



Feeling
The Presence Of God
Study Aid



In The Garden

I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear,
Falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.

He speaks, and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
And the melody
That He gave to me,
Within my heart is ringing.

– *C. Austin Miles*

Sufi Dance

I'm willing to open my eyes,
To see your innocence,
The child of God that you are,
A mirror of myself.

☐ WHAT IS IT?

It is:[p. 24] Those who know God have experienced the fact of his presence; such God-knowing mortals hold in their personal experience the only positive proof of the existence of the living God which one human being can offer to another. The existence of God is utterly beyond all possibility of demonstration except for the contact between the God-consciousness of the human mind and the God-presence of the Thought Adjuster that indwells the mortal intellect and is bestowed upon man as the free gift of the Universal Father.

It is:[p. 64] God lives in every one of his spirit-born sons.

The Paradise Sons always have access to the presence of God, "the right hand of the Father," and all of his creature personalities have access to the "bosom of the Father." This refers to the personality circuit:

- ☐ whenever,
- ☐ wherever, and
- ☐ however contacted, or otherwise entails
- ☐ personal,
- ☐ self-conscious contact and
- ☐ communion with the Universal Father,
- ☐ whether at the central abode or
- ☐ at some other designated place, as on one of the seven sacred spheres of Paradise.

It is:[p. 195] Human self-consciousness implies:

- ☐ the recognition of the reality of selves other than the conscious self and
- ☐ further implies that such awareness is mutual;
- ☐ that the self is known as it knows.

This is shown in a purely human manner in man's social life.

... you cannot become so absolutely certain of a fellow being's reality as you can of the reality of the presence of God that lives within you.

The social consciousness is not inalienable like the God-consciousness;

- ☐ it is a cultural development ...
- ☐ is dependent on knowledge,
- ☐ symbols, ...
- ☐ the contributions of the constitutive endowments of man—
- ☐ science,
- ☐ morality, ...
- ☐ religion...
- ☐ these cosmic gifts, socialized, constitute civilization.

It is:[p. 505] The compound manipulators... is the adventurous group of well-trained beings... dedicated to the functional association ... of divine energy manifested throughout the universes as physical, mindal, and spiritual energies. They are ...in reality seeking to discover the universe presence of God the Supreme ... having in recent times met with some success.

It is:[p. 1001] To some individuals prayer is the calm expression of gratitude;

- ☐ to others, a group expression of praise, social devotions;
- ☐ sometimes it is the imitation of another's religion,
- ☐ while in true praying it is the sincere and trusting communication of the spiritual nature of the creature with the anywhere presence of the spirit of the Creator.

It is:[p. 1193] The Mystery Monitors are undoubtedly the bestowal of the Universal Father,

- ☐ the reflection of the image of God abroad in the universe...admonished men... should be renewed in the spirit of their minds;
- ☐ that they become new men who, like God, are created in righteousness and
- ☐ in the completion of truth.
- ☐ The Adjuster is the mark of divinity, the presence of God.
- ☐ The "image of God" does not refer to physical likeness nor to
- ☐ the ...limitations of material creature endowment but... to
- ☐ the gift of the spirit presence of the Universal Father in the ...bestowal of the Thought Adjusters upon the humble creatures of the universes.

It is:[p. 2087] In the Master's life ... discover a new and higher type of ... religion based on personal spiritual relations with the Universal Father ... wholly validated by the supreme authority of genuine personal experience. This living faith ... was more than an intellectual reflection, and ... not a mystic meditation.

It is:[p. 2088] Jesus brought to God, as a man of the realm, the greatest of all offerings: the consecration and dedication of his own will to the majestic service of doing the divine will. Jesus always and consistently interpreted religion wholly in terms of the Father's will. When you study the career of the Master, as concerns prayer or any other feature of the religious life, look not so much for what he taught as for what he did. Jesus never prayed as a religious duty.

To him prayer was:

- ☐ a sincere expression of spiritual attitude,
- ☐ a declaration of soul loyalty,
- ☐ a recital of personal devotion,
- ☐ an expression of thanksgiving,
- ☐ an avoidance of emotional tension,
- ☐ a prevention of conflict,
- ☐ an exaltation of intellection,
- ☐ an ennoblement of desire,
- ☐ a vindication of moral decision,
- ☐ an enrichment of thought,
- ☐ an invigoration of higher inclinations,
- ☐ a consecration of impulse,
- ☐ a clarification of viewpoint,
- ☐ a declaration of faith,
- ☐ a transcendental surrender of will,
- ☐ a sublime assertion of confidence,
- ☐ a revelation of courage,
- ☐ the proclamation of discovery,
- ☐ a confession of supreme devotion,
- ☐ the validation of consecration,
- ☐ a technique for the adjustment of difficulties,
- ☐ and the mighty mobilization of the combined soul powers to withstand all human tendencies toward selfishness, evil, and sin.
- ☐ He lived just such a life of prayerful consecration to the doing of his Father's will and
- ☐ ended his life triumphantly with just such a prayer.

