself expelled from situations I had not realized to be false, for which I was spiritually unprepared, or which I had outgrown. Although these transitions may sometimes be painful, and often are inconvenient, I must learn to welcome each new experience for its own inherent value and to welcome the shattering of old forms as the prelude to new and better harmonies. Having accepted much responsibility for the arrangement of my interpersonal affairs, and having committed myself to work actively with the divine will, I must be prepared to accept in love the product of this work, even when unexpected or challenging to ancient preconceptions.

For me, no such prayer of truth is complete until the mortal mind recognizes the divine response through the act of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving, like prayer, transcends both time and space. The volitional intention of prayer is causally antecedent but temporally uncoupled from the chain of causation which effects the recognition of the object of thanks. In short, I may find that I sometimes pray for value-events *after* they have happened

and give thanks for value-events *before* I recognize their existence.

And all this is possible because of my certain faith in the process. By giving thanks for the answer to prayer, I accept that answer. By praying in accordance with the Father's will, I am guaranteed a recognizable answer. By giving thanks in conjunction with the prayer, even before I can recognize the answer, I make my acceptance of the answer unconditional, and thus conform the original desire most closely to the divine will. The certainty of the answer, the recognition of the answer, and the acceptance of the answer together constitute a process which is always effective and which further reinforces the faith which drives and supports it in my personal experience.

Having thus focused my desire upon matters within the range of the divine will, and having thus validated my selection by accepting the spiritual reaction to my desire, I must, in all honesty, open my heart to spiritual correction and remediation of defects in the overall process. In all such occasions I must recognize the importance of adjusting my own attitude to the circumstances as equal in importance to the sought-for uplift in the values of my fellows. I permit this adjustment for myself, this opportunity for corrective feedback, by opening myself to the Father in worshipful communion. This is not a difficult thing to do; it is virtually automatic if one simply takes a little time.

The Urantia Book tells us that the desire for worship is sufficient to permit the Thought Adjuster to conduct worship and to register the worshipful impulse in the presence of the Father on Paradise. The desire for worship is a natural consequence of all the foregoing considerations. I do not worship *because* I want my thoughts adjusted, but I accept their adjustment as a beneficial, though occasionally distressing, side effect of the worshipful act. Rather, I worship as a final expression of my self-recognition of sonship and of my relationship to the awful and glorious universe spiritual power which enables this process of adjustment and reconciliation.

The completion of this reflective cycle assures my mortal mind of the effective discharge of spiritual responsibility in the original subject of desire. This does not necessarily free me from material or mindal responsibilities in the occasion. Instead, God has established for me a spiritual process, to which I have become personally attuned, which must result in the satisfactory resolution of the desire. Since the effect of these spiritual forces is able to transcend both time and space, I do not need to be physically or mentally present at the time and place of original causation in order to benefit from the answer to my prayer. However, because many such matters, while within the scope of the Father's will, will not be of a purely spiritual nature, I must be prepared to participate personally in the factual and mindal outworking of my petition when necessary. In addition to accepting adjustment of my own spiritual attitudes, I may find myself serving my fellow man by being drawn into chains of causation which are related to the needs of persons outside the original scope of my intention. This

causes me no concern, since the overall cosmic response in the Supreme to my intention may be literally caused by similar actions of other "disinterested parties."

And so, with some stretching, we arrive at the objective of this discourse. There is, in *The Urantia Book*, a process of highly effective prayer which can accomplish those things in our experience which most require divine intervention for their accomplishment; that is, the harmonization and unification of personal and interpersonal behavior. There is a broad class of desires, consonant with the Father's will, which are capable of certain fulfillment through the cosmic reactions of Supremacy. Although the Supreme is but partially expressed, this class of spiritual processes is stabilized and certain as a result of the supremacy of the Master Son and the concurrent eventuation of certain absonite realities in Nebadon.

Through this mechanism, the long-standing division between the mind-will and the spirit-will is at last repaired. There is a full and effective universe mechanism by which the will of the human mind, properly modulated by the intentions of the human spirit, fully participates in the selection and definition of finite realities. This mechanism exists and is fully revealed in the teachings of *The Urantia Book* concerning effective prayer, true worship, spiritual communion, and the functions of the Supreme and Ultimate. Having first freed the human mind from the superstitious slavery of false and literalist religions, which require belief without understanding, *The Urantia Book* now shows the way to unification of the mind and the spirit for effective, cocreative control over certain phases of the finite universe.

Primitive religionists and believers in magic have long sought to use rites and rituals to bind the outworking of the divine will to their desires. For minds indwelt by the Spirit of Truth, such efforts are doomed to degeneration into superstition and willful insanity. Yet belief in the efficacy of prayer persists, in spite of little supporting objective evidence. Now the truth may be stated plainly:

Although all primitive beliefs which accord supernatural powers to the human mind and will are relatively erroneous, there is contained within these beliefs a seed of Truth. The human mind and will are effective, through the ministry of the Spirit of Truth and the Thought Adjusters, for the development of the personality, and, through it, for the harmonization and unification of inner and outer realities. It is the Father's will for his sons to live in harmony, and through the intentions of the human mind, augmented by the ministry of the manifold phases and personalities of the Infinite Spirit, according to the plans ordained by the Divine Sons, such harmonies are expressed and perfected in the literal, finite universe.

Even so I stand here now before you and pray that the ministry of the Spirit will act throughout time and space, according to the Father's will, to so sensitize your souls to the divine values required for your understanding of these ideas that you will grow to apply them in your own experience in ways most beneficial to your own

personality development. And I extend this plea to the hearts and minds of my friends who may chance to read these words at some other time and place. Knowing this desire of my heart to fully accord with the divine will, I have already given thanks to the Divine Minister of Salvington, the local universe Mother Spirit, for the perfect accomplishment of my intention, unifying the least literal event into a causal framework which has brought each of your hearts and minds to this occasion with the potential to adopt, adapt, and apply these ideas to your own evolving way. Join me, therefore, in a moment of silent communion with the Father and the Son, let your mind consent to worship, and remain still for a moment as our Adjusters register our worship in the presence of the Paradise Deities....

And, there is more...

For the soul of man, the human spirit, grows from near-complete imperfection towards complete finite perfection. Such a being cannot be truly perfect, since it has not always been perfect. In fact, it has not even always been. Once such a being has attained to perfection of the finite, how shall it close the gap of historical imperfection, so that it may truly become perfect, even as the Father is perfect? How are the awful errors of time to be corrected? The key lies in the diversity and multiplicity of the divine will. Although all perfected finite beings act always in accordance with the divine will, as individuals they would not act always the same in identical situations. The difference is the individual system of personality, as it is informed by the antecedent experience of being. And this same experience of being is, at best, a path towards perfection, not a path of more than relative perfection. These imperfections, these errors, these evils, sins, and iniquities over which the spirit has finally triumphed, have, in their remediation, colored the individual experience in ways that forever influence the course and expression of personal spiritual development.

And it is in the post-finite age of absonities eventuating in perfection that the errors of past imperfection of the individual are harmonized with the perfect realities of infinity. For in this new and broadened arena of spiritual and literal action the time-space transcendence of Supremacy is revealed as the eventuator of the will of the Ultimate. In this new universe, the errors of time and the evils of space are seen in true perspective as parts of a greater, ultimately good and harmonious whole. More remarkably, this eventually perfected whole exists in potential today and is absonitized by each occasion in which the finite will chooses the Father's will. The finite choice of the divine will today is an eternal reality joining man and God in joint commitment to make this choice the first step of an ultimately perfected universe reality. If man will have faith and persist in this relationship, the ministry of the Spirit will assure that the ultimate responsibilities thus incurred are in and of the nature of the perfected Finaliter. The human mind, spirit, and soul have nothing to fear in eternity. The frog is the tadpole's destiny as surely as the Finaliter of uniquely transcendent service is the destiny of the mortal personality.

So here is a complete, lengthy, somewhat detailed analysis of my personal experience of the ordinary events of being and doing the Father's will. It is unusual in only one respect—that it admits conscious choosing of events in a cooperative but nonpassive way. The same experience also admits unconscious participation, and it is here that the idea of "loving in the presence of God" seems most descriptive. Upon attaining and acknowledging co-Supremacy throughout Nebadon with the Universe Mother Spirit, Michael of Nebadon became volitionally ubiquitous throughout finite time and space.

As the human Jesus of Nazareth he had anticipated this occasion, and had committed this ubiquity, in part, to the service of his mortal associates. In establishing the Remembrance Supper as the only true sacrament, Michael determined that he would use this new power to provide true worship in his divine presence for any and all faith-conscious persons throughout the time and space of Nebadon. Whoever so *wills* shall be in the presence of the Creator Son. Whoever so *chooses* shall live in the light of the Master. Whoever so *intends* shall serve his fellows in love. Whoever so *desires* shall walk with God.

Reconciliation and Growth

by Mary Daly

Let's begin by asking the Holy Spirit to make us triumphant over the sophistry of presumption.

Lord, we ask you to reveal your presence in a deeper way here. We're to talk over some matters of spiritual growth; help us to put aside any other concerns and be open to you. If there's an experience of your touch that we need to understand better or a question that needs to be answered, give us a quiet and gentle spirit to hear your word in wisdom. I do truly praise you that you continue to call each one of us so faithfully.

I'd like to begin with a delightful story from a nun named Sister Brieghe McKenna. Brieghe entered the convent at age fifteen and was a first grade teacher with crippling arthritis in her early twenties. After seeing many doctors both in Ireland and in America, she expected to be in a wheelchair within months and all the doctors hoped for was to be able to control the pain. One day, in one split second, as she was seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus, she was completely healed. Some months later when Jesus was calling her to a deeper work of faith, she had this little vision of her life. In this image, Jesus came to visit her, and knocked on the door of her house. She opened and was delighted to welcome him in and invite him to make himself at home. So he did, and he went from room to room until he came to a room marked with a big sign:

Private Property.
Do not enter.

"But Brieghe, why can I not go in here," he asked. And in her dream she answered, "Ah, come on now, Jesus, — Lookit, I give you a lot. I mean, you can't expect everything." "Brieghe," he answered, "if I don't get into that room, you'll never know freedom, you'll never experience the joy of the gospel, and you will never be fully able to be what I want you to be."

This afternoon, I'm to talk about walking more closely with God by refusing to presume on his divine mercy. This story puts it all in context, because if you want to understand presumption you need to understand consecration, and that's what Sister Brieghe's story is really about—a call to generous consecration rather than presumptuous bargaining as a relationship with God. We'll begin by reflecting on God's mercy and what presumption is, and on the reality of declined salvation. Next we'll talk about what sin is, because there's a great denial of sin, and I think that's our commonest form of presumption. Then we'll ask how to overcome presumption, because just thinking it's bad won't stop it.

Introductory Thoughts about Mercy and Presumption

First of all, we might ask ourselves: "How extensive is God's mercy?"

And, in answer, we can look at the passage on page 314 on "The Memory of Mercy." These are living records of the mercy extended to each one of us in the ministry of the Infinite Spirit. It says, "In revealing the Father's pre-existent mercy, the Sons of God establish the necessary credit to insure the survival of all...A mercy credit is established for the survival of each rational creature, a credit of *lavish proportions* and one of sufficient grace to insure the survival of every soul who really desires divine citizenship." Nevertheless (looking at the next page), "when mercy is exhausted, when the 'memory' thereof testifies to its depletion, then does justice prevail and righteousness decree. For mercy is not to be thrust upon those who despise it..."

So there is plenty of mercy, but it is not absolute; it does not *determine* our survival.

Again, we can look at p. 1765, where Jesus says: "Forget not that I will stop at nothing to restore self-respect to those who have lost it, and who really desire to regain it." Our Creator Son will "stop at nothing" — and the crucifixion shows that he really meant it. What an immense, humble mercy!

So, then, mercy is abundant, but it can still be refused, because it is qualified by that phrase, "and who really desire to regain it."

What then, is presumption? If mercy is so great, how could anybody count on it "too much?"

Very simply, you might say that presumption is expecting—just taking it for granted—that the mercy extended for past sins will apply to our present and future sins as we plan them. That's really terrible...to *plan* sins? But there is a way people have of refusing to consider the spiritual consequences of their actions because, after all, God is merciful—why worry? What the Urantia revelation makes so clear is that there are consequences to our choices. If we do something wrong, that wrong will harm us; and if we have a careless attitude about the possibility of doing wrong, that will also harm us. We who trust in God's mercy must not be like a person who plans "deathbed repentance" only to discover on his deathbed that he's not really sorry. Unexpectedly, it has become "too late." This is not God's doing; we harden our hearts when we seek to attain God by spurious trust rather than personal dedication.

Presumption is trust gone awry—trust as an excuse for sin, instead of a salvation from sin.

Jesus teaches this truth (*1638) when he says, "The conscious and persistent regard for iniquity in the heart of man gradually destroys the prayer connection of the human soul with the spirit circuits of communication between man and his Maker...When the human heart deliberately and persistently harbors the concepts of iniquity, there gradually ensues the loss of personal communion between the earth child and his heavenly Father." Notice that Jesus refers to the mere "regard for

iniquity"—not to actually *doing* anything. (How would this square with watching television for hours on end?) This attention destroys our capacity for prayer, and spiritual choices become less and less available for actual doing. So when you're aware that something is wrong, just don't mess with it; check out! If you're not sure, ask, and if you don't get an answer, try leaving it alone. Sometimes we don't get a clear answer because we aren't ready to take "no" for an answer. Be ready!

What we're really talking about here is sometimes called the destruction of conscience. G.K. Chesterton has a little story about it in his book *Tremendous Trifles*, where he tells about overhearing a locker-room conversation and the last words he hears are something like, "But if I do that, I will no longer know the difference between good and evil." He flees. He knows he is hearing a person talk about spiritual suicide, about finally breaking the connection with God, the connection that's clear and truthful. And people do break this connection and know when they are breaking it.

What About the Possibility of Rejecting Salvation?

I have the impression that for many people the back door through which presumption enters their spirituality is the belief that everyone is really saved. I just don't think the Urantia revelation, cheerful as it is, supports such a belief. Let me give some examples.

The simplest thing to consider is the numbers given for those who fell during the rebellion. Some of these are listed on page 608: a *considerable number* of the superior seraphim, a *few* of the supervisor order, *over one third* of the administrator seraphim, *one third* of all the Jerusem cherubim, *about one third* of the planetary angelic helpers, *almost ten percent* of the transition ministers, *over 600,000* Material Sons, and *nearly four fifths* of the mid-ways. And, as for mortals (that's us!), *many* on the lower mansion world.

But there is an even stranger number on the following page where the number of Jerusem citizens at the time of the rebellion is given: 187,432,811. That's an awfully small number of citizens, isn't it? Perhaps I have misunderstood, but if Jerusem citizenship is something we all pass through, and there were only 187 million such citizens from over 600 inhabited worlds, the survival rate was averaging a third of a million per world, and this is the prerebellion survival rate, those who were Jerusem citizens *at the time*. If we imagine an average world population of 100 million, still far behind our own population even in pre-industrial times, that's only one in three hundred for the *system average*! We are looking at a very small number here. I hope someone can explain to me how I have misunderstood it.

By comparison, the fact that only a third of the Sanhedrin rejected Jesus—while one third stood by and the others openly embraced the gospel when it came time to count noses—seems not bad. Remember, however, that the Jewish people were among the most spiritually advanced peoples of the world. And it wasn't just the arrogant leadership that rejected Jesus two to one; Nazareth had the same kinds of numbers when Jesus

first spoke there: one third happy to hear him, one third confused, one third rejecting. And then we have the account of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and the subsequent sermon on the bread of life. All of a sudden, a fellowship of 50,000 dwindled to 500. (*1705) One in a hundred survived that time of testing. (!)

Of course, Lucifer himself is an example of the possibility of rejecting eternal life.

And so is Judas. I know that many readers of *The Urantia Book* doubt that Judas lost eternal life. After all, didn't he say (*1998) as he threw down his coins, "I repent that I have done this; here is your money. I want to escape the guilt of this deed." If he repented, would he not be forgiven? Who can say what last thought might have passed through his soul too late to save his body from the desperate decision to hang himself?

But though it's true he would have been forgiven if he spiritually repented, Jesus spoke some very strong words about the possibility of nonspiritual repentance: "Salvation is not open to those who are unwilling to pay the price of wholehearted dedication to doing my Father's will. *When in spirit and soul you have turned your backs upon the Father's kingdom, it is useless in mind and body to stand before this door and knock....*" (*1829, emphasis added) In his mind, Judas understood that he should have embraced the kingdom, but was there love in his spirit? Did he not choose to "escape" the experience of guilt by death rather than repentance? This is not an abiding escape. And since Judas died before the resurrection, he belongs to the last dispensation, and if he is to rise, he must already have done so. In that case, *The Urantia Book's* reflections on his fall would be balanced by some mention of his merciful rehabilitation. Or so it seems to me.

So, to sum it up, although mercy is guaranteed to be sufficient, free will is not thereby transgressed, and some—perhaps many—choose not to go on with the challenges of unending spiritual life.

The Insanity Plea, and the True Nature of Sin

We've looked at the evidence that some people don't choose salvation. Now, from a slightly different angle, I want to explore one of the ways we've nevertheless persuaded ourselves that there can really be no sin.

Basically, the great argument is a variation on the legal plea of insanity. It goes like this: You'd have to be crazy to sin, but if you are crazy, you can't be responsible, so whatever you do, it's not a sin.

To put it another way, sin is deliberate disloyalty to Deity, but who could know God, loveable as he is, and fail to choose him? If you perceive him as loveable, you choose him; if you fail to see him as loveable, you haven't really seen him and so are incapable of disloyalty.

But such arguments cannot be compelling; they are circular. Their institutionalization in the law of the land has led to chaos; their acceptance within family life is disastrous to discipline; they certainly have no place in a divine plan that is orderly and that genuinely includes free will.

Most startlingly, I think the Urantia revelation teaches

that insanity can result from sin. The insanity plea won't hold because, yes, you'd have to be a nut to be so bad, but you can make yourself nutty by being bad. On page 754 we read about this process: "Sin is a purposeful resistance to divine reality, a conscious choosing to oppose spiritual progress—while iniquity consists in an open and persistent defiance of recognized reality and signifies such a degree of personality disintegration as to border on cosmic insanity." So if someone is insane, it may not mean he can't sin; it may just mean he has sinned! Not that we should seek to judge which way things lie; that's for God. But we may not presume on the insanity plea.

Another place to read about this process of making yourself nutty by iniquity is in Scott Peck's interesting little book, *The People of the Lie*. This is actually a psychiatric description of the iniquitous personality. It's quite fascinating to see a psychiatrist openly stating that there is a personality disorder whose victims are incredibly dishonest, actually nauseating to be with, and responsive only to raw power, a disorder which cannot be reduced to any known category of sickness, for which he knows no cure, and which he has never seen cured.

And if there can really be sin, there needs to be repentance, surely. In my own thinking about this, I have recently begun to make a distinction that has helped me to clarify a confusion about repentance. Let me explain:

On page 1609 John the Baptist and Jesus are distinguished in their gospel presentation in simple terms: John taught his followers to repent and believe while Jesus taught his to believe and rejoice. So there is a tendency to think Jesus wasn't into repentance—it's not really part of his gospel. Yet he did assert (*1736) that "if you confess your sins they are forgiven" and this "if" is confirmed at the end of the paper on sin (#89, "Sin, Sacrifice, and Atonement") when it asserts that confession (leading to the sincere recognition of the nature of sin) is "essential to religious growth and spiritual progress."

I'm inclined to resolve the apparent contradiction between these two passages—one implying that repentance is not a big issue and one calling it essential—by making a distinction of my own between two kinds of sins which I call "monkey sins" and sins of spiritual rebellion. Actually, I'm not sure this is too different from the distinction between evil and sin as given in the book, but it helped me, anyway, so I share it.

Monkey sins are things like vanity, aggression, selfishness, territorialism—the stuff you see in the jungle. They are "evil" but not always sinful, and at the level of evolutionary evil, they can be "outgrown" by the simple increase in true spirituality. Once we have committed ourselves to the kingdom, Jesus does not ask for the kind of ongoing "repentance" which is really a perpetual guilt trip—debilitating to the soul, and especially hurtful to souls who tend to be fearful and self-rejecting, anyway. Monkey sins may become fully sinful or become the foundation of deeper sins, but the fact that we have a lot of evolutionary growing to do is not of itself sinful. The issue here is really growth more than repentance.

Sins of spiritual rebellion are deeper. They include pride (a spiritual expansion of vanity), anger (cherished and self-righteous aggressiveness), self-centeredness (deeper and more of a barrier to worship than selfishness), and lack of accountability (a step beyond territorialism—a refusal to recognize the rightful claims of relationships with others). These are some of the sins of the rebellion—and they cannot be outgrown. They have to be rejected. They have to be confessed in a way that clarifies their intent and direction and spiritual magnitude, and they have to be explicitly rejected. They have to be repented.

I think that if we recognize these two dimensions of sins, we can see why there are passages in the Urantia revelation which seem to imply that repentance is not an issue, only growth; while there are other passages indicating that repentance and confession are quite important.

What is sin, then?

I guess at this point we're about overdue to ask exactly what sin is. Presumption means disregarding the possibility of sin or the likely consequences of sin. But what is sin? The Urantia revelation is so cheerful and friendly—it does not dwell much on this topic—but neither is it silent.

We have a definition on page 984: "*Sin must be redefined as deliberate disloyalty to Deity.*" We have already considered how there can be such disloyalty.

Then we have Jesus' teaching on page 1660. This gives some very interesting insights:

About evil: "Evil is likewise the measure of the imperfectness of obedience to the Father's will."

About sin: "Sin is the measure of unwillingness to be divinely led and spiritually directed." (This is what Brieger was talking about, isn't it? Sure, I love God, but am I going to let him run my life?)

About iniquity: "Iniquity is the measure of the continued rejection of the Father's loving plan...."

Jesus' words are wonderful because they are so simple and yet they certainly put evil and sin into the realm of attitudes we know we entertain.

I think we can recognize in Jesus' teaching that while the emphasis is different and more interior, the list of possible sins includes most of the old-fashioned lists and more, not less. It's not burdensome because it isn't spiritually trivial, and so we have the help of celestial and even divine spirits in our efforts to overcome sin. But the challenge is enormous, and the better we know God, the more "little things" shift from the category of trivial evolutionary evil to the category of "disloyalty to Deity" and "unwillingness to be led." Because, you see, at first we live outside our Father's will because we're ignorant of him, but as we come to know him, the same activities constitute a resistance to his will.

Confession and Consecration— Overcoming Presumption

So, then, if rejected survival and sin are realities, we know we shouldn't be presumptuous, but how—in practical terms—can we overcome this lazy spiritual attitude? I see two major ways to overcome presumption:

The first is confessional experiences. I'm sure many of you have had the experience of coming into new freedom in your relationship with God and others by overcoming your denial of guilt—perhaps through an encouraging personal relationship that opened your heart, perhaps through a sacramental experience, perhaps through a “fifth step” experience in a program such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Second, of course, the deeper overcoming of presumption, the sweeping experience, is personal consecration. Consecration is the choice to be unqualifiedly with God as an intimate companion. And that is the choice Sister Briège made. Just a short time later, she began giving retreats to—if you can imagine this for a little Irish nun in her twenties—priests! And for twelve or fifteen years now, she's traveled all over the world to encourage faith in the presence of Jesus, not so much in physical healing (though a lot of that happens) but in the inner healing of becoming able to say “yes” to God. She's spoken to both government leaders and to the desperately poor in many countries, as well as to priests (and even sometimes to ordinary people, so I heard her myself!). She has such a beautiful word of encouragement. So God is just amazing—but we must be wholehearted to experience it.

And we all have these doors marked “private property” in our relationship with the Lord. But we really can't, you know. We can't be telling him that there are certain areas of our lives that we don't want to share with him. *The Urantia Book* says, in a section on “The Consecration of Choice” (*1221): “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.”

So we can't tell God we don't want to talk to him about our business practices or about our sex life or about anything-at-all-before-our-morning-coffee or during our TM, or whatever. *All* times and *all* places and *all* topics must be consecrated to finding him and letting him find us in love.

Before closing, I'd like to take just a few minutes to share part of my own story and how I learned about confession.

You know, I grew up in the Catholic Church in a family that was intellectually and spiritually quite above the average. My father is a respected scientist, a very deep and humble thinker, and my mother, now that she's raised the nine of us, is busy writing books about the spirituality of our great American poet, Emily Dickinson.

So when I was away from the Church, it was very hard to feel myself rejected by such good spiritual company, but the *Urantia* revelation seemed an impossible barrier to Church membership. At last, I went to my local bishop (in Sioux Falls) and I told him my story. But

I didn't only tell him about *The Urantia Book*, because as I prepared to see him, I understood through prayer that I needed to open my heart to him on a different level. I needed to tell him things about my life that were painful to bring up, sad things hidden deep in my heart. In response he sent me, not to a theologian, but to the holiest priest in the diocese for some spiritual guidance. What a wonderful gift! I can never stop being grateful.

