

JOURNAL



URANTIA®

A NEWS JOURNAL FOR READERS OF THE URANTIA BOOK

IN THIS ISSUE :

<i>Personal Spiritual Growth</i> <i>Robert Ezri, Canada</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Religion in Human Experience</i> <i>Isabelle Lefebvre, Canada</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>The Art of Living—According to Jesus and The Urantia Book</i> <i>Hubert Gallet, Canada</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Living My Daily Relationship With God</i> <i>Louis Prud'homme, Canada</i>	<i>15</i>

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Personal Spiritual Growth

ROBERT EZRI, CANADA

Thank you, Father, for wanting us to unite today. Together we exchange, experiment, and try out new ideas which mutually benefit everyone. I thank you, Father, for being there, and I pray that You open our hearts and our spirits so our communion may pass through the channel of the heart and be as fruitful as possible. Today I will speak on spiritual growth.

What is spiritual growth?

On spiritual growth *The Urantia Book* says: *Man cannot cause growth, but he can supply favorable conditions. Growth is always unconscious, be it physical, intellectual, or spiritual* [1097:4].

We all know by now that, if we supply a child with an adequate environment filled with love and care, a sane physical and intellectual growth is the result.

Personally, I have lived a period of searching for interior peace and serenity. This exciting life in its material form was insufficient for me. I have read a lot, I have lived with an institutional religion, and I felt a strong desire to explore new avenues. With perseverance I discovered that I was “a palace inhabited by an honored guest”. This guest is still in me and is always willing to hear, guide and counsel me. He is full of love in regards to me and after each visit, I feel pleasantly different.

An exquisite gentleness, calmness, and serenity took place in me. Life became tinted with a much more pleasant shade than in the past. Over the years, I began to harvest the fruits of the spirit (joy, patience, love, tolerance). Life is different now and I would never go back to where I was before. To illustrate my thought, let's take a lab mouse placed at the center of a labyrinth; it blindly searches for the exit. The observer above the mouse clearly sees which path to take to reach the exit. With a certain degree of growth, we feel

more like the observer rather than the mouse.

What are the prerequisites for obtaining spiritual growth?

Life is full of prerequisites. To do practically anything, we must satisfy the necessary prerequisites. A good foundation allows us to solidly and sanely pursue our activities.

You must have taken courses during your life and know as well as I do that you must finish high school in order to go on to a university. To grow spiritually, a strong structure must rest on a solid foundation.

Three fundamentals are required for spiritual growth: willingness, humility, and flexibility. Of course, this recipe may contain other ingredients but without the three fundamentals, real progress has little chance to sprout.

As the fuel in a rocket, willingness propels us towards new summits in our quest for spiritual growth. This willingness is about searching for, and making contact with, our Father. This willingness becomes so forceful as to pierce through the curtain of everyday life. There is an ascending slope in order to reach spiritual life. The force that draws us upward is the desire to do the Father's will. A weak desire is insufficient; it takes a strong will to discard the old habits.

Our Father wants to collaborate with us but he first requires our full consent. He will not impose growth against our will. If we wish to have this growth we must try to reach it actively.

The second prerequisite is humility. We must recognize our weaknesses and drawbacks and determine the aspects to be corrected. Then, we must humbly undertake the corrective ways. I am not talking about harsh self-criticism; it is not necessary to deprecate oneself. But if a behavioral aspect seems imperfect, let us recognize it humbly while staying optimistic about our capacity to

correct it.

Spiritually speaking, humility is not a sign of weakness but rather one of strength. The spiritually humble person honestly looks at his weaknesses and has faith in his capacities to succeed.

The third prerequisite is flexibility. In order to progress, we must often abandon old ways of doing things and explore new territories. We are a people of habits and are comfortable with our usual ways of doing things. Spiritual growth requires courage.

It is not easy to be flexible, especially when we try a new way of doing things and the results are worse than before. But with perseverance and the willingness to be guided, the wanted results will soon appear.

Flexibility arises from faith and the conviction in knowing that our new way of doing things will lead us to higher spiritual accomplishments. We feel more stable with each success and each new start practically becomes as familiar as our good old habits.

The facets of growth

What a mistake to think that with aging, growth and changes are not to be part of our lives anymore! In the aging process we stabilize ourselves in many aspects, but the changes we go through are of great depth. When we feel a new conviction within ourselves, it is followed by the birth of a new value. We naturally ask: "How will I apply this new value in my everyday life?"

So, there is both an interior and exterior self. On the inside, we experiment with ideas, ideals, and values. The exterior life is full of constraints, tensions, and material realities. We must earn our living, pay the bills, supply the necessary food and shelter, and much more. The strength in spiritual growth resides in our capacity for finding inspiration and interior energies in order to exteriorize our newfound interior values. Growth begins inside and, to complete the cycle, we must apply it in our daily activities.

Our interior ideals should stimulate us to discern and actualize new experiments. In turn, these new experiments should bring us to new internal research and, on the whole, into spiritual

communion.

We must find equilibrium between inner and outer growth. Most often, unfortunately, there is a tendency for excess in one extremity or the other.

As an example, consider a financially and socially successful businessman who does not invest in his interior life. From the outside he may look impressive but he lacks depth and renewal capabilities.

And at the opposite extreme, consider the hermit who spends months in solitude in search of God but has little contact with the outside world. He may attain a high level in his interior life but will not be of service to others. That person may be of great spiritual depth, but what a waste of spiritual abilities.

To sanely grow, we need a good nutrition and regular exercise. Our interior communion with our Adjuster feeds us, and we develop our spiritual muscles in the practice of service to our brothers and sisters.

How growth takes hold

At first, there is a transitional period characterized by confusion and doubt. It's normal; it takes a certain amount of time to accustom to a new way of living. Whatever sprouts should not be expected to produce results rapidly.

It resembles the first steps of a baby who misses his footing and falls often at the beginning. With effort, he becomes stronger and more agile. Before long, the baby walks with more stability and ascertains a pace at which to explore.