The secret of his unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God;

- ☐ ... he attained it by intelligent prayer and
- ☐ sincere worship—unbroken communion with God...

☐ HOW DO WE DO IT?

Method:[p. 89] More of the character and merciful nature of the Eternal son of mercy you should comprehend as you meditate on the revelation of these divine attributes which was made in loving service by your own Creator Son, onetime Son of Man on earth, now the exalted sovereign of your local universe--the Son of Man and the Son of God.

Method:[p. 948] When the worship urge is admonished and directed by wisdom meditative and experiential thinking it then begins to develop into the phenomenon of real religion. When the seventh adjutant spirit, the spirit of wisdom, achieves effective ministrations, then in worship man begins to turn away from nature and natural objects to the God of nature and to the eternal Creator of all things natural.

Method:[p. 1381] In the meantime, Jesus had remained in the temple throughout the afternoon, listening to the discussions and enjoying the more quiet and decorous atmosphere, ... He visited very little during the evening, spending much of the time alone in the garden meditating.

Method:[p. 1382] When this, his second day in the temple, was finished, again he went to Bethany for the night. And again he went out in the garden to meditate and pray. It was apparent that his mind was concerned with the contemplation of weighty problems.

Method:[p. 1387] ... he made frequent trips to the top of the hill to the northwest of Nazareth for prayer and meditation. He was gradually becoming more self-conscious of the nature of his bestowal on earth.

Method:[p. 1393] ...the rigorous experience of supporting his family was a sure safeguard against his having overmuch time for idle meditation or the indulgence of mystic tendencies.

Method:[p. 1416] ... his seasons of deep meditation were often broken into ...always was Jesus ready to postpone the contemplation of his future work for the world and the universe that he might share in the childish joy and youthful gladness of these youngsters ...

Method:[p. 1446] "Out of a pure heart shall gladness spring forth to the Infinite; all my being shall be at peace with this supermortal rejoicing. My soul is filled with content, and my heart overflows with the bliss of peaceful trust. I have no fear; I am free from anxiety. I dwell in security, and my enemies cannot alarm me. I am satisfied with the fruits of my confidence. I have found the approach to the Immortal easy of access. I pray for faith to sustain me on the long journey; I know that faith from beyond will not fail me. I know my brethren will prosper if they become imbued with the faith of the Immortal, even the faith that creates modesty, uprightness, wisdom, courage, knowledge, and perseverance. Let us forsake sorrow and disown fear. By faith let us lay hold upon true righteousness and genuine manliness. Let us learn to meditate on justice and mercy. Faith is man's true wealth; it is the endowment of virtue and glory.

Method:[p. 1448] "God is the sure refuge of every good man when in need; the Immortal One cares for all mankind. God's salvation is strong and his kindness is gracious. He is a loving protector, a blessed defender. Says the Lord: 'I dwell within their own souls as a lamp of wisdom. I am the splendor of the splendid and the goodness of the good. Where two or three gather together, there am I also.' The creature cannot escape the presence of the Creator. The Lord even counts the ceaseless winking of every mortal's eyes; and we worship this divine Being as our inseparable companion. He is all-prevailing, bountiful, omnipresent, and infinitely kind. The Lord is our ruler, shelter, and supreme controller, and his primeval spirit dwells within the mortal soul. The Eternal Witness to vice and virtue dwells within man's heart. Let us long meditate on the adorable and divine Vivifier; let his spirit fully direct our thoughts. From this unreal world lead us to the real! From darkness lead us to the light! From death guide us to immortality!

Method:[p. 1512] Jesus did not go into retirement for the purpose of fasting and for the affliction of his soul. He was not an ascetic, and he came forever to destroy all such notions regarding the approach to God... Jesus was then wholly self-conscious concerning his relation to the universe of his making and also to the universe of universes, supervised by the Paradise Father, his Father in heaven... he desired to be away for a season of quiet meditation so that he could think out the plans and decide upon the procedures for the prosecution of his public labors in behalf of this world and for all other worlds in his local universe.

Method:[p. 1532] That night Jesus ...sat out on the lake shore thinking, thinking until the dawn of the next day. In the long hours of that night of meditation Jesus came clearly to comprehend ... to leave the final untangling of this complicated situation to the outworking of the Father's will.

