



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



## Blessed Assurance

"Your assurance that you have entered into the kingdom family of the Father, and that you will eternally survive with the children of the kingdom, is wholly a matter of personal experience—faith in the word of truth. Spiritual assurance is the equivalent of your personal religious experience in the eternal realities of divine truth and is otherwise equal to your intelligent understanding of truth realities plus your spiritual faith and minus your honest doubts.

"The Son is naturally endowed with the life of the Father. Having been endowed with the living spirit of the Father, you are therefore sons of God. You survive your life in the material world of the flesh because you are identified with the Father's living spirit, the gift of eternal life. Many, indeed, had this life before I came forth from the Father, and many more have received this spirit because they believed my word; but I declare that, when I return to the Father, he will send his spirit into the hearts of all men.

"While you cannot observe the divine spirit at work in your minds, there is a practical method of discovering the degree to which you have yielded the control of your soul powers to the teaching and guidance of this indwelling spirit of the heavenly Father, and that is the degree of your love for your fellow men.

"This spirit of the Father partakes of the love of the Father, and as it dominates man, it unfailingly leads in the directions of divine worship and loving regard for one's fellows.

"At first you believe that you are sons of God

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*Every serious Urantia Book reader should hope to someday experience the possibility that a close relative or friend might sometime silently observe that their life of living love is reminiscent of the life of Jesus of Nazareth*

because my teaching has made you more conscious of the inner leadings of our Father's indwelling presence; but presently the Spirit of Truth shall be poured out upon all flesh, and it will live among men and teach all men, even as I now live among you and speak to you the words of truth. And this Spirit of Truth, speaking for the spiritual endowments of your souls, will help you to know that you are the sons of God. It will unfailingly bear witness with the Father's indwelling presence, your spirit, then dwelling in all men as it now dwells in some, telling you that you are in reality the sons of God.

"Every earth child who follows the leading of this spirit shall eventually know the will of God, and he who surrenders to the will of my Father shall abide forever. The way from the earth life to the eternal estate has not been made plain to you, but there is a way, there always has been, and I have come to make that way new and living. He who enters the kingdom has eternal life already, he shall never perish. But much of this you will the better understand when I shall have returned to the Father and you are able to view your present experiences in retrospect."

## Being and Doing

*That evening while teaching in the house, for it had begun to rain, Jesus talked at great length, trying to show the twelve what they must be, not what they must do. They knew only a religion that imposed the doing of certain things as the means of attaining righteousness—salvation. But Jesus would reiterate, "In the kingdom you must be righteous in order to do the work."*

The title for this article, "Being and Doing," is derived from the above remark made by Jesus to his followers that later goes on to state that "being righteous, by faith, must precede doing

*No, I do not hate the enemy. The worse their behavior, the more I feel sorry for them.*

*From a woman who died from maltreatment in a prisoner of war camp in Sumatra in world war 2.*

righteousness in our daily lives." (1584)

This innocuous looking remark is the catalyst for initiating some serious thinking. For one, what does Jesus mean by "being righteous?" The most common assumption is that it simply means "doing good deeds to others." But that reverses Jesus' priority which asserted that being righteous takes precedence over the doing of righteousness.

An insight into Jesus' meaning for "being righteous" is found in a statement about his earthly mission: "Jesus refused to have his attention diverted from his mission. He ignored the civic, social, and economic realms. He told the apostles he was concerned *only* with the principles of man's inner and personal spiritual life." (1580) Hence, for those seeking to follow Jesus, this statement completely divorces "righteousness" from the arena of the material and transfers it to the domain of the spiritual.

Jesus informs us what we must seek is righteousness in our spiritual life. Confirmation occurs many times in the Papers with statements such as, "the goal of human self-realization should be spiritual, not material" (1096); "the only realities worth striving for are divine, spiritual, and eternal" (1096); and "spiritual destiny is dependent on faith, love, and devotion to truth—*hunger and thirst for righteousness—the whole hearted desire to find God and be like him.*" (1739)

In other words we must transfer our concepts of what we must "be" completely out from the finite, material, secular world to the inner, personal and spiritual world in which we, as individuals, *must seek to remake ourselves in the image of God.* That is what this life is all about. And in case you are unconvinced, hear this:

"The Master fully realized that certain social

*True religion is  
a living love,  
a life of  
service.*

*From The Urantia Book*

results would appear in the world as a consequence of the spread of the gospel of the kingdom; but he intended that all such desirable social manifestations should appear as **unconscious** and inevitable outgrowths, or natural fruits, of this inner personal experience of individual believers." (1865)

Is this asking too much of us? If it is our desire to have a career in eternity, we do not appear to have a realistic alternative. **To seek to become God-like** is the only destiny on offer. Naturally that is a long term process for which our immediate, earthly goal is provided by Jesus' revelation of what it means to be God-like. But it is the **only offer we have**.

Unfortunately Christianity forsook whatever understanding it had of this reality when it evolved from being a small band of dedicated individuals to become an ecclesiastical organization governed by creeds, ritual, and a priesthood. Periodically, attempts have been made for a revival, the one most relevant for Urantians occurring 350 years ago when it arose from the ashes of English Puritanism under the leadership of one, George Fox.

The aim of this group was for a purely personal religion in which each individual was dedicated to living in accordance with a direct consciousness of what they called the "**Inward Light**"—in our parlance, the God-Spirit-Within. Known as the Quakers, the group operated without creeds or clergy, and firmly believed that their experimental approach to the discovery of the "**Inward Light**" would spill over to reform all of Christendom.

The role of the Quakers' "**Inward Light**" is similar, perhaps identical to, the Thought Adjuster of the Urantia Papers. The hope of the Quakers for the reformation of organized authoritarian Christianity is also very close to hopes expressed

Some for renown, on  
scrap of learning  
dote,  
And think they grow  
immortal as they  
quote.  
Edward Young

To know the world,  
not love her is thy  
point,  
She gives but little,  
nor that little long.  
Edward Young

in the Papers—such as: "What a service if, through this revelation, the Son of Man should be recovered from the tomb of traditional theology and be presented as the living Jesus to the church that bears his name. (2090)

In its early days, the Quaker movement achieved remarkable results. It led the campaign in Britain and the USA for the abolition of slavery, it achieved much needed reform to the ghastly prison systems of both countries, it championed a campaign for more humane treatment of the mentally retarded, it was a leader in the campaign for women's liberation, and much else. But in the long run it failed. Why?