During my transitional period in my first attempts to reach God, I remember having been troubled and confused. I would say: "What gives me this honor of being able to communicate with him? Does he have time to discourse with me?" With perseverance and time, my footsteps became more constant, stronger, and more gracious. I am sure now that, as I go along, they will guide me into a more mature and deeper progress, a sort of spiritual maturity.

A trend that gravely threatens spiritual growth is impatience. It is nonsense to try to force events, considering that we do not control the process. In growth, there are no shortcuts. To reach step five we must cross the preceding four. If we kid

ourselves in trying to save time, we may realize that we must climb back and delicately walk on the missed road. A child cannot pretend to be an adult. He must walk the steps of growth day by day, year by year, and learn the lessons as he goes along.

We do not just suddenly flourish in spiritual growth. It is a long and deep process. And why try to accelerate this process when it teaches us so much? At the heart of this process we find it is made of the small everyday lessons. The small decisions and actions of one's daily life gradually build up the substance of one's development. By trying to shorten this reality with impatience might result in delaying the slow but sure progression.

Perseverance is another quality necessary to growth. I pursued the spiritual life with a strong faith. From time to time, I missed my aim and slowed down but it never altered my faithfulness about future progress. I got up and tightened my belt, added a little more discipline and was off again. I am convinced that our Father wishes our progress, and his willingness to help us is in full accordance with our perseverance to achieve it. And in time, it produces great results.

In pursuing spiritual progress, a month of daily effort is worth more than a lifetime of inconsistent trials.

Perseverance must be balanced with the realization that we all reach new spiritual plateaus. Presently, I feel I am on a new plateau and all my efforts to reach higher grounds do not give many results. It is a time that I use to look back, rest and evaluate the distance crossed. I feel grateful for what has been accomplished and I express my thankfulness to my Father. I also thank my Adjuster for all his support and I recognize that he is the best of guides for me. This plateau is one of replenishing. It prepares me for further adventures more complex and ideal.

Spiritual living is serious and demanding, but each new level reached gives us an opportunity to refresh ourselves again. Through worship, we raise our levels of inspiration and motivation, and this energy leads us through new adventures on the hardy ascension. The time lapse of this spiritual boost varies. It may last a short while or a long time depending on exterior or interior

pressures. Meanwhile, we must keep our spiritual reservoirs well garnished.

The Urantia Book says: *The positive always has the advantage over the negative...*[1125:2]. Spiritual growth is positive. It is always easier and more conclusive to try and reach what is good than to fight what is wrong, for example, trying to be generous instead of trying not to be selfish. Being patient but firm with our children is more helpful than trying not to yell at them.

It is difficult to understand the reason behind this principle. Spiritual growth is rarely the rejection of negative elements. It is mostly to be used towards reaching the positive. Once this principle is adopted our efforts will reap the fruits.

In giving what we have received, we make real value of the fruits that have been given to us. By using our experience positively we can benefit others in a constructive manner by being creative in negative situations.

A positive spirituality is a profound love for God and what is good, and to feel joy in our spiritual life. By persevering in these ways the new habits begin to occupy more space than the old habits. For example, if we do not give in to fears, and instead we keep living with faith and courage daily, before long the fears disappear, and our faith and courage become stronger.

The following story illustrates the power in encouraging the positive: An old, wise Indian chief sitting in front of the fire explains to the young warriors that inside of him live two fighting dogs: the first is a vile tempered and vicious dog, the second is courageous, loyal and affectionate. Their combat is for life and the winner will reign in the chief's heart. One of the young listeners became curious and asked: "Tell us, chief, which one will win?" The chief paused and then answered, "The one I feed."

If we faithfully accept living in accordance with God's plan for us, the path will lead us to overcome our fears and enhance our courage.

The role of growth in our lives

Let us not consider spiritual growth as being of minor importance in our lives. We must realize that spirituality infringes on every aspect of it. For many people, spiritual growth means very little,

even though all true values are made real in this process. Family, profession, education, and health are all part of the playground.

Precisely because of this importance, I must spiritually filter my decisions in regard to these daily activities.

I often ask myself: “What would God do in my place?” To think we are too busy being a parent and a working citizen to invest energies in spiritual activities is counterproductive. It is only through spiritual growth that we can reach our full potential in the lives we have been given. Growing spiritually brings growth to all other aspects of life.

The Urantia Book says: *The highest happiness is indissolubly linked with spiritual progress. Spiritual progress yields lasting joy, peace which passes all understanding* [1098:0]. So, who does not wish to be happy? It is everyone’s goal. Happiness is that general state which pleasantly wraps up every instant of our lives. It is above temporary joy and momentary sensations, and it must be anchored to be durable.

The more we grow in spirituality, the more we feel the roots of this happiness being nourished and strengthened, and the strongest winds will not succeed to upheave this reality.

The Urantia Book also tells us: *Health, mental efficiency and happiness arise from the unification of physical systems, mind systems, and spirit systems* [1097:7].

And again: *In physical life the senses tell of the*

existence of things; mind discovers the reality of meanings; but the spiritual experience reveals to the individual the true values of life. These high levels of human living are attained in the supreme love of God and in the unselfish love of man [1098:1].

We must thus unite the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of our lives to enjoy good health and mental happiness. The book also tells us how to obtain this: through our love of God and service to our brothers.

Spiritual growth is the fundamental reason of our lives. With the collaboration of our Thought Adjusters, we progress towards God in spiritual growth. Our daily activities are the brooks which feed the powerful river that irrigates human life in our ascension.

If we choose to swim in this great current, we will continually move forward and evolve from universe to universe until we reach our final destiny, God, our Father and the First Source and Center. We are all his children; he yearns for every one of us to fully know and love him.

Conclusion

I have made spiritual growth the principal theme of my life. This decision has amply compensated me. Thanks to this method, solutions to my quest appear of their own accord. I ask and fraternally encourage you to persevere. Live your experiences, let the results profit you, and, with grace, claim your right to eternal growth.

Religion in Human Experience

ISABELLE LEFEBVRE, CANADA

Today I wish to share with you on a subject that, at a certain moment in my life, brought many questions. I must admit I

didn’t know that one day, this word—**religion**—would come to mean and represent something different than the rites and beliefs I was taught

earlier.