Method:[p.1620] Jesus taught the twelve always to pray in secret; to go off by themselves amidst the quiet surroundings of nature or to go in their rooms and shut the doors when they engaged in prayer.

Method:[p. 1688] ...very few ... were up for breakfast; so he went out by the seaside and sat alone in the ...old fishing boat ...and meditated on the next move to be made in the work of extending the kingdom. But the Master was not to be alone for long...people ...began to arrive... and were clamoring for attention.

Method:[p. 1734] This ...day was one of great quiet. The evangelists and apostles were... absorbed in their meditations regarding the discourses of the Master on religion.

Method:[p. 1756] ...was deeply chagrined at this ill-advised effort and its dismal failure... called ... aside for conference and prayer. After this season of meditation...

Method:[p. 1774] But the greatest of all methods of problem solving I have learned from Jesus, your Master. I refer to that which he so consistently practices, and which he has so faithfully taught you, the isolation of worshipful meditation. In this habit of Jesus' going off so frequently by himself to commune with the Father in heaven is to be found the technique, not only of gathering strength and wisdom for the ordinary conflicts of living, but also of appropriating the energy for the solution of the higher problems of a moral and spiritual nature. But even correct methods of solving problems will not compensate for inherent defects of personality or atone for the absence of the hunger and thirst for true righteousness.

Method:[p. 1777] The effort toward maturity necessitates work, and work requires energy. Whence the power to accomplish all this? The physical things can be taken for granted, but the Master has well said, "Man cannot live by bread alone." Granted the possession of a normal body and reasonably good health, we must next look for those lures which will act as a stimulus to call forth man's slumbering spiritual forces. Jesus has taught us that God lives in man; then how can we induce man to release these soul-bound powers of divinity and infinity? How shall we induce men to let go of God that he may spring forth to the refreshment of our own souls while in transit outward and then to serve the purpose of enlightening, uplifting, and blessing countless other souls? How best can I awaken these latent powers for good which lie dormant in your souls? One thing I am sure of: Emotional excitement is not the ideal spiritual stimulus. Excitement does not augment energy; it rather exhausts the powers of both mind and body. Whence then comes the energy to do these great things? Look to your Master. Even now he is out in the hills taking in power while we are here giving out energy. The secret of all this problem is wrapped up in spiritual communion, in worship. From the human standpoint it is a question of combined meditation and relaxation. Meditation makes the contact of mind with spirit; relaxation determines the capacity for spiritual receptivity. And this interchange of strength for weakness, courage for fear, the will of God for the mind of self, constitutes worship. At least, that is the way the philosopher views it.

Method:[p. 1942] After they had...meditation for a few moments ... individuals, contend not among yourselves as to who shall be greatest. Be you all as brethren. And when the kingdom grows to embrace large groups of believers, likewise should you refrain from contending for greatness or seeking preferment between such groups."

Method:[p. 2047] Do not neglect to minister to the weak, the poor, and the young...remember always that God is no respecter of persons. Serve your fellow men even as I have served you; forgive your fellow mortals even as I have forgiven you. Let experience teach you the value of meditation and the power of intelligent reflection."

Method:[p. 2048] Then Jesus ... asking, "... do you trust me?" ... "Yes, Master, I trust you with all my heart." Then said Jesus: "... if you trust me more, you will be less impatient with your brethren. If you will trust me, it will help you to be kind to the brotherhood of believers. Learn to weigh the consequences of your sayings and your doings. Remember that the reaping is in accordance with the sowing. Pray for tranquillity of spirit and cultivate patience. These graces, with living faith, shall sustain you when the hour comes to drink the cup of sacrifice. But never be dismayed; when you are through on earth, you shall also come to be with me."

Method:[p. 2064] The bestowal of the Spirit of Truth was independent of all forms, ceremonies, sacred places, and special behavior by those who received the fullness of its manifestation. When the spirit came ... they were simply sitting there, having just been engaged in silent prayer. The spirit was bestowed ... It was not necessary ... to go apart to a lonely place for years of solitary meditation in order to receive the spirit. For all time, Pentecost disassociates the idea of spiritual experience from the notion of especially favorable environments.

Method:[p. 2087] Jesus did not cling to faith in God as would a struggling soul at war with the universe and at death grips with a hostile and sinful world; he did not resort to faith merely as a consolation in the midst of difficulties or as a comfort in threatened despair; faith was not just an illusory compensation for the unpleasant realities and the sorrows of

living. In the very face of all the natural difficulties and the temporal contradictions of mortal existence, he experienced the tranquility of supreme and unquestioned trust in God and felt the tremendous thrill of living, by faith, in the very presence of the heavenly Father... this triumphant faith was a living experience of actual spirit attainment. Jesus' great contribution to the values of human experience was not that he revealed so many new ideas about the Father in heaven, but rather that he so magnificently and humanly demonstrated a new and higher type of living faith in God. Never on all the worlds of this universe, in the life of any one mortal, did God ever become such a living reality as in the human experience of Jesus of Nazareth.

