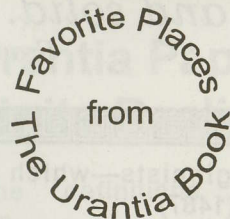


Journal of The Brotherhood of Man Library, an Information, Telecommunication and Lending Service Resource for Students of *The URANTIA Book*.



On Prayer

Prayer is an expression of the finite mind in an effort to approach the Infinite. The making of a prayer must, therefore, be limited by the knowledge, wisdom, and attributes of the finite. Likewise must the answer be conditioned by the vision, aims, ideals, and prerogatives of the Infinite.

When a prayer is apparently unanswered, the delay often betokens a better answer.

The prayers of time, when indited by the spirit and expressed in faith, are often so vast and all-encompassing that they can be answered only in eternity

The answers to the prayer of the mortal mind are often of such a nature that they can be received and recognized only after that same praying mind has attained the immortal state.

The prayer of a God-knowing person may be so distorted by ignorance and so deformed by superstition that the answer thereto would be highly undesirable. Then must the intervening spirit beings so translate such a prayer that, when the answer arrives, the petitioner wholly fails to recognize it as the answer to his prayer.

All true prayers are addressed to spiritual beings, and all such petitions must be answered in spiritual terms, and all such answers must consist in spiritual realities. Spirit beings cannot bestow material answers to the spirit petitions of even material beings. Material beings can pray effectively only when they "pray in the spirit."

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*All down through the
ages men have not been
unable to comprehend
Jesus; rather they have
been afraid to.*

(1736)

No prayer can hope for an answer unless it is born of the spirit and nurtured by faith.

Do not hesitate to pray the prayers of spirit longing... All genuine spirit-born petitions are certain of an answer. Ask and you shall receive. (from 1848)

Brotherhood

"Religious peace—brotherhood—can never exist unless all religions are willing to completely divest themselves of all ecclesiastical authority and fully surrender all concept of spiritual sovereignty. **God alone is spirit sovereign.**" (1487)

You cannot have religious liberty unless you transfer ALL religious authority to some superhuman level, to God himself. Brotherhood, the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men and women, will create religious unity if, and only if, religionists are free from all notions of ecclesiastical (religious) authority and sovereignty.

The term, "ecclesiastical authority" derives from the ancient Greek, "ecclesia," the assembly of the freemen of Athens, and has evolved to mean religious as opposed to civil authority. The Papers inform us that religious brotherhood is possible only when its brothers and sisters reject all religious authority other than God himself.

This is emphasized by their assertion that the very moment we lose sight of the fact of God's sole authority over religious matters our particular brand of religion will begin to attempt to assert its superiority. The result, they state, will always be dissension, recriminations, even "wars"

*How do I love thee? Let me
count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and
breadth and height
My soul can reach, when
feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and idea
Grace.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

*Fame is like a river,
that beareth up things
light and swollen, and
drowns things weighty
and solid.*

Francis Bacon

among religionists—which is hardly "brotherhood." (1487)

As evidenced by past "wars", splits, and decimation within the movement, not even believers in the authority of the Urantia Papers are exempt. Somehow we must absorb into the forefront of our minds that our religious beliefs are between ourselves, as individuals, and our God, not to be imposed upon others, or even suggested to be superior.

The "universe ruling" appears to be that we can present our religious views to others, but never are we to seek to impose them, to suggest their superiority, or denigrate the views of others. To do so is to usurp authority to which we can have no right or claim.

Free will beings, we are told, who ignore these guidelines, will inevitably test their own ability to gain power and authority one way or another. (1487) True brotherhood emerges only with the recognition of the sole authority of God in all matters religious.

History instructs us that mankind has a continuous record of repeatedly attempting to usurp the authority of God.

Not only kings, popes, priests, mullahs, self-declared prophets, etc. have been guilty of usurping God's authority unto themselves, for they are just glaring examples. We all usurp God's authority whenever we promote ourselves as superior, special, chosen, or appointed in some way that ranks us above our neighbor, as authorities relative to our more ignorant fellows. Can we really love those we look down upon as our inferiors?

It is well for us to remember that knowledge in itself has no spiritual value. Hence an illiterate

and ignorant peasant can be, and often is, far more advanced spiritually than the most knowledgeable among us.

On reaching the mansion worlds, a surprise may be in store. Many of these ignorant and primitive illiterates, in terms of spiritual advancement, may find themselves ranked well above the most erudite among us.

'Tis food for thought.

The Urantia Papers on Finite Reality.

First some definitions to aid our comprehension.

Truth: In the Urantia Papers, truth is treated differently from what is merely correct knowledge. Truth is the domain of the spiritually endowed intellect that is conscious of knowing God. Truth has spiritual value. Truth is an experience of the growing soul.

Knowledge: In contrast with truth, knowledge is demonstrable—such as with the facts of science.