And I want to tell you that it is an immense joy for me to try and expand the concept of God with you, in a common goal, and in this way reach a better understanding of our daily and personal relationship with God.

First let us all take a look at what religion means. What is, for each one of us here present, our own definition and comprehension of our beliefs regarding the religion we know and most probably were taught?

First, I will ask you to keep an open mind so we can reach the distinction between a personal religion and an institutional or formal religion. We will attempt to add to our current beliefs and preserve what represents the best for us to establish our own unique religion in universal and eternal spirit unity, as it is in God's plan.

A personal experience

I assume you will agree with me that God is not French, English, Spanish, or other; he is universal so as to reach every human being who shows the desire to create an intimate relationship and spirit unity with Him.

This personal religion delivers us from all our fears and frights. It inspires us with courage and the happiness to be alive, living a man's life amongst men, right now, here on earth, face to face with God. The mental freedom it brings leads us to a spiritual awakening that gives us the desire to resemble Him and to serve our brothers and sisters.

We receive in return an assurance and stability of our own spirit and we can never again ignore this reality which is God, this divine source living inside every one of us.

Further, we wish to share with all our friends and family, near or far, this love that God has given us personally and that keeps growing inside of us.

Then comes the desire to deepen our understanding and continue to clarify the meaning of religion. And that is the reason why I accepted to elaborate on this subject with you, today.

The Urantia Book says: *It is far better to have a religion without a church than a church without religion* [1092:1].

That is the reason why we should invest some efforts in understanding the deeper meaning of true religion. And what means should we use to get there? Well, by talking about our own religious convictions we will obtain a better understanding of religion.

For a very long time now, human beings have been at odds about religion. Who has the best one, and who really represents God?

During my twenties, I discovered through my personal spiritual quest that real religion was simply connecting with God, this half asleep divinity inside of me. Following this, I realised that the word "Catholic" was linked to Catholicism, a religion which recognises the authority of the Pope over Christians. Furthermore, everything ending with 'ism' is a religion in itself but at an institutional level. Already, at the beginning of my search for the truth, I came to the conclusion that Catholicism was an institutionalized and crystallised religion that had forgotten to adapt to the different eras and ever changing needs of human beings.

As proof of this, people today attend church less often than fifty years ago and do not want to be part of an official group with tendencies of uniformity and fossilization of the truth. Human beings need a lot more than this; they need a personal contact, an intimate presence.

To give our life to God as God wishes does not mean to live alone but to be aware of his divine presence inside of us and to live his love through our daily life with our brothers and sisters here on earth, because here on earth is the most appropriate ground to fulfill our spiritual experiences. God never expressed restrictions. We are only told: *Love one another as I have loved you* (1944:4).

An intimate relationship with God

True religion is a personal spiritual experience and nobody in the world can interfere between us and our intimate relation with this divine presence, the Thought Adjuster; this association is unique throughout the whole universe and no one can take it away from us. This certainty grows in us.

Believe me, because that is just what

happened to me, and this day was the best moment of my life; I was entering the kingdom of heaven. It happened while I was attending a week of spiritual seminars and was meditating on one of God's mysteries. I was wondering about this secret of Ascendition that only a human personality could come to know and that nobody could unveil. By searching with a profound desire to understand this secret I finally came to understand why it could not be told to anyone.

The secret was the fact that I linked myself with God who is personal and unique. I had just entered an intimate relationship with God and this happened softly and naturally as if somebody was whispering gentle words in my ears. You know, God's hand is soft and loving. And I must say that at this exact moment I saw the panorama of God's plan that opened in front of me, and I felt reborn. In this instant, I felt personally committed to his immense plan and all the love God had displayed in order that I meet him personally. I knew I would have to do great things in my life and it didn't scare me, because I knew I was no longer alone on my journey in this world. I felt I was given a new and better life that was eternal: that is the reward awaiting each one of us. I must also tell you that everything I had just received from God, I must give back and share with others and that this would be my eternal service, my mission here on earth. When I received this great proof of God's love, I had the sincere and very natural feeling that I would be able to share this love with everyone coming across my way and with anyone interested in hearing about God's love.

Therefore, what I retain from all these previous religious teachings (Catholic, Buddhist, and other) is that they enlightened part of my conscience, made me feel good and allowed me to get where I am now with a deeper understanding than before. These religious institutions were the path I followed to climb and reach for divine wisdom and cosmic insight.

What needs to be understood is that life is movement and change; we need to adapt to every situation, trusting God who lives inside us (The Thought Adjuster); let's not forget he does live inside of us and for us.

To really understand this phenomenon of personal religion, we have no other choice but to open our minds and change our ways of looking at religion, to go beyond our actual knowledge, to spread out the panorama of our perception of divinity. This way, mental adjustments, modifications, and readjustments can occur but without us being conscious of them.

By really entering our relationship with God, we will come to realize that this personal spiritual religion brings us moral stability and infinite spiritual progress.

A spiritual life

I need to mention here that we must not believe that by living a spiritual life we will never again encounter problems, because life continues and we do live on a rebellious, egocentric, and pride-filled world. But we acquire more tools to cope with everyday problems, and gain better knowledge and control over ourselves. Religion is simply a way of living; for me, that makes it easier to sail through the vicissitudes of life.

The means I use to cultivate my spiritual life is by constantly questioning, by meditating, and by asking to be enlightened, through the technique of prayer, on precise situations that arise in my life. As an example I may ask to exercise better control over myself when I'm feeling rushed or losing patience with others. Or to really understand a certain problem and find a solution. By using these methods, I really come to live a life filled with love and wisdom just like God wants. What I need to keep in mind is that I am still evolving, because evolution in God's plan is infinite. Isn't it wonderful to think that life doesn't stop here on earth?

The present moment

Now I would like to bring your attention on the fact that God lives in the present moment. And only when you become conscious of this fact, do you begin to open up the horizon of your own spiritual experience, the one that will set you free from all your fears.

