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Worshipful Problem Solving

Greeting and reading of verses 1-5 Psalm 92 (which I will do in English, Spanish, and French)

Introduction of Rand Leonard, Chicago, Illinois, who will sing "How Great Thou Art."

Text

The subject is worshipful problem solving, which we are enjoined to cultivate as one among many of desirable spiritual habits. A number of questions arise merely from this peculiarly beautiful and intriguing combination of words. What is worshipful problem solving? It appears to be a somewhat contradictory term, for we know that "worship" is not self-serving, but for its own sake while "problem solving" definitely implies self-interest. Another question that occurs is how is this religious predisposition to be developed. And finally why should mortal men and women strive to acquire such a habit? What purposes of God and humanity are achieved

I choose to begin today's examination of the topic with some selected passages from The Urantia Book which may help to serve as an illuminating text for further consideration, if not now and in this company, perhaps at another time and place. I will conclude with some personal reflections.

~~We are told (p. 215) that the true perspective of non-reality problem-human or divine, terrestrial or cosmic-can be had only by the full and unprejudiced study and correlation of three phases of universe reality: origin, history, and destiny. Therefore, let's commence with a study of the nature of worship.~~

We are informed:

p. 2095. Worship is a personal communion with that which is divinely real, with that which is the very source of reality.

p. 195. Worship (is) the sincere pursuit of divine values and the wholehearted love of the divine Value-Giver.

p. 3031. Worship is the conscious and joyous act of recognizing and acknowledging the truth and fact of the intimate and personal relationships of the Creators with their creatures.

p. 31. Only personalities can commune with each other, albeit this personal communion may be greatly facilitated by the presence of just such an impersonal entity as the Thought Adjuster.

p. 31. (And) only a person can love and be loved.

p. 66. Worship is...the act of the material mind's assenting to the attempt of its spiritualizing self, under the guidance of the associated spirit, to communicate with God as a faith son of the Universal Father.

There is a dynamic here which I have chosen to emphasize through the arrangement of the citations. Notice we begin with a rather general statement about the worship of God as the source of reality, but it

becomes readily apparent that with the choice of the word "communion" as an alternative for "worship," the activity takes on meaning and reality for us as time-space mortals only inasmuch as it is personal, and most significantly, as it makes forever clear that personal relationship illuminated by Michael's bestowal on earth, the loving relationship of Father and child.

p. 63.6. The Father desires all his creatures to be in personal communion with him...Therefore settle in your philosophy now and forever; To each of you and all of us, God is approachable, the Father is attainable, the way is open...

p. 63.1. Although the approach to the Paradise presence of the Father must await your attainment of the highest finite levels of spirit progression, 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.

p. 2097. The great challenge to modern man is to achieve better communication with the divine Monitor that dwells within the human mind.

p. 1719 But there are other universe difficulties (which) must be met and planetary obstacles (which) must be encountered as a part of the experience training provided for the growth and development, the progressive perfection, of the evolving souls of mortal creatures.

p. 311. Of all the problems in the universe requiring an exercise of consummate wisdom of experience and adaptability, none are more important than those arising out of the relationships and associations of intelligent beings.

Still we are reminded that (p. 65) worship is, as I remarked at the beginning, 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 (such as solutions to our problems); 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.

These remarks may be definitive, but more is required to understand why the authors dare, then, in another paper to use the word "worship" in combination with the words "problem solving." Clearly the phrase suggests benefits, though unsought in moments of true worship, to be derived from communion with the Father. Rodan provides some enlightenment.

p. 1273. Successful living is nothing more or less than the art of the mastery of dependable techniques for solving common problems. The wise and effective solution of any problem demands that the mind shall be free from bias, passion, and all other purely personal prejudices which might interfere with the disinterested survey of the actual factors that go to make up the problem presenting itself for solution. The solution of life problems requires ~~the~~ courage and sincerity...And this emancipation of the mind and soul can never

be reflected without the driving power of an intelligent enthusiasm which borders on religious zeal. (And) (p. 1774) you can hardly expect success unless you are equipped with that wisdom of mind and charm of personality which enable you to win the hearty support and cooperation of your fellows... You simply must have tact and tolerance. p. 1774. But the greatest of all methods of problem solving I have learned from Jesus, your Master... 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...