Personality: This, too, has a special meaning in the Urantia Papers. Basically, it is a gift to the individual, directly from the Universal Father, and "is that cosmic endowment, that phase of universal reality, which can coexist with unlimited change and at the same time retain its identity in the very presence of all such changes, and forever afterward."

Soul: Our souls are a storehouse of those experiences that have "spiritual value." Spiritual

*I fancy, for myself, that
they are rather out of
touch with reality; by
reality I mean shops like
Selfridges, and motor
buses, and the Daily
Express.*

T. E. Lawrence

*The history of Western
philosophy is, after all,
no more than a series of
footnotes to Plato's
philosophy.*

A. N. Whitehead

values have the inherent characteristics of divine truth, beauty, and goodness.

Animal or human? When the physical machinery of animal mind evolves to the point of becoming accessible to the adjutant mind spirits of worship and wisdom, the individual may experience "superconsciousness"—a form of self-consciousness that includes consciousness of consciousness. Such an "animal" then becomes a "human being."

With those brief comments, let's continue:

Finite Reality—its Source

The Papers inform us that "the source of universe reality is the Infinite." The primary realities of infinity are:

- Paradise Patterns
- The Universal Mind of the Eternal God

Hence all that "is" in the finite universes of time consists in "the time-space repercussions of Paradise Pattern and God's Universal Mind."

Secondary in origin, finite reality has its very "being" in the finite aspect of Deity we know as God, the Supreme.

The reality of the Supreme is existent as:

- Causation in the physical world
- Self-consciousness in the intellectual world
- Progressing selfhood in the spirit world

At the primary level, all that becomes occasions of finite reality in the universes of time has origin in "potentialities" that are resident in the Absolutes of Infinity. These potentials are both infinite and changeless.

The finite reality of the universes is a process of never ending change. Thus, when the changeless potentials of the Absolutes become the "actuals" of the finite worlds, they become a process of transient change brought about through the participation of the Supreme. The Supreme is the direct source of all finite "actuals."

The limits of human comprehension of finite reality are reached in this concept that finite reality is a process of change—the time-space actualization of potentials having origin in the Absolutes of Infinity, becoming transients in the Supreme, and taking form in consciousness as the "actuals" of finite reality.

Humanity is "special"

A characteristic of being "human" is our ability to transcend finite limitations indigenous to the animal world. The ability for such transcendence is because of endowments derived directly from the Universal Father—our individual personalities, and the Father's indwelling spirit fragments.

In addition, we have indirect endowments originating from the Universe Mother Spirit that reach us via the Adjutant Mind Spirits of Wisdom and Worship. Together, these qualities set humanity apart from the animal kingdom.

How far can we go as mortal human beings?

The maximum progression attainable by human creatures culminates with:

- Our recognition of the Universal Father
- Our knowing of the Supreme
- Our achievement of the perfection, harmony,

Havona natives... are eternally existent. Havona thus illustrates something which is not exactly finite nor yet absolute. Havona further acts as a buffer between absolute Paradise and finite creations, still further illustrating the function of transcendentals. But Havona itself is not a transcendental—it is Havona.

(1159)

The evolving soul of mortal man is created out of the pre-existent possibility for such experience within the Supreme.
(1281)

and unanimity of our wills such that the desire to do the Father's will is supreme in our souls and dominant over our minds.

Having attained that desirable state, we qualify to become "as one" with the Father-Spirit within, and thus move on from our mortal limitations towards the potentials of a transcendent spirit existence. From that time onwards our concepts of "reality," finite or transcendent, may be expected to undergo advances that are beyond our current capacity to comprehend. (see pp.1434/5)

When is Epochal Revelation not Epochal?

"Truth is always a revelation: autorevelation when it emerges as a result of the work of the indwelling Adjuster; epochal revelation when it is presented by the function of some other celestial agency, group, or personality." (1109)

Note that epochal revelation is concisely defined by the authors of the Urantia Papers as having been issued directly from a celestial agency, group, or personality other than our indwelling God-spirit, our Thought Adjuster.

Following careful consideration, it becomes clear that some revelation could have special significance, even epochal significance, but still not fall within the defines of "epochal revelation."

The authors make another careful distinction in differentiating between "autorevelation" and "epochal revelation."

I was unaware of these distinctions until, in a talk given at an Australian conference, the

speaker made the statement that nowhere in The Urantia Book do its authors claim it is the "Fifth Epochal Revelation." A check soon revealed that he was correct.

Most readers appear to have made the same mistake as myself. What the book states is this:

"There have been many events of religious revelation but only five of epochal significance. These were as follows:" (1007)

It then lists the:

- 1 The Dalmatian teachings promulgated by Prince Caligastia's staff
- 2 The Edenic teachings from Adam and Eve
- 3 The teachings of Melchizedek of Salem
- 4 The teachings of Jesus of Nazareth
- 5 The Urantia Papers.