Only when I understood this personally did I come to really stabilize my thoughts and banish the unrealistic fears that I had been using to

project completely disillusioned scenarios. Living the present moment is not always easy to do. My mind is often troubled or disturbed by all kinds of circumstances such as trying to finish on time, or trying to do everything all at once. Then it becomes important to adjust and align my spirit, and it is through practice that I will reach this alignment, by constantly asking to remain as conscious as possible of the divine presence in me. It does not mean to forget the past and the future; they will always be important but in another scope. The past and the future are useful for us to progress and to plan long term and short term goals, in order to grasp a better view and understanding of who we really are and where we want to go.

In my life, I have often had difficulties with being centered on the right values of events and situations I had to face. It has taken many events to finally come to terms and face those fears that paralyzed me and stopped me from going forward.

Many years ago, I went through a very difficult period following a work-related injury. To me, this was a totally unknown situation. I was away from work for an undetermined period that lasted two years. When I tell you to live in the present moment, you will see what this brought about for me.

By using the technique of living the present moment, I can evaluate in a better way the situation; it allows me to act accurately, and this way my spirit remains as stable as possible. I live momentarily, each event to its true extent in that precise moment that is entirely mine, without hindrance or misrepresentation on my part. Let's be honest and admit that we do try to delude ourselves; we don't need anybody to do it, we often do it ourselves.

When we go through unusual circumstances, it doesn't take much more to unstabilize us. So when I applied myself to using the technique of living the present moment and ranging every situation according to its true value, well, I adapted more rapidly to the fact that I couldn't work and every inconvenience this caused.

Of course, it needs practice: through meditation and prayers. And it was necessary for

me to share my thoughts regularly with my husband, who is so dear to me, and also with friends and colleagues, in order to remain aligned in the circuits of God, our Father in heaven. It required that I become even more conscious of who I AM and the faculties that inhabit me.

During that period, many people kept asking me: "How can you not be depressed with all that is happening to you?" I would tell them that it was easy to let oneself slip into depression and do nothing else, but I could not let myself go into depression. I have children to raise and a husband to support in our daily tasks of maintaining a home.

I would also tell them that we shouldn't forget that this trying situation was not wished on anyone, and that it served the purpose of growth in life, and it will eventually be beneficial for me even though I couldn't see how at the time; I had to stay focused on the fact that I was not alone in my attempt to live every instant of my life in the present moment. It is useless to add more stress on yourself. Situations change, and if you project the event will end in a certain way, well, it never does happen the way you thought it would. Then you tell yourself: here I was getting all upset for nothing during all this time. I have missed living in the present moment and for what purpose? Because I was living in a completely unrealistic and illusive world.

Linking with God

The outcome of my story is that I try to remain in close communication with the divine interior source (Thought Adjuster) on a constant basis, because God lives in the present moment and in every instant of my life. All I have to do is call on Him. God is waiting for us to sincerely wish to be linked to Him voluntarily; He doesn't push anyone and respects everyone's free will. We all possess free will, and it is up to us to make the link. Living a religion of this sort means a way of life that is tangible and disinterested, because this relationship with God is personal and unique to each one of us.

When we sincerely wish to enter into communication with our divine source, we are living in the present, and that is where this

communication is made possible through our growing living faith that continually searches to do God's will. That is the real religion that God offers us; it is invigorating and keeps growing for each one of us and for all of humanity.

Having gone through the experience of attempting to live in the present moment every instant of my life has brought blessings for me and the people around me. I could detach myself from the past and the future and really live the current situation just like I am doing presently with you.

The necessary effort

See how God is not complicated, how he delivers us by accepting the simplicity of things even though at times they might seem unbearable. Keep in mind that every difficult situation that we live through keeps us growing and will be rewarded. I say this because I am presently being rewarded through what I am living today. I would never have thought that I would be doing this, speaking in front of you and elaborating on a precise subject. When difficult situations come my way, I always tell myself that with God nothing is impossible (291 :3), and it always makes the situation easier. It seems to give me wings to overcome the difficulty. But let's not forget that it requires an effort on our part.

I would now like to bring your attention to the fact that things do change when we are sincere and loyal with ourselves, when we don't attempt to fool ourselves. We have to invest the necessary effort in our attempt to understand, and it is not so much what we do understand that is important but we sincerely try to understand.

I can tell you that I am more and more amazed every day by what I am experiencing. I realize that this personal religion, the fact that I own it, allows me to get to know myself better, but also to appreciate everything that surrounds me more, including nature, animals, and even people that I find a bit irritating.

Today I understand even better that I must be more conscious of who I am, and the importance

of using all the tools God has given me, so I can evolve here on earth and widen my consciousness, such as my power of emergence, of choice, execution, service, and evaluation, the seven adjutant circuits, and still so much more. I understand that everything God has given me I must share with my peers in God's honor.

The mission of this personal religion consists in preparing us to face courageously, and even heroically, the vicissitudes of life.

In this manner, spiritual growth will always bring us a joy that endures and interior peace that goes beyond comprehension.

In conclusion

Finally, my aim is that you will get a better understanding of what is real religion, that you may enter into your own personal relationship with God and integrate it even more, here in your earthly life. May a personal religion liberate you of all life's fears and worries just like it did for me!

That is the reason why it is so important that we become gradually more aware that true religion is an experience of personal contact for each one of us and our relationship with God is unique throughout the universe.

But don't forget that God's love is kind and simple. God is not complicated; he is simplicity itself and only awaits us to deliver his love to humankind.

The greatest love gesture that we can give to humanity is to resemble God and to give freely to everyone surrounding us.

Be aware that each one of us follows their own racecourse. I would like to end with this much appreciated thought from *The Urantia Book*: *Religion pays any price essential to the attainment of the supreme goal, the eternal prize* [1096:6].

May each one of us become more and more conscious of our indwelling divine source who awaits our sincere and dedicated collaboration. Let the race begin now.

And don't forget God is alive in us and loves us individually, intimately, and personally.

The Art of Living— according to Jesus and *The Urantia Book*

HUBERT GALLET, CANADA

This text, presented at the Canadian Urantia Conference on August 9, 2003, gives a theoretical and practical way of living, reconciling our thirst for spirituality with our material constraints and our human logic.

Introduction

Jesus didn't come to Earth to impose anything on us, but to live his life at its best, and in this way, to show us the path to love, faith and freedom; to create a high and vivifying spiritual ideal, and to delicately inspire humans with a new fundamental art of living in a world then assaulted by evil and sin.