Some Quaker literature places the blame for their demise squarely in the lap of their over-involvement in worldly affairs at the expense of individual consciousness of the Inward Light—the result being that the path illuminated by that Inward Light was lost.

But Jesus, in his wisdom, has instructed his Urantian followers to concern themselves **only with man's inner and spiritual life** (1580)—and to allow the fruits of the spirit to arise **unconsciously** (1865) as a consequence of what we must become. For Jesus, being righteous is a categorical imperative that must take precedence over merely doing righteousness.

But Jesus also foresaw that there is an accompanying concept urgently requiring comprehension.

The Papers inform us "that of all human knowledge that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it." (2090) The key to the value of this statement is **because Jesus' life is an authoritative revelation of the true character of God**—in so far as that character is comprehensible and attainable by mortal beings such as ourselves.

Provided we have this knowledge, then the requirement that we must seek to become God-like becomes both a realistic and attainable possibility. But all efforts to remake ourselves in the image of God will fail to bear fruit if we believe its expression must be by the public demonstration of our newly found sainthood. Any effect we might have would be short-lived and transient because it would be the result of insincere play-acting, a staged performance that has little to do with our real self.

If we are to bear fruit where the Quakers failed, the demonstration of Jesus-like mode of living must take place in the environment of those who know us best—our immediate family and our closest friends. Only they will be qualified to distinguish between our real spiritual rebirth and the pretend act that we might put on display in public. And because they will know that something remarkable and real has occurred in our lives, the possibility of it bearing fruit in their own lives will also become more real.

It appears to be highly likely that the only possible way for the true spiritual message of Jesus to penetrate to a significant proportion of Urantia's population would be if it is experienced in early childhood through personal interaction with God-knowing parents. The evidence?—all conceivable alternatives have already been tried and have failed—plus statements such as:

*"The family is the fundamental unit of fraternity in which parents and children learn the lessons of patience, altruism, tolerance, and forbearance which are so essential to the realization of brotherhood among all men." (941)*

And so, in accord with the cited evidence, we conclude that lives lived in the imitation of Jesus in a family-type environment will be the real

Though leaves are many, the  
root is one;  
Through all the lying days of  
my youth  
I swayed my leaves and  
flowers in the sun;  
Now I may wither into the  
truth.  
William Yeats

Now that my ladder's  
gone,  
I must lie down where  
all the ladders start,  
In the foul rag-and-  
bone shop of the heart.  
William Yeats

forerunner for the establishment of the brotherhood of man on this benighted planet.

## Living as Jesus lived—in a family environment.

Attempting to live our life as Jesus lived his while we are at home and among those who know us best may bring us face to face with problems we didn't even know we had. Such problems derive from habits that commenced developing in our early childhood and are held more or less unconsciously—so much so that we ignore them as being normal behavior.

Arising from our evolutionary animal heritage, many such habits originated from a deeply embedded trait found principally in herd and pack animals that we may label as dominance behavior. Coupled with this is a more widespread trait sometimes called territorialism. Singly or together these traits may appear in related behavioral forms such as self-centeredness, aggression, cowardice, anger, fear, resentment, revenge, impatience, intolerance, meanness, avarice, and violent, abusive and anti-social behavior.

Because these habits develop slowly, and mainly through trial and error procedures, they tend to be held unconsciously. Thus, we can become thoroughly nasty people without being in the slightest aware of our failings.

The Urantia Papers inform us, "the better man understands his neighbor, the easier it will be to forgive him, even to love him." But what if we do not understand even ourselves? And are therefore wide open to the criticism of "physician, heal thyself."

For most nasty people like us then, when seeking to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must first expend a major effort on self-healing, at the same time accepting, forgiving, and loving our neighbors without expecting to understand what makes them as they are.

Some of our basic behavior patterns are genetically inherited, others are learned. But most come from a combination of both. An example of why we cannot expect to understand what makes another as they are, comes from a recent discovery that a single gene controls the level of the brain enzyme, monamine oxidase. There are two forms of this gene, one good, the other bad. The gene plays an important role in what may be expressed in human males as violent and abusive behavior patterns.

A staggering 85% of males who inherit the bad form of the gene,<sup>1</sup> and also had a poor home environment, will exhibit violent and antisocial behavior in later life. This may include child abuse if they themselves have experienced abuse during their own childhood. But if they have experienced a good home life, then they are no more likely to go off the rails than those with the good form of the gene.

This is one of the few cases in which behavior can be linked with a genetic abnormality—but even then the actual outcome is unpredictable. However, what has now become obvious is that human behavior is extraordinarily complex—thus indicating that it will be a long, long time before we understand very much about what makes our neighbor, our associates, or even our spouse, behave as they do.

Therefore, if our behavioral interaction with others is to improve to the point that our Jesus-like behavior will have positive effects on others, our repair work needs to be directed virtually

*That best portion of a  
good man's life—  
his little nameless  
unremembered acts  
of kindness and of  
love.*  
William Wordsworth

*Whatever thy hand  
findeth to do, do it with all  
thy might; for there is no  
work, nor device, nor  
knowledge, nor wisdom, in  
the grave whither thou  
goest.*

*Ecclesiastes 9:10*

entirely to within ourselves.