The first four of these come within the definition of "epochal revelation" as each issued directly from a "celestial agency" other than the Thought Adjuster. But the means by which the Urantia Papers came to us is quite different:

"The Adjuster of the human being through whom this communication is being made..." (1208)

Thus, since the Papers have come through a human being and via a Thought Adjuster, they appear to have excluded themselves from the status of being "epochal revelation" but, instead, appear to fall within their own definition of "autorevelation." (1109)

However, as normally used in the English language, the prefix, "auto" means "self," whereas the text of p. 1208 may indicate that the

*The eye of the
spiritualized
intellect discerns a
world of true
values.*

(1435)

*The eye of the
material world
perceives a world of
factual knowledge.*

(1435)

human individual involved was simply a vehicle for the transfer of information. Hence, the Urantia Papers may not comply with their own definitions of either epochal revelation or autorevelation—if the latter is assumed to specifically involve only an individual and their Thought Adjuster.

However, the fact remains that the immediate source "through whom this communication is being made" was a human being—and the Paper states:

"...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." (1768)

Actually, there is no claim for infallibility anywhere in the Urantia Papers by their authors. On the contrary they state:

"Reason is the proof of science, faith the proof of religion, logic the proof of philosophy, but **revelation is validated only by human experience.**" (1106)

It follows that the validity of all revelation must be a personal judgment, one that can only be validated through the experience of the individual—and as an act of personal faith.

This is an essential requirement if the choosing of God's will in our daily lives is to be a truly freewill choice. Divinely promulgated orders, rules, or regulations that carry a penalty for disobedience or rejection are incompatible with true freewill choice. For Jesus, faith is the only key that opens the door of the "kingdom":

"But for you, my children, and for all others who would follow you into this kingdom, there is set a severe test. Faith alone will pass you through its portals, but you must bring forth the fruits of my Father's spirit if you would continue to ascend in the progressive life of the divine fellowship." (1569)

K.T.G.

Atonement: Jewish Origins

The Day of Atonement, with its impressive ritual, is held on the 10th day of the 7th month (Tishi) of the Jewish calendar, and is both the culmination and the crowning of sacrificial worship in the Old Testament. Described in detail in the Pentateuch Book of Leviticus, the ceremony involves both fasting and the slaying of two goats. One is offered as a blood sacrifice to cleanse the "Holy Place" in the Temple and the altar of Burnt Offering. The second becomes the scapegoat for the nation's sins.

There are three stages to the ritual. In the last of these, the sins of the nation are transferred by the officiating priest to the head of the goat in a manner deemed to be actual and not just symbolic.

In ancient times the goat was allowed to escape to the wilderness as an offering to Azazel, the demonic spirit of wilderness. In New Testament times, this "scape goat" is taken to a cliff 12 miles east of Jerusalem, where it is thrown over to be dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

The Atonement, known also as "the Fast," is still the most solemn and most strongly attended religious ceremony of the Jewish religious year. (Source: Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, Hendrickson, 1996 printing)

The curious among us may wonder about the accumulated effect of the blood of hundreds of goats sacrificed and sprinkled around in the Holy Place over the years. Is it cleaned up, and what effect does such cleaning have on its sacred "cleansing" properties? In a somewhat similar type of ceremony, practiced by the ancient Aztecs, the problem of accumulating llama blood was overcome by a captured slave who was forced to lick it up. After that, he was dispatched at a more hygienic location.

The fact that the atonement concept has lasted

*A man that
studieth revenge
keeps his own
wounds green.*

Francis Bacon

for something in the order of three thousand years or more indicates just how deeply ingrained in the human psyche is the presumption of the necessity of God's revenge for offences against his personage, or some acceptable atonement offering in its place.

The early Christian movement was almost entirely Jewish. Its first and primary theologian was Paul who, prior to his conversion, was a traditionalist of the deepest kind.

Authorship for the New testament "Epistle to the Hebrews" is disputed, but often credited to Paul—or at least with having been strongly influenced by his thinking. It has close affinities with Stephen's speech in Acts 3. Its language is extremely elegant and cultured Greek, the best in the New Testament. In it we find a close connection to Old Testament and "Atonement" thought on the necessity for atonement offerings to God for the forgiveness of sin.

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [for us]." (Hebrews 9: 12)

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9: 14)

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Hebrews 9: 22)

This concept is repeated in Paul's various epistles such as:

"In whom we have redemption through his

blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Ephesians 1: 7)

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, [even] the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1: 14)

Paul's writing preceded the writing of the gospels. Hence it is not too surprising that this theme of atonement persisted in Christianity.

Its great attraction is that it lets us "off the hook" for our nastiness with a minimum of fuss and bother. Hence its continuing popularity.

The Supreme Being

In the Urantia Papers, some authors tend to refer to the Supreme Being as both existent and not yet existent—hence in ways similar to how particle physicists treat particles as simultaneously being both wave and particle.

Although the evolving Supreme Being is yet to complete his existence, and still remains in finite reality in fragmented forms as God the Supreme, the Almighty Supreme, and the Supreme Mind, nevertheless in the transcendent domains of Paradise, the Supreme Being already "is."