I remember one time as I was preparing to see this priest, I was troubled by the memory of another priest I had seen for direction years and years before. Then Jesus told me to tell him about it, and I was like Sister Briège, you know, saying, “Ah, come on now, Jesus,” because I didn't think he'd have anything insightful to say and it would just hurt too much. But the Lord told me I'd be surprised what he'd say. Well, I couldn't see how he'd ever surprise me; I'm not so dumb.... So I figured this promise of a surprise response was just one of those confusions between subconscious and superconscious, but anyway I went ahead with my story. And his answer *astonished* me. It took me months to get to the bottom of it. I'm not sure I'm there yet....

But in the process, I learned a lot about both confession and consecration. We really have to be willing to be led by God along very unexpected paths—that's consecration. And then, under his guidance, the experience of confession, which is really just a special dimension of sharing your inner life with others so you can better share it with God, becomes life-renewing, a real gift of refreshment, insight, and peace.

And, of course, it helps to stop the denial of sin.

In Closing:

Now I've talked about presumption both from the point of view of remembering that mercy is a great but not an absolute relationship with God and from the point of view that we need to recognize and not deny the realities of sin and iniquity. But the greatest thing is to altogether avoid presuming on God's mercy by seeking a relationship with him that is based, not on shrewdness or bargaining or gamesmanship, but on consecration.

So I want to close by saying with Sister Briège, don't have a place in your spiritual life marked:

Private Property,
Do Not Enter.

Because that's presumption, to think you can find your way into the kingdom on your own. Share your whole life with Jesus, with your Father, with our Mother Spirit, and also share it with those you will be led to for spiritual companionship. And just put up one sign over every door in your house:

Consecrated.

In Search of the Error So Great...

by Nancy Johnson

...Forms are valueless when lessons are learned. No chick may be had without the shell, and no shell is of any worth after the chick is hatched. But sometimes error is so great that its rectification by revelation would be fatal to those slowly emerging truths which are essential to its experiential overthrow....

(*48/554:6-555:1)

No doubt we have all paid attention service to this provocative statement by an archangel from Nebadon, and surely this archangel intended to pique our curiosity and stimulate us to examine our conceptual environment—our belief system—to recognize an error that's so out of sync with true reality that they couldn't tell us what it was. What truth could have had such a traumatic impact on us at that time? Did they give us any clues?

Consider for a moment the nature of the following conceptual errors, presented in arbitrary order, which the revelators of truth did not hesitate to correct:

- There is no hell. When we die we do not proceed directly to the right hand of God where we will somehow become magically perfect, even as he is perfect. Rather do we proceed to the mansion worlds where we take up exactly where we left off here and where we will encounter numerous other creatures who may appear somewhat different from ourselves and who were born on other worlds.
- While Jesus, whose real name is Michael, is a Creator Son of God, he is not the second person of the Trinity. Nor did he come here to die for our sins in order to appease an offended God. God is not like that.
- Jesus was not born of a virgin. He came into the world in the same manner as all children before and since.
- While it contains the best collection of inspired writings available on our world, the Bible is not *THE* word of God, much less the *final* word of God. It contains errors, parts of it are not inspired, and some parts were not written by the authors to whom they were ascribed. Revelation will continue throughout the ages.
- Adam and Eve were not the first human beings on our world; they were, in fact, transported here nearly a million years after the first mortals evolved in order to upstep the human race and become its spiritual leaders. They would still be here except that they defaulted in their mission. Of the battle that rages between the evolutionists and creationists, it can simply be stated that both sides are correct.

- It doesn't matter, in the ceremony of baptism, whether we sprinkle, pour or dunk. It's just a ceremony insisted on by Jesus' followers; he only required that we be born of the *spirit*. We do not have to be baptized a Christian in order to be saved. While it is true that no one goes to the father except through Christ, that path may be encountered after we leave this world.
- Since Jesus' time the devil has had no power to invade normal minds (we are responsible for our own misbehavior); we do not reincarnate (we have only one trial life in the flesh); astrology is a mass of superstitious error which has no place in the gospel of the kingdom; charms and relics are impotent to heal disease; magic and witchcraft are superstitions of ignorant minds.

This list could be expanded considerably, but the point to be made here is that *the revelators did not hesitate to refute these cherished beliefs of ours*—beliefs so strong that wars have been proudly fought and lives willingly sacrificed in a noble and courageous attempt to defend them.

The kind of error we're looking for *couldn't possibly be found in the realm of religious dogma*. Each school of religious belief has its own dogma, while too many mortals have no religious belief at all. The error must have to do with a misperception that virtually everyone shares—unquestionably an error set in motion at the time of the Lucifer rebellion and the Calligastic betrayal of our world—and one which hits us at the *supposed* core of our very being. But what could it be? And if we're oblivious to the error, how will we recognize the truth? Surely they gave us some clues.

What was uppermost in the mindset of the world in the mid '30s that prevented the revelators from correcting this great error in our belief system? Material survival? These people had just stepped out of the first world war. They were face to face with the setback of a devastating depression and were on the brink of engaging in another world war where attack seemed justified. Science and technology were just beginning to blossom, psychology was regarded as a pseudoscience, and few people believed there might be life on other worlds.

Today's problems are not any better or worse, but our lifestyle is drastically different. Overall we're much better educated and have more time to think and ponder the solution of our problems from a higher perspective. Has that mindset changed sufficiently in recent times to allow correction of the error? These words from a Melchizedek would lead us to believe that it is at least *possible* when he said:

Because your world is generally ignorant of origins, even of physical origins, it has appeared to be wise from time to time to provide instruction in

cosmology. And always has this made trouble for the future. The laws of revelation hamper us greatly by their proscription of the impartation of unearned or premature knowledge. Any cosmology presented as a part of revealed religion is destined to be outgrown in a very short time. Accordingly, future students of such a revelation are tempted to discard any element of genuine religious truth it may contain because they discover errors on the face of the associated cosmologies therein presented. (*101/1109:3)

Forty years later another revelation appeared on the scene: *A Course in Miracles*. The author presumably is Christ himself (or possibly the Spirit of Truth speaking for him). According to the author, our perception of reality is totally off base. Our ego minds think the material world is the real world and that our bodies prove we're all separate beings, blinding us to our oneness. In this world of nonreality, our ego minds try to reign supreme, even demanding that we see ourselves as separate so we can exploit our specialness and justify attacking one another. The ego's only purpose is to survive; it doesn't even concern itself with right thinking. The purpose of the course is to teach us how to forget everything we think we know and let the Holy Spirit correct our perception for us. It is time, he says, to correct the *ancient* misperception, heal the separation, and begin living as God created us to live—as one.

The text was difficult to study—oftentimes frustrating in its repetitious hammering away at a single theme. I was sometimes disturbed as it hit upon areas into which I had personally invested some reality, saying it had no reality. Only toward the end did I begin to see the point of it all, but perhaps that wouldn't have been possible without reading the other parts first.

By the time I finished studying the text of *A Course in Miracles*, I could begin to understand the validity of its claim that we have a split mind (material [ego] mind/cosmic [spirit] mind), with the ego mind investing enormous energy in self-defeating judgments about ourselves and others that have absolutely no reality in eternity. The invitation was for all who would participate as miracle workers to suspend all judgments about anything we can perceive through our material senses, holding ourselves and all others as blameless of any wrongdoing, while the Holy Spirit lets us see who we really are and heals the separation.

In all subsequent readings of *The Urantia Book* I noticed a remarkable number of statements which would support the claims in *A Course in Miracles*, and I began to wonder if these were clues—an attempt on the part of the revelators to condition us to recognize the "great error" when the time was right.

An archangel of Nebadon revealed his technique of conveying ideas by *implication*, and I observed that this technique was effectively used by many of the other authors also. Referring to the Harmony Workers, he said:

...If I had the least possible basis for comparison, I would attempt to portray this unique field

of spirit achievement, but I despair—there is no hope of conveying to mortal minds this sphere of celestial artistry. Nevertheless, that which cannot be described may still be implied. (*44/507:2)

He then painted a word picture that each reader might interpret according to his/her comprehension capacity.

The revelators told us they were handicapped by the necessity of describing spiritual realities in distorted form so they might be at least partially comprehended by the material intellect. The excerpts from *The Urantia Book* used in this presentation pertain mostly to the nature of material personality, material mind, and the soul as they would be described from the Paradise viewpoint and which are more in alignment with statements made in *A Course in Miracles*. (Underlinings are inserted for emphasis.) Some of these statements from the book are subtle and imbedded in heavy subject matter so they may be easily overlooked by the material intellect but are nevertheless registered on the brain; others are direct and even blunt. All together they clearly imply that our material existence is nothing more than a means to an end. This may be what the archangel meant when he said, "No chick may be had without the shell, and no shell is of any worth after the chick is hatched."

A Course in Miracles tells us to wake up from our dream and remember who we are—that we're not who we think we are. As far as they had permission to, I believe the revelators of *The Urantia Book* tried to tell us the same thing. In Paper 1 a Divine Counselor says:

Human personality is the time-space image-shadow cast by the divine Creator personality. And no actuality can ever be adequately comprehended by an examination of its shadow. Shadows should be interpreted in terms of the true substance. (*1/29:7)

In Paper 5 he describes a little more:

Personality is potential in all creatures who possess a mind endowment ranging from the minimum of self-consciousness to the maximum of God-consciousness. But mind endowment alone is not personality, neither is spirit nor physical energy. Personality is that quality and value in cosmic reality which is exclusively bestowed by God the Father upon these living systems of the associated and co-ordinated energies of matter, mind, and spirit. Neither is personality a progressive achievement. Personality may be material or spiritual, but there either is personality or there is no personality. The other-than-personal never attains the level of the personal except by the direct act of the Paradise Father. (*5/70:5)

So personality is bestowed by God the Father, and it may be material or spiritual. The material self is endowed with material personality which is temporarily ours for use during this life in the flesh, for he goes on to say:

Capacity for divine personality is inherent in the prepersonal Adjuster; capacity for human personality is potential in the cosmic-mind endowment of the human being. But the experiential personality of mortal man is not observable as an active and functional reality until after the material life vehicle of the mortal creature has been touched by the liberating divinity of the Universal Father, being thus launched upon the seas of experience as a self-conscious and a (relatively) self-determinative and self-creative personality. The material self is truly and unqualifiedly personal.

The material self has personality and identity, temporal identity; the prepersonal spirit Adjuster also has identity, eternal identity. This material personality and this spirit prepersonality are capable of so uniting their creative attributes as to bring into existence the surviving identity of the immortal soul. (*5/71:1-2)

The time-space image-shadow called human personality is made possible by the pattern arrangement of our material forms. But it is not observable as an active and functional reality until after the Thought Adjuster and soul are present. Also, we are told many times that the bestowal of personality is the exclusive domain of God the Father, but does he delegate the bestowal of "shadow" personality to the Conjoint Actor? Consider the implication of the following statement which appears without apparent explanation in Paper 112:

While it would be presumptuous to attempt the definition of personality, it may prove helpful to recount some of the things which are known about personality:

1. Personality is that quality in reality which is bestowed by the Universal Father himself or by the Conjoint Actor, acting for the Father. (*112/1225:2-3)

Ordinarily we regard the Conjoint Actor as the bestower of mind. How does the Conjoint Actor act for the Father in the bestowal of personality? We are told in Part I (pg. 140:4) that he reacts to both material and spiritual realities, and ministry to beings such as ourselves (who represent a union of both the material and spiritual phases of creation) is his exclusive domain. Does he bestow material (temporal) personality on material minded creatures? The material aspect of creature mind can only respond to the material gravity circuit, as explained by a Divine Counselor in Paper 9 (pg. 104:3), but if we focus our attention on one short paragraph in Paper 8, we will see that he had already called attention to a primary flaw in our view of reality and suggested how we might try to understand the nature and work of the God of Action:

...But material creatures who tend towards the error of viewing matter as basic reality and mind, together with spirit, as postulates rooted in matter, would better comprehend the Third Source and Center if he were called the Infinite Reality, the

Universal Organizer, or the Personality Co-ordinator. (*8/92:5)

He describes "the error," but is it the root of *THE* error? Matter is not basic reality, and mind and spirit are not rooted in matter. Perhaps we would do better to think of them as temporarily *housed* or *encircuited* in matter—a sort of complementary "shadow" composed by the Conjoint Actor in his role as Universal Organizer. As Personality Co-ordinator, the Conjoint Actor awaits the advance preparation of the Creator Son and Creative Spirit who *duplicate* certain Havona *patterns* of personality and mind in their material creation. (It's somewhat important to the entire discussion for you to be aware that in the Foreword (*10) we are told: "Pattern is pattern and remains pattern; only *copies* are multiplied" ... "In contrast to the aspect of the *total*, pattern discloses the *individual* aspect of energy and of personality.") We are given some interesting information about the advance preparation of the Creator Son and Creative Spirit in Papers 14 and 3.

A Creator Son uses the creatures of Havona as personality-pattern possibilities for his own mortal children and spirit beings.... (*14/162:3)

On the worlds of Havona the Spirit and the Daughters of the Spirit find the mind patterns for all their groups of spiritual and material intelligences.... (*14/162:8)

...Mind of the human order is a bestowal of the Daughters of the Conjoint Actor, the Divine Ministers of the evolving universes. (*3/45:7)

Havona is the home of the pattern personality of every mortal type and the home of all superhuman personalities of mortal association who are not native to the creations of time. (*14/162:12)

Now we can take a fresh look at two statements in Paper 112 which round out the picture of the material stage for the enactment of the human part of the drama unfolding in the seven superuniverses:

Human beings possess identity only in the material sense. Such qualities of the self are expressed by the material mind as it functions in the energy system of the intellect. When it is said that man has identity, it is recognized that he is in possession of a mind circuit which has been placed in subordination to the acts and choosing of the will of the human personality. But this is a material and purely temporary manifestation, just as the human embryo is a transient parasitic stage of human life. Human beings, from a cosmic perspective, are born, live, and die in a relative instant of time; they are not enduring. But mortal personality, through its own choosing, possesses the power of transferring its seat of identity from the passing material-intellect system to the higher morontia-soul system which, in association with the Thought Adjuster, is created as a new vehicle

for personality manifestation. (*112/1232:6-1233:1)

At death the functional identity associated with the human personality is disrupted through the cessation of vital motion. Human personality, while transcending its constituent parts, is dependent on them for functional identity. The stoppage of life destroys the physical brain patterns for mind endowment, and the disruption of mind terminates mortal consciousness. The consciousness of that creature cannot subsequently reappear until a cosmic situation has been arranged which will permit the same human personality again to function in relationship with living energy. (*112/1234:4)

The body, then, is merely a temporary functional vehicle with a unique neural pattern. Once activated with the spark of life, it becomes a mechanism for the functioning of the mind and personality circuits. The morontia-soul system is also a vehicle for personality manifestation, and we are supposed to transfer our seat of identity to this soul. The soul is what is observable to spirit beings as an active and functional reality. A Mighty Messenger, a one-time mortal like ourselves, made this so clear when he said:

On a material world you think of a body as having a spirit, but we regard the spirit as having a body. The material eyes are truly the windows of the spirit-born soul. The spirit is the architect, the mind is the builder, the body is the material building. (*42/483:12-484:1)

But what is the soul? Do we really know? From the material viewpoint, it's "something" we created in partnership with the Thought Adjuster. The book tells us this repeatedly. We were only about five years old at the time and probably don't remember too much about it. Nevertheless, from the Paradise viewpoint there must be something additional involved in the "birth" of the soul. First a Mighty Messenger tells us, "The great Supreme is the cosmic oversoul of the grand universe. In him the qualities and quantities of the cosmos do find their deity reflection...." (*1285:5) A few pages later he tells us this:

The act of the creature's choosing to do the will of the Creator is a cosmic value and has a universe meaning which is immediately reacted to by some unrevealed but ubiquitous force of co-ordination, probably the functioning of the ever-enlarging action of the Supreme Being.

The morontia soul of an evolving mortal is really the son of the Adjuster action of the Universal Father and the child of the cosmic reaction of the Supreme Being, the Universal Mother. The mother influence dominates the human personality throughout the local universe childhood of the growing soul.... (*117/1288:4-5)

Consider the implication of this remark—and add to it the Divine Counselor's words that we are not observ-

able as an active and functional reality until *after* the appearance of the Thought Adjuster and the soul. Could it be that the soul is a fragment of the Supreme just as the Adjuster is a fragment of the Father? I have to ask—because *A Course in Miracles* urges us to remember who we are, saying we forgot, but not to fear, because the Holy Spirit remembers for us until we awaken from our dream.

Mighty Messengers must be granted more freedom than others in the revelation of truth to mortals. Four times other revelators use a familiar quote from Scripture with reference to the Universal Father—the one that says:

"In Him we live and move and have our being."
(*2/35:5) (See also 1/29:6, 12/139:1, and 105/1155:4.)

There is no cause to question it, since we know the Primal Father is the source of all that is. But the Mighty Messenger uses the same quote in reference to the Supreme, creating a big shift in perception. He tells us:

The Supreme Being did not create man, but man was literally created out of, his very life was derived from, the potentiality of the Supreme. Nor does he evolve man; yet is the Supreme himself the very essence of evolution. From the finite standpoint, we actually live, move, and have our being within the immanence of the Supreme.
(*117/1283:2)

Are we too focused on our individuality to fully welcome the role of the Supreme in the evolution of the worlds of time and space? *A Course in Miracles* frequently makes reference to God's Son (capitalized) in a collective sense which clearly distinguishes it from "God's son" (not capitalized), which is the style used to refer to individual mortals. Since it tells us we're all really *one*, a *Urantia Book* student might easily infer that "God's Son" (capitalized) probably refers to the evolving Supreme Being.

So *A Course in Miracles* tells us to "remember who we are" and a Mighty Messenger tells us that we are the children of the Supreme. A thorough study of *The Urantia Book* alone provides sufficient ground for us to infer that, collectively speaking, in reality we *are* the Supreme—but not our bodies or our temporary identities, because we've already learned that these do not survive mortal death. We have learned that the Father is self-realizing in the worlds of time and space by sending a fragment of himself to dwell within us after contact has been made by the sixth and seventh adjutant mind spirits. The soul repercussion of this act is a child of the evolving Supreme in whom we actually live, move, and have our being. And we are told about the overcontrol of Supremacy.

Still quoting from a Mighty Messenger, the next two references from the paper on "Energy—Mind and Matter" are thought provoking and have left many a reader puzzled as to their possible meaning. These may or may not have something to do with the overcontrol of the Supreme, but they're definitely clues of some sort:

Mind is always creative. The mind endowment of an individual animal, mortal, morontian, spirit ascender, or finality attainer is always competent to produce a suitable and serviceable body for the living creature identity. But the presence phenomenon of a personality or the pattern of an identity, as such, is not a manifestation of energy, either physical, mindal, or spiritual. The personality form is the pattern aspect of a living being; it connotes the arrangement of energies, and this, plus life and motion, is the mechanism of creature existence. (*42/483:9)

...And from there on out through the realms of time and space, wherever a divine spirit reality is present, whenever a real spirit-mind is functioning, there always tends to be produced a material or physical counterpart of that spirit reality.

The spirit is the creative reality; the physical counterpart is the time-space reflection of the spirit reality, the physical repercussion of the creative action of spirit-mind. (*42/484:2-3)

At least we have a little more information regarding the source of the mechanism of creature existence. The next three references explain the limitations of this mechanism and something about the overcontrol of Supremacy:

Mechanisms produced by higher minds function to liberate their creative sources but to some degree unvaryingly limit the action of all subordinate intelligences. To the creatures of the universes this limitation becomes apparent as the mechanism of the universes. Man does not have unfettered free will; there are limits to his range of choice, but within the radius of this choice his will is relatively sovereign.

The life mechanism of the mortal personality, the human body, is the product of supermortal creative design; therefore it can never be perfectly controlled by man himself. Only when ascending man, in liaison with the fused Adjuster, self-creates the mechanism for personality expression, will he achieve perfected control thereof.

The grand universe is mechanism as well as organism, mechanical and living—a living mechanism activated by a Supreme Mind, co-ordinating with a Supreme Spirit, and finding expression on maximum levels of power and personality unification as the Supreme Being. But to deny the mechanism of the finite creation is to deny fact and to disregard reality. (*118/1303:3-5)

...The Primal Father is even now—as always—self-realizing of an ever-expanding arena of time-space, and of time-space-transcended, meanings, an arena of changing relationships wherein energy-matter is being progressively subjected to the overcontrol of living and divine spirit through the experiential striving of living and personal mind. (*42/480:4)

We do not find the overcontrol of Supremacy to be wholly predictable. Furthermore, this unpredictability appears to be characterized by a certain developmental incompleteness, undoubtedly an earmark of the incompleteness of the Supreme and of the incompleteness of finite reaction to the Paradise Trinity.

The mortal mind can immediately think of a thousand and one things—catastrophic physical events, appalling accidents, horrific disasters, painful illnesses, and world-wide scourges—and ask whether such visitations are correlated in the unknown maneuvering of this probable functioning of the Supreme Being. Frankly, we do not know; we are not really sure. But we do observe that, as time passes, all these difficult and more or less mysterious situations always work out for the welfare and progress of the universes. It may be that the circumstances of existence and the inexplicable vicissitudes of living are all interwoven into a meaningful pattern of high value by the function of the Supreme and the overcontrol of the Trinity. (*10/115:6-7)

Could it be that the Supreme is orchestrating this growing sense of urgency among many readers that it is time for us to begin manifesting the unifying nature of Supremacy in our worldwide fellowship? But we cannot effectively do this unless we manage to transfer our seat of identity to the higher morontia-soul system. Our material selves are not capable of discerning spiritual reality, as pointed out in the next three references:

It is exceedingly difficult for the meagerly spiritualized, material mind of mortal man to experience marked consciousness of the spirit activities of such divine entities as the Paradise Adjusters. As the soul of joint mind and Adjuster creation becomes increasingly existent, there also evolves a new phase of soul consciousness which is capable of experiencing the presence, and of recognizing the spirit leadings and other super-material activities, of the Mystery Monitors. (*5/65:2)

Religious experience, being essentially spiritual, can never be fully understood by the material mind....The difficulties and paradoxes of religion are inherent in the fact that the realities of religion are utterly beyond the mortal capacity for intellectual comprehension. (*5/69:2)

Knowledge is the sphere of the material or fact-discerning mind. Truth is the domain of the spiritually endowed intellect that is conscious of knowing God. Knowledge is demonstrable; truth is experienced. Knowledge is a possession of the mind; truth an experience of the soul, the progressing self. Knowledge is a function of the non-spiritual level; truth is a phase of the mind-spirit level of the universes.... (*130/1435:3)

As you may now understand, it never has been our material selves who were comprehending the spiritual truths associated with the factual information we've been storing in our brains, but it was truly important to get it recorded there. Only in recent times has science discovered that every experience we have ever had, along with any emotional response connected with the experience, is indelibly recorded on the brain. This would include all spiritual experiences as well, even though, as we just read, these are actually experiences of the soul. These accumulated records are scanned and the information used as a basis for making decisions in the present. The joy emotion associated with gradually accumulated spiritual recordings becomes an increasingly attractive choice stimulus to the material creature who naturally seeks pleasure over pain. The indwelling Adjuster can then help us remember the joy at each moment of choice. The midwayers explained it this way:

The human mind does not create real values; human experience does not yield universe insight. Concerning insight, the recognition of moral values and the discernment of spiritual meanings, all that the human mind can do is to discover, recognize, interpret, and choose. (*196/2094:10)

Unless a divine lover lived in man, he could not unselfishly and spiritually love. Unless an interpreter lived in the mind, man could not truly realize the unity of the universe. Unless an evaluator dwelt with man, he could not possibly appraise moral values and recognize spiritual meanings.... (*196/2094:16)

A Melchizedek solicits our cooperation with a practical logic our mortal minds can understand:

But mortal mind without immortal spirit cannot survive. The mind of man is mortal; only the bestowed spirit is immortal. Survival is dependent on spiritualization by the ministry of the Adjuster—on the birth and evolution of the immortal soul; at least, there must not have developed an antagonism towards the Adjuster's mission of effecting the spiritual transformation of the material mind. (*49/565:2)

The choosing power of the material personality should not be understated, but as we grow more consciously aware that it is actually our soul-selves, not our material selves, who are capable of recognizing the leadings of our Thought Adjusters, it makes more sense to consciously shift the focus of our identity to our soul-selves. You might ask, "How can we do this?" *The Urantia Book* tells us we can; *A Course in Miracles* tells us how! It may be the only way we can truly demonstrate our sincerity when we say: "It is my will that your will be done." Without this focus, growth is likely to be spontaneous and wholly haphazard rather than controlled, directed, and constructive. *The Urantia Book* provides us with the skeleton concept, which is basically this:

...Such a spirit dominance of the material mind is conditioned upon two experiences: This mind

must have evolved up through the ministry of the seven adjutant mind-spirits, and the material (personal) self must choose to co-operate with the indwelling Adjuster in creating and fostering the morontia self, the evolutionary and potentially immortal soul. (*111/1216:4)

Having thus provided for the growth of the immortal soul and having liberated man's inner self from the fetters of absolute dependence on antecedent causation, the Father stands aside....it remains for man himself to will the creation or to inhibit the creation of this surviving and eternal self which is his for the choosing.... (*5/71:3)

...By and with the consent of your will, the Adjuster has the power to subject the creature trends of the material mind to the transforming actions of the motivations and purposes of the emerging morontial soul. (*108/1191:6)

A Course in Miracles picks up where *The Urantia Book* left off.