I am deeply impressed with the custom of Jesus in going apart by himself to engage in these seasons of solitary survey of the problems of living; to seek for new stores of wisdom and energy for meeting the manifold demands of social service; to quicken and deepen the supreme purpose of living by actually subjecting the total personality to the consciousness of contacting with divinity; to grasp for possession of new and better methods of adjusting oneself to the ever-changing situation of living existence; to effect those vital reconstructions and readjustments of one's personal attitudes which are so essential to enhanced insight into everything worth while and real; and to do all of this with an eye single to the glory of God--to breathe in sincerity your Master's favorite prayer, "Not my will, but yours, be done."

The worshipful practice of your Master brings that relaxation which renews the mind; that illumination which inspires the soul; that courage which enables one bravely to face one's problems; that self-understanding which obliterates debilitating fear; and that consciousness of union with divinity which equips man with the assurance that enables him to dare to be Godlike. The relaxation of worship, or spiritual communion as practiced by the Master, relieves tension, removes conflicts, and mightily augments the total resources of the personality.

p. 2089. The secret of (Jesus') unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God; and he attained it by intelligent prayer and sincere worship--unbroken communion with God--and not by leadings, voices, visions, or extraordinary religious practices.

p. 2093. Personal, spiritual religious experience is an efficient solvent for most mortal difficulties; it is an effective sorter, evaluator, and adjuster of all human problems. Religion does not remove or destroy human troubles, but it does dissolve, absorb, illuminate, and transcend them.

p. 66. Sincere worship connotes the mobilization of all the powers of the human personality under the dominance of the evolving soul and subject to the divine directionization of the associated Thought Adjuster.

It appears, after thoughtful contemplation of these passages that problems can be viewed altruistically as well as selfishly; they can even be viewed, on the highest level, with "an eye single to the glory of God." I submit, then, that the soul's attitude in identifying and confronting problems is pivotal to our understanding of the role of worship in their solution. If our God is occasionally too small, meaning our understanding of him, as J.B. Phillips contends, then our comprehension of the nature of our problems may be just a trifle small also. They may merely be petty and largely fictitious grievances, hardly worthy of consideration.

Let us now turn our attention to the contribution of the Thought Adjuster in our development, specifically to the role he plays in the cultivation of the habit under discussion today. I think here we begin to find how worshipful problem solving is initiated, enhanced, and ultimately made a firm part of our being and exactly how important it is that we assent to and cooperate in this process.

p. 69. Religious experience, being essentially spiritual, can never be fully understood by the material mind; hence the function of theology, the psychology of religion. The essential doctrine of the human realization of God creates a paradox in finite comprehension. It is well-nigh impossible for human logic and finite reason to harmonize the concept of divine immanence, God within and a part of every individual, with the idea of God's transcendence, the divine domination of the universe of universes. These two essential concepts of Deity must be unified in the faith-grasp of the concept of the transcendence of a personal God and in the realization of the indwelling presence of a fragment of that God in order to justify intelligent worship and validate the hope of personality survival.

p. 63. However Urantia mortals may differ in their intellectual, social, economic, and even moral opportunities and endowments, forget not that their spiritual endowment is uniform and unique. They all enjoy the same divine presence of the gift from the Father, and they are all equally privileged to seek intimate personal communion with this indwelling spirit of divine origin, while they may all equally choose to accept the uniform spiritual leading of these Mystery Monitors.

p.1204. Adjusters are interested in, and concerned with, your daily doings and the manifold details of your life just to the extent that these are influential in the determination of your significant temporal choices and vital spiritual decisions and, hence, are factors in the solution of your problem of soul survival and eternal progress.