It is factual that in some Papers a very concise distinction is made between the incomplete Supreme Being and those parts that are now functional during the evolutionary stages of the grand universe. In others, the term "the Supreme" or "the Supreme Being" may be used in such a way as to leave the reader to sort out what is really meant. Another term occasionally used is "Supremacy," and mostly refers to the joint effects of the Supreme Being and the Paradise Trinity.

For those with some budding interest in

*It is out of the very reality
of the Supreme that the
Adjuster, with the consent
of the human will, weaves
the patterns of the eternal
nature of an ascending son
of God.*

(1284)

*Creatures merely utilize the
qualities and quantities of
the finite as they ascend to
the Father; the impersonal
consequences of such
utilization remain forever a
part of the living cosmos, the
Supreme person. (1287)*

philosophy and theology, the concepts expressed in the Urantia Papers on the relationships of finite (immanent) and transcendent Deity have some similarities to current ideas of process philosophy and theology. However in detail and concept, the Urantia Papers appear to be far in advance of any current works.

Even a modest acquaintance with process theology such as is presented in, for example, Encyclopedia Britannica, can be very helpful for deepening our understanding of the Urantia Papers.

In the Papers, we are informed that the creativity of us humans is limited to the sorting of basic ideas rather than to their creation. Perhaps this confirms what many of our greatest mathematicians have always believed—they do not "create" new theorems or laws but rather "discover" them. Naturally this brings up much argument about where these theorems were prior to their discovery, and also on who created them.

The Papers inform us that all possible original ideas, concepts, etc., are already present as potentials and possibilities in the keeping of the Absolutes of Infinity. (1261, 1264)

Those that become available to us humans do so apparently because they have already been "processed," and are present and available in the now functional Supreme Mind. (1287)

Through the cosmic mind of the Infinite Spirit and the Adjutant Mind Spirits of the Universe Mother Spirit, these pre-existent thoughts are presented for our selection, sorting, recombining, and decision making. (1284, 1287)

At least, that is how it seems to be. The charts that follow may be of help for the carrying out of some self-conducted sorting.

The Creation of the Universes

The Absolutes of Infinity

All possibilities and potentials, whether of matter, mind, spirit, event, or idea, all are initially and permanently existent in the Absolutes of Infinity, including all that is, or may become, finite. It is from these possibilities and potentials that the superuniverses (and all that therein is), plus the outer space bodies, are created as our finite reality.
(1155, 1261, 1264, 1298)



Transmuting the Transcendent

Since these possibilities and potentials resident with the Absolutes are transcendent, that is "outside" of space and time, to become finite reality they must be transmuted (transformed) to appear as actualized reality within finite space and time.

This is a shared task, integration of which is the function of the Infinite Spirit. For matters of non-personal reality, the initial actualization is undertaken by the Architects of the Master Universe, then by the Supreme Creator Personalities (the Creator Sons, Ancients of Days, and Master Spirits), who involve the Supreme Being.
(1150, 1264, 1284, 1287, 1298)