☐ HOW DO WE KNOW ITS WORKING?

Working:[p. 804] The appearance of genuine brotherhood signifies:

- ☐ that a social order has arrived in which
- ☐ all men **delight** in bearing one another's burdens;
- ☐ they actually desire to practice the golden rule.
- ☐ ...such a... society cannot be realized when
- ☐ either the weak or the wicked
- ☐ lie in wait to take unfair and unholy advantage of those... devoted.. to the service of truth, beauty, and goodness.

Then... only one course is practical:

- ☐ ... establish a progressive society ...which
- ☐ ... lives according to their ideals while
- ☐ maintaining an adequate defense against their benighted fellows
- ☐ ... seeking either to exploit their pacific predilections or
- ☐ to destroy their advancing civilization.

Working:[p. 1191] The Mystery Monitors are not thought helpers;

- ☐ they are thought adjusters.
- ☐ They labor ... for the purpose of constructing,
- ☐ by adjustment and spiritualization,
- ☐ a new mind for the new worlds and
- ☐ the new name of your future career.
- ☐ Their mission chiefly concerns the future life, not this life.
- ☐ They are called heavenly helpers,
- ☐ not earthly helpers.
- ☐ **They are not interested in making the mortal career easy;**
- ☐ **rather are they concerned in making your life reasonably difficult and rugged,**
- ☐ **so that decisions will be stimulated and multiplied.**
- ☐ The presence of a great Thought Adjuster does not bestow ease of living and
- ☐ freedom from strenuous thinking, but
- ☐ such a divine gift should confer a sublime peace of mind and
- ☐ a superb tranquillity of spirit.

Working:[p. 1920] ...Take time to think over all that has happened

- ☐ ... and meditate on what is just ahead
- ☐ ... Make sure that ...truth abides in your lives
- ☐ ...that you daily grow in grace."

Working:[p. 2084] ... The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth

- ☐ in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all **men**
- ☐ **...you must go forward from where you find yourselves.**
- ☐ Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus' life and
- ☐ illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation.
- ☐ ... when Jesus becomes thus lifted up, he will draw all men to himself.
- ☐ **We should be ... overflowing sources of inspiration and enhanced living to all men.**

Religion is only an exalted humanism until it is made divine by the discovery of the reality of the presence of God in personal experience.

▣ WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Need:[p.1095] Religious habits of thinking and acting contribute to the economy of spiritual growth. One can develop ... a sort of conditioned spiritual reflex.

Habits which favor religious growth embrace:

- ▣ cultivated sensitivity to divine values,
- ▣ recognition of religious living in others,
- ▣ reflective meditation on cosmic meanings,
- ▣ worshipful problem solving,
- ▣ sharing one's spiritual life with one's fellows,
- ▣ avoidance of selfishness,
- ▣ refusal to presume on divine mercy,
- ▣ living as in the presence of God.

Need:[p. 39] How unreasonable that you should not worship God because the limitations of human nature and the handicaps of your material creation make it impossible for you to see him. Between you and God there is a tremendous distance (physical space) to be traversed. There likewise exists a great gulf of spiritual differential which must be bridged; but notwithstanding all that physically and spiritually separates you from the Paradise personal presence of God, stop and ponder the solemn fact that God lives within you; he has in his own way already bridged the gulf. He has sent of himself, his spirit, to live in you and to toil with you as you pursue your eternal universe career.

Need:[p. 1112] The teachings of Jesus constituted the first Urantian religion which so fully embraced a harmonious co-ordination of knowledge, wisdom, faith, truth, and love as completely and simultaneously to provide temporal tranquillity, intellectual certainty, moral enlightenment, philosophic stability, ethical sensitivity, God-consciousness, and the positive assurance of personal survival.

The faith of Jesus pointed the way to finality of human salvation, to the ultimate of mortal universe attainment, since it provided for:

- ▣ Salvation from material fetters in the personal realization of sonship with God, who is spirit.
- ▣ Salvation from intellectual bondage: man shall know the truth, and the truth shall set him free.
- ▣ Salvation from spiritual blindness, the human realization of the fraternity of mortal beings and the morontian awareness of the brotherhood of all universe creatures; the service-discovery of spiritual reality and the ministry-revelation of the goodness of spirit values.
- ▣ Salvation from incompleteness of self through the attainment of the spirit levels of the universe and through the eventual realization of the harmony of Havona and the perfection of Paradise.
- ▣ Salvation from self, deliverance from the limitations of self-consciousness through the attainment of the cosmic levels of the Supreme mind and by co-ordination with the attainments of all other self-conscious beings.
- ▣ Salvation from time; the achievement of an eternal life of unending progression in God-recognition and God-service.
- ▣ Salvation from the finite, the perfected oneness with Deity in and through the Supreme by which the creature attempts the transcendental discovery of the Ultimate on the postfinaliter levels of the absonite.