We know our world is classed as semibarbaric on the evolutionary scale. *A Course in Miracles* asks us to become instruments of peace and tells us how to let the Holy Spirit use our physical presence as a communication tool to turn all forms of fear into love. A Solitary Messenger encouraged us to do this, too, when he said:

Since this inner life of man is truly creative, there rests upon each person the responsibility of choosing as to whether this creativity shall be spontaneous and wholly haphazard or controlled, directed, and constructive. How can a creative imagination produce worthy children when the stage whereon it functions is already preoccupied by prejudice, hate, fears, resentments, revenge, and bigotries? (*111/1220:9)

The first volume of *A Course in Miracles*, the Text, has an unusual introduction which says, in part: "This is a course in miracles. It is a required course. Only the time you take it is voluntary. Free will does not mean that you can establish the curriculum. It means only that you can elect what you want to take at a given time. The course does not aim at teaching the meaning of love, for that is beyond what can be taught. It does aim, however, at removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance...."

It could rightly be called a course in how to respond to the leadings of our Thought Adjusters who long to bring about our spiritual transformation. As we learned from *The Urantia Book* earlier in this discussion, material creatures tend toward the error of viewing matter as basic reality and mind, together with spirit, as postulates rooted in matter. As long as this fundamental error in perception persists in our minds we will not be able to transcend our animal response to the material gravity circuit. Any attempt to live in unified Supremacy will be doomed to failure, because that is a spirit-dominated realm.

Jesus understood 2000 years ago that it would not be easy for believers to suddenly transfer their seat of identity from the material self to the soul. Otherwise he would not have said:

Forewarn all believers regarding the fringe of conflict which must be traversed by all who pass from the life as it is lived in the flesh to the higher life as it is lived in the spirit. To those who live quite wholly within either realm, there is little conflict or confusion, but all are doomed to experience more or less uncertainty during the times of transition between the two levels of living. (*159/1766:3)

He's been a patient Master, but today he says we're running out of time, so he sent us a course to tell us how it can be done. To mainline Christianity "running out of time" suggests that the catastrophic events foretold in the Scriptures are just around the corner. Students of *The Urantia Book* might infer that we're about to embark on a new age—the first stage of light and life—and most of us fondly wish to make a significant contribution toward that end. But we know there are conditions which must first be met before this can happen, and one of those conditions—the end of rebellion—requires our direct participation, as we were told in Paper 35:

In the event of rebellion on a system headquarters, a new sovereign is usually installed within a comparatively short time, but not so on the individual planets. They are the component units of the material creation, and creature free will is a factor in the final adjudication of all such problems. Successor Planetary Princes are designated for isolated worlds, planets whose princes of authority may have gone astray, but they do not assume active rulership of such worlds until the results of insurrection are partially overcome and removed by the remedial measures adopted by the Melchizedeks and other ministering personalities.... (*35/394:2)

A Course in Miracles says it is time to correct an ancient misperception. It tells us what it is and teaches us how to become the kind of miracle workers it will take to correct it.

The Urantia Book tells us our enduring reality is that we are fragments of the Father and possibly living cells of the Supreme Being. True, we have a material form, with a material mind and a material personality, but "Forms are valueless when lessons are learned. No chick may be had without the shell, and no shell is of any worth after the chick is hatched." Once a certain phase of soul consciousness—awareness of our true reality—is reached, we no longer have to "live face to face with the incessant clamoring of an inescapable self for recognition and honor." (p. 51) We're able then to forsake the

self-life and dynamically choose the divine life instead.

Perhaps we might infer that "forsake the self-life" means we must deny the body its natural instincts. Not so. Apparently the material creation, including the body, has always been quite perfect to fulfill the purpose for which it was created. The misperception, we are told, is that the material or ego mind has been conditioned to believe that it—and all other ego minds—are separate entities apart from God. Remember that Lucifer challenged the reality of God, saying it was just a hoax designed to keep us in line and prevent us from enjoying the freedom we are entitled to. Then Caligastia sided with him, and in a very short time our world reverted to primitive ways. Cooperation lost out to competition, and today we're still caught up in trying to control or outdo one another, miserably preoccupied by prejudice, hate, fears, resentments, revenge, and bigotries. This is the self-life we must forsake—the ego mind that thinks it's separate. We cannot attack another without attacking ourselves. Bodies are material and nonspiritual—only a means to an end—whereas true relationships acknowledge our spiritual oneness and are therefore ends in themselves.

A Course in Miracles tells us that we can first let the Holy Spirit teach us that we're the "chick," not the "shell," and from there we can use our shells as much needed communication devices to help awaken all our brothers from the illusion of separateness kept alive by an ancient misperception. For all who are willing to participate in healing the separation, he promises the same thing a Melchizedek so poetically described in Paper 101 on "The Real Nature of Religion":

Now, rather, are the sons of God enlisted together in fighting the battle of reality's triumph over the partial shadows of existence. At last all creatures become conscious of the fact that God and all the divine hosts of a well-nigh limitless universe are on their side in the supernal struggle to attain eternity of life and divinity of status. Such faith-liberated sons have certainly enlisted in the struggles of time on the side of the supreme forces and divine personalities of eternity; even the stars in their courses are now doing battle for them; at last they gaze upon the universe from within, from God's viewpoint, and all is transformed from the uncertainties of material isolation to the sureties of eternal spiritual progression. Even time itself becomes but the shadow of eternity cast by Paradise realities upon the moving panoply of space.

(*101/1117:4)

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The Art of Sharing

by Carol Hay

Today I want to talk to you about sharing your spiritual life with others. When I use the term "spiritual life," what I am referring to is the inner relationship that you have with God. In my personal experience, one of the main ways that God relates to me is through the love that he gives me. So when I share my spiritual life with other people, I'm mainly passing the love that God gives me along to other people. *The Urantia Book* tells us that love is the desire to do good to others, so spiritual sharing is a very action-oriented, creative approach to life that involves a desire to share the love that we receive from God with others. And—if you're like me—you've had some very wonderful experiences sharing your spiritual life with other people and you've also had some really awful experiences with it.

So we're going to talk about ways to share our spiritual lives so that we consistently get the results that we want when we share spiritually, so we can make a difference in the lives of those around us, and so we can make a difference in the relationship that we have with God as well. I'd like you to help me answer three questions in regard to spiritual sharing. The first question is: What is the purpose of sharing our spiritual life with others? The next question is: When do we share it; when is it appropriate? And last: What sort of skills do we need to more effectively share our spiritual life with others?

Again, the first question is: What is the purpose of spiritual sharing? I've already quoted *The Urantia Book* which says that love is the desire to do good to others. Love brings with it an inherent desire to share itself with others. And it's very interesting the way God has set this up. Because you can't feel the love from God in its full capacity until you start sharing it with other people and it begins to flow through you. Only then, only through sharing, can you really feel the full effect of God's love. I want to quote another section from *The Urantia Book* that reads something like this: "All true love is from God, and we receive the divine affection as we ourselves bestow this love upon others. Love is dynamic. It can never be captured; it is alive, free, thrilling and always moving. We can never take the love of the Father and imprison it within our hearts. The Father's love can become real to mortal man or woman only by passing through that person's personality as they in turn bestow this love upon others. The great circuit of love is from the Father, through sons and daughters to brothers and sisters, and hence to the Supreme." We're going to talk a little more about the Supreme in a minute. But right now, let's talk about this circuit of love that comes from the Father. It's a flow of love that is passing through us. So, inherent in our relationship with the Father is the need to share it with others.

Let me illustrate this point by comparing the way God's love works to the way a light bulb works. There are two tiny filaments of wire inside a light bulb, and

when you turn on the current to that light bulb, the current passes from one piece of filament to the next piece of filament by way of a connecting wire, and it completes the circuit. Only when that electric current is passed on to the next filament will the light bulb actually work. If only one conductor of electricity were present, the circuit would not be complete and the current would have nowhere to go, and we'd all be in the dark, which I am most of the time anyway. You see, if you don't share your spiritual life, then that flow of love is interrupted and the circuit is incomplete. Love wants to be shared, and it has to be shared in order to be felt in its most complete sense. So the purpose of spiritual sharing is to pass the love we receive from God on to others, and in that process we feel his love in its fullness.

Now let's go back to the Supreme. Just what is this thing called the Supreme? And why is it important to you? When the book says the great circuit of love is from the Father, through us to others, and then to the Supreme, what is it talking about? The Supreme is that part of God which is growing right now in this universe age. It is the part of God that is evolving in time and space, as we are. When the flow of the Father's love passes through us to our brothers and sisters, we are contributing to the growth of the Supreme. Because, in a very basic sense, the experiences we have in this life contribute to what the Supreme experiences. And when you start making decisions knowing that they will affect the growth of the Supreme, then you begin to develop something that *The Urantia Book* calls universe citizenship, which is the mark of a maturing human being. So what is the purpose? Spiritual sharing allows the flow of love from the Father to be passed along to others, which is what that love was meant to do, and it is the only way that you can feel that love in its fullness.

The second question when looking at the tool of spiritual sharing is: When do I use this tool? Some people think that the answer to that question involves the times when someone is standing on a soap box on a street corner telling others about Jesus or inviting a friend to a *Urantia Book* study group or telling someone else about all those bright lights that were floating around in your head during meditation this morning. But when we limit our experiences of spiritual sharing to these special instances, we miss out on the point that every minute of every day can be an opportunity to share our spiritual lives with others. Spiritual sharing is the act of sharing God's love, and that means that sharing is considering the other person, respecting their needs and responding to them with the highest intentions that you're capable of. You always have choices on how you are going to respond to life. You will always have the opportunity to share your spiritual life with others.

Let's make this concrete. Your child has just come home from school. And she's forgotten her science

homework and left it at school. It's not the first time that this has happened. Now, at the parent-teacher conference a few weeks ago, her teacher told you that she's having a lot of trouble with science. So, here you are, standing in the kitchen, it's the end of a long day and you've got to respond to this. How do you respond? Do you say, "You know, I am so tired of this. You know that you need to work on this subject more than anyone, so why don't you pay more attention to what you're doing? Let me tell you something, young lady, if you don't go back to school and get that homework, you are grounded for the rest of the week. Now, I've had enough! I mean it!"

Or, the situation can be an opportunity to share God's love with your child. And you can respond like this: "You know, when I was your age, I was having the worst time with math. I can still remember how frustrating that was. Listen, why don't you go back and get that homework and we'll work on it together until we get it right." Sometimes, that's what spiritual sharing sounds like. Very seldom do we have the opportunity to share something profound or enlightening to a person. But that doesn't stop us from giving God's love to people. So, it's obvious, then, that the answer to when can you share your spiritual life with others is: Always.

The third question that we need to ask of spiritual sharing is this: What skills do I need to share my spiritual life with others? Very often, I find that people don't even consider this question. I am of the opinion that we have a tendency to talk and think and talk and think but spend very little time actually finding ways to put these beautiful truths into our lives.

I think there's a good reason for this. It's human nature to put off doing things that we don't know how to do. Let me give you an example. When I moved to Colorado, I soon discovered that my husband and my two stepsons were crazy about downhill skiing. Every Saturday morning during the winter season, at the crack of dawn, they'd be up getting all of their gear together for the two-hour drive in traffic up to the mountains so they could freeze to death in a long lift line and then take their lives in their hands as they maneuvered down the hill. At least that's how I saw it. And no matter how much they tried to convince me that it was fun, I just couldn't see it that way. Frankly, I was sure that I would begin my descent and end up embedded in someone's car in the parking lot. But last year, John took me skiing and stayed with me the whole time as we took it easy down the beginners' slopes. And, you know, after awhile I kind of got to like it. By the end of the second day, I had a different idea about skiing. I actually had a good time. John broke his ankle, but I had a good time. And it just goes to show you that until you develop the skills that it takes to do something well, you're not going to be too diligent about applying the activity in your life.

Everyone has to work on things in order to become good at them. For example, do you think Nobel Prize heart surgeon Michael DeBakey was born with heart surgeon genes? Did he graduate from high school and go straight to the operating room for his first surgery

without the benefit of med school? Of course not. Did Itzhak Perlman take his first violin out of the case at age five and play an incredible sonata without the benefit of music lessons? Of course not.

You see, everything requires skill. If you want to be really good at something, you have to develop the skills that it takes to do that something well. Even Jesus took the time and spent the effort to acquire the skills that he needed to be effective in sharing his spiritual life with others. From *The Urantia Book*, page 1424, we are told: "The Son of Man, during the time and through the experiences of this tour of the Roman world, practically completed his educational contact-training with the diversified peoples of the world of his day and generation. By the time of his return to Nazareth, through the medium of this travel-training he had just about learned how man lived and wrought out his existence on Urantia."

Then on page 1427 it says: "On this Mediterranean tour Jesus spent about half of each day teaching Ganid and acting as interpreter during Gonod's business conferences and social contacts. The remainder of each day, which was at his disposal, he devoted to making those close personal contacts with his fellow men, those intimate associations with the mortals of the realm, which so characterized his activities during these years that just preceded his public ministry." He didn't go shopping. He didn't take tours of art museums. He got out there and learned about people. Another quote from page 1460 says: "He spent much time gaining an intimate knowledge of all races and classes of men who lived in this, the largest and most cosmopolitan city of the world."

Even Jesus spent many years acquiring skills for sharing his spiritual life. So let's identify those skills which will be useful in sharing our spiritual lives with others.

When I am working on improving my ability to share my spiritual life with others, I try to remember three words. Listen, Love and Leap. These three words make up the foundation of the skills that you can use in spiritual sharing to make the experience a good one for both you and the person with whom you're sharing, and, of course, let's not forget the Supreme. Let's talk about these three "L's" now.

The first L is Listen. A lot of people might be surprised that listening is a skill, because all of us listen; we're all listening now. Most of us have two ears that work reasonably well, but the reality is that few people listen effectively. And being a good listener is necessary if you want to share God's love. Because you have to find out what people need before you can love them. You know how Jesus always hit the nail on the head when he shared God's love with people? That wasn't just his divine nature coming through; he knew what people needed because he paid attention to what they were saying to him. On page 1874 in the book is the section entitled "As Jesus Passed By," that says, among other things, that Jesus was a charming listener.

I want to identify two skills that will help you be a more effective listener. And the best technique of listening that I know of to help us become more effective listeners

is a technique called "Active Listening." The two skills from this technique are feeding back and responding to feelings and meanings rather than just the words.

However, I want to make a point here first. In the book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey, there's a chapter called "First, Seek to Understand." In this chapter, Covey reviews techniques such as active listening, and he brings an important consideration to light. If you're not genuinely interested in what someone has to say, forget it. All the techniques in the world won't help. As a matter of fact, people can sense when you're not into it, and they'll resent your manipulation. I think it's a good point to remember...so on with the techniques.

The first skill in Active Listening is something called feeding back. What it means is that when a person says something to you, you feed it back to them. Feed back the message that you think you are hearing from them. This helps you find out if you're receiving the right message and also lets them know that you're getting it. For example, your friend says, "I'm so upset with Bob!" You respond with, "You're feeling really angry." Seems pretty obvious, but this is what I usually do: My friend says "I'm so upset with Bob!" and I say, "You know, I'm upset with Bob, too. He was supposed to be here at 7:30 last night to help me move this piano and he didn't even show up until 9:00." Do you see how it helps to remember to feed back?

The second skill in Active Listening is: Cultivate an inner response to feelings and meanings rather than words. Respond to the feelings and meanings that the person is communicating rather than just what they are saying. For example, your friend says "I can't find a job." You can respond to the feelings that she's having by saying, "That must really be frustrating." If you respond to the words only, you might say something like, "Well, I'm sure that the unemployment office has a list of jobs that might interest you. Why don't you go down there and check it out?" Do you see the difference? She already knows about the unemployment office. Feed back the message and respond to feelings and meanings rather than the words.

The second L in the three L's is Love. The attitude you have when you approach spiritual sharing will either make or break your experience. If you approach someone with a feeling of "this person could really use some concepts from *The Urantia Book*," then don't expect the experience to be a very good one. Your attitude should really be one of receiving instead of giving, which is a paradox, since you're the one who wants to share, but you've got a lot of things to learn about someone before you can appropriately share God's love with them. So the first skill to cultivate in the context of love is to receive the other person with openness, and with a great sense of respect for them. You will distance yourself from other people when you start comparing everything about them to the opinions that you have about how you think it should be. There's a passage on page 138 in *The Urantia Book* where it says "The love of the Father absolutely individualizes each personality as a

unique child of the Universal Father, a child without duplicate in infinity, a will creature irreplaceable in all eternity." Everyone of us is a completely different person. It's unfair to look at someone through a stereotype that you've created in your mind.

Cultivate an openness and a respect for other people so that you can see who they truly are. That way your spiritual sharing will be more appropriate when you begin responding. Jesus was so good at this. His willingness to see people for who they were and his respect for those individuals made it easier for him to really connect with people on the level that they were on, and on the subjects that they were interested in. Be open, and respect others. If you have trouble doing this, the best way to cultivate that openness and respect is by becoming more aware of your responses, so when you do make judgments about people you can monitor yourself and change that bad habit into a good one.

Skill number two in the context of love is this: Develop your faith in people. And that means that you need to believe in them for who they are. This is hard to do. It means that you have to let go of prejudices and fears about people. But faith is absolutely imperative. Faith is also very powerful. Faith releases the potential in other people. When someone else knows that you have faith in them to be able to handle their difficulties, solve their problems, attain their dreams, then you have given that person a great gift. Faith breeds faith. There's a quote in the Jesus papers on page 1875 that says, "Great things happened not only because people had faith in Jesus, but also because Jesus had so much faith in them."

I have a personal experience that I want to share with you that illustrates just how moving faith can be for a person. When I was in my early twenties, I was married to a man who had a very wonderful family. His mother was spiritual sharing personified. This woman could communicate a feeling of respect for others and faith in who they were to such an extent that people always loved being around her. We all said that she could tame a lion. Both my mother-in-law and my father-in-law were staunch Christians and were very respected people, and my mother-in-law was a hostess with the mostest. Well, I was in town for a few days visiting my new in-laws without my husband. My sister-in-law, who lived in the same town, decided to take me to the beach for the day. We had to be back a little early because my mother-in-law had invited some friends over for dinner to meet me. So, my sister-in-law and I picked up some sandwiches and a bottle of wine and headed down to the beach for the day. We sat on the beach and ate our sandwiches and drank our wine and walked on the beach and drank our wine and talked and drank our wine. I think I should mention that I come from a family of teetotalers, and it took me a few years to figure out how to drink alcohol in moderation. This was before I had that figured out. I don't remember much of what happened for the rest of the evening, but my sister-in-law told me that I came into my mother- and father-in-law's house, stood in the living room and sort of swayed

and grinned, and they had to carry me to my room, pull my boots off and leave me lying there in a most indelicate manner.

I woke up the next morning with a terrible hangover, but nothing close to the horror that I was feeling about this tremendous faux pas I had just pulled in this nice respectful family who had invited guests over to meet me with the real china and the real silverware on the table! I wanted to die. I walked into the kitchen where my very polite, well-bred mother-in-law was sitting at the table doing her Bible study and stammered out something like, "I don't know what happened last night, but..." and my mother-in-law jumped in and said, "Well, I do! You just haven't been eating enough!" And that was the end of the conversation. I was pardoned from any wrong-doing because I just hadn't been eating enough. Can you imagine what her spiritual sharing did for me at that moment? She had faith in me. She knew that I was young and stupid. She had a strong enough sense of her own self to not be embarrassed by what I did. She didn't care that I had come home drunk and ruined her dinner party. All she cared about at that moment was restoring my self-respect. Develop your faith in people. It's a great gift to give someone.

The first L was Listen. The second L was Love. And the third L is Leap. Taking a leap of faith is very important if you want to share your spiritual life with others. Because one of the biggest barriers you will face is the fear of rejection. A good example of this is demonstrated by how people react when someone they know is getting a divorce or has a death in the family. Friends tend to fade into the woodwork during those times. And when you ask them why, they say things like, "Oh, I really don't know the situation. I don't want to say the wrong thing and make matters worse," or, "I don't want to appear nosy or meddlesome!" We are so afraid to let go of the controls and enter a situation where we're not sure what's going to happen. I'm not suggesting that by taking a leap of faith we can expect God to start talking inside of our heads, saying, "Okay, this is what you need to do..." Rather, taking a leap of faith means believing that God is going to take care of our needs even if we do end up with egg on our faces. So we can relax and let the situation play itself out so we can determine what sort of sharing is appropriate.

I was once in a prayer group at my church. We'd meet

every Thursday morning, and there was a very elderly lady who came every week. She came into the room in a wheelchair and she then transferred to her walker before finally getting into her chair, and it was a rather precarious operation. But her mind was very keen, and she had a wonderful wisdom that made her very interesting to listen to. But when the prayer group was over, I was afraid I'd be asked to help her get into her wheelchair and I was afraid I'd mess things up, so I always ended our conversation before it was time for her to go. What I was really doing was saying, "I really like what you have to say, but I'm not comfortable with the fact that you're an invalid." One day, there was no one else to help, and I thought, "Good grief, Carol, stop being so afraid of being in an awkward situation and help her!" So I did. And it was awkward, but it was a small example of how my relationship with another human being became whole because I stopped worrying about my needs so I could move into an area that I was not comfortable with. Take that leap of faith and trust God to take care of your needs.

Develop your listening skills. Concentrate on a loving attitude. And trust God to take care of you. It's a procedure that can be applied to even the most ordinary situation. And ordinary situations are what most of life is made of. Because although I'd love to be blinded on the road to Damascus like Paul and have God say, "Carol Hay, this is your life mission," I don't think it's going to happen. What God really wants from me is for me to take the love that he's offering in abundance, pass it through my personality and express it to the universe as only I can do. How we respond to life is our only real gift to God.

I'd like to close with part of a poem by Michael Hanna that describes just how important those everyday responses to life really are:

For love is lavish when rendered in small ways
And each of us profits or suffers
In measure with all of us
And as the qualities of the part
So the qualities of the whole
Forever will these little opportunities to love
That daily drop into our hands
Abundantly satisfy the question
"Lord, what will you have me do?"

Individual Ministry: Community Service

by John Lange

Introduction

As devotees of the Urantia revelation we have chosen to explore new spiritual realities. As we each pursue our own spiritual growth through religious experience, *The Urantia Book* on page 1095 lists habits to discipline this process. The discipline I shall focus upon is "the recognition of religious living in others." What is religious living and how do we recognize it? On page 66 we are given a simple and inspiring answer: "...it [religion] is a living and dynamic experience of divinity attainment predicated on humanity service." Therefore the recognition of religious living is an appreciation of this service dynamic as manifested in others.

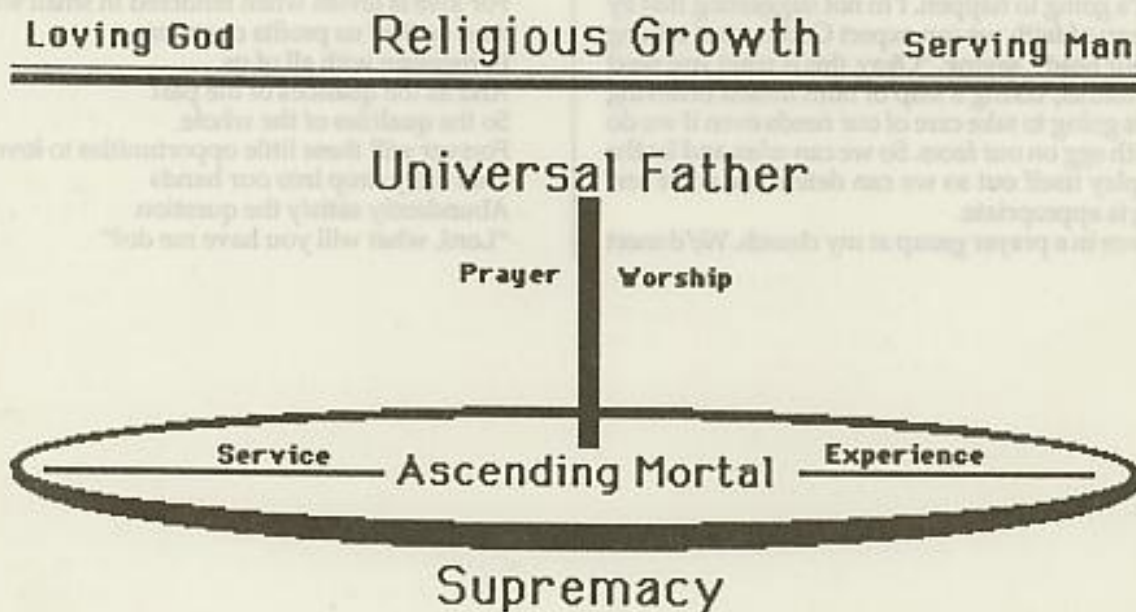
Through service we gain status as universe citizens, and this is emphasized in every section of *The Urantia Book*. In our universe career we are told on page 316, "Service...is the goal of time and the destiny of space." In the Thought Adjuster papers at the bottom of page 1206 we are instructed that we can consciously augment Adjuster harmony by "loving God and desiring to be like him" and by "loving man and sincerely desiring to serve him."