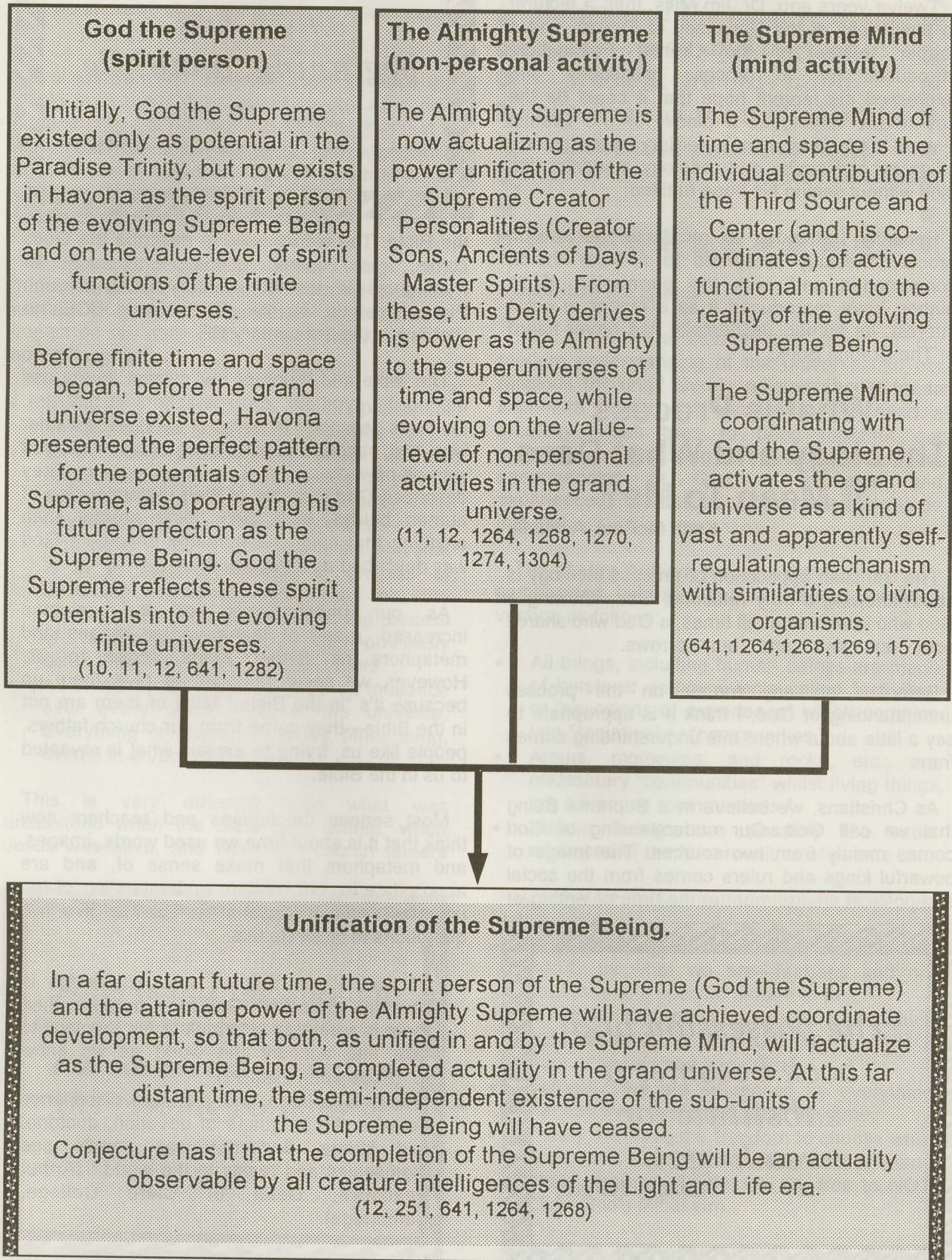


The Evolutionary Supreme Being

Now present as God, the Supreme (spirit), the Mind of the Supreme (mind), and the Almighty Supreme (power and non-personal activities), these aspects of finite Deity are functional during the evolution of the Grand Universe to Light and Life.

When all is perfected, the evolution of the Supreme is completed. The transient aspects of the Supreme will then become united in the immanent and perfected God of the finite Universes, the Supreme Being.
(251, 1268, 1269)

Evolution of The Supreme Being



Relation of The Urantia Papers and Process Theology.

Twelve years ago, Dr Jim Mills, then a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Florida, and a former trustee of the Urantia Foundation, introduced me to process philosophy. Jim expressed his fervent hope that it could be the key to the finding of a place for the Urantia Papers in the curriculum of tertiary institutions for study by philosophy and theology students. Jim died without seeing his hope fulfilled.

Recently, I attended an introductory lecture on process theology presented to a local church congregation and, with the permission of its author, have reproduced it as a matter of great interest. Its author, incidentally had never heard of The Urantia Book.

What is Process Theology and What Does It Mean To Me?

Keith McPaul, Australia

The Christian application of process theology is about knowing a truly relational God, knowing a God who is with us at all times, a God who shares both our joys and our sorrows.

Before I go any further on the process understanding of God, I think it is appropriate to say a little about where this understanding comes from.

As Christians, we believe in a Supreme Being that we call God. Our understanding of God comes mainly from two sources. The image of powerful kings and rulers comes from the social and political environment at the time of writing of

The possession of a book becomes a substitute for reading it.

Anthony Burgess

Now a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Aristotle

the Bible. The words used to describe the Gods come from Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras in the 6th century BCE, through Plato, Aristotle in the 4th century BCE, to Plotinus in the 3rd century CE.

The Bible and much of our current liturgy use the words, symbols, and metaphors of that era. God was described in terms of a king and a ruler who had absolute control over everything. God was all-powerful, eternal, never changing. They described God in terms of their understanding of human beings, with God being greater than anything that could be humanly imagined. God was described as a superhuman.

As our understanding of the universe increased, many of these earlier images and metaphors no longer made sense to us. However, we seem reluctant to give them up because it's "in the Bible." Most of them are not in the Bible—they came from our church fathers, people like us, trying to explain what is revealed to us in the Bible.

Most serious theologians and teachers now think that it is about time we used words, images, and metaphors that make sense of, and are appropriate to, our modern understanding of the universe and our place in it. Let me give two quotations to illustrate this:

- "If we believe that all new knowledge is revealed to us from God for a purpose, then there is a need to reformulate our theology to take into account the world as we know it." (Pope John Paul 11)
- "There is a large and alarming dissonance between the language of devotion, doctrine, and liturgy, and the way people see themselves and reality in the world." (Arthur Peacocke, Dean of Clare College, Cambridge)

In process theology there is an attempt to reconcile our belief in a loving God, the God we see in the scriptures, and the God we experience personally, with the God we see in the world and the wonders of God the scientists have shown us.