Need:[p. 1447] "The fool has said in his heart, 'Evil shall not overtake me'; but safety is found only when the soul craves reproof and the mind seeks wisdom. The wise man is a noble soul who is friendly in the midst of his enemies, tranquil among the turbulent, and generous among the grasping. Love of self is like weeds in a goodly field. Selfishness leads to grief; perpetual care kills. The tamed mind yields happiness. He is the greatest of warriors who overcomes and subdues himself. Restraint in all things is good. He alone is a superior person who esteems virtue and is observant of his duty. Let not anger and hate master you. Speak harshly of no one. Contentment is the greatest wealth. What is given wisely is well saved. Do not to others those things you would not wish done to you. Pay good for evil; overcome evil with the good.

Need:[p. 1451] "How pure and tranquil is the Supreme One and yet how powerful and mighty, how deep and unfathomable! This God of heaven is the honored ancestor of all things. If you know the Eternal, you are enlightened and wise. If you know not the Eternal, then does ignorance manifest itself as evil, and thus do the passions of sin arise. This wondrous Being existed before the heavens and the earth were. He is truly spiritual; he stands alone and changes not. He is indeed the world's mother, and all creation moves around him. This Great One imparts himself to men and thereby enables them to excel and to survive. Even if one has but a little knowledge, he can still walk in the ways of the Supreme; he can conform to the will of heaven.

Need:[p. 2077] The mechanistic naturalism of some supposedly educated men and the thoughtless secularism of the man in the street are both exclusively concerned with things; they are barren of all real values, sanctions, and satisfactions of a spiritual nature, as well as being devoid of faith, hope, and eternal assurances. One of the great troubles with modern life is that man thinks he is too busy to find time for spiritual meditation and religious devotion.

▣ WHAT DOES IT DO?

Does:[p.1133] ... this is the prelude to true worship the practice of the presence of God which eventuates in the emergence of the brotherhood of man.

Does:[p.1159] Even the material mind of the mortal creature thus becomes partner with the divine Adjuster in the dualization of the immortal soul. God the Sevenfold also provides techniques of compensation for the experiential limitations of inherent perfection as well as compensating the pre-ascension limitations of imperfection.

Does:[p. 1784] to believe in the personality of the Father ...by the following steps of reasoning:

- ▣ The Father in Paradise does enjoy equality of communication with at least two other beings who are fully equal to himself and wholly like himself-- the Eternal Son and the Infinite Spirit...
- ▣ Since Jesus was equal with the Father, and since this Son had achieved the manifestation of personality to his earth children, such a phenomenon constituted **proof** of the fact, and demonstration of the possibility, of the possession of personality by all three of the Godheads and **forever settled the question regarding the ability of God to communicate with man and the possibility of man's communicating with God.**
- ▣ That Jesus was on terms of mutual association and perfect communication with man; that Jesus was the Son of God. That the relation of Son and Father presupposes equality of communication and mutuality of sympathetic understanding; that Jesus and the Father were one. That Jesus maintained at one and the same time understanding communication with both God and man, and that, since both God and man comprehended the meaning of the symbols of Jesus' communication, both God and man possessed the attributes of personality in so far as the requirements of the ability of intercommunication were concerned. That the personality of Jesus demonstrated the personality of God, while it proved conclusively the presence of God in man. That two things which are related to the same thing are related to each other.
- ▣ That personality represents man's highest concept of human reality and divine values; that God also represents man's highest concept of divine reality and infinite values; therefore, that God must be a divine and infinite personality, a personality in reality although infinitely and eternally transcending man's concept and definition of personality, but nevertheless always and universally a personality.
- ▣ That God must be a personality since he is the Creator ... and the destiny of all personality. Rodan had been tremendously influenced by the teaching of Jesus, "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Does:[p.1221] This choosing of the Father's will is the spiritual finding of the spirit Father by mortal man, even though an age must pass before the creature son may actually stand in the factual presence of God on Paradise. This choosing does not so much consist in the negation of creature will "Not my will but yours be done"-as it consists in the creature's positive affirmation: "It is my will that your will be done." And if this choice is made, sooner or later will the God-choosing son find inner union (fusion) with the indwelling God fragment, while this same perfecting son will find supreme personality satisfaction in the worship communion of the personality of man and the personality of his Maker, two personalities whose creative attributes have eternally joined in self-willed mutuality of expression-the birth of another eternal partnership of the will of man and the will of God.