Almost all of our obnoxious behavior derives directly from our evolutionary animal heritage—and Jesus proved it can be defeated.<sup>2</sup> That is what life on Earth, this first phase of our journey into eternity, is about. And in a first step in our liberation, we need to recognize that things material and worldly are of little consequence for our eternal life—as evidenced by Jesus' declaration that *the only realities worth striving for are divine, spiritual, and eternal.*

Having recognized that all human beings, and especially ourselves, are afflicted with inherited behavioral habits, we can embark on our own cure. Each of us will have at least some of the symptoms mentioned above—self-centeredness, resentment, impatience, intolerance and so on. If we are to be of any use in the struggle to bring the Jesus' way to this world, these must be defeated. And for that we will need the help and guidance of our indwelling Spirit-Guides, our Thought Adjuster and the Spirit of Truth.

Help is also available from the account we have of Jesus' early life in which he tackled these same problems and overcame them by learning never to react to the will of another, but only to the will of God and his own will.<sup>3</sup> We can emulate Jesus by doing the same thing—refusing to react emotionally to the behavior of others by first pausing to think, then referring our problem to the God-Within, and only after that responding as we believe Jesus would have responded.<sup>3</sup>

If we can convert this process to becoming habitual, we are on our way to becoming the victors. However we will have difficulty in responding as we believe Jesus would have responded except that we have a thorough knowledge of the life of Jesus—which is why the revelators have said that of all human knowledge,

that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it. (2090)

Strangely enough it is the quiet and unobtrusive defeat of our animalistic behavior patterns being carried out in our home environment that turns out to have by far the most potential to influence the long term spiritual advancement of our planet.

Past experience of religionists has shown that shouting our message from the rooftops will ultimately fail. (Billy Graham, etc.) Also the undertaking of massive good works will fail. (Salvation Army, etc.) Even giving out millions of Urantia Books will fail. (Gideons and Bible) But that quiet, unobtrusive, unannounced elimination of animal behavioral habits from our daily lives, particularly when in our home environment or with our intimate friends, will be absorbed, even if unconsciously so—and it will affect those who know us well.<sup>4</sup>

This inconspicuous change in our lives, these acts of not reacting to the will of others but instead modifying our animalistic reactions to coincide with the cosmic good of others, has the incredible power to bring about radical change, not only to other lives, but eventually to the whole world. How will it happen?

All who have been brought up in a church-going Christian family will be well aware that although Christianity is among the most ethical religions ever to exist on Earth, nevertheless the vast majority of its members are just as much plagued with humanity's animal behavioral problems as any other community. The cure then is not going to be in church-going nor in inspiring sermons, nor in good works. Primarily it is in what parents actually "are" in their own home lives that will matter. The revelation informs us:

"The family is the fundamental unit of fraternity

*To see a World in a grain  
of sand,  
And a Heaven in a wild  
flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm  
of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour.*

*William Blake*

*You cannot truly love  
your fellows by a mere  
act of will. Love is only  
born of thorough-going  
understanding of your  
neighbors' motives and  
sentiments.*

*From The Urantia Book*

in which parents and children learn the lessons of patience, altruism, tolerance, and forbearance which are so essential to the realization of brotherhood among all men." (941)

Our revelation also tells us that the coming of the kingdom of God in the hearts of individuals must precede the onset of the brotherhood of man—which implies that the spiritualization of the individual must come first. It also indicates that the roots of this coming brotherhood of man will be in family life—and it must be God-conscious parents who will bear the responsibility of being the initiators of the whole process.

How will it all happen? Slowly, maybe over hundreds of years even. And the dominant factor will be because children observe Jesus-like behavior in their parents and, in their turn, pass it on to their own children, who pass it on to their children, and so on.

Three hundred and fifty years ago the Quakers almost got it right. They lost their way when they moved their sphere of action to the secular world—and lost the guidance of their "Inward Light." Imagine where we would now be if they had had the Urantia revelation to help them and they had understood its real message. Light and Life might have been just around the corner.

References.

1. New Scientist, August 10, 2002, p. 23
2. "Exhibit in your one short life in the flesh...the transcendent possibilities attainable by a God-knowing human..." (p. 1358. Immanuel to Michael prior to his incarnation)
3. Ann Bendall, "The Mind of Jesus." Innerface International Vol. 9., No. 5, 2002.
4. "Let me emphatically state this eternal truth; if

you, by truth coordination, learn to exemplify in your lives this beautiful wholeness of righteousness, your fellow men will then seek after you that they may gain what you have so acquired." (1726)

## Evolution or Revolution?

What might have happened if leaders of all major Christian sects had fully endorsed the Urantia Papers as being God-given revelation immediately after the book was printed in 1955?

Assuming they did so, millions of committed Christian everywhere may have been induced to attempt living their lives in a manner they imagined to be an imitation of the life of Jesus. Then, on seeing them do so, and how they so loved one another, virtually the whole community in all dominantly Christian countries may have followed. Presumably, with this magnificent example of love confronting them, the rest of the world would soon have been inspired to do likewise—and the age of light and life would have been virtually upon us.

A significant proportion of the early readers of The Urantia Book believed that at least the first part of this scenario was both inevitable and desirable. Some sent books to prominent world leaders such as the Pope, Kings and Queens, prime ministers, presidents, congressmen and the like, and local leaders, the expectation being that the divine authority of the revelation would quickly gain recognition, and occasion immediate repentance and conversion.

One of the more probable eventual outcomes from such a scenario would have been the economic collapse of these countries, followed by widespread poverty, with hunger and starvation

*The strongest minds  
are often those of  
whom the noisy  
world  
hears least.*

*William Wordsworth*

*Two things fill the mind with  
ever new and increasing  
wonder and awe, the more  
often and the more seriously  
reflection concentrates upon  
them: the starry heaven  
above me and the moral law  
within me.*

*Immanuel Kant*

becoming endemic, and followed by unconstrained outbreaks of contagious diseases. In one word, disaster. On a miniature scale, this happened to very early Christians in Jerusalem who soon were starving and had to be supported by donations from communities at Antioch and elsewhere.