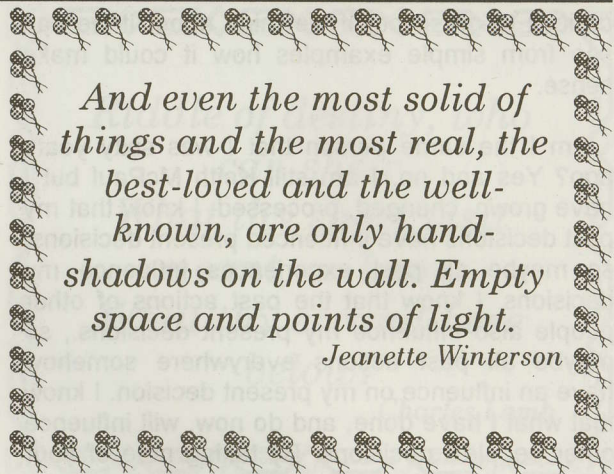
Process theology does not claim to have the whole truth but it does claim to give us a new understanding of our relationship with God that is consistent with what we know and experience about the world about us. It gives us a new set of words and metaphors which are more understandable in our world of today.

Modern science has learned many things about the universe and our place in it, most of which we take for granted because they do not seem to impact on our daily lives. For example, science now tells us that:

- Everything is made of small pulses of energy, and not small units of matter.
- Every building block from which we are made has a degree of freedom to do what it likes. We do not know with certainty what any unit might do or even where it is.
- Nothing is static. Everything in the universe is in a state of change or process of becoming something else. You, me, the flowers, even the table are all in the process of becoming something else—obviously some things move slower than others.
- All things in the universe have an influence over every other thing in the universe. Everything is related to every other thing, even if in a very minute way.

This is very different from what was understood when the Bible was written, when Jesus was alive, and when our church fathers

*Time is but the shadow
of eternity cast by
Paradise realities upon
the moving panoply of
space.*
(1117)



*And even the most solid of
things and the most real, the
best-loved and the well-
known, are only hand-
shadows on the wall. Empty
space and points of light.*

Jeanette Winterson

established the creeds.

Isn't it time we incorporated some of our modern understanding of the universe into our religious thinking? Surely religion should try to illuminate reality, not confuse it. We need a theology which tries to bring together our scientific understanding of the universe and our understanding of God as revealed and experienced. Process theologians are trying to do just that.

The theory behind process theology is very complicated, but I try and understand a simplified version as follows:

- All things, including human beings are made of bursts of energy events called "activities" or "occasions of experience" which combine into "societies" or "communities."
- Atoms, molecules, and rocks, etc., are elementary "communities" whilst living things are advanced "communities."
- Human beings are possibly the most advanced of the "communities of events."

All activities, including humans, are influenced by three forces:

- Firstly, God gives us an initial aim which makes us what we are—humans and not flowers, and a specific human at that.
- In this aim God provides us with a lure which encourages us to grow uniquely towards a state of beauty and happiness.
- Secondly, we are influenced by everything that has ever happened up to this time.
- Thirdly, we have the freedom to choose what to do next. Our freedom is limited by many things, but importantly, we are free to NOT follow God's initial aim.

What does this mean to me? Some of it is

difficult to grasp but if we think about it we can see from simple examples how it could make sense.

Am I the same person that I was sixty years ago? Yes and no. I am still Keith McPaul but I have grown, changed, processed. I know that my past decisions have influenced present decisions, so maybe all past experiences influence my decisions. I know that the past actions of other people also influence my present decisions., so maybe all past actions everywhere somehow have an influence on my present decision. I know that what I have done, and do now, will influence other people's decisions. By taking note of your reading of this, you can see how the connectedness between ourselves and other people works.

If I accept that this makes sense, how does it affect my understanding of God? Theologians have developed a comprehensive Christian theology based on Whitehead's process concept, but again I like to look at it in a very simple way.

I said earlier that we have described God in terms of what we understand of the world. So, if we understand the world as a process, we can also understand God as a process. We can think of God as:

- Having an initial aim which is to guide everything towards newness, uniqueness, beauty, and harmony. (These are four words for what we think is the ultimate.)
- Being influenced by everything that happens in the world.
- Allowing all creation freedom of choice.

The first of these is not that strange, we have traditionally believed that God somehow directs

*Ye gods! annihilate
but space and time.
And make two
lovers happy.*

Alexander Pope

*To material beings the
spirit world is unreal;
to spirit beings the
material world is almost
entirely unreal, being
merely a shadow of the
substance of spirit
realities. (498)*

our paths.

The second and third open up a fantastic new way of understanding our relationship with God.

- God provides us with a preferred option and with the ability to follow that option. However God cannot make us follow it, God does not have the power to force us to do anything. If we do not have the power to disobey God, then we are only puppets.
- But every time we make a decision God is there to give us a new preferred option. God is always with us to guide and help us.
- God is not just a remote observer, God is always with us.
- God knows all the options for the future but cannot know the future in detail because it has not yet happened.