And yet, his life was most difficult: *No adolescent youth of Urantia has had or ever will have more weighty problems to resolve or more intricate difficulties to untangle* [1395:2]. Thus, at the age of 14, after having lost his father Joseph, he first had to oversee the needs of his family and work as a carpenter. He came to know humility, poverty, the love of work well done, the meaning of duty, discipline, solidarity, and family responsibility. Afterwards, he essentially lived his life as an instructor, as a nomad without wealth or a fixed home. He ended his existence crucified like the worst of criminals.

And yet, Jesus was harmonious and sincere. He showed a galvanizing dynamism and an unlimited enthusiasm. He had tremendous charisma, and regardless of the tribulations he endured, he spread kindness, comfort, and love around him. It is within this apparent contradiction between a stressful material life and a shining attitude of tranquil force that we must search for Jesus' art of living.

The Urantia Book has the great advantage of clearly explaining this life and to bringing an almost perfect consistency between its material

aspects and Jesus' spiritual elevation.

How did Jesus demonstrate a grand art of living in such a hostile and hard environment? How did he manage to calmly master even the most complex situations, even though he had asked God *not to benefit from any supernatural aid and to live his entire life as a simple man? He made these decisions during his 40-day retreat in the Perean hills (1514 - 1523).

Jesus tells us that to act well and do righteousness, we must first **be**, more exactly **be righteous...in the kingdom, being righteous, by faith, must precede doing righteousness in the daily life of the mortals of earth** [1584:4].

The first, rather **spiritual**, part of this presentation will show us how to **be** righteous according to Jesus. Once well restored within ourselves we can act with more harmony and adapt to our environment; we can **do** righteousness. This will be the second and rather **material** part of this exposé.

To be righteous:

Jesus re-establishes in us the authentic being.

For many of us since our young age, our being has been the object of multiple trainings and conditionings obliging us to do this, forbidding us to do that, leading us to behave in a programmed manner according to circumstances. Since then, our being has been identified with the role, the profession, or the function the family or the society has assigned to us. But when this role vanishes, the being collapses. Thus, a few months ago, a great French cook committed suicide because he could not accept the loss of a star on his restaurant. (A small hardship in contrast with what Jesus lived through.) And how numerous are the cases of despair, depression and drama due to the lack of self-consistency in the face of

difficulties.

Under our environmental pressure we often run away from ourselves to take refuge in our role, and thus live artificially. This might work out for a well designed and planned life without harshness. But then we are not ourselves, but instead some kind of robot, and the least of the trials sweeps us away. The worst is that we do not even realize that we are in a false state, within our makeup of titles and decorations.

Jesus teaches us that there are two realities we cannot run away from: God and ourselves. Wherever we go we take ourselves along and we bring God who lives in us. Let us not deceive ourselves, and let us face the fact of this double reality of our being. And since we have the chance of always having God within us in the form of his Adjuster, let us have the desire to firmly lean on him, to fully associate ourselves with him: this association of God and us being natural. It is the gift of spiritual sonship which completes and ennoble our material filiations stemming from our mortal father. This desire of union of our material ego and of our spiritual being forms our authentic and real being.

But how do we understand and revive in ourselves this desire for sonship with God the Father? First, by opening ourselves to Him through our heart and spirit. Then, by understanding through faith, experience, and reason that we are His children. Finally, by being conscious of His existence in and around us. This process can be long and difficult but it can lead us to acknowledge the fact that material and temporal values are vulnerable and provisional, whereas spiritual realities are invulnerable and eternal. It can lead us much further than we can guess: *To a God-knowing kingdom believer, what does it matter if all things earthly crash?* [1096:4] But from the moment that this consciousness is established, God exists again for us and in us. But this time, contrary to what we lived when we were children, we understand what it means. We were born materially; we are now also born spiritually. We are **reborn**.

Rediscovering our Divine sonship makes us righteous...

Being linked again to the Father, we can then seek to harmonize with Him, and as Jesus showed us, to love Him like a son naturally loves his father. For, as much as love is the strongest feeling in human life experience—as much as in the universe of universes—love is the supreme relation, the greatest of spiritual realities. By re-establishing this sacred tie, we apply the first commandment taught by the Prophets: *[Y]ou shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength* [1901:2]. This also means that we reunite ourselves to God through faith, and now have full confidence in Him. This relation of sonship, love, and faith means at last that the Father, like a human father, listens to us and helps us, if we want to sincerely address him. He also has confidence in us. We are then re-orienting ourselves high up, towards our original Spring, towards the supreme authenticity and righteousness. Our being is redirected towards God, is right again, ingenuously, as when we were children.

...by liberating us from psychological ills,...

But for all that, we do not become enslaved, since the sonship relation is first a relationship of enrichment and development of our personalities, as a natural parent-to-child relationship. It is a relationship within which the little children we are (compared to God), build ourselves, open up, strengthen through the faith we have in Him, and free ourselves thanks to the strength and the light which this faith brings. And when this strength and this light fill us up, they push away and eliminates all our false and negative thoughts, our prejudices and preconceived ideas, our psychological blocks and repressions. They purify and heal us from our psychiatric illnesses while enabling us to fight with joy against worries, stress and anxiety. On this subject, Jesus said to John and James: *In the coming kingdom, be not mindful of those things which foster your anxiety but rather at all times concern yourselves only with doing the will of the Father who is in heaven* [1525:3]. His password was: Do not have any fear. Thus the faith generated by our sonship with God, instead of imprisoning us, on the contrary liberates us and releases the divine

superhuman activity that lives within our human minds. At the same time it releases our spiritual strengths—faith heals us. Said Jesus after healing Veronica: *Your faith has made you whole* [1698:3]. It was the same process with the fear-ridden woman in Philadelphia (1835:5). And he heals many others from their psychological ills, without any miraculous action, just by inspiring in them a boundless confidence, an immense faith in God.

...by reacting against our natural tendencies,...