It appears that the authors of the Urantia Papers were quite aware of the potential for a new authoritative divine revelation to wreak chaos. "It is nearly fatal to the continuance of civilization to undertake their wholesale modification by radical revolution." (767) And referring to prior experience, "The Dalamatia teachers sought to add conscious social selection to the purely natural selection of biologic evolution. They did not derange human society, but they did markedly accelerate its normal and natural evolution. Their motive was progression by evolution and not revolution by revelation." (750)

Not long after this, the Caligastia rebellion did occur, with the apparent expectations having parallels to what some early readers had for the Urantia Papers: "The complete and radical reorganization of the whole world was attempted; revolution displaced evolution as the policy of cultural advancement and racial improvement."

However the results differed from expectations: "Among the superior and partially trained sojourners in and near Dalamatia there appeared a sudden advancement in cultural status, but when these new and radical methods were attempted on the outlying peoples, indescribable confusion and racial pandemonium was the immediate result. Liberty was quickly translated into license by the half-evolved primitive men of those days." (758)

When providing us with the Urantia Papers, their authors must surely have given deep consideration about how it could be done in order to achieve maximum effectiveness while at the same time keeping the risks to a minimum.

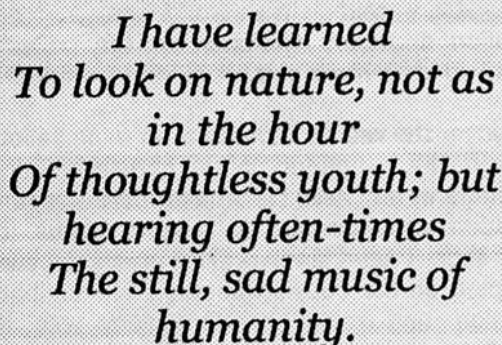
A consequence of the earlier rebellion was the frustration of Adam and Eve during their attempts to fulfill their allotted task of genetic upgrading of the human race, the effect being the extremely limited results flowing from their efforts. Presently our genetic potential is only a little above that of the original life plasm introduced to this planet.

Once the Urantia Papers were completed and ready to go to print, it appears that the recipients were informed we are now "on our own." That means we bear full responsibility for introducing their message to the rest of Urantians. Thus we need to carefully consider our resources, our potentials, and ask what our reasonable expectations might be.

On the scale of intellectual and spiritual capacity covering all minded beings that inhabit finite reality, humanity is at the very lowest level. And even within our own category of finite mortal being, we are described as from a "disordered and backward world like Urantia." (624)

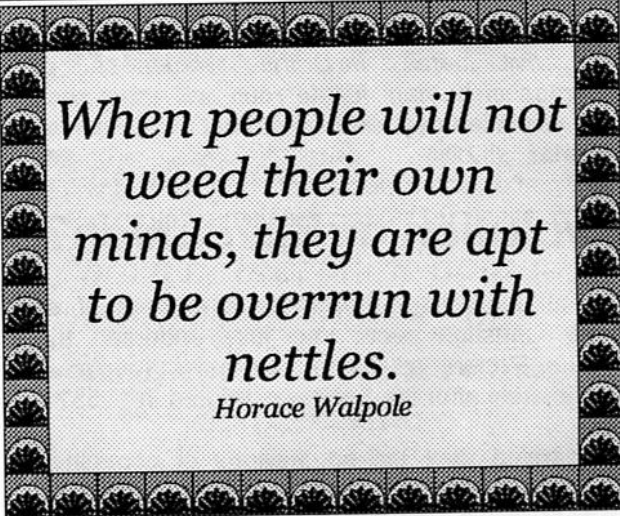
Among our catalogue of attributes as presented in the Urantia Papers is: 'man possess the lowest type of personality;' we are 'the lowest of will creatures;' we have 'the lowest mind of all;' and 'though we may be naturally God-seeking we are not inherently God-knowing.'

To cap the list: "The whole principle of biologic evolution is such that it makes it impossible for primitive man to appear on the inhabited worlds with any large endowment of self



*I have learned  
To look on nature, not as  
in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but  
hearing often-times  
The still, sad music of  
humanity.*

*William Wordsworth*



*When people will not  
weed their own  
minds, they are apt  
to be overrun with  
nettles.*

*Horace Walpole*

restraint." (1302) And, "Mortal man is a machine, a living mechanism; his roots are truly in the physical world of energy. Many human reactions are mechanical in nature; much of life is machinelike."

Adding these together to get a total for our attributes might persuade even the most narcissistic among adherents of the Urantia revelation to take serious thought concerning the personal implications referenced by: "The great danger that besets the creature is that, in achieving liberation from the fetters of the life mechanism, he will fail to compensate this loss of stability by effecting a **harmonious working liaison with spirit**. Creature choice, when relatively liberated from mechanical stability, may attempt further self-liberation independent of greater spirit identification." (1302)

Because of the natural mechanical component of our response to situations, our behavior patterns tend not to derive from the considered actions of a spirit-directed intelligence but have their origin in primordial reflexes associated with self-preservation, dominance, territorialism, and the survival of our species. Mostly, they will be inappropriate for one hoping or striving to live a life in the imitation of Jesus.

Our one and only realistic saving grace is to be located in the potential associated with our spirit indwelling. Though in this mortal life we can never escape the electrical and mechanical aspects of our existence, we can "increasingly learn to subordinate this physical life machine by the process of consecrating the human mind to the execution of the spiritual urges stemming from our spirit indwelling." (1301)

So why don't we just get on with it? Well, it



seems there is a problem. Whereas it is true that the spirit liberates and mechanism limits the function of human will, for our present level on the evolutionary tree of spiritual progress, our mental stability is strongly linked with our automatic and mechanistic control systems. Uncoupling these mechanisms introduces a potential instability that may become of great danger not only to ourselves but for those with whom we associate—and in extreme instances (such as Napoleon and Hitler for example), may threaten the stability of the societies in which we live.

The Urantia Papers inform us about how the slowness of human cultural progress testifies to the effectiveness of these evolutionary components of material inertia that operate to reduce our rate of advance and, in doing so, contribute to overall stability. However, when culture advances at too great a pace, our civilizations contain within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. (1302)

How do these warnings relate to dangers deriving from the ways we seek to spread the book and its message? A potential source of danger stems from individuals who are self-deluded concerning the reality of the relationship they share with their indwelling spirit forces. The harm they may cause to gullible souls, though usually limited, may nevertheless be extensive.