Although we have the freedom to disobey, importantly for us, whatever we do influences God.

- Every time we make a decision, or take an action, God has a new reality to deal with. God can only work with what has happened.
- God works with the world as it is in order to bring it to where it can be.
- It does not matter how many times we choose not to follow God's lure, God is always there to provide us with a new preferred option.
- If we are happy, God is happy with us and gives us new options to develop our happiness even further.
- If we are sad or we are suffering, God is sad and suffering with us and provides us with options to heal our sadness and suffering.

This means the core of Christian theology is the

belief in a relational God:

- A God who is with us all the time, in our times of joy and of sadness, continuously guiding us to a better life.
- God is one who has a relationship with all of creation.

Thinking of God in relational terms makes sense when we look at the world around us.

- It makes sense of evil. God does not cause evil. Evil is a natural consequence of our freedom.
- God does not want suffering, God suffers with us and provides us with the means to stop suffering or to live with suffering
- Prayer makes sense. What we do influences God, and when we pray we are directing our thoughts and actions towards God. We are not only putting ourselves in a state to hear God's aim for us, but we are changing the world as it is for the better. This makes it easier for God to bring about change for the good.
- When we think of an ongoing all-the-time relationship with God, we know that God is always helping us in our decision-making, we are never alone.

By knowing that what we do has an influence on everything else in the universe, we know that we have a responsibility to look after the rest of God's creation. This must change the way we look after the environment. We are also responsible for our own actions and there is no one going to come and solve all our problems for us. Freedom and responsibility means that it is up to us, but we know that we always have God to guide us.

*Fortunately, in her kindness
and patience, Nature has
never put the fatal question as
to the meaning of their lives
into the mouths of most people.
And where no one asks, no one
needs to answer.*

Carl Gustav Jung

*Riddle of destiny, who
can show
What thy short visit
meant, or know
What thy errand here
below?*

Charles Lamb

God gives everything an initial aim and is with them always. We do not know how God guides plants, animals, and people of other religions, but we do know that God is also in relationship with them.

By thinking of God from a process perspective I can better understand and appropriate the Christian message.

- I can believe that God's wisdom and spirit was embodied in the man, Jesus Christ, and through him gain a clearer view of what God's wisdom is and how it operates in human life.
- I can read the Bible and not be worried about whether the stories are true or not, I can concentrate on looking for God's plan for me.
- I can worship God without having to make excuses for what God has or has not done.
- I can better understand how God works among people of other faiths.
- I no longer have to live with an internal fight between what my experiences tell me and what the church tells me. (I do not have to leave my brain outside when I go to church.)

Learning about God is a life long exercise with God directing our path all the way. We should not stop at the Sunday School story level. It is acceptable to change our mind about what the Bible stories mean as we grow older and as our understanding of the world grows.

Process theology does not claim to have all the answers, God still remains a mystery. However it does give me a more credible way of thinking of God. I think that process theology makes the church more credible and more relevant to the modern world and gives us a better chance of meeting the challenges of the next millennium. Thanks be to God!

How should a Urantian Live?

This is a problem that all dedicated readers of the Urantia Papers must face. Many of us received them in circumstances that were highly unusual, sometimes appearing to border on the miraculous. And so we were tempted, as Jesus was tempted, to conclude that we are special, selected, in some way different, maybe even superior to our fellows.

There is nothing new under the sun. So if we seek we shall find. The answers to most, if not all such problems confronting Urantians can be found in the life experiences of Jesus. In this instance, the temptations Jesus underwent during the forty days following on from his baptism offer a fertile arena for investigation.

Among the accounts of this period there is a lengthy paragraph warning us to bear in mind that although Jesus, at this time, had become totally aware of his place in the order things as a Creator Son, effectively God to his own universe, he nevertheless elected to complete his bestowal as a man, and with the mind of a man. (1521)

Jesus now had the capability of fully separating his mind as a man, Jesus of Nazareth, from the mind of Michael, creator of a universe.

The mind of Jesus, we are told, was that of a first century Jew, conditioned by Jewish culture and Jewish aspirations of that time. His mother, Mary, for example, had attempted to mold it to be in accord with Jewish scriptures such as: "The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; this day I have begotten you. Ask me and I will give you

Knowledge is a function of the nonspiritual level; truth is a phase of the mind-spirit level of the universes. The eye of the material mind perceives a world of factual knowledge; the eye of the spiritualized intellect discerns a world of true values. (1435)

The poor are our brothers and sisters—people in the world who need love, who need care, who have to be wanted.

Mother Teresa

the heathen for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel." (1521)

Jesus' "humanity was genuine, natural, wholly derived from the antecedents of, and fostered by, the actual intellectual status and social and economic conditions of that day and generation." (1521)

Thus it was a purely human Jesus who, on being given a vision of the assembled celestial hosts of Nebadon during the forty days after his baptism, was tempted to make use of these mighty personalities in connection with the program of his public work to come.

In this, the first of six major decisions that followed after his baptism, Jesus elected, "not to utilize a single personality of the vast assemblage" unless it be his Father's will.