Now that's a problem that merits attention, but it is still, in a manner of speaking, selfish. After all, (p. 1096) religion is not a technique for attaining a static and blissful peace of mind; it is an impulse for organizing the soul for dynamic service. We ~~now~~ ^{now} ~~is~~ a consideration of the noblest ends accomplished by true worship.

p. 1616. Worship is the technique of looking to the One for the inspiration of service to the many.

p. 1641. The spirit of the Father speaks best to man when the human mind is in an attitude of true worship.

p. 1638. By opening the human end of the channel of the God-man communication, mortals make immediately available the ever-flowing stream of divine ministry to the creatures of the worlds.

p. 1123. Prayer may enrich the life, but worship illuminates destiny.

p. 1616. Worship is intended to anticipate the better life ahead and then to reflect these new spiritual significances back onto the life which now is.

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It appears that worship of the Father, under the guidance of the Thought Adjuster, can enhance the altruistic urge in God-knowing mortals. As they adore the Father, they cannot fail to become impressed by the beauty and goodness of his loving nature and p. 1641 (as a result) ~~worship~~, as Jesus taught, ~~and~~ the increasing like the being who is worshiped. It follows then that the children of the Universal Father will attempt to emulate his perfection in their own sphere and serve others as generously as he bestows himself on them. How often do we hear Jesus exhort his followers, (p.1584) "Be you perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

p. 2087. The human Jesus saw God as being holy, just, and great, as well as being true, beautiful and good. All these attributes of divinity he focused in his mind as the "will of the Father in heaven. His second greatest exhortation was ever to seek to do the will of the Father.

And (p. 1431) "The will of God is the way," ^{God} he said. "To do the will of God, therefore, is the progressive experience of becoming more and more like God..."

The demonstration that believers are moved by that supreme human desire is to be found in the lives they live.

p. 1095. Spiritual development depends, first, on the maintenance of a living spiritual connection with true spiritual forces and, second, on the continuous bearing of spiritual fruit.

p. 65. The proof of fraternity with the divine Adjuster consists wholly in the nature and extent of the fruits of the spirit which are yielded in the life experience of the individual believer.

p. 1095. The evidence of true spiritual development consists in the exhibition of a human personality motivated by love, activated by unselfish ministry, and dominated by the wholehearted worship of the perfection ideals of divinity.

p. 2054. The fruits of the spirit are worthy of enumeration. They are loving service, unselfish devotion, courageous loyalty, sincere fairness, enlightened honesty, undying hope, confiding trust, merciful ministry, unflinching goodness, forgiving tolerance, and enduring peace.

The results of so living one's life as to bear these fruits is happiness, of which the book says we humans know relatively little.

p. 1134. Human happiness is achieved only when the ego desire of the self and the altruistic urge of the higher self (divine spirit) are coordinated and reconciled by the unified will of the integrating and supervising personality.

In this endeavor we have a magnificent partner.

p. 64. God has embarked upon the eternal adventure with man. If you yield to the leadings of the spiritual forces in you and around you, you cannot fail to attain the high destiny established by a loving God as the universe goal of his ascendant creatures from the evolutionary worlds of space.

These selections from the book are powerful, they are definitive, they serve as pointers towards the truth but until they are confirmed in and by experience, until they are lived, they cannot be truth for us. Faith must ever be active. Yet inasmuch as we have responded, if only to the extent signified by our presence here today, I hold that as an indication that we have already experienced in some small way the realities reported in the Urantia papers. The chord has been struck and it resounds with endless reverberations--we shall hear it through eternity.