There are of course many spectacular examples, the Waco and Jones debacles springing quickly to mind. But these are only the examples that make the news. Problems best forgotten have already arisen within the Urantia movement and probably will occur again as the book wends its way into third world countries. The sum total of human misery derived from

*Alone, alone, about the  
dreadful wood  
Of conscious evil runs a  
lost mankind,  
Dreading to find its  
Father.*  
W.H. Auden

*To save your world  
you asked this man to  
die:  
would this man, could  
he see you now, ask  
why?*

*Epitaph to an unknown soldier. (W.H. Auden)*

such incidents can be quite enormous.

The lesson? Outreach needs to be spirit-directed. We must make every effort to see that this is so but any attempt to institute authoritarian control would be self-defeating.

For the individual, it is essential to be aware that our personal spirit alliance will only work for long term good if we have indeed effected a truly harmonious working relationship with our indwelling God-Spirit. Anything other than the possession of a functional harmony will not only fail, but may have unexpected and unwanted consequences if we presume upon it.

The Urantia Papers repeatedly emphasize our need for seeking unbroken personal relationships with our Indwelling Spirit, for consecrating our wills to the doing of God's will, for living our lives in selfless service (as Jesus lived his), and for the bearing of the fruits of the spirit as a critical adjunct. Is the conscious ignoring of these affirmations a rejection of God's will?

"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. 'By their fruits you shall know them.'" (64)

That quote leaves us with little doubt about a recommended course of action to spread the message. The fruits of the spirit are the life reactions of a spirit-led mortal. They are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance."

Jesus spent the major portion of his life serving on a person to person basis. But when he engaged in public ministry it was with a group—

his apostles and the women's corps—and was usually combined with service ministry.

For most of us, our serving needs to begin in the home. Only when those who know us best can recognize in us the love and goodness that was in Jesus would it be safe for us to engage in public ministry. Otherwise our act would be an hypocrisy.

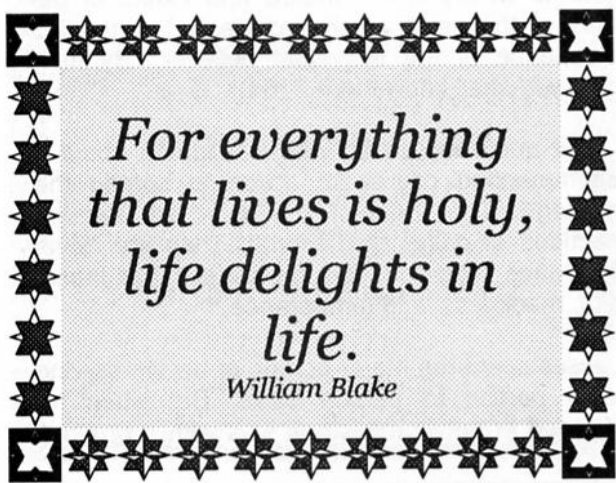
Remembering that evolution rather than revolution is the preferred option, then yes, by our fruits we can be known and we can make a difference.

"Your mission to the world is founded on the fact that I lived a God-revealing life among you; on the truth that you and all other men are the sons of God; and it shall consist in the life which you will live among men—the actual and living experience of loving men and serving them, even as I have loved and served you. Let faith reveal your light to the world; let the revelation of truth open the eyes blinded by tradition; let your loving service effectually destroy the prejudice engendered by ignorance. By so drawing close to your fellow men in understanding sympathy and with unselfish devotion, you will lead them into a saving knowledge of the Father's love." (2043)

### Is God a Possibility?

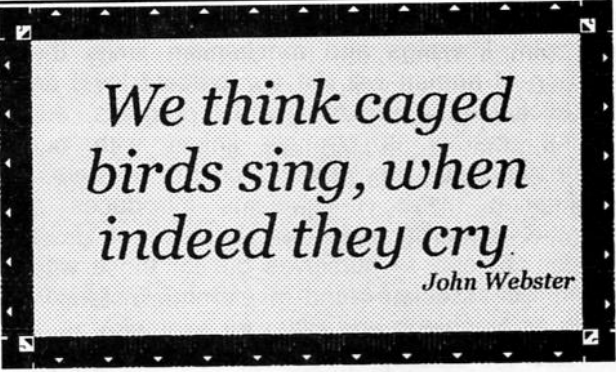
Book review

In games theory, the term 'zero-sum' refers to a situation that clearly has a winner and a loser that, added together, have zero sum. In contrast, in non-zero-sum games the interests of the players may overlap. Examples of the first are tennis, chess, and boxing. Non-zero-sumness is seen in hunting and fishing where participants can help one another in ways that bring benefit to all. Thus zero-sumness tends to be totally



*For everything that lives is holy, life delights in life.*

*William Blake*



*We think caged birds sing, when indeed they cry.*

*John Webster*

competitive while the tendency with non-zero-sumness can be towards increased cooperation.

From its origin in games theory, the logic of zero- and non-zero-sumness has been found to have application in areas such as economics and biological and social evolution, and spreading out into the evolution of complexity, directionality, and purpose.

Using these basic principles from games theory, author Robert Wright<sup>1</sup> has erected an impressive summary and interpretation of the biological and human history of our planet to demonstrate that the dynamics of non-zero-sumness have crucially shaped the unfolding of life on Earth.

In accomplishing this task, Wright has also revealed serious weaknesses in works such as that of Richard Dawkins<sup>2</sup> with his *The Selfish Gene* and Daniel Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*<sup>3</sup> that mechanistically downgraded purpose, consciousness, altruism, and the likes to the status of meaningless epiphenomena—inconsequential effects rather than being causes of anything at all.

It is the accumulation of the consequences of a multitude of non-zero sum 'games' that constitutes 'growth' in biological and social complexity—thus defining the direction of the history of life commencing with a primordial organic soup and leading to data communication systems amounting to globalization that transcends the individual.