In our instruction on human government we are taught "Modern society is largely held together by the industrial market. The gain motive is a mighty civilizer when augmented by the desire to serve." Likewise, service and participation is the essence of the Supreme adventure. In our introduction to the Supreme papers we are told, "With God the Father, sonship is the great relationship. With God the Supreme, achievement is the

prerequisite to status—one must do something as well as be something."

During his sojourn on Urantia, Jesus repeatedly encouraged his followers in the service of their planetary brothers and sisters. In his teaching at Tyre he instructs us, "Self-respect is always co-ordinate with the love and service of one's fellows. It is not possible to respect yourself more than you love your neighbor; the one is the measure of the capacity for the other." In his discourse on sonship and citizenship he states, "Sonship in the kingdom, from the standpoint of advancing civilization, should assist you in becoming ideal citizens of the kingdoms of this world since brotherhood and service are the cornerstones of the gospel of the kingdom." Likewise on page 2017 we are told, "Jesus taught that service to one's fellows is the highest concept of the brotherhood of spirit believers...The believer's chief concern should not be the selfish desire for personal salvation but rather the unselfish urge to love and, therefore, serve one's fellows even as Jesus loved and served mortal men." Thus he replaced this ego concern with a higher transpersonal mission.

Throughout *The Urantia Book* religion is described as this dual experience of loving God and serving man. Vertically upward and inward through prayer and worship the ascending mortal finds the Father and communes with the Adjuster. Horizontally the mortal is broadened and expanded through service and experience to discover the Supreme. In combination the edifice of a spiritual life is fashioned. (See Figure 1 below.)



This discussion will focus on the service dimension and will be divided into two parts. Part I, entitled "Individual Ministry," will undertake six historical character studies and examine their service to humanity as an outgrowth of their religious lives. Part II, entitled "Community Service," will explore four communities, two historical and two contemporary, whose common bond has given them spiritual unity and enhanced their mission in the world. At the close, applications to our individual and collective spiritual lives will be considered.

PART I—INDIVIDUAL MINISTRY

Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale appeared on the scene in 1854 and created the profession of nursing as it is known today. Prior to her efforts, care for the sick had been performed by soldiers, nuns, Christian lay women, and the latter-day "Sairy Gamps." This ministry ranged from enlightened care given by some to the inability to provide basic needs by others. The common denominator of the pre-Nightingale era was the absence of any formal preparation for nursing.

She was born May 12, 1820 in Florence, Italy, of well-to-do English parents. This was an advantage in that she received an excellent education and the proper social connections. When only a young girl of eleven she received a vision, a "call from God to his service." With the eventual blessing from her family, and at a time when few women worked outside the home, she set off on her crusade. She is most well known for her efforts and leadership during the Crimean War. Her nightly rounds with the lantern are even celebrated in a poem by Longfellow, entitled "The Lady with the Lamp."

She was a great success in that, along with her visionary zeal, she was also practical. She possessed powers of organization, observation, and concentration and she had a wide range of interests in philosophy, politics, and religion—all of which she brought to bear in establishing the nursing profession. In this way, her service to humanity has touched nearly every life on the planet, and she has become one of the most celebrated women of all time.

George Marshall

As a soldier, as a statesman, and as a human being, Gen. George C. Marshall may be the greatest American since Lincoln. His personal and professional integrity during World War II and his postwar accomplishments towards peace and prosperity are models of service to humanity of which we are still reaping the benefit.

Born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, December 31, 1880, he attended Virginia Military Institute at the age of 16. As a young officer he began to cultivate his many talents, the most important being that he was an excellent judge of men. He was religious but in a private sense. He regarded his abilities apart from the ego as talents God had given him to manage. Those close to him claim he never lied, tricked anyone, nor made a promise he did not keep. He never wrote his memoirs,

because an honest account of scandals involving his associates would have caused too much pain. Honesty, modesty, and virtue were the keys to success in a more innocent age, but during his life it made the journey ten times more difficult.

His great service to humanity was the Marshall Plan. In his commencement address to Harvard, June 5, 1947, he set down the conditions for the plan. It was in the best tradition of his lifelong philosophy; in essence the message was that God helps those who help themselves. This fundamental trust in the re-emergence of industry and freedom among these war-torn peoples through responsible investment is the great success story of the postwar era. As we witness the opening of Eastern Europe, this message of "swords into plowshares" has again echoed in our time.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the outstanding women of the twentieth century and has been considered virtually an American saint. Her great service lay in her pioneering efforts toward the social equality of all humankind. She had amazing ability to walk with kings and keep the common touch. Because of her life, many others experienced a new sense of possibility.

She was born to an aristocratic Victorian family less than twenty years after the Civil War ended. As a painfully shy adolescent, she looked for meaning beyond the life of leisure. Always a champion of her husband's programs, it seems she came into most prominence after his death. She is most noted for her appointment by President Truman as a United Nations delegate. In this capacity she chaired the commission on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Her life is exemplified by one of her quotes, "The thing which counts is the striving of the human soul to achieve spiritually the best that it is capable of and to care unselfishly not only for personal good, but for the good of all those who toil with them upon the earth."

Anwar Sadat

At the time he was taken from us by an assassin's bullet, Anwar Sadat was considered the worlds wisest and most courageous leader. His great service to humanity was his role in initiating the peace accords between Egypt and Israel. The Camp David accords grew out of his desire for peace which was in turn a reflection of his profound religious convictions.

He was born in 1918, a peasant brought up on the banks of the River Nile. He enjoyed village life and it was his first source of religious inspiration. He joined the Royal Military Academy in 1938 and participated in the struggles to liberate Egypt.

Early in his career he was imprisoned and placed in solitary confinement for a crime he did not commit. His experience in "Cell 54" was a transforming event which he termed "the liberation of self." In essence his heart was emptied of anxiety and filled with love. He began to look to the Creator as a friend and all other relationships with mutual trust.

Mother Teresa

In the current ebb tide of institutional Christendom, the only Roman Catholic order growing is the Congregation of the Missionaries of Charity, led by one of the best known and loved figures in the church today, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Beyond the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, her followers take a fourth vow—a promise to give “wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor to Christ in his distressing disguise.”

Although India is her adopted country, she was born into a peasant family in Albania in 1910. At age fifteen she was inspired to work in India, and while teaching there in 1946 she received a “call within a call...to leave the convent and help the poor by living among them.” Her following has now grown to a community of 700 sisters and 100 brothers in 50 houses around the world but mostly in India.

All who have met her comment on the power of her personal presence. When asked about government participation in relieving the poor she responds, “What we offer is something more, Christian love. Welfare is for a purpose, whereas Christian love is for a person.” Her great service to humanity is the outstretched hand of Christian love beyond all castes, creeds, poverty, and illness to the depths of human existence. For this extravagance of human tenderness and the resulting fruits of the spirit, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the principal leader in the Civil Rights Movement from its inception. His accomplishments have changed the manner in which we view our multiracial society. His nonviolent methods which emanated from his religious conviction have served as a model in the struggle for other human rights. His courage has been an inspiration of Black people worldwide. At the beginning of his crusade discrimination was a way of life, and today these barriers by and large no longer exist. His great service to humanity was the extension of spiritual equality beyond the race barrier. For his tireless efforts he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

Summary—Part I

Through these brief character studies one can picture the steady expanding of human consciousness in the endeavors of science, philosophy, and religion. In the science of human endeavor, Florence Nightingale and George Marshall gave an enlarged meaning to the concept of professional service. As statespersons-philosophers Anwar Sadat and Eleanor Roosevelt promoted peace and participation on a global basis. Through their religious convictions Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, Jr., gave us a larger view of the human family, erasing the barriers of race and station.

These great lives serve as patterns to inspire us, but let us not forget that each life is valuable. Every mortal is unique and forms a thread adding beauty to the fabric of human destiny.

PART II—COMMUNITY SERVICE

Jesus always encouraged us to pursue our higher duty of “obtaining increased yield of the fruits of the spirit as they are manifested in the service of man and the worship of God.” With his disciples this mission on earth was accomplished through the vehicle of community life. Four communities will be studied with a similar pattern of spiritual unity.

Early Christian Communities

Will Durant said the Roman Eagle made straight the way for Christ, and many think Christianity filled a spiritually impoverished empire. On the other hand, history is nearly silent regarding the spiritual fragrance and its persuasive power in these early Christian communities. People from every station and all walks of life were fully accepted into the community, as they announced the spiritual equality of mankind. Women for the first time were given responsibilities in the community. They were orderly, industrious, and financed other impoverished communities. They upheld a strict moral code for the time, ate many common meals together, and above all they loved and cared for each other.

Little is written about these communities prior to Constantine. John Bennett offers the most fascinating account, and according to him they existed in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora—in Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor. The inspiration and ethic of Christ offered hope and happiness and was the common bond which held them together. Their spiritual power arose not from their individual strength but by their love and sacrifice for one another; not by their civility but by their service to one another; not by their tolerance but by their wholehearted acceptance of one another. They were governed not by rules but by a new attitude and pattern of living.

Their great strength arose from living by the tenets of the Sermon on the Mount. These principles of living gave these communities an inner life not subject to disruptive forces. Against all odds they won the day, and by A.D. 300 a network of spiritual communities served as a foundation to disseminate the message of Michael to Urantia. At the end of this era Tertullian, one of the Fathers of the Latin Church, stated “We are only of yesterday, but already we fill the world.”

Alcoholics Anonymous

Bill W., the cofounder of AA, for years struggled with alcoholism unsuccessfully. He regained his sanity only when he accepted his condition and “turned it over” to a higher power. And he found he could only maintain his sobriety by helping other alcoholics. In association with Dr. Bob, AA was founded, has since spread internationally, and has transformed millions of lives.

AA is a true community of kindred souls with a secular religious teaching at its core. Success occurs because it calls on two of the greatest reservoirs of power known to man—religion and association with one's fellows. Members are average citizens from all parts of the world and represent many of its occupations. Among members there is a common fellowship. True community results from having

shared a common peril, and this serves as the cement which binds them together. Service is seen as a pathway to health and sobriety. Therapy is based on the kinship of common suffering. For members life takes on new meaning; to watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, and to see a fellowship grow up about you.

The nature of God is not so important as one's relationship to him. Like rays of color in the spectrum of light, there are a multitude of paths in finding a relationship to the Creator. For most this evolves unconsciously over a period of time. In summary, through "the program" the alcoholic "overcomes his excessive concentration upon himself. Learning to depend upon a higher power and absorb himself in his work with other alcoholics, he remains sober day by day. The days add up to weeks, the weeks into months and years."

The Holocaust

The images of genocide from the Nazi concentration camps are well known to us. In spite of these adverse circumstances, communal efforts toward survival and spiritual growth are noteworthy. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl portrayed how a group of men with nothing left could find bliss. A man, it was discovered, could get used to anything, and these lives of endurance and sacrifice engendered a redefinition of the human character. Soon after admission to the camp, the situation separated the "saints from the swine"; those with an inner spiritual life survived and those spiritually impoverished were destroyed.

The concentration camp experience enhanced group wisdom. Everything not connected with the immediate task of keeping oneself and one's closest friends alive lost its value. Many helped train each other to have a sense of humor as one of the soul's weapons in the act of self-preservation. Living with the certainty of suffering and possibility of death every minute, life took on new meaning. These men experienced a fundamental change in their attitude toward life: "It did not matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us." They learned their sacrifices, suffering, and dying had meaning, and if they survived with their bones intact, this experience would be an asset in the future.

The Castro

The AIDS epidemic in the San Francisco Castro district took on many characteristics of the Holocaust. The Castro was a direct descendant of the Haight Ashbury district and gay settlers began arriving around 1972. San Francisco being a tolerant city, the Castro became a focus of Gay Liberation. With liberation self-restraint gave way to self-expression and the AIDS epidemic hit near the end of 1981. A devastating loss of young productive lives ensued.

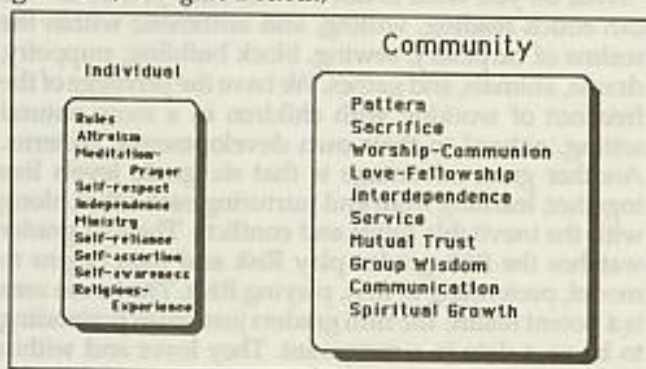
The response of this community to the immense challenges of this epidemic is truly remarkable. The inclusive and fully integrated programs of health care and social services will serve as a model to other communities. The Shanti Project, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, and Hospice provide housing, counseling, help

with medical bills, and home care for AIDS patients. Through education community consciousness has been raised to encourage safe sex practices and prevent transmission. The churches have opened up to the community and the AIDS Interfaith Network was formed. New and original expressions of religious faith have arisen to embrace life as precious even with the spectre of death ever present.

This struggle encouraged a new community attitude of growth, a new intimacy, a new maturity, and a sense of interdependence. Today political enthusiasm has given way to personal relations—friendships. Circles of friends function as families and true community is continuing to grow from this foundation of mutual trust.

Summary—Part II

These four communities were chosen because of their unique formation under adverse and challenging circumstances. Through religious living each developed a pattern of spiritual unity through service to the larger benefit of humankind. These patterns are pure in the sense that they have paid their social and political gravity debt to project over time to serve a future age. The spiritual community offers an enlarged and transcendent pattern beyond individual religious growth. (See Figure 2 below.)



The Future

What can we learn from this study as we struggle toward spiritual community in the Urantia Movement? Are we ready to make the sacrifice necessary and surrender to the larger spiritual pattern? It is interesting that events on the world stage should coincide with the metamorphosis in the Urantia Movement. In a recently publicized article entitled "The End of History?" the author claimed history has reached an end point with the success of democratic society. The goals of past human adventurism are now provided for by the global economy. Society will soon be reduced to the role of perpetual caretaking. An ardent critic observed little consideration had been given to the higher needs of society now crying for expression, namely the longing for spirituality and community. It seems a spiritual awakening has called upon nations to discard the shackles of repression and for us to evolve a larger sense of spiritual community. Through struggle and conflict we are being prepared to stand at the vanguard and offer this revelation of truth to a world made ready for its reception.

Walking with Children Walking with God

by Sara L. Blackstock

As director of a school-age day care center for the last four years, I have been blessed with a human laboratory. I work with about 180 children in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. One of the great joys of this job is the intense and real relationship which the staff and I have with the children. We live with almost 100 children daily. It is very close to a family feeling in many ways, and it is definitely a community.

Even though I am an accredited California teacher with about 25 years of teaching experience behind me, it was not until working here that I really began to experience the joys of working with children. I have come to explain the difference, to myself anyway, like this: as a teacher I had to impose a system on the children which had been orchestrated by a removed bureaucratic hierarchy. "Educating children," in such a context, almost seems to mean taking them out of their real life, relative frameworks and putting information into them.

In day care, we can live with the children in a way that is relevant to them. We can look to the children and say: "What do you want to do? We will help you do it." We can couch reading, writing, and arithmetic within the realms of carpentry, sewing, block building, puppetry, drama, animals, and games. We have the privilege of the freedom of working with children in a more natural setting, natural to their own developmental patterns. Another great advantage is that six grade levels live together, learning from and nurturing each other, along with the inevitable fights and conflicts. The first grader watches the fifth grader play Risk and then begins to model, pretending at first, playing Risk. The house area is a potent realm: the fifth graders just finish pretending to be on a date in a restaurant. They leave and within two minutes we observe the same scene, only with second graders. This process is constant. We can ask a fourth-grade child to clean and bandage a minor scrape for a kindergartner and the nurse- or doctor-to-be types just leap at this opportunity for "real life practice." All of this means that I have the privilege of observing children develop not only intellectually, but socially, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually.

Throughout this talk I will be sharing examples of spiritual qualities and spiritual living as they have been gleaned from not only the above laboratory but also from the rich family experiences which parents have shared with me over the years concerning their children's development and their family environments and experiments.

Dick Van Dyke wrote a book in 1970 called *Faith, Hope and Hilarity, the Child's Eye View of Religion*. It's a delightful compilation of children's questions, thoughts, feelings and personal experiences with and about God. He shares his 14-year-old daughter's statement shortly after they had moved to the desert in Arizona away from the

maddening crowds. She said: "When I go walking in the desert, I realize I don't have to go making up words...I don't have to talk to pray...there's just an awareness of the Presence. I acknowledge the Spirit of God right where I am. That's praying. I know I've established a communication between myself and my Maker without having to talk."

Often, even with minimal guidance from the adult world, children seem to know about God, sense his presence and feel his love for them. I have found children, especially between the ages of 5 and 12 to be keenly responsive to concepts and talk about God; life and death; truth, beauty, and goodness; love; helping others; and suffering.

David Heller, a leading authority on children's spiritual development, discusses the emotional and spiritual growth of children as it relates to their perceptions of God. In his book, *Talking to Your Child about God*, he examines the crucial years between 4 and 12, when children form their most basic ideas about God and religion.

In this book he shares some of the real life letters which children have written to God:

Liz Marie, age 7, writes, "Dear Lady God, I love you. And I want to thank you for making the color pink. Pink is a beautiful creation. I think in heaven you must have made everything pink. Pink cushions, pink houses, even pink clouds. I just hope the boys don't feel too out of place. That would be too bad. I love you lots."

Tamara, age 12, writes: "It's all woven together. All of our lives. And God is at the center."

And Walt, age 10, writes: "Dear God, I love you more than anybody else that I do not know."

I have a picture of Mother Teresa on my office wall and there's nothing especially appealing about it to young children—she looks old, wrinkled, and solemn. When they ask who that sad-looking person is, I leap at the opportunity to tell them that she is one of the world's greatest spiritual leaders. Then they always ask, "What does she do?" As I tell them how she cares for some of the world's poorest people, picking up dying people off the street to help them die with peace and a sense of being loved, I can almost feel the Thought Adjuster shining through with this inspiration of greatness.

One mother wrote about her child's first expressed ability to comprehend the invisible nature of God. Her son's teacher had read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (a story about the metamorphosis of caterpillar to butterfly). The teacher had the children dramatize the event by crawling one-by-one into an enormous butcher paper cocoon and then emerge as butterflies. This five year old

emerged with these words: "Very truthful idea—God can disappear."

In order to recognize spiritual living and acknowledge spiritual qualities in children, we have to first look at ourselves. Where are we in our spiritual and personal development? How does our level of development affect the lives of our children?

I will share with you some of my understandings of how we can work with the spiritual gifts—the adjutant spirits, the Thought Adjuster, the Spirit of Truth—to make the soil for our children's spiritual development more fertile. Finally, I would like to encourage all of us to examine what it means for us to be experiencing the combined privileges and duties of being students of the fifth epochal revelation and being "in partnership with God, raising his sons and daughters." What are our responsibilities, our hopes and visions for their lives? What can we do to provide the foundation for the skills they will need to carry the torches of truth, beauty, goodness and love so that their families, friends and society will better see the paths about which our Master came to tell us?

Seeing Through Children's Eyes

A feeling type of 6 year old told his verbal, well educated, intellectualized father who was trying to explain the Trinity of God being three persons in one, that, "There really was only one God because God fills every place and there's no room for another one. If you were a kid like me, dad, you would not have to use all of those words 'cause you would feel it." The father swallowed his humble pie and realized that his intellectualizations had interfered with his son's simple desire to feel the presence of God with his father, who needs to get in touch with his own child inside himself to be able to see where his 6-year-old boy is really at. We must look at children through the eyes of the child in ourselves.

When I was working with a group of 2 to 6 year olds, we almost became fire worshipers because a single candle in a thank you God ceremony had such an effect in its ability to set the mood for feeling the presence of God. Woe be to the one who blew it out before the proper time!

Jesus said many times that we must become as little children to enter the kingdom:

...[T]he kingdom of heaven can best be realized by acquiring the spiritual attitude of a sincere child. It is not the mental immaturity of the child that I commend to you but rather the *spiritual simplicity* of such an easy-believing and fully-trusting little one. It is not so important that you should know about the fact of God as that you should increasingly grow in the ability to *feel the presence of God*. (*1733)

On page 1861 he gives us some specific qualities of children to emulate (or allow to develop in ourselves): "To come as a little child, to receive the bestowal of sonship as a gift; to submit to the doing of the Father's will without questioning and in the full confidence and

genuine trustfulness of the Father's wisdom; to come into the kingdom free from prejudice and preconception; to be open-minded and teachable like an unspoiled child."

It is the "attitude of mind" and the "response of spirit" of the child which allows mortal man to enter the kingdom of heaven. We can easily observe this attitude of mind and response of spirit in children:

A seven-year-old girl who is moving out of early childhood into the next stage of youth had been experiencing a lot of temper tantrums and emotional ups and downs. After quite a few months of parental involvement in helping her to adjust to her world and control herself, she finally announced to her family one night at dinner that she had figured out what to do about meanness— "Just fill myself up with love so full it just squeezes the meanness right out."

A five year old had been learning sign language and one day she announced to her mother she had made up a sign for God. She put both her hands on her heart and then moved them from her heart out to the world, offering her love.

We can intellectually see that these are desirable characteristics to have, but how does one get them? How do we as adults become as little children so that we may see our children through the eyes of the child of God inside of each of us? On page 1585, Jesus responds to Thomas's concern about how children are easily deceived: "When I asked you to become as little children as the price of entering the kingdom, I referred not to ease of deception, mere willingness to believe, nor to quickness to trust pleasing strangers. What I did desire that you should gather from the illustration was the child-father relationship. You are the child, and it is *your* Father's kingdom you seek to enter." It is our relationship with our Father that will allow us not only to enter and grow in his kingdom, but will allow us to see the spiritual qualities in our children. "...[T]he divine will is observed to shine brighter and brighter in the spiritualizing acts of those creatures of time who have begun to taste the divine delights of experiencing the relationship of the personality of man with the personality of the Universal Father." (*138) As we develop our relationship with God, our light will shine brighter and clearly light the path for our children who are attracted to spiritual light like fireflies to light bulbs. One mother said it very succinctly: "Parents are limited in seeing spiritual living in their own children by their own degree of spiritual advancement. A child is likely to mirror the spirit values of their parents and, depending upon their temperament, would exhibit those values with that frame of reference."

Finding the Hidden Treasures

A man and woman had lived in their well established home for 40 years when she became ill with a slowly debilitating and terminal illness. For 40 years she had planted flowers, weeded, pruned, fertilized, and watered, but during the last year of her illness, the 90-year-old man became so inundated with the tasks of

getting through each day that caring for this paradisaical garden became bottom priority and it became overgrown with weeds. As the wife was dying, she and her husband talked about selling the house. They both decided that after she passed on and the house was put up for sale, her husband would try to sell to a family who would discover and appreciate the hidden beauties of the years of gardening work. So they decided not to fix up the garden. When the wife died, the husband put the house up for sale, but retained control over who would buy it. The house was in a desirable area and many people looked at it, but when they saw the overgrown weeds, they thought it was so ugly and would take so much landscaping work that they did not even go close to the hidden garden, but looked at the unkempt yard from a distance. One couple wanted to put in a large swimming pool where the hidden garden now was. After about 20 couples, there came a middle-aged couple with two teenage children, one of whom was a scrawny 13 year old with a bad case of acne, who had an understanding of outward ugliness and hidden beauty. As his parents were talking about the house with the old man, he walked around in the huge yard filled with weeds, looking for something unknown, and he saw a little purple flower struggling to grow above the weeds. As he parted the weeds he discovered many little miniature irises trying to get sunshine. As he looked further and deeper into the garden he saw many beginnings of plants he recognized, for his father had taught him about the beauties of nature. The family was joyful at finding what was to them a hidden treasure and they couldn't wait to begin weeding and watering. They bought the house with the tearful blessing of the joyful old man who saw the vision of the beauty of his wife's garden spring forth in his mind and he felt impatient to tell her of their good fortune in finding a family who saw the potential in the hidden garden.