Does:[p.1732] You must cease to seek for the word of God only on the pages of the olden records of theologic authority. Those who are born of the spirit of God shall henceforth discern the word of God regardless of whence it appears to take origin. Divine truth must not be discounted because the channel of its bestowal is apparently human. Many of your brethren have minds which accept the theory of God while they spiritually fail to realize the presence of God. And that is just the reason why I have so often taught you that the 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.

Does:[p.1474] ... "You do well to choose the best and esteem the good, but are you wise when you fail to discern the greater things of mortal life which are embodied in the spirit realms derived from the realization of the presence of God in the human heart? The great thing in all human experience is the realization of knowing the God whose spirit lives within you and seeks to lead you forth on that long and almost endless journey of attaining the personal presence of our common Father, the God of all creation, the Lord of universes."

Does:[p.1000] Mysticism, as the technique of the cultivation of the consciousness of the presence of God, is altogether praiseworthy, but when such practices lead to social isolation and culminate in religious fanaticism, they are all but reprehensible. Altogether too frequently that which the overwrought mystic evaluates as divine inspiration is the uprisings of his own deep mind. The contact of the mortal mind with its indwelling Adjuster, while often favored by devoted

meditation, is more frequently facilitated by wholehearted and loving service in unselfish ministry to one's fellow creatures.

Does:[p.1000] The great religious teachers and the prophets of past ages were not extreme mystics. They were God-knowing men and women who best served their God by unselfish ministry to their fellow mortals. Jesus often took his apostles away by themselves for short periods to engage in meditation and prayer, but for the most part he kept them in service-contact with the multitudes. The soul of man requires spiritual exercise as well as spiritual nourishment.

The practical test of all these strange religious experiences of mysticism, ecstasy, and inspiration is to observe whether these phenomena cause an individual:

- ☐ To enjoy better and more complete physical health.
- ☐ To function more efficiently and practically in his mental life.
- ☐ More fully and joyfully to socialize his religious experience.
- ☐ More completely to spiritualize his day-by-day living while faithfully discharging the duties of routine mortal existence.
- ☐ To enhance his love for, and appreciation of, truth, beauty, and goodness.
- ☐ To conserve currently recognized social, moral, ethical, and spiritual values.
- ☐ To increase his spiritual insight—God-consciousness.

But prayer has no real association with these exceptional religious experiences. 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. There is a certain danger associated with overmuch private praying which is corrected and prevented by group praying, community devotions.

Does:[p.118] We all know the direct course to pursue to find the Universal Father.

- ☐ You are not able to comprehend much about the divine residence because of its remoteness from you and the immensity of the intervening space, but those who are able to comprehend the meaning of these enormous distances know God's location and residence just as certainly and literally as you know the location of New York, London, Rome, or Singapore, cities definitely and geographically located on Urantia.
- ☐ If you were an intelligent navigator, equipped with ship, maps, and compass, you could readily find these cities.
- ☐ Likewise, if you had the time and means of passage, were spiritually qualified, and had the necessary guidance, you could be piloted through universe upon universe and from circuit to circuit, ever journeying inward through the starry realms, until at last you would stand before the central shining of the spiritual glory of the Universal Father.
- ☐ Provided with all the necessities for the journey, it is just as possible to find the personal presence of God at the center of all things as to find distant cities on your own planet.
- ☐ That you have not visited these places in no way disproves their reality or actual existence.
- ☐ That so few of the universe creatures have found God on Paradise in no way disproves either the reality of his existence or the actuality of his spiritual person at the center of all things.

▣ WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Benefit:[p. 998] Remember, even if prayer does not change God, it very often effects great and lasting changes in the one who prays in faith and confident expectation. Prayer has been the ancestor of much peace of mind, cheerfulness, calmness, courage, self-mastery, and fair-mindedness in the men and women of the evolving races.

Benefit:[p.1096] After such spiritual attainment, whether secured by gradual growth or specific crisis, there occurs a new orientation of personality as well as the development of a new standard of values. 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.

Benefit: [p. 1105] While religion is not the product of the rationalistic speculations of a material cosmology, it is, nonetheless, the creation of a wholly rational insight which originates in man's mind-experience. Religion is born neither of mystic meditations nor of isolated contemplations, albeit it is ever more or less mysterious and always indefinable and inexplicable in terms of purely intellectual reason and philosophic logic. The germs of true religion originate in the domain of man's moral consciousness, and they are revealed in the growth of man's spiritual insight, that faculty of human personality which accrues as a consequence of the presence of the God-revealing Thought Adjuster in the God-hungry mortal mind.