Author Robert Wright's thesis is that the orchestration of the multiple societies of living organisms that presently populate our planet is the natural outcome for 'life' once it started—provided only that it operates under Darwinian-style natural selection among systems that themselves function through self-regulation inherent in the dynamics of interacting zero-sum and non-zero-sum systems.

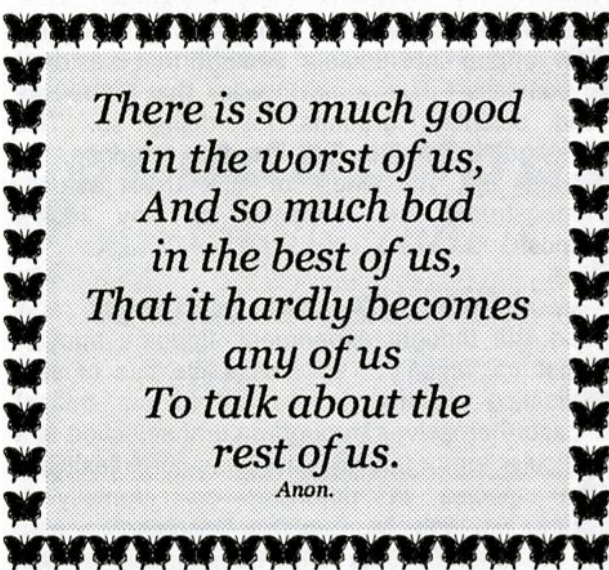
Both human history and organic evolution share a common dynamics, the energetic interplay between zero-sum and non-zero-sum forces. These two processes have an overall parallel direction that, in the long term, adds up to growth in non-zero-sumness (this can also be thought of simply as growth in cooperation and accompanying growth in complexity).

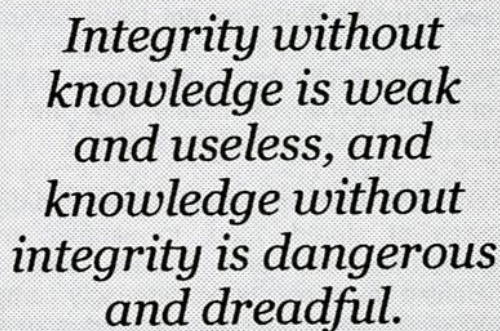
Indeed it appears to be close to inevitable that, given long enough, organic evolution must produce creatures so intelligent as to be capable of sponsoring cultural evolution that, in turn, would promote feedback to enhance the drift of organic evolution towards even greater complexity.

For organic (biological) evolution, an intriguing but difficult problem is the first one—how did it get started? Despite all the garbage spoken about the inevitability that life will develop wherever conditions are suitable, the fact is that nobody at all has yet come close to producing a satisfactory explanation for the origin of life. The time factor is often used as excuse. But surely if we optimized the environment for rare events to become less rare and more coincidental, we should have a good chance of reducing the time factor to manageable proportions.

One of these rare events is the composition of the primordial soup. We know the chemistry of all the ingredients that are likely to be required in this soup and can construct many possible mixtures at negligible cost that should have some chance of spontaneously generating life forms. And undoubtedly thousands upon thousands of hopeful biochemists and students do give it a try.

In fact, we can also tip the scales heavily in our


  
*There is so much good  
in the worst of us,  
And so much bad  
in the best of us,  
That it hardly becomes  
any of us  
To talk about the  
rest of us.*
  
*Anon.*


  
*Integrity without  
knowledge is weak  
and useless, and  
knowledge without  
integrity is dangerous  
and dreadful.*

*Samuel Johnson*

favor by including organic polymers, lipids, proteins even enzymes, nucleotides, and nucleic acids that just might kick-start the mix. A report of possible success has yet to hit the airways. Hence we cannot assert with any certainty that it is even possible for 'life' to occur spontaneously<sup>4</sup>. The confidence that it can do so is based solely upon the argument that since life is here, it must be able to happen spontaneously.

We have a similar situation for a 'Big Bang' beginning of our universe. If it occurred it did so before our laws of physics became operative. Thus, whether it really occurred is unknowable. The most the physicist can hope for is that there is no better alternative.

Is God possible? We do not even know for certain that we are possible!! But accepting that we do exist, the first realistic problem for life to solve is related to the 2nd law of thermodynamics. Allowing that energy can neither be created nor destroyed (for which there is strong evidence), 'life' has to cope with the problem that the only way to a higher energy state is to borrow or steal energy from some other high energy source. Here it is that we commence to see the effects of non-zero-sumness.

For an example consider the single-cell gut bacterium E.coli that, on finding itself in a place with no tucker, sends out a chemical messenger called cyclic AMP. This induces its DNA into action to make a tail, a flagellum, that enables the cell to swim to a new environment. Then, having provided itself with the means, it simply keeps swimming until it either finds a better home or perishes from its efforts.

Such a procedure involves the quite complicated cooperative interaction of many components—amounting to a considerable

degree of non-zero-sumness. It also produces a complex structure that was not there before, a whip-like flagellum that the cell can manipulate to give itself mobility. In any such change, the 2nd law of thermodynamics insists that the total disorder of the system had to increase.

*E. coli* did this by burning highly ordered molecules of stored 'food' to simpler, more disordered things like carbon dioxide, water, and heat. Behind the scene, a bewilderingly complex ordered sequence of events occurred driven by the cooperative effects of non-zero-sum interactions.

We humans tend to think of ourselves as 'higher organisms.' But from an energy efficiency viewpoint we are quite crude compared to our brothers the plants. Complexity, the product of the dynamics of non-zero-sumness, can appear in many forms, some of them being information. The moment we bring information into the equation we can recover our status as 'highest living organism.' When we add information processing and ordered cooperation between individuals, our status heightens even more.

It requires the study of only one of thousands of these intricate control systems in living organisms that operate under the guidance of sophisticated information processing and negative feedback controls, to convince any rational person of the quite incredible, almost infinite complexity of even the simplest of living cells.