Up to this point, we have contemplated ~~the origin, history, and destiny of~~ worshipful problem solving in the most ideal of spiritual generalities, but I think few of us would deny that the human element has made a contribution to our spiritual welfare, that God-knowing individuals have, through their efforts, conscious or unconscious, aided in the growth of our religious habits to serve the Father and our fellows. Reflection on the human origins of our uniquely personal call to worship might well be worthwhile and worthy of sharing with others as we spend time in fellowship here this week. To stimulate your thinking, I'd like to offer some reminiscences of my own. I'm going to tell you a story; ~~for~~ *for story telling.* which there appears to be ample precedent

A story

Like David Copperfield, I was born (although there I think the similarity ends. Certainly I am not going to present an endless recitation of trials and tribulations for your delight and delectation.) I spent the ~~first~~ years of my life in a small midwestern town called Zion. It had been founded as a fundamentalist religious community in the very early 1900's. With their respective families my mother's parents arrived as children, and there they grew up and married, having ten children of their own. My father's people lived in Chicago where they belonged to the Advent Christian Church (not to be confused with Seventh Day Adventists), but in the thirties my great uncle Fred introduced my grandparents and their six children to the Urantia papers; the entire family moved as one in joining the early Forum. My father and mother met in Zion when he began to teach at Elmwood School. I am given to understand that my mother was the star pupil of his first seventh and eighth grade classes, though they didn't start to date until my mother's junior year in high school and didn't marry until the September following her graduation.

When my father returned from the war, he found us already settled into a small apartment over the living quarters of my Grandma and Grandpa Edwards. My grandfather, a celebrated plasterer, had completely remodeled the large old house to accommodate us, and the address 2806 Emmaus, the block between Elisha and Enoch, was drilled into me as the place where I belonged, in case I should stray, which I must admit, I often did. Oh yes, Zion was characterized by street names from the Old Testament and the periodic arrival of a bevy of preachers and ministers who knew where they would find a welcome audience. Many of the descendants of the early settlers, my grandparents among them, had become disenchanted by the strict autocracy of the Christian Catholic Church and its leaders, who ruled like the Hebrew Judges of old. Imbued with the restless pioneer spirit and disgruntled by the slavish adherence to old rules and dogma, the Edwards were always seeking a new Moses to lead them to freedom in the promised land, though their journeys had become more figurative than literal. *of late.*

I came to know the Kulieke residence in Chicago equally as well because never a Sunday or Wednesday dawned but that my father would announce it was Forum day, and we would trundle down the turnpike in our pick-up truck, he to continue on to Diversey with a large number of other members of the clan. Sometimes my mother would accompany him too. Other times she would stay with me in Logan Square to socialize with my grandmother and all my cousins and occasionally an extra aunt to help referee the energetic play of the Kulieke progeny. In those days I didn't know what the Forum was; I didn't even know the meaning of the word, or of the word "sacrosanct," for that matter, but somehow I captured the spirit of the two which rapidly were associated in my mind, for those mysterious meetings my father attended obviously commanded his respect. How I loved those Sunday afternoons! When the clan returned from 533, my grandfather Kulieke would take me with him to the corner store, ostensibly on some errand for my grandmother, but really to buy me gum, which my parents forbade at home. Only the mild-mannered benevolence of my grandfather as he peered in genuine bewilderment through his thick glasses could silence the objections of my mother and father. He found it impossible to believe that gum once a week could irreparably damage my teeth. We always stayed for supper, and I remember vividly on ~~the~~ warm June and July evenings, with the family overflowing onto the porches, that my German grandmother would carefully count the strawberries for dessert, placing one at a time in each dish so that no individual was favored over another. Mom and Pop Kulieke, as they were known to everyone, governed that household benignly with a rare and gracious blend of fair play and understanding generosity.

So it was I grew up enveloped in two enormous families who sought to worship God and carry out their responsibilities faithfully and in the manner of their own choosing. Children were cherished; even my brother Mark, though just a baby, was valued as highly as the next, I noted, despite the fact that he couldn't talk. I'm afraid I ranked him low on my list for entertainment value, however amusing it might be to shake rattles at him from time to time. But gifts of a material kind were not plentiful. Still on Saturday mornings my father would hold me on his lap while we listened to the music of Liszt, Brahms and Debussy, Beethoven, Smetana and Tchaikovsky on old 78's (We didn't have a piano until later; then my father would play his own arrangements of favorite pieces). My week had its most pleasurable routine, for on Mondays I was privileged to hand my mother the clothespins while she hung the wash in the back yard, somewhere between the apple tree and the rhubarb, and sang to me "In the Garden," "Abide with Me" and the Indian Love call from "Rose Marie." All this celebration of music notwithstanding, the first record set of my own was a narration of "The Story of Jesus," which I played until it was worn out. I was entranced by the sound effects of the storm as Claude Rains recounted the parable of the man who built his house on the sand, and the gentleness of Jesus' petition, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," would move me to tears. To this day when I imagine the voice of God, it still comes to me in the rich and beautiful tones of Claude Rains.