In our task of following Jesus, how does this apply to us? We have an authoritative revelation from celestial beings that reveals virtually all that is important for human beings to know in order to ensure their eternal future. Can we assume it includes the delegation of some kind of celestial authority, or power that we can call to our aid? And might this have the effect of elevating our social status, making us special in some way?

From Jesus' example in rejecting all proffered celestial aid other than the help of the Father, the answer is very obviously no, and is illustrated in these statements:

"He (Jesus) would return to Galilee and quietly begin the proclamation of the kingdom and trust his Father (the personalized Adjuster—for us our

Thought Adjuster) to work out the details of procedure day by day." (1523)

"By these decisions Jesus set a worthy example for every person on every world throughout a vast universe when he refused to apply material tests to prove spiritual problems, when he refused presumptuously to defy natural laws. And he set an inspiring example of universe loyalty and moral nobility when he refused to grasp temporal power as the prelude to spiritual glory.

"If the Son of Man had any doubts about his mission and its nature when he went up in the hills after his baptism, he had none when he came back to his fellows following the forty days of isolation and decisions."

Jesus' second and third decisions involved the violation of natural law, possible to him but not relevant for us. His fourth decision was concerned with attracting attention to himself by using his superhuman powers for what might appear to be the legitimate purpose of ensuring a respectable and respectful following.

Since we believe the Urantia Papers were authored by celestial beings, it becomes relevant to ask whether it would be valid to attempt to attract attention to the message of The Urantia Book on the grounds of the authority of its authors or the claim for its status as the fifth Epochal Revelation. Or is there some other more effective and important way for us to achieve this task?

Jesus answer to his fourth problem was again no. He steadfastly refused to use his superhuman powers for purely selfish or personal purposes. Hence, since Jesus would not use his own superhuman powers to attract attention, it would appear that we are expected to find means

Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.
Mother Teresa

To keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it.
Mother Teresa

other than the book's reflected glory as our personal contribution to further the work initiated by Jesus.

Jesus' fifth problem was in deciding what method to employ in the proclamation and establishment of the kingdom. After considering the available alternatives he decided upon leaving it entirely in the hands of his Father to direct his daily comings and goings and what would eventuate. And to his followers he provided this exhortation:

"Do you not understand...that you are to represent me in the world and in the proclamation of the kingdom even as I now represent my Father who is in heaven?"

And surely we are left with absolutely no doubt as to how Jesus represented his Father.

"There was just one motive in Jesus' post-baptismal life on Urantia and that was a better and truer revelation of his Paradise Father; he was the pioneer of the new and better way to God, the way of faith and love. Ever his exhortation to the apostles was: 'Go seek for the sinners; find the downhearted and comfort the anxious.' (1543)

"Proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and portray my revelation of the Father in heaven," Jesus said, "but do not be misled into bypaths of creating legends and building a cult having to do with beliefs and teachings about my beliefs and teachings." (1543)

Thus if we simply promote the The Urantia Book and even its teachings, it appears that this is not what Jesus really wants from us. So what is left?

The only possible answer seems to be that we, as individuals, are asked to live personal lives of individual service just as Jesus lived his—in a way that reflects and reveals the actual nature of God, our heavenly Father. Nothing else will do. Perhaps that is why we are informed:

“To ‘follow Jesus’ means to personally share his religious faith and to enter into the spirit of the Master’s life of unselfish service for man. One of the most important things in human living is to find out what Jesus believed, to discover his ideals, and to strive for the achievement of his exalted life purpose. Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it.” (2090)

If we are still unsure of what there is about the nature of God for us to attempt to reveal in our own lives, in his book, *Jesus, a New Vision*, Marcus Borg states the God of Jesus was a gracious and compassionate God. Compassion in Hebrew, he says, derives from the plural of “womb,” hence has the connotation of wombishness. Thus Jesus’ God was generous, nurturing, nourishing, life-giving.

Jesus said, “My Father requires all his children to grow in grace and in a knowledge of the truth.

You who know these truths must yield the increase of the fruits of the spirit and manifest a growing devotion to the unselfish service of your fellow servants. And remember that, inasmuch as you minister to one of the least of my brethren, you have done this service to me. (1917)

“And the fruits of the divine spirit which are yielded in the lives of spirit-born and God-knowing mortals are: loving service, unselfish devotion, courageous loyalty, sincere fairness, enlightened honesty, undying hope, confiding trust, merciful ministry, unfailing goodness, forgiving tolerance, and enduring peace.” (2054)

There was a sixth decision:

“On the last day of this memorable isolation, before starting down the mountain to join John and his disciples, the Son of Man made his final decision. And this decision he communicated to the Personalized Adjuster in these words, ‘And in all other matters, as in these now of decision-record, I pledge you I will be subject to the will of my Father.’ And when he had thus spoken, he journeyed down the mountain. And his face shone with the glory of spiritual victory and moral achievement.” (1523)

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