Multiply that infinity by another infinity (or two) and we might approach the complexity required to sustain a 'primitive' hunter-gatherer society in the face of competing systems 'designed' to reverse the roles and the hunter to become the hunted. Wright thinks that the basic sequence, the conversion of non-zero sum situations into

*All art deals with the absurd and aims at the simple. Good art speaks truth, indeed is truth, perhaps the only truth.*

*Iris Murdoch*

mostly positive sums commenced happening at least 15,000 years ago, then repeated many times. As natural selection pushed us up the evolutionary ladder, so new technologies kept arising, permitting richer forms of non-zero sum interactions—and here we are today, riding in airplanes, sending e-mail, and living in what looks like the beginnings of a global village.

Wright has another target—to seek the hidden potential in the complexity he analyzes in order to reveal the possibility of an external and intelligent agency of control that he calls 'God' (but with a humble apology for his absence of qualifications to describe or explain God's ways). "I'm using 'God,'" he says, "as a convenient shorthand for something vaguer—the point being just to ask if there are signs of any divinely imparted meaning in the evidence before us. Granted directionality in the sense of growing complexity, is there any directionality along with what you might call a spiritual or moral dimension—or more simply, is there anything at all that might be called spiritual or moral?"

Wright notes that in the modern era the popular view among 'intellectuals' became that existence is pointless—plus a firm belief that there are solid scientific grounds for doing so. This paradigm assumes that modern science, by solving the mysteries of life, has actually demonstrated the absence of any higher purpose.

"What these people need," says Wright, "is a good stiff thought experiment. Imagine another planet on which life evolves. Little bits of self-replicating material (equivalent to our genes) encase themselves through natural selection in a particular armor that exhibits behavioral flexibility. One species in particular—coincidentally a brainy, two-legged organism—becomes capable of exceptional feats like communicating with

*We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality.*

*Albert Einstein*

subtlety, creating artistic masterpieces, watching TV, playing computer games, and so on.

"These organisms have another characteristic—they lack totally in consciousness, sentience, awareness. It isn't like anything "to be like one of them. And yes, fire burns their hands and they are designed to pull them away to avoid damage. But they do not feel pain—or happiness, or anything.

"They look and act just like us except everything is without passion or pride. They are just robots with an unusually good skin."

Such a world lacks those things that many of us believe make life meaningful—devoted love, allegiance, our triumphs and failures, the thrill of accomplishment, etc. Worse, their world is totally lacking in a sense of moral meaning.

These imaginary organisms of an imaginary world are really replicas of what many behavioral scientists assert us to be—machines that do as they do because they cannot do otherwise.

"Ask yourself this question," says Wright. "Is there anything immoral about unplugging your computer? If not, how could there be anything immoral about 'unplugging' your neighbor by some convenient means if he/she is just an insensate organism and happens to be a nuisance to you for some reason?"

**This is the kind of world we would live in if words like right or wrong had no meaning.** The strangest thing about this imaginary world is that it is exactly the kind of world we would expect ours to become if it had evolved along a pathway in which consciousness and awareness were functionless epiphenomena and morality, goodness, and altruism were mental aberrations that have no effective function in real behavioral responses—as is claimed by so many behavioral

*An intellectual is  
someone whose  
mind watches  
itself.*  
Albert Camus

*We are the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with  
straw.*

T.S. Eliot

scientists.

Taking our imagining one step further, **why would altruism evolve or exist anywhere in any universe if no force or power of any kind pre-existed that would somehow foster its eventual appearance?** Supposedly machines like us do as we do because we cannot do otherwise. What then drove robots such as us to 'imagine' all these things that have no reality. What could be the source of such imaginings?

Wright accepts that the embarkation of biological and social evolution on pathways appearing to have an arrow of direction is not proof for the actual existence of an altruistically inclined architect. But surely, he says, it is more suggestive of there being such a divinity than the competing alternative—a world devoid of any meaning or value, having no direction, no valid differentiation of right from wrong, no good or bad, no love, no beauty, no altruism, no consciousness, and no self-awareness!

In such a world, the likes of Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot are incapable of evil, can inflict no suffering or unhappiness, and are behaviorally indistinguishable from a Mother Teresa or a Florence Nightingale.

An alternative scenario is a world in which organic and cultural evolution do have direction, a direction even suggestive of benign purpose. In it, from its beginning, life simulated being a machine to generate and process information and meaning that finally deepened to become a machine that creates the potential for good and evil but raises the ratio in favor of the good.

Along the way consciousness and self-awareness appear, perhaps as a response to non-zero-sumness that arises concomitantly with the socialization of the higher species. **Consciousness is what it feels like not to be a robot. Self-awareness is what it is like to**

know you are not a robot. Both characteristics are profound, possibly eternal mysteries that are suggestive of having origin at a higher level than us earthlings—which opens the way for other unsolved questions like free will.

With subtlety and humility, Wright places the reader in many imaginary situations in which the only rational answer is that there really is, or at least ought to be, a transcendent Creator out there somewhere. Only a stubborn mule-head could answer otherwise.

Wright concludes with this comment: "Whether or not you believe that the story of life on Earth indeed has a cosmic author, one thing seems clear: it is our story. And as its lead characters, we cannot escape its implications.

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## Contacting God. What can we expect?

"But the mind that really discerns God, hears the indwelling Adjuster, is the pure mind." (1100)

Can we really expect to hear with our physical ears, actual sound waves, a real voice, that of our Indwelling Father-Spirit, presumably speaking in our mother tongue? Or do words of this nature simply follow old established biblical traditions of presenting concepts, for which we have no human idiom, as "figures of speech."

Examples from the Book of Psalms are: "Without holiness no man may see the Lord."

*He that knows  
nothing, doubts  
nothing.*

*Proverb*

*Life may change, but it may  
fly not;  
Hope may vanish, but can die  
not;  
Truth be veiled, but still it  
burneth;  
Love repulsed, – but it  
returneth!*

*Percy Shelley*

"For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if you will hear his voice..."