I loved stories of all kinds and in all forms; I read voraciously even before I entered school at the age of four and a half, but I also adored the hours when my mother would read such books as Just

David, ^{David} a young boy who recognized that his talent for playing the violin came from his father in heaven. Sometimes my mother would sew, and my father would read to us. Sacred to every Christmas season was Van Dyke's Story of the Other Wise Man, who found his king every day of his life by helping others. That was upstairs. Downstairs my Grandma Edwards would indulge me as often as I pleaded with accounts of the joys and rigors of her childhood on a farm. My favorite concerned the time she mistook in the distance a post painted white for her mother's apron. It was much more exciting than the Bible story about the lost sheep. I had had little experience of sheep, but I had great experience of grandmothers, who, at all costs, should never be allowed to get away. My grandfather, on the other hand, would feel it incumbent on him to make me familiar with his displeasure over the latest activities of the Church Elders. ~~Additionally~~, at that time my uncle Marvin, one of my mother's younger brothers, who still lived at home, was developing his own special cult around baseball, and he would regale me with all sorts of pungent commentaries on the American League teams. I could be forgiven, I think, for becoming just a little confused. If any one had asked me then my understanding of the devil, who, according to my grandfather was alive and all too well, I would have explained very kindly that the devil had a number of names, but for the most part, he was called the Yankees; he was evil incarnate, in nine different forms to be sure, but someday he was to be vanquished by that mighty host of the Lord God, the White Sox. Because the devil's attempts for dominance were visible on the TV screen every summer afternoon, the entire battle for man's soul was safely externalized for me, and I was never afraid. The White Sox seemed to be taking a long time about settling his doom, but, after all, if my uncle Marvin was not discouraged, why should I be? For years, I had watched Marvin, regular as the first robin, bound out to the spring lawn, raise his arms to the sky, and declare, "This is the year the White Sox win the pennant," which was, apparently, an item of supreme value. God could not fail to respond in time, I was sure, for faith was always rewarded. Of course, I knew what was expected of me so that I could reap my reward. (Contrary to my original expectations, I learned this was not to be a pennant but admission to a place called heaven.) There was definitely a high premium placed on being good; I was to tell the truth, set the table, make my bed, and under no circumstances ever again to walk across my mother's carpet with the soles of my shoes freshly painted purple. God would be happy.

There were, inevitably, some perplexities for a young child. My father was wont to quote Cullen Bryant, saying "The groves were God's first temple" and take me for walks among the trees, but my grandparents were rather adamant about a church with four walls and a steeple, to be entered preferably on a Sunday morning. Nevertheless, I was given to understand that it was always proper to seek out the Almighty. In our lives, God was first, and God was last, not to mention all that came in between. God even began every day and ended every day. At 9:00 every morning and evening in Zion, the carillon from the old college building only two blocks away would sound out, and everyone and everything would stop. It was God's moment. I don't believe I comprehended the full significance, but I stopped too because it was clearly the thing to do. My most enduring memory is of the warm, summer twilights when I would be at play with my friends. At the first sound of the chimes, I would scamper towards the house with its lights, through the trees, just pinpoints like the first stars in the violet sky, and I would know that I could enter the front door

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or the back door or any one of the many side doors of my home to be
enfolded in loving arms. All would be safe and secure and lovely as
we listened to the carillon play "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

Close with music: 'Sweet Hour of Prayer.'