Benefit:[p. 1108] Through religious faith the soul of man reveals itself and demonstrates the potential divinity of its emerging nature by the characteristic manner in which it induces the mortal personality to react to certain trying intellectual and testing social situations. Genuine spiritual faith (true moral consciousness) is revealed in that it:

- ▣ Causes ethics and morals to progress despite inherent and adverse animalistic tendencies.
- ▣ Produces a sublime trust in the goodness of God even in the face of bitter disappointment and crushing defeat.
- ▣ Generates profound courage and confidence despite natural adversity and physical calamity.
- ▣ Exhibits inexplicable poise and sustaining tranquillity notwithstanding baffling diseases and even acute physical suffering.
- ▣ Maintains a mysterious poise and composure of personality in the face of maltreatment and the rankest injustice.
- ▣ Maintains a divine trust in ultimate victory in spite of the cruelties of seemingly blind fate and the apparent utter indifference of natural forces to human welfare.
- ▣ Persists in the unswerving belief in God despite all contrary demonstrations of logic and successfully withstands all other intellectual sophistries.
- ▣ Continues to exhibit undaunted faith in the soul's survival regardless of the deceptive teachings of false science and the persuasive delusions of unsound philosophy.
- ▣ Lives and triumphs irrespective of the crushing overload of the complex and partial civilizations of modern times.
- ▣ Contributes to the continued survival of altruism in spite of human selfishness, social antagonisms, industrial greeds, and political maladjustments.
- ▣ Steadfastly adheres to a sublime belief in universe unity and divine guidance regardless of the perplexing presence of evil and sin.
- ▣ Goes right on worshiping God in spite of anything and everything. Dares to declare, "Even though he slay me, yet will I serve him."

Benefit:[p. 1119] It is difficult to identify and analyze the factors of a religious experience, but it is not difficult to observe that such religious practitioners live and carry on as if already in the presence of the Eternal. Believers react to this temporal life as if immortality already were within their grasp. In the lives of such mortals there is a valid originality and a spontaneity of expression that forever segregate them from those of their fellows who have imbibed only the wisdom of the world. Religionists seem to live in effective emancipation from harrying haste and the painful stress of the vicissitudes inherent in the temporal currents of time; they exhibit a stabilization of personality and a tranquillity of character not explained by the laws of physiology, psychology, and sociology.

Benefit: [p. 1447] "Cheerfulness and gladness are the rewards of deeds well done and to the glory of the Immortal. No man can rob you of the liberty of your own mind. When the faith of your religion has emancipated your heart, when the mind, like a mountain, is settled and immovable, then shall the peace of the soul flow tranquilly like a river of waters. Those who are sure of salvation are forever free from lust, envy, hatred, and the delusions of wealth. While faith is the energy of the better life, nevertheless, must you work out your own salvation with perseverance. If you would be certain of your final salvation, then make sure that you sincerely seek to fulfill all righteousness. Cultivate the assurance of the heart which springs from within and thus come to enjoy the ecstasy of eternal salvation.

Benefit:[p. 1449] "God is our Father, the earth our mother, and the universe our birthplace. Without God the soul is a prisoner; to know God releases the soul. By meditation on God, by union with him, there comes *deliverance from the illusions of evil and ultimate salvation from all material fetters*. When man shall roll up space as a piece of leather, then will come the end of evil because man has found God. O God, save us from the threefold ruin of hell—lust, wrath, and avarice! O soul, gird yourself for the spirit struggle of immortality! When the end of mortal life comes, hesitate not to forsake this body for a more fit and beautiful form and to awake in the realms of the Supreme and Immortal, where there is no fear, sorrow, hunger, thirst, or death. To know God is to cut the cords of death. The God-knowing soul rises in the universe like the cream appears on top of the milk. We worship God, the all-worker, the Great Soul, who is ever seated in the heart of his creatures. And they who know that God is enthroned in the human heart are destined to become like him—immortal. Evil must be left behind in this world, but virtue follows the soul to heaven.

Benefit:[p.1468] ... "Though human beings differ in many ways, the one from another, before God and in the spiritual world all mortals stand on an equal footing. There are only two groups of mortals in the eyes of God: those who desire to do his will and those who do not. As the universe looks upon an inhabited world, it likewise discerns two great classes: those who know God and those who do not. Those who cannot know God are reckoned among the animals of any given realm. Mankind can appropriately be divided into many classes in accordance with differing qualifications, as they may be viewed physically, mentally, socially, vocationally, or morally, but as these different classes of mortals appear before the judgment bar of God, they stand on an equal footing; God is truly no respecter of persons. Although you cannot escape the recognition of differential human abilities and endowments in matters intellectual, social, and moral, you should make no such distinctions in the spiritual brotherhood of men when assembled for worship in the presence of God."