We are emerging from animal evolution. As such, we have inherited a well-nigh complete domination of the energy patterns and chemical forces inherent in the material order of humans. *So few mortals are real thinkers; you do not spiritually develop and discipline your minds to the point of favorable liaison with the divine Adjusters* [1213:1]. We are also dependent on our baser instincts and animal urges. *By nature, before the rebirth of the spirit, mortal man is subject to inherent evil tendencies...* [1660:5], said Jesus to the Evangelists. And if these natural urges which draw us down cannot be fundamentally modified, emotional responses to such urges can be changed; therefore our moral nature and our character can be improved. *In the strong character emotional responses are integrated and co-ordinated, and thus is produced a unified personality.* [1572:8]. This unification mainly means that God is confirmed in his function of spiritual Father, and as such, helps us with love to react efficiently against our lower rank urges. To that effect, Jesus proposes to substitute for our temptations higher and more idealistic forms of conduct, while avoiding wasteful and weakening internal conflicts (1739:0).

...and by encouraging us to realize ourselves.

In particular, our nature can drive us to be intellectually indolent and as such to believe in all kinds of morals, beliefs, or ideologies which promise Paradise against the passive acceptance of their rules of living. The divine sonship relation enables us, through its strength, to be free from these mental recruitments which are enforced by nations, religious institutions, or other organisms, since it is not a relationship of passive submission. The reorganization of our being reasserts in us our free will, and the divine sonship induces us to act,

to express ourselves, and become self-accomplished in the function of creation which God has endowed in us. This creativity expresses itself fully in the association and the partnership that God has always had with deity. And he wants to develop that with us. He thus built Havona in association with the Eternal Son and the Infinite Spirit; he built his terrestrial kingdom with Jesus, and maybe he will need us for the outer space universes.

To summarize, the spiritual sonship—as soon as we accept it entirely—liberates us doubly, and without any fight, from the negative influences of our internal animal nature and from those of the external world. Our self-realized and upright being does not bend anymore, straightened by sonship as if made from the strongest of metals.

But the human mind is easily distracted, and this sonship must be constantly maintained and re-vivified if we do not want it to vanish. The technique of prayer-worship, by bringing us closer to God, reinforces our will to resemble Him, like a child naturally attempts to resemble his parents when they are good enough to be an example for him.

This desire to resemble God, to do his will, and later to find him, gives us a great goal for our destiny, and should provide us with a wonderful and strong motivation for living.

Now that our characters are soundly and strongly rebuilt, now that our beings are reunified, now that we are in full possession of our health, then we can act; we can do so with righteousness and goodness in our everyday lives.

Doing righteousness:

Yet the current political and social environment does not induce us to act with righteousness. Stirred up by lust, greed, or craving for power, and driven by their lowest instincts, many human beings go on triggering endless wars and causing damage.

To fight against them, the Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and others religions have each defined their own conception of good. They put in place constraining sets of moral standards, traditions, and ceremonies which each of them strongly defends, even at the price of crushing human

beings psychologically, if not physically. It is even worse in countries where superstitions prevail. There, people are in fear of infringing upon one of the numerous and ridiculous rules to which they are subjected daily; the most elementary ethics are often absent. It was about the same in Jesus' time, for the Pharisees recommended to the Jews the use of 613 rules of life! (1805:5)

Jesus' theory

Jesus proposed to simplify all that by teaching that man's whole duty is summed up in this one commandment: *Love the Lord your God with all your mind and soul and your neighbor as yourself* [1805:5]. And he suggested we put this commandment into practice by observing the rule of life—that we *treat all men as we conceive God would treat them* [1651:3]. These last words have the great advantage to embrace in a condensed way the two major concepts of spiritual fatherhood and human brotherhood, and to bring us closer to the favorite prayer of Jesus: “*Your kingdom come; your will be done...*” [1860:6].

In this summary of Christ's teachings, we have all that counts in his theory of living. It is very difficult, in our sometimes stressful daily life, to discern good from evil and truth from falsehood, to make good choices, to act with righteousness. Some acts which we might have considered at the beginning as good can unexpectedly come out to be evil due to unpredicted circumstances, ignorance, or insufficient analysis. To make the best choice, one of course has to rely on one's experience and reason, in order to manifest a profound reflection, a sincere self-criticism regarding one's past actions, and a strong moral consciousness. But with Jesus, we also must get our factual daily lives in tune with the will of the Father. According to *The Urantia Book*, this is not a surrender of one's will, but a consecration, an expansion, a glorification of one's will. This is neither a negation of creature will, as it consists in a positive affirmation: “*It is my will that your will be done*” [1221:7]. And if this choice is made, sooner or later will the God-choosing son find inner fusion (a perfected union) with the indwelling God fragment. This process brings us closer to divine wisdom.

In order to know the Father's will, Jesus had the almost permanent habit to pray, and then, as it says in *The Urantia Book*, to: *remain for a time in silent receptivity to afford the indwelling spirit the better opportunity to speak to the listening soul. The spirit of the Father speaks best to man when the human mind is in an attitude of true worship* [1641:1]. This is what we have to try to practice every day. I know many who apply this technique of prayer-worship, in particular through meditation, which in addition brings energy and relaxation. More precisely, *prayer may be likened to recharging the spiritual batteries of the soul, so worship may be compared to the act of tuning in the soul to catch the universe broadcasts of the infinite spirit of the Father.* [1621:7].

Jesus also had the habit to retire alone to the mountains to be still closer to his Father when he had to make important decisions. And we all know how a retreat far from the hustle of big towns can actually be very efficient to better hear our Father through our Adjusters.

And when we have made the supposedly good choice, what criteria should we rely on, so that we can be sure that we are not wrong? Afterwards, we can consider that: *An experience is good when it heightens the appreciation of beauty, augments the moral will, enhances the discernment of truth, enlarges the capacity to love and serve one's fellows, exalts the ideals, and unifies the supreme human motives of time with the eternal plans of the indwelling Adjuster* [1458:2]. This was the main criteria of Jesus to judge of the quality of an action. Another simple criterion was *the degree of your love for your fellow men* [1642:2]. The higher this degree, the more one has yielded the control of one's soul powers to the guidance of one's Adjuster, in other words, to the will of our Father.