What are we looking for? It is easy to see the lovely little well-tended blossoms—the child who sits in a quiet magical mesmerized state before a flickering candle singing “Jesus Loves Me” and thanking God for mommy and daddy; and we fall in love with the lovely little sweetpeas who bring mommy breakfast in bed. But how do we feel about the fifth grader who cannot bring mommy breakfast in bed—he just has to rush out to the park because about 10 friends are waiting for him to play baseball because he is the only one who really knows the rules and how to play fair. What spiritual quality is hidden? What spiritual qualities are usually ignored by the spiritual adults?

Most children at some stage or other exhibit any combination of the more obvious spiritual qualities—being kind, patient, appreciative of beauty, desirous of relieving suffering, joyous, sincere, trusting, and so forth. However, it is my experience, both personal and from observing others, that there is a tendency to negate the less obvious qualities and the ones which are more difficult to direct—love of adventure, competitive spirit, leadership, desire to show and teach others, perseverance and a sense of humor. These traits sometimes seem to be more

obvious and/or stronger in male children, especially after the arrival of the Thought Adjuster.

There is a fifth-grade boy at the center who often seems to be on the receiving end of adult negativism. He has a large, strong body and is an obvious extrovert. You cannot keep him at the back of the line on a hike, and this has alienated him from teachers who desire to control such a child. Everything he thinks seems to immediately exit from his mouth in loud, aggressive statements. He can't keep his mouth shut, because he is full of suggestions and is a real problem solver, so he is immediately involved in anything of any intensity that happens. Some would call him a smart mouth and an instigator. I call him The Viking, and to me he is an obvious leader. When I have a problem that a child can help with, The Viking is the first one I will call to help me. He will be out front in the battles of life saying, “Follow me,” if the adult world doesn't destroy his self-esteem for being himself. Granted, he does need to learn self-control and discrimination and temperance.

Remember the quote on page 159: “Love of adventure, curiosity, and dread of monotony—these traits inherent in evolving human nature—were not put there just to aggravate and annoy you during your short sojourn on earth, but rather to suggest to you that death is only the beginning of an endless career of adventure, an everlasting life of anticipation, an eternal voyage of discovery...Not until you traverse the last of the Havona circuits and visit the last of the Havona worlds, will the tonic of adventure and the stimulus of curiosity disappear from your career.”

We can do better with this innate sense of adventure than give our children TV and Nintendo. We have become so paranoid as a society and lazy or exhausted as parents that we are denying our children the experience of calculated risks and reasonable adventures. It is very safe, we think, for them to watch violence on TV or to sit for hours playing Nintendo, safer than sharing in some other forms of entertainment or outlets for that desire for adventure. Kids have told me that they love Nintendo because of the challenge—once you conquer one level, there immediately is another one and by the time you've conquered the whole game, the company has produced another game with hundreds of levels to conquer. A little of this goes a long way, but it is surprising how many children have made this their substitute for adventure because their parents are not into camping, hiking, beaches, skiing, rock hunting, cave exploring, etc. It doesn't even have to be the parents that do these things, but it might have to be the parents who help arrange for the child to.

Our Supreme Responsibility as Parents

I don't think that recognizing spiritual living in children is a passive activity. When walking with children walking with God, we have to be aware of the path we are traversing so as not to lead them where they will stumble, for as Jesus emphatically said: “But whosoever causes one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck

and he were cast into the sea." (*1761) Now, obviously, because we are not the perfect parents, friends or teachers, we do cause our children to stumble, but Jesus is talking about stumbling in a very profound way, a spiritual way, a damaging way. Adults should feel a sense of responsibility when they are in the presence of children, for they should know that the child is unconsciously modeling, but with parenting the responsibility is quite encompassing. On page 941 the Chief of Seraphim stationed on Urantia tells us that "...[B]ringing a child into the world...entails the supreme responsibility of human existence." This supreme responsibility begins even before conception, as the parents are thinking about when to begin a family; and relationship begins at birth, even before birth. Relationship is the fertile soil from which grows the religious and spiritual development of our children. If we are firmly rooted in our relationship to our Father, our children will be able to send deep roots of their own being into that soil and then can be observed what is talked about on page 1013: "Religious meanings progress in self-consciousness when the child transfers his ideas of omnipotence from his parents to God. And the entire religious experience of such a child is largely dependent on whether fear or love has dominated the parent-child relationship."

Springing forth from our relationship to God will come the framework of loyalties around which our children may build their lives: "Children are permanently impressed only by the loyalties of their adult associates; precept or even example is not lastingly influential. Loyal persons are growing persons, and growth is an impressive and inspiring reality. Live loyally today—grow—and tomorrow will attend to itself. The quickest way for a tadpole to become a frog is to live loyally each moment as a tadpole." (*1094)

And on page 2088, five of these sacred human loyalties are clearly presented: personal honor, family love, religious obligation, social duty, and economic necessity. These are each worthy of intense study and personal family interpretations. The authors of this revelation do not freely use the term "sacred." And these five sacred human loyalties are not learned by our conscious teaching of them to our children. They are absorbed into the deep part of their being as they watch us live our everyday lives. And if you think they are not aware of what we do and how we do it most of the time, spend a day consciously watching them watch you—stop talking at them and watch yourself as they watch you. Children are capable of the most minute observations. At the daycare center we spend a great deal of time in conflict resolution and as we guide them to talk to each other about problems and feelings and what began the negative feelings, we will get down to a tone of voice or a movement, a look, which was interpreted by one party as negating the validity of the other.

Our relationship to God and our loyalties are the external structure we provide for our children's development psychologically and spiritually. The universe provides the great gifts—the adjutant spirits

(intuition, understanding, spontaneous association of ideas, courage, knowledge, counsel, herd instinct and social development), the Thought Adjusters and the angels—as the spiritual internal structure.

Adjutant Influence

The adjutants begin to function with the acquisition of the potential of the ability to learn from experience, "...[A]nd they function from the lowliest minds of primitive and invisible existences up to the highest types in the evolutionary scale of human beings. They are the source and pattern for the otherwise more or less mysterious behavior and incompletely understood quick reactions of mind to the material environment." (*739)

Do we hear how important is learning from experience? There is a rather complex quote on page 1123 talking about the fact of experience: "What is human experience? It is simply any interplay between an active and questioning self and any other active and external reality. The mass of experience is determined by depth of concept plus totality of recognition of the reality of the external. The motion of experience equals the force of expectant imagination plus the keenness of the sensory discovery of the external qualities of contacted reality. The fact of experience is found in self-consciousness plus other-existences—other-thingness, other-mindedness, and other-spiritness." This is another one of those quotes that parents and teachers could chew on for quite a while and it could really help us to determine what kind of experiences we should help our children have. Nintendo and automated robotic toys may not fit these descriptions very well. Notice the key words: active, depth, reality, imagination, sensory discovery. Do you know any parents who with a minimum of whining will buy their toddler a Donald Duck doll that quacks but will not let them play with the flour and the pots and pans?

"It is civilization's protection of the child from the natural consequences of foolish conduct that contributes so much to modern insubordination." (*941)

Do we see the connections between the beginnings of the workings of the adjutants and allowing our children to experience the natural consequences of their foolish behavior?

Now we are assuming common sense here—but the child who has never felt a hot stove or been allowed to get close enough to fire to feel its intense heat are the ones that are most likely to get burned. Children are little sensors. I have stood by a year-old child at the fireplace and watched, ready to grab hand away, as the child very carefully and slowly put the hand closer and closer to the fire until it began to get uncomfortable. I have also watched the parents of a young child with great panic grab a child away from the fire before it could feel any heat and tell the child with great emotion that the child could burn up if it got too close. We have a pool at our home which causes me great anxiety when we have our many little friends visit, but I am training

myself to be a little more watchful and less reactive as they begin to experience a big body of water from the side.

Here is another example. We have a rat cult at our center—the children love to hold them and they make great pets. However, as with everything there are risks. The children are allowed to take them outside and let them run on an area called rat hill. They were plainly warned of the dangers of stepping on a rat if they did not watch where they and the rat were in relation to one another. Yes, it did happen once—a child stepped on a rat and a group of 15 children walked into the center carrying the rat, crying. The rat had not quite died, but lay in pained breathing while we all watched the life ebb away and cried together. Daily as the children take the rats out to rat hill, that story is told over and over. That one incident has done more for children being careful than any words that could be used. We let the children hold the baby rats when they are young and pink saying that if they were dropped they would die. And, yes, one was dropped and did die right before a whole circle of us. But do these experiences mean that we don't allow the children to take the rats outside or to hold baby rats? Why do we have the rats, anyway? Not for the intrinsic value of rats, for sure!

All parents should do an intense, in-depth study of the adjutants and come to understandings as to how they can provide experiential lessons in their home environments so that the adjutants can do their job. I believe that this is especially true of education—instead of accepting the “artificial and superficial education” which occurs in many of our nation's public schools. It does appear that the more we allow our children to learn from experience and provide the arenas for decisions, decisions, and more decisions, the more effective can be the work of the adjutant circuits.

Thought Adjuster Influence

“...[A]ll...nonself desires do actually have their origin in the leadings of the indwelling Thought Adjuster, and this Adjuster is a fragment of God. The impulse of the spirit Monitor is realized in human consciousness as the urge to be altruistic, fellow-creature minded.” (*1132) Once again, it is the basic responsibility of parents to think about this and explore what it means for them in their particular home environment. What I see prevalent to a dangerous degree today—and there are a number of social researchers also concerned about this phenomenon—is the influence of TV advertising on both children and parents. It could make some kind of valuable impact on the child if instead of buying the child 10 Ninja Turtles to tell the child that 3 is enough and “Let's send the money that we would spend on the other 7 to a homeless shelter.”

I teach 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades at the center in our summer school. I thought it didn't go very well this summer; they seemed somewhat bored, although they were tremendously cooperative. So we had an evaluation session and I asked them what they would like to do next summer to make it more valuable for them.

When put to a vote, among many suggestions for having fun and entertaining themselves, about 85% of them voted that they wanted to go out into the community and help other people in some way or another. We will try to find a way to do this next summer.

In the Sermon on the Mount on page 1575 as explanation to the fourth supreme reaction of fatherly love, “Happy are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” they also mention that “[E]very child should early learn to sacrifice.”

In an old book which was used as a textbook at Berkeley High School in the 1930's, *Piloting Modern Youth*, Dr. William S. Sadler wrote about the value of “thwarting.” On page 127 of this book it says: “The non-thwarting idea is fundamentally wrong. The moment a child steps out into the workaday world, it is certain to be thwarted; this is the common lot of man. The ability to redirect impulses, to modify emotions, to curb appetites and control longings is absolutely essential to personality development and social progress. Society demands graceful submission to thwarting on the part of every individual. Thwarting, then, is natural and inevitable. It is a part of human evolution. We cannot always have our way...Disappointment is unavoidable. During very early nursery days, the child should be introduced to the idea that it cannot always have its way. It should clearly be trained in the art of becoming more or less disappointment proof. By this means many of the serious personality breakdowns of later adolescence can be prevented.” Providing neat things, fun and entertainment for children are some of the more enjoyable parts of being a parent. If other activities are in balance for the child, then it is doubtful that any one activity will hurt. But it does seem that it is rather imbalanced today. I have asked many teenagers what their favorite activity is—Nintendo and shopping. I have asked them what their parents like to do on the weekends—TV and shopping.

Soooooooo.

What else can they be doing? Listen to what 15 year olds do on that other continent we are told about: “Children remain legally subject to their parents until they are fifteen when the first initiation into civic responsibility is held. Thereafter, every five years for five successive periods similar public exercises are held for such age groups at which their obligations to parents are lessened, while their new civic and social responsibilities to the state are assumed.” (*811) Suffrage is conferred at 20—look how well prepared they are while our 20 year olds almost lay down their lives to see Led Zeppelin or Madonna. One thing is for sure—the time to begin to think about these things is not when our kids are 13 or 14.

Although children can be very, very selfish and egoistic, all of us see many examples of the beautiful caring and giving that most children are involved with all the time. How many of you have stacks (or would have if you had saved them all) of all of the drawings and sweet sayings you have been given?

Angel Influence

Jesus told his apostles on page 1761: "...[F]or their angels do always behold the faces of the heavenly hosts."

In times of crisis many of us have experienced being upheld by the angels in our experiences of intense grief and shock. Going through this with children can be mightily inspiring—watching them be held by the angels and allowing themselves to be carried in the arms of loved ones, even when they have experienced the loss of a loved one.

I will share with you the most profound experience of my life with children and loss and being upheld by the angels. About one and a half years ago my sister committed suicide. Her two children, aged 10 and 12 came home from school and found her dead in her bedroom; although she had put up a chair in front of the door and they couldn't get in, they could see her feet and part of her lying on the floor. When they found they couldn't get to her, they called their father who works about one and a half hours away, and when they couldn't get him, they went out into the backyard to wait for him. When I asked them what they did out there, they said they cried. They said the hardest part (not including what they had gone through) was telling their father when he walked through the door. Do you think that the angels were holding these two children as they cried and waited?

My husband and I picked them up that night and brought them back to our home. The children and I were in one car and my husband and their father in the other. It was an exceptionally beautiful night...springtime, full moon. As we drove through the hills we all commented on the beauty of the hills silhouetted by the full moon and shared with each other about the beautiful night in the midst of great sorrow. How amazing that these children were able to see the beauty of that night! We were very open to the process of being ministered to by the angels.

The 12-year-old girl asked me to type a letter to her mother the day after her mother had died. At this point of perhaps the greatest grief that could be experienced by a child, she had the presence of mind to want to communicate her last thoughts to her mother. She read this at her mother's open casket and then placed the letter in her mother's folded hands:

"Dear Mommy, We are sorry you are not with us. We may not know why this has happened but you probably know yourself for many reasons. We will always remember the good and happy times we spent with you. In our hearts those moments will never perish. We hope that you are at rest and peace without any worries or problems. God is with you and you are with God."

Stages of Moral and Spiritual Development

"[Jesus] taught morality, not from the nature of man, but from the relation of man to God." (*1585) Morality is completely tied up with relationship. Remember what the chief of seraphim tells us on page 942: "Family life is

the progenitor of true morality, the ancestor of the consciousness of loyalty to duty. The enforced associations of family life stabilize personality and stimulate its growth through the compulsion of necessitous adjustment to other and diverse personalities. But even more, a true family—a good family—reveals to the parental procreators the attitude of the Creator to his children, while at the same time such true parents portray to their children the first of a long series of ascending disclosures of the love of the Paradise parent of all universe children."

It is within the family that the child first learns of his/her value, first to the parents, then to self, then to the world. Before children can give to others, they first have to have a self from which to give. "But before a child has developed sufficiently to acquire moral capacity and therefore to be able to choose altruistic service, he has already developed a strong and well-unified egoistic nature...Very early in life, the normal child begins to learn that it is 'more blessed to give than to receive.'" (*1131)

Children learn how to treat others by modeling the way the people they love and respect treat each other and others. If a child has a problem with bad language or putting others down, we ask the child if s/he has been put down at home. Most often they say they do hear bad language in the home and that they are put down in the home, either by parents or older siblings.

On page 1585 Jesus says, "...[T]he morality of any act is determined by the individual's motive." If a child's motive is throughout life to get something that it didn't get in the early years, it is very difficult for that child to truly think of others; to live the golden rule as restated by Jesus which is to do to others as you think Jesus would do to you.

The children whose basic needs have not been fulfilled are very needy and at all junctures, their own needs take precedence over the needs of others. This can be lessened as we work to uplift their basic self-esteem. We can almost tell within a couple of days if a new child comes from a home whose parents understand and employ excellent child development principles in their rearing. The children are very sensitive to the needs of others, are usually good listeners, really hear what's being said, and respond appropriately.

What is the connection between moral development and spiritual development? "When mind chooses a right moral judgment by an act of the free will, such a decision constitutes a religious experience." (*1131)

Innate Moral Nature—"The psychology of a child is naturally positive, not negative. So many mortals are negative because they were so trained....In the absence of wrong teaching, the mind of the normal child moves positively, in the emergence of religious consciousness, toward moral righteousness and social ministry, rather than negatively, away from sin and guilt." (*1131)

"The Adjusters cannot invade the mortal mind until it has been duly prepared by the indwelling ministry of the adjutant mind-spirits and encircled in the Holy Spirit. And it requires the co-ordinate function of all

seven adjutants to thus qualify the human mind for the reception of an Adjuster. Creature mind must exhibit the worship outreach and indicate wisdom function by exhibiting the ability to choose between the emerging values of good and evil—moral choice." (*1187)

It seems that there are always some children who give into the temptation to steal. When I first began working with children, I was disgusted with this, but have since found it not that unusual. It can happen in the best of homes and can be a tremendous opportunity for the child to be called to make a decision about this problem. Some children get very good at denial and would convince the best adult judge of his/her innocence. After working with children, an adult develops almost a sixth sense about the child. It is very important to be correct about the judgment; it is very important for the child to be caught and experience consequences. There are a number of good books out on how to handle this issue. I use "catching" a child as an opportunity to very directly talk to them about this being an opportunity for making a decision to become strong. We talk about how stealing makes one feel weak inside, and every child I have talked to about this knows exactly the feeling I am describing. Every child wants to be strong; to have power; to have control over themselves for as I ask them: "If you do not control yourself, who will?" they of course will answer in some fashion or another, "Someone else." Children like to think they have some degree of control over their own lives and what they do. This is a very appealing argument for them. I will then have the child, if they are able, to write an agreement with me about their decision they must make. They can have several days to think about it, but these decisions can happen on the spot.

"Time is essential to all types of human adjustment—physical, social or economic. Only moral and spiritual adjustments can be made on the spur of the moment and even these require the passing of time for the full outworking of their material and social repercussions." (*911)

Many of the children when they enter daycare at five or so, probably do not have their Thought Adjusters. There seems to be a lack of self-consciousness and some of them have not progressed from stage zero of moral reasoning which is: "Whatever I want is what's fair." In raising good children, Dr. Thomas Lickona outlines the stages of moral development as first shown in three decades of research by Harvard University psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg who is a widely recognized leading figure in the psychology of moral development. It is important to understand the process of moral reasoning from inside a child's mind. This helps us to appreciate the different stages children go through rather than expecting impossible things of them and belittling them for not being able to meet your expectations. For instance, it is good for fathers to have high standards and challenge their children's growth, but research shows that unfortunately, because of this lack of knowledge, father's expectations are generally two years ahead of what the child is really capable of, causing problems all around. Stage 1 is: You should do what you are told;

stage 2 is: What's in it for me?; stage 3 is: What will people think of me?; stage 4 is: What if everybody did it?; and stage 5 is: Respect the rights of every person.

"Man's choosing between good and evil is influenced, not only by the keenness of his moral nature, but also by such influences as ignorance, immaturity, and delusion. A sense of proportion is also concerned in the exercise of virtue because evil may be perpetrated when the lesser is chosen in the place of the greater as a result of distortion or deception. The art of relative estimation or comparative measurement enters into the practice of the virtues of the moral realm." (*193)

What is the connection between moral development and spirituality? "Every time man makes a reflective moral choice, he immediately experiences a new divine invasion of his soul. Moral choosing constitutes religion as the motive of inner response to outer conditions." (*2095)

External Environment

We have been looking more at the psychological and spiritual climate of the internal development of the child. What kind of *external* environment is conducive to the development of the child's personal relationship to God; to the working of the adjutant spirits, the angels and the Thought Adjuster; to moral development and personal spiritual experience?

In his book *Talking to Children about God*, David Heller talks about the importance of planning a "spiritually enlightened home," for of course this is where it all begins as we shoot them from our arrows. This is as varied as personal home environments. Heller says, "In your home, religion is the spiritual atmosphere that you create through your everyday parenting. You may attend formal religious services every week, but your spiritual life is experienced each and every moment." (pg. 11)

Great Value of Beauty

"It was also at Jericho, in connection with the discussion of the early religious training of children in habits of divine worship, that Jesus impressed upon his apostles the great value of beauty as an influence leading to the urge to worship, especially with children. The Master by precept and example taught the value of worshiping the Creator in the midst of the natural surroundings of creation...When it is not possible to worship God in the tabernacles of nature, men should do their best to provide houses of beauty, sanctuaries of appealing simplicity and artistic embellishment, so that the highest of human emotions may be aroused in association with the intellectual approach to spiritual communion with God. Truth, beauty, and holiness are powerful and effective aids to true worship. But spirit communion is not promoted by mere massive ornateness and overmuch embellishment with man's elaborate and ostentatious art. Beauty is most religious when it is most simple and naturelike. How unfortunate that little children should have their first introduction to concepts of public worship in cold and barren rooms so

devoid of the beauty appeal and so empty of all suggestion of good cheer and inspiring holiness! The child should be introduced to worship in nature's outdoors and later accompany his parents to public houses of religious assembly which are at least as materially attractive and artistically beautiful as the home in which he is daily domiciled." (*1840)

It would appear that we are given some direct instruction here as to the best ways for children to be introduced to worship—in nature's outdoors. So, parents, don't feel guilty about taking that Sunday walk with your children and having a family worship time.

It is our privilege and duty to work with the subtle yet real and powerful spiritual influences as we both progress in our own relationship with God and our growth toward the Supreme, and provide the environment and guidance for children to experience a growing relationship to their spiritual Father. Many parents who are spiritually committed are discovering arenas for working with children in many phases of our lives.

One mother conducted a study, using her daughter's preschool as her research arena, to find out about the relationship of fathers with their children based on their involvement with them since birth. She has extended this study to many other preschools and the study has

of course shown that the more involvement fathers have with their children since birth, the closer is their relationship at the preschool age. Another sideline that has turned out to be very satisfying are the numerous profound and spiritual discussions she has enjoyed with fathers regarding the results of the study.

I would imagine that the hope of all of us is that our children know God as their Father. Many of us would find great joy if they would discover the fifth epochal revelation in a personal way and would embrace and participate in it on a personal level so as to make their life richer, spiritually, philosophically, psychologically and socially; and some of us would extend our dreams even a little further out for our children—that some of them might become the mighty leaders that page 2082 talks about: "Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings...[T]hese new teachers of Jesus' religion...will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men. And then will these spirit-born souls quickly supply the leadership and inspiration requisite for the social, moral, economic and political reorganization of the world."

And as we all know, the social, moral, economic and political reorganization of the world begins at home.

True Worship: A Commentary on Paper 5, Section 3

by Jeffrey Wattles

Let us listen again to the Divine Counselor of Uversa, whose account of "True Worship" may be found in *The Urantia Book* in section 3 of Paper 5, "God's Relation to the Individual." Our commentary cannot properly be a monologue, but I have not marked, in the present text, the pauses for discussion that punctuated it. This discussion follows one on the prayer process (Paper 91 #9, p. 1002) and anticipates one on service. The commentary here is a step toward holographic study—finding the whole of the book in the part.

Worship is both simple and complex. The simplicity of worship is reflected in the fun of the word for worship among the Quictec Indians of Mexico; it means, etymologically, "to wag one's tail before God." One of the wisest teachings I ever heard on worship was Vern Grimsley's remark, "The secret of worship is to do it." One great message of *The Urantia Book* is that WE CAN worship. We are in the Father's personality circuit. Our minds enjoy the adjutant mind-spirit of worship. We are built to worship. However complex or mysterious worship may seem when discussed, and however elusive it may be at times in our practice, we can and do worship the Universal Father. The section on True Worship articulates the concept of worship. When we read this highly articulated account, we may be led to remark, "Easier said than done." But if we keep in tune with the worship experience itself, then we may say, "Easier done than said." Let us take a moment to do just that before proceeding....

This commentary emphasizes one basic truism: worship is worship of God. In the language of contemporary phenomenology (the philosophical discipline devoted to describing experience), worship is an intentional act (where "intentional" does not denote a deliberate act of will, but an act of consciousness which is directed toward an "object" of some sort; directed beyond itself). Worship is directed to God. Worship is a relating to God. The practical import of recognizing the basic I-Thou character of worship is this: this directedness toward God keeps us from a certain kind of mysticism, and we will pay repeated attention here to the difference between worship and mysticism. (I use the term "mysticism" here in its pejorative sense, recognizing that a qualified approval of mysticism is offered in Paper 91, section 7, p. 1000f.) Hear from page 1001:

When prayer becomes overmuch aesthetic, when it consists almost exclusively in beautiful and blissful contemplation of paradisiacal divinity, it loses much of its socializing influence and tends toward mysticism and the isolation of its devotees.