Benefit:[p. 1562] ... his superbly balanced character... so lovingly merciful yet so inflexibly just and fair; so firm but never obstinate; so calm but never indifferent; so helpful and so sympathetic but never meddlesome or dictatorial; so strong but at the same time so gentle; so positive but never rough or rude; so tender but never vacillating; so pure and innocent but at the same time so virile, aggressive, and forceful; so truly courageous but never rash or foolhardy; such a lover of nature but so free from all tendency to revere nature; so humorous and so playful, but so free from levity and frivolity. It was this ... personality appreciation...

Benefit:[p. 1565] The one thing ... was the ... calmness, his assurance, poise, and inexplicable composure.

Benefit:[p. 2083] The world needs more firsthand religion. Even Christianity—the best of the religions of the twentieth century—is not only a religion about Jesus, but it is so largely one which men experience secondhand. They take their religion wholly as handed down by their accepted religious teachers. What an awakening the world would experience if it could only see Jesus as he really lived on earth and know, firsthand, his life-giving teachings ! Descriptive words of things beautiful cannot thrill like the sight thereof, neither can creedal words inspire men's souls like the experience of knowing the presence of God. But expectant faith will ever keep the hope-door of man's soul open for the entrance of the eternal spiritual realities of the divine values of the worlds beyond.

Benefit: [p. 2087] Theology may fix, formulate, define, and dogmatize faith, but in the human life of Jesus faith was personal, living, original, spontaneous, and purely spiritual. This faith was not reverence for tradition nor a mere intellectual belief which he held as a sacred creed, but rather a sublime experience and a profound conviction which securely held him. His faith was so real and all-encompassing that it absolutely swept away any spiritual doubts and effectively destroyed every conflicting desire. Nothing was able to tear him away from the spiritual anchorage of this fervent, sublime, and undaunted faith. Even in the face of apparent defeat or in the throes of disappointment and threatening despair, he calmly stood in the divine presence free from fear and fully conscious of spiritual invincibility. Jesus enjoyed the invigorating assurance of the possession of unflinching faith, and in each of life's trying situations he unfailingly exhibited an unquestioning loyalty to the Father's will. And this superb faith was undaunted even by the cruel and crushing threat of an ignominious death.

☒ WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS?

Drawback:[p.1000] Religious ecstasy is permissible when resulting from sane antecedents, but such experiences are more often the outgrowth of purely emotional influences than a manifestation of deep spiritual character. Religious persons must not regard every vivid psychologic presentiment and every intense emotional experience as a divine revelation or a spiritual communication. Genuine spiritual ecstasy is usually associated with great outward calmness and almost perfect emotional control. But true prophetic vision is a superpsychologic presentiment. Such visitations are not pseudo hallucinations, neither are they trancelike ecstasies.

Drawback:[p. 1093] Man can never wisely decide temporal issues or transcend the selfishness of personal interests unless he meditates in the presence of the sovereignty of God and reckons with the realities of divine meanings and spiritual values.

Drawback:[p. 1100] The more healthful attitude of spiritual meditation is to be found in reflective worship and in the prayer of thanksgiving. The direct communion with one's Thought Adjuster, such as occurred in the later years of Jesus' life in the flesh, should not be confused with these so-called mystical experiences. The factors which contribute to the initiation of mystic communion are indicative of the danger of such psychic states. The mystic status is favored by such things as: physical fatigue, fasting, psychic dissociation, profound aesthetic experiences, vivid sex impulses, fear, anxiety, rage, and wild dancing. Much of the material arising as a result of such preliminary preparation has its origin in the subconscious mind.

Drawback:[p. 1391] His profound periods of meditation, his frequent journeys to the hilltop for prayer, and the many strange ideas which Jesus advanced from time to time, thoroughly alarmed his mother. Sometimes she thought the lad was beside himself, and then she would steady her fears, remembering that he was, after all, a child of promise and in some manner different from other youths.

Drawback:[p. 2076] Do not try to satisfy the curiosity or gratify all the latent adventure surging within the soul in one short life in the flesh. Be patient ! be not tempted to indulge in a lawless plunge into cheap and sordid adventure. Harness your energies and bridle your passions; be calm while you await the majestic unfolding of an endless career of progressive adventure and thrilling discovery.