The practical experience of Jesus

Jesus put as much liveliness in teaching as he did in living his own teachings, showing everywhere his talents and qualities in an immense devotion to serving, from simple and comforting advice to healing.

For Jesus, the most important actions in life were in the relationships with others and with God. Only the relationships between personalities count since *much of material experience will pass away as onetime scaffolding which, having bridged you over to the*

morontia level, no longer serves a purpose in the universe. But personalities and the relationships between personalities are never scaffolding; mortal memory of personality relationships has cosmic value and will persist [1235:4]. This is why we are focusing the doings of Jesus on his relationships with others.

Jesus' relationships with individuals.

In his down-to-earth way of doing and behaving, Jesus showed us the path. As a child, he lived as a friendly and careful brother. At the age of 14, he had to learn how to become a loving father. For his seven brothers and sisters, he was the father-brother who brought them up and guided them in the best possible manner. In addition, since he was very young, he met many people with varied origins, lived many different situations and experiences, and traveled a lot.

This is how he quickly understood that the most important thing in life, after our divine sonship, is our relationship of brotherhood with other human beings. In the right thread of our Father's will, he very consistently gave uniform and unvarying consideration to all sorts of people. He encouraged his apostles to be highly respectful and sympathetic to every human, whatever race or social status. He was the first to explain that the women were to be granted equal rights with men in the kingdom, and he recruited them as evangelists, conferring upon them the same respect given to males. He taught nonresistance towards aggression. He did not accuse the sinner, but condemned the sin.

He placed great value upon pure heart, sincerity, fidelity, courage, and endurance. He never taught character building but rather character growth, and encouraged the development of values and virtues within everyone. Contrary to all religions, he did not elaborate on vices, and rarely referred to moral guilt.

He was a positive teacher of true virtue, and studiously avoided the negative method of imparting instruction; he refused to advertise evil. He was not even a moral reformer [1582:2]. His few denunciations were largely directed against pride, cruelty, oppression, and hypocrisy. In his relationships, he always showed great tact and tolerance, an active and

spontaneous kindness, a genuine love, and he expanded the neighborhood to include the whole world, thereby making all men one's neighbors. But with all this, Jesus was interested only in the individuals, not the mass [1580:6].

Jesus' relations with society

In the civil life, Jesus recommended caution, discretion, and avoidance of political snares, ever making reply: *"Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's"* [1580:4]. He was in favor of a progressive evolution of society, and not in favor of a militant revolution. He told the apostles that he was concerned only with the principles of man's inner and personal spiritual life. He duly observed all civil laws and regulations and did not come to reorganize the world. He did not propose any political theory and did not judge the governing institutions. (1580:4-5)

Jesus was not a sociologist, but labored to break down all forms of selfish isolation. He had a firm sense of justice, but it was always tempered with mercy. *The nearest he came to making sociological pronouncements was to say, "Judge not, that you be not judged"* [1580:7]. He made it clear that indiscriminate kindness may be blamed for many social evils. In all these matters, Jesus always said: *"Be as wise as serpents but as harmless as doves"* [1580:8].

The family occupied the very center of his philosophy of life. *He exalted family life as the highest human duty, but made it plain that family relationships must not interfere with religious obligations. Jesus did not hesitate to give up his family when the family ran counter to the Father's will. He taught the new and larger brotherhood of man—the sons of God [1581:1].* Along the same lines, just before the supreme act of love in his crucifixion, he gave his apostles this new commandment (or golden rule): *That you love one another even as I have loved you [1944:4].* He had demonstrated through all his doings, all his life, the profound meaning of these words.

From an economic viewpoint, Jesus worked and traded with much professionalism. He had been successively a carpenter, a boat maker and a fisherman. And he carefully organized the twelve apostles and the group of evangelists. He was not

an economic reformer although he frequently called attention to the injustice of the unequal distribution of wealth. He made no direct attack on the possession of material values, but he did insist that it is eternally essential that spiritual values come first. He recognized the need for social justice and economic fairness, but offered no rules for their attainment. He warned his listeners against greed, *declaring that "a man's happiness consists not in the abundance of his material possessions."* He constantly reiterated, *"What shall it profit to a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"* [1581:4] He also said *"it is more blessed to give than to receive"* [1581:5].

In his later teachings, he tried to correct many erroneous views of life by narrating numerous parables too general to be interpreted as economic or social theories.

Conclusion

If Jesus were on earth today, he would certainly not take sides in present-day political, social, or economic disputes. He would remain

grandly aloof while teaching us how to perfect our inner spiritual lives so as to render us much more competent to solve our purely human problems.

And we could say, in summary, that the **material** application of his teachings, our art of living, consists more of expressing our best **spiritual** experience once we have decided to do our Father's will. And the best way to do the Father's will is to manifest every day the **fruits of the spirit**—in particular unselfish **worship** of God and loving **service** to our neighbor. These ways of fulfillment of the will of the Father bring joy and peace and the highest happiness.

We thank Jesus for showing us the right path. We thank him for regenerating, through his example, the life on our planet. And we are reminded that: *Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it* [2090:4]. Let us thus be conscious of the immense chance we have to know it. Let us, with enthusiasm, try to live every day this unique and wonderful example.

THE URANTIA BOOK INTERNET SCHOOL

The next UBIS Semester will begin in January, 2004. The Schedule of Courses will be posted on the Urantia Foundation website on December 8, 2003. Registration begins on January 5th, and the courses begin on January 26th, 2004. Four courses (9 weeks duration) will be offered. It is wise to register within the first several days of registration, as the courses fill up rather rapidly. Come and join us in study with readers from around the world in this educational/outreach effort provided on the Urantia Foundation website.

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A Study of the Nature of Religion—Papers 99-103; Morris Kaplowitz, Teacher/Facilitator.

The Nature of Religion and its Material and Spiritual Significance for the Individual and Society.

The Mission of Joshua the Teacher—Papers 130-133; Rick Lyon, T/F.

A study of Jesus' personal ministry during his pre-baptism Sojourn to Rome—Jesus' 28 and 29th years, A.D. 22-23.

The Seven Bestowals: From Michael of Nebadon to Jesus of Nazareth—Papers 119-122; Allan Trout, T/F.