Our worship may become reoriented to bliss; then we begin to aim for subjective feelings. We can become

more interested in worship than in God. Spiritual bliss is a delightful wave that arises spontaneously; it is not the goal or essence or criterion of true worship, at least at this point in our universe career. Paper 27, #7 (p. 303), describes the Conductors of Worship on Paradise and offers a definition:

Worship is the conscious and joyous act of recognizing the truth and fact of the intimate and personal relationships of the Creators with their creatures. The quality of worship is determined by the depth of creature perception; and as the knowledge of the infinite character of the Gods progresses, the act of worship becomes increasingly all-encompassing until it eventually attains the glory of the highest experiential delight and the most exquisite pleasure known to created beings.

Even in this characterization, the joy of worship remains a function of the relatedness of the worshipers to God. It is not simply self-contained joy (whatever that might mean), but rejoicing in the character of the Gods. Worship, moreover, is implicitly *social*, implicitly group worship, whether or not the worshiper happens to be alone. One worships *our* Father, not just *my* Father. The sense of the social horizon also preserves worship from mysticism. The contrast between worship and mysticism will become more subtle as we go on to consider the role of mindal and spiritual factors in worship. For now, the main point can be restated by drawing on p. 196: "We worship God, first, because he is, next because he is in us, and last, because we are in him." In each of these phases—even in the most interior phase of worship and in the wondrous feeling of being *in* God—worship is directed *to* God. Jesus said, "My yoke is light"; I take it that the light yoke of spiritual experience is to sustain attention on God, rather than relaxing into a self-centered space.

In Paper 143 #7, "Teachings About Prayer and Worship" we read: "Worship is effortless attention, true and ideal soul rest, a form of restful spiritual exertion." (*1616) The difference between worship and narcissism, then, is subtle but not difficult; it is a matter of attention to God. The point is not that we need anxiously to hold on to duality lest we slip into bliss. Again, simply, worship is worship of God. Worship is relational.

Worship is for its own sake; prayer embodies a self- or creature-interest element; that is the great difference between worship and prayer. There is absolutely no self-request or other element of personal interest in true worship; we simply worship God for what we comprehend him to be. Worship asks nothing and expects nothing for the worshiper. We do not worship the Father because of anything we may derive from such veneration....

So we don't enter into worship in order to go load up on a sublime good time. This point, which seems to me to be present as an advanced teaching in the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is a familiar basic teaching in much of Hinduism and Buddhism, which are often rigorously clear about keeping worship pure from creature concerns. Writing in the Hindu tradition, O.B.L. Kapoor describes bhakti (worship). He says that yoga (the path of self-mastery) and jnana (the path of philosophic insight) and karman (the path of service-action) are "useful as aids to Bhakti in as much as they are free from all desires for worldly enjoyment. But since they aim at Mukti or a certain blissful state of self, they are not wholly...selfless in their approach." (*The Philosophy and Religion of Sri Caitanya*, p. 180)

Why are we taught that prayer is the ideal prelude to worship? The authors of the Urantia Papers validate human need and encourage the expression of appropriate human desire. The creature is encouraged to express these needs in prayer to the Creator. Indeed, we do in fact walk around most of the time with needs in our hearts, consciously or unconsciously. If we were to try to go directly into worship without prayerfully processing these burdens of the heart, we might deceive ourselves—we might become the prey of old business, the return of the repressed, intruding upon our worship. Can the human mind-self transcend creature concerns without divine assistance? Perhaps that is our ultimate prayer: "God, help me (us) now to transcend the standpoint of request." In any case, no matter what our creature concern is, in prayer we not only present the needs of self and others that we are concerned about, but we also begin to sense the divine response to those needs. Sensing that response, we are lifted by gratitude into worship. I think that's how it goes and how it is supposed to work.

"We simply worship God for what we comprehend him to be." Again, the emphasis is on God. In phenomenological terms, worship is a "founded" act, an act that is based on another act. For example, I may value a political proposal because I believe (and here comes the founding proposition) it will solve a particular important problem. Our worship of God also, in a way, follows the human path from fact to meaning to value. We might say, "I worship God because God is so _____." Usually we don't spell this out to ourselves, but some conception of God underlies our worship. (Recall that the Supreme represents the maximum of truth, beauty, and goodness that we can comprehend, and thus it is particularly in the realm of personality and love that we have access to a supersupreme relationship.) Our comprehension of God, if translated into words, might be put in terms of a noun, a noun phrase, an adjective, an adverb, a verb, a preposition, a dependent clause—let grammatical imagination run free—or even a complete sentence!

We "render such devotion and engage in such worship as a natural and spontaneous reaction to the recognition of the Father's matchless personality and because

of his lovable nature and adorable attributes." Note that the sequence of matchless personality, lovable nature, and adorable attributes exactly follows the first three papers in Part I of the book. In other words, the more we realize of God, through our study and otherwise, the more we will comprehend God and the more likely that our worship is to be spontaneous. If worship is not spontaneous, then it is, perhaps, something we do because we feel we should, or because we are in a group where it is the expected thing, or because we know it's supposed to be a sublime thing—in other words, basically to satisfy our own sense of duty, expectation, or desire—i.e., something which has still to be transformed if it is to reach the level of true worship. Now we are told that on the fifth mansion world, worship is becoming spontaneous (*537.5). Nevertheless we have a tremendous clue to facilitate spontaneity in worship in the line on p. 67: "Sooner or later, God is destined to be comprehended as the reality of values, the substance of meanings, and the life of truth." This idea encourages us to discern God in every realm of daily life—and the more we do so, the more we will be inspired by what we discern, inspired to spontaneous worship. Such connection between the God we worship and the reality, substance, and life of what we experience daily, helps to explain why we are often encouraged to engage in intelligent worship.

When you deal with the practical affairs of your daily life, you are in the hands of the spirit personalities having origin in the Third Source and Center; you are co-operating with the agencies of the Conjoint Actor. And so it is: You worship God; pray to, and commune with, the Son; and work out the details of your earthly sojourn in connection with the intelligences of the Infinite Spirit operating on your world and throughout your universe.

Just as the rules for prevailing petitions (p. 1002) embed teaching on prayer in a general theory of action, we must observe that this section on worship is placed in the context of an entire philosophy of living in the germ. Now we see that trinitarian remarks have practical significance for daily life.

Sincere worship connotes the mobilization of the total powers of the personality under the dominance of the evolving soul and subject to the divine directionization of the associated Thought Adjuster.

What are these powers? Recall the line from p. 1400: "Jesus possessed the ability effectively to mobilize all his powers of mind, soul, and body on the task immediately at hand." The protagonist in this poem from medieval France, "Le Jongleur de Notre Dame" is not a juggler, but the tumbler of Our Lady:

Now above the altar was carved the statue of Madame St. Mary, and this minstrel did come before this image right humble. / Sweet Lady, said he, scorn not the thing I know, for with the help of

God I will essay to serve you in good faith, even as I may. I cannot read your hours nor chant your praise, but at the least I can set before you what art I have./ Then commenced this minstrel his merry play, leaping low and small, tall and high, over and under. Then he knelt upon his knees before the statue, and meekly bowed his head./ Most gracious Queen, said he, of your pity and charity scorn not this my service./ Again he leaped and played, and for holiday and festival, made the somersault of Metz. Afterwards he did the Spanish vault, springing and bounding, then the vaults they love in Brittany, and all of these feats he did as best as he was able. Then he walked on his two hands, with his feet in the air, and his head near the ground./ Thus long did this minstrel leap and play, till at last, nigh fainting with weariness, he could stand no longer on his feet, but fell to his knees./ Lady, said he, I worship you with heart, with body, feet and hands, for this I can neither add to nor take away. Now I am your minstrel./ Then he smote upon his breast, he sighed and wept, since he knew no better prayer than tears, nor no better worship than his art...."

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)

What can those longings and aspirations be? Are they not requests of a higher order? First of all, a longing is not a request, and an aspiration is not a request. If longings and aspirations look forward to fulfillment, they do not express themselves in order to gain fulfillment. The purpose of soul expression is not to gain, but simply to express. Second, the longings and aspirations are unutterable. Think of some very sublime verbalized request, e.g., the close of the believer's prayer: "and make us increasingly perfect like yourself." Now surely the soul aspires to divine perfection, but the word symbols of the human intellect are mere shells; words do not manage to express the soul's longings and aspirations. You remember Lao Tzu's opening line, "The Tao that can be named is not the real Tao"? Well, the longings and aspirations that can be put into words are not the soul's longings and aspirations.

"The mortal mind consents to worship."

This means, first of all, that the mind does not conduct worship. Sometimes we try to prime the pump by praise of God. Or in group prayer, suggestion may be used. We remind ourselves of who we comprehend God to be. This is sublime thinking. It is not worship; but it may stimulate that conception which will serve as the trampoline for worship, for superthinking (*1616). Reading may also be used to prime the pump. Nothing wrong with priming the pump, but the liquid concepts with which we prime are not yet the water of life.

The divine spirit, we recall, aids us in "ceasing to resist." What the mind does in worship is somewhat like ceasing to resist. The mind, then, is attentive, alert, but less active: "effortless attention" (*1616).

A metaphor from the older tradition of Roman Catholic architecture and liturgy may be helpful. In some churches in Spain one can still see the beautifully wrought ironwork gates that separated the altar where the priest performed the Mass. The people looked upon mysteries they did not understand. In worship, the indwelling spirit is like a priest operating behind the gates of consciousness. The mind is more like a sympathetic onlooker at an invisible spectacle wherein are transpiring marvelous and subtle transactions. Only occasionally does the mind stir in some recognition of meaning or value.

Why does the mind need to consent? Because worship is not just a matter of registering some insight. The mind can get the intellectual point and efficiently move on to the next concern rather than waiting for something more profound to transpire. The quick mind likes to move on to the next idea immediately after the first has registered; the immature mind neglects ripening intuition into insight. In worship, however, the entire personality is submitting to the consciousness of contact with God. Worship therefore has a different rhythm.

The point, however, is not merely to slow the mind down, but for the mind to assent to an activity which is not primarily its own. Contrast the poetic, artistic, and musical mysticism which is common today. "The characteristics of the mystical state are diffusion of consciousness with vivid islands of focal attention operating on a comparatively passive intellect." (*1099) To "consent to worship" seems comparatively passive, but the intellect is not the central receiver of the worship experience; the consenting mind is upstaged by the more engaged soul and Thought Adjuster and the personality as a whole. Nor is consciousness diffuse in worship, but as we have said, attentive, alert, "effortless attention." Nor is God perceived or imaged and therefore cannot function as a vivid island of focal attention.

Shall we risk over-teaching and foolish teaching to speak to the question which is sometimes raised: What about distracting thoughts in worship? We must step carefully in response. Our "technological" society is steeped in the quest for quick and easy maxims that the mind can easily understand and which can be easily practiced "in the comfort of your own home." Our desire to control nature, carried to extremes, has yielded a now obvious harvest of pollution. And our desire to control the spiritual life is no more beautiful. We are awash with techniques, methods, handy advice, guidelines, and suggestions. It is all too easy to produce facile and excessively specific instructions. There are various techniques of self-reminding, such as the saying of a spiritual word; but it must be remembered that worship itself is self-forgetting. There is no infallible technique for the human mind to use which guarantees its entry into worship. To use any method of self-reminding is to return to the prayer process, a return to a mountain range, one of whose peaks is to "surrender

every wish of mind and every craving of soul to the transforming embrace of divine growth." (*1002) The openness that is called for here is comparable to that of worship. The intellect that wants to be not merely ship but captain and pilot, too, cannot pray, much less consent to worship. But there is hope. I was praying the other day and I asked God to make me increasingly perfect like himself. And the "response" formed: "I AM." (Smile.)

Let us expand the notion of technique: science (the careful determination and correlation of fact), philosophy (the pursuit of meaning until the very end), and art (the flavored expression of self and spirit) are techniques. Let us consider the coordination of psychology, philosophy, and religion, as a method for finding one's way back to worship through an environment of thoughts. Thoughts need not be regarded as distractions, as though God were somehow to be found only in a different direction from the world.

Again: "Sooner or later, God is destined to be comprehended as the reality of values, the substance of meanings, and the life of truth." One can explore the value latent in one's thought-complex...and then go on to ask what (who) is the reality of this value. And thus one comes once again before the God one had begun to worship. One can explore the meanings of one's thought complex...and then go on to inquire after the substance of those meanings. This path also leads to the presence of God. "Thinking surrenders to wisdom, and wisdom is lost in enlightened and reflective worship." (*1228). And such movement into and "out from" God-consciousness is the life of truth.

The opening of Psalm 92 illustrates a movement from thinking and prayer ("sublime thinking") back to worship. We hear the psalmist turning from the third person discourse of thinking about God to the second person discourse addressing God directly: "It is a good thing to give thanks to Yahweh, to sing praises to your name, O Most High." Prayer and worship have a characteristic second-person or I-Thou focus—or else a sense of the presence of God so genuine as to make anonymous thinking, as though one were alone, obsolete.

When is it worth responding by probing the thought that arises in worship for its value and meaning and truth, and when is it better to abandon the thought? I doubt it would be wise to construct a criterion. The main thing is that the mind aims to be a good mother for the soul—to cooperate with the Thought Adjuster, the father of the soul.

The soul "craves and initiates worship." The craving for worship is one of those unutterable longings we were just discussing. The soul initiates worship...in response to the values it feels. The soul feels values. The more we live from the level of soul consciousness, the more our daily life will conduce to worship. You can walk down the street, perceptually alive to the buzzing, blooming scene about you, with its bodies and boutiques. Or you can walk through the same scene attentive to the qualities of soul that are suggested in the persons

and the evident culture. One of the reasons that prayer is the recommended preparation for worship is that the prayer process facilitates the revelation of values. When we "surrender every wish of mind and every craving of soul to the transforming embrace of divine growth" (*1002), we permit new values to dawn. The rejoicing over these freshly revealed values occasions the spontaneity of the soul's initiation of worship. For someone living in continuous communion with God, the recourse to prayer would not be a necessary preliminary to worship; the supreme truth, beauty, and goodness glimpsed in so many phenomena of daily life would themselves be abundant springboards to worship. I remember Carolyn Kendall mentioning once having asked various people what inspired them most to worship. Some said being out in nature; some said this or that. She said seeing other people, being with people, especially prompts her to worship.

"The divine Adjuster presence conducts such worship in behalf of the mortal mind and the evolving immortal soul." The only point I want to make about this is that there is at this point no human conductor of worship. Human conductors of worship may prepare this phase, but when we open our most profound receptivity, when we surrender to the Adjuster guidance, when we consent to this unutterable transaction, we should not, I suggest, be filled at that time by the socio-suggestions of some preacher, organist, book, or meditation guide. Such other experiences may be beneficial; they may be worshipful, but they are not worship.

What is the difference between a worshipful experience and worship? Worship is an experience of God; an experience of every other reality can be worshipful. Gandhi was asked how long he took for his morning devotions: "Long enough to last all day." Our lives are to be "inwardly illuminated by worship and outwardly devoted to...service..." (*1175) To be illuminated by worship means that the awareness/motivation/response/joy of supreme value is never lost; at least it is in the margin of consciousness. The experiences of striving for value are upheld by the more basic experience of celebrating value.

How can we distinguish mysticism from this phase of worship in which, once initiated by the soul, there is a shift into overdrive, into the duration conducted by the Thought Adjuster? The mind is oriented to God, but not as an island of focal attention operating on the sensory or quasi-sensory level of mind. If the mind gets engaged in trying to detect the faint stirrings of the superconscious, then it is possible to get lost in faint stirrings and to lose the fundamental intention of worship—the act of the entire personality, to which we now turn.

The final level in our exposition is the level of personality. We read, "True worship, in the last analysis, becomes an experience realized on four cosmic levels: the intellectual, the morontial, the spiritual, and the personal—the consciousness of mind, soul, and spirit, and their unification in personality."

The body is not included in this enumeration of the levels of the realization of worship mentioned at the close of our section on True Worship. This means not that the body must be still or gesturally neutral in worship, but merely that the body itself is not a level on which worship is realized. The import of the author's omission of the body here, I propose, is that movement and rest, gesture and posture, our kinesthetic and perceptual sensations—these are dimensions of experience that register in the mind; and it is as part of the mind's experience that they belong to worship. The center of gravity of the worship experience, however, is not in bodily perceptions or movement.

The mention of personality is important because, as each of us can say, I am not just a loose association of mind plus soul plus Thought Adjuster. Even the values of supremacy felt by the soul are not identical with the personality of God intended in worship. I am more than even my soul. I am me, I am a person. On page 67 we read:

The Greek religion had a watchword "Know yourself"; the Hebrews centered their teaching on "Know your God"; the Christians preach a gospel aimed at a "knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ"; Jesus proclaimed the good news of "knowing God, and yourself as a son of God." These differing concepts of the purpose of religion determine the individual's attitude in various life situations and foreshadow the depth of worship....

In other words, I am part of this worship circuit. I am not just an empty openness toward God. Nor in action am I a mere channel. Indeed, one of the essentials of the family of God is to have "faith in the supreme human desire to do the will of God—to be like God." (*1586)

I have two footnotes in closing. One of the "presuppositions"—I cannot find the right concept—of sincere worship is that we are partly saying, as it were, to God: "I want to become more like you." If this is sincere, we cannot hold any ambition higher. A couple of quotes will amplify this theme. "Proper conduct is essential to progress by way of knowledge, through philosophy, to the spiritual heights of spontaneous worship." (*301) It is the divine mercy that we are accepted into the kingdom simply as children of faith. Nonetheless we are called to perfection. The meaning of that invitation is the long universe ascent (*22). But there is one value of perfection that can be realized in a preliminary way (*290) right now. When, after the Ordination Sermon, Jesus emphasized, "Be you perfect," he insisted that being righteous, by faith, must precede *doing* righteousness in daily life. (*1584) I take it that being righteous by faith is the way in which we can, in this life, satisfy the Master's call to be perfect. Being righteous by faith does not guarantee that any given decision will be right, but it does guarantee that we will be teachable. And being righteous is God's gift, not a self-conscious attitude of religio-moral superiority. The Adjuster has been referred to as "the betrothed Adjuster" (*66); this might suggest that the account of worship given here is more meaningful for one who has made the supreme decision for the will of God.

And, finally, a look ahead. "Worship is intended to anticipate the better life ahead and then to reflect these new spiritual significances back onto the life which now is." (*1616) Worship is a foretaste of eternity, in which we as a perfected brotherhood will voyage in the never-ending discovery of the infinity of the Universal Father. (*1174)

The final level of our exposition is the level of personality. The word "personality" is used in the text to mean the individual, the mortal, the physical, and the spiritual—the consciousness of mind, soul, and spirit, and their interaction in personality.

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Spiritual Sharing—A Pathway to God

by Melissa Wells

I'm Melissa Wells, and I'm from Tampa, Florida, where I work as a journalist. I am raising a 12-year-old son named Grayson and my 10-year-old daughter, Rebecca, who just might be lucky enough to make it to age eleven.

Besides being a long-time student of *The Urantia Book*, I have spent the past couple of years working the twelve steps from Alcoholics Anonymous.

At the time that I was offered the opportunity to speak at this meeting on the subject of the recognition of religious living in others, I had just recently committed to attending 90 meetings at AA in 90 days. Obviously, I wish to share with you the fact that I am an alcoholic. I do this without reservation, because it is only since realizing the stern nature of this disease and seeking help from my Higher Power in overcoming it that I have come to find a real measure of lasting peace within myself and harmony with my fellows.

The significance of attending 90 consecutive days of AA meetings is in the fact that it has given me the rich experience of sharing with others how God has provided spiritual solutions to life-threatening material difficulties. This has been an astounding quarter-year of my life. I have grown tremendously as a result of this spiritual experience. An increasing awareness of God at work in my own life has come during this investigation of the AA way of life.

I am not here to sell AA; but I have elected to talk about a technique faithfully applied by winners in AA that is quite relevant to our topic—spiritual sharing as a pathway to God. The purpose of an AA meeting is for recovering individuals to share their experience, strength, and hope for the benefit of those still suffering from the ravages of alcoholism and addiction.

Sharing in an AA meeting is something akin to becoming an oracle for those who have learned how to humble the ego and let their Higher Power speak through them. At each meeting, we read from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous: "Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now! Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon."

And from the Big Book of *Urantia*, Jesus said: "Salvation is not for those who are unwilling to pay the price of wholehearted dedication to doing my Father's will...every one who sincerely desires to find eternal life by entrance into the kingdom of God shall certainly find such everlasting salvation...And they who shall thus take the kingdom in spiritual power and by the persistent assaults of living faith...to all who are honest of heart and sincere in faith, it remains eternally true: 'Behold, I stand at the doors of men's hearts and knock, and

if any man will open to me, I will come in and sup with him and will feed him with the bread of life; we shall be one in spirit and purpose, and so shall we ever be brethren'...." (*1829:1-4)

Many times have I gone into a meeting feeling at odds with myself and the world, and by the end of it, I walked away with joy and serenity. All I had to do was go to the meeting, listen, and partake of the bread of life that awaits anyone who is honest, open, and willing to change.

If I really want to feel good and if I have pertinent experience on the topic presented at the meeting, I will share my own strength and hope. For in the act of sharing the small piece of truth that God has given me, I discover deeper levels of happiness, joy, and freedom from my addictions or the desire to medicate against pressing material difficulties.

It is so simple. It is so simple. I believe that in the midst of these believers is a power greater than themselves, the Spirit of Truth ministering healing to our very real and common afflictions—a spiritual bath perhaps. We experience the benefit of friendly fellowship with our human brothers and sisters, and a spiritual communion with our Higher Power who is leading us to health and happiness.

Each day in AA is a day of gratitude to God, who gives us the miracle of not picking up a drink—and a whole lot more. Each day through applying the spiritual principles of the twelve steps—which is a simple program based on the need for a moral inventory, confession of personal defects, restitution to those harmed, helpfulness to others, and the necessity of belief in and dependence upon God—we live life a little better and enjoy it a lot more. And we learn that God does for us in the mainstream of life that which we cannot do for ourselves.

I have had the pleasure of meeting individuals who have worked the AA way of life and have transformed into loving, happy, productive members of society. One such acquaintance, Bill W.—not the original Bill W. who founded AA, but "my" Bill W., as I like to call him—from whom I have learned very much about life and God and sobriety, was at one time so sick in his disease that he was incarcerated for armed robbery. Today, people sit at the edges of their chairs to listen to this man share his experience, strength, and hope. And in every sharing, he unfailingly says that we never, ever have to have another bad day, and that prayer guides us to everything we need in life. He exhorts us to each day ask God to help us to fear less and love more. And he speaks with an infectious tone of real serenity and lasting happiness. This former con artist is now a charming spiritualist—and he is giving his message of comfort at every opportunity to individuals hungry for the good news that God's will for us is to be happy, joyous, and free.

Somehow hearing Bill W. speak these words of light made them real in my own experience, for shortly after

I listened to him and desired to apply these truths to my life, the opportunity came for me to choose God's will along those lines. I had a clear-cut choice: I could react to a situation over which I had no control with my customary anger, resentment, and jealousy, or I could turn it all over to God and choose to be happy with my life just the way it is. I asked God for help in this moment—and my mind started recalling all the good things for which I have gratitude. As my feelings of self-pity and self-doubt turned into feelings of gratitude, a deep change occurred within me. I was genuinely happy. Only seconds before I had been completely miserable, but miraculously I became happy. Nothing in my external world had changed, but everything inside of me changed.

Since that time, I have an option as to whether or not I am happy. Many, many opportunities arise for me to become restless, irritable, discontented, but my choice for today and each day is to be happy. And the good news is that it is God's will for me, and so each day as I choose happiness, I choose God's will. It is so simple; it is so simple.

Before I ventured into the meeting rooms of AA, I presumed that God's will for me was something along the lines that if I wanted some person, place, or thing in my life, then automatically it was not God's will for me. For those who understand transactional analysis—with terms such as child, adult, and critical parent representing aspects of the human temperament—I had relegated to God the role of critical parent in my life. Now mind you, this was quite unconscious until I heard Bill W. enthusiastically say at a meeting that God's will is for us to be happy, joyous, and free. He convinced me by the consistent peace and joy which he carries. I learned from him the power of the spoken word, for now that I have accepted happiness as my choice for living life, I see the message laden in the gospel which Jesus gave his followers. It's written in the text of *The Urantia Book* to such an extent that I'm amazed at how blind I was before this experience. But it's true—I did not allow myself to see the joy of Jesus' life until I chose joy for myself. I was rooted in his sorrow, but now that is a thing of the past.