Do men really "see" God with their eyes and "hear" God's voice with their ears?

The Urantia Book is confusing in this regard:

- "The ear of the human mind is almost deaf to the spiritual pleas which the Adjuster translates..." (1213)
- "While the voice of the Adjuster is ever within you, most of you will hear it seldom during a lifetime. Human beings below the third and second circles of attainment rarely hear the Adjuster's direct voice..." (1213)
- "The Thought Adjuster has no special mechanism through which to gain self-expression; there is no mystic religious faculty for the reception or expression of religious emotions. These experiences are made available through the naturally ordained mechanism of mortal mind." (1104)
- "The divine spirit makes contact with mortal man, not by feelings or emotions, but in the realm of the highest and most spiritualized thinking. It is your thoughts, not your feelings, that lead you Godward. The divine nature may be perceived only with the eyes of the mind." (1104)
- "It is sometimes possible to have the mind illuminated, to hear the divine voice that continually speaks within you, so that you may become partially conscious of the wisdom, truth, goodness, and beauty of the potential personality constantly indwelling you." (1199)

If you are desperate to hear voices, you may consider there is sufficient support to justify that attitude. But on balance, communication with the

Spirit-Within appears to be through conscious awareness of our 'nearness to God', fortified by faith, and a lot of hard work.

The description given of Jesus' own relationships is helpful:

"The secret of his (Jesus) unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God; and he attained it by intelligent prayer and sincere worship—unbroken communion with God—and not by leadings, voices, visions, or extraordinary religious practices. (2088)

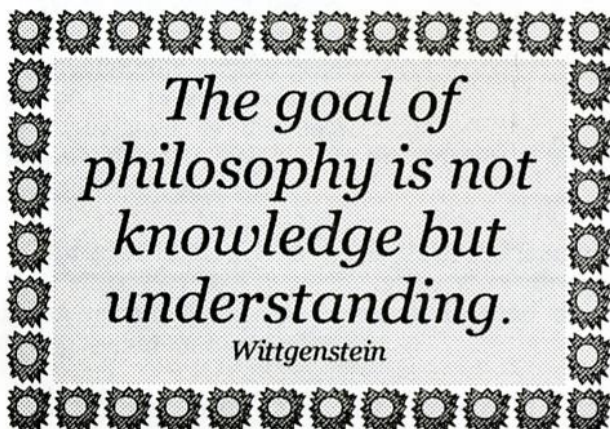
And in conclusion:

"Religion lives and prospers, then, not by sight and feeling, but rather by faith and insight. It consists not in the discovery of new facts or in the finding of a unique experience, but rather in the discovery of new and spiritual meanings in facts already well known to mankind. The highest religious experience is not dependent on prior acts of belief, tradition, and authority; neither is religion the offspring of sublime feelings and purely mystical emotions. It is, rather, a profoundly deep and actual experience of spiritual communion with the spirit influences resident within the human mind and as far as such an experience is definable in terms of psychology, it is simply the experience of experiencing the reality of believing in God as the reality of such a purely personal experience. (1105)

## On Growing Spiritually.

"The goal of human self-realization should be spiritual, not material. The only realities worth striving for are divine, spiritual, and eternal." (1096)

The Urantia Papers are strong on spiritual



*Nothing ever seemed so important to Jesus as the individual human who chanced to be in his immediate presence.*

(1546)

meanings and values. They tell us our soul is built from experiences having spiritual meaning and value that occur in the course of our earthly life, and that: "The Thought Adjuster will recall and rehearse for you only those memories and experiences which are a part of, and essential to, your universe career....But much of your past life and its memories, having neither spiritual meaning nor morontia value, will perish with the material brain;"

Meanings and values, as used in the Papers, may be associated with words such as religious, supreme, and even divine. But when it comes to nailing down exactly what is meant by this terminology, we find we are faced with real difficulties.

It may be that these terms are indefinable outside of the event or occasion in which they actually occur. A similar situation has been recognized regarding what constitutes a moral act.

Each such act is unique; the exact circumstances under which it occurs will never be repeated. Hence, any attempt to provide a precise definition of morality is an impossible task.

Although the Urantia Papers inform us the only realities worth striving for are "divine, spiritual, and eternal," if we set out to define what is meant by spiritual meanings and values, even after scouring the Papers and the hundreds of relevant references, the most likely result is that we will come away empty handed.

So is there a way to put meat on the bones of

these undefined terms? Fortunately the answer is yes. We can find it on page 1096:

"Spirituality becomes at once the indicator of one's nearness to God and the measure of one's usefulness to fellow beings. Spirituality enhances the ability to discover beauty in things, recognize truth in meanings, and discover goodness in values. Spiritual development is determined by capacity therefore and is directly proportional to the elimination of the selfish qualities of love."

Whereas the concepts of truth, beauty, love and goodness defy exact definability, the declaration that our spiritual development is dependent on the elimination of selfishness provides something having substance for us to work on.

Those words "directly proportional" are from standard mathematical terminology. In their present context they mean that if we can double the unselfish qualities of our love then we automatically double our spiritual development. Likewise if we can halve the selfish qualities we also double our spiritual development.

So working upon the elimination of selfishness

from our very being and striving for unselfishness in all our relationships can do amazing things for both our spiritual development and the growth of our souls.

In fact, for most of us, these may come close to being the only areas that we can consciously work upon to advance our spiritual development. And if we consciously and sincerely make it into a joint venture with our Thought Adjuster, amazing results are absolutely assured.

Eliminating selfish qualities, such as egoism, vanity, and selfishness itself, from our nature is not exclusive as a means of advancing soul growth. The unceasing activities of our Thought Adjusters are always at work at subconscious levels, striving to redirect the effects of evolutionary animal behavioral responses that are now inappropriate for potential spiritual beings.

But at the conscious level of eliminating selfishness from our nature, the task is linked to free will decisions that must be our own. And it is concrete—something that we can really get our teeth into.

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