A study of the bestowals of Christ Michael, leading up to his life as Jesus of Nazareth.

The Evolution of Religious Thought—Papers 86, 91, 92, 99 and additional selections; Gregory Hawkins, T/F.

Evolution from primitive fear; the contributions of prayer and worship; later evolutionary religion and the role of the religionist in today's culture.

Living My Daily Relationship with God

LOUIS PRUD'HOMME, CANADA

"Our Father in Heaven..." A famous prayer.

"One day at a time, sweet Jesus..." Also well known!

"Do birds worry what tomorrow will be?" Subtle parable or realistic and particularly delicate application?

Comments guiding us towards daily action without the fear of tomorrow are legion. It is probably the best way to go through eternity without going crazy! To concentrate on what has to be done today, here and now, in the best way we can while leaving the end results up to God, necessitates a kind of faith and trust that doesn't come naturally; we acquire them with experience.

But how do we live God daily? By saying hello in the morning and good night every evening? It's a good start, I believe.

But in between? During the day, how do we go about it? Living love in the present moment, the eternal *now*, finding inside of us the greatest part occupied by God and demonstrating it by unselfish service, spontaneous kindness.

Not always easy...

To show the kind of love the Universal Father has for each of his turbulent children does not come easily for any of us. But almost every one of us, even nonbelievers, tend toward a bettering of our condition, and we look for perfection, or the perfect man or woman, even perfection in music and in nature!

But believers go one step further in worshipping God, the First Source and Centre, the Original Thought, or his Son Michael, Jesus of Nazareth—the Son of Man. And there is also the Universe Mother Spirit, the Divine Minister.

Believers who worship God do not escape life's tribulations, but through their faith they find relief, and they find in him the courage to resolve their problems. They can't lose because even death is only a transition.

Fortunately, I don't have to deal with

catastrophes every day but I still try to live in rhythm with Paradise's pulse in a constant manner, and not only when things go wrong. This way I can still be spontaneous without the risk of a fatal fall. It is not a permanent state but it is getting better all the time.

In order to live God in my daily life, I first practise tranquil joviality. Every time I feel moody, I stop and make a mental pause, a mini-meditation, just the time it takes to quiet my chattering mind, the little me, the mental ego, the squirrel in the wheel, and just listen—until tranquillity comes back. Often it returns with a good idea, but not always.

Nobody's perfect. In a way, to become perfect is the basic principle of our lives, since there is an abundance of perfection in the Universe of Universes. In Satania, however, amongst other barbarian planets, we have the notorious honour of being very experimental.

But let us go back to daily service through the love of our brothers; we need to acquire a sound philosophy in order to face hostility from some of our peers and from life's difficulties.

Being inspired by divine love to fill our hearts with joy, and finding the strength to face different events, can only happen through our own will, expressed freely and clearly. Ask and you shall receive. Ask our Father to inspire you with love, and if you are receptive you will feel it.

It works, it really works!

Prayer and worship are well-known means to contact the divine. *The Urantia Book* is an efficient tool for understanding his will. There is another practice as well to help harmonise the inexpressible: meditation, which Jesus himself

practised.

Meditation for me is the attainment of mental silence.

Mental silence increases receptivity of divine forces. God will never interrupt you if you keep talking. He is a respectful listener, and as long as you are talking, you won't hear him. Even through mental silence we must not expect to hear our Adjuster's voice. The goal of mental silence is to stop all the voices in order to feel an emotion that goes beyond words.

In my opinion, mental silence is the sensory key that allows actualizing and renders the spiritual activity experimental while stimulating the mental. This is what makes my spiritual experience personal and tangible.

Mental silence also allows self-control through active listening; it leaves us free of our ego's superfluous speculations and leaves the mental field open to the Spirit's work.

Some people are naturally able to think of nothing. I even know some who are troubled by this fact. They don't think about anything and feel nothing in return, no joy or other benefit. Creating emptiness in our mind is not sufficient; we also need to be attentive and awakened.

In general, the exercise of not thinking while remaining receptive is not easy; it took me many years of practice to reach an objective level of mental silence. I know now when I have reached this state by an even perception of a phenomenon just above my head, a sort of refreshing flame spiralling above my cranium. It is traditionally called *the thousand petal lotus*, I believe.

I rarely meditate for long periods of time. It is not useful for me to maintain mental silence indefinitely. The principle of it is to shut down the mental ego just long enough to resolve a problem or continue a conversation.

This goes one step further when you can shut completely the mental ego while listening to someone. To stop our own mental story and fully listen to our interlocutor is an excellent way to resist the temptation of cutting short their conversation!

I believe that meditation is the most

experimental aspect and the most personal of our spiritual adventure. It is a useful exercise that is more than an actual knowledge or activity.

To think about God's love is one thing, but thinking doesn't bring new facts, only a different perspective of the facts in question. But we are able to feed our consciences with new information by:

- emptying our minds in order to feel tranquillity and refreshing joy,
- letting ourselves be filled with the love of the Gods and be glowing with goodness,
- stimulating loving thoughts towards new horizons.

Intellectualism can only develop with the information it possesses. Meditation and mental silence stretch out the quality of the spectrum of sensations as well as the quantity of information that can be intellectually processed.

We always leave the mental silence state with new thoughts, and they seem to come from a deeper space inside of us. The **little me** intervenes in a lesser manner and learns to listen more attentively.

There is no ideal way to live according to the will of our Father, but there are ideal conditions to be acquired. Living in Paradise is living in society; it is respecting others, and to do this, the best fuel is love: unselfish love that inspires us with ideas and actions.

The practice of mental silence is not necessary to worship or pray, but it provides for forbearance and helps raise the peace and joy that lead to love. It is also unnecessary to make a complicated practice or rigorous discipline to obtain peace through mental silence and feel the harmony of the Spirit of the Universe a little more. It is possible to love God and serve him without using meditation techniques, but let's just say it is one more tool to make our lives easier; therefore, why not use it?

It is like a train that anybody can take according to their own schedule. We have eternity to become perfect. No need for undue stress; we just need to let the flow take us in its forward motion.

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