How could I miss these words from *The Urantia Book* all these years: "You shall not portray your teacher as a man of sorrows. Future generations shall know also the radiance of our joy, the buoyance of our good will, and the inspiration of our good humor. We proclaim a message of good news which is infectious in its transforming power. Our religion is throbbing with new life and new meanings. Those who accept this teaching are filled with joy and in their hearts are constrained to rejoice evermore. Increasing happiness is always the experience of all who are certain about God." (*1766)

And even this happiness is a gift from God—he helped me make the choice by directing me to the right place to hear a winner talk about happiness and freedom, and then helped me to actually apply it to my own way of living when the moment of truth came.

I have heard it said many times at a meeting that gratitude makes possible God's grace in our lives. And

I have heard the most delicate spiritual statements—tender feelings of love and praise for God—spoken by men and women from all walks of life. Most bizarre are the tender sharings of bikers and rednecks. Yes, even Bubba is taking hold of God in his life. One friend looks as though he would as soon punch you as talk to you—and I'm certain he did plenty of that before joining the AA way of life. His story includes the time he drove his car through a bar because of an unpaid bill. And then there was the time he rammed the bow of a Coast Guard cutter, refusing to follow their orders to dock his boat since he was drunk. And today, well into his recovery, he talks about God filling the empty hole in his heart that he used to try to fill with alcohol.

My favorite alcoholic from AA is Al, some kind of an alcoholic, as he always says. He reminds me of Dudley Moore's beloved character, Arthur. Of course, one must imagine Arthur in recovery to accurately visualize Al. Along with a slight physical resemblance, Al has an uncanny sense of humor, just like Arthur. Every time Al shares, he has us rolling on the floor with laughter. Al has taught me the healing nature of hilarity. By laughing at our selves in our disease, we are all the more able to enjoy the fruits of the spiritual life. And we are reminded of the Eleventh Commandment: "Thou shalt not take thyself too seriously."

One of Al's more thought-provoking comments is how thoroughly he has turned his problems over to God. Al says he doesn't have any problems, that today he gave God quite a few, but they are no longer his own. And what's more important, Al is letting God, the expert, solve these problems.

This goes against our human nature. But if we trust God with absolute abandon, then we enable God to work for us. The way Al puts it is: It's just like the story of Chicken Little, who tried to keep the sky from falling. Today, it's not my sky. If it's God's will for the sky to fall, let the mother fall. And if that sounds far fetched, let me present it in the context of teachings from *The Urantia Book*.

"Jesus portrayed the profound surety of the God-knowing mortal when he said: To a God-knowing kingdom believer, what does it matter if all things earthly crash? Temporal securities are vulnerable, but spiritual sureties are impregnable. When the flood tides of human adversity, selfishness, cruelty, hate, malice, and jealousy beat about the mortal soul, you may rest in the assurance that there is one inner bastion, the citadel of the spirit, which is absolutely unassailable; at least this is true of every human being who has dedicated the keeping of his soul to the indwelling spirit of the eternal God ... Such spirit-born individuals are so remotivated in life that they can calmly stand by while their fondest ambitions perish and their keenest hopes crash; they positively know that such catastrophes are but the redirecting cataclysms which wreck one's temporal creations preliminary to the rearing of the more noble and enduring realities of a new and more sublime level of universe attainment." (*1096:4-5)

That may sound like a far cry from "letting the mother fall," but the spirit in which they are spoken is the same.

It is God's reality, and ours to accept, adjust to, and enjoy. And the individuals I meet who are adept at that adventure in living are the spiritual heroes of my generation. The winners of AA have learned how to do this, and quietly, in those smoke-filled meeting rooms, they share their lessons with others.

Another delightful sort of spiritual sharing is the intimacy shared by two individuals. While I have been fortunate to have brief exchanges of spiritual sharing, I must admit that my disease of alcoholism has hampered me in the area of personal relationships. What I'm saying here is that I'm not much of an expert on this topic—unless you want me to talk about what NOT to do. So, I find it helpful to go to the fount of wisdom available to us in *The Urantia Book*. And I love to contemplate the beautiful outlook found in the philosophy of Rodan of Alexandria.

Rodan's lessons on spiritual friendships—which are worth any sacrifice requisite for their possession, in his opinion—include the notable statements: "Many noble human impulses die because there is no one to hear their expression. Truly, it is not good for man to be alone... Fear, envy, and conceit can be prevented only by intimate contact with other minds... Friendship enhances the joys and glorifies the triumphs of life. Loving and intimate human associations tend to rob suffering of its sorrow and hardship of much of its bitterness. The presence of a friend enhances all beauty and exalts every goodness." (*1775-6)

Rodan goes on to speak of how we can "enrich the soul by pooling our respective spiritual possessions... the mind of one augments its spiritual values by gaining much of the insight of the other."

It is a joy to discover another individual who has insight and wisdom to share, who is gifted at bringing the truth to light, and who does so with humor and good will. I have been fortunate to discover such a person in my own community. We have a friendship that brings to life these potent concepts delivered by Rodan of Alexandria. We both know that we want the best good for each other and that God brought us together.

The intimate, spiritual sharing discovered in the devotion of genuine friendship is the most exhilarating and comforting of human experiences. Parenting—another sort of spiritual sharing—ranks right up there, too. Both types of relationship evoke the best and the worst qualities of my character. As such, they mirror the parts of myself that are closest to God and the parts that will be shed as I grow into a mature person. With such intimacy, my total being is involved. In most social situations, I can skirt uncomfortable areas because I know that shortly the social situation will change. Not so with the spiritual friend relationship and the parent-child relationship. The commitment in these relations is life-long, and the good, the bad, and the ugly—or the sharing of the ebbing and flowing of personality strengths and weaknesses—are innate in our creative living.

It's challenging; it's an adventure. And I wouldn't miss this rich experience for anything. I agree with Rodan; it is worth any sacrifice requisite for its posses-

sion. But in order to maintain my emotional sobriety in such intimacy with another person, I need the foundation of another special relationship.

And this brings me to the next aspect of spiritual sharing I'd like to discuss.

In order to give the best of myself to the group or to another person, I need a daily time of closeness—a spiritual sharing—with God. Prayer and meditation are the avenues of communion that create the perception of a connection with my Higher Power. By dedicating a portion of my day to God, every other portion of the day is filled with an assurance that all is well—regardless of whether I think things are good or bad for that day. What I think or feel continually fluctuates, but deep within I know that all things work for the best for those who love God, and, accordingly, my first priority is to love God. The rest will take care of itself—remember, let go and let God.

In my AA program I have been taught to begin each day on my knees in prayer to ask God to show me the correct thought or action if I am confused or agitated throughout the day. And then at the end of the day I am instructed to hit my knees again and thank God for all the good that came during this day. Gratitude makes possible God's grace. His grace has always been there; our gratitude opens our awareness to his bounty.

One of my favorite prayers is that of St. Francis of Assisi. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book from AA uses this prayer as an aid to help alcoholics learn how to pray and meditate. I'd like to share this with you:

"We will want the good that is in us all, even in the worst of us, to flower and grow. Most certainly we shall need bracing air and an abundance of food. But first of all we shall want sunlight; nothing much can grow in the dark. Meditation is our step out into the sun. How, then, shall we meditate?

"Well, we might start like this. First let's look at a really good prayer. Its author was a man who for several hundred years now has been rated as a saint. We won't be biased or scared off by that fact, because although he was not an alcoholic, he did, like us, go through the emotional wringer. And as he came out the other side of that painful experience, this prayer was his expression of what he could then see, feel, and wish to become:

"Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

"O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen."

"It will help if we can drop all resistance to what our friend says. For in meditation, debate has no place. We rest quietly with the thoughts of someone who knows,

so that we may experience and learn.

"Let us become willing to partake and be strengthened and lifted up by the sheer spiritual power, beauty, and love of which these magnificent words are the carrier."

And as we learn how to pray and meditate, as we give our human consciousness to God and accept his presence within ourselves, we become more than we are. "When man gives God all that he has, God makes that man more than he is," says *The Urantia Book*. My personal experience is confirming this. And I see it at work in the lives of others.

Finally, I wish to speak of one of my very favorite persons and his approach to spiritual sharing that I've discovered in my study of *The Urantia Book*.

"Jesus spread good cheer everywhere he went. He was full of grace and truth... Jesus could help men so much because he loved them so sincerely. He truly loved each man, each woman, and each child. He could be such a true friend because of his remarkable insight—he knew so fully what was in the heart and in the mind of man. He was an interested and keen observer. He was an expert in

the comprehension of human need, clever in detecting human longings.

"Jesus was never in a hurry. He had time to comfort his fellow men 'as he passed by.' And he always made his friends feel at ease. He was a charming listener. He never engaged in the meddlesome probing of the souls of his associates. As he comforted hungry minds and ministered to thirsty souls, the recipients of his mercy did not so much feel that they were confessing to him as that they were conferring with him. They had unbounded confidence in him because they saw he had so much faith in them.

"He dispensed health and scattered happiness naturally and gracefully as he journeyed through life. It was literally true, 'he went about doing good.' And it behooves the Master's followers in all ages to learn to minister as 'they pass by'—to do unselfish good as they go about their daily duties." (*1874-5)

When it comes to spiritual sharing, remember: It's so simple; just let go and let God.

Fellowship with God, Now & Forever

by Gard Jameson & Florence Jameson, M.D.

In telling his followers the essence of his message to the planet, Jesus stated that the cardinal features of the gospel were:

1. The pre-eminence of the individual.
2. The will as the determining factor in man's experience.
3. Spiritual fellowship with God the Father.
4. The supreme satisfactions of the loving service of man.
5. The transcendancy of the spiritual over the material in human personality.

The midway author goes on to say that "this world has never seriously or sincerely or honestly tried out these dynamic ideas and divine ideals..." (*1863) Why not? Why do we resist fellowship with God? To a group of Greek believers in Jerusalem, Jesus said, "My Father sent me to the world to reveal his loving-kindness to the children of men, but those to whom I first came have refused to receive me...I have told them of sonship with joy, liberty, and life more abundant in the spirit...the leaders of my people deliberately blinded their eyes that they see not, and hardened their hearts...All these years have I sought to heal them of their unbelief that they might be recipients of the Father's eternal salvation." (*1902)

Jesus sought then and seeks now to heal our unbelief. He brings an amazing demonstration of divine love to the planet. And, for the most part, his revelation is rejected and resisted or superficially accepted. Once again two thousand years later an updated revelation is given to us. My question to each of you and to myself is, are we superficial recipients of this revelation? If we are earnest in our receipt of this revelation, to what degree? We are told that "the call to the adventure of building a new and transformed human society by means of the spiritual rebirth of Jesus' brotherhood of the kingdom should thrill all who believe in him as men have not been stirred since the days when they walked about on earth as his companions in the flesh." (*2084)

Jesus' parable of the sower is an objective observation of the human condition and its diversity. There are those on the planet who have hardened their hearts by either pride or fear, those who are superficial in their interest in the affairs of the kingdom, and those who in some degree exhibit real interest in a spiritual renaissance for this planet. Quoting the Prophet Jeremiah, Jesus told his followers that "the human heart is deceitful above all things...How easy for you to become self-deceived..." (*1609) Spiritual arrogance and pride follow closely on the heels of any epochal revelation. Consider the numerous examples in the first four epochal revelations. Such arrogance and pride disable all our attempts at genuine relationship, real fellowship with God and our brothers and sisters.

Jesus is the ultimate psychotherapist. He not only sees and describes the painful state of human nature. He provides us with a very simple prescription which is designed to handle virtually all of our neurotic conditions, our dysfunctional relationships and behavior. His message reveals that each of us has been given, through the unique gift of personality, a "will" which is the determining factor in each of our journeys toward fellowship with God. The question that faces each of us is whether we will stand up, recognize the ways in which we have been deceiving ourselves and others, using our "will" to enter into fellowship with God and our brothers and sisters, or we will allow that "will" to lie dormant and neuroses to build, overwhelming us and all of our relationships.

Jesus calls us to use our personal, individual "will" to overcome our superficiality. If the thought that you might be superficial bothers you, that is good. Because if it bothers you, like it bothers me, then we both might be induced to exercise our "wills," recognize our own self-deceit, adjust our attitudes and "enable" our "spiritual nature to begin" our "deliverance from the evils of inaction by the power-presence of living faith." (*1438, "The Young Man Who Was Afraid") Once you acknowledge your own lethargy and superficial nature some real healing can begin to take place. If you do not acknowledge any lethargy or superficiality, and self-deceit within your soul, then either your heart has been hardened by fear or pride, or you're extremely close to fusion.

Some Thoughts on Worship

"Worship is a personal communion with that which is divinely real, with that which is the very source of reality." (*2095)

Worship is our personal response to the Infinite Personality. It is our loving act of real appreciation for existence, for the opportunity of serving our Universal Father, the very source of that love which we share in our worship experience. It is a personal communication of love, signifying our adoration for the Eternal Creator. Worship is indeed the most profound response that we mortals are capable of to the Reality of our love experience.

Worship is an ever-present opportunity for the one who loves God. You "should rejoice in the recognition of the ever-present possibility of immediate communion with the bestowal spirit of the Father so intimately associated with your inner soul and your spiritualizing self." (*63)

Once we begin to fathom the nature of the personal communion possible with the Father, we recognize the importance of maintaining our communion. We are told that "the enlightened worlds all recognize and worship the Universal Father." (*21) Worship becomes then the

center of our religious experience, the very source of our inspiration to be of service in the Father's kingdom.

"Worship is the highest privilege and the first duty of all created intelligences." (*303) Worship is a privilege because it signifies the sublime and wonderful nature of our intimate relationship with the very source of reality. Worship is a duty because it is the basis of our relationship with the source of all reality, the Universal Father. Without worship, we lack that personal basis for knowing our true identity and eternal destiny, to become perfect even as our Father.

Worship is the greatest pleasure in all of existence. Worship is the most enjoyable experience experienceable! Worship takes us immediately, even now, into the presence of the Universal Father, the Source of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, Love Personified, and transforms our souls by its loving touch. Worship is our bridge to the Paradise Isle; it is the one experience which will ensure safe passage from our isolated planet on the backroads of infinity to the Home of Our Creator, Our God, Our Father.

Worship is transformative, "the act of a part identifying itself with the Whole; the finite striking step with eternity." (*1616) "Worship, taught Jesus, makes one increasingly like the being who is worshiped. Worship is a transformative experience whereby the finite gradually approaches and ultimately attains the presence of the Infinite." (*1641)

It is said of Jesus that "the secret of his 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) The secret of our religious lives will be our own sense of inner communion which we establish by our personal attention to prayer and sincere worship. Without this relationship to God, our lives would be very superficial indeed.

Worship is not a complicated technique. The greatest difficulty with worship is the commitment to want to know the Universal Father on an intimate basis. The degree of commitment ensures the success of the personal contact.

The experience of worship can arise in many, many ways. The following is only one suggested approach that may be of assistance to you.

1. Take a couple of minutes to quiet yourself down, follow your breathing for a moment or two, allowing yourself to be centered. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." (Psalm 4)

2. Move in faith into the center of your being, the

dwelling place of God. To move in faith to your center, you may use a centering "worship word," such as "Father," a single, simple word that expresses your faith-intent, begin to let your "worship word" repeat itself within your soul. "I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart." (Psalm 8)

3. Whenever you find in the course of your worship that you are pulled away from the center of your soul by some distraction, gently return to the Presence by the use of your "worship word." All sorts of thoughts may attempt to dominate your attention. Do not allow any of these thoughts to captivate your attention. "My eyes are ever toward the Lord for He will release my feet from the net." (Psalm 25)

4. You may wish to move from worship to prayer, or from worship to worshipful problem solving. If this is your intention, then move gently into your prayer or worshipful problem solving, recognizing that prayer and worshipful problem solving are not real worship. In worship, our intention is the act of loving God purely, with no element of self-interest. Let your real worship be pure.

With respect to our approach to fellowship, Jesus' message is plain and simple: worship and service, service and worship. These two elements of approach bring each of us into fellowship with God directly. But, they need to go hand in hand. The revelators make it clear that we seriously neglect our worshipful approach to God. Do you make worship a part of your daily routine? If not, then your approach is off. I cannot underscore too much the importance of daily worship in your spiritual journey. I understand that our time constraints make it difficult to fit in; when this is the case, have we not clearly misaligned our priorities in a serious manner? Should not there always be time for a personal rendezvous with God the Father, Michael of Nebadon and the Creative Mother Spirit, and attending guardian angels on a daily basis?

If we do not make time for worship are we not like Martha in the kitchen "cumbered by many trivial cares"; the rich young man, Matadormus, enslaved by his "love of himself and his riches"; the young man who needed to return home to comfort his family, trapped by excuse after excuse? There are no excuses with *The Urantia Book*; it's all there for us to see and be motivated by. We know with absolute certainty that the Father of all creation desires a relationship with each of us. The question to each of us—to you—is: Do you truly, in your heart of hearts, want fellowship with the Universal Father?

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Sharing One's Spiritual Life with One's Fellows

by Satu Sihvo

The Summing Up

The gospel of the kingdom is founded on the personal religious experience of the Jesus of Galilee. It was not the only way he shared his spiritual life. He showed forth the fruits of the spirit wherever he passed by. The secret of his unbroken communion with our Father was prayer and worship.

In other words Jesus was open inwards and outwards at the same time. His life is a unique and inspiring example of strong inner life with courageous outer life manifestations. Isn't that THE way we are called to go?

We need transforming inner life but we also need striving, conscious personal efforts to have it adjusted to the cosmic co-work in the middle of our everyday activities. Different small groups offer interesting possibilities for this. Groups can be well used for learning and spreading loving attitudes.

One example is the group started in Finland in August, 1989. The guidelines and principles come from the Center for Attitudinal Healing, Tiburon, CA. They are modified by the teachings of *The Urantia Book* and they are now carried out within a Lutheran parish. The group has weekly meetings.

The "Evergreens" are used to find a useful, spiritual point of view to face the problems of life.

The aim of the group is to encourage and support each of us

- to take care of one's personal relationship with God (interaction with the Father) and
- to take a positive attitude toward oneself and others (coincident interaction with other people).

Evergreens

1. The most essential thing in us is love. Love is eternal.
2. Love is present.
3. Prayer and worship give room for love.
4. Love transforms.
5. Giving and receiving are the same.
6. Health is inner peace—healing is letting go of fear.
7. We can aim at inner peace in all circumstances.
8. We can look for light rather than faults.
9. We can focus on the whole of life rather than the fragments.

10. We can learn to love ourselves and others by forgiving rather than judging.

11. We can perceive others extending love and/or asking for support.

12. We are students and teachers to each other.

Guidelines

The following is a modification from the guidelines of the Center for Attitudinal Healing:

1. We want to learn positive being and interaction.
2. Our purpose is to work on ourselves, support each other and practice nonjudgmental listening and sharing of our own experiences.
3. We understand that each person's learning process is important, not our judgment of it. Being accepted as we are makes it easier to accept others rather than judge them.
4. When we risk and expose our own emotional state, our experience gives a chance for finding unity.
5. We respect each other as unique persons and recognize that each knows himself/herself better than anyone else. If we listen to the voice within, we will find our best answer.
6. We are here to support each other's inner guidance and assist one another to focus on what is meaningful to each of us rather than to confront or preach.
7. We prefer sharing what works for us rather than giving advice. We let other people find their own answers.
8. The roles of student and teacher are interchangeable and fluctuate regardless of age or experience.
9. All information shared in group is confidential.
10. We agree to keep in mind that we always have a possibility to aim at peace rather than conflict, support love rather than fear.

"The idealization and attempted service of truth, beauty, and goodness is not a substitute for genuine religious experience—spiritual reality."
(*2095)

Returning to Family-Council Practices

by Bob Slagle, Ph.D.

"...[T]he family is the master civilizer." (*913:2)

It was a joy to have about seventy people attend our workshop on Family Meetings. A fair number of parents represented families which had attempted family meetings in years past but had faltered for one reason or another, temporarily given them up, then returned to family-council practices with subsequent success. To me this is often the story of family meeting experiments and one strong reason for my claim that family meetings are never a failure, although some families may give them up for a shorter or longer duration. From my experience as a family counselor, even holding just one family meeting is worthwhile and much better than having none at all.

But what do I mean by a "Family Meeting"? Simply getting together to gripe at one another or have Dad or Mom lay down the law like the T.V. Cosbys or Simpsons do is not likely a family meeting in the best sense of the name. Family meetings are appointed gatherings of all family members who live under one roof in order to make decisions by family consensus. Historically, consensus in a town meeting hall meant that everyone gave a unified voice vote of "yea" or "nay" and no written vote or record was counted. In family meetings, consensus means that every person, child or adult, has equal veto power over any decision and that for a decision to count everyone must give their voluntary, uncoerced and informed consent to that decision. Not necessarily an easy process, but amazingly powerful.

There seem to be three essentials to family meetings: consensual agreements, commitment by all parties to abide by those agreements, and keeping a written record of all such family decisions in a family meeting notebook. These essentials have been discovered through trial and error by many families from all parts of the world who have experimented with alternatives, such as majority rule, Father knows best, Mother knows best, children know best, permissiveness, and numerous tactics of avoidance and default of family responsibilities.

Beyond these three essential ingredients families have and should have great latitude in holding family meetings in many different styles, each uniquely suited to the specialness of any given family. Beyond the three essentials—consensus, commitment, and notebook—most of what I have to say consists of suggestions for practical success that I have acquired through working with families as clients over the past twenty years.

The timing, style, traditions, and content of your family meeting is your family's prerogative and should not be dictated by an outsider (in my opinion). For example, many families like and feel comfortable using the family meeting as the vehicle for awarding money (allowance) for home chores and family-related work. Other families are repelled by the idea of having money

or pay as a part of mutual family responsibilities based on love and caring. Some families accept corporeal punishment as an appropriate part of family meeting decisions. Other families hold this to be abuse and use other types of consequences.

The key commitment on the part of parents in holding family meetings is to foster a shift in sovereignty from parental sovereignty to family sovereignty, and to do this in a wise and developmentally appropriate manner. In other words, parents gradually give over their exclusive prerogative to "rule" their children by arbitrary authority to "rule" by the family as a whole. In this process children develop communication skills, teamwork, personal esteem, the ability to compromise, self-confidence, and the true exercise of will (volition). Meanwhile, parents gain a sense of relief from the burdens of arbitrary parenting, freedom to love their children more and reprimand them less. And the family gains a sense of identity, unity, mutual respect, and harmony.

I notice from the life of Jesus that he went far to avoid exercising arbitrary authority. He earned his sovereignty—every bit of it. I cannot help but wonder if families also are not intended to run on the same principles. As I recall, justice is always a group function. On page 1146:1 of *The Urantia Book*, a Melchizedek says, "The Master, when on earth, admonished his followers that justice is never a *personal* act; it is always a *group* function. Neither do the Gods, as persons, administer justice. But they perform this very function as a collective whole, as the Paradise Trinity." Does it not follow that true justice for a child must likewise be a group decision and not the personal act of a parent?

I find a strong mandate in *The Urantia Book* to encourage families of readers and nonreaders alike to institute the type of family meetings that Jesus held with his brothers and sisters here on earth two thousand years ago.

On page 941:7 the Chief of Seraphim of our planet states in the section on marriage and family life: "Human society would be greatly improved if the civilized races would more generally return to the family-council practices of the Andites." Who among us wouldn't like to see society "greatly improved"? This statement is made all the more profound when we realize that the Andites were themselves superhuman, being the progeny of the Adamites and the Nodites. (*871:8, 892:6) I also cannot help but notice that the author of this statement is among the highest of the angels, a Primary Supernaphim from Paradise. (*414:5) And this Primary Supernaphim further qualifies the nature of these family-council practices by saying, "They did not maintain the patriarchal or autocratic form of family government. They were very brotherly and associative, freely and frankly discussing every proposal and regulation of a family nature."

I would venture to say that woven throughout *The Urantia Book* are hundreds of clues, hints, and clearly explicit statements to support the idea that family meetings and a shift from parental sovereignty to family sovereignty affords the highest type of family living and family loving possible.

The tremendous importance of family relations is underscored many times in *The Urantia Book* (e.g., 931:1, 942:2). I am particularly impressed with Jesus' talk with John Mark that Wednesday the lad spent alone with God in the hills of Judea. Jesus makes it clear to me that our early family life affects us greatly, not merely in this life and on the mansion worlds, but forever. "A human being's entire afterlife is enormously influenced by what happens during the first few years of existence." (*1922:4) The importance of family life to our world is emphasized in comments made by the midwayers at the end of this section: "It is our sincere belief that the gospel of Jesus' teaching, founded as it is on the father-child relationship, can hardly enjoy a world-wide acceptance until such a time as the home life of the modern civilized peoples embraces more of love and more of wisdom." (*1922:5) Personally, I am convinced that family meetings provide a sure way to augment both love and wisdom in the home.

The authors of *The Urantia Book* refer to Jesus' type of family-council practices by several terms; on page 1494:5 they use the phrase "family meeting," which I use. In the section entitled "The Nineteenth Year," I find the most explicit directions regarding the essentials of family meetings. Herein I find that Jesus invariably used the positive method of exhortation, that he refrained from emphasizing evil by forbidding it, that family meeting and prayer time went together, that Jesus used wise discipline early in his siblings' training, that he never arbitrarily disciplined his brothers or sisters, and that a watchword of their family was "fairness." (*1401) It seems likely that many decisions relating to family matters were made by consensus, and that even punishment was agreed upon by all and awaited the voluntary agreement of even the offending person before being imposed. The story regarding little Jude is most poignant in this regard: "On three occasions when it was deemed wise to punish Jude for self-confessed and deliberate violations of the family rules of conduct, his punishment was fixed by the unanimous decree of the older children and was assented to by Jude himself before it was inflicted." (*1401:4)

I note a parallel between the consensual nature of Jesus' family meetings and the technique of adjudication on the highest superuniverse levels. When a crea-

ture has made a final and a complete choice of unreality regarding his universe destiny, the Universal Censor does not issue the extinction broadcast until there is consensus among all three of the Ancients of Days. In fact, annihilation must generally await the approval of the sinner himself. (*217:7, 615:5, 611:6) This form of consensual justice is all the more impressive to me when we consider that the Ancients of Days are the most powerful, perfect, divine, and mighty rulers in the time-space creations. (*210:1) Universal Censors impress me, too. On page 218:4 a Divine Counselor reveals that "...when a [Universal] Censor has spoken, no one else may speak, for the Censor has depicted the true and unmistakable total of all that has gone before. When he speaks, there is no appeal." Yet, despite all this power and perfection of judgment, our heavenly Father asks that no action be taken until the sinner himself approves of the justness of the verdict. What noble evidence that justice is always a group function! I can even envision Trinity actions as commensurate with family meeting agreements. Indeed a mighty admonition rests overhead if we as human parents seek to rule our children by personal authority in place of family sovereignty.

Another intriguing parallel to the consensual family meeting process is manifested by Michael and his consort, the universe Mother Spirit, in the kind of consensus they reach with each other in ruling a vast universe. "...Both the Son and the Spirit function together, and in no creative act does the one do aught without the counsel and approval of the other." (*369:3) As you may recall, at the jubilee of jubilees the Divine Spirit pledges to Michael fidelity and obedience, and he, in turn, acknowledges eternal dependence on her and equality with her as co-ruler of their domains. "And this becomes the transcendent pattern for the family organization and government of even the lowly creatures of the worlds of space. This is, in deed and in truth, the high ideal of the family...." (*369:1)

So it appears that from the lowest to the highest, from Urantia to Salvington and on to Uversa, the family meeting idea is the fabric of universe governance and justice. No wonder we are encouraged to return to the family-council practices of the Andites. In my book, *A Family Meeting Handbook: Achieving Family Harmony Happily*, I attempt to integrate the highest concepts from *The Urantia Book*, as they are found in many present day secular sources, with practical experiences in family living. I beseech parents to unburden themselves of the heaviness of personal authority and release themselves into the joy and light of consensual family meetings—family sovereignty—the Jesusonian approach to family harmony.

Tadpoles, Butterflies and Lightosity

by Chuck Burton

Back in March, I watched a made-for-TV version of *The Phantom of the Opera* broadcast on NBC. Not having seen the Broadway rendition—but planning to—I was curious about the story-line. I had seen clips of the old Lon Chaney horror flick and was expecting the usual run-of-the-mill, fright-night special. What I experienced was very different and, as a matter of fact, most inspirational. Instead of an evil monster who delighted in cruel and unusual murders, the Phantom turned out to be quite the opposite. Sure, there were some murders—an opera custodian and few pursuing policemen, and there was the incident when the chandelier crashed on the audience.

But, all in all, the Phantom possessed many noble human qualities. In fact, the Phantom was not inherently evil or even immoral. Due to a birth defect which deformed his face, he finds the world to be very cruel and intolerant—thus he wears a mask and hides from the world by living beneath the opera house. It is only after he hears the angelic voice of Christine that he decides to risk his cover and attempts to win her love. The Phantom gives her voice lessons and rescues her from an angry audience and eventually allows her to unmask him. The sight of his face causes her to faint and this crushes the poor Phantom. Nevertheless, the Phantom, at the close of the story actually triumphs, as it is Christine who realizes that it is her misconceptions about the nature of true beauty, her intolerance of a significant divergence from the norm, which is at the root of the problem. She and the Phantom sing a moving duet to the delight of the audience before the police eventually corner the Phantom and he is shot by a merciful father.

Hope none of you were waiting to see it the second time around!

Shortly after I saw this movie, I came across this quotation on page 597 of *The Urantia Book*:

"Only ethical consciousness can unmask the immorality of human intolerance and the sinfulness of fratricidal strife. Only a moral conscience can condemn the evils of national envy and racial jealousy. Only moral beings will ever seek for that spiritual insight which is essential to living the golden rule."

I don't want to dwell on a discussion of either ethical or moral consciousness, but I do want to focus on the subjects of human intolerance and spiritual insight, because I feel that they relate to the subject of this afternoon's segment, "Sharing One's Spiritual Life with One's Fellows."

When I first volunteered for this presentation, I said to myself, "Sure, I know something about the spiritual life." In my mind the spiritual life consists of one's sovereign relationship with the fragment of God within. One's outer life or his relationship with others is a direct reflection of this inner life. The more one loves God the

Father, the more spiritual fruit will that person bear, although the outward expression will be as varied as the configuration of snowflakes. It gets scary on the mansion worlds, as the morontia form will actually be visible and will reveal the inner self for all to see—sort of like a spiritual nudist colony—no masks allowed.

"Sharing One's Spiritual Life with One's Fellows" ...After a month of mulling this subject over, I realized that I would hardly be able to pass myself off as any type of an expert on the subject. I got scared. So I went to a study group consisting of a number of long-time readers of *The Urantia Book* for help. I sort of wanted to get them to unmask and I stated that I felt that the essence of the teachings dealt with this subject. Casting aside the lofty philosophy, cosmology and theology contained within 2097 pages, the rubber truly meets the road in our interactions with others—or so I stated. I asked each member present to explain briefly how they attempted to share their spiritual life. I thought you might find some of the responses interesting.

One study group member stated that sharing one's spirituality "required a new way of living and a brand new change in perspective." This response conjured up in my mind Jesus' injunction that those who are to enter the kingdom must first be reborn of the spirit.

Another person emphasized the value of listening in order to detect the needs of the person before her. This made me think of the quote, "To those Jesus taught the most, he said the least."

A third member stated that he took on service projects such as library placement of *Urantia Books* and visiting those who were ill or in hospitals. My first thought was that Jesus' whole bestowal mission was a sort of service project, as much of his time was spent ministering to the sick and the downtrodden.

Still another reader discussed the importance of all interpersonal relationships. Having first approached the teachings from a more or less intellectual standpoint and later having pursued organizational experience in the former URANTIA Brotherhood, she felt that just getting to know and trying to understand one's fellows was paramount. I couldn't help thinking that indeed it is our relationships which are our only true ends—everything else is scaffolding.

A fifth reader explained quite simply that he concentrated on just trying to be a good friend to those who would accept his friendship. This made me recall how each apostle considered the Master to be his best friend.

Finally, the last person said that he simply tried to always be happy and thankful for the gift of life and the assurance of sonship.

In all these accounts, it was my perception that not one person would have claimed that they had achieved any special expertise in this area of sharing one's spirituality.

I think they all would acknowledge some sort of tadpole station and admit that it required persistence to be successful. Interestingly enough, not one person attempted to equate sharing *The Urantia Book* with sharing one's spirituality. Nonetheless, it is from *The Urantia Book*, the most authoritative guide that I have ever known, that I derive my concept of spirituality. Furthermore, it is its teachings which help to provide me with a philosophical framework to interpret experience.

Now, if you will allow me—and I guess if you don't walk out, you're allowing me—I would like to tell you about three people that I have known.

Al Ceicel is an easygoing bricklayer with not more than a high school education—sort of an average Joe (or an average Al, in this case). I've known Al for about four years. He attends an Evangelical Free Church. He's a caring husband and an involved father. I met him through a YMCA program called "Indian Princesses," which is a program for fathers and daughters. He and I revived a tribe that was on the brink of extinction. As chief, Al was like a big kid. He liked wearing Indian clothes; he attended long house meetings, representing our tribe, where he planned and coordinated events—camp-outs, roller-skating parties, sock-hops and pet shows—for a nation of 14 tribes consisting of over 200 dads and daughters. He likes to make Indian gear and spends a lot of his free time making head-dresses for nation officers and mendellas, or leather insignias, for each of the other tribes. This YMCA program was better because of him, yet Al never sought any personal recognition. He made his contribution quietly without fanfare.

As I got to know Al better, I found that he had other outlets for social service. He did volunteer work for the Iwanas, the name of his church's youth association. One Saturday he applied his bricklaying skills to constructing an elevated brick retaining wall for a flower bed, which anchored an announcement marquee. In addition, Al assists the local grade school in a Market-Day Program and delivers food to those parents who ordered it. Al finds time to do this while running a growing business that employs over one hundred workers. Also, he has a retarded son who requires a regular dosage of ritalin to curb hyperactivity. Never complains...quite a guy, Al Ceicel!

During my senior year in college, I was accepted for an overseas seminar at the University of Copenhagen. Instead of dormitories, American students were placed with Danish families, and that is where I met Sigrid Hansen—my "Danish mother." My roommate and I were told immediately upon arrival that we were to call her "Mor" and her husband "Far"—Danish for Mother and Father. The second day in Denmark was my birthday, and Mor threw a special party for me by inviting her children and a few of the neighbors.

While in Denmark for four months, we literally became part of the Hansen's family. She cooked breakfasts in the morning, packed sack lunches and served dinner in the evenings. We said prayers at dinner and had moments of silence. Every evening at 8:00, each member of the family stopped whatever they were doing and,

according to Danish custom, sat down together again for tea and a pastry. Unlike American families, this was a special time set aside for all of us to share our day—laugh, exchange ideas, get help in navigating Copenhagen, or hear about the history and culture of Denmark. Most of our conversations were with Mor, who spoke French and German, as well as English. Far, Ludwig Hansen, spoke no English (although he knew German). We smiled a lot and I spoke on occasion with him in broken German.

In the spring we took a family vacation for a weekend at a place called MonsKlint, kind of a White Cliffs of Denmark. It wasn't long before Gerry, my roommate, and I discovered that we were Mor's seventeenth and eighteenth American sons. She was a woman of about sixty and had been doing this sort of thing for eight years. The last time I heard from her was about seven years ago when she was on numbers forty-one and forty-two. She was truly an amazing person, and she enriched my overseas experience immeasurably.

One other thing worthy of note: Our rooms were in a finished attic—complete with kitchenette and bathroom. It was about a week before we left Denmark that we learned over tea that when the Nazis occupied Denmark, Sigrid and Ludwig and their three children lived up there for over three years. The occupying Nazi officers lived in the house proper. One of the most joyous days of their lives was when the Allied troops liberated Denmark. Maybe her interest in American students initially was motivated by a desire to repay the U.S. for this effort...but I'm only speculating.

I want to relate one more experience I had during my college years. I had the good fortune to work as a deckhand on a brigantine in the Caribbean. Does anyone know what a brigantine is? Well, it's like an old pirate ship—square sails on the front mast and a gaff rig on the aftermast. It's about 120 feet long, carries about 18 passengers, has 12 different sails and a jillion ropes. During the four-plus months I was on the ship, we sailed and motored from the Virgin Islands to Trinidad, went into dry dock for the worst month of the hurricane season, and spent the last three months island-hopping up the Lesser Antilles. This story is about the man who owned and ran the ship, Captain Arthur Kimberly.

The Captain was about 50-plus, short, crewcut, weighed about 150 pounds with an average build and was strong as an ox for his size. He had an archaic Masters of the Seas degree (nobody gets these any more) from some nautical school in Mystic, Connecticut. If there ever was a guy in the world who knew everything there was to know about sailing, it was he. He knew about the harbors in the Gallapagos and the sunken reefs in Tahiti and how to navigate Cape Horn; he knew the names of all the woodhulled ships still in existence; he knew about the wrecks of the Spanish galleys and exploits of Drake, Hawkins and other sea dogs. It seemed he had read every novel ever written about the sea from *Treasure Island* to *Wolf Larson*. He was highly defensive of Captain Bly and scorned Mr. Christian for his treacherous actions. He enjoyed his rum in the eve-

ning, and he enjoyed telling off-color stories to the crew. But most of all, he loved the sea, which had been his life since dropping out of high school, and he loved his ship. He had been married on it, and he sailed around the world twice on it in the ten years or so that he had owned it. The Brigantine Romance was his child; he had no other.

As for his crew, he seemed to hold the attitude that it was their good fortune to be even allowed to set foot on it. We were paid \$3.00 plus room and board per day. We worked from 6:00 a.m. sometimes until 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. We night-sailed and we had to come to at 2:00 a.m. to take our turn at the wheel. You had to call each rope and each part of the ship by its proper and correct name or get chewed out. You couldn't call the foc's'l of the ship the "bedroom" or the bulwark the "wall," and all hell would break loose if you called the head the "bathroom." There were different knots for different situations, and you had to learn them all. Sometimes the Captain would climb up the eighty-foot mast to check the royal or top square sail. If he ever found a granny, you'd be on KP for a week.

After the first month, just like a kid at camp, I counted the days until I got off the ship. I worked hard and did as I was told (with a few exceptions), but I longed for a McDonald's and couldn't wait to drive a land ship, which didn't require the effort or the maintenance of this remnant of 1830.

But, you know, when I did get off that ship, I knew that I had had an experience that few have had. I had seen a part of the world and a way of life which were unique. When I got off that ship, I was stronger physically than I had ever been.

One more thing about Captain Kimberly...well, the Captain had one bad eye. He didn't wear a patch or anything, but wherever he looked, the pupil and the iris sort of just pointed down and in. I had heard from his wife that he lost it about ten years earlier, when a taut rope snapped because the crew member tied a granny instead of a clove hitch. You know, Captain had his own ships for some 25 years and he had never had a major accident at sea. I don't know where he is now, but I do know that if he had been at the helm of the Exxon Valdez, there would have been no oil spill. Arthur Kimberly wasn't what one would call a warm, gentle person, yet he possessed a unique passion for life and a quest for perfection in his arena and he actively sought to share those traits, as well as his knowledge of the sea, with all who stepped aboard.

I share my personal experiences of these people with you because the experience of knowing them enriched my life. All three are of ordinary intelligence with varied levels of education and religious background, yet all, I feel, are in their own way spiritual. None of them knows a darned thing about reflectivity, fusion, Orvonton or the absonite level of reality. None of them in their wildest dreams (or nightmares) would ever imagine or expect I would praise their contributions to my life. Yet, in their own way, each has given me a gift which was both inspirational and experientially priceless.

In no way am I trying to denigrate readers of *The Urantia Book*. I could just as easily recall episodes about how my association with a number of *Urantia Book* students has added to my personal growth and enhanced my life. What I am attempting to illustrate is that the Spirit of God is active in all of us and is able to find expression in a multitude of ways.

The Urantia Book on page 2059 lists eleven ways to gauge spirituality—"By their fruits shall you know them." I have known many other people who, in my opinion, were way ahead of me, yet they would either take no interest in or have any use for *The Urantia Book* or would wholeheartedly reject it. What is the difference? What does this say? To me it underscores what has often been said: *The Urantia Book* is a means, a tool, a guide to an end, and not an end in itself; that differences among religionists largely stem from differences in theology and philosophy. The intellectual realm, the domain of the mind, is quite different from that of the spirit.

There once was a charismatic, ecumenical teacher shortly after the turn of the century, who had an interest in science—specifically the speed of electricity. So he asked twenty-five of his students, representing most of the religions of the world, to line up on a damp cellar floor and join hands. He then proceeded to wire the first and turn the switch releasing the current. There were three lessons which could be drawn from the experiment: (1) the teacher obviously was either very persuasive or very powerful; (2) electricity did indeed travel quickly; and (3) the unity exhibited by the diversity of those religionists at that particular moment in time has never before or since been seen on this planet.

One thing *The Urantia Book* does as a tool is to expand the concepts about the nature of God the Father and the functioning of Deity. Said Jesus at Jotapata, "Worship makes one increasingly like the being who is worshipped." (*1641) Thus the better one's understanding and knowledge about the Creator, the First Source and Center, the Heavenly Father, the better will one be able to discern his will and become more God-like and hence more spiritual. C.S. Lewis has a story about this which I will share in my closing.

And where better than an epochal revelation presented in this century does one find a more unified, comprehensive or a more authoritative presentation about the nature of God? If we indeed believe this, that we possess the highest truth about Deity, how are we to avoid the chosen people syndrome and its accompanying intolerance and arrogance? Have you ever observed a child after he gets his hands on a flashlight for the first time? I think that his first act, and this is universal, is to point the flashlight directly into your eyes so that you become temporarily blinded by the light.

The history books are filled with examples of religious groups who felt that they alone knew the truth. Of course, *The Urantia Book* authors speak frequently about the chosen people attitude of the Jewish people at the time of Jesus. The story about the Good Samaritan focused on this attitude as did the arrogant Hebrew belief in a special Messiah who would oust the Romans

for them. Later in history we get to the revolt against the Roman Catholic Church, known as the Reformation. It was the belief of such reformers as Martin Luther that the *individual* could read the Scriptures to discover truth—not be dependent upon an ecclesiastical hierarchy who believed themselves to be the special ambassadors of God and who alone could interpret and determine truth. The Inquisition epitomizes the intolerance of this era.

The Puritans of Massachusetts Bay are a strange phenomenon. Because their desire to cleanse the Anglican Church of its vestiges of Roman Catholicism apparently failed, many left for the New World. And low and behold, before long, in their attempt to establish a Zion in the wilderness, as God's chosen people, they instead established a theocracy. Free thinkers like Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson and Thomas Hooker fled or were expelled, and they initiated their own ways of worshiping. Instead of unifying religionists, the strict interpretation of truth and rigid social requirements backfired on their leaders. The witch-hunts of Salem marked the apex of intolerance and the beginning of the end of Puritan control.

The Mormons of the mid-nineteenth century are one last illustration. These people believed that they were the special recipients of divine truth, *The Book of Mormon*. Their special book was taken from gold tablets discovered by Joseph Smith in 1830, and thousands of converts soon after joined this new faith. However, each time they tried to establish their own "ideal society," they were persecuted and driven off. In Kirkland, Ohio; in Independence, Missouri; in Navoo, Illinois. It wasn't just the practice of polygamy but rather their exclusivity and chosen-people attitude that brought on conflict and forced most to migrate westward to Utah.

Jesus spoke to Nathaniel (*1768) regarding the authority of the Scriptures, and the proclaimed authority of religious leaders to interpret them. "Nathaniel, never forget, the Father does not limit the revelation of truth to any one generation or to any one people. Many earnest seekers after the truth have been, and will continue to be, confused and disheartened by these doctrines of the perfection of the Scriptures.

"The authority of truth is the very spirit that indwells its living manifestations, and not the dead words of the less illuminated and supposedly inspired men of another generation. And even if these holy men of old lived inspired and spirit-filled lives, that does not mean that their words were similarly spiritually inspired. Today we make no record of the teachings of this gospel of the kingdom lest, when I have gone, you speedily become divided up into sundry groups of truth contenders as a result of the diversity of your interpretation of my teachings. For this generation it is best that we live these truths while we shun the making of records.

"Mark you well my words, Nathaniel, nothing which human nature has touched can be regarded as infallible. Through the mind of man divine truth may indeed shine forth, but always of relative purity and partial divinity. The creature may crave infallibility, but only the Creators possess it.

"But the greatest error of the teaching about the Scriptures is the doctrine of their being sealed books of mystery and wisdom which only the wise minds of the nation dare to interpret. The revelations of divine truth are not sealed except by human ignorance, bigotry, and narrow-minded intolerance."

I believe that often ignorance is a cause of intolerance. Sometimes the desire for power is the culprit. But why do intelligent, unselfish and sincere people desirous for the greatest good become intolerant? I believe that this often stems from elevating one truth to an absolute—or to a level higher than it merits. I believe that in the human desire to simplify life, to make sense out of it, man tends to embrace easy and simple formulas for living. "Actions speak louder than words" was and still is one of my formulas I use to determine if someone is being sincere and genuine. But this adage was taught to me before I was ten. Sometimes words and actions are one and the same. Obviously, the tool is simplistic and has its limitations.

If you take any virtue to its extreme, it ceases to be a virtue. For example, one can over-love someone to the point of smothering them. One can be overly sincere and hence tactless. One can be too meek and thus become a weakling. Being overly courageous can result in foolhardiness. In fact, if you take any fruit of the spirit to its extreme it becomes overly ripe or rotten fruit.

In the writing of "The Acme of Religious Living," every virtue, every fruit exhibited by the Master is qualified or tempered: "enthusiastic, not fanatical"; "emotionally active, not flights"; "imaginative but practical"; "frank, but unerringly fair"; "courageous, not reckless"; "prudent, not cowardly"; "sympathetic, not sentimental"; "unique, not eccentric"; "pious, not sanctimonious"; "cheerful, not blindly optimistic"; "generous, not wasteful"; "candid, but kind."

When I was a kid, I was constantly being told that I didn't know when to quit. Whether it was asking for something or teasing or just trying to get my way. You know, I still don't know when to quit—either when speaking before a group or determining the limits of virtues—and I don't think any of us really knows. I guess this is where the Adjuster comes in to assist each of us to become more balanced, more unified and more symmetrical, sort of like a butterfly.

But when I'm not quite sure what's coming from within, I believe the best refuge is to fall back on simple sincerity. Sincerity, more sincerity and more sincerity are indeed "the keys to the kingdom." It doesn't always work and often failure may result, but if one sincerely attempts to learn from his mistakes, he will grow and the quality of his decisions will improve and he will better align his will to that of the Father's.

There is an old Chinese tale about the woman whose only son died. In her grief, she went to the holy man and said, "What prayers, what magical incantations do you have to bring my son back to life?" Instead of sending her away or reasoning with her, he said to her, "Fetch me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow. We will use it to drive the sorrow out of your

life." The woman set off at once to *sincerely* search for that magical mustard seed. She came first to a splendid mansion, knocked at the door, and said, "I am looking for a home that has never known sorrow. Is this such a place? It is very important to me." They told her, "You've certainly come to the wrong place," and began to describe all the tragic things that had recently befallen them. The woman said to herself, "Who is better able to help these poor unfortunate people than I, who have had misfortune of my own?" She stayed to comfort them, then went on in her search for a home that had never known sorrow. But wherever she turned, in hovels and palaces, she found one tale after another of sadness and misfortune. Ultimately, she became so involved in ministering to other people's grief that she forgot about her quest for the magical mustard seed, never realizing that it had in fact driven the sorrow out of her life.

I found it interesting to recently read Winston Churchill's physician biographer, Lord Moran, and what he wrote about why a proud nation followed this man through the long crisis of World War II.

"He was not, I think, a sage. He does not seem to have been a soldier of genius. He was not, perhaps, a born administrator. What is the ultimate secret of Winston Churchill's mastery over men?...Sincerity is the one quality I would have chosen as most typical of him. He was indeed the most truthful of politicians."

At Ramah, Jesus spoke to an old Greek philosopher (*1641): "For more than an hour Jesus taught this Greek the saving truths of the gospel of the kingdom. The old philosopher was susceptible to the Master's mode of

approach, and being sincerely honest of heart, he quickly believed this gospel of salvation."

Jesus response to the apostles after this teaching episode was:

"My children, marvel not that I was tolerant of the Greek's philosophy. True and genuine inward certainty does not in the least fear outward analysis, nor does truth resent honest criticism. You should never forget that intolerance is the mask covering up the entertainment of secret doubts as to the trueness of one's belief. No man is at any time disturbed by his neighbor's attitude when he has perfect confidence in the truth of that which he wholeheartedly believes. Courage is the confidence of thoroughgoing honesty about those things which one professes to believe. Sincere men are unafraid of the critical examination of their true conviction and noble ideals."

I would like to close with one last tale borrowed from C.S. Lewis, author and theologian. And you probably guessed it...it's about masks and becoming spiritual. There once was a man with few friends who, at a certain stage in his life, took a long hard look in the mirror and realized he was quite ugly. He made a conscious decision to wear a mask that made him look much nicer than he really was. He had to wear this mask for years and when he finally took it off, his face had almost magically transformed itself to fit the mask to a tee. He had become truly beautiful. What had begun as a disguise had become a reality. C.S. Lewis utilizes this story to embellish a concept which he terms "dressing up as Christ" in order to join him as a son of God. To me, this tale is just about achieving lightosity.